

**Middle School Poetry, First Place**

*We Dance in a Striped Dress*

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Teacher: Mercy Hearne

Survivor: Ester Wigodsky

“Ester! Ester!” The liberating soldiers call.  
Dance for us, dance for us, the song of hope in your soul.  
Dance to your song, Aase’s Death, with its three notes of grave death.  
She danced.

Striped dress twirling,  
Feet flying and spinning, swishing and leaping,  
With her heart and her soul, laid bare,  
She danced in a striped dress.

She uncloaked the hope of her people,  
Through her interpretive dance.  
Rising belief that family and friends might hold each other again.  
She danced with hope in a striped dress.

She unveiled the courage of her people,  
Caring for each other, stealing food for another,  
Although death loomed like a shadow.  
She danced, full of courage, with hope, in a striped dress.

She danced the death of her people,  
the death of a prisoner, pirouetting ‘til she dropped.  
She danced in a pillar of smoke, through the stench of burning bodies,  
Weeping for family members, uncertain of their fate.  
She danced, wrestling with death, full of courage, with hope, in a striped dress.

She danced the story of her people,  
Still holding on to hope, ‘til they dropped, ‘til they were murdered.  
She ended her dance, crushing the swastika with her final strength.  
She danced a story, wrestling with death, full of courage, with hope, in a striped dress.

I choose to dance too, for her, for her story.  
For names to outlive numbers and memories to outlive smoke.  
We dance for her story, for all those history tried to erase.  
We dance in a striped dress.