

## The Catalogue Assignment

In life certain experiences and feelings simply defy description. During the 1940s Elie Wiesel had more than his share of these experiences. In his later years, when he finally set about recording his memories, he struggled finding ways to describe either the personal or universal significance of what he saw in Auschwitz. Words to Wiesel, in a sense, were an obstacle to understanding.

### Outcome: CR B 30.4

Read and demonstrate comprehension of a range of contemporary and classical grade-appropriate informational and literary (including novels) texts from various international, including indigenous, cultures and analyze the philosophical, ethical, and social influences that have shaped information, issues, characters, plots and themes.

Wiesel describes his dilemma in *Night's* preamble in the following way:

“Convinced that this period in history would be judged one day, I knew that I must bear witness. I also knew that while I had many things to say, I did not have the words to say them. Painfully aware of my limitations, I watched helplessly as language became an obstacle. It became clear that it would be necessary to invent a new language... Writing in my mother tongue—at that point close to extinction—I would pause at every sentence, and start over and over again. I would conjure up other verbs, other images, other silent cries. It still was not right. But what exactly was “it”? “It” was something elusive, darkly shrouded for fear of being usurped, profaned. All the dictionary had to offer seemed meager, pale, lifeless. Was there a way to describe the last journey in sealed cattle cars, the last voyage toward the unknown? Or the discovery of a demented and glacial universe where to be inhuman was human, where disciplined, educated men in uniform came to kill, and innocent children and weary old men came to die?”

Wiesel was asked once if he knew how best to go about writing on the horrors of Auschwitz. He observed that “Not only do I not know [how to respond], but I don’t even know if a tragedy of this magnitude *has* a response. What I do know is that there is *response* in responsibility. When we speak of this era of evil and darkness, so close and yet so distant, *responsibility* is the key word.” Ultimately, what he accomplishes with *Night* is a collective remembering of what happened to those who could not speak for themselves. *Night* is not a typical novel; thus, it requires a different approach to studying it.

The class is going to undertake an **experiential** and **memorial** study of the novel. The experiential part consists of simply reading and responding to the text. The memorial element gives students opportunities to *create* and *remember* those who cannot speak for themselves.

### Experiential Element Explained

For the duration of the novel study students must complete two straight-forward tasks:

#### 1. It-Experiences

Catalogue *every* it-experience encountered in the novel. How do you know if you've just encountered one? You'll *feel* it in your bones (or through the breaking of your heart). I've provided a definition for it-experiences immediately below.

*It-experiences are those events that are so stirring to the heart it renders the mind numb for the senseless depravity of the act, e.g. the little boy hiding in the toilet in the film Schindler's List.*

The process of identifying what to log is a highly subjective process: one student might find ten or fifteen such experiences while another only finds four. There is no maximum or minimum. All I ask is you engage meaningfully with the text.

### EVALUATION

It-Experiences logs are evaluated in the following two ways: firstly, they form the basis of two or three whole class discussions (as per the essay club). These discussions are evaluated on the basis of an associated rubric (filled out by each individual student).

Secondly, once the novel study is completed students use their It-Experiences catalogue to complete part two of the comprehensive summative assessment.

#### 2. Wiesel's Fathers

Throughout the novel Elie Wiesel describes a number of situations, and shares numerous insights, into his relationship with God and his dad, Shlomo. Log these situations and insights whenever you encounter them.

### EVALUATION

This information is used to complete part three of the novel end summative assessment, e.g. a literary essay comparing and contrasting Wiesel's evolving relationship with his two fathers.

### STANDARDS

- Record all the **It-Experiences** and **Wiesel's Fathers** logs in a single *Google* document (share with and give me full editing privileges)
  - Keep the two types of logs separate from one another in your document
- Submit the completed assignment by deadline (late assignments are penalized 10%)
- Insert both a title page and works cited page formatting them according to Chicago style (use the Internet to find title page and works cited page exemplars)
- Use footnotes, again using Chicago style, to reference every citation
  - Footnote exemplars are provided for your convenience on the next page
  - Do not "wing it"

## Catalogue Exemplars

Logs incorporate the following information: a direct quote from the novel, an associated properly footnoted page number, and a relevant personal insight composed by the student.

- a). Write down the associated **direct quote** in its entirety.
- b). Record the **page number**.

In Chicago style, footnotes are used to reference pieces of text. Text is used as evidence supporting a position, argument or stance taken by the writer.

Use superscripted numbers to cite the page (or pages) you are referencing.<sup>1</sup> The superscripted numbers are placed right after the period ending the sentence it is modifying.<sup>2</sup> If you use a word processor like *Google* Docs, footnotes automatically appear in sequential order, e.g. 1, 2, 3.

Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page they are referred to.<sup>3</sup> In the footnote exemplar at the bottom of this page, you'll notice that the first reference looks different than the second and the second looks different than the third, fourth, and so on. If you are referencing a single work, there is no need to include the all of the novel's identifying information each time you cite it.

- c). Write down any relevant **personal insights** or feelings you had at the time of reading. There's no right or wrong way on how to go about answering. Be thoughtful, and above all else be *human*, and your heart will tell you how to respond.

### It-Experience Exemplar

**"Mrs. Schachter 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."**<sup>4</sup>

**Mrs. Schachter was separated from her family during the deportation process. She was hysterical because of her profound worry and sadness at the separation. How difficult it must've been to feel completely powerless to help those she loved?**

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<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Night*, (New York, Hill and Wang, 2006), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Wiesel, *Night*, 25-32. (The consecutive second reference to the same text is simplified to this form.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113. (*Ibid* in the Latin literally means "in the same source.")

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

### Wiesel's Father's Exemplar

**“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?”<sup>5</sup>**

Wiesel grew up enthusiastic about his faith. He wanted to study Kabbalah, pray, and exist solely for his God; however, when he was confronted by the crematoria in the camp he wondered, ‘Where was God?’ And when the men started reciting Kaddish—a prayer to honor God—Wiesel was skeptical. Given what was happening to all these men reciting this prayer, what was there to thank God for?

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 33.