

RESISTANCE & THE HOLOCAUST



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Holocaust Centre of New Zealand
80 Webb Street, Te Aro
Wellington, 6011
New Zealand

www.holocaustcentre.org.nz

Cover image:

Jewish partisan members of the FPO, who escaped from the ghetto to Rudniki forests, returning to Wilno after the liberation, July 1944.

Credit Yad Vashem

RESISTANCE AND THE HOLOCAUST

STUDENT RESOURCES

Resistance is an incredibly important concept in Holocaust education. It challenges the idea that Jews were herded like lambs to the slaughter and shows that they had a fighting spirit, whether it was through spiritual, cultural or physical resistance. It acknowledges that even though their lives were turned upside down, their spirits weren't broken. This unit also includes resistance from non-Jewish people and how their actions ended up being life saving for some Jews. Resistance to Nazi Germany is often a theme in survivor testimonies, whether it was partisan fighters, non-Jews assisting and hiding Jews or the continuation of important Jewish culture.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This unit centres around the lives of Jews living in Eastern Europe. In particular, it explores the experiences of Jews in Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania, and the surrounding areas. The main stories are of two sisters, Freda and Liza Malacki, who were separated during WWII. Each of them survived because of different forms of resistance experiences.

1.

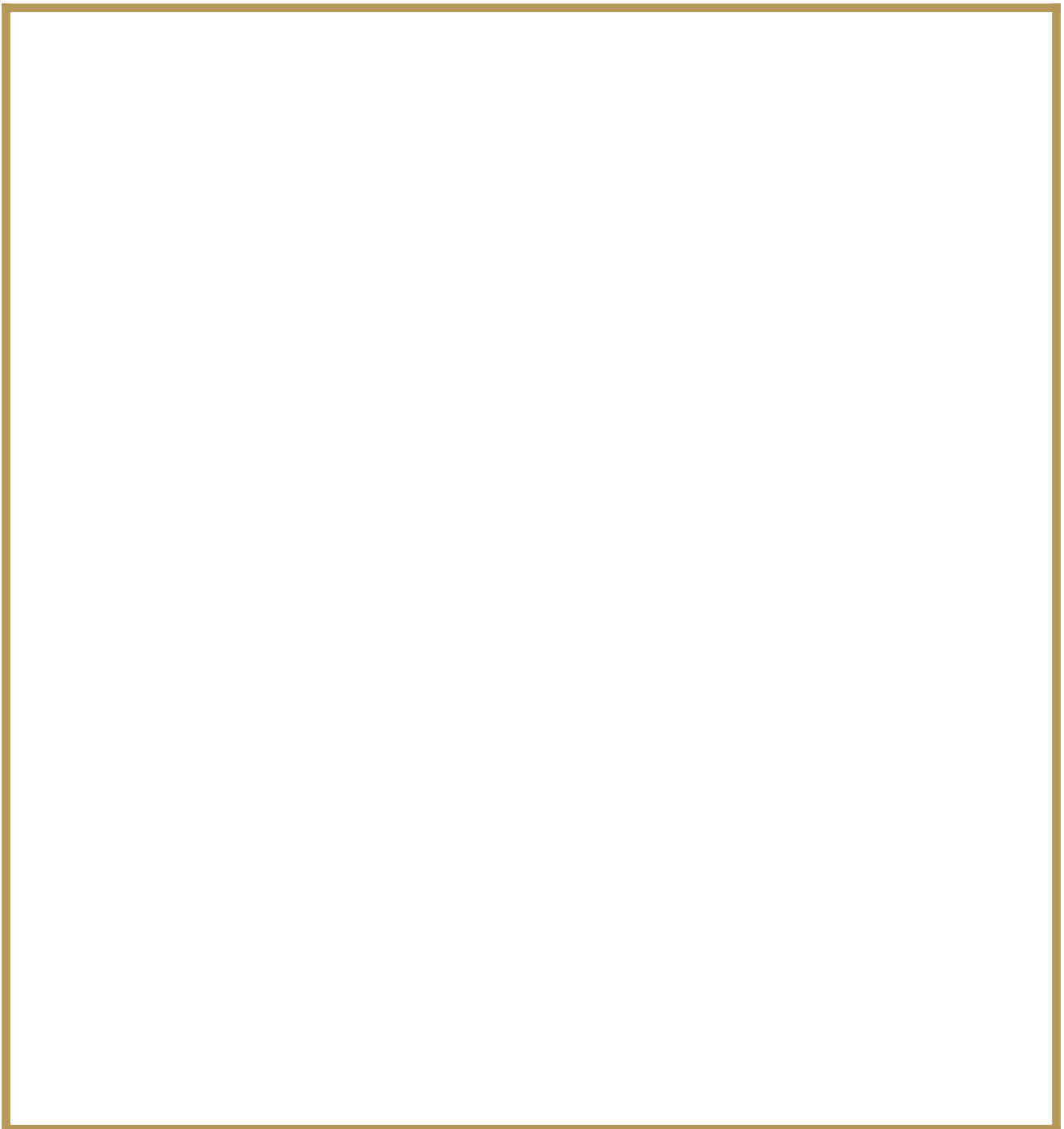
LESSON 1 LIFE BEFORE THE HOLOCAUST

Lesson Objectives:

- To be able to explain what life was like for Jewish people in Eastern Europe before Nazi occupation.

1. DRAW A JEWISH PERSON

In the box below, draw a Jewish person:



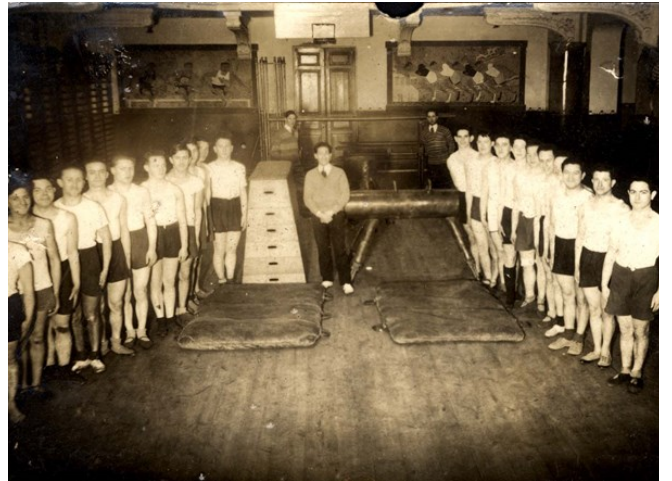
2. LIFE FOR JEWS PRIOR TO 1939

A.Photo task: Are these photos from the 1930s or modern day?

In order to categorise each photo, students can consider the following questions:

1. What do you see in this photo? Look closely to see if there are any details that might tell us when this photo was taken.
2. Are there people in the photograph? What are they doing?
3. What objects are in the photograph?
4. What does the photo tell us about life during that time period?





3. SOVIET OCCUPATION

5 mins

It is important to acknowledge Soviet occupation prior to Nazi German occupation in order to understand how living conditions changed for Eastern European people, Jew and non-Jew alike, throughout World War II.

Poland is annexed by Germany and Soviet Union:

- 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the West
- 17 September 1939, Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East
- 6 October the campaign ended and Germany and Soviet Union divided and annexed the whole of Poland.

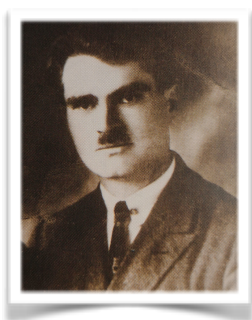


4. CHOICELESS CHOICES

A. What do you think the phrase 'Choiceless Choices' means? Write your answer below:

CASE STUDY: THE MALACKI FAMILY

10 min



Jacob Malacki

Born in 1889

He was a prominent community figure who was on the town council and well known in the Jewish community. He also ran a footwear business. Jacob was a very religious man.

Pronunciation:

Malacki family - Maa-laa-ksi
Widze - Vee-dz-e



Kreina Malacki (nee Flexer)

Born in 1897

Kreina was a highly educated woman, having studied in Vienna to university level, which was very uncommon because of Jewish quotas in Polish schools. She was very religious. She became a school teacher during Soviet occupation.



Liza Malacki

Born in 1926

Sent to boarding school in Warsaw from 1937 until 1939, so knew little of family life with her youngest sister Freda.



Esther Malacki

Born approx. 1928

Little is known about Esther. She had red hair. In 1939 she was sent to stay with the Svirskis family in Ponevez, Lithuania.



Freda Malacki

Born in 1937

Freda was very young when her town was taken over by World War Two. She had blonde hair and blue eyes.

B. Read the following 'Choiceless Choices' scenario.

You have 5 minutes to decide what option your 'family' will choose and why. If you haven't made a decision after the allotted time, your decision will be made for you.

Scenario: During Soviet occupation, there were mass deportations of Polish people, starting with civil servants and public figures. Jacob and Kreina were friends with the town Mayor, Mr Karlovichov, who was sent to Siberia under the Soviet Union's occupation. Mrs Karlovichova and her son have asked if you, the Malacki family, can hide them to save them from being sent away too. Mrs Karlovichova's husband, a landowner and leader of the town, has been deported to a Gulag labour camp in Siberia and she fears that her and her son will be captured and sent there as well, a likely death sentence. Doing this would put the Malacki family at risk of also being arrested and possibly sent to Siberia as well, but would very likely save the lives of Mrs Karlovichova and her son, Władysław (Vladislav).

What do you do:

- Hide the Karlovichovas in your house?
- Tell them they need to find somewhere else to stay?

5. REFLECTION

10 min

Task: Think-Pair-Share - What are different ways that you can resist something?

Think about how someone could resist something physically, culturally and spiritually.

2.

LESSON 2 LIFE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand how Nazi Germany's occupation resulted in Jews being removed from society into ghettos.
- To understand how Jews reacted in different ways to restrictions and attempted extermination of the Jewish people imposed by Nazi Germany.

1. FOUR CORNERS DISCUSSION: CHOICELESS CHOICES

You have 5 minutes to decide what the Malacki family will choose to do and why.

Once you have decided, your group/'family' needs to **move to the corner of the room that represents your answer**. Then you can discuss as a class why people made their decisions.

If you haven't made a decision after the allotted time, your decision will be made for you.

Scenario: Late in 1941, your family has just heard news that the German army is getting close to Widze. It isn't entirely clear what will happen when the Germans arrive, but the reports of how Jews have been treated throughout Europe have made it clear that it will be far worse than life under Soviet rule. Since the Malackis hid Mrs Karlovichova during the Soviet occupation and she lives on a rural farm, there is the possibility that they could risk hiding there.

What do you do:

- Stay at home, continue life as usual and hope for the best.
- Send just Freda to live/hide with Mrs Karlovichova and her son because she is blonde and blue-eyed and the least Jewish looking.
- All go into hiding with Mrs Karlovichova and her son but increase the chance you'll be discovered.
- Send the daughters to go and live with other family in Europe.

2. FREDA'S TESTIMONY

A. Watch the 4min video of Freda talking about her father's death and life on the farm.

B. Consider the following questions:

- How do you think you would feel if this happened to you?
- Why do you think Freda's father, Jacob, was killed before the Germans arrived?
- What do you think might have happened if Freda had been discovered as a Jewish girl living with Mrs Karlovichova?

Summary of Freda's testimony:

"When the Nazis occupied Widze in 1941, Jacob Malacki was shot along with other leading men of the Widze Jewish community. Karlovichova offered to hide the remaining family members on her farm, but Kreina believed that a flaxen haired, blue eyed four year old was less likely to be detected. Freda was despatched with a promise that she would be handed back to any family member who might return to claim her. Fella, as she was called for security reasons, the "niece" from Warsaw, lived on the farm as a practising Catholic for three years. The remaining members of the Widze Jewish community, including Kreina and Liza, were sent to the ghetto in nearby Vilna."

3. FORMS OF RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

5 mins

Some Jews manage to resist the control and reach of Nazi Germany's power throughout the Holocaust. The most obvious of these forms were physical resistance, in the form of fighting or hiding, however it is also worth noting the ways in which many Jews managed to resist culturally and spiritually in order to overcome the oppressions caused by the antisemitic treatment by Nazi Germany throughout Europe.

Physical

- Hiding with non-Jews - under floor boards, behind walls, in attics, in barns.
- Joining partisan groups and fighting against
- Non-Jews who helped Jews escape or live in less harsh conditions - e.g. Oskar Schindler

Cultural/Spiritual

- In the ghettos, concentration camps and extermination camps, there are examples of artwork, poetry, music and writing that helped many Jews to express their suffering.
- Groups such as the Bielski Otriad who hid and created a Jewish community in the Novogrudek Forest.

4. SENT TO THE GHETTOS

20mins

A. What do you think 'ghetto' means.

Write your definition below:

B. Life in Vilna ghetto

View video about life in Vilna ghetto

— How was life different for Jews once they were forced into the ghetto?

5. REFLECTION

10mins

Reflect on life in the Vilna ghetto:

- What do you think the most difficult part of ghetto life would be?

- How do you think it would have made Kreina and Liza and feel to be stuck in the ghetto without any of their family?

- Liza was about the same age as you are now. How do you think you would have managed to survive living in the ghetto? What skills would you need?

3.

LESSON 3 LIFE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand how some Jews tried to fight back through different forms of resistance.
- To understand how Jews reacted in different ways to restrictions and attempted extermination of the Jewish people imposed by Nazi Germany.

1. FIGHTING SPIRIT

A. Task: Think-Pair-Share

What do you think 'partisan' means. Write your definition below:

2. POEM: *HUNGER*

20 mins

As a class, read the poem 'Hunger' and answer the following questions:

1. What does the poem tell us about the living conditions for Jews during the Holocaust?

2. How do you think this would impact someone's ability to resist what the Germans were doing to Jews?

3. Think about the testimony from the last lesson about life in the Vilna ghetto. How could someone overcome the challenges of being Jewish in the ghetto?

Hunger

By Leo Egan

It was all figured out by a German scientist:
If they're starving, they won't have the strength to resist.
They won't think of planning revolts or living underground,
But only of how a piece of bread might be found.
They won't rebel in any way,
When they're counting the potatoes in the soup today.
The gnawing hunger was always on my mind,
To anything else I soon became blind.
Nine in the morning, there was a coffee break.
Naturally, only the Germans did partake.
At least I could warm my hands by the open fire.
I was lucky enough to have gloves, as part of my attire.
And the wool in the gloves burned like hell,
And there seemed to be a bacon smell.
When the glove was crisp but not destroyed,
I put it in my mouth, as if food were being enjoyed.
And to my mind came the Charlie Chaplin film,
Where he ate the sole from his shoes, and nails like bones he did trim.
I realized no matter how small the ration,
They couldn't rob my imagination.

3. CHOICELESS CHOICES

10 min

In pairs and each group member needs to choose a family member to represent.

You have 5 minutes to decide what the remaining 2 members of the Malacki family will choose to do and why. If you haven't made a decision after the allotted time, your decision will be made for you.

Scenario: There's been talk about the Nazis liquidating the ghetto and sending everyone that's left away. Since Kreina and Liza arrived, thousands have been sent to 'work camps' never to return. There have also been rumours of mass killings at nearby Ponary. The partisan groups that Liza has connections with have said if they can escape the ghetto they can meet up with the Soviet partisan group led by Fedor Markov, but females are rarely accepted into partisan groups.

What should Kreina and Liza (16) do?

- Just do as they're told by the Jewish council and Nazi soldiers?
- Try to escape to the Naroach forest where the Markov brigade is located?
- Try to escape and return to Mrs Karlovichova's farm?

Note: Mrs Karlovichova's farm is about 130 kms away. The Naroach forest is a little over 100km away.

4. GO TO THE FORESTS

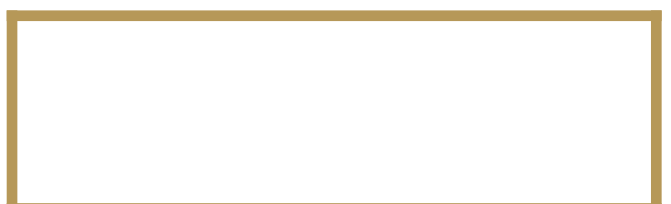
The words of Zerach Erlok: "If anyone tells you that when he joined the partisans, he did so because he wanted to fight and take revenge, it's not true. We all left the ghetto in the hope that we would stay alive. And if we didn't survive, at least we wanted to die in a different way than the way most of the Jews died. Not with them shooting you in a mass grave, not by being sent to a concentration camp. I think that whoever fled from the ghetto had similar motives. They did not go out in order to fight, they went out in order to live."

(From: Nechama Tec, *The Family of the Forest People, Bielski's Partisan Unit* [Jerusalem: Yad Vashem] 1977, p.53).

A. Describe what you see in the photos and what you think life was like living in the forests of Naroch and Rudnicki.

"WE ALL LEFT THE GHETTO IN THE HOPE THAT WE WOULD STAY ALIVE. AND IF WE DIDN'T SURVIVE, AT LEAST WE WANTED TO DIE IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN THE WAY MOST OF THE JEWS DIED."





4.

LESSON 4 RETURN TO LIFE

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand how shocking and life altering it was for Jews to discover the real extent of mass murder that occurred during the Holocaust.
- To understand how Jews managed to return to life after such traumatic events.
- To understand how antisemitism and the Holocaust had a significant impact on the lives of Jews worldwide.

1. LEARNING ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Malacki family are just one of millions of Jewish families that were torn apart by the Holocaust. As Europe was liberated by the Allies and as survivors returned home, the full extent of the Holocaust started to become clear.

Rank the following statements about the Holocaust from most shocking to least shocking:

- It is estimated that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust.
- Hitler and Germany were responsible for the attempted extermination of all Jews in Europe.
- Although millions of others died because of the war and because of Nazi persecution, Jews were the only group that Germany attempted to completely get rid of.
- It is estimated that 1.5 million Jewish children and thousands of Romani, German, and Polish children died in the Holocaust.
- Germans murdered about 90 percent of Lithuanian Jews, one of the highest victim rates in Europe.

All of those that survived the Holocaust faced the daunting task of returning back to a new version of normal. But how could they do that when their lives had just been torn apart?

2. REUNITED AT LAST

Watch testimony of how Freda, Liza and Itzchak were all reunited and lived after Vilna was liberated by the Soviets.

Liza and Itzchak found that each other were alive and lived with Freda in Widze before returning to Vilna with Itchak. Although they eventually immigrated to New Zealand, it's important to know that it wasn't a short journey to get there. It was years of living in different camps and short stays in different cities throughout Europe.

3. THE JOURNEY WEST

A. Map activity: draw lines between the cities that Liza, Itzchak and Freda travelled to in order to make their way to the displaced person's camp in Berlin.

You could record this journey using Google Maps, or find it on a map printout.

- Left **Widze/Vidzy** in 1945
- Went to **Vilna/Vilnius** with Itzchak
- Got on a goods train and got all the way to **Łódź, Poland**
- Arrived in **Szczecin, Poland** and on trucks crossed the border
- Crossed the border illegally into **Berlin, Germany**
- Moved to Displaced Persons Camp in **Eschwege, Germany**
- Arrived in **Landsberg, Germany** Displaced Persons Camp in 1946

They made their way on a train to a displaced persons camp and attempted to get to Palestine. But Freda got sick with an ear infection and they ended up making their way to New Zealand instead.



4. GROWING UP IN NEW ZEALAND

Photos of Freda & Liza plus Freda, Bob and their family in New Zealand.



Liza and Freda in Germany in 1948



Freda's graduation in 1981



Bob and Freda's wedding day - January 22, 1959



Porus Family - Jack, Liza, Jack's wife Lynn and brother Michael (front). Sons Joel and Daniel (back)



Itzak Porus



Freda and her Hebrew school class.



Ian Narev and his family



Bob and Freda with their children Ian, Kim and Rick.



Freda was awarded Queen's Service Medal in 2012



Family reunion at Okahu Bay



Liza and Freda



Bob and Freda Narev



Freda at her grandson Daniel Jaffa's barmitzvah, 2012

Read the brief summary of Freda and Liza's life in New Zealand

Freda, Liza and Itzhak immigrated to Auckland, New Zealand in 1949. They had nearly moved to Palestine illegally, but Freda getting an ear infection stopped them travelling. Liza and Itzhak started their own family in New Zealand, however Itzhak passed away in a tragic industrial accident in 1964. Liza passed away at the end of 2019.

Freda went to Auckland Girls Grammar school and went on to be a bacteriologist for the Auckland Hospital Board. In 1957 she became engaged to Robert Narev, also a Holocaust survivor. In 1962, the first of the new Narev generation, daughter Kim, was born on Kreina Malacki's birthday. Eric, known as Rick, was born in 1964 and Ian in 1966.

They have both been actively involved in Holocaust education in Auckland. Together with Claire Bruell, Freda has also been involved in the Auckland oral history group, having conducted many interviews with other survivors and refugees.

While and after raising a family, Freda has also been active with both Jewish and general community work, including marriage guidance, the Home and Family Society, the Shalom Court rest home, and the Citizens Advice Bureau. She was co-founder and coordinator of the Senior Outreach Service for the Jewish elderly. For all her activities she has been awarded a Queen's Service Medal.

In October 2019 representatives of the Narev and Porus families went to Poland to take part in a Righteous of the Nations ceremony celebrating Mrs Karlovichova and her son for saving Freda's life.

Discuss the following questions:

- What do you think life was like for Freda and Liza when they first arrived in Auckland, New Zealand?
- How has Freda influenced others in New Zealand?
- What significance does Freda's story of survival have for us as New Zealanders?

5. WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT WE REMEMBER?

A. Read through quotes about why we must remember the events of the Holocaust:

"The spirits of evil are emerging in a new guise, presenting their anti-Semitic, racist, authoritarian thinking as an answer for the future, a new solution to the problems of our age. And I wish I could say that we Germans have learnt from history once and for all. But I cannot say that when hatred is spreading."

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2020)



"First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me."

Martin Niemöller (1946)



"Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings."

Heinrich Heine -- *Almansor: A Tragedy* (1823), p. 142



"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Elie Wiesel Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, December 10, 1986



"Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions."

Primo Levi

C. Create a video or poster explaining why is it important that we remember what happened in the Holocaust.

Students could get some inspiration from the 'Keeping the Memory Alive' posters on the Yad Vashem website: <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/international-projects/posters/2014.html>