



# Holocaust Education Companion Guide

Poem: *I Am a Jew* by Franta Bass

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTER  
ZEKELMAN FAMILY CAMPUS



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## I Am a Jew

I am a Jew and will be a Jew forever.

Even if I should die from hunger,  
never will I submit.

I will always fight for my people,  
on my honor.

I will never be ashamed of them,  
I give my word.

I am proud of my people,  
how dignified they are.

Even though I am suppressed,  
I will always come back to life.

– Franta Bass



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## Primary Source Information

**Title of the Source** I Am a Jew

**Date** 1942-1944, published in 1994

**Creator (author, photographer, artist, etc.)** Franta Bass

### Background information on the creator

“Franta Bass was born in Czechoslovakia in 1930. When he was 11 years old, he was deported with his family by the Nazis and sent to the Terezin Ghetto north of Prague (also known as Theresienstadt). He lived there for 3 years before being transported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered on October 28, 1944. He was 14 years old.”

**Source** Howes, Jonathan. “The Garden by Franta Bass.” 100 Great Poetry Lessons. September 30, 2017. <https://poetrylessons.wordpress.com/2017/09/30/the-garden-by-franta-bass/>

**Source Description** Multiple poems and artworks were created by children in the Theresienstadt Ghetto and published in the work, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, compiled and edited by Czech art historian, Hana Volovkova. The works were created in secret, and many of the creators’ names remain anonymous to this day.



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## Lesson Planning Information

### Recommended Grade Levels

- 6-8
- 9-12

### Holocaust Topics

- Prewar Jewish Life
- Antisemitism
- The Ghettos
- Children of the Holocaust
- Jewish and Non-Jewish Resistance

### Themes

- The Human Story
- Light in the Darkness
- Resilience and Resistance

### Connections to Standards and the C3 Social Studies Framework

- MI WHG 7.2.6 - Case Studies in Genocide
- C3 Framework Dimension 1: Developing Questions & Planning Inquiries
- Common Core State Standards - Reading
- Common Core State Standards - Reading in History / Social Studies



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## Contextualizing the Primary Source

**Information/knowledge  
needed for students  
to understand this  
primary source (Context)**

“The lives Jews have lived around the world and throughout history can perhaps be characterized best by their immense diversity. Jews have always expressed their religious faith (or lack thereof) and connection to Jewish culture in myriad ways. It is important for students to understand and appreciate the richness and diversity of European Jewish life before the Third Reich, both to honor what was lost in the Holocaust and to counterbalance the “single story” about Jews spread through Nazi ideology and policy. As historian Doris Bergen writes: Nazi propaganda would create the category of “the Jews,” a composite based on myths and stereotypes... In reality there was no such thing as “the Jew,” only Jews who often differed as much, and in many cases more, from one another than they did from the Christians around them.

Throughout history, Jews have always been a small minority in Europe that never made up more than 1 or 2% of the population. Yet, before World War II, Jews lived and thrived in varied communities, spanning eastern and western Europe, with diverse cultures and ways of life. Jews in Europe came from small towns as well as cities, and they held a variety of occupations.”

*Facing History and Ourselves. “Teaching the Holocaust and Human Behavior: European Jewish Life before World War II.” <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior/european-jewish-life-world-war-ii>*



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## Recommended Contextualizing Resources

### Echoes and Reflections

- Antisemitism:  
<https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-2-antisemitism/?state=open#lessn1>
- Jewish Resistance:  
<https://echoesandreflections.org/unit-6/>

### United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)

- Description of Theresienstadt:  
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt>
- Jewish Resistance:  
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-resistance>
- Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos:  
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/spiritual-resistance-in-the-ghettos>

### Facing History and Ourselves

- Photo Gallery: Jewish Life in Eastern Europe:  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery/pre-war-jewish-life-eastern-europe>
- Video Clip: "A Day in Warsaw"  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/day-warsaw>
- Pre-war Sighet (Elie Wiesel's hometown - also good context for Night):  
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/gallery/pre-war-sighet-visual-essay>



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## Additional Lesson Plan Information

**Recommended Length** 1 day (2 days with an optional extension)

**Questions to provide more context**

If used at the beginning of a unit:

- How large was the Jewish community in Europe before the Holocaust?
- How did Jewish life differ among the different European countries or even among cities or towns?
- What do students know about Judaism and its holidays, practices, etc.?

The poem could also be used when discussing the ghettos, especially when focusing on the experiences of children at Theresienstadt, and its use as Nazi propaganda for a Red Cross visit. This discussion/investigation could focus on how writing these poems and practicing Judaism, are forms of resistance.

**Optional Extension**

Students research this and other ghettos, presenting their findings, or students select other poems from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.



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This guide is a joint product of the Social Studies Teacher Advisory Group and the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus.

## 2019-2020 Social Studies Teacher Advisory Group

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