

A Hollow Shell

Introduction
orients the
reader.

Title
foreshadows
the writer's
claim

After nearly two years of misery, a young boy finally saw the first ray of hope on the horizon; the Americans had finally arrived, and the Nazis were gone. In his autobiography Night, Elie Wiesel shares his experiences in Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of Hitler's concentration camps. Wiesel was one of the minority of Jews to survive the Holocaust during World War II. His family did not make it through with him, and this had lasting effects. Wiesel's identity changed completely during his experiences in Auschwitz; he lost his faith in God and he became indifferent to his survival and the survival of his family members. Despite these hardships, however, he ultimately became a stronger person than he was before.

Writer
provides a
perceptive
analysis of
the text that
integrates
summary.

Essay offers a
focused
thesis.

Writer links
credible
evidence to
the thesis
with
convincing
analysis.

The greatest change to Elie Wiesel's identity was his loss of faith in God. Before he and his family were moved to the camps, Wiesel was a religious little boy who cried after praying at night (2). When the Hungarian police come to force the Jews to move to the ghettos, they pulled Elie from his prayers (13). Even on his way to Auschwitz, stuffed inside the cattle car with other terrified Jews, Wiesel gave thanks to God when told he would be assigned to labor camps (24). After a few days in Auschwitz, Elie Wiesel heard about the

crematory and the fact that the Nazis were killing the sick, weak, and young. In his first night in the camp, Wiesel experienced his first crisis of faith:

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. ...Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust (32).

Later, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Elie was not able to celebrate the New Year with the other Jews in the camp. When the Rabbi said "Blessed be the Name of the Eternal," Wiesel thought "Why, but why should I bless Him?" In these quotes, Wiesel's frustration and anger is directed toward God because he has no one else to blame. He is appalled by everything happening around him, and cannot believe the God he spent all his time praying to was letting this happen. Wiesel's faith in God waned while he was in the camps. Because he used to be a religious, Jewish person, losing his faith changes his identity.

Elie Wiesel's experiences in the camps not only cause him to lose faith in God; they also make him lose faith in his own survival. While in the camp, the Jews were abused, starved, and murdered. By the end of the book, Wiesel has adopted an indifferent attitude toward his own life. He writes, "It no longer mattered. After my father's death, nothing could touch me anymore" (107). Previous to his father's death, there were times when Elie watched

Writer includes quotations from the text and does not leave this quotation to stand for itself; it is clear which words are Wiesel's and which represent the opinion and analysis of the essay writer.

Rich, but not necessarily formal, language is evident throughout the essay

Correct, grade-level appropriate punctuation used throughout; sentence types are varied and demonstrate rhetorically sophisticated use of clauses and phrases.

the Nazis abuse his father and, though he did not react, he felt remorse, anger, and a desire to “sink my nails into the criminal’s flesh” (37) to defend his father. But shortly before his father died, he began to care less and less about himself and his father. And when his father passed away, he no longer could imagine a reason to go on living. This did not make him sad, because his only thought was to survive:

I had no more tears. And in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might perhaps have found something like—free at last! (106)

Wiesel lost his ability to care about his own life, and he felt free from caring about anything after his father died. Elie’s indifference shows how much he changed while in the concentration camp.

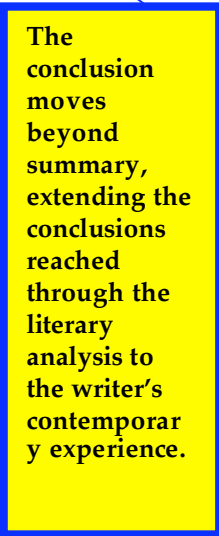
Elie Wiesel survived the concentration camps for nearly two years. Even though he often claims that he wanted to give up, that he wished he would die, he still fought against death. He was still alive when the first American tank arrives at Buchenwald (109). He writes: “our first act as free men was to throw ourselves onto the provisions. We thought only of that. Not of revenge, not of our families. Nothing but bread” (109). This quote shows that, though Elie has lost his identity so much that he is almost like a wild animal, he has still managed to keep the instinct to survive. This endurance showed that he never was able

Writer guides the reader through the development of her analysis, leading us through a complex sense of the way Wiesel’s experiences change him; the writer consistently returns to the thesis throughout.

The writer demonstrates a sense of the nuances of the text in the suggestion that the will to endure shows Wiesel has not yet fully given up on life.

to fully give up on life. He somehow pushed past the Nazi cruelty to live through malnutrition, torture, and sorrow. Even as his emotions shut down to the point where he could not cry for his dead father, he was shutting down so he could survive the experience of the death camps. By doing whatever he needed to so he could survive, Wiesel's identity had truly changed in the concentration camps.

Just like wood reduced to ash, many Jews who survived the Holocaust were forced to change. From the beatings, starvation, and other physical and emotional tortures, the survivors would never be the same. Survivors of the Holocaust tell their stories so we all remember that what Hitler did to the Jews was unforgivable and should never be repeated. But people in Oakland, and all over the world, are being changed in the same way, though to a smaller degree. Because of unequal treatment, oppression, and everyday trauma, people change out of anger and frustration. Anytime the majority works to keep the minority in an ignorant state of mind, there is something that is too similar to Hitler and the Holocaust.



The conclusion moves beyond summary, extending the conclusions reached through the literary analysis to the writer's contemporary experience.

This essay demonstrates a satisfactory example of 10th grade response to literature. The student shows that she understands this text and is able to display this understanding through the selection and brief analysis of effective quotations. Her essay is well-structured, with a well-developed thesis and consistent supporting evidence. Sentence structure is varied; correct use of grade-level appropriate English language conventions, such as the correct use of clauses, phrases, and advanced punctuation marks (quotation marks, semicolons) is evident throughout.

The student has not fully mastered Writing Applications standard 2.2c (Demonstrate awareness of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created) or Writing Applications standard 2.2d (Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text).

A strong example of 10th grade writing in this genre would include direct reference to the author's style as represented in literary devices (such as diction, tone, mood, figurative language, imagery, dialogue, foreshadowing, flashback) with an accompanying original analysis of the effects of these stylistic choices on the reader. This student has chosen to analyze plot and character development but has not attended to literary style within this analysis.

The student touches on WA 2.2d in the fourth paragraph of the essay, noticing the paradox in Wiesel's indifference to his own life (he writes that he's given up on life, but this indifference is in itself a survival strategy, and therefore demonstrates a continued—if inadvertent—will to survive). The student has not fully examined or explained this complexity, however, reading in it a strength of will that Wiesel himself does not seem to recognize. While a strong 10th grade response to literature might demonstrate a fuller recognition of such ambiguities, nuances, or complexities, it is developmentally appropriate for exemplary 10th grade student writing to grasp at these literary moments, rather than to fully explicate them.