

Schindler's List
1993/Certificate 15

Synopsis of the film

Schindler's List tells the story of Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who used his wealth and standing to save the lives of almost 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust. By charting Schindler's journey from an opportunistic and greed-driven exploiter to a compassionate rescuer of the Jews, Spielberg's film covers both the tragedy of those murdered and the relief of those saved. Through the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto and the savage violence of SS men Spielberg presents an unflinching depiction of the Holocaust, one that challenges us to recognise and condemn the evils of racism and discrimination. *Schindler's List* is also a personal story, one that tells the journey of how a simple man's goodness was able to resist the onslaught of Nazi tyranny. Widely recognised for its impact on public consciousness of the Holocaust, it remains a powerful reminder of how one person can make a difference.

Based on a true story, *Schindler's List* is critically acclaimed and won 7 Academy Awards in 1993.

When it was made and where

Schindler's List was made in 1993 after a long personal campaign by one of the Jews saved by Schindler's actions, Leopold 'Poldek' Pfefferberg, to have the story told to mass audiences. The film was set and produced in Krakow, and its reproduction of the ghetto has been strongly praised by critics and survivors of the ghetto itself.

HMDT Review

Please note that the review may act as a spoiler for the film.

We are recommending this film because it reminds us all of how one person can make a difference. Schindler's actions directly led to nearly 1,200 lives being saved during the Holocaust. The theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2011 is **Untold Stories**. The story of Oskar Schindler is no longer an **Untold Story**. Yet there are stories for everyone who died or survived the Holocaust. Steven Spielberg's film demonstrates how these individual stories can have a powerful impact on retaining the memory of what

happened under the Nazis many years ago, so it may not happen again under someone else.

The main themes in *Schindler's list* are redemption and transformation. The audience follows the fate of Schindler to see a man give up the selfish pursuits he valued in order to help others. Ultimately Schindler's salvation is in his own saving of the Jews.

Issues to be aware of

Schindler's List is a powerful film that tells the story of one man standing against Nazi hatred, and saving nearly 1,200 Jews in the process. It is important to remember that Schindler's example is an uncommon one. For millions of Jews and other victims of the Holocaust there were neither saviours nor safe havens. Instead, these victims perished in the processes of a vast genocidal machine that stretched across Europe. Those who resisted the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe were much fewer than those who collaborated and those who stood by. The acts of Schindler are indeed worthy of celebration, but the fate of the millions of others who did not survive is where the Holocaust's significance lies most heavy.

You can use HMD resources to find out more about resistance in the Holocaust <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/liberation-resistance-and-rescuers>. The HMD 2006 Theme Paper **One Person Can Make a Difference** <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/one-person-can-make-a-difference> may also be helpful in exploring some of the issues raised by this film. You may also find it useful to read *Schindler's Ark* <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/for-adults/books-for-adults-schindlers-ark> by Thomas Kennealy as additional background.