

GREAT FILMS

and How to Teach Them

William V. Costanzo



William V. Costanzo, author of the classic *Reading the Movies* (1992), is back with *Great Films and How to Teach Them*, an updated, expanded edition that contains 80% new material on teaching film, including study guides of 14 new films.

Recognizing that the growing worldwide interest in film presents exciting teaching opportunities, Costanzo offers high school and college teachers a relevant way to engage their students through a medium that students know and love. The author combines developments in pedagogy with many aspects of film study—film scholarship, the nature of movies themselves, significant changes in the movie industry, film technology, American culture, globalization, and the connection with literary texts.

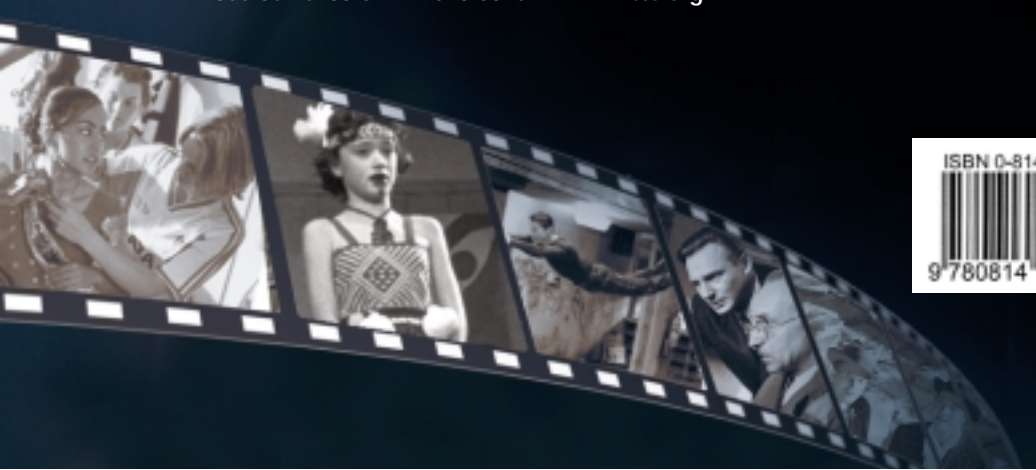
The first part of the book includes not only updated chapters on standard topics but several new ones as well, intended to prepare readers for movies in the 21st century: adapting fiction to film, how to “read” film, film technology, film history, film as a business, film theory, film genres, representation in film, film in the English class.

The second part of the book offers study guides for 14 films, from classics to contemporary international hits. Three appendixes and a glossary of film terms round out the book’s many teacher resources. Written in an accessible, straightforward style, *Great Films and How to Teach Them* makes it possible for novice and experienced instructors to successfully incorporate film into their classrooms.

Films Featured in the Study Guides

- *Casablanca*
 - *North by Northwest*
 - *To Kill a Mockingbird*
 - Zeffirelli’s *Romeo and Juliet*
 - *The Godfather*
 - *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
 - *Glory*
 - *Mississippi Masala*
 - *Schindler’s List*
 - *The Shawshank Redemption*
 - *Run Lola Run*
 - *The Matrix*
 - *Bend It Like Beckham*
 - *Whale Rider*
-

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	xiii
I Reading the Movies	
1. The Art of Fiction Film	3
2. The Languages of Film	16
3. The Technology of Film	25
4. A Brief History of Film	43
5. The Business of Film	56
6. Theories of Film	65
7. Film Genres	77
8. Representation in Film	95
9. Film in the English Class	116
II Study Guides for 14 Great Films on Video and DVD	
10. <i>Casablanca</i>	133
11. <i>North by Northwest</i>	141
12. <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	155
13. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	165
14. <i>The Godfather</i>	179
15. <i>One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	193
16. <i>Glory</i>	205
17. <i>Mississippi Masala</i>	217
18. <i>Schindler's List</i>	227
19. <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i>	241
20. <i>Run Lola Run</i>	251

21. <i>The Matrix</i>	261
22. <i>Bend It Like Beckham</i>	273
23. <i>Whale Rider</i>	283
<i>Appendix 1: More Great Films</i>	291
<i>Appendix 2: Student Film Study Projects</i>	296
<i>Appendix 3: Great Film Web Sites</i>	303
<i>Glossary</i>	309
<i>Works Cited</i>	321
<i>Author</i>	329



18 Schindler's List

Directed by Steven Spielberg; screenplay by Steven Zaillian; based on the book by Thomas Keneally; produced by Branko Lustig, Gerald R. Molen, and Steven Spielberg; cinematography by Janusz Kaminski; edited by Michael Kahn; art direction by Ewa Skoczowska and Maciej Walczak; production design by Allan Starski; set decoration by Ewa Braun; music by John Williams; released by Universal Pictures in 1993. [197 minutes]

<i>Oskar Schindler</i>	<i>Liam Neeson</i>
<i>Itzhak Stern</i>	<i>Ben Kingsley</i>
<i>Amon Goeth</i>	<i>Ralph Fiennes</i>
<i>Emilie Schindler</i>	<i>Caroline Goodall</i>
<i>Poldek Pfefferberg</i>	<i>Jonathan Sagall</i>
<i>Helen Hirsch</i>	<i>Embeth Davidtz</i>
<i>Malgoscha Gebel</i>	<i>Victoria Klonowska</i>
<i>Shmulik Levy</i>	<i>Wilek Chilowicz</i>
<i>Mark Ivanir</i>	<i>Marcel Goldberg</i>
<i>Béatrice Macola</i>	<i>Ingrid</i>

By any standards, *Schindler's List* is a landmark movie. It has probably had a greater impact on the general public than any other film or book about the Holocaust. Because of its accessibility and emotive power, it is likely to continue to shape the way many young Americans read one of the most troubling chapters in world history.

Spielberg's film tells the story of Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who employed over a thousand Jewish factory workers during World War II, exploiting their status under Nazi persecution while at the same time saving their lives. Schindler was a cunning businessman, a suave womanizer who drank heavily, socialized with the Nazis, and profited handsomely from the war. Yet, as the war rolled on, he grew more dissatisfied with Nazi policy and more protective of his workers, to the point of risking his own life to sabotage the German war effort and protect the *Schindlerjuden*, the Schindler Jews. Spielberg offers no definitive analysis of Schindler's motives. He leaves the moral judgments to us. Nor does he try to document the horrific magnitude of Hitler's Final Solution with interviews, historical footage, or ingenious fictions, as other filmmakers have done. Instead, he tells Schindler's true story, largely from the German's point of view, letting a few selected Jewish characters and many Jewish names and faces represent the six million who perished in the Holocaust and the hundreds of thousands who survived.

For all the film's awards (it won seven Oscars), critical acclaim (most of the professional film reviewers praised it), and popular success (it grossed over \$300 million in its first few years), *Schindler's List* continues to be a topic of vigorous debate. Some critics fault Spielberg for turning a self-serving war profiteer into a heroic figure. Others attack him for turning the unfathomable enormity of the Shoah into a Hollywood media event. Still, it is an important film to study: for its glimpses into history, for the questions it raises about moral choices, and for the resourcefulness of a master filmmaker when confronting "the limits of imagining the unimaginable" (Louvish 75).

Schindler's List is a stunning departure from Steven Spielberg's popular adventure films, which include four of the top ten grossing films in movie history: *Jurassic Park* (1993), *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and *Jaws* (1975). Although he had attempted serious films before, including *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Empire of the Sun* (1987), they were about other people's ancestries. In fact, Spielberg grew up trying to hide his Jewish identity. Born in 1946 in Cincinnati, he moved with his family to Arizona, where he was ashamed of belonging to the only Jewish family in the neighborhood. His fear of being considered an outsider continued during his high school years in California. Young Spielberg knew that being different could have grave consequences. While his parents never spoke of the Holocaust by name, their talk was full of references to the events of World War II, and he remembers seeing his first concentration camp tattoo at the age of five at the home of his grandmother, who taught English to Holocaust survivors. Spielberg's film career is widely known. He gained valuable experience with home movies, scripting his first amateur film and directing actors by age twelve. Within years he was winning contests. Like other directors of the film school generation, he studied filmmaking in college before landing a job with a major studio, Universal. After ten major Hollywood films, he began his masterpiece on the Holocaust in 1993, at the age of forty-seven.

Spielberg first read *Schindler's List* in 1982. Thomas Keneally, the Australian writer, had published the book earlier that year under the title *Schindler's Ark* in Britain, where it won the coveted Booker Prize. In his preface, Keneally describes how he learned about Oskar Schindler in 1980 in a luggage store in Beverly Hills, California. Leopold Pfefferberg, the storeowner, was a Schindler survivor, one of more than 1,100 Jewish men, women, and children who had been saved through Schindler's efforts. Keneally was fascinated by Pfefferberg's story of the handsome German bon vivant, a savior but no saint, who traded on the black market, kept mistresses, and drank freely with Nazi officers while running a factory with Jewish laborers. How and why would such a man put himself at peril to

keep those Jews alive during the war? Keneally traveled to seventeen nations to interview some fifty *Schindlerjuden*, pored through Schindler's personal papers (the man himself had died in 1974), and studied other documentary evidence for his research. As a novelist, his aim was "to use the texture and devices of a novel to tell a true story" while attempting "to avoid all fiction, since fiction would debase the record" (Keneally 10).

Schindler's known historical record is briefly summarized. Born in 1908 in the industrial city of Zwittau, then part of the Austrian Empire, he grew up in the *Sudetendeutsch* community, a German-speaking minority that found itself in the newly formed republic of Czechoslovakia after World War I. His family was Catholic and comfortably middle class. One of his close neighbors was Rabbi Kantor, whose sons played with Oskar and went to the same German-speaking school. The Kantors left Zwittau in the 1930s, but Oskar would remember them. Meanwhile, he seemed less interested in racial politics than in motorcycles. He raced a red Moto-Guzzi while in high school and nearly won a major competition. In time he developed into a polished businessman and married Emilie, a local gentleman farmer's daughter, to whom he was steadily unfaithful. Just before the blitzkrieg of Poland, Schindler joined the Nazi party and served briefly as a German spy, which gave him lucrative connections once the war began. Keneally describes him as a convivial charmer, an impressive figure with the ladies and hard-drinking men, who had more talent for shady business deals than for straightforward industry. This view is borne out by Schindler's career after the war. In 1949 he made his way to Argentina with his wife, mistress, and several *Schindlerjuden* to start a rodent farm. He returned alone in 1958, unable to succeed in the fur business or any other enterprise. Schindler eked out a living with financial support from the Jews whose lives he had saved. He divided his remaining days between Germany, where he was finally given a government pension, and Israel, where he was welcomed as a "righteous gentile."

Even before Keneally's book appeared there were plans to film the Schindler story. As early as the 1960s, Pfefferberg had tried to sell it to MGM, which hired Howard Koch (one of the scriptwriters for *Casablanca*), but the project was dropped. Roman Polanski, Sydney Pollack, and Martin Scorsese had each considered directing *Schindler's List* for Universal before Spielberg took it on. Spielberg planned to make the film in the mideighties but had trouble with the script, passing it from one scriptwriter to another. Keneally himself worked on it for a while, producing a sprawling 250-page docudrama, but eventually Steven Zaillian (the writer for *Awakenings*, 1990) got the job. Zaillian's screenplay, based on Keneally's book and interviews with survivors, was completed in March of 1992. In retrospect, Spielberg was grateful for the delay. In ten years, he had matured and grown more

connected to his Jewish roots. The times had changed as well. Grim news of “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia and Kurdish Iraq was appearing daily in the media. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was scheduled to open in 1993. The public was primed for such a film.

Casting began with the character of Itzhak Stern, a composite of several Jews who actually ran the factory while Schindler wined women and Nazi officials. For the part of this “unsung hero,” Spielberg chose Ben Kingsley, who had just won an Oscar for the title role in *Gandhi*. Ralph Fiennes was cast as Amon Goeth, the sadistic prison commandant. Spielberg had seen Fiennes’s performance as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (1992) and had him gain twenty-five pounds for the role. For the part of Helen Hirsch, Goeth’s eleven-year-old Jewish maid, he chose the South African actress Embeth Davidtz. Finally, he asked Liam Neeson to play Schindler after seeing his Broadway performance in *Anna Christie*. Spielberg cast Israelis in key Jewish roles—many of them children of survivors—using Catholic Poles in nonspeaking parts. Their etched faces leave indelible impressions of silent suffering and loss.

To make the film as authentic as possible, Spielberg did most of the shooting on location in Poland. In seventy-two days during the winter of 1992, he set up his cameras in the streets of Kraków, in the original SS headquarters, and in Schindler’s actual factory and apartment, which were still standing. Since he was not allowed to film within the camp at Auschwitz, he created a replica just outside the gates, setting the train backwards so that it entered the set from the camp. Spielberg was completing postproduction on *Jurassic Park* at the same time, so he felt pulled in two directions. But his methods for these films were completely different. *Jurassic Park* was a blockbuster fantasy filmed in Hollywood with the latest high technology. For *Schindler’s List*, he worked quickly, on a low budget, and without storyboards, dollies, or special lights. To avoid beautifying events, he chose black-and-white film stock, the kind that would have been used in the 1940s. Forty percent of the film was shot with handheld cameras, giving it a spontaneous, documentary feel. It was an exercise in simple storytelling, Spielberg explained. “I had to let the facts tell the story” (Guthmann 55).

The final film runs three hours and fourteen minutes, cut from four hours. It has 146 settings in Poland alone, 126 speaking parts, and 30,000 extras, and cost \$23 million to make. Spielberg gave all the money he earned to Jewish charities. For the last scene, 128 Schindler Jews from around the world were flown to Israel to place ceremonial stones on Schindler’s grave. In retrospect, this film was not just another Steven Spielberg movie. Being there, in Poland, where the actual events had taken place some fifty years

earlier had a profound effect on the director. His biographer called it "the transforming experience of Spielberg's lifetime" (McBride 414).

The film opens in glowing color. A match is struck, a candle lit, then another. We hear a male voice intone a Hebrew prayer. A family is celebrating the Jewish Sabbath in an old-world dining room. As the credits begin to roll, the votive candles burn down in slow dissolves until extinguished. The camera follows the smoke upward and we hear the faint sound of a train. Cut to the train in black and white. It's September 1939. The film titles inform us that German forces have defeated the Polish Army in two weeks. Jews have been ordered to register and relocate to major cities. More than 10,000 arrive in Kraków daily. Now we see folding tables set with paper, stamps, and ink. The film's first word in English is a question: "Name?" As a handheld camera pans the crowd of anxious Jews, they speak their names one by one, which are neatly typed: Hudes Isak, Feber, Bauman, Klein. The sequence is factual, straightforward, chilling. We sense that we are witnessing the beginning of an episode in history that these people cannot yet imagine. Later, the smoke will be rising from mass crematoriums. Most of these names, and others like them, will be assigned to the death camps. A smaller number will be on Schindler's list.

Schindler himself is introduced in the next scene, though not directly. First we see a bottle of liquor being poured. A man is selecting his evening dress from an array of expensive suits, silk ties, and cufflinks. We watch as he arranges each article and pulls a wad of bills from a drawer, then a watch, and last, a Nazi pin. The entire scene is shot in close-ups without revealing Schindler's face. Not until well into the next scene, in which he joins a party of Nazi officers, do we get to see his strong, handsome features sculpted in the nightclub's artificial light. We watch him watching the other Germans, like a hunter stalking prey, before he introduces himself and becomes the center of the party.

From this point on, most of the film centers on Schindler. Except for Itzhak Stern, Helen Hirsch, Poldek Pfefferberg, and a few others, the Jews appear generally as names and faces in the background. For the first third of the story, Schindler builds his factory from scratch. Arriving with nothing but confidence and his Aryan good looks, he takes advantage of the situation with cunning and style. Although he knows little about manufacturing, he buys a small factory and turns it into the *Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik* (German Enamelware Factory), also known as Emalia, turning out military cookware and munitions to ensure its essential status in the war effort. Now that Jews no longer have rights, their possessions and services are at his disposal. He hires Stern, a first-rate accountant, to finance the factory, promising a secure job to the Jewish donors in return. He uses

Pfefferberg's contacts on the black market to get luxury items for bribing the officials. Meanwhile, Jews are summarily evicted from their homes, forced to wear the yellow armband, and pelted by angry Poles as they are funneled into a sixteen-block square of tenements called the ghetto. Only Schindler's Jews seem to be immune. Their blue stamp, or *Blauschein*, marks them as essential workers in a war-protected industry.

But not entirely. When the SS commandeers his workers to shovel snow or shoots one or loads another into a boxcar, Schindler must muster all his skill to intercede. The challenge grows greater after the liquidation of the ghetto, when the Schindler Jews are sent to a forced labor camp in Plaszow. Here enters Amon Goeth, the film's other major character. Goeth is the commandant of Plaszow, a brutal man who is capable of killing Jews for sport. At first the two men seem cut from the same cloth. They are both Aryans; large, impressive figures; sensualists who enjoy wine, women, and power. Both benefit from the war. This comparison is reinforced cinematically. At one point, we watch them as they shave, in different locations, smug in their self-assurance. At another point, the two men are separated by a thin line in the center of the screen, a line that thickens in later scenes. Gradually, they are distinguished from each other. As Goeth gains power, he becomes crueler. He executes a Jewish engineer who offers ideas to improve construction in his camp. Goeth shoots her and then tells his guards to build the barracks her way. In his world, a stolen chicken or a bathtub ring is sufficient cause for a bullet in the head. He grows fat sitting on his balcony with a rifle, randomly aiming at the prisoners in his yard. Meanwhile, Schindler changes in a different way. At first the Jewish workers are an expedient to his career. He has no room for pity. When a one-armed man thanks him for saving his life, Schindler reproaches Stern for keeping such a useless worker in the factory. By the end of the film, however, Schindler is obsessed with saving lives. He barter his entire personal fortune to add a few more names to his list. Perhaps the contrast between Schindler and Goeth is sharpest in their treatment of Helen Hirsch, Goeth's young Jewish maid. Both men take a liking to her and have private moments with her in the cellar. But while Schindler asks about her tormented life, giving her a compassionate kiss on the forehead that lands him in prison, Goeth, torn between sexual attraction and repulsion, ends up beating her. Goeth is Schindler's shadow self, a reminder that our choices determine who we become.

Throughout the film, titles link the story to a historical time line. In 1939 all Jews were forced to relocate to cities like Kraków, where a special Jewish Council (the *Judenrat*) was set up to carry out the German orders. March 20, 1941, was the deadline for entering the ghetto, which was liquidated on March 13, 1943. The Plaszow camp was closed in April 1944, and

thousands of murdered Jews were incinerated to hide the evidence. Schindler's new factory in Zwittau-Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia, operated for seven months, until liberated by the Soviets. Schindler was declared a "righteous gentile" by the council of the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in 1958.

Spielberg's great achievement in *Schindler's List* is to translate history into motion pictures, scenes that move. He does this in the first few minutes of the film, cutting from a peaceful Shabbat to the mass roundup of evicted Jews and from Schindler's dressing room to a noisy Nazi nightclub. Some scenes are almost unbearable to watch, such as the liquidation of the ghetto or the shower scene in Auschwitz. Occasionally, Spielberg gives us brief moments of comic relief, as when Schindler auditions for a secretary, but the overriding tone is somber and respectful. The film's turning point is arguably the long scene in which Goeth's storm troops invade the ghetto, a scene that unrolls as a series of vignettes. In one room, a frightened family is swallowing jewels rolled in bread, as in some lopsided version of communion. In the hospital, a doctor prepares a toxic dose of medicine for his bedridden patients. A woman hiding in a sunken floor compartment reluctantly agrees to accommodate another woman's child but not the mother. Meanwhile, on the street, a soldier steadies a boy's head with his boot and pulls the trigger. Another soldier fires through a line of prisoners, killing five with one shot. All this is witnessed by Schindler and his mistress, mounted on horseback on a hill above the ghetto. They watch, horrified, as a single child in a red coat makes her way through the carnage, aimless and alone.

Spielberg colorizes the red sweater, singling out this child as a living individual against the black-and-white of history. He uses color elsewhere—in the faint blue tint of the *Blauschein* stamps, for instance, or in the scene at Schindler's grave that ends the film—but the girl in her red coat is truly unforgettable. These effects were created by Janusz Kaminski, Spielberg's Polish cinematographer, who won an Oscar for his work. His lighting and crisp black-and-white tones hark back to German expressionism and Italian neorealism. Michael Kahn was awarded an Oscar for editing. His ingenuity is evident in scenes such as the nightclub, the liquidation, and the barracks wedding, where he cuts back and forth between the wedding in Plaszow, a floor show in Kraków, and Goeth's near seduction of Helen in the basement of his villa. Ewa Skoczowska and Maciej Walczak won an Oscar for their art direction, which is sometimes more expressive than the actors. Think of the warehouse filled with neatly separated piles of shoes, watches, eyeglasses—and the bag of human teeth that have been saved for their gold fillings. The other Academy Awards went to Spielberg for directing (his first), to Steven Zaillian for his script, to John Williams for his powerfully subtle music, and to the film itself for Best Picture.

Spielberg was criticized for focusing on Schindler: a German, a flawed human being, an individual who could never represent the millions of Jews who suffered and perished. Claude Lanzmann, whose *Shoah* (1985) is widely regarded as one of the best documentary films on the subject, faulted *Schindler's List* for presenting the Holocaust "not as a crime against humanity, but a crime of humanity" (qtd. in McBride 434). Lanzmann believes that the enormity of the event "erects a ring of fire around itself," that "fiction is a transgression, . . . that there are things that cannot and should not be represented" (qtd. in Hartman 63). Geoffrey Hartman criticized the film on two accounts: first, that it is not realistic enough ("a compromise with Hollywood") and, second, that it gives too much attention to the cinematic aspects of history, neglecting things that can't be filmed (63). Other critics offered high praise. David Ansen agreed that Spielberg's talents may have been wasted on inconsequential stories in other films, "but this time the abundant virtuosity is in the service of a harrowing authenticity" (57). Omar Bartov exclaimed that "Spielberg has filmed some of the most haunting moments in any cinematic representation of the Holocaust" (44). David Thomson called *Schindler's List* simply "the most moving film I have ever seen" (90).

Spielberg himself was interested in Schindler precisely because of his flaws. He was fascinated by this rather ordinary man who achieved uncommon results in extraordinary times. The fact that Schindler never had much success in business before or after the war supports this view. His specialty was "presentation," not substance, and his greatest skill was in deception. A more virtuous man probably could not have done as much under the circumstances. Like Goeth and other Germans, he had choices, but the choices he ultimately made were for human life. If he was a hero, his story raises tough questions about heroism. For answers, we might begin by looking at the Talmudic epigraph inscribed within the ring given to Schindler by the people he had saved: "Whoever saves one life saves the world entire."

Suggested Films and Readings

More Films by Steven Spielberg

Jaws (1975)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)

1941 (1979)

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)

E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982)

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984)

The Color Purple (1985)
Empire of the Sun (1987)
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)
Always (1989)
Hook (1991)
Jurassic Park (1993)
The Lost World: Jurassic Park (1997)
Amistad (1997)
Saving Private Ryan (1998)
A.I.: Artificial Intelligence (2001)

More Films on the Holocaust

Documentaries

Night and Fog (1955; dir. Alain Resnais) In French with English subtitles
The Sorrow and the Pity (1969; dir. Marcel Ophuls) In French with English subtitles
Schindler: The Documentary (1982; dir. Jon Blair)
Shoah (1985; dir. Claude Lanzmann) In German, Polish, French, and English
The Architecture of Doom (1989; dir. Peter Cohen) In German with English subtitles

Dramatizations

The Diary of Anne Frank (1959; dir. George Stevens)
Judgment at Nuremberg (1961; dir. Stanley Kramer)
The Pawnbroker (1965; dir. Sidney Lumet)
The Shop on Mainstreet (1965; dir. Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos) In Czech with English subtitles
Holocaust (1978; dir. Marvin Chomsky) TV docudrama
Sophie's Choice (1982; dir. Alan J. Pakula)
Europa Europa (1991; dir. Agnieszka Holland) In German and Russian with English subtitles

Books

Ansen, David. "Spielberg's Obsession." *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, the Book, the Film, the Holocaust and Its Survivors*. Ed. Thomas Fensch. Forest Dale, VT: Paul S. Eriksson, 1995. 56–64.

Bartov, Omer. "Spielberg's Oskar." *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*. Ed. Yosefa Loshitzky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 41–60.

Cole, Tim. *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler: How History Is Bought, Packaged, and Sold*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

- Doneson, Judith E. *The Holocaust in American Film*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987.
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- Hartman, Geoffrey. "The Cinema Animal." *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*. Ed. Yosefa Loshitzky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 61–76.
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- McBride, Joseph. *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- Taylor, Philip M. *Steven Spielberg: The Man, His Movies, and Their Meaning*. New York: Continuum, 1992.
- Thomson, David. "Presenting Enamelware." *Oskar Schindler and His List: The Man, the Book, the Film, the Holocaust and Its Survivors*. Ed. Thomas Fensch. Forest Dale, VT: Paul S. Eriksson, 1995. 90–98.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What did you already know about the Holocaust before watching *Schindler's List*? Where did your knowledge and impressions come from? What did you learn about the Holocaust from the film?
2. Which scenes are most disturbing to you? Describe what makes them so troubling: what particular images, what sounds, or what things people in the movie do or say.
3. Some viewers see Oskar Schindler as a con man who used Jews to profit from the war. Others see him as a kind of hero. How do you size up the man? On what words and deeds do you base your judgment? Did your opinion of Schindler change? If so, at what point in the film did you notice a change? If not, how does his behavior at the end of the film confirm your initial impressions?
4. Compare Schindler and Goeth. In what respects are they similar? In what respects are they different? Imagine if they had traded places. What kind of commandant would Schindler have been? How would Goeth have run the Emalia factory?

5. How are the Jewish people depicted in the film? Which Jews are given individual identities? How are the millions of other Jews represented?
6. Why do you think Schindler risked his life to save the Jews?
7. In one of the Plaszow scenes, Goeth stands on the balcony of his villa with a rifle in his hands. At first we see him from the yard, the way a prisoner might see him. Then the camera shifts to his perspective. We see what he sees as the barrel of his rifle shifts from one prisoner to another. He selects a slow-moving woman in the distance and fires. In the bedroom behind him, his half-naked girlfriend groans, "Oh, Amon," burying her head in a pillow. Where else in the film does the camera alternate like this among different points of view? What purpose is served by such shifts in perspective?
8. How realistic does the film seem to you? Since Spielberg did not use historical footage, he had to rely on actors, sets, camera work, and the other tools of fiction film to re-create events of the 1930s and 1940s. How well did Spielberg and his crew succeed in making history come alive?
9. What roles does Itzhak Stern play in the story? What is his position in the factory? What influence does he have on Schindler and the Jews?
10. *Schindler's List* shows Jews being mistreated in appalling ways. Where do you see this mistreatment most strikingly? Does the film give an explanation for Nazi anti-Semitism? What reasons can you give?
11. Few people who see the film forget the little girl in the red coat. What makes her so memorable? What does she symbolize to you?
12. History is a record of the choices people have made and the consequences of those choices. What other choices were available to Schindler, Goeth, the Jews themselves, and others in the film? How might their lives—and our history—be different if they had made different decisions? Where do you see similar choices being made in our lives today?

Topics for Further Study

1. Investigate the facts behind *Schindler's List*. Why were Jews persecuted by the Nazis? What happened to them elsewhere in Europe? What forms of resistance to Hitler were mounted by Germans, Jews, and others? Create a time line and place events of the film in their historical context. Explain new terms that you come across, such as *the Final Solution*, *Aktion*, *ghetto*, *concentration camps*, *SS*, *Resistance*, *Zionism*, *Yad Vashem*.
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2. Find out about the real Oskar Schindler. What was he like before the war? What happened to him afterward?
3. Read Thomas Keneally's book and compare it to the film. You may be interested to read about the card game between Schindler and Goeth for Helen Hirsch (it begins on page 277), a scene that was filmed but cut from the final release print. What else does Spielberg leave out of the movie? What changes does he make in the structure of the story, the portraits of people, or the emphasis on certain events?
4. Watch another film about this period in history, perhaps a documentary like *Shoah*, a television docudrama like *Holocaust*, or a feature film like *The Diary of Anne Frank*.
5. Turn off the sound for part of the film. Notice how this changes your awareness of the camera work, the characters' movements, the editing, and other cinematic elements. Then restore the sound. What do the dialogue, music, and sound effects add to your experience of the scene?
6. Analyze the composition of a selected scene. Observe how the actors are positioned within the frame. Notice the way lines (vertical, diagonal, horizontal) and masses (large, small, dark, light) contribute to the overall effect. Where is the lighting coming from, and what does it emphasize? How else might the scene have been framed?
7. At the end of the film, we see real survivors among the actors at Schindler's grave. Find out what happened to them after the war. There are many Web sites on the Holocaust with references to helpful documentaries and readings.

Scenes to Analyze

1. **Schindler's Entrance.** [3:25] Note how we are introduced to Schindler in the dressing room scene. What do the close-ups tell us about the man? When do we first see his face? What does his conduct at the nightclub reveal about his character and intentions? Why does the camera keep changing position? How do the lighting and music comment on the action?
 2. **The One-Armed Worker.** [39:35] Schindler is in his office when Stern introduces Mr. Lowenstein, an old man with one arm who is grateful for being allowed to work. Notice the acting here. How does Schindler (Liam Neeson) show his attitude toward Lowenstein and Stern (Ben Kingsley)? Compare this to his attitude in the next scene, when Lowenstein is killed [43:00].
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3. **Liquidation of the Ghetto.** [57:00] In a fifteen-minute tour de force, Spielberg plunges us into the terror and horror of the Nazi *Aktion*. Storm troopers burst into homes and shove people onto the street. One family tries to hide beneath the floorboards; another swallows jewels encased in bread. A soldier chucks a child on the cheek affectionately while a second soldier shoots a boy in the head. Meanwhile, Schindler and his girlfriend watch silently on horseback from a hilltop. As they look on, a little girl in a red coat walks through the chaos of the night. Examine the scene several times, focusing on a different element of filmmaking each time. Look only at the lighting: the fear and safety of shadows, searchlights scanning frightened faces, flashes of gunfire in the windows. Listen for the sounds: people screaming, dogs barking, gunfire, and a piano playing classical music in the middle of it all. Watch how the camera keeps shifting its position and our point of view. What makes this scene so powerful?
 4. **Hinges.** [1:26] When Goeth questions a man making hinges in the factory, Spielberg captures the tension in a masterpiece of editing. Watch how he shows the process—and power play—in a series of close-ups, shifting angles, and quick cuts. Pay particular attention to the camera's positioning in the railroad yard, where Goeth takes the man for execution.
 5. **Parallel Scenes.** [1:38:39] When Goeth expresses his feelings for Helen Hirsch in his wine cellar, the scene is intercut with a Jewish wedding in the barracks and a floorshow for the Germans. Why does Spielberg cut back and forth between these scenes? What connections is he making? Compare Goeth's advances to Helen with Schindler's approach to her earlier in the same location. What do the two cellar scenes reveal about the characters of these two men?
 6. **The Showers.** [2:18:00] The women arrive at Auschwitz in a cattle car at night. Searchlights illuminate their frightened faces in the falling snow. They are stripped, shorn, and ushered into a large chamber marked "showers," where they huddle naked waiting for a long time. The lights go out, we hear screams, and finally a spray of water falls from one nozzle, then another. The screams turn to cries of relief. But as the Schindler women file out to the sound of a plaintive violin, another line is coming in, and the camera tilts up to show smoke rising from the chimney. What was falling was not all snow. Compare Spielberg's visual treatment of the scene to Keneally's description on pages 305–11 of the book.
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