Cities Under Siege

Locate three ghettos and examine why each site matters.

SS24.HOS.13c "Locate major ghettos and explain the significance of these sites."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each ghetto city and its location, then circle one detail for each site that explains its historical significance.

Three Ghettos, Three Histories

1 During World War II, Nazi Germany forced Jewish people into crowded, sealed neighborhoods called ghettos across occupied eastern Europe. These were not safe refuges. Guards controlled movement, food was scarce, and disease spread. Warsaw, in central Poland, became the site of the largest Nazi ghetto in occupied Europe. After years of starvation and deportations, Jewish fighters launched the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. They resisted German forces for weeks, even though the fighters had far fewer weapons. Warsaw's location and its uprising show how a ghetto could be both a tool of persecution and a place of organized resistance.

2 Southwest of Warsaw, Łódź, a city in central Poland, held another major ghetto. German authorities sealed it in 1940 and made many imprisoned Jews work in factories and workshops. Work did not protect most residents from hunger or deportation. The ghetto remained in operation until 1944, longer than most other major ghettos in occupied Poland. As German forces emptied it, they sent many residents to Auschwitz-Birkenau, a killing center in occupied Poland. Locating Łódź beside Warsaw helps reveal that Nazi officials used ghettos not only to isolate Jewish communities but also to exploit their labor before deporting them.

3 Farther northeast, Vilna, now called Vilnius, lies in present-day Lithuania. After Germany occupied the city in 1941, Nazi authorities established ghettos there. Jewish residents kept schools, music, and cultural activities alive under severe restrictions, while some organized armed resistance. In 1943, German forces destroyed the remaining ghetto. Many residents were murdered at the nearby Ponary killing site or sent to camps. Vilna shows that the ghetto system reached beyond present-day Poland and that Jewish communities defended their lives and culture in different ways. Together, these three places trace a pattern of confinement, exploitation, and mass murder across occupied Europe.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Where is Warsaw, and why is its ghetto a key site in the history of Jewish resistance?

2. Where is Łódź in relation to Warsaw, and what does its ghetto reveal about Nazi use of forced labor?

3. In what present-day country is Vilna, and why is its ghetto important to the history of Jewish culture under Nazi rule?

4. How does Vilna's location expand the geographic picture given by Warsaw and Łódź, and what happened to residents at all three sites?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a visitor thinks every ghetto had the same history. Write a four-sentence museum label that places Warsaw, Łódź, and Vilna geographically, explains two ways their histories differed, and identifies one Nazi policy common to all three.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each ghetto city and its location, then circle one detail for each site that explains its historical significance. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Where is Warsaw, and why is its ghetto a key site in the history of Jewish resistance?	**Warsaw is in central Poland. Jewish fighters there launched the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and resisted German forces for weeks.**
2	Where is Łódź in relation to Warsaw, and what does its ghetto reveal about Nazi use of forced labor?	**Łódź is southwest of Warsaw. Nazi authorities forced ghetto residents to work in factories and workshops, then deported many as the ghetto was emptied.**
3	In what present-day country is Vilna, and why is its ghetto important to the history of Jewish culture under Nazi rule?	**Vilna is in present-day Lithuania. Jewish residents kept schools, music, and other cultural activities alive despite severe restrictions.**
4	How does Vilna's location expand the geographic picture given by Warsaw and Łódź, and what happened to residents at all three sites?	**Vilna shows that ghettos extended beyond present-day Poland into present-day Lithuania. At all three sites, many Jewish residents were deported or murdered.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Warsaw and Łódź were in occupied Poland, with Łódź southwest of Warsaw; Vilna was farther northeast, in present-day Lithuania. In Warsaw, Jewish fighters rose against German forces, while in Łódź, residents were forced to work in factories and workshops. In Vilna, Jewish residents maintained cultural activities, and some organized armed resistance. At every site, Nazi authorities confined Jewish people, and many residents were later deported or murdered.

Accept descriptions of Vilna as Vilnius and of its location as Lithuania. For the museum label, accept different accurate contrasts if the response locates all three sites and identifies a policy they shared.