



***From Documentation to Social Media:
Empowering Students To Analyze (Mis)Information***

***Barbara Arfa Professional Development Conference
on Holocaust Education***

March 19, 2023

THE LAST BOY

Steven Fisher



THE LAST BOY

a play that allows young people to see themselves

Participants will discover the true story of the secret literary society made up of 100 boys who passed through Dorm Number One in Terezin Concentration Camp. The 800 pages of *Vedem*, a weekly magazine of poems and prose, was buried by *Vedem*'s sole surviving contributor, Sidney Taussig. At the time of liberation, 15-year-old Taussig was the only boy remaining in Dorm One, at which time he dug it up and brought it back to Prague for future publishing. Today, the *Vedem* manuscript is housed at Yad Vashem. Hear about the incredible journey that led Steve Fisher to pen the play, which serves as a tribute to the boys of *Vedem*, almost all of whom perished in Auschwitz. Learn the value of drama as documentation of the courage and creative strength of young people who endured the Holocaust - especially for young people today. As part of the workshop, a few very special young people will share some of the poems that are threaded into the play. *The Last Boy* had its world debut Off Broadway in July 2021, winning four Broadway World awards. A one night-only performance of the play on Broadway commemorated *Yom Hashoah* this past April. A screen adaptation is in development.



Poet Hanus Hachenburg Z"l

1929 - 1944



Hanus was murdered on his 15th birthday after being transported from Terezin to Auschwitz.



Speech Excerpt



We no longer want to be an accidental group of boys, giving into fate. We want to create, through hard work and discipline, our own society. We have been unjustly uprooted from our families, neighborhoods, schools, and friendships from which our young lives drew strength. They have only one aim in mind - to destroy us, not only physically but mentally and morally. Will they succeed? Never! Robbed of our cultural endeavors, we shall create new ones. On this fourth night of Chanukah, and it also being Christmas Eve, let us not allow our hearts to be hardened by hatred, but today and forever, let our highest aim for our fellow men be love, and contempt for racial, religious and nationalist strife.



Prose Excerpt



“Why,” you may ask, “am I unsuccessful in making friends?” An involuntary but persistent inclination to avoid social interaction. Instead, I befriend...paper. Paper is silent. Yet, it can absorb anything. I can pour onto it anger, tears, dreams. For me, paper is better than a friend. One does not usually feel comfortable revealing his true self, for fear of being laughed at. Not the case with paper. Paper never ridicules.



“A Fairy Tale”



HOW LONG
SINCE I WATCHED THE SUN FALL BELOW YOU,
PRAGUE?
EYES ABLAZE,
WRAPPED IN YOUR NIGHT SHADOWS.
HOW LONG
SINCE I STOOD ON CHARLES BRIDGE TO HEAR
THE PLEASANT RUSH OF WATER
OVER THE WEIR IN THE VLTAVA?
I LONG FOR THE BUSTLE
ON WENCESLAS SQUARE
THOSE UNKNOWN NOOKS
IN THE OLD TOWN
THOSE SHADY,
SLEEPY CANALS.
DO YOU CRY FOR ME,
AS I DO FOR YOU,
HUDDLED IN THIS HOLE?
MUDDY STREETS
STAND IN FOR PRICELESS BEAUTY.
PRAGUE,
HOW WELL I REMEMBER YOU,
A FAIRY TALE



“Inside Dirty Fortress Walls”



INSIDE DIRTY WALLS
CROWNED WITH WIRE LIKE AN UNKEMPT KING
FIFTY THOUSAND THERE SLEEPING
ONLY BUT A FEW WILL WAKE
SINGING A SONG OF SPILLED BLOOD
I WAS A CHILD ONCE -
A FEW SHORT YEARS AGO
HOPING FOR ANOTHER WORLD
BUT I AM A CHILD NO MORE
I'VE SEEN THINGS THAT MAKE IT SO
NOW I AM OLD
FOR I HAVE KNOWN HORROR
TERRIBLE WORDS AND MURDERED DAYS
THAT ARE NO LONGER JUST A CHILD'S BUGABOO
COULD IT BE JUST AN AWFUL DREAM?
MIGHT I SEE MY CHILDHOOD AGAIN?
WILL A NOISY BELL WAKE ME?
ENDING A GRISLY NIGHTMARE
WILL IT WAKE MOTHER TOO?
SHE WHO LOVED THE DIFFICULT CHILD MOST
SHE WHO BROUGHT ME INTO THIS WORLD TO WEEP
TO LIE ON A HARD PALLET
ONE DAY
I SHALL UNDERSTAND
THAT I WAS JUST A TINY CREATURE
AS SMALL AS THAT CHORUS OF THIRTY THOUSAND



“Everything’s Water Again”



FROM SOMEWHERE UP HIGH
STEADILY DESCENDING
WHIRLING IN THE AIR ON A TENDER BREEZE
SILENTLY
LIGHTLY
SLOWLY
IT DRIFTS DOWN
BLANKETING THE EARTH
AS IN A DREAM
SUDDENLY EVERYTHING
IS ONCE AGAIN WHAT IT USED TO BE
HIDDEN
IS THE FILTH
HIDDEN
THE DARKNESS THAT BLINDS US ALL
HIDDEN
THE HUNGER THAT MAKES US RETCH
JUST FOR A WHILE WE BREATHE AGAIN FREELY
DRUGGED BY THIS GLITTER
BY THE WORLD ALL IN WHITE
THEN SUDDENLY
EVERYTHING’S WATER AGAIN



“What good”



WHAT GOOD
IS THE BEAUTY OF GIRLS?
WHAT GOOD
IS THE WORLD
WHEN THERE ARE NO RIGHTS
WHAT GOOD
IS THE SUN IF THERE IS NO DAY?
WHAT GOOD
IS THE NIGHT IF THERE ARE NO STARS?
WHAT GOOD
IS GOD IF HE ONLY PUNISHES?
ARE WE ONLY BEASTS BORN TO SUFFER?
AND ROT BENEATH THE YOKE OF OUR
SUFFERING?
WHAT GOOD
IS LIFE WHEN LOVERS ARE APART?
KNOW SON, IT IS THERE FOR A REASON
TO MAKE YOU FIGHT AND CONQUER ALL



“The Tr-ns-p-rt is Leaving”



THE TR-NSP-RT IS LEAVING
BROKEN PEOPLE
WALK ALONG MUDDY STREETS
OLD ONES
YOUNG ONES
HEALTHY ONES
SICKLY ONES
ALL OF THEM PALE
NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THEIR FUTURE HOLDS
THAT IS THE WORST THING
THAT IS THE BEST THING
THE TR-NSP-RT IS LEAVING

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