

NAME: _____

School/class: _____

HMLC/2018

IN THE MUSEUM: ***THE ŁODZ GHETTO 1939-1941***

“Like a stone in water, they disappeared.”

✪ When was the Łodz ghetto sealed? _____

What did this mean for the Jews of Łodz?

✪ How was life in the ghetto organized to provide for the residents' needs? Find at least 5 elements of a functioning society that were present in the ghetto:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Listen to the recorded testimonies of Mary Lou Ruhé, Sara Wolf, Leo Wolf, and Lisa Sjöberg [station 21]

Describe the conditions the residents faced every day:

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- *Ghettostadt: Łodz and the Making of a Nazi City*. Gordon Horwitz. Belknap Press, 2010.
- *The King of the Jews*. Leslie Epstein. Putnam, 1978; paperback 2004. A novel about Rumkowski and the Łodz Ghetto.
- *Memory Unearthed: The Łodz Ghetto Photographs of Henryk Ross*. Bernice Eisenstein, Jan Van Pelt. Art Gallery of Ontario, 2015.

⊕ Who was Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski? Was he a positive force or a destructive one? Why do you think so?

On September 1942, the Nazis demanded that the Jewish Council hand over all children under the age of 10 and old people over the age of 65 for deportation to Chełmno extermination camp. In response, Rumkowski gave the following speech:

The ghetto has been struck a hard blow. They demand what is most dear to it – children and old people. I was not privileged to have a child of my own and therefore devoted my best years to children. I lived and breathed together with children. I never imagined that my own hands would be forced to make this sacrifice on the altar. In my old age I am forced to stretch out my hands and to beg: "Brothers and sisters, give them to me! – Fathers and mothers, give me your children..."

Yesterday, in the course of the day, I was given the order to send away more than 20,000 Jews from the ghetto, and if I did not – "we [the Nazis] will do it ourselves." The question arose: "Should we have accepted this and carried it out ourselves, or left it to others?" But as we were guided not by the thought: "how many will be lost?" but "how many can be saved?" we arrived at the conclusion – those closest to me at work, that is, and myself – that however difficult it was going to be, we must take upon ourselves the carrying out of this decree. I must carry out this difficult and bloody operation, I must cut off limbs in order to save the body! I must take away children, and if I do not, others too will be taken, God forbid.

[quoted in the Holocaust Educational Trust. <http://www.70voices.org.uk/content/day28>]

What argument(s) does he give to persuade them to give up the children and elderly?

Given what you have read and seen about the ghetto and the Nazis' actions,

What would you do? _____

Why?

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“Like a stone in water, they disappeared.”

✪ When was the Łodz ghetto sealed? ____1942_____

What did this mean for the Jews of Łodz?

Residents were forbidden to leave the ghetto; visitors were not allowed.

A major road intersected the ghetto. Bridge made is possible to go from one side to the other; traffic (by trolley or foot) was not allowed to stop as it passed the ghetto's barbed wire walls.

✪ How was life in the ghetto organized to provide for the residents' needs? Find at least 5 elements of a functioning society that was present in the ghetto:

1. Currency (with Rumkowski's picture on it)
2. Militia/police
3. Textile factories
4. Fire brigade
5. Postage stamps (also with Rumkowski's picture)

Listen to the recorded testimonies of Mary Lou Ruhé, Sara Wolf, Leo Wolf, and Lisa Sjoberg [station 21] [?]

Describe the conditions the residents faced every day:

1. Rations of about 1100 calories/day—¼ of what a healthy adult needed
2. No running water or sanitation system
3. Very crowded conditions (165,000 people in a small area)
4. Extreme measures for smuggling food and goods into the ghetto
5. Schools, worship, intellectual life forbidden—but carried on secretly

✪ Who was Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski? Was he a positive force or a destructive one? Why?

The chairman of the ghetto's *Judenrat*, he felt responsible for the survival of the residents of the ghetto. His actions and methods were controversial; they seemed at once self-centered and selfless.

What argument(s) does he give to persuade them to give up the children and elderly?

- I love our children and to be forced lose them is a terrible sacrifice
- I bargained the total required down from 42,00 to 20,000
- If we do not select who will go, the Nazis will do it anyway
- Think of this as how many are saved, not how many are lost
- If we do this, the rest of us may be saved

Given what you have read and seen about the ghetto and the Nazis' actions,

What would you do? _____Give them up? Refuse? Hide? Another idea?_____

Why?

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✧ DESCRIPTION:

- This exercise offers students 10-15 minutes, more or less, to observe the artifacts, listen to survivors’ accounts, and read the material included in the exhibit on the Łodz ghetto.
- It asks students to command both the facts of ghetto life and the implications of those facts by answering 2 kinds of questions: the political and civil restrictions on life there and the implications of those restrictions.
- Finally, students are asked to put themselves in the places of ghetto residents and judge the effectiveness of its leader, Chaim Rumkowski, and the request he makes of them to give up their children.

✧ PURPOSE:

- To provide information about the conditions ghettos imposed on the inhabitants.
- To identify specific individuals, systems, and consequences resulting from Nazi rule.
- To reveal the immersive experience of ghetto life.
- To show the complexity of the choices leaders and inhabitants faced under Nazi policies.

✧ OBJECTIVE:

- To reveal the self-governing impulse of people arbitrarily chosen and required to live together in crowded and inadequate circumstances.
- To provide an opportunity for students to make a difficult, albeit hypothetical, decision based on available information—to reason their way through an untenable situation.

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✧ And for the existentially, philosophically minded: how does one live in the face of choiceless choices?

“Perhaps it's done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story.....it will be the silence, where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.”

—Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

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