

Teachers's

Museum of History & Holocaust Education

The Butterfly Project

Guide



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**KENNESAW STATE
UNIVERSITY**
MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES AND RARE BOOKS
Museum of History and Holocaust Education

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About this Teacher's Guide

This Teacher's Guide addresses the short lives of children that were victims of the Holocaust. These activities can be put in conversation with many other educational resources made available by the Museum of History and Holocaust Education. To inquire about availability, please email us at: **mhheeducation@kennesaw.edu**.

This curriculum guide, for **fifth through eighth grade** teachers, will help educate students about the atrocities of the Holocaust and the individuals impacted by this event. Although the lesson in this guide focuses on Social Studies standards, the activities are designed to be cross-curricular and can also be used for English Language Arts classes.

This guide is organized as a single lesson which is intended to take between one and two class periods to complete. We recognize, however, that not all teachers will be able to dedicate this amount of time to the topic of the Holocaust; portions of the activity, therefore, can be pulled out of the lesson and stand alone as individual parts.

In designing this guide we also sought to place a heavy emphasis on primary and secondary sources to teach this topic. All primary sources and worksheets that are needed for each lesson are included in the guide. Sources include poems and online museum exhibits.

Teachers should review all resources provided in this guide before sharing them with students to determine the appropriateness for their class.

Credits: *This teacher's guide was collated, edited, and designed by the Museum of History and Holocaust Education staff.*

Overview:

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 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.

Georgia Standards of Excellence correlated with *The Butterfly Project* activities:

These lessons meet the criteria for the following Georgia Standards of Excellence:

5TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

SS5H4 Explain America’s involvement in World War II.

b. **Describe** major events in the war in both Europe and the Pacific; include Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, D-Day, VE and VJ Days, and **the Holocaust**.

d. **Identify** Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill, Hirohito, Truman, Mussolini, and **Hitler**.

SS6H3 Explain conflict and change in Europe.

b. Explain the rise of Nazism including preexisting prejudices, the use of propaganda, and events which resulted in **the Holocaust**.

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE/TECHNICAL SUBJECTS GRADES 6-8:

L6-8RHSS1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

L6-8RHSS2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

L6-8RHSS7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS GRADES 6-8:

L6-8WHST8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

L6-8WHST9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.

Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/general-teaching-guidelines

Define the term “Holocaust”

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived “racial inferiority”: Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable

Just because a historical event took place, and it is documented in textbooks and on film, does not mean that it had to happen. This seemingly obvious concept is often overlooked by students and teachers alike. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. Focusing on those decisions provides insight into history and human nature and can help your students to become better critical thinkers.

Avoid simple answers to complex questions

The history of the Holocaust raises difficult questions about human behavior and the context within which individual decisions are made. Be wary of simplification. Seek instead to convey the nuances of this history. Allow students to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust and that often made decision making difficult and uncertain.

Make responsible methodological choices

One of the primary concerns of educators teaching the history of the Holocaust is how to present horrific, historical images in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Graphic material should be used judiciously and only to the extent necessary to achieve the lesson objective. Try to select images and texts that do not exploit the students’ emotional vulnerability or that might be construed as disrespectful to the victims themselves. Do not skip any of the suggested topics because the visual images are too graphic; instead, use other approaches to address the material.

In studying complex human behavior, many teachers rely upon simulation exercises meant to help students “experience” unfamiliar situations. Even when great care is taken to prepare a class for such an activity, simulating experiences from the Holocaust is pedagogically unsound.

The activity may engage students, but they often forget the purpose of the lesson and, even worse, they are left with the impression that they now know what it was like to suffer or even to participate during the Holocaust. It is best to draw upon numerous primary sources, provide survivor testimony, and refrain from simulation games that lead to a trivialization of the subject matter.

Furthermore, word scrambles, crossword puzzles, counting objects, model building, and other gimmicky exercises tend not to encourage critical analysis but lead instead to low-level types of thinking and, in the case of Holocaust curricula, trivialization of the history. If the effects of a particular activity, even when popular with you and your students, run counter to the rationale for studying the history, then that activity should not be used.

Strive for Precision of Language

Any study of the Holocaust touches upon nuances of human behavior. Because of the complexity of the history, there is a temptation to generalize and, thus, to distort the facts (e.g., “all concentration camps were killing centers” or “all Germans were collaborators”). Avoid this by helping your students clarify the information presented and encourage them to distinguish, for example, the differences between prejudice and discrimination, collaborators and bystanders, armed and spiritual resistance, direct and assumed orders, concentration camps and killing centers, and guilt and responsibility.

Try to avoid stereotypical descriptions. Though all Jews were targeted for destruction by the Nazis, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Remind your students that, although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them without benefit of modifying or qualifying terms (e.g., “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases but not all”) tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality.

Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust

Most students express empathy for victims of mass murder. However, it is not uncommon for students to assume that the victims may have done something to justify the actions against them and for students to thus place inappropriate blame on the victims themselves. One helpful technique for engaging students in a discussion of the Holocaust is to think of the participants as belonging to one of four categories: victims, perpetrators, rescuers, or bystanders. Examine the actions, motives, and decisions of each group. Portray all individuals, including victims and perpetrators, as human beings who are capable of moral judgment and independent decision making.

Avoid Comparisons of Pain

A study of the Holocaust should always highlight the different policies carried out by the Nazi regime toward various groups of people; however, these distinctions should not be presented as a basis for comparison of the level of suffering between those groups during the Holocaust. One cannot presume that the horror of an individual, family, or community destroyed by the Nazis was any greater than that experienced by victims of other genocides.

Avoid generalizations that suggest exclusivity such as, “The victims of the Holocaust suffered the most cruelty ever faced by a people in the history of humanity.”

Do not romanticize history

People who risked their lives to rescue victims of Nazi oppression provide useful, important, and compelling role models for students. But given that only a small fraction of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped rescue Jews, an overemphasis on heroic actions in a unit on the Holocaust can result in an inaccurate and unbalanced account of the history. Similarly, in exposing students to the worst aspects of human nature as revealed in the history of the Holocaust, you run the risk of fostering cynicism in your students. Accuracy of fact, together with a balanced perspective on the history, must be a priority.

Contextualize the history

Events of the Holocaust, and particularly how individuals and organizations behaved at that time, should be placed in historical context. The Holocaust must be studied in the context of European history as a whole to give students a perspective on the precedents and circumstances that may have contributed to it.

Translate statistics into people

In any study of the Holocaust, the sheer number of victims challenges easy comprehension. Show that individual people—grandparents, parents, and children—are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts and memoir literature add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics.



Lesson The Butterfly 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 represents 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 (page 12) 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>

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.



Resources for Teachers: K-12 Educational Programs

The mission of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education is to support K-12 students and teachers in the study of World War II and the Holocaust. Our programs are free and flexible, and you can customize a program to fit your school's specific needs. We offer:

- Field Trips to the museum
- In-School Programs
- Traveling Trunks
- Traveling Exhibitions
- Online Teacher's Guides
- Summer Workshop for High School Students
- No Place for Hate Art and Writing Contest
- Professional Development Workshops
- On-Site Events

To reserve a program, or for more information, contact us at **470-578-2083** or by email at **mhheeducation@kennesaw.edu**.

The Legacy Series

The Museum of History and Holocaust Education's *Legacy Series* oral history program uses filmed interviews to preserve the experiences of Holocaust survivors, World War II veterans, and home front workers living in Georgia. Through our website, you can find short video clips excerpted from these filmed interviews, in which the individuals share their World War II and Holocaust experiences. We encourage you to use these in your classroom to support your teaching about World War II and the Holocaust, and to help your students meet history face to face.

historymuseum.kennesaw.edu/educators/legacy_series.php



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