

## 9-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Student Guide

**Instructions:** What do you want to say and how do you want to say it? This Student Guide will help you decide. Read the background information and answer the “Finding Your Inspiration” questions to help decide what your message is and how you will use art or writing to communicate that message. Then use the “Creating Your Project” worksheet to make a plan for putting it all together.

### Background Information:

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Romania. He was a young child when Hitler came to power in Germany, but would not directly encounter Nazi tyranny until the German army invaded his town in 1944. As a teenager, Elie was forced to live with roughly 11,000 other Jewish people in the Sighet Ghetto. From there, he and his family were deported to Auschwitz, where his mother and one of his sisters were immediately murdered. Elie and his father remained together for numerous harrowing experiences, including a death march, until his father’s death.

After Elie’s camp was liberated in 1945, he was sent to France, where he reunited with his two surviving sisters and went to university at the Sorbonne. He vowed not to speak about his experiences for 10 years. Sure enough, in 1954 he wrote a memoir in Yiddish called *And the World Remained Silent*. By 1958, Elie had worked to translate a much shorter version of the work into French called *La Nuit*. In 1960, it was translated into English and called *Night*.

Eventually, Elie moved to the United States and became a professor. President Jimmy Carter appointed him Chairman of the United States Memorial Council. The work of that council led to the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

In addition, he was a human rights activist who spoke and wrote extensively to spread awareness of past and potential acts of genocide. He won numerous awards for his work, including the Nobel Peace Prize. Elie Wiesel passed away in 2016.

### Reflection Questions:

- What do you know about Elie Wiesel?
- What more do you want to know?
- What do you know about the Holocaust?
- What more do you want to know?

# What does a better world look like to you?

In *Night*, Elie Wiesel describes his arrival at Auschwitz. After jumping out of the cramped boxcar, men and women were separated. Each group was inspected – some people were selected for manual labor, but most were sent to the gas chambers. Elie and his father were selected for manual labor. His experience was one of darkness and chaos. Just a few months before, Elie and his family had been living a normal life. One day it changed forever. In his memoir he writes:

“Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. 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.”

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## Finding your inspiration:

**Where do you see darkness and suffering in our world today?**

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**What is causing it?**

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**Who else knows about it?**

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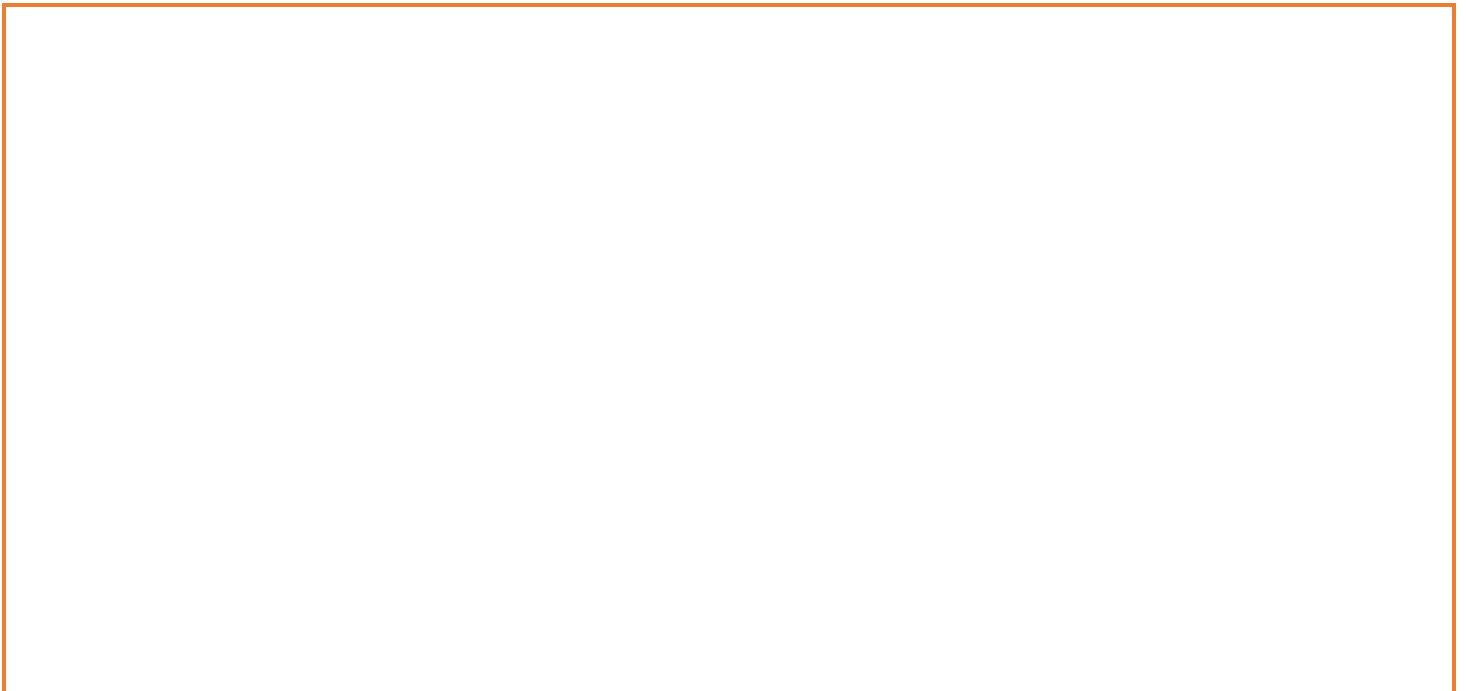
**What is being done or can be done to help change the course?**

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**What does it take to make those changes happen?**

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Use the space below to jot or sketch your thoughts:



# The Power of Choice:

During the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel had very little control over his future. He did not get to choose what to wear, what to eat, or what to do with his time. At any moment, his life could have ended.

As Elie described in his memoir, the Jewish victims were subject to severe dehumanization and torture. The Nazi soldiers and guards that oversaw the deportations and ran the camps all made choices to do so. At any moment, they could have refused.

Millions of people were aware of the terrible things that were happening, and did nothing. At any moment, they could have done something to resist. Even small acts of resistance can have a powerful impact. Later in his life, Elie Wiesel said:

“Indifference, to me, is the epitome of evil.  
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.”

To be indifferent is a choice. To be caring and compassionate is also a choice.

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**Finding your inspiration:**

**How do people become indifferent?**

**What are the consequences of indifference?**

**How can each of us overcome indifference?**

**What impact can our choices have?**

Use the space below to jot or sketch your thoughts:

# What can you do to make our world a better place?

Ten years after liberation, Elie Wiesel wrote his memoir and shared his experience with the world. He spent the rest of his life writing, publishing, speaking, and standing up for others. There is no way to measure the impact that his actions have had – he has educated millions of people, has restored humanity to those suffering, and has, no doubt, inspired tremendous compassion and acts of kindness. In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, he said:

“I remember he asked his father: “Can this be true?” This is the twentieth century, not the Middle Ages. Who would allow such crimes to be committed? How could the world remain silent?

And now the boy is turning to me: “Tell me,” he asks. “What have you done with my future? What have you done with your life?”

And I tell him that I have tried. That I have tried to keep memory alive, that I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.

And then I explained to him how naive we were, that the world did know and remained silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere.”

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## **Finding your inspiration:**

**What influences the choices you make?**

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**What do you think is right or good?**

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**Who is responsible for making the world a better place?**

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**What power does one person have to make a difference?**

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**What can you do to make the world a better place?**

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Use the space below to jot or sketch your thoughts:

# Art & Writing

**Instructions:** Now that you have used the “Finding Your Inspiration” questions to help decide what your message is and how you will use art or writing to communicate that message, use this worksheet to make a plan for putting it all together.

## **Step one:** Reflect and Jot

Think about a piece of art or writing that you have seen or read, and write your thoughts about the following questions in the space provided below:

- What drew you to it?
- What effect did it have on you?
- How did it make you feel?
- Did it impact your thoughts or actions?
- Why do you think the artist or writer created that piece?

## **Step two:** Determine your message

Think about what you want people to know, think, feel, and do after seeing or reading your piece.

**Complete this statement: The message that I would like to communicate to the viewers or readers of my piece is that...**

**Step three:** Determine your audience

Who will see or read your piece of art or writing?

What do you know about this audience?

**Step four:** Design and Communication

What medium will you use?

- Poetry
- Prose
- Drawing
- Painting
- Photography
- 3 Dimensional Art

How can you use this medium to communicate your message? How will you make your point to the viewer or reader? What materials, symbols, words, or other elements will you use?

**Step five:** Draft your Statement of Purpose

Your entry must be accompanied by a Statement of Purpose in which you:

1. State your message
2. Explain the meaning of your piece
3. Explain its connection to the theme, inspiration, and prompt

*The final version of your Statement of Purpose may not exceed 250 words  
and must be written in complete sentences!*