

Night

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Study Guide for Students

Chapter 1

billeted – to be quartered or lodged, especially in reference to troops

boche – a derogatory term for German troops

Cabala or Kabbalah – the body of mystical teachings based on esoteric interpretations of ancient Hebrew scriptures

firmament – the expanse of the heavens; the sky

ghetto – An area of a city which contains and restricts a certain portion of the population. The Jews of various Eastern European cities were forcibly relocated into cordoned-off areas of the city where overcrowding, starvation, and forced labor were the norm. The ghettos were eventually destroyed, as Jews were deported to the death camps.

Hasidism – the ultra-orthodox branch of Judaism that teaches the individual to raise every action in life to the level of prayer

Miklos Horthy (1868 - 1957) – regent, or ruler, of Hungary from 1920 - 1944. He initially enacted harsh laws against the Jews of Hungary but later rejected German pressure to deport Jews. Horthy was exiled after Germany took over Hungary.

lorry – a truck

Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204) – Spanish-born physician, philosopher, and religious scholar who fled to Egypt to escape anti-Semitism in Spain

Passover – a holiday celebrating the Jews' freedom from slavery in Egypt

Phylactery – small leather boxes containing strips of parchment inscribed with quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures used by Orthodox and Conservative Jewish men during worship

Talmud – the codified body of Jewish civil and religious law including rabbinical commentaries on the Torah

Torah – the first five books of the Old Testament of the Bible

truncheon – a club

waif – a forsaken or homeless child

Zionism – political movement concerned with founding a Jewish state in Palestine

1. Who was Moshe the Beadle?
2. What does Wiesel tell the reader of Moshe?
3. How does Wiesel describe himself as a boy of 12?
4. How does Wiesel describe his father?
5. Why did Elie's father prohibit him from studying the Cabala?
6. How did Wiesel realize his wish to study the Cabala?
7. What happened to Moshe?
8. Several months later, Elie saw Moshe the Beadle again. What story did Moshe tell?
9. How was Moshe able to escape?
10. How had Moshe changed as a result of his experience?
11. How did other people in the village react to Moshe's story? Why do you suppose they reacted this way?
12. In the spring of 1944, what political changes occurred in Hungary?
13. What was the attitude of the Jews of Sighet?
14. What literary device does Wiesel employ to emphasize the foolish optimism and denial of facts of the Jews living in Sighet? How is it used?
15. After the Germans arrived in Sighet, what was the prevailing attitude among the residents?
16. After Passover, Wiesel says, "the curtain rose." (Pg. 8) What does this refer to? What happened?
17. What was bitterly ironic about the comments that Wiesel's father made regarding the wearing of the yellow star?
18. What was the Germans' next step?
19. How did the Jews react to this?
20. The Germans had other plans for the Jews of Sighet, however. What were those plans?
21. The Wiesel family were among the last to leave the large ghetto. Where were they sent?
22. Where did they go?
23. Despite all that happened, even after the Germans entered the capital of the Budapest, Wiesel tell us that people still remained optimistic about their future. How can you explain this optimism?
24. In this chapter Wiesel uses images from nature. How does he use the sun?
25. What does this imagery of night suggest?
"Night. No one prayed, so that the night would pass quickly. The stars were only sparks of the fire which devoured us. Should that fire die out one day, there would be nothing left in the sky but dead stars, dead eyes." (Pg. 8)
26. Given the fact that the title of this book is *Night*, what do you suppose a major theme in this work will be?
27. A memoir is a story of one's life told by the person similar to an autobiography. Describe the tone of this memoir, and speculate on why Wiesel chooses to use this tone.
28. Identify each of the steps in the German plan, and point out how the cunning of the German plan and the people's human need for optimism in the face of danger led the Jews of Sighet to the transports to Auschwitz.

Chapter 2

Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp was located in Poland, near Krakow, in the town of Oswiecim. Auschwitz was first established by the Nazis in 1941 under the direction of Heinrich Himmler, chief of the Gestapo. Auschwitz I, the first camp, held about 10,000 prisoners; the second site, Auschwitz II or Birkenau, was about 2 miles from the original. It is estimated that up to 4 million people were murdered at Auschwitz. Because Jews made up the greatest number of those killed there, Auschwitz has become a symbol of the Holocaust. At least 1/3 of the 5 – 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust died at Auschwitz. Additionally, there were about 40 satellite camps for forced labor in the area around Auschwitz, collectively known as Auschwitz III.

1. After several days of travel, what did the prisoners finally realize?
2. Wiesel's description of Madame Schächter, "she looked like a withered tree in a cornfield" is an example of what figure of speech?
3. What happened to Madame Schächter, and what did she do?
4. Madame Schächter's hysterical screaming of "Fire! Fire" is an example of what literary device?
5. How did this affect those in the cattle car with her?
6. When the prisoners were finally unloaded from the train, where were they? What was significant about the time?

Chapter 3

antechamber – a smaller room serving as an entrance into a larger room

devoid – completely lacking, empty

Job – from the Old Testament of the Bible; Job was a deeply religious man who retained his faith even though he suffered great illness and loss.

leprous – resembling leprosy

lucidity – clarity

Kapo – a concentration camp inmate (Jew) appointed by the S.S. to be in charge of a work group.

Josef Mengele – a German S.S. physician notorious for pseudo-scientific experiments particularly on Gypsies and twins.

SonderKommando – S.S. or Einsatzgruppe, also refers to the Jewish slave labor units that removed bodies of those who were gassed in extermination camps.

S.S. (Schutzstaffel) – an elite unit of the Nazi party that acted as political police and oversaw the operation of the concentration camps.

wizened – dried up, withered

1. Immediately after the Jews were unloaded from the train, what do the German officers do?
2. The men were then marched before Dr. Josef Mengele. What did he do? What was his purpose?
3. What did another prisoner say would happen to Elie's group?
4. When some of the younger men wanted to rush the guards, even if they died in the effort, what did the older people counsel?
5. What did Elie witness while he was standing in line? What was his reaction to what he saw?
6. When Elie realized that he and his father may be burned, what plan did he devise?
7. The scene of Wiesel and his father approaching the inferno is particularly vivid. How is such artistry achieved?
8. What did Elie revolt against?
9. One way an author has to effectively emphasize a point is through selective repetition of a word or phrase. What phrase does Wiesel employ to highlight the horror of his first night in the concentration camp?
10. List the things that Wiesel says he shall never forget.
11. Another method of emphasis is through the use of imagery. What images are used frequently throughout *Night*.
12. Elie and his father are spared from the flames. What happened to them next in the course of their processing at Auschwitz?
13. This marked the end of Elie's first night at Auschwitz. What natural sign marked the beginning of the next day? What does Elie tell us of the change in himself?
14. Why did Elie berate himself so severely?
15. Where were Elie and his father marched to?
16. What was Elie's first impression of Auschwitz?
17. What was unusual about the prisoner in charge of their barracks?
18. The next day, the prisoners underwent a last step in their admission process. What was it?
19. Who did Elie meet after several days at the camp?
20. What did Stein want?
21. How did Elie respond to Stein's request for information?
22. Since the prisoner in charge of their block was kind, and since there was no work to be done, Elie and his father tried to avoid being transported anywhere else. How were they able to avoid being transported?
23. Why was the prisoner in charge of their block replaced? Find the ironic statement on page 41.
24. Stein continued to visit the Wiesels, but suddenly they no longer saw him again. What happened to Stein?
25. How did some religious Jews see their troubles? How did Elie feel about God?
26. Finally, Elie and his father were moved from their barracks. Where were they taken?

Chapter 4

Aryan Race – a term that referred to people of Northern European racial background. The Nazi aim was to preserve the purity of German blood. Jews and Gypsies were excluded.

Buna – operated by I.G. Farben, was one of the forced labor camps that were part of Auschwitz III. Prisoners were routinely starved. It was found that most prisoners on the so-called "I.G. Farben Diet" lost an average of 7 – 9 pounds per week. The average work life of these slave laborers was about 3 months, after which they were too weak for any useful labor and were gassed at one of the nearby concentration camps.

gallows – structure used for hangings

Himmler, Heinrich – Nazi leader, second in command to Hitler

1. How did the new camp appear to Elie?
2. As part of their medical examinations, prisoners were examined by a dentist. What was he looking for?
3. After several days, Elie and his father were assigned to a work detail. What were they to do?
4. What potential problems were there in this job?
5. Why was Elie called to the dentist?
6. How did Elie avoid having his tooth pulled?
7. Why was Elie so pleased about saving his gold crown?
8. What finally happened to the dentist and why?
9. What happened to Elie one day at the factory?
10. Who cleaned the blood from Elie and soothed him with kind words? What was unusual about her?
11. Elie tells of meeting this same woman many years later in Paris. What important question did he ask her, and what was her reply?
12. What else did Idek do to the Wiesels? How did Elie respond?
13. What did Franek, the Polish foreman, want from Elie? What was Elie's response?
14. How did the foreman get revenge on Elie and his father for refusing to give up the gold tooth?
15. How did Elie try to stop the beatings? Was he successful?
16. What did Elie finally do? What was the irony in all of this?
17. All of the Kapos were also prisoners, and most were Jewish, Are you surprised about how cruel and greedy they were?
18. Why did Elie's unit have to go to the warehouse on a Sunday, even though they were not required to work?
19. How did Idek punish Elie for spying on him?
20. Why was a prisoner shot during an Allied air raid on the prison camp?
21. Why were the prisoners happy about the air raid even though they might have been killed by bombs?
22. One day, the prisoners were told that soup would not be distributed until after roll call. Why was this?
23. What other public execution does Wiesel write about.
24. Why was this execution particularly cruel?

Chapter 5

crucible – a severe test, a trial

fortnight – 14 days

mountebank – clown, jokester

monochrome – in a single color

musulmann – prison camp slang for a prisoner who was so weakened he was not expected to live much longer.

Red Army – Soviet Russian army. Russia was one of the Allied powers (Britain, Free France, and the U.S.) during World War II.

Rosh Hashanah – the Jewish New Year

Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement

1. What literary device does Wiesel use to illustrate his disillusionment with God?
2. Wiesel's description of himself as "ashes" is an example of which figure of speech? What does the term suggest?
3. Wiesel's assertion that man (and thus Wiesel) himself is stronger than God is an example of what literary device?
4. During Yom Kippur, what did the prisoners debate?
5. What "gift" did the Germans have for the prisoners for the New Year?
6. The head of Elie's block gave some words of advice to the prisoners to improve their chances and avoid being selected. What did he say?
7. When Elie's number was not written down for selection what joke did his friend make?
8. What did the head of the block tell everyone after the selection process was over? Why did he say this?
9. Several days later though, some of the prisoners were told that they were not to report to work but would instead stay in camp. Who were these prisoners?
10. What was to become of these men?
11. What did Elie's father give to Elie, and what did Elie ironically call it?
12. What happened to Elie's father?
13. Why was Akiba Drumer chosen for selection according to Elie?
14. What did Akiba Drumer ask of his fellow prisoners?
15. Why do you suppose they never honored the request?
16. When winter came to the camp, what happened to Elie?
17. What was the doctor's diagnosis?
18. Was the operation successful?
19. Two days after Elie's operation, what rumor began circulating around the camp?
20. Why was this good news for the prisoners?
21. The prisoners had heard similar rumors in the past. Why were they particularly hopeful this time?
22. Why did Elie's hospital neighbor refuse to be fooled?
23. What bad news did the prisoners receive that day?
24. What choice did Elie and his father have to make that day? What was their decision?
25. What became of those people who stayed behind in the hospital?

Chapter 6

automatons – people who act in a mechanical fashion

petrified – dried up

stupefied – dazed

This chapter describes one of the infamous Death Marches. Toward the end of the war, when the Nazis realized that defeat was imminent, they moved tens of thousands of prisoners from the concentration camps in an attempt to cover up the atrocities Germany had committed. Thousands of prisoners, already severely weakened by disease and starvation, perished during these brutal forced marches made during the extremely cold winter months.

1. As the prisoners ran through the night, what orders were the S.S. guards under?
2. “Death wrapped itself around me...it stuck to me” is an example of what literary device? (Pg. 82)
3. Although Elie felt that he could have easily given up and died, why did he run on?
4. Given the situation and their physical condition, what was remarkable about the night’s journey?
5. Some time later, Elie was awakened by his father. Why would he not let Elie sleep?
6. What agreement did Elie and his father reach?
7. Who was Rabbi Eliahou looking for?
8. Elie told the Rabbi that he had not seen his son, but later remembered that he had indeed seen the boy. What else did Elie remember about the Rabbi’s son?
9. What did Elie do in response?
10. The second night’s march is different from the first in what ways?
11. When the prisoners finally reached their destination of Gleiwitz, a new danger arose. What was it?
12. Who was the boy underneath Elie?
13. Some time during the night, what did Elie hear?
14. After three days, what happened?
15. How did some of the prisoners try to distance themselves from the grim reality of their existence?
16. This chapter is about hardship, perseverance, caring and not caring. List some quotes to support this generalization.

Chapter 7

1. After the transport train stopped in the middle of a field, what orders were given?
2. How did the prisoners respond? How did Elie save his father’s life?
3. How long did they travel?
4. At one stop, a workman tossed in a piece of bread. What happened? How can you account for the prisoner’s actions?
5. What happened next?
6. Why do you suppose Elie then tells the story about the woman throwing coins to the natives?
7. Throughout this chapter, how does Elie view the average German civilian?
8. What scene did Elie witness? At the end of this scene why do you suppose Elie tells us that he was fifteen?
9. During the last day of their journey, what happened?
10. Of the 100 men who had gotten on the train with Elie, how many got out? What does the death of Meir Kayz suggest?
11. Where did the remaining prisoners finally arrived?

Chapter 8

1. After they arrived, the prisoners were supposed to shower. What did Elie’s father want to do?
2. Why did Elie shout at his father?
3. What finally forced them inside?
4. The next day when Elie went in search of his father, what was his fleeting hope?
5. Weakened further by dysentery, the father could not get out of his bunk? What further injury did some of the inmates do him?
6. What advice did the block leader give Elie?
7. Of the advice, Elie says— “He was right, I thought in the most secret region of my heart...” In what sense was the block leader right?
8. After lying ill for over a week, what finally happened to Elie’s father?

Chapter 9

1. How long was Elie’s stay at Buchenwald? What were his thoughts during this time?
2. How did the prisoners know that the end of the war was near?
3. What did the prisoners think was going to happen to them?
4. What did the Germans decide to do with the prisoners?
5. Before all the prisoners could be evacuated, though, what happened?
6. Several hours later, what happened?
7. What comments did Wiesel make about the prisoners’ actions after liberation?
8. What happened to Elie after liberation?
9. What does the last line of this book suggest?
10. Why do you suppose that Wiesel always refers to his persecutors as Germans or S.S., but never Nazis?