

The film 'schindler's list'



Steven Spielberg is American and Jewish and had long felt the need to portray the suffering of European Jews under the Nazis during World War Two. In 1994, Steven Spielberg released the film, Schindler's List.

The film was based upon the book ' Schindler's Ark' which was originally written by Thomas Keneally. Spielberg wanted the world to know just how traumatic the experience was for the European Jews and how a member of the Nazi Party was able to help save many Jewish lives. The film was set in Poland and at Auschwitz itself, where millions were brutally murdered. Furthermore it is a true story, which tells us of the extraordinary efforts, made by a German businessman and member of the Nazi Party, Oskar Schindler. Spielberg's film is about Oskar Schindler who did his utmost to help the Jews, knowing if he were to be caught, it would result in his death.

Oskar Schindler, with the help of his Jewish accountant Ithzak Stern, secretly tried to save many Jews from vicious conduct at the labour camp at Plaszow, which was run by a heartless Nazi commandant named Amon Goethe. Schindler made these attempts to save Jews, by offering them employment within his steel-making factory and paying them low wages. From the beginning of the film we learn that Oskar Schindler is a philanderer and a womaniser, which makes it hard for us to believe that he would be the kind of person, who would bother to offer sanctuary to the Jews. But we learn that this avaricious German businessman finds something within himself that compels him to become involved saving Jews. Initially, Oskar Schindler portrays himself to be exploitative towards the Jews by using them for such hard labour and giving them unbelievably low pay. Although when the Jews show him their appreciation at the end of the holocaust by presenting him

with gifts, we begin to distinguish the canny nature that Oskar Schindler seemed to hide throughout the film.

However at the point where he begins to shed tears we learn how awful he feels for exploiting the Jews, because he believed that he still could have saved more lives. This is where we learn, that at first he had wanted to exploit the Jews but when he witnessed the brutal liquidation scene, from this point he became less exploitative and more understanding towards his Jewish workers. In the heartbreaking scene of the liquidation of the ghetto, Spielberg manages to portray the terror vividly using various visual and sound effects. The techniques he uses to symbolise the tragic events that took place on March 13, 1943 will be exemplified further in this essay. In the opening scenes of the liquidation of the ghetto, we are able to see two different scenes, both of them showing important characters (Oskar Schindler and Amon Goethe) shaving. From this, we learn that although the characters are different there are also many similarities between them.

Most importantly they have very different views regarding the Jews. Oskar Schindler wants to exploit the Jews by offering them employment at his factory and Amon Goethe is a Nazi commandant who is trying to liquidise the existence of Jews in the world. For six centuries there has been a Jewish Krakow - think about that. By this evening those six centuries are just a rumour, they never happened. Today is history.

' Said by Amon Goethe. This was the speech given to German soldiers before they caused rampage liquidising the ghetto. These strong words make the viewer aware of the actions soon to be taken against the Jews within the

ghettos. This quote is particularly significant as we later learn how effective these words were from the approach that were made by the German Soldiers whom basically 'man hunted the Jews'. After this scene, we see the German troops rush out of army vehicles.

They then dash quickly into a part of the ghetto and evacuate all of the Jews. In one case, a German soldier seizes a man in front of his family, throws him down and shoots him in the head. This demonstrates the reckless and unexplained hatred towards the Jews. Another German Soldier then begins to ridicule a very young Jewish boy. The sound effects in these events play a huge part on making the viewers aware of the mayhem that took part upon that day.

The effect of this is to allow the viewer to feel and understand the horror, torment and disrespect shown by the Germans towards the Jews. The Jews are in disbelief and shivering with terror as they are assembled in the overcrowded ghetto streets. Once they are in the streets, those who try to run to safety and sanctuary are shot dead immediately. The German Soldiers think this is a game; they relentlessly go round rampaging and killing every Jew in sight. In these particular scenes camera shots are generally close up and they usually remain on Jewish victims who have just been killed.

This has a poignant effect on the viewer leaving them so that the sheer horror of the event is truly felt. Another time where this particular technique is used is when Spielberg wants to stress the terror that the Jews were experiencing through this outrageous event. Spielberg has also used specific lighting effects to illustrate how weak and helpless the Jews were. For

example, the Jewish characters were shown to be very pale. The effect of this is to allow the viewer to see how shockingly and appallingly the German soldiers treated the Jews.

Spielberg's idea of using monochrome highlights the events in the past effectively as the viewers gain a deeper sense of the actual experience. In one scene, the viewers see the desperation of a Jewish man when he tries to escape from the terror through the sewers. However the patrolling soldiers in the sewers trap him from seeking an escape route. There is no escape and he is forced to return to the ghetto.

In another scene we see Jews who assisted to die. In the hospital, we see the nurses giving the patients 'Trucizna' (German) – a poison to cause quick and easy death. This shows us that the doctors and nurses thought that it was for the best to help the Jewish patients to die with ease rather than see their lives being taken away from them. We then see and hear the German Soldiers walking up the stairs of the hospital and then walking into the ward and shooting at the already dead patients.

This pointless shooting shocks the viewers forcing them to see just how intense the hatred was felt against the Jews. Later as a man tries to comfort his injured loved one, he asks a German soldier if he could take her inside. The soldier coldly shoots the woman in her head and pushes the man into the line. In this scene, Spielberg has portrayed the terror and horror towards the Jews by using vivid sound effects. When the man had approached the soldier he was very scared and weak. The sound of the gunshots and the

sound of the reactions of the man and other Jews as the woman is shot clearly portrays the horror that Jews endured.

As I have mentioned previously, the man who tried to desperately escape through the sewers had to avoid the soldiers before returning to his loved one. When the soldiers marched down the street, we see him quickly remove the baggage from the street and pretend that those were his orders. This again emphasises the terror felt by a Jew who was facing German Nazi soldiers. Spielberg again portrays the terror shown in this scene with sound effects.

As the soldiers approach him the sounds of their marching begins to increase in volume, causing to the viewer to feel the same fear as the Jewish man. As Schindler is about to leave after witnessing the alarming event, he notices a young child – Spielberg highlights this by emphasizing upon her red coat against the monochrome picture. We then see her try to find security away from this pandemonium. The effect of this is that the viewer is made aware of how innocent little children who were separated from their parents were, and Spielberg clearly demonstrates her thoughts on the whole liquidation, as the camera follows her into a bedroom where she hides with her hands on her ears under the bed. This use of symbolism reveals how much of a tragedy the liquidation was, not just for adults but how the children were affected by this life scarring experience. The German soldiers are determined not to leave any survivors.

At nightfall they check the entire ghetto, with stethoscopes so that no one would escape or were left alive. We see many Jews hidden in odd places,

hiding like animals. One man hid within a piano. When he tries to get out he accidentally steps on the keys alerting the troops of his position. At the same time we see the soldiers find Jews hidden in a room.

As the soldiers rush up the stairs to where the music is coming from, the viewer sees shadows of the Jews against the walls being killed by machine guns. At the same time a German SS Officer begins to play a Mozart piece. This scene is particularly effective as the place and the choice of music made by Spielberg makes the viewer feel the terror and understand the vicious experience encountered by many Jews. The effect of this fits well with the terror and horror that director Steven Spielberg is attempting to portray. This is the music played when the viewers see the shadows of the killings and when the soldiers rush to find the man who stepped on the piano, the viewers, are made aware of this horror, as we begin to see the scenes switching, showing how brutal and unmerciful the attitudes of the soldiers were when they massacred the Jews. After this horrific and intense scene the viewers are left shocked at the brutal experiences the Jews had encountered.

The camera is low and slowly passes over the thousands lying dead in an area of the ghetto. Slowly the camera is moved away to a hilltop overlooking the ghetto and the viewer sees a flickering of lights in the windows, sound of gunshots and people wailing with fear and pain. This is again particularly significant as we see just how inhuman the Germans were when liquidising the ghetto. All these events emphasise the terror of the experiences of innocent Jewish citizens.

Spielberg brilliantly portrayed the terror and horror of the liquidation of the ghetto by using many different techniques such as sound, lighting, music and camera effects to demonstrate to the viewer and the rest of the world the heartbreaking event that happened on March 13, 1943. From viewing the scene of the liquidation of the ghetto from the film Schindler's List, I believe that Steven Spielberg has been very successful in conveying the terror of the holocaust. I believe that Spielberg has achieved this as he has managed to portray the historic and the most degrading event towards a religion culture and people in the twentieth Century. The methods of horror that Spielberg has used within the film have been applied to the scene fantastically. For example, the sound effects, the shouting and the chaos made by the fleet of German Soldiers shows us just how much of a terrifying experience it must have been for those who were there. The camera angles have been positioned correctly to portray the faces of the characters that observed the incident; this makes us feel a part of the liquidation.

As the tempo of the scenes quickens so does the movement of the camera – if the people are running, then the camera angle is moved quickly to make the viewer, a part of the crowded Jews who are running away from the horror. The way in which Spielberg has selected the characters to take upon specific roles helps to depict the reality of the liquidation to the viewers. We see scenes that effect different people due to the actions taken by the German Soldiers and the actors play a huge part in presenting the terror and the horror that many Jewish people experienced. The overall effects that this film has upon the viewer is that it allows them to understand just why Spielberg felt the need to let the world know just how viciously the Jews of

Europe were treated. From the scene, the liquidation of the ghetto, we learn how hatred can be such a powerful feeling. From watching this film we begin to thoroughly understand how such an unprovoked event has affected people due to one man's evil ideology.

Hitler's hatred towards the Jews resulted in millions dying needlessly, just because they were of a different religion. We, as a world society should do our utmost to prevent a reoccurrence of such an event, as we have seen just how severe the consequences can be.