



**BOOK REVIEW OF *NIGHT* WRITTEN BY ELIE  
WIESEL**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that she compiles this final project without taking results from other researchers in any degrees of any universities. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, 11 June 2015

Diah Intan Pratiwi

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

*If talk is too hard, then just write.*

**Diah Intan Pratiwi**

*To be great is to be misunderstood.*

**Ralp Waldo Emerson**

*This final project is dedicated to myself who unbelievably survive until the very  
end.*

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The writer realizes that this project is still far from being perfect. She, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this project better.

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## ABSTRAK

Buku yang berjudul *Night* merupakan sebuah autobiografi dari Elie Wiesel. Buku ini bercerita tentang perjuangan Elie Wiesel muda ketika ia bersama ayahnya ditahan di kamp konsentrasi milik Nazi Jerman pada masa Perang Dunia II. Ia yang merupakan seorang keturunan Yahudi terpaksa harus menjadi korban peristiwa Holocaust yang didalangi oleh Hitler. Pada *book review* ini, penulis membahas tema, tokoh dan penokohan, kelebihan serta kelemahan dari buku ini. Melalui *book review* ini, diharapkan akan mengundang semakin banyak pembaca yang tertarik untuk membaca buku yang berjudul *Night* ini. Buku ini mempunyai beberapa kelebihan di antaranya mengungkapkan fakta tentang pemusnahan etnis yang seharusnya tidak terjadi di mana semua manusia dari segala golongan, etnis maupun ras memiliki hak untuk hidup yang sama.

**Kata Kunci:** Autobiografi, Holocaust, Hitler, Yahudi.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Writing

Wellek and Warren state that literature is an imitation of life journey of human being, problems they have faced. According to their opinion, a literature is a portrait of reality which is put into words (1963: 94). It means that a literary work represents human's experience.

There are two kinds of literary works, fiction and non-fiction. A fiction such as novel contains theme which is an imagination of the author. In other words, it is not based on real events. However, a work of non-fiction is the opposite. According to Licciardi, a nonfiction is a genre in literature in which the story is told based on the real events, but using a story telling technique. This means that the people, places, objects, and events are all real <http://study.com/academy/lesson/non-fiction-novel-definition-examples.html>.

*Night* which is written by Elie Wiesel is a work of nonfiction. This book is a memoir of the author himself. Elie was twenty six when he wrote the story in 1954. He is a survivor of Holocaust which killed his family members. This book tells about how young Elie and his family lived under Nazi Germany's threat. Until in 1944, his family and other Jews were moved to concentration camps. There, they began to face the horror show

when they saw with their own eyes that their family and people they had known were slaughtered mercilessly. They were waiting hopelessly for their turns to come.

This book is begun with a story of young Elie who was making friend with Moishe the Beadle. Basically, Moishe was the first person in the town where Elie lived who was taken by the Nazi. When miraculously he was back to the town to warn the people that there was a big danger waiting for them, nobody believed him. Tragically, Moishe was right. There was a death sentence waiting for his people, the Jewish. This holocaust was one of the worst tragedies in the human history. We should recall this in order to avoid the same thing happens in the future. That is why the writer chose this book to be reviewed because it contains of a great theme to be remembered in human's life.

## **1.2. Purposes of the Writing**

There are two purposes of the writing. First, the writer will give a brief explanation about the themes and the characters of the book. Second, the writer will considerably give explanation about the strengths and the weakness of the book.

## **1.3. About the Author**

According to The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, Elie Wiesel was born in Sighet, Transylvania in 1928. He was fifteen years old when he and his family were sent away to Auschwitz by the Nazis. He and his two older sisters were the only from their family who survived.

His father died before the camp was liberated in April 1945  
<<http://www.eliewieselfoundation.org/eliewiesel.aspx>>.

When the war ended, Elie studied in Paris and became a journalist. During an interview with Francois Mauriac, the distinguished French writer, he was persuaded to write about his experiences through the Holocaust tragedy. The result was his internationally acclaimed memoir, *Night (La Nuit)*, which has been translated into more than thirty languages.

In 1978, Elie Wiesel was appointed to be a Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust by President Jimmy Carter. Then he became the Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council in 1980. He is President of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance, and injustice.

Elie Wiesel has written more than sixty books of fiction and non-fiction, including *A Beggar in Jerusalem* (Prix Medicis Winner), *The Testament* (Prix Livre Inter Winner), *The Fifth Son* (Winner of The Grand Prize in Literature from the City of Paris), two volumes of his memoirs, *All Rivers Run to the Sea* and *And the Sea is Never Full*, and most recently *The Sonderberg Case*.

## CHAPTER 2

### SUMMARY OF *NIGHT*

Elie described himself as a religious teenager. He was a student and liked to come often to a synagogue, a place for Jewish to pray and also to study. One day he wanted to learn Kabbalah so badly, but his father did not allow it because he thought it was too early for Elie to learn about something so complicated such as Kabbalah, and that when he met Moishe, a caretaker of a synagogue. Moishe was a shy guy who shut himself from the outside world. But from Moishe, Elie learned so many things about his God and the life itself. Until one day, every Jewish immigrant should leave Shiget, and Moishe was one of them. He was taken by the Hungarian cops in a crowdie cattle train into somewhere. He was gone for several months. Suddenly, Elie saw him sitting in front of the synagogue. Moshe told Elie of what happened to him, that he was taken by the Gestapo to Poland, and there he and the other immigrants were slaughtered. Fortunately, a miracle happened. His leg was wounded, and he was left alone to die. However he did not give up. So he dragged himself from one to other houses to warn the people in Shiget that they were on a big danger. So then, he tried to tell the people, hoping that they would prepare to escape so what had happened to him would not happen to anyone else, but no one would listen. They did not want to listen, or maybe they were too scared to believe that what they listened might be true.

On springtime 1944, German armies entered Shiget. People started to be worried, but they were still optimist that something bad would not happen because the armies looked gentle and friendly. They still wanted to believe that those armies came for the goodness. But then, their hope was faded. Less than a month, some new rules came one by one. First, the Jewish in Shiget were not allowed to come outside the house for three days. If they broke the law, they would die. Then the new rule came, they should wear yellow stars in their chests. Also, they were not allowed to be in the public places or outside the house after 6 P.M anymore. Until one day, suddenly all of the Jewish were forced to get on the train heading to somewhere they did not know. At first, they thought they were going to Hungary because the police who took them was a Hungarian cop, but the train did not stop. It kept going through Czechoslovakia, and finally it stopped in concentration camp, in Auschwitz. And there, the only thing waiting for them was death.

In Auschwitz, Elie was separated from his mother and sisters. It was still lucky that Elie could be together with his father. Both had to work hard in order not to get selected to the crematorium. Elie saw a lot of inhumane things. He saw old people and children were thrown to the chimney. He paralyzed, could not believe of what he saw, but it was the truth. The Jewish in concentration camp were killed one by one violently. Thus, it turned him from a religious kid into someone who hardly believed of God's absolute justice.

Finally, after struggling through the suffering, in April 1945 the camp Buchenwald, where Elie and the others stayed, was liberated by the U.S Army. It was too sad that his father, Chlomo, could not make it. However his two older sisters remained alive.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF *NIGHT*

#### 3.1. The Themes of *Night*

According to Meyer, the definition of theme is “the central idea or meaning of a story. It provides a unifying point around which the plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements of a story are organized” (Meyer, 1990: 196). Every book has a subject or something to discuss. Then it can be said that a theme is what the book all about.

The first theme of *Night* is genocide of Jewish in all around Europe during the World War II. Then what is genocide? Genocide is a phenomenon where a whole population of national, racial and religious groups is wiped out both biologically and culturally. In World War II, this phenomenon occurred to Jewish. This extermination is also called anti-semitism (Lemkin, 1946: 227).

The Jewish were meant to be terminated by Nazi German. In 1940s, all of Jews in Europe were transported into concentration camps to be slaughtered under Hitler’s command, including Elie Wiesel and his family. The olds, the children and the useless ones were thrown to the chimney. The remained had to work very hard in the field and certain companies like slaves. They only had a bowl of soup and a piece of bread

each person a day. If they became weak and useless, they would be finished. This kept happening until no one last.

That evening he announced to us that henceforth no one was allowed to leave the block after the evening soup. A terrible word began to circulate soon thereafter: selection.

We knew what it meant. An SS would examine us. Whenever he found someone extremely frail—a "Muselman" was what we called those inmates—he would write down his number: good for the crematorium (Wiesel, 2006: 70).

The second theme of this book is the struggle of father and son to survive. Every day in the camp, they always tried to stick with each other no matter what happened. Even when someone offered a good opportunity to Elie, all he wanted was just not to be separated from his father. It can be seen in the quotation below.

One of his aides—a tough-looking boy with shifty eyes—came over to me: "Would you like to get into a good Kommando?". "Of course. But on one condition: I want to stay with my father." (Wiesel, 2006: 48).

This firmness of Elie to remain together with his father is emphasized in the following quotation.

Behind me, an old man fell to the ground. Nearby, an SS man replaced his revolver in its holster. My hand tightened its grip on my father. All I could think of was not to lose him. Not to remain alone (Wiesel, 2006: 30).

They also shared foods and spirits. Sometimes when Elie swallowed up his ration too early, his father would sincerely give his. Thus, they remained alive for a long enough time after suffering so many things. Although in the end, the father did not make it.

The bell announced that we were dismissed. We went to fetch the evening meal: bread and margarine. I was terribly hungry and swallowed my ration on the spot. My father told me, "You mustn't eat all at once. Tomorrow is another day..." But seeing that his advice had come too late, and that there was nothing left of my ration, he didn't even start his own. "Me, I'm not hungry," he said (Wiesel, 2006: 44).

Then the third theme of this book is losing faith. As the inhumanity continued to happen, Elie started asking about God's existence. He was mad why God remained silent and chose to let the tragedy keep happening to His people who always praised His name. Then he stopped praying, but he did not deny His existence. He just doubted His absolute justice. "For the first time, I felt anger rising within me. Why should I sanctify His name? The Almighty, the eternal and terrible Master of the Universe, chose to be silent. What was there to thank Him for?" (Wiesel, 2006: 33).

### **3.2. Characters and Characterizations on *Night***

According to Meyer, the definition of character is "essential to plot" (1990: 61). Without characters a story will be flat or vapid and less interesting. Thus, characters are very significant to make the story seem real. To make it become more real, there is something called characterization. Characterization is "a method by which a writer creates people in a story so that they seem actually to exist" (Meyer, 1990: 61). It means that even the characters do not exist in the real world, by using characterization the readers will feel as the characters are truly alive.

The characters and their characterizations on *Night* are as follows:

1. Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel is the main character of the book. At first he was a religious kid who always praised God's name, went to synagogue often, even he wanted to learn Kabbalah. "By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to a synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple" (Wiesel, 2006: 3). Then he changed. During the war, he saw the worst things that he started to doubt His fairness. He wondered where God was when His people were being murdered.

Behind me, I heard the same man asking: "For God's sake, where is God?". And from within me, I heard a voice answer: "Where He is? This is where – hanging here from this gallows . . ." (Wiesel, 2006: 65).

What are You, my God? I thought angrily. How do You compare to this stricken mass gathered to affirm to You their faith, their anger, their defiance? What does Your grandeur mean, Master of the Universe, in the face of all this cowardice, this decay, and this misery? Why do you go on troubling these poor people's wounded minds, their ailing bodies? (Wiesel, 2006: 66).

2. Chlomo Wiesel

Chlomo Wiesel is Elie's father. He was an educated, generous and wise person.

My father was a cultured man, rather unsentimental. He rarely displayed his feelings, not even within his family, and was more involved with the welfare of others than with that of his own kin. The Jewish community of Shiget held

him in highest esteem; his advice on public and even private matters was frequently sought (Wiesel, 2006: 4).

He even liked to sacrifice himself to his only son, Elie.

The bell announced that we were dismissed. We went to fetch the evening meal: bread and margarine. I was terribly hungry and swallowed my ration on the spot. My father told me, "You mustn't eat all at once. Tomorrow is another day..." But seeing that his advice had come too late, and that there was nothing left of my ration, he didn't even start his own. "Me, I'm not hungry," he said (Wiesel, 2006: 44).

Nevertheless, according to Elie, Chlomo was a type of person who concerned about the community more than his family.

My father had not recognized him. He must have barely known him, always being up to his neck in communal affairs and not knowledgeable in family matters. He was always elsewhere, lost in thought (Wiesel, 2006: 43).

### 3. Moishe The Beadle

Moishe was a caretaker of a synagogue. He was a religious and shy guy. Elie described Moishe as a quiet boy who shut himself from the outside world, and nobody knew that he had a very large knowledge about spiritual things behind his silence. "Physically, he was as awkward as a clown. His waiflike shyness made people smile. As for me, I liked his wide, dreamy eyes, gazing off into the distance. He spoke little" (Wiesel, 2006: 3).

One evening, I told him how unhappy I was not to be able to find in Sighet a master to teach me the Zohar, the Kabbalistic works, the secrets of Jewish mysticism. He smiled indulgently. After a long silence, he said, "There are a thousand and one gates allowing entry into the orchard of mystical truth. Every human being has his own gate. He

must not err and wish to enter the orchard through a gate other than his own. That would present a danger not only for the one entering but also for those who are already inside" (Wiesel, 2006: 5).

#### 4. Madame Schachter

Madam Schachter was a woman who screamed in the train.

She was about fifty years old and accompanied by her ten years old son.

There was a woman among us, a certain Mrs. Schächter. She was in her fifties and her ten-year-old son was with her, crouched in a corner. Her husband and two older sons had been deported with the first transport, by mistake. The separation had totally shattered her (Wiesel, 2006: 24).

They were separated from their other family members by mistake. Shame, it shattered her. Then she started screaming all the way in the train, shouting that there was a fire.

Mrs. Schächter had lost her mind. On the first day of the journey, she had already begun to moan. She kept asking why she had been separated from her family. Later, her sobs and screams became hysterical. On the third night, as we were sleeping, some of us sitting, huddled against each other, some of us standing, a piercing cry broke the silence: "Fire! I see a fire! I see a fire!" (Wiesel, 2006: 24).

#### 5. Tibi and Yossi

Tibi and Yosi were brothers who made friends with Elie in the camp. "Yosi and Tibi, two brothers from Czechoslovakia whose parents had been exterminated in Birkenau. They lived for each other, body and soul" (Wiesel, 2006: 50). They were also

Jews. Yossi was religious, but Tibi was more like a shy boy who liked to keep quiet.

Tibi and Yossi, who had changed Kommandos at the same time I did, came to urge me. "Let's stay together. It will make us stronger." Yossi was mumbling something. He probably was praying. I had never suspected that Yossi was religious. In fact, I had always believed the opposite. Tibi was silent and very pale. All the block inmates stood naked between the rows of bunks. This must be how one stands for the Last Judgment (Wiesel, 2006: 71).

#### 6. Dr Josef Mengele

Dr Josef Mengele was an abusive doctor in camp Auschwitz and Birkenau. He was well-known as an "Angel of Death". This name was taken according to what he could do. He was one of the men who had the authority to decide someone's life. Whenever he said someone should go to the gas chamber. Then it would be done.

Then came the ordinary prisoners' turns. Dr. Mengele looked them over from head to toe. From time to time, he noted a number. I had but one thought: not to have my number taken down and not to show my left arm. Softly, he read some ten numbers. We understood. These were the numbers from the selection. Dr. Mengele had not forgotten (Wiesel, 2006: 72,74)

### **3.3. The Strengths of *Night***

*Night* is a very inspiring book. Readers can find four strengths within this book. Those strengths will make them more interested in reading it. The first one is that this book is based on actual events which mean that the story really happens in the past. Thus, it makes their

feelings shaken all the time. They will feel angry, tormented and sad at the same time. The story will bring their minds back seventies years in the past when the events took place.

Francois Mauriac told the fact in his forward for this book.

And yet I was still thousands of miles away from imagining that these children were destined to feed the gas chambers and crematoria. This, then, was what I probably told this journalist. And when I said, with a sigh, "I have thought of these children so many times!" he (Elie) told me, "I was one of them." He was one of them! He had seen his mother, a beloved little sister, and most of his family, except his father and two other sisters, disappear in a furnace fueled by living creatures (Wiesel, 2006: xxi).

The second strength is most parts of the book uses English which is very easy to understand. The sentences mostly are simple and the diction is also very common. These make easier for people whose mother tongues are not English to understand the book.

Moishe was not the same. The joy in his eyes was gone. He no longer sang. He no longer mentioned either God or Kabbalah. He spoke only of what he had seen. But people not only refused to believe his tales, they refused to listen. Some even insinuated that he only wanted their pity, that he was imagining things. Others flatly said that he had gone mad (Wiesel, 2006: 7).

The third strength of this book is that the story is told very clearly, briefly and coherently. Elie as the writer retells the events he has experienced very passionate which makes the readers easy to imagine the settings. Perhaps it is because of the suffering he has been through. Then the pain still lingers in his mind which makes the story thrill to read.

We continued our march. We were coming closer and closer to the pit, from which an infernal heat was rising. Twenty more steps. If I

was going to kill myself, this was the time. Our column had only some fifteen steps to go. I bit my lips so that my father would not hear my teeth chattering. Ten more steps. Eight. Seven. We were walking slowly, as one follows a hearse, our own funeral procession. Only four more steps. Three. There it was now, very close to us, the pit and its flames. I gathered all that remained of my strength in order to break rank and throw myself onto the barbed wire. Deep down, I was saying good-bye to my father, to the whole universe, and, against my will, I found myself whispering the words: "*Yisgadal, veyiskadash, shmey raba...*May His name be exalted and sanctified..." My heart was about to burst. There. I was face-to-face with the Angel of Death (Wiesel, 2006: 33-34).

The next strength is that the book uses the first person point of view. It makes the readers read the novel as if they were experiencing it themselves which is very good in absorbing the story.

My foot was aching, I shivered with every step. Just a few more meters it will be over. I'll fall. A small red flame... A shot... Death enveloped me, it suffocated me. It stuck to me like glue. I felt I could touch it. The idea of dying, of ceasing to be, began to fascinate me. To no longer exist. To no longer feel the excruciating pain of my foot. To no longer feel anything, neither fatigue nor cold, nothing. To break rank, to let myself slide to the side of the road (Wiesel, 2006: 86).

### **3.4. The Weakness of *Night***

There are always two sides of a book, the goodness or the strength and the weakness. This book also has its strength and weakness. *Night* has one weakness, that is, the title. The first part of a book which will be noticed by people is the title because somehow they assume that the title is representing the whole content of the book. Since most of books in the bookstore are sealed, then the title becomes the most considered in

assessing a book. Thus, the title should be made as interesting as possible. *Night* is the title of this book. Although the word 'Night' relates closely to the content of the book itself because it symbolizes darkness, suffering and hopeless feeling, as the author states "Here or elsewhere, what did it matter? Die today or tomorrow, or later? The night was growing longer, never ending" (Wiesel, 2006: 98), but it can be revealed only if the book has been read. While the word 'Night' is less interesting and generally has a wide meaning. It can be night literally or night figuratively. Thus, it can mislead people to the actual value of *Night*. Whereas the book *Night* which is written by Elie Wiesel contains such a great historical theme which is worth more than what the word 'Night' can convey.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

Night is a memoir which is based on the experience of the writer, Elie Wiesel. He was one of the survivors of a genocide which happened to the Jewish in World War II under Nazis German. This phenomenon is also known as an anti-semitism action. He survived with his two older sisters while his parents and his little sister died in the tragedy. He wrote the story to somehow alleviate his lost. The story is very well-written. Readers can feel the anger, the agony and the sadness of the victims as they read it.

As any other books, *Night* has strengths and weakness. The first strength is that the book contains of a true story which shakes anyone who reads it. The second one is the book uses easy understanding English which is very significance to those who learn English as their second language. The third one is the story is told very clear, brief and coherent. This makes the readers easy to follow the plot. Furthermore, the book uses first person point of view which makes the readers feel as if they were going through the events by themselves. However, *Night* has a weakness that the title is less interesting that can mislead people to the actual value of *Night*.

After all, night is a very inspiring book. There are values within the book, values which can be used to see the world differently. The readers will start to respect other people's believes, races, and cultures. They can learn from this book

that there is no gain in playing God but the destruction of themselves. People believe that Elie survived to write the book, even he did not think so. Yet the point is the book exists for reasons.

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