

Sunshine 1999/ Certificate 15

Synopsis of the film

Sunshine is the story of the rise and fall of a Jewish Hungarian family during major events of the 20th century. The film follows the story of a number of family members through their lives, deaths, marriages, careers and relationships. The family name Sonnenschein – which means ‘sunshine’ in Hungarian – plays a central role to the film and provides its title.

When it was made and where

Sunshine was released in the UK in 1999 and was filmed in Berlin, Budapest, Paris and Vienna. It was written and directed by István Szabó. The film stars Ralph Fiennes who plays grandfather, son and grandson at different points throughout the film.

HMDT Review

Please note that the review may act as spoilers for the film.

We are recommending *Sunshine* for HMD event organisers because it provides an insight into events that took place before and after the Holocaust. It’s sometimes easy to think about the Holocaust in a vacuum, but *Sunshine* reminds us that life was vibrant before the Nazis came to power and attempted to destroy it. It also shows us that the effects of the Holocaust continued to be felt after liberation.

There are a number of themes which run throughout the film. We see the importance of names and heritage within a family when the second generation of Sonnenscheins we meet change their name to Sors. The film ends as the family name is reintroduced.

The themes of justice, duty, fairness and speaking up are raised throughout *Sunshine* and can be linked into discussions about moral choice and resistance. Viewers may also wish to explore the role of bystanders and collaborators in acts of discrimination and genocide.

If you use this film as part of your HMD activities there are a couple of issues you should be aware of. *Sunshine* is a long film; it runs for almost 3 hours. You could choose to split the film into two showings or have an interval at a suitable point within the film.

There are some scenes of a sexual nature and nudity in the film. There are also some violent scenes.

Sunshine uses both new and archive footage and does include re-enacted scenes from history. Please ensure that you inform your audience that this film is not a true story, but is inspired by real-life events. The film is not typical of the genre, and does not explore the events of the Holocaust in depth.

You can use HMD resources to find out more about: The Holocaust
<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust> or listen to the testimony of a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, Iby Knill <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/films/hmd-2010-the-legacy-of-hope> who has also published her testimony in *The Woman Without a Number* <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/for-adults/books-for-adults-a-woman-without-a-number>.