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Guido Orefice was a young man living in Italy, whose dream was to open a bookstore. He begins his journey as a waiter, when he meets a teacher by the name of Dora. He instantly falls for her, and they have a child named Giosue. The movie skips ahead to a much darker time towards the end of the Holocaust in World War II. Taken into a Nazi Labor camp, Guido tries to shield his son from the horrors of the camp by creating a game, whereby the first to get 1,000 points wins the ultimate award, a tank.
Historical Context

- Takes place in Tuscany, Italy in 1939
  - Beginning of WWII
- Benito Mussolini: Fascist dictator of Italy
- As fascism grew, anti-semitism did as well
  - Nazi Eugenics influenced Italian treatment of Jewish people
  - Kristallnacht in Germany
  - Jewish families were relocated in Italy to labor camps in German occupied territories
- Concentration camps (Auschwitz, Treblinka)
- Zyklon-B gas utilized to commit genocide
What is the angle that the movie looks at human rights? What is the context?

Many scenes in the movie can be related to human rights:

- Prison vs Quarantine
- Shower time
- Brainwash-Adolf Hitler’s education

Angle:

- The struggles of survival faced in the concentration camp comes from the perspective of a Jewish-Italian man

Context:

- Holocaust/World War II
- Nazi concentration camps
Think critically about the language of film and the messages with regard to human rights.

The language of film in *Life is Beautiful*:
- First segment of the film: a slice of life
- Creates an attachment to the characters
- A bond between the protagonist and the audience
- The consequences/implications begin to affect the viewer in a more personal manner

The message:
- Personal connections change our views on human rights violations
- Pathos vs. Ethos
- The difference between subjective and objective decisions; not mutually exclusive
- Stories can’t be reduced to statistics
What is the message of this movie? Do you agree?

- Preservation of Innocence
  - Healthy, mature exposure to major issues in children
  - Developmental stage, Mental Health
- Hope as a necessity in times of cruelty
  - Insight into beauty, love, and life
- These messages can be seen elsewhere
  - Rwandan Genocide, Human Trafficking, Syrian War
Did you learn anything from this movie?

- Life is what you make it seem
  - Perception is powerful
    - Theme = life is beautiful because you have the power to make it seem that way
    - Ex) Guido translating the Nazi instructions, making up fake scenarios like the train having no seats, and the point system for the “game.”
- Even in the most horrific situations, love will always fuel resilience
  - Guido loved his son so much that he stuck with his positive/comedic mindset to shield him
    - Ex) first half compared to last half of film
  - Survival instinct → Guido was able to uniquely disguise the reality of the Holocaust
Describe two images or scenes from the film that stand out in your mind.

- **Work in the Factory (Anvils)**
  - Disregard for human life/dehumanization
  - Lack of dignity and rights
  - Subjection to torture and servitude
  - Irony: The men are carrying metal that will be used to make weapons

- **Hiding of Giosue Orefice**
  - Preservation of innocence
  - Ultimate sacrifice for life
  - Ingenuity promotes “survival of the fittest”
  - Significance of the “fight or flight” reaction in times of critical conflict
Symbolism

- **Tank**
  - Symbolic of hope, new beginnings, and unity

- **Riddles**
  - Symbolic of the Nazi’s twisted way of thinking

- **Humor**
  - Symbolic of paternal devotion

- **Schopenhauer Method**
  - Symbolic of will and determination