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Night Essay

*Night* is a terrifying account of the Holocaust written firsthand by a survivor. Elie ‘s memoir was his first step in his lifelong process as a witness for those he saw tortured and killed. Survival and Holocaust are words that are not commonly used together in the same sentence. After anyone who reads *Night* can see quickly Elie had to learn to survive by doing whatever it took, no matter the consequences to stay alive. This experience was truly the darkest time in Elie’s life, one that no one ever wants to have to truly live through.

Elie Wiesel was just fifteen years old when he was deported by the Germans to Auschwitz. He was forced to leave his home during the night. His mother and older sister died in the gas chambers on the first night or their arrival. Elie and his father were deported together to Buchenwald. Survival was the only way Elie could even begin to prepare for what he was about to have to endure and go through. Elie had to first lie about his age in order to survive. “Eighteen. My voice shaking.” “Farmer, I heard myself say” (Wiesel 30). This was only the beginning for what was to come. Fear no fifteen-year-old had ever felt before began in the blink of an eye.

Elie and his father were separated from his mother and sisters, stripped of their clothing and hair, forced into hot showers, given prison clothing, and marched to Auschwitz. Even with the harshest treatment, questions of faith and survival began. After the torture of a forty-two-mile march after Elie had left the hospital after surgery with a wounded foot, he was still able to find a way to survive, “My father’s presence was the only thing that stopped me. I had no right to let myself die. What would he do without me? I was his only support” (Wiesel 78). This statement alone shows exactly how strong mentally Elie was forced to endure at such a young age. He truly began to act like a parent himself for his own father.

Being a prisoner in a concentration camp, Elie survived the death march, brutal treatment, and loss of many family members to the Holocaust. “I had ceased to feel fear. I was overcome by an inhuman weariness. We were incapable of thinking anything at all. Senses were blunted and everything was blurred after watching hours of evil,” (Wiesel 34). It had only been one night of survival. These men were stripped of everything and were treated worse than animals for hours, days, and even weeks at a time. They were starved and made to work as slaves for hours at a time.

Elie was able to survive the death march, concentration camp, and forced labor camps despite what he had to do in order to stay alive. “We were masters of nature, masters of the world. We had forgotten everything; death, fatigue, our natural needs. Stronger than cold or hunger, stronger than the shots and the desire to die, condemned and wandering, mere numbers, we were the only men on earth” (Wiesel 79). At the end of *Night* once rescued Elie had completely lost is identity and values, but did survive the Holocaust. After the war, Elie and his two older sisters were able to reunite. Discussing his survival did not come easy. He kept it hidden deep for a long time. Elie had made a vow with his anger. He kept quiet for over ten years unable to discuss in spoken or written form of his experience.

Sources Cited

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. EMC/Paradigm Publishing, 1988.