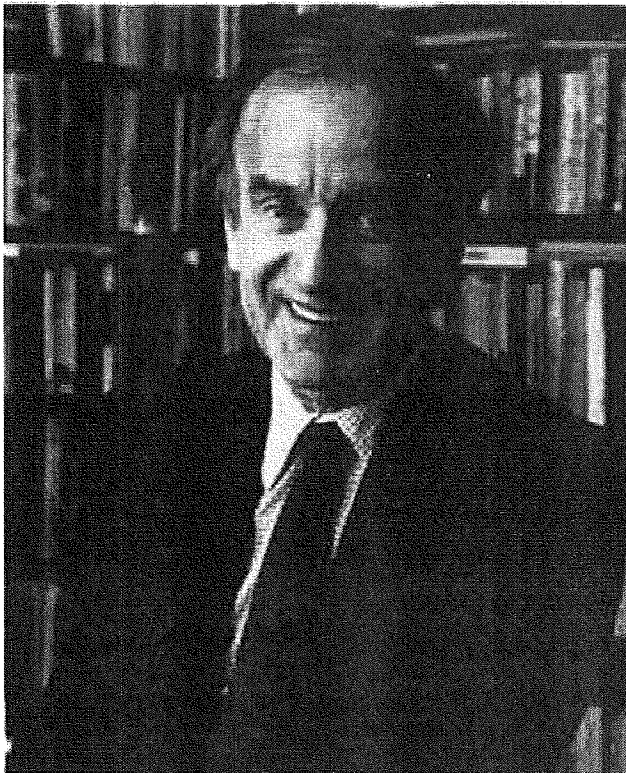


Elie Wiesel Biography

No other individual is so identified with the Holocaust—its memory and its prevention—as Wiesel. He was born in 1928 in Sighet, Romania, to Shlomo (a grocer) and Sarah Wiesel. His parents were part of a Hasidic Jewish community and encouraged him in his religious studies. Growing up, young Wiesel "believed profoundly" and felt it his duty to pray. In 1944, the distant threat of Hitler invaded the community, and his family was deported to a concentration camp. A few years after the war, Wiesel was reunited with surviving family members—two sisters.



Eliezer Wiesel

At the war's close, Wiesel hoped to emigrate to Palestine which would see the declaration of the state of Israel in 1947. Being an orphan, however, placed him with other children enroute to Belgium. General Charles de Gaulle intervened and brought the train to France. Wiesel finished his teens in Normandy and won entrance to the Sorbonne in Paris. After completing his studies he became a journalist. After a decade of living in France he moved to the United States and eventually gained American citizenship. In 1969, he married Marion Erster Rose. She is also a survivor of the camps and a writer in her own right. She became his English translator.

In 1954, while working on assignment for a Tel Aviv newspaper, he interviewed Nobel Laureate Francois Mauriac. When the discussion turned to the suffering of Jesus Wiesel angrily burst out that nobody was speaking of the suffering just a few years before. Mauriac suggested he break the silence. The result was the first of many works, an eight hundred-page memoir in Yiddish, *Un di Velt Hot Geshvign* (1956), which detailed his experience of losing his family and friends to the concentration camps. This work became the famous *La Nuit* (1958), or, in English, *Night* (1960).

At the time of the book's completion, nobody wanted to be reminded of the Holocaust. In fact, the publishing world felt Anne Frank's *Diary of a Little Girl* was a sufficient memento of the horror. A tiny firm disagreed