

Facing History and Ourselves

A GUIDE TO THE FILM *SCHINDLER'S LIST*



Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc.
Brookline, Massachusetts

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Foreword

The film *Schindler's List* focuses on the years of the Holocaust—a time when millions of Jews and other men, women, and children were murdered solely because of their ancestry. It is one of the darkest chapters in human history. Yet an appalling number of people, young and old, know little if anything about it. Even today the world has not yet learned the lesson of those terrible years. There are far too many places where hate, intolerance, and genocide still exist. Thus *Schindler's List* is no less a “Jewish story” or a “German story” than it is a human story. And its subject matter applies to every generation. *Schindler's List* is simply about racial hatred—which is the state of mind that attacks not what makes us people but what makes us different from each other. It is my hope that *Schindler's List* will awaken and sustain an awareness of such evil and inspire this generation and future generations to seek an end to racial hatred. Facing History and Ourselves developed this study guide to inform that journey by helping students make essential connections between the past and the present.

Steven Spielberg
Amblin Entertainment, Inc.



Facing History and Ourselves is a national educational organization devoted to teaching about the dangers of indifference and the value of civility by helping schools confront the complexities of history in ways that promote critical and creative thinking about the challenges we face and the opportunities we have for positive change. It focuses on the events that led to the Holocaust and the results of policies of genocide. Those grim histories help students recognize that our freedom is not the result of “outside forces” but a positive outcome of our own courage and resolve. Facing History also encourages students to relate that history to their own lives by exploring issues of identity, group behavior, and racial and ethnic hatred. With the help of the Facing History staff and resource speakers, teachers who participate in the program learn to use the tools of the humanities—inquiry, analysis, and interpretation—to analyze the events that threaten democracy and turn neighbor against neighbor. At workshops and follow-up sessions, those teachers are offered a wide range of materials that engage and challenge their students’ most advanced thinking and promote individual reflection and group discussion. These materials can be used to supplement or enrich existing courses.

Facing History is committed to producing and teaching materials that further democratic values and beliefs. It is also committed to prevention. We believe that unexamined prejudices, myths, and misinformation threaten the nation and its future. We therefore encourage students to look, listen, read, and think critically. And we constantly challenge them to complicate their thinking by not accepting simple solutions to complex questions. Facing History, writes one high school teacher, is a program that “honors duality, process and product, head and heart, history and ethics.” It helps teachers move their students from thought to judgment and ultimately to participation. This study guide uses the film *Schindler's List* to stimulate and inform that process.

Margot Stern Strom
Executive Director, Facing History and Ourselves

Additional Resources

For a fuller treatment of ideas and concepts developed in this guide, see *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. Other resources of interest available from Facing History and Ourselves include:

- *Elements of Time*: A companion manual to the Facing History videotape collection of Holocaust testimonies—the result of a five-year collaborative project between Facing History and the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University made possible through the vision and support of Eli Evans and the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The book includes transcriptions of the videos along with essays by scholars who have addressed Facing History conferences.
- *I Promised I Would Tell*: Sonia Weitz’s poetry and remembrances of life in the Krakow Ghetto and various concentration camps including Plaszow and Auschwitz.
- *The Jews of Poland* uses a variety of primary sources to describe Jewish life in Eastern Europe before, during, and after the Holocaust. It considers the ways Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors responded to questions of identity, membership, and difference at various times in their shared history.

Teachers can also obtain videos from Facing History and Ourselves to extend and enrich this study guide. Possibilities include *Obedience, the Milgram Experiment; Childhood Memories* (testimonies of survivors); *The Hangman; The Propaganda Battle*; and a packet of materials on monuments including a videotaped interview with Maya Lin.

The following books can be used to explore specific topics and/or concepts highlighted in this guide:

- Alan-Williams, Gregory. *A Gathering of Heroes: Reflections on Rage and Responsibility*. Academy Chicago Publishers, 1993.
- Berenbaum, Michael. *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Little Brown, 1993.
- Block, Gay and Malka Drucker. *Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust*. Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1992.
- Browning, Christopher. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. HarperCollins, 1992.
- Dwork, Deborah. *Child With a Star*. Yale University Press, 1991.
- Hilberg, Raul. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*. HarperCollins, 1992.
- Keneally, Thomas. *Schindler’s List*. Simon & Schuster, 1982.
- Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*, trans. by Stuart Woolf. Macmillan, 1993.
- Presseisen, Barbara Z. and Ernst L. “The Authentic Lessons of *Schindler’s List*.” (Copies of the article are available from Research for Better Schools, Inc., 444 N. Third Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123.)
- Rittner, Carol and Sondra Myers, ed. *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*. New York University Press, 1986.
- Tec, Nechama. *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland*. Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Hill and Wang, 1960 (paper, Avon).

Preface

Schindler's List, the award-winning film directed by Steven Spielberg from a screenplay by Steven Zaillian based on the book by Thomas Keneally, tells the story of Oskar Schindler, a war profiteer and member of the Nazi party who saved over 1,100 Jews during World War II. The movie explores the human capacity for monumental evil as well as for extraordinary courage, caring, and compassion. And by revealing how fragile civilization truly is, it turns history into a moral lesson. No lesson is more needed in our schools today. As Spielberg recently told members of Congress, "History has to cease being facts and figures, stories and sagas from long ago and far away about *them* or *those*. In order to learn from history, rather than just about it, students need to rediscover that those people were just like us."

Hannah Arendt, one of the foremost political philosophers of our time, explained why the teaching of history must have a moral component when she argued that we can put past evils into the service of a future good only by squarely facing reality. She wrote, "The methods used in the pursuit of historical truth are not the methods of the prosecutor, and the men who stand guard over the facts are not the officers of interest groups—no matter how legitimate their claims—but the reporters, the historians, and finally the poets." And, she might have added, the filmmakers. The facts—no matter how horrifying—must be preserved, not "lest we forget," but so that we may judge. Preservation and judgment do not justify the past but reveal its meaning.

Several years ago, Steven Spielberg was asked to choose an image that summarized all of his films. He chose "the little boy in *Close Encounters [of the Third Kind]* opening the door and standing in that beautiful yet awful light, just like fire coming through the doorway." That "beautiful yet awful light" is knowledge and it offers both promise and danger. In *Schindler's List*, Spielberg encourages us to take a step toward the light—"toward what we don't understand and what we don't know about and what scares us."

Schindler's List provides a unique opportunity to both preserve and judge the past through a medium that is accessible to every high-school student. This study guide is designed to help teachers make the most of that opportunity by fostering reflection and discussion.

Steven Spielberg encourages people to see his films in theaters "not to bias your opinion but to share the experience." He believes, "Not only is the film often the experience, but sometimes the reaction is the experience." Those who have access only to the video can approximate that experience by showing the film to several classes at one time. Because the film is 3 hours and 17 minutes long, it also provides a unique opportunity to break the artificial divisions of the school day and promote interdisciplinary learning. Many teachers who have viewed *Schindler's List* with their students have come away profoundly impressed with the way their classes have responded. Students of diverse backgrounds and experiences have discovered that the film is not just *their* story but also *our* story. They have shown, as we at Facing History have learned so well, that our students are moral philosophers.

Margot Stern Strom

Teaching

Facing History and Ourselves: A Guide to Schindler's List

Facing History has created this study guide to help educators use the film *Schindler's List* for reflection on and discussion of issues important to adolescents and their roles as citizens in a democracy. Adolescence is a time when many young people struggle with issues of independence, competing loyalties, and responsibility. The film and the readings chosen for this guide address these issues and support students in their efforts to define their own identity and their relationship to society. Thus the guide promotes an understanding of differing perspectives and helps students comprehend not only their own motives but also those of others.

Adolescence is a time of major developmental transitions. Students need to think about their thinking in order to become aware of their moral development. Facing History seeks to foster cognitive growth and historical understanding through content and methodology that continually complicates students' simple answers to complex questions. The film and the readings also stimulate students to think about the complexities of good and evil, the choices they have as individuals within a society, the consequences of those decisions, and their responsibilities to self and others.

Throughout this guide, students are encouraged to chronicle their learning in a journal. Many find it helpful to use their journals to reflect on their reactions not only to the film but also to the stories they read and the history they learn. Then students come together to share insights and perspectives as they form judgments about human behavior and events in history. Some students may move from thought to action by showing empathy for others, developing ideas to break the isolation among groups, investigating ways to make a difference in their community, or standing up for social justice.

ORGANIZATION

This study guide is divided into three parts: **Pre-View**, **Focus on *Schindler's List***, and **Post-View**. Each contains a variety of readings followed by a set of questions and activities labeled "Connections" and encourages critical reading, reflection, research, and discussion.

Pre-View prepares students for the film by raising compelling questions about human behavior. Students begin to explore why some people choose to help strangers, while others stand by and still others participate willingly in doing evil. The first four readings use literature and primary sources to help students develop a common vocabulary for discussing identity, group membership, and racial and ethnic hatred—concepts central to the film and to Oskar Schindler's choices. Students then apply those ideas about human behavior to readings that focus on life in the United States, Poland, and Germany before World War II.

The section entitled **Focus on *Schindler's List*** is designed for use immediately before and just after seeing the film. It fosters critical viewing skills by encouraging reflection and discussion about the film itself and its central character, Oskar Schindler. This section of the guide continues the process of broadening perspectives by presenting a selection from Thomas Keneally's novel and a 1949 interview with Schindler. These readings connect the film to ideas developed in the **Pre-View** section by exploring how a storyteller's identity shapes the way he or she relates a story.


Students also explore how their own experiences, memories, and thinking affect their responses to that story.

The final section—**Post-View**—adds new voices and historical perspectives to discussions sparked by the film. The section helps students confront their own responses to the brutal and horrific violence of the perpetrators, the pain of the victims, and the indifference of the bystanders by focusing on the moral and ethical questions inherent in the film and in this particular time in history.

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Depending on the class, the time allocated for teaching the film *Schindler's List*, and your own objectives, the materials included in this guide may be used in many ways. Some readings, particularly literary selections and longer quotations, can be read aloud, taped, or dramatized. Others lend themselves to careful analysis and discussion in small cooperative-learning groups. These groups might focus on a single reading that members then teach to other groups or to the class as a whole.

The questions included in “Connections” may be used to prompt journal reflections or as topics for a wide variety of writing assignments. At times, you may wish to assign selected readings as homework so that class time can be used for a discussion of the questions raised in “Connections.” If so, encourage individual students to facilitate those discussions in both small groups and large ones. Recommended videos (see “Additional Resources,” page 4) may be used in place of or along with a reading or a group of readings.

Most “Connections” contain questions set off with a special symbol . These indicate activities that can be used to document students' learning. One such activity asks students to create their own identity chart and then compare that chart with those of their classmates. The activity demonstrates not only a recognition of the factors that shape identity but also perspective-taking. Others allow students to demonstrate critical reading and viewing. One activity in the **Focus** section asks students to describe the main idea of the film by choosing a “master image”—a single frame that summarizes the film. Still others ask students to explore the ways filmmakers, reporters, and other storytellers relate a story. They then consider how the storyteller's craft affects responses to that story. How does a film differ from a novel? From an article in a magazine or newspaper? Students reflect too on the ways people remember the past. They then create their own memorial. Activities provided in **Post-View** also call upon students to make judgments and express feelings about the the film and the man it memorializes. Some activities link the film to concepts and ideas developed in other parts of the guide.

By the time they have completed the guide, students will have created a broad range of work that chronicles their learning. One of the most important is their journals. It reveals their struggle to understand the past and relate that learning to the world today. Many teachers end a unit of study by asking students to demonstrate what they have learned by preparing a portfolio of their work. Students then select the journal entries, homework assignments, essays, poems, and research papers that show how their thinking has grown and changed. Students constantly revise and reassess their portfolios by adding new examples and revising earlier pieces. Like a journal, a portfolio documents thinking. And much like history itself, it always awaits further entries.

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Student Introduction

Facing History and Ourselves: A Guide to Schindler's List

The film *Schindler's List* is based on a book by Thomas Keneally. Both tell the true story of a German businessman who saved over 1,100 Jews during World War II. At the time Oskar Schindler made his choice, the Germans were targeting Jews and others for death *solely* because of their ancestry. Those murders are collectively referred to as the *Holocaust*, a Greek word that means “complete destruction by burning.” Auschwitz and other German death camps where the bodies of many victims were burned brought the word to mind. We will never know exactly how many were murdered in those camps, shot in raids, or died from beatings, disease, and hunger.

Oskar Schindler acted at a time when many people saw themselves as helpless. Albert Camus, a French writer, was among the few to disagree. He wrote that even though people are often paralyzed by the tragedies of history, “strength of heart, intelligence and courage” are enough to “stop fate and sometimes reverse it.” If individuals in wartime can indeed “stop fate and sometimes reverse it,” few events are inevitable. Most are determined by the choices we make. At the time, those choices may not seem important, but together, they shape an age and have consequences that may affect generations to come. This study guide can help you explore such choices and consider the ways they affect the world around you.

Although Schindler took his stand over 50 years ago, many of the issues he and others faced then are similar to those we confront today. As Steven Spielberg, the director of the film, has stated, “*Schindler's List* is no less a ‘Jewish story’ or a ‘German story’ than it is a human story. And its subject matter applies to every generation. It is simply about racial hatred—which is the state of mind that attacks not what makes us people but what makes us different from each other.” He explained:

When I made *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* in 1977, I was obsessed with the theme that we are not alone in the universe. I am still obsessed with that theme—we are not alone with our pain. People all over this planet who are oppressed share the same history. The common ground between slavery and the Holocaust is the pain of racial hatred.

This study guide connects the events described in *Schindler's List* to the present by focusing on issues of choice, group behavior, and racial and ethnic hatred. As you explore those ideas, you will find it useful to keep a journal. It is a way of documenting the process of thinking. For author Joan Didion and others, it is also a way of examining ideas. She explains, “I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means.”

Journals allow us to witness our own history and consider the ways ideas grow and change. Many teachers and students use them to think about who they are and to examine their values and beliefs. Only then do they come together to share insights and responses to complex questions. That sharing requires trust and mutual respect. Building a caring classroom community is hard work. For many, the first step is a “double-entry” journal in which they write responses to key questions on one side of the page, leaving room on the other for later observations or comments by teachers and classmates. In this way, they begin a silent conversation with themselves and then with others.

“The common ground between slavery and the Holocaust is the pain of racial hatred.”

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means.”

Pre-View

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how ways lead on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

ROBERT FROST

The film *Schindler's List* explores the important and difficult choices one man made over 50 years ago. Oskar Schindler, like the narrator in Robert Frost's poem, chose the less-traveled road. It was not an easy choice. Yet it made "all the difference" not only in Schindler's life but also in the lives of hundreds of other men, women, and children. It is sometimes as hard for people today to choose the less-traveled road as it was in Schindler's day. Indeed many of the factors that affected his decision also affect ours. The first few readings in this section of the study guide explore some of the factors that shape not only the choices we make but also the way we view those choices. The readings focus in particular on those that relate to our identity, our need to belong, and the ways we see ourselves and others. The last three readings in this section link those ideas to life in the United States, Poland, and Germany in the years before World War II. In doing so, they will provide you with the historical perspectives you will need to understand ideas developed in the film.

One of the ideas important to this study guide is that of perspective—the ways one’s point of view influences what he or she sees or fails to see. The photographs on this page were taken during World War II. The man in both is Oskar Schindler. What can we tell about the man from a photo? How does his appearance affect the attitudes and assumptions you bring to his story? Is it possible to make connections from how one looks to how he or she acts? What are the risks in doing so?



Reading 1

Identity and Conformity

Like Robert Frost in “The Road Not Taken,” Eve Shalen can still recall a difficult choice she made. At the time, she was an eighth grader. Now a high school student, she reflects on the factors that influenced her decision.

Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.

My eighth grade consisted of 28 students, most of whom knew each other from the age of five or six. The class was close knit and we knew each other so well that most of us could distinguish each other’s handwriting at a glance. Although we grew up together, we still had class outcasts. From second grade on, a small elite group spent a large portion of their time harassing two or three of the others. I was one of those two or three, though I don’t know why. In most cases where children get picked on, they aren’t good at sports or they read too much or they wear the wrong clothes or they are of a different race. But in my class, we all read too much and didn’t know how to play sports. We had also been brought up to carefully respect each other’s races. This is what was so strange about my situation. Usually, people are made outcasts, because they are in some way different than the larger group. But in my class, large differences did not exist. It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred, hatred caused differences between us.

The harassment was subtle. It came in the form of muffled giggles when I talked, and rolled eyes when I turned around. If I were out in the playground and approached a group of people they often fell silent. Sometimes someone would not see me coming and I would catch the tail end of a joke at my expense.

I also have a memory of a different kind. There was another girl in our class who was perhaps even more rejected than I. She also tried harder than I did for acceptance, providing the group with ample material for jokes. One day during lunch I was sitting outside watching a basketball game. One of the popular girls in the class came up to me to show me something she said I wouldn’t want to miss. We walked to a corner of the playground where a group of three or four sat. One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl’s diary. I sat down and, laughing till my sides hurt, heard my voice finally blend with the others. Looking back, I wonder how I could have participated in mocking this girl when I knew perfectly well what it felt like to be mocked myself. I would like to say that if I were in that situation today I would react differently, but I can’t honestly be sure. Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.

Connections

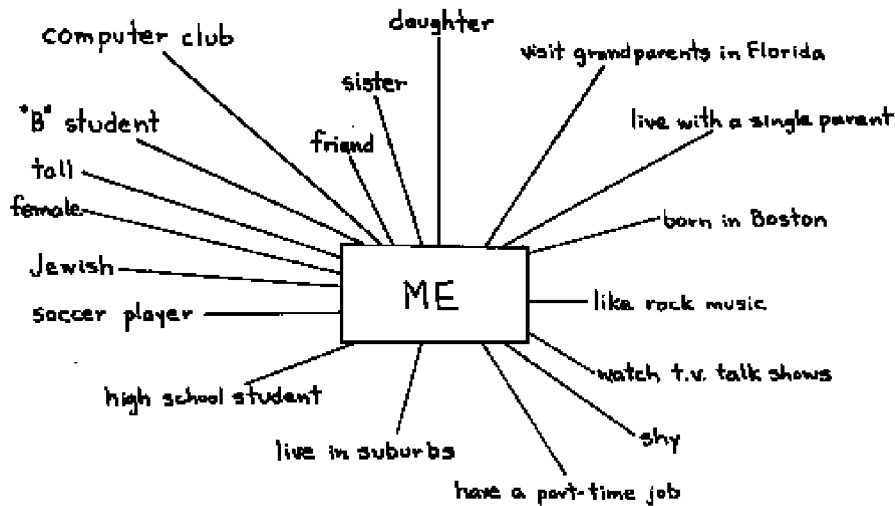
What factors influenced Eve Shalen’s decision the day she chose to mock a classmate? How does she explain her decision? Why does it still trouble her? How do you think Robert Frost might have viewed it?

How did peer pressure shape Eve Shalen's identity? The way she viewed others? How does it influence the way you see yourself and others?

✍ Eve Shalen concludes, "Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last." What does she mean? Do you agree?

"Who am I?" is a question that each of us asks. In answering, we define our identity. The diagram below is an example of an identity chart. Individuals fill it in with the words they call themselves as well as the labels society gives them. Create an identity chart for yourself. Most people define themselves by using categories important to their culture. They include not only "race," gender, age, and physical characteristics but also ties to a particular religion, class, neighborhood, school, and nation. What labels would others attach to you? Do they see you as a leader or a follower? A conformist or a rebel? How do society's labels influence the way you see yourself? The choices you make? Record your thoughts in your journal.

Compare your charts with those of your classmates. Which categories were included on every chart? Which appeared on only a few charts? As you look at other charts, you may wish to add new categories to the one you created.



Create an identity chart for Eve Shalen. Begin with the words or phrases that describe the way she sees herself. Then add the labels that society has placed on her.

Reading 2

Stereotypes and Choices

“We all know we are unique individuals but we tend to see others as representatives of groups.”

One of the factors that influences our decisions is our need to belong. Like Eve Shalen, each of us yearns to be a part of a group. And all too often we make our choices based on our need to be accepted by others even though “the satisfaction does not last.” This reading explores yet another factor that affects our decisions: the images we have of ourselves and others. Psychologist Deborah Tannen writes, “We all know we are unique individuals but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It’s a natural tendency; since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn’t be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn’t predict a lot about them and feel that we know who or what they are.” Although Tannen considers it “natural” to generalize, she views stereotypes as offensive. A *stereotype* is more than a judgment about an individual based on the characteristics of a group. Stereotyping reduces individuals to categories. The two short stories included in this reading suggest some of the ways stereotyping influences the choices we make.

Excerpts from House on Mango Street cannot be published online. The quotation is available in the printed version.

And so “it goes and goes” with *us* against *them*. Is it as inevitable as Cisneros implies that we view *them* as representatives of groups while we see *ourselves* as individuals? Although it is “natural” to generalize, stereotyping reflects an unwillingness to alter a judgment and recognize others as individuals. Therefore stereotyping can lead to prejudice and discrimination. The word *prejudice* comes from the word *pre-judge*. We *pre-judge* when we have an opinion about a person because of his or her membership in a particular group. A prejudice has the following characteristics:

- It is based on differences between groups.
- It attaches values to those differences in ways that benefit one group at the expense of the *other*.
- It is generalized to all members of a group.

Discrimination occurs when prejudices are translated into action. Not every stereotype results in discrimination. But all stereotypes tend to divide a society into *us* and *them*, as Jesus Colon discovered while riding the subway one evening.

It was very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm, a valise in her left hand and two children, a boy and girl about three and five years old,

trailing after her. She was a nice-looking white lady in her early twenties.

At Nevins Street, Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station—Atlantic Avenue—which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to be a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm, and a medium-sized valise in her left hand.

And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of—not even the customary book under my arm, without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

As the train was entering the Atlantic Avenue station, some white man stood up from his seat and helped her out, placing the children on the long, deserted platform. There were only two adult persons on the long platform some time after midnight on the evening of last Memorial Day.

I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad or into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep, long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Avenue station?

Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was—a Puerto Rican hours past midnight, a valise, two white children and a white lady with a baby on her arm badly needing somebody to help her, at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.

But how could I, a Negro and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady, who very likely might have preconceived prejudices about Negroes and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?

What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman perhaps coming from a small town with a valise, two children and a baby on her right arm? Would she say: Yes, of course, you may help me. Or would she think that I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went forward to offer my help?

Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute. The ancestral manners that the most illiterate Puerto Rican passes on from father to son were struggling inside me. Here was I, way past midnight, face to face with a situation that could very well explode into an outburst of prejudices and chauvinistic conditioning of the “divide and rule” policy of present-day society.

It was a long minute. I passed on by her as if I saw nothing. As if I was insensitive to her need. Like a rude animal walking on two legs, I just moved on, half running by the long subway platform, leaving the children and the valise and her with the baby on her arm. I took the steps of the long concrete stairs in twos until I reached the street above and the cold air slapped my warm face.

This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!

Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. Or not prejudiced enough to scream at the coming of a Negro toward her in a solitary subway station a few

“Although it is ‘natural’ to generalize, stereotyping reflects an unwillingness to alter a judgment and recognize others as individuals. Therefore stereotyping can lead to prejudice and discrimination.”

“This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!”

hours past midnight.

If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. I know that there is a chance in a million that you will read these lines. I am willing to take the millionth chance. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, lady. I failed you, children. I failed myself to myself.


I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning. But here is a promise that I made to myself here and now; if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.

Then I will have my courtesy with me again.

Connections


Sandra Cisneros refers to outsiders as “those who don’t know better.” What is she suggesting about the way ignorance shapes *their* perceptions of *us*? How then does knowledge affect the way *we* perceive ourselves? What does her story suggest about the way ignorance affects our views of others? Our behavior?

Is Cisneros right to suggest that we see *them* as dangerous? That we make our decisions about *them* based on stereotypes? Do you agree that it will continue to “go and go” with *us* against *them*? How can we break the cycle of myth and misinformation that *we* have about *them* and *they* have about *us*?

 What role do stereotypes play in your community? Find examples of the ways they influence decisions. What role do prejudice and discrimination play? Look for examples of the ways they influence decisions and then review the identity chart you created (p. 13). To what groups do you belong? How do your memberships affect your view of outsiders? How do stereotypes shape your thinking? Your decisions? Does stereotyping lead to prejudice and discrimination?

Jesus Colon describes labels that others have placed on him. What stereotypes does he hold about the groups to which he belongs? About other groups? How did those stereotypes shape the way he perceived his choices and the decision he made? Why does he have regrets? Do you think he made the right choice? Would your answer be different if he were a white American? Or if the woman were black?

The word *civility* is often defined as a work of the imagination, for it is through the imagination that we render others sufficiently like ourselves that we view them as worthy of tolerance and respect, if not always affection. How are *courtesy* and *civility* related? What does Colon mean when he says, “I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning”? What is the significance of that loss?

 How can we learn empathy—that is, to see others as sufficiently like ourselves that we regard them as worthy of tolerance and respect? What experiences have helped you understand other points of view? What experiences have had the opposite effect? Look for examples in the news. Interview friends and adults about experiences that have brought together people from different neighborhoods and backgrounds.

Reading 3

Conformity, Obedience, and Choice

Eve Shalen's behavior was influenced by peer pressure. Stereotypes had a profound effect on the actions of Jesus Colon. Other factors also shape the ways we react to the world around us. One of the most powerful of these centers around the ways we respond to people we invest with authority. In the 1970s, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a study that focused on issues of obedience. At what point, he wondered, would an individual refuse to obey a direct order—in this case, an order to inflict increasing pain on a protesting victim? To find out, Milgram recruited paid volunteers for what he called a study of the “effects of punishment on learning.”

Milgram designated each volunteer a “teacher.” And as the “teacher” watched, a “learner” was strapped into a chair and told to memorize word pairs for a test. Each was warned that wrong answers would result in electric shocks. The “learner” was, in fact, a member of Milgram's team. The real focus of the experiment was the “teacher.” Each “teacher” was taken to a separate room and seated before a bank of switches ranging from 15 volts labeled “slight shock” to 450 volts labeled “danger—severe shock.” Teachers were to increase a “learner's” shocks by fifteen volts for each incorrect answer.

Milgram predicted that most volunteers would refuse to give electric shocks of more than 150 volts. A group of psychologists and psychiatrists thought that less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the volunteers would administer all 450 volts. To everyone's amazement, 65 percent gave the full 450 volts!

Later Milgram tried to isolate the factors that encouraged obedience by varying parts of the experiment. In one variation, he repeated the test in a less academic setting. Obedience dropped to nearly 48 percent, still a very high number. In another variation, volunteers received instructions by phone. Without an authority figure in the room, only 21 percent continued to the end.

The distance between the volunteer and the “learner” also made a difference. Only 40 percent of the “teachers” obeyed when the “learner” was in the same room. Obedience dropped to 30 percent when volunteers had to place the “learner's” hand on a metal plate to give the shock. On the other hand, when they had a lesser role in the experiment, 92 percent of the volunteers “went all the way.” Milgram concluded that the farther the subjects were from the victim, the more likely they were to go “all the way.” To sociologist Zygmunt Bauman this finding is important: “It is difficult to harm a person we touch. It is somewhat easier to inflict pain upon a person we only see at a distance. It is still easier in the case of a person we only hear. It is quite easy to be cruel towards a person we neither see nor hear.”

Other scholars were struck by the gradual nature of a volunteer's involvement. John P. Sabini and Maury Silver noted:

When the learner makes his first error, subjects are asked to shock him. The shock level is 15 volts. A 15-volt shock is entirely harmless, imperceptible. There is no moral issue here. Of course, the next shock is more powerful, but only slightly so. Indeed every shock is only slightly more powerful than the last. The quality of the subject's action changes from something entirely blameless to something unconscionable, but by degrees. Where exactly should the subject stop? At what point is the divide between the two kinds of action crossed? How

A video entitled

can be used to supplement this reading or in place of it. Copies can be obtained from Facing History and Ourselves.

“It is difficult to harm a person we touch . . . It is quite easy to be cruel towards a person we neither see nor hear.”

is the subject to know? It is easy to see that there must be a line; it is not so easy to see where that line ought to be.

Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University, focused on the behavior of those who refused to obey:

The question to ask of Milgram’s research is not why the majority of normal, average subjects behave in evil (felonious) ways, but what did the disobeying minority do after they refused to continue to shock the poor soul, who was so obviously in pain? Did they intervene, go to his aid, did they denounce the researcher, protest to higher authorities, etc.? No, even their disobedience was within the framework of “acceptability,” they stayed in their seats, “in their assigned place,” politely, psychologically demurred, and they waited to be dismissed by the authority. Using other measures of obedience in addition to “going all the way” on the shock generator, obedience to authority in Milgram’s research was total.

Connections

Milgram has defined *obedience* as “the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose.” How do you define it? How do our feelings about authority figures (teachers, doctors, police officers, and others invested with power in our society) affect the options we perceive? The choice we finally make?


What is the difference between *obedience* and *unthinking* or *blind obedience*? How does each affect the choices we perceive? The choice we finally make?

What encourages obedience? Is it fear of those in power? A desire to please authority figures? A belief in authority? Peer pressure? A need to conform—to go along with the group? What is the difference between *obedience* and *conformity*?

Why do you think it is difficult to harm someone we touch? Why is it somewhat easier to inflict pain upon a person we only see at a distance and easier still on someone we only hear? Does this explain why it is quite easy to be cruel towards a person we neither see nor hear?

How would you answer the questions Sabini and Silver raise? At what point is the experiment no longer harmless? Where exactly should volunteers stop? How is the volunteer to know that point has been reached? Is there a point when it’s too late to stop?

How does Zimbardo define the term *obedience*? What does his definition suggest about our need to conform? What does it suggest about the meaning of the word *courage*?

 If Milgram’s findings are accurate, what fosters acts of cruelty? Indifference to the fate of others? How then might a school encourage acts of caring? Choose one idea and investigate the ways it can be put into effect. How might a neighborhood encourage acts of caring? Society as a whole?

Reading 4

From “Race” to Racism

Jesus Colon believed that racism kept him from making the choice he would have liked to make. It also played an important role in the choices people made in Oskar Schindler’s day. Yet scientists say that “race” is a meaningless idea. Can a meaningless idea affect the way people act? Sociologists say it can. They remind us that what things objectively *are* is often less significant to human beings than what things *mean* in everyday life.

Until the mid-1800s, the word *race* had a number of meanings. Sometimes it referred to a whole species—as in “the human race.” Sometimes it meant a nation—as in “the French race.” And sometimes it referred to a family—“the last of his or her race.” These usages all imply kinship and suggest that shared characteristics are passed from one generation to the next. Scientists who studied the concept defined the word in similar ways in the 1800s. They used the term *race* to refer to those who share a genetic heritage.

Some scientists were so certain that “race” explained human behavior that they distorted facts to bolster their arguments or made claims they could not substantiate. As a result, they strengthened prejudices and gave new life to myths and misinformation. Among these “scientists” was an American named Samuel Morton. In the early 1800s, he decided that skull size was linked to intelligence and “race.” He therefore insisted that his research “proved” that the “white race” was more intelligent than any other. He was not sure if blacks were a separate “race” or species, but he did insist that they were different from and inferior to whites. He also maintained that each race is intrinsically different from others and incapable of being changed.

Many Americans liked his conclusions so well that they did not question his research or his assumptions even though they were surrounded by people of “mixed races.” One of the few to challenge Morton’s findings was Frederick Douglass, a former slave and an abolitionist. After reading Morton’s book, he described the scientist as one “blinded by prejudice.” And Douglass warned, “It is the province of prejudice to blind; and scientific writers, not less than others, write to please, as well as to instruct, and even unconsciously to themselves, (sometimes,) sacrifice what is true to what is popular.”

Few white Americans paid attention to Douglass’ remarks. They preferred to believe they belonged to a “superior race.” Europeans were also intrigued with the idea. A French anthropologist, Paul Broca, later built upon Morton’s theories. Broca believed that only “compatible” races would produce “racially healthy” children. He therefore warned against “race mixing.” That idea had powerful effects when governments began to apply it to everyday life. For example, Broca’s research was used to justify taking land from Native Americans and forcing them onto reservations. In 1882, it was cited in defense of strict limits on Chinese immigration. And in 1896, that same research gave the Supreme Court reason to uphold a Louisiana law requiring that Americans be separated by “race.”

Racists also thought they found support for their arguments in the work of Charles Darwin, a British biologist. In 1859, he explained how species of plants and animals physically change, or evolve, over time. Darwin’s work suggested that each competes for space and nourishment and that only those with a selective advantage

“It is the province of prejudice to blind; and scientific writers, not less than others, write to please, as well as to instruct, and even unconsciously to themselves, (sometimes,) sacrifice what is true to what is popular.”

“The idea of pure, superior races and the concept of a racial enemy solved too many pressing problems to be easily discarded.”

survive. A number of social scientists tried to apply Darwin’s ideas to humans. Referring to Darwin’s work but using phrases like “the survival of the fittest,” they popularized a doctrine known as *Social Darwinism*.

Social Darwinists saw their ideas at work everywhere in the world. The “fit” were at the top of the social and economic pyramid and the “unfit” at the bottom, they reasoned, because competition rewards “the strong.” They argued that if the laws of natural selection were allowed to function freely, everyone would find his or her rightful place in the world. Increasingly that place was based on “race.”

In every country, people interpreted Social Darwinism a little differently. In the United States, it affected the way African Americans and Indians were treated. In Europe, it applied mainly to Jews. In 1879, Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist, was among those who attacked Jews not as followers of a particular religion but as members of a separate, evil, and inferior “race.” In the past, Jews were targets because of their religious beliefs. Then, or so the reasoning went, they could end discrimination by becoming Christians. But conversion cannot alter one’s “race.” Racists turned the “Jewish problem” into a permanent one. Marr coined the word *antisemitism* to describe the new opposition to Jews. It meant, and still means, hatred of Jews.

A few years later, a German biologist Ernst Haeckel used Social Darwinism to rank the “races.” Not surprisingly, he placed “Aryans,” the mythical ancestors of the Germans, at the top of his list and Jews and Africans at the bottom. Haeckel’s book, *Riddles of the Universe*, also encouraged eugenics—breeding “society’s best with best”—as a way of keeping the “Aryan race” pure. That idea also came from England. Its originator was Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin.


Scientists who showed flaws in racist thinking continued to be ignored. In the late 1800s, for example, the German Anthropological Society conducted a study to determine if there really were racial differences between Jewish and “Aryan” children. After studying nearly seven million students, the society concluded that the two groups were more alike than different. Historian George Mosse writes:

This survey should have ended controversies about the existence of pure Aryans and Jews. However, it seems to have had surprisingly little impact. The idea of race had been infused with myths, stereotypes, and subjectivities long ago, and a scientific survey could change little. The idea of pure, superior races and the concept of a racial enemy solved too many pressing problems to be easily discarded. The survey itself was unintelligible to the uneducated part of the population. For them, Haeckel’s *Riddles of the Universe* was a better answer to their problems.

Biologists who conducted similar studies also found that human racial differentiation is, indeed, only skin deep. But their research, too, had little effect on popular views of “race.” What things objectively *are* remained less significant than what things *mean* in everyday life.


Connections

Write a working definition of the word *race*. Explain what the word means to you. Then add the meanings described in this reading. Next create a working definition of the word *racism*. Keep in mind that the ending *ism* refers to a doctrine or principle. Can you be a racist if you do not believe in the concept of “race”? Expand your definitions as you continue reading.

 Think of times when prejudice has blinded you. How did you react? What are the consequences of allowing prejudices to become “fashionable”? How do Mosse’s comments support the view that what people believe is true is more important than the truth? Give an example from your own experiences that supports the idea that what things objectively *are* is often less significant to human beings than what things *mean* in everyday life. Give an example that calls that idea into question.

In the 1800s, Social Darwinism and other ideas about “race” were preached from the pulpit and taught in universities. In the United States, those ideas triggered a debate that forced some Americans to question both the message and the messenger. In other societies that debate was censored. Why is the freedom to debate ideas essential to a free society?

Why do you think we have no difficulty in telling individuals apart in *our* group, while *they* all look alike—even though there are more genetic variations among *us* than there are between *us* and *them*?

 As part of the 1990 Census, Americans were asked to place themselves in one of the following categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black; White; or “Of Hispanic Origin.” Similar categories appear on applications for jobs, scholarships, and loans. The information is used to enforce civil rights laws. Which category do you think Jesus Colon would choose for himself? Which might others choose for him? How valid is either choice?

Deborah A. Thomas of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans would like to add a new category to the 2000 census. It would read “Multi-ethnic.” She argues that “with the absence of the current convenient categories,” public officials will “analyze the deeper issues that confront all of us instead of relying on the racial lip service that is all too prevalent. After all, races *do* mix. We are *all* mixed people: Racial purity is the fantasy of cavemen.” To what extent are the issues Thomas raises a legacy of the nation’s past? To find out how “race” shaped American life during the 1800s and early 1900s, research such topics as the “winning” of the West; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other immigration laws; the anti-lynching campaign in the early 1900s, and the Civil Rights movement.

Reading 5

Us and Them

As racist thinking became more “respectable,” so did acts of violence against .

By the early 1900s, more and more individuals and nations focused not on what *we* have in common but on the differences between *us* and *them*. As racist thinking became more “respectable,” so did acts of violence against *them*. *They* were increasingly seen as beyond *our* “universe of obligations”—the circle of individuals and groups toward whom we have an obligation, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.

In the United States, *they* were African Americans. As state after state passed laws that placed *them* outside its “universe of obligations,” violence against blacks rose sharply. An attack on African Americans in Springfield, Illinois, the town where Abraham Lincoln once lived, prompted a small group of black and white Americans to speak out. They issued a document describing what Lincoln, the nation’s president during the Civil War, would find if he were still alive in 1909:

In many states Lincoln would find justice enforced, if at all, by judges elected by one element in a community to pass upon the liberties and lives of another. He would see the black men and women, for whose freedom hundreds of thousands of soldiers gave their lives, set apart in trains, in which they pay first-class fares for third-class service, and segregated in railway stations, in places of entertainment; he would observe that State after State declines to do its elementary duty in preparing the Negro through education for the best exercise of citizenship.

In much of the United States, separation was required by law. In much of Europe, it was a matter of custom and tradition. Sociologist Nechama Tec says of Jews in her native Poland:

As the largest community of Jews in Europe, Polish Jews were also the least assimilated. They looked, dressed, and behaved differently from Polish Christians. Some of these differences can be traced directly to religious requirements that called for special rituals and dress. Others were accentuated by the urban concentration of Jews. Over 75 percent lived in urban settings, while the same was true for only 25 percent of the Polish population in general. . . .

The economic importance of Jews was first recognized by the medieval princes who had invited them to settle in Poland. . . . Because Jews were barred from ownership of land, most of them had to become merchants, artisans, and professionals. Since these occupations required an urban setting, Jewish presence fulfilled the princes’ wish for modernization. Aware of the Jews’ economic usefulness, the powerful nobles tried to protect them from growing religious opposition. Their efforts, however, became unsuccessful when to the hostility of the church was added resentment due to economic competition. The rising class of Christian merchants objected to their Jewish competitors, as did the minor nobility. Both aspired to the positions held by the Jews. To the resentment of these groups was also added the resentment of peasants who had direct dealings with the Jewish estate administrators and who blamed them rather than the lords for all their misfortunes.

That resentment continued long after Poland, like many nations in Eastern Europe, won its independence as a result of the breakup of the German, Austrian,

and Russian empires after World War I. And like other nations in the region, it had to decide who would be citizens of the new nation. Many Christian Poles firmly believed that there was room in Poland for only one nationality. To emphasize the point, anti-Jewish riots shook many towns across the nation.

The growing violence not only in Poland but also in other Eastern European nations troubled world leaders, including President Woodrow Wilson of the United States. When he and the others met in France to write the peace treaty that would end World War I, they insisted that Poland and other new nations assure their minorities equal rights. Polish leaders reluctantly signed the Minorities Treaty on June 28, 1919, the same day that they signed the agreement that guaranteed the nation's independence.

Although many Polish Jews applauded the Minorities Treaty, most Christian Poles saw it as a violation of their honor. According to sociologist Celia Heller, those Poles defined honor as "a special quality which every Pole inherited as part of his Polish birthright and which he was to guard constantly against violations by outsiders, especially inferiors. And the Jews were considered the outsiders, the strangers in their midst." And as outsiders, their "presence in Poland was due only to Polish good will."

That "good will" was not always forthcoming. In times of crisis, the Jews were an easy target. In 1929, a worldwide depression began. It lasted through much of the 1930s. A *depression* is a time when economic activity slows as more and more businesses decrease production and lay off workers. In a poor nation like Poland, the effects were devastating. As the crisis deepened, people looked for leaders who would end the suffering. Increasingly they turned to individuals who saw the crisis as an economic war between *us* and *them*. Author Wanda Wasilewska described the effects of such attitudes:

The slogan of economic struggle is raised against the paupers of the Jewish street. Why look for those responsible [for Poland's economic problems elsewhere] when it is so easy to find them nearby, in a street of the Jewish quarters? Why suppress when it is so easy and so safe to vent one's anger in a fight with a bowed porter [one who earns a living carrying heavy loads on his back], with a Jewish boy selling watches, with an old Jewish woman [selling bagels]?

In one year alone, 1935-1936, nearly 1,400 Jews were wounded and several hundred killed in antisemitic attacks in over 150 Polish towns and cities. The violence alarmed many people, including the nation's prime minister. In 1936, he assured members of parliament that "my government considers that nobody in Poland should be injured. An honest host does not allow anybody to be harmed in his house." But he insisted on the right to continue to exclude Jews economically.

The Catholic church took a similar stand. In an open letter, Cardinal August Hlond advised Polish Catholics that "one does well to prefer his own kind in commercial dealings ... but it is not permissible to demolish Jewish businesses, destroy their merchandise, break windows, torpedo their houses. One ought to fence oneself off against [the Jews'] anti-Christian culture but it is not permissible to assault Jews, to hit, maim or blacken them."

Connections


Woodrow Wilson was the world leader who argued most strongly in favor of the Minorities Treaty. Yet as president of the United States, he was responsible for segregation in the offices of the federal government. Why would he support equal rights for minorities in Poland but not at home? What do his actions suggest about his “universe of obligations”?


Like the Poles, Czechs also had to sign the Minorities Treaty. And like the Poles, many Czechs resented doing so. But unlike Polish leaders, President Thomas Masaryk of Czechoslovakia honored the agreement. When asked why, he replied, “How can the suppressed nations deny the Jews that which they demand for themselves?” How was he defining his nation’s universe of obligations? How did Poland’s leaders answer Masaryk’s question? In doing so, how did they define their universe of obligations?

In Polish the word *alien* is synonymous with “different.” What does it mean to be seen as “different”? What connotations does the word *alien* have in English? How do those connotations affect the way Americans view aliens?

The reading describes a stand taken by the Polish *government* and the Catholic *church*. When people speak of *government*, to whom are they referring? When they speak of *the church*, to whom are they referring? Who are the individuals behind the labels?

A *pogrom* is a government-organized or inspired act of violence against a minority group, particularly Jews. It comes from a Russian word that means “riot” or “destruction.” Over one hundred years ago, the nobles of St. Petersburg demanded that the “people’s wrath” be vented against the Jews. The peasants in the nearby town of Elizanetgrad responded with the first pogrom in modern times. A Russian writer described the subsequent murders, rapes, and looting as the “unending torture” of a religious and ethnic minority. To what extent were the antisemitic riots described in this reading pogroms? What part did the government play in the riots?

 Sociologist W. E. B. DuBois was among those who protested the riots in Springfield, Illinois, and other cities. In response to the violence, he helped organize the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Under his leadership, the group tried to end discrimination everywhere in the United States. It also spoke out against the racist attitudes and beliefs inherent in Social Darwinism and the eugenics movement. Find out more about DuBois and his lonely struggle for social justice. What does your research suggest about the difficulties in combatting racist thinking?

 Celia Heller describes the “social line between Poles and Jews” as “very close” to the color line in the United States before the Civil Rights movement. To what similarities is she referring? What differences seem most striking? Before you answer, you may wish to research violence against African Americans in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s and against immigrants today.

Reading 6

Racism—A Distorted Lens

By the early 1900s, “race” was the distorted lens through which many people viewed the world. As attacks against *them* increased, many Jews, African Americans, and other minorities turned inward to their people and their faith for support. Others tried to assimilate—become more like the majority. They were confident that as differences diminished, so would discrimination. When they did not, many, like the young Pole quoted here, became bitter and angry:

I didn't want to be a Jew. [But] Poland regards me as a Jew, doesn't want me here, and treats me as a stranger. In this situation, in this sad situation, we see our life more clearly. I see that I am a Jew. Somebody said to me rightly when I was an internationalist that I worried about all humanity, about all nations but forgot my own nation's misfortunes. But today I look around and see that Poland's independence is not my independence because they don't want me here, because I am despised and I am in danger. . . . Try to defend yourself verbally and you're accused of insulting the Polish nation. But you can be insulted and called a mangy Jew. Because these are not our courts; these are not our prisons.

Many European Jews had similar experiences. Walter Rathenau, a prominent German businessman and politician, wrote in the early 1900s, “In the youth of every German Jew there comes the painful moment which he will remember for the rest of his life, when for the first time he becomes conscious that he has come into the world as a second-class citizen, and that no ability or accomplishment can liberate him from this condition.”

Some Jews tried to ignore the attacks. Others protested the violence. But as the worldwide depression deepened in the 1930s, prejudices and discrimination intensified. So did the separation between *us* and *them*. In 1933, for example, a Protestant minister in Germany wrote, “In the last 15 years in Germany, the influence of Judaism has strengthened extraordinarily. The number of Jewish judges, Jewish politicians, Jewish civil servants in influential positions has grown noticeably. The voice of the people is turning against this.”

Were such fears justified? Did Jews control Germany? In 1933, they made up less than one percent of Germany's population. And of the 250 Germans who held important government posts between 1919 and 1933, only four were Jews. The myth of a Germany dominated by Jews was fostered by groups like Adolf Hitler's National Socialist, or Nazi, party. In speech after speech, they maintained that the Jews were everywhere, controlled everything, and acted so secretly that few could detect their influence. The charge was absurd; but after hearing it again and again, many came to believe it. They also believed tales of mythical “Aryans” who invented civilization. A supporter said of Hitler's speeches, “You cannot imagine how silent it becomes as soon as this man speaks; it is as if all of the thousand listeners are no longer able to breathe. . . . Adolf Hitler is so firmly convinced of the correctness of his nationalistic views that he automatically communicates this conviction to his listeners.”


Few joined Hitler's Nazi party in the 1920s. But as the worldwide depression intensified in the early 1930s, many Germans found the group increasingly attractive. In 1932, Hitler ran for president of Germany. Although the incumbent won,

By the early 1900s, “race” was the distorted lens through which many people viewed the world.

Hitler did surprisingly well. So when the party in power was unable to end the depression, its leaders turned to Hitler for help. In January, 1933, he became chancellor, or prime minister. Within weeks, he set into motion a series of laws and orders that destroyed the nation's democratic government and replaced it with a dictatorship based on "race" and terror.

Connections

Is "race" the only lens through which people view the world around them? Why is "race" referred to as a lens that distorts perception? What other lenses distort?


-  What is a "second-class citizen"? Use a newspaper to find current examples of "second-class citizens." What do those individuals have in common with the Jews of Europe before World War II? What differences seem most striking?

Why do you think many look for simple answers to complex problems in times of crisis? How do negative feelings about *others* turn into acts of hatred and violence? How are intolerance and fear linked? Humiliation and hatred? How do your answers explain why minorities are vulnerable in times of stress?

Although a few European Jews were rich, most barely made a living. Some were assimilated, while others were deeply religious. They also disagreed on many issues, including the best way to counter discrimination. Some urged keeping "a low profile." Others were Zionists—nationalists who hoped to leave Europe and build a Jewish state in Palestine. Despite such divisions, many saw Jews as united, rich, and dangerous. What does this suggest about the power of a lie told repeatedly?

As a child in Poland, Helene Deutsch would often see a neighborhood priest followed by an altar boy who shook a bell "to remind the faithful to kneel down. All the passersby would sink to their knees like wheat stalks in the wind. I alone, the Jew, would remain standing in solemn silence. I felt marked by a stigma and full of shame." Why does she call it "a sight that has lasted in my memory all my life"? A high-school student born in Cambodia wrote the lines below. How universal are the feelings she describes?

What is it like to be an outsider?
What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?
What is it like when the teacher says, "Whoever wasn't born here raise your hand."
And you are the only one.
Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.
You have to live in somebody else's country to understand.

-  A German of Jewish descent asked in the 1920s, "But what is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence?" How would you answer? Are racism and violence also linked? Research the history of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. What evidence can you find that would support a link between racism and violence? What evidence suggests other factors may be involved?

Reading 7

Building a “Racial State”

Adolf Hitler believed that different “races” play different roles in society. In his view, the role of the “Aryan race” was to lead. As Hitler put it, “Everything we admire on this earth today—science and art, technology and inventions—is only the creative product of a few peoples and originally perhaps one race (the Aryans). On them depends the existence of this whole culture. If they perish, the beauty of this earth will sink into the grave with them.” And who threatens that culture? To Hitler, the answer was clear: Africans, “Gypsies,”* and Jews. To protect the purity of the “Aryan” race from these enemies, he would turn Germany into a “racial state.”

Once in power, Hitler set out to eliminate every opponent. The first to be targeted were the Communists. He saw them as enemies not only because they stirred up “class hatred” but also because of their ties to Communist Russia, an inferior and dangerous nation in his view. Within a month of taking office, he ordered the arrest of 4,000 Communists in Berlin alone. Some were confined to concentration camps. Others found themselves in secret prisons that Rudolf Diels, the chief of the political department of the Berlin police, described as “hellish torture.” According to Diels, “Not only Communists but anyone who had ever expressed himself against Hitler’s movement was in danger.”

Although the Nazis operated outside of the law, they encountered little opposition. As historian A. J. P. Taylor has noted, everything Hitler did “followed logically from racial doctrines in which most Germans vaguely believed.” Christopher Isherwood, a British writer, expressed the same idea when he described the Germans as “suddenly proud of being blond. And they thrilled with a furtive, sensual pleasure, like schoolboys, because the Jews, their business rivals, and the [Communists], a vaguely defined minority of people who didn’t concern them, had been satisfactorily found guilty of the defeat and the inflation and were going to catch it.”

By spring, Hitler felt confident enough to take his campaign of intimidation one step further. He created a special government bureau that would be responsible for all executive actions against the Nazis’ political enemies. Under the leadership of Hermann Goering, the Gestapo (or Secret State Police) was to “protect public safety and order” by using methods that ranged from interrogation to consigning individuals to concentration camps. Neither practice was based upon law or subject to judicial review.

Next Hitler turned his attention to the Jews whom he associated with the Communists by claiming the Jews were behind the teachings of the Communist party. He proclaimed 42 anti-Jewish measures in 1933 and 19 more in 1934. Each was designed to protect “Aryan blood” from contamination by “Jewish blood.” Then in 1935, Hitler announced three new laws: the first two stripped Jews of citizenship and the third isolated them from other Germans by outlawing marriages between Jews and citizens of Germany.

*An animated video entitled
can be
used to supplement
this reading or in
place of it. Copies
may be obtained from
Facing History and
Ourselves.*

* The people Hitler and others referred to as “Gypsies” called themselves the Sinta and Roma. Like the Jews, they too had lived in Europe for centuries.

The new laws raised a question: Who is a Jew? On November 14, 1935, the Nazis defined a Jew as a person with two Jewish parents or three Jewish grandparents. Children of intermarriage were considered Jewish if they practiced the Jewish religion or were married to a Jew. An individual was also considered a Jew if one parent was a practicing Jew. A child of intermarriage who was not Jewish according to these criteria was a *Mischling*—a person of “mixed race.” By isolating Jews and forbidding any mixing of “races,” the Nazis hoped that the problem of defining a *Mischling* would eventually disappear.

The Nazis would create over 400 more “racial laws” over the next ten years. These would apply not only to Jews but also to “Gypsies.” Increasingly a person was defined solely by his or her ancestry.

In 1933, the Nazis announced yet another “racial” law. This one allowed them to sterilize women “tainted” by “inferior” blood. At risk was anyone who suffered from such “genetically determined” illnesses as feeble-mindedness, schizophrenia, mental illnesses, genetic epilepsy, Huntington’s Chorea, genetic blindness, deafness, and some forms of alcoholism. The purpose of the law was “to have at all times a sufficient number of genetically sound families with many children of high racial value.”

The law created special “genetic courts” where doctors and lawyers decided who would be sterilized. The individual in question had no say in the matter. The Germans modeled their laws after similar ones in the United States. Between 1907 and 1930, twenty-nine states passed compulsory sterilization laws and about 11,000 people were sterilized. Many states also had laws that banned “mixed” marriages. Both sets of laws were prompted by a desire to “raise the standard of humanity.” But the Nazis now took that goal much further than the Americans ever did. Between 1933 and 1939, about 320,000 German women were sterilized under the law. By 1945, the number may have grown to as many as 3 million.

The Nazis, like the Americans, also encouraged what they called “eugenics”—the breeding of a superior race. Heinrich Himmler, as head of the SS, was particularly concerned about the “racial quality” of his men. Each recruit was carefully screened. He had to prove that his family was “Aryan” dating back to at least 1750. In addition, Himmler and his top aides inspected photographs of every applicant to make sure he did not look “too Eastern” or have “a Jewish intellectual look.” Not only did every member of the SS have to pass the test but so did his prospective bride.

By 1936, Hitler was applying his ideas about “race” to foreign policy. He maintained that it was unfair for inferior peoples to control land in Eastern Europe when a superior “race” needs living space. The first to feel the effects of that policy were Austrians and Czechs. Then, on September 1, 1939, the German army marched into Poland. Jacob Birnbaum, a Jew who lived in the town of Piotrkow, quickly discovered what that policy would mean to Poles and Jews:

The next day, Saturday, September 2, at 8:30 in the morning, Piotrkow was heavily bombed, resulting in many casualties. The heavy bombing continued through the following day, destroying a number of public buildings, including the city hall, police headquarters, the State Bank, the post office, and the city’s water system. On Tuesday, September 5, at 4:00 in the afternoon, German ground troops entered Piotrkow and conquered the city after two hours of street fighting. That same day they set out on a search for Jews in the almost deserted city, found twenty, among them Rabbi Yechiel Meir Fromnitsky, and shot them in cold blood. Thus it began.

Everything Hitler did followed logically from racial doctrines in which most Germans vaguely believed.”

The day after the invasion, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun in Europe. Almost from the start, there were two wars. One was fought openly by soldiers on the battlefields of Europe and North Africa. The other was fought in secret and its victims were civilians—children, women, and men whose only “crime” was their “race.”


Connections

Why do you think many Germans were proud of being blond”? What are the pictures that come into your mind when you hear about different groups in the United States today? Where do those images come from? Are they generalizations or stereotypes? What is the difference?

According to historian Fritz Stern, the great appeal of National Socialism was “the promise of absolute authority. Here was clarity, simplicity.” To achieve that clarity, the German people gave up “what for so long they had taken for granted: the formal rule of law, a free press, freedom of expression, and the elementary protection of habeus corpus.” What is the purpose of law in a democracy? How did the Nazis use law? Who supported their efforts? What do your answers suggest about the role of a citizen in a democracy?

Imagine the arrest of 4,000 people in a large city in a matter of days. How many people were likely to see the police arrive? Watch them herd women and men into vans and cars? Notice the absence of co-workers, friends, and neighbors? Why didn’t anyone speak out? How do you think the fact that the police came for the Communists affected the way individuals responded? Did Germans consider Communists a part of their “universe of obligations”?

Visitors to German hospitals where sterilizations took place, were told, “We have courts. It is all done very legally, rest assured. We have law and order.” What rights did a victim have to protest? To whom could they protest? The Bill of Rights, part of the United States Constitution, protects the rights of all Americans. Yet, even with that protection, hundreds of Americans were sterilized. What do these incidents say about why many perceive minorities as particularly vulnerable to acts of violence?

 In 1933, Martin Niemoller, a Protestant minister, voted for the Nazi party. By 1938, he was in a concentration camp. After the war he is quoted as saying, “In Germany, the Nazis came for the Communists and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak for me.” How did Niemoller view others? How did his view of them affect the choices he made? What were the consequences of his decisions? What do those consequences suggest about the ways individuals and groups in a society are linked? Find examples of the ways Niemoller’s remarks relate to the choices people make today. Do those examples support the moral of his lesson?

Focus on *Schindler's List*

This part of the guide will help you sort through your impressions of the film and of Oskar Schindler. It begins with explanations of what prompted Thomas Keneally to write a book about Schindler and Steven Spielberg to make the movie. The questions and activities that follow ask you to think about the film and the man it features. Some ask you to compare Spielberg's film with Keneally's book. Both men learned of Schindler from Leopold Pfefferberg, one of the Jews Schindler saved. A magazine article by Herbert Steinhouse offers an additional view of the German industrialist. The article is based on an interview with two men who died long before Keneally and Spielberg researched Schindler's story. The two men Steinhouse interviewed were Oskar Schindler and Itzhak Stern, a Jew important to Schindler's operations. Comparing Steinhouse's account with the film will help you understand how one's perspective and experiences affect his or her view of events.

The map below shows place names referred to in the film *Schindler's List*.



A Chronicle of Key Events in *Schindler's List*

This timeline provides a summary of *Schindler's List* by relating key events in the film to the unfolding of the Holocaust. It is based on historian Christopher Browning's observation that "at the core of the Holocaust was an intense eleven-month wave of mass murder. The center of gravity of this mass murder was Poland, where in March 1942, despite two and a half years of terrible hardship, deprivation, and persecution, every major Jewish community was still intact; eleven months later, only remnants of Polish Jewry survived."

September, 1939	Germany conquers Poland in two weeks; World War II begins in Europe; Polish Jews are ordered to register and relocate.
October 26, 1939	Krakow becomes the capital of German-occupied Poland.
December, 1939	Oskar Schindler takes over the enamelware factory in Krakow, meets Itzhak Stern, and with Stern's help, begins using Jewish workers in his plant.
1940-early 1941	Germans expel some Jews in Krakow to other towns.
March 3, 1941	Germans establish a ghetto in Krakow.
March, 1942	About 20 to 25 percent of the Jews who would die in the Holocaust have already perished.
June, 1942	The Germans build a forced labor camp at Plaszow.
June-October, 1942	Deportations and shootings terrorize the Krakow ghetto.
February, 1943	Amon Goeth takes command of Plaszow. About 80 to 85 percent of the Jews who would die in the Holocaust have already perished.
March 13-14, 1943	The Germans liquidate Krakow ghetto.
March 1943	Schindler sets up a branch of his factory at Plaszow.
August, 1944	Schindler's factory is closed and his Jewish workers are taken back to Plaszow.
October, 1944	Schindler creates a list of Jewish workers for his new plant in Brennece, Czechoslovakia; workers are transferred from Plaszow via Auschwitz.
January, 1945	Plaszow is closed and the remaining prisoners are sent to Auschwitz.
May 8, 1945	World War II ends in Europe. The Holocaust is over.
May 9, 1945	The Soviet army liberates the camp at Brennece.
September 13, 1946	Goeth is found guilty of war crimes and is hung in Krakow.
October 9, 1974	Oskar Schindler dies in Frankfurt, Germany.

Viewing the Film

The film *Schindler's List* is based on the novel by Thomas Keneally. In a note to readers, Keneally explains how he came to write the book and why he decided to turn a true story into a novel.

“The Holocaust goes well beyond any effort of fantasy. For the first time in my life, I feel more like a chronicler than a filmmaker.”

In 1980 I visited a luggage store in Beverly Hills, California, and inquired the prices of briefcases. The store belonged to Leopold Pfefferberg, a Schindler survivor. It was beneath Pfefferberg's shelves of imported Italian leather goods that I first heard of Oskar Schindler, the German *bon vivant*, speculator, charmer, and sign of contradiction, of his salvage of a cross section of a condemned race during those years now known by the generic name Holocaust.

This account of Oskar's astonishing history is based in the first place on interviews with 50 Schindler survivors from seven nations. . . . It is enriched by a visit, in the company of Leopold Pfefferberg, to locations that prominently figure in the book. But the narration depends also on documentary and other information supplied by those few wartime associates of Oskar's who can still be reached, as well as by the large body of his postwar friends. Many of the plentiful testimonies regarding Oskar deposited by Schindler Jews at *Yad Vashem*, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority [in Israel] further enriched the record, as did written testimonies from private sources and a body of Schindler papers and letters, some supplied by *Yad Vashem*, some by Oskar's friends.

To use the texture and devices of a novel to tell a true story is a course that has frequently been followed in modern writing. It is the one I chose to follow here—both because the novelist's craft is the only one I can lay claim to, and because the novel's technique seem suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar. I have attempted, however, to avoid all fiction, since fiction would debase the record, and to distinguish between reality and the myths which are likely to attach themselves to a man of Oskar's stature. It has sometimes been necessary to make reasonable constructs of conversations of which Oskar and others have left only the briefest record. But most exchanges and conversations, and all events, are based on the detailed recollections of the *Schindlerjuden* (Schindler Jews), of Schindler himself, and of other witnesses to Oskar's acts of outrageous rescue.

Universal Pictures obtained rights for Steven Spielberg to turn the book into a film soon after it was published, but it did not reach development for about ten years. Spielberg later remarked that before he could make the film, he had to come to terms with his own identity. *“Schindler's List* has a great deal to do with my story as a man and a Jew. So far, I have always made films that I liked as a spectator, relying on my imagination, the fantasies of a boy who never grows up. In this case, my imagination, my faithful companion in the past, was nothing but an extra piece of luggage—something that would actually become a burden. There is nothing one would have to invent in this story. The Holocaust goes well beyond any effort of fantasy. For the first time in my life, I feel more like a chronicler than a filmmaker.”

As he worked on the film, Spielberg drew not only on historical research but also on his own experiences in life. He explains, “You never know what prepares anyone for a film. I was certainly prepared to make *Schindler's List* since childhood.” That

preparation began around his grandmother's dining-room table. In the 1950s, she taught English there to Holocaust survivors who came to the United States to start new lives. Spielberg still recalls learning how to count by tracing the numbers on one survivor's tattoo. Spielberg notes, "Very early on, as a kid, I began asking questions about the numbers and those people. I remember all of them very vividly. They were consumed with sadness in their eyes."

Responding to the Film

As you watch the film, try not to reach a conclusion about the story or the characters until it is over. Then use your journal to:

- record what you remember about the film. What images or scenes stand out? Which characters stand out in your mind? What qualities make those characters memorable?
- list what you learned from the film; questions that the film raised but did not answer; and at least one way that the film relates to the world today.

Discuss your observations with friends and classmates. Was everyone struck by the same scenes? The same characters? How do you account for differences?

Writers use detail to draw attention to a person or event. Filmmakers use color, motion, and sound to accomplish the same thing. What scenes in *Schindler's List* are in color? Why do you think Spielberg chose to film these scenes in color but not others? How was music used in the scenes you recall most vividly? What ideas or events did the music underscore?

In making *Schindler's List*, Spielberg says he tried to be "more of a reporter than a passionate, involved filmmaker—because I wanted to *communicate* information more than I needed to proselytize and convert. The information is so compelling because it wasn't written by Hollywood authors. It comes out of the human experience. Out of history." That vision influenced many of his decisions as the film's director. Identify decisions that reflect Spielberg's desire to place the viewer "inside the experiences of Holocaust survivors and actual victims as close as a movie can."

Rena Finder, who was on "Schindler's List," says of the film, "I felt as if I left my body in my seat and went into the screen. I felt like I was one of the people there. It felt like my life. It felt like me going through everything." A critic wrote that as a result of the film "the Holocaust, 50 years removed from our contemporary consciousness, suddenly becomes overwhelmingly immediate, undeniable." To what qualities are they referring? Can the visual imagery of a film be more profound than reality?

No two people tell a story in exactly the same way. What is omitted is often as important as what is included. How did Spielberg's identity—who he is as a person—affect the way he viewed Schindler's story? The way he told that story? Compare the way Spielberg tells the story with the way Thomas Keneally tells it. How similar are the two versions? What differences seem most striking? Do they reflect the differences between a film and a novel? Between the two storytellers?



The photo to the left shows Amon Goeth selecting a housemaid in *Schindler's List*. The photo below was taken during the war by an Austrian who managed a factory at Plaszow. It shows women prisoners at work. Spielberg used this photo and others like it to ensure the accuracy of his film. How do the two photos explain why Rena Finder found the film so real?



✍ Director Martin Scorsese once told film critic Gene Siskel about the concept of a “master image”—one frame from a movie that can summarize the entire film. When asked in 1990 which “master image” would summarize all of his films, Spielberg chose “the little boy in *Close Encounters [of the Third Kind]* opening the door and standing in that beautiful yet awful light, just like fire coming through the doorway. And he’s very small, and it’s a very large door, and there’s a lot of promise or danger outside that door.”

When Siskel asked if that image suggests that “we’re all boys or girls standing in front of a door at all times,” Spielberg expanded on that idea by saying “that we don’t know what’s out there. We should be afraid of not knowing. And we should take a step toward what we don’t understand and what we don’t know about and what scares us. And we should embrace what scares us. We shouldn’t be self-destructive about it, but we should go toward that kind of proverbial light and see what’s out there for us.” Why do you think some people fear knowing? Avoid the light? What “master image” summarizes *Schindler’s List*? Write a letter to Steven Spielberg explaining your choice. How is it like the one he chose in 1990? What differences seem most striking? Share your ideas with your classmates. How similar are the choices each of you made? How do you account for differences?

✍ The power of a film to shape our view of both past and present realities means that every film has within it an element of propaganda—somebody’s idea of the way the world is, was, or ought to be. Thus every film not only tells a story but also shapes our view of the world. In an interview with journalist Bill Moyers, David Puttnam, the producer of *Chariots of*

Fire and *The Killing Fields*, reflected on the way a movie can be used as propaganda:

I don't think any one film is ever going to change anything. I don't think any one newspaper article ever changes anything. But over a period of years, the drip, drip, drip of a lot of good movies, a lot of good articles, . . . all this is very, very, very important. The effect of that drip, drip, drip, the daily diet of views and ideas that adhere to and promote what's best in society—that has an effect. Not one movie, not one article, not one building, but just the fact that all of us buckle down and try to do better and be better.

David Puttnam believes that films can have a positive or negative impact. Prepare a list of films and/or TV shows that promote a “negative, apathetic, and ignorant” society. List those that promote a “healthy, informed, and concerned” society. What distinguishes positive films from negative ones? Is it the subject matter? Or is it the way the subject matter is treated in the film? For example, can a film about violence promote a “healthy, informed, and concerned” society?

The Nazis were aware of the potential of films to shape the way people saw the world. Therefore every film made in Nazi Germany had a political function. One such film, *The Triumph of the Will*, features a Nazi rally in Nuremberg in 1935. It portrays the Nazis as heroic conquerors. The filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl, once said of that film and others like it, “The object of propaganda has little to do with truth. Its object is to make people lose their judgment.” Would David Puttman agree with her view? Would Steven Spielberg agree?

In watching propaganda, it is important not to get caught up in the feelings it is designed to evoke. One way to avoid doing so is by describing exactly what you observed without interpretation or judgment. Then analyze the film. What message does it convey? Who is sending that message? Who is the message for? How did the director make the film attractive to that group? What emotions does he or she try to evoke? How does the filmmaker use sound, color, motion and visual images to arouse those emotions?

Most films made in Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s fostered negative images of black Americans. But unlike the Jews in Nazi Germany, African Americans were able to use their rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution as an avenue of outrage. Some filmmakers like Oscar Micheaux used that freedom to create movies that presented a truer picture of African Americans. Those films, known as “midnight rambles,” were shown very late at night when white audiences were least likely to attend or in segregated theaters. Pamela A. Thomas, a student of film history, made a documentary about those filmmakers. It was featured on the public-television series *The American Experience*. She created the movie because the “midnight rambles” and the filmmakers who created them are rarely mentioned in books about film and filmmaking. What do the “midnight rambles” suggest about the power of film to shape not only our view of others but also the way we see ourselves? Why do you think the people who made the “midnight rambles” have been left out of history books?

A Journalist's View of Oskar Schindler

Neither Steven Spielberg nor Thomas Keneally ever met Oskar Schindler or Itzhak Stern. Both died long before Keneally walked into the leather goods store in Beverly Hills.

One of the few to actually interview the two men was Herbert Steinhouse, a Canadian journalist. After the war, he was an information officer for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Europe. In the course of his work, he met Stern and a few other *Schindlerjuden* or Schindler Jews. At first, Steinhouse was suspicious of the stories they told of a Nazi war profiteer who rescued Jews, but he was intrigued enough to investigate. To his surprise, he found evidence that supported their stories in the files of underground and resistance groups.



The real Itzhak Stern and Oskar Schindler in 1949.

After several meetings with both men, Steinhouse wrote an article about Schindler in 1949 but was unable to find a publisher. At the time, no one wanted to read about the war; it was too depressing. As a result, the article was not published until 1994, 45 years after it was written.

It was from the accountant Itzhak Stern that I first heard of Oskar Schindler. They had met in Krakow in 1939. “I must admit now that I was intensely suspicious of Schindler for a long time,” Stern confided, beginning his story. “I suffered greatly under the Nazis. I lost my mother in Auschwitz quite early and I was very embittered.”

At the end of 1939, Stern directed the accountancy section of a large Jewish-owned export-import firm, a position he had held since 1924. After the occupation of Poland in September, the head of each important Jewish business was replaced by a German trustee, or *Treuhänder*, and Stern's new boss became a man named Herr Aue. The former owner, as was the requirement, became an employee, the firm became German, and Aryan workers were brought in to replace many of the Jews.

Aue's behavior was inconsistent and immediately aroused Stern's curiosity. Although he had begun Aryanizing the firm and firing the Jewish workers in accordance with his instructions, he nevertheless left the discharged employees' names on the social-insurance registry, thus enabling them to maintain their all-important workers' identity cards. As well, Aue secretly gave these hungry men money. Such exemplary behavior could only impress the Jews and astonish the wary and cautious Stern. Only at the end of the war was Stern to learn that Aue had been Jewish himself, that his own father was murdered in Auschwitz in 1942, and that the Polish he pretended to speak so poorly actually was his native tongue.

Not knowing all this, Stern had no reason to trust Aue. Certainly he could not understand the man's presumption when, only a few days after having taken charge of the export-import firm, Aue brought in an old friend who had just arrived in Krakow to see Stern saying quite casually, “You know, Stern, you

can have confidence in my friend Schindler.” Stern exchanged courtesies with the visitor, and answered questions with care.

“I did not know what he wanted and I was frightened,” Stern continued. “Until December 1, we Polish Jews had been left more or less alone. They had Aryanized the factories, of course. And if a German asked you a question in the street it was compulsory for you to precede your answer with ‘I am a Jew. . . .’ But it was only on December 1 that we had to begin wearing the Star of David. It was just as the situation had begun to grow worse for the Jews, . . . that I had this meeting with Oskar Schindler.

“He wanted to know what kind of Jew I was. He asked me many questions, like was I a Zionist or assimilated or what have you. I told him what everyone knew, that I was vice president of the Jewish Agency for Western Poland and a member of the Zionist Central Committee. Then he thanked me politely and went away.”

On December 3, Schindler paid another visit to Stern, this time at night and to his home. They talked chiefly of literature, Stern remembers, and Schindler revealed an unusual interest in the great Yiddish writers. And then suddenly, over some tea, Schindler remarked: “I hear that there will be a raid on all remaining Jewish property tomorrow.” Recognizing the intended warning, Stern later passed the word around and effectively saved many friends from the most ruthless “control” the Germans had thus far carried out. Schindler, he realized, had been attempting to encourage his confidence, although he could still not fathom why.

Oskar Schindler . . . had come to Krakow from his native town of Zwittau, just across what had been a border a few months earlier. Unlike most of the carpetbaggers . . . , he received a factory not from an expropriated Jew but from the Court of Commercial Claims. A small concern devoted to the manufacture of enamelware, it had lain idle and in bankruptcy for many years. In the winter of 1939-1940 he began operations with 4,000 square metres of floor space and a hundred workers, of whom seven were Jewish. Soon he managed to bring in Stern as his accountant.

Production started with a rush, for Schindler was a shrewd and tireless worker, and labour—by now semi-slave—was as plentiful and as cheap as in any industrialist’s fondest dream. During the first year the labour force expanded to 300, including 150 Jews. By the end of 1942, the factory had grown to 45,000 square metres and employed almost 800 men and women. The Jewish workers, of whom there were now 370, all came from the Krakow ghetto the Germans had created. “It had become a tremendous advantage,” says Stern, “to be able to leave the ghetto in the daytime and work in a German factory.”

. . . Word spread among Krakow’s Jews that Schindler’s factory was the place to work. And, although the workers did not know it, Schindler helped his Jewish employees by falsifying the factory records. Old people were recorded as being twenty years younger; children were listed as adults. Lawyers, doctors, and engineers were registered as metalworkers, mechanics, and draughtsmen—all trades considered essential to war production. . . .

From behind his high book-keeper’s table [Stern] could see through the glass door of Schindler’s private office. “Almost every day, from morning until evening, officials and other visitors came to the factory and made me nervous.

Schindler used to keep pouring them vodka and joking with them. When they left he would ask me in, close the door, and then quietly tell me whatever they had come for. He used to tell them that he knew how to get work out of these Jews and that he wanted more brought in. That was how we managed to get in the families and relatives all the time and save them from deportation.” Schindler never [explained] but gradually Stern began to trust him.

Schindler maintained personal links to “his Jews,” each of whom worked in the factory’s office. One was Itzhak Stern’s brother, Dr. Nathan Stern, a man who is today a respected member of Poland’s small Jewish community. Magister Label Salpeter and Samuel Wulkan, both old ranking members of the Polish Zionist movement, were the other two. Together with Stern, they were part of a group that served as a link with the outside underground movement. And in this work they were soon joined by a man named Hildegeist, the former leader of the Socialist Workers’ Union in his native Austria, who, after three years in Buchenwald, had been taken on in the factory as an accountant. A factory worker, the engineer Pawlik, subsequently to reveal himself as an officer in the Polish underground, led the activities. Schindler himself played no active role in all this, but his protection served to shelter the group. It is doubtful that these men did effective resistance work, but the group did provide the *Schindlerjuden* with their first cohesiveness and a semblance of discipline that later was to prove useful.

... Then, on March 13, came the orders to close the Krakow ghetto. All Jews were moved to the forced-labour camp of Plaszow, outside the city. Here, in a sprawling series of installations that included subordinate camps throughout the region, conditions even for the graduates of the terrible Krakow ghetto were shocking. The prisoners suffered and by the hundreds either died in camp or were moved to Auschwitz. ...

Stern along with Schindler’s other workers had also been moved to Plaszow from the ghetto but, like some 25,000 other inmates who inhabited the camp and worked outside, they continued spending their days in the factory. Falling deathly ill one day, Stern sent word to Schindler urgently pleading for help. Schindler came at once, bringing essential medicine, and continued his visits until Stern recovered. But what he had seen in Plaszow had chilled him.

Nor did he like the turn things had taken in his factory.

Increasingly helpless before the frenetic Jew-haters and Jew-destroyers, Schindler found that he could no longer joke easily with the German officials who came on inspections. The double game was becoming more difficult. Incidents happened more and more often. On one occasion, three SS men walked onto the factory floor without warning, arguing among themselves. “I tell you, the Jew is even *lower* than an animal,” one was saying. Then, taking out his pistol, he ordered the nearest Jewish worker to leave his machine and pick up sweepings from the floor. “Eat it,” he barked, waving his gun. The shivering man choked it down. “You see what I mean,” the SS man explained to his friends as they walked away. “They eat anything at all. Even an animal would never do that.” ...

The increasing frequency of such incidents in the factory and the evil his eyes had seen at the Plaszow camp probably were responsible for moving Schindler into a more active ... role. In the spring of 1943, he ... began the

conspiring, the string-pulling, the bribery, and the shrewd outguessing of Nazi officialdom that finally were to save so many lives. It is at this point that the real legend begins. For the next two years, Oskar Schindler's ever-present obsession was how to save the greatest number of Jews from the Auschwitz gas chamber only sixty kilometres from Krakow.

His first ambitious move was to attempt to help the starving, fearful prisoners at Plaszow. Other labour camps in Poland . . . had already been shut down and their inhabitants liquidated. Plaszow seemed doomed. At the prompting of Stern and the others in the "inner-office" circle, Schindler one evening managed to convince one of his drinking companions, General Schindler—no relative, but well placed as the chief of the war-equipment command in Poland—that Plaszow's camp workshops would be ideally suited for serious war production . . . The general fell in with the idea and orders for wood and metal were given to the camp. As a result, Plaszow was officially transformed into a war-essential "concentration camp." And though conditions hardly improved, it came off the list of labour camps that were then being done away with. . . .

The move also put Schindler in well with Plaszow's commander, the *Hauptsturmführer* Amon Goeth, who, with the change, now found his status elevated to a new dignity. When Schindler requested that those Jews who continued to work in his factory be moved into their own sub-camp near the plant "to save time in getting to the job," Goeth complied. From then on, Schindler found that he could have food and medicine smuggled into the barracks with little danger. . . .

Life in the factory went on. Some of the less hardy men and women died, but the majority continued doggedly at their machines, turning out enamelware for the German army. Schindler and his "inner-office" circle had become taut and apprehensive, wondering just how long they could continue their game of deception. Schindler himself still entertained the local officers but, with the change of tide [in the war], tempers were often out of control. A stroke of a pen could send the Jewish workers to Auschwitz and Schindler along with them. The group moved cautiously. . . . The year 1943 became 1944. Daily, life ended for thousands of Polish Jews. But the *Schindlerjuden*, to their own surprise, found themselves still alive.

By the spring of 1944, the German retreat on the Eastern Front was on in earnest. Plaszow and all its sub-camps were ordered emptied. Schindler and his workers had no illusions about what a move to another concentration camp implied. The time had come for Oskar Schindler to play his trump card, a daring gamble that he had devised beforehand.

He went to work on all his drinking companions, on his connections in military and industrial circles in Krakow and in Warsaw. He bribed, cajoled, pleaded, working desperately against time and fighting what everyone assured him was a lost cause. He got on a train and saw people in Berlin. And he persisted until someone, somewhere in the hierarchy, perhaps impatient to end the seemingly trifling business, finally gave him the authorization to move a force of 700 men and 300 women from the Plaszow camp into a factory at Brenneč in his native [Czechoslovakia]. Most of the other 25,000 men, women, and children at Plaszow were sent to Auschwitz, there to find the same end that several million other Jews had already discovered. But out of the vast calamity, and

"The year 1943 became 1944. Daily, life ended for thousands of Polish Jews. But the , to their own surprise, found themselves still alive."

through the stubborn efforts of one man, a thousand Jews were saved temporarily. One thousand half-starved, sick, and almost broken human beings had had a death sentence commuted by a miraculous reprieve.

The move from the Polish factory to the new quarters in Czechoslovakia, it turned out, was not uneventful. One lot of a hundred did go out directly in July, 1944, and arrived at Brennece safely. Others, however, found their train diverted without warning to the concentration camp of Gross-Rosen, where many were beaten and tortured and where all were forced to stand in even files in the great courtyard doing absolutely nothing but putting on and taking off their caps in unison all day long. At length Schindler once more proved successful at pulling strings. By early November all of the *Schindlerjuden* were again united in their new camp.

And until liberation in the spring of 1945, they continued to outwit the Nazis at the dangerous game of remaining alive. Ostensibly the new factory was producing parts for V2 bombs, but, actually, the output during those ten months between July and May was absolutely nil.

Jews escaping from the transports then evacuating Auschwitz and the other easternmost camps ahead of the oncoming Russians found haven with no questions asked. Schindler even brazenly requested the Gestapo to send all intercepted Jewish fugitives "in the interest," he said, "of continued war production." A hundred additional people were saved in this way, including Jews from Belgium, Holland, and Hungary. "His children" reached the number of 1,098: 801 men and 297 women.

The *Schindlerjuden* by now depended on him completely and were fearful in his absence. His compassion and sacrifice were unstinting. He spent every bit of money still left in his possession, and traded his wife's jewelry as well, for food, clothing, and medicine, and for schnapps with which to bribe the many SS investigators. He furnished a secret hospital with stolen and black-market medical equipment, fought epidemics, and once made a 300-mile trip himself carrying two enormous flasks filled with Polish vodka and bringing them back full of desperately needed medicine. His wife, Emilie, cooked and cared for the sick and earned her own reputation and praise. . . .

Perhaps the most absorbing of all the legends that *Schindlerjuden* on all four continents repeat is one that graphically illustrates Schindler's self-adopted role of protector and saviour in the midst of general and amoral indifference. Just about the time the Nazi empire was crashing down, a phone call from the railway station late one evening asked Schindler whether he cared to accept delivery of two railway cars full of near-frozen Jews. The cars had been frozen shut at a temperature of 5°F and contained almost a hundred sick men who had been locked inside for ten days, ever since the train had been sent off from Auschwitz ten days earlier with orders to deliver the human cargo to some willing factory. But, when informed of the condition of the prisoners, no factory manager would hear of receiving them. . . . Schindler, sickened by the news, ordered the train sent to his factory siding at once.

The train was awesome to behold. Ice had formed on the locks and the cars had to be opened with axes and acetylene torches. Inside, the miserable relics of human beings were stretched out, frozen stiff. Each had to be carried out like a carcass of frozen beef. Thirteen were unmistakably dead, but the others still

breathed.

Throughout that night and for many days and nights following, Oskar and Emilie Schindler and a number of the men worked without halt on the frozen and starved skeletons. One large room in the factory was emptied for the purpose. Three more men died, but with the care, the warmth, the milk, and the medicine, the others gradually rallied. All this had been achieved surreptitiously, with the factory guards, as usual, receiving their bribes so as not to inform the SS commandant. . . .


Such was life at Brennecc until the arrival of the victorious Russians on May 9 put an end to the constant nightmare. The day before, Schindler had decided they would have to get rid of the local SS commander just in case he suddenly remembered his drunken threat and got any desperate last-minute ideas. The task was not difficult, for the guards had already begun pouring out of town in panic. Unearthing their hidden weapons, a group slipped out of the factory late at night, found the SS officer drinking himself into oblivion in his room, and shot him from outside his window. In the early morning, once certain that his workers finally were out of danger and that all was in order to explain to the Russians, Schindler, Emilie, and several of his closest friends among the Jewish workers discreetly disappeared and were not heard from until they turned up, months later, deep in Austria's U.S. Zone.

“Behind the gleaming ranks of those who seem totalitarian robots stand men and women, various and diverse, complex and complicated, some brave, some cowardly, some brainwashed, some violently idiosyncratic, and all of them very human.”

Connections

Some of the people Steinhouse interviewed were no longer alive when Keneally and Spielberg did their research. How did their voices shape Steinhouse's account? Do their voices alter the basic outline of the story? The details that support the outline? The images you form of the central characters in the story?

In January of 1945, Michael Klein, now a professor of physics at Worcester (MA) Polytechnic Institute, was one of 94 prisoners in a hospital at a forced labor camp. A few months earlier, he and the others would have been shipped directly to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. But now the war was coming to an end and the Germans were preparing to close the camp. So they loaded the 94 patients onto two cattle cars and abandoned them on an isolated siding. It was the prisoners in those cars that Schindler rescued, but he did not act alone. Among those involved in the rescue were his brother-in-law who alerted him to the men's plight; his wife Emilie who helped nurse the men; and even the guards who could have turned them in but did not. Each of their choices is a story within the story. What stories within the story do you recall from film? How does each help us understand that life is always more complicated than we think? That “behind the gleaming ranks of those who seem totalitarian robots stand men and women, various and diverse, complex and complicated, some brave, some cowardly, some brainwashed, some violently idiosyncratic, and all of them very human”?

 It took 45 years for Herbert Steinhouse to find a publisher for his story. People did not want to think about the Holocaust earlier. There are events in every history that people are reluctant or unwilling to acknowledge. One such event in American history was the evacuation of all Japanese Americans from the West Coast of the United

A packet of materials on memorials including a videotaped interview with Maya Lin can be used to supplement this activity. The packet is available from Facing History and Ourselves.

States in February of 1942, just three months after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Children, women, and men of Japanese descent were shipped to “relocation centers” in remote parts of the West. Not one of them was ever found guilty of sabotage or treason. Yet when Japanese Americans challenged the legality of their detention, the Supreme Court ruled in 1944 that it was a valid use of the nation’s war powers. It would take 40 years before the government acknowledged it had acted wrongly by agreeing to make reparations to those it relocated.

Manzanar, which lies west of Death Valley in California, was one of the ten “relocation centers.” After it became a National Historic Site, a team of architects who planned a memorial there considered these questions:


- How do you encourage visitors to stare into the ugly face of hate and prejudice?
- Can you show the dark side of history in a way that neither sugarcoats it nor makes people turn away unmoved and unengaged?
- Is it possible to make people think about the unthinkable?

Research the way the people who turned Auschwitz into a museum answered those questions. Find out how they were answered by a memorial to the horrors of the African slave trade at Goree off the coast of West Africa. Research, too, the way slaves are portrayed in historical reenactments like one at Williamsburg, Virginia. Find out how Native Americans have remembered their experiences with injustice. What are the similarities? What differences seem most striking? How would you answer the questions? Journalist Dwight Young describes the way they were answered at the Manzanar “relocation center”:

What should a monument to injustice look like? Should it be tall, threatening, and sharp-edged, gleaming black and blood-red? Or should it be smaller, more slithery, a poisonous menace half-hidden among rocks and shadowy vines?

Or might it take the form of an isolated valley dotted with scrubby bushes where clouds of wind-borne grit sometimes blot out the rugged mountains looming on all sides?

That’s how Manzanar looks.

 Some people remember the past by building memorials like the black granite wall Maya Lin created in memory of Americans who died in the Vietnam War or the monument she designed to honor slain civil rights workers. Others paint pictures like the one on the cover of this guide. It is the work of Holocaust survivor Samuel Bak, a noted artist. Still others write books and make films. Design and then build a memorial to a person, an idea, or event that is important to you—one that you believe must be remembered. Whom do you want to see or experience your memorial? What impression or feeling do you want to leave with those individuals? How does your memorial convey that feeling?

Post-View

This section of the guide adds new voices and historical perspectives to discussions sparked by the experience of the film. It also begins the process of investigating historical, moral, and ethical questions raised by the film. Each reading in this section focuses on a scene from the film.

The photograph below is of Raimund Titsch, the manager of a factory in the forced labor camp at Plaszow. He took many photographs during the war, including the two on this page and those on pages 11 and 34. The one on the left shows women prisoners on their way to a quarry. The one on the right shows the distribution of food. After the war, Leopold Pfefferberg wondered what happened to the pictures. In 1963, he located Titsch and negotiated to buy the film. Fearful of the Nazis, Titsch had buried the film in a steel box in a public park in Vienna, Austria. Pfefferberg gave the negatives to Yad Vashem, a memorial to the Holocaust in Israel. In 1993, he donated prints to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Steven Spielberg used those photos to ensure the accuracy of many of the scenes in *Schindler's List*.



Reading 1

Questions of Power



Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson, right) bargains with SS commandant Amon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes) for the lives of his Jewish workers.

“Power ... is when we have every justification to kill ... and we don’t.”

A scene in Schindler’s List: As the radio plays a “moody” song, a camera pans a hotel room in Krakow to reveal a glass of expensive cognac, several expensive-looking business suits, an assortment of neckties, a pile of cuff links, a silk handkerchief, a stack of money, cigarettes, a watch, and finally, a swastika pin—a sign of membership in the Nazi party.

Later the camera reveals the owner of these items—Oskar Schindler. By then, an impression has been formed. It is an impression that is deepened as Schindler makes friends with the German officers he encounters in a Krakow night club.

Amon Goeth, the commandant at Plaszow, is introduced in a similar way. He, too, is not visible at first. Instead the camera shows a large open car moving slowly through the Krakow ghetto. The car is accompanied by an SS officer on a motorcycle. As the entourage passes, a Jewish policeman holds back a crowd of residents. In the back seat of the car sits a man in an officer’s uniform. His name and title appear briefly on the screen as a Nazi official seated in front explains the organization of the ghetto.

Amon Goeth speaks but once during the entire scene. It is a complaint. He’s freezing and demands to know why the top is down.

As the story unfolds, those images are refined and expanded. In one scene, the two men discuss power. Goeth, who clearly has had too much to drink, tells Schindler, “The more I look at you—I watch you—you’re never drunk.” As Schindler stares, the commandant continues, “Oh, that’s, that’s real control. Control is power. That’s power.”

Schindler is not so sure. He wonders, “Is that why they fear us?”

To Goeth, the answer is easy. He argues that “they fear us” because “we have the power to kill.”

Schindler disagrees. “They fear us because we have the power to kill arbitrarily. A man commits a crime, he should know better. We have him killed, and we feel pretty good about it. Or we kill him ourselves, and we feel even better. That’s not power, though. That’s justice. That’s different than power. Power ... is when we have every justification to kill ... and we don’t.”

When Goeth says he does not understand, Schindler expands on the idea, “That’s what the emperors had. A man stole something, he’s brought in before the emperor, he throws himself down on the ground, he begs for mercy. He knows he’s going to die. Then the emperor ... pardons him. This worthless man. He lets him go. That’s power, Amon. That ... is power.”

Goeth roars. He mockingly gestures like a Roman emperor and laughingly says “I pardon you.” Yet the next day, Goeth seems taken by the notion and even practices “pardoning” prisoners, particularly Lisiek, the young Jew responsible for cleaning his bathtub. But in the end, he returns to his old ways and the shootings begin again. His first target is young Lisiek.

Connections

Why do you think Steven Spielberg chose to introduce the two men through the use of symbols? What is he trying to tell the audience about each man? How does your opinion of each man change or deepen as the film progresses? How is the Oskar Schindler you encountered at the start of the film like the man you saw in the final scenes? How is he different? Does Goeth change in similar ways?


In the 1980s, a British television crew interviewed Amon Goeth's mistress. She told them, "We were all good Nazis. What else could we be?" Was she right? Or did she have other choices? Did Goeth? It has been said that "the system" doesn't force one to act out of character. It simply reveals one's character. What did the "system" reveal about the woman? About Goeth? Schindler?

How important are symbols of power? Does an individual become powerful because he or she has the "right" symbols? Or do the symbols come with power? Or are the symbols irrelevant if an individual has real power?

Write a working definition of the word *power*. What did the word mean to Goeth? To Schindler? What does it mean to you? Why did Schindler distinguish between the power to kill and the power to kill arbitrarily? How important is the difference?

What is the relationship between power and evil? Between power and goodness? For example, how does Schindler's own love of power affect his ability to save his Jewish workers? His willingness to do so?

What was Schindler trying to accomplish in his conversation with Goeth? Was he trying to teach him? Influence his thinking? Clearly if Schindler hoped to change Goeth, he did not. What approach would you take to influence a man like Goeth?

 It has been said that "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you agree? How does the film support that view? Below are other views of power. Which would Schindler support? With which would Goeth agree? Which is closest to your own views?

- The measure of a human being is what he does with power.
- The reputation of power is power.
- No one with absolute power can be trusted to give it up even in part.
- Power corrupts, but lack of power corrupts absolutely.
- Power does not corrupt men; but fools, if they get into a position of power, corrupt power.
- Power intoxicates. When one is intoxicated by alcohol, one can recover, but when one is intoxicated by power, one seldom recovers.

The real Amon Goeth on a balcony overlooking the camp.



Reading 2

Separating Neighbor from Neighbor

“For one could get rid of one’s badge a hundred times, yet one still remained oneself.”

A scene from Schindler’s List: On March 3, 1941, the Nazis order the Jews of Krakow into a walled and closely guarded section of the city known as a ghetto. Soon after, hundreds of Jewish families pile their possessions onto pushcarts and form a huge procession toward the ghetto. As they walk, a Polish man grabs horse dung from the street and hurls it at the Jews. As they brush the dung from their clothes, they hear a small child shout, “Good-bye, Jews! Good-bye, Jews!”

The actions of the bystanders suggest that in Poland many had turned against their neighbors long before the German invasion. Gusta Draenger, a young Jewish woman with “Aryan looks” and “Aryan papers,” believes that separation made it almost impossible for Jews to escape.

How easy it was to say: “Run away from the deportations!” But how was one to escape from the barbed wire guarded by policemen? It was enough for a policeman to notice one’s Jewish armband and he gunned down the bearer. One could, of course, get rid of one’s armband, but if passers-by notice the blue-white symbolic badge disappear, they handed one over to the police. Even if one crept into the darkest gateway and there accomplished this fundamental change of decor, there would always be somebody who had noticed that one had entered the gateway as a Jew and reappeared . . . as what? Yes, indeed, as what? For one could get hide of one’s badge a hundred times, yet one still remained oneself. . . . One betrayed one’s Jewishness by every anxious movement one made; by every uncertain step one took; by one’s hunched back that seemed to carry the burden of slavery; by one’s eyes that were those of a hunted animal; by one’s general appearance on which the ghetto had left its stamp. One was nothing else but a Jew not simply because of the colour of one’s eyes, hair, complexion, shape of nose, race. One remained a Jew because one lacked self-assurance; because of the intonations in one’s speech; because of the way one expressed oneself; because of the way one behaved and because of the Lord only knows what else. One was and remained a Jew because everybody was determined to see a Jew in one; because everybody around wanted to hound Jews and could not bear the thought that even a single Jew might escape annihilation. Wherever one went, people stared arrogantly, suspiciously and provocatively into one’s eyes until one became confused, blushed, lowered one’s eyes—and turned out to be a Jew.

Therefore, before a Jew reached the nearest railway station, he already had behind him several battles in which the weapons were eyes, several encounters when without a word being said he had stood up to the enemy in every passer-by, and frequently also several encounters with blackmailers, so that in his pocket there hardly remained enough money to buy a ticket for the nearest townlet. And when he finally reached the railway station, he found himself the object of scrutiny by people in uniforms. There were several police forces whose only task was to track down Jews. . . . A Jew needed all the sang froid in the world to walk proudly, head held high, through the station, meeting the persistent stares of the plain-clothes policemen with a cold glare, and finally fight-

ing his way into a carriage with a nonchalance as though he did it every day.

But it was inside the carriage that the rule of the mob truly began. From the stares of those people, devoid of all subtlety, there was no escape. Their gimlet eyes bored through one; they smelt out a Jew for the pleasure of handing him over to the police or, in the best cases, in order to torment, blackmail and threaten him until his spirit broke completely and he prayed for death as one prays for salvation. Not infrequently, as the price of the most intense nervous strain, the Jew managed to conceal his identity. But he could not avoid listening to conversations that chilled the blood in his veins. What did they talk about? They talked about Jews. They said that the Jews got what they deserved. That it was high time that their fate should be settled once and for all. That they had been justly punished; that they had tried to escape, but had been caught in the nick of time. That they had attempted to get away with their gold, but had been prevented from doing so just in time. The Jew had to listen to old wives' tales, to base slanders, to infamous lies, and above all, to expressions of rejoicing, to low bestial joy at the fact that hundreds of thousands of children, women and old people were being murdered. Like hyenas in search of carrion, they were willing to pounce on Jewish belongings, to plunder and rob the houses whose owners were no longer there. And in the corner of the carriage there sits a human being who has not yet got over the loss of his nearest and dearest and not a single muscle must move in his face, for should he display the slightest emotion of indignation or anguish, then he must be a Jew.

Connections

What do the man and the child in the scene from the film symbolize? Sonia Weitz, a survivor of the Krakow ghetto and Plaszow, says of her own experiences, "As Jews, we were twice victimized, first by the Nazis and then by many of our Polish neighbors. We became victims of the victims." How does the scene reflect that feeling?

What is "the rule of the mob"? Do people behave differently in large crowds than they do in small groups? Than they do when they are alone? Would the people Gusta Draenger encountered on the train have behaved differently if they met at school or work?

How did Gusta Draenger's fears affect what she saw and heard on her train ride? To what extent did her own stereotypes of Poles and Jews shape her perceptions? Compare her journey with the one Jesus Colon took (pages 14-16). What do the two readings suggest about what we see? What we fail to see? How do our perceptions shape reality?

Reading 3

Betraying the Youth

A scene from *Schindler's List*: The cameras shift from one part of Krakow to another as individuals and groups prepare for the final liquidation of the ghetto. Through it all, Amon Goeth can be heard addressing his men:

*A video entitled
can be
used to supplement
this reading or in
place of it. It contains
the memories of
Holocaust survivors.
Copies can be
obtained from Facing
History and
Ourselves.*

Today is history. Today will be remembered. Years from now, the young will ask with wonder about this day. Today is history, and you are part of it. Six hundred years ago . . . , Kazimierz the Great so-called told the Jews they could come to Krakow. . . . They took hold. They prospered. In business, science, education, the arts. They came here with nothing. Nothing. And they flourished. For six centuries, there has been a Jewish Krakow. Think about that. By this evening, those six centuries are a rumor. They never happened. Today is history.

Goeth's speech reflects years of Nazi propaganda. He joined a Nazi youth group in Austria at the age of seventeen and became a member of the SS at 22. He was convinced that he belonged to a "superior race" and the Jews were his "racial enemy." Most of his men held similar views. The Nazis focused much of their propaganda on young people. Soon after Hitler took power, a new course was added to the curriculum. Its objectives were to:

1. Give pupils an insight into the relationship, causes and effects of all basic facts having to do with the science of heredity and race.
2. Impress the pupils with the importance of the science of heredity and race for the future of the nation and the purposes of the government.
3. Awaken in the pupils a sense of responsibility toward the nation, as represented by both its ancestry and its posterity; imbue the pupils with pride in the fact that the German people are the most important exponent of the Nordic race, and to influence them in favor of complete (Nordification) of the German people.

This is to be accomplished early enough so that no child shall leave school without a conviction of the necessity of pure blood.

As homework for the new "race science" classes, students were to collect pictures of great scholars, statesmen, artists, and others who "distinguish themselves by their special accomplishments." Students were then to determine the "preponderant race" of these individuals "according to physical characteristics." Racial instruction was not limited to a single course. Every course taught that Jews, blacks, and "Gypsies" were inferior to "Aryans." Even arithmetic text books contained "story problems" like this one: "The Jews are aliens in Germany—In 1933 there were 66,060,000 inhabitants of the German Reich, of whom 499,682 were Jews. What is the percentage of aliens?"

The emphasis on "race" accentuated the isolation of Jewish students. One recalls, "People started to pick on me, 'a dirty Jew,' and all this kind of thing. And we started to fight. In the break time there was always one of us fighting." "Race science" classes had a different effect on "Aryan" students. A former member of Hitler Youth recalls them as fostering pride. "The flag, the people—they were everything. You are nothing, your people everything. Yes, that's how children were brought up, that's how you can manipulate a child." Erika Mann, a German writer who opposed the Nazis, held similar views. In a book called *School for Barbarians*, she wrote:

You leave the house in the morning, “Heil Hitler” on your lips. . . . All the way down the street, the flags are waving, every window colored with red banners, and the black swastika in the middle of each. You don’t stop to ask why; it’s bound to be some national event. . . .

You meet the uniforms on the way to school: the black [uniformed] SS men, the men of the Volunteer Labor Service, and the Reichswehr soldiers. And if some of the streets are closed, you know that an official is driving through town. . . . And here, where a building is going up, the workmen are gone—probably because of the “national event.” But the sign is on the scaffolding. “We have our Fuhrer to thank that we are working here today. Heil Hitler!” The familiar sign, seen everywhere with men at work, on roads, barracks, sport fields. . . .

There are more placards as you continue past hotels, restaurants, indoor swimming pools, to school. They read . . . “Not for Jews.” And what do you feel? . . . You don’t feel anything, you’ve seen these placards for almost five years. This is a habit, it is all perfectly natural, of course Jews aren’t allowed here. Five years in the life of a child of nine—that’s his life, after four years of infancy, his whole personal, conscious existence. Through the Nazi street walks the Nazi child. There is nothing to disturb him, nothing to attract his attention or criticism.

Alfons Heck, a former member of Hitler Youth, is not as certain that it was just propaganda that made it easy to manipulate children:


Traditionally, the German people were subservient to authority and respected their rulers as exalted father figures who could be relied on to look after them. . . . Hitler used that yearning for a leader brilliantly. From our very first day in [a Nazi youth group], we accepted it as a natural law—especially since it was merely an extension of what we had learned in school—that a leader’s orders must be obeyed unconditionally, even if they appeared harsh, punitive or unsound. . . .

I still recall with wonder that [our leader] once marched all 160 of us in his [troop] into an ice-cold river in November because our singing had displeased him. We cursed him bitterly under our breath, but not one of us refused. That would have been the unthinkable crime of disobeying a “direct order.”

*“The flag, the people—
they were everything.
You are nothing, your
people everything. Yes,
that’s how children
were brought up, that’s
how you can manipu-
late a child.”*

Connections

Write a working definition of the word *indoctrinate*. How does it differ from the word *educate*? How did Hitler try to indoctrinate young Germans?

 What should the goals of education be? Interview your parents and teachers. Compare their responses to those collected by classmates. How hard is it to reach a consensus? Would students in Nazi Germany have had the same difficulty?

How important is it to you to “look right”? To fit in? How do you feel when you don’t belong? How does it affect your self-esteem? When in a child’s development is he or she most vulnerable to issues related to “in” and “out” group behavior? Are adolescents more or less vulnerable than young children?

Why is it important that a child be taught to conform? To obey? What is the difference between *obedience* and *blind obedience*? What arguments would you use to convince a young Nazi that obeying is not always the right thing to do?


Hitler said of the symbols on the Nazi flag: “In red we see the social idea of the movement, in white the nationalist idea, in the swastika the vision of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man.” How powerful is a flag as the symbol of a nation? What message does it convey to those who carry it? To those who find themselves in a sea of brightly colored flags?

One of the most inflammatory films the Nazis produced was a movie called *Der Ewige Jude* (The Wandering Jew). Although they called it a “documentary,” the narration made such outrageous accusations against the Jews that it had to be changed before the film could be shown abroad. Officials feared the tone might damage the film’s “credibility.” A Dutch graduate student, Marion Pritchard, said of the “edited” version:

At that time there were still Jewish students in the school and the faculty was partly Jewish. We went to see this movie and sat and made smart remarks all the way through and laughed at it because it was so outrageous. And yet when we came out of the movie, one of my Gentile friends said to me, “I wish I hadn’t seen it. I know that it was all ridiculous and propaganda, but for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us—Jews and Gentiles. I’m going to do everything I can to help them, but I wish I didn’t have this feeling.”

What did Marion Pritchard’s friend mean when she said, “for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us—Jews and Gentiles”? What does her statement suggest about the power of propaganda to shape our view of *them*?

The media has the power to shape our view of reality. In 1994, radio stations in Rwanda broadcast messages that fanned the flames of a civil war by turning neighbor against neighbor, in this case the Hutu against the minority Tutsis. Listeners were told again and again, “The enemy is out there—go get him.” Bonaventure Ubalijoro, a former Rwandan ambassador to the United States and France, tried to explain why so many obeyed: “In America, you understand the effect of propaganda on people. If there was a very influential person with a well-financed propaganda machine saying, ‘You have to kill all the rich people,’ do you think there would not be people who would respond?” Particularly, the ambassador added, if that influential person also controlled the apparatus of the state, including the police and the army. What do his remarks suggest about the power of propaganda? About its links to terror? How would you answer the questions Ubalijoro raises?

 How do the media shape the way Americans see themselves and others? African Americans make up about twelve percent of the population of the United States but represent only about three percent of the positive images projected by advertising. As a research project, track the way African Americans are portrayed on television in the course of a week. How often are they portrayed in a positive manner? In a negative way? Or you may prefer to focus on another minority group. Report your findings to the class. How can you or any one else avoid being manipulated by propaganda?

Reading 4

Obedience and Choice

A scene from Schindler's List: During the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto, soldiers hide in the stairwell of a tenement. As they wait to see if any Jew remains hidden in the building, they hear a sound. The commander promptly gives an order and the men rush to the second floor with their machine guns blazing. In the midst of the action, an SS officer plays the piano in a deserted apartment. A soldier and an officer appear in the doorway and listen briefly. The officer asks in German, "What is it? Is it Bach?" The soldier tells him, "No. Mozart."

What kind of person stops for music in the midst of a massacre? Murders babies? Slaughters old people? Were the soldiers so blinded by propaganda that they did not know right from wrong? To find answers to such questions, historian Christopher Browning studied interrogations made in the 1960s and early 1970s of 210 men in Reserve Police Battalion 101. The battalion was originally formed from the German equivalent of city policemen and county sheriffs. After 1939, it and other Order Police battalions served as occupation forces in conquered territory. Battalion 101 was assigned to the district of Lublin in Poland. Although Amon Goeth was not a member of the battalion, he was assigned to Lublin before coming to Plaszow.

Like the National Guard in the United States, German battalions were organized regionally. Most of the men in Battalion 101 came from Hamburg, Germany. They were older than the men who cleared Krakow. The average age was thirty-nine. Most were not well-educated. The majority had left school by the age of fifteen. Still few were Nazis and none was openly antisemitic. Major Wilhelm Trapp, a 53-year-old career police officer who rose through the ranks, headed the battalion. Although he became a Nazi in 1932, he did not belong to the SS. His two captains did.

The unit's first killing mission took place on July 13, 1942. Browning used interrogations to piece together the events of that day.

Just as daylight was breaking, the men arrived at the village [of Jozefow] and assembled in a half-circle around Major Trapp, who proceeded to give a short speech. With choking voice and tears in his eyes, he visibly fought to control himself as he informed his men that they had received orders to perform a very unpleasant task. These orders were not to his liking, but they came from above. It might perhaps make their task easier, he told the men, if they remembered that in Germany bombs were falling on the women and children. Two witnesses claimed that Trapp also mentioned that the Jews of this village had supported the partisans. Another witness recalled Trapp's mentioning that the Jews had instigated the boycott against Germany. Trapp then explained to the men that the Jews in Jozefow would have to be rounded up, whereupon the young males were to be selected out for labor and the others shot.

Trapp then made an extraordinary offer to his battalion: if any of the older men among them did not feel up to the task that lay before him, he could step out. Trapp paused, and after some moments, one man stepped forward. The captain of 3rd company, enraged that one of his men had broken ranks, began to berate the man. The major told the captain to hold his tongue. Then ten or twelve other men stepped forward as well. They turned in their rifles and were told to await a further assignment. . . .

Trapp then summoned the company commanders and gave them their respective assignments. Two platoons of 3rd company were to surround the village; the men were explicitly ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape. The remaining men were to round up the Jews and take them to the market place. Those too sick or frail to walk to the market place, as well as infants and anyone offering resistance or attempting to hide, were to be shot on the spot. Thereafter, a few men of 1st company were to accompany the work Jews selected at the market place, while the rest were to proceed to the forest to form the firing squads. The Jews were to be loaded onto battalion trucks by 2nd company and shuttled from the market place to the forest.

Once Trapp gave his men their assignments, he spent the day in town. No one recalled seeing him at the shooting site. Those who did describe him as bitterly complaining about the orders and “weeping like a child.” Despite his discomfort, Trapp insisted that “orders were orders” and must be carried out.

Browning says of the massacre, “While the men of Reserve Battalion 101 were apparently willing to shoot those Jews too weak or sick to move, they still shied for the most part from shooting infants, despite their orders. No officer intervened, though subsequently one officer warned his men that in the future they would have to be more energetic.” As the killing continued, some asked to be reassigned. A few officers complied, while others pressed their men to continue. By midday, the men were given vodka to “refresh” them. By afternoon, a number of men had broken down, but the majority continued to the end.

After the massacre, the battalion was transferred and platoons were divided up, each stationed in a different town. But they all took part in at least one more shooting action and most of the men found it easier to participate this time. Therefore Browning regards the first massacre as an important dividing line. It changed everyone who took part.

Even twenty-five years later they could not hide the horror of endlessly shooting Jews at point-blank range. In contrast, however, they spoke of surrounding ghettos and watching [Polish “volunteers”] brutally drive the Jews onto the death trains with considerable detachment and a near-total absence of any sense of participation or responsibility. Such actions they routinely dismissed with a standard refrain: “I was only in the police cordon there.” The shock treatment of Jozefow had created an effective and desensitized unit of ghetto-clearers and, when the occasion required, outright murderers. After Jozefow nothing else seemed so terrible.

Browning says of the choices open to the men he studied.

Most simply denied that they had any choice. Faced with the testimony of others, they did not contest that Trapp had made the offer but repeatedly claimed that they had not heard that part of his speech or could not remember it. A few who admitted that they had been given the choice and yet failed to opt out were quite blunt. One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades. Another—more aware of what truly required courage—said quite simply: “I was cowardly.” A few others also made the attempt to confront the question of choice but failed to find the words. It was a different time and place, as if they had been on another political planet, and the political vocabulary and values of the 1960s were helpless to explain the situation in which they found themselves in 1942. As one man admitted, it was

“A few who admitted that they had been given the choice and yet failed to opt out were quite blunt. One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades. Another—more aware of what truly required courage—said quite simply: ‘I was cowardly.’”

not until years later that he began to consider that what he had done had not been right. He had not given it a thought at the time.

The men who did not take part were more specific about their motives. Some attributed their refusal to age or lack of ambition. Browning notes:

What remains virtually unexamined by the interrogators and unmentioned by the policemen was the role of anti-Semitism. Did they not speak of it because anti-Semitism had not been a motivating factor? Or were they unwilling and unable to confront this issue even after twenty-five years, because it had been all too important, all too pervasive? One is tempted to wonder if the silence speaks louder than words, but in the end—the silence is still silence, and the question remains unanswered.

Connections

In reflecting on Milgram's experiment (pages 17-18), Philip Zimbardo states: "The question to ask of Milgram's research is not why the majority of normal, average subjects behave in evil (felonious) ways, but what did the disobeying minority do after they refused to continue?" How does that question apply to Browning's research? How does your answer explain why the soldiers were never punished for refusing to participate?

Zygmunt Bauman notes, "It is difficult to harm a person we touch. It is somewhat easier to inflict pain upon a person we only see at a distance." Does Browning's research support that conclusion? What new insights does it offer?

What choices were open to the soldiers? What part did peer pressure play in the evacuation of the ghetto? In the massacre at Jozefow? What part did opportunism play? What other factors may have influenced participation?

What does Browning mean when he writes of the soldiers, "It was a different time and place, as if they had been on another political planet, and the political vocabulary and values of the 1960s were helpless to explain the situation in which they found themselves in 1942"?

The officers described in the reading were concerned for their psychological well-being and that of their men. Yet they had no concern for their victims. What does this suggest about their sense of morality—of right and wrong?

What does Browning mean when he writes, "After Jozefow, nothing else seemed so terrible"? Would Amon Goeth agree? Would Trapp? Compare Trapp's speech with Goeth's. How do you account for differences?

Browning writes of two men who took part in the murders, "One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades. Another—more aware of what truly required courage—said quite simply: "I was cowardly." Write a working definition of the word *coward*.

Reading 5

Choices in a Time of Narrowing Choices

A scene from Schindler's List: On the morning of the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto, Oskar Schindler and his mistress go horse-back riding. The two can see the evacuation from a hill overlooking the town. As he watches, Schindler focuses on a tiny girl dressed in red who wanders through the blood-soaked streets seemingly unaware of the danger.

On the day the Krakow ghetto was evacuated, many people saw at least a part of what happened. And each of them made a choice. For some it would be one of the most painful decisions they would ever make. Over 50 years after the liquidation of the ghetto, Rena Finder, a young Jew from the Krakow ghetto, can still recall the horror of the decision she was forced to make:

We had to leave the ghetto by six o'clock that night, on March 13. And we were not allowed to take the children. Any children under 12 had to remain in the ghetto. There was an orphans' home in the ghetto for all the children whose parents were already killed. And there were some adults there that took care of the children in the ghetto. And children were not going to be allowed to go into Plaszow, the concentration camp. I had to take my little cousin. I was taking care of a little cousin—my mother and I—because my mother's sister already was taken, evacuated somewhere, we didn't know where. My father just before he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz saved this little cousin—she was five years old. I had to take her to the orphans' home. My mother sent me. I never asked her why.

I left my little Jenny with a friend of my mother's. The children were crying. The parents were crying. They didn't want to leave their children. There was a group of women standing there who did not want to leave their children. And people were already beginning to leave the ghetto for Plaszow. I walked with two mothers with children hidden in their backpacks. The young children—two or three years old—were drugged. The mothers did not want to leave them. They brought them to Plaszow.

The children left in the ghetto that night were killed. The next day, people from the camp were brought in to clean the ghetto. Bodies from the ghetto were taken to Plaszow to be buried in a mass grave. There was blood on the streets of the ghetto. Those who were not killed in the ghetto were sent to Auschwitz. There were eyewitnesses.

We were one of the last groups to leave. Those who had children and didn't want to leave them waited until the end. My mother and I tried to figure out a way to save my cousin, but there was no way. As we were running out of the ghetto, we could already hear shooting, crying, and screaming. So we already knew the Nazis were killing the people left behind. They were looking through every building, through every cellar, through every attic.

Although Rena Finder was only 12 years old at the time, she did not consider herself a child. She saw herself as an adult with an adult's painful responsibilities. One of Rena's aunts made a different choice that day. She could not bring herself to leave her small child behind. So she smuggled him into Plaszow. In the end, he too was killed. He was among 300 children brought illegally into the camp. It was impossi-

ble to keep the presence of so many youngsters a secret. Eventually the guards rounded them up and shipped them to Auschwitz where they were sent directly to the gas chambers. Rena will never forget the day they were evacuated. The prisoners rushed forward, screaming even as the trucks were pulling away. Suddenly a voice boomed out a warning over the loud speaker: If anyone called out or tried to remove the children from the trucks, every child would be shot. Eighteen thousand people stood frozen as the trucks pulled away.

Like Rena Finder, Schindler could not forget what he saw the day the ghetto was closed. According to Keneally, he would later claim, "Beyond this day no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system." In the book, that scene takes place a little earlier, during one of the many deportations before the ghetto was finally closed. And it ends with Schindler trying to understand why the soldiers did not try to stop the toddler dressed in red:

Their lack of shame, as men who had been born of women and had to write letters home (What did they put in them?), wasn't the worst aspect of what he had seen. He *knew* they had no shame, since the guard at the base of the column had not felt any need to stop the red child from seeing things. But worst of all, if there was no shame, it meant there was official sanction. No one could find refuge any more behind the idea of German culture, nor behind those pronouncements uttered by leaders to exempt anonymous men from stepping beyond their gardens, from looking out their office windows at the realities on the sidewalk. Oskar had seen in Krakusa Street a statement of his government's policy which could not be written off as a temporary aberration. The SS men were, Oskar believed, fulfilling there the orders of the leader, for otherwise their colleague at the rear of the column would not have let a child watch.

Later in the day, after he had absorbed a ration of brandy, Oskar understood the proposition in its clearest terms. They permitted witnesses, such witnesses as the red toddler, because they believed the witnesses would perish too.

Schindler was not the only bystander to the deportations. Many German civilians and Poles saw all or part of the evacuation. But only a handful chose to help the Jews. It was not an easy decision to make. The risks were enormous, particularly for the Poles. A German who helped the Jews went to prison; a Pole was shot. Yet there were a number of Poles who did not turn their backs on their neighbors. Among them was Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the owner of a pharmacy in the Krakow ghetto. When the ghetto was sealed from the outside world in 1941, his store was one of four within its boundaries. The owners of all four shops were offered space outside the ghetto, but only Pankiewicz turned down the offer. Thus he and his two employees were the only Christian Poles with the right to enter and leave the ghetto each day.

Pankiewicz's pharmacy soon became a center for underground activity. In the film, it was the place where Joseph Blau forged a "metal polisher's certificate" for Chaim Nowak at Itzhak Stern's request. In real life, it served many functions. Pankiewicz later remembered it as a place where scholars met, poets recited their work, and artists had space to work. There was also a room for Pankiewicz to hide valuable hand-written scrolls containing the Torah or Holy Scriptures. Like Schindler, Pankiewicz saw the liquidation of the ghetto as a turning point. In the film, he can be seen opening his pharmacy and taking out various medicines. The

"But worst of all, if there was no shame, it meant there was official sanction."

scene then shifts to the ghetto hospital where the doctors and the nurses administer poison to their patients just before the SS comes to evacuate the building. In his autobiography, Pankiewicz writes of the choices he made in the days that followed what Rena Finder calls “the most horrible of all the horrible days:”

“But it was not at all simple to give help. It was dangerous to stop in front of an empty building, or to try to get in touch with someone who was hiding, for this might be noticed by the German police, or the all-too-eager Jewish [policemen], very few of whom could be trusted.”

After two days of compulsory sitting in the pharmacy, I walked around the deserted town, listening to the echo of my own footsteps. It was dark when I was returning to the pharmacy. The uncanniness of the surroundings—dark, empty streets and squares—filled me with unease. . . . There were moments when I felt I was having hallucinations: someone silently running through a doorway; someone lighting a match in a window; a whistle, a small card thrown by an unseen hand falling at my feet. No, these were not hallucinations. Someone was still living in that building, someone was hiding, in fear of someone else. I picked up the paper and I hurried my steps. The things I had seen and lived through were still too fresh in my mind and in my thoughts to allow me to stop and calmly consider the meaning of this bit of paper, to remember the place from which the secret signals had come.

Before re-entering the pharmacy, I heard the shuffle of someone’s soft footsteps and a knock on a window pane. I rushed into a gateway. There was a complete silence. In the passage, I stumbled over the naked corpse of a man. I heaved a sigh of relief when I finally reached the pharmacy. I went to the window to look out into the square I knew so well, so as to be able to believe in the reality of what I had experienced. I found it difficult to sleep that night. The sensation of emptiness and silence was making me nervous. I kept having the impression that I could hear the soft echo of someone’s steps, a door squeaking somewhere, a knocking on a window pane. For many days afterwards, whenever I walked in the ghetto, I kept hearing similar sounds. Then I knew for sure that these were no ghosts. People were trying to convey the message that they were alive, that they needed help.

But it was not at all simple to give help. It was dangerous to stop in front of an empty building, or to try to get in touch with someone who was hiding, for this might be noticed by the German police, or the all-too-eager Jewish [policemen], very few of whom could be trusted. In the meantime, the unfortunate ones simply had to be helped.

Despite the risks, Pankiewicz fed the hungry. He also contacted both the Polish and the Jewish underground and, with their help, smuggled out a few people, including a number of children. Other Poles managed to get food, medicine, and even money to Jews confined in Plaszow. A leader in the Polish underground described their efforts:

Thanks to the firm of Madritsch and Titsch, and the workers employed there, the Krakow Council could deliver to the Plaszow Camp flour, beans, and other provisions. All these products, bought on the black market, were delivered to the camp in a German car by Antoni Kozlowski, a cousin of my liaison man, Zbigniew Kuzma, an economist who worked during the war as a cart driver for the Madritsch workshop.

Yet every rescuer had limits. Not everyone was willing to risk everything to help a stranger or even a neighbor. Some refused to aid the Jews but would not betray them either. Others when asked would hide Jews for a day or two but no longer. People like Julius Madritsch went further. He employed more Jewish workers than he

needed so that he could keep alive as many as possible. He also enabled smugglers to get food and medicine into Plaszow. Yet when Schindler asked Madritsch to start a factory in Czechoslovakia with his own list of Jewish workers, Madritsch refused. But at his request, about seventy of his workers were added to *Schindler's List*.

Connections

Rena FINDER and her mother were faced with “choiceless choices.” These are decisions made in the absence of humanly significant alternatives—that is, alternatives that enable one to make a decision, act on it, and accept the consequences, all within a framework that supports his or her personal integrity and self-esteem. What distinguishes a “choice-less choice” from other decisions? Why do you think normal standards for judging behavior do not apply to the “decisions” of those facing a choice-less choice?

After watching the child in red, Schindler tries to understand why the soldiers did not seem ashamed of what they were doing. How does he account for their lack of shame? Why does he conclude that “beyond this day no thinking person could fail to see what would happen”? What connection did he see between antisemitism and the Holocaust? What linked the two? Why didn't he see that link earlier?

Based on his study of rescuers during the Holocaust, Professor Ervin Staub writes that “Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born. Very often the rescuers make only a small commitment at the start—to hide someone for a day or two. But once they had taken that step, they began to see themselves differently, as someone who helps. What starts as mere willingness becomes intense involvement.” Is his conclusion true of Schindler? Did the closing of the ghetto mark one step in the process of change or was it a complete reversal in Schindler's thinking? What about Pankiewicz? Did the closing of the ghetto change his thinking or deepen a commitment he had made earlier?

Deborah Dwork notes that the murder of the children helps us understand that the choices Jews made were “so alien, so different from anything Jews experienced personally, or had learned through education that they could not apply their knowledge to it.” Survival was often a matter of luck. The experiences of Rena FINDER and Sonia WEITZ illustrate Dwork's point. As children, the two were classmates and friends. Neither came from a very rich family or very poor one. And both girls were taken to Plaszow when the ghetto was evacuated. But Rena had the good fortune to be on Schindler's list and Sonia did not. Rena made the list, because her family happened to share a room in the ghetto with Marcel Goldberg, a Jewish policeman, and his family. Later Goldberg got Rena, her mother, and grandfather into Schindler's factory. And he saw to it that their names were on the list. As a result, Rena went to Czechoslovakia, while Sonia Weitz faced a less hopeful future. She was shipped from Plaszow to Auschwitz and from there to two other camps. Although both young women survived the war, their experiences were different.

Marion Pritchard rescued Jews in the Netherlands during the war. In reflecting on her own decision and the choices others made, Pritchard is troubled by those who

“divide the general population ... into the few good guys and the large majority of bad guys.”

The point I want to make is that there were indeed some people who behaved criminally by betraying their Jewish neighbors and thereby sentenced them to death. There were some people who dedicated themselves to actively rescuing as many people as possible. Somewhere in between was the majority, whose actions varied from the minimum decency of at least keeping quiet if they knew where Jews were hidden to finding a way to help them when they were asked.

Why does Pritchard see oversimplification as misleading? Many people believe that the people who sided with the Nazis were racists and those who opposed them were not. In fact, there were antisemites who rescued Jews. How would Pritchard explain their actions? How do you explain them?

Pritchard says of her own decision: “I think you have a responsibility to yourself to behave decently. We all have memories of times we should have done something and didn’t. And it gets in the way of the rest of your life.” Who in the film or these readings sees the world much the way she does?

✍ Samuel and Pearl Oliner have studied people who rescued Jews during the war. As a result of their research, they concluded:

For most rescuers, helping Jews was an expression of ethical principles that extended to all of humanity and, while often reflecting concern with equity and justice, was predominantly rooted in care. ... This sense that ethical principles were at stake distinguished rescuers from their compatriots who participated in resistance activities only. For these resisters, hatred of Nazis and patriots were most often considered sufficient reasons for their behaviors; for rescuers, however, such reasons were rarely sufficient.

Does Schindler fit the Oliners’ description of a rescuer? Does Madritsch? Pankiewicz? Identify individuals you have read about or met that fit the Oliners’ description. How important are such individuals to a society?

Below are a few of the names on “Schindler’s list.” This copy was made at the end of the war. Each individual is identified by nationality, name, date of birth, and occupation. Why do you think Rena FINDER says that “the list meant life”?

K.L.Grosz-Rosen-A.L. Brunnitz/Liste d. mannl.Haftlinge,18.4.45 Blatt 7.

Lfd. Nr.	H.Art. u. Nat.	H. Nr.	N a m e und Vorname.	Geburtsdatum.	Beruf.
361	Ju.Po.	69208	Hahn Dawid.	20.10.97	Werkzeugschlosserm.
362	"	9	Immergluck Zygmunt.	13. 6.24	Stenner.
363	"	69210	Katz Isak Josef.	3.12.08	Klempfergehilfe.
364	"	1	Wiener Samuel.	11. 5.07	Tischlergehilfe.
365	"	2	Hosner Leopold.	26. 6.18	Maler.
366	"	3	Gewelbe Jakob.	22.9. 97	photographmeister.
367	"	4	Korn Edmund.	7. 4.12	Metallarbeiter.
368	"	5	Penner Jonas.	2. 2.15	Stenner.

Reading 6

Slavery and Labor

A scene from *Schindler's List*: After learning that Plaszow will soon be closed and the Jews shipped to Auschwitz, Schindler goes to see Amon Goeth. Schindler tells Goeth that he wants to move his factory to Czechoslovakia and take his workers with him. Goeth looks down from his window to a large group of Jewish prisoners being led to the main gate. "You want these people?" he asks. Schindler replies, "These people, my people. I want my people." The scene ends with Schindler saying, "All you have to do is tell me what it's worth to you. What's a person worth to you?" Goeth replies, "No, no, no, no. What's one worth to you?" The two men stare at each other and grin meaningfully.

Theologian Richard Rubenstein maintains that the Holocaust is linked, although not exclusively, to a cultural tradition of slavery "which stretches back to the Middle Passage from the coast of Africa, and beyond, to the enforced servitude in Ancient Greece and Rome." And he argues that "if we ignore this linkage, we ignore the existence of the sleeping virus in the bloodstream of civilization, at the risk of our future." That "sleeping virus" is racial hatred—in Steven Spielberg's words "a state of mind that attacks not what makes us people but what makes us different from each other." It was that hatred that made it possible for the Germans to enslave the Jews.

Orlando Patterson, an African-American sociologist who has studied slavery at various times in history, defines *slavery* as a relationship based on the total power of one individual or group over another. Although he sees similarities between it and other relationships based on power, he regards slavery as unique in three important ways: slaves are always powerless; they are almost always outsiders; and they are always disrespected.

Long before the Jews of Krakow were deported to Plaszow, they had lost power over their lives. Sonia Weitz, a survivor of the Krakow ghetto, tells of the night in October of 1942 when the Nazis came for her mother. Although Sonia, her father, and sister tried desperately to save the woman, there was nothing they could do. Nor was there anyone they could turn to for help. Their Jewish neighbors were as powerless as they were. That kind of helplessness is a characteristic of slavery.

Slaves are also isolated. They are almost always outside the larger community's "universe of obligations." Patterson found that their treatment accentuated their isolation. They not only lived apart. They were usually dressed in special clothing or given a distinctive haircut. Many were also tattooed. In the United States, historian Winthrop D. Jordan writes, the powerlessness and social isolation of African slaves led to a "generalized conception of 'us'—white, English, free—and 'them'—black, heathen, slave." In Nazi Europe, that conception was of "us"—Aryan, German, free—and "them"—Jewish, foreign, slave.



Amon Goeth and Oskar Schindler bargain for Jewish life in *Schindler's List*.

“The fierce love of the slave mother for her child is attested to in every slaveholding society; everywhere the slave’s zest for life and fellowship confounded the slaveholder class; and in all slaveholding societies the existential dignity of the slave belied the slaveholder’s denial of its existence.”

According to Patterson, slavery is also distinctive in that slaves are always humiliated. Only through acts of resistance can they maintain their identity. Thus he stresses the importance of even small acts of resistance:

The slave resisted in countless ways, only one of which, rebellion, was not subtle. Against all odds he strove for some measure of regularity and predictability in his social life. . . . Because he was considered degraded, he was all the more infused with the yearning for dignity. Because of his formal isolation . . . he was acutely sensitive to the realities of community. The fierce love of the slave mother for her child is attested to in every slaveholding society; everywhere the slave’s zest for life and fellowship confounded the slaveholder class; and in all slaveholding societies the existential dignity of the slave belied the slaveholder’s denial of its existence.

Sonia Weitz can still recall her own acts of resistance at Plaszow.

Although men and women lived in separate parts of the camp, the two groups did manage to have contact with each other. For example, on one occasion I was sent to the ghetto with a cleanup detail. While there I found a jacket, a precious warm jacket. I smuggled it back to Plaszow to my father. It was comforting to think that the jacket would keep him warm that winter.

On another day, I sneaked into my father’s barracks on the other side of the barbed wire fence. While I was there, I met a boy who was about my age—14 or 15. The boy was playing a harmonica, an offense punishable by death. My father and I listened to the music, and my father said to me, “You and I never had a chance to dance together” . . . and so we danced. It is such a precious image, a bizarre and beautiful gift.

Orlando Patterson has also noted that in every society he studied, slaves were “not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives.” The Jews, like other slaves, understood the importance of keeping their heritage alive. Many went to extraordinary lengths to do so. Sonia Weitz’s father and other parents secretly supported a Jewish school in the ghetto, a criminal act in German-occupied Poland. Countless families carried prayer books and other religious objects wherever they were sent. Thus, early in the film, when the Nussbaums prepare for their move to the ghetto, Mrs. Nussbaum packs the candlesticks she lit at sunset every Friday to mark the beginning of the Sabbath. Before leaving the apartment Oskar Schindler would eventually occupy, Mr. Nussbaum removes a *mezuzah* from the doorpost. It is a small tube that contains a quotation from the Bible calling upon Jews to make their homes worthy of God’s presence.

Connections

Why does Rubenstein regard racial hatred as a “sleeping virus”? What does the virus threaten? How is it linked to slavery? To the Holocaust? What signs of such a link can you find in the film? In current events?

Frederick Douglass once wrote, “A man without force is without the essential dignity of humanity.” What is the relationship between disrespect and powerlessness? Between a person’s labor and his or her social value? How does your answer explain why many Jews felt they had to resist no matter what the consequences?


Jews in every part of Europe fought back. In *Schindler’s List*, Keneally writes of the

Zionists, the Jewish nationalists who led the resistance movement in Krakow:

The young Zionists ... had acquired uniforms of the Waffen SS and, with them, the entitlement to visit the SS-reserved Cyganeria Restaurant in *sw Duchą Plac*, across the square from the Slowacki Theatre. In the Cyganeria they left a bomb which blew the tables through the roof, tore seven SS men to fragments, and injured some forty more. ... They bombed the SS-only Bagatella Cinema in Karmelicka Street. [Zionists] would in a few months sink patrol boats on the Vistula, fire-bomb sundry military garages throughout the city, arrange [passes] for people who were not supposed to have them, smuggle passport photographs out to centers where they could be used in the forging of Aryan papers, derail the elegant Army-only train that ran between Krakow and Bochnia, and get their underground newspaper into circulation. They would also arrange for two of [ghetto police officers] who had drawn up lists for the imprisonment of thousands, to walk into a Ghetto ambush.


Still, the style of resistance for the ghetto dwellers remained that of Artur Rosenzweig [a leader of the Jewish council] who, when asked in June to make a list of thousands for deportation, had placed his own name, his wife's, his daughter's at the top.

Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, says of such acts, "The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how so many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?" How would you answer Wiesel's question?

 Historian Debórah Dwork finds uprisings and acts of sabotage "spectacular, awe-inspiring, and monumentally courageous." But she believes that other forms of courage were equally spectacular. What were they?

The policy, for example, ... in Warsaw and Gens in Vilna to educate, feed, and protect children out of proportion to their ghettos' resources was another way in which Jews opposed the press of Nazism and held fast to their principles and responsibilities. The activities of Jewish networks throughout Nazi-occupied Europe to save the children is also too frequently forgotten. And, most poignant, the decisions taken by the children's parents on behalf of their daughters and sons is an overwhelmingly painful form of courage and resistance. It cannot be stressed too fervently that it was the parents who took the first step and the most terrifying step in the protection of their children, as it was they who had to determine whether it was best to send them into hiding, to try to smuggle them out of the country, or to keep them at their side.

What evidence of such resistance can be seen in the film? In Keneally's book? How does Dwork define *courage*? *Resistance*? How do you define them?

 Why have slaves throughout history gone to extraordinary lengths to keep their heritage alive? How does your answer help explain the Yiddish folk song a children's choir sings throughout the evacuation of the ghetto? In the song, young children are repeatedly told that they must learn their "ABCs" to preserve their heritage. What other scenes in the film convey a similar message? Research the way African Americans used music, storytelling, and other art forms to keep their culture alive through over 300 years of slavery.

Reading 7

Was Oskar Schindler a Hero?

A scene in *Schindler's List*: After learning that the war is over, Schindler addresses his workers from a catwalk overlooking the factory floor as the guards look on.

The unconditional surrender of Germany has just been announced. At midnight tonight the war is over. Tomorrow, you'll begin the process of looking for survivors of your families. In most cases . . . you won't find them. After six long years of murder. . . victims are being mourned throughout the world. We've survived. Many of you have come up to me and thanked me. Thank yourselves. Thank your fearless Stern and others among you who, worried about you, have faced death at every moment. I'm a member of the Nazi party. I'm a munitions manufacturer. I'm a profiteer of slave labor. I am . . . a criminal. At midnight, you'll be free and I'll be hunted. I shall remain with you until five minutes after midnight, after which time—and I hope you'll forgive me—I have to flee.

Was Schindler's assessment of his role accurate? Or did he tell only part of the story? In 1964, he said of himself, "The persecution of Jews in occupied Poland meant that we could see horror emerging gradually in many ways. In 1939 they were forced to wear Jewish stars, and people were herded and shut up into ghettos. Then in the years '41 and '42 there was plenty of public evidence of pure sadism. With people behaving like pigs, I felt the Jews were being destroyed. I had to help them. There was no choice."

Did Schindler have a choice? Was he a hero? A moral person? For Rena Finder, who was on "Schindler's list," the answer is simple. He was indeed a hero, a "savior," a man larger than life. She still recalls his acts of kindness at a time when "nobody had a kind word or look for us. Here was a German who would say 'good morning,' who would talk to you." In her view, Schindler was never a real Nazi because he had no hate in his heart.

Steven Spielberg believes that in the beginning Schindler was in the "Oskar Schindler business." In his view, the industrialist changed as a result of "getting to know his workers as people, not just as metal polishers or lathe operators, but he got to know them by name, and he got to know who they were. He looked upon them as people who were doing kindnesses to him, making him a lot of money and giving him a lifestyle that he wanted to enjoy. I think he returned the favor just simply by identifying his Jewish workers as people, not as numbers." After studying many rescuers, Ervin Staub came to a similar conclusion: "Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born."

Actor Gregory Alan-Williams distinguishes between heroism and acts of courage. His own act of courage took place on April 29, 1992, the day a jury acquitted the Los Angeles police officers accused of beating Rodney King, an African American. After viewing a video of the beating that a bystander made, many African Americans were outraged by the verdict. Within hours, they took to the streets of Los Angeles. When Alan-Williams, also an African American, saw an angry crowd attack a Japanese American motorist with broken bottles and metal rods, he rushed to save the man. Alan-Williams was hailed as a hero but he is not sure that he was heroic.

The true heroes are those who do the best they can on behalf of themselves and others. Folks who go to work every day, despite the drudgery, then come home and love a bunch of crazy kids who don't really appreciate them. Every day, around the world, heroes feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked, and teach the so-called hopeless and ignorant. Heroes take the time to share themselves and the wisdom they have gathered on their walk toward destiny. Heroes cry and cry out when there is injustice, regardless of their ties to the unjust.

Jennifer Jones, a student at Bellevue Junior High in Memphis, Tennessee, wrote of such a hero:

At night as I lie in my bed smelling the sweet smell of the freshly-cut grass of summertime float through the open window caressing my face and tickling my nose, I sometimes remember a lot of the things that my "hero" has done for me. My "hero" is my dad. My dad has always been there for me to talk to and to understand. To many people my dad is just another "nigga" who talks too much, but to me, he is my world. The feelings that I have for my dad can't be explained by any word in the English language.


My dad was born in Memphis, Tennessee, to a poor Black mother and a poor Black father. Their names were Olden William Jones, Senior, and Louise Jones. My father often talks about how different things were back when he was young. He was born in 1942 and is now 52 years old. He talks about the many struggles he and his three brothers and one sister faced. He was the second oldest of five children, now he is the oldest of four. My uncle Olden was the oldest child. He was the first Black Eagle Scout in the state of Tennessee. He was stabbed to death by some white teenagers at the age of seventeen.

When my father was older, he became a singer. He sang with a group called the Ovations. They cut one record. They opened for groups like the Temptations and the Commodores. At many of the places they performed, they couldn't go through the front door because they were Black. When he was in his 40's my dad worked as a garbage man. I remember a time when my little brothers and I were little and we had no place to live. During that time we slept in the very same station wagon that often drives me to school some mornings. Even though times were tough, we always had enough to eat and a sacrificing father who worked hard to feed us. Now we have a nice home and we know our father loves us, always has, and always will. He can truly be called a hero by me.

"Every day, around the world, heroes feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked, and teach the so-called hopeless and ignorant. Heroes take the time to share themselves and the wisdom they have gathered on their walk toward destiny. Heroes cry and cry out when there is injustice, regardless of their ties to the unjust."

Connections

How are Staub's conclusions similar to Milgram's? Do your own experiences and those of friends and classmates support the idea that goodness and evil both begin with small steps? How are those small steps like the "drip, drip" David Puttnam describes on pages 34-35?

 How does Alan-Williams define the word *hero*? According to his definition, is Jennifer Jones' dad a hero? Was Schindler a hero? Write your own definition and then investigate a hero in your community. Write an essay introducing the person you chose to your classmates.

Reading 8

Can One Person Make a Difference?

“From past experience we have learned that whenever people speak up on behalf of their more unfortunate fellow human beings, their protest does have an effect . . . But even if our efforts left the tormentors indifferent, they would still be fruitful, for they bring comfort and consolation to their victims.”

The final scene in *Schindler’s List*: At the Catholic cemetery in Jerusalem, one Schindler Jew after another places a pebble on Oskar Schindler’s gravestone. Each is accompanied by the actor who played him or her in the film. A few words appear on the screen to identify each individual. The line of people waiting to pay their respects seems endless, as these words appear on the screen: “There are fewer than four thousand Jews left alive in Poland today. There are more than six thousand descendants of the Schindler Jews.”

Rena Finder, a Schindler Jew and a survivor of the Holocaust, firmly believes that she has a responsibility to call attention to injustices wherever they may occur. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace, has a similar view. In 1993, he traveled to war-torn countries around the world to call attention to violations of basic human rights. Shortly after returning from one such trip, he was asked why students should care about events in distant places.

From past experience we have learned that whenever people speak up on behalf of their more unfortunate fellow human beings, their protest does have an effect . . . But even if our efforts left the tormentors indifferent, they would still be fruitful, for they bring comfort and consolation to their victims.

In other words: It may very well be that you are powerless to change the course of history on a decision-making level but it is incumbent upon you to improve the psychological condition of those who suffer. . . .

Find a way, any way, to give voice to your outrage at the young racists in Germany, to your abhorrence of bigotry on our own streets, to your solidarity with the prisoners in former Yugoslavia and to your determination to combat hunger in Somalia. Do not tell me you are voiceless. . . . There are adolescents in Somalia who will die if help does not arrive soon. They are younger than you.

Connections

How do Rena Finder and Elie Wiesel define their “universe of obligations”? How important is that definition to the way they see themselves? To their community? To society as a whole? What questions would you like to ask of them? What can you learn from their experiences?

A Polish woman recalls two occasions when she turned away rather than help someone from the ghetto. Wondering if the outcome would have been different if she and others had followed their conscience, she concludes, “Possibly, even if more of us had turned out to be more Christian, it would have made no difference in the statistics of the extermination, but maybe it would not have been such a lonely death.” Every major religion teaches that we are indeed “our brothers’ keepers” and yet much of history describes the way neighbors have turned against neighbors. What can history teach us about the value of our neighbors? About the way people everywhere are linked?

