

**SAMPLE ANNOTATED PASSAGE**

*Night* by Elie Wiesel

Passage from pg 91

Toolkit # \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Context** – During the evacuation the labor camp, Rabbi Eliahu and his son, who are incredibly close, are separated during a march from one concentration camp to the next. At a stopping point to rest, Elie recalls an encounter in which the Rabbi approaches him looking for his son.

When he came near me, Rabbi Eliahu whispered, "It happened on the road. We lost sight of one another during the journey. I fell behind a little, at the rear of the column. I didn't have the strength to run anymore. And my son didn't notice. That's all I know. Where had he disappeared? Where can I find him? Perhaps you've seen him somewhere?"

"No, Rabbi Eliahu, I haven't seen him."

And so he left, as he had come: a shadow swept away by the wind.

He had already gone through the door when I remembered that I had noticed his son running beside me. I had forgotten and so had not mentioned it to Rabbi Eliahu!

But then I remembered something else: his son *had* seen him losing ground, sliding back to the rear of the column. He had seen him. And he had continued to run in front, letting the distance between them become greater.

A terrible thought crossed my mind: What if he had wanted to be rid of his father? He had felt his father growing weaker and, believing that the end was near, had thought by this separation to free himself of a burden that could diminish his own chance for survival.

It was good that I *had* forgotten all that. And I was glad that Rabbi Eliahu continued to search for his beloved son.

**Stylistic Devices**

**Metaphor**

Compares Rabbi Eliahu to shadow. Shows transformation separation has had both physically and emotionally.

**Opposites**

"swept away" – light  
"burden" – a heavy load  
\*uses opposites to show different perspectives between father & son

**Punctuation**

**Colons** – used to define or explain what follows in a text. In this case, is defining what terror is to Elie (that a son might abandon his father for his own survival).

**Question mark** – frames statement as a question because he can hardly believe son would do this. Internally questioning if he would make this same choice.

**2. Box Names**

**3. Definitions**

- "rear of the column" – back of the line
- "losing ground" – falling behind
- diminish – to make or become less

**4. Summary** - Elie describes the effect the separation from his son has had on the once strong religious leader and questions if the son's disappearance may in fact, have been a deliberate attempt to escape from his father to increase his chances for survival.

**5. THREE Stylistic Devices** – see above

**6. Connotations**

**7. Tone** – desperate, hopeless, confusing, uneasy, shocked

**8. Topics** – paternal bonds, survival, transformation

**9. Theme** – When it comes to survival, for some, powerful relationships provide hope, but for others, are a burden to be shed.

shadow

- No emotions or thoughts
- Cannot see physical features or face
- Dark
- Cannot touch; disappears without

**Prompt:** How do stylistic devices used in this passage contribute to an overall theme or message?

In his memoir *Night*, Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, narrates his own experiences as a boy struggling to survive through the horrors of a concentration camp where paternal bonds are tested. During one scene in particular, he recalls an encounter with Rabbi Eliahu, who is looking for his son after being evacuated from a labor camp and forced to march to a new destination in which they were separated. Elie describes the effect the separation has had on this once strong religious leader and questions if the son's disappearance may in fact, have been a deliberate attempt to escape from his father. Through the use of metaphor, contrasting language and punctuation, Wiesel conveys the message that when it comes to survival, for some, powerful relationships like paternal bonds can give one hope, but for others, such relationships are a burden to be shed.

Through the use of metaphor, Elie is able to capture the internal strength paternal relationships provide and both the physical and emotional effects when lost. Rabbi Eliahu maintains his strength, enduring all the hardships of the Holocaust and concentration camps. However, after being separated from his son on the journey from one concentration camp to the next, Rabbi Eliahu is a completely changed man and leaves "as he had come; a shadow swept away by the wind" (91). Wiesel uses the metaphor of describing Rabbi Eliahu as a "shadow" because he has no strength of power and is physically barely visible. All life and desire to live, which we associate with color, has dissolved into the dark blur of a shadow because the Rabbi has lost the only person who has given him hope to live. "Swept" is also a significant word in this metaphor. Something that is "swept" can be picked up and carried away further reinforcing the Rabbi's loss of desire to live. He no longer cares what happens to him. Like a shadow that disappears with light, Eliahu has lost what has kept him human, his son.

The contrasting language in this same scene emphasizes that for others, however, close ties must be cut to survive. Elie realizes after the religious leader has left, that the Rabbi's son may have deliberately separated himself from his father "to free himself of a burden that could diminish his own chance for survival" (91). A "burden" is the opposite of something that is so light it can be "swept away by the wind." It is something you carry that is heavy and keeps you from moving freely. Wiesel uses these opposites to show the difference between the two perspectives. What gives Rabbi Eliahu hope, the relationship between him and his son, is a burden to his child when it comes to survival.

Perhaps what is most terrifying though for Elie, emphasized by the punctuation, is the fear that he might someday make this same choice. Elie writes, "A terrible thought crossed my mind: What if he had wanted to be rid of his father?" (91). Wiesel frames the idea as a question because it is so shocking, he can hardly find it possible to believe. What is more noteworthy though, is the use of the colon. A colon is often used to indicate that what follows further defines or explains an idea that comes before it. In this situation, Elie is defining what true terror is to him. Wiesel writes he is "glad that Rabbi Eliahu continued to search for his beloved son" taking comfort in that at least the Rabbi is sheltered from the truth but also wanting to quickly forget this new realization about the choice those struggling to survive sometimes face.

Wiesel's use of metaphor, contrasting language and punctuation show the power of paternal bonds and how the Holocaust tested such relationships. The Rabbi's previously strong relationship with his son is not that different from the one between Elie and his own father. The realization that a son might abandon his own father is terrifying to Elie and seeing the Rabbi's transformation paints a picture of the cost of such a choice. These stylistic devices are used to convey the theme that such connections can provide strength when it is needed most but for others, it may be seen as a burden that weighs them down. While the conditions may be different, most of us have bonds with our parents that are often tested as the ones we love grow older and are forced to rely more on the children they raised. The sacrifices sometimes necessary to provide our parents' strength is a question many of us will grapple with at some point in our lives. When we do, we might remind ourselves that there is always a cost to cutting what we consider a burden, no matter how necessary, to "survive."

