

# Night: inhumanity genocide

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Night: Inhumanity/Genocide Night, a memoir written by Elie Wiesel, is about a young boy and his experience in the concentration camps during the Holocaust. This young boy, Elie Wiesel, starts off as a religiously devout Jew that lives in a small community of Sighet, Hungarian Transylvania. In the spring of 1944, his close knit family of his parents and three sisters are deported to Birkenau. Elie is separated from his mother and his sisters at the arrival of the concentration camps. After a short stay, Elie and his father are transported to Auschwitz, Buna, and eventually Birkenau. They meet many others in the concentration camps. Idek, a Kapo, was very violent to the Jews although he was also a victim in the Holocaust; Elie feels his wrath at one point in the book. Throughout the course of Chlomo (Elie's father) and Elie's journey, they are dehumanized by being branded, beaten, starved, and forced to work past their limit. They watch many others die through the work of Germans, Kapos, and even other Jews. Ultimately, they were stripped of all their pride. Elie managed to survive it all, however, and was liberated on April 11, 1945. One major theme portrayed in Night that I thought was really important was inhumanity. The definition of inhumanity is the lack of compassion or consideration for others, which is true for many of the characters in this memoir. Much more displays of cruelty are displayed in this book than actual kindness; inhumane acts towards Elie and his father are performed by everyone including Nazis, Kapos, and even other Jews. This book demonstrates that anyone with a sense of authority or power has the capability of mistreating whoever they want and is able to get away with it. There are a few characters in this book that are kind despite their status in power, but most of the leaders abuse their position because they are simply

allowed to. Anyone, even the young, innocent ones, is capable of inflicting cruelty on their fellow prisoners in the concentration camps. Inhumanity is touched on hugely in this book, *Night*. Quotes and Analysis " And then one day, all foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet. Crammed into cars by the Hungarian police, they cried silently"(Wiesel, 6). One of the first displays of humanity was even before Elie's whole town was transported to the concentration camps. The foreign Jews were forced against their own will, and without any warning, to leave their hometown. They left their homes, into a fate they didn't know of, and most didn't return. " She received several blows to the head, blows that could have been lethal. Her son was clinging desperately to her, not uttering a word"(Wiesel, 26). During the transport on the train to Birkenau, Madame Schacter had gone mad and was yelling about a fire. This display of inhumanity was by people that she knew, like neighbors or distant friends. Instead of sympathizing with her and accepting her madness, fear overrode them and they chose to beat her to shut her up although they knew she was mad. " A truck drew close and unloaded its hold: Small children. Babies! Yes, I did see this, with my own eyes... Children thrown into the flame"(Wiesel, 32). This attempt of genocide was simply appalling; they were getting rid of innocent children because of their race, something the children had no power of choosing of. Their excuse was the fact that the children were weak and therefore no use to them. The babies thrown into a flame was an indication of the methods of mass murders that the Germans were planning to execute. " Then, as if waking up from a deep sleep, he slapped my father with such force that he fell down and then crawled back to his place on fours"(Wiesel, 39). Elie's father had asked a

Gypsy inmate in charge of the barrack that Elie and his father were staying in a polite question of where the bathroom was. Instead of answering back, he decided to abuse his power and slapped him. This inhumane act was performed despite Chlomo's frail figure and old age. " And he began beating him with an iron bar. At first, my father seemed doubled over by the blows, but then he seemed to break in two like an old tree struck by lightning"(Wiesel, 54). Idek, a cruel Kapo in the concentration camps, was in a bad mood and started hitting Elie's father because he wasn't working hard enough. He ignored that Elie's father was old and couldn't work as hard as the others. Chlomo didn't get a mere warning before he was beaten. " An ordinary inmate does not have the right to mix into other people's affairs... I shall therefore try to make him understand clearly once and for all"(Kapo officer, 57). This was the speech Elie received before he had to lie on his stomach on the crate for 25 lashes, because he walked in on Idek and a girl. Kapo inhumanely didn't give Elie any compassion or even hear his side of the story before taking out the whip on him. " In Buna, the pipel were hated... I once saw them, a boy of thirteen, beat his father for not making his bed properly"(Wiesel, 63). Pipel were young boys with angelic faces, and had authority because of their involvement in homosexual trafficking with German officials. One pipel inflicted cruelty on his own father just because he had the power to. This shows that even the young, innocent ones are capable of being inhumane. " Their fingers on the triggers, they did not deprive themselves of the pleasure. If one of us stopped for a second, a quick shot eliminated the filthy dog"(Wiesel, 85). This scene was during a long and very tiring run from Buna to Buchenwald where the Germans forced

the Jews to move forward, long past their limit of fatigue. The German officials had guns in their hands, and Elie describes them as eager to kill the Jews who couldn't go on any longer. These Germans definitely had a lack of compassion for the Jews. " His son had seen him losing ground, sliding back to the rear of the column. And he had continued to run in front, letting the distance between them become greater" (Wiesel, 91). This description was between an old man, Rabbi Eliahu, and his son. Although his son hadn't inflicted any sort of pain onto his father, he was still inhumane. Instead of staying with Rabbi Eliahu and helping him, he decided to leave him to his own fate and continue on his own because he cared more about his own wellbeing. He didn't care whether his father, a burden to him, lived or died. " But the other threw himself on him. The old man mumbled something, groaned, and died. Nobody cared. His son searched him, took the crust of bread, and began to devour it"(Weisel, 101). In this scene, a son kills his own father for something as little as a small piece of bread. Hunger blinded him and he was so cruel. He didn't care about his father; only for himself and the piece of bread. " No. I wasn't asleep. They threw themselves on me. They snatched it from me, my bread... And the beat me... Again... I can't go on, my son... Give me some water..."(Chlomo, 110). Elie's father was almost at the end of his life. His neighbors and bunk mates beat him and took his bread because he was weak and frail and couldn't relieve himself in an appropriate place. They ignored that he was almost dead and suffering from dysentery. They were so cruel to such an old, weak man. " The Lager Kommandant announced that the Buchenwald camp would be liquidated. Ten blocks of inmates would be evacuated everyday. From that moment on,

there was no further distribution of bread and soup. And the evacuation began. Everyday, a few thousand inmates passed the camp's gate and did not return"(Wiesel, 114). This was the Nazis' last attempt of genocide. They started the liquidation because of the threat of liberation and they wanted to get rid of all the Jews before the Allies arrived. Everyday, thousands were killed until those who survived were liberated.