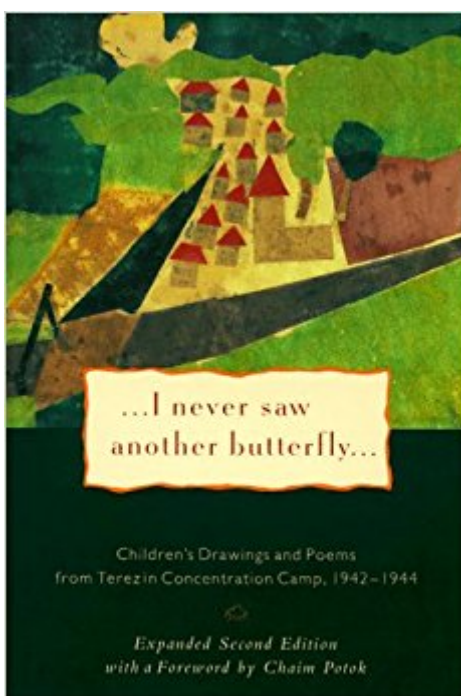


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# I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings & Poems From Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-44



## Synopsis

The drawings and poems by the children of Terezin are among the most poignant documents of the Holocaust. This expanded edition of the unforgettable collection *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* was occasioned by the loan of the children's art by the State Jewish Museum in Prague to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., for exhibition and for this book. The ghetto of Terezin (Theresienstadt), located in the hills outside Prague, was an unusual concentration camp in that it was created to cover up the Nazi genocide of the Jews. Billed as the "Führer's gift to the Jews," this "model ghetto" was the site of a Red Cross inspection visit in 1944 and of a propaganda film produced by the Nazis. Some elderly Jews even paid to enter its protective ghetto walls. With its high proportion of artists and intellectuals, culture flourished in the ghetto -- alongside starvation, disease, and constant dread of the continuous transports to the death camps of the east. Every one of its inhabitants was condemned in advance to die. A total of 15,000 children under the age of fifteen passed through the Terezin Concentration Camp between the years 1942 and 1944; less than 100 survived. In these poems and pictures drawn by the young inmates of Terezin, we see the daily misery of these uprooted children, as well as their courage and optimism, their hopes and fears. The drawings and poems are all that is left of these children. About those who signed their names to their work, it has been possible to find out a few facts: the year and place of their birth, the date of their transport to Terezin and to Auschwitz, and the date of their death. For most of them that last date was 1944, a year before the end of the war. These innocent and honest depictions allow us to see through the eyes of the children what life was like in the ghetto. Birds and butterflies flutter with the looming red roofs of Terezin in the background; a luminous moonlit room betrays the stark interior of the barracks. Pencil line drawings depict the threatening guards, work brigades, and deportations they witnessed. Side by side with the realities are images of hope -- a sailboat guided by a candle, a lighted menorah, children playing in a garden that resembles Eden, figures scaling mountain peaks to liberation. The children's poems and drawings, revealing a maturity beyond their years, are haunting reminders of what no child should ever have to see. Each piece of art gives the overwhelming tragedy of genocide a human and individual face. This new, expanded edition of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* includes many additional drawings and poems chosen from the archives of the State Jewish Museum in Prague by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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[...] Recently reading about the Houston Holocaust Museum's planned 2013 exhibition titled *The Butterfly Project*, I read for the first time Pavel Friedmann's poem "The Butterfly" in which he remarks that he has seen no butterfly in the ghetto though some of the beauty of the natural world insists on itself even there. The ghetto is the Terezin Concentration Camp in Czechoslovakia. Terezin was a bizarre experiment of the Third Reich, which set it up as a place to hold Jewish artists, intellectuals, and German army veterans of World War I. To these Jews and to the world it presented this depraved and dirty ghetto as a gift to these Jews who had greatly to German culture. In fact, the Germans even succeeded in fooling the Red Cross into believing the place was OK. Meanwhile, 15,000 children passed through Terezin, but fewer than 100 survived. While they were in that hellish bastion of cruelty, these children were nevertheless blessed by the Vienna-born, Bauhaus-trained artist Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. Under her gentle direction and with the few art supplies she managed to hoard, many of these children found a release for all that they were feeling as they encountered Nazi cruelty and awaited death every day. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* exhibits these children's artwork, poems, and prose in the space of 106 pages. The book includes a catalog of the works that identifies the young artists' birth, deportation, and death dates. When the book arrived the other day, I decided I would not read the book until I could read it in one sitting. The book deserves complete, uninterrupted attention. The innocence and honesty, truth and reality captured by these children create beauty where otherwise beauty could not take hold. Works of art on scraps of paper are the legacy of murdered children to the present. May we learn from them. Hey, try to open up your heart To beauty; go to the woods someday And weave a wreath of memory there. Then if tears obscure your way You'll know how wonderful it is To be alive.--Anonymous, 1941, [...]

Everyone knows of the atrocities that the Nazis perpetrated during the Holocaust, but how many people stop and think about the children that were in the concentration camps? Or what they had to

bear? Shocking as it is the children at Terezin were allowed to have some time together, with a former art teacher, to sketch and create, and to basically have a form of art therapy for all of the horrors they were seeing (not that the Nazi's realized that therapy was occurring.) This book captures some of the poetry and artwork that these children created. Their fears, their hopes, and their dreams are laid out in the open for all to read. It is a powerful book and I would highly recommend it to all, especially to those taking or teaching a class on this time period.

Even if one more reference to the Holocaust is painful for you, you must own and read this book. Why? Because you will see the horror of that bleak chapter of human history through the eyes and hearts of children. As if by a miracle, these children purify their suffering and elevate it to the level of a spiritual experience. The simplicity of their art and the poignant insights of their poetry strike us with a power and honesty that no adult can capture by more sophisticated and intellectual means. This book should be in the library of every person who loves humanity, children, and historical truth. In their creations we experience the evil of war and the redemptive power of childhood's unspoiled sanctity.

Just a beautiful book. The poems may not be astounding, but they are poignant, as are the beautiful images that accompany them. I plan on using this book in the classroom, paired with another book on the Holocaust.

What can I say about this book? It is so powerful. I read it as a child and I never forgot it. Now as a 47 year-old adult I've found a copy as a keepsake to pass on through my generations. This book should be embraced and never ever forgotten. It is a rare gem.

The pictures, stories, and poetry written by these children who were surrounded by death and suffering and knew that their own chances of survival were slim tell so much about the human spirit. The depth of these children's understanding of the situation is nothing short of amazing. The tragedy is all the more real when you connect the child's work with his or her date of death. Everyone needs to see this art that comes from such young, innocent souls!

I bought this after reading Kristy Cameron's series on WW II. BEAUTIFUL book. The drawings are haunting.

A friend lent me this book and kept it for a couple of months. After I had read and absorbed it I returned it to her knowing that I had to own my own copy, so I started to hunt for it. I had difficulty in obtaining it in the U.K., but was then advised to try in America. As I say in the title, I find it sad and haunting, but am really impressed by the optimism it conveys. I have recently found out that several of my Grandfather's family died in The Holocaust and this fills me with sadness. I am now in touch with family around the world and have visited Auschwitz I feel I need to find out as much as I can as to what my relatives suffered.

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