

I Never Saw Another Butterfly and The Terezin Promise

Written by Celeste Raspanti

This Education Resource is to help teachers within the classroom provide context for the play, prior to viewing.

Before watching the performance by MYT it is important that students have a basic knowledge of WWII and the Holocaust. We have provided some resources but it is up to the teachers on how in depth they would like to go in their study.


History of hatred

Antisemitism and oppression has been a part of Jewish history for centuries. When studying the Holocaust, students will learn the history of anti-Judaism and its relevance. Stereotypes and misinformation of the Jewish people has persisted and changed through the years, with much of it still visible in present day.

The following video gives a brief overview of Hitler's rise to power and the consequences of the Holocaust.

ACTIVITY

Watch the following video with your class:

 WW2: The Rise of Nazism and the Holocaust | The Jewish Story | Unpacked

DISCUSSION

- Why is it important to study the history of anti-Judaism when discussing the Holocaust?
- How does prejudice turn into violent oppression?

- What does it mean to be an oppressed group?

A number of anti-jewish laws came into effect in Germany in 1933. These laws segregated Jews from Germans by restricting where they could work, who they could marry and where they could attend school. Laws limiting the number of Jewish students in schools and universities allowed antisemitic ideas to be spread within classrooms.

- How can segregation of a group increase prejudice against them?
- What purpose did it serve to reduce the amount of Jewish students in schools and universities?
- How could separating Jewish children from German children impact how they view one another later in life?

Open this up into a broader discussion about prejudices in history and how rumors and hatred get carried through generations.

- Can you think of some groups throughout history that faced oppression?
- Why do people generalize characteristics for an entire group?
 - How can this be dangerous?
- Can you think of other groups that have faced similar hardships in history that still prevail today?
- Does this history feel relevant to the present day?

In groups of five, ask students to consider the following question:

- What tends to follow acts of oppression?
- Does it always lead to violence?
- What about revolution?
- What are some ways you can think of to counter prejudice and oppression?

Hitler's rise to power

To understand how the rise of Nazism became possible in Germany it is important to understand how the German people and society were affected by their loss in WWI, the debt that they incurred from the war and the stock market crash of 1929.

This left German citizens eager to follow any leader who promised to improve their lives.

DISCUSSION

- What was it about the struggles of German life during this time that made the extremist views of the Nazis more appealing?
- How can a dictator gain control of a democracy even without winning the vote of the majority of the people?

Propaganda and the Third Reich

The Nazi party used propaganda very effectively to sway people to their way of thinking. How was this possible?

ACTIVITY 1

Look at and discuss the propaganda pieces at the following link:

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/visual-essay-impact-propaganda>

After discussing a couple of the pieces, ask your students to **define propaganda**.

- What is it used for?
- Where would you find it used today?
- What makes it so effective?

ACTIVITY 2

Divide the students into groups of 3 – 4 students. Provide each with a current print advertisement or political ad. Have them discuss the following questions and be prepared to present their conclusions to the class.

- Who is the target audience?
- What is the message?
- How is it conveyed through images and words?
- How effective is this message?

Come back together as a class and ask students:

- How do these messages shape a person's perspective?

- How can this help explain the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda?

The blueprints of genocide

Begin by asking students if they have ever heard of Auschwitz. Then ask if they have heard about Dachau. Do they know what they were? What was the difference between the two? You may find it helpful to pull up these maps of [Dachau](#) and [Auschwitz](#) by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Read through the resource, [The Nazi Camp System: Terminology](#) by USHMM with the class. Start at the top of the page with the overview and the three Key Facts before moving on.

DISCUSSION

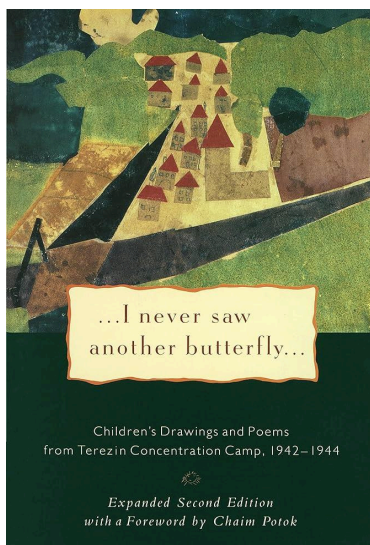
- Terezin, the setting of our play, was both a ghetto and a camp. Why?
- What is the difference between a concentration camp and an extermination camp?
- What was a Jewish Ghetto?
- What is the importance of using the correct terminology when talking about the Nazi camp system?

ACTIVITY

Watch this video that will give a description of the life in the Jewish Ghettos:

 [Everyday Life in the Ghettos | Yad Vashem](#)

The writings of Terezin



The one act plays *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* and *The Terezin Promise* are written by Celeste Raspanti. They are based on the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*. It is a collection of works of art, poetry and journal entries created by Jewish children who lived in the Terezin Ghetto. They were created at the camp in secret classes and collected and hidden away in the hopes that they would one day be discovered. The works were compiled after World War II by Czech art

historian Hana Volavková, the only curator of the Jewish Museum in Prague to survive the Holocaust.

Where known, the fate of each young author is listed. 15,000 children went through Terezin, and only 100 survived.

Prior to watching the play, why not check out a copy of the source material for your class to look at? Or better yet, have your school purchase a copy for your school library.

The newspapers and writings created by the children of Terezin allow us to see through their eyes. Through their art we can glimpse what they were seeing and experiencing. We can read stories of how they dealt with daily life in the ghetto, including how they related to each other, themselves, their parents and other adults. We can also learn about their day to day concerns such as hunger, sickness and loneliness. They used the exercise of writing to not only tell their stories but to also communicate with one another and provide entertainment in a very unhappy place.

The book takes its title from a poem by Pavel Friedmann, a young man born in 1921 who was imprisoned at Terezin and was later killed at Auschwitz.

The Butterfly by Pavel Friedmann

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished
to kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
In the ghetto.

ACTIVITY 1

Read aloud the poem, "The Butterfly".

- What experiences do you think generated this poem?
- To what is the poem referring?
- How does this poem make you feel?

ACTIVITY 2

Watch the 16 minute video, [The Ghettos](#) by Yad Vashem.

- What sort of challenges did people face in the ghetto?
- How did people try to maintain a sense of dignity or humanity?
- How did hearing the testimonies and diary entries help paint a picture of what life was like in the ghettos?
- Provide 10 minutes for students to write and reflect. This could be in the form of a poem, short story, letter or a diary entry written from the perspective of a Jew during WWII.

ACTIVITY 3

The students of Terezin, in secret, created a newspaper called Vedem. This was copied by hand and passed from barracks to barracks, often being read aloud at night. This was a way for them to communicate with one another and it provided some hope and something positive to the prisoners.

- Create a class newspaper that details events that happened within the classroom over the past year. Use materials you find in the classroom. Each member of the class must contribute something, a poem, a story or a drawing.

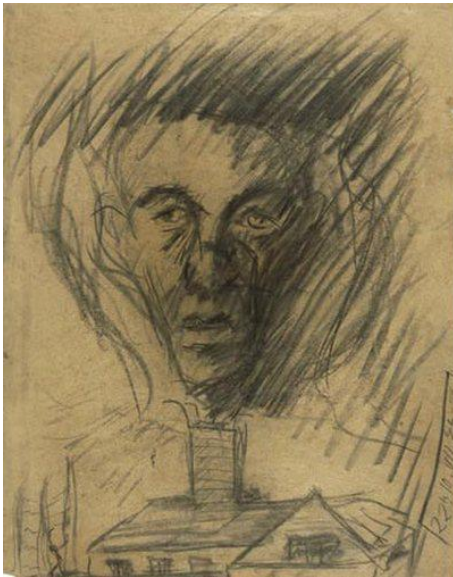
Art and resistance

In *The Promise of Terezin*, Raja makes a promise to Irina to save the children's art work and writings. She promises not to leave them behind. Some of the children wonder why this is so important and Raja explains "If [the Nazis] destroy the evidence, who will ever believe we were here? Who will believe that this happened?"

DISCUSSION

- Ask students how they define resistance. What does resistance look like and what form does it take?
- Ask them also if they would expect there to be much resistance in concentration camps. Why or why not?
- How were the children's writings and drawings a form of resistance?
- Why is it important to keep resisting oppression?
- How does art undermine oppression?

YEHUDA BACON



Some of the art created in the Ghettos and Concentration camps served another function after the war. It served as evidence in trials leading to the conviction of Nazis. An example of this is Yehuda Bacon's work which was used together with his recollection of the gassings, beatings, and murders.

Yehuda Bacon (b.1929), In Memory of the Czech Transport to the Gas Chambers. 1946. Charcoal on paper. Yad Vashem Art Museum Collection, Jerusalem.

Born in Czechoslovakia, in 1929. In 1942, Yehuda Bacon was deported with his family to Terezin, where he lived in the youth barracks and belonged to a group that produced the newspaper "Vedem" (We Are Leading). While at Terezin he studied with artists in the Ghetto. In 1943, Bacon and his family were deported to the "family camp" at Auschwitz. In 1944, he was transferred to the men's camp and assigned to a labor group, which was assigned the task of gathering the murdered inmates' belongings, and collecting the victims' ashes for dispersal.

In the drawing *In Memory of the Czech Transport to the Gas Chambers*, we see the face of a man coming out of the crematoria, this man is his father. Bacon wrote the date of his death, in the gas chambers, in the lower part of his drawing as he knew exactly the date when his father, together with the thousands of Czechs who had arrived from Terezin in December, 1943, had been killed in massive gassings that were carried out between July 10-12, 1943. Bacon portrayed him as coming out from the chimney of the crematoria, rendering testimony to the way in which he had

died. Bacon painted it immediately after being liberated. He was afraid that if he didn't draw his father's face, he would soon forget it.

How should we remember?

- How do we honor the memory for those who have passed?

In the Terezin camp, children wrote letters and poetry as a way to both remember who they were and to resist the Nazi control. These letters remain as a memorial to them and what they experienced. Without this evidence, some of the Jews murdered by the Nazis would be lost from memory forever.

Letters help to tell the individual stories and restore the names and faces of the victims of the Holocaust. Direct students to the Yad Vashem exhibit, "[Last Letters From the Holocaust:1944](#)". Each letter is accompanied by some background information on the sender and receiver; students should read these as well.

Tell students that the letters that they will look through in this exhibit were sent from the Czech lands, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, and the Ukraine and that they were written by victims of the Holocaust. Not all authors of these letters understood their fate. Some letters may depict uncertainty, some optimism, and others may show that the author knew exactly what awaited them. There were also cases when people were coerced to write letters saying all was well, when the reality was far different.

ACTIVITY

Creating a "found poem" from a Holocaust survivor's testimony can be a way to honor his or her experiences. A found poem is one that is created using only words that have been copied and rearranged from another text. You are literally "finding a poem" within someone else's writings.

This activity can be done in small groups or as a class.

1. Have students look through the Yad Vashem exhibit and choose a letter to write their poem from.
2. Read the letter a few times. Read it to yourself and outloud to the group.
3. Copy down 15-20 words from the letter that you find memorable or important.
4. Arrange the words you have selected into a poem. You may find it helpful to write the words out on index cards so that you may arrange them in different ways and see what possibilities you can come up with.

5. Try to arrange the words in a way that captures what you think is the message of the letter or your experience in reading it.
 - a. You do not HAVE to use every word you have chosen
 - b. You MAY reuse words
 - c. You CANNOT add words besides the ones you have copied from the text
 - d. Your poem DOES NOT need to rhyme
 - e. Make sure to pull one of two small words (a, to, is, the, at) just in case.
6. When you are finished, give your poem a title.
7. Ask for volunteers to read their poems aloud to the class.

DISCUSSION

- How did it feel reading these letters?
- Did you feel a connection to the person whose story you wrote about?

Name reading

During the performance students will hear the names of children who were killed during the Holocaust. These names are read out loud, with their ages and where they were murdered. Name reading is a simple way of commemorating those who lost their lives during the Holocaust. Reciting names can have a powerful effect on an audience.

ACTIVITY

Watch this [video on Remembrance](#) by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

DISCUSS

- What is commemoration? Why is it important?
- Why is name reading used in commemoration?
- How long would it take a single person to read the first and last names of 6 million victims?
 - *It would take a single person over 1,538 hours, or 64 days*

- When else are name readings used?
- Do they serve the same purpose?

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Standards

- CCCS.ELA - R.3.4, R.4.4, R.5.4
 - Determine the meaning of words, phrases, figurative language, and academic and content-specific words within a text. (RI&RL)
- CCCS.ELA - R.6.4, R.7.4, R.8.4
 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings within a text. (RI&RL)
- CCSS.ELA - W.3.1, W.4.1, W.5.1, W.6.1, W.7.1, W.8.1
 - Compose reflective, formal, and creative writing, which may happen simultaneously or independently, for a variety of high-stakes and low-stakes purposes.
- CCSS.ELA - SL.3.1, SL.4.1, SL.5.1, SL.6.1, SL.7.1, SL.8.1
 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing one's thinking clearly.
- CCSS.ELA - L.3.2, L.4.2, L.5.2, L.6.2, L.7.2, L.8.2
 - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases in grade-level reading and content; use context clues, analyze meaningful word parts, consult general and specialized reference materials, and apply word solving strategies (for meaning) as appropriate.
- CCSS.ELA - L.3.3, L.4.3, L.5.3, L.6.3, L.7.3, L.8.3
 - Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
- CCSS.EE - BH1, BH2, BH3
 - Examine how human behavior and cultures can influence people, events, and other cultures (Anthropology).
- CCSS.EE.-Hist1
 - Students will use historical evidence for determining cause and effect.
- CCSS.EE.-Hist3
 - Students will connect historical events, people, and ideas to the present, identify different perspectives, and identify current implications.
- CCSS.EE.-Hist4
 - Students will examine a variety of primary and secondary sources to identify the historical context, intended audience, purpose, and/or author's point of view (Historical Methodology).