

"incident at vichy" by  
arthur miller essay  
sample



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## **“ Incident at Vichy” by Arthur Miller Essay Sample**

Mistreatment, racism, discrimination, these are some of the actions brought on by misperception of a certain group of people. Due to being blinded by lies, propaganda and false accusation, people easily succumb the manipulation of the upper class. The play “ Incident at Vichy”, by Arthur Millar, illuminates the subject of racism, discrimination, dehumanization, knowledge, hatred, deception and sacrifice through the use of Marxism theory by presenting how the upper class has power to influence and control the lower class. In the play “ Incident at Vichy” by Arthur Miller, a certain ethnic group of people are heavily discriminated against. This is because the government was able to manipulate society to misperceive these groups of people, eventually leading to their downfall. In the play “ Incident at Vichy” Arthur Miller shows, how a man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the betterment of other community. Today we have knowledge about the world but during the time of World War 2, common people had least knowledge, so to pass on the knowledge and to make people realize about the sufferings of some ethnic groups, some people had to step up and sacrifice. This is a unique play, where a Christian prince who is also considered as lower class, sacrifices his own freedom for the freedom of a Jew. He does this to make people realize about the Nazi’s ruthless behavior against some ethnic groups.

Arthur Miller uses illustrative structure to emphasize racism, discrimination, knowledge, hatred, deception and sacrifice, main subjects in “ Incident at Vichy”. Through the use of visual structure Bayard tells that Gypsies are also considered inferiors. The Author uses visual structure to emphasize the

importance of the quote. Bayard says, " They're in the same category of the Racial Laws. Inferior."(pg17). These words stand out from the regular type on the page, and highlights to the reader where the narrator is telling, how some different races were tagged as inferiors. This shows how the government manipulated people and influenced them to believe whatever they wanted them to believe. As a result, people of the lower class are misled and deceived into causing the mistreatment of an ethnic group. This illuminates the subject of deception, discrimination and racism.

Furthermore in the play Monceau gets confused and says that it does not make sense to kill Jews as Germans can get free labour out of them. The author uses visual structure to convey this idea to the reader. Monceau says, " But what good are dead Jews to them? They want free labor. It's senseless."(pg37). The italicized quote stands out from the text. The author puts more stress on this quote as it reveals the subject of hatred; the Nazis who were considered as upper class hated Jews so much that they did not even care about their own benefit. At the end of the play Von Berg (Prince of Austria), who is a Christian gets the white pass from the major, but gives the pass to Leduc who is a Jew. The author uses symbolism and visual structure to demonstrate this scene.

The white pass symbolizes freedom and the structure of the quote brings the scene into more focus. The author writes " In his hand is a white pass..... and thrust the pass into Leduc's hand." (pg69). The quote stands out from a normal text as it is typed in italics, which brings the scene into more focus. Von Berg was considered lower class but did not get influence by the government and knew the reality, so he sacrificed his own

freedom and life for a Jew who was considered inferior. This quote serves much importance because it shows how a person sacrificed his own life just for the benefit of some other ethnic group. Von Berg wanted Leduc to share his experience with others so that the people who do not have knowledge about the situation in Europe can deal with the circumstances. Through all this, the author signifies the subject of freedom, knowledge and sacrifice.

Arthur Miller uses effective setting and tropology to demonstrate one of the main subjects in " Incident at Vichy"; dehumanization and racism. Through the use of setting, Lebeau tells Bayard that they are trapped by Germans based on accusation for being Jews. Lebeau says " I'm sitting in a police station or whatever the hell this is and in the middle of Europe, the peak of civilization! And you know what it means."(pg 6). This quote displays date and time of the setting, which is very significant, as the time, place and morals of the time are vital in driving the plot of the story, as what happens would not have happened (exactly) unless it were in that time and place. In Vichy France in 1942, eight men and a boy are seized by the collaborationist authorities and made to wait in a police station, because they are suspected to be Jews, who were considered as inferiors at that time. This quote is significant as it highlights the subject of Racism and tells the reader how a human being was tortured and punished just for being suspected as a Jew.

Moreover in the play Arthur Miller uses illustrative imagery to show; how Jews were treated in the jails. In the scene, Arthur Miller shows how the waiter is mistreated by the captain. The author writes " Captain- grabs the waiter from the guard: Get in here you Jew son of a bitch..... He throws the waiter into the office: ..... The major grips his thigh in pain,

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pushing the waiter clear. The slides to the Major's feet, weeping pleadingly. The captain strides over and violently jerks him to his feet and pushes him into the office, going in after him." (pg40). The author uses Words like grabs, throws, grips and pushes to make the reader visualize the scene. The author here uses angry tone; this tone is felt because of the torture the waiter went through. The author uses this tone so the reader can feel how bad it is to lose your freedom and be humiliated. Arthur Miller shows how a person was influenced by the government and believed all the propogandas and accusations made by the government against an ethnic group and treated them according to that. The emerging theme is dehumanization, as the waiter is treated brutally and cruelly. The reader can clearly imagine, waiter getting beaten up and getting affronted. This was the most cruel act that showcases dehumanization as everything thing that can harm someone's dignity is seen.

Arthur Miller exhibits the subject of racism, discrimination, dehumanization, knowledge, hatred, deception and sacrifice through the use of Marxist literary theory. In the play " Incident at Vichy" The author demonstrates how the government has the power to cause misperception of an ethnic group of people through the use of manipulation, propaganda, and false accusations. As a result, people of the lower class are misled and deceived into causing the mistreatment of an ethnic group. This play represents how power in the wrong hands can lead to misconstrued facts, which in turns leads to the massacre of a race of people. Also in the play, Arthur Miller shows, how a person who does not get influenced by the government, sacrifices his own freedom and life for the prosperity of some other ethnic group.