

Resistance during the Holocaust

“Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did.” –Sophie Scholl

Grade Level: 6-12

Time Required: One or two class periods

Subjects: World History, European History, United States History, English, Genocide Studies, Social Justice

Overview: A question that students often ask about the Holocaust is, “Why didn’t they fight back?” There is a misconception with Holocaust History that most victims did not resist Nazi persecution; all that did resist were victims and that resistance which took place during this era was only physical and armed. This lesson will allow students to define and explore that resistance took on many forms during the Holocaust, armed and unarmed, Jewish and non Jewish. Adult men, women and even teenagers all fought back against the Nazi regime. Students will gain understanding about specific individuals that were a part of the resistance movement as well as the different forms of resistance.

Activity #1

Defining Resistance

The teacher will write the word resistance on the chalkboard. Students brainstorm what resistance is or examples of resistance. Students will place their ideas on “sticky notes,” and place them around the word resistance on the chalkboard. The teacher will then read aloud the student responses and lead a class discussion regarding responses.

Activity #2

Background: Resistance during the Holocaust

The teacher will use video and primary source photographs to illustrate to students the different types of resistance that occurred during the Holocaust.

Partisan Introduction

Courtesy of the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation

http://jewishpartisans.org/t_switch.php?pageName=student+films

Partisan/Resistance Fighters

Sarah Ginaite Rubinson

Sarah was born in 1924 in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania. During the German occupation, she was imprisoned in the Kovno ghetto where she lost most of her family. She would eventually come into contact with members of the underground movement and begin working with them. Here she talks about the activities of the partisan unit that operated in the Kovno area:

<http://www.va-holocaust.com/content/oral-history-resistance>

Virginia Holocaust Museum Oral History

The Bielski Brothers

Arczyk, Asael, Tuvia, and Zus Bielski were four brothers whose parents and two other siblings had been murdered by the Nazis. With thirteen other individuals the brothers escaped to the woods in Belorussia. For two years the Bielski Brothers lived in the forest with a group that grew to be over 1,000 people- both old and young, the brothers never turned anyone away, they had become a small community. During the time in the forest the Bielski Brothers along with the other partisans attacked villagers in their region that had collaborated with the Nazi’s as well as sabotaged

and destroyed Nazi efforts to expand their empire. When the war ended in Belorussia in 1944, 1,200 people that were a part of the Bielski Partisan Resistance had survived.

http://jewishpartisans.org/t_switch.php?pageName=educator+defiance&gloss=false

Courtesy of the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation

Spiritual Resistance

Vladka Peltel Meed

Vladka was a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization and was smuggled out of the Warsaw Ghetto to find hiding places for Jewish children and adults in Poland.

http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_oi.php?ModuleId=10005416&MediaId=2897

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Jewish Resistance

La Sixieme

Jewish underground rescue network operating in the southern zone of France. (For photo see "Attachment A")

Non Jewish Resistance

Forces Francaises de l'Intérieur (French Forces of the Interior)

French Resistance Fighters during World War II. (For photo see "Attachment B")

The White Rose

The White Rose was a nonviolent German Resistance group, opposed to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Regime. Students from the University of Munich compromised much of the group, which included Sophie Scholl, Hans Scholl, Christoph Probst, Willi Graf and Alexander Schmorell. The White Rose created leaflets (pamphlets) that exposed and condemned the Nazi's for their crimes. Eventually members of the White Rose were arrested by the Gestapo and executed for being disloyal to the Nazi Party.

Activity #3

Research

Students will be given a form of resistance during the Holocaust to research.

Types of Resistance

- **Spiritual** (examples of this include: open underground libraries, lectures, art contests and writing music and performing plays in ghettos)
- **Jewish Resistance** (examples of this include: uprisings at Treblinka and Sobibor killing centers)
- **Non Jewish Resistance** (examples of this include: The White Rose, Resistance in France against the Vichy Regime)

Students must answer the following questions:

- What type of resistance were you given to research?
- Define your form of resistance you were given to research
- Provide information regarding one person that was involved in your form of resistance.
- Provide visual examples of your resistance (photos, artifacts involved in resistance)

Activity #4

Resisters & Resistance - Pinterest & Prezi

Using either the website *Pinterest* or *Prezi.com* students will create a board or presentation for their specific form of resistance. In the presentation the following must be addressed and present:

- What type of resistance were you given to research?
- Define your form of resistance you were given to research
- Provide information regarding one person that was involved in your form of resistance.
- Provide visual examples of your resistance (photos, artifacts involved in resistance)

Sources

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. **Resistance in the Holocaust.**

Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation

Further Classroom Resources

Holocaust History Fact Sheet

<http://www.va-holocaust.com/content/factsheets>

Holocaust Dictionary of Terms

<http://www.va-holocaust.com/content/dictionary>

Virginia Holocaust Museum Oral Histories

<http://www.va-holocaust.com/content/oral-history-classroom>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum- Non Jewish Resistance

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007332>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum- German Resistance

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005208>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum- White Rose

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007188>

Axelrod, Toby. *Hans and Sophie Scholl: German Resisters of the White Rose*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2001.

Vocabulary

Dehumanization: Describing or treating an individual or group in a way that is designed to depict them as being less than human.

Gestapo: Secret Police of Nazi Germany

Ghetto: Originating in the Middle Ages, it refers to areas of towns where Jews chose or were made to live. Ghettos were used by the Nazis as a collection points for Jews who were eventually deported to concentration camps or murdered in open air killing actions.

Holocaust: Greek term that refers to sacrifices. It is also used as a translation for the Hebrew notion of olah, a sacrificial offering that is brought up and burnt whole on the altar. The term has evolved to refer to the genocide of European

Jewry (6 million people) by the German Third Reich. Scholars have expanded the concept in recent years to deal with the almost 13 million victims of the Nazis during World War II.

Partisan: A term commonly used to refer to any group of resistance fighters during the Holocaust.

Resistance: Opposition or fighting against

Righteous Among the Nations (Righteous Gentiles): The title and recognition given by Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews.

Spiritual Resistance: Individuals maintaining their humanity, personal integrity, dignity and sense of civilization in the face of Nazi attempts to dehumanize and degrade them.¹

¹ "Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos." Holocaust Encyclopedia. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum., 10, June 2013. Web. 3 Dec. 2013.