

HISTORY LEADERSHIP ETHICS JEWISH VALUES

## CAFÉ RESIST

A 60-90 minute activity for 9th – 12th grade students



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### Lesson Overview

Use this experiential activity to engage your youth in discussions about ethical dilemmas encountered by the Jewish partisans during the Holocaust. The discussions take place in a relaxed 'café' setting that is a contrast to the harshness of everyday life during World War II.



Conforms to Common Core Standards  
[jewishpartisans.org/standards](http://jewishpartisans.org/standards)

# Who Are The Jewish Partisans?

**par-ti-san** *noun*: a member of an organized body of fighters who attack or harass an enemy, especially within occupied territory; a guerrilla

During World War II, the majority of European Jews were deceived by a monstrous and meticulous disinformation campaign. The Germans and their collaborators detained millions of Jews and forced them into camps, primarily by convincing them that they were going there to work. In reality, most Jews who entered these so-called “work camps” would be starved, murdered or worked to death. Yet approximately 30,000 Jews, many of whom were teenagers, escaped the Nazis to form or join organized resistance groups. These Jews are known as the Jewish partisans, and they joined hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish partisans who fought against the enemy throughout much of Europe.

## What Did They Do?

Partisans were determined to do battle with the Germans. They were not powerful enough to attack them frontally; that was the task of Allied Armies. But partisans could use speed, surprise, mobility and full knowledge of the area to attack the Germans and then escape before their enemies had time to confront them. Jewish partisans blew up thousands of German supply trains, convoys, and bridges, making it harder for the Germans to fight the war. Partisans also destroyed power plants and factories, focusing their attention on military and strategic targets, not on civilians. Jewish partisans forced the Germans to expend massive amounts of resources on combating them, disrupting their focus from multiple fronts against the Allies. One German commander called the Jews a “dangerous element” for their participation in partisan units in Russia.<sup>1</sup> In Lithuania, where Jewish partisans made up approximately 10% of all partisan fighters, they were responsible for 79% of derailed German trains and injuring nearly 50% of all enemy soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Jewish partisans saved thousands of Jewish lives, in some cases literally breaking Jews out of the confines of well-guarded ghettos, and in at least one situation, digging a tunnel to free 250 people from a ghetto. It is important to note that many partisans credit three things for their survival—luck, knowledge, and opportunity—not heroism, courage, and bravery.

## How Did Other Jews Resist?

Resistance against the Germans took many different forms. In addition to the physical resistance of the partisans and ghetto fighters, spiritual resistance took the form of prayer services, and teaching children to read Hebrew. Artistic resistance produced art and poetry in ghettos and camps. Without taking up arms, these Jews stood in defiance to the Nazis, who sought to strip Jews not only of their lives, but also of their dignity and self-respect in order to facilitate the killing process. Jews countered the Germans and their collaborators in still other ways. Smugglers sent children to safety and couriers carried messages between the ghettos. Forgers created documents to ensure Jews safe passage to non-occupied countries or create fake identity cards that allowed Jews to “pass” as non-Jews. Jews in the work camps also sabotaged guns and other products they were forced to make for the Germans.

## Why Should We Learn About the Jewish Partisans?

Most students falsely believe that Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter”. They perceive the Holocaust as a piece of Jewish history only about victimization and the loss of hope. The experience of thousands of Jewish partisans who stood up to tyranny and oppression, fought courageously—and often successfully—against the Germans, and saved countless lives is an important part of Jewish history that few students are aware of. This information has the power to transform people’s perception of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, providing a clearer picture of Jewish heroism and character. After learning about the partisans, non-Jewish teens acquire a greater understanding about the Jewish people, leading to interfaith dialog and tolerance, while many Jewish teenagers often feel empowered, developing a stronger sense of Jewish identity and pride. The story of the Jewish partisans is empowering, and demonstrates how young people can make a positive difference in the world.



*A group of Jewish members of the Lenin battalion of the Lipczany forest. 1944. Location: Belorussia. Source: Museum of Jewish Heritage*

## Life Lessons of the Jewish Partisans

Most of the Jewish partisans that JPEF interviewed agreed that three important life lessons must be passed on to future generations:

- *Young people can make a difference*
- *Stand up to tyranny, oppression, and discrimination...early*
- *Never give up*

JPEF encourages educators to discuss these with their students throughout this lesson.

## What is JPEF?

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation develops and distributes effective educational materials about the Jewish partisans, bringing the celebration of heroic resistance against tyranny into educational and cultural organizations. JPEF produces lessons, study guides and films for 6th–12th grade History, English, Ethics, Leadership, Jewish Studies and more. JPEF educational materials are a key curriculum component in thousands of Jewish and secular schools worldwide.

1. Documents of the Holocaust, edited by Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margalioit (Lincoln, The University of Nebraska Press, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem 1999), 441–444.  
 2. Fighting Back, Dov Levin, (New York, Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1985), 196.

# How to Use this Activity

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation has produced a comprehensive and thought-provoking new curriculum called RESIST. The lessons of RESIST transmit values and enduring understandings arising from the stories of the Jewish partisans.

This RESIST lesson is divided into five sections. These sections provide teachers and instructors with an overview of the lesson, a guide containing background information on the subjects at hand, instructions on how to prepare for the lesson, an easy-to follow lesson procedure, and the materials and attachments necessary to conduct the lesson. The following is a list of these six sections.



*Recreation of how partisans laid explosives on train tracks. Location: Lithuania. Source: Ghetto Fighter's House*



*JPEF presentation at Camp Tawonga. 2005. Source: JPEF Archives*

## Overview

Contains a summary of the lesson and learning objectives.

## Guide

Provides additional information for the teacher/instructor about the topics at hand.

## Setup

Lists the materials and space necessary to carry out the lesson and explains how to prepare for the lesson.

## Procedure

Lists step-by-step instructions for running the lesson. Action words are boldfaced.

## Attachments

The worksheets, forms, and other materials needed to complete a particular lesson.

# Overview

*This lesson will take 60 – 90 minutes and is targeted for 9th – 12th grade students.*

## Activity Summary

World War II presented Jewish populations under Nazi rule with uniquely horrific dilemmas. A seemingly trivial decision could result in the death of a loved one, or even one's own death. Holocaust scholar Laurence L. Langer coined a term to describe these drastic situations in which the stakes often involved life and death: "choice-less choices." For Jewish partisans, who were able to join or form armed resistance groups, a whole new level of these "choice-less choices" were created.

Café RESIST engages students in discussions about ethical dilemmas encountered by the Jewish partisans throughout World War II, highlighting the application of Jewish ethics when faced with the most difficult of questions. The discussions take place in a relaxed café setting that is a contrast to the harshness of everyday life during World War II. While the content is heavy, the atmosphere is comfortable, pleasant, and evocative of the "period" setting in history.

With this activity, the secret to success is in the creation of an *immersive environment* in which learning is *experiential* and felt on a personal level. If your team of educators and/or instructors can commit to role-playing and create a fun and provocative atmosphere, participants are more likely to have a memorable, empowering, and deeply meaningful educational experience.

## Activity Objectives

- Define the concept of an "ethical dilemma"
- List examples of ethical dilemmas drawn from their own experiences and those of the Jewish partisans
- Explore the ethical dilemmas faced by three Jewish partisans
- Apply Jewish ethical principles to help solve ethical dilemmas faced by the Jewish partisans
- Apply Jewish ethics to help solve difficult personal decisions and dilemmas



*Portrait of Jewish Partisan Sara Ginate at the liberation of Vilna in Lithuania. 1944.  
Source: USHMM*

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## Ethics...

are the examination of right versus wrong, the identification of how people make responsible choices, and study of what happens when they fail to do so.

It also refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong which help people decide how to take action in day-to-day and life-or-death situations.

The more practice we have in examining and applying ethics in our daily decisions, the better we can respond to *ethical dilemmas*: complex situations where different right actions seem to be in conflict, such as when telling the truth may put another person in danger.

## Ethical Dilemmas: "Choice-less Choices"

Conventional wisdom dictates that tough situations have a "right" and "wrong" answer. However, everyone at some point faces a decision that inevitably will result in some sort of negative outcome. We call this a dilemma: a challenge in which there are two (or more) identifiable solutions, both of which portend negative, even disastrous, results.

In some instances, two or more core Jewish ethics, indeed universal human values, clash with each other no matter what the choice. Violent conflict and crimes against humanity bring such situations to shocking extremes, often on a mass scale. Take 9/11 as an example of one unprecedented disaster, during which thousands had no choice but to make decisions that were guaranteed to have tragic results:

- The World Trade Center "jumpers" had to choose between "suicide" and excruciating death. Two instinctive human priorities, also articulated in Jewish texts, were at odds:

Will to live  $\longleftrightarrow$  Desire to minimize pain and suffering

- The passengers of United Flight 93 faced a decision regarding not only their own lives, but also those of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others. Again, a clash of values made this an extreme either/or situation:

Prohibition against killing  $\longleftrightarrow$  Obligation to save lives

Jewish law has a built-in mechanism for such situations: *pikuach nefesh* (to save a life). The principle behind *pikuach nefesh* is that a law may be broken if it is with the aim of upholding a higher, more important law. Many rabbis interpret this to imply that human life is a supreme value.

The Jewish partisans faced unprecedented situations involving grave threats to human life. One unique aspect of these

situations was that when faced with the choice of short-term relief or long-term hardship and danger, for some reason, Jewish partisans overwhelmingly chose the latter.

In this activity, young people will consider how Jewish partisans may have reached these difficult decisions.

# Guide

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## Café RESIST...

is an immersive environment created by the program facilitator and staff. It involves significant logistical preparation, props, food items, programming supplies, content preparation on the part of all staff, and a careful balance between the levity of the program's format, and the serious nature of its content.

The "*Maitre de*" leads the program and is the manager of Café RESIST. The "Wait Staff" supports the Maitre de, delivers food and discussion "menus," answers participants' questions when necessary, and keeps discussions on track. They should be familiar with the activity, and the material in the Partisan Study Guides.

## The Short Films...

suggested for this activity are a "double feature" lasting a combined 15 minutes. If time and/or budget limitations only allow for one, it would be most helpful to use "Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust.

If it is possible, show the film(s) in a different room before welcoming students to Café RESIST.

1) *Der Fuehrer's Face* (*Walt Disney Treasures - On the Front Lines*), available from Amazon.com for about \$25, is an eight-minute cartoon short from 1942, which can both set a WWII-era tone and ease participants into difficult discussions in a light, entertaining, authentic way.

2) *Introduction to the Jewish Partisans* provides an introduction to who the Jewish partisans were, and what they did. This short film can be viewed for free at the JPEF website: [www.jewishpartisans.org/films](http://www.jewishpartisans.org/films). You may also request a DVD by emailing [dvd@jewishpartisans.org](mailto:dvd@jewishpartisans.org) or contacting JPEF at (415) 563-2244.

The screenings can take place immediately before Café RESIST, or up to a week in advance, either in a different location, or in the Café (as illustrated in the suggested setup diagram).

## The Closing Discussion...

of this activity may lead to some interesting and provocative topics. JPEF recommends that the discussion leader pose the following question during the discussion: "Though there were about 30,000 Jews who joined the partisans, why do you think so many Jews did not or could not join the partisans?" Here are some of the numerous and compelling answers to this difficult question:

- Resisting the Nazis most often had harsh immediate results, such as denial of food and shelter, and risk of immediate execution—for those caught resisting, their family, or both.
- Even as they went to the camps, many Jews were unaware they were going to be murdered. (In the First World War, millions went to work camps to actually work—and they survived. Many had no reason to think this would be any different.)
- Could anyone have imagined something as sinister as Hitler's Final Solution? Who could have guessed that Jews would be taken from their homes to the ghettos and then to camps where they would be systematically murdered? At what point would someone discover such an evil plot?
- Some Jews had never heard of the partisans.
- Many Jews had no formal military training. (Few countries permitted Jews into the military. Those that could join were seldom advanced beyond entry-level ranks.)
- Few Jews had the opportunity to join: the partisans were elusive and difficult to find, they generally rejected women and those they considered too old or young, and the price of admission was usually that one had to have their own gun or rifle—a near impossibility for most Jews. ?
- Joining the partisans usually meant leaving one's family behind to an uncertain fate.

## The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation...

develops and distributes educational materials about the Jewish partisans and the life lessons arising from their stories. For more information about the Jewish partisans, please visit: [www.jewishpartisans.org](http://www.jewishpartisans.org)

# Setup

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***This activity will take up to 90 minutes. It is designed for approximately 25-75 participants in 9th-12th grade. It requires one staff member to play the role of "Maitre de," and one staff member per one or two tables to play the roles of the "Wait Staff".***

The impact of this experiential program cannot be as strong without attention to detail. Details (listed below) such as the tablecloth, centerpiece, and period costumes are all elements that will lead to its success. Optional items are marked as such, but the "basics" go a long way towards making Café RESIST an experience to remember. Remember, the higher the production value, the greater the experience.

While numerous content materials are provided within this document, there are other props that must be provided by you. This demands creativity and plenty of advance preparation. JPEF suggests gathering antique style furnishings, objects, costumes, and other items that will give Café RESIST an authentic, 1940s feel. If budget allows, it's worth a trip to the thrift store to get some additional items that will add to the program's immersive impact.

Before beginning Café RESIST, ensure that the room is completely ready to go before the participants arrive, so that when they enter the café as a group, the setup will be a complete surprise.

It is important to note that while the layout of this activity has been designated as a WWII French Café, this activity could be implemented successfully in other formats as well. A standard, non-thematic restaurant or diner would also work with this activity. While JPEF encourages the use of creativity to produce a conducive, energetic atmosphere for this event, we caution the use of themed restaurants that might trivialize the serious issues that are dealt with in this activity. For example, a 50s themed diner might not be an appropriate backdrop for a discussion of some of the ethical dilemmas of the Jewish partisans. Please use discretion in this regard.

## What You Will Need:

- a large multi-purpose space (two if possible)
- The two short films that can be utilized for this lesson, *Der Fuhrer's Face* (8 minutes) and *Introduction to the Jewish Partisans* (7 minutes). See the GUIDE section of this activity for where to get these short films.
- DVD player, projector, and screen or area to project the film(s)
- A card table, or small table (or simply a paper table cloth on the floor) for every 4-6 participants.
- a long table (6-8 feet) for real snacks/food
- a table for programming supplies (menus, pens, etc.)
- 1 CAFÉ RESIST MENU per participant (see pages 13-19) – printing on cardstock is an optional way to help add realism

- 1 FOOD FOR THOUGHT CRITIC NOTEBOOK (pages 10-11) per table of participants
- 1 pen or pencil per table of participants
- Snacks to accompany each Food for Thought course (i.e.: crackers, cheese, pretzels, nuts, veggie sticks and dip, small sandwiches, mozzarella sticks and marinara sauce, cookies, candy, donuts, etc.)
- Beverages
- Cups, and napkins for all participants (plates and other items if necessary)
- Music system and speakers
- Audio recording of "The Hymn of the Jewish Partisans" (*Zog Nit Keynmol Az Du Geyst Dem Letstn Veg*—"Never Say That You Have Reached The Final Road") available on several CD's including "Rise Up And Fight! (Songs Of Jewish Partisans)" published through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or on the JPEF website through their kind permission, [www.jewishpartisans.org/music/Partisan\\_song.mp3](http://www.jewishpartisans.org/music/Partisan_song.mp3).

## Optional props for Café RESIST:

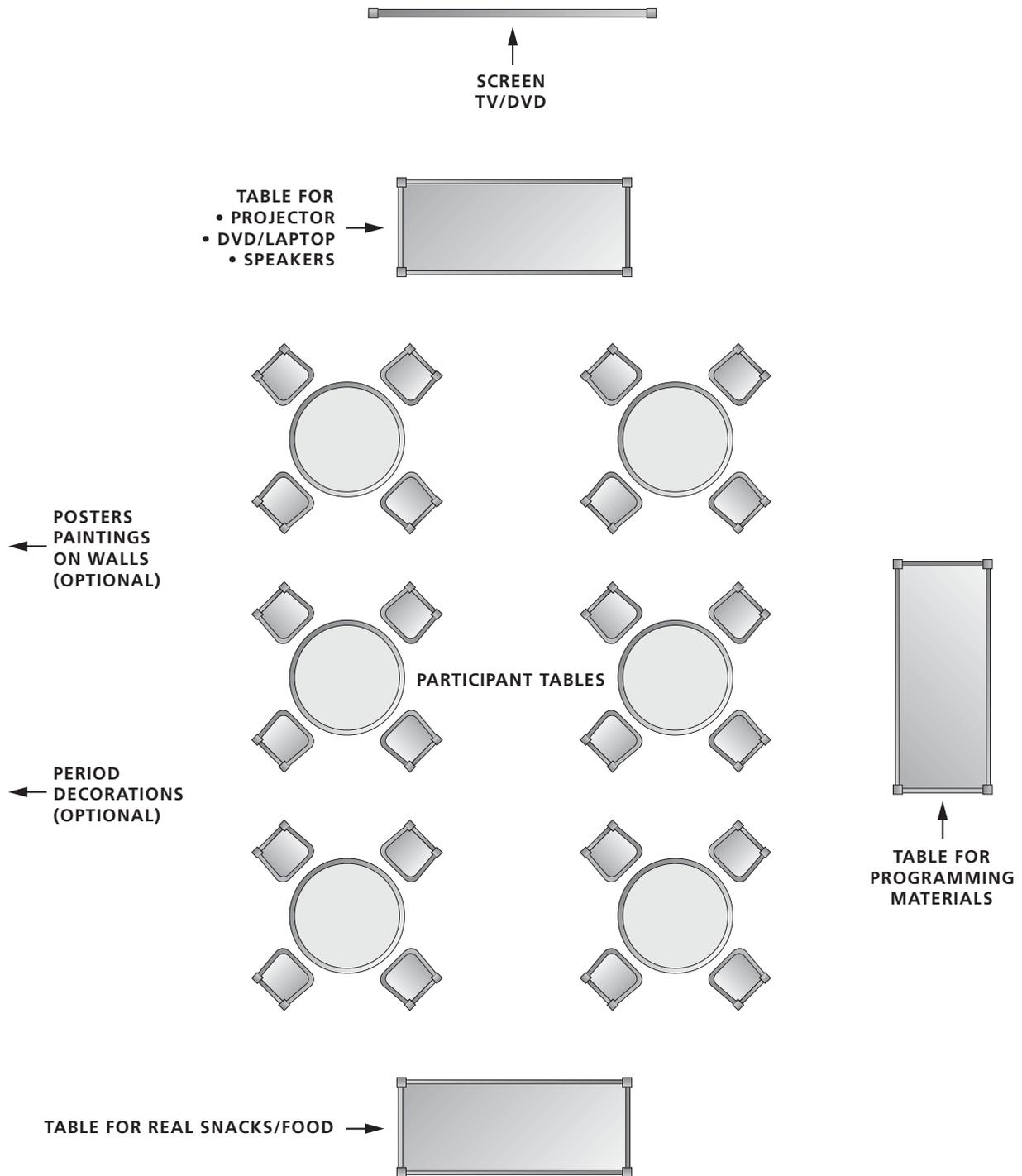
- 1 vase with flowers per table of participants (or other decorative centerpiece)
- 1 tablecloth per table of participants
- Antique style lamps
- Period posters, painting reproductions, or prints
- Wall hangings
- Jewish partisan biography posters (available from JPEF)
- Period music by Edith Piaf, Marlene Dietrich, etc.
- RESIST stickers (available from JPEF) for distribution at the end of the program

## Optional props for the Maitre de and Wait Staff:

- Name tags
- Hand towels
- Trays
- Notepads and pens/pencils for taking orders
- Period costumes (as with antiques, gather what you have at your disposal, or go thrift stores. We suggest at least a button up shirt. Add-ons can include vests, shoes, glasses, etc.)
- Votive candles for each table.

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## Suggested Setup



\*Note - If you have access to a second multi-purpose room that can fit all participants, we strongly suggest using it for the introduction where you will view the film(s) and have a closing discussion. Having this extra space helps to clearly delineate the tone of the activity from one part of the program to the next. It also invites everyone to step into a personal, immersive experience inside Café RESIST, conducive to small group discussion. The transition back to the film/discussion space invites participants to step outside of their experience at Café RESIST, process it, and feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

# Procedure

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## Introduction – up to 20 minutes

1. Seat participants to watch the double feature of short films. The films, described in the GUIDE section of this activity, are an effective way to introduce the Jewish partisans and the issues to be discussed at Café RESIST.

2. Present the double feature. If for any reason, only one of the films can be presented, show *Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*. If for any reason, neither of the films can be presented, read aloud, "WHO ARE THE JEWISH PARTISANS?" This document can be found at the very beginning of this activity.

## Welcome to Café RESIST – 10 minutes

1. Bring participants into Café RESIST (if you have used a separate space for the Introduction).

2. Maitre de: Welcome participants with the following (or to this effect):

*"Madames and Messieurs. Welcome to Café RESIST. My name is (choose a fitting name), and it is my great privilege to serve as your Maitre de for this afternoon/evening. Here at Café RESIST, the food we serve is nourishment... for your mind. We offer you a tantalizing menu (display the menu) with numerous courses of Food for Thought. So please come in, find a table (if you have assigned seats, then say, "find your table"), as the staff at Café RESIST proudly present... your lunch/dinner."*

\*Note: If you are choosing to assign seats for this activity, it is recommended that you preset a list at each table of the participants that should be seated there. The Maitre de and Wait Staff should assist participants in finding their seats.

3. Wait Staff: Go to your tables and ask everyone to introduce themselves to one another (if they do not already know one another). Help the group to "break the ice." The more immersed you are in your character, the more fun the group will have with this activity. This will help the group to relax and feel comfortable working with one another.

4. Ask the group to choose a "Food for Thought Critic." Tell them that the critic's job will be to record the group's thoughts. The waiter/waitress should then say: "Please select your critic, and I will be right back with your menu." Then leave the table.

5. Return and hand a CAFÉ RESIST MENU to everyone at the table. Then hand a FOOD FOR THOUGHT CRITIC NOTEBOOK printout to the Food for Thought Critic. Also give this person a PEN or PENCIL.

6. Maitre de: Announce to everyone in the room:

*"Dear guests, each of you at Café RESIST has now received a menu. Please open it. As you can see, your menu contains a First Course, Second Course, and a Third Course of ethical discussion items. Turn to the First Course section of your menu and look over your choices. (Wait a few moments) Notice that just before the First Course, there is a page called "The First Dilemma." Look at "The First Dilemma" page. Now listen carefully, because here is how Café RESIST works. For each course of your meal at Café RESIST, your group will read about an ethical challenge three different Jewish partisans had to face.*

*"Your job is to discuss the questions in the Food For Thought Critic's Notebook for each dilemma or ethical decisions, using one or more of the items on your menu for that course to help guide the conversation. Your table's Food Critic will record your group's answers during this discussion.*

*"Your waiter will be on hand to provide your table with snacks (or lunch/dinner) and help explain the ethical items on the menu, if necessary. You will have 12 minutes to complete each course. When you hear the following music (briefly play "The Partisan Song") please move on to the next course. Are there any questions before we begin?"*

7. Field questions.

8. Maitre de: Say to participants: *"Very good. Make sure your Food for Thought Critic records the answers to your conversation. You are now ready to turn to the First Course of your menu and begin the meal."*

## First Course – 12 minutes

1. Wait Staff: Serve a snack to each table and make sure participants understand the directions. Once participants have started reading that course's dilemma, you can move on to the next table.

2. Return to each table to help get conversations moving, if not already in progress and on-topic.

2. Allow discussions to run their course at the tables. Check-in from time to time to make sure the discussion remains on-topic and help facilitate as needed. Make sure the Food Critic writes down participants' answers.

4. Maitre de: Announce when there is one minute remaining for this course. Then, when time expires, play "The Hymn of

# Procedure page 2 of 2

the Jewish Partisans" to signal the end of this course. Instruct participants to move on to the next course on their menus and to begin reading the next dilemma.

## **Second and Third Courses – 12 minutes each**

1. Repeat the procedure for "First Course" for the two remaining courses.
2. Maitre de: Ask all participants to help clean up the room and throw away trash, following "dessert".

## **Closing Discussion – up to 25 minutes**

1. Take all participants back to the room where you gave the introduction and watched the film(s). If the closing discussion is taking place in the café, simply segue into the closing discussion at this point.
2. The Maitre de and Wait Staff should now stop playing their characters.
3. The activity leader (or another staff member) ask each Food for Thought Critic to report on the discussions at each course of the meal in turn. Take 5-10 minutes to gather thoughts and reporting for each course. Participants should be encouraged to use details from the menu, when necessary. Take notes on this discussion.

Reporting may result in discussions that cover some of "The Closing Discussion" topics in the GUIDE section of this activity. Whether these topics surface or not during the discussion, it is recommended that the discussion leader refer to the GUIDE to raise these important issues.

4. Collect the FOOD FOR THOUGHT CRITIC NOTEBOOKS for evaluation.



# Food for Thought Critic Notebook

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## DIRECTIONS

The Food for Thought Critic should fill out this "notebook" during the activity, by summarizing the discussions at your table. One suggestion for doing this is to wait until the end of each discussion and ask the members of your group to "sum up" their thoughts and ideas. Be sure to include your own thoughts and ideas as well.

NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

## FIRST COURSE / FIRST DILEMMA (GERTRUDE BOYARSKI)

Food for Thought items for this course: \_\_\_\_\_

What ethical decisions or dilemmas did Gertude face? \_\_\_\_\_

How did she respond? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think about what happened? Which Food for Thought items can help shed light on the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss a personal decision or dilemma (from the news or from your own lives) that people your age face. Which Food for Thought item(s) on your menu could help guide someone's response? In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_

(continue on next page)

# Food for Thought Critic Notebook

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## DIRECTIONS

The Food for Thought Critic should fill out this "notebook" during the activity, by summarizing the discussions at your table. One suggestion for doing this is to wait until the end of each discussion and ask the members of your group to "sum up" their thoughts and ideas. Be sure to include your own thoughts and ideas as well.

## SECOND COURSE / SECOND DILEMMA (BEN KAMM)

Food for Thought items for this course: \_\_\_\_\_

What ethical decisions or dilemmas did Ben face? \_\_\_\_\_

How did he respond? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think about what happened? Which Food for Thought items can help shed light on the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss a personal decision or dilemma (from the news or from your own lives) that people your age face. Which Food for Thought item(s) on your menu could help guide someone's response? In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_

(continue on next page)

# Food for Thought Critic Notebook

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**DIRECTIONS**

The Food for Thought Critic should fill out this "notebook" during the activity, by summarizing the discussions at your table. One suggestion for doing this is to wait until the end of each discussion and ask the members of your group to "sum up" their thoughts and ideas. Be sure to include your own thoughts and ideas as well.

**THIRD COURSE / THIRD DILEMMA (JOE KUBRYK)**

Food for Thought items for this course: \_\_\_\_\_

What ethical decisions or dilemmas did Joe face? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did he respond? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think about what happened? Which Food for Thought items can help shed light on the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Discuss a personal decision or dilemma (from the news or from your own lives) that people your age face. Which Food for Thought item(s) on your menu could help guide someone's response? In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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## THE FIRST DILEMMA

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### *Gertrude Boyarski*

Gertrude Boyarski was all by herself for the first time in her life when the Germans killed her family. She had no one left. As she recalls, "I was all alone. My life was nothing, yet I wanted to live." Gertie, as her friends and family used to call her, wanted to join the partisans. A supposed friend of the family offered to help her join if she would become his mistress. Appalled at his request, Gertrude refused, even though it might be her only chance to become a partisan.

Gertrude decided to take things into her own hands and went directly to Commander Bulak, the leader of a partisan unit near Derechin, telling him she wanted in. Bulak was dismissive of her and said, "You girls don't want to fight. You girls want to come to the group to have a good time." But Gertrude was insistent, "I want to fight and take revenge for my whole family. I had seventeen cousins, five uncles, and five aunts who were killed in the ghetto. I want to take revenge."

Impressed by Gertrude's conviction, Commander Bulak agreed to let her join the unit on one condition: She would have to serve as a guard for two weeks, on her own, about a mile away from the group. She would receive a horse, a rifle and a gun, and food would be brought to her once a day by a partisan who would identify himself with a password. If she heard any unusual noises, she was to notify the group. It was a dangerous mission, and there would be no one to help her. Gertrude agreed.

"I was all alone in the woods, in the middle of the night, dark, and each time I heard a little noise, I thought it's Germans, but it was animals. I was afraid of the animals too, but I said I'm going to do it and I did it. Two weeks—it was like two years."

Gertrude passed the test and was recruited as a partisan fighter. She went on to be a highly decorated soldier, eventually earning the Soviet Union's highest military award, the Order of Lenin.

# *Food for Thought*

## FIRST COURSE

### *Sanctity of Life Salad*

"Compute the loss in doing a commandment against its reward and the benefit of a transgression against what will be lost."

—Pirkei Avot 2.1

### *Matzo Ball Morality*

"Keep your distance from an evil neighbor; don't be the buddy of a wicked person; and don't give up on retribution."

—Pirkei Avot 1.7

### *Leadership Latkes*

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

—Pirkei Avot 1.14

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## THE SECOND DILEMMA

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*Ben Kamm*

A year after the German invasion of Poland, the Polish Jews were forced into ghettos—forced mostly by superior German strength, but persuaded to go through lies about eventual freedom. Warsaw, the Polish capital, was divided into "Aryan" and "Jewish" sectors that were separated by an eleven-foot wall capped by broken glass and barbed wire. Within weeks, close to a half million Jews had been uprooted and squashed into apartments lining the 73 streets that constituted Warsaw's ghetto.

The Kamm family packed a few bags of clothes and a handful of mementos and were forced to move into a single room in the ghetto with seven other people. The ghetto itself was quickly overrun by hunger, disease, and death. Smuggling food or goods into the ghetto was punishable by death. As Ben explains, "They kill you if they find you, but you have to do it to survive." Flouting Nazi orders, Ben began smuggling, helping keep his family alive as starvation and disease stalked the ghetto.

When Ben heard a rumor that partisans were battling the Germans a hundred miles away in Lublin, he convinced nine friends to sneak out of the ghetto with him and join the fight. Neither Ben nor his family members expected the separation to be long.

Not long after joining the partisans, Ben found out that his family was on the edge of starvation as conditions worsened in the Warsaw ghetto. He sewed pockets into his pants and shirts and filled them "with beans, beans, beans, beans, and all kinds of other packages." Using the familiar smuggling routes, Ben snuck back in to the Warsaw ghetto. What he saw filled him with horror. "People—dead people—laying in the streets. Children begging. People begging. Horrible. Horrible." Ben left to rejoin his partisan group. He never saw his family again.

Looking back, Ben regrets not trying to take his younger brothers with him when he left. At the time, though, he felt it would be safer for them to stay behind than risk their lives on the run. Though conditions were bad in the ghetto, he believed that his family would survive. As Ben put it: "I think that the human mind cannot comprehend what happened. That they were going to take people and gas them and kill them by the millions, it didn't even come into my mind."

# *Food for Thought*

## SECOND COURSE

### *Partisan Pasta Primavera*

"If I am for myself alone, then what am I?"

—Pirkei Avot 1.14

### *Compassion Quesadillas*

"The world stands on three things – the Torah, prayer, and loving acts of kindness."

—Pirkei Avot 1:2

### *Resistance Roast Chicken*

"The reason why the guilty prosper or the innocent suffer is not within our grasp."

—Pirkei Avot 4.15

## THE THIRD DILEMMA

*Joe Kubryk*

As soon as the Germans invaded Joe's Kubryk's home town, they established restrictions to persecute the Jews.

On Fridays, the Germans would entice local Jews to the market place by giving them permission to buy food. Then, while the Jews would shop, German soldiers would grab them and put them on trucks. When Joe saw the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators rounding up his classmates, he knew he had to run for his life.

Joe didn't tell anyone his plans, because his parents—if they knew—would stop him. His parents would never agree to go to the forests, and he couldn't take his brothers and sister with him because they were too young.

In August 1941, not long after his friends were taken by the Nazis, Joe felt that it was "now or never." He never said good-bye, though he feared he would never see his family again. Joe took a loaf of bread, and with just the clothes on his back, left when his parents were too busy to notice. Joe was only 14, and he cried himself to sleep every night for the family he left behind.

Eventually, Joe was found by several Jewish partisans who recruited him into their group. Joe and several of his partisan friends would sneak into the ghettos of Rovno and Brody in the Ukraine to help young Jews escape. There, the Jews were being systematically rounded up for slave labor or to be shot in the neighboring woods. Joe and his troupe would get through the ghetto gates by posing as Ukrainian thugs. "We'd say, 'I'm going to rob the Jews,'" Joe recalls, "and they were happy to let you do that." Joe would go in with several men, and return with one or two more: Jewish prisoners who he snuck out under the guards' noses when they weren't counting how many men went in. The Germans would sometimes reward them with a loaf of bread for "beating up" Jews. In this way, Joe's group saved approximately 150 Jewish lives.

# *Food for Thought*

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## THIRD COURSE

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### *Contemplation Cake*

"If not now, when?"  
—Pirkei Avot 1.14

### *Pondering Pecan Pie*

"Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence  
around the Torah."  
—Pirkei Avot 1:1

### *Justice Gelato*

"The sword comes into the world because of justice delayed and justice  
denied and because of those who misinterpret the Torah."  
—Pirkei Avot 5.8