

6 things you should know about the Holocaust

6. How did Jews resist?

The last in a series of 6, 20-minute self-study short lessons for KS3

Short lesson 1 overview



Well done – you’ve made it to the last of six short, 20-minute lessons that I’ve put together for you to help address some of the common misunderstandings many students have about the Holocaust.

In this 20 minute lesson you are going to;

- 6 a) Reflect on what ‘resistance’ means. (5 mins.)
- 6 b) Explore two case studies of how Jews resisted (10 mins.)
- 6 c) Reflect on the implications of this in a quiz (5 mins.)



Key terms for this lesson

Key term	Meaning
ghetto	A part of a city where just Jews were forced to live in slum conditions.
Sonderkommando	Mostly Jewish prisoners in death camps who were forced to remove dead bodies from gas chambers.

6 a) What does it mean to resist?

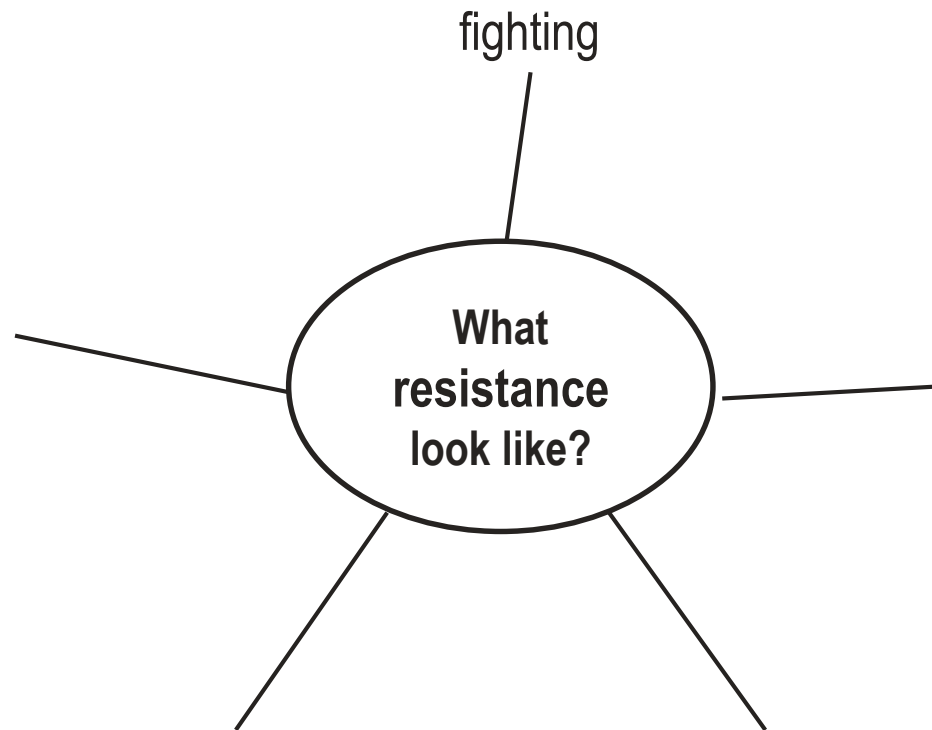


On an A4 piece of plain paper, create a mind map to describe what you think **resistance** looks like.

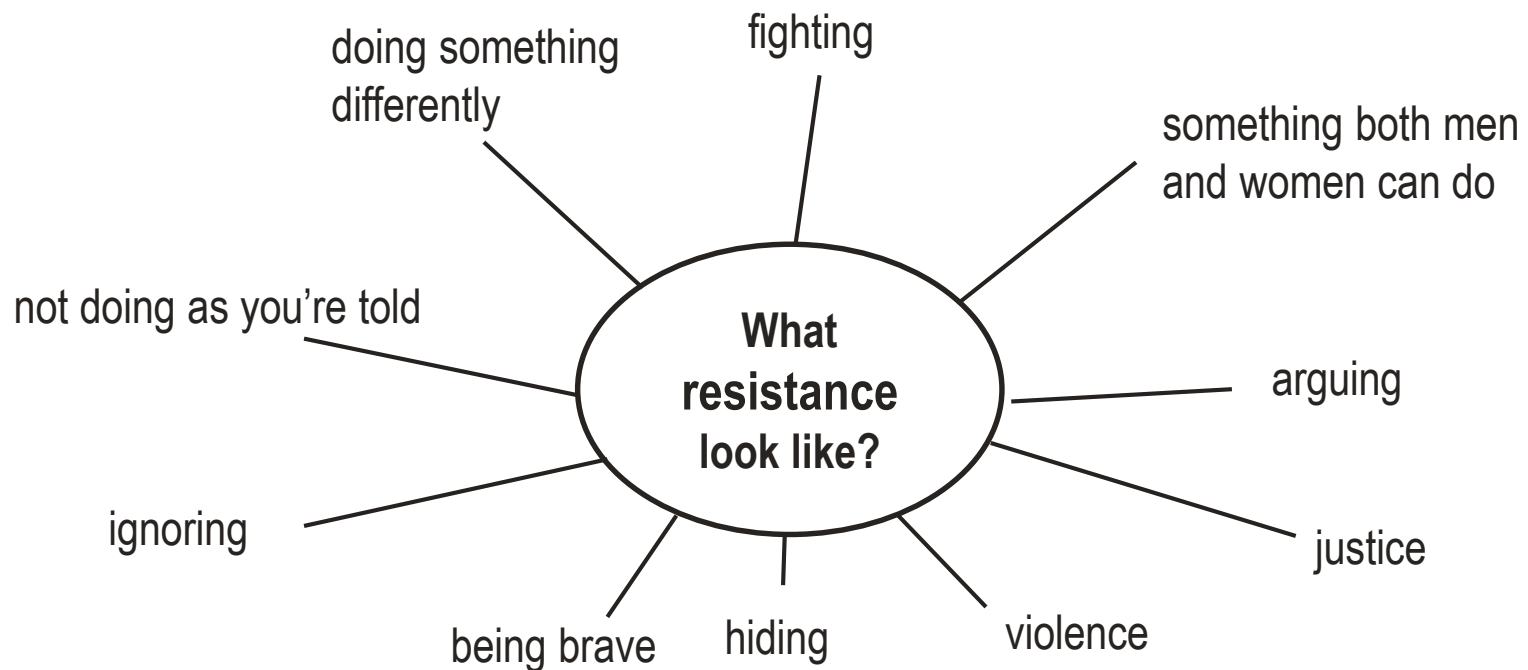
Don't worry if you're not too sure about some things. Just record words that help describe what you think you know.

On the next slide is the outline of a mind map you can use to get you started, or you can create your own.

6 a) What does it mean to resist?



6 a) What does it mean to resist?



Here are some ideas about what resistance might look like.

Did you get any of these, or did you get some other ones?

As you can see, there are many different ways in which we can understand what resistance can mean.

6 a) What does it mean to resist?



Don't forget as well that it was extremely difficult for Jews to resist.

If you remember from short lesson 1, the intent of the Nazis was to wipe out all the Jews from the face of the earth. So Jews were facing a massive threat to their very existence.

They also often had limited knowledge of what the Nazis were doing, which made it especially hard to fight back.

6 b) How did Jews resist?



The next two slides show two case studies;

- The first is about Mordecai Anielewicz
- The second is about Zalman Gradowski.

Read them both, and then be ready to think about and answer the questions on the slide after them.

Mordecai Anielewicz

Mordecai Anielewicz led the first armed uprising against the Nazis in any town or city anywhere in German-occupied Europe. He wrote to his friend, Yitzhak Zuckerman:



It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another for more than six hours... Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans. Our losses... are minimal. That is also an achievement. Yechiel fell. He fell a hero, at the machine-gun. I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance...

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air...

We heard the marvellous report on our fighting by the Shavit radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle.

Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defence in the ghetto is a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.

23 April 1943



Photo: Yad Vashem

Mordecai Anielewicz, leader of the Jewish Combat Organisation. On 8 May 1943, after holding out for several weeks with just a few smuggled guns and homemade grenades against German soldiers armed with tanks, machine guns and flamethrowers, 23 year old Anielewicz took his own life rather than surrender.



Zalman Gradowski

In the death camps, Jewish prisoners were forced to lead thousands of Jewish men, women and children into the gas chambers. Then they dragged out the dead bodies, pulled gold teeth from their mouths, and burned their bodies.

After the war, documents were found buried in the soil of Auschwitz-Birkenau, written by some of these Jewish prisoners – the *Sonderkommando*. Among them were the writings of Zalman Gradowski:

Dear Finder

Search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Tens of documents are buried under it – mine and those of other persons – which will throw light on everything that was happening here.

Great amounts of teeth are also buried here. It was we, the Sonderkommando, who have strewn them all over the ground, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people.

We ourselves have lost hope of being able to live to see the moment of liberation...

The *Sonderkommando* knew that the Nazis would try to hide all trace of their crimes, and that they would be murdered to stop them telling what they had seen. So they hid these papers in the human ashes they were made to bury, in the hope that one day the truth might be discovered.

Zalman Gradowski (pictured right) was also one of the leaders of the *Sonderkommando* revolt of 7 October 1944. He was killed after the *Sonderkommando* attacked their SS guards and blew up one of the crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

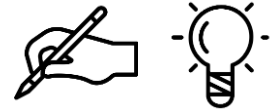


This aluminium flask was found after the war, buried in the ashes of the Auschwitz-Birkenau crematoria. It contained eyewitness accounts of mass murder, written by the Jewish *Sonderkommando* forced to work in the gas chambers.

State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau



6 b) How did Jews resist?

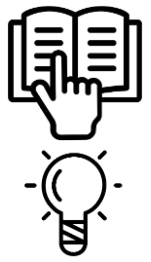


Now you have read the two case studies, think about the following;

- How did Mordecai Anielewicz resist?
- How did Zalman Gradowski resist?
- Having read them both, how do we know understand what it meant for Jews to resist?

Note that *Sonderkommando* like Zalman Gradowski, would have been executed if they refused to follow orders, and were regularly murdered after completing tasks anyway.

6 b) So what can be said about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust?



So, **Jews resisted the unfolding genocide in a variety of ways, despite the horrors they faced.** Indeed, Esther Brunstein, a Holocaust survivor, has said that even ***‘to have survived one day under those conditions and retain one’s values was a great act of resistance.’***

- Why do you think it is important to know about Jewish resistance during the Holocaust?

Knowing about the many Jews who resisted, despite the Nazis’ attempt to murder all of them, helps to show that they weren’t just victims who did nothing to resist, but instead showed they resisted in a variety of ways despite the difficulties and horrors they faced. Many of their stories, as you have started to see, are quite remarkable.

6 c) End of lesson quiz



You will be given **3 multiple-choice questions** to see how your knowledge and understanding of responsibility for the Holocaust has started to develop.

Use a pen and paper to record you answers.

At the end of the quiz are the answers. You can use this to see how you've done after you've recorded your best answers...

6 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 1

Which of the following statements about Mordecai Anielewicz is not true?

- A. He led the first armed uprising against the Nazis in any town or city anywhere in German-occupied Europe
 - B. In the Warsaw ghetto uprising he took his own life rather than surrender
 - C. His case shows that Jews did resist, often against overwhelming odds
 - D. The Warsaw ghetto uprising wasn't important. It inspired no other uprisings.
- .

6 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 2

Which of the following statements about the case of Zalman Gradowski is true?

- A. Jews resisted by accumulating evidence of Nazi crimes
- B. Jews were too scared to resist
- C. Jews only resisted by direct fighting
- D. Jews were unable to resist

6 c) End of lesson quiz

Question 3

Which of the following statements is true?

- A. There was no Jewish resistance to the Holocaust
- B. Resistance only meant fighting the Nazis with guns
- C. Jewish resistance took many different forms
- D. It was easy to resist

6 c) End of lesson quiz

Answers

1. D

2. A

3. C

End of short lesson 6

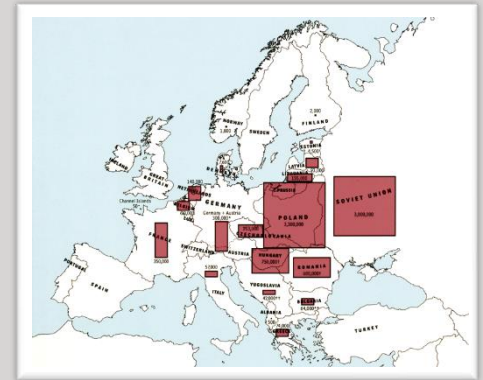
Well done!

You have now completed the last of six short lessons about important things you should know about the Holocaust. Now you are starting to understand that **Jews resisted the unfolding genocide in a variety of ways, despite the horrors they faced.**

If you've been able to complete all six short lessons, and understand their key messages, then you will be a step ahead of most students in English secondary schools that we surveyed in 2016.

6 things you should know about the Holocaust

6. Jews resisted the unfolding genocide in a variety of ways, despite the horrors they faced.



Centre for
Holocaust Education

Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL,

tel: +44(0)20 7612 6437 fax: +44(0)20 7612 6126 email: holocaust@ioe.ac.uk web: www.ioe.ac.uk/holocaust

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