

Lesson Plan - *Jewish Women in the Partisans*

Time: **50 minutes**

Audience: **Grades 6-12** (Omit "Select an Officer" section for Grades 6-8)

Student Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Understand the role of women in resistance activities during WWII.
- Recognize the unique challenges facing women, and in particular Jewish women, and acknowledge their gender defying behavior.
- Gather in-depth personal knowledge of female Jewish partisans and their experiences, leading to the cultivation of empathy.
- Know the history of the Jewish partisans.

Aligned Standards (California Common Core)

- Example of Common Core Standard, 6th grade:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RH.6.2
- Example of Common Core Standard, 6th-8th grade:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. RH.6-8.2
- *See a complete list at the end of this document.*

Grades 6-12

(For grades 6-8, modify or omit the section on "Select an Officer")



JPEF offers its short educational film (15 minutes), ***Every Day the Impossible: Jewish Women in the Partisans***, narrated by Tovah Feldshuh, as a supplement to this lesson plan. The film offers rare archival footage and interviews from many of the women featured in the lesson.

The lesson plan includes discussion questions associated with the film. We recommend that educators view this film before using the study guide.

JPEF offers an alternate film, ***Introduction to the Partisans*** (6 minutes), that can also be used with this lesson plan. It may be more suitable for grades 6-8.

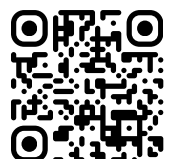
Please note that this film and lesson plan discuss the sexual harassment and abuse women faced in some partisan units. Educators should be prepared to address these issues with their students in a way that is most appropriate for their learning environment.



**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS COLLABORATIVE
FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION**

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Jewish Women in the Partisans

"I was a fighter, I was always a fighter.

Jews did not go like sheep to their slaughter," emphasized partisan Eta

Wrobel, who began her resistance activities immediately after Germany invaded her native Poland in September 1939. "Fear was not in my dictionary!" declared Greek partisan Sara Fortis, who organized one of the only all-female brigades to fight the Fascists during World War II. Women partisans like Eta Wrobel and Sara Fortis proudly recalled their roles in the anti-Nazi resistance. Their boldness is remarkable given that women were not readily welcomed into male-dominated partisan units. Guns were the law of the forest, and guns belonged to men.

The primary role of a partisan was to take up arms and fight the enemy in guerrilla-type warfare, focusing on military and strategic targets. Partisans killed Nazis and their local collaborators; they disrupted transportation and communication lines to the war front. They dynamited railroad tracks, enemy power plants, and factories; they held up police stations and stole their arsenals. They operated from hideouts made within wild, dense forests or mountainous terrain. This harsh, perilous, combat existence was ruled and populated by men.

Of the approximately 30,000 Jewish partisans who fought in both non-Jewish and Jewish resistance units in German-occupied Europe, fewer than ten percent were women. Some performed roles traditionally assigned to women: they tended to the sick and the wounded, cooked for and fed the troops, and acted as decoys, smugglers, and couriers. Arms-bearing women like Eta in Poland and Sara in Greece were exceptions to the rule. Although their numbers were small and their duties often limited, women combined courage, savvy, and sheer will with luck to become part of the vital infrastructure that sustained partisan movements across the war-torn continent. Despite the twin evils of antisemitic and sexist violence that threatened their survival, Jewish women partisans overcame the specific and compounded dangers they faced both as women and as Jews.

From Protected to Protector

The road to the partisans usually began in the ghettos and camps, where women were forced to develop strategies that could help them and their families survive. Some of these tactics departed from socially acceptable conventions, such as the smuggling of arms; others were extensions of the traditional female caretaking role. Women of all

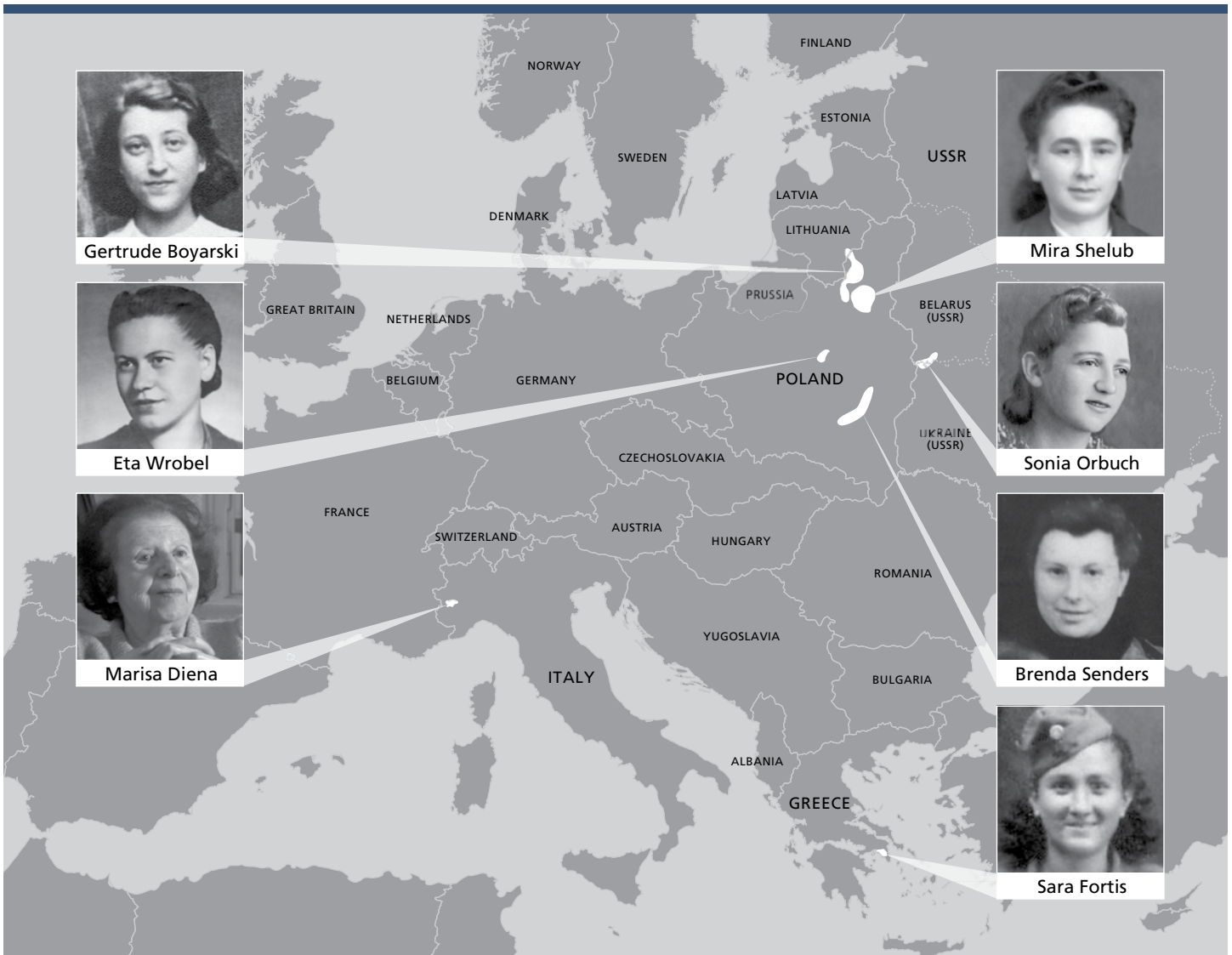


Female Jewish resistance fighters in the forests near Pinsk, circa 1943. Source: USHMM

ages—mothers, sisters, and daughters—used their wits and resources to find food, clothing, shelter, information, and valuable contacts for their families. Sonia Orbuch's mother, for example, bribed a policeman with her wedding ring to allow the family to escape the Luboml ghetto in Poland—today in Western Ukraine—in October 1942. Brenda Senders of Sarni, Poland, found refuge for a younger sister with a Christian farmer and ensured her safety by warning the caretaker: "My sister is the only one left from my family, and you better take care of her. If you betray her, remember—I'll come for revenge." The sister survived. Such strength of mind would serve other women who subsequently entered partisan units.

Traditional gender roles made it harder and thus less common for women to separate from their families and try to join the partisans on their own. Women usually chose to remain in the ghetto with their loved ones, whether out of loyalty, fear, or lack of confidence and skills. It was a hot August day in 1942 when the Germans began rounding up the Jews of the Sarni ghetto. Amid the gunshots, killings, and mayhem, Brenda Senders's mother pulled her daughter close: "Brenda, you must go into hiding." Brenda resisted, "Where am I going to hide? No. Whatever will be with the family, will be with me." But her mother insisted, "No, maybe one of us will survive." So at her mother's urging, Brenda was emboldened to escape and take her younger sister with her.

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Map of the seven female partisans featured in this lesson plan, and their locations on the map. This map depicts the approximate partisan activity of the women featured in this lesson plan from 1942 to 1944. The borders of this map are from Europe in 1939, before the German/Soviet aggression pact.

Some families made a point of teaching girls how to conspire against the Nazis. In the Polish town of Lokow, Eta Wrobel's father, active in the Polish underground, taught his 18-year-old daughter survival tactics after her mother and six siblings were killed in one of the first Nazi roundups of Jews in Poland. Eta recalls: "He instructed me to help the underground resistance, and constantly encouraged me. 'Don't be afraid. Only you can do it. I order you to survive.' And that's what I did."

"Only boys can go!"

Not all women were encouraged by their families to risk escape and engage in clandestine resistance. In October 1942, Meyer Orbuch was in the Luboml Ghetto in Poland. He had collected guns and made plans to escape into the woods with several other young men. His mother begged Meyer to take his older sister, Sonia, along. Meyer refused, explaining that, "No girls can go with us. Only boys can go!"

Meyer went to the forest, and Sonia remained with her family in the ghetto. In such instances, women who might have wanted to run could not, and often were murdered together with their families. However, in Sonia's case, she and the rest of her family managed a treacherous flight during the final destruction of the ghetto and went into hiding.

Other families attempted to escape the ghettos and stay together. Mira Shelub and her family fled the Zdziedociol Ghetto in Poland in 1942, just as the Germans began killing off the ghetto population. Fifteen-year-old Sara Fortis and her mother traveled a 12-hour journey by donkey to a remote village in Greece, as the Germans occupied their beautiful hometown of Chalkis. Marisa Diena followed her partisan brother to a hideout in the Italian mountains, where she eventually trained other young women in reconnaissance activities. In each instance, women fled with their families when no other options stood before them but death.

With the Partisans: Jews and Women “Unfit for Battle”

Jewish men and women faced a whole new set of challenges once they made contact with partisan groups. Many Eastern European units, composed of ex-Soviet soldiers who were escaped prisoners of war and male anti-Fascists from native populations, did not accept Jewish fugitives. They were even less likely to accept women. For Jews to join these units, they had to find their own weapons and ammunition or bring special skills such as communications, medicine, or knowledge of local geography. But the Jews who ran to the forests were civilians, not soldiers, and arrived at a partisan camp with little more than the scant possessions they could carry when they fled. Considered too weak, unskilled, and inferior to be fighters, Jews were seen as a burden to the unit, and Jewish women were seen as a double burden.

Brenda Senders understood, “The partisans expect you to bring ammunition, or they won’t take you in.” Instead of arms, Brenda brought a keen familiarity with the local forests; she also knew some Christian inhabitants, who had done business with her family and could supply the partisans with food and shelter. Her father, a forester, shared his knowledge and love of the woods with her growing up, and Brenda used this knowledge to beg her way into a Soviet unit: “Take me in. I want to fight.”

Sonia Orbuch and her family were admitted into a Soviet partisan unit on the Ukrainian border. Still, Sonia said they would have been turned away if her Uncle Tzvi had not been with them. Tzvi had been a scout in the Polish underground and could offer the Soviets his reconnaissance skills. That knowledge saved Sonia, Tzvi, and her parents.

But skilled or not, the partisans mainly regarded Jews as liabilities, not as resources, because the presence of Jews threatened the security of the secret combat units. The Nazis and their collaborators hunted runaway Jews tenaciously. Local populations, though they might be loyal to the partisans, would often betray Jews in exchange for food or other bribes. Some partisan units preferred to kill Jews rather than harbor them, due to their own antisemitic beliefs.

“The Highest Priority Was To Save Jewish Lives”

Mira Shelub recounted that antisemitism in partisan units was a threat to Jewish survival and led to the creation of all-Jewish camps. Her husband, Nochim, whom she met in a Soviet unit, established one such camp in eastern Poland. All-Jewish units, while fewer in number, accepted Jewish women readily. These units often shared a dual



Sara Fortis poses for a photo in her Greek partisan uniform. Date unknown. Source: JPEF

purpose: to rescue fellow Jews unconditionally and to sabotage the enemy. “The highest priority was to survive and save Jewish lives,” emphasized Eta Wrobel, who helped form a Jewish unit in central Poland in October 1942. “Sure, we wanted to disturb the Germans so they shouldn’t have it easy, but I think saving Jews was the most important work. It was my work. We saved about a hundred people in a year and a half.”

Saving Jewish lives was a priority for Jewish partisan groups, which is why one in four of their inhabitants were women, compared to one in fifty in non-Jewish units. In Ukraine’s Naliboki Forest, the Bielski Brigade set up family camps for 1,200 Jews, who assisted in military operations or repaired weapons, made clothing, and cooked for the fighters. Women made up 30 to 40 percent of the Bielski population.

Sadly, the very advantage of family camps proved to be their weakest point. By being stationary and admitting everyone regardless of gender, age, or physical ability, family camps became vulnerable to exposure and attack from both the

German troops and local people, who shared the Nazis’ hatred of Jews. Gertrude Boyarski’s mother and younger siblings lived in a family camp while she, her father, and an older brother lived nearby among the partisan units. Gertrude recalled the last time she visited her mother in the family camp, A surprise attack by local Nazi collaborators killed many unarmed members of the camp, including Gertrude’s mother. Lucky to survive the raid, Gertrude ran through the forest to her father’s unit, where she remained until the war’s end.

Women and Men: “Select an officer, life will go better for you”

(consider omitting this section with grades 6-8)

The double threats of antisemitism and sexism seemed a never-ending consequence of the war. Jewish women faced the constant danger of sexual abuse, rape, and forced abortion in the ghettos and camps, where the Nazis targeted them as breeders of an inferior race that had to be exterminated. The trail of physical and sexual violence followed women into the resistance units. Many found themselves cornered and coerced by partisan men, who demanded sexual favors in exchange for protection.

Sonia Orbuch remembered being horror-struck when the commander’s wife took her aside for a private conversation soon after her family arrived in the Soviet camp: “You’re a young girl, there are very few women in the partisans, and I would advise you to select an officer. Life will go better for you,” the woman said.

The most vulnerable women were those who operated alone and were usually young and unmarried. “Be my wife, and I will get you into the

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unit," a friend of Gertrude's father propositioned her. She refused his offer and instead stood guard duty as an admissions test, succeeding in joining the partisan group on her own.

"It was difficult for a woman in a predominantly male organization to avoid propositions and advances by male partisans," Mira Shelub acknowledged. "The female population was small. Men wanted sweethearts. I was lucky enough to be protected by my parents. That made all the difference." Mira explained that some women willingly "chose an officer" because the relationship offered protection and privileges, such as relief from combat assignments, larger food rations, and more comfortable living quarters. A man could buy a woman food, clothing, and shelter for her and her family. In a raid, a man with a gun could protect a woman and her family.

Those women who didn't pair off with men feared the consequences of their decision to remain unattached. They had no one to help them carry the heavy loads of wood and water, or prepare the huge

campfires for cooking the partisans' meals. Serious problems could result if the food were not ready on time, and it became an enormous source of stress for single women, as Sonia Orbuch recounted. Every morning, she and the other women were given two short hours to "carry water, chop the wood, build a fire, prepare the food, cut, cook, and clean up. If I had no one to help me, it was impossible to do the work in two hours... We always worried that if we were not able to perform, we will be thrown out of the partisans. So you had to deal with it." Sonia weathered frostbite, hunger, and the loss of her loved ones to prove her worth and be accepted by the Soviet partisans.

An estimated 60 percent of the adults in the Bielski partisan group lived as couples, and some of the relationships, like Mira's marriage to partisan leader Nochim Shelub, would last a lifetime. Other women coupled with men from very different religious and class backgrounds, men whom they would never have met or chosen in a peacetime situation.

Many women, however, had relationships forced on them, especially in non-Jewish units. Though it was rarely discussed openly, women had to face the bitter irony that some of them had escaped the Nazis only to be threatened with rape or murder at the hands of partisans in non-Jewish groups.

Not all partisan environs were dangerous for women, and some camps punished rape severely. In the Soviet camp where Gertrude Boyarski worked, the commander protected women from sexual assault as part of his overall effort to impose greater discipline in the combat units. "He told us to count on him for support," she recalled. After a Polish girl was raped, the commander issued a swift punishment. The instigator of the assault was held before all the partisans, and after his crime was announced, he was shot on the spot. The commander's warning to the other men could not have been more explicit.

Once Jewish camps were formed, women became better protected against sexual coercion. Frank Blaichman, leader of an all-Jewish unit, said he felt duty-bound to protect the women. "There were many bullies in our group... But I would say to the women: 'Don't be afraid to say 'No.' And I told the men, 'If you want to have a girlfriend, okay. But to abuse women and then go back on the partnership-no, you can't do this.'"

Women's Work: Caretakers and Couriers

Women played a variety of roles in both Jewish and non-Jewish groups, but primarily their partisan activities were extensions of their traditional caretaker roles. They were responsible for feeding their entire unit, nursing the wounded and the sick, setting up and breaking down camp, doing the laundry, and cleaning and carrying weapons—vital duties that ensured a camp's survival, safety, and ability to function.

Working in a makeshift hospital under the guidance of their only doctor, 17-year-old Sonia treated sick and wounded partisans. Her medical education was as improvised as the hospital, she recalled. After a few meager days of training, she was bandaging injured partisans. "You got thrown into the work, whatever it was. You got used to it."

Women also acted as spies, smugglers, and couriers, for they had a beneficial gender advantage in these roles—a female could move



Female partisan printing the partisan newsletter for distribution throughout the region in the forests of Belarus. Circa 1943. Source: Ghetto Fighters' House

about in public more easily than a male, especially a Jewish man, whose identity could be readily exposed. Because circumcision in Europe occurred almost exclusively among Jewish men, their true identities could be easily revealed. The partisan units recognized and benefited from this fact.

When young Marisa Diena became the Vice-Commander of Information Services in an Italian partisan group, she enlisted and trained peasant women to become courier messengers. “No one suspected their involvement...” Marisa explained. “We didn’t have all the things that a real army has, like communications services. Instead, we had the peasant girls, who could maintain connections and pass information back and forth.”

Female Jewish partisans with blond hair and blue eyes could “pass” as Aryan. By manipulating ethnic and female stereotypes, they could move around unnoticed in public—ride buses or trains, hold meetings in parks or cafes—and thus transmit messages, smuggle supplies, or escort fugitives into hiding. They would assume Christian names and acquire false identification papers. For instance, Sara Fortis became Sarika, and Marisa Diena became Mara. “My name was changed from Marisa to Mara. It was not my nickname. It was my battle name,” she explained proudly.

Partisan women who took on courier assignments had to speak the country’s language fluently and without a Yiddish accent. Brenda Senders spoke Polish, Russian, and Yiddish. Sara was raised in a family she described as more Greek than Jewish, and she spoke Greek like every other native on her island. Italian was the first and only language for Marisa/Mara of Turin. Young women like these had to think on their feet, slip out of risky situations, and never get caught. Independent and vulnerable, their undercover work was crucial to partisan operations and as dangerous as armed battle. By doing this work, women transcended traditional expectations of their role in and contributions to society.

Sara Fortis, for one, refused to be a caretaker for the Greek partisan unit she joined. “I told them: if I am a female partisan, I will have rights, and I will do something comparable to what you do.” Eta Wrobel said she made sure never to wash men’s clothes or cook their meals. “I refused to do it, because I had never done it at home.”

Rule Breakers: Women’s Leadership and All-Female Groups

Some women partisans were able to bend rigid rules about gender roles. Eta, Sarika, Brenda, and Mara fought alongside men. Given the unusual conditions the partisans confronted, any woman who could use a weapon was needed to fight. Brenda joined a 1,600-member Soviet partisan unit in eastern Poland at 17, and she recalled pleading with her unit commander for weapons training. “If I was going to die, I wanted to die with a gun in my hand, fighting my enemy. I wanted revenge.”

In a few cases, women took an active strategic role. At her initiative, Sara Fortis single-handedly planned and organized a group of female partisans, whom she recruited from peasant villages on the Greek island of Chalkis. She traveled by donkey from village to village and assembled a platoon of a dozen girls, telling them and their families:



Sara Ginaite stands guard at the liberation of the Vilna ghetto, 1944. Source: USHMM

“Don’t look at the place of the woman as needing to be at home all the time. Women can also help and have a role in resistance.”

‘Capitan Sarika,’ as she came to be known throughout Greece, taught the girls how to behave around men. “They all came from homes in which a girl would never speak to a man, and suddenly I was telling them, ‘You’re a partisan now.’ It’s tough for a girl from an isolated village to learn to behave as an equal among men. I thought these girls would slowly become different by the end of their service. I succeeded in teaching them that.”

The platoon was constantly moving, didn’t have a base camp or shelter, slept outdoors, and often traveled with the male partisans. They learned to shoot handguns, torch buildings, and throw Molotov cocktails as diversionary tactics.

“In the beginning, the girls would giggle, ‘Ooh, will we hold that gun?’ After a month went by, it was like they were completely different girls,” Sarika said proudly. “They took it more seriously than I did.”

Sarika was concerned that after the war, the girls in her brigade would not be taken back into their villages, which had strict rules defining a woman's proper place. But they were all accepted, as was their Captain because the villagers were proud of them. Many of the women's lives, however, went back to the same sexist configurations as before the war, and in some cases, things were a little different.

Marisa Diena was the third resistance fighter in her family. The Italian Fascists had arrested her older brother in 1943, and a year later, her younger brother was gunned down and killed in the mountains. Marisa joined a Communist partisan organization called the Garibaldi Brigades, which hid in the mountains but worked in the towns, foothills, and plains below. Because gas was rationed, Marisa traversed the area by bicycle, working as a communication link with the partisans.

"Young people like me didn't know how to do anything. We weren't soldiers. I was a little girl who'd just left school, but I understood that to give information, I needed to have contacts where the enemy was, where the Germans and Italian Fascists were. So, I rode my bicycle everywhere."

Like Sarika in Greece, Marisa was a Jewish teenager playing a role in a non-Jewish partisan group. Unlike Eastern Europe, where antisemitism was the rule and the local population did not commonly harbor Jews, Sarika and Marisa had never experienced antisemitism before World War II, and neither felt persecuted by her fellow partisans for being a Jew. Each was more sensitized to gender and class inequalities in her culture than to antisemitism. Not only were both girls accepted by their respective non-Jewish partisans, but they were also rewarded for their abilities.

Heroes and Heroines: "Staying alive was a full-time job"

The partisans hid by day and fought or traveled by night. They lived off the land and foraged for food and clothing. They slept in makeshift dugouts during the bitter winters and under the stars in the summer. "The trees, the sky, the pine needle ground were our summer home," Mira recounted. They begged local farmers or peasants for food, horses, and supplies, and if they were refused, they resorted to force and stole whatever was needed. Eta acknowledged they lied, cheated, and stole, because "We had to!"

The physical conditions people faced—freezing temperatures, lack of clothing and food, frostbite, lice, and diseases – were equal opportunity hardships. They affected both men and women. Still, as Marisa emphasized, the partisans represented "the best possible means for survival."

"Was it possible for everybody to fight and get out to the forest and survive? No, it wasn't," Sonia acknowledged. "This is the price we paid, but we paid it gladly." As Eta said, Jewish women willingly paid it because, "We knew we had our destiny in our own hands. We were free to smell the fresh air. But it was hard, let me tell you. It was a full-time job to stay alive."

Lesson Plan - *Jewish Women in the Partisans*

Interactive Classroom Study Guide (Grades 6-12)

Jewish Women in the Partisans: Courage and Resistance

Introduction and Learning Objectives

Objective: Students will explore Jewish women's courageous roles in partisan resistance movements during WWII and reflect on themes of identity, survival, and moral choice.

Essential Questions:

- What does resistance look like?
- How did Jewish women contribute uniquely to the partisan movement?
- How do gender, religion, and social expectations impact resistance?
- How did men's and women's roles differ, and how did they see their work differently?

Learning Activity 1

See, think, wonder: Each group of 4-5 students is given a sheet of paper with a female Jewish partisan's photograph on one side and instructed to evaluate what they see in the photo, what they think about it, and what they wonder about it. (A biography of the partisan is included on the backside for later review.)

Initial responses are gathered from the class and recorded on the board.

This is followed by the 15-film *Everyday the Impossible: Jewish Women in the Partisans*, which includes video interviews with each woman. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9i5Hp2nVb8>



If there are time constraints, educators may alternately show the 6-minute film *Introduction to the Partisans* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLxFjDooib4>



Learning Activity 2: Meet the Female Fighters

Content Summary: Jewish women like Gertrude Boyarski, Marisa Diena, Sara Fortis, Sonia Orbuch, Brenda Senders, Mira Shelub and Eta Wrobel resisted Nazi oppression through courage and tactical skill. Many had to defy gender norms and risk everything to fight.

Activity: Character Profiles. Students return to their original groups from the See, Think, and Wonder activity and together read the short biography of the partisan, learning more about Eta, Sara, Sonia, Mira, Gertrude, Marisa, and Brenda. Each group creates a brief presentation, poster or collage about their life, challenges, and contributions to share with the class.

Extension 1: Invite students to act out a short monologue in their character's voice.

Extension 2: Have students imagine that they could have an interview podcast with a female partisan. What questions would they ask them? Even if there are no answers to these questions, asking makes them realize

how hard it is to know what was happening in their head and discover what they are personally curious about.

Learning Activity 3

Quick Write (5 min) After the Film: "What would you do if an unjust government threatened your rights and life?"

Learning Activity 4: From Protected to Protector

Content Summary: Many women began resisting from within ghettos, smuggling food and weapons, or escaping to the forests to join partisans. Family ties often shaped their paths.

Activity: In pairs, students roleplay a conversation between a daughter and a parent deciding whether to flee or stay in the ghetto. Discuss emotional and practical challenges.

Reflection: "Would you go alone to fight if your family couldn't come with you? Why or why not?"

Learning Activity 5: Challenges in the Forest

Content Summary: Jewish women faced rejection, antisemitism, and sexism from other partisans. Many were only accepted if they brought weapons or vital skills.

Activity: Simulation Game "Would You Be Accepted?" A game where students draw cards with fictional backstories and determine

whether they'd be accepted into a partisan unit based on historical criteria (weapons, medical skills, etc.).

Debrief: Discuss fairness, fear, and the concept of "value" in extreme situations.

Learning Activity 6: Double Dangers – Antisemitism and Sexism (reserved for grades 9-12)

Content Summary: Women risked sexual harassment and coercion, even among supposed allies. Some formed relationships for protection, while others stood their ground.

Activity: Ethical Dilemma Discussion. Small groups read and respond to real scenarios faced by women partisans. Each of the biographies contains a dilemma of this nature. Groups present what they would do and why.

Teacher Tip: Handle this section with care. Consider prior content warnings and alternate assignments if needed. This activity is best suited for grades 9-12.

Learning Activity 7: Women's Roles – More Than Caretakers

Content Summary: Women served as couriers, nurses, spies, and fighters. Their gender helped them blend in and carry out dangerous missions.

Activity: Mission Planner Students, in teams, design a secret courier mission: plan a route, disguise, supplies, and contingency plan. Present in class.

Creative Extension: Write a diary entry from a courier's perspective.

Learning Activity 8: Breaking Barriers – Leadership and Legacy

Content Summary: Women like Sara Fortis formed all-female brigades. They redefined what it meant to be a fighter.

Activity: Leadership Lab Debate: "Can anyone become a leader in times of crisis, or are leaders born?" Tie in the stories of Marisa Diena, Sara Fortis, Sonia Orbuch, Brenda Senders, Mira Shelub, and Eta Wrobel

Project Option: Create a "Resistance Hero" trading card featuring a woman partisan (stats, skills, bio, quote).

Reflection & Assessment

Final Reflection Questions:

- What surprised you most about these stories?
- How did these women resist beyond just fighting?
- What does this history teach us about standing up against injustice today?

Assessment Options:

- Written response or creative piece (e.g., poem, letter, art)
- Group project or presentation
- Exit ticket: "Three things I learned, two things I wonder, one way I can resist injustice today."

References

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Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation

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Wrobel, E. (2006) My life, my way, the extraordinary memoir of a Jewish partisan in WWII Poland. Wordsmithy / The Yivo Institute for Jewish Research

Additional Resources

Films:

[A Partisan Returns: The Legacy of Two Sisters](#)

[Daring to Resist](#)

English Language Arts Grade 6

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 6.1 (Key Ideas and Details) Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI 6.2 (Key Ideas and Details) Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI 6.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

RI 6.4 (Craft and Structure) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RI 6.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

W: Writing Standards

W 6.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W 6.2 (Text Types and Purposes) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W 6.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 6.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

W 6.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

W 6.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 6.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 6.2 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL 6.4 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Present claims and findings (e.g., argument, narrative, informative, response to literature presentations), sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details and nonverbal elements to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

L: Language Standards

L 6.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the

conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 6.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L 6.3 (Knowledge of Language) Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

L 6.6 (Vocabulary Acquisition and Use) Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

English Language Arts Grade 7

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 7.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI 7.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

W: Writing Standards

W 7.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W 7.2 (Text Types and Purposes) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W 7.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 7.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking and citing sources.

W 7.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

W 7.9 (Research to Build Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 7.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 7.2 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL 7.4 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Present claims and findings (e.g., argument, narrative, summary presentations), emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

L: Language Standards

L 7.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 7.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L 7.3 (Knowledge of Language) Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

English Language Arts Grade 8

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 8.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

W: Writing Standards

W 8.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W 8.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 8.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

W 8.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

W 8.9 (Research to Build Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 8.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 8.4 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Present claims and findings (e.g., argument, narrative, response to literature presentations), emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

L: Language Standards

L 8.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 8.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L 8.3 (Knowledge of Language) Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

English Language Arts Grade 9

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 9.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Analyze various accounts

of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

W: Writing Standards

W 9.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W 9.2 (Text Types and Purposes) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W 9.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 9.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

W 9.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W 9.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 9.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL 9.4 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically (using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation) such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose (e.g., argument, narrative, informative, response to literature presentations), audience, and task.

L: Language Standards

L 9.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 9.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L 9.3 (Knowledge of Language) Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Literacy in History/Social Studies Grade 7 and 8

RH: Reading Standards

RH 7-8.1 (Key Ideas and Details) Cite specific textual evidence to

support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH 6-8.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

RH 6-8.4 (Craft and Structure) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

RH 6-8.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

WHST: Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

WHST 6-8.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

WHST 6-8.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

WHST 6-8.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Literacy in History/Social Studies Grade 9

RH: Reading Standards

RH 9.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

RH 9.4 (Craft and Structure) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

WHST: Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

WHST 9.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

WHST 9.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

WHST 9.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

English Language Arts Grade 10

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 10.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI 10.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

W: Writing Standards

W 10.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W 10.2 (Text Types and Purposes) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W 10.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 10.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

W 10.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W 10.9 (Research to Build Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 10.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL 10.4 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically (using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation) such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose (e.g., argument, narrative, informative, response to literature presentations), audience, and task.

L: Language Standards

L 10.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 10.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L 10.3 (Knowledge of Language) Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

English Language Arts Grades 11 and 12

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

RI 11-12.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RI 11-12.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media

or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

W: Writing Standards

W 11-12.1 (Text Types and Purposes) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W 11-12.2 (Text Types and Purposes) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W 11-12.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 11-12.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W 11-12.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 11-12.1 (Comprehension and Collaboration) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL 11-12.4 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence (e.g., reflective, historical investigation, response to literature presentations), conveying a clear and distinct perspective and a logical argument, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

SL 11-12.6 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas) Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

L: Language Standards

L 11-12.1 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L 11-12.2 (Conventions of Standard English) Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Literacy in History/Social Studies Grade 10

RH: Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

RH 10.3 (Key Ideas and Details) Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

RH 10.4 (Craft and Structure) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

WHST: Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

WHST 10.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST 10.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

WHST 10.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

WHST 10.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Literacy in History/Social Studies Grades 11 and 12

RH: Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

RH 11-12.7 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RH 11-12.9 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

WHST: Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

WHST 11-12.4 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST 11-12.6 (Production and Distribution of Writing) Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

WHST 11-12.7 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

WHST 11-12.9 (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

About the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation (JPEF) empowers young people to fight against antisemitism by utilizing the real-life lessons of young Jewish partisans as role models. JPEF brings the partisans' legacy of heroic resistance to millions of students and educators worldwide through innovative educational materials, original films, interactive websites, teacher education, classroom lesson plans, and partnerships with global Holocaust organizations. The Jewish partisans fought against antisemitism 80 years ago, and JPEF continues that fight today.

Founded in 2000, by filmmaker Mitch Braff, JPEF initially began collecting video testimonies from Jewish partisans to bring what had previously been the unknown history of approximately 30,000 Jews who fought back against the Nazis and their collaborators to the world. By 2001, the organization had launched its website, which houses 54 Jewish partisan biographies and interviews today. A large number of them feature Jewish women who defied gender norms to resist genocide and hate.

By 2014, JPEF had directed and produced 12 PBS-quality short films for use in middle and high school classrooms on subjects ranging from Jewish women in the partisans to the challenges of living and surviving in the forests - finding food, medicine, and shelter during brutally hot summers and freezing winters. Among JPEF's essential resources are easy-to-use classroom lesson plans on these subjects and many more. JPEF collaborated with Academy Award-winning director Ed Zwick and Paramount Vantage on the film *Defiance*, about the largest all-Jewish partisan brigade, which was responsible for saving more than 1,200 Jews - women, men, children, and the elderly during the Holocaust.

Teaching with Defiance is one of JPEF's most popular classroom lessons, combining clips from the film, which stars Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber, to teach young people about history, ethics, leadership, and values.

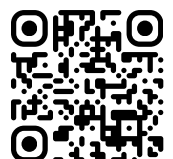
In 2024, JPEF launched its newest curriculum, *Foundations of Resistance: A Curriculum to Counter Antisemitism for Grades 6-12*. Through a series of four lessons, each containing an unique student webquest, young people learn why they should and how they can speak out and stand up against antisemitism and hate in their lives. These lessons, produced with funding from the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education are available at www.jewishpartisans.org/pictures-of-resistance-virtual-exhibit.

Pictures of Resistance: The Wartime Photographs of Jewish Partisan Faye Schulman is JPEF's traveling exhibit of 30 photographs with accompanying narratives taken by the only known female Jewish partisan photographer. It has toured the world from San Francisco to Melbourne. A digital exhibit of the photographs, with narration by Faye herself, assisted by award-winning actor Jason Isaacs, is now available on the JPEF website at: www.jewishpartisans.org.

JPEF's curriculum materials are available to educators for free, including its online professional development courses that award CEUs from Touro College upon completion. Nine lessons, all under one hour, are available on subjects ranging from Tactics of Resistance to Finding Leadership. <https://jewishpartisans.org/elearning>

JPEF hosts another 95 Jewish partisan biographies on its auxiliary site, Jewish Partisan Community, at www.jewishpartisancommunity.org

We welcome you and your students to use all of our resources!



Visit our website:
jewishpartisans.org

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