

Holocaust Education Week

Lesson Plan

Holocaust Poetry: 50-120 minutes

5th-8th Grades

Created by Rachel Lenerz

STANDARDS:

5th grade standard : SS.5.HE.1.1

Define the Holocaust as the planned and systematic state-sponsored persecution and murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

6th -8th standard: SS.68.HE.1.1

Examine the Holocaust as the planned and systematic state-sponsored persecution and murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

K-12th Standards: LAFS.K12.SL.1.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

LAFS.K12.R.3.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

LAFS.K12.SL.1.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

GRADE LEVEL(S): 5th- 8th

TOTAL CLASS TIME: 50-120 minutes (if you do not read the epilogue, it should be completed in 1 period, though the epilogue is a very powerful and history rich part of the story)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How do we honor and remember those who lost their lives during the Holocaust so that part of history is never again repeated? How can the past teach us tolerance?

LEARNING GOALS:

- ✧ Students will understand what the Holocaust was and when it took place.
- ✧ Students will understand how the expression through the arts (poetry) by children of concentration camps during the Holocaust impacts us today.
- ✧ Students will understand how symbols represents ideas.
- ✧ Students will create art to help remember our past and create a kinder future.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ✧ Poems from the children of Terezin (included below)
- ✧ Epilogue from “...I Never Saw Another Butterfly”
- ✧ KWL Chart (included below)
- ✧ Computers for students to visit:
<https://www.museumoftolerance.com/education/teacher-resources/holocaust-resources/children-of-the-holocaust/>
- ✧ Poem Templates (included below)
- ✧ White Cardstock

BEFORE INSTRUCTION:

- ✧ As a class, complete a KWL chart on the Holocaust (included below)
- ✧ Discuss what the Holocaust was (**edit for grade level appropriateness**):
 - The Holocaust was the systematic, state -sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators.
 - The Nazis came into power in Germany in January 1933
 - They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was “superior” to all others
 - They claimed that the Jews (and others such as Gypsies as well as people who had physical or intellectual disabilities) did not meet the “superior race” criteria and were perceived to be a threat to the German community
- ✧ Discuss that in order to exterminate the “inferior” individuals, especially the Jews, the Nazi’s, under Hitler’s leadership, created concentration camps, forced-labor camps, and death camps.
- ✧ One of these camps named Terezin was unique among concentration camps. This transit and ghetto labor camp, was also used as a fake city of safety and as a ruse to fool the Red Cross and the rest of the world. Approximately two hundred thousand people passed through Terezin of which fifteen thousand were children. Of those children, only 132 were known to have survived. The camp inmates’ determination to

preserve tradition, music, art, education, and all that creates culture amidst these appalling conditions is beyond remarkable. These poems and other artist creations were hidden at Terezin inside mattresses and stuffed in cracks between the walls of houses. They were recovered after the war.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION:

- ✧ Hand out a packet with the Epilogue and a copy of all poems (except from “I Never Saw Another Butterfly”)
- ✧ Tell students to think about the following as we read:
 - Why do you think these poems were written?
 - What experiences do you think generated these poems?
 - To what is each poem referring?
 - How does each poem make you feel?
- ✧ As a class, read through the poems.
- ✧ Tell students: These poems were written by children while he was imprisoned in the Terezin Concentration Camp. The poems are featured in, “ ... I Never Saw Another Butterfly,” a compilation of artwork and writing by children imprisoned at Terezin. These poems were found in the camp at the end of the war, and their publication has resulted in unforgettable imagery of those who perished.

COLLABORATIVE WORK:

- ✧ Have students turn and talk to their shoulder partner about which poem spoke to them the most and what connection did they make with it? (2 minutes)
- ✧ Afterwards, discuss as a class the symbol of the butterfly. Guide students to understand: The butterfly symbolizes all good things in life, but also reminds us that life is fragile. The butterfly also serves as a symbol of hope. Friedmann’s poem though it evokes some frightening images, also shows us beyond fear, the children of the Holocaust still had hope.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE:

- ✧ Teachers will visit the website:
(******make sure to preview in advance, to ensure grade level appropriateness******)
<https://www.museumoftolerance.com/education/teacher-resources/holocaust-resources/children-of-the-holocaust/>
- ✧ Select 5 or more children from the Holocaust list (if you click on the names, it gives the background on the children). Allow students to select one from your list and have them create a remembrance poem. If appropriate, you can allow students to choose their own.
- ✧ It is recommended that teachers research more on the history and purpose of Terezin at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-terezin>

- ✧ Students Remembrance poems: free-flowing expression of emotions containing descriptive language. It does not have to rhyme unless you'd like to utilize that literary device. Then, you can laminate the poems so they will last longer.
- ✧ Students should color in the butterfly using colors they feel represent the person they have chosen.
- ✧ The butterflies represent the children of Terezin.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Materials Needed:

- ✧ Clear Elastic Bead String
- ✧ Black Beads
- ✧ Yellow Beads

Bracelet Activity: Students can create all black bracelets with 6 yellow beads to represent the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust as remembrance.

<p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(What we Know)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(What we Want to Know)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(What I learned)</p>

EPILOGUE

by Jiri Weil

In Czechoslovakia there is a strange place called Terezin, some 60 kilometers from Prague. It was founded by order of Emperor Joseph II of Austria 200 years ago and was named after his mother, Maria Theresa. This walled-in fortress was constructed on plans drafted by Italian military engineers and has 12 ramparts that enclose the town in the shape of a star. It was to have been a fortress and it became a sleepy army garrison dominated by the barracks, where the homes of the inhabitants were a necessary nuisance. There were homes, taverns, a post office, a bank, and a brewery. There was a church as well, built in a somber style and belonging to the barracks as part of the army community. The little town seemed to have been forced onto the countryside, a lovely countryside without either high mountains or dizzy cliffs, without deep ravines or swift rivers ... only blue hills, green meadows, fruit trees, and tall poplars.

Today a shadow still lingers above this little town, as though funeral wagons still drive along its streets, as though the dust stirred by a thousand footsteps still eddies in the town square. Today it seems sometimes as though from every corner, from every stairway and from every corridor, are human faces, gaunt, exhausted, with eyes full of fear.

During the war years, Terezin was a place of famine and of fear. Somewhere far away, in Berlin, men in uniforms had held meetings. These men decided to exterminate all the Jews in Europe, and, because they were used to doing things thoroughly, with the calculated, cool passion of a murderer, they worked out plans in which they fixed the country, the place, and the timetable as well as the stopping places on that road to death. One of those stopping places was Terezin.

It was meant to be a model camp that foreigners could be shown, and it was termed a ghetto. At first, Jews from Bohemia and Moravia were brought to Terezin, but finally they came from all over Europe and from there were shipped farther east to the gas chambers and ovens. Everything in this small town was false, invented; every one of its inhabitants was condemned in advance to die. It was only a funnel without an outlet. Those who contrived this trap and put it on their map, with its fixed timetable of life and death, knew all about it. They knew its future as well. Those who were brought there in crowded railroad coaches and cattle cars after days and days of cruelty, of humiliation, of offense, of beatings, and of theft knew very little about it. Some of them believed the murderers' falsehoods, that they could sit out the war here in quiet safety. Others came to Terezin already crushed, yet with a spark of hope that, even so, perhaps they might escape their destiny. There were also those who knew that Terezin was only one station on a short timetable and that is why they tried so hard to keep at least themselves alive and perhaps their family. And those who were good

and honorable endeavored to keep the children alive; the aged and the ailing. All were finally deceived, and the same fate awaited all of them.

But the children who were brought there knew nothing. They came from places where they had already known humiliation. They had been expelled from the schools. They had sewn stars on their hearts, on their jackets and blouses, and were allowed to play only in the cemeteries. That wasn't so bad, if you look at it with the eyes of a child, even when they heard their parents' lamentations, even when they heard strange words charged with horror such as mapping, registration, and transport. When they were herded with their parents into the ghetto, when they had to sleep on the concrete floors in crowded garrets or clamber up three-tiered bunks, they began to look around and quickly understood the strange world in which they had to live. They saw reality, but they still maintained a child's outlook, an outlook of truth that distinguishes between night and day and cannot be confused with false hopes and the shadow play of an imaginary life.

And so they lived, locked within walls and courtyards. This was their world, a world of color and shadow, of hunger and of hope.

The children played in the barracks yard and the courtyards of the onetime homes. Sometimes they were permitted to breathe a little fresh air upon the ramparts. From the age of 14, they had to work, to live the life of an adult. Sometimes they went beyond the walls to work in the gardens, and they were no more considered to be children. The smaller ones acted out their fairy tales and even children's operas. But they did not know that they, too, as well as the grownups, had been used deceitfully, to convince a commission of foreigners from the Red Cross that Terezin was a place where adults and children alike could live. Secretly, they studied and they drew pictures. Three months, half a year, one or two years, depending on one's luck, because transports came and went continually, headed east into nothingness.

From these 15, 000 children, who for a time played and drew pictures and studied, only 100 came back. They saw everything that grownups saw. They saw the endless lines in front of the canteens, they saw the funeral carts used to carry bread and the human beings harnessed to pull them. They saw the infirmaries that seemed like a paradise to them and funerals that were only a gathering up of coffins. They saw executions, too, and were perhaps the only children in the world who captured them with pencil and paper. They heard the shouts of the SS men at roll call and the meek mumblings of prayer in the barracks where the grownups lived.

But the children saw, too, what the grownups didn't want to see-the beauties beyond the village gates, the green meadows and the bluish hills, the ribbon of highway reaching off into the distance and the imagined road marker pointing toward Prague, the animals, the birds, the butterflies-all this was beyond the village walls and they could look at it only from afar, from the barracks windows, and from the ramparts of the fort. They saw things, too, that grownups cannot see-princesses with coronets, evil wizards and witches, jesters and bugs

with human faces, a land of happiness where for an admission of one crown, there was everything to be had-cookies, candy, a roast stuck with a fork from which soda pop trickled. They saw, too, the rooms they'd lived in at home, with curtains at the window and a kitten and a saucer of milk. But they transported it to Terezin. There had to be a fence and a lot of pots and pans, because pots and pans were supposed to be filled with food.

All this they drew and painted and many other things besides; they loved to paint and draw, from morning till evening.

But when they wrote poems, it was something else again. Here one finds words about "painful Terezin," about "the little girl who got lost." These told of longings to go away somewhere where there are kinder people; there are old grandfathers gnawing stale bread and rotten potatoes for lunch, there was a "longing for home" and fear. Yes, fear came to them and they could tell of it in their poems, knowing that they were condemned. Perhaps they knew it better than the adults.

There were over 15,000 of them, and 100 came back. You are looking at their drawings now after many years, when that world of hunger, fear, and horror seems to us almost like a cruel fairy tale about evil wizards, witches, and cannibals. The drawings and poems-that is all that is left of these children, for their ashes have long since sifted across the fields around Auschwitz. Their signatures are here and some of the drawings are inscribed with the year, and the number of their group. Of those who signed their names, it has been possible to find out a few facts: the year and place of their birth, the number of their transport to Terezin and to Auschwitz, and then the year of their death. For most of them, it was 1944, the next-to-last year of World War II.

But their drawings and their poems speak to us; these are their voices that have been preserved, voices of reminder, of truth, and of hope.

We are publishing them not as dry documents out of thousands of such witnesses in a sea of suffering, but to honor the memory of those who created these colors and these words. That's the way these children probably would have wanted it when death overtook them.

The Butterfly

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.

Pavel Friedmann 4.6.1942



The poem is preserved in typewritten copy on thin paper in the collection of poetry by Pavel Friedmann, which was donated to the National Jewish Museum during its documentation campaign. It is dated June 4, 1942 in the left corner.

Pavel Friedmann was born January 7, 1921, in Prague and deported to Terezín* on April 26, 1942. He died in Oswiecim* (Auschwitz) on September 29, 1944.

Homesick

I've lived in the ghetto here more than a year,
In Terezín, in the black town now,
And when I remember my old home so dear,
I can love it more than I did, somehow.

Ah, home, home,
Why did they tear me away?
Here the weak die easy as a feather
And when they die, they die forever.



I'd like to go back home again,
It makes me think of sweet spring flowers.
Before, when I used to live at home,
It never seemed so dear and fair.

I remember now those golden days...
But maybe I'll be going there again soon.

People walk along the street,
You see at once on each you meet
That there's a ghetto here,
A place of evil and of fear.
There's little to eat and much to want,
Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.
But no one must give up!
The world turns and times change.

Yet we all hope the time will come
When we'll go home again.
Now I know how dear it is
And often I remember it.



9.3.1943. Anonymous

This poem is preserved in manuscript, written in pencil on a sheet of lined paper torn from a notebook. The date "9.III. 1943" is in the upper right corner. All other facts are missing.

Fear

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of its shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps it's better - who can say? -
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away.
We want to have a better world,
We want to work - we must not die!

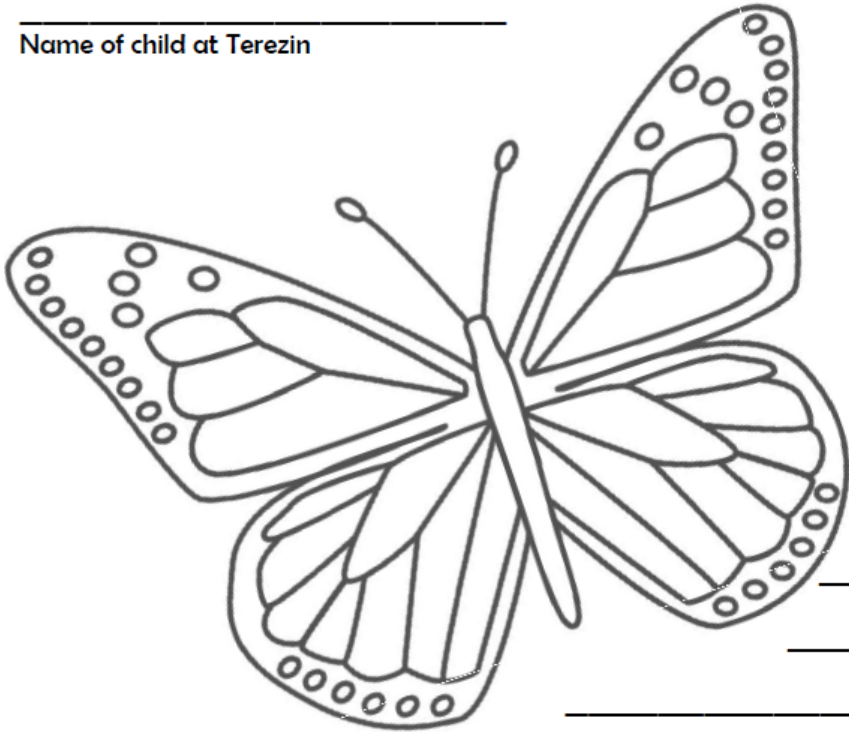


Eva Picková, 12 years old, Nymburk

The poem is preserved in a copy turned over to the State Jewish Museum in Prague by Dr. R. Feder in 1955. It is signed at the bottom, "12 year old Eva Picková from Nymburk".

Eva Picková was born in Nymburk on May 15, 1929, deported to Terezín* on April 16, 1942, and perished in (Auschwitz) on December 18, 1943.

Name of child at Terezin



Name of child at Terezin

