

Teacher's Guide: Children's Life in the Ghetto

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- Introduction:

(In the fall of 1939, the Nazis began to confine the Jews in ghettos in Poland and Eastern Europe. With the help of the ghettos, the Nazis intended to isolate Jews from the rest of the population, and to control their lives.

The ghettos were usually built in the poorest and most crowded parts of the city. Jews were relocated to these parts of the city and banned from leaving. Some ghettos were disconnected from the outside world with the help of a wall. The Jews were forced to leave behind everything they knew, and to move into a new and unknown, poor and overcrowded environment. As a result of the move to the ghetto, children's lives were turned upside down. Nothing remained as it was, including their home, their friends, and their school. In addition, children were often forced to do things that in their lives before the war, only adults were responsible for. Such responsibilities included getting food, going to work, and providing for the family. Containment in the ghetto not only led to an almost complete separation of Jews from their surroundings, but also to difficult living conditions due to overcrowding, starvation and forced labor, which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Despite the difficult living conditions in the ghetto, Jews tried to maintain a normal routine as much as possible. A variety of educational frameworks were established for children, often in hiding. Some ghettos housed theatres in which plays were performed for the ghetto's residents. Despite unbearable living conditions, children in the ghetto continued playing, writing poetry, drawing pictures, and dreaming of better days.)

The following lesson plan focuses on different aspects of ghetto life and the ways the children in the ghetto coped with the conditions of this reality.

Preparatory Class Discussion:

In order to focus the students on the lesson's subject, the discussion will surround the following questions:

- What was the ghetto during the Holocaust?
- What were the living conditions of Jews in the ghettos?
- What were the difficulties that children faced in the ghettos?

At the conclusion of the discussion it is recommended to instruct the students that throughout their independent work they refer to the ways the children of the ghetto coped with the harsh reality of ghetto life.

- Distribution of worksheet **Children's Life in the Ghetto:**


Visit the **Children in the Ghetto** website <http://ghetto.galim.org.il/> and click on the **Entrance** icon .


Upon entering, you will see an imaginary street in front of you. This street represents the ghetto. You can navigate around the street with the arrows found on its sides.




- The highlighted drawings are portals to sections on various subjects regarding the world of the ghetto.
- Each section can also be viewed by clicking on the matching icon at the bottom of the street.

During the lesson we will view different section on the website. The move from section to section will be done through the street.



1. With the help of the arrow on the left side of the street  navigate to the newspaper stand. By clicking on the armbands on display in the stand you will enter the **Marking the Jews** section.


The **Marking the Jews** section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

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- a) Read the explanation and look at the photograph next to it. Why did Jews have to wear the patch in the ghetto? (**Note to the Teacher:** the marking of Jews was a humiliating edict which enabled the Germans to easily distinguish Jews from non-Jews and was meant to segregate them from the rest of the population. Even after Jews were physically separated from the rest of the population and deported to ghettos, the edict was not cancelled nor was the strict adherence to it. The "mark of disgrace" that the Jews were forced to wear even within the ghetto walls, was meant to humiliate them and limit the success rate of escape from the ghetto. It is clear that Jews confined within the ghetto walls were separated and segregated from the rest of the population by both wall and by marking.)
- b) Read the testimonies of Ruth Minsky-Sender and Bilha Shefer (**On Paper** icon ), complete the tasks at hand and answer the accompanying questions.






2. Return to the street **Back to the street**. Scroll left with the assistance of the arrow  until you reach the end of the street, here you will find a barbed wire fence. Click on the fence to enter the **Closure and Isolation** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).



- a) Read the explanation, look at the photograph next to it and watch the video testimonies in this section (**Testimony** icon ).
- b) Hassia Ben Dov, Zehava Zuckerman and Israel Aviram were children during the Holocaust. How do they describe the deportation to the ghetto?
- c) Which changes occur in a child's life as a result of being deported to the ghetto?
- d) In your opinion, what are the difficulties created by these changes?




3. Return to the street **Back to the street** . Scroll right with the assistance of the arrow  until the next street corner where a large crowd has gathered. Click on the crowd to enter the **Crowded Ghetto** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).


- Read the explanation, look at the photograph and watch the testimonies found in this section (**Testimony** icon ).
- In your opinion, what did children have to give up when they moved into a single room with all their family members?
- Look at photograph number 1 (**Photograph** icon ) and the drawing (**Drawing** icon ) in this section and complete the tasks at hand.






4. Return to the street **Back to the street** . Scroll right with the assistance of the right arrow  until you reach the end of the street. In the upper right hand window you can see a girl drawing a butterfly. Click on the window to enter the **Wings of Imagination** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

- Read the explanation: What did children in the ghetto think, write and draw about? Why?
- Look at the drawing of the teenage girl Eva (Hava) Lubova and read Paul Friedman's poem (**Drawing** icon ) and answer the question next to them.






5. Return to the street **Back to the street** . Click on the group of children holding cutlery in their hands to enter the **Hunger in the Ghetto** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

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- a) Read the explanation and watch the testimonies of Israel Aviram and Zehava Zuckerman found in this section (**Testimony** icon ).
- b) Israel Aviram and Zehava Zuckerman were children during the Holocaust. How do they describe the suffering caused due to the food shortages? How did Israel Aviram's family cope with food shortages?
- c) Watch Shmuel Gal's testimony (**Testimony (2)** icon ), read the excerpt from Sara Plager Zyskind's book (**On Paper** icon ) and answer the questions next to them.
- d) What were the uncertainties and emotions the children were forced to deal with due to the food shortages and the hunger in the ghetto?



6. Return to the street **Back to the street** . Scroll left with the assistance of the left arrow  until you reach the wall at the end of the street. There are four children standing around a hole in the wall. Click on the children to enter the **Children Smugglers** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

- a) Read the explanation, look at the photograph next to it and watch the testimonies in this section (**Testimony** icon ). Why did the children become the ghetto's heroes?
- b) Why was it that young children in particular became smugglers in the ghetto?
- c) What, in your opinion, did the children who were engaged in smuggling food into the ghetto feel during these acts?




7. Return to the street **Back to the street** . Scroll right with the assistance of the arrow  until you reach the end of the street. In the building's first floor window one can see children working with a sewing machine. Click on the link and enter the



Children at Work section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon





at the bottom of the street).


- a) Read the explanation and answer the following question: Why were the children of the ghetto forced to work?
- b) Look at the photographs in this section (**Photo** icon ), complete the tasks at hand and answer the questions.






8. Return to the street **Back to the street**. Scroll right with the assistance of the right arrow  until you reach the end of the street. In the upper right hand window you can see a girl drawing a butterfly. Click on the window to enter the **Wings of Imagination** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).



- a) Look at the stamp bearing the image of Peter Ginz and read the explanation next to it (**Artifact** icon ).
- b) Read Abraham (Avramek) Kopolevich's poem "A Dream" (**Poem** icon ) and answer the questions next to it.
- c) What is the shared subject in both Peter Ginz's painting "Moon Landscape" and Avramek's poem "A Dream?" In your opinion, why did both teenage boys focus on this subject?





9. Return to the street **Back to the street**. On the top floor of the building one can see children studying. Click on the windows to enter the **Schools in the Ghetto** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

- a) Read the testimonies of Yitzchak Rudishevsky, Efraim Dekel and Sara Zelorch (On Paper icon ), complete the tasks at hand and answer the questions next to them.
- b) Look at the photograph in this section (Photograph icon ) and read the explanation next to it. Why did the Jews continue running schools in the ghetto despite the ban? (The explanation at the beginning of the section may help you better understand ).



10. Return to the street **Back to the street**. Scroll slightly to the right with the help of the right arrow . In the narrow alley across the street, one can see three children playing with a ball. Click on the children to enter the **Children's Games** section. (This section can be accessed by clicking on the icon  at the bottom of the street).

- a) Read the excerpt from Shalom Eilati's story about his childhood in the Kaunas Ghetto (On Paper icon ), complete the task at hand and answer the questions next to it.
- b) Look at the Monopoly game from the Theresienstadt Ghetto (Artifact icon ) and answer the following questions:
- How are the games seen here similar to Monopoly and the dolls that you know?
 - How are they different?



11. Return to the street **Back to the street**.

Summarizing Questions:

Now, after having completed the tour of the site, choose one of the sources that you have seen during the tour (picture, artifact, poem, photograph, written testimony or video testimony) and answer the following questions:

- What can be learned from the source about the boy or girl it belonged to?
- What can be learned from the source about the life of children in the ghetto?

In-class Summation:

After completing the independent work with the website, a discussion will be held with the whole class, during which the students will present their choices and the answers to the questions.

Afterward, the children can tell of their impressions of the tour and then be asked the following:

- What questions arise from the site tour?
- If you could ask a question to one of the children you acquainted on the tour, what would that question be?

(It is important to make it clear to the students that although they will not always find the answers to their questions, this does not mean they should refrain from asking them).