

2025 Elie Wiesel Competition
Special Commendation, Junior Essay
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During the Holocaust, about 25,000 Jews participated in resistance efforts. Although physically fighting back was rarely successful, Jews could rebel in many ways, including making art. Art can be used as resistance to explain the traumatic events Jewish people went through and fight back against what the Nazis wanted: to erase Jewish people and their culture. This art is extremely powerful to this day, because art brings viewers into the mind of the artist to tell stories by sharing experiences, evoking emotion, and encouraging interpretation.

One way art can tell a story is through sharing experiences with people alike and different to the artist. Anne Frank's diary tells what happened throughout 25 months spent in hiding. The diary is a factual account, but it also contained what Frank hoped and dreamed of. Art is activism; people today would have never known what Frank thought if she never made this piece of art. Additionally, in a poem by Eva Pickova entitled "Forgotten," the author says, "Perhaps it's better-who can say?-Than watching this, to die today?" Pickova wrote this while imprisoned in Terezin. The poem is powerful in part solely because of the context of its creation. These pieces of art tell a story because they can connect people who have been through the Holocaust, and validate an alienating experience.

Because art can transport the viewer into the artist's thoughts, art can tell stories. In her diary, Anne Frank wrote, "I have often been downcast, but never in despair; I regard our hiding as a dangerous adventure, romantic and interesting all the time." (page 381) Frank's diary is a piece of art that is adept at telling stories because it shows her thoughts and displays to the reader what she went through. Throughout *Night* by Elie Wiesel, the reader discovers how his encounters with concentration camps affected the main character's religious beliefs. Wiesel struggled to believe in God because the world was against him. *Night* tells the story of Wiesel's beliefs using his thoughts about what he experienced as a medium.

Art can also tell stories because it can be interpreted in millions of ways. As said by Edgar Degas, "Art is not what you see, but what you make others see." Anyone's personal experience can change the output of what they see in a piece of art, so what one person understands is different from another's. Much of art is ambiguous and left for the viewer to take as their own. In *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, while the prisoners are forced to march in the snow, Wiesel says, "We were the masters of nature, the masters of the world. We had transcended everything - death, fatigue, our natural needs." (page 87) This description is imagined in each person's mind very differently, especially between people who went through the Holocaust and people who did not. Because of this divide, each story the art tells is unique.

In conclusion, through encouraging the reader to experience events, feel emotion, and make their own interpretations, art can tell a powerful story. Diaries, poems, and books like *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Night* tell the stories of Jews during the Holocaust because they transport the reader into the author's mind. The purpose of art is to evoke emotions, and art from the Holocaust stands as a monument from 1939 to the present because of the artists' own emotions that transfuse themselves into each and every piece.

Works Cited

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[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL8347284M/I_Never_Saw_Another_Butterfly_\(One_Act\)](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL8347284M/I_Never_Saw_Another_Butterfly_(One_Act))

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