

### **Schindler's List - Krakow Ghetto Liquidation (52:56 - 1:10:45)**

An important scene in the film shows the **liquidation of the Jewish ghetto in Krakow**, which took place in March 1943. The most active character here is Amon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes), the Nazi Commandant of the labour camp to which many of the Jews were to be moved. He is contrasted with Schindler, who sees what is happening from a hill outside the city, as he rides with a girlfriend. Goeth thinks he is making history, but it is Schindler - wholly changed by what he sees - who is remembered today.

This scene is pivotal in revealing Schindler's **motivations** and **development**.

In later years, Schindler allegedly looked back on this Aktion and said, *"Beyond this day, no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system."*

The ghetto "liquidation" scene was only a page of action in the script, but Spielberg turned it into 20 pages and 20 minutes of screen action "based on living witness testimony". For example, the scene in which the young man escapes capture by German soldiers by telling them he was ordered to clear the luggage from the street was taken directly from a survivor's story.

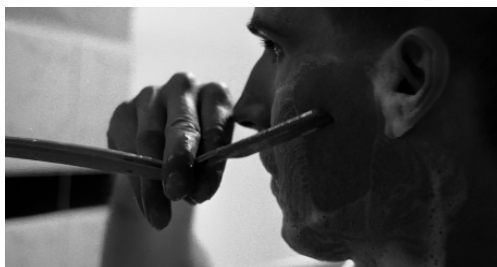


Both Schindler and Goeth - in two different locations - are brushing shaving soap onto their fair faces...





and sliding a straight razor through the lather on their cheeks.

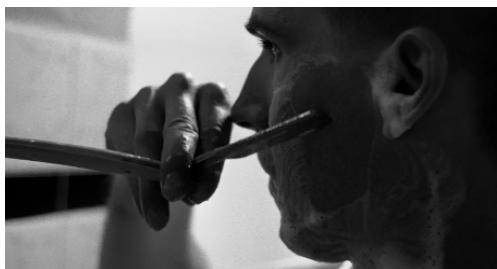


Why? What effect does this have?

- This establishes the similarity between the two male characters, Schindler and Goeth, and creates a link between them.
- The two men start the day in similar fashion (half-dressed, showing their common humanity) but they spend it doing very different things - when Goeth puts on his uniform he is more obviously a Nazi.
- We are encouraged to **contrast** and **compare** their attitudes and actions in the following scene, and in the rest of the film.



While we still see the men shaving, there is a short voice-over transition...





then we see the soon-to-be Commandant Goeth standing before his assembled Sonderkommandos in Krakow, addressing them in the dawn light, trying to inspire them for the events ahead. The white background of the swastika behind him makes him stand out as he paces to and fro. The hand held camera makes us feel as if we are there.



He talks about the liquidation of the ghetto and of the Jews in Krakow:

*“Today is history. Today will be remembered. Years from now, the young will ask with wonder about this day. Today is history and you are part of it. Six hundred years ago, when elsewhere, they were footing the blame for the Black Death, Kazimierz the Great, so called, told the Jews they could come to Krakow. They came. They trundled their belongings into the city. They settled, they took hold, they prospered. In business, science, education, the arts, they came here with nothing. Nothing. And they flourished. For six centuries, there has been a Jewish Krakow. Think about that. By this evening, those six centuries are a rumor. They never happened. Today is history.”*

What techniques are used in this speech to inspire the soldiers?  
How does it make you, the viewer, feel?

- Goeth's speech to his men has echoes of **heroic** and **patriotic** speeches in Shakespeare (like Henry V before Agincourt), but what he is about to do is shameful and inhuman. **We** know what the real judgement of history has been on what Goeth does.
- Think about the use of English and German dialogue - why is Goeth's speech in English, while elsewhere in this section the soldiers speak in German? Why does Spielberg do this?

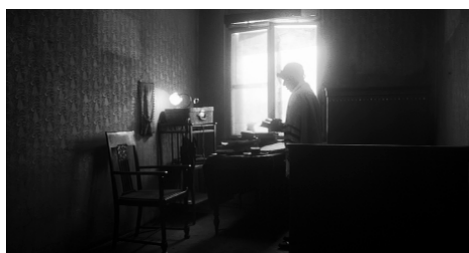


In a quick montage of scenes during the speech's delivery, we are shown snippets of everyday life in the ghetto.

What is the purpose of this?

What effect does it have on the viewer?

These scenes serve to **humanise** the Jews and focus us on individuals to follow and be concerned about in the following scenes. This is in contrast to the words we are hearing, which are intended to **depersonalise** the Jews for the soldiers.



Ironically, as Goeth talks about wiping out the Jews of Krakow, we see, and hear, Rabbi Levertov singing a prayer incantation, the light from the window next to him highlighting him, in an almost Biblical moment. The sound of his prayer continues through the next shots, underlying Goeth's speech, reminding us why this particular group of people are being persecuted.



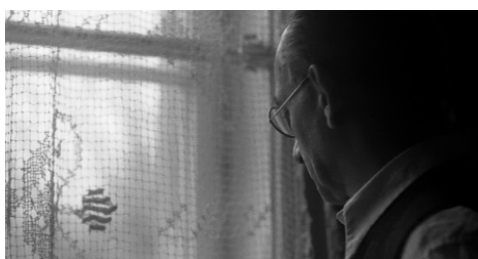


The Dresner family are sharing a meal in their ghetto apartment in a strained atmosphere. Mrs Dresner encourages her husband to cut a smaller and smaller slice of bread for her, reminding us of the shortage of food available and the difficulties which these people are facing.



Mrs Nussbaum is smiling up fondly at her husband, who returns her look, reminding us that these are real people with real relationships. (This is the couple we saw being evicted from their apartment near the start of the film).





Stern is looking out of his window and a point of view shot shows that the clerks and listmakers are setting up their folding tables and chairs. This makes us feel as if we are there with him, and are sharing his fear.







We see another shot out the window from Stern's point of view, and then a mid shot of him standing in his room. He seems to be drawing himself together, adjusting his tie, bracing himself to face what is to come.



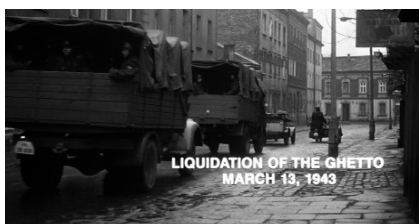


We return to Goeth as he finishes his speech:  
*"They never happened. Today is history."*  
This reminds us of who is speaking and of the soldiers waiting to go into action.





The camera lowers to his horse's hooves and this cuts to a shot of the wheels of trucks containing troops which are moving into the ghetto to liquidate it.



We hear the drone of engines and see a long row of trucks containing soldiers. The shot is at street level so we feel like we are there and the trucks are driving past us. A caption tells us what event we are about to witness: *Liquidation of the Ghetto*, and the date: *March 13, 1943*. This makes it feel like a factual documentary rather than a straightforward drama.



We see an officer shouting at the soldiers as he emerges from his truck, adding to the atmosphere of terror.



Soldiers hurry into line, creating a sense of urgency.



The camera appears to be hand held, creating a jerky effect, adding to the reportage, eye witness feel. The soldier in the foreground, sitting in the motorbike sidecar with his finger on a machine gun trigger, makes us wonder what we are going to witness. Why would they need weapons like this in order to move unarmed



civilians? Goeth commands that the stormtroopers start with Ghetto B in his massive orchestration of the coordinated effort to raze the ghetto.



We do not get any close ups or front-on shots of the soldiers - they are nameless, faceless, unemotional figures, all dressed in the same uniform, and we see them as intimidating automatons.



Many of them have leashes on muzzled, barking dogs, again making us scared for the Jews who could be hunted down like defenceless prey by these fierce dogs.



The riders have slowed down to a walk and stop on a hilltop clearing above the Krakow ghetto buildings - the quietness is a sharp contrast to the barking and shouting in the previous shot. From a distance and on horseback, they look down at the apparently peaceful, early morning scene. Echoes of the noise of the growling dogs, trucks, and orders shouted out are heard in the distance.







Ingrid looks, with concern and emotion, towards Schindler and a close up of Schindler's face, with furrowed brow, shows his confusion and disbelief.





The Dresner family hear the commotion outside - their anxiety is clear as they go to look out the window.





A handheld camera shot tracks an old woman with a shawl and headscarf who is trudging along carrying a bucket and canister.



Armed soldiers run up behind her, shouting, and she appears to be deaf as she does not react.



She seems bemused as they run past her.



The stormtroopers are shouting, trying to intimidate their victims, and the jerky hand held camera adds to the sense of action and panic.



Close ups of children's faces as they literally shake with fear helps us to empathise with their situation and show that even children are victims of the soldiers.



The left side of their faces are in light while the right is in shadow, adding to the drama of these shots. There is silence in the room and all we can hear is the soldiers shouting outside.



The family are grouped together, the father with his hands protectively on his son's shoulders.



In the foreground a man and woman move aside a table.



The woman tears back a flap of wallpaper to reveal a recess behind. She pulls out a tin and places it on the table.





She empties some jewellery out of a pouch from the tin onto the table while someone else cuts slices of bread. Nobody speaks - all we can hear is the soldiers shouting.







The woman then pulls out a piece of bread from the middle and presses a diamond into it. We realise that they are going to swallow their valuables - like a communion ritual - anticipating that they will survive. This plan is obviously well prepared as everyone seems to know what they are doing without being told.



We then see a low angle shot, looking up from a courtyard at soldiers running along external corridors -



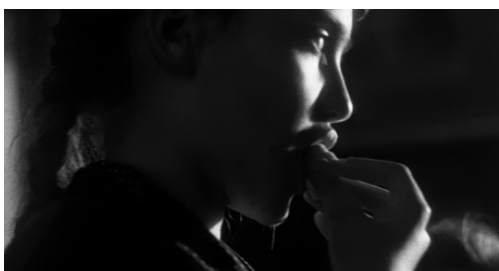
they seem to be everywhere, and are banging on doors and windows as they pass. We feel like they are getting closer to the family, making us anxious.





We go back to the family, who are swallowing the bread.





Even the children are taking part.



We see the soldiers outside again.



The camera swings across and follows a man holding a small child who is being hurried along by a soldier as we hear a whistle blowing.



We see a small child being hurried along, holding an adult's hand and with one hand on his head. We can only imagine the fear he must feel.



We see three soldiers standing outside an apartment door calling out names from a list on a clipboard - a shaft of strong light separates the soldiers from their victims, highlighting the gap between them.



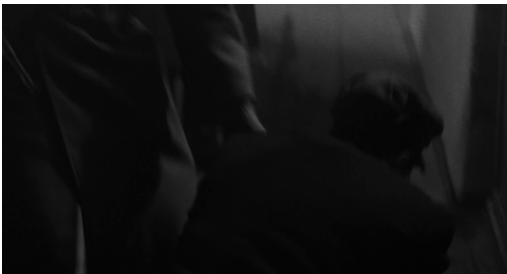




and is bundled towards the camera by another soldier who grasps his lapel. The camera moves back as they walk towards us, making us feel as if we are trying to get out of the way. The soldier says nothing and his face is blank.

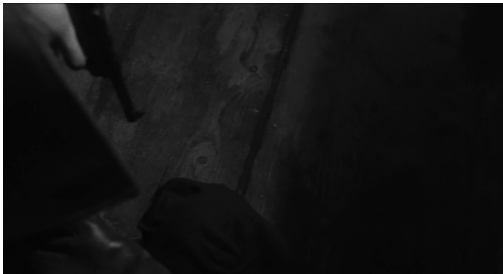






He forces the man, who does not struggle, probably knowing that any resistance would be futile, face down onto the ground and puts his foot on his back.





We then see a revolver coming into shot and a few seconds later we see the flash of the gun and the noise as the soldier shoots him in the back of the head. We hear a woman's scream off camera.





Blood pours from his head. The soldiers seemed to be looking for this individual, so it was not entirely random, but the fact that they said nothing to him, gave him no reason for what was about to happen or opportunity to defend himself shows the callousness with which they carry out their tasks. Also, there was no thought of taking the man away out of sight of the others - indeed, he may have been killed here as a warning to others not to resist. The camera tilts back up to the people in the corridor.





More people hurry past,  
horrified by what they have  
seen.







The boy's mother looks terrified. The contrast between this moment of apparent kindness and tenderness and the horror round about it is shocking and highlights the inhumanity of what is happening. The soldiers are only people, and in civilian life may well treat small children with kindness rather than driving them to their deaths. The soldier reverts to type and harasses the next people to pass.



We are once again outside and see (Rabbi) Levertov having his suitcase taken away from him...



and the papers he presents casually thrown away by a soldier.







He bends to pick it up.



The camera tracks him for a few steps and then tilts upwards. We see suitcases being emptied from upper balconies by soldiers and abandoned as litter - the implication is that the Jews won't need their belongings where they are going.



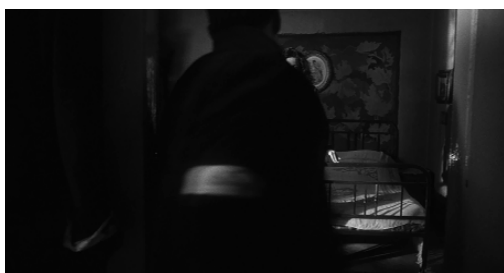


People hurry past, glancing anxiously upwards, trying not to be hit by falling objects. The camera angle, looking up almost vertically, makes us feel vulnerable, like the Jews.





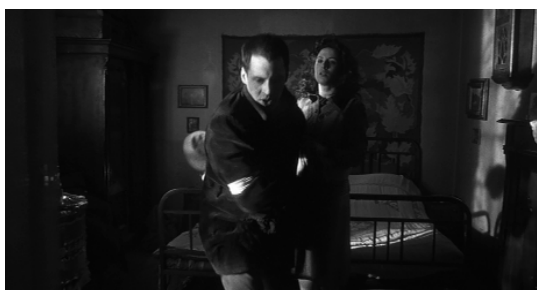
We see a close up, then a mid shot, of Mila Pfefferberg in her bedroom, leaning against the bed and looking terrified. We hear footsteps coming towards her and assume that they belong to soldiers.





Mila tells him she won't go in the sewers and even a passionate kiss does not change her mind.





She repeats that she will not go in the sewers.









We see an interior hand held shot following behind a man in a coat and hat as he hurries along a corridor to an open doorway through which we see soldiers and crowds of people.





The man is shouted at by a soldier demanding, "Your card, Jew!" and we realise that he is Stern, who is used repeatedly throughout this scene as a point of reference for us to identify with – we share his horror at what he sees going on around him and feel concern for his safety. A close up shows his fear.



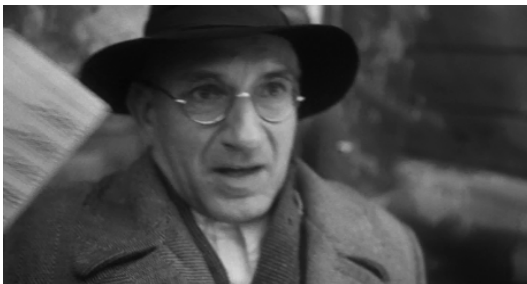


The camera lowers to close ups of his pockets as he frantically searches for his identity card and we share his panic.





Stern reaches into his inside coat pocket...



and pulls out his card -  
we see a glimpse of  
relief on his face.



Stern is rushed towards a  
line by another soldier,  
away from the camera.



The camera moves forwards towards a man who is grabbed by a soldier who shouts at him. The man points upwards.



The man's son, who was standing next to him, takes the opportunity to run away.







One of the soldiers raises his rifle and the father grabs the rifle to save his son.





The soldier turns and shoots the man, and also the woman behind him, who was standing next to Stern. This near miss for him emphasises that death and survival in this place seems totally random.



Stern is hurried on, past a woman crying over an obviously dead man who is being ignored by everyone. Everyone is so intent on their own survival that they have lost their humanity and compassion for others – they have seen so much suffering that they are no longer moved by it.



The boy who ran away is dragged back by a soldier on either arm and is shot by another soldier.





One of the soldiers who was dragging him angrily goes up to the soldier who fired and shouts at him, apparently angry that he took the risk of firing at the boy so close to the soldiers rather than just for shooting the boy. Their callousness horrifies us. People step over the dead bodies behind them.



An interior shot shows a man in a blood spattered white coat rushing into what seems to be a pharmacy, grabbing small bottles from a drawer behind the counter.





An exterior shot shows people walking past and pans across to a sign with a cross which tells us it is a hospital.





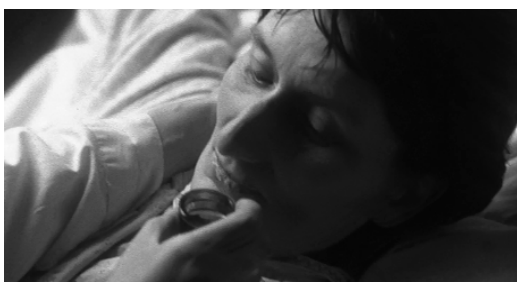
The camera tilts up to a top floor window and the next shot shows us the inside of the room and a close up of a syringe being used to draw out liquid from a bottle of poison (Trucizna).





This liquid is then calmly added to small glasses of liquid on a tray, held by a man in a white coat, presumably the man we saw before. We see soldiers about to enter the hospital and this adds to the tension - there is not much time before the soldiers get there.





These poisonous cocktails are administered by nurses to what seem to be helpless, terminally-ill Jewish patients, who willingly take them, while the soldiers climb the stairs, guns at the ready.









The patients are obviously grateful that the doctors and nurses are sparing them a potentially painful death.



Cutting repeatedly between shots of the patients / doctors and the soldiers, and hearing the noise of the soldiers climbing the stairs while we see the patients, intensifies the tension of the scene - it heightens our sense of the soldiers getting closer and we wait to see if the doctors will have carried out their mercy mission in time and how the soldiers will react.



We see the doctor and nurse standing defiantly at the far end of the room and a rifle enters the shot.





The first lifeless corpse is machine-gunned, then the soldiers realise they are already dead.





We admire the courage and compassion behind this act of defiance. The couple's bravery and contempt for the soldiers is shown in their proud demeanour as they stand, heads held high.







We see Stern hurrying past the camera clutching several suitcases and looking anxiously at a couple he passes, a man in a white, blood spattered coat supporting a semi-conscious woman who is bleeding from her nose.





A soldier stops them and says, "She's as good as dead. Leave her." The man begs to be allowed to take her inside and the soldier calmly raises his revolver and shoots her in the head.





The man winces and clutches her as blood spurts over him from her head and she falls to the ground. The callousness of the soldier's actions shocks and horrifies us.





The soldier grabs the man and tells him to “Join the line”, shoving him towards a group of others crouching on the ground.





We see Stern, obviously shocked by what he has seen, reinforcing our emotions.



We see close ups of groups of families, with the Nussbaums in the foreground, who are being separated: "Men to the right, women to the left." This leads to panic (a woman cries "I won't leave my husband" as she is dragged away).



The small boy that we saw earlier is taken from his father's arms. The camera appears to be jostled, reflecting the panic of the women we see



who are screaming and waving identity papers.



The Dresners are separated and we see Mrs Dresner's horror as she clutches Danka and is forced away from her husband and son.





Children are ripped from their mother's arms.

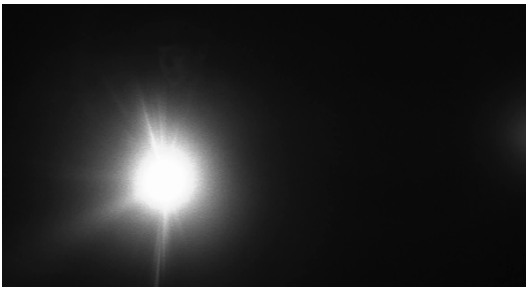


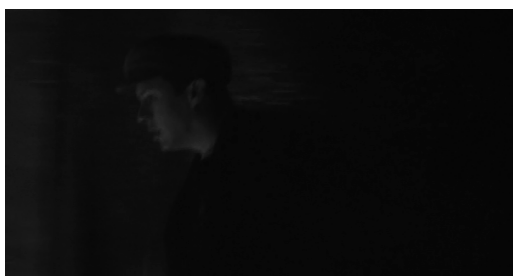






The next shot takes place in the dark in the sewer and is quiet compared to the previous scene. A man, silhouetted by the light behind him is running towards the camera, holding a torch. We are unable to see who it is.





As he passes the camera we realise it is Poldek, who we last saw climbing down a manhole.



He joins other men who we see as silhouettes running away from the camera towards light at the end of the tunnel, which we assume symbolises safety.



Soldiers with dogs appear at the end of the tunnel and Pfefferberg manages to duck into the shadows and double back.





He hides in a recess, which is lit from above.



We get a quick closer up view of the soldiers shooting the men, even though their arms are raised in surrender. We see the flash of gunfire and we hear the loud noise of machine guns, then the camera swings back to a close up of Pfefferberg's face.



The next scene returns us to above ground, as a manhole cover is moved aside and Pfefferberg emerges; we can hear the sound of gunfire and shouting in the background. There are suitcases in the foreground and a pile of dead bodies in the background. He pauses as he sees the bodies, apparently in shock. He climbs out and looks, his back to us, at the bodies, apparently horrified.





He staggers back and falls over, emphasising his shock, and runs up the street, away from the camera, dodging abandoned suitcases and bundles as he goes, glancing back as he runs.



We see him  
return to his  
apartment,  
looking for  
Mila...





...and in the next shot we see Mila hurrying along a road with a group of other women, accompanied by soldiers.



The camera moves forward and we see Danka and Mrs Dresner, who slip into a doorway away from the group.





We return to the same street where we saw the old woman walking before. It is now strewn with abandoned suitcases and dead bodies. We hear the (contrapuntal) sound of church bells ringing. The Dresners are running towards us from the mist at the end of the street.





A ground level shot shows the shocking image of a close up of a dead body in the foreground, eyes open and blood which has run from the nose and mouth. In the background, Danka stumbles and cries, "Oh God, Oh God!"



We see an interior shot of a room with a woman in a space hidden under the floorboards.



Danka climbs into the space but the woman refuses to let Mrs Dresner go in, telling her there is no room for her. Mrs Dresner pleads that they are "clearing out the ghetto."



She argues that they “tried it before and there was more than enough room” but the woman still refuses, saying, “I’ve changed my mind.”



Danka comes into shot, screaming hysterically “Mama!” She clearly does not want to be parted from her mother.





Mrs Dresner tries to cajole the woman, saying there is plenty room and she's just scared, but when the woman still refuses Mrs Dresner refuses to let Danka get out, telling her to stay and saying "I'd rather you be here than God knows where." The trap door shuts and a rug is pulled over it with string, leaving Mrs Dresner, isolated and alone in the room.



This scene shows the lengths people will go to in dire situations - the woman refuses Mrs Dresner entry to the hiding place in order to try to save herself, even if it means sending someone else to her death. In turn, Mrs Dresner is willing to be separated from her daughter if it means she has a greater chance of surviving, showing the sacrifices people are willing to make for their loved ones.



The next shot is outside again, and we see Poldek Pfefferberg running through a suitcase-littered street, with nowhere to hide as the sounds of soldiers and barking dogs comes closer.





Pfefferberg thinks fast - he begins to stack the suitcases against a wall as Goeth and other soldiers appear round the corner.





He faces them, clicks his heels and salutes, masquerading as a recruit:

**Pfefferberg:** *Herr Commandant.*

**Goeth:** (laughing) *Look, he's even saluting!*



**Pfefferberg:** *I respectfully report I've been given orders to clear the bundles from the road so there will be no obstructions to the thoroughfare.*



We see a close up of Goeth as he comes closer to Pfefferberg.

**Goeth:** (amused and mocking) *Finish and join the lines, little Polish clicking soldier.*

The troops move on, leaving Pfefferberg still saluting.



The contrast between Pfefferberg's fear and desperation (and the horror of the scenes we have witnessed) and the soldiers' amusement and humour in such circumstances appals us and highlights the soldiers' lack of humanity.



The scene shifts to a small Jewish boy who is also clearing packages - he is dressed in the uniform of an OD (a member of the ghetto police). As a terrified Mrs. Dresner hurries down the apartment building steps, the boy blows his whistle to alert the soldiers to her presence.



However, he then recognises her - she is the mother of one of his friends. She tells him she will *“go quietly”* and *“be no trouble”*.







He encourages her to hide under the stairs.





The boy tells approaching SS troops: *"I've searched the building. There's no one here."*



As the soldiers leave, Danka runs down the stairs, wanting to be with her mother rather than in the relative safety of the hideaway.



The camera tilts up from Mrs Dresner's face to Danka coming down the stairs.





They embrace,  
then Mrs Dresner  
turns round  
anxiously to the  
boy.





Danka says the boy's name, "*Adam*", and he appears quite flustered, as if he likes her, highlighting his youth and innocence, in contrast with the job he is doing, assisting the Nazis in rounding up the Jews. This is reinforced by the sound of gunshots.





The boy promises them:  
*"Come with me. I will put you in the good line."* Mrs. Dresner blesses the boy:  
*"Do you know the expression 'an hour of life is still life'? You are not a boy anymore. I'll say a blessing for you."*

**The most important detail in this scene is the girl in the red coat.**

The girl in the red coat is the most obvious symbol in *Schindler's List*, simply because her coat is the only colour object, other than the Shabbat candles, presented in the main body of the film.

To Schindler, she represents the innocence of the Jews being slaughtered. He sees her from high atop a hill and is riveted by her, almost to the exclusion of the surrounding violence.

The moment Schindler catches sight of her marks the moment when he is forced to confront the horror of Jewish life during the Holocaust and his own hand in that horror.



It is ten minutes since we last saw Schindler, and we have seen so many horrific things in that time that we have almost forgotten that he was on the hill, witnessing the events in the ghetto. We can see the concern on his face and the Nazi badge on his lapel is prominent, showing that, at least in name, he is allied with the soldiers carrying out these atrocities.





It is clear that the next shot, a long, high angle shot, is **his** view of the ghetto, so we know we are about to see what he can see.



We see a series of brutal attacks / executions being carried out in the street. From his vantage point, Schindler's attention, and therefore ours, is caught by a young girl in a drab red coat - a small spot of colour in the black and white scene. **Her lone image personalises the slaughter.** For Schindler, she suggests the idea that escape is possible - it is as if, watching her, he sees what he must do for the Jews he employs.

Although it was unintentional, this character is coincidentally very similar to Roma Ligocka, who was known in the Kraków Ghetto for her red coat. Ligocka, unlike her fictional counterpart, survived the Holocaust. After the film was released, she wrote and published her own story, *The Girl in the Red Coat: A Memoir* (2002, in translation). The scene, however, was constructed on the memories of Zelig Burkhut, survivor of Plaszow (and other work camps). When interviewed by Spielberg before the the film was made, Burkhut told of a young girl wearing a pink coat, no older than four, who was shot by a Nazi officer right before his eyes. He said *"it is something that stays with you forever"*.

Spielberg himself has explained that he only followed the novel, and his interpretation was that:

*"America and Russia and England all knew about the Holocaust when it was happening, and yet we did nothing about it. We didn't assign any of our forces to stopping the march toward death, the inexorable march toward death. It was a large bloodstain, primary red color on everyone's radar, but no one did anything about it. And that's why I wanted to bring the color red in."*

As we first see her we hear music starting for the first time in the scene. The music is **contrapuntal** to (at odds with) the images we are seeing.

The song is **Oyfn Pripetshik** (English: *On The Hearth*), written in Yiddish by M.M. Warshawsky (1848-1907).

The song is about a rabbi teaching his young students the 'alef bet' (the Hebrew alphabet). By the end of the 19th century it had become one of the most popular songs of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe: as such it is a major musical memory of pre-Holocaust Europe. The song is still used in Jewish kindergartens.

The fourth stanza introduces pathos (an appeal to the emotions) into the song: "When, children, you will grow older / You will understand / How many tears lie in these letters / And how much crying." The lyrics hint at the Yiddish saying that the history of the Jews is "written in tears".

#### **Oyfn Pripetshik** Lyrics - English translation

<i>A fire burns on the hearth</i>	<i>Learn, children, don't be afraid.</i>
<i>And it is warm in the little house.</i>	<i>Every beginning is hard.</i>
<i>And the rabbi is teaching little children</i>	<i>Lucky is the Jew who studies Torah.</i>
<i>The alphabet.</i>	<i>What more do we need?</i>

<i>Remember, children,</i>	<i>When, children, you will grow older</i>
<i>Remember, dear ones,</i>	<i>You will understand,</i>
<i>What you learn here.</i>	<i>How many tears lie in these letters</i>
<i>Repeat and repeat yet again,</i>	<i>And how much crying.</i>
<i>Komets alef-o.</i>	

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The soundtrack of a traditional child's song, sung by a children's choir, contrasts strongly with the horror we are seeing and emphasises the girl's youth and innocence.



The girl draws our attention – reflecting Schindler's interest in her - as she apparently invisibly makes her way, aimless and alone, past the madness and chaos in the street.



The camera returns to a close up of Schindler, emphasising his concern for the girl and emotional involvement in her fate.



The fact that it is a lone child that has been highlighted with the use of colour, rather than, for example, an adult, is far more emotionally involving for the viewer.



She seems untouchable and unaffected by what is happening around her - not even faltering when a woman is machine-gunned just behind her.





We again see the reactions of Schindler and his girlfriend, emphasising their, and our, emotional involvement in the girl's fate. The fact that there is no dialogue between them reflects the fact that what they are witnessing is so horrific that words cannot describe it, and it allows us to form our own emotional response to what we are seeing.



We again return to the girl and we continue to hear the sounds of screams and gunfire as well as the choir singing as people are shot around her.



Again we see Schindler. Repeatedly returning to close ups of his face emphasises the significance of this experience for him and the influence it will have on him and his future actions.



Following Schindler's point of view we then get a street level view of the girl, allowing us to see her features. She makes her way along the road, past other Jews and Nazi soldiers...



apparently joining a group of people walking.



The viewer, and therefore Schindler, loses sight of the small figure as she walks behind a building, making us more anxious for her safety.



We see Schindler's view as he scans along the buildings looking for her.







We see a soldier on a balcony throwing suitcases into the street, and soldiers on the street snatching bags and cases from lined up Jews, showing how little the soldiers value the Jews' belongings, and implying that they will have no need of them where they are going.



We see the girl again, walking by a line of Jews being herded down a sidewalk.



We see Schindler again, his horse restless, and share his sense of relief that she has still survived.



In a shot from Schindler's point of view we see the girl walking along with a group of people.



In the foreground we see seven men being lined up as the girl passes by behind them...



and a soldier fires at them...



killing five with one bullet.



The other two are finished off at close range with a pistol. It is clear that this shocking act of brutality has drawn Schindler's attention as he stays focussed on the scene once the girl has gone out of sight. The fact that someone would do this, purely for entertainment, or possibly to settle a bet, sickens us, and presumably Schindler.





Schindler's mistress, in obvious distress, says, "*Please, let's go. Let's go please. Come on,*" but Schindler seems unable to drag himself away.

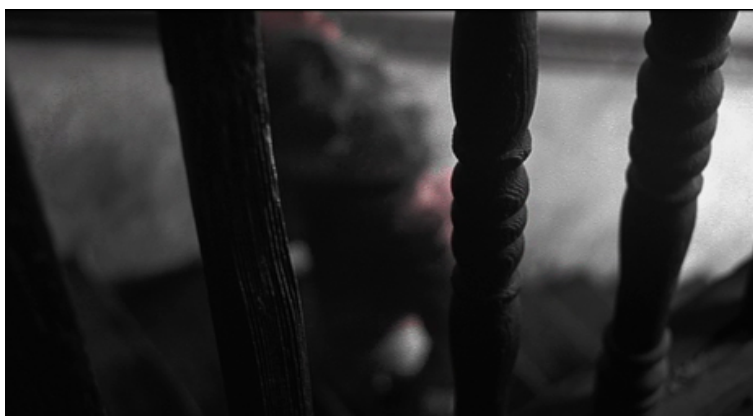




A shot from a slightly high angle shows people in the foreground who are being loaded into trucks, and in the background we see the girl.



She goes up to a door, apparently unnoticed by the soldiers who frame her on either side, and opens it.



We see her climbing a flight of stairs, blurred and out of focus, the struts of the banister in focus in the foreground.

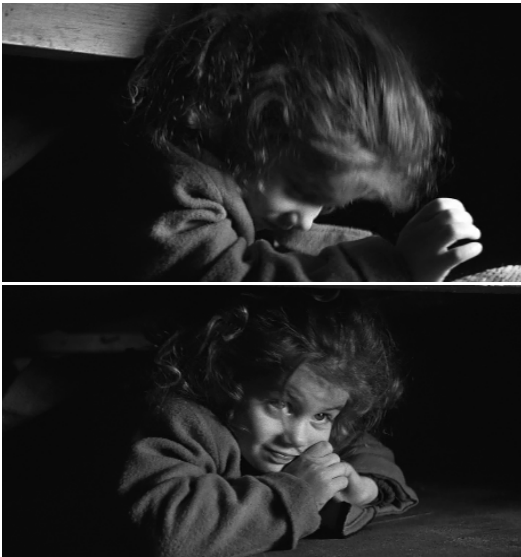


Only now that the girl is out of sight can Schindler leave, distressed and stricken by the nightmare below and the plight of the little girl in red. The singing stops, although the music continues.



The girl runs across a ransacked room...





It is only at this point that we see an in focus close up of her face and the colour fades from her coat; now that Schindler can no longer see her, she loses her symbolic significance and returns to being the same as the other Jews.



The last shot we see of her is as she covers her ears to protect herself against the sound of the horrors continuing outside and we are left scared for the fate of this vulnerable child. The music fades and is replaced by the sound of soldiers marching, possibly suggesting the eventual fate of the girl.





It is dark and we see a group of soldiers, who we heard marching in the previous shot. They seem to be running towards us holding rifles, light glinting menacingly off their helmets. The contrast of the visual image of the soldiers, linked in our minds with the brutality we have seen men like this carry out, and the sound of the music makes them seem even more intimidating. They have come to search for people hiding in the ghetto and we are then shown a montage of scenes showing the fate of Jews who tried to hide.



We see soldiers in long coats holding stethoscopes to the ceiling in a room, listening for people hiding in secret compartments. He indicates a point where he thinks he has found someone.





Soldiers wait on the stairs, guns at the ready, listening for signs of life. We see a piano...





and a young man climbing out of it.



A woman removes a false front from a chest of drawers...



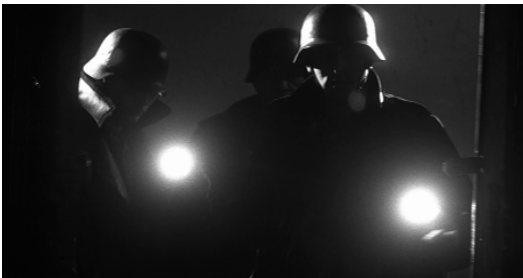
and we see a child hiding in the space behind it.



A boy emerges from a cupboard...



and a hidden trapdoor opens under a bed. We get the impression that people are emerging throughout the ghetto.



A door opens, revealing soldiers holding torches, and we feel like we are the ones hiding in the room.



They turn a bed on its side and we see a man strapped to the underside.



A large group are found behind a curtain.



They hold up their hands in surrender.



The man steps onto the keys of the piano...





and the  
soldiers  
waiting below  
spring into  
action.



The camera does not follow the soldiers, but we hear a woman screaming and then machine gun fire and the flashes of the guns projecting the soldiers' shadows on the wall. Leaving the scene to our imagination is more shocking than showing us what is happening. At the same time the contrapuntal sound of piano playing starts, and the upbeat music is jarring against what we are seeing.



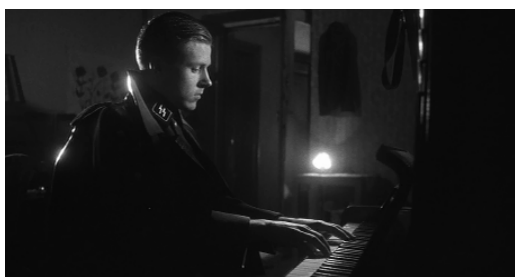
A hand held camera follows some more soldiers, the shaky camera making us feel as if we are being shoved out the way.





It then tilts up to follow them running up the stairs; there seems to be an overwhelming number of them.



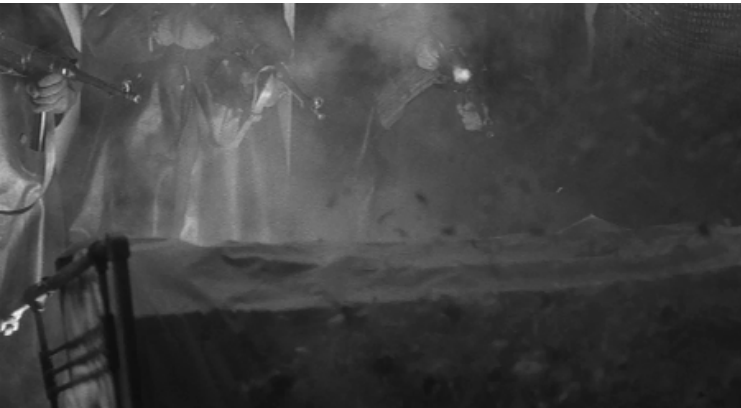


It is not until we see a soldier in a great coat, SS insignia clear on his collar, that we realise that it is him playing the piano, rather than non-diegetic music on the soundtrack, as his comrades roam from room to room shooting people. This demonstrates the contrast between the civilised and cultured nature of some of these soldiers and the brutality of their actions.





At the doorway to the room, two soldiers ask each other if it is Bach or Mozart being played. One of them insists that it is Mozart, but it is actually the Prelude to Bach's English Suite #2 in A Minor. This shows the ignorance of the German soldiers - Bach is a German composer, and it makes them seem uncultured by mistaking his music for Mozart, an Austrian composer. The fact that they would have such a discussion in the middle of the slaughter appals us.



We see a series of scenes of soldiers shooting - the camera focussing on the soldiers rather than their victims. We see three soldiers machine gunning the bed where we previously saw a man strapped, which seems to be overkill.



We then see them shooting where they think there might be people hiding, such as in ceilings or kitchen cabinets - there seems to be no escape.







An exterior shot shows soldiers standing round dead bodies jumbled together like a pile of rubbish, showing that the soldiers see them as worthless. Jewish police appear to be stripping them of valuables.





The camera pans across to a group of officers standing round a table, discussing what seems to be a map of the ghetto. Goeth is seated, presumably showing his superiority...





and rinses his face with water from a jug. Behind him, the search continues - punctuated by gunbursts lighting up the windows. Goeth complains "*I wish this fucking night were over.*" It is impossible to feel any sympathy for his weariness.





A high angle long shot, similar to Schindler's previous viewpoint, shows the ghetto in darkness, windows illuminated briefly by gunfire throughout the ghetto. The sound of the piano continues. According to Keneally, more than 4,000 people were caught and executed during this night.



As at the start of this scene, Schindler and Goeth are contrasted at the end of it. As we hear the echo of the final notes of piano music we see a pile of pots. The camera tilts up and we see Schindler standing in his factory office, staring silently down at the empty D.E.F. factory floor.





A closer low angle shot shows Schindler and his girlfriend, Ingrid, who is sitting down. They are still wearing their riding clothes and she is visibly upset by what she has seen.

Schindler is pensive and appears to be realising not only the implications of the liquidation for his profitable, exploitative business enterprise, but its implications for the future of the Jews themselves.

Nearly a year after the ghetto liquidation, and an hour later in the film, Goeth has been ordered to exhume the bodies of more than 10,000 Jews killed at Plaszow and during the Krakow Ghetto Massacre.

It is at this point that we see **the girl in the red coat** again.







She is just one more of the thousands who have been killed.





Schindler is clearly appalled when he sees her body.  
Her death symbolises the death of innocence.

**Points to Remember:**

When you are writing about this scene you should comment on **how Spielberg uses the image of the girl in red** . If you can, refer to some of the following things:

- **Cinematography** - the film is in monochrome but a colour insert is used here - why? The girl is out of focus when we see her at first, and only comes into focus when the colour is removed - why?
- **Composition of shots** - how the eye is drawn to the child, while elsewhere on screen we see brutal killings depicted.
- **Effect on the audience** - how we share Schindler's interest and concern for this girl, and how she seems magically protected from the dangers around her.
- **Symbolism** - what does the girl represent for Schindler? For us? How does the girl, and her death, reveal Schindler's motivations and development?

**Possible sources for the girl in the red coat:**

- 1) Thomas Keneally's novel 'Schindler's Ark' refers to three year old 'Red Genia', so called for the red coat which she always wore. Her guardian was her uncle, Dr Idek Schindel who worked in the ghetto hospital and she was a cousin of Danka Dresner. Her parents were hiding in the countryside but were planning on slipping back into what they thought was the safety of the ghetto.

Keneally describes Schindler, horse riding on the hilltop in June 1942, witnessing Genia being rounded up with others. Having watched people being executed in full view of this small child Schindler realised that *"They permitted witnesses, such witnesses as the red toddler, because they believed all witnesses would perish too."* (p143) Schindler left before he saw her walking away without being noticed from the soldiers guarding her group. She returned to the room she shared with her uncle and hid under the bed. However, she had a profound effect on Schindler and he later claimed, *"Beyond this day, no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system."*(p147)

However, evidence suggests that Schindler may never have actually witnessed this scene and that it was created by Keneally as an explanation of Schindler's motivations.

**Possible sources for the girl in the red coat:**

- 2) Although it was apparently unintentional, this character is very similar to Roma Ligocka , who was known in the Kraków Ghetto for her red coat. Ligocka, unlike her fictional counterpart, survived the Holocaust.

Scurrying around the streets in search of safety, Ligocka feared that her red coat would make her a target: "*We didn't have anything to eat or wear. It was a cold winter and my grandmother sewed the coat from an old skirt of my mother's,*" she explained.

The red woolen coat did make her stand out, but it was to be to her benefit. After her father was taken to a concentration camp, Ligocka and her mother were taken in by a Polish family.

Attracted by the brightness of her clothes, they dyed the little girl's hair blonde and pretended that she was their country cousin. As a result of their kindness she survived World War II.

After the film was released, she wrote and published her own story, *The Girl in the Red Coat: A Memoir* (2002, in translation).

**Possible sources for the girl in the red coat:**

- 3) The scene was allegedly constructed on the memories of Zelig Burkhut, survivor of Plaszow (and other work camps). When interviewed by Spielberg before the film was made, Burkhut told of a young girl wearing a pink coat, no older than four, who was shot by a Nazi officer right before his eyes. When being interviewed by *The Courier-Mail*, he said *"it is something that stays with you forever"*.

**Possible sources for the girl in the red coat:**

- 4) Another possible source is a true story told at the trial of Adolf Eichmann, "the architect of the Holocaust". Assistant Prosecutor (now Supreme Court Judge) Gavriel Bach tells this story from the trial. When asked if there was any one moment in the trial that affected him more than any other, this is the moment he describes.

Bach was questioning Dr. Martin Foldi, a survivor of Auschwitz, about the selection process at the train station in the shadows of the famous "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("work will set you free") sign at Auschwitz. Foldi described how he and a son went to the right while a daughter and his wife went to the left. His little daughter wore the red coat. When an SS officer sent the son to join the mother and daughter, Foldi describes his panic. How would the boy, only twelve, find them among the thousands of people there? But then he realised the red coat would be like a signpost for the boy to find his mother and sister.

He then ends his testimony with the chilling phrase, "I never saw them again."

While telling the story, thirty-five years after it happened, Judge Bach wells up with emotion. As Dr. Foldi retold the incident, Bach became frozen and unable to continue. All he could do was think about his own daughter for whom he had by chance just bought a red coat. He then adds that to this day he can be at the theatre or a restaurant and he will feel his heart beating faster when he sees a little girl in a red coat.



**Possible sources for the girl in the red coat:**

- 5) Spielberg himself has explained that he only followed the novel, and his interpretation was that:

*"America and Russia and England all knew about the Holocaust when it was happening, and yet we did nothing about it. We didn't assign any of our forces to stopping the march toward death, the inexorable march toward death. It was a large bloodstain, primary red color on everyone's radar, but no one did anything about it. And that's why I wanted to bring the color red in."*

