

Quote Book for *Night* by Elie Wiesel

Quote	Theme/Character	Page #
Why did I pray? A strange question. Why did I live? Why did I live?	Faith	14
The train disappeared on the horizon; it left nothing behind but its thick, dirty smoke	Symbolism – fire, smoke	16
Without passion, without haste, they slaughtered their prisoners.	Terror (Moche the Beadle)	16
Babies were thrown into the air and machine gunners used them as targets.	Innocence (Moche the Beadle)	16
People refused not only to believe his stories but even to listen to them.	Naivety (Elie about Moche the Beadle)	17
I did not believe him myself...I only felt pity form him.	Naivety (Elie about Moche the Beadle)	17
People said: “The Russian army’s making gigantic strides forward... Hitler won’t be able to do us any harm, even if he wanted to”	Hitler	18
We even doubted that he wanted to exterminate us. Was he going to wipe out a whole people? Could he exterminate a population scattered throughout so many countries? So many millions!	Hitler	19
A Jew no longer had the right to keep in his house gold, jewels, or any objects of value. Everything had to be handed over to the authorities – on pain of death.	First circumstance of cruelty	21
...every Jew must wear the yellow star	Second circumstance of cruelty	21
We were no longer allowed to go into restaurants or cafes, to travel on the railway, to attend synagogue, to go out into the street after six o’clock.	Third circumstance of cruelty	22
Then came the ghetto.	Fourth circumstance of cruelty	22
The shadows beside me awoke as from a long sleep. They fled, silently, in all directions.	Symbolism – shadows (light and dark) Elie in the ghetto	25
The Hungarian police struck out with truncheons and rifle butts, to right and left, without reason, indiscriminately, their blows falling upon old men and women, children and invalids alike.	Violence	27
The stars were only sparks of fire which devoured us. Should that fire die out one day, there would be nothing left in the sky, but dead stars, dead eyes.	Symbolism – fire	32
So much has happened within such a few hours that I had lost all sense of time. When had we left our houses? And the ghetto? And the train? Was it only a week? One night- one single night	Symbolism – night	34
Fire! I can see a fire! I can see a fire!	Madame Schachter’s visions on the train	35
There was nothing there; only the darkness	Elie looking out of the train	36
In front of us flames. In the air that smell of burning flesh. It must have been about midnight. We has arrived – at Birkenau, reception centre for Auschwitz.	First experience of the concentration camp	39
‘Men to the left! Women to the right’. Eight words spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight short, simple words. Yet that was the moment when I was parted from my mother.	Family	40
For a part of a second I glimpsed my mother and my sisters moving away to the right. Tzipora held Mother’s hand.	Family	40

I saw them disappear in the distance; my mother was stroking my sister's fair hair, as though to protect her, while I walked on with my father and the other men.	Family	40
And I did not know that in that place, at that moment, I was parting from my mother and Tzipora forever.	Hindsight	40
My hand shifted on my father's arm. I had one thought – not to lose him. Not to be left alone.	Relationship with his father	40
I pinched my face. Was I still alive? Was I awake? I could not believe it. How could it be possible for them to burn people, children, and for the world to keep silent? No, none of this could be true. It was a nightmare.	Nightmares	43
For the first time, I felt revolt rise up in me. Why should I bless His name? The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible, was silent. What had I to thank him for?	Questioning his faith	44
Never shall I forget that night, the first night camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed.	Symbolism – Night	45
Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.	Symbolism – smoke, silence Loss of innocence	45
Never shall I forget those flames, which consumed my faith forever.	Symbolism – fire Loss of faith	45
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.	Symbolism – silence, night	45
Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.	Loss of faith	45
We had to throw our clothes at one end of the barracks. There was already a great heap there. New suits and old, torn coats, rags. For us, this was the equality: nakedness. Shivering with the cold.	Inhumane	46
The Kapos beat us once more, but I had ceased to feel any pain from their blows.	Violence	47
I had new shoes...but as they were coated with a thick layer of mud, no one had noticed them. I thanked God, in an improvised prayer, for having created mud in His infinite and wonderful universe.	Faith	49
Yesterday, I should have sunk my nails into the criminal's flesh. Had I changed so much since then? So quickly?	Change (after his father is hit by the gypsy)	51
"Here, you have got to work. If not, you will go straight to the furnace. To the crematory. Work or the crematory – the choice is in their hands."	Ironic – there was no choice	50
It was a beautiful day in May. The fragrance of Spring was in the air.	Ironic - weather	51
But we had been marching for only a few moments when we saw the barbed wire of camp. An iron door with this inscription over it: <i>Work is liberty!</i> Auschwitz.	Ironic – work = death	51
I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted His absolute justice.	Questioning his faith	57
The camp looked as though it had suffered an epidemic: empty and dead.	Surroundings – after moving to Buna	58
As if the choice was in our own hands.	They had no choices	59
I now took little interest in anything except my daily plate of soup and my crust of stale bread. Bread, soup – these were my whole life. I was a body. Perhaps less than that even: a starved stomach. The stomach alone was aware of the passage of time.	How he had changed	64

Why, but why should I bless Him? In every fiber, I rebelled. Because He had had thousands of children burned in his pits? Because He kept six crematories working night and day, on Sundays and feast days? Because on His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many factories of death.	Questioning faith	64
I had watched the whole scene without moving. I kept quiet. In fact I was thinking of how to get further away so that I would not be hit myself....I was angry with him (my father) for not knowing how to avoid Idek's outbreak. That is what concentration camp life had made of me.	How he had changed – relationship with his father	66
“Long live liberty! A curse upon Germany! A curse! A cur...”	The young man from Warsaw hanged – last revolt from a condemned man	74
Then the whole camp, block after block, had to march past the hanged man and stare at the dimmed eyes, the lolling of the tongue.	Exposure to murder	74
To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him	Loss of innocence	76
For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed.	Child killed – innocence lost	77
Where is God now? Where is He? Here He is – He is hanging here on this gallows... That night the soup tasted of corpses.	God was hanged in the shape of an innocent child	77
I was the accuser, God the accused.	Questioning faith	79
My eyes were open and I was alone – terribly alone in a world without God and without man. Without love or mercy. I had ceased to be anything but ashes, yet I felt myself to be stronger than the Almighty, to whom my life had been tied for so long.	Elie's loneliness	79
...I stood amid that praying congregation, observing it like a stranger.	Feeling excluded from religion	79
He was standing near the wall, bowed down, his shoulders sagging as though beneath a heavy burden. I went up to him, took his hand and kissed it. A tear fell upon it. Whose was that tear? Mine? His? I said nothing. Nor did he. We had never understood each other so clearly.	Relationship with his father	80
I no longer accepted God's silence. As I swallowed my bowl of soup, I saw in the gesture an act of rebellion and protest against Him. And I nibbled my crust of bread. In the depths of my heart, I felt a great void.	Rebelling against God by not fasting. Without God, Elie feels empty.	80
And soon a terrible word was circulating – selection	Fear	81
The old men stayed in their corner, dumb, motionless, hunted. Some were praying.	Fear did not discriminate – young and old	82
'Don't talk like that father.' (I felt that would break into sobs.) 'I don't want you to talk like that'	Keeps hope of survival alive – when Chlomo tries to give him the knife and spoon	86
The hospital was not bad at all. We were given good bread and thicker soup. No more bell. No more roll call. No more work. Now and then I was able to send a bit of bread to my father.	Light in the dark	90
'I've got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He's the only one who's kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people.'	As opposed to God – a faceless neighbour	92

They could only just open their lips enough to say the word: evacuation.	Fear of what was to come.	93
'What shall we do father?' He was lost in thought. The choice was in our hands. For once, we could decide our fate for ourselves. We could both stay in the hospital, where I could, thanks to my doctor, get him entered as a patient or a nurse. Or we could follow the others.	First choice they have had – to stay in Buna or evacuate with the others.	94
'Let's be evacuated with the others.' 'Let's hope that we shan't regret it Eliezer.'	Elie made the decision	94
I learned after the war the fate of those who had stayed behind in the hospital. They were quite simply liberated by the Russians two days after the evacuation.	Hindsight	94
The last night in Buna. Yet another last night. The last night at home, the last night in the ghetto, the last night in the train, and now, the last night in Buna. How much longer were our lives to be dragged out from one 'last night' to another?	The last of everything	94
The snow never ceased... It snowed relentlessly.	Bitter weather and tough conditions	96
Pitch darkness...If one of us stopped for a second, a sharp shot finished off another filthy son of a bitch...Near me, men were collapsing in the dirty snow. Shots.	Consequences of his decision	97
Death wrapped itself around me till I was stifled. It stuck to me. I felt that I could touch it. The idea of dying, of no longer being, began to fascinate me. Not to exist any longer. Not to feel the horrible pains in my foot. Not to feel anything, neither weariness, nor cold, nor anything.	Accepting fate	98
My father's presence was the only thing that stopped me...(from giving up). He was running at my side, out of breath, at the end of his strength, at his wits end. I had no right to let myself die. What would he do without me? I was his only support.	Relationship with his father	98
We were masters of nature, masters of the world. We had forgotten everything – death, fatigue, our natural needs. Stronger than cold or hunger, stronger than the shots and the desire to die, condemned and wandering, mere numbers, we were the only men on earth.	Loss of identity. Strength of will	99
I was walking in a cemetery, among stiffened corpses, logs of wood. Not a cry of distress, not a groan, nothing but a mass agony, in silence. No one asked anyone else for help. You died because you had to die. There was no fuss.	Different side to death	101
In every stiffened corpse, I saw myself.	Saw his own death	101
'We can lie down for a bit, one after the other. I'll watch over you, and then you can watch over me. We won't let each other fall asleep. We'll look after each other.'	Elie to his father in the snow. Relationship with his father	101
God knows what I would not have given for a few moments of sleep. But deep down, I felt that to sleep would mean to die. And something within me revolted against this death. All round me death was moving in, silently, without violence. It would seize upon some sleeping being, enter into him, and consume him, bit by bit.	Elie doesn't want to die	101
He (Rabbi Eliahou) had lost his son in the crowd. He looked in vain among the dying. For three years they had stuck together... Three years, from camp to camp, from selection to selection. And now when the end seemed near – fate had separated them.	Father and son relationship	102

Then I remembered something else: his son had seen him losing ground, limping, staggering back to the rear of the column. He had seen him. And he continued to run on in front, letting the distance between them grow greater. A terrible thought loomed in my mind: he had wanted to get rid of his father! ...to get rid of the burden, to free himself from an encumbrance which could lessen his own chances of survival.	Father and son relationship	103
And, in spite of myself, a prayer rose in my heart, to that God in whom I no longer believed. My God, Lord of the Universe, give me strength never to do what Rabbi Eliahou's son has done.	Doesn't believe but still prays	103
Sons abandoned their fathers' remains without a tear	What the war can do to people	104
The sound of a violin, in this dark shed, where the dead were heaped on the living. What madman could be playing a violin here, at the brink of his own grave? Or was it really an hallucination? It must have been Juliek.	light in the dark	107
It was pitch dark. I could hear only the violin, and it was as though Juliek's soul were the bow. He was playing his life.	Symbolism – life through the music	107
I shall never forget Juliek. How could I forget that concert given to an audience of dying and dead men?	Strange and unbelievable contrast	107
I do not know for how long he played. I was overcome by sleep. When I awoke, in the daylight, I could see Juliek, opposite me, slumped over, dead. Near him lay his violin, smashed, trampled, a strange overwhelming little corpse.	Death personified.	107
In difference deadened the spirit. Here or elsewhere – what difference did it make? To die today or tomorrow or later? The night was long and never ending.	Symbolism – night Defeat.	109
My father was huddled near me, wrapped in his blanket, his shoulders covered with snow. Was he dead, too? I called him. No answer. I would have cried out if I could have done so. He did not move.	When he thinks his father has died.	110
My mind was invaded suddenly by this realization – there was no more reason to live, no more reason to struggle.	Given up	110
The days were like nights, and the nights left the dregs of their darkness in our souls.	Symbolism - night	111
One day, when we had stopped, a workman took a piece of bread and threw it into a wagon. There was a stampede. Dozens of starving men fought each other to the death for a few crumbs. The German workmen took a lively interest in this spectacle.	Treated like animals	111
The old man again whispered something, let out a rattle, and died among the general indifference. His son searched him, took the bread and began to devour it. He was not able to get very far. Two men had seen and hurled themselves upon him. Others joined in. When they withdrew, next to me were two corpses, side by side, the father and the son. I was fifteen years old.	Reminding us of his age. Father and son relationship	113
'Don't let yourself go under,' my father said, trying to encourage him (Meir Katz). 'You must resist. Don't lose faith in yourself.'	Place faith in yourself not in God.	114
The death rattle of a whole convoy who felt the end upon them. We were all going to die here. All limits had been passed. No one had any strength left. And again, the night would be long.	Symbolism - night	114
A hundred of us had got into the wagon. A dozen of us got out – among them, my father and I. We had arrived at Buchenwald.	Against the odds	115
I held onto my father's hand – the old familiar fear: not to lose him	Father and son relationship	115

'I can't go on...This is the end... I'm going to die here...' I could have wept with rage. Having lived through so much, suffered so much, could I leave my father to die now? Now, when we could have a good hot bath and lie down?	Resentment for his father	116
He had become like a child, weak, timid, vulnerable.	Role reversal Resentment for his father	116
For a long time this argument went on. I felt that I was not arguing with him, but with death itself, with the death that he had already chosen.	Letting go	117
It was daytime when I awoke. and then I remembered that I had a father...I had known that he was at the end, on the brink of death, and yet I had abandoned him.	Regret	117
But at the same moment this thought came to my mind: 'Don't let me find him! If only I could get rid of this dead weight, so that I could use all my strength for my own survival, and only worry about myself.' Immediately I felt ashamed of myself, ashamed forever.	Elie considers survival without Chlomo Regret	117
With those few gulps of hot water, I probably brought him more satisfaction than I had done during my whole childhood.	Relationship with his father	118
I gave him what was left of my soup. But it was with a heavy heart. I felt that I was giving it up to him against my will. No better than Rabbi Eliahou's son had I withstood the test.	Resentment for his father	118
Another wound to the heart, another hate, another reason for living lost.	Responsible for his father	120
'Listen to me boy. Don't forget you are in a concentration camp. Here, every man has to fight for himself and not think of anyone else. Even of his father. Here, there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends. Everyone lives and dies for themselves.'	Family	122
I awoke on January 29 at dawn. In my father's place lay another invalid. They must have taken him away before dawn and carried him to the crematory. He may have still been breathing.	Facts about his father's death	123
There were no prayers at his grave. No candles were lit to his memory. His last word was my name. A summons, to which I did not respond.	Regret	123
I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I had no more tears. And, in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might have perhaps found something like – free at last!	Reaction to his father's death	123
It no longer mattered. After my father's death, nothing could touch me any more.	State of mind	123
I had but one desire – to eat. I no longer thought of my father or of my mother.	Change	124
Our first act as free men was to throw ourselves on to the provisions. We thought of only that. Not of revenge, not of our families. Nothing but bread.	Change	126
One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me.	Not the same person. The original Elie had died.	126