

# Worksheet – Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto

## Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The questions below relate to the YouTube video called ‘The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising’, at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjVQgDhMuis>

### Questions

1. When did the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising begin?
2. Using your background knowledge, and information in the video, explain what is meant by ‘The Great Deportation’.
3. What was the ZOB?
4. Name three Jewish resistance fighters who were important in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
5. What is meant by ‘the small uprising’?
6. What is a bunker, and what was the purpose of bunkers for the Warsaw Ghetto resistance fighters?
7. When did the final deportation begin?
8. Why do you think “The Germans were caught off guard by the Jewish resistance and the defiance of the deportation orders.”
9. How did the nature of fighting change, between the first few days, and the weeks that followed?
10. How long did the Jews defend themselves against the Germans?
11. What happened to the fighters after the uprising?
12. Consider the opening quote by Mordechai Anielewicz: “It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. What happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the Ghetto. The dream of my life has risen to become fact. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.”  
What are the main emotions behind Anielewicz’s words?
13. What is the significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?
14. What does the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising reveal about early historians’ views that there was little Jewish resistance?



## Activities

1. Match the word with the appropriate descriptor:

Over 1 month	Underground cellars which were used by the Jewish fighters as hiding places
3 days	Great Deportation from Warsaw Ghetto begins
Fire	Jewish Fighting Organisation
Bunkers	The first popular urban uprising in Nazi-controlled Europe
April 19, 1943	Period of street fighting throughout the Warsaw Ghetto
Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	Start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
July 22 1942	Number of Jews deported from the Warsaw ghetto by September 21, 1942
300,000	Time the Jewish fighters were able to hold off the Nazi assault
ZOB	The age of Mordecai Anielewicz, commander of the ZOB
23 Years	Method used by the Nazis to clear Jews out of all buildings in the ghetto

2. Indicate whether each statement is true (T) or false (F):

- a. Many of the resistance fighters were young men and women.
- b. Most of the resistance fighters were killed, either in the ghetto, or in camps where they were sent after the uprising.
- c. No resistance fighters survived the uprising.
- d. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is the only example of resistance within the Warsaw Ghetto
- e. The uprising was a success for the resistance fighters.
- f. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is an example of spiritual resistance.

# The Emanuel Ringelblum / Oyneg Shabbes Archive

## Reading

The *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive was created by Jews imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. It is one of the most significant collections of documentation about the Holocaust. It was initiated and led by Dr Emanuel Ringelblum, a Polish-Jewish historian, who believed in the power of documentation as resistance. The name *Oyneg Shabbes* (meaning “Joy of the Sabbath” in Yiddish) was chosen because the group often met on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. He was determined to create a historical record, saying, “It must all be recorded with not a single fact omitted. And when the time comes – as it surely will – let the world read and know what the murderers have done.”

This secret group consisted of over sixty members, including writers, teachers, rabbis, social workers, and journalists. Despite the extreme conditions of hunger, persecution, and violence, they risked their lives to interview refugees and record the daily experiences of Jews in the ghetto. It was a great accomplishment that the secret historians were never discovered.

The archive contains a wide range of materials, including:

- Personal diaries and letters
- Reports on deportations and massacres
- Underground newspapers
- Drawings and photographs
- Essays and statistical data
- Cultural and religious reflections
- Material evidence such as candy wrappers, ration cards and theatre posters

These documents were hidden in metal boxes and milk cans buried beneath buildings in the ghetto. After the war, two of the caches were discovered. A third has never been found. Of the roughly 60 members of the secret group, only three are known to have survived the Holocaust.

The *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive is significant because it provides a deeply human and detailed account of life under Nazi occupation from the perspective of the victims themselves. It is not only a historical record but also a moral testimony to courage, intellectual resistance, and the importance of memory. Today, it is preserved at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw and continues to educate and inspire people around the world.

## Questions

1. Who was responsible for creating and organising the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive?

2. Who was responsible for contributing to the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive?
3. Give two or more reasons why the archive was created. Provide quotes from the text.
4. What types of sources were included in the archive? What can these types of items teach us about life in the Warsaw ghetto?
5. Refer to ONE of the sources below and respond: what does this source reveal about life in the Warsaw Ghetto?
6. What type of resistance is exemplified by the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive? Explain your response.
7. Discuss the significance of the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive.

Extension question: Consider what it means to be a 'historian'. Were the people who created the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive all historians? Defend your response.

Extension question: Do you think some forms of evidence were more or less valuable than others to historians studying the experience of Jewish people during the Holocaust? Discuss with reference to the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive.

## Source A

"He who fights for life has a chance of being saved: He who rules out resistance from the start is already lost, doomed to a degrading death in the suffocation machine at Treblinka.... We, too, are deserving of life! You merely must know how to fight for it!"

- Text of a poster preserved in the *Oyneg Shabbes* Archive. The poster urges a Jewish uprising. January, 1943.

## Source B



Benjamin Rozenfeld, 'Funeral Fund' (1941), pencil on paper, 20,9×17,8 cm, The Ringelblum Archive, the JHI, ARG I 581, courtesy of the Jewish Historical Archive