

# Night – dehumanization of the jews essay sample

[Countries](#), [Germany](#)



One of the saddest aspects of the Holocaust was not how many lives were lost, but how many souls were lost. Those lucky enough to survive Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and the like came out changed men and women, and not for the better. While some, such as Elie Wiesel, were able to contribute to the world and keep alive the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, many left the experience shells; shadows of their former selves. So much had changed during their time in the concentration camps and they had lost so much of their dignity and identity.

This issue is a major aspect of the novel *Night*. The characters in *Night* are subjected to ghastly horrors at the concentration camps in which they are imprisoned. As a result, they start to lose their hope, dignity, and identity. The experience is thoroughly dehumanizing.

A wise person named Michael Moore once said, "The unfortunate thing about us humans is that once abused, some of us seek to abuse others... Sometimes people just go crazy from too much abuse and violence and take drastic, irrational measures to protect themselves." In *Night*, this quote rings sadly true. With all the other atrocities they face, the concentration camp's prisoners shouldn't have to deal with their comrades turning on each other.

Examples of this include the foreman who forces Elie to give him his gold tooth (53) and the old man whose son kills him for a piece of bread (96). In the first case, a young man named Franek, the foreman of the place where Elie works, one day suddenly tells Elie, "Give me your crown, kid." This is a shock; Elie describes him as a usually "sympathetic, intelligent youth" (52). Like so many others in the camp, though, Franek is not himself anymore.

Before coming to the camp, Franek was a student, and probably a very kind and reasonable person. However, the experience of the concentration camp - the endless labor, abusive guards, and random killings - has changed him so much that he is now forcing a young boy to give him his tooth.

At one point in *Night*, while crammed in wagons like cattle and traveling through a German township, the prisoners are thrown bread by bored German workmen. As soon as the bread hits the wagon, there is a rapid scramble for them. The men fight each other to the death for a few bread crumbs, like ducks in a pond might. Elie, witness to this spectacle, eyes an old man crawling away from the scuffle with his hand to his chest. Elie thinks the man has been hit in the chest at first, but soon realizes the man has managed to snag some bread. A younger man walks up to the old man and begins to strike him mercilessly. " Meir. Meir, my boy!" cries the old man, " Don't you recognize me? I'm your father...you're hurting me...you're killing your father!" (96). The boy kills his father and takes the bread.

Unfortunately, the others have spotted this and they jump on him, killing him also. This is one of the most tragic points in the book. Elie, only fifteen years old, is shocked at the behavior of those older and supposedly wiser than him. A man has just been killed by his own son for a piece of bread. Have the prisoners been treated so horrendously that this has to happen? It is apparently so. These people have lost their not only their homes, possessions, and sense of identity, but now also their compassion and dignity. They are like animals.

The people who have really lost their sense of humanity, though, are the Nazis. What is less human than the lack of sympathy they showed toward the Jews whom they so brutally tormented? Their mindless killing and careless attitude toward the Jews is something so horrific, it still blows the minds of people around the world sixty years later. How could anyone have such strong feelings against their fellow man? That question remains unanswered, but it has led the Nazis to be (rightfully) remembered as the most inhumane group of people in the history of the world.