

Example of essay on one day in the life of ivan denisovich and tyranny

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



The Banality of Evil is not about abnormal people carrying out despicable crimes and atrocities but rather it is about normal people who accept their current situation no matter how bad they are. They carry out orders and any enterprises with the power from the bureaucrats. They carry out terrible activities in an organized and systematic manner. People steal, kill and commit many other crimes and still nothing seems to be wrong. It is normal to have these happenings. One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich is about the life of criminals in the Gulag where the people who commit great crimes like treason and other political crimes are contained. Many are there for the mere fact that they are non-Russians being guilty of no wrongdoing, others for their religion, others because they are seen as threats to the Soviet Republic.

Solzhenitsyn describes the life of a zek on these lines. Ivan is an ordinary Russian who was captured by the Germans and accused of high treason that he never committed. This was during the World War Two as he served in the Red Army. He could not resist for the fear of being killed by the Stalin's police. He was sentenced to ten years imprisonment in a Siberian Concentration camp. Ivan is forced to survive in the gulag with some dignity and humanity. The conditions in the camp are intolerable and not user friendly but Ivan makes the best out of it. He wakes up earlier than the rest and does some side jobs that earn him some few coins like sewing other people's things in the first ninety minutes before assembling for work (Solzhenitsyn 45). In the camp life is dependable on each other's productivity. They had to be there for each other in order to get that much needed meal that many said it was better than freedom. This is not a normal

thing but they take it the way it is and make it a routine. The dehumanizing nature of the camp ironically makes the prisoners discover survival tactics as individuals as they comply with the stringiest of their warden and system rules. Regardless of the conditions, Ivan's spirit is resilient against all odds. His life in the camp seems to be normal. He has friends who keep him breakfast when not around, his gang leader Tiurin is a close friend who helps them not to carry out tasks in the brutal cold. While working, he happens to have the best tools though stolen making him efficient. He is said to handle any task to completion with a lot of perfection and work ethics. He does not care whether it is in a brutal camp or not. All the prisoners including the ones that are in Ivan's gang are thieves. Stealing is normal here. They stole protection roofing from their counterparts to ensure that they work with some warmth. He works as though they are to be paid for the same. He lies to the cook too and manages to get some extra bowls of soup. When one is full in the camp, he is free in some way. Ivan also known as Shukhov knows how to survive in the camp. He befriends a rich prisoner who gives him his food as well as enjoys some warmth in his place. This is important because the place is very cold.

Many a time, the gang leader Tiurin signs the work report even without the prisoners doing any job. This helps them relax and save some energy. They happen to lead normal lives despite the prevailing conditions. They have unmerited freedom in their gang. Gang 104 usually finishes their tasks earlier than the rest and this makes it possible for them to take dinner first. Shukhov is serving the rest of the gang and this helps him keep the thickest soup for himself. This makes life in the camp hustle free for him. The

brutality associated with the camp never finds him. He escapes unscathed especially when he was found sleeping late whose punishment was to be kept in the hole for ten days. The place is cold making all the body parts numb. His friendship with other beneficial people helps him make a heaven in the hell. His skills gain him a livelihood like making a knife out of a hacksaw, which was later borrowed by the rich prisoner in exchange for sausages.

Life in the camp is altogether not fit for human beings. They worked even in the cold. The only time that they could not work was when the temperatures were forty below zero. These are extremely cold temperatures. There were devout Christians in the gulag who exercised their worship even when it was illegal in the camp. Their way of life was one of freedom and normalcy. The rich prisoner too lives as though life was normal. He spends days on end talking of the luxuries outside. When time for the meals comes, Shukhov is keen enough to observe all the morals by taking off his cap before eating indicating that life was continuing as before the fabricated arrest.

Additionally, the system has made the prisoners be accustomed to their conditions and live with them as though they were normal. The wardens enforce the laws without fear or favor instilling discipline to the prisoners. It is known that whenever a warden is spotted few yards away, all the prisoners should take off their hats as a sign of honor. In case one fails to do the same, they face the consequences without any resistance. They know nothing else outside this norm. Fear has been inflicted in them for them to live in accordance with the system's principles. They never complain when the countless checkups are being conducted even in the extreme colds

without shirts. Their doctor too believes that the best cure for any form of illness is hard work. They have no say as far as their fate is concerned. In addition, Shukhov is used to prison life that he thinks it will be daunting in the outside where there is freedom together with his family. The system also is set up in such a manner that everyone is either rewarded or punished together. There is no freedom for one person; it is a collective punishment or deliverance. This means that in order to see another day, they had to live as a family.

In conclusion, the life of zeks is depicted by the many oppressions and hardships that they go through on daily basis. There are rules that are enforced randomly causing pain rather than peace and orderliness. They end up breaking the excess rules in order to survive. Prisoners like the ex-captain have more clothes on than expected. They must endure the hardships that they face. The hope for a better day keeps them triumphing over their adversities. In order to have a competitive advantage over the others in the camp, they must be vigilant. Shukhov is one person who understands this and makes the best out of it. They have to compete for food, cigarette butts, and good assignments for them to live. The power invested in the wardens is mostly abused and even the government that has all the power to give them a better life is nowhere to be seen or found. The only thing that helps them is the power of knowledge that Shukhov is blessed with. All these and more as narrated above are examples of the kind of life that the zeks have in the gulag. They have found home in doing them as a way of living their lives. Though they have no hope for ever coming out of the camp, the prisoners have formed some family units that help them accomplish their daily tasks

with ease. Their lives are dependent on these units. All the hardships that they go through have become a normal thing as well as part of their prison lives. They are accustomed to the prison's way of life that getting out never rings a bell in their heads. In a quote, Solzhenitsyn says that once one is in the system, there is no time to think of how he came or how to leave (78).

Works Cited

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich*. 2nd ed. New York: Signet Classic, 1998. Print.