



CALIFORNIA TEACHERS COLLABORATIVE FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Room 7: Jewish Resistance and in the Military

Audience: 6-8 Grade

Time: 45-60 Minutes

Student Outcomes

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

1. Identify multiple forms of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust
2. Analyze the challenges and complexities of resistance under extreme oppression
3. Develop empathy and critical thinking about historical resilience
4. Recognize the diversity of resistance strategies

Aligned Standards (California Common Core)

History-Social Science Standards (Grade 7 and 8)

- **7.9:** Students analyze the historical developments of the Reformation and the causes and course of World War II.
- **8.12:** Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution, including the Holocaust (extension of historical understanding).

Common Core ELA Standards for History/Social Studies (Grades 6-8):

- **RH.6-8.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- **RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- **RH.6-8.7:** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- **RH.6-8.9:** Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Speaking and Listening Standards (Grades 6-8):

- **SL.6-8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.6-8.4:** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details.

Writing Standards for History/Social Studies (Grades 6 - 8):

- **WHST.6-8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- **WHST.6-8.9:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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Context: Short Summary

This room 7 highlights the courage, resilience, and significant contributions of Jewish individuals and communities who fought against Nazi oppression both from within occupied territories and as part of Allied forces.

As students navigate through this virtual space, they will discover historical photographs and personal testimonies that document the multifaceted ways Jewish people actively opposed the Nazis and contributed to the Allied victory.

During World War II, Jewish people demonstrated extraordinary courage and resilience through multiple forms of resistance against Nazi persecution. Jewish soldiers served in Allied armies worldwide, with approximately 1.5 million fighting against Nazi forces

in various military roles. In addition to formal military service, many Jewish individuals formed partisan groups, conducting guerrilla warfare in forests across Eastern Europe. The Bielski Partisans, for example, not only fought Nazi troops but also established a community that saved over 1,200 Jewish lives. Within occupied territories, Jewish resistance movements emerged in ghettos and underground networks, organizing armed uprisings like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943, where residents fought German troops for nearly a month using limited weapons and extraordinary determination.

Beyond armed resistance, Jewish people also engaged in critical spiritual and humanitarian resistance efforts that preserved cultural identity and saved lives. Rescue networks, comprised of both Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, worked secretly to provide hiding places, false documentation, and escape routes for persecuted populations. The Jewish Brigade, a military unit of volunteers fighting with the British Army, played a crucial role not only in combat but also in supporting Holocaust survivors and facilitating Jewish immigration. Spiritual resistance manifested through secretly maintaining religious traditions, preserving cultural artifacts, and continuing educational practices under extreme oppression. These diverse resistance strategies demonstrated that Jewish communities responded to Nazi persecution with remarkable courage, resilience, and a commitment to survival and human dignity, challenging narratives of passivity and showcasing the complex ways individuals and communities fought against systematic oppression.

Thinking Strategies

Empathetic Perspective Taking

- Develop deep, nuanced understanding of individual experiences
- Move beyond broad historical narratives to personal stories
- Recognize human complexity in extreme circumstances
- Strategies:
 - Read personal testimonies
 - Analyze first-person accounts
 - Imagine ethical dilemmas from multiple viewpoints
- Goal: Cultivate compassionate historical understanding

Critical Contextual Analysis

- Examine resistance within complex historical contexts
- Understand systemic challenges facing Jewish communities
- Analyze multiple forms of resistance beyond armed struggle

- Key focus areas:
 - Social, economic, and political limitations
 - Psychological impact of oppression
 - Varied survival strategies
- Techniques:
 - Compare different resistance approaches
 - Evaluate resources and constraints
 - Recognize subtle forms of defiance

Ethical Reasoning and Moral Decision-Making

- Explore ethical complexities of resistance
- Discuss moral choices under extreme conditions
- Develop nuanced understanding of human behavior
- Exploration methods:
 - Hypothetical scenario discussions
 - Moral dilemma case studies
 - Reflective writing on personal courage
- Core questions:
 - What makes resistance possible?
 - How do individuals maintain dignity?
 - What sustains human resilience?

Systems Thinking

- Understand interconnected historical processes
- Analyze how individual actions relate to broader systems
- Recognize complex networks of resistance
- Analytical approaches:
 - Map resistance networks
 - Identify collaboration patterns
 - Examine institutional and social dynamics
- Skill development:
 - Recognize systemic barriers
 - Understand collective action
 - Analyze power structures

Comparative and Interdisciplinary Investigation

- Connect Holocaust resistance to broader human rights struggles
- Explore resistance across different historical contexts

- Develop sophisticated historical thinking
- Comparative study areas:
 - Other genocides and persecution events
 - Contemporary human rights movements
 - Global resistance strategies
- Interdisciplinary connections:
 - Psychology of survival
 - Sociology of collective action
 - Anthropological perspectives on community resilience

Glossary:

Key Terms

- **Partisans:** Underground resistance fighters who conducted guerrilla warfare against Nazi forces, often operating in forest regions of Eastern Europe. Jewish partisans formed independent groups and also joined existing resistance movements, engaging in sabotage, intelligence gathering, and direct combat against Nazi troops.
- **Ghetto Uprising:** Organized armed rebellions by Jewish residents against Nazi forces within confined ghetto areas. The most famous was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943, where Jewish residents fought German troops for nearly a month using limited weapons and improvised strategies.
- **Rescue Networks:** Organized groups that helped Jewish people escape Nazi persecution, providing hiding places, false documentation, and escape routes. These networks often involved cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish individuals across occupied territories.
- **Jewish Brigade:** A military unit of Jewish volunteers who fought as part of the British Army during World War II. Composed primarily of Palestinian Jews, they fought against Nazi forces in Italy and later played a crucial role in helping Holocaust survivors and supporting Jewish immigration.
- **Underground Resistance:** Clandestine organizations and individuals who worked secretly to oppose Nazi occupation, including intelligence gathering, providing aid to persecuted populations, and conducting sabotage operations.
- **Spiritual Resistance:** Efforts to maintain cultural and religious identity under Nazi oppression, including secretly practicing religious traditions, preserving cultural artifacts, and maintaining educational and spiritual practices despite extreme persecution.
- **Rescue Efforts:** Organized attempts to save Jewish lives during the Holocaust, including hiding individuals, providing false documentation, and creating escape

routes. Notable examples include efforts by individuals like Oskar Schindler and organizations like the French Resistance.

- **Bielski Partisans:** A Jewish partisan group led by the Bielski brothers in Belarus, known for both fighting Nazi forces and establishing a community of Jewish survivors in the forests. They saved over 1,200 Jewish lives while conducting resistance activities.
- **Allied Jewish Soldiers:** Jewish military personnel who served in the armed forces of Allied countries, fighting directly against Nazi Germany. These soldiers served in various capacities, including combat roles, intelligence, and support positions in American, British, Soviet, and other Allied armies.
- **Resistance Movements:** Organized groups that opposed Nazi occupation through various means, including armed struggle, intelligence gathering, and humanitarian efforts. Jewish individuals played significant roles in resistance movements across occupied Europe, often working alongside non-Jewish allies.

Timeline: Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust

1933-1939:

- **Rise of the Nazi Party:** The Nazi Party gains power in Germany, implementing discriminatory laws against Jews.
- **Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass):** A coordinated attack on Jewish businesses, synagogues, and homes across Germany and Austria.

1940-1942:

- **Ghettoization:** Jews are forced into ghettos, confined to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.
- **Deportations to Death Camps:** Mass deportations of Jews to extermination camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, and Sobibor.

1943:

- **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising:** A major armed uprising by Jewish resistance fighters against the Nazis.
- **Uprisings in Other Ghettos:** Smaller uprisings occur in ghettos across Eastern Europe.

1944:

- **Sobibor Uprising:** A successful prisoner revolt at the Sobibor extermination camp.
- **Jewish Partisan Units:** Jewish partisans fight alongside Soviet partisans in the forests of Eastern Europe.

1945:

- **Liberation of Concentration Camps:** Allied forces liberate concentration and extermination camps, ending the Holocaust.

Materials:

- [Read about the museum](#)
- [Access to virtual museum Room 7](#)
- Primary source documents: Excerpts from diaries, letters, or memoirs of Jewish resistance fighters (can be found at sources like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) website)
- Multimedia presentation on different types of Jewish resistance (slide deck, video, or interactive website)
- Worksheets with guiding questions for analyzing personal testimonies (see below)
- Large chart paper
- Colored markers
- Video clips of Jewish resistance movements (optional)

Differentiation:

- Provide scaffolding for comprehension by providing definitions or visuals for key terms. Encourage use of graphic organizers to depict the different resistance strategies.
- Offer adapted materials with simplified language and sentence structure. Provide graphic organizers with sentence starters for analyzing testimonies.
- Challenge students to research a specific resistance group or individual in more depth and present their findings to the class.

Assessment:

- **Exit tickets:** After the gallery walk activity, students can answer a prompt on the exit ticket such as "What surprised you about Jewish resistance?" or "What questions do you have about the Holocaust?"
- **Worksheet analysis:** Teacher can assess students' understanding of the different resistance strategies and their ability to analyze primary sources by reviewing their completed worksheets.
- **Class discussion participation:** Observe students' engagement in discussions, their ability to analyze complex topics, and their use of evidence from the lesson materials.
- **Closing reflection:** Analyze students' written reflections on the meaning of resistance to gauge their understanding and ability to make connections to broader themes.

Possible Project Write Up:

Name of resistance fighter:

Type of resistance: (armed, spiritual, rescue, etc.)

Challenges faced:

- What were the main obstacles this person encountered?
- How did these challenges make resistance difficult?

Maintaining hope:

- How did this person find strength and motivation to resist?
- What examples does the testimony provide of the will to survive?

Visual representation:

- Create a drawing, diagram, or collage that depicts a key moment or aspect of this person's story.

Lesson/Activity: Pre-Lesson Activity

Anticipation Guide:

- Create a list of statements about the Holocaust, such as "All Jews were passive victims of the Holocaust" or "There was no hope for Jews during the Holocaust."
- Ask students to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each statement.
- This activity will activate prior knowledge and generate interest in the topic.

Vocabulary Building:

- Introduce key terms related to the Holocaust, such as resistance, ghetto, concentration camp, and genocide.
- Have students create visual representations of these terms, such as drawings or diagrams.
- This activity will help students understand the complex concepts and key terms associated with the Holocaust.

Personal Connection:

- Ask students to reflect on a time when they felt powerless or faced a challenge.
- Have them discuss how they coped with the situation and what strategies they used to overcome it.
- This activity can help students relate to the experiences of Jewish resistance fighters and understand the importance of hope and resilience.

Lesson Outline

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Opening Activity: Silent Gallery Walk
 - Post images around classroom showing different resistance moments
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cfa65c76822d481ea76ae7a250b6cb30>
 - Students walk silently, observe, and write initial thoughts on sticky notes
 - Provoke thinking: "What does resistance look like?"

II. Conceptual Framing (15 minutes)

- Presentation on Resistance Types:
 1. [Armed Resistance](#)
 - Partisans
 - Ghetto Uprisings
 - Jewish Military Contributions
 2. [Spiritual Resistance](#)

- Preserving Culture
- Religious Practices
- Educational Efforts
- 3. [Rescue Resistance](#)
 - Underground Networks
 - Hiding and Saving Lives
 - False Documentation

III. Personal Story Analysis (15 minutes)

- Small Group Activity:
 - Distribute excerpts of personal testimonies
 - <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/personal-stories-jewish-partisans>
 - <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/testimony-resistance-auschwitz>
 - <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/resistance-resilience-hope-holocaust-survivor-stories/>
 - Groups analyze:
 - What specific resistance strategy was used?
 - What challenges did the individual face?
 - How did they maintain hope?
 - Groups create visual representation of their assigned story

IV. Reflection and Discussion (15 minutes)

- Whole Class Dialogue:
 - What surprised you about resistance strategies?
 - How would you define resistance?
 - What makes resistance possible?

V. Closing Assessment (5 minutes)

- Individual Reflection:
 - Write a short paragraph: "Resistance is not just about fighting. Resistance is..."

Discussion Questions

What were the challenges faced by Jewish resistance fighters, and how did they overcome these challenges?

- Consider factors such as limited resources, harsh conditions, and the constant threat of death.

How did Jewish resistance differ from other forms of resistance during World War II?

- Discuss the unique circumstances faced by Jews, such as their systematic persecution and the limitations imposed by the Holocaust.

What impact did Jewish resistance have on the course of the Holocaust?

- Consider both the immediate and long-term effects of resistance on the morale of Jewish communities and the morale of the Nazi regime.

Why is it important to remember and honor Jewish resistance?

- Discuss the significance of recognizing the courage and sacrifice of Jewish resistance fighters, and how their stories can inspire future generations.

How can we learn from the lessons of Jewish resistance to combat prejudice and discrimination today?

- Consider the importance of standing up to injustice, promoting tolerance, and working towards a more equitable society.

Supplemental Resources

Extended Activities

Creative Projects:

- Write a Short Story or Poem: Have students write a short story or poem from the perspective of a Jewish resistance fighter. They can imagine the challenges, fears, and hopes of their character.
- Design a Historical Fiction Comic Book: Students can create a comic book that tells the story of a Jewish resistance fighter.

Research Projects:

- Research a Specific Resistance Group: Students can research a specific resistance group, such as the Bielski Partisans or the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
- Compare and Contrast Different Forms of Resistance: Have students compare and contrast different forms of resistance, such as armed uprisings, smuggling, and cultural activities.

Community Engagement:

- Visit a Holocaust Museum: If possible, organize a field trip to a local Holocaust museum.
- Interview a Holocaust Survivor or Descendant: If there are any Holocaust survivors or descendants in your community, arrange for students to interview them.
- Volunteer at a Local Organization: Encourage students to volunteer at a local organization that supports Holocaust education or helps survivors.

References

Related Literature and Media

Books:

Tec, N. (2008). *Defiance: The Bielski partisans*. Oxford University Press.

Avital, M. (2018). *And there was courage: Stories of Jewish valor and heroism during and after the Holocaust*. Mazo Publishers.

Tec, N. (2013). *Resistance: Jews and Christians who defied the Nazi terror*. Oxford University Press.

Documentaries:

Defiant Hearts. (n.d.). [Film].

The Uprising. (2001). [Film]. PBS.

The Partisans of Vilna. (1986). [Film]. Aviva Kempner.

Films:

Zwick, E. (Director). (2008). *Defiance* [Film]. Paramount Vantage.

Online Resources:

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.). *Holocaust history and Jewish resistance*. <https://www.ushmm.org>

Yad Vashem. (n.d.). *Righteous among the nations & Jewish resistance*. <https://www.yadvashem.org>

Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation. (n.d.). *Jewish partisans and their legacy*. <https://www.jewishpartisans.org>