

"Night" by Elie Wiesel

Central Question of this Unit:

- What is the relationship between our stories and our identity?
- To what extent are we all witnesses to history and messengers to humanity?

Night is a memoir—an autobiographical story. The term comes from a Latin word meaning "to remember." In the book, Elie Wiesel recalls what he saw and experienced during the Holocaust. He tells too of how that story changed him as a person. When asked why he has chosen to tell it, he responds by speaking of those who did not survive to tell their own stories.

- "I owe them my roots and memory. I am duty-bound to serve as their emissary, transmitting the history of their disappearance, even if it disturbs, even if it brings pain. Not to do so would be to betray them, and thus myself."

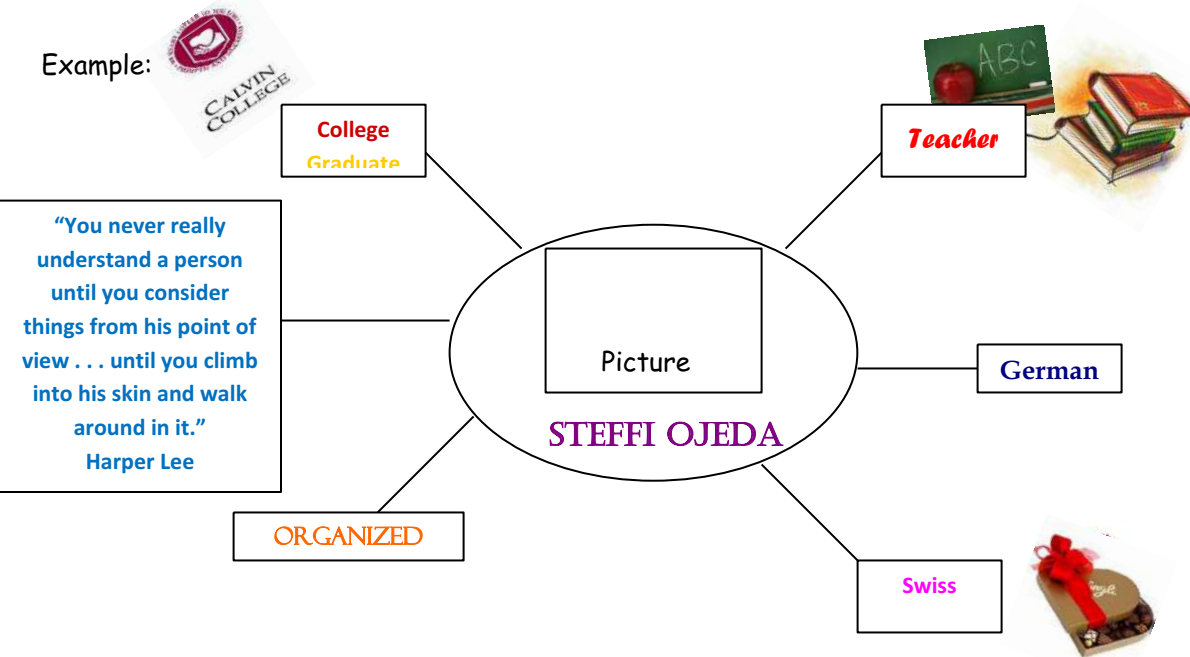
What is he suggesting about the relationship between the story he tells and his identity? About the importance of "bearing witness"?

Identity Map

Directions: You will create your own identity chart.

- Include in it at least 30 things that describe who you are.
 - Remember, you can include words other people use to describe you, things you like or dislike, physical descriptions of yourself, etc.
- Include images, drawn, pasted, or computer generated for 10 of the items on your chart.
- In the center, above your name, include a small picture of yourself.

Example:



Criteria Checklist/ Score Sheet

Identity Chart includes:	Points Earned	Points Possible
<input type="checkbox"/> Small self image		5
<input type="checkbox"/> 30 self descriptions		10
<input type="checkbox"/> At least 10 images/drawings of descriptions		5
<input type="checkbox"/> Neat, organized, on-time, creative presentation		5
Total		25

Name: _____ Due: _____ Period: _____

Survivors of the Holocaust (Video) - Discussion Questions:

- What do the survivors remember about their childhood? How are their memories similar to your own? What differences seem most striking?
- How did the Nazis' rise to power, first in Germany and then in other European countries, affect the way the various speakers saw themselves and others?
- Why do you think these survivors have chosen to tell their stories to the world? What do they expect you and others to learn from such stories?

Night - Part I

In your groups answer the following questions. Be ready to present the answers to the class.

Explore the factors that shape Eliezer's identity.

- How does Eliezer describe himself?

- What is his family like? To whom in his family does he seem most attached? With whom would he like to be closer?

- What role does Moshe the Beadle play in Eliezer's life?

- How important is religion to the way Eliezer defines his identity?

Consider why no one believed Moshe the Beadle.

- How does Eliezer view Moshe at the beginning of the book? How do others in Sighet regard him?

- Why were Moshe and other foreign Jews expelled from Sighet? How do other Jews in the community respond to the deportation of foreign Jews?

- What did Moshe witness when he was shipped to Poland? Why does he want the Jews of Sighet to know what he saw?

- Why is it so important to Moshe that he be believed?

- Was Moshe a madman as some people claim? What does that label seem to mean in Sighet? What does the word mean to you?

Explore the relationship between Sighet and the outside world between 1941 and 1944.

- What do the Jews of Sighet know about the outside world in 1941? How do they respond to what they know?

• Why do you think they refuse to believe Moshe when he returns to Sighet?

• Do you think people really believe that Moshe is lying to them? What is the difference between saying that someone is lying and saying that you cannot believe what he or she is saying?

• What kinds of stories do you find it easiest to believe? What kinds of stories do you find it hardest to accept as true? What are the main differences between the stories you believe without question and those you doubt?

• What do the Jews of Sighet know about the outside world by the spring of 1944? How do you account for the way they respond to the stories they hear by word of mouth? Over the radio? Have you or someone you know ever responded to news in similar ways?

• How do the Jews of Sighet react to the arrival of the Germans? The creation of the ghettos? Their own deportation? How do you account for these responses?

Discuss the way the author tells his story.

• Why do you think Elie Wiesel begins *Night* with the story of Moshe the Beadle?

• What lessons does the narrator seem to learn from Moshe's experiences in telling his own story?

• Why do you think Elie Wiesel tells his story in the first person perspective? If *Night* were written in the third person, would it be more or less believable?