



Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout

(1986)

It is with a profound sense of humility that I accept the honor - the highest there is - that you have chosen to bestow upon me. I know your choice transcends my person.

Do I have the right to represent the multitudes who have perished? Do I have the right to accept this great honor on their behalf? I do not. No one may speak for the dead, no one may interpret their mutilated dreams and visions. And yet, I sense their presence. I always do - and at this moment more than ever. The presence of my parents, that of my little sister. The presence of my teachers, my friends, my companions...

This honor belongs to all the survivors and their children and, through us to the Jewish people with whose destiny I have always identified.

I remember: it happened yesterday, or eternities ago. A young Jewish boy discovered the Kingdom of Night. I remember his bewilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car. The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed.

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 explain to him how naïve we were, that the world did know and remained silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men and

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf



women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must— at that moment—become the center of the universe.

Wiesel, E. (1997). *Hope, Despair and Memory. Nobel Lectures in Peace 1981–1990.* Singapore: World Scientific.

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Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

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Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. In paragraph 1, what does Wiesel mean when he says, "I know your choice transcends my person"?
2. Does Wiesel feel he has the right to represent the multitudes that perished? Why or why not?
3. Who does he say the honor belongs to?
4. What does he say will happen if we forget the memory of these occurrences?
5. Why does Wiesel refer to himself in both the first and the third person in paragraphs 4 through 6?
6. In paragraph 6, what does Wiesel mean when he says that "if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices"?
7. Based on paragraph 7, why does Wiesel believe that people "must take sides" during times of crisis?
8. What does Wiesel say about neutrality and silence in the last paragraph?
9. What does Wiesel's last sentence imply about the importance of stopping injustice and persecution?

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EFL 5
Word Count 393

10. What is the purpose of Wiesel's speech? Provide evidence from the text.
11. What is a central idea of Wiesel's speech? Provide evidence from the text.
12. What are some of the rhetorical strategies Wiesel uses in the speech?
13. How does Wiesel's use of rhetoric contribute to the tone of the speech?
14. Explain why *Hope, Despair and Memory* is an appropriate title for the speech?
15. How does Wiesel use his speech as a "call to action"?

Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Analyze how Elie Wiesel develops the central ideas and advances his point of view in his speech. Use evidence from the speech to support your analysis. [RI.9-10.6]

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