

Lesson

Duration:

Two 50-minute class periods

Learn the History: Deportations from the Łódź Ghetto in an Anonymous Girl's Diary

Learning Objectives

In this lesson students will gain an understanding of the extreme living conditions within the Łódź Ghetto. Through reading diary entries from the Anonymous Girl, students will have an opportunity to compare her first-hand account of ghetto life with primary documents recovered from the Łódź Ghetto.

Educators and students are encouraged to read the introduction to the Anonymous Girl's diary in *Salvaged Pages*, pages 226–30, before beginning the lesson. It provides valuable information about the writer's life and historical context for a reading of the diary.

Overview

One week after Germany invaded Poland beginning World War II, German troops occupied the city of Łódź (pronounced "Loge"). In early February 1940, the Germans established the Łódź ghetto, forcing 160,000 Jews, approximately one-third of the city's population, into an area encircled with fences and barbed wire. Because the city of Łódź was already a center of industry in prewar Poland, German forces quickly established factories for the war effort and exploited the ghetto's residents for forced labor.

In 1941–42 another 40,000 people were deported to Łódź from Germany, Austria, and other German-occupied lands, including a sizeable population of Roma (Gypsies) from Austria. Beginning in January 1942, the Germans began deporting these same Jews to the nearby killing site of Chelmno. While the Jews in Łódź did not know with absolute certainty the fate of the deportees, they lived in terror of being forced to go into the unknown. It was in 1942, amid a period of frequent deportations from the ghetto, that the Anonymous Girl began writing in her diary. While her diary offers little information about her or her life before the war, it includes important details about the deportations and how they were viewed by those inside the ghetto.

Focus Questions

Diaries written within ghettos reflect many aspects of suffering under the Nazis. One of the most central of these was the pervasive threat and reality of deportation.

- What can we learn from diaries about the impact of the deportations on the lives of Jews in the ghettos?
- What do we learn about how the Anonymous Girl viewed deportation?

- What hints does the Anonymous Girl give that she does or does not understand where the deportees were going?
- What is the emotional toll she suffers as a result of the constant deportations from the ghetto?

Activities

Opener: Read Entry from the Anonymous Girl

Begin by asking students what they already know about deportations during the Holocaust. What role did they serve? When and how did they occur? Record their responses.

Read aloud the opening lines from The Anonymous Girl's diary:

[Undated entry]

nobody sends the community officials away. There is no justice in the world, not to mention in the ghetto. Right now they are deporting people on welfare. People are in a state of panic. And this hunger. A struggle against death from starvation. Life is terrible, living conditions are abominable, and there is no food. . . .

I'm very upset about the whole situation, because how can you be indifferent to so much suffering? How can you watch indifferently when they deport people you know, the sick, the elderly, and the children?¹

Ask students to reflect and discuss these beginning lines. What do they notice? What role do deportations appear to have within the Łódź ghetto at this moment? Is this new information? What questions does this entry raise?

The Łódź ghetto was one of the largest and longest standing ghettos that existed in Poland during the Holocaust. The leader of the Jewish Council in the Łódź ghetto was Chaim Rumkowski. Rumkowski believed that creating a useful Jewish workforce for its German oppressor was the community's path to avoid annihilation. All those able to work joined 12- to 14-hour shifts in grim conditions for little pay and a food ration of bread and thin soup. Boys and girls ages 14 and older began entering the labor force in spring 1941.

We recommend reading with your students [the history of the Łódź ghetto](#) and viewing an [animated map of Łódź](#), both from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, to learn more.

Main Activity: Learning About Deportations from the Łódź ghetto

Diaries are unique primary sources that offer students the opportunity to learn history from a first-person account. They also offer students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the human experience and, when viewed side by side with other documents, expand their knowledge of the Holocaust experience.

1. With students in small groups, pass out [Deportation of Jews From Łódź Ghetto](#), [Jews Being Deported from the Łódź Ghetto](#), and [Łódź Ghetto Poster Announcing Resettlement](#). Have students look at the primary source materials and reflect on the information. Then discuss what new information these images and artifacts offer. What story do these sources tell about the deportations from the Łódź ghetto?
2. Read aloud [Diary Entries on Deportations from the Łódź Ghetto](#).
3. Have students form small groups to discuss the following questions. Remind students to assign a note taker and to choose a reporter.
 - What are the connections between the diary entries and the supplemental primary source materials?
 - How do the documents deepen your historical understanding of the diary entries and the experience of the Anonymous Girl?
 - What new details do the documents reveal?
 - How would it change your understanding of the Holocaust, or the Anonymous Girl's diary, if these documents didn't exist? Why is this important?
4. Have the reporters share the findings of their groups with the class.

Citations

1 Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 230.

Assessment

Deeper Exploration and Assessment: Comparing Records from the Łódź ghetto

In the Łódź ghetto during the Holocaust a team of authors kept a record of daily life from 1941–1944. This was not done in secret but was part of an official archives kept by the Jewish administration of the ghetto. Initially buried in the ghetto, these records were recovered after the war and published first in Polish then in English.² In February and March 1942, at the same time the Anonymous Girl wrote in her diary about the deportations that were occurring, an official record of what occurred was also kept for the archives.

1. Have students read [Records from "The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto"](#).
2. Compare the Primary Source #5 record with the diary entries from the Anonymous Girl from the same month. Then discuss the following questions in small groups or as a whole class. It may be helpful for students individually, in small groups, or as a large class to discuss and track their answers to the questions below by using a [two-column note-taking strategy](#).
 - What are the similarities between these two historical records from the Łódź ghetto? What are the significant differences? Why are these similarities and differences important details in examining the deportations?
 - How does comparing two different historical records from the same time and same place inform your understanding of this moment?

- Why is comparing two chronologically aligned records an important historical research skill? What insights does this process offer
- Describe the tone (or voice) of the author and the writing style of each source. How do they compare to one another? What do you notice? Is this important? Why or why not?

Citations

2 An abridged collection of the documents, *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto* was published in 1984 and edited by Dr. Lucjan Dobroszycki. For more information on this publication see [The Untold Story of the Lodz Ghetto](#). Accessed September 2, 2015.