

NIGHT

Author and Memoir Info

- Elie Wiesel was born on **September 30, 1928** in **Sighet**, a small town in Transylvania that was then part of Romania but became part of Hungary in 1940.



- Wiesel's Orthodox Jewish family was very involved in and devoted to the Jewish religion.



- As a teenager, Wiesel busied himself with the traditional Jewish texts:
 - Torah- the first five books of the Old Testament
 - Talmud- codified oral law
 - Cabbala- mystical texts

This was unusual for someone so young.



- The Jews of Hungary were relatively **untouched** by the catastrophe that was destroying the other Jewish communities of Europe.
- But things changed in **March of 1944**, when the German army occupied Hungary.

- Shortly after that the Hungarian Jewish community, the only **remaining large Jewish community in Europe**, was **deported to concentration camps**.



Arrival and selection of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz, 1944. Credit: Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

- In May of 1944, when Wiesel was 15 years old, his family and other community members were deported to Birkenau, a reception area for the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland.



- Auschwitz was the largest and deadliest of the camps.
- Wiesel's father, mother, and little sister all died in the Holocaust.



- Wiesel suffered horrible cruelties first at Auschwitz, then at Buna and Buchenwald, two other camps.

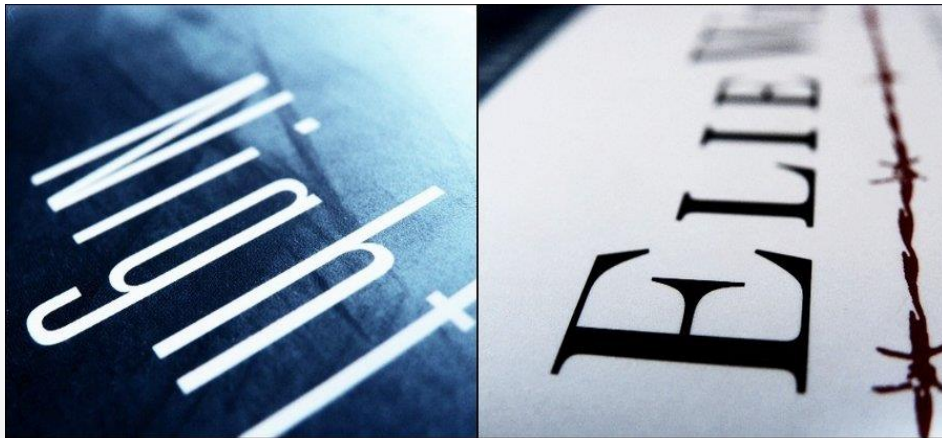
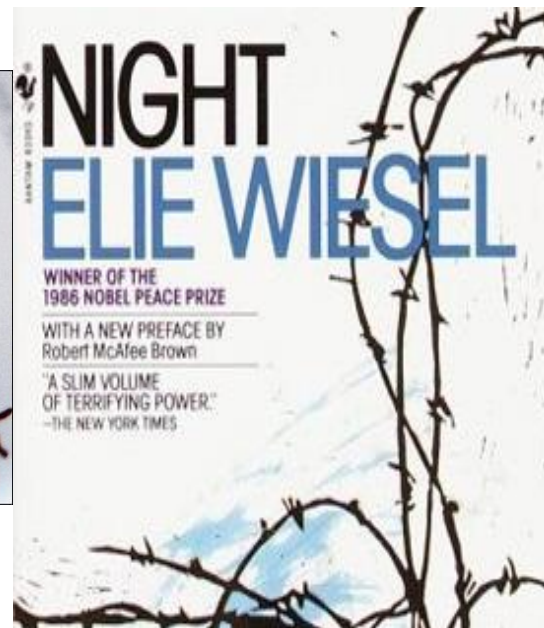


- Wiesel survived the Holocaust and emigrated to France. In France, Wiesel learned that his two older sisters were alive.

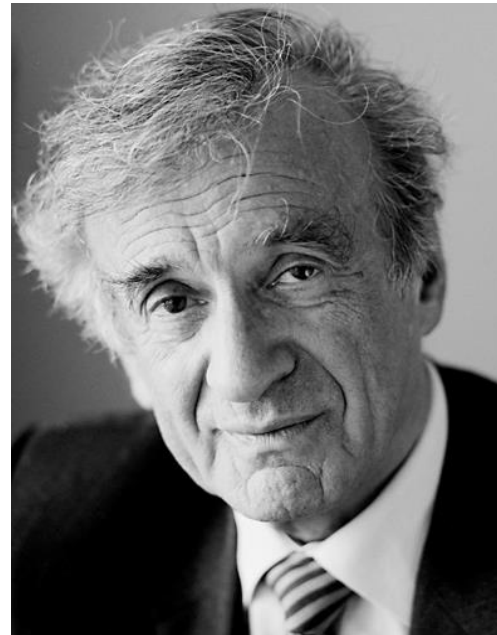
- He received his college degree, but he could never write about the Holocaust. Then he was urged by a French writer to share his terrible memories so the world would not forget what had happened.
- In 1956, he published a 900 page account of his life during the Holocaust.

In 1958, he condensed his work and translated it from **Yiddish into French**.

- The work was translated into English and published in **1960** as *Night*.



- In 1963, Wiesel became an American citizen.
- He has had many prestigious and influential roles in the education of the Holocaust:



- Professor of Humanities at Boston University since 1976
- Served as chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council
- Received the Congressional Medal of Freedom in 1985
- Won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his work in promoting human rights
- Established the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity in 1987

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gives an award each year to recognize prominent individuals whose actions have helped to **confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity**.

It was established in 2011 and is the **Museum's highest honor**. Elie Wiesel was the first recipient and the Museum then renamed the award as the **Elie Wiesel Award**.



- Up until his recent death, Wiesel spoke out on the horrible intolerance of today.
 - In July 2004, when addressing the atrocities in Sudan, Wiesel asked, “How can a citizen of a free country not pay attention? How can anyone, anywhere, not feel outraged?”



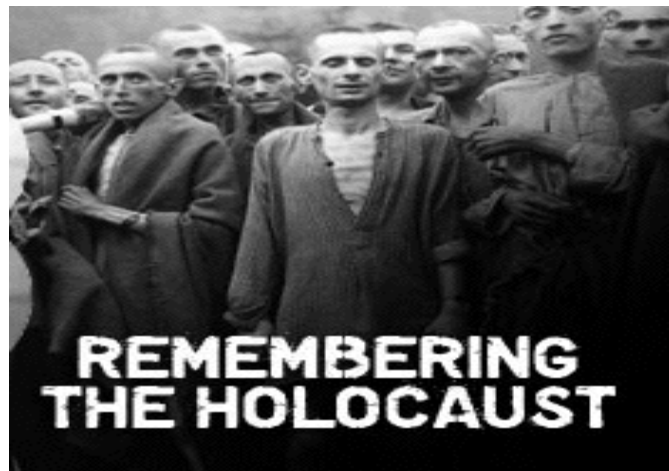
- In April 2006, Wiesel urged a rally of tens of thousands of people on the National Mall in DC to call for an end of genocide in Darfur:
- “Silence helps the killer, never his victims.”



- Elie Wiesel died July 2, 2016.
- He was 87 years old.
- “If I survived, it must be for some reason... I must do something with my life...because in my place, someone else could have been saved. And so I speak for that person...”
~Elie Wiesel in an interview with The New York Times, 1981



- Publishers were **hesitant** to embrace this memoir, believing that audiences would not be interested in such a **pessimistic subject**, but today it stands as one of the most **widely read and taught accounts** of the Holocaust.



- Though *Night* is Elie Wiesel's testimony about his experiences in the Holocaust, Wiesel is not exactly the story's **main character**. *Night* is narrated by a **boy named Eliezer who represents Wiesel**, but **small details** in the story differentiate between the two.

- Wiesel does this because he wants to distinguish his narrator from himself. It is very painful for a survivor to write about his Holocaust experience, and speaking through someone else allows Wiesel to distance himself from the event.

- Therefore, *Night* is an account of the thoughts and experiences that Wiesel had as a teenage concentration camp prisoner, told through the eyes of a young boy named Eliezer.

Organization of the Book

- 1. Roundup of Wiesel's family and neighbors in Sighet



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-179-1575-07
Foto: Wetzel | 25. März 1944

- 2. Deportation by cattle car to Auschwitz-Birkenau



- 3. Division of his family forever during the selection process



- 4. Mental and physical anguish he and his fellow prisoners experience at the camp



- 5. The death march from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Buchenwald



- 6. Liberation of Buchenwald by the American army

