

Night Elie Wiesel

About the book

Night is Elie Wiesel's memoir of his experience, as a young Orthodox Jew, of being sent with his family to the German concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald during the Holocaust.

Fifty years after being written, the 109-page volume, described as devastating in its simplicity, stands alongside Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* and Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* as one of the most influential works of Holocaust literature.

About the Author

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. He was fifteen years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister died, his two older sisters survived. Elie and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945.

After the war, Elie studied in Paris and later became a journalist. For his literary and human rights activities he has received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award, and the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honour. In 1986, Elie Wiesel won the Nobel Prize for Peace, and soon after, Marion and Elie Wiesel established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. why does Elie call his book *Night*? Is this a reference to the darkness of the Holocaust or a period before a new day?
2. why do you think that the Jews that Moishe the Beadle met refused to believe his story?
3. why does Elie's father refuse to leave the ghetto with Maria?

4. what is your opinion of the treatment on the train of Mrs Schachter? Can you defend the actions of those who attacked her?
5. Elie says 'In a few seconds we had ceased to be men' – what does he mean by this?
6. why does soup taste better than ever after the first hanging Elie witnesses but have the taste of corpses after the execution of the 'pipel'?
7. how true does the advice 'In this place there is no such thing as father, brother, friend' become for Elie?
8. Elie's story is full of decisions – not to leave for Palestine, not to escape the ghetto with Marie, to take part in the march to Buchenwald. How much were these decisions completely in the hands of Elie and his family? Can we only understand the folly of some of the decisions in hindsight?
9. why do you think that so many publishers rejected Night when it was initially written?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about life in the concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/life-in-the-camps/>.

You can also read about other survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau including Kitty Hart-Moxon <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/survivor-stories/holocaust-testimony-kitty-hartmoxon> and Freddie Knoller <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/survivor-stories/holocaust-testimony-freddie-knoller>.

The HMD 2010 short film <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/films/hmd-2010-the-legacy-of-hope> includes the stories of Auschwitz-Birkenau survivors Lily Ebert and Iby Knill.