

Cost of Indifference

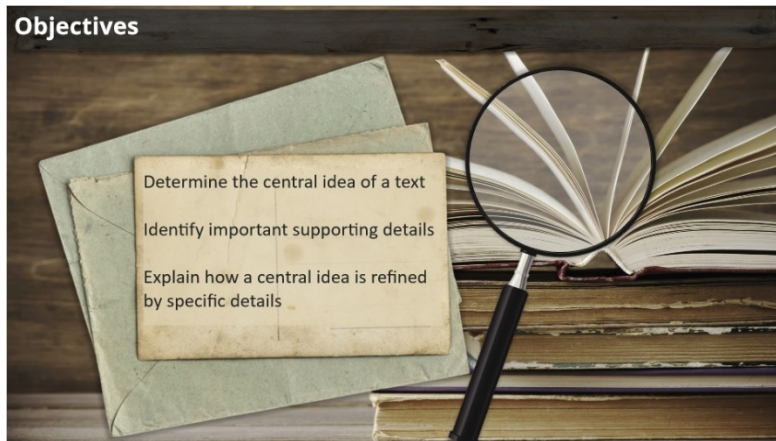
1.1 Opening Slide



Notes:

Welcome to “The Cost of Indifference: Determining the Central Idea,” an online English Language Arts tutorial for students in ninth and tenth grades.

1.2 Objectives

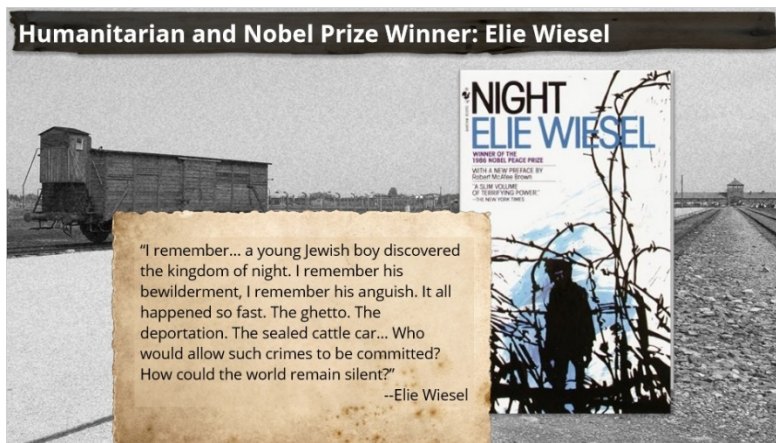


Notes:

Being able to identify an author's central ideas in a text is an important skill to know and be able to use when reading. In addition, after determining a central idea of a text, being able to analyze how authors use details to help support and refine that central idea is important both as a reader and as a writer. Further, being able to back up your thinking and analysis with appropriate evidence from the text will prove a very useful skill over the course of your education.

In this tutorial, we will read a few selected excerpts from texts written by Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel. As we learn to use the following skills, we will look carefully at his words so that we may think critically and deeply about his central ideas. By the end of this tutorial you should be able to determine the central idea of a text. You should also be able to identify the important supporting details of a central idea, as well as explain how the central idea is refined by specific details.

1.3 Humanitarian and Nobel Prize Winner: Elie Wiesel



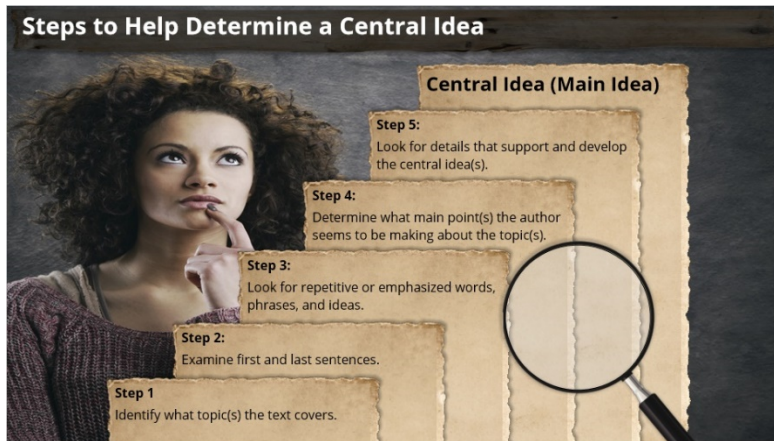
Notes:

Let's get briefly acquainted with the author of the text excerpts we will read in this tutorial. Elie Wiesel is a professor, political activist, and the author of fifty seven books. He is also a Holocaust survivor who was imprisoned during World War II in the Nazi concentration camps and work camps of Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald. He experienced and witnessed firsthand the inhumane cruelties that the prisoners suffered at the hands of their captors. He shares some of these memories in his book, *Night*. Elie was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his work against repression, racism, and violence. We will be reading excerpts from his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, as well as excerpts from "The Perils of Indifference," a speech he gave at the White House in 1999.

Slide Layer Text:

"I remember... a young Jewish boy discovered the kingdom of night. I remember his bewilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car... Who would allow such crimes to be committed? How could the world remain silent?" --Elie Wiesel

1.4 Steps to Help Determine a Central Idea



Notes:

Before we go any further, we will review the term central idea and discuss a few steps you can use to determine the central ideas in a text. The central idea is sometimes called the main idea. The central idea is the dominant, most important, or chief idea that emerges from all the ideas presented in a piece of text. There can be more than one central idea in a text. To help you determine the central ideas in a text, you might first want to identify what topic or topics are the focus of the text. You can ask yourself, "Who or what is this text primarily about?"

Then, you can examine the first and last sentences of each paragraph and especially the first and last sentences of the entire text. Sometimes authors will implicitly or explicitly reveal the central ideas in these locations in the text, but they do not have to. Even if they don't, you can still glean important information from these locations in the text. Next, read the text carefully to look for use of repetitive or emphasized words, phrases and ideas. After that, take all of this information into consideration and try to determine what main point the author is making about the topic. This will help you determine the central idea. You then check to see if your analysis is sound by looking carefully at the details throughout the text. Do the details help support and develop the central idea? If so, you should be right on point!

1.5 Practice 1: Sequence the Steps

Practice 1: Sequence the Steps

There is much to be done, there is much that can be done. One person – a Raoul Wallenberg, an Albert Schweitzer, one person of integrity, can make a difference, a difference of life and death. As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our lives will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs.

Use the steps you just reviewed to put the items below in the correct sequence.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
I notice the contrasts of "one" and "alone" vs "we" and "our." "Freedom" appears three times, "difference" and "done" appear twice, and "one" appears four times.	Supporting details: "There is much that can be done," "One person of integrity, can make a difference..." "... when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours..."	This text seems to be primarily about victims and the role or task of those who are not victims.	The first and last sentences tell me that this paragraph will address that action must be taken on behalf of victims who are suffering around the world.	Central idea: As long as there is injustice in the world we have to speak up for the victims who need us to fight for them; each individual action can make a difference for those who suffer.

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Now you will put these steps to use. This paragraph comes from Elie Wiesel's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. "There is much to be done, there is much that can be done. One person - a Raoul Wallenberg, an Albert Schweitzer, one person of integrity, can make a difference, a difference of life and death. As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our lives will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs."

Use the steps you just reviewed in the last slide about determining a central idea to help you put the items in the correct sequence.

Feedback when correct:

Great work! You remembered to first determine the topic or topics of the text. You can do this by asking yourself, "Who or what is the text primarily about?" Then you can look at the first and last sentence of the paragraph as sometimes authors like to implicitly or explicitly reveal the central idea in these locations. Even if the author chooses not to reveal the central idea here, you can still receive some important information from these parts of the text. Then, you can pay attention to emphasized or repeated words, phrases, and ideas. After completing these steps, you can ask yourself, "What main point is the author making about the topic? This can help you determine the central idea. Finally, you can determine if your analysis is sound by making sure the key details in the text support the central idea.

Feedback when incorrect:

A good first step is to determine the topic or topics of the text. You can do this by asking yourself, “Who or what is the text primarily about?” This paragraph seems to be primarily about victims and the role or task of those who are not victims. Then you can look at the first and last sentences of the paragraph as sometimes authors like to implicitly or explicitly reveal the central idea in these locations. Even if the author chooses not to reveal the central idea here, you can still receive some important information from these parts of the text. In this paragraph, the first sentence describes that there is much that can be done, or in other words, much action that can be taken. In the last sentence it describes what action we should take to help those who are victims. The next step involves paying attention to emphasized or repeated words, phrases, and ideas. Elie repeats a number of words in this paragraph. After completing these steps, you can ask yourself, “What main point is the author making about the topic? This can help you determine the central idea. We could say that Elie’s central idea is that as long as there is injustice in the world we have to speak up for the victims who need us to fight for them; each individual action can make a difference for those who suffer. Finally, you can determine if your analysis is sound by making sure the key details in the text support the central idea.

Drag Item	Drop Target
This text seems to be primarily about victims and the role or task of those who are not victims.	Step 1
The first and last sentences tell me that this paragraph will address that action must be taken on behalf of victims who are suffering around the world.	Step 2
I notice the contrasts of “one” and “alone” vs “we” and “our.” “Freedom” appears three times, “difference” and “done” appear twice, and “one” appears four times.	Step 3
Central Idea: As long as there is injustice in the world we have to speak up for the victims who need us to fight for them; each individual action can make a difference for those who suffer.	Step 4

Drag Item	Drop Target
Supporting details: “There is much that can be done.” “One person of integrity, can make a difference....” “... when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours...”	Step 5

1.6 An Excerpt from Elie Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

An Excerpt from Elie Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. **Neutrality** helps the **oppressor**, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become **irrelevant**. Wherever men or women are **persecuted** because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe.

--Elie Wiesel

Click the bold words for definitions.

Notes:

Let's read another excerpt from Elie Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

"...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe."

If you want to see some of the definitions for the more challenging words in this excerpt, please click on the bold words. Take a look at these definitions and how the words are used in the text before you move to the next slide.

Slide Layer Popup Text:

Neutrality: noninvolvement; being neutral

Oppressor: one who treats others in a cruel or unfair way

Irrelevant: not relevant to the matter at hand; not important

Persecuted: to oppress, harass, or mistreat especially because of race, religion, political beliefs, etc.

1.7 Putting the Steps to Use

Putting the Steps to Use

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe.

--Elie Wiesel

STEP ONE Determine the topic. Who or what is the text primarily about?	STEP TWO Look at the first and last sentences.	STEP THREE Look for words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized.	STEP FOUR Determine what main point the author seems to be making about the topic. What is the central idea?	STEP FIVE Look for details that support and develop the central idea.
--	--	--	--	---

↓ Click to download note taking guide

Notes:

Together, let's put some of our steps to use on this excerpt. If you want to take notes throughout the tutorial, a note-taking guide is available to download. You are welcome to print it and take notes as we go.

First I want to determine the topic. I will ask myself who or what is the text primarily about? The passage seems to be primarily about people, particularly people who are victims.

Second, I will look closely at the first and last sentences of the text. The first sentence seems to be referring to Elie's experiences during the Holocaust. What happened to Elie and millions of other Jews, as well as millions of other persecuted people groups, was allowed to happen because for too long the world didn't speak up or take action. The last sentence sums up Elie's view of what people must do wherever unfair treatment is happening; wherever these people are located, that place has to become the focus of the rest of humanity.

Third, I will look for words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized. I see many words and phrases that are similar in meaning. "Neutrality" and "silence" both refer to not speaking up or not getting involved. "Victim," "tormented," and "persecuted" all refer to those who are being mistreated. "Oppressor" and "tormentor" both refer to the people who are mistreating others. "Take sides" and "interfere" both refer to doing something, getting involved, or trying to help. "Human beings," "human lives," and "human dignity" all draw attention to the fact that Elie is talking about fellow humans who are in danger. "Endure suffering," and "humiliation," emphasize that Elie is talking about people who have to go through a lot and who are subjected to great misery.

Now it's your turn to think about steps four and five. Ask yourself, "What is the main point Elie seems to be making about his topic?" Remember we said that this passage is primarily about people, particularly people who are victims. What do you think the central idea for this passage is? Once you have come up with the central idea, check to see if your analysis is sound by making sure there are key details that support and develop the central idea.

Slide Layer Text:

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe. --Elie Wiesel

1.8 Practice 2: Determine the Central Idea

Practice 2: Determine the Central Idea

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe.

--Elie Wiesel

Which statement expresses the central idea of the speech excerpt? Choose one.

A	Staying silent helps the cause of the tormentor.
B	When human lives are in danger, locations become unimportant.
C	We must take a stand for people who are being mistreated.
D	The world knew about the Holocaust and took no action; it remained silent.

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Keeping in mind all that we learned in the last slide, which of the following statements expresses the central idea of the speech excerpt? Choose the best answer.

Slide Layer Text:

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe. --Elie Wiesel

Feedback when correct:

Good Job! Choice C best captures the central idea of the text. Elie says we must interfere; we must take sides. We cannot remain neutral or silent. It is also important to realize that the central idea of this paragraph would have to involve an action like “taking a stand.”

Feedback when incorrect:

Choice C best captures the central idea of the text. Elie says we must interfere; we must take sides. We cannot remain neutral or silent. It is also important to realize that the central idea of this paragraph would have to involve an action like “taking a stand.” Choices A, B, and D are details in the paragraph, and A and B in particular support the central idea well, but none of these are the central idea or the main point the author is trying to make about the topic.

Remember that we identified the primary topic of this excerpt is people, particularly people who

are victims. What main point is Elie trying to make about this topic? That we must take a stand for those who are being victimized or mistreated.

Correct	Choice
No	A - Staying silent helps the cause of the tormentor.
No	B – When human lives are in danger, locations become unimportant
Yes	C – We must take a stand for people who are being mistreated
No	D – The world knew about the Holocaust and took no action; it remained silent

1.9 Practice 3: Details that Support the Central Idea

Practice 3: Details that Support the Central Idea

Now that you know the central idea — we must take a stand for people who are being mistreated — what details in the text help support and develop this central idea?

type here

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe.

--Elie Wiesel

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Now that you know the central idea—we must take a stand for people who are being mistreated—what details in the text help support and develop this central idea? Use the text box to type your response.

Slide Layer Text:

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe. --Elie Wiesel

Feedback:

There were a number of different details that you could have listed that help support and develop the central idea. Here are a few examples; how do they compare to what you identified?

Sample Responses

Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. (If we are being neutral and staying out of it, this won't help those who are being victimized, and in fact, it hurts them because the tormentors have no reason to stop.)

Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. (If we remain silent and don't speak up for those who are being victimized it encourages the tormentors to continue harming the victims.)

Borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. (We cannot let geography, distance, nationality, political correctness, or anything else stop us from helping those who are being victimized. We must take a stand no matter what.)

1.10 Details that Refine the Central Idea

Details that Refine the Central Idea

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe.

--Elie Wiesel

The central idea: We must take a stand for people who are being mistreated.

Text Evidence:
"humiliation"
"suffering"
"endangered"
"persecuted"

Refines the central idea by:
Zeroing in on the experience of a victim of injustice to activate our emotions

Text Evidence:
"take sides"
"interfere"
"become the center of the universe"

Refines the central idea by:
Zeroing in on the actions we must take to make us feel accountable even if the injustice doesn't affect us directly

Notes:

Before we move on, let's go just a little deeper in our analysis of this excerpt. Not only can authors use details to help support and develop their central ideas, they can also use details to help refine their central idea. To refine means to make more precise. So, authors can use details to clarify and zoom in on their central ideas to make their meaning even clearer for their audience. When we analyze a piece of text and determine a central idea, we can look for details that support and develop the central idea, as well as details that refine the central idea.

In this excerpt, we have already determined the central idea: We must take a stand for people who are being mistreated. Let's try to determine which pieces of textual evidence help zero in on this central idea and make Elie's meaning even more precise.

The central idea refers to mistreatment of human beings, and my text evidence includes "whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation," "when human lives are endangered," and "wherever men or women are persecuted." These quotes are some examples from the text that clarify and zoom in on the types of mistreatment that occurs. The words "humiliation," "suffering," "endangered," and "persecuted" are all negative, but each word adds a layer to our understanding of what it feels like to be a victim in these situations. These details activate our emotions so that we as readers do not read this text and feel indifferent to their suffering.

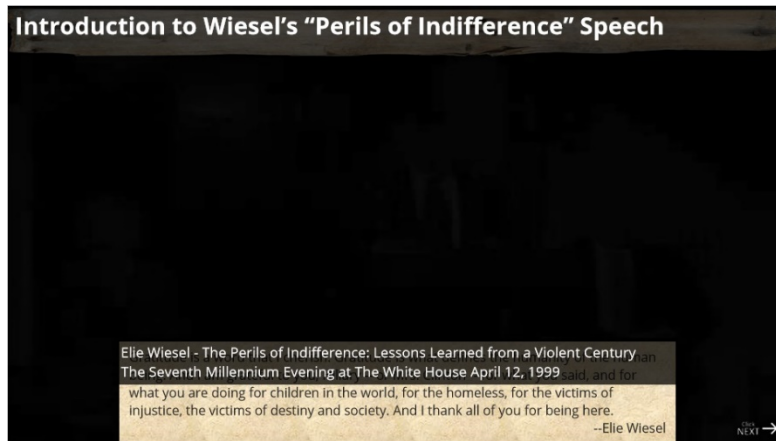
The central idea also states that we must stand up for the mistreated, and my text evidence includes "we must always take sides," "sometimes we must interfere," "wherever men or women are persecuted...that place must...become the center of the universe." We see in these quotes "take sides," "interfere" and the call to make these places of suffering "the center of the universe," a sense that we must take action; where we are either for the tormentors or for the victims. It doesn't matter where it takes place, wherever people are being persecuted or victimized the rest of the world must turn its attention to that place, unlike what happened during much of the Holocaust. These details further refine the central idea because Elie is trying to drive home the point that just because we may be far away from where injustice is taking place, it does not mean that our actions or attitude about the injustice are irrelevant. By elaborating on the actions we must take, Elie makes his audience feel accountable even if the injustice doesn't affect them directly.

As you work to determine a central idea and then identify details that help support it and refine it, it is always important to use specific textual evidence to back up your analysis like we have done here. In this case, we have used specific pieces of text to explain the various aspects of the central idea, and explained how some details help refine or make clearer the notion of human mistreatment, as well as the notion of how we should take action. When I put it all together it provides a rounded defense of not only how I arrived at the central idea, but also how these details support and refine the central idea Elie is making in this passage.

Slide Layer Text:

...The world did know and remain silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must...become the center of the universe. --Elie Wiesel

1.11 Introduction to Wiesel's "Perils of Indifference" Speech



Notes:

Now we'll move on to our next text by Elie Wiesel, a speech titled "Perils of Indifference" that he gave at the White House on April 12, 1999. Let's do an introduction to this speech by reading and listening to the first three paragraphs of Elie's speech. Know that the young Jewish boy he refers to is Elie himself and he is recalling his experiences during the Holocaust.

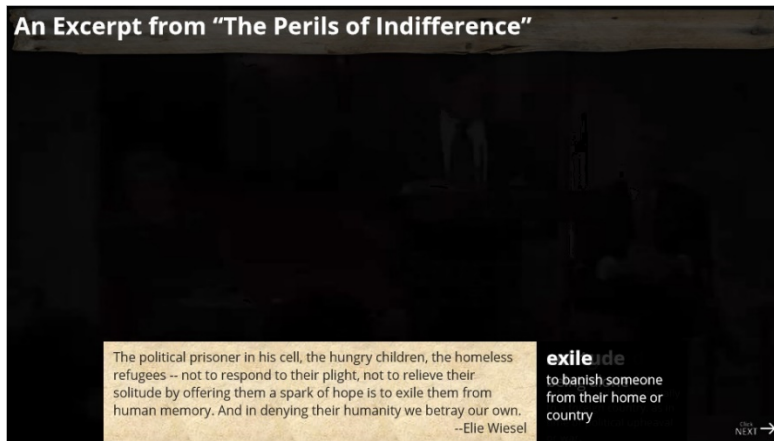
"Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, members of Congress, Ambassador Holbrooke, Excellencies, friends: Fifty-four years ago to the day, a young Jewish boy from a small town in the Carpathian Mountains woke up, not far from Goethe's beloved Weimar, in a place of eternal infamy called Buchenwald. He was finally free, but there was no joy in his heart. He thought there never would be again.

Liberated a day earlier by American soldiers, he remembers their rage at what they saw. And even if he lives to be a very old man, he will always be grateful to them for that rage, and also for their compassion. Though he did not understand their language, their eyes told him what he needed to know -- that they, too, would remember, and bear witness.

And now, I stand before you, Mr. President -- Commander-in-Chief of the army that freed me, and tens of thousands of others -- and I am filled with a profound and abiding gratitude to the American people.

Gratitude is a word that I cherish. Gratitude is what defines the humanity of the human being. And I am grateful to you, Hillary -- or Mrs. Clinton -- for what you said, and for what you are doing for children in the world, for the homeless, for the victims of injustice, the victims of destiny and society. And I thank all of you for being here."

1.12 An Excerpt from “The Perils of Indifference”



Notes:

Through the first three excerpts of Elie’s speech that we just listened to, now we know his audience, his general tone, and his intention to discuss his life experiences, particularly those during the Holocaust, as a lens for the central ideas he means to convey to the audience. We’ll deal with central idea shortly, but for right now, let’s look at another excerpt from this same speech.

“In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own.”

Slide Layer Text:

indifferent: uninterested; unconcerned

elicit: to bring out; bring forth; evoke

denounce: condemn; indicate strong disapproval

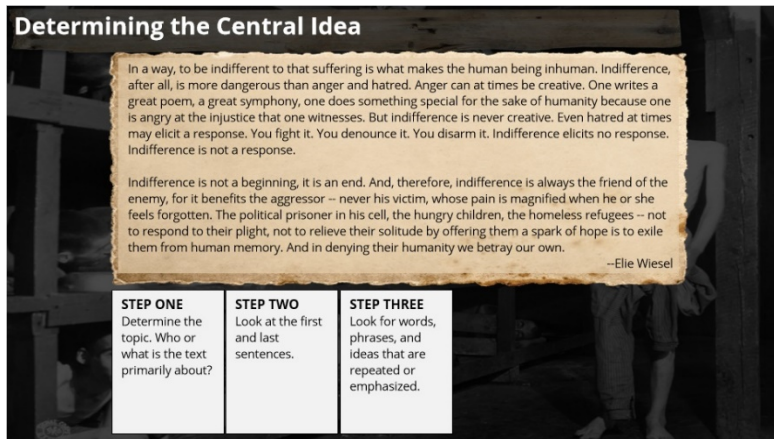
magnified: to increase or cause to increase

refugee: person who flees for refuge or safety, especially to a foreign country, as in time of political upheaval or war

solitude: being alone

exile: to banish someone from their home or country

1.13 Determining the Central Idea



Determining the Central Idea

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor – never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees – not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own.

—Elie Wiesel

STEP ONE	STEP TWO	STEP THREE
Determine the topic. Who or what is the text primarily about?	Look at the first and last sentences.	Look for words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized.

Notes:

Let's use this excerpt to practice our steps and get you ready to determine the central idea and supporting details for this excerpt. Remember that the first step is to determine what topic or topics Elie is covering in this text. Ask yourself, "Who or what is the text primarily about?" I see the word "indifference" repeated multiple times throughout this text. Indifference is definitely a topic Elie is covering. We could also say that victims is a topic in this text as well, just as it was in the other texts we have read by Elie in this tutorial. Although he only uses the word "victim" one time, he gives many examples of victims: those who suffer, those who experience injustice, political prisoners, hungry children, and homeless refugees.

Now look at the first and last sentences of the passage as a whole. In the first sentence we see: "In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman." In the last line we see: "And in denying their humanity we betray our own." Consider what ideas might be echoed in these sentences. We notice that humanity, our sense of understanding others and sharing a connection through our feelings and experiences, is an important concept here. In the first line, Elie tells us that if we are indifferent or unconcerned about others who suffer then we are acting inhuman. In the last lines, he tells us that by ignoring those who are suffering, we deny these people their humanity and in turn we betray our own humanity by becoming something inhuman, uncaring, unloving and unfeeling. In these lines, we can see that Elie is leading us to a deeper understanding of what indifference, or ignoring suffering, really means.

Next, look for any words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized. In the first paragraph, I notice many references to "indifference" "anger" and "hate." In both paragraphs I see many references to human and humanity. In the first paragraph Elie also repeats the word "you" and "response."

I also notice in the first paragraph that Elie is making a contrast. When we hate something, or

feel angry, at least we are feeling something, and this feeling can make us act. On the other hand, to be indifferent is to feel nothing and because of this feeling we do nothing. I notice more contrasts in the next paragraph. I see “beginning” and “end,” “friend” and “enemy,” “aggressor” and “victim,” “pain” and “spark of hope,” and “offering” and “denying.” These contrasts make it clear that indifference is feeling nothing and doing nothing, and this inaction helps the aggressor and further wounds the victim.

Now that we have gone through these first three steps together, you can do the next two steps in the following slides: determining the central idea of the passage and identifying details that help support or develop the central idea.

1.14 Practice 4: Determine the Central Idea

Practice 4: Determine the Central Idea

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, or does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she

Which statement expresses the central idea of this excerpt from Wiesel's "Perils of Indifference" speech? Choose one.

A	Indifference about another's suffering is not a response.
B	Indifference about another's suffering magnifies the pain of the victim.
C	Indifference about another's suffering helps the aggressor.
D	Indifference about another's suffering robs everyone of their humanity.

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Now it's your turn. What is the central idea of this excerpt from Elie Wiesel's "Perils of Indifference" speech? Choose the best answer.

Slide Layer Text:

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own. --Elie Wiesel

Feedback when correct:

Well done! The topics of this passage are indifference and victims. What point is Elie making about indifference in regards to victims? Indifference about another's suffering (the victims) robs everyone of their humanity. Indifference about another's suffering robs those whom are indifferent, as well as the victims, of their humanity. The other choices are details in the passage but they are not the main, overarching point that Elie is making about his topics.

Feedback when incorrect:

Remember that we said the topics of this passage are indifference and victims. What point is Elie making about indifference in regards to victims? Indifference about another's suffering (the victims) robs everyone of their humanity. Indifference about another's suffering robs those who are indifferent, as well as the victims, of their humanity. The other choices are details in the passage but they are not the main, overarching point that Elie is making about his topics.

Correct	Choice
No	A – Indifference about another's response suffering is not a response
No	B – Indifference about another's suffering magnifies the pain of the victim
No	C – Indifference about another's suffering helps the aggressor
Yes	D – Indifference about another's suffering robs everyone of their humanity

1.15 Practice 5: Details that Support the Central Idea

Practice 5: Details that Support the Central Idea

Now that you know the central idea — indifference about another's suffering robs everyone of their humanity — what details in the text help support and develop this central idea?

type here

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own. --Elie Wiesel

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Now that you know the central idea - indifference about another's suffering robs everyone of their humanity - what details in the text help support or develop this central idea? Use the text box to type your response.

Slide Layer Text:

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own. --Elie Wiesel

Feedback:

There were a number of different details that you could have listed that help support or develop the central idea. Here are a few examples; how do they compare to what you identified?

Sample Response

Elie says that because those who are indifferent do not act, this helps those (the aggressors)

who are tormenting and victimizing people to continue doing so because they have no reason to stop. When we ignore those who are suffering, the political prisoner in jail, hungry children, those who are homeless and without a country, we cast them from our consciousness and our memory and this takes away their humanity, as well as our own. When we take no action to respond to their distress or help them feel less isolated or cut off by not providing them some kind of hope that their situation can change, we make them feel inhuman, as if their lives do not matter.

1.16 Practice 6: Details that Refine the Central Idea

Practice 6: Details that Refine the Central Idea

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is

Central Idea:
Indifference about another's suffering robs everyone of their humanity.

What details in the text help refine the central idea and make Elie's meaning even clearer?

type here

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Now that you have determined the central idea, take a moment to consider what details in the text help refine the central idea and make Elie's meaning even clearer. Type a few details in the box to the right.

Slide Layer Text:

In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony, one does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response.

Indifference is not a beginning, it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees -- not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity we betray our own. --Elie Wiesel

Feedback:

You could have identified a number of different details that help refine the central idea. Here are a few examples; how do they compare to what you identified?

Sample Response

The first part of the central idea involves the concept of indifference. Different details in the text help zero in on what indifference is or is not. Indifference is dangerous. Indifference is never creative. Indifference is not a response; it is nothing. Indifference is a friend of the aggressor or persecutor. The second part of the central idea describes one effect of indifference—that suffering robs everyone of their humanity. Different details help zero in on this effect. It makes people inhuman, both those who are indifferent and those who are suffering. It is an end, or in other words, nothing can come from, or happen because of, indifference. It makes the victims' pain worse. It makes the victims feel forgotten.

1.17 A Final Excerpt from “The Perils of Indifference”



Notes:

Now we'll look at one last excerpt from “The Perils of Indifference.”

“Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then...”

Slide Layer Text:

Seductive: enticing; captivating

Anguish: excruciating or acute suffering or pain

Abstraction: not quite real; just an idea that does not affect one's life

Outgoing century: this speech was written in 1999, right before the end of the 20th century

Ghettos: city districts in which the Germans concentrated the Jewish population and forced them to live under miserable conditions

Consolation: a person or thing that is a source of comfort in a time of suffering, grief, or disappointment

1.18 Determining the Central Idea

Determining the Central Idea

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then...

---Elie Wiesel

STEP ONE Determine the topic. Who or what is the text primarily about?	STEP TWO Look at the first and last sentences.	STEP THREE Look for words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized.
--	--	--

Notes:

Using our steps, determine the topics of the text. We should see a familiar pattern. In this excerpt too, Elie's topics are indifference towards victims. However, the topic of the Holocaust is also significantly featured as a topic during the latter half of this excerpt.

Look at the first and last sentences of the passage. The first sentence: "Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive." The last sentences: "And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then..." These sentences seem to indicate that not only will Elie attempt to explain the psychological rationale behind indifference, but also how it happened, and was going on during the time of the Holocaust.

Look for any words, phrases, and ideas that are repeated or emphasized. Multiple times in the first paragraph of the excerpt, Elie uses the word "easier" to emphasize that it is easier for people to be indifferent than it is to take action. He repeats the word "our" to emphasize our, his audience's, role in being indifferent. He repeats the word "indifference" a number of times. He uses words like "look away," "avoid," "hidden," "punishment," "abandoned," and "forgotten" to represent the nature of indifference.

Before we move on, look closely at the last few paragraphs of the excerpt and look at the details Elie describes about the Holocaust and how the nature of indifference played a role during this time.

Slide Layer Text:

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our

dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then... --Elie Wiesel

1.19 Practice 7: Determining Central Idea

Practice 7: Determining Central Idea

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

Choose the statement that best identifies the central idea of this last excerpt from "Perils of Indifference." Choose one.

A	Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust.
B	During the Holocaust, the society Elie lived in had three categories: the killers, the victim, and the bystanders.
C	It is inconvenient to go to the aid of those being mistreated.
D	Elie and the other prisoners thought that the rest of the world must not know what was happening.

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

Think back to the topics we just identified in the last excerpt, what we reviewed in the first and last lines, and the repeated or emphasized words, phrases, and ideas we noted. Now think about what Elie is saying about the topics in the excerpt. What main point is he making about these topics? Look at the choices provided and select the statement that best identifies the central idea in this excerpt from "Perils of Indifference."

Slide Layer Text:

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then... --Elie Wiesel

Feedback when correct:

Excellent! Choice A best represents the central idea of this text excerpt. In paragraph two, Elie explicitly states that indifference is a punishment and this understanding is one of the most important lessons of the 20th century. He then goes on in the remainder of the passage to explain how indifference played a role in the lives of those who were suffering in the Holocaust.

Feedback when incorrect:

Choice A best represents the central idea of this text excerpt. In paragraph two, Elie explicitly states that indifference is a punishment and this understanding is one of the most important lessons of the 20th century. He then goes on in the remainder of the passage to explain how indifference played a role in the lives of those who were suffering in the Holocaust. The other choices are details within the passage, and choice B and D in particular help support the central idea, but these choices are not the central idea themselves as they are not the overarching main point Elie is making about his topics.

Correct	Choice
Yes	A - Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust
No	B - During the Holocaust, the society Elie lived in had three categories: the killers, the victim, and the bystanders.
No	C - It is inconvenient to go to the aid of those being mistreated.
No	D - Elie and the other prisoners thought that the rest of the world must not know what was happening.

1.20 Practice 8: Explaining Textual Evidence

Practice 8: Explaining Textual Evidence that Supports the Central Idea

Match the textual evidence on the right with its corresponding explanation on the left.

Central Idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust.

An indifferent person doesn't value the lives of others.		"If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene."
During the Holocaust, there were the tormentors, the tormented, and those who stood by.		"Yet for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless."
The prisoners of the concentration camps believed that world leaders did not know what was happening.		"And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets..."
The prisoners believed that if the world knew, then they would have taken action—they would have rescued the prisoners.		"In the place that I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders."

SUBMIT ✓

Notes:

In this practice, some of the important details that help support and develop the central idea have already been pulled from the text for you. Look carefully at each piece of textual evidence on the right that helps support and develop the central idea of the passage. Then match each piece of textual evidence on the right with its corresponding explanation on the left.

Slide Layer Text:

Central Idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust.

Feedback when correct:

Super work! You correctly matched each piece of textual evidence with its corresponding explanation. These direct quotes help support and develop the central idea of the excerpt.

Feedback when incorrect:

Please take a moment to look at the correct matches. Examine each quote on the right and then look at how its match explains the quote. Each of these direct quotes help support and develop the central idea of the excerpt.

Drag Item	Drop Target
“Yet for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless.”	An indifferent person doesn’t value the lives of others.
“In the place that I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders.”	During the Holocaust, there were the tormentors, the tormented, and those who stood by.
“And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets...”	The prisoners of the concentration camps believed that world leaders did not know what was happening.
“If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene.”	The prisoners believed that if the world knew, then they would have taken action—they would have rescued the prisoners.

1.21 Getting Ready for the Final Practice

Getting Ready for the Final Practice

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

Your goal: Explain how the central idea is refined by details in the text.

Central Idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust.

Do Now: Write down details from the text that explain the effects of indifference.

Notes:

Let's put all of this together. Looking back at the text, our final excerpt from "The Perils of Indifference," you are going to explain how the central idea is refined by details in the text. We already established the central idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust. Looking at the text once more, see if you can identify and select details that explain the effects of indifference. Jot down a few of these details in your notes so you can use them to help you in the next slide, our final practice.

Slide Layer Text:

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then... --Elie Wiesel

Your goal: Explain how the central idea is refined by details in the text.

Central Idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust.

Do Now:

Write down details from the text that explain the effects of indifference.

1.22 Final Practice

The interface is titled "Final Practice" and is set against a background of a barbed wire fence. It contains the following elements:

- Instruction:** "Explain how Elie's central idea in this last excerpt from 'The Perils of Indifference' is refined by specific details, details that zero in on the central idea and make the meaning clearer."
- Text Box:** A large white box with the placeholder text "type here".
- Central Idea:** A text box stating: "Central Idea: Indifference punishes those who are victimized, and a prime example of this is what took place during the Holocaust."
- Image:** A photo of Elie Wiesel speaking at a podium.
- Buttons:** A "Click to read excerpt" button below the photo and a "SUBMIT" button with a checkmark in the bottom right corner.

Notes:

Explain how Elie's central idea in this last excerpt from "The Perils of Indifference" is refined by specific details, details that zero in on the central idea and make the meaning clearer. In your answer, include an explanation of how the details you have selected relate back to the central idea and make it more precise. Use the text box to type your answer. If you need to see the excerpt again, you can click on the photo of Elie Wiesel.

Slide Layer Popup Text:

Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the other to an abstraction...

...Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment. And this is one of the most important lessons of this outgoing century's wide-ranging experiments in good and evil.

In the place where I come from, society was composed of three simple categories: the killers, the victims, and the bystanders. During the darkest of times, inside the ghettos and death camps...we felt abandoned, forgotten. All of us did.

And our only miserable consolation was that we believed that Auschwitz and Treblinka were closely guarded secrets; that the leaders of the free world did not know what was going on behind those black gates and barbed wire; that they had no knowledge of the war against the Jews that Hitler's armies and their accomplices waged as part of the war against the Allies. If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction. They would have bombed the railways leading to Birkenau, just the railways, just once!

And now we knew, we learned, we discovered that the Pentagon knew, the State Department knew. And the illustrious occupant of the White House then... --Elie Wiesel

Feedback:

There were a number of ways you could have responded to this question. Here is a sample response, how does it compare to what you wrote? Hopefully you will see a few similarities.

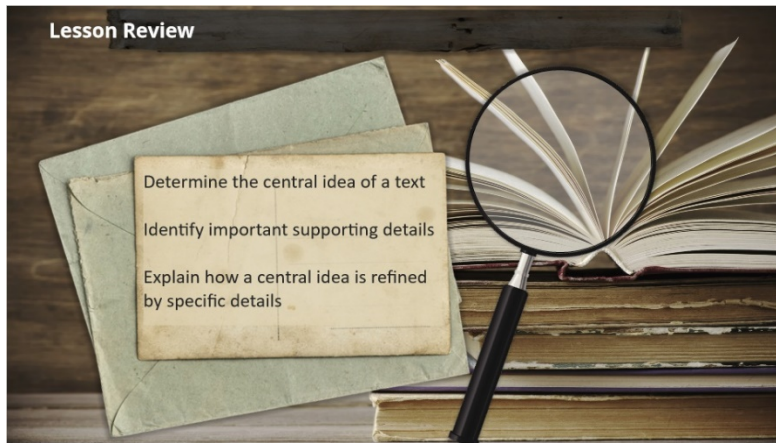
Sample Response:

A particularly important part of Elie's central idea is that indifference equals punishment. Certain details within the passage zero in on how indifference is a form of punishment to those who are already being victimized, particularly those who experienced the Holocaust. He says that the victims' lives are made meaningless. Elie stresses he and his fellow prisoners, in addition to all the punishments they already faced at the hands of their captors, experienced further punishment because they felt abandoned by the world. This reality is evidenced throughout the excerpt with Elie's revelation about people during this time being either killers, victims, or bystanders. In other words, one was either being tormented, doing the tormenting, or watching it all happen indifferently. The indifference of the bystanders made him and his fellow prisoners feel "... abandoned, forgotten. All of us did."

He further elaborates that the only way that they could bear the reality of this abandonment-of the apparent unconcern of the world-was to believe that the rest of the world must not know, that the mistreatment within the camps must be "closely guarded secrets." Their evidence was the inaction of the world's leaders. "If they knew, we thought, surely those leaders would have moved heaven and earth to intervene. They would have spoken out with great outrage and conviction." For those who survived, they would later learn the world did know for quite some time and did not act. An implication is also made that because the world knew what was happening and still acted indifferently, the horrors inside the concentration camps like Auschwitz and Treblinka were allowed to continue, resulting in emotional, mental, and physical punishment and death to millions.

Elie makes it clear that the feeling of abandonment was one of the most tormenting aspects of the punishments he experienced during the Holocaust. It inspired a sense of hopelessness, which was entirely demoralizing in an already unthinkable reality of horror.

1.23 Lesson Review



Notes:

In this tutorial, you have practiced determining the central idea of a text, identifying important supporting details for the central idea, and explaining how the central idea is refined by specific details. I hope you will be applying these skills to future texts that you will read. I also hope you'll be checking out more works by Elie Wiesel!

1.24 Thank You

Notes:

Thank you for using this original tutorial. Be sure to check out our other original tutorials too.

Credits

All images licensed from Getty Images, iStock.com and/or Thinkstock.com, unless otherwise noted.

Night book cover: "NightWiesel" by Book cover. Via Wikipedia -
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NightWiesel.jpg#/media/File:NightWiesel.jpg>

"Elie Wiesel - Acceptance Speech." Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 7 Feb 2015.
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance.html

Wiesel, Elie. "The Perils of Indifference." The History Place - Great Speeches Collection: Elie Wiesel Speech- The

Perils of Indifference. 07 Feb. 2015. <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/wiesel.htm>

"Stroop Report - Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 06b" by Unknown
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust#/media/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_06b.jpg

Speech video - "Elie Wiesel: Seventh White House Millennium Evening Lecture (1999)"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVnVHW3MGoQ> originally obtained from the White House Millennium Evenings website (now archived) at
<http://clinton4.nara.gov/Initiatives/Millennium/evenings.html>

"Buchenwald Slave Laborers Liberation" by Private H. Miller. (Army) - U.S. Defence Visual Information Center, image #HD-SN-99-02764; NARA image ARC #535561, file #208-AA-206K(31). Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons -
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buchenwald_Slave_Laborers_Liberation.jpg#/media/File:Buchenwald_Slave_Laborers_Liberation.jpg

Credits (Slide Layer)

Credits

All images licensed from Getty Images, iStock.com and/or Thinkstock.com, unless otherwise noted.

Night book cover: "NightWiesel" by Book cover. Via Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NightWiesel.jpg#/media/File:NightWiesel.jpg>

"Elie Wiesel - Acceptance Speech." Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 7 Feb 2015.
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance.html

Wiesel, Elie. "The Perils of Indifference." The History Place - Great Speeches Collection: Elie Wiesel Speech- The Perils of Indifference. 07 Feb. 2015. <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/wiesel.htm>

"Stroop Report - Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 06b" by Unknown http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust#/media/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_06b.jpg

Speech video - "Elie Wiesel: Seventh White House Millennium Evening Lecture (1999)" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVnVHW3MGoQ> originally obtained from the White House Millennium Evenings website (now archived) at <http://clinton4.nara.gov/Initiatives/Millennium/evenings.html>

"Buchenwald Slave Laborers Liberation" by Private H. Miller. (Army) - U.S. Defence Visual Information Center, image #HD-SN-99-02764; NARA Image ARC #535561, file #208-AA-206K(31). Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buchenwald_Slave_Laborers_Liberation.jpg#/media/File:Buchenwald_Slave_Laborers_Liberation.jpg