Night Journal Prompts

Chapter 1:

Choose 1 prompt and answer the questions in an organized and complete response. Responses should be at least 2 paragraphs long.

Then choose a symbol that represents what you wrote about.

1. Moishe the Beadle questions Eliezer as to why he prays. Eliezer, however, does not have an answer, and he feels "troubled and ill at ease." Moishe's questions cause Eliezer to contemplate the foundation of his faith, something which many people encounter at some point in life. Consider a time when you, someone you know, or a character from a book or movie faced doubts about personal faith. Summarize this occasion in a paragraph. Next, write a second paragraph in which you discuss your perspective on faith. How important is it for an individual to have some form of faith, and why?

2. Moishe returns to Sighet with horrific tales of his experiences in the Galician forest. He desperately tries to warn the townspeople about the Gestapo, but his words go unheeded. Why do you suppose that no one will listen to Moishe? Why is Moishe not only ignored, but considered insane?

3. The Jewish people are forced into ghettos that are enclosed with barbed wire fences. Yet, despite their imprisonment, the people regard their situation in a positive light. Eliezer writes, "The ghetto was ruled by neither German nor Jew; it was ruled by delusion." Write a response explaining this statement. Why do you think the people of Sighet may have viewed their situation in this way? Why does Elie Weisel use the word, "delusion"?

4. News arrives that the ghettos are being liquidated and that all residents are being transported. People have less than twenty-four hours to prepare to leave their homes and travel to an unknown location for an indeterminate amount of time. Reflect on how you would feel in this predicament. Imagine that you are a resident of the ghetto, and write about the experience. What feelings and events are you experiencing? Make a list of the first five things that you would take with you. You are restricted to five items only.

5. Read the following passage. Using complete sentences, answer the questions that follow:

"Our backyard looked like a marketplace. Valuable objects, precious rugs, silver candlesticks, Bibles and other ritual objects were strewn over the dusty grounds—pitiful relics that seemed never to have had a home. All this under a magnificent blue sky."

A. What does this passage bring to mind? How does it make you feel?

B. What do you suppose the author means when he calls the valuables "pitiful relics?"

C. In your opinion, why does the author mention the "magnificent blue sky?"