

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

By Celeste Raspanti

Weidner Center for the Performing Arts

May 3, 2017



UW-GREEN BAY THEATRE

Hello!

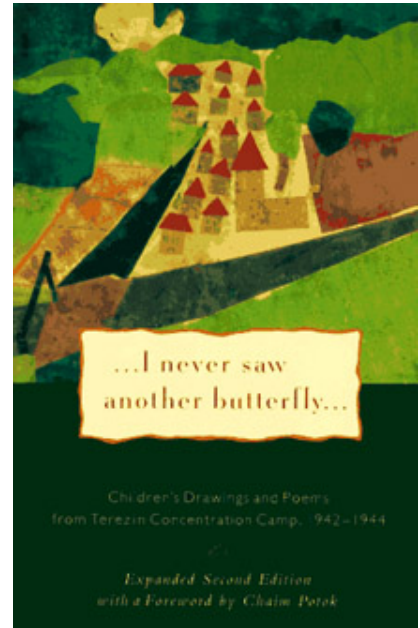
The Weidner Center for Performing Arts
is honored that you are attending the University of
Wisconsin-Green Bay performance of

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

Written by Celeste Raspanti

Based on the book of poetry and illustrations of the same
name.

This study guide has been designed to prepare teachers and
students prior to your arrival and to enhance your experience as
audience members at the theatre.



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About the Play

I Never Saw Another Butterfly is an uplifting and inspiring story about the use of art in times of tragedy. The story centers around Raja, a young Czech teenager who is forced into Terezin, or Thereisenstadt, a Jewish ghetto that was used as a stopping point for transport to the death camps in the east, Auschwitz in particular. While many Jewish artists, filmmakers, and other people of cultural or political prominence were sent there, the ghetto itself was still a miserable place to live.

Disease was everywhere, and starvation was the norm. Through the eyes of the children who lived in this camp, we see how art helped them not only survive their time in the ghetto, but also how it helped them cope. The play uses poetry from the book by the same name, a collection of artwork and poetry by the children of the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944.

About the Playwright

Celeste Raspanti is a retired university professor living in St. Paul. Born in Chicago, in 1928, the daughter of Italian immigrants, she graduated from Alverno College in Milwaukee with a BA in English in 1950, and went on to earn a Master's degree in English from Marquette University in 1957. In 1963, She was teaching English at Alverno College when she first came upon the book, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, the collected poetry and artwork of the children of the Terezin Concentration Camp. See page 14 for the playwright's essay.

Structure

The play is a "memory" play told by Raja, a survivor of Terezin, 10 years after the end of the war. Parts of the story are narration spoken to the audience and other parts are acted out as "flashbacks" in which Raja participates, playing herself as a child. The actors are an ensemble, a group of actors working together to tell a story. The play moves back and forth in time, slowly revealing information about life in the Terezin Concentration Camp as seen through the eyes of children who drew, painted, and wrote to express their feelings.

The play is approximately one hour long with no intermission. Music and projections of the Terezin children's art are used during transitions from one scene to the next. Most of the actors play several characters, representing the thousands of children that passed through Terezin. Some of the lines in the script were taken from diary entries found after the war and some were made up by the playwright after doing extensive research and interviews with survivors.

The Children's Opera

The playwright references a children's opera, "Ludvik," in the play. "Ludvik" is not a real opera. Raspanti probably changed the name because the actual opera, "Brundibar," was protected by copyright.

"Brundibar" (Czech for 'bumblebee') by Hans Krasa, was performed by the children of Terezin 55 times. The story involves two poor, young children who need to buy milk for their sick mother. They try to earn money by singing in the town square but are bullied by the evil Brundibar. The animals and other children come together to help them defeat Brundibar, who represents Hitler.

The children of Terezin found great joy in rehearsing and performing the short opera. The message is one of triumph over evil by working together. A new English translation was written by American playwright Tony Kushner and recorded in 2006. The words have been published in a book for children, illustrated by Maurice Sendak ("Where the Wild Things Are")

Themes

This play and the book it is based on highlight the healing power of the arts in times of suffering. Raja discovers this for herself throughout the play, and uses the healing power of creativity to help her struggle through the loss of her many friends and loved ones. Irena teaches the children to use art as a tool for remembrance and healing. Hope is also an important theme, as hope is the only means for survival of the Holocaust.

Discussion Points

- Why was Raja so scared to enter Terezin?
- How did Raja's teacher Irena help her overcome her fear?
- How do you think the children felt being separated from their families while at Terezin?
- What does Raja feel upon liberation from Terezin?

Vocabulary

Achtung: (German) attention

Auschwitz: A concentration camp located in Poland that many people were sent. It was one of several death camps that the Nazis used to enact the “Final Solution,” or their goal to kill all the Jews in Europe.

Barrack: The place that the people of Terezin were kept, where bunks were three high and crammed together in a small space.

Bath house: In the context of the play, the gas chambers people would be sent to be killed.

Concentration Camp: A prison for large numbers of inmates using as few guards and at as little cost as possible. Prisoners often had to work incredibly hard and received only a minimum of food.

Deportation: the lawful expulsion (sending out) of an undesired person or people from a state

The Final Solution: the decision made in 1942 by Nazis to kill all the Jews in the Third Reich, or Hitler’s empire.

Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: An artist and teacher from Prague who was sent to Terezin and resided there until her deportation and death in Auschwitz in 1945. The inspiration for Irena in the play.

Ghetto: Part of a town with walls and gates separating Jews from the rest of the population.

Hausalter: (German) loosely translated, dorm leader

The Holocaust: The systematic killing of Jewish people and others by Nazis in the 1940s.

Liberation: in the context of the play, the release from concentration camps by the Allied Powers.

Nazi: Short for National Socialist, the name of Hitler’s political party.

Prague: The capital of Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and home to 92,000 Jews before WWII

Raja Englanderova: The main character of the play who is based on a real person of the same name. A Jewish girl originally from Prague, and during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia was sent to Terezin. She was imprisoned there from 1942 until the camp's liberation in 1945.

Reinhard Heydrich: Considered “the man with the iron heart” by Hitler himself, he was a high-ranking official and the Nazi leader of the Czechoslovakia region of Germany during WWII.

Schnell: (German) quickly

SS: (*Schutzstaffel*) Hitler's special, ruthless Nazi force, who wore black shirts as part of their uniform.

Terezin: A Jewish ghetto that hundreds of thousands of people were sent to. It acted as a transition point to death camps, and a place where prominent Jews in politics, culture, and academia were sent under false promises of protection. The German name for the camp was Thereisenstadt. (See Page 11)

Transport: In the context of WWII, sending people to other concentration camps by railway. Also, the act of being on the list to be sent away to another camp.

Typhus: an often deadly illness transmitted by lice. It went more often by its common name Typhoid Fever, and is highly contagious.

Vedem: The newspaper that the boys of Terezin wrote. It included poetry, news stories, and artwork of the people living in Terezin, and many pages still exist today. (See Page)

Warsaw: The capital of Poland.

Wehrmacht: The German armed forces prior to and during WWII.

Map of Terezin

Terezin's origin was as a military fortress built in the late 1700s. Prior to World War II, the town scarcely held more than 3,000 people. When the Nazi's occupied Czechoslovakia in the early 1940s, they evacuated the town and turned it into a Jewish ghetto, which they renamed Theresienstadt. Life there was miserable, and there was always fear of transport to the East. This map shows the what the layout of the ghetto would have been.

What are some things you notice about the town? Why do you think this town was important to the Nazi's for the containment of the Jews? What else do you notice about the original image?



Timeline of WWII and Terezin

1934

August: Hitler declares himself the Fuhrer of Germany

1938

March: Hitler enters Austria; anti-Jewish Laws are imposed

September: Germany occupies Sudetenland (area near Czechoslovakia that belonged to Germany prior to WWI)

November 9: *Kristallnacht*: anti-Jewish riots across Germany, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, shops, and hospitals are destroyed.

1939

March 15: Germany occupies Czechoslovakia and establishes the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

August 31: Germany invades Poland

September 3: Great Britain and France declare war on Germany

1940

March: Czech Jews are banned from working in commerce, transport, advertising, or banking

April: Czech Jews are banned from work as doctors, vets, and lawyers

1941

September 18: Czech Jews are ordered to wear a yellow star

September 27: Reinhard Heydrich, a leading Nazi, become head of the protectorate

October 10: Nazis decide to turn Terezin into a Jewish ghetto and rename the town Theresienstadt

October 17: Terezin is proposed as a transit camp to the East

December 4: The first transport of Prague Jews arrives at Terezin. By the end of the month, there are 7,350 inmates.

1942

January 20: The Wannsee Conference: Nazi leaders agree on plans for “The Final Solution.” Terezin is chosen as a camp for elderly and prominent Jews from Germany and Austria.

June: The Czech inhabitants of Terezin are expelled, and the town is turned over to the Jewish council of elders

June 2: The first elderly Jews from Berlin arrive at Terezin

June 20: The first Jews from Vienna arrive at Terezin

July: The population of Terezin rises to 43,000

September 18: Terezin’s population reaches 58,491. During September, 3,491 people die

October 2: The first Terezin transport is sent to Auschwitz

1943

January: Terezin's population thins with mass deportations to Auschwitz

April 1: The first Dutch Jews arrive

September 5: 5,000 are sent to the "family camp" at Auschwitz

October 5: 466 Danish Jews arrive at Terezin

November 11: A twenty-four-hour census is taken of the entire ghetto

1944

January: 2,000 more Dutch Jews arrive

June 23: Visit from the Red Cross delegation

July: The Soviet army advances. Death marches begin

August 16-September 11: Shooting of the propaganda film

September 20: 2,081 more Dutch Jews arrive.

September 29-October 28: Eleven transports to Auschwitz of 18,000 people, leaving only 11,000 people in Terezin, including all the Danes. Seventy percent of those that remain are female.

November 26: Dismantlement of Auschwitz is ordered.

1945

February 5: 1,210 inmates leave for safety to Switzerland

March 11: 1,000 Hungarian Jews arrive

April 15: The Swedish Red Cross transfers 423 Danish prisoners to freedom in Sweden

April 17: The Nazi archives are burned

April 20: 2,000 prisoners, evacuated from eastern concentration camps, arrive. 15,000 more arrive in the following two weeks. A typhus epidemic breaks out

April 30: Hitler dies

May 2: The International Red Cross takes control of Terezin

May 5: The last SS men abandon their posts at Terezin

May 7: Germany Surrenders

May 8: The Soviet army liberates the 30,000 inmates of Terezin

May 10: The Soviet army takes control of Terezin

May 14-28: The residents are kept in quarantine

May 28: Repatriation begins and is complete by August.

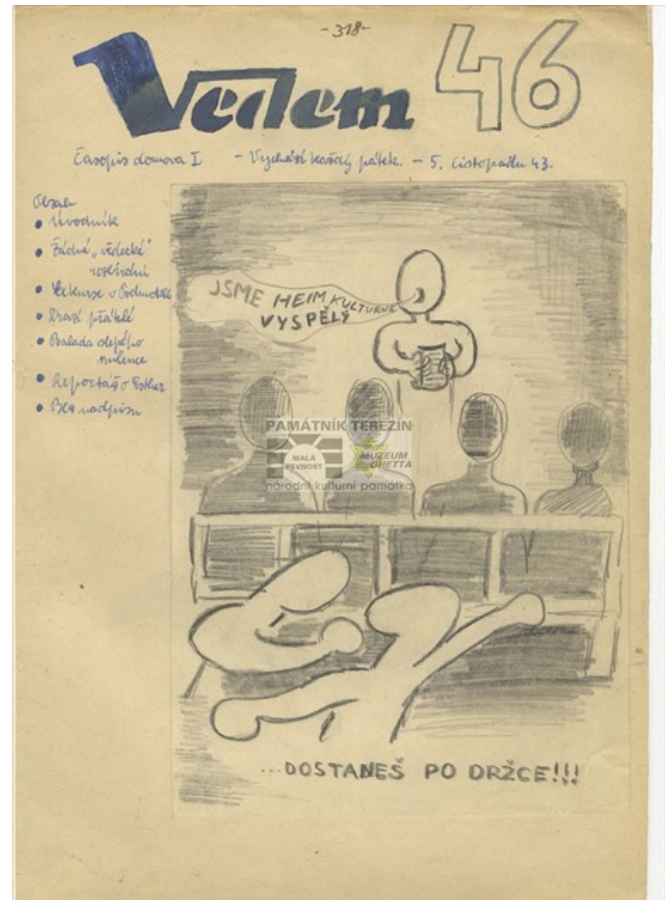
**Ruth Thomson "Timeline," *Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust*. (Candlewood Press: Sommerville, 2011) 62.

Activities

Write your own Vedem Article

In *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* the boys of Terezin published a weekly magazine from their barracks called *Vedem*, which means “In the Lead”. This magazine was illegal, and there would be serious consequences if they were to be caught by the guards. In the magazine they published articles, poetry, puzzles, and artwork from the children in the camp.

Here are some examples of the magazine, with more on the next page:





What would you write or draw if you were writing for *Vedem*? Use the space below to create your own?

Poetry Analysis

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 good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived 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 here in the ghetto.

-Pavel Friedmann, 1942

1. What does this poem tell you about the author?
2. Does the author use simile or metaphor? Where?
3. Why was the butterfly important?
4. Compare this to the timeline on pages 8-9. When was this poem written in the ghetto's history?

The Power of Art to Sustain Hope



Children who arrived at Terezin were frightened, grieving, sick, and often unable to communicate due to shock and fear. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (the inspiration for the character Irena in the play) was an artist who had studied at a Bauhaus art school. In Terezin, she taught children to express themselves through art although the Nazis forbade Jewish children to attend schools. Using a technique of aesthetic empathy, she gave the children an escape from the daily horrors of the ghetto in art and imagination. She encouraged

them to draw images of what they remembered from their homes as well as those from dreams and nightmares. At night, she used the techniques of art therapy to better understand each child through their artwork and strove to help them cope from day to day.

Use the space below to draw, write, or create a collage of something that may be going on in your life, or something that brings you joy.

Where Does a Play Begin?

By Celeste R. Raspanti

I knew I wanted to be a writer in 1943, when I won an essay contest in high school. The prize for the winning essay that second year of WWII was appropriately a \$25 War Bond. But more important to me was a framed certificate with the designation: WRITER OF THE YEAR. I reveled in the title and did everything I could to enhance it—writing for the school paper, writing skits for school assemblies, writing a pageant for my parish jubilee, even writing a play in Latin that was performed before the whole school. (I attended a Catholic girls' school in the 40s!)

It was not surprising that when I went to college, I would dedicate myself to perfecting my talents as a writer with a future. But a funny thing happened on the way to the publisher's office. I entered the convent, started to teach—and loved it.

But I never stopped writing. Inspiration was everywhere I turned. A theatre workshop at Columbia University inspired a short play set in Harlem; an intense rereading of the Brontë novels inspired another play; my own teaching of Shakespeare brought me to my first commissioned work: the book and lyrics for a children's operetta during the Shakespeare quadricentennial in 1964.

So it is that I have never had any difficulty in answering the most frequent questions about my plays—both published and produced. Where do your ideas come from? How do you begin? My answer is direct: I begin in fact, in history, in that little knot of truth that I can unravel and spin into a drama. And I find my subjects everywhere, though sometimes they find me. My play, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, is a case in point.

It was some years ago that I stepped into Brentano's bookstore in Chicago to pass the time waiting for a friend. "Waiting doesn't matter in Brentano's," I said. As I wandered into the poetry section, I picked up a book which I thought to be just another book, one of many in a lifetime of books. But as I opened the pages, I sensed that this book would be different. While the title, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, was irresistibly poetic, the subtitle was informative: *Children's Drawings from Terezin Concentration Camp: 1942-1944*. These simple facts sent me on a long journey of research, writing and publishing.

It was impossible for me to put the book down. I turned page after page, reading the poetry, moved by the simple poignancy of the drawings, charmed by the clumsy child humor, terrified at the brutal truth that came so directly and so openly from the mouths of the children. When I reached the end of the book, I could not speak.

The final section of the book identified the child poets and artists of the works included in this slim volume. There was a brief paragraph, all that was known of each child: the date of birth, the date of the transport to Terezin, and the date the child perished at Auschwitz.

As I glanced at the pages, I noticed one recurring phrase in the grim litany of brief, young lives, "perished at Auschwitz, perished at Auschwitz, perished at Auschwitz." But another phrase startled me, "Raja Englanderova, after the liberation, returned to Prague."

At that moment I knew I was committed to these children, to the more than 15,000 children who were incarcerated in Terezin, to the mere 100 who survived, and in a special way, to that one child, now a woman, who would become the subject of my research, the nominal principal character in my play, and a dear personal friend.

My first reaction to the story of the Terezin children was silence. My second reaction was the inability to keep silent. As a published playwright, I began my research thinking in terms of a play. I was encouraged by friend and director Robert Pitman, who met me almost daily with the question, "How's the script coming?" One day he made a compelling promise, "If you write it, I'll direct it," and I knew I would have to create this play.

The research was absorbing, becoming in time a kind of obsession. I began in my own college library, expanded to the libraries at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of Chicago and the Yivo Institute in New York. I contacted a number of Holocaust survivors in the Jewish communities in Milwaukee and Chicago. Through the editor of the book, I located Dr. Karel Lagus, the curator of the Jewish Museum in Prague. Letter after letter passed between us, mine with questions, his with answers that only led to further questions.

As I worked, the single child survivor mentioned in the book became real to me, so real that I decided to use her name for the principal character. Except for that name, I knew very little about her—only the date of her birth, the date of her transportation to Terezin, and that one fact: "After the liberation, returned to Prague."

With a statement that was almost an afterthought, I wrote to Dr. Lagus, "Is Raja Englanderova still living? I suppose like many of the children who survived, she has disappeared into the present, unreachable."

But she was not unreachable, as I was to learn from Dr. Lagus. He wrote that he had located Raja Englanderova, now married. "She is Dr. Raja Lodinova, working in the Clinic for Mothers and Children, a research center here in Prague. I told her there was a woman in Milwaukee writing a play about her, and she was very pleased to be the hero of your play. She asked me to tell you to write to her..."

In a way, the letter frightened me. What could I say to her? What might she say to me? She might be, as were many Holocaust survivors, bitter and silent about her experience, resenting what might look like an outsider's curiosity. But I wrote—with trepidation. I explained that though I intended to use her name, I had no other information about her to use in the play. "I've used the writer's privilege," I wrote, "assuming that what happened to one person in Terezin, could have happened to any other person. I will not use your name, if you do not wish me to do so." I waited for her

answer, preparing myself to make changes if she requested them. Three weeks later I received my first letter from Raja.

"Dear Friend," she wrote, "I am very pleased to learn that you are writing a play about the Terezin children. I would be happy to help you. We could speak together about it, and I could give you some information you may not have found in your research. It would be pleasant for you to visit me in Prague."

Yes, I thought, it would be pleasant. Her invitation was so casual, a friendly, "Stop in for a cup of coffee and we'll chat." That wasn't possible, I thought at the time, but at least I had her permission to use her name, and better yet, I had the promise of her memories to share.

Some months later I did travel to Prague and Terezin to verify my research and to absorb the sense of place there. To my surprise, Raja decided to go with me and Dr. Lagus, who was to be my guide. We went together driving silently through the hills outside of Prague into the country, until we arrived at Terezin. I had come to know Terezin through books, documents, and photographs. I was to learn its meaning through the eyes of one who had lived there and survived its terrors.

In Terezin the quality of life was the astounding thing. The question that had prompted me to begin my research and to write my play had been: "Why should Raja Englanderova have survived?" After meeting Raja, visiting Dachau, Lidice, and Terezin, my question was not why, but how, how was it possible that Raja could have survived to become the unique person she was. She seemed a whole person, without hatred, without bitterness, without recriminations.

When we returned to my hotel, Raja asked to read the first draft of the play. Sitting across the room from her, I tried to write postcards to my friends and family, but I couldn't concentrate. My mind was reading through the script with Raja, and I was anxious for her reaction.

How could I have presumed to write her story? Now, more than ever, knowing her, I felt inadequate. I glanced at her several times as she read. But there was nothing on her face or in her posture to indicate what she was thinking or feeling. With a rustle of paper, she turned the last page and placed her hand on the script, gently, it seemed to me, almost lovingly. I looked at her not daring to ask, and her answer came without my question. "But how could you have known? A Catholic nun? How could you have known so well what it was like to be a Jew in Terezin? How could you have known?"

She asked that question many times as we visited. "How could you have known that I fell in love, young love, in Terezin? How could you have known about our teacher in Terezin?" I knew she was pleased and so was I. I had been immersed in these lives for two years, and I assumed that wherever there were young people—lonely and afraid, there would be the need for love. Wherever there were children huddled in the shadows of hunger and fear, there would be at least one strong person to teach the children how to sing, how to write poetry, how to paint pictures—how to survive. How could I have known? If you are a writer, you know. You know.

Three months later she asked that question again. Through the generosity of the Jewish community in Milwaukee, assisted by "twelve Jewish men who wished to do a mitzvah," Raja came to the United States and sat in the audience for the first performance of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. When she left the theatre in silence and came to embrace me, she asked it once more, "How could you have known?"

There is no simple answer, of course. Who can explain how one book, one phrase, one story can affect a writer? How vicarious experience becomes so real, that it can truly be described? Only another writer perhaps.

The writer who truly loves her story—researching, studying, living with it, can begin to enter into the characters. The first rule of writing, "Write what you know," really means, "You must learn what you need to know to tell your story." For me that has always meant reading, research, talking to people who can help me to know what I need to know to tell my story.

Sometimes I stumble across other stories that need to be told. While researching the background of the Holocaust, I came across a reference to another story. A father tells his son that he received his Bar Mitzvah in a German convent, where the nuns were actively involved in the underground transfer of Jewish children to France and England.

Deprived of his Bar Mitzvah, the boy tries to return to his Jewish community, now destroyed by the Nazis. He is prevented by the Mother Superior, who convinces him to stay. She promises that she will arrange his Bar Mitzvah in the convent chapel and then send him through the underground to safety in France.

A Bar Mitzvah in a convent: the knot of truth was irresistible. My own personal history was a rich background for the story I would create around that one true event: a Bar Mitzvah in a convent.

The plays that are still on my hard drive have the same point of origin: history, a true event, a fact. I like to begin my building on the solid ground of fact and then let characters and dialogue emerge. I take what is often called "poetic license," and carefully assume that within the context of a true event, historical and fictional characters will pursue their personal goals—and there will be drama. How do I know? If you are a writer, you know. You know.

MAKING THEATRE

Making a play takes a lot of work and a lot of people! Here are some of the jobs that people have for the show you are going to see.

DIRECTOR: The director creates the world of the play. This person picks the actors to play the parts, and works with costume, lighting, sound, and set designers to choose how the story is told to the audience.

STAGE MANAGER: The stage manager helps rehearsals run smoothly, and makes sure that information is communicated to everyone working on the show. This person also runs the show from backstage. This means they tell actors when to go on stage, when the lights need to change, and when a sound effect or music should be played.

ACTORS: The actors are who you see on stage during a performance. They work hard to memorize their lines, learn where and how to move and bring the characters in the story to life. In this show, all of the actors play mice!

DESIGNERS: Each area of the show (scenery, costumes, make up, props, lights and sound) has a person who decides what things look like and how to make them. This job is very creative and each time a play is done, different choices can be made. Designers work together with the Director and Actors to bring the story to life for the audience.



BACKSTAGE CREW: Designers need lots of help to sew the costumes, make the props, build and paint the set and set the lights. During the performance, there are a lot of people that the audience doesn't see, moving the set and curtains, controlling the lights and sound, and helping the actors backstage.

DRAMATURG: The person who is responsible for researching the historical background of the play. They provide information to the cast, the designers, and people coming to see this show. A dramaturg even wrote this study guide you're reading now!

What happens when you get to the Weidner Center?

Theatre would not be what it is without an audience. In a movie, the audience watches a recording of the actors that is projected on the screen. It is exactly the same every time it is played. In live theatre, the actors are performing right in front of you and every performance is a little different.

As an audience member, your job at the theatre starts as soon as you walk through the doors!

What is your job?

1. When you arrive, stay with your class, and listen to your teachers.
2. If you need to use the bathroom, do it before the show begins. You don't want to distract the actors or your classmates, and you don't want to miss any of the show!
3. Once you are in your seat, make sure you stay in your seat.
4. Do not bring food or drinks into the theatre. Most theatres do not allow you to take photos during a performance.
5. Please do not talk during the show, this can distract the people around you. Make sure you are listening and watching very closely, so that you can follow the story. At the end of a performance the audience claps to show their appreciation.

Enjoy the Show!

Resources for Educators

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org/>

“Soon There Will Be No Survivors”: A source that explores the oral history of Holocaust survivors. <https://tabletmag.atavist.com/soontherewillbenosurvivors>

***Fireflies in the Dark* by Susan Goldman Ruben:** An illustrated book based on the work of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis

We are Children Just the Same: The collected articles of *Vedem* with a forward by Vaclav Havel

***The Terezin Promise* by Celeste Raspanti:** A play written as a sequel to the play *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

***Helga’s Diary* by Helga Weiss:** A diary of a survivor’s time as a teenager in Terezin