

FEATURE FILM SCREENPLAY COVERAGE

TITLE	Schindler's List
LOGLINE	As Nazism rises in Poland during WWII, a German businessman risks his status, wealth, and life to protect the Jewish people from the Third Reich.

SUBMITTED TO	Jeffrey Hirschberg	AUTHOR	Steven Zaillian
SUBMITTED BY	Samantha Tocke	COVERAGE DATE	3/19/25
READER	Samantha Tocke	DRAFT DONE	12/15/1993
LENGTH	164 pages	TIME PERIOD	World War II
LOCATION	German-occupied Kraków, Poland	BUDGET	Mid budget
GENRE	Drama/Historical Drama	SIMILAR PROJECTS	The Zone of Interest, Life is Beautiful, Sophie's Choice, The Pianist
ATTACHMENTS	N/A		

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PREMISE	X			
PLOT	X			
PRODUCTION VALUE	X			
CHARACTERS	X			
DIALOGUE	X			
SETTING	X			
STRUCTURE	X			

CASTING POTENTIAL		X		
------------------------------	--	---	--	--

	RECOMMEND	CONSIDER	PASS
SCRIPT	X		
WRITER	X		

SUMMARY: Act I begins with POLISH JEWS being ushered into overcrowded, impoverished ghettos under the order of the NAZIS who have taken and occupied Germany, but savvy and wealthy businessman OSKAR SCHINDLER lives comfortably, merrymaking with his Nazi party peers. Schindler is able to bribe SS OFFICIALS and WEHRMACHT to own and operate an enamelware factory. While the Jewish people live in fear for their safety and are continually dehumanized more and more each day, Schindler manages to exploit their discomfort and anxieties for free labor in his factories, and Schindler continues to live cozily in German-occupied Poland. Schindler employs ITZHAK STERN to help run production and manage the factory's finances. The JEWISH WORKERS employed by Schindler are able to be seen as essential workers for the war effort thanks to Stern, avoiding a brutal fate at the concentration camps.

AMON GOETH, the SS-Untersturmführer, has the ghettos dispatched and moves the Jews there to the Plaszów concentration camp. Two thousand Jews are moved to the camp, and two thousand more are killed by the SS officers in the ghettos. This marks the narrative's big event as Schindler witnesses the massacre firsthand, slowly reshaping his perspective on the war. He watches a GIRL IN RED wander the streets, hiding from the Nazis. Later, he sees her red shoes tossed into a pile of shoes that belonged to, now murdered, Jews. Goeth finds pleasure in the Jew's torture, shooting them from his balcony in the camps and assaulting his Jewish maid. Despite his cruelty, Schindler preserves his friendship with Goeth to maintain his appearance and security within the Nazi party.

The second act begins with Goeth planning to relocate the remaining Plaszów Jews to Auschwitz due to the Germans' steady decline in the war. This triggers the midpoint with Schindler bribing Goeth to move his workers to labor camps in Brünnlitz. Schindler's business goals transition from a capitalist hunger to humanitarian softness, saving the Jewish people who work for him. Quickly, Schindler and Stern create a list of 1,100 Jews to be saved from their fates at Auschwitz. The workers are loaded onto the train to Brünnlitz, but the women are placed on the train to Auschwitz-Birkenau, causing Schindler to bribe the commandant at Auschwitz, RUDOLF HÖSS, to release them. Schindler relocates his workers to a factory where they are protected from the SS officials; however, due to Schindler's strategies to keep the Jews safe, the factory is not able to make any usable materials for the war effort. Luckily, the Germans surrender just as Schindler runs out of money at the third act's crisis/climax.

Despite Schindler's humane actions, he must flee Poland and the invading Red Army to avoid imprisonment. The third act's crisis continues to build into its showdown when the SS officials are ordered to kill the remaining Jews. Before he can flee west to potential American sanctuary, Schindler convinces the SS officials not to kill his workers. The workers present Schindler with a token of their gratitude and appreciation for his actions, a ring inscribed with, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world." Despite his altruistic actions, Schindler finds himself with deep regret, wanting to have saved more individuals. Schindler flees, and the next morning, the workers are ordered to leave by SOVIET OFFICERS, telling them they are unwanted here. The Jews escape to the countryside.

Years later as Schindler meets with a former worker, PFEFFERBERG, it is revealed Goeth was hanged for his crimes against humanity. In 1958, Schindler is deemed righteous and is honored with a tree in the Avenue of Righteousness, where it still grows to this day.

COMMENTS: The highlight and standout of *Schindler's List* is the arch and development of the main protagonist, Schindler. From starting out as unlikable and somewhat heartless, devoid of compassion, Schindler's mercy and charity ambitions overtake his life as he risks his status, job, and life for his workers. Schindler goes from selfish to selfless. At the beginning of the screenplay, Schindler is a very shallow and vain person, dependent on relationships and buying the affection of the Nazis through lavish and expensive parties, but as the narrative progresses, Schindler's sympathy outweighs his capitalistic gains, disguising his factory as a safe haven for his workers, protected by his power. The motivation for this change can be placed at the massacre he witnessed after the death of the girl in red, seeing her shoes discarded like trash, symbolizing the blood spill of innocent lives, but it could be based on guilt as well. Towards the end of the third act, Schindler is overcome by guilt with how he could have saved more lives, not recognizing the thousands he already had. This guilt could also be rooted in Schindler initially supporting and funding the Nazis and their actions. The juxtaposition of his character from the beginning to the end is what makes Schindler such a complex, dynamic, and gravitational individual.

The structure of the screenplay makes reading a breeze. Page after page, Zaillian knows how to keep his reader hooked. Act I does run a tad longer than the standard screenplay; however, one could argue this is necessary to illustrate the prolonged suffering the Jewish people endured under the order of the Nazi party without the reliance on heavy or sloppy exposition. The midpoint is written exceptionally as it is Schindler's inner fight and struggle that arches his character into the humanitarian seen at the end of the script. Without intention, Schindler has become the sanctuary the Jews hoped for as displayed between him and the young woman, begging him to save her elderly parents from the camps. The structure is also supported by the fantastic dialogue, which contains no fat. Words are only necessary to advance the screenplay. The brevity of the action line is enough to convey the message, and Zaillian understands the importance of silence.

With being such a heavy and emotional story, *Schindler's List* is able to toggle with many themes, all equally important to the thematic intentions of the narrative. One of these most prevalent themes is the triumph of the human spirit, which can apply to the majority of the script's characters. Throughout the screenplay, the Jewish people's faith is tested time and time again, but they manage, in the barbaric circumstances they are thrust into, to never

lose the importance of their faith, continuing to uphold Jewish traditions and ceremonies. A simple sign that these people will not go quietly. Another theme of *Schindler's List* is the idea of the difference a person in a position of authority can do with their power. Power can be used for benevolent intentions, as shown through Schindler's arch, or it can corrupt a person and rot their soul, like Goeth. Despite the power imbalance between Schindler and his workers, he treats them like the humans they are, unlike his fellow Nazis that dehumanize them. There is respect reciprocated on both ends of the relationship. Schindler risked his life in order to save the lives of others.

Castability of these roles should not be the priority if this script was to be produced. The cast of characters are already so perfectly developed and the story is gorgeously structured that it would not take star-studded names to sell an audience to see this script on the big screen. As long as the screenplay is put in the hands of an intelligent, heartfelt, and thought provoking director, the story will sell itself.

PASS, CONSIDER, or RECOMMEND

Recommend.