

The Great Dictator Film Summary

The Great Dictator by Charlie Chaplin

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Context

The Great Dictator is a loosely veiled play on Hitler's dictatorship of Germany. As much of the rest of the world, especially the United States, was trying to ignore the German threat and the persecution of the Jews, Charlie Chaplin spoke out loudly against the injustice.

In his story, Chaplin plays two roles: the barber with amnesia and Adernoid Hynkel the dictator of Tomania. The barber was injured in the First World War when he was saving Commander Schultz's life. Eventually, he leaves the mental institution and returns home without any knowledge of the present situation in which Jews are being persecuted. His ignorance means that he insults the police and begins to cause problems in the area. In the meantime, Hynkel who looks like the barber is trying to take over the world. Finally, the barber and Schultz escape from a concentration camp only to return to Tomania, meet the army, and become the leaders of the country when the barber is mistaken for Hynkel.

Charlie Chaplin is both the lead actor and the director of *The Great Dictator*. Chaplin appeared in almost 90 films during his lifetime, directed 75 films, wrote 61, and produced 36. Chaplin first gained popularity as an actor in silent movies such as *Making a Living* (1914), *Kid Auto Races at Venice* (1914), *Easy Street* (1917), and *A Woman of Paris* (1923). Chaplin was informed at one point that Hitler had sat through two screenings of the film, and he responded, "I'd give anything to know what he thought of it."

Paulette Goddard who plays Hannah began her career as a child actress in the Ziegfield show as the girl on the crescent moon. In 1932, she began seeing Charlie Chaplin, and he cast her in *Modern Times* (1936), her first big hit. She got a contract with Paramount for her role in *The Women* (1939) and was in a Bob Hope movie, *The Cat and the Canary* in 1939. The next year she won praises for her role in *The Great Dictator*. She spent the next few years making such great movies as *So Proudly We Hail!* (1943) before becoming less popular in the late 1940s.

Jack Oakie plays the role of Benzini Napolini. He had played tremendous roles earlier in films such as *Sitting Pretty* (1933), *Murder at the Vanities* (1934), and *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935). He also performed in *Hit the Deck* (1930) and *Call of the Wild* (1935). His work had fallen off a bit until he made a big breakthrough again with this role as Napaloni.

Although *The Great Dictator* didn't win any awards, it was nominated for several: Best Actor in a Leading Role for Charles Chaplin; Best Actor in a Supporting Role for Jack Oakie; Best Music, Original Score for Meredith Willson; Best Picture for Charles Chaplin; and Best Writing, Original Screenplay for Charles Chaplin.



Summary and Analysis

The Great Dictator begins with a note that if the barber and the dictator look alike it is just due to coincidence. The story begins between the two World Wars. During that time, things started going crazy and freedom disappeared.

The World War 1918

We watch as shooting between the sides occurs. We hear a man talking about the country of Tomania that was becoming weaker but sought to hit the Cathedral of Notre Dame with its war weapon. The Dictator watches as the machine hits only in front of a small house and then drops a bomb to the ground directly in front of it. One man is sent to check the fuse as the missile turns toward him with his every move then explodes. Planes fly overhead, and he tries to shoot them down with little success.

Finally, everyone is called to the front and given hand grenades. The man doesn't know how to work the grenade, so he asks the captain for directions; however, the soldier gets the grenade stuck inside his clothes. He finally throws the grenade and joins the others. He tries to follow his captain, but he ends up siding with the other side instead. He runs away and rejoins the captain. He is told to shoot at the enemy, but then the man asks him to help him to his plane. He helps the man fly the lane, and they escape. The man says that Tomania might still win, but then the man faints. They fly along upside down for quite sometime, but they don't realize the fact until it's too late. The plane runs out of gas, and the man begins to talk of his family. They crash, but the man continues talking. He takes the dispatches from the man who has fallen into the mud. Sadly, the soldiers who find them report that the war has already been lost. The man with him is put into a hospital where stays for the next twenty years.

When the man, a Jewish barber, is finally released from the hospital, he enters society with no idea what has happened. However, Tomania is now being run by the anti-semitic leader, Adernoid Hynkel. The Dictator is an enthusiastic speaker who says nothing. The crowds cheer him on blindly. He talks about the problems with liberty and free speech, denouncing both. He also speaks out for violence against the Jews. According to the station person, Hynkel is addressing the "Sons and Daughters of the Double Cross" - a brilliant play on words. Hynkel is leaving as one of his men knocks him down the stairs accidentally. Before leaving, the Dictator holds babies and greets his people. He returns to his palace pass on the royal masterpieces. Hynkel's soldier tells him that talk of violence against the Jews might have roused the people again, but Hynkel assures him that things have been quiet in the Ghetto lately.

In the Jewish Ghetto, two men meet and discuss how things could be worse. For instance, they could have been stuck in the hospital like the barber. They also talk about a girl, Hannah, who lives in the building but cannot pay her rent because she has fallen on hard times. In the street, she watches as Tomanian soldiers steal food and break windows. She speaks out against their actions, but they only laugh and throw tomatoes at her.



Two men discuss the Jewish barber who talks only of his barber shop. One of them then gets a call that the barber has disappeared, but they decide to let him go since they can do no more for him. The barber returns to open his shop and finds that the word, "Jew" keeps being painted on his store. He tries to clean it up, but a soldier attacks him for his impudence. Hannah sees what is happening and knocks out the two soldiers. The barber then dances down the street past many others shops that have "Jew" written on them. When he doesn't understand that he should hide, she pulls him inside. Other soldiers show up, but they leave quickly. Hannah applauds the barber on fighting back and says that they should all do the same.

The soldiers eventually come back, but the barber once again begins to fight them. The soldiers hang the barber from a lamppost just as the captain drives upon the scene. The captain recognizes the barber as the man who saved his life in the last war. He reminisces of their time together, and the barber begins to remember. The captain tells the barber to let him know if he or his friends are ever in trouble.

Hynkel is seeking to build a great war machine so that he can take over the world. A man comes in to show a bullet proof uniform; however, the man dies when the uniform is tested. Hynkel also calls in his secretary to take a letter, but he seduces her instead. When the phone rings, he drops her and answers it instead. He is then shown a parachute that can be worn as a hat, but that man also dies when his invention fails. Hynkel calls in his "Garbitsch" man after seeing surprising numbers and finds out that the army has been arresting 5,000-10,000 Jews per day. Apparently, the people complain about eating sawdust. The men want a loan, but the banks have refused. However, Ebstein, a Jew, might make a loan, so Hynkel tells him to stop persecuting the Jews until the deal is closed.

In the Ghetto, the man talks to the barber about the state of affairs. He tells him that he should start cutting women's hair since all the men are being sent to concentration camps. He decides to cut Hannah's hair as his first experiment. Hannah talks to the barber as he ends up shaving her face. They both laugh as they realize he was distracted by her beauty. When he finally finishes, Hannah looks absolutely gorgeous. As Hannah walks out, two storm troopers help her up as she falls and speak kindly to the barber. Hannah hopes that maybe everything is going to be okay now.

At Hynkel's palace, he searches for a pen so that he can sign some papers. When he can't find one, he simply rips up the papers. While he talks with his advisors, a woman walks in and tells Hynkel that a group of 3,000 men is about to strike, but he wants to kill them all. The advisors convince him to wait awhile before killing them. Hynkel wants to kill the brunettes after killing all the Jews. They talk about using the pure Aryan race to rule the world. Hynkel then dances around the room, spinning the globe and talking about becoming "Emperor of the World." However, the globe he is playing with eventually explodes.

In the Ghetto, the barber continues his work. His customer is a bit concerned about the dance the barber does while shaving his beard and cutting his hair. Later that night, the



two men from earlier talk downstairs about how Hynkel is discussing giving the Jews back their rights. We also discover that Hannah and the barber have a date that night.

Hynkel learns that Epstein refused to give the money, and he decides to begin persecuting the Jews once again. Commander Schultz advises Hynkel against this action, but Hynkel decides to send Schultz to a concentration camp. Hynkel then prepares to give his next speech, directed at the Children of Israel.

The barber goes to meet Hannah as the rest of the house watches. Hannah says that Hynkel isn't such a bad guy after all, but then Hynkel comes over the radios, and everyone hears how he plans to destroy all the Jews in the Ghetto. The barber doesn't get inside quickly enough to avoid a guard, but he is able to get away. The storm troopers return to the Ghetto, the women hide, and the men try to stand up for their rights. The Jews in the barber's house remain safe because of Commander Schultz's orders. A moment later, Hannah hears that Schultz has been arrested, and the soldiers are now after the barber. Hannah forces him to hide on the roof, but the shop is burned down. Hannah tells him that they can escape to another country and buy a chicken farm.

Hynkel plays his piano in the comfort of his palace.

Hannah and the barber stay on the roof until they are told that the coast is clear. They are told that Commander Schultz wants to meet with the barber later that night. Schultz tells the men that one man, the one who finds a coin in his pudding, must give up his life to save the Jews; however, he is not going to participate. The barber passes out the pudding, weighing the plates as he passes. The man next to him keeps putting his pudding on his plate until finally the barber eats the coin. However, it turns out that everyone gets a coin. Hannah walks in and says that she put a coin in everyone's pudding. She doesn't want them to participate since they are already in enough trouble.

The next morning, Mr. Jaeckel hands Hannah a newspaper that says both Schultz and the Commander are hiding in the Ghetto and are wanted for questioning. Outside, the soldiers are searching the houses to find Schultz. Both men are sent to the roof as they try to hide the commander's things. Up on the roof, the barber's head is covered with a bucket, and he drops all of the commander's belongings on the street. He then falls into a roof skylight and into a couple's house. When he tries to escape, both are captured by the soldiers.

In the concentration camp, the men are forced to march for hours each day. Meanwhile, the Jaekels and Hannah flee out of the country to remain safe. They begin farming with Jaekel's family. However, Hannah still misses the barber terribly and writes letters to him daily.

Hynkel announces to his men that they are finally ready to march on Austrilich where the Jews have fled. However, Napaloni has the same idea and has troops waiting to invade as well. Thus, Hynkel declares war on Napaloni. Napaloni calls to discuss the matter of his troops waiting to invade. Hynkel decides to put on a great show so that his



country looks very powerful. Then, he tears up the declaration of war. Napaloni arrives and the two men meet. Gabitsch tells him that he has made sure that by using psychology Napaloni will always feel inferior to Hynkel. Napaloni enters and pats Hynkel on the back, knocking him under the table. Hynkel and Garbitsch are completely disconcerted; however, Napaloni obviously gets the same feeling while sitting in an extremely small chair. Instead, Napaloni takes a seat on top of the desk. Hynkel becomes upset and begins to stutter. Napaloni convinces Hynkel to go to the barber shop with him. In the barber shop, Hynkel keeps trying to put his chair higher than Napaloni's so that he feels superior.

Later, Hynkel invites Napaloni to see a review of the troops. Tomania's army is not very impressive and very small. Napaloni is shocked to find that Hynkel has never heard of tanks that go under water and fly in the air. Then, some planes fly by, but they crash in front of the men. At the ball that night, Hynkel avoids the party and worries about how to take over Osterlich. Napaloni is missing, so Hynkel dances with Madame Napaloni. However, he has to leave her to meet with his advisors and Napaloni. Napaloni invites Hynkel to talk things over.

Napaloni asks Hynkel to agree that neither country will invade Osterlich. Napaloni tries to convince Hynkel to sign the treaty before he removes his troops. However, Hynkel wishes to sign the treaty after the troops are moved. Hynkel then eats some of the English mustard and begins to have convulsions, and the same thing happens to Napaloni when he takes a bit of his sandwich. Outside the room, a man from the International Press tries to get in but is refused. When no one is looking, however, the man speaks in and is hit in the face with food. Garbitsch comes in and convinces Hynkel to go ahead and sign.

At the concentration camp, two prisoners, the barber and Schultz, have escaped. They are dressed as soldiers, and they hurry toward the border. Hynkel sits in his boat, but he falls out when he tries to shoot a duck. He is captured by two soldiers looking for the escapees and taken back to the camp. The barber and Schultz keep walking toward the border with confidence. When the soldiers see the barber they mistake him for Hynkel. He is asked for orders, and he directs the soldiers to invade Osterlich. The newspapers show that back home the Ghettos are raided and Jewish property is stolen. The Jaeckels and Hannah are finally found in Osterlich and captured by soldiers.

The barber impersonating Hynkel speaks to Osterlich from the capital city, but as he sits down, his chair breaks. Garbitsch first speaks to the world and speaks in favor of abolishing liberty and democracy. He announces that all Jews will lose their rights, and Tomania now rules Osterlich. The barber as Hynkel then takes the microphone. He apologizes to the world and says that he wants everyone to get along. He talks about how machinery and technology have made the world a lonelier, sadder place. We watch Hannah cry as he talks about the hate of men and this time of greed. He says, "Along as men die, liberty will never perish." He also speaks out against machine men to the soldiers around the world and encourages them to fight for humanity.

His speech goes as follows:



I'm sorry but I don't want to be an emperor. That's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone if possible; Jew, Gentile, black men, white. We all want to help one another." He continues to speak out against dictatorships and discrimination. He also calls out to Hannah to retain hope. We see Hannah look up as she listens to the speech on the radio. The Jaeckels ask her if she heard that, but she simply says, "Listen." As she looks off over the fields, a beautiful music begins to play.



Characters

Adenoid Hynkel (Dictator of Tomania), played by Charles Chaplin

Description

Adenoid Hynkel is a self-centered, overbearing man. As the Dictator of Tomania, he bosses around the entire country especially those who work closely with him. Hynkel is convinced that he should create a completely Aryan race, and he especially hates the Jews because of their dark complexions. Hynkel finally decides that he will take over the neighboring country of Osterlich, but he is surprised to learn that another dictator, Benzini Napoloni is also on the borders of Osterlich preparing to attack. He finally convinces Napaloni to back off. Eventually Hynkel is captured in place of the Jewish barber and sent to a concentration camp.

Analysis

Hynkel is a ridiculous little man who seeks to keep power by making himself seem bigger and stronger than everyone else. However, he seems ridiculous as he is always posing for portraits or being knocked over by his soldiers. He seems to be the stereotypical man suffering from an inferiority complex because of his small stature.

Hynkel is a barely veiled portrayal of Adolf Hitler. Chaplin made the film at a time when getting involved in another World War was not a popular idea in America. Chaplin wanted to reveal to Americans the tortures and trials that the Jews were facing. Hitler is shown to be just a ridiculous little man who has captivated an equally ridiculous country's fascination. He receives applause whenever he speaks with the only people who realize his idiocy being the persecuted Jews.

A Jewish Barber, played by Charles Chaplin

Description

The Jewish barber is an amnesiac due to a head injury sustained during the First World War. He helped save Captain Scultz, but he ended up having to spend the next 20 years in a hospital. Although he remembered his life as a barber, the barber remembered nothing else.

One day, he escapes from the hospital and reopens the barber shop. He unwittingly angers the soldiers, because he doesn't understand what is going on in the world now. The barber finds love with Hannah, but he and Schultz are sent to a concentration camp



after plotting to overthrow Hynkel. When they escape, he is mistaken for Hynkel and becomes the kind and generous ruler of Tomania.

Analysis

The barber is an average, quiet man who has had a difficult life. Although he made great sacrifices during the war, the barber suffers for those sacrifices as he totally loses most of his memory. In addition, he gets into trouble when he doesn't know the changes that have gone on.

The barber's similarity to Hynkel finally allows him to take the place of the dictator. Chaplin comes out of character to give a speech about freedom and equality. Despite the fact that the barber hardly talks throughout the rest of the film, his speech at the end is heartrending and powerful.

Hannah, played by Paulette Goddard

Description

Hannah lives in Mr. Jaeckel's boarding house. Her parents died, and she cannot afford to pay rent, but Mr. Jaeckel doesn't want to kick her out. Instead, she stays and then she and the barber begin to fall in love.

Analysis

Hannah is a kind young woman who begins falling for the amusing and crazy antics of the barber. She is distraught when she must leave the country without him, but when she hears his voice on the radio, she realizes that there is hope for her world.

Benzini Napaloni (Dictator of Bacteria), played by Jack Oakie

Description

Benzini Napaloni is the Dictator of Bacteria. Both he and Hynkel want to invade Osterlich. When he comes to Hynkel's palace, the two try to work out an agreement, but they just end up in a fight instead.

Analysis

Just like Hynkel, Napaloni is portrayed as a child playing at running a country and going to war.



Commander Schultz, played by Reginald Gardiner

Description

Commander Schultz is the only respectable member of

Analysis

Garbitsch, played by Henry Daniell

Description

Garbitsch is one of Hynkel's main helpers. He is in charge of getting rid of the "garbage" in the country. He persecutes the Jews and has thousands of them arrested by soldiers each day.

Analysis

Garbitsch happily does Hynkel's dirty work for him. Rather than standing up to Hynkel, Garbitsch buys into Hynkel's plan to rid the country of the Jewish people.

Madame Napaloni, played by Grace Hayle

Description

Madame Napaloni is Dictator Benzini Napaloni's wife.

Analysis

She is only seen for a moment but she seems as spoiled and ridiculous as her husband.

Mr. Jaeckel, played by Maurice Moscovitch

Description

Mr. Jaeckel is the owner of the house in which the barber and Hannah live.

Analysis

Mr. Jaeckel is a kind man who doesn't have the heart to kick Hannah out when she can't pay. He becomes a father figure to the people who live in his building.



Mrs. Jaeckel, played by Emma Dunn

Description

Mrs. Jaeckel is the wife of the barber and Hannah's landlord.

Analysis

Mrs. Jaeckel is a kind woman who cares for all the people who live in the house. She gives good advice to Hannah and helps her stay strong after they flee the country.



Themes

Stop the Cruelty

During a time when many people in the world, particularly in the United States, were ignoring the problems caused by Hitler and the mistreatment of the Jews, Charlie Chaplin uses *The Great Dictator* to speak out against the injustice. Chaplin speaks out against the cruelty throughout the film. Rather than hiding the truth about concentration camps, Chaplin presents the truth about what was going on in and around Germany.

Chaplin truly speaks out against the cruelty against Jews during the last scene. He comes out of character as the barber who is pretending to be Hynkel, and he begins to speak out against the injustice, discrimination, and cruelty being perpetrated against the Jews. He calls for people around the world to speak out and step up so that things can change.

Throughout the film, Chaplin shows the horror of the situation in a way that would shock viewers but would not terrify them. He encourages them to take steps in their daily lives to stop discrimination and cruelty. Additionally, he pushes for action from the United States and others so that the lives of many innocent Jews could be saved.

Ridiculousness of Dictators

Chaplin powerfully ridicules Dictators Hynkel of Tomania and Napaloni of Bacteria, and their real life counterparts: Hitler of Germany and Mussolini of Italy. He makes them out to be big children who are having fun playing with other people's lives. They not only fight over countries like children fight over toys, but they also fight over silly things like food.

Chaplin also shows how ridiculous the people who follow the dictators are. Hynkel's soldiers are absolutely ludicrous as they try to capture the barber. One of them is even hit on the head several times by Hannah. The main point is that for a soldier to be hit by a woman, he must be very stupid. In addition, none of the soldiers recognize that the barber is not really Hynkel. They have been following blindly, and they are not even able to discern whether or not someone is their leader.

Chaplin pokes fun at the real dictators Hitler and Mussolini through this film. He tries to show people how terrible their actions are while making them seem so stupid that conquering them should be easy. Chaplin is trying to convince people, especially Americans, that going to war is a necessity, and they will end up triumphing against these ridiculous dictators in time.

Power of Others to Stop Chaos

Many people at the start of World War II either believed there was no problem or they believed that they had no power to stop the events happening in Europe. Americans especially just wanted to stay out of the fight after having World War I end just a few years earlier.

Chaplin uses his film as a tool to convince people that their duty is to go to war. They owe it to the Jewish people and other people in Europe to help conquer Hitler. Additionally, Chaplin reminds them that eventually Hitler would come to conquer the United States as well. Chaplin shows that simple acts could quickly stop the chaos of the war as we see the barber standing up for his rights and eventually impersonating Hynkel.

Chaplin wanted people to realize that they were not powerless to act, but rather that their duty was to act and save the lives of millions of innocent people who were being slaughtered in Europe. Chaplin was hated for making this film even though many agreed with him by the time it came out.

Style and Cinematography

The Great Dictator is an interesting combination of both a silent film and a talkie. Charlie Chaplin is best known for his performance in silent films and his amazing ability to communicate thoughts and emotions with the movement of his body. He uses that talent in this film even though there are parts where talking is used.

Because audible words are only used through a portion of this film, many of the most important parts are designated by the use of words. The brilliance of the film and Chaplin's performance specifically is that the use of words in no way takes away from the powerful symbolism of his movements. Although Chaplin plays both Hynkel and the barber, the way they move is one of the distinguishing characteristics of them both. For example, even when Chaplin is the barber dressed as Hynkel, he still moves and expresses himself like the barber. However, when Chaplin is actually playing the part of Hynkel the mannerisms are much different than those of the barber.

The film definitely has a very obvious political agenda. Chaplin barely veils the fact that he is criticizing Germany's infamous dictator, Hitler. At the time of filming, many people did not feel that the United States should get involved with the war, and the government and others objected to Chaplin's film. Most people felt that speaking out against Hitler was a show of going against the United States; Chaplin's patriotism was questioned. However, Chaplin and the other actors and actresses in the film stood up for their beliefs, and their style shows a passionate commitment to the message of the film. Chaplin especially portrays this commitment when he partially comes out of character at the end of the film as the barber speaks in Hynkel's place. Chaplin states dramatically exactly what he believes and his hopes for the future of the world.



Motifs

Wartime

Many people will experience a time of war in their lifetime. Using wartime is a common motif since many people can relate to it. In addition, Chaplin was speaking out against the current war, so the setting needed to be realistic in order for him to get his point across.

The wartime motif helps us see all the themes running through the film. We see that we should stop the cruelty when we see how the Jews are being treated and hear the barber's final speech as Hynkel. We see the ridiculousness of dictators when Hynkel and Napaloni act like children during their meeting. We also see that we can all help to stop the chaos by avoiding discrimination and standing up for those who can't care for themselves.

Chaplin effectively shows all three themes through the glasses of the country during wartime. Hynkel becomes ridiculous while the average, everyday people become the heroes of the film.

Romance

Romance helps bring the story to life as we watch Hannah and the barber fall in love. Romance always brings a certain humanity to a story. Without love, we sometimes forget how wonderful things can be or how painful a separation can be.

The barber and Hannah's romance makes them real to the audience. The barber at first simply seems like a goofy forgetful man, but once we see his love for Hannah, he becomes a brave man who is trying to protect his loved one.

After he is taken to the concentration camp, we see him trying to stay alive for Hannah at the same time we watch her gazing off across the fields, wondering where he could be. Their romance makes the final speech even more powerful when the barber pretending to be Hynkel calls for people to stand up against prejudice, and then speaks directly to Hannah so that she will know he has survived.

Prince and the Pauper

The prince and the pauper story has been used many times throughout the years, but never for such a positive cause. Much of the world felt defeated at Hitler's hands even before he attacked them personally. Sure, he was crazy and evil, but there was a belief that no one could beat him.



Chaplin uses the idea of the prince and the pauper to show that sometimes the way to success is more simple than we could have imagined. By having the barber take the place of Hynkel, Chaplin shows that a little creativity can quickly solve the problem. The motif also gives the movie a funny irony as we see two men who look exactly alike living completely different lives.

Chaplin's primary goal with all the motifs, themes, and symbols is simply to show the horrors of the situation and try to encourage those around the world, particularly the United States, to act. Chaplin achieves his goal by the creative use of many techniques and a lot of humor.



Symbols

Frying Pan

During the film, Hannah hits several soldiers on the head with her frying pan. Every time they come to the house to try to capture the barber and/ or Schultz, she attacks them by reaching through the window and hitting them with the frying pan. The scenes are amusing as a soldier falls and his friends are shocked that he has been beaten by a woman.

The frying pan symbolizes the ridiculousness of the Gestapo. The Gestapo were supposed to be terrifying men who were doing Hitler's work with no sense of consciousness. Although this is true, they are shown to be foolish with no minds of their own. They only do what Hitler says because they don't know how to do anything else.

Also, the fact that the Gestapo are beaten back by a woman shows that if people were to fight, they could defeat Hitler. Chaplin is trying to get people up and moving, and by showing the possible simplicity of defeating Hitler while he is still rather weak, he hoped to get people to spring into action.

Vineyard

When Hannah and the Jaeckels leave their home in the city, they go to a vineyard in the country. Their new home is absolutely gorgeous, but Hannah desperately misses the barber who is now locked away in the concentration camp. Even in the midst of all this beauty she is sad.

One day, however, she is listening to the radio to one of Hynkel's speeches and suddenly he is speaking to her. The barber has begun impersonating Hynkel, and he wants to let her know that he is safe and that everything will be okay. Hannah's face lights up at the news as she is relieved and overjoyed.

As the film ends, we see the view across the vineyard and see that the new growth on the vines brings hope for a more positive future. Hannah and all the other Jews will be safe now that Hynkel has been replaced by the kind barber who is speaking out against discrimination and cruelty.

The Storefront

When the barber returns to his old home, he has no idea about what has been happening since he has been in the hospital. For the past twenty years, he has received no news from the outside world, so when he goes home he expects things to be the same as they always were. When he finds that someone has written "Jew" all over his storefront, he begins to clean the window.



Each day for several days he must once again clean off his window as the writing continues to appear. Finally, the Gestapo becomes angry and begins to attack him for insulting them and breaking the law.

The storefront symbolizes the injustice of what was happening. Since the barber had not had a chance to become accustomed to the practices and accept them as normal, he knew that what was going on was obviously wrong. He speaks out against the injustice without even realizing the impact or meaning of his actions.



Essay Questions

How does the barber return to his home?

Who is Chaplin pretending to be in this film?

What is Chaplin's message to the world?

How was Chaplin perceived at the time of making this film?

What does the frying pan symbolize?

Why does Chaplin partially speak out of character at the end of the film?

What are the themes of the film?

How does the use of both talkie and silent sections affect the film?

What is the primary motif used to tell Chaplin's story?

How does the relationship between the barber and Hannah impact the film?