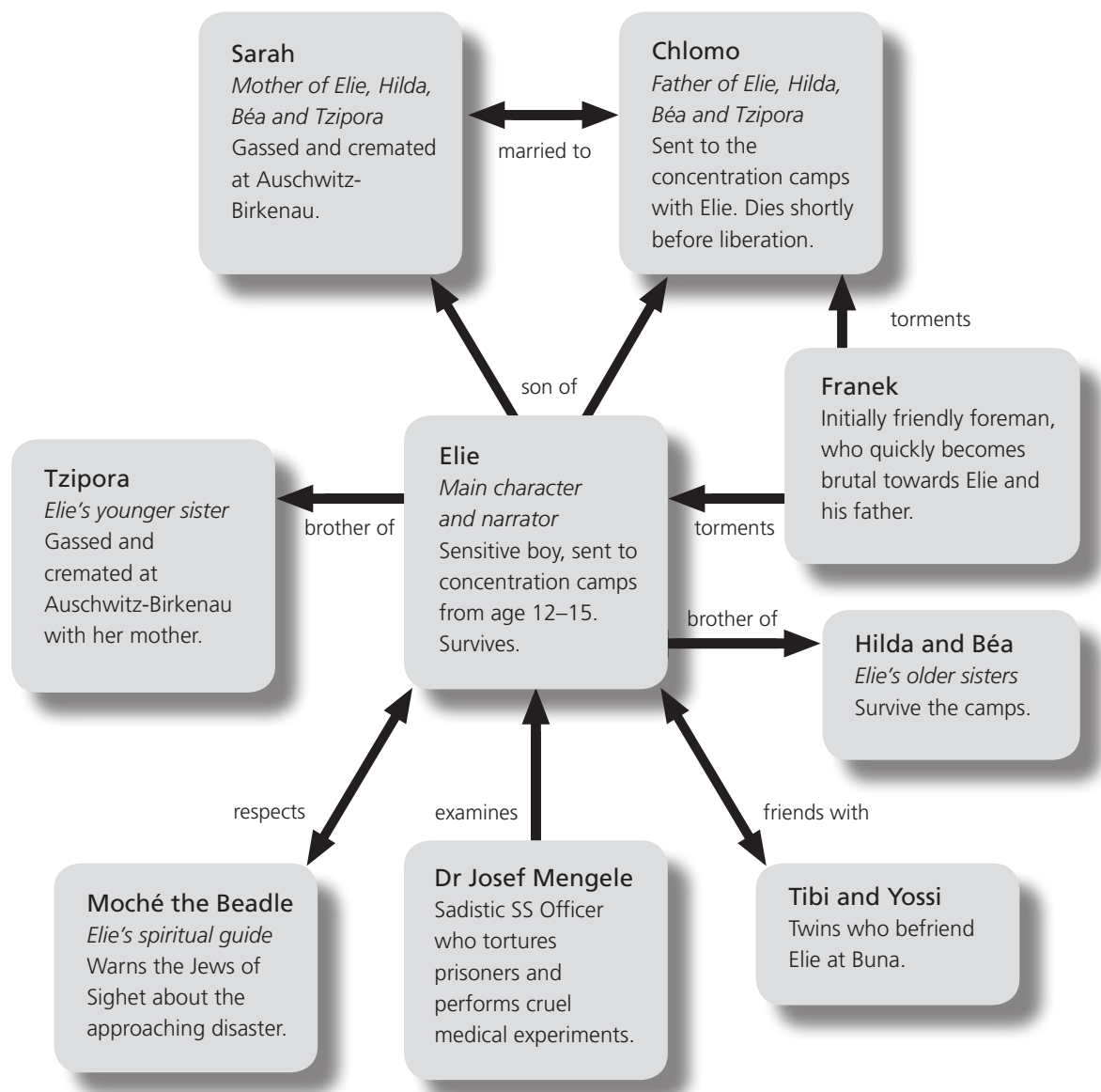


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Character map



Introduction

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 and lived in a close-knit Jewish community in Sighet, Transylvania. The region has long been the scene of conflict and dispute between Hungary and Romania.

Wiesel's quiet upbringing was disrupted by the arrival of the Nazis in 1944. The entire Jewish community was deported to concentration camps in Poland and Wiesel was separated from his mother and sister on arrival at Auschwitz. Ten years after the end of World War II, Wiesel wrote his memories in Yiddish, titled *Un die welt hot geshvign* (And the world kept silent), which was compressed into *Night* and translated into English and French. He became an American citizen in 1956 and continued to write novels and plays. His plays include *Zalmen*, or *The Madness of God* and *The Trial of God (Le Proces de Shamgorod)*. His other novels include *The Gates of the Forest*, *The Oath*, *The Testament*, and *The Fifth Son*. He lives in New York City with his wife and their son, Elisha, and teaches at Boston University.

The question at the centre of Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* is, 'Where is God? Where is He?' (p.76). At that moment there seems to be no answer, even for the most devout believer, Eliezer, the central character who introduces himself simply with: 'I believed profoundly'. *Night* exposes, clearly and powerfully, aspects of human nature which readers may never have faced in others or in themselves. In the face of the evil witnessed by Eliezer and his fellow sufferers, God does appear to be dead and the bonds that tie father to son and friend to friend destroyed.

Brief synopsis

The opening of *Night* introduces the villagers, Moché the Beadle and Eliezer's father. Readers become aware that the villagers act and react together to the events that engulf them; they appear as one character because they act collectively. The appearance of the Germans and the restrictions placed on the villagers' lives are always greeted by a succession of emotions, first fear and then confidence, first resignation and then reassurance. Readers are aware of how worsening events affect the village rather than how the protagonist is affected:

Anguish. German soldiers – with their steel helmets, and their emblem, the death's head.

However, our first impressions of the Germans were most reassuring ... The Germans were already in town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict had already been pronounced, yet the Jews of Sighet continued to smile. (p.20)

Tips For Writing Essays

If you follow these simple tips, you'll be assured of an extra mark or two!

10 Do's



- Know the text really well and answer the question properly.
- Write a plan.
- Structure your essay using an introduction, several body paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Use paragraphs with clear topic sentences to mark the progression of your argument. Remember 'new paragraph = new point'. A good example of a clear topic sentence is: 'The consequences of racial prejudice are explored in *Othello*'.
- Use correct spelling and ensure you always spell book titles, characters' names or authors' names correctly; for example, 'Eli Wiesel's *Night*'.
- Put direct quotations in inverted commas; for example: 'Othello defends Desdemona's loyalty to Brabantio, swearing 'my life upon her faith'.
- Display your knowledge of the text by selecting relevant references to support your views. For example, if you choose to focus on the moments of Eli's life that shaped his personality in *Night*, you might analyse the scene featuring the death of his father.
- Work out your own point of view on key elements such as characters, narrators, plot, etc.
- Keep to topic.
- Acknowledge the difference between genres; for example, film, play. For example, when discussing a film, refer to 'shots', 'images', 'scenes', etc. When discussing a play, acknowledge the performance aspects, such as stage directions, the playwright's instructions for the setting, etc.

