



NIGHT & FOG

Teacher's Guide

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Product Code: VY100V-DV

NIGHT AND FOG

(Nuit et Brouillard)

Night and Fog -- 1955, France. Documentary directed by Alain Resnais. Award winning short film using actual black and white footage shot inside Hitler's concentration camps, contrasting sharply with beautiful contemporary color scenes of the death camps ten years after the carnage ended. A surreal journey of horror, written by a novelist who survived his own residence in one of the prisons of the Third Reich. A brilliant and disturbing document. In French with English subtitles. 32 minutes.

The title of this film (presented here on videotape) is taken from the Night and Fog Decree (*Nacht und Nebel Erlass*) issued on December 7, 1941 by Hitler, providing for the seizure of "persons endangering Germany's security." These individuals were not to be executed immediately but were to vanish without a trace into the "night and fog" (Germany's concentration and death camp system).

PREPARATION AND PREVIEW ACTIVITIES

Due to the nature of this film's subject and its graphic depiction of these events, the teacher needs to exercise critical judgment and sensitivity before, during, and after viewing.

Previewing by the teacher is essential, as it serves as a key for guiding the pupils' learning activities. Throughout this film the student will be presented with some of the most graphic depictions of horror ever captured on film. Be forthright in your introductory comments regarding Night and Fog. **STUDENTS MUST BE PREWARNED REGARDING THE NATURE OF TOPICS COVERED IN THIS FILM.**

The following are specific recommendations:

1. Considering the nature of the film *Night and Fog*, viewing for elementary grades is not recommended. High school/college viewing would be most appropriate.
2. Consider showing the entire film at one sitting.
 - a. If two class periods are available, do not hesitate to stop the film at various points to allow discussion, reflection, opinion, etc.
 - b. Always leave time to "debrief" the students at the end of the film. Never allow students to leave class immediately at the end of the film without appropriate follow-up discussions and lessons !
3. When do you show the film *Night and Fog*?
 - a. It should only be used after the students have done reading, research, and discussions on the topic.
 - b. It should **NOT** be "sprung" on the students. You should carefully prepare the students for its powerful content.

When getting the class ready for *Night and Fog*, the teacher should create a bridge between previous class experiences and the content of this film, pointing out specific things for which to look and questions for which answers will have to be sought.

Here are some specific suggestions:

1. Review the glossary on the following pages with the students, and any other words you feel are necessary for them to know. If appropriate, reproduce the glossary so that each student can refer to the terms.
2. Students may have difficulty reading the subtitles because they flash on the screen rapidly. A complete text is provided for your reference.
 - a. Suggest that students concentrate more on visual images if they cannot make out the subtitles, or b. Have someone familiar with the film (the teacher perhaps) read the script aloud at the appropriate time. (Turn down the French audio.)
 - c. You may want to reproduce the text here provided for student reference. Give them copies of the text AFTER they have viewed the film, for maximum impact.
 - d. You may want to use the text to draw students' attention to specific incidents and scenes before viewing.
3. Some scenes are quite graphic, and students **MUST** be forewarned.
 - a. Let them know that they can put their heads down on the desk, close their eyes, or even step out of the room if necessary.
 - b. Students should not be made to feel "guilty" for the actions they take -- so long as they do not hinder other students from viewing the film. There is nothing wrong with sensitivity, and this is certainly sensitive material.
 - c. Even students who are not able to view the film fully can be included in discussions following the film. If asked tactfully, they may be able (and may want) to share their feelings.
4. **ALWAYS** allow time for follow-up activities! Use class discussions for recall and extension, presentation of additional examples for clarification, assignment of writing exercises, or outside follow-up reading. Some post-viewing suggestions are listed after the glossary and text.

GLOSSARY OF SPECIAL TERMS

The following terms are mentioned in the film. Most need to be studied prior to the showing of the film. For most of the terms definitions have been supplied.

Arbeit Macht Frei (Labor liberates - Work makes one free) -. Adage emblazoned on the camp gates of various concentration camps and killing centers (e.g. Auschwitz). The purpose was to indicate to both the public and inmates that the camps were dedicated to the useful goal of labor in the service of the Third Reich. One of the numerous euphemisms employed for the deceiving of the population sent to the camps.

Concentration Camps - Institutions used in the Third Reich and in occupied Europe for imprisoning and murdering opponents of the Nazi regime. Many names-of camps are mentioned in *Night and Fog* - e.g. Oranienburg, Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück, Dachau, etc. Some camps (e.g. Auschwitz) were set up for the sole purpose of exterminating whole populations (i.e. "death camps").

Geographic Place names - Points in Europe from which victims were transported to the concentration and death camps. Warsaw and Lodz, Poland; Prague, Czechoslovakia; Athens, Greece; Zagreb, Yugoslavia; 'Odessa, U.S.S.R.; Rome, Italy; Compiègne, France; etc.

Dachau - "Model Camp" - First concentration camp established by the Nazis. Located on the outskirts of Munich.

SS - Schutzstaffel (Elite Guard) - Originally the black shirted personal guard of Hitler but later transformed by Himmler into a mass army on which was to rest the ultimate exercise of Nazi power. Served as a political police and was later assigned the duty of administering concentration camps and extermination centers.

-Zyklon B - Poison gas used in the gas chambers of the extermination camps. Hydrocyanic or prussic acid.

Triangles - Patches worn by the prisoners in the camps. Various colors indicated types of prisoners:

Red = political prisoner

Green = criminal

Pink = homosexual

Yellow = Jewish - two triangles crossed would become Star of David

Kapo - group (section) leader in concentration camp. Usually political or criminal prisoner. Many were as brutal as the SS guards.

Mauthausen Quarry - Located near Linz, Austria. Concentration camp established after the Anschluss (union) between Germany and Austria in 1938.

Goethe's Oak Tree at Buchenwald Concentration Camp - Buchenwald was located near the city of Weimar, the shrine of German democracy (1919-1933) and German culture. Weimar is associated with the names of Goethe (author of Faust) and Schiller (poet and novelist).

Two terms that are not used in this 1955 film, but are vital to the study of the Holocaust are:

Genocide - Use of a deliberate, systematic policy designed to eliminate an entire racial, political, or cultural group or a nation or a people. The word was formed from the Greek geno8 (race, kind), and -cide (killing). The word was first applied to the attempted extermination of all of Europe's Jews by the Nazis.

Holocaust - The term used to describe Hitler's attempt to exterminate all European Jews. In its Greek origin the word means "to be consumed by fire." From 1933 to 1945 a total of eleven million men, women, and children died who were not war casualties in the usual sense. Six million of them were victims of planned genocide. One third of all the Jews in the world were

murdered by gassing and burning in death camps, by starvation and disease in isolated ghettos, and by mass shootings.

POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION POINTS

1. *Night and Fog* is a personal account of the horror under the Nazis. It was produced only ten years after the *Götterdämmerung* (collapse) of Nazi Germany. It is thus restrictive in scope. What points are emphasized in this film production? If your class has done extensive reading on the Holocaust, what points were omitted from this film production?

Some points that might be considered:

- a. Racial policies of the National Socialist movement, especially those outlined by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*.
 - b. The role of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Discussion needed on Hitler's "final solution" to the "Jewish problem."
 - c. The concept of genocide. The program of genocide was put into action by the Nazis with the invasion of Russia in June, 1941. You might need to discuss the role of the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads), who shot millions of victims. This method was considered too "inefficient" and thus the death camps and the gas chambers and crematoria were established.
 - d. The establishment of the ghettos in Eastern Europe for the Jews—October/November 1939 to June 1941. These ghettos (concentration of Jews in a few geographic areas) facilitated the shipping of the Jews to the death camps.
 - e. Resistance movements against the Nazi plans of mass murder:
 - within the ghettos - Warsaw
 - within the death camps - Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz
 - within the partisan and resistance movements in occupied Europe
2. The goal of the Nazis was to dehumanize their victims. Discuss this issue with your students. The concept of name vs. number. When the students view the film, have them concentrate on individuals within the crowd. An especially poignant individual image is that of a woman's face peering out of one of the cattle cars. Students might speculate on what was going through her mind at this time.
 3. Have the students be aware of the sharp contrasts made in this film - especially the juxtaposition. of contemporary tranquil scenes currently evident at most concentration camps and the films of the actual horror of the camps.
 - a. Alain Resnais relates that the Nazis hid the crematoria behind trees (like a picture postcard). Yet modern-day tourists have their pictures taken in these areas. What does this say about contemporary people? Have most of us already forgotten what happened in these places?
 - b. Notice the contrasts between the SS, the *Kapos*, and the prisoners.
 - c. A most telling contrast is made by showing pictures of the home life of the commandant with his wife and children.
 - d. Use of deception by the Nazis -- gas chambers disguised as bath houses, use of an orchestra in the camp, etc.
 4. In the scenes showing the victims being led to the cattle cars, most of the pictures were of Western Europeans - French, Dutch, etc. The Germans were even more brutal when they shipped Eastern Europeans to their deaths. How can we account for this different treatment?

5. You might wish to reprint the text of the film. Consider having the students read the text after the showing of the film. The author poses many questions in the text. Those can be points of discussion with the entire class.
6. Visuals always give a vivid picture of camp life. Which pictures made the greatest impression upon your students? (those depicting lack of food, clothing, health and toilet facilities?)
7. Most of the pictures shown were taken by the Nazis - except the final scenes which were taken in the liberated camps by the Allies. Why would the Nazis wish to document such horrors?
8. All doctors take the Hippocratic Oath, embodying a code of medical ethics. What can one say about the doctors who conducted experiments for the Nazis?
9. The largest industrial corporations in Germany used slave labor during the war to make larger profits. Does the author of this film have a point to make regarding this use of prisoners as slave labor?
10. Notice the use of certain words in the English translation:
 - a. "Deportees" is used instead of "civilians," "prisoners of war," etc.
 - b. "Incinerator" is used instead of the more accepted word, "crematorium."
 - c. Can you find any others?
 - d. Notice that the very object of the Nazi's annihilation program, the Jews, are never mentioned in this film. Why?
11. The author has a dreaded fear of the future. What is this fear? Why does he view the camp scene like "another planet"?
12. Neo-Nazi groups are stating that the Holocaust is a myth, and that the film just shown is a "Hollywood fabrication and fake." Teachers need to deal with this vital issue.
13. One error of fact within the film: There is no evidence that the Nazis made soap from the remains of the victims. Recent historical research has shown this to be a myth. Groups such as the [Institute for Historical Review](#) have used this one point to contend that the entire Holocaust is a myth.
14. The author uses the figure "9,000,000 dead haunt this landscape." The correct figure should be 11,000,000. Six million Jews and five million non-Jews. In the words of Elie Wiesel, "It defies language, it defies memory, it defies categories. Yet one can remember and one must." Have students react to this quotation.
15. What about the fate of the five million non-Jewish victims (derelicts, unemployables, the crippled, homosexuals, antisocials, criminals, political prisoners, Gypsies)? Not much is said about them. You may wish to refer, or have students refer, to the book *The Other Holocaust* by Bohdan Wytwycky for information on this often-neglected aspect of the Holocaust.

TEXT OF "NIGHT AND FOG"

A peaceful landscape.
An ordinary field with crows flying over it.
An ordinary road...an ordinary village...
Holiday makers...a steeple and a fairground.
This is the way to a concentration camp.

Struthof, Oranienburg, Auschwitz, Belsen, Ravensbrück, Dachau were names like any others on the map and guide books.
The blood has dried...the tongue is silent, only the camera
goes round. Weeds have grown where the prisoners used to walk... The wires are no longer live...
No footsteps are heard except our own.

1933
The machine gets underway.
The nation must sing in unison.
No wrong note.
No quarrels...work.

The concentration camp is built like a grand hotel.
You need contractors, estimates, and competitive bids.
And no doubt friends in high places.
Any style will do.
The Swiss style.
The garage style.
A Japanese model.
No style at all.
The leisurely architects planned the gates,
Which no one will enter more than once.

Meanwhile Berger, Stern come from Amsterdam. Schmulski from Cracow.
People go on living their everyday lives, ignorant that there is a place for them, 600 miles from home.
The day comes when their blocks are rounded up. All they have to do is arrive. Rounded up in Warsaw.
Deported from Lodz, Prague, Brussels, Athens, from Zagreb,
Odessa or Rome. Interned at Pithivieres. Arrested...

Members of the resistance at Compiègne...
All those caught in the act, wrongly arrested, simply unlucky make their way towards the camps.
Anonymous trains, their doors locked well... 100 deportees to every waggon.
Neither night nor day, neither hunger nor thirst, asphyxia or madness...

Sometimes a message flutters down and is picked up
Death makes his first pick...
Chooses again in the Night and Fog.

Today on the same track the sun shines.
Go slowly along it, looking for...what?
Traces of the bodies that fell to the ground,
or the footmarks of those first arrivals.
While the dogs barked and the search lights wheeled,
as the incinerator flamed in the lurid decor so dear to the Nazis.

First sight of the camp - another planet.
Nakedness.
and the individual is surrendered to the camp.
Shaved...
Tattooed...
Numbered...
Caught up in the hierarchy of which he understands nothing.
Dressed in his blue striped uniform.
Classed sometimes as "*Nacht und NeDel*" (*Night and Fog*).
The deportee with his red triangle first meets the green triangles. Common criminals are made masters among the underlings.
Above them is the *Kapo*, again a common criminal as often as not. Still higher is the SS, the untouchable addressed at a distance. Highest of all is the Commandant.
He pretends to know nothing about the camp...who doesn't.
Besides now discover what remains of these camps
When it was despised by those there,
and deluded those that suffered there.

Those wooden blocks...
These beds where three people slept...
These burrows where people hid...
Where they furtively eat and sleep.
Itself was a danger.
No description can show the endless, uninterrupted fear.
We should need the very mattress, the blanket that was fought over... The denunciations and oaths, the orders repeated in several tongues, the sudden checks by the SS.

Only the husk and shade remain of this brick dormitory.
Here is a setting - buildings that might be stables, garages, workshops, A piece of land that has become a wasteland. An autumn sky indifferent to everything...
Evokes a night, shrill with cries, busy with fleas. Night of chattering teeth...to sleep quickly.
Wakening at dawn, people falling down, rolling over one another. Muster on the parade grounds.
The night's dead - throw them out.

A band plays while they leave for the quarries or the factories. Work in snow that is soon frozen mud.
Work in the August sun, thirst and dysentery. 3,000 Spaniards died building this road that leads to the Mauthausen Quarry. Work in the underground factories.
Month after month they dig deep down, hide themselves. They all have women's names - Dora ~ Laura.
But these workmen who weigh five stone (70 pounds) are unreliable.
The SS watches them...
Supervises, musters, inspects and frisks them before they return to camp.
The *Kapo* only has to count the day's victims.

The deportees return to the obsession of life and dreams - Food.
Soup spoons are worth their weight in gold.
Two or three cigarettes are bartered for a plate of soup.
Many are too weak to defend their portions.
They wait for the mud and the snow.
To lie down anywhere and die one's own death.

The latrines and their approaches.
Skeletons with baby flesh came here seven or eight times a night. The soup saw to that.
Woe to him who met a *Kapo* rolling drunkenly home in the dark. They watched one another in fear,
On the lookout for the familiar symptoms...passed blood was the sign of death.
The black market...clandestine buying, clandestine killing... You called on your friends, exchanged rumors
and news. Organized resistance groups...
Gradually society developed its form...the image of terror. Lust mad was the SS. "Cleanliness was Health"
"Work is Freedom" "To each his due"
"A Louse means death"
What about a stormtrooper?

Each camp had its surprises. A symphony orchestra... A zoo...
Hothouses where Himmler cultivates rare blooms.
Goethe's Oak at Buchenwald...the camp was built around it. The orphanage...short-lived but constantly
restarted. An invalid bay...
Then the real world...the world of the past. Seems far, yet not so far?
For the deportees it was an image.
You belonged only to this self-contained universe.
Hemmed in by observation posts where the behavior of the camp was watched.
Soldiers spied on the deportees, killing them on occasion, having nothing better to do.

Everything is a pretext. Humiliation...
The roll call lasts two hours.
A badly made bed meant 20 strokes with a cane. Pass unnoticed...make no sign to the gods.
They have their gallows, their sacrilege grounds.
This yard in Block XI has been especially arranged for executions. Notice the walls protected against
ricocheting bullets. This is a Hochheim, where coaches brought passengers, never
to be seen again. Black transports which arrive at night, which we shall never
know anything about.

When the body is worn out, fatigued, the mind works on. They made spoons, which they carefully hide.
Monsters... Boxes...
They manage to write and made notes. Train the memory with dreams. They can think of God.
They even dispute with the common criminals their right to control camp life. They look after friends
worse off than themselves. They share their food with friends.
It is a great act of courage to take the dying to the hospital. Approach this door...can you hope for a real
bed? And there was the risk of death by syringe. The medicines were make-believe
The same ointment is used on every sore. Sometimes the starving eat their dressings.
In the long run all the deportees conformed...but died with
their eyes open.

There was a surgical block.
It almost looked like a nursing home.
An SS doctor...
A disquieting nurse?
What is behind this set-up and scene?
Useless apparatus, amputations, experimental mutilations.
The SS surgeons have to get their hands on it.
The big chemical factories sent samples of their toxic products...
Where they buy a batch of deportees to practice on.
A few of these guinea pigs survived...
Castrated...
Burned with phosphorus...
The flesh of some will be marked for life --despite their return.

The administration photographed both the men and the women as soon as they arrived. Names are also noted. Names of 22 nations.
Filling hundreds of registers...thousands of indexes. The dead have red strokes through their names.
Deportees keep these mad, always inaccurate books, Watched by the SS and privileged KGpos.

These are the bosses of the camps.
The *Kapo* has his own room where he can hoard supplies, and receive his favorites in the evening. The Commandant's villa is near the camp. His wife and children...
She entertains like in any other garrison town. The war seems distant - not to end. Perhaps she seems bored.
Luckier still...the *Kapos* have a brothel...better fed women, but prisoners still. Sometimes from these windows one looks for a comrade outside.
So the SS had managed to construct the semblance of a real city... With a hospital, reserved quarters, residential districts, even its prison. Useless to describe what went on in these cells.
In cages so designed they could not lie or stand...men and women were constantly punished for days on end. The air holes were not sound-proof.

A visit from Himmler. Destruction but productivity.
Leaving the production aspect to others, Himmler concentrates on the destruction. Plans...
Models are studied...are carried out...the deportees doing the work. The incinerator could be made to look like a picture postcard. Latter-day tourists are themselves photographed in them. Deportations spread all over Europe.
The convoys lose their way, stop, then start again...are bombed and finally arrive. For some the choice is already made for them.
For the rest...those to the left will work...on the right, a few minutes and their execution. Killing by hand takes time. Cylinders of Zyklon gas are used.
Nothing distinguishes the gas chambers from any ordinary block house. What looks like the shower room awaits the arrivals. The doors were closed... A watch was kept...
The only sign that you have to know is the ceiling...scored by fingernails. Even the concrete was torn.
When the incinerator proved inadequate, pyres were installed. Yet the new ovens coped with thousands of bodies per day. Nothing is lost...
Here lie the remains of the Nazis at war... Here are their stores... Women's hair...
At 15 Pfennigs per kilo, it is used for making cloth. Bones...
They're intended for manure. Bodies...
There is nothing left to say. The bodies were meant for soap. As for skin...

1945

The camps were full and spreading
Towns of 100,000 inhabitants - full house everywhere.
Heavy industry takes an interest in this labour force, and have camps of their own. Slayer, Krupp, Heinkel,
I. G. Farben, Siemens, Hermann Göring recruits their labour force here.
The Nazis may win the war - these new towns are part of their economy. But they lose...
There is no coal for the incinerators, no bread for the men. The camp streets are strewn with corpses,
typhus... When the Allies open the doors, All the doors,..
Deportees look on without understanding. Are they free?
Will life know them again?
"I am not responsible," says the *Kapo*.
"I am not responsible," says the Officer. "I am not responsible." Who is responsible then?

As I speak to you now, icy water lies in the hollows of the carnal houses.
Water as sluggish as our own bad memories. War nods, but has one eye open, but
Faithful as ever the grass flourishes on the muster grounds, around the blocks. An abandoned village still
heavy with threads. The furnaces are no longer in use.
The skill of the Nazis is child's play today. 9,000,000 dead haunt this landscape.
Who is on the lookout from the strange watchtowers to warn us
of our new executioner's arrival? Are their faces really different from ours?

Somewhere in our misty life, *Kapos* survive... Reinstated officers and anonymous informers.
These and those reluctant...believing from time to time. There are those who look upon these ruins today,
as though the monster were dead and buried beneath them. Those who take hope again as the images fade,
as though there were a cure for the scourge of all those camps. Those who opined it happened only once.
Those who have at a certain time and a certain place... Those that refuse to look around them... Deaf to the
endless cry.