

Close Reading Questions for *Night* by Elie Wiesel

The page numbers vary depending on the version you have.

Each chapter remains without a name; they are identified as sections here. Give each chapter/section its own plot or theme related title.

Section One –

1. What is Eliezer's (Elie's) family like? To whom in his family does he seem most attached? With whom would he like to be closer?
2. List five facts about Moshe the Beadle. Include his physical description, job, place in Sighet's society, etc.
3. What role does Moshe the Beadle play in Eliezer's life?
4. How important is religion to the way Eliezer defines his identity, and how do you know this?
5. After Moshe is deported, he returns to Sighet. Why does he return? What is the story that he tells, and how do the residents of Sighet react to him?
6. What is the setting for the first part of the book? What was happening in the world at that time?
7. On the seventh day of Passover, things took a turn for the worse for the Jews in Sighet. List five things that happened that day and during the next few days.
8. What preparations does the family make for deportation?
9. Maria, the family's former maid, came to see them in the ghetto. What does she ask the family to do? What is Elie's father's response, and how is this ironic?
10. Describe the family's last 24 hours in Sighet.

Section 2 (pages 23-28)

1. Describe conditions in the cattle car (pages 22-23).
2. What did Madame Schacter see in her vision, and how did the other people in the car react to her?
3. Describe the reactions when people arrived in Auschwitz (page 27). Why did they feel that way?
4. What was the last stop for the train, and what did the passengers discover there? **In your answer, quote at least one example of imagery from the book.**

Section 3 (pages 29 – 47)

1. What did Elie feel and think when he and his father were separated from his mother and sisters?
2. What happened when Elie met Dr. Mengele?
3. What was Elie seeing, feeling, and thinking as he and his father were walking from Dr. Mengele to the barracks?
4. What is the *Kaddish*, and why is it strange that the people were saying it?
5. List the steps that the men went through after arriving at the barracks.
6. How did Elie and his father react when the gypsy struck his father for asking to use the toilet?
7. Describe and explain the two examples of irony on page 40. Hint: they are both signs in the camp.
8. How long did Elie and his father remain in Auschwitz?
9. Who is Akiba Drumer?
10. What does the reaction of the Germans townspeople to the procession of prisoners imply?

Section 4 (pages 47-65)

1. Name and describe the camp that Elie and his father reached at the end of their walk from Auschwitz.
2. What was the role of the musicians at the camp?
3. Where did the men work?
4. Identify the following people:
 - a. Idek
 - b. Franek
 - c. Yossi and Tibi
 - d. Juliek
5. Describe Elie's encounter with the dentist.
6. When Idek beats Elie, who helps Elie and what does he recall about her later?

7. How did Elie Wiesel respond when Idek hit his father? What is significant about Elie's response to this incident?
8. What does Franek want from Elie, and why?
9. What happens to Elie after he discovers Idek with a girl?
10. Explain the context of the following metaphor: "Two lambs with hundreds of wolves lying in wait for them. Two lambs without a shepherd, free for the taking. But who would dare?"
11. How did the men react to the bombing of the Buna factory?
12. What is a *pipel*?
13. Describe the reasons for each of the two hangings that take place on pages 61-65. Analyze Elie's reaction to each of the hangings.
14. There are two descriptions of father/son relationships in this chapter – Elie and his father, and the *pipel* and his father. Contrast the two relationships.
15. Elie Wiesel uses a lot of imagery in this section. Select one example and explain how it affected you and why.

Section 5 (pages 66-84)

1. What happened in the camp on the eve of Rosh Hashanah?
2. After reading pages 66-68, describe how Elie's feelings about God and his religion have changed since the beginning of the book.
3. What was Elie's decision about fasting on Yom Kippur, and why did he make that decision?]
4. What is the "beautiful present" the SS gave the men for the new year?
5. What is the significance of the bell in Elie's daily life?
6. Why does Elie receive an "inheritance" from his father, and what is this inheritance? Does he keep the inheritance?
7. In Elie's opinion, why was Akiba Drumer selected? Did the men remember to say *kaddish* for Drumer?
8. Elie goes into the hospital for an operation. While he is there, he meets a patient who tells him that he has more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. What is his rationale (reason/justification) for this?
9. What decision do Elie and his father make regarding staying in the hospital or being evacuated from the camp? In hindsight, was this the right decision?
10. What was the last thing the *Blockälteste* (head of the block) ordered the men to do before they evacuated, and why?

Sections 6, 7, 8, and 9 (pages 85 – 115)

1. Describe the evacuation (2-3 sentences)
2. What idea begins to fascinate Elie while he is running? Hint: there is heavy use of personification in this passage). What stops him from carrying out this idea?
3. How has Elie's father changed during the evacuation?
4. Wiesel discusses another father/son relationship on pages 90-91. What does Elie realize about Rabbi Eliahu and his son?
5. When they finally arrive at Gleiwitz, Elie is reunited with a friend from the factory. Who is it? Describe their "reunion" as well as what happens to this friend.
6. After Gleiwitz, the men are taken to Buchenwald, in the center of Germany. Describe their traveling conditions. How many men are in the car at the beginning and at the end of the journey?
7. Who is Meir Katz?
8. In your opinion, what is the most horrifying part of the trip from Gleiwitz to Buchenwald?
9. Why does Elie argue with his father on page 105?
10. On page 107, Elie says that he "had not passed the test." What does he mean?
11. What happens to Elie's father?
12. In your opinion, why is it ironic that Elie was transferred to the children's block?
13. What is the only thing that interested Elie at this point?
14. When was Buchenwald liberated, and by whom?
15. Why do you think Wiesel ends the book as he does? What is your reaction to his last statements?

Final Activity

While *Night* covers several months in Eliezer's life, Wiesel wrote it such that the events can feel like those of one long, surreal, seemingly endless night. He has said in interviews that he thinks of the Holocaust as an extended period of "night" in the 20th century.

Because of this, it can be difficult to keep track of the order of events in *Night*. Below is a lettered list of some of its major incidents. Arrange them in the proper order and record the progression at the bottom of the page. Your answer should take the form of a series of letters; if Event B is first, Event F is second, and Event C is third, your list should read "B, F, C," and so on.

- A. Eliezer's father becomes ill with dysentery.
- B. Eliezer sees a man shot for approaching a soup cauldron during an alert.
- C. Eliezer sees a boy kill his own father over a piece of bread.
- D. The Jews of Sighet learn that Madame Schächter's "vision" is real.
- E. Eliezer perceives his father as unsentimental and unaffectionate.
- F. Eliezer and his father decide not to observe Yom Kippur.
- G. Juliek plays Beethoven for his fellow prisoners.
- H. The Jews of Sighet are made to wear the yellow star.
- I. Eliezer has surgery on his foot.
- J. A pipel is hung at Buna.
- K. The Jews of Sighet are forced to live in a ghetto.
- L. The prisoners at Buna are forced into a long march in the snow. M. Eliezer sees live children fed into a fire pit.
- N. Eliezer realizes that Rabbi Eliahou has been abandoned by his son.