

Documenting the *Shoah*

Night and Fog 1956
dir. Alain Resnais

Landmark documentary about the Shoah – Holocaust

One of the most admired

Shot 10 years after the end of WWII

Poses a relevant issue – moral & esthetic:

How to make a film about the concentration camps?

How to achieve a 'distance' so that the viewer can analyze?

How to confront human monstrosity?

Built on a pattern of related oppositions

present/past

color/black & white

tranquility/horror

natural environment/buildings

footage shot for the film/archival material

Impact of *Night and Fog*

30 minutes long

Brilliant use of a simple device – frequent shifts of color

Narrator – Poet Jean Cayrol , camp survivor
wrote & read commentary
powerful & quietly reflective

Use of newsreel materials – horror builds up carefully

Final moments built to leave viewers with question:
“Who is responsible?”

The documentary does not offer material/historical analysis
Is not expository

Produces a powerful emotional impact
Searing indictment of Nazi regime
Goes beyond the Shoah to tackle ethnic destruction

Documentaries on the Holocaust

- *Memory of the Camps* 1985
 - Compiled from footage filmed by Allied forces in 1945
 - Raw footage, horrific
 - Ironic narration by British actor Trevor Howard magnifies
- *One Survivor Remembers* 1985
 - Oscar-winning documentary co-produced by Holocaust Museum
 - Interviews survivor Gerda Weissmann Klein
- *Shoah* 1985
 - Directed by Claude Lanzmann – No archival footage at all
 - 9 hours of interviews

- *The Last Days* (1998)
Five Jewish Hungarians, now U.S. citizens, tell their story. Directed James Moll, co-produced by Shoah Foundation
- *Inheritance* (2008)
A survivor of Plaszow concentration camp, featured in *Schindler's List* (1994) meets the daughter of camp's commander
Relies on direct cinema techniques
- *Multiply by Six Million* 2007
Documentary short by photographer Ewy Eisen
Still photographs & narration by survivors

Other documentaries related to this topic

- *The Memory of Justice* (1976) dir. Marcel Ophuls
about the Nuremberg Trials after WWII
- *The Specialist* (1999)
about the trial of Martin Eichmann in Jerusalem
- *Blind Spot – Hitler’s Secretary* (2002)
- *The Goebbels Experiment* (2005)
- *A Film Unfinished* (2010)
about a Nazi propaganda film shot in Warsaw
- *The Decent One* (2014)
about Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler