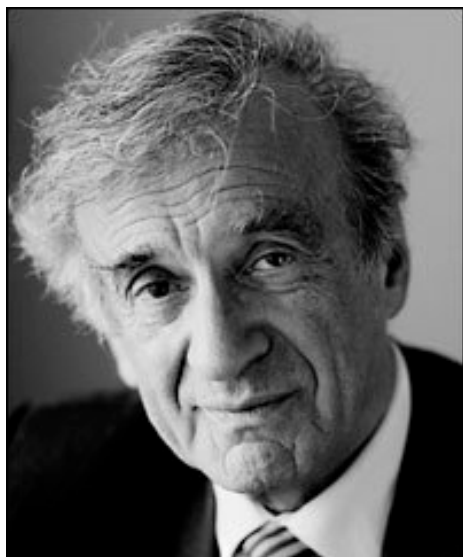


A God Who Remembers

April 07, 2008 3:00 PM ET
Elie Wiesel



As a teenager, Nobel Prize-winning author Elie Wiesel was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps for 11 months.
Sergey Bermeniev

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— I hoped — that I would not survive him, not even for
him, I thought I was the last of our line. With him, our p
future.

Wiesel pictured at age 15. "I was thrown into a haunted universe," he writes.

The moment the war ended, I believed — we all did
— that anyone who survived death must bear witness.

Some of us even believed that they survived in order to become witnesses. But then I knew deep down that it would be impossible to communicate the entire story. Nobody can. I personally decided to wait, to see during 10 years if I would be capable to find the proper words, the proper pace, the proper melody or maybe even the proper silence to describe the ineffable.

For in my tradition, as a Jew, I believe that whatever we receive we must share. When we endure an experience, the experience cannot stay with me alone. It must be opened, it must become an offering, it must be deepened and given and shared. And of course I am afraid that memories suppressed could come back with a fury, which is dangerous to all human beings, not only to those who directly were participants but to people everywhere, to the world, for everyone. So, therefore, those memories that are discarded, shamed, somehow they may come back in different ways — disguised, perhaps seeking another outlet.

Granted, our task is to inform. But information must be transformed into knowledge, knowledge into sensitivity and sensitivity into commitment.

How can we therefore speak, unless we believe that our words have meaning, that our words will help others to prevent my past from becoming another person's — another peoples' — future. Yes, our stories are essential — essential to memory. I believe that the witnesses, especially the survivors, have the most important role. They can simply say, in the words of the prophet, "I was there."

What is a witness if not someone who has a tale to tell and lives only with one haunting desire: to tell it. Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future.



The barracks at Buchenwald photographed just after the liberation of the camp on April 16, 1945. Wiesel is seventh from the left in the center bunk, next to the vertical beam.

After all, God is God because he remembers.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Speaker/Purpose/Audience

After reading Elie Wiesel's "A God Who Remembers" indicate who the speaker is, what the speaker's purpose is, and whom the speaker is attempting to reach as an audience. To gain full credit, you must clearly indicate 3-5 aspects for each concept.

1. Identify who the speaker is through voice and character (Narrative voice/persona that expresses feelings and situation. Voice is not always the author as he or she is currently. Look for attitudes, beliefs, feelings, or biographical details):

2. Identify the author's purpose (reason the writer is writing: inform, entertain, explain, teach, or persuade) and include how you know this through textual evidence:

3. Identify the author's intended audience or the people reached by this speech/text (Who is reading or listening and why? Who cares about this text?):

REMEMBER: Include as least three aspects of speaker, three reasons for purpose, and three possible audiences.