**Theater in the Ghetto**

**Opening paragraph**

Despite the harsh living conditions that Jews faced in the ghetto, they tried to keep up the cultural activities they had practiced before the war. Some ghettos established theaters and put on plays for the ghetto’s residents. Both adults and children participated in its place.

**Opening photo**

Two girls performing in the Lodz Ghetto

**Photo section**

Have a look at this photo gallery.

**Children’s Play, Lodz Ghetto; Children Performing in the Lodz Ghetto; Children Performing in a Ghetto Play; Theater Set, Lodz Ghetto**

Make the photos bigger using the magnifying glass and examine the costumes, accessories, and makeup that the children are wearing, as well as the theater set (decorations).

Do these look like the costumes and decorations in the plays you’ve seen?

Why do you think the residents invested so much in producing plays in the ghetto? How did this contribute to their lives?

**Written testimony section**

**In December 1943 we went to the sports hall in the boys’ dormitory. It was completely packed. I found a spot near the feet of the piano. I’d heard this piece three times already in Prague, but it was never as wonderful as it was here. It was truly a miracle that the conductor Rafael Schechter was able to do something so wonderful in the ghetto. On my way home after the performance, I suddenly transcended all the problems related to food … and hard work in the vegetable garden. I felt like someone who dreams beautiful dreams, then suddenly wakes up and sees that everything is once again gray and dull.**

Testimony of H. P., a 12-year-old girl, Theresienstadt Ghetto, in *In Their Footsteps – A Guide for the Visitor to Terezin* Terezin (Beit Terezin: Society and Youth Administration, 1999), p. 28 [Hebrew].

<Glossary>

- transcended – rose above, felt spiritual

Read the testimony and highlight the following:

* The difficulties the girl must cope with in the ghetto.
* The importance of this performance for her, and the good feelings it inspires.
* What does the fact that “the sports hall in the boys’ dormitory” was “completely packed” tell us?

**Drawing section**

Here is a drawing of an invitation to a children’s play at the Vilna Ghetto.

**Invitation to a children’s play at the Vilna Ghetto**

Despite the harsh living conditions in the Vilna Ghetto, the residents put on many plays for adults and children. This invitation, to a Hanukkah play, also served as decoration for the play.

Describe the drawing in your own words. What feeling does it inspire in you?

Why do you think the invitation was drawn like this – as a calm landscape in bold colors? What were the illustrators trying to express? What might the drawing hint at?