

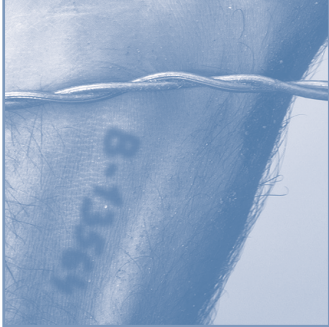
# Unit 4

## When you see injustice, do you stand by—or stand up?

**C**olumbine, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, the Japanese tsunami, the Sandy Hook school shootings, the Boston marathon bombing . . . Every night details of disasters flicker across our television screens. We can watch video of a tornado tearing through a farmhouse or a hit-and-run accident on our cell phones minutes after they happen. We watch in horror, and then share the link with our friends. We watch, but what do we *do*?

Even when people are watching horrific events unfold right in front of them, they often don't act. In fact, the more eyewitnesses present during a crime, the less likely it is that someone will help the victim. It's called the bystander effect. In 2009 an intoxicated teenage girl was attacked outside her high school while 20 bystanders watched and recorded the incident on their phones. No one called the police. Some claimed they didn't realize they were witnessing a crime. Others assumed that someone else would call the police.

As you read the selections in this unit, you will explore how the choice to act—or not to act—has consequences. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel once said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." What moves people from apathy to action? What causes bystanders to stand up and make a difference? Consider these questions as you explore the texts in this unit.



# Chapter 19

## A Horrifying Descent into Night

### **First Read: Terrifying Details**

Elie Wiesel was a teenager when he was sent to Auschwitz. The book *Night* is a memoir based upon Wiesel's memories of the horrors of Nazi concentration camps. As you read through this excerpt, make a note of dialogue or description that has the greatest impact on you.

*from*  
**Night**  
by Elie Wiesel

- 1 The beloved objects that we had carried with us from place to place were now left behind in the wagon and, with them, finally, our illusions.
- 2 Every few yards, there stood an **SS man**, his machine gun trained on us. Hand in hand we followed the throng.
- 3 "Men to the left! Women to the right!"
- 4 Eight words were spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight simple, short words. Yet that was the moment when I left my mother. There was no time to think, and I already felt my father's hand press against mine: we were alone. In a fraction of a second I could see my mother, my sisters, move to the right. Tzipora was holding Mother's hand. I saw them walking farther and farther

**SS man:** member of a Nazi paramilitary organization in Germany during WW II. The SS was largely responsible for carrying out the Holocaust.

away; Mother was stroking my sister's blond hair, as if to protect her. And I walked on with my father, with the men. I didn't know that this was the moment in time and the place where I was leaving my mother and Tzipora forever. I kept walking, my father holding my hand.

5 Behind me, an old man fell to the ground. Nearby, an SS man replaced his revolver in its holster.

6 My hand tightened its grip on my father. All I could think of was not to lose him. Not to remain alone.

7 The SS officers gave the order.

8 "Form ranks of five!"

9 There was a tumult. It was imperative to stay together.

10 "Hey, kid, how old are you?"

11 The man interrogating me was an inmate. I could not see his face, but his voice was weary and warm.

12 "Fifteen."

13 "No. You're eighteen."

14 "But I'm not," I said. "I'm fifteen."

15 "Fool. Listen to what I say."

16 Then he asked my father, who answered:

17 "I'm fifty."

18 "No." The man sounded angry. "Not fifty. You're forty. Do you hear? Eighteen and forty."

19 He disappeared into the darkness. Another inmate appeared, unleashing a stream of invectives:

20 "Sons of bitches, why have you come here? Tell me, why?"

Someone dared to reply:

21 “What do you think? That we came here of our own free will? That we asked to come here?”

22 The other seemed ready to kill him:

23 “Shut up, you moron, or I’ll tear you to pieces! You should have hanged yourselves rather than come here. Didn’t you know what was in store for you here in **Auschwitz**? You didn’t know? In 1944?”

24 True. We didn’t know. Nobody had told us. He couldn’t believe his ears. His tone became even harsher:

25 “Over there. Do you see the chimney over there? Do you see it? And the flames, do you see them?” (Yes, we saw the flames.) “Over there, that’s where they will take you. Over there will be your grave. You still don’t understand? You sons of bitches. Don’t you understand anything? You will be burned! Burned to a cinder! Turned into ashes!”

26 His anger changed into fury. We stood stunned, petrified. Could this be just a nightmare? An unimaginable nightmare?

27 I heard whispers around me:

28 “We must do something. We can’t let them kill us like that, like cattle in a slaughterhouse. We must revolt.”

29 There were, among us, a few tough young men. They actually had knives and were urging us to attack the armed guards. One of them was muttering:

30 “Let the world learn about the existence of Auschwitz. Let everybody find out about it while they still have a chance to escape . . .”

31 But the older men begged their sons not to be foolish:

32 “We mustn’t give up hope, even now as the sword hangs over our heads. So taught our sages . . .”

***Auschwitz:** a  
Nazi concentration  
camp in Poland*

33 The wind of revolt died down. We continued to walk until we came to a crossroads. Standing in the middle of it was, though I didn't know it then, **Dr. Mengele**, the notorious Dr. Mengele. He looked like the typical SS officer: a cruel, though not unintelligent, face, complete with monocle. He was holding a conductor's baton and was surrounded by officers. The baton was moving constantly, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left.

34 In no time, I stood before him.

35 "Your age?" he asked, perhaps trying to sound paternal.

36 "I'm eighteen." My voice was trembling.

37 "In good health?"

38 "Yes."

39 "Your profession?"

40 Tell him that I was a student?

41 "Farmer," I heard myself saying.

42 This conversation lasted no more than a few seconds. It seemed like an eternity.

43 The baton pointed to the left. I took half a step forward. I first wanted to see where they would send my father. Were he to have gone to the right, I would have run after him.

44 The baton, once more, moved to the left. A weight lifted from my heart.

45 We did not know, as yet, which was the better side, right or left, which road led to prison and which to the **crematoria**. Still, I was happy, I was near my father. Our procession continued slowly to move forward.

46 Another inmate came over to us:

47 "Satisfied?"

**Dr. Mengele:**  
*SS doctor who conducted medical experiments on Jewish concentration camp victims*

**crematoria:**  
*buildings where bodies of the dead are burned*

48 “Yes,” someone answered.

49 “Poor devils, you are heading for the crematorium.”

50 He seemed to be telling the truth. Not far from us, flames, huge flames, were rising from a ditch. Something was being burned there. A truck drew close and unloaded its hold: small babies. Babies! Yes, I did see this, with my own eyes . . . children thrown into the flames. (Is it any wonder that ever since then, sleep tends to elude me?)

51 So that was where we were going. A little farther on, there was another, larger pit for adults.

52 I pinched myself: Was I still alive? Was I awake? How was it possible that men, women, and children were being burned and that the world kept silent? No. All this could not be real. A nightmare perhaps . . . Soon I would wake up with a start, my heart pounding, and find that I was back in the room of my childhood with my books . . .

### FIRST RESPONSE

What part of this story had the greatest impact on you? What image stays in your mind? Describe your thoughts in your response journal.

### TECH-CONNECT


Who was Dr. Josef Mengele? Why did Elie Wiesel call him notorious? Use your phone or computer to find out more information about this infamous Nazi.

### Focus on Development of the Central Character

In this excerpt the narrator Eliezer, an Orthodox Jewish teenager, describes his feelings as he realizes what is happening at Auschwitz. Earlier in the book, a Jewish man who had been deported to the camps escapes and warns Eliezer’s village of the horrible murders taking place. However, the villagers do not believe him.

Think about how Eliezer’s character changes over the course of the narrative from when he first gets off the train to the final paragraphs. Fill in the chart on the next page. In the first column, describe the narrator’s attitude. In the second column, include a quotation or detail from the text that supports your conclusion about the narrator’s attitude.

What is the narrator's attitude?	Evidence from the text
When he arrives at the camp (para. 1)	
As he is told what happens at the camp (para. 23–26)	
At the end of the excerpt (para. 50–52)	

 **Speak and Listen** With a partner, share your answers to the graphic organizer above. Work together to write a one- to two-sentence summary of how the narrator's attitude changes throughout the excerpt.

## **Second Read: Focusing on Theme**

Read the excerpt again. This time look for repeated ideas. Think about the following:

1. Underline every time the word *night* or *nightmare* appears in the text.
2. Throughout this passage, what is the narrator continually focused on in relationship to his father?

### **Focus on Uncovering Themes**

The theme of a work is the central main idea. It is a truth about life. Theme is communicated through how characters grow and change through conflict. Authors often use repeated ideas to emphasize theme. (To review theme, see page 81.)

## Connect to Testing

In this chapter, you analyzed how the attitude of the main character changed throughout the excerpt. You were asked to point to specific sentences in the text that supported your ideas. Here is an example of how this type of question might appear on a test:

1. How does the narrator's attitude change from the beginning to the end of the passage from *Night*?
  - A. He becomes increasingly more hopeful.
  - B. His attitude changes from hopeful to angry to disbelieving.
  - C. He grows increasingly more disbelieving of what is happening.
  - D. He becomes more and more angry.
  
2. On the lines below, write two examples from the text that support your answer to question 1.

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### EXPLANATION

As you analyze the narrator's attitude, focus on his response to what is happening around him. In paragraph 1, he leaves his illusions behind. He realizes that his family is not merely being relocated. They are being sent to a horrible prison. As he walks through the line, he can't believe what the inmates are saying. After seeing piles of corpses for himself, he is so shocked that he tells himself it is just a nightmare. He knows the truth, but he wants to deny it and escape. Thus, C is the best answer. Supporting examples include the following:

Paragraph 1: "The beloved objects that we had carried . . . were now left behind in the wagon and, with them, finally, our illusions."

Paragraph 26: "We stood stunned, petrified. Could this be just a nightmare? An unimaginable nightmare?"

Paragraph 52: "All this could not be real. A nightmare perhaps . . ."



**Focus on Uncovering Themes** (continued)

What are the theme(s) of this excerpt? It is about the Holocaust, but the Holocaust is not the theme. What bigger message about the Holocaust does the author reveal? What is the central idea about his own survival? Answer the following questions.

1. Why do you think the writer titled his book *Night*? Why does the narrator repeatedly talk about being in a nightmare?

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2. What might the writer be trying to say about the Holocaust by using the repeated ideas involving night?

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3. In paragraphs 20 and 23, an inmate asks the newcomers why they have come. "Didn't you know what was in store for you here in Auschwitz?" he asks. What is the narrator's response to the inmate?

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**REFLECT**

*Night* is the first book in a trilogy. The next books are titled *Dawn* and *Day*. What idea do these titles communicate?

*continued on next page*

4. What is the response of the angry young men in paragraph 30?

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5. How might their response be connected to the writer's purpose for writing the book?

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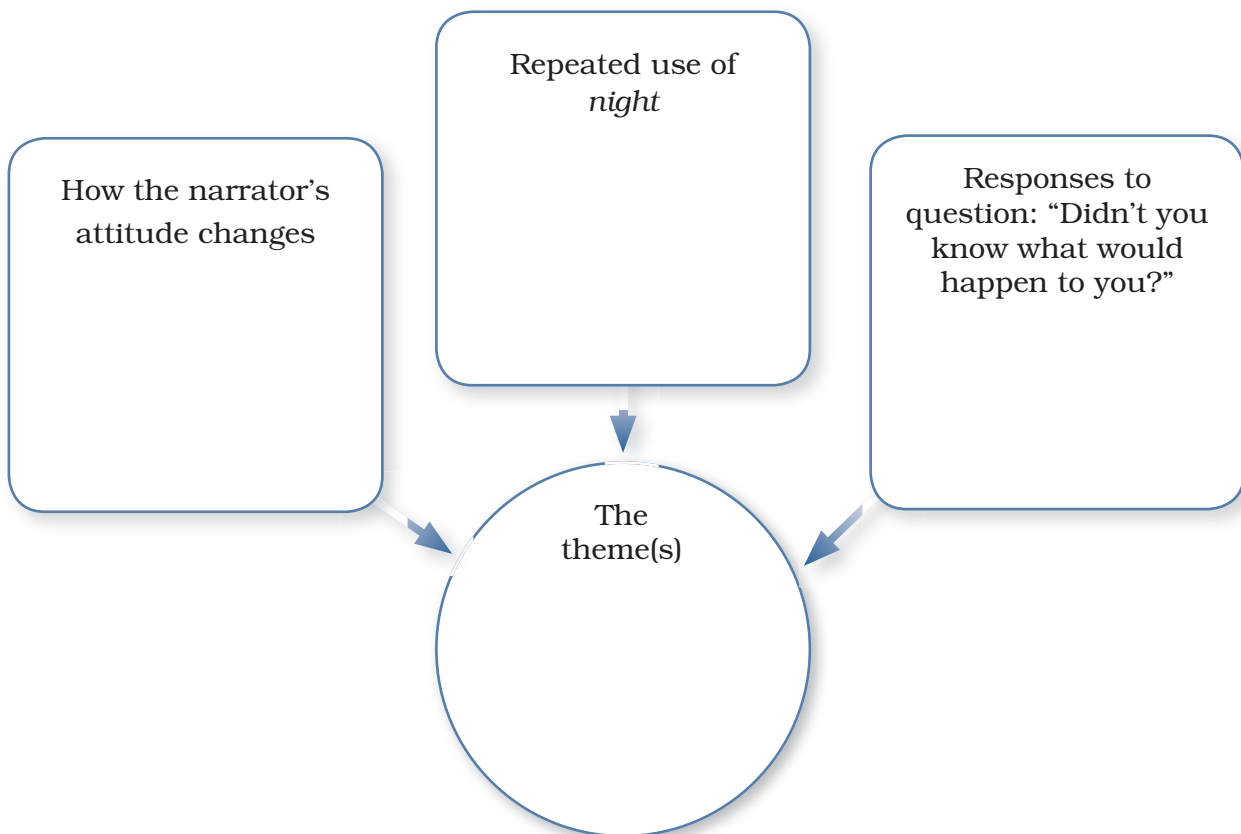
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Based upon what you discovered in your first and second reads of *Night*, fill in the following chart to help you determine the theme:



## **Third Read: Style Supports Theme**

Listen as your teacher or other students read the passage aloud. Think about how the writing sounds:

1. Do you hear long, flowing sentences or short, clipped ones?
2. Does the writer use many unfamiliar words or are most of them used in everyday speech?
3. Are there many descriptive passages with figurative language or realistic dialogue?


### **Focus on Style of Writing**


Style is the way in which a text is written. It is *how* something is written, as opposed to *what* is written. However, a writer's style will always support the theme he or she wants to communicate.

Use the following chart to help you analyze the style of *Night*.

1. For rows 1–3, circle the description that best fits the style of the text.
2. In the final row, place a star by the best description of the style.

How would you describe the style of <i>Night</i> ?	
1. Long, flowing sentences	1. Short, clipped sentences
2. Many difficult, unfamiliar words	2. Familiar words used in everyday speech
3. Much description and unique figurative language	3. Very little description, mostly dialogue
The writing is formal, descriptive, and complex.	The writing is informal, stark, and to-the-point.

 **Speak and Listen** With a partner, discuss how the style of the writing is appropriate for the topic of the Holocaust and the themes you uncovered during your second read.

 **Write** After discussing how the style supports the theme, write one or two paragraphs explaining how the style fits the theme. Include examples from the excerpt. On the next page are some sentence starters to help you compose your paragraphs.

The style of the novel *Night* is . . . .

The writer's words are . . . . One example of this is . . . .

He does/does not use sentences that are . . . . For example, . . . .

This formal/informal style supports the topic because . . . .

The writing style also supports the theme by . . . .

## Project-Based Assessments

### Letter to the Editor

Not everyone agrees with the opinions expressed in articles published in a newspaper, in a magazine, or on the Internet. Just read the comments readers post at the end of the article. Comments often become heated exchanges as readers share their opinions.

Before the Internet, newspaper readers would respond to articles by writing letters to the editor. These letters would be published in the editorial section of the paper. Most letters to the editor share an opposing viewpoint of a previously published article. They reference the content of the letter with which the writer disagrees, state why they disagree, and offer evidence to support an alternative point of view. For this project, you will write your own letter to the editor based upon the following situation.

Like Elie Wiesel, you are a survivor of a concentration camp who has immigrated to the U.S. Some of the SS officers who worked at Auschwitz and escaped to America are finally being tried for their crimes against humanity. A newspaper article quotes one of the men as stating that he is not guilty of any crime and that he was merely following orders. In fact, he goes so far as to say that if he had resisted orders, he would have been killed himself. The reporter for the article didn't interview victims for an opposing point of view. You are outraged and decide to write a letter that will be published in the newspaper. Follow these steps:

- Read some examples of letters to the editor in your local newspaper or an online newspaper. Think about the tone the writers use. Is he/she angry, opinionated, confident, or logical? What words does the writer use to communicate this tone?
- Before writing, consider your response to the SS officer's comments. Because you didn't experience the events first-hand, you will need to rely on descriptions from *Night* and other works about the Holocaust. Imagine what you would say

in response to the guard’s comments. Remember to use persuasive appeals such as logos, ethos, and pathos. Provide evidence to support your position. Make sure your style of writing fits the ideas you are communicating.

- Use business letter format in a block style and include the following: date, recipient’s address (use information for the editor of your city’s newspaper), salutation, body, closing, and signature. Visit Purdue Online Writing Lab to view an example: owl.english.purdue.edu.

Use the following guidelines for your letter to the editor.	
<i>To receive the highest score (4.0), the letter must meet all of these criteria.</i>	<p>Your letter to the editor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• addresses the original comments made by the SS officer on trial.</li><li>• clearly explains your point of view on the subject.</li><li>• strongly presents your opinion by presenting reasons, along with pathos.</li><li>• contains convincing and effective language and style.</li><li>• is in business letter format with a header, salutation, body, and closing.</li><li>• contains correct grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling.</li></ul>

### Modern Poem

Transform Wiesel’s prose into a work of modern poetry. Capture his style in short, exact words. Read Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool” for an example of using few words and abbreviated sentences to communicate much meaning. Also, consider how you might arrange the words on the page to communicate the meaning and emotion of the words. Here is an example of a poem with visual elements:

Two by  
Two they  
trudge through  
the snow.  
One line  
                                leads to life.  
The other  
to death.

How does the poem visually communicate the idea of walking in a line? Of the people in the lines being separated?

**TECH-CONNECT**

Type *visual poetry* into your search engine. Then click on the *Images* tab to see examples.

*continued on next page*

Use these guidelines as you write your poem:

- Focus less on explaining every event that happened in the story and more on capturing a single image or idea from the story.
- Try to say as much as possible with as few words as possible. Use a thesaurus to pick just the right words.
- Arrange the words on the page to help the reader visualize the ideas you are communicating.

#### Use the following guidelines for your poetry.

*To receive the highest score (4.0), the poetry must meet all of these criteria.*

Your poem

- is based upon an image, idea, or event from the excerpt.
- captures the tone of the prose by using carefully chosen words.
- has a visual element that supports the words.
- is free from grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

#### On Your Own: Integrating Ideas

1. Oprah Winfrey joined Elie Wiesel on a return trip to Auschwitz sixty-one years after he was a prisoner there. Read the interview at [oprah.com](http://oprah.com) or watch a YouTube video of their trip.
2. Three powerful movies about the Holocaust are *The Pianist*, *Schindler's List*, and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Each one describes the horrors of the Holocaust from a little different perspective. What other movies about the Holocaust have you seen?
3. Using Google Earth, search Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum to view pictures of what Auschwitz looks like today. You can also download a Google Lit Trip which traces Wiesel's deportation from his hometown of Sighet, Romania, to Auschwitz-Birkenau and finally Buchenwald, Germany.
4. The most widely published book about the Holocaust is *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Read the book and watch the movie or play.
5. Explore the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Web site, which includes interactive online exhibitions with pictures and video. Elie Wiesel is the Founding Chair of the museum council.

#### REFLECT

Do you think Holocaust literature is important? Should students be required to read about the horrors of the Holocaust? Why or why not?