

Name _____

Date _____



What Was Buried: The Irena Sendler Story

In 1939, Germany invaded Poland.

This initiated World War II.

Germany was ruled by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.

They sought to exterminate the Jews.

In 1940, they built a wall

Around the area Jewish people lived in in Warsaw.

Those who lived there already were trapped,

As thousands more were forced in en masse.

The enclosure came to be called the Warsaw Ghetto.

It was plagued by illness and starvation.

Periodically, soldiers forced residents onto trains;

A death camp was their destination.

Escaping was nearly impossible.

Non-Jewish Poles were told not to help.

But some still did and risked their lives,

Like Irena Sendler, an angel in disguise.

She led the children's division of a secret group

Called Żegota that set out to rescue

Jewish people from captivity and death.

She posed as a health worker to gain entrance

To the ghetto every day. She went door-to-door,

Offering to help kids escape. It was that or

Near-certain death.

So, many parents agreed this was their best bet.

Sendler helped smuggle children out in many ways.

Some hid under stretchers, others tucked away

Under piles of garbage, while others were led

Through sewer pipes or other clandestine escape routes.
But once out, all those kids
Had to hide their identity, bury it
Deep down—the only way to survive.
They were given Christian names and a new life
In an orphanage, convent, or foster home.
After each rescue, Irena carefully wrote
Each child's real name and identity in code
On tissue paper. Then, near her home,
She buried those papers in milk jars, deep
Down enough but not too far to reach.
And in 1945, when the war was done,
Sendler went outside and dug the jars up
And set out to reunite the children with their history.
Most of their parents had been killed.
All told, Sendler saved about 2,500 children,
But after the war, her deeds remained concealed
For fear of persecution by the government of Poland.
Hundreds of those who helped Jews never told.
Stories like Irena's got buried, lost.
But in '99, a group of students came across
A mention of the story of the woman with the jars.
They dug deeper and learned that Irena
Was still alive to tell her story. They got to work,
Sharing with the world what they had unearthed.
Yeah, they got to work,
Sharing with the world what they had unearthed.