

The Light of Days - Young Readers' Edition**Essential Questions:**

- What does resistance mean in the context of war and oppression?
- What factors influence decision-making in the face of injustice?
- How did people resist the Nazis, and what do these actions show about their beliefs and identities?
- Why do you think women's roles in history are often overlooked?
- What lessons can we learn from resisters during the Holocaust?

Subjects

ELA
Social Studies

Grades

5-8

Lesson Objectives:

- Analyze themes of resistance, bravery, and resilience in *The Light of Days*.
- Explore the role of Jewish women in the resistance during the Holocaust.
- Define and describe different types of resistance
- Analyze why some people would risk their own lives to help protect and fight for themselves and others.
- Examine the obstacles to resistance during the Holocaust.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

It is important to address the myth of Jewish passivity during the Holocaust. Too often, students are left with the impression that Jews were simply helpless victims, lacking the courage or means to fight back. It is common to hear people ask, "Why didn't the Jews resist?" Throughout this lesson, students will come to understand that resistance required great courage. Those who chose to resist had to grapple with many dilemmas, including the possible price of disobeying Nazi orders, the effect of their resistance on their families and communities, and the punishment they might have to endure for resisting.

The Light of Days Young Readers' Edition by Judy Batalion brings to life the incredible efforts of Jewish girls and young women who formed a resistance front in Poland against the Nazi regime during World War II. This book provides the perfect opportunity for teachers to include more historical stories about women as equal participants during wartime in their curriculum.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- USHMM [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)
- Echoes and Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- *The Light of Days* [Discussion Guide](#)
- [The RESIST! Curriculum](#) - Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation
- [Who Are the Jewish Partisans?](#) Reading
- [Jewish Women in the Partisans](#) Reading

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. *The Light of Days Young Readers' Edition* by Judy Batalion - 2021
2. Poem "[Resistance Is...](#)" by Haim Gouri and Monia Avrahami
3. [Everyday the Impossible: Jewish Women in the Partisans Video](#)

LESSON SEQUENCE

WARM-UP

Have students work in small groups to create a working definition of "resistance". A working definition is one that builds in meaning as students learn more about the topic being covered.

Have students read the poem "[Resistance Is...](#)," which explores different ways that Jews resisted during the Holocaust.

Ask students whether they would revise their definition after reading the poem. You can lead a discussion with students using the prompts below as a starting point:

- What types of resistance are discussed in the poem?
- Which type of resistance, spiritual/cultural or physical, do you think would be more effective? Why?

MINI LESSON

Show students the 15-minute video film [Everyday the Impossible: Jewish Women in the Partisans](#) (or excerpts from the film) to help students visualize the stories of women resistance fighters. Have students respond to the discussion questions:

- In her interview, Eta Wrobel said, “I was born a fighter. I was free.” What do you think this means? How does being a fighter connect with the idea of freedom?
- Why do you think women were more easily accepted into Jewish partisan groups as opposed to non-Jewish groups?
- Do you think that Jewish women partisans were ordinary or extraordinary women – or both?
- Do you think the women in this film think of themselves as heroes, as survivors, or as something else? Why do you think so?

***Note to teachers:** it is suggested that the film be viewed beforehand to make sure it is suitable for your students.

BOOK ANALYSIS

Assigned students (or small groups of students) a different resistance fighter from the book to focus on. As the students read about these Jewish women resistance fighters, they should answer the following questions to compare their experiences, motivations, and actions. This section of the lesson can easily be adapted into a jigsaw activity.

- What was her life like before the war?
 - What event or experience motivated her to join the resistance?
 - What specific actions did she take to resist the Nazis?
 - How did she use her skills, knowledge, or resources to contribute to the resistance?
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- What risks did she face, and how did she respond to danger?
- How did her role as a woman affect how she was treated?
- Did she face ethical or moral dilemmas in her resistance work? How did she handle them?
- What happened to her after the war (if she survived)?

DISCUSSION

Break students into groups to discuss patterns and differences between the women. This can easily be adapted into part 2 of a jigsaw activity.

- What similarities/differences do you notice when comparing the different resistance fighters?
- What different approaches to resistance were taken by the women? Why?
- In what ways does her story challenge or expand our understanding of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust?
- Why is it important to share stories of women in resistance movements?

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Holocaust survivor and scholar, Elie Wiesel, wrote: “The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how so many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?” Based on what you have learned about women fighting in the resistance, how would you answer this question?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- [Women in the Resistance](#) introduces students to four women who fought as partisans during the war. This can easily be modified to use as a jigsaw activity. (USHMM)
 - [How did Jews resist Nazi persecution?](#) - Students will learn why individuals chose to take part in resistance efforts and what challenges existed. Students will then make connections to the concept of resistance in society today. (iWitness Activity)
 - [Who Will Write Our History Mini Unit](#) - *Who Will Write Our History* tells the story of the Oyneg Shabes, a secret organization in the Warsaw Ghetto that collected diaries,
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essays, poems, songs, and anything else that would counter Nazi propaganda and help the world understand life in the ghetto from the perspective of its Jewish inhabitants. (Facing History and Ourselves)

- [Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust](#) - Students examine the many forms of resistance that Jews took against the Nazis during World War II, including armed resistance, spiritual resistance, and nonviolent resistance using primary source photographs. (Museum of Jewish Heritage)
- [Cultural and Spiritual Resistance](#) - Students will explore primary sources of various means of resistance in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. (Echoes and Reflection)

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, STEM, and Art

- Research forms of resistance used throughout history and compare these to those used by the resistance fighters in the book.
 - Evaluate the 2018 law passed in Poland, criminalizing statements that attribute Holocaust crimes to the Polish nation.
 - Explore how resistance fighters used foraging, first aid, and survival techniques in the forests.
 - Create a visual timeline of events using drawings, digital art, or a graphic novel panel.
 - Design a propaganda poster that might have been used to inspire resistance.
 - Compare Holocaust resistance photography with other historical protest imagery.
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