**Children’s Games**

**Opening**

In the ghetto, many children were forced to work, look for food, and help their family members. But despite the difficult living conditions, children also found time to play with their friends. They played board games, ball games, snow games, and others. Sometimes they had nothing to play with, so they invented games from things they found in the ghetto.

**Opening photo**

Children playing in the Lodz Ghetto, Poland

**Photo section**

Look at these photos of children playing different games in different ghettos.

1. What are the children in the photos playing?
2. Are these games that children also play today? How are they similar and how are they different?
3. Describe the children in the photos: What are they wearing? How do they look? Do you think they are having fun?
4. What can these photos teach us about children in the ghetto?

**Written testimony**

**“It was a great time for games.”**

“… I don’t remember that period as a time of boring idleness. Most days I was with my friends Arkeh and Meimkeh and their friends. When the weather was good and the conditions were right, we would be outside. It was a great time for games. On cold, rainy, or “not good” days we stayed in one of the apartments. In the winter we built snowmen and had snowball fights like children all over the world… We made improvised sleds from a wide board supported by two narrow, filed-down beams. We slid on them, pushing off in every possible direction…

In summer we played all sorts of ball games, although real balls were scarce … And when we couldn’t play soccer outside, and we were sick of chess, a new game took pride of place – table football with buttons. [This] button-soccer was something that 10-13 year olds in the Kovno Ghetto invented and developed… There were home games and league games, and enthusiastic crowds around the board would watch the game.”

Shalom Eilati, *Crossing the River* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem), pp. 84-85

Children in the ghetto had almost no toys, but they still found many ways to play.

Read Shalom Eilati’s story about his childhood in the Kovno Ghetto.

Highlight in blue the parts of Shalom’s testimony that describe the games he and his friends played (try to find at least five games).

What new game did Shalom and his friends invent and why?

<Glossary>

- idleness – inactivity, doing nothing

- improvised – invented on the spot or from whatever is available

- took pride of place – became important and respected

**Object section**

(1) **A Monopoly game from Theresienstadt Ghetto**

Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection

This game of Monopoly was created in Theresienstadt Ghetto in 1943. The center of the board shows a bird’s-eye view of the ghetto itself, and the bank for the game is the Jewish bank that actually issued money for use in the ghetto.

The various spaces on the board were named after important streets and buildings in the ghetto.

The Monopoly board was created by Oswald Pöck for the purpose of entertaining children, but it was also meant to provide them with information about life in the ghetto.

Questions:

What purposes did the Monopoly game serve, in your view? Click and drag the correct answers

* A game for leisure time @
* Learning the names of the ghetto’s streets @
* Room decoration
* Gift

You can see other children’s games from the Holocaust era at the following exhibit  
<https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/he/exhibitions/children/index.asp#toys-games-books>

(2) **“Zuzia” the doll, who kept Yael Rosner company while she was in hiding in the Warsaw Ghetto**

From: Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection

Yael Rosner was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1939. She and her family were banished to the ghetto along with other residents of the city. Her mother was busy during daytime hours smuggling children outside of the ghetto to the Aryan side to save them, so Yael would hide in a small cellar until her mother returned.

One day her mother brought her a doll to play with during the long hours alone in the cellar.

Later her mother was injured while out working and could not get back to the ghetto, so she sent someone to bring Yael to her, to the Aryan side. Yael climbed into a coal sack and lay there quietly, but as she was being carried along she remembered that she had forgotten her doll in the cellar. She tapped on the man’s back, but he ignored her because of the great danger facing them. Yael did not give up and started shouting, forcing the men to return to the hiding place so she could take her doll. After the war Yael and her mother came to Israel, and years later she donated the doll to the Yad mission Artifacts Collection.

<Questions>

How do you think Yael felt about the doll? What did the doll mean to her?

Mark the best answers

* This doll is my only friend @
* This doll is unnecessary; there’s no point in keeping such a thing in the ghetto.
* When I’m lonely, only the doll makes me feel good @
* I love the doll very much because she’s a gift that my mother had to make a great effort to get me @
* I have fun playing with the doll, but I know that if I have to escape quickly again I will give her up.
* I will not give up this doll under any circumstances because she is so precious to me @