*[Schindler’s List](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/)*; Amblin Entertainment, 1993; Directed by Steven Spielberg; Starring Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fiennes, & Caroline Goodall; Rated R; [Watch the trailer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gG22XNhtnoY).

Summary:

That more than six million Jews died during the Holocaust is a known and tragic fact, but how one thousand individuals were saved by a man, an act that led to six thousand descendants, is a joyous reality that begins to temper the devastation of Hitler’s “Final Solution.” *Schindler’s List* is the 1993 film that follows Oskar Schindler—entrepreneur, adulterer, and opportunist—as he befriends and battles his foil, the Nazi Amon Goeth, a sociopath hauntingly played by Ralph Fiennes.

Based on the 1983 novel *Schindler’s Ark*, the film won seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Director, and Screenplay. Steven Spielberg read the book in the eighties and wanted to make the film, but it took years before he felt prepared to begin the project. Rather than focus on the Jews as a race or religious group, Spielberg chose to have the film follow individual stories of real people.

Themes, Symbols, & Motifs:

* Names. There are dozens of names spoken or read in this film, each the name of an actual person. Names and lists of names emphasize the sacredness of individuals.
* Headstones. Goeth forces Jews to construct roads made out of Jewish headstones, a demoralizing act that also erases the record of their ancestors.
* Color. One of the two instances of color in the main body of the film is the Shabbat candle at the beginning, which is blown out and shown smoking. Fire, ash, and burning feature heavily as symbolic reminders of devastation. The second use of color is the girl in the red coat, representing innocence.
* Redemption. This is a rare theme for the Holocaust, but the film shows the realistic spectrum of how individuals, cultures, and countries can be horrifically evil as well as achieve some measure of redemption, as Schindler does.
* Good vs. Evil. It might be too simple to say that Schindler is good and Goeth evil, but the struggle between good and evil is portrayed in myriad ways throughout the film.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss Stern’s quote: “*The list is an absolute good. The list is life. All around its margins lies the gulf.”*
2. At what point do Schindler’s motivations change, with him deciding to save Jews rather than make money? Does the film do justice to Schindler’s internal state?
3. What insights do Stern and Helen offer into Schindler and Goeth?
4. Spielberg’s films often deal with literal and figurative fathers and lost boys. Are these elements in this film?
5. Does this film have a happy ending?
6. Schindler is a con man in multiple ways, multiple times. How so?
7. In the final scene, Schindler is given a ring with an engraved quote: *Whoever saves one life saves the world entire.* Why is this relevant?
8. Would you say *Schindler’s List* explains evil?
9. Almost half the film is shot with handheld cameras, all of it in black and white, and much use is made of parallel editing. What effect does each achieve?