

Critical analysis of 'night' assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Der Fuhrer: Adolf Hitler On April 20, 1989, one of the world's most profound leaders, public speakers and war generals was born in Braunau, Austria (Scholtz 417). Hitler rose to become the highest-ranking official of the Nazi Party that was erected in 1920 (Carney 305). His fellow party members knew him a very well spoken man as well as having innate leadership skills (Scholtz 420). At the end of the 1920's the German people suffered from unemployment, poverty, starvation, and most of all, hope (Robinson 856).

Along with the economical and social collapse of the 1920's, Germany's politicians were caught up in petty squabbles and the whole republic was falling apart. Hitler used this opportunity to take power. He would not try and cease power at first; he would use his gift of persuasion (Carney 308). He made promises to restore the republic by stabilizing the economy and giving people back their jobs. This was all he needed for people to vote him in as President of Germany. As president, he did just as he promised, he brought the republic up out of the ashes of the 1920's and 30's and rebuilt (Scholtz 423).

Little did the people know, Hitler had other plans up his sleeves. Shortly following the elections in 1933, Hitler ordered his secret police to commence their systematic takeover of the Government (Carney 311). He would stop it nothing until the entire country was his. Once Hitler ceased complete control, he would begin to set in motion, one of the worst tragedies to ever befall the earth. It started with simple boycott of Jewish stores and shops (Scholtz 424). He wanted to make it known that Jews were not welcome in his new regime, and they would pay the price if they stayed.

Hitler soon passed the Nuremberg laws, which forbade Jews from owning things pets, cars, nice furniture, expensive clothing, etc (Robinson 867). In 1935, Hitler revealed his plans to begin war against the free world (Scholtz 426). This started a chain of horrifying and deadly events known as World War II. The Jews were soon put into ghettos and then taken to concentration camps where they were to either be executed or worked to death (Robinson 875). Over the course of twelve years, Hitler and his army would destroy over 11 million Jewish lives and leave thousands of others without families.

Unfortunately, the war kept the outside world uninformed about the genocide that was taking place. It was only after, did the world learn of the evil that took place over those twelve years. They used mostly gas chambers as a way of mass execution (Carney 300). They would march, mostly women, children, and the elderly into these large rooms where they were promised a much-needed hot shower. What they got instead was a deadly combination of hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide called “ Zyklon B” (Carney 302).

After all the Jews in the chamber were deceased, the guards would either throw them into large, mass graves or burn the bodies in huge furnaces (Robinson 893). Hitler would never get to stand trial for his heinous and vile acts against the Jews because on April 30, 1945, Hitler poisoned his family; with the same poison he used against the Jews, and then took a gun to his own head and ended his life (Scholtz 426). He would not live to see his regime fall to Allies, along with the Nazi party itself.

The twenty-six year span of time from the crash of the stock market in 1929, to the end of World War II in 1945, the Jews living in and around Germany

would lose everything at the hands of Germany's one and only Führer, Adolf Hitler. The Holocaust Through the Eyes of the Media During the era of World War II, the only way the American people got information about what was going on was through the media. Because the German Army did such a good job of keeping these concentration camps hidden in remote areas, the Allies had a hard time not only getting to them, but finding out exactly what was going on there.

Over the span of time from 1933 to 1945 there are no articles that contained hard factual information about these concentration camps. What the New York Times did focus a lot on however, is the way these Jews were being treated before they were hauled away. One such article, printed on May 15, 1933, read, " Jews Here Decree Boycott on Reich" (New York Times 1). It goes on to describe how the Nazi government put a ban on things made and sold by the Jews. The Jews were in such an uproar about this, they decided that they would in turn stop purchasing things not made by Jewish people.

They also went as far as to stop voting and attending public political meetings. This, however, did not have any effect because the article reports that there were only 2, 000, 000 million Jews living in Germany at the time and that they were outnumbered 4 to 1 (New York Times 8). Unfortunately, this would be a last ditch effort for the Jews to try and stand their ground, because days later, the article reports, they were scheduled to be relocated (New York Times 8).

Ten days after the New York Times reported about the Jews boycotting German goods and services, they talked with Jewish Government Officials to

try and figure out what actions the government had taken against the Jews. The article headline reads, " Jews in Reich Deny Atrocities By Nazis" (New York Times 1). The Jewish Officials questioned by the New York Times said that Hitler had only begun to try and better the economy by, for example, creating substitutes for butter that happened to be cheaper than Jewish butter.

Small incidents like this one were being distorted to be a boycott against the entire Jewish race claimed the officials. The officials also lashed out against foreign media saying that they were also horribly distorting the events going on in Germany. They closed with saying that Hitler had no plans to try and push the Jews away or any other means of hurting their wellbeing. Americans who picked up the New York Times on April 18, 1945 got much more than they had ever dreamed of when they read, " Nazi Death Factory Shocks Germans on a Forced Tour" (Currivan 1).

This short but very depictive article describes a group of German civilians who were taken on a tour of one of the Nazi death camps to witness first hand the aftermath. Currivan writes that there wasn't much left standing alone because the Germans tried to destroy any trace of the death camps by knocking down the buildings. What they did find were some bodies curled up in the corners with little to no meat on their bones at all. The air reeked of burning flesh and ash. They got to see the bunkhouses where they people were actually packed in like chickens in a hen house.

The article goes on about all the different horrifying discoveries that these civilians made. This was the first real glimpse that the public was able to

receive of the atrocities that happened in these Nazi death camps. The media did not keep the public very informed about the well being of the Jews caught in the middle of war, because they just didn't have the information. All they were able to do was speculate about what had happened to all these Jewish families. They knew that they were disappearing, but they had no idea of the massive death camps that took so many Jewish lives.

The only real thing that the media reported on, especially in America, was the state of Allied forces and what was happening on the front lines. Had the media been able to accurately report on these death camps, and how many people were being innocently slaughtered, it might have raised a desire for people to join the army and help fight Hitler and his armies. Elie Wiesel Elie Wiesel is an American-Jewish novelist, political activist and holocaust survivor. He has written over 40 books, most famous of which is Night (Cannon). He was born on September 30, 1928 in the small town of Sighet in what is now known as Romania.

He lived there until he was a teenager when the German army relocated his family first to a ghetto, and then to a concentration camp in 1944. Elie's mother and sister, Tzipora, perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz (Hartman). For the next several years, Elie and his father would suffer through the concentration camps, Auschwitz and Buchenwald, only to have Elie's father die, moments from rescue (Cannon). After the war, Wiesel lived in an orphanage in France until 1948, when he began to study literature, and psychology (Hartman).

He supported himself as a choirmaster and teacher of Hebrew, and he became a journalist, writing for the French newspaper *L'Arche* and the Israeli *Yediot Ahronot* (Cannon). Elie had vowed never to write about his Holocaust experiences, but in 1955, after meeting the French Catholic novelist Francois Mauriac, he decided to write *And the World Remained Silent* (Horn). The book was originally written in Yiddish, but appeared two years later compressed in a 127-page French version called *La Nuit* (Night) (Horn and Roth). In 1956 Elie Wiesel was hit by a taxicab in New York and confined to a wheel chair for almost a year (Horn and Roth).

He applied for American citizenship and after recovering from his injuries, continued to live in New York as a feature writer for a Yiddish-language newspaper called the *Jewish Daily Forward*. He wrote an additional 35 works in French dealing primarily with Judaism and the Holocaust. His novels include *L'Aube* (Dawn) and *Le Jour* (The Accident), which are semi-autobiographical works dealing with Holocaust survivors (Cannon). Wiesel's other novels include *The Gates of the Forest*, *The Oath*, *The Testament*, and *The Fifth Son* (Horn). In addition, he has written collections of Hasidic tales and Biblical stories, and the English translation of his memoirs was published in 1995 as *All Rivers Run to the Sea*. Wiesel continues to write in French, but his wife Marion, who he married in 1969 and who also survived the concentration camps, collaborates with him in his books' English translations (Cannon). Wiesel became politically involved after learning about the persecution of Soviet Jews in the USSR. He first traveled to the USSR in 1965 and described the situation he observed in the volume *The Jews of Silence*.

He has continued to plead on the behalf of oppressed peoples in the Soviet Union, South Africa, Vietnam, Biafra, and Bangladesh (Horn and Roth). Elie Wiesel has also lectured at colleges around the country and has been Andrew Mellon Professor of Humanities at Boston University since 1976 (Hartman). In 1978 President Jimmy Carter appointed him Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, and in 1985 he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal of Achievement by President Ronald Reagan (Cannon). In 1986 Wiesel received the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Currently, Elie Wiesel lives in New York City with his wife and son Elisha (Hartman). Critical Analysis The book, *Night*, by Elie Wiesel is a narrative about his life as a young boy in the Jewish town, Sighet, at the beginning of World War II. He, his parents, and three siblings are a well-known family in the community. Wiesel not only depicts the harsh treatment they have to endure, he also shows how important family becomes when death is so near. At the beginning of World War II in 1942, the German army begins to invade Jewish communities and force them to move into ghettos, and, then later, concentration camps.

The Germans did not actually reach the small town of Sighet until the spring of 1944. Once they began to relocate the Jews from town to ghetto to concentration camp, Elie begins the hardest and most mortifying trip he would ever take. For the next months, Elie and his father struggle to survive not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. Elie's trust in his own family will be tested and even broken as he tries to hold onto life over his eleven year struggle in Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

One of the first things that would happen to the Jews, when they arrived at the concentration camps, was that they were divided. Elie recalls the guards saying, " Men to the left! Women to the right! " (Wiesel 29). It is here that Elie and his father are separated from his mother and sister. From then on, all Elie had to hold on besides his faith was his father. Elie remembers, " My hand tightened its grip on my father. All I could think of was not to lose him. Not to remain alone" (30). Elie believes that if his father dies or gets separated from him, then he would be alone.

This experience brought Elie and his father closer than they could have ever imagined before. After they had been in Auschwitz for three weeks, Elie begins to get dehydrated and weak. One of the guards tells Elie's father, " Take care of your son. He is very weak, very dehydrated..." (45). The two of them now have to start watching out for each others well being even more, because the living conditions in these camps were so bad, it was so easy to get sick or dehydrated and die. Here, family becomes the most important thing that Elie has to physically hold onto.

Elie begins to really, deeply love his father and truly treasure the relationship that they have. When they were assigned their duties out in the yard working, Elie makes an extra special effort to try and make sure he gets to be with his father. He tells a guard, " Please, sir...I'd like to be near my father. " (50). Elie will stop it nothing to stay right at his fathers side, so they can watch out for one another, and for Elie, having a friendly face by his side makes what they have to endure so much easier. This isn't the first time that they go to extreme lengths to be with one another.

As they change bunkhouses, they somehow manage to work a deal with the guard who is in charge of that particular house, so that they can be with each other. After some time, their father-son roles begin to reverse themselves. Elie becomes increasingly stronger as his father grows weaker. Elie's father becomes so weak that he is bedridden, and is being beaten by a Frenchman. Upon Elie's return the bunkhouse one day, his father cries out, " My son, they are beating me...tell them not to beat me...I haven't done anything...why are they beating me? (109). What would normally be an easy task for a normal father, protecting himself has become merely impossible now. Elie's father must now rely on him for protection and care. Elie is forced to mature and essentially assume the role of a parent and take care of his father. Soon after his father died. Elie narrates, " I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I was out of tears. And deep inside me, if I could have searched the recesses of my feeble conscience, I might have found something like: Free at last!... " (112).

Elie has endured so much with father, and they have shared so many tears and painful moments that Elie cannot even find the tears within to cry. Deep down inside Elie feels good that his father has passed on because he is in a better place, where there is no suffering. Elie loved his father very much, and would have done anything to keep him alive until they were rescued. It turns out that death would find his father before rescue could. Elie would have never expected that at such a young age, he and his father would have to endure the things they had to endure. The only physical thing that Elie had left to hang on to was his father.

He would learn that through the harshest of times, family is the most important thing that a man can have. Elie clung to his father and made every effort he could to stay right by his side. Elie also had to rise above his pubescent state of being and become a parent. He had to care for his father towards the end when he got sick and couldn't work anymore. Elie was forced to learn these things at a very young age when normal teenagers wouldn't learn them for many years. The one thing that Elie found that mattered, despite the atrocities around him, was his family, and preserving his family no matter what it took.

Self Evaluation As a whole, I think that this project was very successful for me. I didn't find nearly as stressful as I thought that I would. The way that it was broken down made it seem more digestible and easy to accomplish. I really took to heart the idea of having five separate papers to write instead of one big twelve-page research paper. I sat down with the assignment sheet and established what I needed to do in the library and what I could do at my own desk. I then went to the library and immediately started finding sources that I needed.

As I was finding encyclopedias and Internet biographies, I used Noodlebib to keep track of my sources. I also took my computer with me so that I could read information and immediately start forming a paper. I skipped taking notes on what I was and instead would digest a section of information and then write it into my paper making sure that I used a good blend of all my sources. For the critical analysis, I decided that since I had already written a paper on the element of faith in Night, then I would do one on how important family was for Elie and how he learned that family comes first.

I was really able to space things out and give myself plenty of time to accomplish all the papers with as little stress as possible. I learned a great deal about the life of Hitler and the specifics of exactly how he came to power. I also took a great deal of experience about how to pace myself and make sure that I don't procrastinate. I think that in the future, if I am faced with a research paper that isn't broken down into simple papers, like this one, then the first thing I will do is to break it down.

I learned that twelve-page research paper doesn't have to be stressful and cause merely as much stress as most people think. Overall, I think that this project was a perfect ending to the semester. It really gave me a chance to dig into the literature that I found most appealing and do some deep research. I also think that we were given many opportunities to write papers and get feedback over the course of the semester and it well prepared us to tackle a big research project. Personally, I appreciate the opportunity to do another research paper because it gave me new confidence in myself.

I feel much better about myself as a writer, and that I can develop a well written paper. Research papers that I have done in the past have been really big nightmares and have given me a real negative feeling about them. I definitely feel like the research papers that I do in the future will be much less stressful and even easier because I have already done one, and it gave me so much needed confidence in myself as a writer. Works Cited Cannon, Byron D. " Elie Wiesel. " Cyclopedia of World Authors. 4th ed. Hackensack: Salem Press, 2004.

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