Reflective Writing

**Reflective writing** is about looking at specific or personal incidents and *exploring their meaning*, or *connecting it* to other experiences or general concepts about life. It is about *using personal experience as a jumping off point*, and then reaching beyond it in order to see or explore the broader implications or significance of it. You are not trying to convince anyone of something, or sway them to your point of view; **you are merely sharing your ideas and your thought processes**.

Choose three passages from the memoir: one from the beginning, one from the middle, and one from the end. The passages you select should have affected you in some way. Then, write a *thorough* journal response (the length of your own writing should far exceed the length of the passage).

1. **Copy the passage.** At the end of the passage, give the page number(s) in parentheses.
2. **Give the background** needed to fully understand your passage. In your own words, explain as much as you have to of what’s already happened in Night in order for the reader to understand what’s happening in the passage. Label this paragraph “Background.”
3. **Give your emotional reactions** to the passage. If you like, compare your reactions to emotional reactions you have had in your own life. Label this paragraph “Emotions.”
4. **Give your intellectual reactions** to the passage. What does the passage reveal about human nature or human behavior generally—about what humans are capable of thinking, feeling and doing? If you like, refer to other incidents in Night, or to incidents in your own life, to support your ideas. (Avoid sermonizing or moralizing, such as “People should be nicer to each other.”) Label this paragraph “Thoughts.”

Thematic topics and motifs that passages have prompted students to think about in the past (which you are not necessarily limited to or guided by) are printed below.

**Thematic Topics:**

Challenges to religious faith

Dehumanization

Discrimination

Human endurance

Optimism/Denial

Peer Pressure

Scapegoating

Selfishness

Relationships & Family

**Motifs**:

Night – pay attention to what happens at night and what that might symbolize.

Bearing Witness – The word “bear” means to carry, and it is usually associated with carrying some kind of burden or something heavy. Pay attention to which characters are witnesses and to what they bear witness.

Father-son Relationships – Pay attention to how Elie and his father’s relationship develops; in addition, notice other father-son relationships in the book.

Loss of faith – Notice how Elie’s faith in God changes as the book progresses. Consider this as a focus for at least one of your journals.

Voice vs. Silence – Notice who has a voice and who chooses to remain silent. (Think of “voice” as both actual verbalization, as well as a way to show power in having a right to speak one’s truth.) Why might Elie Wiesel title his novel what he did originally, and why did he no longer remain silent?

***Your responses must be formatted according to MLA guidelines,***

***and submitted to TurnItIn.com on Monday, April 22.***