

Echoes of Vilna

Classroom Companion Sheet for Educators & Students

About the Play

Echoes of Vilna is a Holocaust-era drama inspired by the wartime diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski and other historical accounts from the Vilna Ghetto. Through diary entries, family conversations, and moments of resistance, the play invites us to bear witness to a lost world—and the resilience that outlived it.

Historical Context

- Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania) was once called “the Jerusalem of the North” for its vibrant Jewish culture. - Between 1941–1943, its Jewish population was decimated through ghettos, deportations, and mass executions at Ponar. - Yitskhok Rudashevski, a 15-year-old diarist, documented life inside the ghetto before his murder in 1943. His writings were discovered post-war and became a rare firsthand account.

Themes to Explore

Theme	Guiding Question & Notes
Resistance	What forms of resistance appear in the play—both physical and emotional? Student Response:
Memory	How does writing (or storytelling) act as a form of memory or survival? Student Response:
Faith and Doubt	How do different characters view God or faith in the face of atrocity? Student Response:
Identity	What happens when identity becomes life-threatening? Student Response:

Courage	What does courage look like in this story—and who defines it? Student Response:
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Before the Play

1. Research the Vilna Ghetto (1941–1943). What was life like there? Student Response:
2. Read excerpts from Yitskhok Rudashevski's diary (if available). Student Response:
3. Warm-Up: 'What does it mean to bear witness to someone else's story?' Student Response:

After the Play

- Which moment impacted you most—and why? Student Response:
- What would you write in a diary if you were living in Vilna during that time? Student Response:
- Did you see any parallels between this history and modern-day injustices? Student Response:

Creative Options:

- Write a poem or diary entry from the perspective of one character. Student Response:
- Create a visual timeline of Vilna's Jewish life before and during the Holocaust. Student Response:
- Dramatize a deleted scene: imagine a private moment between two characters. Student Response:

Writing & Research Prompts

- Compare Echoes of Vilna to Anne Frank's or Elie Wiesel's writing—how does the voice of youth shape our understanding of genocide? Student Response:
- Write a letter to Yitskhok, responding to one of his diary entries. Student Response:

Why This Play Matters

"Memory is a form of resistance." What does this quote mean to you? How can remembering—and telling—stories fight injustice? Student Response: