

SYNOPSIS OF NIGHT by Elie Weisel

<http://www.branford.k12.ct.us/user/site/staff/cmiller/docs/nightqu.htm>

When WWII broke out, Eliezer Weisel was barely an adolescent. Absorbed in his studies of the Talmud and devoted to prayer, this innocent child was totally incredulous when Moche the beadle, his revered teacher, returned from Poland seemingly lifeless, uttering tales of atrocities perpetrated against the Jews. In fact, most of the Jews in the Transylvanian town of Sighet disbelieved these horrible stories.

Then it happened. German soldiers slowly invaded the little the little town. Soon Jews were driven out of their homes and herded into trains; their destination unknown. Finally, the Germans ordered their first stop: AUSCHWITZ. "Men to the left! Women to the right!" This was the last time Elie saw his mother and sister. Such was the beginning of a nightmare. Stripped, shaven, and beaten, Elie and his father managed to survive the first night.

Inscribed on the iron door at the entrance to Auschwitz was the slogan, "Work is Liberty," almost prophetic in nature. Soon the prisoners came to realize that perhaps being worked to death might garner them the only freedom they might ever know--that liberty which only comes in death.

Conditions worsened; work increased; exhaustion was ever present. With soup and stale bread to eat, men became gaunt shadows of human beings. Whipped for marching out of step and hanged for stealing soup, loving, moral men were transformed into grappling, vicious human animals grasping for survival. Sons betrayed and destroyed fathers for morsels of food or to ease their burden, purposely lost them during selection periods. Although Elie often wished

his father would suddenly be lost, he did not succumb to human's potential vicious behavior. Instead, he cared for his father, encouraged him, "fathered" him.

Although transferred to another camp, their situation did not change. Rations were meager, whippings more frequent, and hangings and selections more numerous

Passage from

Audrey A. Friedman

Study Questions

Chapter 1 pp. 1-20

1. Describe Moshe, the Beadle.
2. Why did Eliezer pray, and why did he cry when he prayed?
3. Upon his return, what story did Moshe tell?
4. Why didn't the people believe him?
5. Cite examples of how the Jewish citizens of Sighet began to lose their rights.
6. What is a ghetto?
7. Why did the citizens resist the truth, even when it was in front of them?
8. Describe the conditions in the train (at the end of the chapter).

Chapter 2 - pp. 21-26

1. Explain, "our eyes were opened, but too late." Where was the train at this point?
2. What was foreshadowed by Madame Schacter's nightmare?
3. What did some of the passengers do to quiet Madame Schacter?
4. Where did the train finally stop?

Chapter 3 - pp. 27-43

1. When questioned by the S.S. Officer, why did Elie lie about his age and occupation?
2. What was the first horrifying sight that Elie at first disbelieved?
3. Explain what Elie meant when he said, "Never shall I forget these flames which consumed my faith forever."
4. How had Elie changed in a short time?
5. What was Elie's first impression of Auschwitz after leaving Birkenau?

6. What was the “compulsory formality” at the entrance to all camps?
7. What sort of identification was used on the prisoners?
8. Why was the prisoner in charge of Elie’s block removed from this position?
9. What were the prisoners’ rations at each meal?
10. What was Bela Katz forced to do once he was chosen for his strength?

Chapter 4 - pp. 45-62

1. What were the objectives of the medical examinations?
2. Why were the Jewish musicians not allowed to play music by Beethoven?
3. Describe one of Idek’s bouts of madness.
4. How did Elie initially avoid losing his gold crown?
5. Whom did Elie meet years later on the Paris Metro?
6. What happened when Elie refused to give his crown to Franek? What was the end result?
7. Describe the scene with the soup cauldrons.
8. During one of the preliminary “ceremonies” for a hanging, what did Juliek whisper to Elie? What does this suggest?
9. During one hanging, Elie and the other prisoners cried. What made this hanging different from others?

Chapter 5 - pp. 63-80

1. Why didn’t Elie fast on Yom Kippur?
2. What advice was Elie given to pass the selection process?
3. How did Elie’s father respond when he learned his name had been written down?
4. What did Akiba Drumer ask the others to do for him? Did they do it?
5. Why was Elie placed in the hospital?

6. Why was the camp to be evacuated? What did Elie learn of the fate of those who stayed behind in the hospital?

Chapter 6 - pp. 81-92

1. What happened to anyone who could not keep up with the march?
2. How did Zalman die?
3. What horrible realization did Elie come to concerning Rabbi Eliahou and his son? How did Elie respond to this?
4. What was Juliek's last act?
5. How did Elie help his father when the selection was made?

Chapter 7 - pp.93-98

1. How did Elie again help his father when they were on the train?
2. Describe the scene Elie witnessed between the father and son.
3. How many got out of the wagon? Where had they arrived?

Chapter 8 - pp. 99-106

1. Explain how the father/son roles had been reversed in the case of Elie and his father?
2. Why was Elie's father being beaten?
3. What did Elie think of the advice given to him by the head of the block?

Chapter 9 - pp. 107-109

1. What happened on April 5th?
2. What was the resistance movement? What did they do?
3. What did the prisoners do when they were freed?