

ambassador, a representative of the United States to various foreign nations, because I want to experience how people in other countries live and how their cultures influence them.

L E V E L 3



**Zach Mason, Grade 11**  
**Golden Sierra High School**  
**Garden Valley**

*Night*, Elie Wiesel

**Dear Mr. Wiesel,**

I am not writing to praise you on the ingenious writing and brilliant emotions and feelings you applied in your memoir. Nor am I writing to thank you for some fictitious, life changing epiphany that occurred while reading it. I am writing, simply, to enlighten you on how reading *Night* opened up my ignorant mind to the evils and cruelties of this venomous world.

Growing up in 21st-century America, I am perhaps one of the most fortunate men alive. I am, in fact, at this moment, lying on a couch under a solid roof, steadily typing away on a laptop with hardly a care in the world. I feel warm, my belly is full, but most importantly, I feel safe. Now here is a feeling many people, including myself, take for granted on so many levels. I say I feel safe, and yes, for most of my life I have felt safe from the “danger” of the world, but for most of my life I have been completely oblivious as to what this “danger,” what this “hate,” actually is. Sure, I sometimes hear on the news that a truckload of soldiers is blown up while fighting in Iraq, or that some cashier is shot and killed in a drug store robbery, but it wasn’t until freshman year that my mind was truly open to what the sadism of man really is.

It was freshman year when I read your book, Mr. Wiesel, that the viciousness of man became apparent to me. I was so astonished, so disgusted, that my initial instinct was to blatantly deny it. I didn’t want to believe that those of my own kind, my own species, could do something so diabolical, and to each other. But as I read on, it became apparent to me that these were not lies you were spewing, these were truths, the truths of the world. From then on I began to slowly accept it, slowly acknowledge that this abhorrence toward fellow man did occur, and from then on I began to realize how established this animosity really is. Not only from the Nazis in the concentration camps but also from Joseph Stalin in communist Russia, the constant ethnic violence between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the persistent genocides taking place in Sudan. This hatred was everywhere and I had been living under a rock, deaf to it for perhaps the sole reason that I didn’t want to know.

And so, Mr. Wiesel, it appears I am thanking you, but thanking you for exposing me to the repulsive hostility of man. Thanking you for not allowing me to live unconscious of the real world and unsuspecting of man's true colors. Your book opened me to see where I lived in the world and who I lived with, and alerted me to stay aware of the ever possible belligerent acts of my fellow man.

*Sincerely,*  
*Zach Mason*

*After graduating high school, I hope to further my education at a four-year university. I have always been interested in science and I plan to major in marine biology. I hope to eventually earn my PhD and work at a research university.*

L E V E L 3



**Ella Moberg, Grade 9**  
**Mission College Preparatory**  
**San Luis Obispo**

*The Nancy Drew Mysteries, Carolyn Keene*

**Dear Mrs. Keene:**

Almost every day I hear someone make a remark about how a girl can't do something because it's too difficult or not feminine. I used to just shrug these comments off and think that I couldn't do anything to change the way people perceived girls and their abilities. Your Nancy Drew novels inspired me to speak out and defend myself. In other countries women are oppressed and viewed as property with ownership rights. They cannot leave the house without a man and are not even allowed to vote. I believe that by speaking out we can change the way women are viewed and maybe, just maybe, empower each girl a little more.

Your character Nancy Drew is what all women should aspire to be. She is an independent and courageous person. Miss Drew never let the fact that she was a female prevent her from pursuing her goals. She didn't let anyone stop her and her dreams. Until recently, girls were not allowed to participate in sports or other athletic activities. They were thought to be too delicate to partake in such vigorous activities. Now girls compete in various events from weight-lifting to soccer and basketball. This was only made possible because someone decided to have the courage to speak out and take action. Many young girls will just accept it and even question their abilities when someone makes a comment about what they are about to undertake. These girls let someone else's thoughts hinder how big they dream and what they try and achieve. I was once one of these girls. I saw boys building a tree house and desperately wanted to join in. One of them told me I couldn't because I was a girl