

10th Grade: Informational Writing
Writing Prompt: Painful Past

It is important to remember painful memories and not forget them because it is a needed accessory for our day-to-day lives. Elie Wiesel's writing in *Hope, Despair and Memory* tells of how these painful memories are helpful to what is next. It allows us to remember who we once were. The work tells a story of a man who was told to forget the painful memories once. We are told of ghosts withdrawing into the past and that the past is buried within us. He says, "For us, forgetting was never an option. Remembering is a noble and necessary act."

Painful memories are important and should not be forgotten because futures are affected by the painful pasts and memories. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his work, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, help us to see this. He tells of painful memories experienced when inequality among races were on a high rise. The stories were of what he or others may have experienced. He tells of family death, caged individual, and children adapting hatred. "-then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." He writes about how difficult it was to wait for an end to come to the death and the hate. That how long the wait was insufferable and that patience was become lost. "I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience." He says in the end.

These memories that once were in the past are in the past. Like Elie Wiesel said, "A world where the past no longer counted- no longer meant anything." We are told that some little things in the past may be forgotten, but not the ones which were painful to ourselves. Not the ones that bear into our minds. Not the ones that are made to not be easily forgotten. This is because those memories help to stitch together the future in front of us.

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"Remembering is a noble and necessary act" (Wiesel). There are many things in history that are avoided. They are rarely spoken of, and when they are, it is cautiously and sometimes not the full truth. There are many painful aspects of the past that are difficult to remember, but it is important that they are not forgotten. If we forget and ignore the things of the past, we cannot improve the history we continually create for the future. Forgetting is a disgrace to people of the past who made a difference for us in our day, and by remembering the past we learn important lessons and become who we hope to become.

Experiences of the past can never truly be felt by someone else the same way. This makes it difficult to appreciate what previous people went through in their lives. We, today, can easily blow off the challenges in history, because we never actually felt it. "I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say 'wait'" (King). Segregation is something we will never get the full effect of. So we might more easily tell those people to be patient, toughen up, and 'wait'. However, when we make the effort to remember and understand what these people felt and endured, we might have more compassion for what those people did. Ignoring the memories is a disgrace to them who risked their very lives to make a difference in the world which we enjoy today. Often, we take them for granted and we make no effort to appreciate what people before us went through. If we look at "a recollection. The time: After the war. The place: Paris. A young man struggles to readjust to life. His mother, his father, his small sister are gone. He is alone. On the verge of despair. And yet he does not give up" (Wiesel). This young man has an extremely hard situation, and he shows the courage to push through. That is admirable and should be observed and recognized.

The history we learn about was once made, and we each are currently making history for future generations. If we disregard everything before us, and do it all on our own, we will have to learn it all the hard way; by trial and error. However, if we remember the past and take lessons from good decisions and bad decisions, we will benefit and can alter history for the better. It can be painful to remember the despair and terror that has occurred in the past, but then also we will realize that we should never do anything like what happened in past times. If we understand the "tranquilizing thalidomide" that we can give, "relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration," we will know to love our neighbor and we can improve ourselves as well as those around us (King). We also must not forget ourselves, and who we are and where we came from. In concentration camps in the second World War, "the prisoners found themselves in a social and cultural void. "Forget," they were told. "Forget where you came from; forget who you were. Only the present matters" (Wiesel). This was to gain power and control over the prisoners. We must not forget our own past and lose all confidence and hope. Hope cannot exist without remembering the past.

When we forget the past, we take credit from those who sacrificed for us, and by remembering the past we learn important lessons and become who we hope to become. It is important to remember the past despite pain or ease or despair. It is natural to repress painful memories, but it is also a disgrace to our lives. We need to remember, and we will be better and improved people.

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The past plays an important role in time. It is important to remember it. Remembering the past helps us learn from it and avoid repeating history. Elie Wiesel said, "that the memory of evil will serve as a shield against evil; that the memory of death will serve as a shield against death." By remembering painful and hard events and situations that have occurred in the past, those feelings cause a desire to stay away from going through or causing these sufferings again in the present. Remembering the past is an important part of respect. Those who have lost their lives for noble causes should not simply be forgotten because it is painful to remember them. They need to be remembered, and respected. In Elie Wiesel's opinion, "forgetting was never an option. Remembering is a noble and necessary act." The past and the pain associated with it had to be remembered in order to move forward.

Martin Luther King, Jr. comments, "...the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair." The memories of the inequality and injustice that the African-American people went through would hopefully become a source of learning from the past to teach a lesson of equality to the people of the present. Martin Luther King, Jr. also said, "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed." This is another example of learning from the past. This knowledge of the acquiring of freedom in the past gives a foundation to demand freedom in the present. It teaches a lesson, and even though the memories might be painful to look back on, they were important in the movement for freedom.

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It's important to remember the painful aspects of the past to show mankind what they were doing wrong, the things that need to change, and the things that shouldn't happen again. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote a letter while in the Birmingham Jail. In the letter Martin says, "There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience." By saying this he is hoping to show how unfair and wrongly white people were treating black people.

The Holocaust is a very painful aspect of the past. Elie Wiesel was a Jewish Holocaust survivor. He states, "For us, forgetting was never an option. Remembering is a noble and necessary act." Sometimes it is hard to forget the painful memories you have experienced and sometimes it is important not to. By remembering these things, it helps mankind to be better and have less painful memories in the future.

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Colored people have been thru a lot of bad things and bad moments, they been living without hope for couple years for the future, colored people been living scared and the way they weren't supposed to live.

We all should have been treated equal, but people starting judging and stuff just because of skin color, some people have tried to stop racism, one of the biggest was Martin Luther King JR, he helped color people and he tried to avoid racism all around the world for the best of colored people, he wrote a letter explaining all that about racism and judgment on colored people; he pretty much said that if you get into black men shoes you'll see that there is no difference in between blaCk and white, that skin color don't mean none, that black people are just as human as white people and judging a person because of skin color wasn't just right.

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The past may only seem like what it is, the past, but it's far more important to remember than what people credit it, no matter how painful it may be. We must remember to be better. Black and white people were segregated, and black was the most abhorred. They were beaten, isolated, and rendered impunity from their white counterparts. Martin Luther King Jr. fought against this and helped create equality amongst humanity, but in order for this to remain we must remember the atrocities that were committed and counteract them. As Martin Luther King says, "when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodyness"-then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." (Martin Luther King Jr.)

We must remember to protect. Always, we can remember the worst. The past is filled with crime, destruction, and evil. Haunted by war, poverty, and evil. WW1, the first time we warred and realized the true destructive power and nature of violence and conflict, and WW2 just as terrible. But, as Elie Wiesel said, "the memory of evil will serve as a shield against evil; that the memory of death will serve as a shield against death" (Hope, Despair and Memory PI). We can't stop contention in full, but by the remembrance of our ancestors' fate we can better choose ours, and protect our friends and families from this chain of death.

we remember for the future. "if dreams reflect the past, hope summons the future" (Elie Wiesel, Hope, Despair and Memory) this can fit in either previous paragraph, but it seems fit to give it its own. What we do today will go into history books, or may even be what eradicates the usage of history books all in all. The past and our ancestors have made mistakes, and we must learn from them-remembering how to hope like they did in the worst of scenarios. Another quote worth mentioning by Elie Wiesel is "For us, forgetting was never an option. Remembering is a noble and necessary act." (Hope, Despair and Memory). And with this I conclude, stating that we must remember to be better, to protect, and the future. The past is a painful place for a reason.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist minister and political activist who was a leader in the African-American civil rights movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance.