



**The Elie Wiesel Living Archive**  
**Middle School - LESSON #3: Open Heart (2013)**

**GOALS**

- Invite reflection on the meaning of suffering, compassion, and cultivating an “open heart.”
- Consider the experience and lessons of Prof. Elie Wiesel as set forth in this lecture
- Inspire action and advocacy rooted in Jewish values

**MATERIALS**

- Computer with access to Elie Wiesel’s 2013 Lecture (speakers loud enough for the whole class to hear!)
- Pen/pencil
- White/chalk/poster board and corresponding writing implements (dry-erase markers, chalk, marker) – anything so participants can see what’s being written by the teacher
- “Open Heart” handout
- “Growing Old in America” handout
- “The Meaning and Purpose of Life” handout
- “We are not alone” handout
- 

**Introduction & Ice-Breaker/Warm Up – 15-20 minutes**

- Prof. Elie Wiesel is author of the memoir, *Night*. Published when Prof. Wiesel was a young man and just making a start as a writer, *Night* recounts the ordeal he, his family, and his community were made to endure during the Holocaust. In this lecture, Prof. Wiesel recounts a different experience of suffering and anguish: his 2011 ordeal of undergoing open heart surgery, the taking stock that the experience occasioned, and the lessons of compassion and gratitude that emerged from it. He published a memoir by the same title in 2012, which turned out to be the final book that appeared during his lifetime. In the course of his “Open Heart” lecture, Prof. Wiesel reads excerpts from the memoir, as well as adding new material, particularly on the topic of growing old. Indeed, the lecture, presented in May, 2013 when he was 84 years old, is one of Prof. Wiesel’s last at the 92NY.
- Ask participants about how they define the idea of an “open heart.” Write their answers on the board for everyone to see.
- Read together the “Open Heart” section of the handout page and follow the prompts
- Note that these classes simply skim the surface of Prof. Wiesel’s contribution! There’s always more to learn and read!

**Growing Old in America– 30 minutes**

- Distribute the “Growing Old in America” handout and listen to Prof. Wiesel’s comments on the elderly’s standing in America. Follow the prompts.

**The Meaning and Purpose of Life – 30 minutes**

- Depending on the size of the group, either divide the class into two sections or work through one or both quotes as a single group.
- After reflecting on the prompts, invite the class to consider how these views have guided Prof. Wiesel’s approach to his life and work

**We Are Not Alone – 20 minutes**

- Distribute the “We are not alone” handout and play the section of Prof. Wiesel’s lecture
- Follow the prompts

**Closing Exercise: Bikur Cholim/Visiting the Sick-- 20 minutes**

Distribute handout and follow prompts