

Teacher's Guide - The Story of Zvi Shepetinsky

Lesson Plan for High School Classrooms

Guidance and pedagogical advice:

Ms. Efi Sadiv, Director of the Tel Aviv district teaching center at the Society and Youth Administration, Ministry of Education.



About the Activity:

The enrichment activity is interactive, and we recommend teaching it close to Yom HaShoah. The activity is suitable for 7th-12th grade students in both public and religious-public schools.

The activity is centered on the topic of Jewish partisans during the Holocaust and inspired by the story of Zvi Shepetinsky (today, Shefet) and the story of his family.

After the Germans burned down the Slonim ghetto in Belarus, Zvi escaped with his parents and sister, heading toward the forest.

In the forest, they reached a family encampment of partisans. It was there that Zvi decided to separate from his family

members and join a combat resistance group of partisans.

The unit discusses Zvi's experiences as a partisan, touching on his life prior to the war and continuing with the story of Zvi's immigration to the State of Israel on the very day that it was declared. It shares how he raised a family in Israel and finally concludes with Zvi's remarks today, at age 95.

During the activity, the student is exposed to Jewish combat in the partisan units and the different issues that the partisans dealt with during their resistance.



The activity will take place through experience, interaction and familiarity with the feelings, fears, deliberations, and coping mechanisms of a young teenager during this period.

Activity Objectives:

1. The students will become familiar with the life story of a young man from a Jewish community, prior to the war and during the war.
2. The students will be exposed to the personal stories of Holocaust survivors.
3. The students will learn about the partisans, their lives, their goals, and their courageous spirits.
4. The students will become familiar with the dilemmas and challenges of survival in the forest.

Teaching Method:

An interactive online activity that can be taught:

- As a synchronous class activity (facilitated by the teacher).
- As an asynchronous individual or family activity.
- In the classroom, face to face.

During the activity, students will be presented with tasks that they will complete in order to progress in the story.

For the best experience with this lesson plan, it is recommended to use a desktop or laptop computer (not a Smartphone or Tablet)

Preparatory discussion with the students before the activity:

- What do you know about the partisans?
- What do you imagine when you hear the word “partisan”?
- What do you think the lives of the partisans in the forests of Europe throughout the years of the war looked like?
- We are commemorating Yom Hashoah - Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day. What makes someone a hero, in your opinion?

General background for the teacher about the partisans:

The name partisan refers to a fighter in an unofficial military who fights against a conquering army. It is usually used in the context of fighters in underground movements who opposed the Nazi dominion in Europe during World War II.

During the first years of the war, there were disputes within the ghettos regarding the question - is it better to remain in the ghetto and fight from the inside, or fight in the forests as part of the partisan movement. Some people remained in the ghettos to fight from within, and some escaped to the forests to join the partisans. Essentially, Jews participated on both fronts.

The hatred that the local population felt toward the Jews was expressed in a palpable and tragic way, even when Jews escaped from the ghettos to join the partisan units, as well as within the units themselves. Sometimes, Jews who had succeeded in escaping from the clutches of the German guards in the ghettos fell into the hands of anti-Semitic farmers or partisans and were murdered, or returned to the Germans. By the end of 1943, the Jews had established themselves within the partisan movement and also operated their own units. The Jewish partisans reached the peak of their anti-Nazi efforts after most of the ghettos had been liquidated.

Partisan family camps - A very unique Jewish phenomenon were the partisan family camps, which included men, women and children. Almost all of the family camps were saved thanks to the fact that the family members remained together in most cases. Most of them became maintenance camps for the Russian partisans, and featured shoemaker shops, weapon repair workshops, and bakeries.

The military struggle against the Nazis was the clearest expression of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust (quoted from the Jewish Agency website).

Discussion with the students following the activity:

- What did you learn about the lives of the partisans in the forests of Europe that you didn't know before?
- In your opinion, should the partisans be called heroes? Why?

- Why is heroism not just a measure of physical strength?
- Do you know of any other examples of heroism during the Holocaust?

[To read more about the challenges that the partisans faced](#)

[Link to the autobiography of Zvi Shefet \(Shepetinsky\) - "Modeh Ani"](#)

[Link to the website of Slonim Jews in Israel](#)

At the end of the activity, we invite the students to visit the [Shem Vener website](#) and print or prepare labels for memorial candles.

Each label features the name of someone who perished and some information about them. The students will stick the labels onto the memorial candles and light them on Yom Hashoah eve.

We invite the students to upload pictures of their candles on social media and tag us:

On Facebook: @שם ונר - Our 6 Million

On Instagram: @shemvener

