Figurative Language in *Night*

Because Elie Wiesel’s experiences are so horrifying and so uniquely personal, it is difficult for him to describe them in direct, literal language. Language cannot capture the depths of suffering, sorrow, and despair of his life and in the Nazi concentration camps.

➔ Please fill out the definitions of the following figurative language terms.

**Simile:**

1. “Physically, he was as awkward as a clown” (Wiesel 3).
2. This example of figurative language compares Moishe's awkward traits to that of a clown. Due to its direct comparative nature using “as”, it is classified as a simile.

**Metaphor:**

1. “They dwell in the depths of our souls and remain there until we die” (Wiesel 5).
2. This excerpt is an example of a metaphor because it confines the words of God and answers of life into the human soul, even though we can determine such not be unreasonable and not literally applicable.

**Personification:**

1. “The shadows around me roused themselves as if from a deep sleep and left silently in every direction” (Wiesel 14).
2. Because shadows cannot rouse themselves, sleep, or leave in their own effort, this example of figurative language is personification.

**Hyperbole:**

1. “This conversation lasted no more than a few seconds. It seemed like an eternity” (Wiesel 32).
2. When Elie implies that the conversation felt like an eternity, he doesn't literally mean a whole eternity; no one can relate to such a length of time. He uses such an exaggeration to convey the unrealistic feeling of length the conversation, but surely doesn't truly mean an eternity, making this a hyperbole.

**Irony:**

1. “We were to leave the train here. There was a labor camp on site. The conditions were good. Families would not be separated” (Wiesel 27).
2. This is a hugely ironic excerpt from the text because, upon arriving to the labor camp, the Jewish believed they would live in fair conditions, however, their beliefs were extremely wrong and everything inhumanely possible occurred.

**Oxymoron:**

1. “She was smiling her mournful smile as she slipped me a crust of bread. She looked straight into my eyes. I knew she wanted to talk to me but that she was paralyzed with fear” (Wiesel 53).
2. This is an example of an oxymoron because smiles are associated with joy and pleasant feelings, although the woman's is linked to fear and anxiety.
Metaphor or Simile?

Part A

Directions: Read the statements below selected from Night. If the statement is a metaphor, write M on the line. If the statement is a simile, write S on the line. Should the statement contain both, write M/S. Be prepared to defend your answers.

_____ 1. “The street was like a marketplace that had suddenly been abandoned.”
_____ 2. “A great tidal wave of men came rolling onward and would have crushed me like an ant.”
_____ 3. “He looked us over as if we were a pack of leprous dogs hanging onto our lives.”
_____ 4. “It was not the first time a false prophet had foretold to us peace-on-earth, negotiations-with-the-Red-Cross-for-our-release, or other false rumors...And often we believed them. It was an injection of morphine.”
_____ 5. “The doors were nailed up; the way back was finally cut off. The world was a cattle wagon hermetically sealed.”
_____ 6. “Men threw themselves on top of each other, stamping on each other, tearing at each other, biting each other. Wild beasts of prey, with animal hatred in their eyes; an extraordinary vitality had seized them, sharpening their teeth and nails.
_____ 7. “In one moment of ultimate lucidity it seemed to me that we were damned souls wandering in the half-world, souls condemned to wander through space till the generations of man came to an end.”
_____ 8. “The march began. The dead stayed in the yard under the snow, like faithful guards assassinated, without burial.”
_____ 9. His (the Rabbi’s) mere presence among the deportees added a touch of unreality to the scene. It was like a page from a torn story book, from some historical novel about the captivity of Babylon of the Spanish Inquisition.”
_____ 10. “Thousands of voices repeated the benediction; thousands of men prostrated themselves like trees before a tempest.”
Metaphor or Simile?

Part B

Directions: Choose two statements from Part A. Write the number of each statement on the line provided below. Follow steps A, B, C, and D to complete the charts.

A. Write the first item of the comparison.
B. Write the second item of the comparison.
C. Write a description of the second item.
D. Explain how item one is, or is like, item two.

Example Statement: Life is like a rollercoaster ride.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Life</th>
<th>B. rollercoaster ride</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Begins slowly and then moves fast; has uphills, downslopes, curves; exciting, fun, fearful; makes you dizzy, out of control, cannot get off until it stops</td>
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<td>D. Life seems to move at different paces, too fast when having a good time and too slow in the boring times. Life is a mixture of joy and sorrow, simple pleasures and complex trials. At times it is an exciting adventure that is enjoyable; at other times it can be frightening and sickening. Life can seem so out of control and confusing that you do not know what direction you are going or where you will end up. There is no way to get away from life until it stops.</td>
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Statement:

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<th>A.</th>
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D. 

Statement:

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<td>C.</td>
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D. 
Verbal and Dramatic Irony

Part A

Directions: Read each statement below. Determine whether it represents verbal or dramatic irony. Write verbal or dramatic on the line provided. Briefly explain the literal meaning of the statement on line A and tell why the statement is ironic on line B.

1. “...we saw the barbed wire of another camp. An iron door with this inscription over it: ‘Work is liberty!’ Auschwitz.”
   Kind ________________________________
   A. (literal) ____________________________________________________________
   B. (ironic) ____________________________________________________________

2. “Three days after the liberation of Buchenwald I became very ill with food poisoning. I was transferred to the hospital and spent two weeks between life and death.”
   Kind ________________________________
   A. (literal) ____________________________________________________________
   B. (ironic) ____________________________________________________________

3. “Like the leader of the camp, he loved his children.”
   Kind ________________________________
   A. (literal) ____________________________________________________________
   B. (ironic) ____________________________________________________________

4. “I’ve got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He’s the only one who’s kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people.”
   Kind ________________________________
   A. (literal) ____________________________________________________________
   B. (ironic) ____________________________________________________________

5. “The passengers on our boat were amusing themselves by throwing coins to the ‘natives’...I suddenly noticed that two children were engaged in a death struggle...I turned to the lady.
   ‘Please,’ I begged, ‘don’t throw any more money in!’
   ‘Why not?’ she asked. ‘I like to give charity...’”
   Kind ________________________________
   A. (literal) ____________________________________________________________
   B. (ironic) ____________________________________________________________
The Meaning Behind a Symbol

Part A

Directions: Answer the following questions with your partner. Try to come to an agreement upon the answers, but you may note differences of opinion or interpretation during class discussion. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Elie Wiesel’s central symbol for his memoir is that of a time period - *Night*. This symbol is both the description of and a commentary upon his experiences.

1. What connotations (feelings, emotions, ideas) are evoked by the word *night*?

2. How is *night* an appropriate symbol to convey Elie Wiesel’s concentration camp experience? How does it represent his suffering, man’s inhumanity to man, and the effects of the Holocaust upon his faith?

3. Another symbol Wiesel uses takes the form of a person and event. In what ways does the hanging of the young boy, the “angelic pipel,” symbolize the following:
   - The Jewish people
   - God
   - The faith of the author and other prisoners like him

Part B

You have been commissioned by the U.S. Holocaust Committee to design a monument to represent the Holocaust. The Holocaust must be represented in true symbols; no words or direct images (signs) of the Holocaust can be used. Your creation may take the form of a poster or of a three dimensional sculpture (mobile, sculpture, architectural design). The monument may contain more than one visual symbol. Upon completion, you must explain to the committee (your class) the meaning of your symbols and what you were attempting to convey.