The old image, still prevalent today, that Jews went 'like lambs to the slaughter' falls into the realm of historical legend. Jews resisted the Nazi genocide, in groups or as individuals, in public or in hiding. Their strategies of defence and survival took many forms.

Jews fought as soldiers in all theatres of war and participated as partisans and anti-Fascists in the organised underground movements in Hitler's Europe. Jews responded to the Nazi assault with protests. They defended their humanity and dignity, performing courageous acts of self-assertion which bear witness to their spiritual and moral resistance. Escape was itself another act of defiance. Jews crossed state borders in order to find sanctuary in countries of the 'free world'. They disappeared into the underground to survive on what was called the 'Aryan side'. For some, the decision to take one’s own life represented the 'ultimate refuge'. Uprisings in ghettos and concentration camps were desperate and heroic acts to resist annihilation.

Jews were not in a position to stop the destructive course of National Socialist racial policies by themselves, let alone to overthrow the powerful and popular Hitler state. Dispersed throughout Europe and excluded from society, cut off from the 'free' outside world and divided by internal borders, they were dependent on help from non-Jews. With few exceptions there was no protest, no solidarity, no protection offered by the population at large. Public silence reigned virtually undisturbed as the Jews were taken from their living quarters and transported to the extermination sites. At no time were the various non-Jewish resistance groups able, or willing, to place the struggle against the persecution of the Jews at the heart of their operations. The same is true for the Allied powers. Their final war aim rested on the 'unconditional surrender' of Germany. When they achieved this aim, in May 1945, the Nazis had won their war against the Jews. Only remnants of European Jewry survived the slaughter.

This booklet depicts instances of resistance as well as of case studies to help students understand this important topic. Particular emphasis is placed on a visit to the Sydney Jewish Museum as a way of highlighting the topic's most relevant features.

The Holocaust became a subject of historical research as soon as the event itself was over. One of the first comprehensive works was Raul Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews* in 1961. Focusing on perpetrators, rather than on Jewish victims, Hilberg’s work introduced the English speaking academic world to the horrors of the Holocaust. Despite the absence of early survivor memoirs in his account, academia looked at Hilberg’s work as groundbreaking and definitive. In the eyes of historians such as Hilberg, however, Jewish resistance during the Holocaust was meagre. Many factors, such as the perception of the Jew as a victim and the way resistance was defined might have contributed to the lack of focus on this important topic in earlier historical accounts.

Indeed, it was not until historians started hearing the voices of the victims, survivors and other witnesses that a different story emerged. One example of these victims’ voices was found in the *Oneg Shabbat* (Joy of the Sabbath) archive; a collection of diaries, historical accounts, photos, scientific research and other sources collected in the Warsaw ghetto and hidden in milk crates until their discovery after the war. This archive holds the records of historian Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum, who describes discussions on resistance.

“The various parties used to hold their meetings in public halls. They even had big public celebrations. At one such meeting, a speaker addressing an audience of 150 preached active resistance.”

It was in the Warsaw ghetto that an organised armed uprising took place in April 1943. It is on this date, that the Jewish World remembers the Shoah.

Today, historians use a variety of approaches to facilitate an ever increasing understanding of the Holocaust; ranging from those who utilise almost exclusively perpetrator sources, to those who seek to recount the history of the Holocaust ‘from below’, as narrated through the eyes of victims, resistors and collaborators. As a result, our understanding of the range and amount of resistance to Nazi occupation has increased exponentially.

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4 *Shoah* means calamity in Hebrew. This is the preferred term in Jewish as well as academic circles, due to the problematic nature of the term Holocaust, which means a totally consumed offering.

5 An example of the latter is Nechama Tec.
LESSON PLAN

The following Lesson Plan aims to familiarise students with different kinds of resistance during the Holocaust.

1. Ask your students to brainstorm what their perceptions on resistance are. Write what they say on the board (it will most likely be related to armed resistance).

Introduce them to the following excerpt from Lena Goldstein's "Bunker Weekly"

Guide for young housewives

In view of growing tendency to obesity amongst our readers, that can be blamed only on our climate conditions, the association of housewives with the approval of the High Commission issue and ordinance, according to which members of the High Society would limit themselves to one or maximum two meals a day.

Further to the above ordinance we are offering hereby to all housewives the following excellent recommendation of what to cook in a form of a weekly planner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>One bowl of spit soup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Two patties with coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>One bowl of spit soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Two patties with coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>One bowl of spit soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Two patties with coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>One bowl of spit soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with dumplings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helena (born Chaja Raca) helped the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto and played a part in preparing for the Uprising of April 1943.

While working in a laundry, washing German uniforms, she was assigned to help the ghetto fighters steal some of those uniforms, thus enabling them to disguise themselves as Wehrmacht soldiers. Her other assignment was to steal light bulbs from abandoned apartments. They were then later filled with kerosene and used as Molotov cocktails (grenades) against Nazi troops and tanks.

Helena managed to escape from the ghetto just before the Warsaw ghetto uprising. A Polish caretaker agreed to hide her and three other Jews in a bathroom in a building he managed. They hid there for 18 months, talking in whispers, not daring even to sneeze for fear of being heard.

When Warsaw was evacuated during the national uprising in 1944, Helena and eight others hid for six months in a tiny underground bunker measuring two square meters. They boiled the subterranean water with stolen grains to make soup. As they disposed of the husks while eating, they called it "spit soup". Life in the bunker was hard, hunger and desperation conducd to anger. While in the bunker and to ameliorate the tense circumstances, Lena wrote a satirical newsletter entitled: "Bunker Weekly". Lena remembers: "when people laughed, they stopped being angry".15

In 1945 she married Alexander Goldstein, who had survived three concentration camps. They immigrated to Australia in 1949.

15 Interview with Helena Goldstein, 25th May 2011.
Introduce your students to the following excerpt:

Dearest Yitzhak,

I have only one expression to describe my feelings and those of my comrades: Things have surpassed our boldest dreams. The Germans ran from the Ghetto twice. One of our units held out for forty minutes, the other for more than six hours. The mine planted in the brushmaker’s area exploded. We had only one casualty: Yehiel, who fell as a hero at the machine gun.

Yesterday, when we got information that the PPR (Polish Communist Party) attacked the Germans and that the (clandestine) radio station Swit broadcast a wonderful bulletin about our self-defense, I had a feeling of fulfillment. There is still a lot of work ahead of us but whatever has been done so far has been done perfectly.

We are now switching to guerilla warfare. At night, three or four units go outside the ghetto on an armed reconnaissance patrol and to acquire weapons. We know the pistol has no value and we rarely use it. We need grenades, rifles, machine guns and explosives.

Only a few individuals will hold out. All the rest will be killed sooner or later. The die is cast. In all of the bunkers where our comrades are hiding, you can’t light a candle for lack of oxygen... Of all units in the ghetto, only one man is missing: Yehiel. That too is a victory. I don’t know what else to write. I imagine you have many questions. For now, be content with this.

The general situation: All the workshops in the Ghetto and outside have been closed, except for Werterfassung (SS enterprise for collecting Jewish property), Transavia and Daring. I don’t have any information about the situation in Schultz and Toebbens. Contact is cut off. The brushmaker’s workshop has been in flames for three days. I have no contact with the units. Yesterday the hospital burned down. Blocks of buildings are in flames. The ghetto police force was dismantled, except for the Werterfassung.

Mieczyslaw Szmerling (commander of the Jewish police at the deportation point who survived an assassination attempt) has resurfaced. Marek Lichtenbaum (head of the Judenrat after Adam Czerniakow’s suicide) has been released from the Umschlag (deportation point). Not many people have been taken out of the ghetto. But it is different in the shops. I don’t have details. During the day, we sit in hiding places.

Be well, my friend. Perhaps we shall meet again. The main things is the dream of my life has come true. I’ve lived to see a Jewish defense in the Ghetto in all its greatness and glory.

Mordechai

Letter written to Yitzhak Zuckerman by Mordechai Anielewicz on April 23rd 1943. Zuckerman and Anielewicz were both part of the Warsaw ghetto uprising which fought the Nazis from the 19th April to the 16th May. Zuckerman escaped through the sewers to the “Aryan” side. Anielewicz was killed on the 18 May 1943 when the commander bunker where he was hiding was attacked with poison gas by the Nazis. He was 23 years old.