Research Paper Assignment

There are four sections to this paper along with a Works Cited page. Each section should be written in paragraph form. Directions for each can be found below.

1) Evaluation of at least two events in the text for verisimilitude. Using at least two sources, research some aspect of your text to see if it really happened as described or dramatized.
2) Internet literature review: analyze two on-line sources about the Holocaust.
3) Explanation of most important scene to you.
4) Discussion of one scene which reveals a character’s relationship to authority within his or her family or his or her faith and how this helps them make decisions.
5) Works Cited page using either MLA or APA.

Directions

1. Evaluation of at least two events

   A) Describe each event
   B) Provide at least two Internet sources of information about an element of the event (character, time, place). Explain what your research has revealed
   C) If the event is from an autobiographical text, explain how realistically it is represented. Is there evidence that this event really happened or could have happened? Did similar events happen to other people? If you feel the event is not represented well, explain why you think the writer included the event in the text. Do you think the inclusion of this event has a negative or positive effect on the viewers’ understanding of the Holocaust? Provide specific details from your research to support your conclusion.
   D) Cite your sources using the MLA or APA format.

Example of “C” scene evaluation

Some of the events in the movie Amen. appear to be invented in order to represent more complex situations. For instance, in the film a Jewish man shoots himself in front of the League of Nations sometime before the war. I can find no evidence that this actually happened. This is probably included to show how the world ignored the violence against Jews quickly. The problem is that the film claims to be based in reality, and this is very dramatic event is not real. This might lead naive viewers to think that other events, like the Holocaust itself, were not real.

Dwork, Deborah, ed. Voices and Views, New York: Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, 2002 (index terms: League of Nations. I also glanced through the pages on Europe before the war)
Reason for “C”: The example does not provide evidence of research about ways that the European Jewish community did try to alert the world of the persecution of Jews in Germany.

Example of an “A” scene evaluation from Ruth: Another event which I could not verify, but is the trip to Rome by the young Italian priest and Gerstein to convince the Pope that Jews were being exterminated. The article on Gerstein on the USHMM Encyclopedia says that Gerstein did speak to protestant church leaders and the papal nuncio in Berlin, Father Cesare Orgsenigo, but there is no mention of a trip to Rome.

However, as the Jesuit priest in the movie’s own father points out, the Pope did not need Gerstein to provide information about the extermination of the Jews. What the movie fails to point out is anyone who wanted to know about the fate of the Jews, including the Pope’s advisors, could have read about it in The New York Times. Readers of the New York Times knew about the mass extermination of Jews from 1941 on (Wyman 26). As Eli Wiesel says in his preface to Wyman’s book, when his family reached Auschwitz in May 1944, they did not know their fate, but the leaders of the free world did, including the pope (xiii).

This fiction is not helpful because it implies that Christians all over the world would have acted if only the Pope had alerted them to the reality of the Holocaust. While Pope Pius XII did fail to act, his failure is not an excuse for the rest of the world’s Christians. In fact, according to Wyman, the debate about whether or not to help Jews was being conducted openly in the US Christian press. Wyman quotes the Protestant weekly The Christian Century, which stated that the rather than “expend in vain outcry one unit of emotional energy” against the “Polish horror” it would be better to put that energy into winning the war. In this argument is made by the American Ambassador to the Vatican, but in fact it was being made openly by American Christians, as well. The movie reduces the controversy over the debate about why Christians did not act to save Jews to the failure of one mission made by two men to notify their respective denominations.


2. Direction for Internet Literature Review

   a) Provide the title and URL of the source
   b) Explain how the site relates to your topic
   c) Evaluate the credibility of the source by explaining how the site is funded and what people or institutions support the site. Most sites have an “About Us” or “Links” tab and/or a “Mission Statement” tab which will provide this information
   d) Summarize what you learned from the site or from evaluating it as a source

Example from Ruth:
Dibert, A. Review of *The 'Confessions' of Kurt Gerstein* by Roques Henri. *Institute for Historical Review*

http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v10/v10p223_Dibert.html

This site was one of the results from a search using “Kurt Gerstein.” The Institute for Historical Review claims to be “the leading periodical of its kind,” a statement scholarly journals do not have to make about themselves. In fact, the organization, centered in Contra Costa, CA, is funded privately and is not linked to any public institutions of higher learning. http://www.ihr.org/main/about.shtml

Dibert says that Roques uses Gerstein’s testimony to prove that the Holocaust was a hoax. Since Gerstein’s testimony is a very small part of the documentation about the Holocaust, the fact that the site would publish a positive review about such a ridiculous book casts serious doubt on the Institute’s credibility.

“Kurt Gerstein” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum


The Museum was begun by an act of the US Congress in 1980 and is supported by donations, grants and public funds. The purpose is to collect and disseminate information about the Holocaust. The academic committee has professors from NYU, Hebrew University, Boston University and many others.

The article on Gerstein says that he was conflicted throughout his life about his duty to his country and to his God. He joined the Nazi party in 1933, was thrown out for questioning it, was actually sent to prison for a time, but then rejoined the party in 1939 with the help of his father, a very influential Nazi. The article says it is unclear if he joined the SS before or after his sister-in-law was murdered in a euthanasia program. While it doesn’t dismiss his claims to be a spy in the midst of the SS, it doesn’t affirm them either.

3. Most Important Scene or Event in Text

Choose what seen you think will have the most impact on viewers. If you object to other parts of the text, do you think this scene salvages the text? If you think the text is good overall, why is this scene so powerful? Provide the necessary context for the scene, giving citations for the dates and locations of events in your discussion of the scene’s validity or lack thereof.

4. Discussion of one scene which reveals a character’s relationship to authority.

In class, we discuss how one’s relationship to the laws and rules of a society or situation can be in conflict with one’s understanding of right and wrong. Sometimes the understanding of right and wrong comes from a family member, sometimes from our religion. What authority does your character use when making decisions about how to act? How does he or she know that this is the right thing to do?
Example from Carrissa:

During his stay in Auschwitz, Vladek appeals to the authority of the Nazis in order to stay alive, but he puts even more effort into maintaining love, especially for his wife, Anja. He is willing to risk his life to maintain his love for her, so this love is a higher authority than the Nazis’ rules. While he is in Auschwitz I, she is in Auschwitz II Birkenau (Speigelman 51). Even though there is a great distance between them, Vladek finds ways to see her and keep in contact with her. For example, while Vladek worked in the tin shop in the summer of 1944, he was able to work on the roofs of some of the women’s barracks, which enabled him to see her. He also tried very hard to keep in contact with her through letters, which Mancie, the leader of Anja’s group, would in turn give to Anja (Spiegelman 52). He also managed to give Anja food packages, which in one instance cost him a brutal beating from an S.S. officer (Spiegelman 57). Even though he needed his ration of food in order to be healthy enough to pass selections, he still risked his life to get food to Anja in order to keep her nourished and to appear healthier than she really was. Towards the end of the fall in 1944, Vladek basically starves himself in order to get enough food to be able to use for bribes and exchanges. Using this precious commodity of bread, he is able to arrange for Anja to be moved from Birkenau to some women’s barracks in Auschwitz I. Remembering this, Vladek says, “And with them [the women] was Anja. This I arranged. It was the only time I was happy in Auschwitz”(Spiegelman 64). It is obvious that Vladek had his own survival in mind; if he did not, he would not have tried so hard to survive and would have most likely become a musselman and be sent to the gas chambers. Despite Vladek’s strong sense of self-preservation, there were times when this instinct took second place to the preservation of his wife. He was willing to risk his life in order to keep her alive so she could survive through the horrific nightmare that they found themselves unable to escape.