

## Worksheet: Paula Burger

TEACHER KEY

Answer the following questions. Answers do not need to be in complete sentences.

### Paula's Life Before the War

1. Where is Novogrudek?  
**Poland (but also claimed by Lithuania, Russia, and Belarus)**
2. In what year was Paula born? 1934
3. Write one sentence on Novogrudek.  
**It is home to one of the oldest Jewish communities in the region. The Jewish population (approximately 6500 people) makes up half of the population.**
4. Who were the members of Paula's immediate family?  
**Wolf Koladicki (father), Sarah Koladicki (mother), Isaac (younger brother)**

### War on the Horizon

5. Write a one-sentence reflection about what stood out to you in this section.  
**Germans and Soviets signed a non-aggression agreement in 1939 (an unpublished portion of the agreement lays out spheres of influence throughout Europe for both nations). Poland was invaded by the Germans on September 1, 1939. The Soviets invade September 17, and the territory they took included Novogrudek. The German invasion in the west sent refugees east with stories of Nazi crimes.**
6. *Watch the video testimony.* Why did it take a while for the war to come to Novogrudek?  
**They were so far to the east that it took a while for the refugees to reach their town.**

### "The Sky Exploded": Germans Occupy Novogrudek

7. What are some of the forms of persecution and torture the Nazi invasion on July 4, 1941 initiated against Jews?  
**Jews lost citizenship. Their property was confiscated. They were forced to wear a yellow star of David. They could not walk on the pavement. Strict food rations and forced labor were imposed. They were subject to random acts of violence and murder.**
8. Read the excerpt from Paula's memoir. Write a one-sentence summary.  
**Paula's whole life changed with the invasion. She was playing outside when bullets flew near her, and her parents scolded her while crying and holding her close. The Soviets left in defeat, and others leave, but Paula's family stays. People disappear and she doesn't know what happened to them.**

## **“Black Monday” in Novogrudek**

9. What is Black Monday and how do the Koladickis escape it?

**The Nazis executed 4,000 Jews. Paula’s father was away. Her mother learned of the Nazi raid and took the children to hide on a nearby farm for a few days.**

10. How does the Koladicki family avoid the ghetto?

**They hid on nearby farms and never stayed in one place too long.**

11. Watch the second video testimony. Write a one-sentence reflection about what stands out to you.

**(Summary) Paula talks about running to a nearby farm with her mother and brother. They were being shot at, and she doesn’t want to go any further. However, her mother could get her to keep going by telling Paula that her father was up ahead. She speaks about neighbors who risked their lives to hide her family. These were gentiles who her father knew from work. She explains that if the Nazis caught these people who helped them, the helpers would have been killed, their property burned, and their pets shot. They would have to return to the ghetto because they could only stay with people for 3-4 days due to the risk of being caught.**

## **Novogrudek Ghetto: Murder and Escape**

12. Read or watch the testimony. What is the fate of Paula’s parents?

**Her father left the ghetto to avoid arrest after the people who took over their house turned him in to the Nazis. The Nazis interrogated her mother. Her mother becomes an interpreter due to her knowledge of German, but she is later killed in a mass shooting.**

13. Read or watch the testimony. How do Paula and Isaac get out of the ghetto?

**Her father smuggled them out in a barrel.**

## **The Bielski Partisans**

14. What are partisans?

**Members of armed groups formed to fight against enemy occupation. During World War II, partisan groups were formed throughout Nazi-occupied territories as paramilitary units and to provide shelter for civilians, particularly Jews, fleeing persecution and murder. From remote, hidden forest camps, partisans mounted clandestine attacks on Nazi personnel and infrastructure.**

15. Describe the Bielski partisans in a paragraph.

It was a group formed by four Jewish brothers whose parents and two brothers were murdered by the Nazis. Unlike other partisan groups, this one was specifically Jewish. They participated in armed resistance against the Nazis, but their main goal was survival. They recruited members from ghettos. They admitted all Jews regardless of age or ability. By the summer of 1943, they had over 750 members, 200 of whom were armed fighters. By the time they were liberated by the Soviets in 1944, they had around 1200 members.

### **Life in the Forest: History and Memory**

16. Read or watch the testimony. Describe some of the hardships Paula faced.

Her dad was frequently gone, and so some adults resented taking care of her and Isaac. She was concerned for her father's safety (he is all they have left). Her father met a woman who would become her stepmother. She was not warm towards Paula, and Paula felt very lonely. Food was scarce, and the family needed to be ready to move quickly at a moment's notice. Paula was frustrated by the unfairness of being forced to live outside and being hated for no reason.

### **The "Big Hunt" for Partisans**

17. Read the first excerpt from Paula's memoir about their journey to Krasnaya Gorka. Write a one-paragraph reflection.

(Summary) The Bielski Partisans knew the Nazis were coming, so they relocated to a swampy island. The journey was hard. Paula was concerned that Isaac would cry and give them away. They had to wade through cold, dirty water. She slept standing up as the journey dragged on for days. At one point, they rested in a dry spot and lose the group. The partisans reached the swampy island and realized Wolf and his children are missing. They send out a search party for them and bring them to the new camp.

### **Jerusalem in the Forest**

18. Describe the Bielski Partisan Camp in two sentences.

They established a more permanent camp that included a bakery, mill, tannery, kitchen, food storage warehouse, workshops, clinic, hospital, school, synagogue, and jail. Other partisan groups sought them out for repairs, food, and medical care.

## **Liberation**

19. Read the excerpt from Paula's memoir. Write a one-paragraph reflection.

**(Summary) Despite the Soviets' defeat of the Germans, the Nazis were still hunting Jews. Paula's camp was attacked, and 11 members were killed. Then the Russian military came into their camp with tanks. Paula and Isaac were lifted onto the tank. Some Soviet soldiers cried at the sight of them.**

## **Uprooted again: Postwar Migration**

20. What three countries do they travel through to get to the displaced persons camp?

\_\_\_\_\_ Poland \_\_\_\_\_ Czechia \_\_\_\_\_ Germany \_\_\_\_\_

## **Setting Down New Roots in the United States**

21. How old was Paula when they immigrated to the United States? \_\_\_\_\_ 14 \_\_\_\_\_

22. Read the excerpt from her memoir and write a two-sentence reflection.

**(Summary) She didn't look back as they boarded the plane. Her stepmother was sick before they even took off. Isaac was 8 and loved the flight. Paula held her half-sister, Fay, on her lap. People got sick on the plane, but she was just excited. She saw the Statue of Liberty, and as they landed, her memory of her experience in the Holocaust evaporated.**

## **Building a Life after the Holocaust**

23. Summarize Paula's experience in the United States in two or three sentences.

**She attended school and married David Zapiler, a fellow Holocaust survivor. She had three children. Her father had a stroke and dies 10 years after. They remain very close. Paula moved to Denver in 1967 and got divorced. She had a career in real estate and ran a nursing home. She married Samuel Burger in 1981.**

24. Why is art significant to Paula?

**It became a source of strength and allowed her to process her trauma.**

## **Use the Map Feature on the website.**

25. Filter the map to just Paula. Write a one-sentence reflection on what stands out to you in using this tool.

**Answers will vary.**