

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Exploring history, meaning & significance

During this period of home/remote learning, this resource has been designed for use by your student as self-directed study, although you also could teach/mediate the lesson via an online platform. In either setting, it is estimated that it would take around 45-60 minutes to work through the resource.

The material is designed for use with students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. It is presumed that students will have some foundational knowledge of the Holocaust; without this, the student is likely to find accessing some of the higher order thinking in this resource challenging. Ideally, students will also possess some knowledge of the Warsaw Ghetto: having this will benefit their learning considerably, since it will allow them to put the events of the Uprising into their historical context. The resource can be used in various subject settings – including History, RE and Citizenship.

The resource centres upon a specific event: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Uprising was a remarkable moment in the history of the Holocaust for a number of reasons. It was, for instance, one of the most sustained instances of armed resistance against the Nazis anywhere in occupied Europe in the entire history of the Second World War; it was conducted by a relatively small number of armed persons, nearly all of whom had no military training or expertise; and it took place in the most dire and desperate of circumstances, enacted by men, women, and children who had suffered months of hardship living in appalling conditions within the ghetto. That these men, women and children were fighting to delay their almost inevitable deportation to the gas chambers of Treblinka, only makes this episode all the more remarkable.

The history of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising thus raises a raft of questions rich for exploration by students. At a very fundamental level, knowing about this event provides a direct rebuttal to any notion that Jewish people did not 'fight back' during the Holocaust, and/or that they were somehow complicit in their own demise. There is much to contemplate, through the Uprising, about heroism, human will and agency, as well as the determination of ordinary people to try to 'resist' death. Yet at the same time, the history of the Uprising is – ultimately – steeped in tragedy, horror and brutality. Put simply, the Uprising did not prevent those Jews remaining in the Warsaw Ghetto being sent to their deaths. Nor is it possible to ignore – amidst the heroism of the resisters – the eventual resolve of the perpetrators to completely and utterly destroy the ghetto and its inhabitants, showing no quarter as they set fire to buildings, hunted down resisters, and murdered at will.

It is these sorts of contrasting and conflicting issues that students can be invited to explore as they consider matters of meaning and significance through the material. As they do so, they are also asked to exercise and hone their skills of source analysis, to employ critical thinking, and to contemplate some of the broader and knottier issues surrounding 'resistance' and the Holocaust. This includes recognising that caution is needed in understanding how and why some people

behaved the way that they did, and how the choices that people made were contingent on their choices and circumstances.

Learning Objectives	Learning Outcomes	Curriculum Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To develop knowledge and understanding of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. ▪ To consider what meanings may be made, and what significance can be ascribed, to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To have considered the dilemmas faced by those who participated in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. ▪ To have appreciated the challenges of armed resistance ▪ To have identified what the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising means and signifies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This relates directly to your studies in Religious Education, Citizenship, and History. ▪ It will develop literacy and self-study skills as well as critical thinking. ▪ It will support SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) understanding.

Introduction for students: (can be cut/pasted to 'Show my homework', sent to student email or by other platforms of school communication for remote/home learning)

It is likely that you have learned about the Holocaust in one or more of your subjects, and that you have encountered it in films, on the television or in books. As part of these encounters, you may have come across the idea that Jewish people didn't 'fight back' or do anything to prevent the Holocaust. In this lesson, you will explore this idea and see if it is an accurate description.

Instructions for student self-directed home study (can be cut/pasted to 'Show my homework', sent to student email or by other platforms of school communication for remote/home learning)

1. Open the PowerPoint 'The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Exploring history, meaning and significance'. Have some pen and paper to hand, or a Word document open on a computer.
2. Read the learning objectives outcomes carefully – write a title in your book (slides 1&2)
3. Work through each slide one by one. On some slides you will see a box with a large ? in it, together with some questions. Answer these questions on your paper, or your Word document.
4. Once you have completed all of the activities, send your answers to your teacher.

For Teachers:

Guidance for teacher-directed home study (via Teams, Zoom or other online forums)	
Slide	
	Before the lesson begins, invite students to share what they already know and understand about the Warsaw Ghetto
3	Begin the session by talking through the slide 'Examining a photograph'. Emphasize that the overarching question is 'What is happening in this scene?' Use the questions on this slide to discuss Slide 4
4	Use guided questioning to discuss this slide. Focus on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is the condition of the building?- How could it have got in this state?- Why might this have occurred?- Who are the people? What are they doing?- What, if anything, is unusual about this scene?
5	Explain to students the status of their enquiry: that they have begun to construct an account which is incomplete and remains tentative. Use the questions on this slide to develop discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do the soldiers look calm, or in a hurry? Why might this be?- Where and when was this photograph taken?- Why did someone decide to take this photograph?
6	Outline to students the importance of context in trying to make further sense of the photograph. Talk through Slide 6, and introduce Slide 7
7	Use the questions from Slide 6 to drive analysis of the image: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What language or languages can you see?- What words or terms are visible?- What questions do you have after looking at this cover sheet?
8	Reiterate the need for further contextualisation in order to understand the cover sheet. Return to Slide 7 as appropriate whilst working through the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What does the original title suggest the report is about?- How does this information develop our understanding of the earlier photograph?- What might the words 'International Military Tribunal' on the cover sheet suggest the report was used for?
9-10	As a group read through Slides 9-10. Take the time to explore the questions on these Slides: they are complicated and challenging, but important for helping students to consider some of the broader issues of resistance and perpetration:

Guidance for teacher-directed home study (via Teams, Zoom or other online forums)

Slide

- What do the origins of The Stroop Report say about the attitude of men like Krüger, Stroop and Himmler?
- What obstacles and challenges would the resistance groups inside the Warsaw ghetto have faced?
- Why should we be cautious about criticising people for not joining resistance groups?

11-13 Instruct students to work through these slides at their own pace. The information on these slides needs to be digested to help students deepen their understanding of what people were doing within the ghetto, and the nature of this experience. Take some time to discuss the question:

- These photographs were taken by the Nazis. They appeared in The Stroop Report. Why do you think the Nazis took these photos?

Return students, if necessary, to the earlier point that the Stroop Report was intended to be commemorative. If appropriate, explore with students broader issues relating to how we use and interact with photographs taken by the perpetrators.

14-16 As a group, read through the history of the Uprising. Highlight the change in tactics that occurs under Stroop's command, and draw out student responses to the age of Mordecai Anielewicz – the leader of the resistance, aged just 24 years old.

17 Talk through the 'post-history' of the Uprising. Give students time, if needed, to think about their responses to the two questions. You may wish to set these tasks as homework.

- 'Ultimately, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was a failure'. What is your response to this statement?
- In your view, what is the meaning and significance of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?

Source acknowledgments

Photograph slide 3, 4, 5: USHMM/National Archives & Records Administration, College Park, MD.
Photograph number 26542

Photograph slide 7, 8: USHMM/National Archives & Records Administration, College Park, MD.

Available: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/artifact/stroop-report-cover>

Account, slide 12: Mordekhai Lanski, Yad Vashem Document Archive, O.33/257, Manuscript, pp. 306-307

Photographs, slide 13: (Left) USHMM, Photograph number 26562; (Right) USHMM, Photograph number 26561

Photograph, slide 15: Yad Vashem Photo Archives, 4613/128

Photograph, slide 16: Yad Vashem Photo archives, DO7209