MCATEE ENG IIIB PERIOD 6 OFF-SITE LEARNING PACKET DAY 3 Name_____
(10 pts) Date_____Period_____

Directions: Read the attached excerpt from "Night" and compose responses to the following.

Recall

1. To what does Wiesel refer when he says, "The SS gave us a fine New Year's gift"?

2. What advice did the head of Wiesel's block offer before the prisoners passed before the SS officers?

3. Why was the narrator's father told to stay behind in the camp?

4. Who are Tibi and Yossi?

5. What is the resolution or final outcome of this selection?

Interpret

6. Why is the first sentence of the selection an example of verbal irony, where someone says one thing and means another?

7. Why might the block leader have lied to the men who were selected telling them nothing would happen to them?

8. Explain why Wiesel's father gives him the knife and spoon. What does this "inheritance" tell you about the state of their lives?

9. Of what importance might Tibi and Yossi be to Elie Wiesel and to his retelling of these events? Use details from the selection in your response.

10. Describe the range of emotions that Wiesel might have experienced on the day he was separated from his father.

Before You Read

from Night

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What do you know about the Holocaust—the killing of millions of Jews and other European civilians during World War II?

DISCUSS As a class, share your knowledge about what happened and generate a list of questions you'd like to know more about.

SETTING A PURPOSE Read to share the author's horrors and anxieties in a concentration camp during the Holocaust.

BACKGROUND

The Time and Place
The events in this excerpt from *Night*, Elie Wiesel's memoir, take place in 1944 inside a Nazi concentration camp in Poland.

Did You Know?
Adolf Hitler, founder of the Nazi party, became chancellor of Germany in 1933 and ruled as a dictator until 1945. Germany was in an economic depression when Hitler came to power, and the Jewish people were used as scapegoats for the country's many problems. Hitler began persecuting German Jews by taking away their citizenship and civil rights. After Germany invaded Poland in 1939 to start World War II, Jews from Germany and from each country Germany occupied—along with tens of thousands of others who opposed Hitler or were deemed "undesirable" by him—were imprisoned in forced-labor concentration camps. There they were overworked, starved, tortured, and sometimes killed outright. Several prison camps in Germany and Poland became "death camps," where the systematic extermination of Jews and others was carried out. Out of an estimated 8.5 million Jews living in German-occupied Europe after 1939, approximately 6 million were killed. About 6 million other people died at the hands of the Nazis.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

emaciated (ĭ mā′ shē āt′ ĭd) *adj.* extremely thin; p. 307
avidly (av′ ĭd lē) *adv.* eagerly; enthusiastically; p. 307
meager (mē′ gər) *adj.* inadequate in amount or quantity; p. 308
din (dĭn) *n.* loud, continuous noise; p. 309

Meet Elie Wiesel

"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness."

At age fifteen, Romanian-born Elie Wiesel (el′ ē wē sel′) and his family were imprisoned in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, two of the most notorious death camps. Although Wiesel survived, most of his family perished. After the war, Wiesel lived and worked as a journalist in Paris before moving to the United States and becoming a citizen. He is a teacher, philosopher, and prolific writer of novels and nonfiction works about the Holocaust as well as about Jewish law, philosophy, and other subjects. Wiesel often speaks out against human rights violations in the world today.

Elie Wiesel was born in 1928. Night was published in English in 1960.

from NIGHT

Elie Wiesel
Translated by Stella Rodway

The SS[1] gave us a fine New Year's gift.

We had just come back from work. As soon as we had passed through the door of the camp, we sensed something different in the air. Roll call did not take so long as usual. The evening soup was given out with great speed and swallowed down at once in anguish.[2]

I was no longer in the same block as my father. I had been transferred to another unit, the building one, where, twelve hours a day, I had to drag heavy blocks of stone about. The head of my new block was a German Jew, small of stature,[3] with piercing eyes. He told us that evening that no one would be allowed to go out after the evening soup. And soon a terrible word was circulating—selection.

We knew what that meant. An SS man would examine us. Whenever he found a weak one, a *musulman*[4] as we called them, he would write his number[5] down: good for the crematory.[6]

1. SS is the abbreviation of the German word *Schutzstaffel*, meaning "protection staff." At first, SS troops acted as Hitler's bodyguards. Later they were in charge of killing prisoners in countries conquered by Germany.
2. *Anguish* (ang' gwish) means "extreme mental or physical pain."
3. *Stature* (stach' ər) means "height."
4. *Musulman* (moo' sool mən)
5. Upon imprisonment in the camps, all people were tattooed with a number on the left forearm. Guards would refer to each person by number instead of by name.
6. A *crematory* is a furnace used to burn bodies.

After soup, we gathered together between the beds. The veterans said:

"You're lucky to have been brought here so late. This camp is paradise today, compared with what it was like two years ago. Buna[7] was a real hell then. There was no water, no blankets, less soup and bread. At night we slept almost naked, and it was below thirty degrees. The corpses were collected in hundreds every day. The work was hard. Today, this is a little paradise. The Kapos[8] had orders to kill a certain number of prisoners every day. And every week—selection. A merciless selection. . . . Yes, you're lucky."

"Stop it! Be quiet!" I begged. "You can tell your stories tomorrow or on some other day."

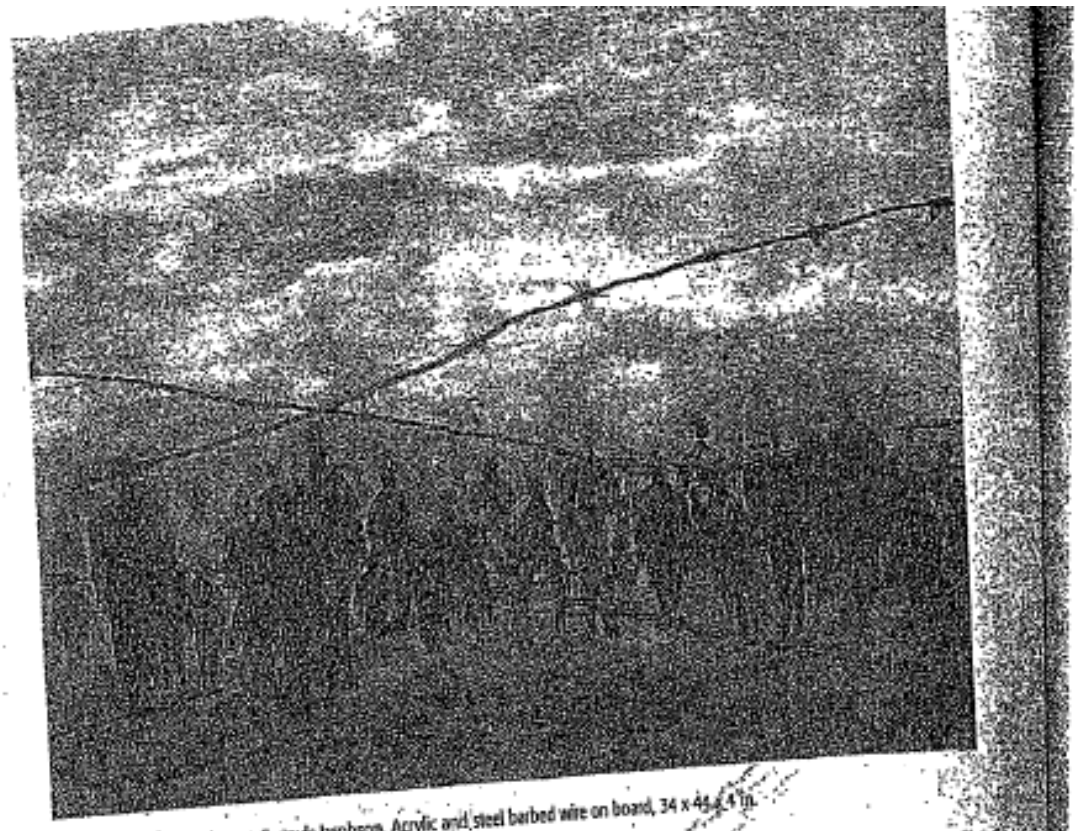
They burst out laughing. They were not veterans for nothing.

"Are you scared? So were we scared. And there was plenty to be scared of in those days."

The old men stayed in their corner, dumb, motionless, haunted. Some were praying.

An hour's delay. In an hour, we should know the verdict—death or a reprieve.[9]

7. *Buna* (boo' nə) was a forced-labor camp in Poland near Auschwitz (oush' vits).
8. *Kapos* (kä' pōz) were themselves prisoners, serving as foremen of the prisoners' buildings or cell blocks.
9. *Reprieve* (ri prēv') means "temporary relief or escape, as from danger or pain."



Anywhere in Europe 1933–45. Gertrude Jacobson. Acrylic and steel barbed wire on board, 34 x 46 x 4 in. Collection of Yad Vashem Museum of Art, Jerusalem.

Viewing the art: What do the title and the barbed wire contribute to the artist's message? How does this excerpt from *Night* convey what it might be like to be a person in this painting?

And my father? Suddenly I remembered him. How would he pass the selection? He had aged so much. . . .

The head of our block had never been outside concentration camps since 1933. He had already been through all the slaughterhouses, all the factories of death. At about nine o'clock, he took up his position in our midst:

"Achtung![10]

There was instant silence.

"Listen carefully to what I am going to say." (For the first time, I heard his voice quiver.) "In a few moments the selection will begin. You must get completely undressed. Then one by one you go before the SS doctors. I hope you will all succeed in getting through. But you must help your own chances. Before you go into the next room, move about in some way so that you give yourselves a little color. Don't walk slowly, run! Run as if the devil were after you! Don't look at the SS. Run, straight in front of you!"

He broke off for a moment, then added:

"And, the essential thing, don't be afraid!"

There was a piece of advice we should have liked very much to be able to follow.

I got undressed, leaving my clothes on the bed. There was no danger of anyone stealing them this evening.

10. *Achtung* (äkh tqoong') is German for "Attention!"

Tibi and Yossi, who had changed their unit at the same time as I had, came up to me and said:

"Let's keep together. We shall be stronger."

Yossi was murmuring something between his teeth. He must have been praying. I had never realized that Yossi was a believer. I had even always thought the reverse. Tibi was silent, very pale. All the prisoners in the block stood naked between the beds. This must be how one stands at the last judgment.[11]

"They're coming!"

There were three SS officers standing around the notorious Dr. Mengele,[12] who had received us at Birkenau.[13] The head of the block, with an attempt at a smile, asked us:

"Ready?"

Yes, we were ready. So were the SS doctors. Dr. Mengele was holding a list in his hand: our numbers. He made a sign to the head of the block: "We can begin!" As if this were a game!

The first to go by were the "officials" of the block: Stubenaelteste,[14] Kapos, foremen, all in perfect physical condition of course! Then came the ordinary prisoners' turn. Dr. Mengele took stock of them from head to foot. Every now and then, he wrote a number down. One single thought filled my mind: not to let my number be taken; not to show my left arm.

There were only Tibi and Yossi in front of me. They passed. I had time to notice that Mengele had not written their numbers down. Someone pushed me. It was my turn. I ran without looking back. My head was spinning: you're too thin, you're weak, you're too thin, you're good for the furnace. . . . The race seemed interminable.[15] I thought I had been running for years. . . . You're too thin, you're too weak. . . . At last I had arrived exhausted. When I regained my breath, I questioned Yossi and Tibi:

"Was I written down?"

"No," said Yossi. He added, smiling: "In any case, he couldn't have written you down, you were running too fast. . . ."

I began to laugh. I was glad. I would have liked to kiss him. At that moment, what did the others matter! I hadn't been written down.

Those whose numbers had been noted stood apart, abandoned by the whole world. Some were weeping in silence.

The SS officers went away. The head of the block appeared, his face reflecting the general weariness.

"Everything went off all right. Don't worry. Nothing is going to happen to anyone. To anyone."

Again he tried to smile. A poor, emaciated, dried-up Jew questioned him avidly in a trembling voice:

"But . . . but, *Blockaelteste*,[16] they did write me down!"

The head of the block let his anger break out. What! Did someone refuse to believe him!

"What's the matter now? Am I telling lies then? I tell you once and for all, nothing's

11. In some religions, the *last judgment* is God's final judgment of humankind, which is to occur on the day the world ends.
12. Infamous for his medical experiments on prisoners, Dr. (Josef) Mengele (meng' a la) personally selected nearly half a million prisoners for death in the Auschwitz gas chambers.
13. Birkenau (bur' ke nou) was the name of one large section of the Auschwitz camp.
14. *Stubenaelteste* (shtōō' ben el' te ste), which translates as "elders of the rooms," refers to a rank of Kapos.
15. The race seemed *interminable*, as if it would never end.
16. *Blockaelteste* (blōk' el' te ste), which translates as "elders of the buildings," refers to a higher rank of Kapos.

Vocabulary
emaciated (i mā' shē āt' ed) *adj.* extremely thin
avidly (av' id lē) *adv.* eagerly; enthusiastically

going to happen to you! To anyone! You're wallowing in your own despair, you fool!"

The bell rang, a signal that the selection had been completed throughout the camp.

With all my might I began to run to Block 36. I met my father on the way. He came up to me:

"Well! So you passed?"

"Yes. And you!"

"Me too."

How we breathed again, now! My father had brought me a present—half a ration of bread obtained in exchange for a piece of rubber, found at the warehouse, which would do to sole a shoe.

The bell. Already we must separate, go to bed. Everything was regulated by the bell. It gave me orders, and I automatically obeyed them. I hated it. Whenever I dreamed of a better world, I could only imagine a universe with no bells.

Several days had elapsed. We no longer thought about the selection. We went to work as usual, loading heavy stones into railway wagons. Rations had become more meager: this was the only change.

We had risen before dawn, as on every day. We had received the black coffee, the ration of bread. We were about to set out for the yard as usual. The head of the block arrived, running.

"Silence for a moment. I have a list of numbers here. I'm going to read them to you. Those whose numbers I call won't be going to work this morning; they'll stay behind in the camp."

And, in a soft voice, he read out about ten numbers. We had understood. These were numbers chosen at the selection. Dr. Mengele had not forgotten.

The head of the block went toward his room. Ten prisoners surrounded him, hanging onto his clothes:

"Save us! You promised . . . ! We want to go to the yard. We're strong enough to work. We're good workers. We can . . . we will. . . ."

He tried to calm them, to reassure them about their fate, to explain to them that the fact that they were staying behind in the camp did not mean much, had no tragic significance.

"After all, I stay here myself every day," he added.

It was a somewhat feeble argument. He realized it, and without another word went and shut himself up in his room.

The bell had just rung.

"Form up!"

It scarcely mattered now that the work was hard. The essential thing was to be as far away as possible from the block, from the crucible[17] of death, from the center of hell.

I saw my father running toward me. I became frightened all of a sudden.

"What's the matter?"

Out of breath, he could hardly open his mouth.

"Me, too . . . me, too . . . ! They told me to stay behind in the camp."

They had written down his number without his being aware of it.

"What will happen?" I asked in anguish.

But it was he who tried to reassure me.

"It isn't certain yet. There's still a chance of escape. They're going to do another selection today . . . a decisive selection."

I was silent.

17. *A crucible* is a heat-resistant vessel for melting metals and ores. The word *crucible* is also used to describe a severe test or trial.

Vocabulary
meager (mē′gər) *adj.* inadequate in amount or quantity

He felt that his time was short. He spoke quickly. He would have liked to say so many things. His speech grew confused; his voice choked. He knew that I would have to go in a few moments. He would have to stay behind alone, so very alone.

"Look, take this knife," he said to me. "I don't need it any longer. It might be useful to you. And take this spoon as well. Don't sell them. Quickly! Go on. Take what I'm giving you!"

The inheritance.

"Don't talk like that, Father." (I felt that I would break into sobs.) "I don't want you to say that. Keep the spoon and knife. You need them as much as I do. We shall see each other again this evening, after work."

He looked at me with his tired eyes, veiled with despair. He went on:

"I'm asking this of you. . . . Take them. Do as I ask, my son. We have no time. . . . Do as your father asks."

Our Kapo yelled that we should start. The unit set out toward the camp gate. Left, right! I bit my lips. My father had stayed by the block, leaning against the wall. Then he began to run, to catch up with us. Perhaps he had forgotten something he wanted to say to me. . . . But we were marching too quickly . . . Left, right!

We were already at the gate. They counted us, to the din of military music. We were outside.

The whole day, I wandered about as if sleepwalking. Now and then Tibi and Yossi would throw me a brotherly word. The Kapo, too, tried to reassure me. He had given me easier work today. I felt sick at heart. How well they were treating me! Like an orphan! I thought: even now, my father is still helping me.

I did not know myself what I wanted—for the day to pass quickly or not. I was afraid of finding myself alone that night. How good it would be to die here!

At last we began the return journey. How I longed for orders to run!

The military march. The gate. The camp.

I ran to Block 36.

Were there still miracles on this earth? He was alive. He had escaped the second selection. He had been able to prove that he was still useful. . . . I gave him back his knife and spoon.

Vocabulary

din (din) *n.* loud, continuous noise

Holocaust Outcry 1993. Alfred Tibor. Cast bronze, bright. 15 in. Collection of the artist.

Viewing the sculpture: Describe your immediate reaction to this sculpture. What connections do you see between the sculpture and this selection?