



## LAST STOP BEFORE THE LAST STOP

### CHILDREN IN TEREZÍN

This lesson is intended to provide students with an overview of some of the experiences children had in Terezín, including their access to education, forms of entertainment, medical treatment and daily life. It includes a video overview of Terezín, a set of photo artifacts, information sheets and a “What did you notice?” worksheet



#### Essential Questions:

- What was the experience of children in Terezín?
- How did the environment of Terezín shape the experience of children?

#### Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to explore the experiences of children in Terezín.
- Students will be able to analyze artifacts that provide insight into the experience of children in Terezín.
- Students will be able to appreciate the resilience of children during their internment in Terezín.

#### Subjects:

Social Studies  
English/Language Arts

#### Grades:

9-12

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EXTERNAL LINKS 

- [Leo Baeck Institute](#)
- [The Defiant Requiem Foundation - Education](#)
- USHMM [Path to Nazi Genocide](#)
- USHMM [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)
- Defiant Requiem Video Clip - [History of Terezin](#)
- Yad Vashem Video giving [Background on Terezín](#)
- Echoes & Reflections [Timeline of the Holocaust](#)
- Facing History and Ourselves [Preparing Students for Difficult Conversations](#)

Cover image:

Troller, Norbert. *Terezin : Forbidden teachings*. 1942.

Archives of the Leo Baeck Institute, 82.227

## CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

The life of Jewish children during the Holocaust was a life of challenge and loss. It was also a life of moments of joy, however small they were, in spite of their awful surroundings. This lesson asks students to consider the various aspects of the lives on Jewish children in the Terezín/Theresienstadt ghetto/concentration camp located north of Prague, in the former Czechoslovakia.

Terezín was opened in 1941 and called Theresienstadt by the Nazi occupiers, who had first entered the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia in Summer 1938. They then occupied the region of Bohemia & Moravia in March 1939. As the occupation progressed into a wartime environment, they sought to emulate the ghettos being created in Eastern Europe in Czechoslovakia with a specific goal of creating a “show” ghetto/camp that could be leveraged for propaganda purposes if and when that was needed.

Individuals deported to Terezín were typically Western European Jews from affluent backgrounds. Many families deported to Terezín included children. Of the estimated 15,000 children who passed through the gates of Terezín, only approximately 200 survived. The vast majority either died in Terezín or were deported to the death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau or Treblinka.

This lesson will illuminate their brief lives during the duration of Terezín’s existence, which ended with its liberation in May 1945.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Laptop, tablet, or other device that can be used to access materials digitally
- Image of Jirina Kanova
- [Background on Terezín](#) (Video)
- [Artifacts for Discovery Table](#) - printed double sided or posted digitally
- [Artifact Landing Pages](#)

## LESSON SEQUENCE

### SEE, THINK, WONDER

**\*Note to teachers:** if students have not yet learned about the Holocaust, we recommend starting with the [What was the Holocaust?](#) part of the Echoes & Reflections [Explore the Past, Shape the Future](#) student activities set.

Begin by showing the class the [image of Jirina Kanova](#)

Model the “See, Think, Wonder” strategy with this image. As students begin to fill in details, share with them that this portrait was made in the Terezín ghetto/concentration camp in 1943, during the Holocaust.

The artist’s name was Charlotta Buresova. She survived the war, but her subject, young Jirina, did not. She was 5 years old when this portrait was created and died the following year in Auschwitz-Birkenau after being deported there from Terezín.

Jirina’s story was similar to many in Terezín. Children had a very low survival rate. Still, it is important for us to learn about how they lived while they were there and what their lives were like in this place.

## ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT & WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

Explain to students that before they begin the group work, you are going to watch a [brief video on the history of Terezín](#).

Included are prompts for discussion of the video clip:

- Can you describe what Terezín was? Share their responses with their thinking partner and discuss.
- Liz Elsby, the narrator, states that there are not very many photos to document what life was like in Terezín, but towards the end of the video she does mention an alternative source of documentation of daily life in Terezín. What is this alternative source? Why do you think these sources are important? Discuss with your thinking partner.
- Not much is mentioned in the video about the experiences of children in Terezín however, they do show a few photos depicting children. Can you find a photo from the video that shows a child or children in Terezín and discuss with your thinking partner what you think the experience of children was like there?

## DISCOVERY TABLE ACTIVITY

Students will be introduced to, and given a tour of, the discovery table. If you have never used a discovery table activity before, here is a suggested explanation: “Discovery tables are used to display artifacts (actual artifacts, replicas, photos, documents, videos, books, articles, maps, etc.) about a specific topic being studied. Students are given the opportunity to explore, question, investigate, and discover these items and hopefully this investigation will lead to bigger ideas, questions, investigations, and discoveries, outside of the classroom.”

After the tour of the discovery table, students will choose an artifact of interest from the table.

On the back of the artifact are directions for students to follow, QR code and link that will lead students to a “Landing Page” where they will gather information for their Group Share Out.

**GROUP SHARE OUT**

After students complete their time with their artifacts, ask each group to share out the following:

1. What was their artifact?
2. How did it connect to the theme of childhood/youth in Terezín?
3. What did it help them understand about the experience of children/youth in Terezín?
4. What questions still remain?

**EXIT TICKET**

Following everyone's presentations (and discussion if time permits), ask students to create an exit ticket that responds to the following prompt:

*Based on what you saw today in your artifacts and those of your classmates, what was the experience of children in Terezín? How did the environment of Terezín shape the experience of children?*

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

View the film, Defiant Requiem, and look for evidence of the experience of children as you watch the film. Create a list of learnings.

**KEY TERMS / VOCABULARY****AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU**

Auschwitz-Birkenau was the second camp in the Auschwitz camp complex located outside of Nazi-occupied Oswiecim, Poland. It was a death and forced labor camp.

**CONCENTRATION CAMP**

A place where large numbers of people, especially political prisoners or members of persecuted minorities, are deliberately imprisoned

**GHETTO**

An area of a city/town where individuals are forced to live due to political decrees and/or economic/social conditions

**JUDENRAT**

Jewish leadership of a ghetto, often forced to perform this role. Did not have ultimate authority – that belonged to the Nazis.

**PROPAGANDA**

Information created to portray a false or partly-false narrative to encourage people to adopt certain beliefs

**TEREZÍN**

A fortress town 30 miles north of Prague; This "camp-ghetto" existed for three and a half years, between November 24, 1941 and May 9, 1945. It was first used as a ghetto for Jews of Central and Western Europe, but its functions evolved into that of a concentration/transit camp.

**THERESIENSTADT**

German name for Terezín (see above)

**TREBLINKA**

A death camp located north of Warsaw, Poland, in Nazi-occupied territory.

**YOM KIPPUR**

Holiest day of the Jewish year, known as the "Day of Atonement," when Jews ask for forgiveness of their sins

WORKSHEET 1 IMAGE OF JIRINA KANOVA



Burešová, Charlotta: *Portrait of Jirina Kanova, Prague 1938-Auschwitz 1944*, Leo Baeck Institute, 84.561.

**WORKSHEET 2** SEE, THINK, WONDER

| What do you <b>see</b> ?<br>What details stand out? | What do you <b>think</b> is going on?<br>What makes you say that? | What does this make you <b>wonder</b> ?<br>What other questions does this image raise for you? |
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**WORKSHEET 4** EXIT TICKET

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Based on what you saw today in your artifacts and those of your classmates, what was the experience of children in Terezín? How did the environment of Terezín shape the experience of children?