Resistance in the Forests

How Jewish partisans fought and protected lives

SS24.HOS.17a "Explain how and why Jewish partisans undertook armed resistance against the Germans and their Axis partners."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline reasons Jews joined the partisans and circle the actions partisans took. In each group's account, put the same number beside one reason and one action it helps explain.

Fighting Back Under Occupation

1. In German-occupied eastern Europe, some Jews escaped ghettos or mass shootings and joined armed groups called partisans. Germany's genocidal policies, supported by Axis partners and collaborators, threatened Jewish lives. Partisans resisted because remaining under Nazi control often meant deportation or death, while fighting offered a chance to survive and defend others. Forests provided cover, but escape required weapons, food, trusted contacts, and knowledge of the land. Antisemitism among some non-Jewish fighters made joining other groups dangerous, so some Jews formed their own units.

2. In the forests of occupied Belarus, brothers Tuvia, Zus, and Asael Bielski organized a Jewish partisan group. They welcomed people who could not fight, including children and older adults. Armed members guarded a forest camp, obtained supplies, and fought German forces and collaborators. Their goal was not only to attack the occupiers but also to keep Jews alive. Moving through wooded ground helped the group avoid raids. By the time Soviet forces reached the area in 1944, the group had saved more than 1,000 people.

3. In the Vilna ghetto, the United Partisan Organization gathered weapons and urged Jews to resist deportation. When a broad uprising did not take place, some members escaped to nearby forests in 1943. There, Jewish fighters joined partisan units that attacked German supply lines, including railways. Such strikes could slow troop movements and disrupt the occupation, but fighters faced shortages and the danger of capture. Their choices show two linked aims: protecting lives where possible and weakening the forces carrying out persecution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did some Jews join armed partisan groups despite the risks of escape?

2. How did the Bielski group use armed resistance to protect people who could not fight?

3. How did forest cover help Jewish partisans resist German forces?

4. Why did partisans who escaped Vilna attack railways and other supply lines?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum label says, "Jewish partisans only fought to survive." Revise this claim using evidence from both the Bielski group and the Vilna fighters. Explain one shared goal and one difference in their methods.

Resistance in the Forests

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline reasons Jews joined the partisans and circle the actions partisans took. In each group's account, put the same number beside one reason and one action it helps explain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did some Jews join armed partisan groups despite the risks of escape?	**Nazi control threatened them with deportation or death. Fighting offered a chance to survive and defend others.**
2	How did the Bielski group use armed resistance to protect people who could not fight?	**Armed members guarded a forest camp and fought German forces and collaborators while the group sheltered children and older adults.**
3	How did forest cover help Jewish partisans resist German forces?	**It gave fighters a place to shelter and helped the Bielski group avoid raids; Vilna fighters also used nearby forests as a base for attacks.**
4	Why did partisans who escaped Vilna attack railways and other supply lines?	**Attacking supply lines could slow German troop movements and disrupt the occupation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jewish partisans fought to survive, but they also protected others and tried to weaken German control. The Bielski group sheltered children and older adults while armed members guarded the camp and fought the occupiers. Fighters who escaped Vilna attacked supply lines to disrupt the occupation. Both groups resisted persecution, but the Bielski group made sheltering people a central part of its work.

Accept responses that connect a stated reason to a specific action in the passage. For the museum label, look for evidence from both groups, a shared goal, and a clear difference in methods.