

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Night

by Elie Wiesel

written by Amber Reed

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1. Moishe is a poor handyman at the shtibl, or house of prayer. He has been called Moishe the Beadle for so long that his actual surname is unknown. Write a paragraph discussing the nickname of someone you know or a character from a book or movie. How did this person get the nickname, and, in your opinion, is it well suited? Why or why not?
2. Eliezer explains that the underprivileged people in his hometown are assisted, but ostracized by the townspeople. Eliezer lives in a small town in Transylvania, but his observation may be applicable to other parts of the world. In your opinion, is this statement a fair depiction of how the poor and homeless are treated in American society? Compose an editorial expressing your opinion on the subject, and be sure to support your position with examples.
3. Eliezer's father is a highly respected member of the community whose advice is often sought. Think of a person you admire for his or her intelligence or skill. The individual may be someone that you do not know personally, such as a political leader or celebrity. Pretend that you are entering this person in a contest titled, "Role Model of the Year." Write a brief submission essay describing the traits that you admire in this person and how he or she has influenced you. Supply at least two reasons why this individual should receive the award.
4. Eliezer wishes to study Kabbalah, and he asks his father to find an instructor. His father, however, refuses because of Eliezer's young age. Choose one of the following questions to complete:
 - A. Do you agree or disagree with Eliezer's father? Do you believe that Eliezer is old enough to make his own decisions, or should he heed his father's spiritual guidance? Write a letter to Eliezer's father voicing your opinion on the matter.
 - B. Have you or someone you know ever been denied something because of age? What did you want, who prevented you, and how did you feel? Describe the situation in the form of a one-page journal entry.

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5. Moishe the Beadle questions Eliezer as to why he prays. Eliezer, however, does not have an answer, and he feels “troubled and ill at ease.” Moishe’s questions cause Eliezer to contemplate the foundation of his faith, something which many people encounter at some point in life. Consider a time when you, someone you know, or a character from a book or movie faced doubts about personal faith. Summarize this occasion in a paragraph. Next, write a second paragraph in which you discuss your perspective on faith. How important is it for an individual to have some form of faith, and why?

6. All foreign Jews are suddenly shipped out of Sighet, but the townspeople attribute this strange occurrence to the war. In a short time, the exiled people are forgotten and life returns to normal. Imagine that you are a student of journalism in Sighet, and you want to write a story on the townspeople’s reaction to the eviction. Write an article that you will attempt to get published in the local newspaper. The piece should include one quote from a deportee and one from someone who remained in town. Try to image how the people felt and the atmosphere during this time, and relay those feelings in the article.

7. Moishe returns to Sighet with horrific tales of his experiences in the Galician forest. He desperately tries to warn the townspeople about the Gestapo, but his words go unheeded. Why do you suppose that no one will listen to Moishe? Why is Moishe not only ignored, but considered insane? Imagine that you are the only person in town who believes him. Write a letter to Moishe giving your explanation for the way that he is being treated.

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8. The people in Sighet refuse to believe that Hitler can or will exterminate the Jewish race; their lives continue as usual, despite news of German victories. Recall a time when a character from a book or movie was in denial like the people of Sighet. Complete the following conversation by describing the character to a friend:

Friend: I can't believe that no one is leaving town. If I heard that the Germans were coming, I'd be out of there, especially after what Moishe said. They must be in complete denial.

You: Yeah, they remind me of this other character in...

9. The Germans arrive in Sighet and lodge in the townspeople's homes. Despite their grim uniforms, the soldiers appear to be polite and nonthreatening. How would you react if an army of an enemy nation suddenly arrived in your town, and some began living in your home? Pretend that you are living in Sighet when the Germans arrive. Compose an editorial for the local newspaper voicing your opinion of the situation. The piece should not exceed one page.
10. The Jewish people are forced into ghettos that are enclosed with barbed wire fences. Yet, despite their imprisonment, the people regard their situation in a positive light. Eliezer writes, "The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew; it was ruled by delusion." Write a short paragraph explaining this statement to a student in your class who doesn't understand what the sentence means.
11. News arrives that the ghettos are being liquidated and that all residents are being transported. People have less than twenty-four hours to prepare to leave their homes and travel to an unknown location for an indeterminate amount of time. Reflect on how you would feel in this predicament. Imagine that you are a resident of the ghetto, and compose a poem about what is occurring. For instance, the poem may express feelings or depict events that are taking place. You may choose any format for the poem; the final work should contain at least six lines.

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12. As an accompaniment to the previous prompt, make a list of the first five things that you would take with you if you had to be re-settled in a ghetto. You are restricted to five items only.
13. Eliezer's father is assigned with the task of informing the community about the sudden transport. Imagine that you are in his place. What would you say? Create a speech that is as informative as possible yet attempts to break the news gently to your relatives, friends, and neighbors. The speech should range between one and two pages in length.
14. Members of the Jewish community are told that they can only take "a backpack, some food, [and] a few items of clothing" on the trip. What if you had to leave your home and could only take one item? Using complete sentences, explain what one item you would be forced to leave. This, obviously, would be the second most important thing you have.
15. Read the following passage. Using complete sentences, answer the questions that follow:

"Our backyard looked like a marketplace. Valuable objects, precious rugs, silver candlesticks, Bibles and other ritual objects were strewn over the dusty grounds—pitiful relics that seemed never to have had a home. All this under a magnificent blue sky."

- A. What does this passage bring to mind? How does it make you feel?
- B. What do you suppose the author means when he calls the valuables "pitiful relics?"
- C. In your opinion, why does the author mention the "magnificent blue sky?"

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16. Eliezer and his family arrive in the small ghetto and stay at Uncle Mendel's house. Eliezer notes that his mother, while preparing dinner, keeps repeating, "We cannot give up." What do you believe she is experiencing or feeling at this time? Write a journal entry from the perspective of Eliezer's mother. In your account, note your primary fears and concerns, as well as your hopes and strengths.

17. Eliezer's family has a chance to escape to a safe house with Maria, their former maid, but the father refuses. The children, afraid to part from their parents, also decide to stay in the ghetto. Do you believe that they made a wise decision? Remember that the family does not know the horrors they are yet to encounter; the future is uncertain. As a friend, write an imaginary letter to Eliezer and his sisters offering guidance on a course of action based on what they know up to this point. Give at least two reasons to support your advice.

18. Large groups of people are crammed into cattle cars and given a limited supply of bread and water. The soldiers warn their captives that, if anyone should escape, another prisoner will be shot. Suppose that you are one of the prisoners on the train. Would the Germans' threats be enough to prevent you from trying to escape? Choose one of the following questions to complete:
 - A. Imagine that you are the escapee. What would you say to the person who will be shot in your absence? Compose a letter to this person justifying your reasons for escape.

 - B. Imagine that you are the person to be shot. What would you say to the person who escapes? Compose a letter to this person explaining your feelings.