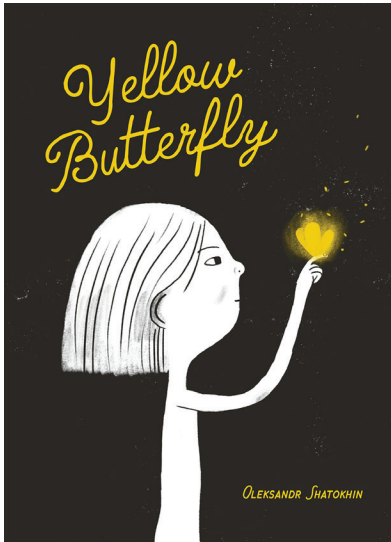


# Resource Guide



**Genre:** Juvenile Fiction / War & Military / Social Themes, Violence

**Interest Level:** 5+  
Grades PreK–1

**Themes:** War & Conflict,  
Peace & Hope, Ukraine War

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- **Sharing a Wordless Picture Book**
- **Guiding the Conversation**
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## Yellow Butterfly: A story from Ukraine

Written and Illustrated by OLEKSANDR SHATOKHIN

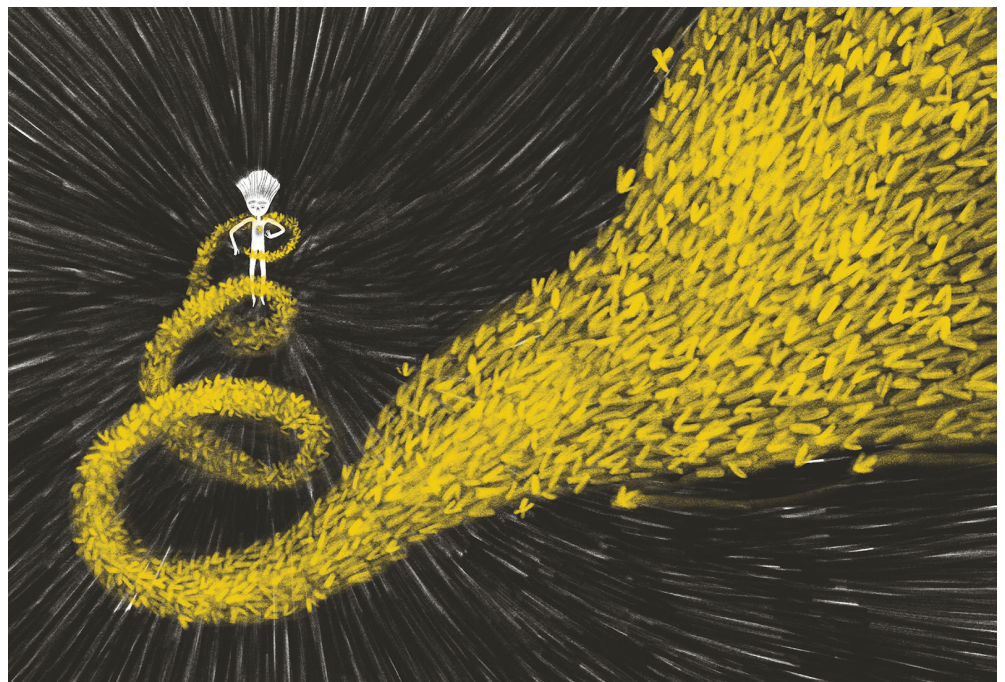
Published by Red Comet Press, 2023

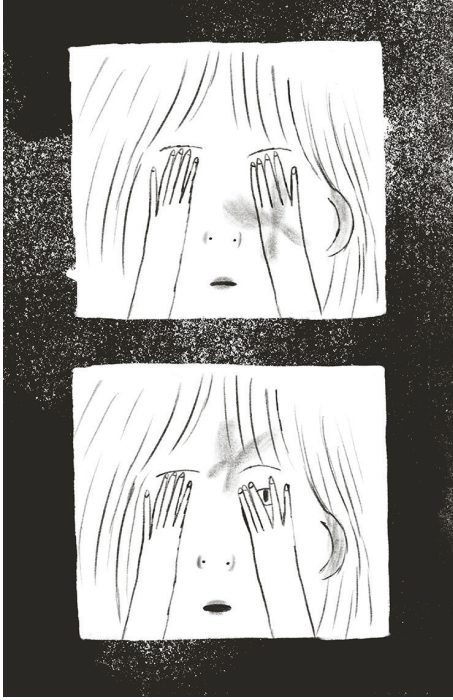
Discussion Guide by RACHAEL WALKER [www.belleofthebook.com](http://www.belleofthebook.com)

**Supercharge the most valuable part of the read-aloud experience—the interaction that takes place while sharing a story—with a wordless picture book.**

A wordless picture book tells a story through its illustrations, inviting readers to activate imaginations and bring the story to life from pictures alone. The wordless format is a wonderful device for actively engaging readers in asking questions, making discoveries, and launching conversations. Sharing wordless picture books also helps to support the development of language and literacy skills, including promoting comprehension and building vocabulary.

When you share a wordless picture book with a child, you collaborate on careful, close reading and interpretation of illustrations. You discover a story together.





## Sharing a Wordless Picture Book:

Let readers know this is a different kind of reading experience. Explain that this book has no words and that the story comes from what they see and understand in the illustrations.

- **Talk about the book title and cover.** Make and share predictions about what the story will be about.
- **Preview the book together and try to get a sense of what it is about.** Look through all the pictures, paying close attention to details like the setting, how color is used, and how expressions convey emotions of the characters. Talk together about what you notice and wonder about.
- **Start the book again.** You might begin by narrating, showing readers how you turn the clues you see in the pictures into words that tell the story. Ask the story develops, ask readers questions, incorporating their answers into your story:

*What do you see in the picture?*

*What is happening?*

*Where is it happening?*

*What do you think (a character) is feeling?*

*What do you think (a character) wants?*

*What do you think (a character) is going to do?*



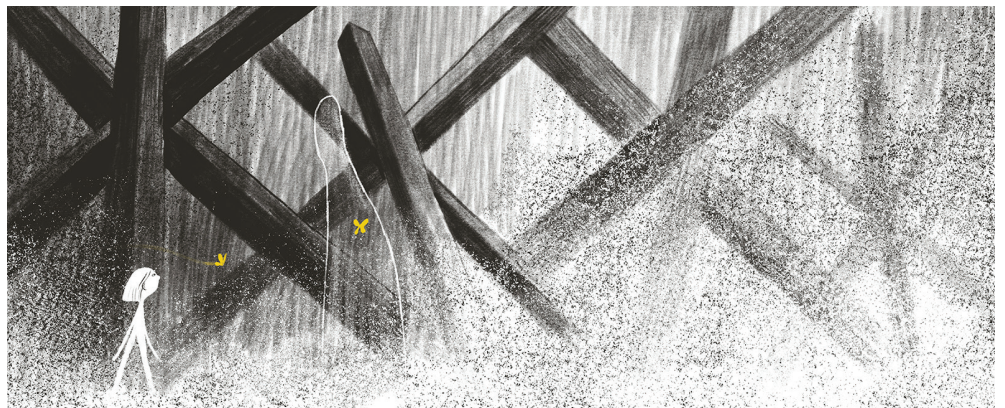
- **Let your readers take over.** You can offer a prompt by asking what happens next and encourage them to keep reading the story to you. Or you can finish reading the story yourself and then have your reader share their version with you. Keep asking questions to elicit more details.
- **Take your time.** The wordless picture book is a shared adventure that you don't want to rush. Make sure to allow for pouring over illustrations, making predictions, talking about ideas, and getting to know characters.
- **Talk about what the author tells you about the book.** Read the Author's Note or other information written by the author that is included in the book and talk about why it is there. Read the story again and see if you and your readers notice any additional details or see things differently based on what you learned from the author.

## Guiding the Conversation:



Talking about war with children might feel overwhelming. But we do children a disservice if we try to pretend they haven't been exposed to information about current conflicts through media and conversations with friends. We can't ignore the violence and terrorism that has brought fear close to home. We shouldn't avoid the truths that children around the world are living in or trying to escape from conflict situations. Children want and need to talk about what they see, hear, learn, and feel about war.

- Check in to ask what children know and how they are feeling about what has happened or is happening. Encourage them to share their own opinions and feelings and empathize with them. Validate and respond to the concerns they share.
- Listen and ask questions to find out if children understand the situation accurately. Clear up any misinformation kids might have heard. Be prepared for questions they might have, such as:
  - *Where is this war happening?* Use a map to show them the location and help them understand where they live in relation to the conflict.
  - *Who is involved in this war?* Talk about the countries involved in warfare and affected by the conflict. Share facts about these countries and their people, careful to avoid stereotypes and villainizing of other cultures.
  - *Why do wars start?* Why did this war start? Wars start for many different reasons and if you don't have an answer to why this particular conflict started, you should be prepared to say so and do some research. Share information that is age-appropriate and won't increase anxiety. You might explain some of the general reasons wars start: disputes over resources or land, long-standing rivalries and perceived grievances, clashes in religion or culture, or to make radical changes in a government.





- *How does this war affect us?* For children and adults with a trauma or refugee background, images and talk of war and violence can be triggering. If you have friends or family members in the military, children will be worried about them and what role they may have to play in the conflict. You may also have friends or family in the country of conflict or your own cultural ties. Reassure children that adults are working to end the war and make sure they know that you are doing everything you can to protect them and keep them safe.
- *What can we do to help?* Brainstorm ideas with children about ways to take positive action together. Helping those affected by the conflict offers more opportunity for discussion and can help children make connections that build their resilience.

**Use books.** Children's books about war can help you start conversations about a hard topic. Books can offer a neutral, non-threatening way to talk about all kinds of issues and ideas, providing readers with a safe way to learn about and process dangerous realities and empathize with the difficulties people face.

**Foster resilience.** When the world is in chaos, keeping to routines can be comforting for children. Find activities that can increase family connections and time spent together. Model both recognition of the hard and scary things out in the world and how to get through them as you continue to promote tolerance and acceptance in your community.



## **An Interview with Oleksandr Shatokhin**

### **1) How has your life been since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine?**

Thanks to our soldiers, volunteers, diplomats, energy workers, rescuers, and incredible people in Ukraine and worldwide, I can draw, create books, make posters about the war, and at least somehow contribute to our imminent victory. With the beginning of the war, after all the shock, fear, and hatred comes a reassessment of your life, values, and things you did not notice in peaceful life. You value simple and mundane things and single out the concepts of motherland, state, language, and freedom as your main ones.

### **2) What was the genesis of the Yellow Butterfly? How did you start to create it? What was most the challenging aspect?**

It all started with an illustration I had made before the full-scale invasion. It is a picture of a girl facing us; in the foreground, the barbed wire seems to cover the girl's eyes with its thorns (the illustration from the book). Back then, my thoughts about the idea of the book were not clear enough. But even then, I understood it should be a wordless book about restrictions and limits on freedom, but essentially with a hopeful ending. But coming up with the plot was tricky, so I just put the idea aside. When Russians attacked Ukraine, my family and I were forced to leave our hometown of Sumy. We saw with our own eyes columns of Russian tanks and destroyed houses. We experienced evacuation through the green corridor, separation, and the entire range of emotions—all these situations set a background and ideas for the book I drew during the war.

### **3) What has been the reaction to the publishing of this book in Ukraine?**

Wordless books are an unknown format in Ukraine. If publishers are familiar with this format, many readers find it unusual. But I think the feedback and reaction to the book was reasonable and brilliant. People perceived and understood the history and meaning of the book. I am over the moon about this and owe it to the Old Lion Publishing House in Ukraine for immediately agreeing to publish the book.

### **4) What do you want children (and adults) to take away from reading this book?**

The primary sense of the book is hope and faith that everything will be all right, and after all the fears and horrors, the sun will come out, the sky will be blue, evil will retreat, and peace will prevail. We can stand against evil together and will definitely win.

## 5) What books or creators would you say have most influenced your work?

Not so much influenced but more inspired by the creativity of people who give me the strength to do what I like the most, draw. These are Wolf Erlbruch, Shaun Tan, Isidro Ferrer, Brecht Evens.

### **About the Author:**

OLEKSANDR SHATOHKIN is an artist and children's book creator who grew up in Eastern Ukraine, close to the border with Russia. After the start of the war in February 2022, his wife and young son were evacuated to Poland. They have since been reunited and are again living and working in his hometown of Sumy. *Yellow Butterfly* is his second book to be published for an English-speaking audience.

Also by Oleksandr Shatohkin:

*The Happiest Lion Cub*

Published by Red Comet Press, 2022

### **Other books about war and conflict:**

*How War Changed Rhondo* written and illustrated by Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv

*War* written by Jose Jorge Letria, illustrated by André Letria, Greystone Kids

*The Cat-Man of Aleppo* written by Karim Shamsi-Basha and Irene Latham, illustrated by Yuko Shimizu, G.P. Putnam's Sons

*The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, Flying Eye

*The Day The War Came* written by Nicola Davis, illustrated by Rebecca Cobb, Candlewick Press

