

KEY QUESTIONS

Use these questions to focus your thinking during and after watching a Holocaust themed film.

PURPOSE

- What type of historical source is this film? Primary? Secondary?
- Who produced it and why?
- When was it produced and how might this impact on how we view the film?
- Who is the intended audience? How do you know this?
- Do you think it is a reliable source? Why?
- How can you test a source's reliability?

REPRESENTATION

- Who are the central characters and how are they portrayed?
- Where is the narrative set?
- How do music, camerawork and lighting affect our perception?
- What meaning is communicated and how does the editing contribute to this?
- What themes are emphasised and how?
- What do you think is not represented or not shown?
- Is there a "right" or a "wrong" way to represent the Holocaust? Should filmmakers try to represent mass atrocities?
- What are the specific challenges to giving the Holocaust visual form as opposed to writing or speaking about it?

INTERPRETATION

- How important is historical accuracy in this film text?
- What aspects of the Holocaust are emphasised by this film?
- How have fictional elements (if any) been woven into the narrative? Why has the director chosen this approach?
- How reliable is this source as a historical text? How can we test the reliability of a source?
- Does the text strive for authenticity? If so, what strategies are used?

SIGNIFICANCE

- What is the significance of this text for historical study of the Holocaust?
- Why have so many film directors revisited this historical narrative?
- What does the text reveal about the cultural & social significance of the Holocaust?
- How significant is the popularity of certain Holocaust films to our understanding of this period in history?
- To what extent do "popular" Holocaust films broaden and deepen our understanding, or do they simplify and distort?

Based on *Thinking Film, Thinking History: The Holocaust*
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