



Unit 3 - Life in the Ghettos and Camps

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

Essential Questions:

- How do individuals and groups find ways to resist and maintain their humanity in the face of violence and inhumanity?
- Why is it important to study the stories of individuals within the context of mass atrocity?
- How did the Nazis isolate and dehumanize people in the ghettos and camps?

Subjects

Social Studies
ELA
Art

Grades

5-8

Lesson Objectives:

- Evaluate and analyze the creative production that came from the camps and the ghettos as an indicator of Jewish culture and the determination of victims to leave both a record and a legacy.
- Discuss the importance of trying to maintain a sense of identity as a human and a sense of pride as a person as part of the survival process and as a form of resistance to the Nazis.
- Learn about the experience of young children during the Holocaust through a study of the poems and pictures drawn by those imprisoned in Theresienstadt.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

Terezín (known as Theresienstadt by the Germans) existed for three and a half years, between November 24, 1941, and May 9, 1945. During its existence, Terezín was unique in that it did not fit the definition of a concentration camp or a ghetto; it was used as a transit camp for those being sent to other camps farther east and as a place to house specific populations of Jews whose disappearance might be widely reported or who would be unfit for forced labor. The inmates included a number of famous poets, painters, musicians, composers, and scholars.

More than 150,000 Jews were sent there, including 15,000 children under the age of 15, and held there for months or years. About 33,000 individuals died in the ghetto camp, mostly due to the appalling conditions arising out of extreme population density, malnutrition and disease. About 88,000 inhabitants were sent to their deaths at Treblinka and Auschwitz extermination camps in occupied Poland, as well as to smaller camps elsewhere. At the end of the war, there were only 17,247 survivors of Terezín, less than 150 of whom were children.

I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–1944 is a collection of works of art and poetry by Jewish children who lived in Terezín. They were created at the camp in secret art classes taught by Austrian artist and educator Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. The book takes its title from a poem by Pavel Friedmann, a young man born in 1921 who was incarcerated at Terezín and was later killed at Auschwitz. 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. Most died prior to the camp being liberated.

EXTERNAL LINKS

- Facing History and Ourselves: [Preparing Students for Difficult Conversations](#)
- USHMM [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)
- Echoes and Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944* edited by Hana Volavkova (1994)
- Copies of the poem “The Butterfly” by Pavel Friedman (can be found in this [Resource Packet](#))

LESSON SEQUENCE**READ ALOUD**

As students follow along, read the poem “The Butterfly”. As students follow along, have them list or underline the words/phrases that they thought were the most impactful. Engage in a whole-class discussion, using the following prompts to facilitate responses:

- What does the poem say to you?
- What one line, phrase, or word resonated with you most? Why?
- What do you think the butterfly is meant to symbolize? Why a butterfly?

POETRY ANALYSIS

Assign a poem to each student to read from “I Never Saw Another Butterfly.” As students are given time to silently read, ask students to identify any examples of hopes, dreams and/or fears in their child’s poem.

Once students have been given enough time to read and analyze their poem, have students turn and talk to a classmate about their poem. Students can use the following prompts to facilitate their discussion:

- What does this poem say to you?
- What line/phrase/word resonated with you the most? Why?
- How does the poem reflect courage, hope, fear, etc?

VISUAL THINKING

Select an illustration from the book. Direct students to (silently) look closely at the illustration. Allow 1 to 2 minutes for students to observe the picture.

Ask the following after each response, clarifying, linking comments, or summarizing responses as appropriate:

- What’s going on?
- What makes you think this? (Encourage students to justify their responses.)
- What more can we find? (Probe students to look deeper, go beyond the obvious, discover more possibilities, offer more divergent responses, etc.)

The discussion should continue until all students have shared everything they can about the picture.

Break students into small groups or pairs. Have the students select an illustration from the book and analyze it. Remind them to look carefully at a work of art, talk about what they observe, back up their ideas with evidence, and listen to and consider the views of others.

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Have students engage in a [Big Paper silent conversation](#) based on the quote: "The death of a child is the loss of infinite possibilities."

- Put the quote in the center of a large piece of poster paper or butcher paper.
- Let students know this activity will be completed in silence. All communication is done in writing. Students should be told that they will have time to discuss later.
- Have students read the quote in silence.
- Have pairs discuss the quote, through writing—each writing a reflection and responding to what the other wrote.
- As a class, discuss the major insights gained from the conversations.

INTERDISCIPLINARY & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- "[Life in the Ghettos](#)" is an adaptable lesson from the Museum of Jewish Heritage, examining life in the ghetto through primary sources, including photographs and diary entries of Jewish children and teenagers who lived in the ghettos.
- "[Children in the Ghetto Interactive Learning Environment.](#)" A lesson from Yad Vashem for grades 4-6 that deals with children's lives in the ghettos during the Holocaust period and describes life during the Holocaust from the perspective of children living in the ghettos

