

2025 Elie Wiesel Competition

Special Commendation Junior Poetry

Faith Ducksworth, 8th Grade

Krimmel Intermediate School, Holly Walsh

For they have not seen what I've seen,

For they do not know what I know.

Foolish, I was. For not believing in what my master had seen, for I hadn't known.

I hadn't known of the atrocities, all I had known was a once sane man changed.

Alike to a butterfly growing wings of fire and gasoline, something of the unbelievable.

Foolish, I was. For unbelievable is the truth that people won't acknowledge.

I was told of the stories, and yet... I turned my head.

Alike to a gazelle continuing to feast on grass knowing the piercing gaze of a lion is upon it.

At that moment, I was similar to... them.

I closed my eyes to the sight, I closed my ears at the desperate words spilling with grief.

Foolish, I was, for I had not seen what he had seen.

For I did not know what he knew.

Foolish, we were. Alike to insects waiting for sharp beaks to slaughter them.

We had known of the threats from Hitler. And yet...Germans, in our towns, our houses.

And for some unknown reason... we were smiling, laughing even!

Alike to cheeky children who had cheated on a test, unknowing that the teacher was aware.

Filled with ignorance, arrogance, and a false sense of security.

Day by day it grew worse. We grew quiet, for the race toward death had begun.

And now, it wasn't funny anymore.

For, weren't we warned?

Foolish, we were, for we had seen what was to happen, and yet, ignored it.

For we had known, and alike to moths, we had flown into the flame.

Foolish, everyone was.

Forced to give up valuables, for your hard work was nothing more than the death penalty.

Sent to ghettos, the streets for what did it matter?
Alike to an old dog with no fight, seemingly waiting for the inetable.
Dogs who loudly barked confidently, but had no bite.
Talk of us on vacation for the use of stealing valuables.
Ha! Now that was something truly funny.
Foolish, we were, for we had no idea of what we were to soon see.
For back then, we did not know what I now know.

Foolish, we were. For not becoming united. (For the pain could've been lessened.)
Flames enriched with bodies released smoke of the screams and pained eyes of my people.
Never shall I forget the night my God was slaughtered with human hands,
Choked by the ruthless, le German palms.
Alike to a young songbird watching its mother die by strangulation.
The wishing well of humanity had been depleted, none le to go around.
Fights taking place between father and son for mere bread,
Whippings and lashings to all,
Shots fired mercilessly at malnourished men who only wished for food,
The hanging of small children who symbolized the only innocence le in the world,
The hanging of a pipel. The tortured slow death as he hung. That of a testimony.
Foolish, we were...
For our God was hanging here from this gallow.

For there are stories told, but they were incomparable to what I had lived.
For I had lived the pain for ten different lives.
For those who tell stories, have not lived what I lived, have not seen what I've seen.
For they could not imagine the eyes of a hungry boy, the eyes of a cold killer,
For they could not imagine their faith shattering into glass thrown into the flame of ashes,
For they could not imagine being trampled from a thousand feet crying for mercy,
For they could not imagine the death that filled every corner, every particle.
For I could not bear to keep my story any longer,

For they have not seen what I've seen,
For they do not know what I know.