English 10H

***Night* Evaluation**

* *Choose FIVE statements to respond to. Answer each question in paragraph form.* ***In each response, please include quotes or passages from the memoir to illustrate your point, or to illustrate how the author responded to specific experiences. Use the proper MLA citation format and heading.***
* ***Turnitin.com submission date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

1. What was your emotional reaction to the book? What thoughts went through your mind as you followed young Elie on his journey? Fully explain and provide annotations of specific passages that support your answers.

2. Do you think other people can ever really understand what the author experienced in the concentration camp? If someone asked you describe exactly what you think Elie Wiesel thought and felt while living in the camps, how would you do so? Provide specific examples to back up your claim.

3. Elie Wiesel has stated, “My whole life, my whole work, has been devoted to questions, not to answers.” Having read *Night*, formulate at least three questions that you think might be of paramount importance to Wiesel. After, please answer those same questions (as yourself).

4. Throughout the last few days of his father’s life, Wiesel is tormented by the guilt he feels over his inability to help his father more than he does, and for secretly wanting to feed himself before feeding his father. During this time, Wiesel is told: “Every man has to fight for himself and not think of everyone else…Everyone lives and dies for himself alone.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

5. Wiesel painstakingly describes his experience of “loss” – the loss of his family, his homeland, his home, his childhood, and most significantly, his God. When a person is asked, “what makes life worth living,” attachment to one or more of the elements Wiesel describes is often noted. Which attachments/connections in life most contribute to your sense of meaning? How do you think that you would react to the loss of one (or more) of these attachments? How is a person to find, discover, or create meaning in life after an experience of profound loss, as Wiesel experienced?

6. It has been said that the one belief most responsible for the bloodshed of countless individuals through history is this one: “Those who do not share my faith (or race or religion or political ideology) do not share my humanity; ‘they’ are different than ‘us’ and thus not ‘human’ in the same way we are.” What do think and feel about this way of looking at life and others? Why, do you think, does it seem so difficult to appreciate human differences? Do you think that this tendency is inborn, or do we learn to devalue the “other”? Does education play some role in reversing the tendency to devalue those who are different from me, from “my kind”? How does education (if it plays as role at all) make a difference in how we perceive and treat others?

7. Once a person reaches the “Those (others) are not (really) human” stage, it is quite easy to detest them—to hate them—and yet still perceive oneself as “good.” In his discussions of the anatomy of hate, Elie Wiesel observes that anti-Semites hate all Jews—those that were born yesterday and those that will be born tomorrow; in hating all Jews they thus hate people whom they’ve never even met. So, asks Wiesel: “What do they hate when they hate, and whom do they hate when they hate?” Ultimately, Wiesel argues, this hatred is not only destructive, but self-destructive. Do you think hatred is both destructive and self-destructive? Why or why not? How do we come to hate certain groups? And once we give in to hate, how would we answer Wiesel’s question: “What do you hate when you hate, and whom do you hate when you hate?”

8. You might wonder how the Nazis and other Germans could possibly have carried out the horrific acts demanded of them, even if they did in fact learn to hate the Jews. Some scholars would explain their collaboration in terms of “deindividuation:” a loss of individuality as one becomes submerged in the group, which leads to lessened self-awareness and weakened restraint against harmful acts. Can you think of instances when you experienced a reduced self-awareness due to membership in a cohesive group? Others scholars focus on the excuse given by many persons who went along with the horrific massacres: “I was only following orders.” At what point do persons bear a responsibility for their own actions, even when ordered to commit an act by a “legitimate authority?”

9. Perhaps the concept of deindividuation can give partial understanding to why groups commit harmful acts, but what about the people lead others into this collaboration in acts of evil and hatred? Often we immediately think that something must be inherently “wrong” or “different” about someone who could mastermind such horrific acts. However, scholars often use the phrase “banality of evil” to indicate that, rather than being something extra ordinary, the propensity for evil is something ordinary and common place in human beings. Consider this: Adolf Hitler wanted to be a painter, but he could not gain admission to art school. How is it possible that this same man could have led the Holocaust? Is evil derived from inherent traits or life circumstances? What circumstances might have lead Hitler (or might lead any person) to commit acts of hatred?

10. When reading Wiesel’s experience of *Night* and reflecting on the massive devastation caused by Hitler’s project, it is tempting to isolate the Holocaust—to cling to a blind hope that humanity “has come a long way since then,” that humanity will affirm with one voice: “Never again.” In our college courses, however, we learn about Rwanda in the mid-1990’s, of the mass graves found in Bosnia and Kosovo, of the *current* plight of the millions in Sudan who are starving, and of the current plight of millions of orphans and children around the world. What does it take for a person to become socially aware? To understand the world around her? Is it enough to read the newspaper or watch the news now and again?