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A man by the name of Henry Blumenstein made a recent visit to my high school to share with my classmates and I his story of how he survived the Holocaust. Mr. Blumenstein commented that he was puzzled how the location of his mother's death, Auschwitz, was turned into a "tourist attraction." He told us that he has since come to realize that allowing society to visit the concentration camps is what allows people to learn about and try to understand why the Holocaust happened. He and I share a common belief that some of the greatest lessons life has to offer are those revealed through the Holocaust. This period of time reminds us all that we never know what man is capable of until we see his actions. It says we must not forget those who perished, because it is their stories that serve as our window into the truth of the Holocaust. It is our obligation as the young generation to work towards a peaceful world today by learning from the mistakes of the past. For we must remember, history has proven numerous times how it repeats itself. I believe understanding the Holocaust now, enables us to know how to prevent a similar situation from happening again. Youth can learn various lessons from the Holocaust, and once those lessons are acquired they can then live those lessons in the present and change the world.

Holocaust literature is a powerful tool that brings stories to life for its readers; including me. For example, Art Spiegelman tells his stories of wealthy Jewish business owners being taken from their homes, through pictures and comic strips in order to bring them to life in his graphic novel, *Maus*. While his story is in the form of a comic book, his message is still very clear: the hatred of the Nazis affected everyone, rich or poor. Gerda Weissmann Klein opens eyes through her memoir, *All But My Life*, to the horrors that her family witnessed in Bielitz, Poland.

She shares many accounts of hate coming from Nazi guards, from one prisoner to another, and hate from members of her community. She was Jewish, and to associate with her would put neighbors in jeopardy. Pavel Friedmann's poem, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, teaches readers that even those who were young could be lost to hatred. It kidnapped the innocence of the children in the Holocaust and forced them to see a level of darkness that man should never know. Each piece of literature serves as a lesson to all. Hate is present in all parts of the world and effects people of all ages. Friendships may not withstand the power of hate, no matter how strong the bond. So, we must encourage future generations to learn from the Holocaust, and realize that when we remove hate, we salvage the positives in life and our relationships.

Our children and grandchildren should learn that at the end of the day we are all human, no matter our ethnicity, religious beliefs, age, gender, or occupation. Let us teach them to respect others because it would be very easy for others to turn discrimination back onto them. It is crucial to know that humane treatment of others is the key to a peaceful world. The art of humanity is slowly fading into the distance, and it rests in our hands and theirs to try and bring that concept back into the way of life. If we strive to prevent another Holocaust, we must practice humane treatment and show understanding of others.

It is not enough to simply read the stories from the Holocaust because those stories can soon be removed from the mind and become part of the past. In order to keep those stories alive we must take action with the lessons gained from them and work towards improving our future. A group of Turpin High School seniors, myself included, wanted to educate others about the Holocaust after reading literature about it. We designed a project named *Metamorphosis*, and stated our mission: to encourage people to treat others humanely and to remind them to never forget those who lost their lives in the Holocaust. Our idea was born after sitting in a circle and

suggesting ways to inform others about the lessons of the Holocaust. After reflecting over the various works we had read, the graphic novel *Maus*, the memoir *All But My Life*, and *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, we chose to center our idea on butterflies because they were a symbol from our favorite piece, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. This work was written by Pavel Friedmann, a young boy in Terezin; a concentration camp that fed into Auschwitz. Our project involved working with first grade students to create our 1,000 butterflies. While they were helping us, we were teaching them the art of humanity and how vital it is to having a peaceful world.

As butterflies were pouring in from the elementary students, our class printed out images from the Holocaust that we hung on four art display panels at the entrance of our school. Several classmates and I pinned the 1,000 images onto the panels before winter break to prepare for the reveal of the project. For one week, after returning from winter break, my classmates and I walked around the cafeteria during lunch with a box of unsigned butterflies and asked students if they would like to sign a pledge to treat others more humanely. For every signed butterfly we received we took down one image of hate and replaced it with a butterfly symbolizing hope. The transformation was gradual and amazing to witness. We had great success, and replaced our one thousand images of hate with one thousand butterflies of hope. That was a special week for our school because for the first time the feelings of anger, hate, and discrimination seemed nonexistent. I believe it made a positive impact on the students and I know it greatly impacted me.

In order to further spread the message, I contacted organizations to let them know about our project. Such organizations included: Local 12 News who interviewed us; the Washington DC Holocaust Museum who sent our story out on Twitter; a local rabbi who sent our story to

thousands of people across the globe; the Cincinnati Enquirer who published an article; and other in preserving their stories. We removed our butterflies two weeks after completing the project so Holocaust Museums around the world who have forwarded my email. The Houston Holocaust Museum has also sent the story to their list of Holocaust survivors to share with them our efforts they could be mailed to the Houston Holocaust Museum. There, they will hang in a display, along with 1.5 million other butterflies, to serve as a memorial for the 1.5 million children who perished in the Holocaust.

Though our butterflies were taken down and the project is physically gone, I like to believe that the message is not. In one week, we, a group of students, were able to positively impact our school and were able to spread our message of "hate to hope" within our district, throughout our country, and around the globe.

Work Cited Sheet

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