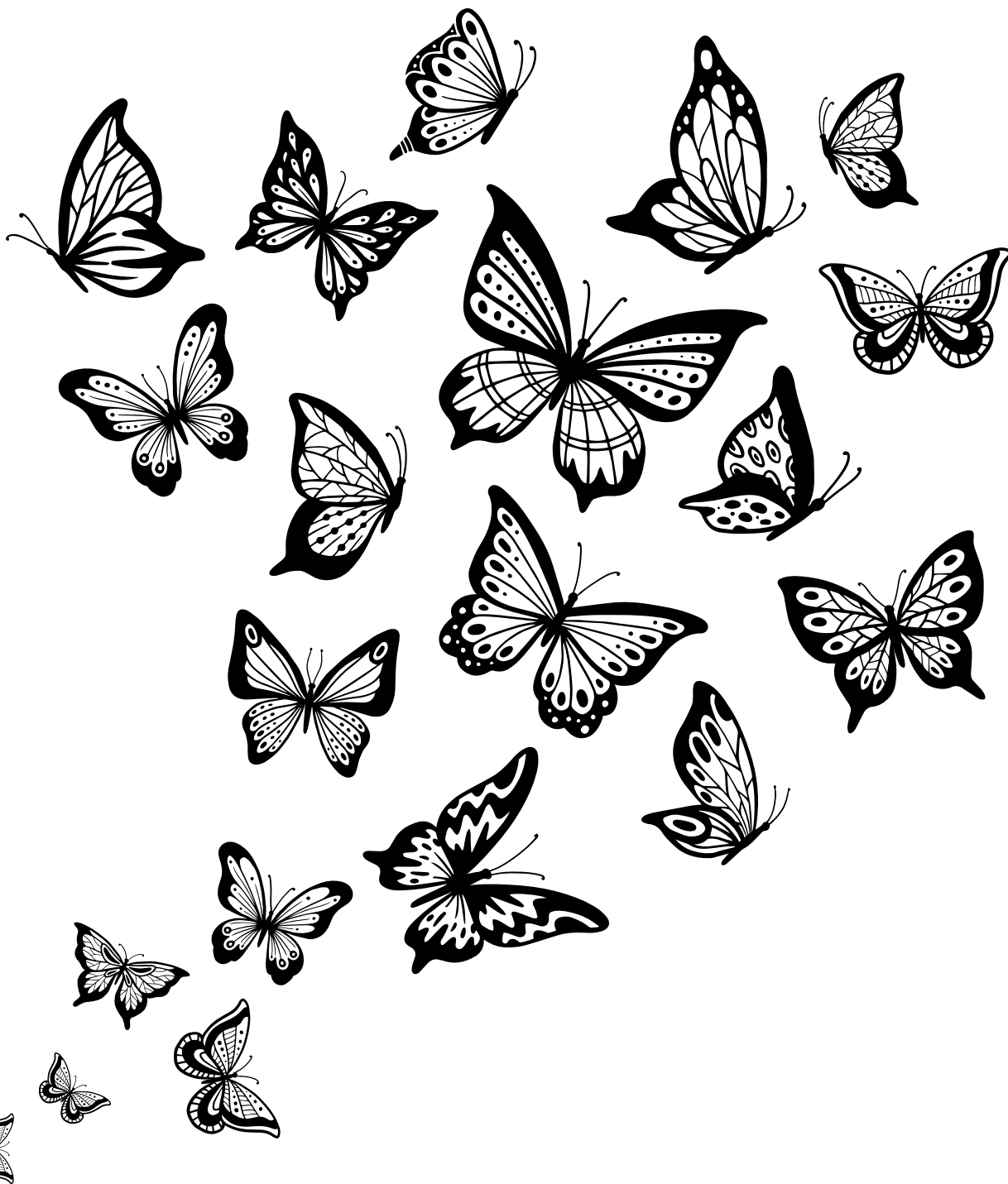


Select poems from
I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's
Drawings & Poems from Terezín
Concentration Camp, 1942-44

Published in 1964 by McGraw-Hill Book Company



Background Information

The Nazis ran Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto/concentration camp from November 24, 1941, until it was liberated by the Red Army on May 8, 1945. Jews mostly from Bohemia and Moravia, Germany, and Austria were deported to Terezín. A large portion of those imprisoned were notable due to their involvement in arts and culture.

Upon arrival at Terezín, prisoners were sorted, so children under 14 were housed in children's homes. In these homes, school was held in secret. Often the teachers would lead students in poetry contests and recitation nights. Many of the poems compiled in [I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings & Poems from Terezín Concentration Camp, 1942-44](#) were donated to the State Jewish Museum in Prague in 1952 by Mrs. Anna Hanusova-Flachova, a survivor of Terezín whose husband was also imprisoned there and was a teacher in the children's homes.

Most of the prisoners in Terezín were deported to other ghettos, as well as concentration camps and killing centers like Auschwitz and Treblinka. Of the approximately 15,000 children imprisoned in Terezín, the vast majority did not survive.

At Terezín

When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not I!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor- why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!

Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug?
Here in Terezin, life is hell
and when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.

Written by Teddy in 1943

(Poem was only signed Teddy, identity unknown)

From Children's Home L410

1.) In the poem “At Terezín”, it is told from a child’s perspective. Besides the use of the word “child” in the poem, what other clues let you know that the speaker is a young child?

2.) Given what you know about the Holocaust, why would things in Terezín seem strange to a new child arriving (lines 1-2)?

It All Depends on How You Look At It

I.

Terezin is full of beauty
It's in your eyes now clear
And through the street the tramp
Of many marching feet I hear.

In the ghetto at Terezin,
It looks that way to me,
Is a square kilometer of earth
Cut off from the world that's free

II.

Death, after all, claims everyone,
You find it everywhere.
It catches up with even those
Who wear their noses in the air.

The whole, wide world is ruled
With a certain justice, so
That helps perhaps to sweeten
The poor man's pain and woe

Written by Miroslav Košek

Born on March 30, 1932 (Hořelice, Czechoslovakia)

Deported to Terezín on February 15, 1942 (age 9)

Killed at Auschwitz on October 19, 1944 (age 12)

Juxtaposition: placing two different things/ideas together so that we can see the contrast/difference between them

1.) Describe the juxtaposition that you see in the poem “It All Depends on How You Look At It”.

2.) What message do you think the author is trying to convey?

Terezín

That bit of filth in dirty walls,
And all around barbed wire,
And 30,000 souls who sleep
Who once will wake
And once will see
Their own blood spilled.

I was once a little child,
Three years ago.
That child who longed for other worlds.
But now I am no more a child
For I have learned to hate.
I am a grown-up person now,
I have known fear.

Bloody words and a dead day then,
That's something different than bogie men!

But anyway, I still believe I only sleep today,
That I'll wake up, a child again, and start to laugh and play.

I'll go back to childhood sweet like a briar rose,
Like a bell which wakes us from a dream,
Like a mother with an ailing child
Loves him with woman's love.
How tragic, then, is youth which lives
With enemies, with gallows ropes,
How tragic, then, for children on your lap
To say: this for the good, that for the bad.

Somewhere, far away out there, childhood sweetly sleeps,

Along that path among the trees,
There o'er that house
Which was once my pride and joy.
There my mother gave me birth into this world
So I could weep . . .

In the flame of candles by my bed, I sleep
And once perhaps I'll understand
That I was such a little thing,
As little as this song.

These 30,000 souls who sleep
Among the trees will wake,
Open an eye
And because they see
A lot

They'll fall asleep again. . .

Written by Hanuš Hachenburg in 1944

Born on July 12, 1929 (Prague, Czechoslovakia)

Deported to Terezín on October 24, 1942 (age 13)

Killed at Auschwitz on July 10, 1944 (age 14)



Alliteration: using the same letter or sound at the beginning of words close to each other

1.) In stanza six of “Terezín”, the author uses alliteration when he says, “Somewhere, far away out there, childhood **s**weetly **s**leeps”. Why do you think they used alliteration there, and what are they trying to say with that line? (*Note: this is a translated version of the poem which may affect word choice and rhyme scheme.*)

2.) What is the theme of “Terezín”?

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,
Pinned 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.

Written by Pavel Friedmann on June 4, 1942
Born on January 7, 1921 (Prague, Czechoslovakia)
Deported to Terezín on April 26, 1942 (age 21)
Killed at Auschwitz on September 29, 1944 (age 23)



Personification: giving human qualities to something non-human

1.) In the poem “The Butterfly”, the author personifies the sun (“the sun’s tears would sing”, “it wished to kiss the world goodbye”). What effect does this have on the poem? Why do you think the author chose to include the personification?

2.) Why does the author say that they never saw another butterfly? What could the butterfly represent in this poem?

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!

Written by Eva Picková

Born on May 15, 1929 (Nymburk, Czechoslovakia)

Deported to Terezín on April 16, 1942 (age 12)

Killed at Auschwitz on December 18, 1943 (age 14)

Diction: word choice used by an author

1.) Throughout “Fear”, the author uses vivid diction (“evil sickness”, “weep and writhe”, “bitter tax”). How does their word choice enhance the poem?

2.) In line two of the poem, it says “Death wields an icy scythe”. When we typically think of the Grim Reaper (personification of death), they don’t have an icy scythe. Why do you think the author chose to make it icy in the poem?

