

Re-Reading Eve Bunting's *Terrible Things* in the Age of Trump – Or, the Ethical Uses of Holocaust Representation in Contemporary Children's Literature

Eve Bunting's picture book, *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* (1989), uses Martin Niemöller iconic poem, "First They Came For..." to present the story of woodland creatures who become paralyzed by fear as formless monsters successively carry off distinct species. Although the book has often been used to introduce young readers to the incomprehensible trauma of the Holocaust and the morally compromised role of its bystanders, its actual address of the Shoah is limited to its subtitle and its implicit allusion to Niemöller's poem. Thus, it could just as well be re-read, in our contemporary moment, as an allegory of the successive policies of disenfranchisement, deportation, and persecution deployed by the current US administration – as well as the apathy or political impassivity of US citizens. The purpose of this paper, then, is to question the ethical implications of returning to, or otherwise repurposing, a loose allegory of an earlier traumatic event in order to address distinct contemporary structures of injustice. On the one hand, as Holocaust scholar Timothy Snyder argues in *On Tyranny* (2017), it is crucial that young people recognize the frightening parallels between mid-twentieth expressions of fascism and those that are developing within the present moment. On the other hand, however, an emphasis on such parallels might dangerously elide the historical specificity of the Shoah. This paper, then, will use Bunting's picture book as a point of departure for a broader theoretical discussion of the ethical uses of the past in and by the present.