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Double-Spaced**

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Social Studies/ Language Arts (Class)

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### Oskar Schindler: Triumph of the Human Spirit

World War II is mostly known for its disturbing events: the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. During this time period mostly known for tragedy, there were also triumphs, great and small. One triumph of the human spirit is the story of Oskar Schindler, a Czech who saved the lives of more than 1100 Jews.

Oskar Schindler was not born a hero; in fact, he was a Nazi. He was a businessman who was born in Czechoslovakia. He joined the Nazi party because he thought it would give him good business opportunities (Roberts 20). He was working as a sales manager of an electronic goods company when the German government asked him to be a spy. They wanted him to give them information about businesses and important people in Poland, where he took many business trips (Schindler). He agreed because he did not want to be drafted into military service (Roberts 22).

After Germany invaded Poland, Schindler moved there to "make his fortune" (Roberts 38). Once in Poland, Schindler became friends with an accountant named Itzhak Stern, who was Jewish. They developed a strong friendship and Schindler looked to Stern for financial advice. Since Germany had taken over many of the Jewish businesses in Poland, Stern helped Schindler raise funds from Jewish investors to purchase an enamelware factory that could provide field kits for the war effort. They both thought this would be a great way to make money (39).

At first, things went as planned, but Adolf Hitler's Reich was making more and more anti-Jewish laws and rules. Since Schindler was a card-carrying member, he was able to use his charming personality to "schmooze" high-ranking Nazis. He got the

government contract and at first he had only 100 Jews working for him. But word got around that this was a Jewish-friendly factory, and Stern began to recommend workers to Schindler, who hired them all (Roberts 40).

Soon, life became unbearable for the Jews. They lost their homes, were not allowed to send their children to school, lost access to their bank accounts, and were forbidden to ride the trains. As Hitler's plan to kill all the Jews became clear, Schindler was horrified (Schindler). One day Schindler saw Jews being forced into trains cruelly. Many died or were tortured along the way. Then and there Schindler said, "I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system" (Roberts 56).

Through his factory and his Nazi connections, Schindler was able to save many lives. He decided to hire only Jewish people to work in his factory. When he saw how they were being treated badly as they walked to work every day, he got permission to build dorms on the grounds of the factory (Roberts 68). He had to use big bribes and lots of charm to get permission to do this, and his factory became a "forced-labor" subcamp. When Russia was about to invade Poland, Hitler wanted all the Jewish people sent to Auschwitz, a concentration camp, to be exterminated. Schindler used "bluff and bribery" to convince the Nazis to move his factory and all of his workers to Czechoslovakia. The list of workers later became known as "Schindler's List" because he was able to protect and save the lives of all 1100 Jewish people who worked for him (Schindler).

After the war, Schindler was declared a hero. The people who worked for him would have died without his help and sacrifice. This is a triumph of the human spirit. Though he became a Nazi with the idea to make a lot of money, "by the time the war ended, Schindler was early penniless, having spent the majority of his wealth in trying to save as many Jewish lives as possible" (Roberts 14). Schindler may have used his charming personality and his enjoyment of game playing to outwit the Nazis, but along the way he saved 1100 lives.