

Elie Wiesel was born September 30, 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania into a religious family. His father was an important advisor to the town government. When Elie was born, Sighet was Romanian (and is today), but from 1940-1945, it was a Hungarian town. The Hungarian government was allied with the Nazis and instituted **antisemitic** laws, such as expelling all Jews with foreign citizenship from Hungary and creating **ghettos**. Despite being allies, German forces invaded Hungary in spring 1944, when Elie was 15 years old.

Three days after taking the city of Budapest, the German army arrived in Sighet. They established ghettos and restricted the Jewish people to living there. Elie's home was already in the area that would become the large ghetto. He watched as his neighbors were crammed into the houses around him, as well as a second, smaller ghetto outside the city center. In May 1944, Elie Wiesel and his family were **deported** to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. His family went through the **selection** process, and his mother and one of his sisters were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Elie was selected to go to Auschwitz III-Monowitz, a **forced labor** camp. In January 1945, Elie and his father went on a **death march** to **Buchenwald**, where his father died. Just weeks later, their previous camp, Auschwitz, was **liberated**. Elie was imprisoned in Buchenwald until U.S. troops liberated it on April 11, 1945, he was 16 years old.

Following liberation, Elie Wiesel studied journalism at the Sorbonne in Paris. He worked as a journalist for a Tel Aviv newspaper and eventually moved to New York to be a **correspondent**. Elie first published his **memoir**, *Night*, in French in 1958. It took two years before it was published in English. Following this, Elie went on to write several other memoirs about his experiences during the Holocaust, as well as dozens of other books. Outside of his writing, Elie Wiesel became a **human rights activist**, as well as a professor of humanities at top universities in the United States. For his writing, professorship, and activism, he has received numerous awards and medals, including: the Nobel Peace Prize, the Holocaust Memorial Award, the Jewish Heritage Award, the US Congressional Gold Medal of Achievement, "The Star of Romania," and many others. Elie Wiesel passed away July 2, 2016 at the age of 87 in New York.¹

¹ For more information on Elie Wiesel and Hungary during the Holocaust, check out these sources:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/elie-wiesel>
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hungary-before-the-german-occupation>
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hungary-after-the-german-occupation>

Glossary:²

Antisemitism: Prejudice and discrimination against Jews on the basis of their religious beliefs, their ethnicity, or the false idea that Jews are a race. Nazi antisemitism was racial in nature.

Auschwitz: A concentration camp established by the Nazis in 1940, in Oswiecim, Poland, with three camps for imprisonment and extermination and over 40 sub-camps for forced labor. Elie's family were sent to the Birkenau camp for selection.

Buchenwald: A concentration camp established in 1937 near Weimar, Germany. It was primarily a labor camp, but many died from starvation, over-work, and execution. Near the end of the war in early 1945, many Jews from other camps were forced to march there.

Correspondent: a regular contributor to a news station or newspaper who reports back from the scene of an event.

Death March: Brutal forced marches of camp prisoners towards the end of the war with the goal of moving prisoners into Germany and away from advancing Allied forces from the west and Soviet forces from the east, so that they could not be liberated. Thousands were shot or died of starvation or exhaustion.

Deportation: Removal of people from their areas of residency for purposes of resettlement elsewhere. For Jews, this meant removal to another city, ghetto, concentration camp, or extermination center.

Forced Labor: A process whereby prisoners are forced to perform harsh labor under poor conditions in places like mines or factories. Jewish laborers were subject to particularly humiliating treatment for the financial gain of the Nazi war economy.

Ghetto: A section of a city or town, primarily in Eastern Europe, where German occupiers and their collaborators would overcrowd, starve, and steal from Jews. There were limited resources such as food, water, and medicine, and rampant diseases.

Human Rights Activist: Someone who peacefully promotes and advocates for the rights of people around the world who are facing hardships.

Liberation: The process of one army driving an occupying army out of an occupied territory. Holocaust survivors and citizens of occupied Europe used the word "liberation" to refer to the moment they were freed from Nazi control.

Memoir: An account of historical events, or a biography, written from personal knowledge.

Resistance: Generally, action of an individual, nation or group in opposition to those in power. More specifically, efforts by Jews and others to oppose persecution at the hands of the Nazis and their partners.

Selection: A substitute word for the process carried out by German physicians to select victims for extermination or forced labor.

² Definitions courtesy of [Echoes and Reflections](#) (a project of Yad Vashem, USC Shoah Foundation, & the Anti-Defamation League) and the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia](#).

Analyzing Elie Wiesel's *Night*

In this section, you will gain a deeper understanding of Elie Wiesel. Consider the quote below from Elie Wiesel's forward to the 2006 edition of *Night*.

"In retrospect I must confess that I do not know, or no longer know, what I wanted to achieve with my words. I only know that without this testimony, my life as a writer - or my life, period - would not have become what it is: that of a witness who believes he has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory."³

As discussed in the biography and quote above, Elie Wiesel wrote about his experiences during the Holocaust. Think about the quote above and answer the following questions:

- Why does Elie choose to write? Explain his reason in your own words.
- What is Elie's tone? What is he feeling? How do you know he feels this way?
- How does this quote make you feel?
- Why are you drawn to Elie Wiesel's writing?

³ Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Translated by Marion Wiesel, Hill and Wang, 2006, pp. viii.

Art as Resistance in Elie Wiesel's *Night*

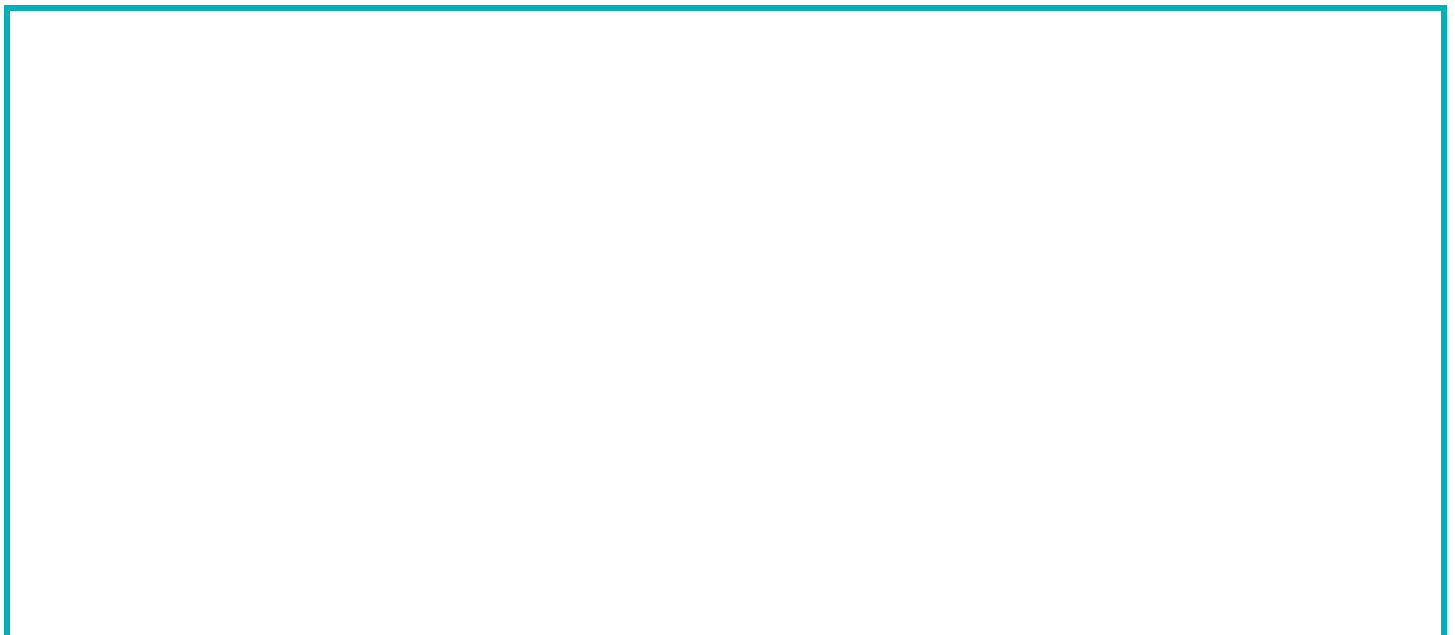
Think about the quote on the previous page:

- How does this quote, written in Elie's older years, compare to the contents of *Night*?
- Why do you think Elie published his memoir? Why did he wait a decade before writing?
- Why might the Nazis not want Elie's memoirs to be published?



This Competition explores the theme of resistance in art and writing:

- What does resistance mean to you?
- How can writing be a form of resistance?
- How can personal writing serve as a record of past events?



Submission Requirement: Statement of Purpose

As you construct your Competition submission, you will choose to respond to one or more sources of inspiration: Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and/or Erich Lichtblau-Leskly.

Consider your own thoughts on Elie Wiesel. How can your submission serve as a response to his work? Will you write, or will you make art?

To complete your submission, you will compose a **statement of purpose**. This statement will aid the Competition judges in understanding your reasons for creating your submission, as well as how it connects to the source(s) of inspiration.

In your submission and statement of purpose, please respond to the following questions:

- What does “art as resistance” mean to you? How do art and writing provide opportunities for cultural resistance?
- What messages of resistance and lessons of the Holocaust will you convey in your art and writing?
- How is your piece inspired by the works of Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and/or Erich Lichtblau-Leskly?

In the box below, outline your ideas for your statement of purpose. Your statement of purpose must be 250 words or less, and it must respond to all three of the above questions.