

Free book review about the germans in elie wiesel's night

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Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the author's autobiographical tale of his experiences in German concentration camps during the Second World War, is a harrowing story of family, helplessness and the simple human drive to survive. While the story focuses primarily on the Jews who are imprisoned, tortured and killed in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, one fascinating perspective is how the German soldiers are portrayed. The Nazi soldiers of the book are depicted as largely inhuman monsters, who strip the Jews of their identity and agency; while there are the occasional moments where the Germans are shown to just be following orders, their complicity in the actions of the Holocaust condemn them completely in Wiesel's eyes.

Right from the beginning, the Nazis are shown to be heartless, yet cunning with their application of power; even as they began assembling the ghettos, the unsuspecting Jews were put off by their surface kindness: "our first impressions of the Germans were most reassuring Their attitude toward their hosts was distant, but polite". Early in the book, Jews even share stories of the kindness of the Nazi soldiers; Mrs. Kahn tells the tale of a perfectly kind German soldier who even brings her a box of chocolates. Much of the time during their deportation, the Jews simply cannot believe that the death camps are real, and that Hitler will kill them; that kind of cruelty is simply beyond the comprehension of the Jews. However, the Nazis are unflinching in their application of the Final Solution; the story of Moshe the Beadle cements the objectively evil viewpoint of the Nazis. Moshe tells of Jews being forced to dig their own graves and being shot heartlessly by the Nazis, leaving no room for sympathy towards their position. Wiesel does not sugarcoat the horrific atrocities the Nazis perform; they are simply this inexorable, alien

force that seeks to eliminate them with no mercy.

One of the greater evils of the Germans in the book is the way they make Jew turn against Jew; the central conflicts involve the dog-eat-dog world of the concentration camps, and how people must become more selfish and cruel to others in order to survive. As Eliezer's father says to him, " Here, every man has to fight for himself and not think of anyone else Here, there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends. Everyone lives and dies for himself alone." While on the surface, the actions of the more selfish Jews are their responsibility, the real blame lies with the Nazis, who are nearly always faceless stormtroopers establishing the rules for the inner hell that the Jews in the camps experience at each other's hands.

Wiesel's opinion of the Germans is alluded to heavily in the decision to have few named Nazi characters; most of them are simply referred to by reference. This furthers the idea that the Germans are incapable of relating to the Jews on any other level than as cattle, subjects to be controlled; the vast majority of the German characters encountered simply crop up when someone needs to be punished or hurt for not obeying the rules of the camps: " They had orders to fire on any who could not keep up. Their fingers on the triggers, they did not deprive themselves of this pleasure. If one of us had stopped for a second, a sharp shot finished off another filthy son of a bitch."

During the ride to the camps, the German soldiers are observed to have no sense of remorse or guilt about their actions: " Two Gestapo officers strolled down the length of the platform. They were all smiles; all things considered, it had gone very smoothly." This control is made even clearer when the

Nazis take over God's role of choosing who lives and who dies; at one point, the inmates are brought before the infamous Dr. Mengele, who arbitrarily chooses who gets to live. One other prisoner tells Elizer that he has not replaced Hitler with God in terms of delivering his promises: " I've got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He's the only one who's kept his promises to the Jewish people."

In conclusion, the Nazis in Elie Wiesel's *Night* are rightly referred to as faceless, cruel and unfeeling automatons whose sole purpose is to subjugate and torture the Jewish people they bring to the camps. While there are positive references to German soldiers early in the book, this is meant to reflect the naïveté of the Jews in thinking the Nazis have any benevolent intent toward them. The German figures around the main characters are so alienated from the others, they are almost a force of nature - a sea of Aryan faces and jackboots who revel in the suffering of the Jewish people. To that end, Wiesel's portrayal of Nazis is unsympathetic and harrowing, but only to demonstrate the horrors of what the author and his people had been put through.

Works Cited

Wiesel, Elie. *Night* (Hill & Wang, 1960).