



I Never Saw  
Another Butterfly  
by Celeste  
Raspanti

## Source Material/Historical Context

From the playwright,  
Celeste Raspanti:

### Big takeaways:

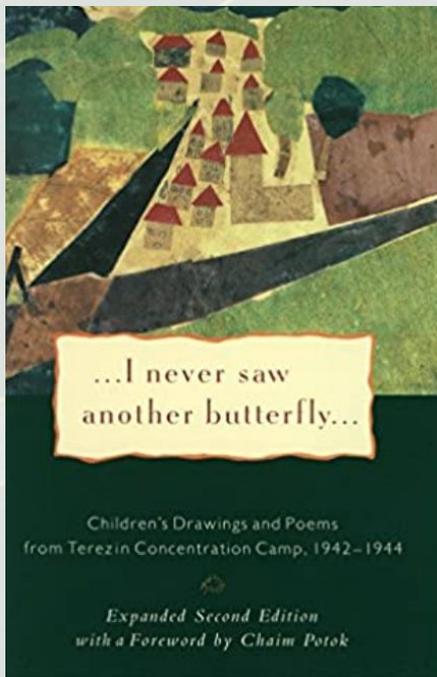
- 1) This play is based off a book of poems written by children in Terezin, a ghetto outside of Auschwitz. It is a fictional story.
- 2) These poems and drawings are primary source documents.
- 3) This play takes place at the end of WW2.

### SOME INTRODUCTORY NOTES

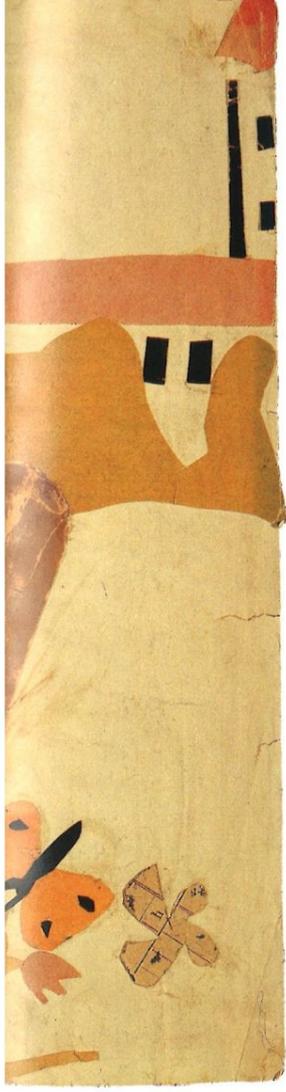
From 1942 to 1945 over 15,000 Jewish children passed through Terezin, a former military garrison set up as a ghetto. It soon became a station, a stopping-off place, for hundreds of thousands on their way to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. When Terezin was liberated in May, 1945, only about one hundred children were alive to return to what was left of their lives, their homes and families. The story of those years at Terezin remains in drawings and poems collected and published in the book, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.

The appendix to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* briefly notes the names of the children, the dates of their birth and transportation to Terezin. For most of the children whose work appears in the book, the brief biography ends, “perished at Auschwitz . . .” But one child, Raja Englanderova, “after the liberation, returned to Prague.” This play is an imaginative creation of her story from documentary materials: poems, diaries, letters, journals, drawings and pictures.

## The Source Material



- This is a book of **drawings** and **poems** created by the **children of Terezin**.
- Terezin was a “**stopping place**” before being sent on to **Auschwitz**
- In Terezin, **children attended school, created art and theatre**.
- When they were sent on, the **children left their art behind with other children**.
- **At the end of war in 1945, only 100 out of 15,000 children survived**



## 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 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.

## The Play

- ◻ Written in 1971
- ◻ Raja, one of the few survivors, is the main narrator of the story.
- ◻ The play follows her life in Terezin as she and her peers find small moments of resistance, joy and community as they navigate the trauma of the Holocaust.

### Characters:

Raja- Narrator of our story, based on real survivor.

Irena- based on art teacher from Terezin

Honza- Created a newspaper in Terezin

Youth- Compilation of stories

Loudspeaker- Provides historical context throughout the play

The background is a watercolor-style illustration. It features several overlapping, semi-transparent circles in various shades of blue, ranging from a deep, dark blue to a lighter, teal-like blue. Superimposed on these circles are delicate, branching structures in a golden-brown or light tan color, resembling bare tree branches or coral. The overall effect is a textured, artistic composition.

# Playwright Spotlight

Celeste Raspanti



Wrote several “memory” plays about the Holocaust, is a retired professor. Her plays have been performed all over the country in schools, community spaces and theatres as a way to learn about the Holocaust from the perspective of children and evoke empathy, compassion and understanding.

The background features a watercolor-style pattern. It consists of overlapping, semi-transparent circles in various shades of blue and teal. Superimposed on these circles are delicate, golden-brown branches that resemble coral or seaweed, with thin, tapering limbs. The overall aesthetic is soft and organic.

## **Impact of the play**

"The play has such power on its own, but it has particular resonance in 2021, as we face global challenges that make people question their values and seek to find joy in the "ordinary things"."

Review by Jennifer Wirz, PAS, Paynseville, Minn.

The script allows great creativity in staging and set design. It is a beautiful performance piece and an important and timeless message. Created dialogue in language arts and social studies classes about the poetry and the events of the Holocaust."

Review by Sharon Morrow, Parkview High School, Lilburn, GA

"This story is powerful. Traveling to senior centers with this play is the best thing we ever did. Many, many seniors came up after the show and said, "Let me tell you about ..." We even met one of the soldiers who actually was there to liberate these youth."

Review by Walter Williams, Master Arts Theatre, Grand Rapids, Mich.

**From educators...**

**The source material for this play is featured in galleries of primary source materials for the Holocaust in Holocaust memorials/museums around the world including the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle.**

Terms/References and additional resources/sources in I Never Saw  
Another Butterfly

Auschwitz

Vedem

Terezin

Ludvik

“My number”

Memory Play

Barracks

Resettlement

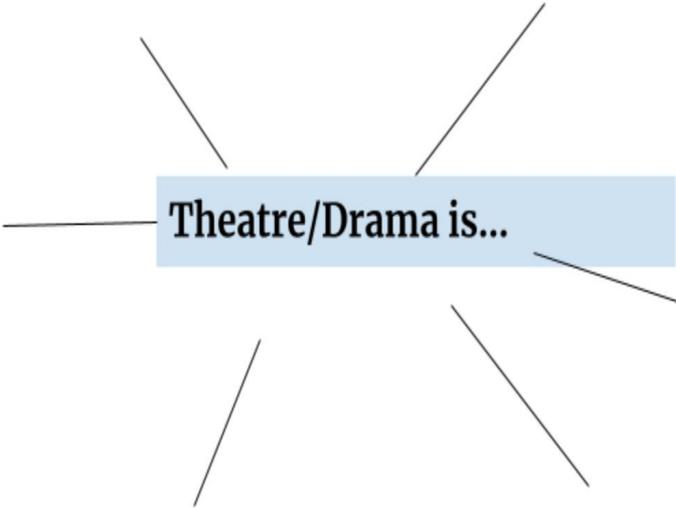
Liberation

# Why this play now??

- Opportunity to learn across content areas
  - Personalize survivor stories
  - From the perspective of youth
- A devised play using the source material of a profoundly beautiful primary source
  - Opportunity to develop empathy

## DO NOW

1. Grab mind-map.
2. Paste mind-map into notebook.
3. Write what you know about theatre/drama.



Theatre/Drama is...

**Theatre is anything that leads us through an experience.**

**This definition of theatre broadens the label for what theatre can be. Under this umbrella, **theatre can be:****

- **Visual Art (like theatrical design!)**
- **Tableaux (Frozen Image/Statue with our bodies)**
- **Pre-written scene (like in a play)**
- **An improvised scene (we come up with it on the spot)**
- **Soundscaping/music (sound choices)**
- **Storytelling (spoken word, poetry, short stories)**
- **Movement/dance**

## **Source Material**

(what we create from)+

**Art Form** (our creation  
tool)=

**Theatre**

## Gallery Walk

### **Directions:**

**For each primary source, fill in the sentence starters:**

**Name of Art Piece \_\_\_\_\_.**

**This is art about \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Looking at this, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.**

**An art form to explore this could be \_\_\_\_\_.**

## Devising with Primary Sources

### Your Task:

**Step 1:** Pick a primary source material to work with. (You can take it off the wall or we can give you copies)

**Step 2:** Get into small groups of 2-4 people.

**Step 3:** Come grab an art-form sticky note from the board.

**Step 4:** Read your primary source out loud, noting/circling any details/language that sticks out to you.

**Step 5:** Create a 30 second artistic response piece that tells us through your art form: **what is the main idea or feeling of this piece.** Title your piece and run through it at least twice.

**We will share like this:**

- 1) When you begin, say “we begin”.**
- 2) Perform your piece.**
- 3) When you are done, say “we end” so you know you are done.**
- 4) Celebrate your peers for sharing their art! Share a specific piece of praise on a sticky note or exit ticket: Your choice to \_\_\_\_\_ had the impact of \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Exit Ticket:**

\_\_\_\_\_, it made me think.

I Never Saw Another Butterfly Unit  
Day 2:

**Essential Question: What artistic tools do we have available to explore a script? How can a play function as a primary source?**

**Do Now:**

**Glue the definition for empathy into your notebook AND put this definition into your own words!**

Empathy can be defined as: “the feeling that you understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions” or “the ability to share someone else’s feelings” (Psychiatric Medical Care).

We’re going to practice sharing “another person’s experiences and emotions” by doing the same physical movements as them. This is called mirroring.

## Mirroring

### Directions:

- 1) Turn to the person next to you. Select who is A and who is B.
- 2) A will lead for 2 minutes and B will lead for 2 minutes. For the final 2 minutes, no one will lead/both of you will lead.

### Some reminders:

- This activity is to be done in total silence.
- You are mirroring to the best of your ability.
- When you are leading, please be considerate of other folks' access needs. Move in a way that is safe.

## **Characters:**

**Raja- Narrator of our story, based on real survivor.**

**Irena- based on art teacher from Terezin.**

**Honza- Created a newspaper in Terezin.**

**Youth- Compilation of stories.**

**Loudspeaker- Provides historical context throughout the play.**

## **LOUDSPEAKER**

***(an arrogant, military voice, interrupting).*** March 5, 1939. Germany enters Prague. ***(Martial music under the following announcements.)*** December 1, 1939. Jewish children excluded from state elementary schools. June 14, 1940. Auschwitz concentration camp set up. September 27, 1941. Reinhard Heydrich orders mass deportation of Jews and establishes Terezin as a Jewish ghetto. October 16, 1941. ***(Train sounds start and accelerate.)*** First transports leave Prague for Terezin. ***(Train sounds. )***

## RAJA

My name - is Raja. I  
was born in Prague.

Father, Mother,  
Pavel, Irca - Irena,  
Honza - they are all  
gone, and I am alone.

But that is not  
important. Only one  
thing is important -  
that I am a Jew, and  
that I survived  
Terezin.

## IRENA (*calming them*).

Quiet, now.  
Don't be  
afraid!

Remember,  
you are not  
alone.

Whatever you  
see or hear,  
whatever is  
done,  
remember, we  
are together -  
and then you  
will not be  
afraid!

## CHILD

I did not know that such a thing could happen to me.

When I go home, I'm going to eat only white bread . . . When I go home, I'm going to make my bed every day, clean ...

When I go home, I'm going to drink hot chocolate in the winter, lots of it ... When I go home, I'm going to have pretty white curtains-rugs, too.

## HONZA

Maybe. My father was beaten and left for dead before my eyes. I saw it. I couldn't move, I was so afraid. But I didn't run. I never understood it - until my father dying told me, "You're a good boy, Honza; you are afraid, but you are not a coward."

- **Stage directions:** In *italics*, tells us what the **characters are doing, communicates action**. May not always be in *italics* but will always be in **parentheses**.
- **CHARACTER NAMES** are in **ALL CAPS**. The lines the character says are to the right of the **CHARACTER NAME**
- The heading includes the **title of the play** and the **page number** on the top of the page
- Anything in **(parentheses)** is not said out loud. That's just for you, the actor!

RAJA (faces in the direction of the voice, then walks slowly downstage). My name — is Raja. I was born in Prague. Father, Mother, Pavel, Irca — Irena, Honza — they are all gone, and I am alone. But that is not important. Only one thing is important — that I am a Jew, and that I survived Terezin. Terezin was a fortress built by Emperor Joseph II of Austria for his mother Maria Teresa. About sixty kilometers from Prague it slept quietly in its green valley under blue skies until . . .

LOUDSPEAKER (an arrogant, military voice, interrupting). March 5, 1939. German Wehrmacht enters Prague. (Martial music under the following announcements.) December 1, 1939. Jewish children excluded from state elementary schools. June 14, 1940. Auschwitz concentration camp set up. September 27, 1941. Reinhard Heydrich orders mass deportation of Jews and establishes Terezin as a Jewish ghetto. October 16, 1941. (Train sounds start and accelerate.) First transports leave Prague for Terezin. (Train sounds.) Among them were children . . .

(Train noises die down as light flashes on in upstage area. IRENA SYNKOVA, one of the first inhabitants of Terezin, stands in the light with her back to the audience. She is holding a sheaf of odd-sized papers. She is a strong woman; one knows this by her voice and by the way she evokes strength in others. She has taken responsibility for the children in the camp, organized them into groups, planned lessons in a makeshift school for them. She is obsessed with their survival and the

## Let's Read Through Your Scene!

### Directions

- 1) **Select your group.**
- 2) **Send one representative up from your group to grab materials.**
- 3) **Cast your scene and write down who will playing what part.** Note:  
For a read through, someone can be cast as the stage manager and read the stage directions.
- 4) **Read through your scene, highlighting your lines as you go.**
- 5) **Discuss first impressions:** What stood out to you? What is going on in this scene? How are these characters feeling? What physically needs to be on the stage?

**Take this time to look at your script and highlight the design elements that you see.**

- **Set design (what's physically on the stage),**
- **Prop design (what characters are holding),**
- **Costume design (what characters are wearing),**
- **Light design (the lighting that shapes the mood of the scene)**
- **Sound design (the sounds that bring the scene to life).**

**Pick 1 design element to focus on and make a list/brainstorm of your idea on the Design graphic organizer.**

**If you have extra time, run through your scene again.**

- 1) Perform the scene (as a staged reading- no memorizing lines necessary)
- 2) Present your scene by explaining what happens and presenting one design element.
- 3) Perform the scene and present a design element!

### **Reflection/Exit Ticket:**

**Share one phrase to describe your scene!**

**This can be about**

- **Content**
- **Tech Design**
- **Rehearsal**

## I Never Saw Another Butterfly Unit Day 3

### DO NOW

Glue our Essential Question into your notebook: **Why do we share our work as theater artists? How can theater help us to empathize and connect with difficult history?**

**Jot down a one sentence response.** We'll come back to this later today.

## **WARM UP: Round of Applause**

- 1) Stand up. Let's form a circle if possible.
- 2) We will be passing the applause around the circle
- 3) **Your goal is to clap at the same time as the person next to you. Hint: Eye contact is helpful!**

## **Reflection Questions**

- 1) **How does this activity help us to warm up our bodies and voices?**

**As a reminder, here are your choices:**

- 1) Perform the scene (as a staged reading- no memorizing lines necessary)**
- 2) Present your scene by explaining what happens and presenting one design element.**
- 3) Perform the scene and present a design element!**

**During your work time today, here's what it should look like if you are doing the various options:**

- 1) Run through the scene at least twice. One group member should introduce the scene.**
- 2) Select who will be explaining the big ideas in the scene and who will be presenting their design element. Use this time to create design elements.**
- 3) Run through the scene at least once and use the rest of the time to create your design element.**

## Performing/Presenting Our Scenes

**Pick one sentence starter for each group**

- **An artistic choice I liked is \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **An artistic choice I noticed is \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **A question I have for the artists is \_\_\_\_\_.**
- **This scene made me feel \_\_\_\_\_.**

## **Sticky Note Exit Ticket**

**How can theater help us to empathize and connect with difficult history?**