



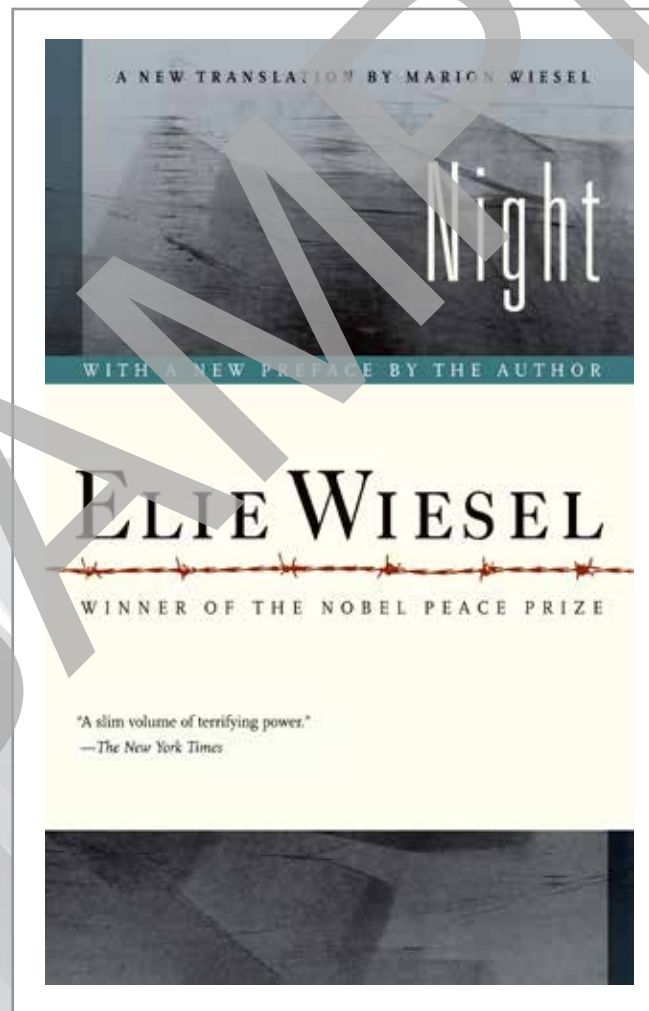
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Night

Elie Wiesel



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Night

Elie Wiesel

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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About *Night*

A terrifying memoir of the author's experiences as a 15-year-old Jewish boy in the Nazi death camps, *Night* is considered by many critics to be the most influential piece of Holocaust literature.

Published in 1960, it was one of the first books to focus worldwide attention on the question of how and why this terrible genocide was allowed to happen. Wiesel sugarcoats nothing and yes, this is a deeply disturbing book about past events that many people would prefer to forget. There is a growing movement to deny that these atrocities ever happened at all—or at least to minimize them—and recent news presents ample evidence that anti-Semitism is still very much alive.

A powerful, beautifully-written, "quick read," *Night* offers teachers—of history, social studies, English, and even sociology and psychology—an ideal tool for probing student thinking about the terrible reality of the Holocaust. And with Wiesel's help "we can recapture enough of that reality so that it will never be repeated." (preface, Robert McAfee Brown).

About the Author

Elie Wiesel ("Eliezer" to his family) grew up in the town of Sighet in Transylvania (Romania). The only son of shopkeeper parents, he was the third of four children. At the age of 15, he was taken to Auschwitz and parted forever from his mother and younger sister, to whom *Night* is dedicated. After Auschwitz, Wiesel and his father were taken to Buna, and then to Buchenwald, where his father died. After the camps were liberated, Wiesel studied at the University of Paris and worked as a newspaper reporter. He became a United States citizen in 1963, and became the Andrew Mellon Professor of Humanities at Boston University in 1976. From 1980-86, he was Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1985, won the Nobel Peace Prize for human rights in 1986, and two years later established the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. He has written 21 books. His most popular titles include *Dawn* (1960), *The Accident* (1961), *The Town Beyond the Wall* (1962), *A Beggar in Jerusalem* (1968), *The Testament* (1980) and *The Forgotten* (1992).

Background Information

Torah

The primary source in the Jewish religion is the Hebrew Bible, consisting of twenty-four books divided up into three sections: Torah (the Pentateuch or first five books of the Bible), Neviim (the Prophets) and Ketuvim (the Writings of the Hagiographa).

Talmud

Next in importance to the Hebrew Bible is the Babylonian Talmud, a collection of teachings of early rabbis from the 5th/6th centuries.

Cabbala

Hasidic Jews also read this mystical commentary on the Torah.

World Jewry

The modern religious Jew, whether Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform or Liberal synagogue, sees himself as part of a faith community that goes back 4,000 years. In the 18th century, Jews began to move out of the European ghetto where they had been segregated since medieval times. During the Nazi-led Holocaust, six million Jews were murdered. Then, after 2,000 years of exile, Jews regained a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel. (Today there are nearly 14-1/2 million Jews worldwide, with the largest group in the U.S.A. (6,000,000) followed by Israel (3,000,000) and the Soviet Union (3,000,000).

Phylacteries

Arm and head phylacteries (tefillin) worn on weekday mornings consist of leather boxes, painted black, held in place by black leather straps. In the boxes are scrolls of parchment with passages from the Pentateuch.

Zionism

Nationalists known as Zionists wanted to see Jews established in their own homeland. The most important Zionist leader was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904). The Zionist movement grew during the early 20th century and groups of Jews wanted to resettle Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jewish people, which was part of the Turkish empire and then controlled by Britain under a mandate from the League of Nations. Despite the opposition of the Arab countries in the Middle East, the United Nations recognized the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.

Pages 1-12

Summary

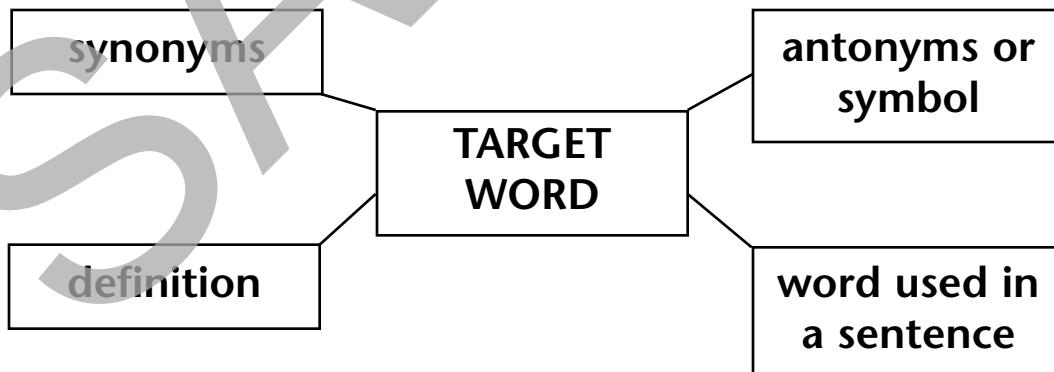
In 1941, when Elie Wiesel was 12 and a profound believer, he found a master to guide him in his studies of the cabbala—Moshe the Beadle, a poor foreign Jew. One day Moshe and all the other foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet and systematically slaughtered by the Gestapo. Moshe was taken for dead and later managed to escape and return to Sighet, but no one believed his stories. In the Spring of 1944, the townspeople of Sighet were optimistic that Germany would soon be defeated. Then German soldiers suddenly appeared, arrested the leaders of the Jewish community, made all Jews wear a yellow star, and set up two ghettos, surrounded by barbed wire. Any illusions townspeople had that they would stay in the ghetto until the end of the war were soon shattered by the Gestapo's deportation order.

Vocabulary

beadle 1	Hasidic 1	synagogue 1	waiflike 1
cabbala 1	deliverance 1	Talmud 1	mysticism 2
Zohar 3	initiation 3	deportees 4	Gestapo 4
bombardment 5	rabbi 5	exterminate 6	Zionism 6
emigration 6	Fascist 6	abstraction 6	anti-Semitic 7
Passover 8	ghetto 9	Pentecost 10	firmament 10
premonition 10	haggard 11	deportation 11	

Vocabulary Activity

Word mapping is an activity that can be used with any vocabulary list. Students work independently or in small groups to “map” words using the framework below. For words that have no antonyms, students provide a picture or symbol that captures the word's meaning.



Discussion Questions

1. When and where did Elie Wiesel grow up? (*Sighet, Transylvania—1930s and 1940s*) How do you picture that community? How was his childhood like yours? How was it different?

-
2. Who was “Moshe the Beadle”? (*a poor foreign Jew*) Why do you suppose the author begins his story with Moshe? What did Eliezer’s parents and the others in the community think of him? (*They accepted him.*) Why did Eliezer spend a lot of time with him? (*He guided Eliezer in his study of the cabbala.*)
 3. What are your impressions of Eliezer’s family? What was Eliezer’s father like? (*cultured shopkeeper; more concerned with others than with his own family*) What was his position in the Jewish community? (*respected*) How do you imagine his mother? (*concerned with family, marrying off her daughter, etc.*)
 4. What happened to Moshe that caused a great change in him? (*He was deported, then witnessed and nearly died in a massacre by the Gestapo.*) How did he change? (*He became joyless.*) How did the rest of the community react when he told them what he experienced? (*They didn’t believe him.*) What does their reaction remind you of?
 5. Why were the Jews of Sighet heartened by the news on the radio in late 1942 and 1943? (*It seemed as if the Germans would soon be defeated.*) What does Wiesel mean when he says, “Besides, people were interested in everything—in strategy, in diplomacy, in politics, in Zionism—but not their own fate”—page 6? (*They turned a blind eye to impending disaster.*) What is his tone here? (*ironic*)
 6. What news did Berkovitz bring from Budapest? (*Antisemitism was rampant.*) Why was it that “optimism soon revived”—page 7? (*Many assumed the Germans wouldn’t get as far as Sighet.*) Why was it that “the optimists rejoiced” even three days after the German soldiers appeared in Sighet (page 7)? (*Although the Germans marched in, they were polite to their Jewish hosts.*) What is Wiesel saying about these “optimists”? (*They were short-sighted.*)
 7. Why was celebrating Passover like playing a “comedy” (page 8)? (*People pretended to celebrate.*) What is meant by the line, “On the seventh day of Passover the curtain rose”? (*Jews couldn’t pretend anymore; Germans arrested their leaders.*) What decrees were made by the Germans? (*Jews had to wear yellow stars, weren’t allowed to leave their homes, use trains, or go to restaurants and synagogues.*)
 8. What were the ghettos? (*neighborhoods outlined in barbed wire where Jews were forced to live*) How did the Jews of Sighet feel about these ghettos? (*At first, they didn’t think they were too bad. They were among friends and were left alone.*)
 9. Why did the Jews of Sighet think they were being deported? (*perhaps for their own good because the front was near; perhaps to keep them from aiding the guerillas*) Why do you suppose their destination was kept secret from them?
 10. What one line from this section particularly strikes you? Why?

Prediction: What will happen to Eliezer’s family?

Supplementary Activities

Literary Analysis: Style

Style is the unique way an author adapts language to ideas. Just as some people wear a certain style of clothing, some authors “wear” a certain distinctive style of writing. Elie Wiesel’s style has been described as “lean, taut, and sparse” (Brown, preface). Have students choose passages that demonstrate this “lean” prose—and rewrite it in another, wordier way. (e.g., rewrite “We had spent the day fasting. But we were not very hungry. We were exhausted.”—page 15) Why is Wiesel’s version more effective?

Research

- (a) Wiesel and his father disagreed about whether he should be studying the **cabbala**. Find out more about the cabbala.
- (b) “...people were interested in Zionism—but not in their own fate”—page 6. Research Zionism.
- (c) “...the Fascists were already in power”—page 8. Who were the Fascists?

Writing Idea

You are Moshe. Write an entry in your diary about your deportation—and how you feel now that you are back in Sighet.

Pages 12-20

Summary

Elie and his family watched as the Hungarian police ordered most of the Jews out of their houses to line up in the blazing sun. After waiting all day, they finally marched out of the ghetto. The Wiesels’ turn came a few days later. Carrying their bags on their backs, they were crammed into cattle wagons, eighty people per car.

Vocabulary

edict 13	candelabra 13	phylacteries 13	truncheons 13
indiscriminately 13	convoy 14	cringing 15	portfolios 15
expelled 16	morale 18	refuge 18	guerillas 18
pillage 19			

Vocabulary Activity

Have students create and exchange crossword puzzles based on the vocabulary words (with definitions as clues). Students may use graph paper to create the puzzles by hand—or a piece of puzzle-making software.

Discussion Questions

1. Could the Jews of Sighet have escaped from the Germans? (*There was a point at which they could have gotten visas to Palestine before the Germans marched in.*) How did they prepare for the deportation? (*baked, packed bags to carry*) What was it like? Would you have been very frightened? Why was there “joy” (page 14) when