

Honorable Mention

Division I – Writing

Michael Jarden, Grade 8

Revere Middle School

Streets That Fought Back

Word Count 354

Streets that fought back

I learned about the Warsaw Ghetto
from a textbook picture,
black and white,
people standing too close together,
like the air itself was crowded.
But the picture didn't tell me
how loud fear can be,
or how quiet bravery starts.
The ghetto was made of rules,
brick walls,
and stars sewn on coats.
It was made of hunger too—
empty bowls,
thin soup,
days that felt longer than they should.
Kids my age were there,
only they weren't worried about homework.
They were worried about tomorrow.
The Nazis thought the ghetto was a cage.
They thought people inside were already broken.
They were wrong.
In 1943,
when they came to take what was left,
the streets said no.

Not with big armies
or shiny weapons,
but with homemade guns,
smuggled bullets,
and hands that shook but didn't stop.

I imagine a boy
stuffing courage into his pockets
the way I stuff my phone and keys.

I imagine a girl
watching from a window,
heart beating so loud
she thinks the soldiers can hear it.

I imagine people deciding,
together,
that dying quietly was not the only option.

The rebellion didn't last long.
The ghetto burned.
Buildings fell like tired giants.
Smoke wrote messages in the sky
that no one wanted to read.

The fighters knew they would not win.
But they fought anyway.
That part sticks with me.
Fighting when you know the ending.
Standing up when the odds laugh at you.
They weren't trying to change history books.

They were trying to change how they left the world.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

wasn't about victory.

It was about dignity.

About saying,

“We are still here.

We are still human.”

It was about choosing courage

in a place designed to erase it.

When I close my textbook,

the picture is still there,

but now I hear footsteps,

and whispers,

and the sound of resistance

echoing down narrow streets.

The walls are gone now,

but the story isn't.

It lives in questions,

in poems like this,

in the reminder that even

in the darkest corners of history,

people lit small fires

and called them hope.

Works Cited

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.). THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING.

United States holocaust memorial museum.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-warsaw-ghetto-uprising?series=35>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.-a). RESCUE AND RESISTANCE. United States holocaust memorial museum.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/rescue-and-resistance?series=35>