

Teachers

Museum of History & Holocaust Education

EDUCATING FOR A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE

The Butterfly Project

Guide



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www.kennesaw.edu/historymuseum



Department of Museums,
Archives & Rare Books

The Butterfly Project was initiated by the Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas in 2001 to honor the 1.5 million Jewish children who perished in the Holocaust. The project's goal was to collect 1.5 million hand-crafted butterflies—one for each child victim. The program was brought to Kennesaw State University in fall 2005 by professors Natasha Lovelace and Charlotte Collins.

In June 2008, Kennesaw State University officially submitted its butterflies to Houston—butterflies of all colors, shapes, and sizes created by local children, students, seniors, and other community members. We continue to display a selection of butterflies in our onsite exhibit, and we continue to lead local students in butterfly-making activities.

Holocaust education can be emotionally difficult. Through the creative and contemplative process of crafting a butterfly, we have the opportunity to honor a child lost in the Holocaust as well as those who continue to be affected by war and genocide. We have found The Butterfly Project to provide a healing and enriching experience and an important element of Holocaust education.

We find that The Butterfly Project is most effective with these guidelines in mind:

- Preface the activity by learning the story of at least one child who lived during the time of the Holocaust
- Clearly describe the history and purpose of the project and butterfly-making activity
- Discuss the symbolism of the butterfly
- Provide examples of butterflies and descriptions of their meaning
- Follow-up with discussion and sharing of individuals' butterflies

When the activity is complete, you may choose to:

- Display your butterflies on a poster or bulletin board
- Create a butterfly “chain” to drape across a wall or ceiling
- Hang butterflies from ceiling using string
- Send butterflies home with students to share with their families
- Collect and send the butterflies to the Holocaust Museum in Houston

We have compiled the following templates and information to help you participate in this meaningful and important project.

The Butterfly Project

Facilitator Instructions

1. Explain the history of the project and its rationale:

In 2001, the Holocaust Museum in Houston, Texas began collecting 1.5 million handmade butterflies to re-member the 1.5 million children who died in the Holocaust. Countless students and families from Georgia schools made butterflies at our museum as part of this project.

Today, we create butterflies because:

- We continue to honor the children who were lost,
- We want visitors to actively participate in this remembrance,
- The butterflies remind us to be grateful for the beauty and freedom that we have today.

2. Guide a short discussion about the meaning of the butterfly:

- Why are butterflies a symbol we use when we learn about the Holocaust?
- When you think of a butterfly, what words or images come to mind? Rebirth, beauty, freedom, growth, hope?
- What does a butterfly mean to you?
- Show the class a few examples of other students' butterflies and quotes about them.

3. If the facility allows, play an audio cd while students work on their butterflies:

- Ask to students to avoid drawing on the background paper—we would like to reuse as much as we can.
- Try to maintain a calm, thoughtful atmosphere that lends itself to creative expression.
- Feel free to walk around the room and ask children about their butterflies.
- We encourage you to draw your own butterfly as well!
- Keep track of time, and tell students when time is running out.

4. Budget the last 5-10 minutes for students to clean their workspaces and to talk about the butterflies they made. Offer to let the students take the butterflies home with them or brainstorm a creative way to display the butterflies.

Brave Butterflies: Student Quotes

“I drew this butterfly to show there is hope after war.”

“I dedicate this butterfly to the millions of children who were lost during the Holocaust.”

“My butterfly shows how I am thankful for my freedom.”

“The dots on my butterfly represent tiny hope for each child, and the V repre-sents their wish for victory.”

“I made my butterfly for the memory of people who died in WWII.”

“I wish I could give this butterfly to somebody in a ghetto or camp to show them there are still beautiful things in the world.”

“I made my butterfly brown and orange like leaves in fall because history changes like seasons change.

“I made a butterfly to show that we didn’t forget the people who lived and died in the Holocaust.”

“The Holocaust teaches us to see beauty in all kinds of people, like a beautiful butterfly.”



The Butterfly by Pavel Friedman

“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 good-bye.
For seven weeks I’ve lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches 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 Friedman wrote this poem while living in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. Born in 1921, Friedman was sent to the camp at age 21. This camp, called Theresienstadt, or “Terezin” for short, was a terrible place. Without enough food, water, or sanitation, many Jews died in Terezin from disease and starvation. Those who survived were likely sent to extermination camps in Poland. Like many others, Friedman eventually died in the Auschwitz camp in 1944.

Friedman’s poem was one of many poems and drawings created by children who lived in Terezin. Their works have been collected and published in the book, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, by Hana Volavkova (Schocken, 1994). This poem and the image of the butterfly serve as inspiration for the Butterfly Project. We encourage students to use the project to learn more about camps like Terezin, as well as the lives of children who lived there during the Holocaust.

Please see the “additional resources” page for more information.

Additional Resources:

Websites:

The Butterfly Project, Holocaust Museum, Houston, Texas

http://www.hmh.org/ed_butterfly1.shtml

Learning About the Holocaust Through Art

<http://art.holocaust-education.net/home.asp?langid=1>

North American Federation of Temple Youth, Butterfly Project

<http://www.nfty.org/resources/socialaction/butterfly/>

Shoah Research Center, Yad Vashem

http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot/prog/index_before_change_table.asp

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Educator Information

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/>

Books:

Hana Volavkova, editor. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, New York: Schocken, 1993.



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