

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

A *ghetto* is a section of a city occupied by a minority, such as the former traditional residential neighborhood for Jews in Europe. The Nazis, however, transformed the ghettos into walled prisons, where starvation and disease were rampant. The German government passed its first anti-Jewish laws in 1933, and within six years it began to confine Jews to the ghettos, beginning in Poland. In 1941 the “final solution”—the methodical extermination of the Jewish people—began. Ghettos were emptied and their residents taken to concentration camps such as Treblinka, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen.

At one point, the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland contained as many as 500,000 men, women, and children. The Nazis sealed it off from the rest of the city in 1940. They initially put some of its residents to work in factories making goods for the German war effort. Then, in the summer of 1942, the Nazis began to transport large groups from the ghetto to places they claimed were part of a “resettlement program.” Over the next few months, as many as 300,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw, most of them to the death camp at Treblinka. By the fall of 1942, many of those who remained had decided to resist further deportations and formed the Z.O.B., whose Polish name means Jewish Combat Organization. The Z.O.B. called for a halt to cooperation with authorities and prepared for armed resistance.

On April 19, 1943, Nazi troops surrounded the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, prepared to destroy it completely. In the ensuing battle, trained soldiers using armored vehicles, heavy artillery, and flame throwers took on members of the Jewish resistance who had a small stockpile of grenades, rifles, and pistols. As the ghetto burned down, some Jews attempted to escape through the sewers, but the Nazis filled the sewers with poison gas. On May 16, the destruction of the neighborhood’s historic Tlomecki Synagogue signaled a German victory. Germany’s Major General Stroop wrote his report: “The Warsaw ghetto is no more.” A few hundred Nazi soldiers died in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It is believed that 56,000 Jews were killed during the battle, executed afterwards, or sent to die in concentration camps.

Ironically, April 19, 1943 was the first day of Passover, the Jewish holy days that commemorate the escape of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Few escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto, however. Indeed, only a handful of the people confined there survived World War II.

Recalling Facts

1. Warsaw is a city in
 - ☐ a. Germany.
 - ☐ b. Poland.
 - ☐ c. Bulgaria.
2. The German government passed its first anti-Jewish laws in
 - ☐ a. 1929.
 - ☐ b. 1933.
 - ☐ c. 1942.
3. Traditionally, the ghettos in Europe were the
 - ☐ a. Jewish neighborhoods.
 - ☐ b. Jewish prisons.
 - ☐ c. commercial areas of cities throughout Europe.
4. The Z.O.B. was
 - ☐ a. the name the Germans gave to the Jewish resistance.
 - ☐ b. the organization that governed Warsaw.
 - ☐ c. the Polish name for the Jewish resistance.
5. At the end of the Warsaw uprising,
 - ☐ a. Jewish survivors were sent to concentration camps.
 - ☐ b. Jewish survivors were put to work in factories in Warsaw.
 - ☐ c. the Jews rebuilt the Tlomecki Synagogue.

Understanding Ideas

6. One can conclude that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising
 - ☐ a. represented a turning point in the war.
 - ☐ b. was carried out mostly through hand-to-hand combat.
 - ☐ c. was unsuccessful for the Jewish people.
7. It seems likely that nearly
 - ☐ a. 500,000 Polish Jews died during World War II.
 - ☐ b. 500,000 Jewish people from Warsaw died at the hands of the Nazis.
 - ☐ c. 300,000 Jewish people worked in Warsaw's factories.
8. One can infer from this passage that anti-Jewish feeling in Germany
 - ☐ a. was a problem before the beginning of World War II.
 - ☐ b. became a problem only after the beginning of World War II.
 - ☐ c. ended with the implementation of the "final solution."
9. The destruction of the Tlomecki Synagogue by the Germans could probably best be described as
 - ☐ a. an act of remorse.
 - ☐ b. a heroic deed.
 - ☐ c. a symbolic gesture.
10. The irony of the uprising, which began on the first day of Passover,
 - ☐ a. is that it failed.
 - ☐ b. is that Passover celebrates the escape of the Israelites from Egypt but the uprising ended in destruction.
 - ☐ c. was a force behind the organization of the Z.O.B.

Raoul Wallenberg: The Hero Who Disappeared

Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish envoy, has been called an “angel” who saved the lives of thousands of Jews during World War II. In 1944 Wallenberg traveled to Hungary in an effort to save Jews from Nazi persecution. He designed a flashy but official-looking pass and used it to bring countless Jews out of the country. He also established some 30 “Swedish houses” in Budapest, where 15,000 refugees found sanctuary at one time or another.

For a year, Wallenberg gave out his passes, even stuffing them through the windows of trains headed to death camps. He forced Nazi officials to honor them, using threats, bribery, and the sheer force of his personality. Altogether, Wallenberg may have saved 100,000 lives. By the time the Russians arrived in Budapest in 1945, however, only 97,000 Jews were still living in the ghettos.

Wallenberg disappeared in January 1945, before World War II ended. He was on his way to Soviet headquarters in Hungary and told friends that he would be back in about eight days. In 1957 the Soviet government stated that Wallenberg had died in one of its prisons in 1947. There has never been any reasonable explanation for why he was arrested or conclusive proof of his death. Today, the circumstances surrounding his disappearance are unknown, and his whereabouts (if, indeed, he is still alive) remain a mystery.

1. Recognizing Words in Context

Find the word *conclusive* in the passage. One definition below is closest to the meaning of that word. One definition has the opposite or nearly the opposite meaning. The remaining definition has a completely different meaning. Label the definitions C for *closest*, O for *opposite or nearly opposite*, and D for *different*.

- _____ a. tentative
- _____ b. hurtful
- _____ c. decisive

2. Distinguishing Fact from Opinion

Two of the statements below present *facts*, which can be proved. The other statement is an *opinion*, which expresses someone’s thoughts or beliefs. Label the statements F for *fact* and O for *opinion*.

- _____ a. Wallenberg was a Swedish envoy to Hungary during World War II.
- _____ b. Wallenberg had the most creative approach to helping Jews during World War II.
- _____ c. The circumstances surrounding Wallenberg’s disappearance are unclear.

3. Keeping Events in Order

Number the statements below 1, 2, and 3 to show the order in which the events took place.

- _____ a. Wallenberg is sent to Hungary as an envoy.
- _____ b. Wallenberg provides passes that help Jews escape.
- _____ c. Wallenberg travels to Soviet headquarters in Hungary.

4. Making Correct Inferences

Two of the statements below are correct *inferences*, or reasonable guesses. They are based on information in the passage. The other statement is an incorrect, or faulty, inference. Label the statements C for *correct* inference and F for *faulty* inference.

- _____ a. The Soviet army was committed to rescuing Jewish people.
- _____ b. The Soviet Union fought against Germany in World War II.
- _____ c. Wallenberg was imaginative in his approach to rescuing Hungary's Jews.

5. Understanding Main Ideas

One of the statements below expresses the main idea of the passage. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other explains only part of the passage; it is too narrow. Label the statements M for *main idea*, B for *too broad*, and N for *too narrow*.

- _____ a. Raoul Wallenberg printed passes that Jews used to escape from Hungary during the Nazi occupation.
- _____ b. The Swede, Raoul Wallenberg, was clever and brave in his efforts to save Hungarian Jews.
- _____ c. Heroes of World War II include Raoul Wallenberg.

Correct Answers, Part A _____

Correct Answers, Part B _____

Total Correct Answers _____