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Category: Years 7-8

Topic: Society is full of people who have stood up to prejudice and discrimination. During the Holocaust this was no exception. Describe the role that one person played in saving Jews during the Holocaust and explain what impact they have had on you.

Irena Sendler, a hero of the Holocaust

Throughout the endless nights and the dreary hours of the Holocaust, a hero remained behind the shadows, unrecognized for her work as a saviour in the Holocaust. That hero's name was Irena Sendler. Irena Sendler was a 29-year-old Polish social worker living in Warsaw when World War 2 commenced. As the Jewish were driven tightly into the Warsaw ghetto, Irena along with her underground network succeeded in smuggling and hiding over 2,500 children throughout the Holocaust. Up until the autumn of 1999, Irena was a hero that remained in the shadows but now she is globally recognized for her courageous acts throughout the Holocaust. After understanding Irena's story, it inspired me, made me reconsider what a hero was and she showed me how important equality is.

Throughout Irena's life, she helped smuggle Jewish children out of the ghetto and set up hiding places for them. She did this while putting herself in personal danger, but always putting the needs of the Jewish children before herself. Irena inspired me to always help others that are in need and to treat others the way you want to be treated.

Hearing the story, of a saviour who came from a background, where they were not famous or wealthy made me realize that heroes are ordinary people. Irena was not born a hero, but she displayed courageousness and proved that to be a hero, all you have to do is support what is right. Irena quoted that "If someone is drowning, you have to give them your hand. When the war started, all of Poland was drowning in a sea of blood, and those who were drowning the most were the Jews. And among the Jewish, the worst off were the children. So I had to give them my hand." This made me realize that it is simple courageous acts which makes someone a hero.

Irena grew up in a home full of compassion, kindness, and equality. Her mother was a social worker and her father died of Typhus which he acquired by tending to Jewish patients, which his colleagues refused to treat. A lot of this kindness rubbed off on Irena as she too was driven for equality and strived to let people know that no matter what ethnicity you are, we should all be treated the same. Irena's father told her before he died that "There are two kinds of people: good and bad. Nationality, race and religion do not play any role; what is important is which human you are." I believe this is true, equality is very important in life.

Although there were many heroes in the Holocaust, Irena Sendler is the hero that sticks out for me. She was selfless, courageous, and risked her life to save Jewish children. Irena inspired me, made me realize what a hero was and she also showed me how important equality is. Irena Sendler, was in fact, a hero of the Holocaust.