Life Behind Walls

Daily life and resistance in the Warsaw ghetto

SS24.HOS.13b "Describe Jewish life in the ghettos, including means of resistance."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show what daily life was like in the ghetto. Circle actions residents took to resist Nazi control.

Living and Resisting in the Warsaw Ghetto

1 In November 1940, German authorities sealed the Warsaw ghetto, forcing hundreds of thousands of Jews into a small part of the city. Walls and guarded gates cut families off from most of Warsaw. Several people often shared one room, and official food rations were far too small to sustain life. Many residents searched for ways to get food, while hunger and crowded housing helped disease spread. Children sometimes crossed the boundary to smuggle food back, risking arrest or death. Despite these dangers, people still tried to care for relatives, keep households running, and find moments of ordinary life.

2 Daily survival also depended on neighbors helping one another. Residents organized soup kitchens and aid groups that shared scarce food and helped children without caregivers. Teachers held secret classes because the occupiers restricted Jewish education. Historian Emanuel Ringelblum and a group called Oneg Shabbat collected diaries, notices, and other records of ghetto life. They hid these records so that future generations could learn what happened from the people who lived through it. Such efforts could not end Nazi rule, but they challenged efforts to isolate Jews, erase their voices, and destroy their community.

3 In 1942, German forces deported most Warsaw ghetto residents to the Treblinka killing center. Those who remained faced further deportations. Some joined underground groups that gathered a few weapons and planned to fight. In April 1943, when German forces entered to carry out more deportations, Jewish fighters launched an uprising. The fighters, badly outgunned, held out for weeks before German forces crushed the revolt and destroyed the ghetto. Armed resistance could not stop the Nazi campaign of mass murder. Alongside food sharing and hidden records, it shows the different ways residents acted against persecution under extreme danger.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did crowded housing and small food rations affect daily life in the ghetto? Describe two effects.

2. How did soup kitchens and secret classes each resist the conditions imposed on ghetto residents?

3. Why did Oneg Shabbat hide records of ghetto life, and how was this an act of resistance?

4. Why did some residents turn to armed resistance in 1943, and what happened to the uprising?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 105 word museum label about the Warsaw ghetto. Describe two conditions of daily life and at least two forms of resistance, explaining why resistance did not always mean fighting.

ANSWER KEY

Life Behind Walls

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HOS.13b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show what daily life was like in the ghetto. Circle actions residents took to resist Nazi control. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did crowded housing and small food rations affect daily life in the ghetto? Describe two effects.	**Small rations caused hunger and drove residents to seek food. Crowded housing helped disease spread.**
2	How did soup kitchens and secret classes each resist the conditions imposed on ghetto residents?	**Soup kitchens shared scarce food to help neighbors survive. Secret classes kept children learning despite restrictions on Jewish education.**
3	Why did Oneg Shabbat hide records of ghetto life, and how was this an act of resistance?	**The group hid records so future generations could learn what residents experienced. Preserving their accounts resisted the attempt to erase their voices.**
4	Why did some residents turn to armed resistance in 1943, and what happened to the uprising?	**They fought when German forces entered to carry out further deportations. The fighters held out for weeks, but German forces crushed the uprising and destroyed the ghetto.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Inside the Warsaw ghetto, families crowded into small rooms and faced food rations too meager to live on. Hunger and disease made each day dangerous. Residents resisted in more than one way. Aid groups served food to neighbors, helping people survive despite severe shortages. Oneg Shabbat hid diaries and other records so the world could hear residents' own accounts. Some people also fought with weapons during the 1943 uprising against further deportations. The uprising was crushed, but these actions show that resistance could mean protecting lives and testimony as well as fighting soldiers.

Accept supported paraphrases. For the museum label, look for two accurate conditions, two distinct forms of resistance, and an explanation of how at least one form worked without weapons.