



Night by Elie Wiesel
Interactive Extension Activity

Nancy & David Wolf
**HOLOCAUST
& HUMANITY
CENTER**



“For the dead
and the living,
we must bear
witness.”

Elie Wiesel

[Full Length Tour](#)

[Clip of Introduction](#)



Mosaic

Jews lived in every country of Europe, in communities large and small, going back centuries. Jewish life was diverse and vibrant.

In Eastern Europe, small villages known as “shtetls” were made up of more observant and traditional Jews, while Jews who lived in urban communities led more modern lifestyles. Some were poor, others were wealthy, others were considered middle class.

Many spoke “Yiddish,” in addition to the local language. In all cases, Jews contributed to their communities by working in various professions and taking an active role in cultural life.

Clip of the Tour

Family Before the War

- Elie Wiesel was born on September 30, 1928, the only son to Shlomo & Sara (Feig) Wiesel. He had three sisters. Two eldest were Hilda & Beatrice, and the youngest Tzipora. The family lived in [Sighet](#), Transylvania, Romania.
- [Elie Wiesel Timeline](#): (1928-1951)
- [Maps of Sighet](#)



Massacre

In June 1941, [Einsatzgruppen](#) (mobile killing units), comprised of German SS and police, followed the Wehrmacht (German Army) into Eastern territories and the Soviet Union to round up Jews and opponents of the Reich (real or perceived).

Victims were gathered, often with deceptive promises of relocation. Marched to trenches they were sometimes forced to dig themselves; they were lined up and shot — bullet by bullet, town by town. Entire families, whole Jewish communities, disappeared.

[Clip of Tour](#)

Moishe the Beadle

“And then all the foreign Jews were expelled from Sighet. And Moishe the Beadle was a foreigner.”

Elie Wiesel

From 1940-1944, Romania became a part of Hungary. Moishe the Beadle was deported from Sighet because he could not prove his Hungarian citizenship. He witnesses the massacre in the Galician forest near [Kolomay](#). The Hungarian Jews were taken to Kolomay and forced marched to [Kamenets-Podolsk Region](#) (now the Ukraine) in August of 1941. Killings continued there through 1942.



Photo: Jews at the killing site outside of Kamenets-Podolsk.
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ivan Sved

“In those days it was still possible to buy emigration papers to Palestine. I had asked my father to sell everything, to liquidate everything & to leave.”

Elie Wiesel

Jews looking to escape faced enormous obstacles and most were unable to leave. People went to desperate lengths to acquire necessary paperwork for visas. Those with means could afford to flee, though much of their wealth was confiscated.

Oftentimes, families were separated when parents made the difficult decision to send their children ahead of them.



Star Badges

German forces occupied [Hungary](#) on March 19, 1944.

Seeking ways to further segregate Jews from others, Nazi officials implemented policies to physically identify them. Jews in Poland were the first to have to wear the badges, which in some cases were arm bands instead of stars sewed directly on clothing.

[Star badges](#) varied depending on country and region.

[Clip of Tour](#)





“The barbed wire that encircled us like a wall did not fill us with real fear.” In fact, we felt this was not a bad thing; we were entirely among ourselves. A small Jewish republic...”

Elie Wiesel

Ghettos were a way to isolate, segregate, and confine Jews until plans were created for their annihilation. Conditions in the ghettos were horrendous; overcrowding, starvation, and disease were rampant. Some ghettos existed for years; others only lasted for weeks until their “liquidation” — destruction.

The Sighet ghetto was established on April 18–20, 1944. It was divided into a small & large ghetto. The Wiesels were in the large ghetto.

Clip of Tour

“The street resembled fairgrounds deserted in haste. Open rooms everywhere. Gaping doors and windows looked out into the void.... An open tomb.”
Elie Wiesel



Photo: View of a major street in Krakow after the liquidation of the ghetto
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej

Once the infrastructure and plan for the implementation of the Final Solution were set in place, **deportations** to the killing centers began. Using deceptive language, the Nazis told Jews they were being resettled in the East.

As ghettos were being liquidated, Jews were rounded up and held at rail stations, or other central areas, until they were forced onto trains to the killing centers. The railroads became an essential tool for mass murder. Jews were transported mostly in freight trains or cattle cars under inhuman conditions.

Packed inside, they were given no water, food, or proper sanitary facilities. These journeys sometimes took days or weeks; many died before they reached their destination.

[Clip of Tour](#)

Resistance

“In our minds, we always resisted.”

Werner Coppel, Local Survivor



“The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how so many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?”

Eli Wiesel

Jews resisted in forests, ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers. Struggling to maintain faith and family, Jews resisted spiritually by maintaining religious observances and educating their children for a future they might not live to see. Perseverance was a form of resistance.

Clip of Tour

“Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed.”
Elie Wiesel



In late 1941, months before the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis began building **killing centers** in occupied Poland. These relatively secret “death factories” were used to efficiently murder Jews in assembly-line fashion.

Auschwitz was the largest and most lethal of the concentration camps established in Poland by the Nazis. It contained three camps: Auschwitz I, the main camp, housed mainly Polish political prisoners, and Auschwitz III (Buna-Monowitz) provided slave labor to German industrial firms. Auschwitz II (Birkenau) was the killing center.

- [Clip of Tour](#)
- [Clip of Edith Carter](#)
- [Clip of Werner Coppel](#)

Survival

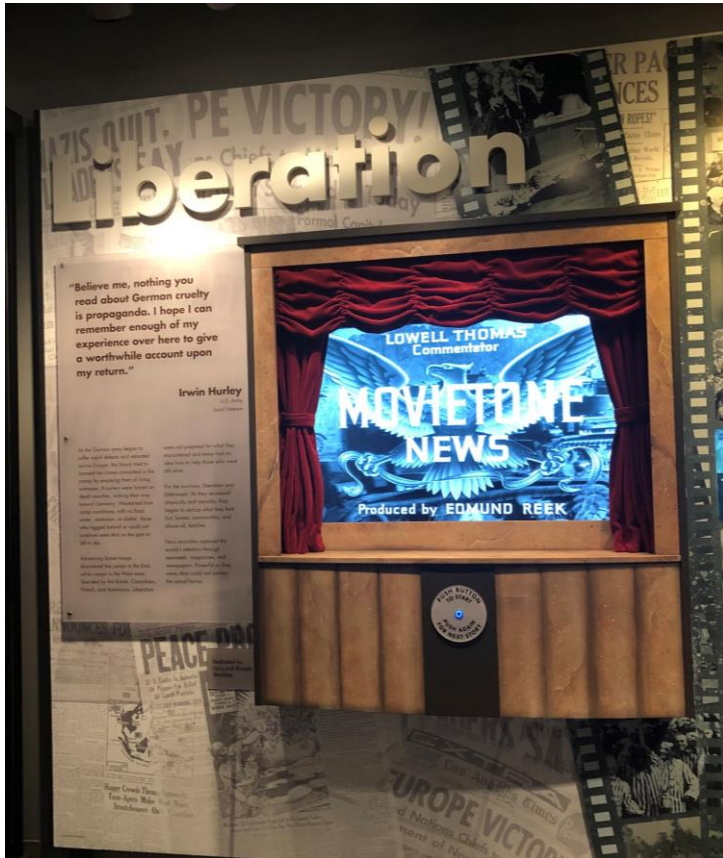


Finding a way to survive in the concentration camp system was difficult; in the killing centers, it was near impossible. The young and the skilled were better able to survive the horrors of concentration camp life. At Auschwitz those who were selected for work, were often sent to Buna-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) or were sometimes transferred to other camps based on labor needs throughout occupied territories.

There was no single formula for survival. Chances for survival increased if one belonged to a group, consisting of family members or friends, who could help and care for each other. However, nothing guaranteed that one would live.

- Clip of Tour
- Clip of Werner Coppel on daily life in Auschwitz III.

Liberation



“Hope is eternal — I knew the end was near. Over the loudspeakers they would yell, ‘All Jews come to the front gate.’ I would not go — I stayed. Then on April 11, we were in the barrack. I take a look, and the SS are getting down from the towers. The towers were empty — we hugged each other; we were free!”

Ray Kantor, Buchenwald, Local Survivor

Buchenwald was opened in 1937 outside of Weimar, Germany. In the aftermath of Kristallnacht on November 9 & 10, 1938 some 10,000 Jewish men were sent there including local survivor Henry Meyer. In 1945, conditions in Buchenwald were horrible. US forces liberated the camp on April 11, 1945.

Clip of Tour

Character Strengths

- Every individual possesses all 24-character strengths in different degrees, giving each person a unique character profile. When you know your strengths, you can improve your life and thrive.
- Take the Via Character [Survey](#) to find out your 24.
- [Clip of Tour](#)





Werner Coppel from Survivor to Upstander

Clip of why Werner decided to speak out

After the war, [Elie Wiesel](#) would become an author, teacher, and advocate for human rights and peace. He fits the definition of an [upstander](#) as he used his experiences during the Holocaust to stand up for the oppressed and to fight for human dignity for all. Wiesel died in 2016 but his legacy lives on.

[Timeline of Elie Wiesel's Life](#): 1952 USHMM

[Clip of Tour](#)

We hope that all visitors to the museum are inspired by Edith Carter's quote as they leave the gallery space.

[Clip of Edith Carter](#)

How will you contribute to the world?



"Everybody
every human being has the
obligation to contribute
somehow to this world."
-Edith Carter