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**IC3: Discussion Prompts Worksheet Bubeck ENGL 1305/1310 Eli Wiesel, “The Perils of Indifference”: Questions for Discussion**

1. Who was the young Jewish boy from 54 years earlier?

Elie Wiesel  
2. Why would the boy always be grateful for the soldiers’ rage?

Because their rage is what saved him and allowed him to be free again   
3. Why is Wiesel looking back on the past (20th) century?

Wiesel looks at the 20th century because to tell his audience how terrible the 20th century was: two world wars, a lot of assassinations.

4. How would you define “indifference”?

We would define indifference as a sense of not caring.

5. Why might indifference be necessary sometimes?

It is needed because indifference is the friend of the enemy as said in the speech.  
6. Why would indifference be seductive?

Indifference is seductive because it is easier to block out other peoples’ pain than to try to feel it with them. Why would you be willing to let yourself be angered or saddened if it doesn’t affect you in any way?  
7. What does Wiesel mean by indifference “reducing the other to an abstraction”?

Wiesel means indifference is the act of turning indifferent things to nothing but an idea, something that you can forget if you choose too.   
8. Why does Wiesel use “the most tragic of all prisoners...the muselmanner”\* to illustrate indifference?

Wiesel used muselmanner to show indifference because the nazi’s truly did not care for their well-being . The Nazi’s created an environment where the muselmanner could be alive but be dead at the same time.   
9. Why would Wiesel’s Jewish tradition prefer an unjust God to an indifferent God?

They would want an unjust God instead because an indifferent God would not have cared for them.  
10. Why would anger be better than indifference?

He says anger at times can be created and that is why it is better to be angry than to be indifferent since it is not created like anger.

11. Why would Wiesel argue indifference is not only a sin but a punishment?

It is a punishment because being indifferent has no reasoning like how anger does.  
12. Why would the concentration camp prisoners take comfort in believing no one knew what was going on?

They took comfort in it so that nobody could have to experience the hard ships that they were going through in World War ll.

13. Wiesel said Franklin D. Roosevelt was a great leader and a good man, so why would it be the president’s “image in Jewish history flawed?”

Roosevelt has a flawed image in Jewish history because he allowed the jews to suffer for years before he took the effort to help them, allowing Jews to hate him.   
14. How might “the depressing tale of the St. Louis” be a cautionary about indifference in our world today?

In St louis around 1000 Jews were turned away and sent back to nazi Germany after the atrocities began. It is evidence of America at the time doing minimal things to help the victims of the holocaust and persecution. It holds relevance to today because if America and the modern world can step in early a lot of atrocities can be stopped.

15. Who were the “righteous gentiles” and how did they save the honor of their faith?

They saved the honor of their faith because they prioritized the victims instead of the murderers  
16. Why does Wiesel shift direction and list positive things that had taken place in the later 20th century?

He wants to demonstrate that he sees the positive capabilities of the western world and there influecne on the betterment of society.

17. Why does Wiesel bring up at the end the example of children of the world in their day?

He gives real world experiences that he faced as a kid during the time of WW2 to kids now today that some children in the world face today.  
18. Why does Wiesel end with the image of the young boy and the old man—what’s his point?

The moment he was saved by the old man, he strived to become like the old man to help those in need now, just like his was in need back them.

\* Muselmann: Marie Jalowicz-Simon, a philologist who also survived Nazi persecution, argued that by the 1940s, Muselmann had become a colloquial term for the elderly or infirm, which allowed it to be co-opted into the Nazi vocabulary. Primo Levi wrote, “Their life is short, but their number is endless: they, the Muselmanner, the drowned form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labor in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand..." - Primo Levi, If This Is a Man