

# The Girl from the Diary



**Hundreds of memoirs and accounts have survived from the times of the Holocaust - shocking testimonies of the collapse of fundamental rights and principles, of the struggle for survival and of unimaginable suffering.**

**Many of them were written by those who survived the Holocaust. In addition to the memoirs of survivors written down after the war, there are also dozens of accounts and diaries of people who described their experiences on an ongoing basis, immortalizing their everyday life in ghettos or hidden on the "Aryan side" on densely written pages.**

**In 2008, the world learned about another important testimony: a diary from the Łódź ghetto written on 112 yellowed pages. Its author remained anonymous for a long time, but thanks to the efforts of researchers from the USA, Poland and Israel, it was possible to identify her.**

**Her name was Rywka Lipszyc.**



For students

# The Life and Diary of Rywka Lipszyc

## Getting to know Rywka

Rywka Lipszyc was born on April 15, 1929 in Łódź as the first child of Jankiel and Miriam (nee Zelwer) Lipszyc. She had three siblings: Abram Ber (born January 13, 1932), Cypora Chaja (born October 9, 1933), and Estera, who was called Tamarcia by the family (born November 13, 1937). The family lived at 43 Południe Street. At the outbreak of the Second World War and the beginning of the German occupation, Rywka was 11 years old.

A few months later, the Lipszyc family ended up in the ghetto established in February 1940. They lived at 22 Wolborska Street. The first victim of the hardships of life in the ghetto was Rywka's father, who died on June 2, 1941 as a result of a severe beating by the Germans and complications related to lung disease.

A year later, the Lipszyc siblings lost their mother, who died on July 8, 1942. Rywka, Abramek, Cypka and Tamarcia were taken care of by their uncle, Jochanan Lipszyc, who was the chairman of the rabbinical council in the ghetto, and his wife, Hadasa. However, already in September 1942, during the deportation action known as "Allgemeine Gehsperr", Jochanan Lipszyc and two of the siblings - Abramek and Tamarcia - were deported to the death camp in Chełmno nad Nerem (Kulmhof).

In March 1943, aunt Hadasa died. The girls – Rywka and Cypora – were adopted by their eldest cousin - Esther.



## The life and diary of Rywka Lipszyc

### Rywka's diary

In October 1943, taking advice from her teacher and mentor Fajga Zelicka, and from her dear friend Sara (Surcia) Zelwer, Rywka began to write a diary.

The entries are characterized above all by the great maturity of the author and her ability to pose difficult questions and philosophical deliberations. In

her diary, Rywka also describes the daily struggles in the terrifying conditions of the Lodz ghetto: hard work, hunger, disease, but also fear for the fate of her loved ones, especially Cypora - her only sister who stayed with her ... But what makes Rywka's diary particularly special is the fact that it is a rare testimony from a deeply religious and tradition-bound person.

### What happened to Rywka?

The last entry in the diary is dated from April 13, 1944. The liquidation of the ghetto in Łódź will begin soon. Together with her sister and three cousins, Rywka is deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in August 1944. Her younger sister, Cypora is murdered in the gas chamber. A month later, as a result of the partial evacuation of prisoners, Rywka and Mina, Chana and Ester are transported to the camp in Christianstadt (a sub-camp of Gross Rosen). In February 1945, they are forced to partake in the six-week Death March to the Bergen Belsen camp. The camp was liberated by the Allied forces on April 15, 1945. On that day, one of Rywka's cousins, Chana, dies of exhaustion. Rywka was in a serious condition. Ester and Mina are evacuated to Sweden for treatment and convalescence. Rywka would not have survived this journey. In June 1945, the cousins see each other for the last time. Ester and Mina leave Germany convinced that Rywka has not survived. However, this was not confirmed in the preserved documents. The last trace of Rywka Lipszyc found so far is a displaced person card from September 1945. The document shows Rywka's personal data, including the country of origin and the country she wanted to go to (Palestine) and her signature. She was still alive in September 1945 ...



## ***A Portrait out of Words...***

Individual work at the exhibition

### **PART A**

*Oh, to write!... To be able to write, to make pen move on paper! I need to write.*

*[...]*

*A few years ago, in my dreams, when I was imagining my future, I could see sometimes: an evening, a studio, a desk, there is a woman sitting at the desk (an older woman), she's writing... I can see myself as this woman.*

**What role can writing play in a person's life? What do we gain while putting our experiences and thoughts on paper? What was writing for Rywka Lipszyc?**



### **PART B**

*Through the fog of my tears, I saw Tamarcia's frightened eyes (that's how she looked in the picture)... She looked like she was calling me. Like she was crying for help... I did nothing...*

*[...] Oh, Tamarcia, where are you, I want to help you...*

**What are the most difficult experiences described in Rywka's diary? How is she dealing with them?**





## ***A Portrait out of Words...***

Individual work at the exhibition

### **PART C**

*I'm losing my strength (not necessarily my inner strength), but that's enough. I'm so weak that sometimes I don't feel any hunger.*

**What is Rywka missing the most? What emotions does he express while writing about the reality of the ghetto?**



### **PART D**

*What's waiting for us in the future? I'm asking this question with both fear and youthful curiosity. We have an answer to this, a great answer: God and the Torah. Father God and Mother Torah! They are our parents! Omnipotent, Omniscient, Eternal!*

**What was the significance of religion and adherence to tradition in Rywka Lipszyc's life? What role can faith play in people's lives?**





For teachers and educators

## Exhibition

In 2017, the Galicia Jewish Museum, in cooperation with the Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center of San Francisco, prepared a temporary exhibition

**"The Girl from the Diary.**

**Searching for Rywka from the Łódź ghetto".**

Due to the great interest in the exhibition, a traveling version was created.

The exhibition presents the story of Rywka Lipszyc - a young girl who wrote a diary while in the Łódź ghetto. It is this diary - a moving record of her adolescence, struggles with the realities of war, and testimony of a religious Jewish girl, who despite losing her siblings and parents never lost her hope – which constitutes the crux of this exhibition.

The exhibition uses unique objects, photographs and documents from museums, archives and other institutions in Poland, the USA, Israel, Germany and Belgium. They emphasize the individual, personal dimension of the Holocaust.

The exhibition is a unique educational tool for teaching about the Second World War and the Holocaust. Rywka Lipszyc becomes a guide in the world of chaos, the loss of values, suffering and death. Thanks to the biographical perspective, the exhibition brings the audience closer to the events of the past, and allows them to identify with the protagonist.



For teachers and educators

# Exhibition

If you are interested in renting the exhibition, please contact the Exhibitions Department of the Galicia Jewish Museum.

## Contact:

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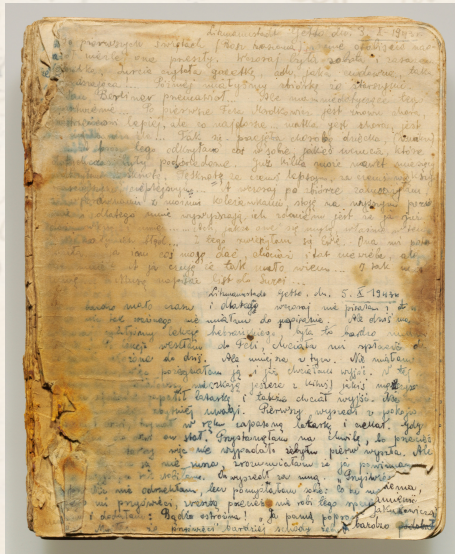
Exhibitions Department: Tomasz Strug  
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For teachers and educators

## Website



Detailed information about Rywka Lipszyc, her family and the fate of her diary, as well as contextual materials allowing her to embed her personal fate in the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust, can be found on the website:

**[www.rywka.com](http://www.rywka.com)**

RYWKA LIPSZYC

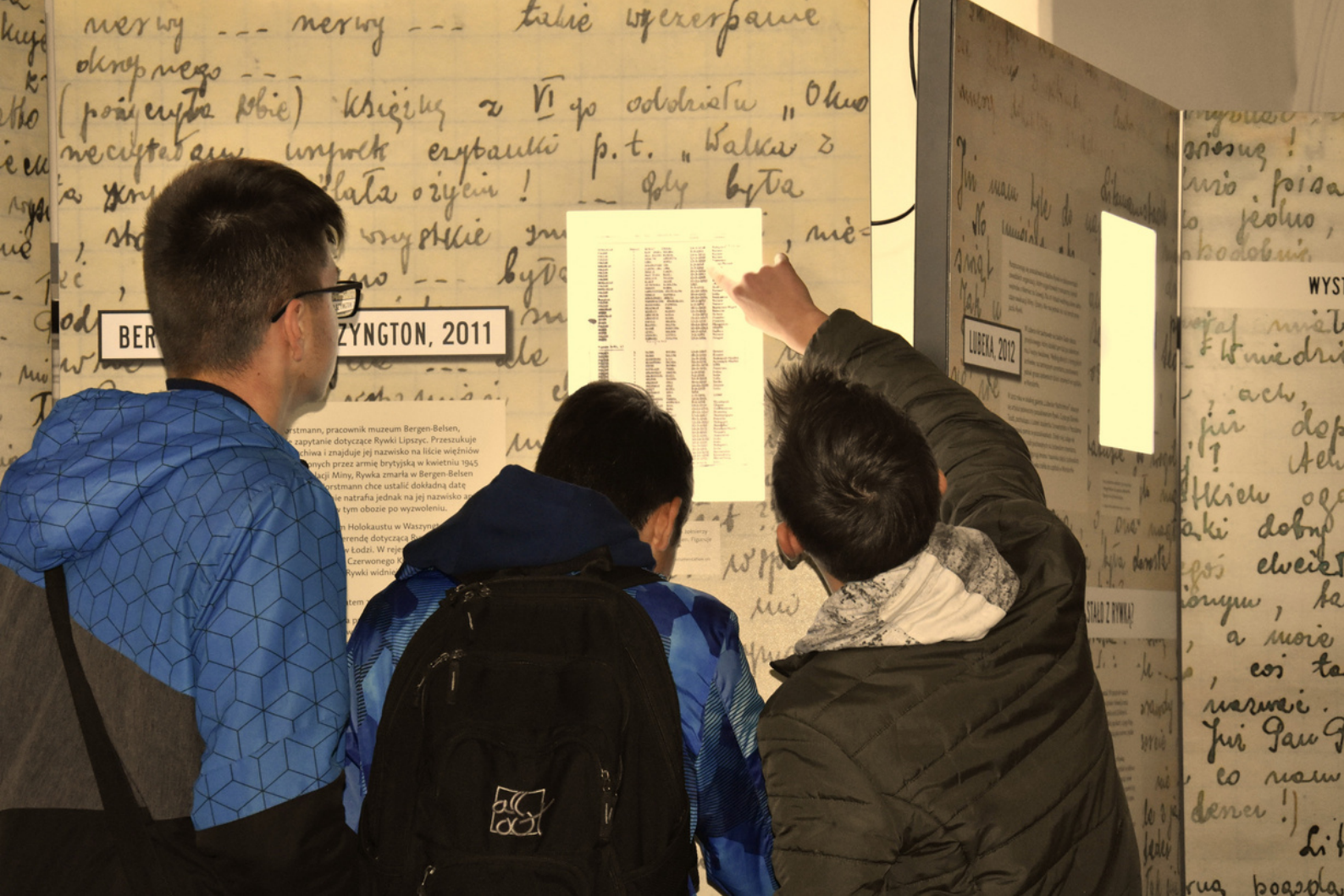
*The Diary from  
the Łódź Ghetto*

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*“The Girl from the Diary. Searching for Rywka  
from the Łódź Ghetto.”*

THE EXHIBITION





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