

# WISDOM AND GUIDANCE: A RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS



## VEDEM Educator's Guide

# *VEDEM* Educator's Guide

## Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Resources for educators	3
Instructional objectives	4
Terezín	5
Teaching about <i>Vedem</i>	6
Suggested learning activities – English/Language Arts	
Selected readings from <i>Vedem</i>	8
Research and creative writing projects	15
Suggested learning activities – Social Studies/History	
Selected readings from <i>Vedem</i>	15
Research projects	16
Sources	19

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Cover Art: Collage by Chava Pressburger, sister of Petr Ginz, the 14-year-old editor-in-chief of the Terezin journal *Vedem*.  
Courtesy of Chava Pressburger.

## ***Introduction***

Every Friday for about two years, between 1942 and 1944, a group of courageous teenage boys in the Terezín concentration camp created a remarkable secret journal they called *Vedem* (Czech for “In the Lead”). By learning about *Vedem*, students today can gain a unique perspective on the Holocaust as it was seen through the eyes of children—boys who resisted unspeakable cruelty through education and creative expression. In addition to teaching students about the boys and their secret journal, the lessons and activities suggested in this guide also emphasize the importance of recognizing and accepting the differences that make others unique, and illustrate the dangers of degrading and bullying.

The guidance offered here recognizes that the time allotted teachers to incorporate such materials into their lesson plans can be limited. We offer essential information with which educators can construct their own lessons, and printed and on-line resources for deeper exploration. Educators are encouraged to take from these materials in ways that enhance their own curriculum. While this guide provides examples for Language Arts/English and Social Sciences/History classes, many of its activities could be appropriate for music, art and other subjects. We hope, too, that teachers will consider interdisciplinary approaches.

In the suggested assignments, projects and discussion questions, we attempt to help teachers make *Vedem*'s lessons relevant for the lives of young people today. The story of the teenage boys of Terezín offers a unique opportunity to replace the Holocaust's statistics with the names, faces and thoughts of individual people who were not silent victims, but struggled together to maintain their human dignity. In the face of the genocide that was the Holocaust, these boys and their teachers demonstrate how education and creative expression can serve as positive actions in the face of adversity, offering wisdom and guidance for all generations.

## Resources for educators

The instructional strategies suggested in this guide assume at least some exposure to the Holocaust's historical facts. In developing lesson plans for *Vedem*, educators will need to assess their students' prior learning about the Holocaust, and to consider their maturity and emotional readiness for the material.

Teaching about the Holocaust is challenging with students of any age. It is a painful topic of deep historic and moral complexity that cannot be reduced to simple explanations. Almost seventy years after the end of World War II, scholars and educators still struggle with the Holocaust's meaning. Presenting the Holocaust to students in ways that are age-appropriate, meaningful and accurate is an especially delicate task. Yet it is so important.

Several online resources can be particularly valuable for teachers. The [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum \(USHMM\) website](#) contains an excellent set of guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust. Another outstanding resource is [Echoes and Reflections: A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust](#), developed jointly by the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. An essential comprehensive resource for information about the Holocaust is the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia](#). The following print resources are also recommended:

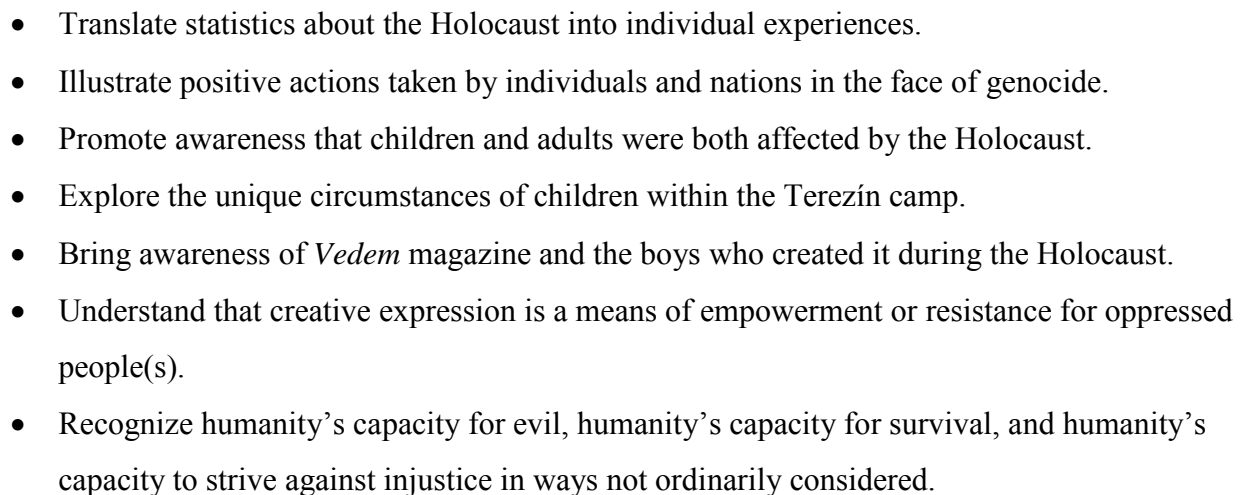
- *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*. Washington, D.C.: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004.
- Fallace, Thomas D. *The Emergence of Holocaust Education in American Schools*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Totten, Samuel, and Stephen Fienberg. *Teaching and Studying the Holocaust*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.

The primary resource for *Vedem* is:

Křížková, Marie Rút, Kurt Jiří Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest, eds. *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*. Prague: Aventinum Nakladatelství, 1995. English language edition: *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*. Translated by R. Elizabeth Novak, edited by Paul R. Wilson. Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995.

The book contains all currently published excerpts from the boys' secret magazine, and it is the source of the readings used in this guide's discussion questions and learning exercises. Teachers should become familiar with it, and students should be encouraged to explore it on their own.

- Other resources for teaching about *Vedem*, the children of Terezín, and Terezín in general include:
  - Rothkirchen, Livia. *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*. Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2006.
  - Volavkova, Hana, ed. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. New York: Schocken Books, 1994.

- 
- Translate statistics about the Holocaust into individual experiences.
  - Illustrate positive actions taken by individuals and nations in the face of genocide.
  - Promote awareness that children and adults were both affected by the Holocaust.
  - Explore the unique circumstances of children within the Terezín camp.
  - Bring awareness of *Vedem* magazine and the boys who created it during the Holocaust.
  - Understand that creative expression is a means of empowerment or resistance for oppressed people(s).
  - Recognize humanity's capacity for evil, humanity's capacity for survival, and humanity's capacity to strive against injustice in ways not ordinarily considered.

### **Instructional objectives**

Two important objectives of any Holocaust education program are to translate statistics into the lives of actual people, and to illustrate actions taken by individuals and nations in the face of genocide. It is hoped that teachers will develop lesson plans for *Vedem* that include these objectives, and others as well.

A range of discussion topics, assignments and projects are suggested below that teachers can adapt to address the objectives they have established for the specific needs of their classrooms.

## Terezín

To appreciate the significance of *Vedem*, students will need to understand how the Terezín ghetto/concentration camp was unique, and especially about the lives of children there. Educators will find the following internet resources useful, and might also want to recommend them to their students.



[“Theresienstadt”](#), Holocaust Encyclopedia, USHMM

[“The Ghettos: Theresienstadt”](#), Yad Vashem



At a minimum, students should learn basic historical facts such as these:


- Terezín, about thirty-five miles north of Prague, was established as a garrison town in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Nazi Germany occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939. In 1941 they turned Terezín (which they called “Theresienstadt”) into a ghetto and concentration camp. Most of its prisoners were Jews, but others were sent there as well.
- The Nazis used Terezín in propaganda, aiming to deceive the world by convincing people that the Germans were treating Jews humanely. In reality, Terezín was a transit camp. Nearly all of its prisoners were eventually transferred to death camps—if they didn’t perish first of disease or starvation.
- Terezín’s prisoners included many important musicians, writers and artists who continued to create even in the camp. Nazi authorities allowed, and even encouraged, some musical performances.
- The Nazis allowed some aspects of Terezín’s day-to-day life to be governed by a Jewish Council of Elders, and those elders gave special care to the children. Most children lived in buildings for boys or girls, where they were placed in rooms according to their ages. In many of those rooms the children continued their education, taught secretly by adults in the camp who used whatever materials could be found or invented. Some children created secret artwork, stories and poetry that survived even if the children didn’t.
- Many people know about *Brundibár*, a children’s opera by the Czech composer Hans Krása who was imprisoned in Terezín. *Brundibár* was performed 55 times in Terezín by casts of children. The opera

tells a story of how a group of children band together to overcome an evil bully. The bully's character was costumed to resemble Hitler, and the story was seen by child singers and audiences as a symbolic moral victory.

### **Teaching about *Vedem***


*Vedem* was a secret magazine created by a group of about 100 boys who lived in Home One, a room in Terezín's Building L-417 for boys. The boys, aged 13 to 15, wrote poems and essays, and drew illustrations. They described life in Terezín, and recalled their lives in their hometowns before. Some poems are about events the boys witnessed—people dying, families being separated—and others are about things they experienced, fears and worries, and hopes and dreams. The boys used pseudonyms in the magazine—aliases that would help protect their identities if the Nazi authorities discovered the magazine. The magazine's editor, and driving force, was Petr Ginz. Petr was fourteen years old when he was taken from his family in Prague and sent to Terezín. Like most of the children and adults in Terezín, Petr was eventually sent to a Nazi extermination camp. He died at age 16 in Auschwitz.

Of the boys who created *Vedem*, only one of them stayed in Terezín until the camp's liberation in 1945. This boy, Sidney Taussig, buried the magazine's 800 pages in a metal container, and returned later to recover them. Sidney is still alive, and resides in Florida. Thanks to Sidney's courage and foresight, *Vedem* was preserved, and eventually many parts of it were published in a book that has been translated into English: *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*.



Křížková, Marie Rút, et al. *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*, Prague: Aventinum Nakladatelství, 1995. English language edition: *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*. Translated by R. Elizabeth Novak, edited by Paul R. Wilson. Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995.

Visit the website [Vedem 2010](#) created by the Czech children of PŘÍRODNÍ ŠKOLA (“Nature School”) and explore their research about *Vedem* magazine and the boys of Terezín.



In introducing *Vedem*, educators should emphasize that many historical events are remembered through the unique true stories of people who lived through them, and that these stories often are important in ways that go beyond the time and place of the events themselves. The story of the boys who created *Vedem* in Terezín's Home One is a valuable example. Inspired by Valtr Eisinger, a visionary teacher and mentor assigned to supervise their room, the boys created an idealistic self-governing society that they called The Republic of Shkid, complete with rules of conduct and justice, a flag—and the weekly secret magazine to which they were all expected to contribute. In their lives, and in the contents of the magazine, the boys strove to honor the noble ideal that was part of the [anthem they created](#).

*Every person is our brother,  
Whether Christian or a Jew.  
Proudly we are marching forward  
The Republic of Shkid is me and you.*

The boys expressed solidarity in the face of bitter oppression, a continued faith in humanity, and a belief in a better world that few of them would live to see. The secret magazine helped the boys to maintain and express an extraordinary dignity even in dire circumstances that we can hardly imagine.

An introduction to *Vedem* could include the use of visuals and activities such as the following:

- On the classroom world map, indicate where Terezín is located in today's Czech Republic.
- Show the children a picture of the Children's Homes of Terezín.
- Visit the website [Vedem 2010](#) created by the Czech children of PŘÍRODNÍ ŠKOLA ("Nature School") and look at a sample of the *Vedem* magazine.
- Select one humorous, one historical, and one troubling excerpt from *Vedem* and several examples of artwork. Allow the students to express their thoughts about these excerpts and art.
- Offer a challenge/assignment to the students: write a paragraph or short poem, or draw a picture, about their own world that they would want the boys of Room One to know about. The *Vedem* boys were oppressed but fought this oppression through education and art. Encourage the children to demonstrate how children in today's world fight against oppression through learning and creative expression.
- Select an inspiring excerpt from *Vedem* and one example of artwork.
  - Recommended excerpt: "Only for Strong Nerves, or The Events of One Night," by The Saint (Kurt Kotouč), pp. 55-56 in *We are Children Just the Same*.
  - Recommended artwork: illustration to the serial "Men Offside," unknown artist (p. 96) and "Vedem No. 52 cover" (p. 35) in *We are Children Just the Same*.



Ask students to react to these excerpts, and to indicate how today's children might fight against injustice through education and art.

## **Suggested Learning Activities – English/Language Arts**

### **Selected readings from *Vedem***

Instruction about *Vedem* should include an introduction to the magazine itself. All published content from the magazine can be found in the book *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*, by Marie Rút Křížková, Kurt Jiří Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest. We have attempted to organize the book's material by theme:

#### **Survival**

*Heroica* (poem) p. 176  
Leader (essay) p. 177  
For Children (poem) pp. 177-78  
*Vedem* (poem) p. 180

#### **Imagination/Stories/Essays**

Only for Strong Nerves, or The Events of One Night (story) pp. 55-56  
The Life of an Inanimate Object (essay) p. 66  
Mad Augustus (story) pp.76-77

#### **Friendship/Fun/Satire**

Equestrian Ballad (satirical poem) p. 47  
Motto: Destroy Whatever You Can—A Terezín Proverb? (satirical essay) pp. 48-49  
Sport in Terezín (article) p. 52

#### **Past Memories**

Memories of Prague (poem) p. 26

#### **Present Surroundings**

Terezín (poem) p. 22  
Two Recollections (article) p. 27  
Interesting Dialogues of the Week (magazine column) p. 42  
Just a Little Warmth (poem) p. 48  
An Unsuccessful Ramble Through Terezín (article) p. 63  
Something about the Crematorium and Cremation; Rambles Through Terezín (both are articles, appropriate for mature readers, pp. 85-87)  
One of the everyday aspects of life in the Terezín Ghetto (article) p. 92

Rambles Through Terezín (articles) pp. 102-104; pp.105-06 (about nurseries)  
The Republic of Shkid anthem, p.36.

### **Living & Dying**

Remembrance (poem) p. 93  
At the Crossroads (poem) p. 115  
Summer Noon (poem) p. 185

### **Hope**

With You, Mother (poem) p. 108  
Friday Evening (poem) p. 109

### **Faith/Spirituality/Religion (or lack thereof)**

Faith in Nothing (poem) p.184

For closer analysis, several selections from *Vedem* and discussion questions are suggested below.

#### Avowal (poem by “Mustafa”—Zdeněk Ornest)

I know what depresses you, hurts you beyond belief,  
Why you are lost in bottomless despair,  
I know why life is crumbling beneath you,  
Dragging you swiftly into gray oblivion.

I know you completely, I know your weak will,  
I know your oversensitive ambition,  
I know why only evil rolls his eyes at you,  
And what riddles your face with bitterness.

We lived so well, as well as others did,  
We had our freedom, each one had his treasures,  
I know sweet fruit fell straight into our hands  
And life wrapped us round with other things.

No cruel pitfalls, we were full of strength  
We knew not misery, we knew not pain,  
And now, now all that's left is dreams.  
We wander blindly in a swamp, and who's to find us?

Why should we look for succor in the past?  
Why should we fearfully turn our faces back?  
Why rake the ashes of long rotted bones?  
Why search for memories long lost?

Proudly we stand here with our throbbing wounds  
We laugh and grin in the face of pain  
How could a pack of half-lies ever help us?  
Let them not see our weakness and despair!

Look bravely forward, swallow all your sorrow,  
Even though its bitterness might make us choke.  
Do not be broken in this tattered labyrinth.  
A dream will always end when we awake.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1.) To whom do you think “Mustafa” is writing? Who is the “knower” in this poem? Who is “we” in the third stanza?
- 2.) “We knew not misery, we knew not pain,” Mustafa writes in the fourth stanza. “Now all that’s left is dreams.” What are those dreams? Are they memories of the past? Are they hopes for the future? Are they something else?
- 3.) What idea is Mustafa trying to convey in the fifth through seventh stanzas? What does this tell you about his attitude? Is he accepting of his circumstances, or does he want to fight? How does he want to deal with his present circumstances?
- 4.) The poem is titled “Avowal.” Check the word’s meaning in a dictionary, and explain why Mustafa might have chosen it for a title. How does the word’s meaning fit with the poem’s themes?

#### *Five (poem by “Academy”—Hanus Hachenburg)*

This morning at seven, so bright and so early  
Five novels lay there, sewn up in a sack  
Sewn up in a sack, like all of our lives,  
They lay there so silent, all five.

Five books that flung back the curtain of silence,  
Calling for freedom, and not for the world,  
They’re somebody’s novels, someone who loves them....

They called out, they cried, they shed tears, and they pleaded  
That they hadn’t been finished, the pitiful five.

They declared to the world that the state trades in bodies

Then they slowly vanished and went out of sight.

They kept their eyes open, and they looked for the world  
But nothing they found. They were silent, all five.

### Discussion Questions

- 1.) Do you think this poem is just about books? What else could the books represent?
- 2.) In the second stanza, the books fight back—they “flung back the curtain of silence/calling for freedom and not for the world.” What deeper meaning can you find in this stanza?
- 3.) Do you think Hanuš chose to use books as imagery for any particular reason? Did he really see five books tied up in a sack, and worry about the fate of the owner? Could he have chosen books because they contain stories, like people do?

#### The Ramparts—article written by “Švejk” (Hanuš Kominík)

The ramparts, the playing fields of Terezín. When I first came to the ramparts, the so-called playing field was a sad sight. It was a piece of lumpy ground where a group of youngsters were working to level it. Since then much time has passed. One day a rumor made the rounds of the school that we were going to rehearse a play to celebrate the opening of the ramparts; and hardly had this rumor gone through L 417, when another came: there would be an assembly [a meeting, held on May 23, 1943] of all young people on the ramparts, where the playing field would be ceremoniously handed over.

Full of curiosity, I went to have a look at the ramparts, and was met with the sight of a lovely playing field with two goals. It was the work of our comrades, who did it not only for us, but for the entire population of Terezín. What I have described here is only a small illustration of the fact that when the grown-ups say that the young people in Terezín only learn to steal, they are very wrong indeed. They are certainly leaning one thing here: to appreciate physical labor.<sup>1</sup>

### Discussion Questions

- 1.) What does the word “ramparts” mean? Why might the boys have chosen to call their playing field “the ramparts?”

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Rút Křížková, Kurt Jirí Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest, eds., *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*, prepared and selected from *Vedem (In the Lead)*, (Prague: Aventinum Nakladatelství, 1995). English language edition: R. Elizabeth Novak, ed., and Paul R. Wilson, trans., *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), p. 143.

2.) “Švejk,” the writer of the article, makes a comment about “the grown-ups of Terezín” being wrong when they say that “young people in Terezín only learn to steal.” Do you think adults nowadays have misconceptions about teenagers and young people? Where do these misconceptions come from?

*Negroes and Us*—essay written by Hanuš Pollak

Not long ago I read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. You all surely know the book. It tells the life story of several black slaves in America. Many of the horrors of negro slavery are described in the book: the beatings, the starvation, and so on. But most of all, I was moved by the splitting up of families. Many slave families were waiting in the slave markets to be auctioned off. Their only wish was to be sold together to one master. But not even this smallest desire was granted. They were each sold separately, and would probably never meet again. This is how negro slaves were sold and treated in America in the nineteenth century, that is to say, three-hundred years after the discovery of America.

How do we differ from those slaves, and how do our times differ from those times? We live here in Terezín, in a slave warehouse. Just like the negroes, we are subjected to beatings and hunger... This is happening to us Jews, a persecuted people. Just like the negroes... we bear our fate calmly and heroically, looking it straight in the eye... How do we really differ from those [slaves], now, at a time of great cultural flowering, in the middle of the twentieth century?<sup>2</sup>

**Discussion Question**

1.) In his essay, Hanuš Pollak wonders “How do we differ from those slaves, and them from us?” Do you think it’s valid to compare African-American slaves with the Jews in Terezín? How were the situations of the two groups similar? How were they different?

*The Young People’s Library in L 216*—article written by Herbert Maier

I should like to give you a report of the Young People’s Library which opened this week in L 216. The idea of setting up such a library arose five months ago in the circle of teenagers who had previously looked after the cultural youth program. It only became possible to put this into practice a few weeks ago by amalgamating the private libraries L 216 and Q 609, the Dresden barracks library for the young, and a contribution from the *Ghettobücherei*.<sup>\*</sup> This nucleus, about 2,000 volumes, was increased by books from individual members who had to hand over at least two books in return for borrowing one, or one book if they wanted to read in the reading room. Now the library contains about 35,000 volumes and interest among the youth of Terezín is constantly growing. Valuable books are only available in the reading room. Others may be taken out. The library contains Czech and German literature, boys’ books, various scientific texts, and books on Judaism and Zionism.

The library also contains a permanent exhibition of visual art. Every evening there is a program at the library, either a musical evening, a lecture or a slide show.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid: pp. 159-60

It has never happened before in Terezín, that by combining something private, something public has been created.<sup>3</sup>

\* Its first official name was the *Zentral-Ghettobücherei*, established at the end of 1942. From 1944 on it was called the “Community Library.” The Nazis permitted it so they could demonstrate the “civilized” face of Terezín. Smaller libraries were also established—medical, technical and the youth library mentioned in this article. The *Ghettobücherei*, which by liberation contained about 130,000 volumes, was supervised with great dedication by the outstanding Prague philosopher and aesthetician Professor Emil Utitz.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion Questions

1.) Herbert Maier reports on a library being created in Terezín. Why was the library significant for the boys and for the other prisoners?

2.) “It has never happened before in Terezín, that by combining something private something public has been created,” Herbert writes. Analyze this statement. What is “private,” and why? What is “public?” How did the “private” library turn into something “public?” Why does this matter?

### Suggested research and creative writing topics

Students may select from the following list of research topics or titles for book reports, and may work individually, in pairs or in small groups. Students might also give class presentations. Some possible research, essay, or creative writing topics include:

#### Research

- Research the biography of one the boys of *Vedem*. There is more information on Petr Ginz than on the others. (See *The Diary of Petr Ginz*, edited by Chava Pressburger, and *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*, edited by Marie Rút Křížková, Kurt Jiří Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest for more information.)
- Research stories about other children who lived in Terezín. One possibility is *The Girls of Room 28* by Hannelore Brenner, which tells about a group of young girls who created their own “country” in the midst of the camp. How do these children’s stories give testament to the human spirit and survival?

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid: p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: p. 151.

- Find out more about children’s art projects from Terezín. What do the projects reveal about life in the camps, and about the children’s lives before?
- Learn about *Brundibár*, the opera performed 55 times by casts of children in Terezín. Listen to a recording of an English-language version ([click here for CD](#)). Summarize the story, and discuss what the opera meant to the children who performed in *Brundibár*. What does *Brundibár* suggest about the power of music to resist oppression? (Note: for a group activity, teachers might consider having students learn and sing a song or chorus from the opera.)
- While many non-Jewish people stood by silently when Jews were persecuted, there were some who tried to help Jews even at risk to themselves. Find the stories of some of those who tried to help. How were they different? What do you think motivated them?

### Essays

- In 2010, the American composer Lori Laitman wrote a musical work that tells the story of *Vedem* and sets several of the boys’ poems to song. Listen to a recording of the piece ([click here for CD](#)), and watch a brief on-line video about it ([click here to watch](#)). Do you think that the music is effective in communicating the *Vedem* story? Do you think it is significant that the music is performed by a chorus of teenage boys?
- Explore Eastern-European Jewish cultural life, including education and schooling for children. Suggested source: [YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe](#). How do the worlds of the boys of *Vedem* differ from your own world? Does learning about the boys’ lives and educations make it easier for you to understand their work in *Vedem*?
- Read diaries and journals of victims and survivors from Terezín, or from other ghettos and camps. Reading some articles at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website is a good way to start exploring. ([This article](#) provides links to excerpts from children’s diaries.) Pick three or more entries that interest you, and see what you can find out about the young writers. Write an essay about your findings, giving details about the journals and the children’s lives.
- Read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the journal of a Jewish girl who hid with her family for two years in an attic until they were captured by the Nazis. Compare Anne’s diary entries with the articles in *Vedem*. What are the different types of things we can learn from each?

## Creative Writing

- Write a letter to Petr Ginz or one of the other boys of *Vedem*. Tell them what you liked about the magazine, and reflect on what you have learned about the boys' lives and circumstances.
- Work with your classmates to design a magazine like *Vedem*, about a subject that is important to you, or design a magazine about Holocaust Remembrance to share with students in other classes.

## Suggested Learning Activities – Social Studies/History

### Selected readings from *Vedem*

Here are some excerpts from *Vedem* to present and discuss:

#### Quote[s] of the Week

*“Football [soccer] is the best game, right after Monopoly.”*—Embryo (pseudonym)

*“I’m afraid to speak. I might say something stupid.”*—Medic Šnajer (pseudonym; real name: Jiří Grünbaum)<sup>5</sup>

### Discussion question

What do you think about these “Quotes of the Week” in *Vedem*? What might have been the purpose of Petr Ginz, the editor of *Vedem*, for including these quotes alongside the poems and stories?

#### “Sport in Terezín” –report written by Academy (a group of authors, names unknown)

...Fourteen players are running around the field. The match...is underway. The crowd hums with excitement. He comes in on the goal, he shoots, but the goalkeeper dives after the ball and stops it. A mighty round of applause. The teams attack and defend, back and forth, and excitement in the crowd reaches a fever pitch, when one team scores a goal on itself. The match is over. The spectators walk back to their quarters, but lively discussions continue. Suddenly a question comes up: suppose a ghetto team were to play in the Czech championships?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid: pp. 46-47

<sup>6</sup> Ibid: p. 52



## Discussion question

The group of authors called “Academy” wrote about a soccer game in Terezín. Afterward, they say some people discussed the idea of a soccer team from the ghetto playing in a national championship game. If it wasn’t something that could really happen, why do you think they thought about it?

“Negroes and Us”—essay written by Hanuš Pollak

Not long ago I read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. You all surely know the book. It tells the life story of several black slaves in America. Many of the horrors of negro slavery are described in the book: the beatings, the starvation, and so on. But most of all I was moved by the splitting up of families. Many slave families were waiting in the slave markets to be auctioned off. Their only wish was to be sold together to one master. But not even this smallest desire was granted. They were each sold separately, and would probably never meet again. This is how negro slaves were sold and treated in America in the nineteenth century, that is to say, three-hundred years after the discovery of America.

How do we differ from those slaves, and how do our times differ from those times? We live here in Terezín, in a slave warehouse. Just like the negroes, we are subjected to beatings and hunger... This is happening to us Jews, a persecuted people. Just like the negroes... we bear our fate calmly and heroically, looking it straight in the eye... How do we really differ from those [slaves], now, at a time of great cultural flowering, in the middle of the twentieth century?<sup>7</sup>

## Discussion question

In his essay, Hanuš Pollak wonders “How do we differ from those slaves, and them from us?” Do you think it’s valid to compare African-American slaves with the Jews in Terezín? How were the situations of the two groups similar? How were they different?

## Research projects:

- Research the biography of one the boys of *Vedem*. There is more information on Petr Ginz than the others. See *The Diary of Petr Ginz*, edited by Chava Pressburger and *We are Children Just the Same: Vedem, the Secret Magazine by the Boys of Terezín*, edited by Marie Rút Křížková, Kurt Jiří Kotouč, and Zdeněk Ornest for more information on other boys in Terezín.
- Research stories about other children who lived in Terezín. One possibility is *The Girls of Room 28* by Hannelore Brenner, which tells about a group of teenage girls who created their own “country” in the midst of the camp.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid: pp. 159-60

- Find out more about children’s art projects from Terezín. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, edited by Hana Volavkova and *Fireflies in the Dark*, by Susan Rubin Goldman, are some books to look at for more information.
- Visit the website [Vedem 2010](#) created by the Czech children of PŘÍRODNÍ ŠKOLA (“Nature School”) and explore their research about *Vedem* magazine and the boys of Terezín. The children of this Czech private school have a Facebook page devoted to *Vedem*, located on this website. Students might try contributing to Facebook, discovering ways to overcome the potential language barrier, and together learn more about Terezín’s children, *Vedem* magazine and the significance of this knowledge today.
- Find out more about other children who experienced the Holocaust. For example, learn about the children who participated in the *Kindertransports* (children’s trains) that brought children out of endangered countries to England, where they lived with English families until after the war. In some cases, these children never saw their family members again.
- Create a list of the questions you would like to ask the boys of *Vedem* if you could meet them.
- Find out whether there are people in your community who survived the Holocaust as children. (Some communities have resource centers that can help with this.) If you can, invite a survivor to come to your school and speak to students. With your teacher and other students, plan some of the questions you would like to ask.
- While many non-Jewish people stood by silently when Jews were persecuted, there were some who tried to help Jews even at risk to themselves. Find the stories of some of those who tried to help. How were they different? What do you think motivated them?
- Find out about children today who suffer as a result of war or discrimination. How do they fight against such oppression?
  - Suggested sources:
    - Ellis, Deborah. *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees*. Berkeley: Greenwood Books, 2009. Reading level: young adult.
    - Ellis, Deborah. *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*. Berkeley: Greenwood Books, 2004. Reading level: grades 7-9.
    - Miller-Lachmann, Lyn. *Our Family, Our Friends, Our World: An Annotated Guide to Significant Multi-Cultural Books for Children and Teenagers*. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1991.

- Zim, Jacob, ed. *My Shalom, My Peace: Paintings and Poems by Jewish and Arab Children*. New York: Sabra Books/McGraw-Hill, 1975. Reading level: grades 5 and up.
- Consider oppression of children within the United States? What kinds of oppression exist? How can you or your classmates help such children?

## **Sources**

### **Historical information, timelines, and survivors' testimonies:**

[The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.](#)

[Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.](#)

["A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust."](#) Florida Center for Instructional Technology, 2005.

### **Sources for information about Terezín, Vedem, the boys of Terezín, and art in the Holocaust:**

- Brenner, Hannelore. *The Girls of Room 28*. Translated by John E. Woods and Shelley Frisch. New York: Schocken Books, 2009.
- Dutlinger, Anne D., ed. *Art, Music and Education as Strategies for Survival: Theresienstadt 1941-1945*. New York: Herodias Inc., 2001.
- Makarova, Elena. *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: The Artist Who Inspired the Children's Drawings of Terezín*. Los Angeles: Tallfellow/Every Picture Press, 2001.
- Massachusetts College of Art. *Seeing Through "Paradise": Artists and the Terezín Concentration Camp*. Boston: Massachusetts College of Art, 1991.
- Pressburger, Chava, ed. *The Diary of Petr Ginz*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007.

### **Websites about Terezín and Vedem:**

["The Ghettos: Theresienstadt."](#) The Holocaust. Yad Vashem

["Theresienstadt."](#) Holocaust Encyclopedia. USHMM

["VEDEM, Terezín 1942-1944."](#) My Jewish Learning