

<b>TOPIC:</b> RESISTANCE	<b>TITLE:</b> <b>RESISTANCE AND “RESISTANCES” IN THE AREA OF MONFERRATO CASALESE</b> <b>An example: “la Banda Tom”(a group of Partisans led by Tom)</b>
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## INTRODUCTION

<b>age</b>	Secondary School students (16 – 18 years old)
<b>duration</b>	4 sessions, 60 minutes each
<b>sources</b>	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Seventy years have passed since April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1945. The day we, Italians, remember as The Liberation Day.</p> <p>We need to begin with the “memories” to understand the value of our re-conquered freedom and a new national dignity.</p> <p>However, it is not enough to be limited to a simple celebratory, monumental, rhetorical, or repetitive aspect. So, it is necessary to reflect on the roots of the Liberation that lived in the Resistance, and not only appreciated for their military aspects, but a broad spectrum of integrity, redemption, civil passion, and their hopes for the future.</p> <p>Then, here they are emerging not only from Resistance, but also from the various “resistances;” each one with its own characteristics which were born from different perceptions and experiences. Common citizens, young and old, just like us, were aware that they had to act with responsibility and respect, for justice and humanity. During the Resistance, they completed small and great acts born from their awareness and desire to redeem themselves from their suffering and humiliation.</p> <p>From our national history there, we know the need for freedom, identity, rights, responsibilities, and also for the destiny of other countries. The values of the democracy are common assets and the different kinds of “resistances” establish the basis.</p>



Antonio Olearo, TOM



**Materials:** Photos, posters, books, videos, quotations, interview

## RESISTANCE IN THE MEMORY OF THE PEOPLE IN CASALE MONFERRATO

Talking about Resistance with **Mrs. Rosetta Santambrogio**

Rosetta Santambrogio had been the President of the Antifascist Unitary Committee for a long time, but first of all she is Luigi Santambrogio's sister. Luigi was one of the thirteen young men belonging to "Banda Tom", a group of partisans shot by Nazi-Fascists at the military citadel in Casale Monferrato, in January 1944. The young Rosetta strongly faced the Nazis to lay claim at least to bury his dead brother but they denied it. After the war she fought for the triumph of justice, she has been keeping the memory of his brother and all his poor companions alive since that tragic event, sharing courageously her testimonies with the youngest, to make them understand the sacrifice of those thirteen boys who chose to die for freedom.

biography  
rationale

### OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES

- Defining the concept of "Resistance"
- Building a more shared memory about an event which still raises prejudices and resentments and on which people living in Casale are split
- Inviting the youngest to think about the historical facts
- Creating the premises for a better future built on historical bases and a strong learning

### The Students should

- Understand the difficult basic elements of Resistance in Italy; book: S. Favretto, Resistenza e nuova coscienza civile, Edizioni Falsopiano
- Understand the concept of "Banda" (groups of partisans); book: A.A.V.V. La resistenza nella provincia di Alessandria, 1976;
- Find out knowledges from the analysis of the available documents (photos, newspapers, evidences) Newspapers of the time; Articles commemorating the 70th anniversary of the massacre; Photos and library pictures (manifesto of the Death sentence and photos of the partisans composing the group)
- Understand the reasons why so many young people chose to take position against the fascist regime, fighting totalitarianism; La Resistenza: Quaderno didattico della provincia di Alessandria
- Think about the concept of individual responsibility facing the choices to be taken nowadays by young people. Interview to Rosetta Santambrogio
- Find examples of resistance today

aims

other aspects	<b>classroom arrangements</b>	Ordinary classroom or in Labs for the videos, the posters, and the photos produced.
	<b>groups</b>	16-year-old students. They work in small groups (4 or 5) with a student who coordinates each group (indoors), a group of students interviews Mrs. Santambrogio at her house. The Students work individually at home.
	<b>equipment</b>	Handouts of texts and photos. Projector, computer, Internet connection and LIM.

## DEVELOPMENT

historical background	<p><b>THE TEACHING VALUE OF RESISTANCE</b></p> <p>Facing this subject we would like to awaken our students to the meaning of “Memory” without prejudices, Memory founded on a strong knowledge, leading to both a historical and personal reflection and thinking. This is an opportunity to stimulate a conscious elaboration of past events and to understand how democracy could be fragile without the strong framework of a civil consciousness.</p> <p>Our country is facing a lot of troubles, trying to build a common and shared memory, the basis of a real living together. That’s why we address to teenagers to make them understand the courage and beauty of the choice which led a lot of young people to be engaged in fighting and even lose their lives for freedom.</p> <p>Letting our students know the value of Resistance as a refusal to every kind of dictatorship, means to promote the value of our Constitution, which is the most durable result of the sacrifice which still gives rise to feelings of sharing and belonging to a new Italy and Homeland which has never existed before.</p>
	<p><b>THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF RESISTANCE IN CASALE AND IN all MONFERRATO AREA</b></p> <p>Casale Monferrato and all the surrounding hilly area of Monferrato took an active part in the Resistance Movement during the dramatic period of time from 1943 to 1945. It wasn’t an occasional participation. As in our customs we get back facts, episodes and leading characters. We usually tell events, we mention documents, we propose again the violence we suffered and we inflicted. Together with the single event and plenty of local dramatic stories, it’s useful to propose a more substantial and complex consideration of what Resistance was in Monferrato and which its distinctive features were.</p> <p>Resistance in Monferrato was:</p> <p><b>DIFFICULT AND ORIGINAL</b></p> <p>The Monferrato area of Casale was still situated in the middle of a quadrilateral linked to important railway and road networks, it included a lot</p>

of towns such as Alessandria, Casale, Asti, Valenza, Chivasso, Turin and Vercelli.

The German troops occupied, with their posts, all the area and controlled all the ways of communication (roads, bridges and railways). The Fascists, during the dictatorship (Regime), and the Republicans, after 8<sup>th</sup> September, were always present and they organized all the area. As a consequence of those geographical and military premises we can understand that it was very difficult to start Resistance. It was easy to organize partisans groups in the Pre- Alps and Apennines but it was more difficult in Monferrato: for the first time they had to face lots of risks against the presence of the German military forces supported by a strong and widespread Italian Social Republic. From the beginning, it was an original Resistance because it was born from the integration of both hill peasants and town factory workers or middle class; with sudden spontaneousness lots of "Bande" were born.

In the hills, Resistance had an organised structure only at the end of 1944 and at the beginning of 1945. The German troops controlled each partisan's movements, with the Fascists' support. The first partisans groups were born with the great support of the local people and they were helped by former soldiers, former members of the Italian Alpine troop, former aircraft men and "Carabinieri".

### **UNANIMOUS AND PLURALISTIC**

Different components of ideals inspired Resistance. The communist ideals, the catholic component (also expressed by the Bishop of Casale Mons. Angrisani and a lot of parish priests like Don Camurati who was executed together with nine fathers of a family in Villadeati), the socialist component, the liberal component and the monarchical component, inspired by a patriotic vision of a unitary state.

All social components contributed to the partisans' fighting for freedom: young university students, soldiers, peasant families, factory workers, artisans, teachers, professionals and entrepreneurs, the clergy and the catholic organizations. The Jewish community also contributed, it had taken an active part in the economic and public life in Monferrato. The racial laws and the RSI violence had destroyed the community but a hidden solidarity was born among common people, catholic priests and Jews.

Some Anglo-American and English soldiers were parachuted in Monferrato, they were commanded by Major Leach and before the Liberation they provided weapons, munitions, foodstuffs, clothes, trans - receiving radios, means and instructors for sabotaging.

Our partisans felt that their fighting for Resistance was shared with other people.

### **OPEN AND COOPERATIVE**

Resistance wasn't the expression of closed military or rebels groups. Some partisans came and fight in Monferrato from Val Susa, Val di Lanzo and

some of them were killed in Monferrato. For example the partisan “Bizzarro” left from Casale and went to Valle d’Aosta where he organized the first groups and he was captured and killed when he came back to Casale and took part in his fellow partisan Carrera’s funeral rite.

### **ITS STRONG IDENTITY AND FOUNDATIONS**

Resistance confirmed the main role of Monferrato in the history of this area of Piedmont. The Monferrato area had always had a leading role in the process of changing. We can remember, for example Eusebio Giambone, an active communist born in Camagna, imprisoned by the Fascists, exiled to France and later a member of the Regional Military Headquarter in Piedmont. He was shot in Turin on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1944.

Our Resistance, in its cooperation, built little by little a new shared and democratic sensitiveness.

### **CRUEL AND VIOLENT**

It was also cruel and violent and the losses were heavy:

“Banda Lenti”, 27 young men were shot by fascists in Valenza; “Banda Tom”, 13 young men were captured and shot in Casale in January 1945, when a great part of Italy was already free; the massacre of Villadeati where the parish priest and nine heads of a family were shot in the square of the village and many others in Ticineto, Valenza, Castelletto Monferrato and moreover the fighting and the combings in Cantavenna, Gabiano, the reprisal and the great fire of Rosignano, lots of victims. We paid a very high price for freedom, to overcome a critical period of our history.

We must read, know, learn the pages, the faces and the events, the ideals and the dreams of Resistance, to reach a common historical awareness today. (Sergio Favretto)

The Second World War (Appendix 1)

Resistance (Appendix 2)

### **Talking about Resistance with Mrs. Rosetta Santambrogio**

Our class, the third year of the Course for Administration, Finance and Marketing and our Students’ representative at Istituto “Leardi”, Luca Annaratone met Mrs. Rosetta Santambrogio and interviewed her at her house. She has been the President of the Antifascist unitary Committee for a long time, but above all she is Luigi Santambrogio’ s sister, one of the thirteen young men belonging to “Banda Tom”, a group of Partisans shot by Nazi-Fascists at the military citadel of Casale, in January 1945.

We went and saw her with our History teachers, Mrs. Franca Ameli and Mrs. Maria Laura Franchi. We made a video of the interview but, first of all, we listened to her. She told us “her” story about Resistance and “Banda Tom”.

“[...] my brother entered the Banda Tom when he was only seventeen” she said “[...] he escaped and joined the Partisans to fight for our freedom”. She

biography

spoke with a mixture of sadness and enthusiasm and sometimes with a deep and tangible sorrow. She told us how her brother entered the group, how her family were afraid for him but they respected his choice and then she described the terrible days of 70 years ago, when the Banda Tom's boys were arrested and tortured. Then, in a snowy winter in January, on Sunday they were forced to march barefoot in the snow. On the following Monday they were shot, while his family were desperately trying to know something about the destiny of their son and brother.

"[...] they told us they had caught them but we couldn't go and see because a curfew was imposed and they would shoot us..." . She continued "...when we tried to do something, to ask for help, it was already too late. They told us that the youngest were safe so I went to the citadel, hoping that my brother would be alive. But when I arrived, he was dead, lying on the body of another boy. They told me that we couldn't even take the corpses away because they wanted to throw those bodies "without any God!" in the river Po. After that, I don't know how I could go back home. Then they buried all of them in a town cemetery and didn't allow us to bring them flowers [...]"

It was only a few months after the end of the war that the bodies were given back to their families.

Rosetta and her parents have never forgiven the people who contributed to so many deaths. Then she showed us some photos of Luigi and "Banda Tom", of the parades on commemoration of the massacre, where she was always at the head. She showed also all the papers of the trials she was present to: she has never stopped fighting to get justice.

We took some photos with her and then we left her house with the hope that her story, her brother's, Banda Tom's and Resistance story in general will be renowned and remembered and let this be a warning to people, an invitation to never surrender, never forget but always seek justice. We must always remember our predecessors' sacrifice and take it as an example, for us and for the world we would like to change.

*Fabiana Bonfante, Martina Ombra*



Young Rosetta

activities

1

**The teacher introduces the topic “Resistance”**

Short reflections upon the research method

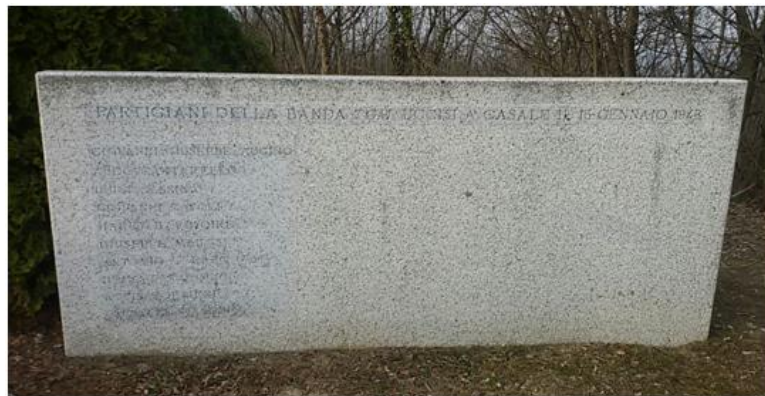
We first approached the subject of Resistance in Monferrato in a traditional way, by attending lessons to contextualize the historical event but then we followed different methods: we chose interviews which put us in contact with people and witnesses, lectures during which we focused on wider subjects and according to different points of view (for example we were present at the commemoration of “Banda Tom” at the local theatre in January; we looked for material such as letters, photos, newspaper articles and information which helped us to contextualize biographies and events).

We have experimented a different and unusual way of studying history, by paying more attention to the places and the countryside, which are important backgrounds to the events. First of all we have focused on “Memory”, without which we couldn’t understand who we really are and what we would like to become.

“Memory” for us who didn’t live the events is the only way of feeling an integral part of our society and of being aware of our role and our responsibilities as citizens.



“IL SANGUE  
DI QUESTI  
MARTIRI  
SIA SEME DI  
PACE, DI  
CONCORDIA  
, DI  
RESURREZI  
ONE DELLA  
PATRIA  
NOSTRA.”



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|   | <p><b>Introductory lesson about Resistance</b> (prof. Mauro Bonelli): the context<br/>(Students)</p> <p>After Mr. Bonelli's introduction about the Resistance, which is a subject that is not usually studied in the third year in Italian schools, we did a group activity with collected reading and analysis documents</p> <p>We have historical documents about local history, about the Resistance in Monferrato, photos, and other various information thanks to Mrs. Santambrogio, who is interviewed in the video.</p> <p>We did a brainstorming activity in order to approach the historical event and a photographic timeline made by a student, which contained important places to remember.</p> <p>Then, we chose to do narrative activity to synthesize the event about the Banda Tom. (As it appears, in the final teaching unit).</p> |
| 3 | Individual or common reading proposals  |
| 4 | Guided brainstorming about common reading   |
| 5 | Drafting of an episode about the “Banda Tom” event  |

	6	Preparing a series of questions to be asked when interviewing a witness
	7	Listening to the interview
	8	<p><b><u>Questions for Discussion:</u></b></p> <p>Can we talk of totalitarian regimes aggression in the first half of the XXth century?</p> <p>The nazi occupation in most of Europe, was it also a violation of moral values?</p> <p>Did Italian Resistance, operating after the 8th of September, embody a perspective of national redemption?</p> <p>Does the aim of a new aspect exist inside the Italian Resistance movement?</p>
	9	<p><b><u>Focus</u></b> on the participation of the young people in Resistance and the responsibility of their choices.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> the concept of “banda” and the relationship between the “bande” and the Monferrato area and “the Banda Tom” event</p> <p>Appendix 3 [The Partisans groups (“bande”) and “The Banda Tom”]</p>
	10	<p><b>Reflection:</b> the students’ interest is focused on the Banda Tom event because among those boys a seventeen-year-old boy was killed, Luigi Santambrogio, a teenager full of expectations like today’s teenagers. The event, whose memory is still alive in Casale Monferrato, awakens the students’ interest also because Luigi’s sister lives here, she is a sweet old lady, Rosetta Santambrogio, and by chance she is Laura’s mother in law and Laura is a teacher in our school! The students decide to interview Rosetta.</p> <p>See the interview with Rosetta Santambrogio. Appendix 4</p>



Group work: the students answer to a short questionnaire, after watching the filmed interview.

**Questions for the final debate:**

Do you think that through authentic sources and real documents, as Rosetta's words are, you can get a better overview of the facts, also because she is a witness?

All the stories linked to Resistance reveal a sort of laceration in the social fabric which separates partisans and fascists, all young people who shared interests, amusements and their life, only some months earlier. Does this feature emerge from Rosetta's interview?

What does it mean to safeguard and keep a historical memory? Do you think that Rosetta, during all these years spent in keeping his brother's souvenir alive, was successful?

How is memory important for future reference?

Final draft and reading of the article written by the students who met and interviewed Mrs. Rosetta Santambrogio.

**Final questions, last reflections**

Resistance told us difficult stories, stories about young people's broken lives, we felt the sorrow of people involved in such events which even nowadays, 70 years later, can't be forgotten; but what should a teenager resist against today? What should a teenager be actively involved in?

Is it right talking about Resistance today that we live in a free Europe and we can dialogue?

Those who resist choose to be resolute: does it make a sense to find

out the fundamentals of our determination?

## **Extension**

### **Resisting today: proposals of working plans**

Start: TU, a general reflection on Resistance from its historic dimension.

Activity: Brain storming

### **Topic: What does “resisting” mean today?**

**A) Resisting means** that we need to understand that the afflictions of the years 1943-45 have another face nowadays.

We need the capacity to interpret the present, but only going through a REFLECTION ON THE PAST...THE MISTAKES MADE in the XXth century.

The challenges in our global world need:

the capacity of making an analysis of the present / developing future plans.

From a tragic and complicated historic period we need to come to:

- a) strategies for a better living together with our differences
- b) watch over forms of intolerant thought and behaviour, dictatorial and/or totalitarian.

**B) Resisting means** not being deprived of:

identity and the necessary instruments for a quiet living together

the right to happiness

the right to love

Ideals

the distinctive human rights

the right to cultural differences

**C) Resisting:**

to temptations (to what is considered morally unacceptable)

to the adversities of life

to consumerism

to indifference and superficiality

to bullying

to the power of money

to envy

to the prejudices

	<p>to the avoiding of any problems</p> <p>to the lack of responsibility</p> <p>to political corruption</p> <p>to extremism</p> <p>to the economic crisis and poverty</p> <p><b>D) Resisting to any substances which can bring to addiction:</b></p> <p>Resisting to drugs</p> <p>Resisting to smoking</p> <p>Resisting to the widespread and obsessive use of technology</p> <p>Resisting to gambling Appendix 4</p> <p><b>B) <i>Resisting means getting up after falling down; fighting to reach important aims such as finishing studies or finding a job</i></b></p> <p><b>Elena's video</b></p>
<p>references</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sergio Favretto, <u>Casale partigiana, Libertas Club Casale</u>, 1977</li> <li>● Sergio Favretto, <u>Resistenza e nuova coscienza civile</u>, Edizioni Falsopiano, Alessandria 2009</li> <li>● AA.VV. <u>La Resistenza nella provincia di Alessandria</u>, 1976, <u>Newspapers</u> of the time</li> <li>● <u>Articles commemorating the 70th anniversary of the massacre</u></li> <li>● <u>Interview</u> to Rosetta Santambrogio</li> <li>● Resistenza, <u>Quaderno didattico della provincia di Alessandria</u></li> <li>● Mons. Giuseppe Angrisani, <u>La croce sul Monferrato durante la bufera</u>, Fondazione Sant'Evasio, Casale 2014</li> <li>● <u>Photos and library pictures</u> (manifesto of the Death sentence and photos of the partisans composing the group)</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

<p>authors</p>	<p>Gabriele Angelini</p> <p>Franca Ameli</p> <p>Carlo Berrone</p> <p>Laura Catalano</p> <p>Ilenio Celoria</p> <p>M.Laura Franchi</p> <p>Paola Perotto</p>
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