**Children as Smugglers**

**Opening paragraph**

There was a severe food shortage in the ghettos. The Germans distributed very small rations of food to the ghetto’s residents. Because of the severe hunger, most residents of the ghetto suffered from malnutrition and diseases. Therefore, many Jews in the ghetto smuggled food into the ghetto in order to survive. These were usually children, because being small allowed them to pass through ruptures in the ghetto walls. The smugglers put their lives in danger on a daily basis, but despite this, the smuggling did not stop.

<Glossary>

rations – fixed amounts

malnutrition – a physical condition that takes place when the body does not receive the food it needs for normal health

ruptures – holes and openings

**Opening photo**

Boys smuggling, Warsaw Ghetto, Poland

**Photo section**

Children helping a boy climb out of a hidden passage, Warsaw, Poland

From: Yad Vashem Photo Archive

Here is a photo of three children next to the ghetto wall.

The children in the photo look young, especially the boy who is trying to climb through the opening.

Why do you think young children, in particular, became smugglers?

**Drawing section**

Here is a drawing by the artist Halina Olomucki, a Holocaust survivor.

Identify the following objects in the drawing, and point to them using the computer mouse.

1. The ghetto wall or barbed-wire fence
2. The large sack in which the boy is hiding the things he is smuggling into the ghetto
3. The boy’s hand, protecting the bag

The drawing is slightly blurry and uses gloomy colors.

Why do you think the artist chose to draw it this way? What did she want to express?

**Poem section**

The following poem talks about Hershek, a boy who had to smuggle food for his family and the ghetto.

1. How does Hershek feel about smuggling? Highlight the verse that describes this.
2. Highlight the verses that explain why he must do this.
3. What word is repeated several times in the poem? What does it tell us about Hershek’s feelings about smuggling food?

He was, oh, so scared to go to work each day,

But he was twelve, shouldn’t give in to his dread;

Hersh was a smuggler, had to make his way

Beyond the wire, he had to go for bread.

You wait and wait and then the guard turns round,

You lift barbed wire, you wriggle underneath,

You make a dash and you’re on Aryan ground,

Your armband’s off and you can hardly breathe.

Another dash to where your partner waits;

“Hi mate!” “Heil Jew-boy!” “Gimme two this time.”

The bread inside your coat, look sharp, run straight

Back to the wire, once more you cross the line.

…

Hersh is so scared, he really isn’t bold,

He goes because he must, because they’re poor,

They have to eat and all their stuff’s been sold,

Even the beds; they now sleep on the floor.

So all those nasty, dirty ghetto days,

He goes out, quaking, ashamed to feel this fear,

And whistling as he goes, the scared child prays:

“Dear God, today please help me to get clear.”

**Written testimony section**

“…I went with my sister to see how the ghetto wall was built. German soldiers, armed with rifles, supervised the Jews who were building the wall using bricks. When the wall was finished, broken glass was scattered on the edge. My friends in the ghetto showed me secret ways of getting out of the ghetto. I learned how to move between houses, from floor to floor, and exit on the other side. Eventually I was the one sent to buy things, pass notes to and from the ghetto, and bring medicine. I did not understand that it was dangerous. I was six years old.”

From: *Grownup Children* (Jerusalem: International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem), p. 39 [Hebrew]

<Glossary>

supervised – watched, controlled.

* Why do you think glass was scattered on the ghetto wall?
* Why didn’t Hannah understand that she was doing something dangerous? Highlight the sentence in the testimony that explains this, in your view.

What can we learn from Hannah’s testimony about the children’s role in smuggling things into the ghetto?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Even the youngest children… | were involved in smuggling things to and from the ghetto. |
| Children brought important things into the ghetto, such as… | food and medicine. |
| The children taught each other… | how to exit the ghetto. |