

Middle School Book Reviews

Title: *Night*

Author: Elie Wiesel

Genre: Memoir

Night starts out in Sighet, Czechoslovakia, 1941, the beginning of World War II. Throughout the book, the author, Eliezer Wiesel is moved through several treacherous concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Buna. Most of the action takes place in these camps, as Elie struggles to survive. The book covers Elie's life from 1941 to 1945, a time when, in Nazi controlled Europe, Jews like Elie, along with countless others were taken to concentration camps where they were held, forced to work, or killed. The concentration camps Elie stayed at had conditions ranging from poor to barely livable. Although one of his camps was stated to be "better off", he still had little food, old clothing and long workdays. He had to work in the snow and heat, march long distances through the cold and sleep in the mud on the floor, sometimes surrounded by the dead corpses of his companions. The author didn't "choose" the setting of his story; he was placed in it. However, I believe he chose to write about this part of his life because it shows the issues Jews went through and the cruelty man can show to man.

The main character in this book is Eliezer Wiesel. He was a Jewish boy of 15, born in Sighet, Czechoslovakia. He was thoughtful, loyal and kind throughout the book, but as he goes through one after another hardship, his character changes greatly. When at first he was deeply religious and awed by his God, he begins to doubt, and even despise Him. He stops caring about others about seeing so many die before him. One thing he doesn't lose is his love for his father. Although many times he wondered if it wouldn't be easier to leave his weak father behind, Eliezer sticks with him until the end. This loyalty is one of his best traits, while one of his worst, even if only caused by the circumstances, is his lack of concern or empathy for anyone besides himself or his father.

The message of this book was clear. Without hope, courage and empathy, men can turn on one another without thought or reason, and without education to understand other people, this can become even worse. Although the heartless soldiers stood out to me, the heartless prisoners stood out even more. For example, in one part of the book, a boy, or young man killed his own father over a piece of bread, so animal was his desire for food. I think the author wants you to learn about how harshly the Jews were treated during this time period, and the sheer viciousness of the Holocaust.

This book definitely held my interest. There were no slow parts, and although it was not an extremely difficult read, it was very thought provoking and very engrossing. I would recommend it to almost anyone. Whether they like action or history or complex characters or anything else, this book will probably have it. I think any one can enjoy, and more importantly learn from *Night*.

Title: *The Maze Runner*
Author: James Dashner
Genre: Science Fiction

The Maze Runner takes place in a very mysterious place called the “Glade” which is located in the center of a huge maze made of stone, and every night the walls close around the Glade so the stone walls can slide around to create a brand new maze. Most of the action takes place out in the maze at night when the Grievors come out. The Grievors are half machine and half animal, and will kill any person they find in the maze at night with no mercy. The author probably chose this setting because it’s very mysterious and leaves you wanting to come back and read more just so you can find out more about this strange place.

The main character of the book is a boy named Thomas. Thomas is very curious as to how he got to the Glade, why everyone was sent here in the first place, and what life was like outside of the Glade where he actually had a family. Being curious could be a good thing, but in the Glade it can also be a bad thing. Many people in the Glade don’t like to be questioned or doubted, even though in some cases Thomas’s curiosity could pay off.

The plot of the book is to have Thomas and all of the other “Gladers” find their way out of the maze using out of the ordinary ways of thought. Thomas tries to be the hero throughout many parts of the book, but sometimes he doesn’t think about what’s safe for him, and he only thinks about saving the day. The climax of the book is when all of the “Gladers” decide to make one last run for it and then everything becomes dysfunctional.

After reading the story, the author wants you to feel on edge because you find out how the outside world has changed for the worse, and the Glade might have been a good option. The author also wants you to learn that everyone has to work together so accomplish something huge. When someone tries a huge task alone they probably won’t be able to do it, but together they can do anything.

This book held my interest because no matter where you decided to stop reading, you were always left on a cliffhanger. The book is very suspenseful, especially when they had no choice but to run for their lives. I would recommend this book to anyone, whether they usually like science fiction or not because I usually don’t, and this book was still extremely well-written and had an amazing storyline.