

The Righteous in Film

How to talk about the Righteous? The way in which the memory about rescuing Jews during the Holocaust is pictured in movies and video recordings.

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Age of participants: 16 – 19 years old (students of upper secondary schools)

Duration time of the workshop: 90 min + preparation

Size of the group: 20 people (optimal size)

After the workshop the student:

knows historical context and social situation

during the occupation of Poland

can participate in a discussion on documentary and feature films as instruments of historical memory that can shape people's attitudes

can perform a critical analysis of video materials pertaining to the subject matter of Righteous Among the Nations

can describe the role of “oral history”, its possibilities and dangers

Requirements for the person conducting the workshop:

possesses knowledge about World War II, the Holocaust and Righteous Among the Nations

is familiar with a chosen film (see: Attachment 1)

possesses knowledge about documentary and feature films on history and recordings of "oral history"

knows the text: James E. Young, *Holocaust Video and Cinemagraphic Testimony. Documenting the Witness in: Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, Indiana University Press, 1988

has the ability to moderate discussions and stimulate the participants to work independently over the subject matter

Requirements for the participants:

possess elementary knowledge

about World War II and the Holocaust

possess elementary knowledge about Righteous Among the Nations

have familiarized themselves with the film indicated by the organizer of the workshop and have completed the questionnaire (see: Attachment 2)

Materials:

printed out materials (attachementes)

slide projector and films accompanying the scenario

sheets of paper, pens, paper sheets for a flipchart (min. 2), markers, Scotch tape
or magnets

PREPARATION (duration time of the movie + 20 min for completing the questionnaire)

Choose one film from the list of feature movies (Attachment 1) and ask the participants to watch it. Prepare the questionnaire (Attachment 2) for each of the participants. They should complete the form before the workshop starts. The questions in the questionnaire regard the movie they have watched.

NOTE: You can also use any other feature film known to you that focuses on the issue of rescuing Jews during the Holocaust.

EXERCISE 1 - Critical analysis of feature film (15 min)

With the help of questions from the questionnaire, start a discussion at the group's forum concerning the film watched by the participants. In Attachment 3 you can find remarks and suggestions relating to the questions. The aim of the exercise is to sum up the film and perform critical analysis of its message.

EXERCISE 2 - Analysis of record of "oral history" as a form of documentary film (35 min)

Part 1

Inform the participants that they are going to watch the record of an interview with Piotr Stankiewicz, the Righteous Among the Nations. By means of a slide projector, display the first of the two films provided with the scenario (see: Piotr Stankiewicz version 1, duration time: 5:24).

Divide the students into 4 groups. Each group will have to answer one question (see: Attachment 4) and briefly present their conclusions at the group's forum.

NOTE: Notice that the problem presented in the film has undergone a double process of choice – made by the character himself and by the director. Pay attention also to the function of the distance of time, the way it influences the memory and emotions felt by the witness.

Part 2

After the presentation show the students the second film with the same character (see: Piotr Stankiewicz version 2, duration time: 7:05). Start a discussion, paying attention to the following issues:

- The role of the director (person asking the questions) and editing (choice of scenes) in building the image of Righteous Among the Nations.
- Historical memory (what does the history presented in both films look like? How deeply can one interfere in historical memory? Where is the border between interpretation and manipulation?)

EXERCISE 3 – Documentary film versus feature film. Debate. (20 min)

Choose 3 persons that will play the role of “Producers”. The rest of the group should split into two teams. Their task is to prepare themselves for a debate within 10 minutes. Each team receives suggestions and supplementary texts (see: Attachment 5). The conclusions should be written down on large sheets of paper and attached to the board/wall.

The organizer of the workshop moderates the debate during which the participants should complete their tasks (see: Attachment 5).

The “producers” observe the preparations of the participants, assess the group during the debate and, by means of voting, choose the winning team.

SUMMARY – Memory of rescuing Jews during World War II (15 min)

Start a discussion, paying attention to the following problems:

- What are the goals of a feature film and a documentary film? Can they be convergent?
- Can a feature film be a source of historical knowledge? Is a documentary film (in particular the account given by the witness – the record of "oral history") a credential source of historical events?
- Should emotions constitute part of this account?
- What is historical memory? How is it shaped? Who should have an influence on it?
- Can producers of documentary and feature films be held responsible for a historical account arising from their movies? If yes, are they equally responsible for it?
- What will happen with the memory of rescuing Jews during the Holocaust when all the witnesses pass away?