

How & Why Did the Holocaust Occur? Exploring Action and Inaction through the Survival Story of Esther Gutman Lederman

An important concept to keep in mind when studying the Holocaust is that it was not inevitable. According to the USHMM, “Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. **The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act.** Focusing on those decisions leads to insights into history and human nature and can help your students to become better critical thinkers.” In this lesson, students will closely examine the various categories and actions (or inactions) of people during the Holocaust, including the perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders, resisters, rescuers, victims, and survivors. Students will explore each category in an attempt to gain an intricate understanding about how something as unfathomable as the Holocaust occurred. Students will then identify these categories of people while viewing the incredible story of Holocaust survivor, Esther Gutman Lederman. Esther spent 22 months hiding in a home owned by a Christian family in Poland. She is alive because this Christian family risked their own lives to save her and 4 other Jews. Students will culminate their exploration by focusing on the incredible actions of victims and survivors (such as Esther), resisters, and rescuers, as they create a medal of honor to bestow on a person or group of their choice.

Key Words

Anti-Semitism
Battle of Stalingrad
Bystanders
Collaborators
Displaced Persons (DP) Camp
Ghetto
Jewish Councils (Judenraete)
Labor camp
Perpetrators
Poland
Polish Underground
Propaganda
Rescuers
Resistance
Star of David
Survivors
Victims

Grades

Middle & High School

Essential Questions

- What were the various ways that people acted or chose not to act to either contribute to, perpetuate, or fight against the Holocaust?
- Who is responsible for the Holocaust, and are there varying degrees of responsibility?
- While it is important to identify and try to understand the actions/inactions of the perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders and millions of victims of the Holocaust, why is it equally important to honor the survivors, resisters, and rescuers during this terrible period of history?

- What are examples of passive resistance? Compare and contrast with overt, active resistance.
- After hearing Esther Gutman Lederman’s incredible story of survival, what words would you use to describe her and why?
- Why is it important to study the Holocaust and learn about the experiences of people like Esther Gutman Lederman – and other survivors, resisters, and rescuers - even though it is emotionally difficult and complex history?

Materials

- “How Did the Holocaust Occur?” accompanying PowerPoint; available in Carolina K-12’s Database of K-12 Resources.
 - <https://k12database.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/06/ActionInactionHolocaustPPT.pdf>
 - To view this pdf as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “view” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “full screen mode”
 - To request an editable PPT version of this file, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
 - *Special thanks to Dr. Peter Stein of the [Center for Holocaust, Genocide & Human Rights Education of NC](#) for providing content for this presentation*
- Chart paper signs and different colors of markers
- Action & Inaction During the Holocaust, worksheet attached
- *Hiding for Our Lives: Esther Gutman Lederman Lederman’s Story*
 - This documentary short is available for free viewing here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1mvWa2ky5M>
 - The video is divided into 3 short chapters, with a total running time of approximately 30 minutes.
 - Discussion questions for the film can be found throughout this document. Teachers should edit/omit questions as they see fit. These questions can also be tailored to create a viewing worksheet rather than solely used for class discussion.
- Medals of Survival, Resistance & Rescue, assignment sheet attached

Duration

- Two 60 – 90 minute periods
- Teachers can choose to edit/omit various discussion questions provided based on their time constraints. Thus, final lesson duration will vary. When/where to stop and end day 1 of instruction is also discretionary.

Preparation

- Before class, number and label 6 pieces of chart paper with the following categories and post them around the room:
 - 1) Perpetrators
 - 2) Collaborators
 - 3) Bystanders
 - 4) Victims
 - 5) Resisters
 - 6) Rescuers/Liberators
- Students should have a basic understanding of Holocaust history and geography before engaging in this lesson. See Carolina K-12’s additional lessons available at <http://database.civics.unc.edu/lesson/?s=&lesson-topic=holocaust>
- Teaching Holocaust history demands a high level of sensitivity and keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. Teachers are encouraged to read the “Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust” by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum before broaching this subject matter: <http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/general-teaching-guidelines>
- To effectively study sensitive history such as the Holocaust, a firm foundation of respect and tolerance must be present in the classroom. See Carolina K-12’s “Activities” section of the Database of K-12

Resources for assistance: <https://database.civics.unc.edu/activity/> (Search by topics such as “Classroom Management/Setting Expectations,” “Character Education” and “Discussing Controversial Issues”)

- Before beginning your study of the Holocaust, prepare students that this is a very difficult period of history to examine. Let students know that they may find themselves feeling upset at various points and that this is understandable. Explain to students that even though the material is difficult, it is still critical that we learn about this past to honor those who suffered and ensure history does not repeat itself. Encourage students to debrief their feelings throughout the lesson, either in discussion (class, small group, or partner), journaling, artistic responses, etc.

Procedure – Day 1

Why Did the Holocaust Occur?

1. As a warm up, project slide 2 of the accompanying PPT and ask students to spend a few minutes writing down their thoughts to the question: Was the Holocaust inevitable? (Meaning, did it *HAVE* to happen?) Why or why not?
2. Afterwards, allow students to share their opinions, pushing them to back up their opinion with any evidence they can identify. After students have expressed their opinions, ensure that they gain the understanding that the Holocaust was absolutely NOT inevitable. According to the USHMM, “Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. **The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act.** Focusing on those decisions leads to insights into history and human nature and can help your students to become better critical thinkers.” Further discuss:
 - We have studied a number of people who were victimized during the Holocaust as well as perpetrators, or those who were directly responsible for the harm and murder of Jews and other targeted groups. What other categories of people can you think of?

Exploring Action and Inaction During the Holocaust – Carousel Brainstorm

3. Next, project slide 3 and tell students that to truly begin to understand how something as unbelievably awful as the Holocaust took place, they must think about the various roles that all people living during that time fell into:
 - 1) Perpetrators
 - 2) Collaborators
 - 3) Bystanders
 - 4) Victims & Survivors
 - 5) Resisters
 - 6) Rescuers
- *Note: Teachers should ensure that students understand the basic definition of each word, but should leave in depth discussions for the individual groups.*
4. Divide students into six groups (teachers may want to provide students with numbered slips of paper when they first enter class and refer them to these assignments at this point) and ensure each group has a different color of marker for notetaking on the chart paper. Tell them that they will spend the next few minutes considering the actions and characteristics of these various groups in the Holocaust. Move to slide 4 and give students the following instructions:
 - You will have 4 minutes to brainstorm the category written on the chart paper that corresponds to your assigned number. Use the provided questions as a guide.
 - As your group discusses, one student should summarize the group’s thoughts on the chart paper using the marker provided.

- After 4 minutes, I will signal everyone (i.e., flash the lights, ring a bell, etc.) to rotate clockwise to the next piece of chart paper, where you will discuss the new category noted there in around 2 minutes. (Keep your same marker.)
 - Begin by reviewing the notes the previous group took and add to those thoughts. You can place checks, stars, etc. beside comments you strongly agree with, write questions or comments based on previous groups' writings, and add your own thoughts underneath using your same marker. (Ensure each group keeps their same color of marker to use at each station, which will help visually differentiate each group's thoughts.)
5. Provide students with 2 minutes at each category after their original. After rotations have put students back at their original group (around 15 minutes later), allow them to review all the comments that have been added then return to their seats.

Action & Inaction During the Holocaust – Defining the Major Holocaust Groups

6. Provide students with the attached "Action & Inaction During the Holocaust" worksheet and go through each category with students as an entire class, first by having a spokesperson from the original group report the final thoughts compiled on the corresponding chart paper to the class, then by providing further information via the accompanying PPT and soliciting class discussion. Remind students throughout steps 7-11 below to fill in the left column of the "Action and Inaction During the Holocaust" worksheet. (They will work with the second column later in the lesson.)
- *Note: Since space on the worksheet is printed, teachers might alternatively choose to have students simply recreate the chart on notebook paper.*

| Perpetuators & Collaborators |

7. After students from both groups have summarized the thoughts collected, share the information on slide 5 and further discuss:
- Who else might you consider a perpetrator and/or a collaborator and why?
 - Are there varying degrees of responsibility within this category? (For instance, is a German who volunteers for the SS as responsible as a citizen who receives a confiscated business that was stolen from a Jewish shop owner? Is an employee at a concentration camp as responsible as Hitler? Explain.)
 - Discuss with students how we often like to think that the perpetrators and collaborators in the Holocaust were monsters, that they were not normal people and that they were very different than any of us. The fact is, while many people committed monstrous acts, they too were human beings. They were parents, grandparents, young adults...they were police officers, teachers, doctors, - it took the active participation or the passive acceptance of the majority of German and Nazi occupied society for the Holocaust to take place.

| Bystanders |

8. At this point, move the conversation onto the role of the bystander in the Holocaust. After a spokesperson from this original group summarizes the thoughts collected, share the information on slide 6 and further discuss:
- When we ask ourselves, "What would we have done?" it's quite simple to say, "I would never do something like that. I am stronger, braver, more resilient..." But consider the reality of what you have learned regarding the events of the Holocaust. Would you really risk your own life for another? Would you risk your family's life? All to save a stranger, perhaps even someone in your society who is unlike any friend you have; someone many around you say is "less than you" anyway?
 - Point out to students that for many of them, it's hard enough to face their peers within the walls of school, without the threat of death that was present in Germany. Explain to students that while it is difficult to truly know what any of us would have done, in actuality the percentage of Germans who resisted the Nazis or served as rescuers was unfortunately extremely small.

- Again, ask students to consider the varying degrees of responsibility. While someone like Hitler is obviously directly responsible, it took thousands of people – bystanders- to remain silent, look the other way and let the Holocaust happen as well.
- Project the image on [slide 7](#) and ask students to comment on what they first see and notice, then ask them to share who they think the people in the picture are and what is happening. Encourage them to back up their thoughts with any evidence they can cite. After students have discussed, share the image caption:
 - “Nazis and local residents look on as Jews are forced to get on their hands and knees to scrub the pavement. Vienna, German-incorporated Austria, March–April 1938.” *Source: USHMM, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park*
- Project the quote on [slide 8](#) and discuss. (For a change of pace, teachers might want to ask students to engage in a “Think-Pair-Share,” where they consider the quote and talk about it with a partner before discussing as an entire class.)
 - What message is the author trying to convey?
 - How does this relate to the Holocaust? What other historical events can you think of that connect to this message?
 - How does this quote relate to life today (both in national news or even locally, in this school?)

| Victims |

9. After summarizing the thoughts from the Victims brainstorm, project [slide 9](#) and discuss with students how beyond the lives lost, the destruction of entire communities and the toll on Jewish culture was also unimaginable. Project [slide 10](#) and point out that there were also numerous victims beyond Jews. Next, project [slide 11](#) and ask students to discuss:
 - What do you see/first notice about this image? Who do you think this is and why? What do you think is happening in this photo? When would you estimate it was taken and why?
 - Note: Many students are under the incorrect assumption that all inmates and prisoners during the Holocaust were tattooed. Teachers may want to point out that in actuality, tattoos were only used at one location - Would it be possible to note here that tattoos were issued in only one location, the Auschwitz Birkenau concentration camps. (*Source: <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007056>*)
 - This image shows a Holocaust survivor looking into the eyes of her granddaughter, 1990s (*Source: <http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/>*)
 - Move on to [slide 12](#), which contains the word “Survivors,” and point out to students that while the loss of life is beyond imaginable, it is also important to note that some people did survive. The woman in the slide they just viewed, for instance, went on to have grandchildren, despite all the horror she saw and experienced. While there were certainly millions of victims who lost their lives as well, it is important to think about those who survived and what it took to make it through this deplorable period. Discuss:
 - What do you think it took to survive the Holocaust? (Students might touch on concepts such as strength, resilience, assistance from others, luck, etc.)
 - After the Holocaust was over, what challenges faced the victims who had survived?
 - Point out to students that often when studying the Holocaust, we only learn about the experience of Jewish victims during the war, when they were victimized, mistreated, and often murdered. And while we learn that some people survived and we celebrate this, we often forget to think about what their life would be like after liberation. Life as they knew it was over. They had experienced the unimaginable and suffered beyond comprehension. Many of their loved ones were murdered or missing. Their assets and property had typically been looted, stolen, and/or confiscated. They were typically in very poor health (i.e., having survived in hiding or the conditions in a concentration camp.) Many survivors experienced post-traumatic stress given all they had seen and endured. Holocaust survivor [Renee Fink](#) comments that for her, the hardest part of the Holocaust was “surviving survival.”

| Resistors |

10. After summarizing the thoughts from the Resistors brainstorm, project [slide 13](#) and explain to students that even in the face of Nazi terror, some Jews and non-Jews risked everything to resist the Germans and their collaborators. “Underground resistance movements developed in over 100 ghettos in Nazi-occupied eastern Europe. Further, under the most adverse conditions, Jewish prisoners succeeded in initiating uprisings in some of the concentration camps. Jewish partisan units operated in France, Belgium, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Poland, and other countries. Jews also fought in non-Jewish resistance organizations operating in France, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece and Russia. While organized armed resistance was the most direct form of opposition to the Nazis, resistance also included escape, hiding, cultural activity, and other acts of spiritual preservation.” (Source: https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005213&MediaId=3543) Discuss:
- What types of risks do you think were associated with resistance?
 - Move on to project the image on [slide 14](#) and ask students to discuss: What do you see here? What do you think is happening? How does this image represent resistance?
 - Let students know that this is a 1943 image depicting Jews within a transit camp in Holland lighting a Menorah on Hanukkah. (Source: <http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/>)
 - In what way is preserving your culture or religion an act of resistance?
 - Why is it important to recognize less obvious forms of resistance, such as spiritual or artistic resistance, just as it is to recognize those who revolted and fought physically?
 - How is survival itself a form of resistance?
 - Project the image on [slide 15](#) for students to consider. Discuss: What do you see in this image? When do you think this was taken and what do you think is happening? What emotions can you identify in these men? How does this image differ than many other Holocaust images you have seen?
 - “Victims. Helpless. Downtrodden. That’s the narrative that’s been spread about...since the Holocaust.” But this image shows inner strength, the spirit of survival, a defiance that refuses to be beaten, and resistance. “Taken in Buchenwald just after its liberation by the photographer Margaret Bourke-White, this image is so powerful not just because it shows the pure joy of liberation, but because it turns these men, who we have almost turned into mythic creatures, into normal folks.” (Source: <http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/>)
 - Project [slide 16](#) and read the quote aloud for students to consider and discuss:
 - “In every ghetto, in every deportation train, in every labor camp, even in the death camps, the will to resist was strong, and took many forms. Fighting with the few weapons that would be found, individual acts of defiance and protest, the courage of obtaining food and water under the threat of death, the superiority of refusing to allow the Germans their final wish to gloat over panic and despair...Even passivity was a form of resistance. To die with dignity was a form of resistance. To resist the demoralizing, brutalizing force of evil, to refuse to be reduced to the level of animals, to live through the torment, to outlive the tormentors, these too were acts of resistance...Simply to survive was a victory of the human spirit.” (Source: GILBERT, MARTIN. *The Holocaust. The Jewish Tragedy*. London: Fontana. 1987)
 - Read more at:
 - Jewish Resistance - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005213>
 - Non Jewish Resistance - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007332>
 - Warsaw ghetto uprising - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005188>
 - Spiritual resistance - http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/13/main_article.asp#!prettyPhoto
 - The White Rose, student-led resistance movement – <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007188>

| Rescuers |

11. After summarizing the thoughts from the Rescuers brainstorm, project slide 17 and ask students to discuss the quote:
- “Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe.” (Teachers can either lead a quick whole class discussion, or have students engage in a “Think-Pair-Share,” where they consider the quote and talk about it with a partner before discussing as an entire class.
 - What is this quote from the Jewish Talmud trying to convey?
 - How does this relate to the Holocaust? What examples can you cite that show the truth of this quote?
 - Discuss the information on slide 18 and share with students that “Attitudes towards the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbors were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews’ property. In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values...They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust.” (Source: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/about.asp>)
 - “During the Holocaust, acts of rescue and resistance were the exception. Carrying out such deeds was dangerous and punished severely by Nazi authorities. Yet, despite the indifference of most Europeans and the collaboration of others in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust, individuals in every European country and from all religious backgrounds risked their lives to help Jews. Rescue efforts ranged from the isolated actions of individuals to organized networks both small and large....Whether they saved a thousand people or a single life, those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust demonstrated the possibility of individual choice even in extreme circumstances. These and other acts of conscience and courage, however, saved only a tiny percentage of those targeted for destruction.” (Source: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/permanent/resistance>)
 - Optional examples to discuss:
 - Perhaps the most extraordinary case of collective rescue occurred in October 1943, when more than 7,000 Danish Jews (about 98% of the Jewish population) were transported across the sea to neutral Sweden by fisherman, resistance fighters, and ordinary citizens.
 - In Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and the neighboring villages in France, villagers took action and hid several thousand Jews.
 - Sometimes **resistance** and **rescue** went hand-in-hand. Some underground groups, such as Żegota (which operated in occupied Poland), provided false documents, money, and safe hiding places to thousands of Jews seeking to escape Nazi genocide.
 - Kindertransport (Children’s Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts which brought thousands of refugee Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940. Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee payment for each child’s care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas.
 - Let students know that *Righteous Among the Nations* is an official title awarded by *Yad Vashem* (Israel’s Holocaust memorial museum and education center) on behalf of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust: “In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous Among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.” Let students know that they can read about hundreds of rescuers by visiting <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/index.asp>.
 - Additional reading:
 - Rescue - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005185>
 - Kindertransport - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005260>

- Righteous Among the Nations - <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/index.asp>

Hiding for Our Lives: Esther Gutman Lederman's Story

- Next, tell students that they will continue thinking about these various categories of people as they hear one survivor's story of surviving the Holocaust. Tell students they are now going to watch the first chapter (just under 10 minutes) of a 30-minute video in which they hear from Esther Gutman Lederman, a North Carolina resident who actually experienced and survived the Holocaust after hiding for her life for 22 months. (Que up the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1mvWa2ky5M>.) Read the following introduction to students (which will also be projected at the beginning of the documentary):
 - *Esther grew up in Lodz, a manufacturing center and the second largest city in Poland. She lived a happy and carefree middle class existence with her parents, Rose and Israel Gutman, and her younger sister, Halina. Their lives dramatically changed on September 1, 1939, when the German army invaded Poland thus beginning World War II. The Nazis began to systematically round up the Jews and put them in overcrowded ghettos, inhumane labor camps and eventually concentration and extermination camps. In order to escape being put into the Lodz Ghetto, the Gutmans left the city and started a journey that would find Esther separated from her family, knocking on the doors of strangers asking them to hide her. Even though the punishment for hiding Jews was death, the Zal family hid Esther for 22 months. Her father was eventually taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp. He survived. Esther would never see her mother or sister alive again.*
- Play **Chapter 1: Germany Invades Poland – “There was unemployment, overcrowding, lack of food...” (9:30)**. Tell students that as they watch, they should focus on the second column on their “Action & Inaction in the Holocaust” worksheet and fill in any people or categories of people they hear about in the documentary. Encourage students to think deeply about the categories as they relate to Esther's individual story. Remind them also that some people may fit in more than one category. Note the check marks throughout the discussion questions below, which highlight these various categories to address with students after viewing.
- After viewing the chapter, teachers might start by asking students what most struck them (i.e., surprised them, interested them, made them feel a strong emotion, etc.) in the chapter. Teachers might also allow students to report out on the various examples they found from Esther's story that fit the 6 Holocaust groups. Additionally, teachers can choose from the following questions for leading a more in depth discussion:
 - What was Esther's life like before the war? (“We were carefree and careless. We just were typical teenagers and we wanted to have a good time.” 2:36)
 - Esther notes that when they heard about what was happening in Germany, it was very hard to believe. Why do you think this was the case?
 - ✓ PERPETRATORS: German government/Nazis
 - How did Esther and her family feel about the Polish government?
 - What happened on September 1, 1939?
 - ✓ RESISTERS: Polish government (Let students know that despite military defeat, the Polish government itself never surrendered. In 1940 a Polish government-in-exile became based in London. More information at <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/students/learning-materials-and-resources/poles-victims-of-the-nazi-era/polish-resistance-and-conclusions>.)
 - Esther comments that the German soldiers “knew how to hurt.” What examples does she give of such hurt? (i.e., cutting or pulling out men's' beards, forcing Jews to pick up horse dropping by hand, etc.)
 - ✓ PERPETRATORS: German soldiers/Nazis
 - Why did some Jews have to wear a yellow star while others did not? What other types of identification were mandated for Jews?

- Since Chmielnik had not yet been incorporated into the Third Reich, Jewish people were not forced to wear yellow stars. Instead, another form of identification was required. Everyone aged 12 and over had to wear a white band with a blue Star of David:
 - “Reinhard Heydrich first suggested the Jewish badge concept after the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938. In September 1939, after the German invasion of Poland, the Nazis decreed that Jewish stores should be branded with a distinctive mark. Soon after, the head of the General government, Hans Frank, ordered that the Jews themselves be marked: all Jews over the age of 12 were to don white armbands, at least four inches wide, inscribed with a blue Star of David. From then on the idea spread to all territory held by the Nazis.” (Source: *Yad Vashem*)
- What were ghettos? What were conditions typically like in ghettos? How was Esther’s family able to avoid the Lodtz ghetto?
 - ✓ Discuss with students whether they think ghetto police were PERPETRATORS, COLLABORATORS, or both?
- Why did the family move to Chmielnik? How did her family survive there? How was Esther’s mother paid for her dress making services?
 - ✓ Discuss Esther’s mother’s dress making as a form of survival, and thus RESISTANCE.
- Esther goes on to say that “things started getting a little harder.” In what ways did conditions begin to worsen? (i.e., overcrowding, unemployment, lack of food)
- What was the role of Jewish councils (*Judenraete*)?
 - During World War II, the Germans established Jewish councils, usually called *Judenraete*, which were required to ensure that Nazi orders and regulations were implemented. Jewish council members also sought to provide basic community services for ghettoized Jewish populations.
 - For more on the *Judenrate*, see <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005265>
 - ✓ Allow students to discuss whether they believe Jewish Councils were COLLABORATORS, since they were officially established by the Germans, and/or RESCUERS, since they provided services for Jews.
- In what ways did people try to help one another? Despite such community efforts, in what ways did conditions continue to worsen? (i.e., epidemics of diseases, such as typhoid fever, spread and starvation intensified) Why do you think children were typically the first victims?
 - ✓ Discuss people helping each other as a form of RESISTANCE.
- As conditions got worse, Esther sought out other young people and attempted to hold onto normalcy however she could. What are some examples of how she tried to lead the life of a typical teenager (i.e., keeping up with school curriculum, meeting up with people her age, developing a relationship with Ezel Lederman, etc.?) Does it surprise you to hear that she and other teens made the choice to continue school on their own? Explain. In what ways was this as important to her survival as food and water?
 - ✓ RESISTERS: Teens secretly continuing their education
- What type of rumors do Esther and others start to hear about what was happening in other parts of the country? Why does she say, “There was something fishy about it?”
- What does Esther mean when she says, “These were the anti-Semitic rumors. It can’t be...a normal brain does not comprehend this kind of information.” How does this compare to how we sometimes react when learning about the Holocaust today?
- What type of “rumors,” or misinformation, still remains regarding the Holocaust? (Teachers might want to discuss the absurdity of Holocaust denial as an example.)

15. Let students know they will hear the rest of Esther’s story the next time class meets.

16. As a warm up and review project slide 19 and ask students to comment on what they see:
- What do you see/first notice about this image?
 - What appears to be taking place?
 - What do you notice about the men pictured?
17. As students discuss, let them know that they are looking at an image of a Holocaust survivor who went skydiving in San Diego with his grandson (not pictured). Further discuss:
- Knowing that this is a Holocaust survivor, in his 80s, skydiving with his grandson, how does this image make you feel?
 - How does this image connect to some of the themes we addressed in our previous class, such as survival and resistance?
 - Share with students the commentary on this photo that “Nothing better depicts the unlimited future for Holocaust survivors and their descendants. Nothing better encapsulates the true freedom we can have when we use our past to grow instead of hold us back. Nothing is more beautiful than a man once in bondage in a world of total freedom.” (Source: <http://popchassid.com/photos-holocaust-narrative/>)
 - When studying the Holocaust, why is it so important to recognize the strength, perseverance, and resistance that Holocaust victims – such as this man, and such as Esther - represent through their very survival?
18. Tell students that they are going to continue learning about Esther Gutman Lederman’s story today. Have them refocus on their “Action & Inaction” worksheet and remind them to continue filling it in as they continue with Esther’s incredible story. Share the following paragraph with them to introduce the next chapter. (This information is also written at the beginning of the chapter.)
- After the Germans invaded Poland, which started World War II, Esther Gutman and her family left their home in Lodz and went to a small town named Chmielnik in an attempt to escape the ghettos and labor camps. In Chmielnik, Esther met Ezjel Lederman whose family was also trying to escape the Nazis. They liked each other and began dating. When the Germans came to Chmielnik, the Lederman’s left to go into hiding with a Catholic family, the Zals. Soon after, many of the Jews in Chmielnik were rounded up and sent to labor camps. Amongst them was Israel Gutman, Esther’s father. Having narrowly escaped being sent away herself, Esther, now 18 years old, left her mother and sister to find the Zals and ask if they would be willing to hide her family as well. After she left, the Germans rounded up all the remaining Jews in Chmielnik, killing most of them, and sending the survivors to Treblinka – an extermination camp. The Nazis sought to murder all the Jews living in the area known as the General Government of Poland. Esther’s mother and sister were amongst those killed.
19. Play **Chapter 2: Looking for a Place to Hide – “Whatever happens to us, happens to her,”** which is a little over 8 minutes long. Afterwards, allow students to share the various categories from their worksheet that they identified in the people mentioned, and choose from the discussion questions below to further process the chapter:
- Esther says, “In those days you didn’t tell the dearest people anything.” Why do you think this was the case? Despite the risk, why do you think Ezjel told her his family’s plans?
 - ✓ COLLABORATOR: People who would turn you in for their own benefit
 - Thousands of men, ages 15-45, and women, ages 15-40, were ordered to the market place on October 1, 1942 for deportation to a labor camp. While Esther and her father both fell into this category, how does Esther manage to avoid deportation? What was her friend, the ghetto policeman, risking by helping her in this way?
 - ✓ BYSTANDERS: People who watch the deportations but do nothing.

- ✓ Discuss the ghetto policeman as both a RESCUER, but also a COLLABORATOR. He saved Esther while sending others to their death.
- Esther notes that her papers arrived. What do you think the process for getting papers was?
 - ✓ RESCUER: The person who prepared Esther's false papers.
- What do you imagine she felt like when leaving her home to go and seek safety with strangers? What was Esther risking as she went door to door seeking shelter?
 - ✓ Should the people who refused her shelter be considered COLLABORATORS?
- A few days after becoming a governess for a non-Jewish family, what does Esther learn regarding what was happening to Jews? Why could Esther show no reaction as the neighbors spoke? How do you imagine Esther felt in that moment?
 - ✓ BYSTANDERS: The neighbors and Esther's host family
- How did Esther react to the Mayor questioning her regarding whether she was Jewish or Catholic? What does her reaction tell you about her?
 - ✓ COLLABORATOR or BYSTANDER: The Mayor
- What does Esther's host family do after the Mayor leaves? What do you think you would have done? (Remind students that it is quite easy to sit in the safety of our modern times and say that we would have certainly helped her. In truth, given all that was at risk, would we really?) How do you imagine Esther now felt?
 - ✓ Does Esther's host family move closer to being COLLABORATORS by asking Esther to leave? Or, are they RESCUERS by not turning her in?
- The video text noted that "Esther took comfort in the fact that Jan was with the Polish Underground, civilian and military resistance groups that were loyal to the Polish government exiled in London. They worked actively, but secretly, against the Germans, who had invaded their country." What do you already know about the Polish Underground?
 - Additional information is available at:
 - Polish Resistance <http://www.ushmm.org/learn/students/learning-materials-and-resources/poles-victims-of-the-nazi-era/polish-resistance-and-conclusions>
 - Warsaw Ghetto Uprising <http://www.ushmm.org/research/the-center-for-advanced-holocaust-studies/miles-lerman-center-for-the-study-of-jewish-resistance/medals-of-resistance-award/warsaw-ghetto-uprising>
 - ✓ RESISTERS: Polish Underground and Jan Lederman
 - ✓ RESCUERS: The Zals
- How do you think Esther felt sleeping in the forest alone that night, unsure of her future?
- How do you think Esther felt seeing the Lederman's when she walked into the attic? How do you think the Lederman's felt seeing her?
- Mr. Lederman said when he saw Esther, "She is an orphan Jewish child. Whatever happens to us will happen to her. Whatever we will eat, she will eat." What does this tell you about his character? What other responses could he have had, since including Esther in their group meant fewer resources for the Lederman family and greater risk?
 - ✓ Discuss how although they were VICTIMS hiding themselves, the Ledermans also become RESCUERS in this instance, by not turning Esther away.

20. Tell students that they will now view the conclusion of Esther's video. Again remind them to fill in their worksheet as they watch the 10 minutes of **Chapter 3 – 22 Months in Hiding "We had three close encounters..."** Before starting the chapter, teachers may want to read aloud the text that will start the chapter as an introduction:

- After hearing of the death of her mother and sister, and almost getting caught for being Jewish, Esther found her way back to the Zal's house, where her boyfriend's family, the Ledermans, were hiding. After a serious discussion, the Ledermans and the Zals agreed to hide Esther. For the next 22

months Esther and the Ledermans hid from the Nazi forces that were trying to round up all of the Jews. Esther used her natural optimism to cope with difficult living arrangements and found ways to lose herself in studying and chores.

21. After completing the chapter, choose from the following discussion questions as well as noting any categories that the people mentioned fit into:

- Describe the house that Esther hid in. How long was she in hiding? Think about all you do, all the places you go, all the people you encounter, etc. within a course of almost 2 years. What do you imagine being hidden in one space with a small group of people would be like?
- How does Esther's hiding situation compare to others you may have learned about? (Consider the fact that she says "We were never hungry" and that water and soap for bathing was available.)
- What did Esther do for clothing?
- How did Esther and the others pass the time?
- What are the major sources of news for Esther and the others? What does she mean when she says, "Between the two of them we could figure things out?" Why is it important, even in today's society, to always consult more than one source for news?
- What was the Battle of Stalingrad and why was it significant?
 - In the Battle of Stalingrad (August 23, 1942 – February 2, 1943), Nazi Germany and its allies fought against the Soviets for control over the city of Stalingrad (now called Volgograd). After suffering a massive loss of manpower and equipment, the German army surrendered. The German defeat at Stalingrad marked a turning point in World War II and is often regarded as the single largest and bloodiest battle in history.
- After news of the German surrender at Stalingrad, Esther describes a massive amount of waiting. What do you imagine this experience of waiting was like? Can you cite examples of having to wait for something important to happen?
- Esther mentions three close encounters with Germans with their dogs hunting for Jews. How do you imagine these moments would feel?
- What clever technique did Esther and the others use to hide themselves?
- What happened on Aug. 3 1944?
 - ✓ RESCUERS (liberators): Soviet forces
- Why couldn't Esther and the Ledermans leave openly now that the war was over? What were the Zals risking by hiding the Ledermans?
- How does the Soviet soldier help the Ledermans and Esther?
 - ✓ RESCUER/RESISTOR: Soviet soldier
- When Esther is freed, how long had it been since she'd seen the sun? While her hiding circumstances may have been better than others (given that she at least had food and water), what was still incredibly difficult about this situation?
- How do you think Esther felt as she ate her first meal as a free person?
- How does Esther describe the Russian soldiers?
- How do you think it felt when Esther returned to Lodz?
- What happened on Aug. 3 1945?
 - ✓ COLLABORATORS: Citizens who benefited from confiscated homes and belongings
- Why did Esther and the Ledermans have to leave Lodz?
 - ✓ Have students discuss whether anti-Semitic people who drove Esther, the Ledermans and others from Lodz were BYSTANDERS or COLLABORATORS in their opinion.
- We learn that Esther and the Ledermans ended up in a DP Camp. What was the role of such camps?
 - While in Lodz, Esther and the Ledermans faced a lot of anti-Semitism and realized they no longer had a place in Poland. They made their way to Munich, where they found themselves in

a Displaced Persons' Camp (DP Camp.) These camps housed hundreds of thousands of people who had lost their homes and their belongings during World War II.

- How did Esther and the Ledermans continue on with their life while at the DP Camp in Munich?
 - ✓ RESCUERS: DP Camp staff from sponsoring countries
- After getting married and having a baby, Esther and Ezel finally immigrate to America, arriving in Brooklyn on July 21, 1949. Why do you think she says “and a new life began” of this moment?
 - ✓ Discuss with students how Esther and Ezel’s survival itself and continuation of a family can be viewed as a form of RESISTANCE.
- Esther discusses how it was most important to her to raise her four children to be honest, good, and caring people who were not selfish. Why do you think this was her priority?
- Esther says “Until we stop teaching children to hate, whatever happens will never stop.” What do you think she means?
- Esther notes, “I am optimistic because my optimism kept me alive. And my optimism made me live and keep on living and hoping for the best because we all tried the best. Because we all tried the best to make a future for our children.” How is it possible that Esther, despite going through the Holocaust, is optimistic? Why do you think she says it was her optimism that kept her alive?
 - ✓ Discuss Esther’s optimism as a form of RESISTANCE.
- Why do you think it is important to Esther to speak to school children?
 - ✓ Discuss Esther’s choice to speak about her past and educate others as a form of continued RESISTANCE.

Culminating Project: Medals for Survivors, Resisters & Rescuers

21. Ask students to think back to the question they pondered at the very beginning of the lesson regarding whether the Holocaust was inevitable. Project slide 20 and again remind them that “The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act.” Summarize for students that they have now studied the various groups of people in the Holocaust who both acted for good or for evil, as well as those bystanders who chose not to act for various reasons. They also saw these types of people represented in the incredible survival story of Esther Gutman Lederman. Hand out the attached project, “Medals for Survivors, Resisters & Rescuers” and tell students you want to culminate this lesson with a focus on the survivors, the resisters, and the rescuers of the Holocaust, who through various acts survived and/or helped others survive this horrific period of history. Tell students that through this project, they will choose, research, and design a medal for a survivor, resister, or rescuer to honor their actions during and after the Holocaust. Go over the details of the assignment.
- NOTE: Teachers should determine whether to assign students particular people or categories (rescuer, resister, and survivor) or whether they will choose. If students are allowed to choose their own person/organization/event, teachers should ensure all categories are covered.
22. Sample people, organizations and events to assign include:
- SURVIVORS
 - Students can focus on North Carolina based survivors, such as Esther Gutman Lederman, Renee Fink, Hal Meyers, and Peter Stein. Short documentaries about these incredible people are available at: <http://www.holocaustspeakersbureau.org/videos.html>
 - USHMM collection of survivors - <https://www.ushmm.org/remember>
 - Yad Vahem’s Remembrance page - <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/index.asp>
 - RESCUE
 - [Jewish rescue in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon](#)
 - [Danish rescue efforts](#)
 - [American War Refugee Board and Raoul Wallenberg](#)
 - [American Friends Service Committee \(Quakers\)](#)
 - [Kindertransport](#)

- [Oskar Schindler](#)
- [Zegota \(The Council to Aid Jews\)](#)
- Yad Vahem's *Righteous Among the Nations*, - <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/index.asp>
- Rescue During the Holocaust - <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005185>
- Voices of Rescue from the Holocaust - <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/days-of-remembrance/organizing-a-remembrance-event/commemoration-themes/rescue> (12 min. video)
- RESISTANCE
 - [Auschwitz Revolt](#)
 - [Jewish Resistance in Belgium](#)
 - [Bialystok Ghetto Uprising](#)
 - [Bielski Partisans](#)
 - [Jewish Fighters in the Cracow Ghetto](#)
 - [Jewish Partisans in France](#)
 - [Resistance in the Kovno Ghetto](#)
 - [Partisans in Minsk](#)
 - [The Jewish Resistance Fighter Unit from the Nováky Labor Camp](#)
 - [Jewish Fighters from Palestine](#)
 - [Sobibór Uprising](#)
 - [Treblinka Death Camp Revolt](#)
 - [Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto](#)
 - [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#)

23. Allow students to ask questions and let them know when the medal due date is. On the due date, teachers may want to allow time for students to share their medals in small groups, or by posting them around the classroom and allowing the class to do a “gallery walk.” Allow time for students to debrief specific medals as well as reflect overall by asking:

- Which medals stood out to you and why? What might these various medals teach us about the Holocaust?
- Why is it important to study the Holocaust and learn about the experiences of people like Esther Lederman – and other survivors, resisters, and rescuers - even though it is upsetting history?
- After everything thing we have discussed, who would you say is ultimately responsible for the Holocaust and why?
 - Note: This is a very complex and open-ended question. Teachers might consider assigning this as a post-lesson written response. Otherwise, ensure ample time is provided to students to really grapple with this question.
- Considering that the resisters and rescuers were relatively small in number, how might things have been different if more people had assumed these roles?
- What is an individual’s responsibility to society as a whole, and for doing what is right even when there are great risks involved? What can you do in your own life to make a difference?
- In your opinion, how can we prevent a Holocaust from occurring?

Name: _____

Action and Inaction During the Holocaust

Categories of People During the Holocaust – Definition, Examples & Notes	Who from Esther’s story fits into this group?
Perpetrators	
Collaborators	
Bystanders	
Victims & Survivors	

Resisters	
Rescuers	

Who from Esther's story fits into this group?
<p>PERPETRATORS: Hitler and the Nazis German soldiers German government officials</p>
<p>COLLABORATORS: Ghetto police Jewish Councils - ? Labor camp personnel and guards Extermination camp (i.e., Treblinka) personnel and guards The Mayor Citizens who benefited from stolen/confiscated property and belongings - ?</p>
<p>BYSTANDERS: People who watched deportations Esther's host family The Mayor Neighbors of Esther's host family</p>
<p>VICTIMS/SURVIVORS: Esther Gutman Lederman Esther's mother and sister, who were murdered Esther's father, who survived an extermination camp The Lederman's, including Esther's future husband Ezjel</p>
<p>RESISTERS: Esther's mother (in providing for the family/dress making) Neighbor's helping each other Teens continuing education in secret Jan Zal and the Polish Underground Esther and Ezjel having children and continuing their family legacy Esther's continued resistance through tell her story to children and others</p>
<p>RESCUERS: Preparers of false papers The Zal Family The Lederman Family (in not turning Esther away) Esther's friend who was a ghetto policeman and allowed her to avoid deportation Jewish Council Soviet soldiers DP Camp personnel</p>

Name: _____

Medals of Survival, Resistance & Rescue



The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum recognizes the bravery of Jews who attempted to thwart the Nazis and their collaborators with their “Medals of Resistance Awards.” The honorees or their representatives (in the case of post-mortem awards) are presented with specially commissioned medals, each of which is composed of four pieces joined together in a pendant form.

Imagine that you have been commissioned by the Museum to design a medal for a person during the Holocaust who was a survivor, a resister, and/or a rescuer.

Steps for completion:

1. Choose and **research** an individual, organization, event, etc., that falls into one or more of the categories of survival, resistance, and/or rescue and then based on what you learn, design a medal for honoring their brave actions.
 - Consider the experiences, contributions, attributes, etc. of your assigned person, group/organization, or event and how these actions of survival, resistance, or rescue made a difference.
 - Think about why it is important to remember and honor this person, group/organization, event, etc. then begin to brainstorm how you might convey this in the medal you design.
2. Your medal must have **four interlocking parts**, in any design you choose. Based on your research, you should choose four attributes, experiences, qualities, actions/contributions, etc. that represent your assigned person/organization/event on which to focus each interlocking part.
 - You can design your medal with words, phrases, literal or abstract art, symbols, etc. Be creative, just ensure that you convey your chosen attribute, experience, quality, action, etc. in each of the four parts.
 - For example, if assigned Esther Lederman, you might focus one part of the medal on optimism. That section of the medal might have a sun with bright rays shooting out of it to visually represent this special quality of Ether’s.
3. While designing the interlocking parts of the medal, further consider how to design the entire award to thematically represent the awardee. For instance, does the medal hang from a colorful ribbon, is it something that would be displayed in some creative way as part of a public memorial, etc.?
4. Write a paragraph overview of the awardee and his/her actions during the Holocaust, noting why this person is being honored with this award.