



COVID-19 Archive Activity

This activity is designed for students grade 5 and up and their families. It is designed for a family to complete together, but students can also complete the activity individually. If the student will be completing the activity alone, walk them through all of the steps before they begin so they understand your expectations.

Steps:

- 1. Start this activity by reading the text below for background on the Oneg Shabbat Archive.**

The Holocaust was the organized murder of six million Jews by the Nazis, a political party that came to power in Germany in 1933. The Nazis were racists who believed that they were superior to others. The Nazis treated Jewish people in Germany unfairly after they came to power. The Nazis passed laws that limited the freedoms of Jewish people. Nazi laws made it difficult for Jews to work, own their own business, get an education, or even be part of the community around them.

After the start of World War Two, the Nazis invaded much of Europe and began to separate Jewish people from everyone else. Many Jews in Eastern Europe were forced to move into places called ghettos. The word ghetto originally meant a Jewish neighborhood, so the Nazis used this word to describe closed off areas where Jewish people were forced to move.

Many ghettos, including that in Poland's capital Warsaw, were eventually closed off from the rest of the city. There was not enough food or medicine to go around and people lived squashed together (for example, eleven people living in one room). Jews were not allowed to leave the ghettos and were therefore trapped when the Nazis began deporting Jews to killing centers. Jewish people resisted any way they could, not just through violence but also by coming together as a community to help others and keep their religion and culture alive.

A historian living in the Warsaw Ghetto named Emanuel Ringelblum realized that what was happening was a big deal, and he wanted to create a record so future generations (that's us!) would know about what happened. He also wanted to collect evidence that could be used in trials after the Holocaust.

Ringelblum started by writing about what was happening and interviewing people about their experiences. He recruited more people to work with him and they began collecting items that showed what life was like in the ghetto. This included things like diaries, newspaper articles, drawings, posters, restaurant menus, postcards, event tickets, photographs, and even candy wrappers. They called their effort "Oneg Shabbat," which means "joy of the sabbath," usually a time when Jewish communities gather. The archive participants usually met on the sabbath, the day of rest.

All of the items collected for the archive were eventually buried in three parts, two of which were located after the Holocaust. Because of the archive, we know a lot about life in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Nazis kept records about the ghetto, but they were not interested in honest depictions of those they were about to murder. The Oneg Shabbat archive shows us things the Nazis would have rather us not know, like how Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto were able to maintain their community even in the most desperate conditions.

If you want to learn more about Oneg Shabbat, you can:

- Read the book *Who Will Write Our History?* by Samuel Kassow - Available from [Brazos Bookstore](#) or [Amazon](#).
- Watch the documentary *Who Will Write Our History?* directed by Roberta Grossman - Available from [Amazon](#).

2. Discuss this passage by talking about or writing down answers to these questions:

- Why do you think the Oneg Shabbat archive is important?
- Think of a historical event which interests you or you think you know a lot about (for example, 9/11 or the bombing of Pearl Harbor). Brainstorm how we know about what happened in that event, or how you would find out more about it.
- Why do you think it is important to learn about historical events?
- If you had to evacuate your home because of a hurricane, what kinds of things would be left behind? What would those things tell a stranger about your life? What would a stranger not know about your life based on the objects you left behind?

3. Create your own archive of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What objects will a historian in the future need to understand what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic? Each participant should make their own list of objects first. Then compare your lists. Is everyone's list the same? If they are different, talk about why you think your item(s) should be included.

Combine everyone's ideas into one list and post it somewhere everyone in the family can access. If you think of something else to add, discuss as a group and add it if everyone agrees. Write the date an object is added. Look back at the list every week. How can you see changes in what is happening through your archive?

Call or message friends or relatives and ask what they would include in an archive. Is their experience the same as yours, or is it different?

More Activities

1. Write a diary

Try writing a diary each day for seven days. Write about what you are doing or thinking. What is happening in your community? What is happening in your family? Keep your diary in a way that feels most comfortable to you. Schedule a time for everyone to write in their diary.

2. Create a family newspaper, magazine, or blog

Create a newspaper, magazine, or blog about your family's life during the pandemic. Document important events. These can be events in your community like emergency declarations, neighborhood events like seeing a stray dog, or family events. Divide up tasks based on what family members want to contribute. Tasks include writing articles, interviewing others (via phone, message, or Skype) to get a different perspective, illustrating the news, taking photos, or putting together the final product.

Include anything going on with your family. What is everyone reading? Is there a good recipe you discovered? Did someone tell a good joke? You can also include short stories, poems, comics, or anything you like to create.

For inspiration, learn about Vedem, an underground newspaper created in a ghetto [here](#).

3. Tell the future

Write a list of predictions. What do you think will happen next week? How about next month? You can predict anything you want, but you must provide evidence for why you think your prediction will come true. Write down your predictions and put them in a place where everyone in the family can see. Keep track of what happens. How often did you predict correctly? What events happened that surprised you?

Think about people who are making laws or running local governments during the pandemic. Do you think they always predict what will happen correctly? What happens when they don't?

4. Make your own time capsule

After the COVID-19 crisis is over, put together all of the items on your archive list and make a time capsule. A time capsule is a collection of items that is buried or stored so you or others can discover it later and learn about the past.

Remember to always ask for permission before putting any item in the time capsule. Someone may still want or need the object!