

Night by Eli Wiesel

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

Personal Response

What is your reaction to Moché the Beadle? What do you think about his treatment by the villagers after his return from Poland?

- Moche the Beadle is the janitor, handyman and one of the poorest people in the village. He is responsible for looking after the Synagogue. Moche the Beadle is deported to Poland like the other foreign Jews, where the Nazis attempt to execute them all in a forest. He escapes and returns to his village and attempts to warn everyone about what has happened, but none of the villagers believe him because of his low social status.
- Consensus is that the villagers should have listened to Moche the Beadle, rather than ignore his warnings about the Nazis.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe Wiesel's community at the beginning of the story. How does young Elie view the world and his place in it?
- He lives in a Jewish village that is very traditional about its faith. Elie loves his community and his family, but wishes to know more about his religion and the wider world.
2. What are some incidents that suggest or **foreshadow** the coming danger to the Sighet Jews? Why doesn't the community believe it is in danger?

Foreshadowing (writing technique) is one the author gives the reader clues or hints as to what will come later in the novel.

- Moche the Beadle returned to the village after surviving a massacre and tried to warn the other Jews to flee from the Nazis.
 - Elie's father summoned to a special meeting of the Jewish council.
 - German officers visiting the ghetto and looking around.
 - Pg. 11 Elie's father saying that the stars weren't that bad, followed by the in brackets statement, "Poor father! Of what then did you die?")
 - Jewish people forced to live in the ghetto, and then spending a night in their destroyed synagogue.
 - The family maid offers them a secret place to hide in their village from the Nazis, but they refuse.
 - Elie's father refuses to sell up and immigrate to Palestine.
 - A Hungarian police man who is a friend of the family attempts to warn them about the dangers, by tapping on one of their sealed up windows.
3. What are the conditions on the Jews' train journey? How do the Jews react to Madame Schächter's behavior? What does this reveal about human nature?

Analyzing Literature

Evaluate and Connect

4. What connection might there be between Madame Schacter's treatment on the train and possible future events in the concentration camp? What are some other ways that Wiesel foreshadows, or hints at, the horrors ahead?
 - Madame Schacter's calls out that she sees "Fire!" and that she sees big flames while on the train. Initially the other Jewish people treat her as though she has become mad due to the mistreatment by the Germans; however, in hindsight they see her as a "prophet" because she foretells the cremating of corpses at Auschwitz.
 - Foreshadowing - is the technique when a writer hints at what is to come in a book, so as to increase tension and suspense.
 - Wiesel's description of the German soldiers' threats hints at awful events to come for the Jews from Sighet.
 - Wiesel's distant cousin asks for information about his family, which highlights that people are disappearing.
 - Moche the Beadle's warnings about what the Nazis are doing to the Germans.
 - The attempt by the Hungarian police officer to warn Wiesel's family about what is to come.
5. Even though it was 1944, and Nazi extermination of Jews had begun years earlier, the Sighet Jews had very few facts about it. Do you think it is possible in today's world for a community to know so little, to be so unprepared? Explain.
 - In contemporary society, amongst people who live in wealthy western countries, it is highly unlikely that we would not be aware of events like the Nazi extermination of Jews. This is because people had more than the radio, newspaper and letters to rely on information. Today, we have the internet that can be accessed through mobile phones and computers as well as huge mass media organisations. Unfortunately people who live in poor countries and lack basic literacy and access to infrastructure like the internet, might still be unaware of such awful crimes and at risk from similar persecution.

CHAPTERS 3 TO 5

Personal Response

- When he arrives at Auschwitz and then at Buna, Wiesel describes scenes he will never forget. What scenes, ideas, or feelings from the memoir do you find unforgettable?
- " 'Men to the left! 'Women to the right!' " pg. 29
- Eight words, spoken quietly, indifferently without emotion. Eight simple short words. Yet that was the moment that I left my mother." DELIBERATE CONTRAST
- This moment is significant for Elie Wiesel because it is the last time he sees his mother and youngest sister.
- "I pinched myself. Was I still alive?" pg. 32 The events Wiesel witnesses are so horrifying that he has to constantly remind himself that he is still alive and not in a nightmare.
- "Never shall I forget..." (pg. 34) repetition of this phrase, reinforces to the reader the aspects of Wiesel's arrival at Auschwitz that will stay with him for the rest of his life.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe the conditions first at the Birkenau reception center, then at Auschwitz, and later at Buna. How does Wiesel's relationship with his father change during this time?
- Wiesel and his father at Auschwitz are cruelly mistreated as they are forced to run naked, sleep three to a bunk, given very little in terms of food, water and clothing, while also participating in hard labour.
- Elie and his father become closer at Auschwitz as they struggle to survive.
2. **What events lead to the two hangings Wiesel describes? How does Wiesel feel about his evening meal after each hanging? What do his reactions suggest about how he is changing?**
3. What are some ways that Wiesel and the other Jews at the camps try to observe their religion? How have Wiesel's feelings about God changed since his captivity began?
- The Jewish people attempt to observe their religion through the singing of "Hasidic melodies" and discuss of the Torah. However, Wiesel's feelings about God has changed since his captivity, because he cannot believe that God would let him and the other Jews suffer so much without intervening.

Analyzing Literature

Evaluate and Connect

4. In the camps, Wiesel must struggle to stay alive and to remain human. In your opinion, how well does he succeed with his struggles?
- To be human - sense of identity, personal integrity, to experience both justice and injustice, our relationships with others.
- Yes - Wiesel, despite his struggles to survive, maintains his humanity which is seen through his close relationship with his father and friendship with other prisoners.
5. There are several discussions about resistance by the prisoners. Why do you think there was no large scale effort to resist?
- People struggled to resist the Nazis who had superior force and weaponry. The Nazis were also able to manipulate the prisoners by insisting that they would randomly execute someone if they tried to run away. The Nazis are fitter, healthier than the weakened prisoners making it hard for them to be easily overcome.

CHAPTERS 6 TO 9

Personal Response

What feelings and thoughts went through your mind as you read about Wiesel's final experiences as a German prisoner? What would you say if you could talk to him about this time in his life? What would you want him to explain to you?

- Questions about Elie's father, Chlomo and will he survive?/ Will Elie's recently operated on foot survive the march?/ How will the story end? Ultimately how many prisoners will survive?
- Feelings - Angry, frustrated at the treatment of these people.
- Elie Wiesel - Questions for
 - Why don't you give up?
 - Why didn't you want to seek revenge against the Nazis?
 - How did you motivate yourself to keep alive when your dad died?

- How did you find the strength to run?
- Why didn't he get depressed at the camp/

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why do Wiesel and his father leave Buna? How do they respond to the circumstances of the forced march?
- The prisoners are evacuated from Buna because the front against the Soviets is too close to the camp, and they are forced to march further into Germany. Wiesel motivated his father to keep on going despite their tiredness, weakness and extreme cold.
2. What happens between Rabbi Eliahou and his son? What does Wiesel's reaction to this incident reveal about his relationship with God?
- During the march, Elie witnessed Rabbi Eliahou falling behind and his son ignoring his father's distress, as he was only intent on his own survival. Elie still has some faith in God, because he prays to him to ensure that he will never treat his father the same way as Rabbi Eliahou's son.
3. How does Wiesel treat his father during the journey to Buchenwald and later during Chlomo's illness?
- At times during the journey Buchenwald and later during Chlomo's illness, Elie is forced to be tough with his father so as to prevent him from falling behind, or freezing to death. Elie sacrifices his own food and water rations and gives them to his father.
 - During an Air Raid Alert, Elie forgets about his father and abandons him as he searches for cover. He feels no better than Rabbi Eliahou's son. Elie realizes what he did wrong and returns to his sick father and helps feed him. (pg. 106)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Given their life or death situation, do you believe Wiesel's attitude toward his father was understandable? Explain your reactions.
- As a class, we think it is understandable. The circumstances in which Elie finds himself is so awful, that sometimes forgetting about his father and focussing on only his own survival is understandable.
5. Wiesel believes that remembering the Holocaust will help to ensure that this type of atrocity does not occur in the future. Do you think learning about historical events can guide people to behave differently? Explain.