



**The Jewish Education Center Of Cleveland**  
2030 South Taylor Road • Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
Phone (216) 371-0446 • Fax (216) 371-2523  
www.jecc.org

## ***Study Guide for Uprising***

### ***An NBC miniseries documenting the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising***

*This study guide was developed to help teachers lead a discussion of “Uprising” in the days immediately following its showing on TV in early November, 2001. However, the material has lasting value for teachers planning a full unit focused on the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto, Jewish resistance, or on the themes inherent in the ghetto uprising (see page 3, below). Included is:*

- *General background information on the Warsaw Ghetto*
- *An overview of the movie*
- *Themes from the movie, with discussion questions*
  - *Stemming from the video*
  - *Stemming from Hillel’s quote, “If I am not for myself, what am I?”*
- *A list of key characters in the movie*
- *Vocabulary*
- *Bibliography*

*Teachers should be aware that “Uprising” was created for an adult audience. It contains scenes of violence and adult situations including disturbing deaths and nude corpses (though the latter are usually not in close-up shots). The film depicts all aspects of the lives of the resistance fighters, including the very human side of finding love and romance in the most deplorable of situations. While there are romance scenes in this movie, the characters remain clothed. This is not a film for pre-adolescents. Parents of teens may appreciate knowing the content of the film and the aforementioned issues.*

*Living in the shadow of the September 11, 2001 attack against America, the message of this movie may be especially poignant. As with the ghetto fighters, we have a moral responsibility to fight evil. We may view this movie through the lens of history or through the prism of our own life and times.*

*Educators have permission to make as many copies as needed of this study guide, as long as the JECC name remains on the pages.*

## Background Information

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. In less than a month, Poland surrendered, and, as a consequence, life for the Jews changed drastically. In November of that year the German government:

- Issued an ordinance decreeing that all Jews must wear armbands.
- Mandated that each city create a *Judenrat*, a council of Jewish leaders that implemented Nazi orders.
- Moved Jews into small areas in each city known as ghettos, thereby creating a Jew-free *Lebensraum* or "living space" in the other parts of the city.

By the middle of 1942 only 100,000 of the original 500,000 Jews imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto (Poland) were still alive. An underground resistance movement called the Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB) was established. Historical facts of importance in the context of "Uprising" are that:

- The leaders of the ZOB included Mordechai Anielewicz, Yitzhak Zukermann, Marek Edelman, Zivia Lubetkin, Michael Klepfisz, and Aryeh Vilner.
- The ZOB had very few weapons, training or support.
- The ZOB also had to contend with the German decree that no Jews could have access to printing presses, radios or gatherings, limiting (but not preventing) its communication and work.
- The ZOB stepped up their resistance by burning factories and shooting Nazi soldiers as they marched into the ghetto.

On April 19, 1943, on the eve of Passover, a Nazi force descended upon the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jews responded with explosives, grenades and gunfire. The battle lasted for three weeks. On May 8, the ZOB headquarters were surrounded. Many of its members committed suicide, while the others were killed or sent to Treblinka; a few escaped.

## Movie Overview

The movie begins in 1939 in the Warsaw Ghetto, just after Poland surrenders to Germany. Scenes of starvation, humiliation and degradation are evident as the characters are forced to risk their lives for basic necessities.

The JFO (Jewish Fighting Organization) or ZOB as it is historically known, is created to fight the Nazis and help restore dignity and honor to the Jews of the ghetto. As the process of deportation is increased, the JFO begins acts of resistance.

- On January 18, 1943, the JFO attack SS troops who enter the ghetto, resulting in further attacks from the Nazis in April of that year.
- The JFO fights back, killing dozens of German soldiers.
- The Nazis fear that the spreading news of this battle could result in more ghetto uprisings and therefore double their efforts against the Warsaw Ghetto.
- The resistance fighters are forced into underground bunkers after several days of battle.

- For the next few months, Jewish resistance fighters emerge from their shelters and kill additional Nazis. Eventually, Nazi soldiers refuse to enter the old ghetto areas because of the fear of “Jewish ghosts.”

In the last few scenes, surviving resistance fighters escape to the woods, with many making their way to Palestine.

## Themes from the movie

The questions, below, focus on three **big ideas** emerging from “Uprising:”

- The responsibility of the individual to fight evil.
- The power of a community when individuals ban together.
- The moral and ethical imperative to fight for freedom and human dignity.

### Movie-based questions:

- 1) Who in the movie showed strength or courage? Think back to what you know of each person from the beginning of the movie. Would you have predicted such behavior from what you knew of the person at that early point? What do you think moves people to show courage? When have you shown such courage?
- 2) With which character(s) in the movie do you most identify? Who could you imagine being, had you lived at the time of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising?
- 3) Several characters in the movie talked about the “responsibility of a moral (person) in an immoral world.” In your own words, explain what this means. What examples from the movie show people taking this kind of moral responsibility?
- 4) What were the turning points in the movie that changed the individuals from passive to active resisters?
- 5) What are some examples from the movie that show the resistance fighters struggling for freedom and human dignity? Where did they succeed? Fail? [Consider, for example, the scene in the first half where the Nazis ordered a Jew to play his violin for them and then killed him in cold blood. When they then ordered a second Jew to play his violin, a resistance fighter shot the Nazi taunters dead. As the fighter left the area, he turned to the very frightened second violinist and said, “I am sorry for the loss of your friend.” How does this example show the struggle for freedom and/or human dignity?]
- 6) How does the movie illustrate how Jews value the connection we have with one another? (In Hebrew this value is called, *klal Yisrael*).

Text-based questions: [Hebrew-English versions of texts cited are found on page 12.]

- 1) Consider the movie in light of Hillel's quote from *Pirke Avot 1:14* [See page 12].
  - What are some examples from the movie that show individuals being “only for themselves?” Did the movie depict these acts as successful? When is it appropriate to be “for yourself?” [Consider also studying Babylonian *Talmud Baba Metzia* 62a, located on page 12.] In what circumstances does concern for *self* take precedence over concern for *others*?
  - Which character(s) in the movie exemplified Hillel's phrase, “When I am only for myself, what am I?”
  - The Jewish Council in the ghetto (the *Judenrat*) had to work with the Nazis by providing work crews and filling the quotas for transports of Jews. Consider Hillel's quote and support the argument that these people were “for themselves,” OR not “only for themselves.” How do you judge the effectiveness of their work? Compare and contrast the use of reason in dealing with the Nazis with physical resistance.
  - What do you think causes a person to shift in ideology from *self-interest* to *concern for others*? For example, think about the girl whose full focus was on getting bread for her father at the beginning of the movie. Or, you may wish to consider these quotes in your discussion:
    - “We fought not only for our lives, we fought for life in dignity and freedom.” (Marek Edelman, JFO fighter and Warsaw Ghetto survivor)
    - “Human beings are defined by their solidarity with others, especially when the others are threatened or wounded.” (Elie Wiesel)
  - Spiritual resistance was evident in the ghettos, including maintaining a semblance of communal life. The movie showed examples of schools, hospitals, charitable organizations and cultural events. Compare and contrast spiritual resistance to armed resistance, looking especially at motive and results. Which part(s) of Hillel's quote does each of these kinds of resistance exemplify?
  - Which parts of the movie might be good examples of Hillel's question, “If not now, when?” Are there examples when resistance or action might have been taken, but an opportunity was lost?
- 2) Consider the movie in light of the text from Ecclesiastes [See page 12].
  - What does this text literally mean? [Teachers may wish to set up a demonstration.]
  - How does the movie demonstrate the principle that “a three-fold cord is not quickly broken?”

- Who are the people or groups from “Uprising” that demonstrate knowledge that banding together creates greater strength?
- What conflicts arose over this principle between the Jewish Council leadership and the resistance fighters?

Thinking beyond the movie:

- 1) In light of the terrorist acts on September 11<sup>th</sup>, there are those who would say that we have responsibility to act morally in an immoral world. What examples can you give of people trying to act as such in today’s society?
- 2) What enduring message does the Warsaw Ghetto uprising have for Americans today, living in the shadow of terrorism?
- 3) What enduring message does the Warsaw Ghetto uprising have for Israelis today, living in the shadow of terrorism?
- 4) What enduring message does the Warsaw Ghetto uprising have for Jews today?
- 5) In what other times in Jewish history have Jews had to band together to conquer a common enemy? Compare those period(s) in history to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Think about: motives, issues among Jews, issues with the enemy, results, lessons learned, current commemoration(s) (e.g., celebrating *Hanukkah*).

**NBC’s *Uprising*,  
List of Key Characters**

**Tosia Altman** – Resistance fighter and courier

**Mordehai Anielewicz** – Head of the J.F.O., former teacher

**Adam Czerniakow** – Head of the Warsaw Ghetto Jewish Council (*Judenrat*)

**Fritz Hippler** – Nazi propaganda filmmaker

**Simha “Kazik” Rotem** – Resistance fighter, courier and driver for Adam Czerniakow

**General Jurgen Stroop** – SS officer in the Warsaw Ghetto

**Yitzhak Zuckerman** – Chief lieutenant in the Resistance movement and best friend of Mordehai Anielewicz

## Vocabulary List

*You may wish to introduce these terms to students before viewing the movie, OR stop at appropriate times to be sure that they understand the specific words or phrases.*

**Anti-Semitism** – Term used to designate organized movements or other manifestations of the hatred of Jews in general.

**Aryan** – In Nazi doctrine, a non-Jewish Caucasian, most often described as blond and blue-eyed.

**Final Solution** – Euphemism used first in January, 1942 at the Wannasee Conference to coordinate the activities of all German government agencies in implementing the destruction of European Jewry.

**Genocide** – Term coined in 1944 to describe the systematic attempt made by the Nazis to exterminate the entire Jewish people.

**Holocaust** – This period in history began in January, 1933 with the Nazi ascension to power and ended on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945 with the Nazi surrender. During this tragic period of Jewish history, 6,000,000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

**J.F.O. or Z.O.B.** – Jewish Combat Organization or Jewish Fighting Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto who fought underground for the honor and dignity of the Jewish people.

**Judenrat** – Jewish Council, whose job it was to liaison with the Nazis on behalf of the Jewish community.

**Nazi** – A member of the National Socialist German Worker's Party, which controlled Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler. Nazis advocated totalitarian government, territorial expansion, anti-Semitism, and Aryan supremacy.

**Nuremberg Laws** – By direct order from Hitler in 1935, these laws were designed to disenfranchise the Jews. They were composed of 2 parts: The Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor.

**Partisans** – Groups of underground fighters who fought the Nazis mainly from the forests of Eastern Europe.

**Resettlement** – Name given to the forced occupation of the ghettos and camps by the Jews.

**Resistance** – Acts of both passive and active defiance against the Nazis, characterized by clandestine operations.

## RESOURCES

The materials listed are available at the JECC's Ratner Media & Technology Center and are available for local use, only.

For information or video reservations please call 216-371-8288

### Curricula

***The Jews of Poland.*** Facing History and Ourselves, 1998. Grades 9 – 12.

*Facing History and Ourselves* is an organization that teaches about the events that led to the destruction of democracy in Germany, the rise of the Nazis, and the Holocaust. This study guide is a resource book that provides a flexible structure for teaching and examining complex events and ideas. Maps, autobiographies, diaries, literary works, photographs, and other documents are studied. There is extensive material on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

Bianco, David. ***Warsaw Ghetto, Instant Lesson,*** Torah Aura, 1999.

Meinbach, Anita Meyer and Kassenoff, Miriam Klein. ***Memories of the Night: a Study of the Holocaust.*** Photographs by Sharon Gurman Socol. Frank Schaffer Publications, 1994. Grades 7 – 12.

This study guide is organized into three sections: Historical Perspectives, The Literature of the Holocaust, and a variety of teaching activities and reproducible sheets. There are numerous black and white photographs and some maps. The literature section is dated.

Rossel, Seymour. ***The Holocaust.*** Franklin Watts, 1981. Grades 6 – 8.

Like Bea Stadler's book (below), this is a widely used Holocaust text suitable for middle school students. The chapter on Jewish resistance contains information about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The accompanying teacher's guide provides discussion questions, activities, and a bibliography of adult books about the Warsaw Ghetto that teachers might want to read.

Stadler, Bea. ***The Holocaust: a History of Courage and Resistance, Rev. Ed.*** Behrman House, 1994. Grades 5 – 8.

This widely-used study of the Holocaust for elementary and middle school students has chapters on the Warsaw Ghetto, the resistance leader, Mordechai Anilewitz, and the selfless director of a Jewish orphanage, Dr. Janusz Korczak. The discussion guide by Nancy Karkowsky that accompanies the book provides chapter summaries, a delineation of each chapter's major themes, and discussion questions.

Willis, Dr. Aaron, Ed. ***Teaching Holocaust Studies With the Internet.*** Classroom Connect, 1997. Grades 7 – 12.

A lesson plan on life in the ghettos is included, beginning on page 61. It requires that students have some prior knowledge about the Holocaust. The lesson plan involves language arts activities such as responding to pictures, reading poems, diaries, press accounts, and writing essays.

## **Books**

Adler, David. *Child of the Warsaw Ghetto*. Holiday House, 1995.

A short, illustrated biography of a boy who survived the Warsaw Ghetto.  
Grades 4 – 6.

Bachrach, Deborah. *The Resistance. The Holocaust Library Series*. Lucent, 1998.

A factual account of anti-Nazi resistance movements, including a chapter on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. There are photographs of some of the major personalities, such as Adam Czerniakow, Yitzhak Zuckerman, Tzvia Lubetkin, and Emmanuel Ringelblum.  
Grades 7 – 12.

Bauer, Yehuda. *A History of the Holocaust, Rev. Ed.* Franklin Watts, 2001.

An excellent reference work for young adults, written by a leading Holocaust scholar. Grades 8 – 12.

Landau, Elaine. *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*. Macmillan, 1992.

This well written account focuses on the final days of fighting prior to the destruction of the ghetto in 1943. Grades 6 – 9.

Laird, Christa. *But Can the Phoenix Sing?* Greenwillow, 1993.

A 17 year old boy discovers the incredible details of his stern stepfather's past when, as a boy, he stepped out of the Warsaw Ghetto's sewers to become a resistance fighter. Sequel to *Shadow of the Wall*. Grades 7 – 10.

Laird, Christa. *Shadow of the Wall*. Greenwillow Books, 1989.

Imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto with his mother and sisters, Misha befriends the heroic teacher, Janusz Korczak, and joins a resistance organization. Exciting fiction for grades 6 – 9.

Leapman, Michael. *Witnesses to War: Eight True-life Stories of Nazi Persecution*. Viking, 1998.

One of the stories is about children hiding in the Warsaw Ghetto. Grades 6 – 9.

Mogilanski, Roman. *The Ghetto Anthology*. American Congress of Jews from Poland and Survivors of Concentration Camps, 1985.

A statistical and historical survey of the Nazi extermination of Polish Jews in camps and ghettos. Grades 10 – Adult.

Nerlove, Miriam. *Flowers on the Wall*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1996.

A heart-rending illustrated story about a family and the deterioration of their life as Nazi control tightens. Grades 4 – 6.

Orlev, Uri. *The Island on Bird Street*. Translated from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin, Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

A boy must survive on his own in a ruined house in the almost-deserted Warsaw Ghetto, waiting and hoping for his father to return. Grades 6 – 9.

Orlev, Uri. *The Man from the Other Side*. Translated from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin, Puffin Books, 1989.

Living on the outskirts of the Warsaw Ghetto, a 14 year old boy and his grandparents shelter a Jewish man in the days before the uprising. Grades 6 – 9.

Pettit, Jayne. *A Time to Fight Back: True Stories of Wartime Resistance*. Houghton Mifflin, 1996. Grades 6 – 9.

These accounts describe the experiences of eight children who waged their own battles against evil during World War II.

Rogasky, Barbara. *Smoke and Ashes: the Story of the Holocaust*. Holiday House, 1988.

An excellent short history for grades 6 – 9.

Zieman, Joseph. *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*. Lerner, 1975.

The true story of a group of Jewish children who escaped the Warsaw Ghetto and survived in the Aryan section of the Nazi-occupied city. Grades 7 – 12.

### Videos

*A Day in the Warsaw Ghetto: A Birthday Trip in Hell*. Filmmakers Library, 1992, 30 minutes.

This film is a moving, pictorial history of life in the Warsaw Ghetto before its destruction. The photographs used were taken by a Wehrmacht sergeant, as he toured the ghetto on his birthday, in September of 1941. They remained hidden at the soldier's home for four decades until their publication in the 1980's. The stark images are complimented by excerpts from diaries of ghetto internees. Grades 9 – 12.

*Holocaust Instruction and Days of Remembrance*. Ghetto Fighters House, n.d. A kit that includes two videos, a songbook and audio-cassette, activity cards, and a teachers manual. Emphasizes two facets of the Holocaust: children and Jewish resistance. Grades 9 – 12.

*Korczak*. New Yorker Films Artwork. 1993, 118 minutes, B&W, subtitles.

This powerful film tells the true story of Janus Korczak, a renowned physician and author who ran a home for Jewish orphans in 1930's Warsaw and refused to abandon them when they were deported to Auschwitz. Grades 9 – 12.

***The Uprising.*** NBC, 2001, 2 parts 2 hours each part.

This four-hour miniseries dramatizes heroic true stories of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, when a small group of Jewish citizens banded together to fight their German oppressors and, despite impossible odds, held off the Nazi army longer than the entire country of Poland. They accomplish what mattered most: they lived with honor and they died with honor, while lighting a torch for resistance. For grades 9 – 12 and adults.

***The Wall.*** HBO, 135 minutes, color.

The Wall tells the haunting story of the inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto. For grades 9 – 12.

***The Warsaw Ghetto.*** Hollywood Home Theatre, 1969, 51 minutes.

Using archival footage, this 1969 British Documentary explores life before and during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It retells the valiant struggle of Jewish spirit against Nazi oppression. Teacher guide available. For grades 9 – 12.

## **Computer Software**

*Stories from the Warsaw Ghetto: Voices from the Past.* Montparnasse Multimedia, 1999.

Stories from the Warsaw Ghetto with narratives, archival film footage and animated graphic sequences. [Requirements: Windows 3.1 or higher/MAC System 7 or higher]

## **Websites**

[www.nbc.com/nbc/other\\_nbc\\_shows/uprising/](http://www.nbc.com/nbc/other_nbc_shows/uprising/)

***Website of the NBC made-for-TV movie, “Uprising,” including weblinks and information on purchasing the video. Sneak preview available on-line.***

[www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

***The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s website.***

[www.gfh.org.il](http://www.gfh.org.il)

***Website of the Ghetto Fighters House, a museum and educational center devoted to the Holocaust and to Jewish resistance in the ghettos.***

[www.yadvashem.org.il](http://www.yadvashem.org.il)

***Website of Yad Vashem, Israel and the Jewish People’s Memorial to the Holocaust in Jerusalem.***

[motlc.wiesenthal.com/index.html](http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/index.html)

***The Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Museum of Tolerance’s Multimedia Learning Center online.***

[www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org).

*The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, whose upcoming exhibit features artifacts from the Emmanuel Ringelblum archives documenting life in the Warsaw Ghetto.*

[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org).

*The Anti-Defamation League’s web site, dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism, bigotry and extremism. It includes material from its Braun Holocaust Institute.*

**Jewish Texts**

<b><i>Mishnah Pirke Avot 1:14</i></b>	ã"é:à úááà é÷øô äðùî
He [Hillel] used to say:	:øî àà äéä [ì ì ä] àää
If I am not for myself, who is for me?	.èî éî .èî éðà ìéà í à
When I am only for myself, what am I?	.éðà äî .éî ôî òì éðàùéä
And if not now, when?	:éúî éà .äéùèò àì í àä

<b><i>Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 62a</i></b>	à°áñ àðéöî àáá èì áá äâî ì ù
If two are travelling on a journey [far from civilization], and one has a pitcher of water.	-èøãá ìéèì äî äéäù í éðù .í éî ì ù ìäùé÷ ìäî äçà äéää
If both drink, they will [both] die, but if one only drinks, he can reach civilization.	-í éúî - í äéðù ìéúäù í à .ääùéì òéâî - ìäî äçà äùäù í àä
The Son of Patura taught: It is better that both should drink and die, rather than that one should see his companion's death.	:àøàèò ìá ùøä ,äúâî éä í äéðù äùùéù áèâî .äøéáç ì ù äùùéí á í äî äçà äàøé ì ää
Until R. Akiba came and taught: "that your brother may live with thee" your life takes precedence over his life.	:âî èì ä àáé÷ò éáø àáù äò -éî ò ééçà éçä .éøéáç ééçì í éî ää÷ éééç

<b><i>Ecclesiastes 4:12</i></b>	á"é°ä ùì ä÷
...a threefold cord is not quickly broken.	°÷úðé äðâî á àì ùì ùî ä èäçää...