

# Choosing Life – Rescue and Resistance during the Shoah

## בחרתה בחיים

8<sup>th</sup> Grade JSS – HaMorah Nance

**Enduring Understanding:** Rescue and resistance are as much a part of the Shoah narrative as the murder of six million Jews, and 11 million innocent overall, by the Nazis. These stories can inspire us to be Upstanders.

### Essential Questions:

What is resistance?

When have I resisted or protested something that I felt was unacceptable?

Why did non-Jews risk their lives to rescue Jews?

Who supported rescue and resistance and made it possible?

What gave people the strength and courage to resist or rescue?

How can I use these lessons as models in my life?

### Notes to Teachers

This project is part of a larger unit on spiritual/unarmed and armed resistance by Jews during World War II and about rescue of Jews by non-Jews. Students will have learned about unarmed resistance in the camps and ghettos prior to this project and will learn about Righteous Gentiles using the Yad Vashem website after this project. The entire unit is taught using primary resources from a variety of sources. The section on armed resistance begins with a video from Centropa.org about two Jewish Partisans from Macedonia ([http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/beno-and-roza-kamhi-years-make-their-own?subtitle\\_language=](http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/beno-and-roza-kamhi-years-make-their-own?subtitle_language=)) and with materials from Echoes and Reflections on the topic.

I introduce the project with a video from the Jewish Partisan Education Foundation (JPEF) website called “Introduction to Jewish Partisans” [http://www.jewishpartisans.org/films#node-media\\_film-846](http://www.jewishpartisans.org/films#node-media_film-846) I give the students an overview of the JPEF website prior to having them begin their work so they know how to find the materials on their partisan and additional materials, such as a separate lesson on women in the partisans, on the site.

Lesson intro and project take 5-6 50 minute periods. Introduction and choosing of partisans is one period, 2-3 work periods and, depending on class size, two periods to share out. I have included the final reflection here. Though it is for the whole armed resistance portion of the larger unit, and not just this project, most of what they write comes from this project. It can be done as homework, though I usually give one work period in class and then it is homework.

### Jewish Partisans Project

### **Project Goals:**

You will get to know the story of one Jewish Partisan on a personal level.

You will learn about the experiences of other Jewish Partisans during World War 2 from your classmates.

You will be able to compare/contrast the experiences of Jewish Partisans during WW II.

### **Materials Needed**

Computer and internet access

PowerPoint software

Links to Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation and Jewish Women's Archive websites

List of Partisans for students to select their choice (on JPEF website)

Examples from past years as mentor texts (see resources)

Student handout with instructions (see resources)

Rubric for the assignment (see resources)

Grid for recording information about all of the partisans during presentations (see resources)

### **Steps to the Project**

1. Choose a partisan
2. Go to the information page about your partisan and begin your study
3. Using the videos and personal interviews, learn as much as you can about your partisan's life prior to and experience during the War.
4. Write up, in first person (from their point of view) the story of their life through World War 2. If they survived, you can say briefly what they did after the war but the main focus is before and during the war.
5. Present, as your partisan, their story to the class in an engaging and educational format.
6. Learn about other partisans and be able to compare and contrast their experiences.
7. Write a reflective essay about our learning on resistance and on the specific partisans.
8. Learn Zog Nit Keynmol and have your band of partisans sing it together! (optional)

You will be responsible for taking notes during the presentations so that you can complete an activity comparing the various Partisan activities and experiences. You will be given a grid to assist in this note taking.

### **Resources for Research**

We will be using the primary source material on the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation website (<http://www.jewishpartisans.org>) as our main reference. Some of the female partisans may also be found on the JWA.org website. You may use other reference materials, but these websites should have all you need to complete this assignment.

### **Pieces of Information to be sure you include in your presentation**

Where they lived prior to war  
Some information about their family or life prior to the war  
How/when/why they got involved with Partisans  
Which Partisan group they were with (Soviet, Bielski, French Underground, Tito...)  
What they did as a Partisan –what was their job, example of them doing it  
How the war ended for them  
A great quote or two from their video would be super!

You are allowed to quote freely - I know your resource and you are speaking as that person so it is appropriate.

Your presentation should be no more than 5 minutes – a short PowerPoint (2-3 slides) with your quote, a **photo**, and **names of places** and other required info on it would be helpful to your classmates.

### **Presentations**

Students present as the partisan – like they are a speaker visiting the class. I video tape these and post them on a class YouTube channel. Students take notes on each other's presentations using the grid. This grid is turned in with their reflective essay and should be used in the writing of it. Students record where the partisan was located, what their job was and a quote or interesting fact.

### **Armed Resistance Reflective Essay**

Write a short reflective essay (2-3 substantial paragraphs) about your thoughts on armed resistance during the Shoah. What surprised you? What story did you most connect with or find inspiring? What questions do you still have? Please share any other thoughts or feelings about the Partisans and others who fought **unofficially** to stop the Nazis. You may use anything we learned in this unit so far and should use your info grid from the presentations to give specifics about the Partisans.

**Please turn in your completed grid with your essay – you should have all lines filled except for your person.**

#### **Suggested topics for good depth –**

Compare jobs  
Compare men's experiences to women's  
Discuss where they were from  
Which partisans were most inspiring? Why? What quotes from a partisan were inspiring?  
How did their quotes and stories make you feel?  
How did the fact that they could fight make these Jews feel? How does it make you feel?

### **Post Unit Activity**

Hirsh Glik, a 22 year old resident of the Vilna Ghetto, wrote *Zog Nit Keynmol* – The Jewish Partisans Song. This moving song was sung by Jewish Partisans during WW II to inspire resistance and strength in

the face of overwhelming odds. It became part of the Jewish world after the war and was learned in many languages in Europe, particularly in the Soviet Union, as well as in Hebrew in Israel. Having your students, in character as their partisan, get together and sing this song is a powerful way to end this unit. It can be learned in the original Yiddish, in English, Hebrew or a host of other languages. Learning the first verse/refrain in Yiddish is very powerful and then learning the rest in your language can be one way to do the project. All of the necessary resources are available thanks to the work of Eli Rabinowitz and can be found on his website dedicated to spreading awareness of this powerful song. <http://elirab.me/znk/> is the link to the site and the various translations. There is also a sound file of the tune on his site. Here are links to my students singing it on Masada. <https://youtu.be/NZRH7aq-N3I> Eli would love to have you share a recording of your students singing the song to add to his page. Contact information is on the website.