SCREAM THE TRUTH AT THE WORLD

Emanuel Ringelblum and the Hidden Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto
*Scream the Truth at the World: Emmanuel Ringelblum and the Hidden Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto* is a travelling exhibition produced by the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York and presented in Vancouver by the VHEC with support from the American Society for Jewish Heritage in Poland.

## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-visit Activity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-visit Activities</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw Ghetto Timeline</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Resources</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The VHEC’s fall program, recommended for grades 6-12, focuses on Jewish responses to the Holocaust and considers the questions: What is resistance? What were the obstacles to resistance during the Holocaust? What forms did Jewish resistance to Nazism take? Can writing be a form of resistance?

Your visit to the VHEC will be inquiry-based: we ask students to respond to the primary source materials in the exhibits, and to consider their meaning and significance. The exhibits and school program are an excellent complement to the study of the Holocaust, a discussion of resistance, as well as a consideration of historical documentation and the connection between recording history and activism.

In order for your students to get the most out of your time at the Centre, we encourage you to introduce basic concepts, chronology and timeline of the Holocaust in advance of their visit. The VHEC’s Holocaust Education Teacher Resource contains guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust, frequently asked questions, a timeline, a glossary, recommended readings and websites.

This resource is available for download at: http://vhec.org/teaching.html.
Recognizing that the events unfolding around him in Europe in the fall of 1939 were unprecedented and required careful documentation and preservation, Warsaw historian Emanuel Ringelblum gathered a few dozen writers, historians, rabbis, teachers and welfare workers to form a group code-named Oyneg Shabbes [Joy of Sabbath]. The mission of Oyneg Shabbes was to document Jewish life in Nazi-occupied Poland. From September 1939 until January 1943, the clandestine group collected drawings, photographs, posters, newspapers, children’s school essays, and reports of the murder of Jews.

As the Nazis began liquidating the ghetto, Ringelblum had the archive buried in several containers. On September 18, 1946, the first cache was pulled from the ghetto’s rubble; a second cache was found in 1950; the last cache has never been discovered. Less than a handful of the group’s members survived. Ringelblum was not among them. The Ringelblum archive, as the materials came to be known, is the most important source for, and the most poignant testimony to, the destruction of Warsaw Jewry.
OBJECTIVES OF SCHOOL PROGRAM

- To understand the richness and diversity of the lives of Polish Jews before and during the Holocaust.

  Before WWII, Poland was the largest center of Jewish life in Europe. 3.25 million Jews lived there—10% of the country’s total population. Half of all Jews murdered in the Holocaust—approximately 3 million—were Polish Jews.

- To explore issues about documenting history, in particular about recording unprecedented events while living them.

  Unlike survivors’ testimonies and memoirs, the Oyneg Shabbes archive tells the story of the Holocaust from the point of view of the individuals who perished. It is the main source of research into the history of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation.

- To consider questions about the nature of resistance; to examine the Jews’ physical and spiritual struggle to survive, both individually and as a people.

  The documents in the Ringelblum archive, as well as the Oyneg Shabbes project itself, contradict the stereotype of Jews passively submitting to the Nazi genocide. They demonstrate the Jews’ extraordinary efforts to affirm their human dignity despite the Nazis’ aim to dehumanize them.

Key questions raised by exhibition and school program:

1. How did the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto respond to the war waged against them by the Nazis?

2. How do we interpret the documents of the Oyneg Shabbes archive?

3. How are recording history, resistance and activism interconnected?
PRE-VISIT LESSON: IMAGES OF JEWISH RESISTANCE
OBJECTIVES OF LESSON

• To provide background information for the class visit to the VHEC
• To introduce strategies of examining and analyzing primary sources that will be central to the school program.
• To introduce the diversity of Jewish life in pre-war Europe.
• To introduce ghettos and their role in the Nazis efforts to annihilate Jewish life and culture in Europe.
• To engage students in the consideration of Jewish responses to the Holocaust.

The lesson (90 minutes total) can be conducted in one session or divided over two classes (A) Part 1, (B) Parts 2&3.
PART 1: INTRODUCTION THE WARSAW Ghetto | 25 minutes

A. INTRODUCTION

Explain that the class will be visiting the VHEC to view exhibits and participate in a program about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. Introduce Emanuel Ringelblum and the Oyneg Shabbes project.

B. STUDENT READING

Introduce the topic of life in the Warsaw ghetto with Student Reading: Life in the Warsaw Ghetto [p. 9]

As a class, discuss the following questions:

· What are the conditions inside the ghetto as described by Ringelblum?

· What actions did Jews take in response to these conditions?

· What were the risks associated with these actions?

· Why do you think Jews continued to act in spite of these risks?

C. DISCUSSION

Teacher Resource


The following articles offer additional background information and can be assigned as student readings for advanced grades:

· Ghettos
· Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust
· Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos
**A.** Divide the class into three groups. Each group will examine three photographs.

Each group should have a moderator to guide the discussion, a secretary to record important points, and three reporters who will present the outcome of the discussion to the rest of the class during the general discussion.

**B.** Distribute multiple copies of each handout to the groups:

- **Group 1:** Pre-war Jewish life in Poland
- **Group 2:** Ghettos during the Holocaust
- **Group 3:** Jewish responses to ghetto life

**C.** While analyzing the images, each group will discuss the following questions, first looking only at the image, and then considering the accompanying text.

- **GROUP 1: PRE-WAR JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND**
  - Describe the people and settings in each image.
  - What do these photos reveal about pre-war Jewish life?
  - What does the accompanying text add to your understanding?

- **GROUP 2: GHETTOS DURING THE HOLOCAUST**
  - Describe the photos and the conditions they depict.
  - How did ghettos isolate Jews from their non-Jewish neighbours?
  - How were Jewish liberties restricted in the ghetto?
  - How does the accompanying text add to your understanding of the images/artefacts?
GROUP 3: JEWISH RESPONSES TO GHETTO LIFE

- Describe the images/artefacts and the activities they depict.
- What actions did Jews take in response to conditions in the ghetto?
- What risks were associated with these actions?
- Why do you think Jews continued cultural activities in the ghetto?
- Why do you think some Jews chose to document events unfolding around them?

PART 3: GROUP REPORTING | 25 minutes

- Give each group five minutes for their presentation.
- The group reporters direct the class’ attention to particular photographs and summarize the highlights from the group’s discussion.
- Time permitting, other members of the group may add to the reporter’s comments.
- The remaining time can be used for wrap-up/debrief.
Smuggling began at the very moment that the Jewish [ghetto] was established; its inhabitants were forced to live on 180 grams of bread a day, 220 grams of sugar a month, 1 kg of jam and 1 kg of honey, etc. It was calculated that the officially supplied rations did not cover even 10 percent of the normal requirements. If one had wanted really to restrict oneself to the official rations then the entire population of the ghetto would have had to die of hunger in a very short time....

The German authorities did everything to seal off the ghetto hermetically [completely] and not to allow in a single gram of food. A wall was put up around the ghetto on all sides that did not leave a single millimetre of open space... They fixed barbed wire and broken glass to the top of the wall.

Several kinds of guards were appointed for the walls and the passages through them. The victims of the smuggling were mainly Jews, but they were not lacking either among the Aryans (Poles). Several times smugglers were shot at the central lock-up on Gesiowka Street. Among the Jewish victims of the smuggling there were tens of Jewish children between 5 and 6 years old, whom the German killers shot in great numbers near the passages and at the walls....

And despite that, without paying attention to the victims, the smuggling never stopped for a moment. When the street was still slippery with the blood that had been spilled, other smugglers already set out, as soon as the “candles” had signalled that the way was clear, to carry on with the work....

Source: Life in the Warsaw Ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum quoted in Yad Vashem Documents on the Holocaust, pp 228-229:
GROUP 1: PRE-WAR JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND
“The shtetl - not a town, not a village, but a whole world.”

- Abba Kovner

Jews had lived in Poland since the 11th century and were an integral part of Polish society until WWII. Some Polish Jews lived in shtetls, small towns in Eastern Europe with predominantly or entirely Jewish populations. These settlements originated approximately 1,000 years ago and saw periods of relative tolerance and prosperity as well as times of extreme poverty, hardships and anti-Jewish violence. Jews living in shtetls spoke a unique language (Yiddish) and observed Jewish religious laws and customs.
"I pondered and at the same time observed the street below. The passers-by were as divided in their beliefs and attitudes as were the children in our house. Here, a bearded Jew with earlocks walked by in a fur-lined hat and satin gaberdine [traditional religious dress for Jewish men] and soon a dandy came by in modern clothes, yellow shoes, a straw hat, clean-shaven and with a cigarette between his lips. Now came a pious young matron with a bonnet on her shaven head [traditional religious dress for Jewish women], to be closely followed by a girl with rouged cheeks, a kind of blue eye-shadow, and a short-sleeved blouse that revealed her bare arms."


Before World War II, the city of Warsaw was a major centre of Jewish life and culture in Poland. Warsaw’s pre-war Jewish population of more than 350,000 constituted about 30 percent of the city’s total population. The Warsaw Jewish community was the largest in both Poland and Europe, and was the second largest in the world, second only to New York City.
In pre-war Warsaw, there were twenty-seven Jewish daily newspapers to choose from. (Marion Wiesel, ed., *To Give Them Light: The Legacy of Roman Vishniac*)

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a growing portion of Polish Jewry became Westernized. Traditional lifestyle was called into question by a segment of the Jewish population. Warsaw Jews were active in a variety of political and social movements. Jewish organizations included political parties, social service organizations, school systems, community charities and sports clubs.
GROUP 2: GHETTOS DURING THE HOLOCAUST
A. GROUP 2: GhettoS during the Holocaust

“The ghetto’s area is far too small for half-a-million people, as only a few streets have been designated as the Jewish district. The congestion is mind-boggling. If you stand on a balcony and look down on the ghetto streets in front of you, you see nothing but a vast expanse of human heads, the ebb and flow of waves of tens of thousands of people. Almost everyone is dressed in the same manner, nothing elegant, and every face wears the same expression of Jewish sorrow…”


On October 12, 1940, the Nazis decreed the establishment of a ghetto in Warsaw. The decree required all Jewish residents of Warsaw to move into a designated area, which German authorities sealed off from the rest of the city in November 1940. The ghetto was enclosed by a wall that was over 10 feet high, topped with barbed wire, and closely guarded to prevent movement between the ghetto and the rest of Warsaw. The population of the ghetto, increased by Jews from nearby towns, was estimated to be over 400,000 Jews. German authorities forced ghetto residents to live in an area of 1.3 square miles, with an average of 7.2 persons per room.
“Life in the ghetto is frozen. There are walls around us; we have no space, no freedom of action. Whatever we do we do illegally; legally we don’t even have the permission to exist.”


The Nazis ordered Jews residing in ghettos to wear identifying badges or armbands and also required many Jews to perform forced labour for the German Reich. Daily life in the ghettos was administered by Nazi-appointed Jewish councils (Judenrate). A ghetto police force enforced the orders of the German authorities and the ordinances of the Jewish Councils, including the facilitation of deportations to killing centres. Jewish police officials, like Jewish council members, served at the whim of the German authorities. The Germans did not hesitate to kill Jewish policemen who were perceived to have failed to carry out orders.
C. GROUP 2: GHETTOS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

A ration card for potatoes issued to Bluma Wasser, a member of the Oyneg Shabbes, 1941.
(ZydowskiInstytutHistoryczny, RingII/383)

“Hunger is a wild, raw, primitive, animal thing...From yesterday’s soup until today is an eternity. I can’t imagine that I will be able to sustain such a murderous hunger...Someplace in the world they eat as much as they want...Another hour until I get my soup, another hour, you understand?”


Cut off from their pre-war sources of livelihood and the rest of the city, Jews in the Warsaw ghetto were forced to rely on the public distribution of food. Potatoes were a staple food item in the ghetto. For many inhabitants of the ghetto, an allocated piece of bread and watery bowl of soup were the only daily food.
GROUP 3: JEWISH RESPONSES TO GHETTO LIFE
A. GROUP 3: JEWISH RESPONSES TO GHETTO LIFE

Smuggling food into the ghetto. (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, Ring II/1311)

"The mildest punishment for smuggling is death, carried out on the spot... The children who were smuggling had the most extraordinary and fantastic courage... These children went through [the ghetto walls] several times a day, laden with goods that often weighed more than they did. Smuggling was the only source of subsistence for these children and their parents, who would otherwise have died of starvation."

- Emanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations.*

Self-help and smuggling grew out of necessity to survive because the Nazi ghetto policy regarding the limited distribution of food aimed at starvation on a massive scale. Several methods were employed to carry out the smuggling operations: through buildings that were connected with buildings on the “Aryan” side, across the wall, through camouflaged openings in the wall, through underground canals and at the ghetto gates. Jews also organized soup kitchens with meagre resources to try to alleviate mass hunger and suffering.
B. GROUP 3: JEWISH RESPONSES TO GHETTO LIFE

Jews in the ghetto carried on many cultural activities, including the creation of works of art, songs, theatrical productions, concerts, cabarets, dances and lecture. Many musicians who were members of the Warsaw Philharmonic, the Opera House, and the Polish radio orchestras were forced to move into the ghetto. They created the Jewish Symphony Orchestra and gave concerts in Warsaw’s Main Judaic Library and at the Melody Palace. Virtually all of the 80 musicians in the orchestra were murdered in the Treblinka death camp.
“From all sides I hear voices crying out for bread. A very small boy, trembling, stretches out his thin arm and begs... Here is a poor woman, her clothes torn and tattered. Swollen from starvation, she lies in the street like a corpse. I can’t look at her and I turn my face away....”

- Yaffa Bergman, age 14

The Oyneg Shabbes archive included diaries, children’s essays, artworks and reports on the deportation and murder of Jews. Diaries documented daily life, personal loss, rumours about the fate of Jews deported from the ghetto and elsewhere, as well as reflection about the uncertainty of their own fate.
POST-VISIT EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
In order to build on your visit to the VHEC, we recommend that school groups continue their exploration in the classroom of the issues raised during their visit. Students can be asked to write about their own feelings and values. Although students should be made aware that each historical period is different, they are encouraged to use their understanding of history to reflect about contemporary cases of social injustice.

The suggested post-visit activities are adaptable for grades 6 through 12. We would be very happy to hear back from you about how the activities are working. We also encourage students to write letters to the VHEC to comment on aspects of the tour and their related studies.

1. **The Music of Resistance**

Many Yiddish songs were composed in the ghettos. Study the anthem of the underground resistance movement “Zog nit keyn mol” (Never Say) below.

Written by Hirsh Glik in the Vilna ghetto, this song later spread to other ghettos and partisan units. Glik was born in 1922 and belonged to a group of young Yiddish poets before the war. He was deported to a concentration camp in Estonia and was killed in 1944.

**For Discussion:**
- What were Hirsh Glik’s intentions when he wrote this song?
- What is the mood of the lyrics?
- What feelings does the music inspire?
- Why did the ghetto Jews sing or listen to songs such as this one?
Never say that this is the end of the road.
Wherever a drop of our blood fell, there our courage will grow anew.
This song, written in blood, was sung by a people fighting for life and freedom.
Our triumph will come and our resounding footsteps will proclaim “We are here!”

From land of palm-trees to the far-off land of snow.
We shall be coming with our torment, with our woe;
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth
Shall our bravery, or vigor blossom forth.

We’ll have the morning sun to set our day aglow;
Our evil yesterdays shall vanish with the foe.
But if the time is long before the sun appears,
then let this song go like a signal through the years.

This song was written with our blood, and not with lead;
It’s not a song that summer birds sing overhead;
It was a people, amidst burning barricades,
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.

So never say you now go on your last way,
Through darkened skies may now conceal the blue of day,
Because the hour for which we’ve hungered is so near,
Beneath our feet the earth shall thunder, “We are here!”

2. The World’s Response

In June 1942, Emanuel Ringelblum wrote in his diary:

“Friday, June 26, has been a great day for O.S. [Oyneg Shabbes]. This morning, the English radio broadcast about the fate of Polish Jewry. They told about everything we know so well: about Slonim and Vilna, Lemberg and Chelmno, and so forth. For long months, we had been suffering because the world was deaf and dumb to our unparalleled tragedy. We complained about Polish public opinion, about the liaison men in contact with the Polish government-in-exile. Why weren’t they reporting to the world the story of the slaughter of Polish Jewry? We accused the Polish liaison men of deliberately keeping our tragedy quiet, so that their tragedy might not be thrown into the shade. But now it seems that all our interventions have finally achieved their purpose. There have been regular broadcasts over the English radio the last few weeks, about the cruelties perpetrated on the Polish Jews: Belzec and the like. Today there was a broadcast summarizing the situation: 700,000, the number of Jews killed in Poland, was mentioned. At the same time, the broadcast vowed revenge, a final accounting for all these deeds of violence.

The O.S. group has fulfilled a great historical mission. It has alarmed the world to our fate, and perhaps saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination.”

Unfortunately, despite the BBC broadcast, little was done by foreign governments to save European Jews from genocide. Write a research paper examining what countries like Canada did to help the Jews in Nazi Europe. What else might have been done? Could they have done more? How could Canadian citizens today respond to the news of a refugee crisis or to the persecution of ethnic or religious groups in other countries?

If you were to hear such a report on the radio or on TV, how would you respond? Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper of your choice expressing your opinion.
3. children & the holocaust

This poem was written during World War II by a girl of a Jewish high school in Krakow, Hela Blumengraber, to her teacher, Julius Feldhorn:

**To the Teachers**

You taught us to strive for a life of ideals,
You exhorted through verses and poems
To soar on the wings of enthusiasm,
To unravel life’s innermost secrets.

You taught us to love the magic of words,
To go into raptures, weeping with awe,
To press ever onward and search unrelentingly
For the truth and the cosmos unrevealed.

You enchanted our spirits with “humanist” phrases,
You taught us to worship the glory of genius.
For this I am now bowed with suffering,
I face the cruel world all helpless and lost.
We should have been taught to spring from a crouch,
To seize hold of a neck with an iron-strong grip,
To strike at the forehead with merciless fist
Until lifeless he crumples and falls!

You should have taught us to shriek till we’re heard,
How to crash through a gate that is cracked,
How to kill to avoid getting killed
And get used to the glitter of blood.

O, erudite teachers, men of vast knowledge!
Did you really and truly not know
That the earth has no place for a humanist?
Why did you plant yearning in our hearts?

Why does Hela reproach her teacher? Do you agree with her that being trained in using weapons was more important in her life than receiving an education? What do you think is the task of teachers and the role of education in times of crisis? What does this poem tell you about how children coped with the extreme situation in which they lived? Write an essay or a poem in response to her protest.
### 1939

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>SEPTEMBER 1</td>
<td>Germany invades Poland. World War II starts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCTOBER 28</td>
<td>According to a census ordered by the Germans on this day, there are 359,827 Jews living in Warsaw.</td>
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**STARTING NOVEMBER, FOR ONE YEAR**

About 90,000 of these Jews are resettled in Warsaw.

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<td>NOVEMBER 15</td>
<td>All middle and high schools in Warsaw are ordered closed. Secret education begins in high schools, including Jewish schools.</td>
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<td>NOVEMBER 23</td>
<td>Governor-General Hans Frank issues a decree requiring all Jews, 10 years of age and older, to wear a white armband on the right arm bearing a Star of David, starting on December 1, 1939. Every store owned by Jews also must be marked with a Star of David in the front window.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECEMBER 4</td>
<td>Jewish elementary schools are ordered closed.</td>
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### 1940

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<td>STARTING JANUARY</td>
<td>All synagogues are ordered closed. Prayer meetings in private homes are also prohibited. Food ration cards are issued to the people of Warsaw.</td>
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<td>STARTING APRIL</td>
<td>The Germans begin construction of the wall around the area that will become the Warsaw Ghetto.</td>
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<td>STARTING MAY</td>
<td>The Judenrat (Jewish Council) is ordered to provide 7,000 people daily for slave labour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 29</td>
<td>The Germans authorize the formation of the Jewish Self-Help Society (JSS) to provide welfare services to Jews.</td>
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<td>STARTING SEPTEMBER</td>
<td>Jews are allowed to use only those trolley cars with a sign indicating “For Jews Only.”</td>
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<td>OCTOBER 2</td>
<td>The Germans announce the creation of a Jewish “neighborhood.” Approximately 113,000 Poles are required to leave the area and about 138,000 Jews are forced to move into it from various parts of the city.</td>
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### 1940

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<td>November 16</td>
<td>The ten-foot-high wall surrounding the Jewish ghetto is completed, creating a ghetto covering approximately 1,000 acres, in which about 350,000 people are imprisoned. On average, over nine people inhabit each room.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Emanuel Ringelblum establishes a group to create an underground Ghetto archive. The enterprise is code-named <em>Oyneg Shabbes</em>.</td>
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**Starting December**

- Clandestine educational activities are organized at public soup kitchens for children. Religious and secular studies are offered.

### 1941

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<td>Starting April</td>
<td>Workshops (called “shops”) are opened in the Ghetto to produce goods needed by the Germans. Prohibitions regarding education, culture, and religious life are partially rescinded; permission is given to open three synagogues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>Germany and her allies invade the Soviet Union.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Starting October</td>
<td>Couriers of underground organizations reach the Ghetto with the first specific information about mass executions of Jews by the Germans in those parts of Poland which had been occupied by the Soviet Union.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Governor-General Hans Frank issues an order requiring the death penalty for Jews who leave the Ghetto without permission, as well as for Poles who offer them help in doing so.</td>
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1942

### JANUARY-FEBRUARY

“Jakub Grojnowski,” known as Szlamek, escapes from the Chelmno death camp and reaches Warsaw. Oyneg Shabbes members transcribe his eyewitness account of mass killings of Jews and Roma (Gypsies) in gas vans.

### END OF MARCH - BEGINNING OF APRIL

News of the extermination of Jews from Lublin and surrounding areas reaches the Warsaw Ghetto. Oyneg Shabbes declares a new goal, to raise the alarm and alert the world to the German extermination of the Jews. They print a clandestine bulletin, which concludes that the Germans intend the total annihilation of the Jews. The reports are transmitted to the Polish Government-in-exile in London. New forms of resistance develop in the Ghetto. They organize for political and propaganda war, and for combat against the Nazis.

### JUNE

- **26-27** The underground Ghetto press prints information about BBC broadcasts giving news of the extermination of Jews in occupied Poland and of diplomatic efforts by the Polish Government-in-exile against the murder of the Jewish population.

From October 1939 to July 21, 1942, about 100,000 Jews die in Warsaw from starvation and other illnesses related to malnutrition and overcrowding.

### JULY

- **22** The liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto begins. At 10:00 a.m., Adam Czerniakow, President of the Judenrat, is notified of the start of the Aktion to “resettle” Jews from the Ghetto to the “East.” Czerniakow is ordered to supply 6,000 Jews per day for transport. In reality, they are sent to the death camp Treblinka.
- **23** Czerniakow, unwilling to be an accessory in the deportations, and unable to prevent people from being sent to their deaths, commits suicide.
- **26** The Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) is founded as a resistance organization.

### AUGUST

- **3** The first part of the Ringelblum Archive is buried in metal boxes.

### SEPTEMBER

- **21** The last day of the Aktion begins on July 22. In all, during the summer of 1942, the Germans reduce the Ghetto population by about 300,000 people.
### 1942 | continued...

**OCTOBER-NOVEMBER**

A representative of the Polish Government-in-exile, Jan Karski, is smuggled into the Warsaw Ghetto and into the Belzec death camp in order to be able to report as an eyewitness to the murder of the Jews. He is sent to London and to Washington, where he meets with Allied leaders. His reports are met with disbelief and inaction.

| OCTOBER | 28 | The area of the Warsaw Ghetto is radically reduced. Less than 60,000 people remain, of which 35,000 have valid documents. |

### 1943

**JANUARY**

18-22

German military units, accompanied by Lithuanian and Latvian auxiliary troops and some Jewish Ghetto Police, enter the Ghetto to begin the final liquidation. Having prepared to resist, few Jews respond to orders to report for deportation. Most hide in previously prepared bunkers, while armed fighters of the ZOB open fire, killing and wounding Germans. The Nazis withdraw from the Ghetto and discontinue the Aktion.

**OCTOBER**

28

The area of the Warsaw Ghetto is radically reduced. Less than 60,000 people remain, of which 35,000 have valid documents.

**FEBRUARY**

Emanuel Ringelblum escapes the Ghetto with his wife and son to a hiding place prepared for them on the outskirts of Warsaw.

**FEBRUARY – MARCH**

The second part of the Ringelblum Archive, packed into two milk cans, is hidden.

**PRIOR TO APRIL**

19

The third portion of the Oyneg Shabbes Archive is hidden.

At dawn, units of the SS enter the Ghetto in armored vehicles to begin its final liquidation. They are met with armed resistance. The Jews are armed with a small number of pistols, grenades and homemade Molotov cocktails, often obtained at great cost. They fight fiercely for almost a month, until they are burned out of their bunkers and posts.
# Warsaw Ghetto Timeline

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<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 29 - May 8-10</td>
<td>About 80 Jewish fighters, including some of the leaders of the Uprising, escape the Ghetto through the sewers. Several Poles assist them. The Jews form a partisan unit in the forest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Great Synagogue of Warsaw is blown up by the Germans to symbolize the end of the fighting in the Ghetto.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Until the end of June</td>
<td>Sporadic fighting continues in the Ghetto.</td>
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**1944**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>Ringelblum’s bunker is betrayed to the Germans. The 38 Jews who were hiding in the bunker, including Emanuel Ringelblum, his wife Judyta, and son Uriel, are shot to death in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto.</td>
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**1945**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>Warsaw is liberated by the Red Army.</td>
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS
GHETTO

The word “ghetto” originally referred to a city quarter or street in which only Jews lived, separated from the other parts of the city. The term was first used in Venice, where in 1516 the Jews were forced into a closed quarter called the Geto Nuovo (New Foundry). The purpose of ghettos was to restrict contacts between Jews and Christians and to confine Jews to certain economic activities. The original ghetto was not, however, a prison. In other cities, Jews often lived in separate quarters of their own free will. The Nazis ghettos were not designed to serve only as a separate area for Jews; they were a transitional phase in the process that was meant to lead to the extermination of all European Jews. In these ghettos, run like camps, Jews were dehumanized, subjected to terror and sentenced to death by starvation and disease.

JUDENRAT (pl. Judenrate)

The Jewish councils created by the Nazis to administer the internal life of the Jewish communities of occupied Europe. Generally, local Jewish leaders became members of the Judenrat. They were responsible for implementing German policy regarding the Jews. Their tasks were to draft people for forced labor, take a census of the Jewish population, evacuate apartments and hand them over to Germans, pay fines or ransoms, and confiscate valuables owned by Jews. They tried to delay or alleviate the measures imposed on them by the Germans. The Judenrat was also responsible for distributing the food rations and for providing the community with public services such as hospitals, orphanages, educational institutions. Later, the Judenrat was forced to provide lists of Jews for deportation. The responses of the Judenrate to these demands varied from compliance to refusal to cooperate.

JANUSZ KORCZAK (pen name of Henryk Goldszmit, 1878-1942)

Korczak has become a legendary figure for having accompanied the 200 children of his Warsaw Ghetto orphanage when they were deported to Treblinka. He was also a remarkable man for his achievements in life. As a doctor and educator, he was a pioneer in modern pedagogy. He presented his revolutionary ideas in several books, including his important work *How to Love Children*. He called for understanding the emotional life of children and for respecting their rights. A child was not to be regarded as something to be shaped and trained to suit adults, but rather as someone whose soul was rich and who should be listened to as an individual. For Korczak, to reform the world meant to reform the educational system. Before the war, he was in charge of orphanages, summer camps, and other educational institutions where he implemented his ideas. In the Warsaw ghetto, he focused on providing the children in his orphanage with the basic necessities and with a semblance of normal life. He was offered asylum outside of the ghetto, but he refused, not prepared to save himself and abandon the children.
Although Emanuel Ringelblum was the initiator of the Oyneg Shabbes project, Oyneg Shabbes was a collective enterprise—an organized underground operation with several dozen participants. It was named Oyneg Shabbes (Joy of Sabbath) because the group usually met on Saturday. The diversity of the team members reflected the diversity of Warsaw Jewry.

Emanuel Ringelblum wrote in his Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto:
“Oyneg Shabbes is not an association of scholars who compete and fight with each other, but a unified enterprise, whose members exist in fraternal relationship to one another, and who assist each other in the pursuit of their mutual goal. For long months they sat around a single table: pious Rabbi Huberband next to the Left Po’alei Zion member Hersz Wasser and the general Zionist Abraham Lewin. … Every Oyneg Shabbes member knew that his toil and suffering, his hard work and pain, his twenty-four hour a day exposure to danger in the course of his perilous work of moving materials from place to place, was in the service of a great idea that a free society would properly associate and reward with the highest honours that a free Europe could bestow.”

The guiding principle behind the activities of Oyneg Shabbes was to be objective and comprehensive. Ringelblum wrote in January 1943: “One can rightly assert that there has been no major event in the life of Jews during the war that was not reflected in the materials of Oyneg Shabbes.” At first, Ringelblum and his team did not consider the Oyneg Shabbes collection as some sort of testament and farewell. Their original plan was to publish the collected material after the war. They were creating a foundation of source materials for their own future research, in the belief that one day they would write this chapter of history. It was a unique type of historical project: the subject matter of their research was not some distant past reality, but the drama of contemporary events. Their mission was to document the fate, experiences and spiritual world of ordinary people.

To collect the information, they relied on a vast network of clandestine organizations and enlisted the help of many non-professionals who passed on documents and collected data using questionnaires. They gathered information from couriers. They interviewed people about the fate of their towns and loved ones. They recorded the testimonies of Jews who had witnessed the genocide. Once it was clear that they would not survive the war, the original purpose of the archive evolved into a mission to alert the world to their plight and to urge their fellow Jews to fight against the Nazis.

Before the liquidation of the ghetto in 1942, they buried their archive in three caches in the ghetto. Two of them were discovered after the war. In 1999, in recognition of the extraordinary value of this collection as evidence, UNESCO placed it on the “Memory of the World” Register.
EMANUEL RINGELBLUM (1900-1944)

Born in 1900, Emanuel Ringelblum was trained as a historian and did his research work on the history of the Jews of Warsaw. He was influenced as a historian by a generation of pioneers in Jewish socio-economic history; these valued studying the lives of ordinary people. His most important role during the war was to create and lead the Oyneg Shabbes archive in order to document the life of Polish Jews under the Nazi occupation. But he also led a central role in other Warsaw ghetto organizations: he ran a network of soup kitchens for the Jewish Self-Help Organization; he founded a society for the promotion of Yiddish culture; and he was active in the political underground. He also organized a network of some 2,000 House Committees, which were responsible for helping the penniless tenants in their buildings and for setting up kindergartens, youth clubs and cultural activities. His own chronicle of the Warsaw ghetto represents the most extensive effort made by any person to transmit information on the events that were taking place and to cope with their significance. Ringelblum was smuggled out of the ghetto before the uprising in 1943 (his life was too valuable to imperil). But his hiding place was betrayed and he was executed in Warsaw with his wife and son in 1944.

YIDDISH

The language spoken at home and in the street by most East-European Jews (mame-loshn=mother tongue), while Hebrew (loshn-koydesh= the Holy Tongue) was reserved for religious purposes. Yiddish emerged in the 10th century and was mostly an oral language until the 19th century. In the 19th century Yiddish became a cultural language, used in literature, education, the press, the theater and films. There was a movement in Eastern Europe to create a Jewish culture in Yiddish (in the 1910s and 20s, there was a short period of tolerance in Poland and the Soviet Union when Yiddish schools were officially allowed and flourished). Some people refer to Yiddish as “Jewish” because the word itself means “Jewish” in Yiddish. All East-European Jews spoke several languages: most spoke Yiddish at home, used Hebrew to pray and spoke Polish or Russian with the surrounding population. Five million of the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust were Yiddish native speakers. Before the War, Yiddish was the native language of 11 million Jews.

TREBLINKA

One of the six death camps. Between July and September of 1942 (in the space of only two months), 254,000 Jews from Warsaw and 112,000 from other places in the Warsaw district were murdered at Treblinka. The camp was shut in the fall of 1943 after a revolt by the prisoners. A total of 870,000 people were murdered there.
UPRISINGS

Considering the circumstances in which the Jews lived during the Holocaust, there were surprisingly many instances of Jewish armed struggle throughout Europe. The Jewish fighters did not usually regard armed resistance as a way to save a significant number of Jews from death, but mostly fought to save their honor and dignity. While many of the fighters fell in battle, many also managed to escape and continued fighting the Germans with partisan units in the forests. Despite the conditions of terror and starvation in the camps, prisoners succeeded in organizing uprisings in a number of camps and in several dozen camps organized escapes to join partisan operations in the area. The most famous revolts took place in three of the death camps (Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz).

In about 100 ghettos, Jews created underground organizations to wage armed struggle against the Nazis. These groups faced extremely difficult problems, such as obtaining arms and smuggling them into the ghetto, training the fighters, and gaining the support of the general ghetto population.

The largest single revolt by Jews was the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which started in January 1943 and culminated in April and May of that year. Despite the superiority of the German force, the fighters managed to resist for over a month. Inspired by the revolt in Warsaw, several other ghettos in Poland also planned uprisings (Bialystok, Czestochowa, Bedzin, Sosnowiec, Tarnow, Krakow, Vilna, Kovno, Minsk and other smaller ghettos). Although the planned uprising did not always lead to an open revolt, some fighters managed to flee the ghetto and join resistance groups in the forests.

ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization)

This Jewish armed group was established in Warsaw in July 1942, when mass deportations from the ghetto were in full swing, to enable the Jews to defend themselves and offer armed resistance to the Nazi enemy. In the summer of 1942, when 300,000 Jews were deported from the ghetto, the ZOB was unable to carry out any large-scale attacks and revenge actions, because the terrorized ghetto population did not heed their call for resistance and because they lacked weapons. After they managed to establish contacts with part of the Polish resistance, they obtained some weapons (ten pistols and some explosive charges). Under the command of Mordecai Anielewicz, the ZOB embarked upon the training of the fighters and laid plans for resistance. They gained control of the ghetto administration (Judenrat), neutralized the Ghetto Police and gained support of the remaining population. Between January and April 1943, the ZOB assembled a force of some 500 fighters and acquired weapons; the population prepared a network of subterranean refuges and hiding places. On April 19, 1943, when the German forces entered the ghetto, the entire Jewish population had taken to their hiding places. When the Germans realized that even with tanks they could not defeat the fighters, who defended themselves with pistols and Molotov cocktails, they decided to burn the bunkers. The fighting in the ghetto lasted over a month. The Warsaw ghetto uprising was the first urban uprising in German-occupied Europe and, among the Jewish uprisings, the one that lasted the longest.
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Books


Websites

JEWSH RESISTANCE

- Yad Vashem Encyclopaedia entry on Jewish Resistance:
  http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/entries/english/30.asp
- Nechama Tec’s Essay “Jewish Resistance: Facts, Omissions, and Distortions“ on the USHMM’s site:
- *Daring to Resist* Teachers’ Guide:
  http://www.mjhnyc.org/daring/documents/DTR_GUIDE.pdf
RINGELBLUM AND THE OYNEG SHABBES ARCHIVE

- Profile of Emanuel Ringelblum at the Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team site: http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/ringleblum.html
- Yad Vashem exhibit on Ringelblum and the Oneg Shabbat Archive, Let The World Read and Know: http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/Ringelblum/Ringelblum.home.htm