

The Round Up (La Rafle)



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Directed by: Rose Bosch

Release date: 10th March 2010 (France), 17th June 2011 (UK)

Certificate: 12

Country: France, Germany, Hungary

Language: French, German, Yiddish (subtitled in English)

Running time: 115 minutes

Keywords: Drama, History, WW2, France, Holocaust

Suitable for: GCSE / AS/A levels, French, Media Studies / Film Studies, History

SYNOPSIS

La Rafle, directed by Rose Bosch starring Jean Reno, Mélanie Laurent and Gad Elmaleh, is a film based on true events retelling the story of the 1942 'Vélodrome d'Hiver round up' which saw the mass arrest of 13,000 Jews in occupied Paris by the French Police before they were deported to concentration camps in Eastern Europe. These historical events are seen through the eyes of two real people:

twelve-year-old Jewish boy Joseph Weismann and Protestant nurse Annette Monod.

PLOT

1942, Paris is occupied by the Germans and the Jews are made to wear the yellow star on their clothing. In the Montmartre district of the capital, some families are worried about the growing discrimination against the Jews whilst others are trying to live 'normally'.

Joseph is twelve and on the early hours of 16th July 1942 the French Police storm the estate and arrest all the Jews. The Weismanns along with the other Jewish residents are captured and crammed into the Vél' d'Hiv. They meet Annette Monod who has volunteered to provide medical care to the snatched. The living conditions are appalling and squalid with no water and food supplies running out.

A few days later, the Jews are transferred to a transit camp in Beaune-la-Rolande 100kms south of Paris. Annette asks to follow them to carry on her voluntary work but she begins showing signs of exhaustion and malnutrition too. A few days later the parents and older children are deported to what they believe are working camps in Eastern Europe while the younger children are told they will join them in the following week. Joseph's mother orders him to escape before she is taken away. He and a friend manage to escape by crawling under barbed wire. The next day, the remaining children are despatched by train to death camps.

After the war in 1945, Annette is searching for survivors in a hotel in Paris where they are gathered. She finds Joseph who has been adopted by a French family and Nono Zygler, a young orphan she cared for after the raid.

HISTORICAL CONTENT

In order to understand the film and the surrounding events, you need to have a basic understanding of the Holocaust. For an overview of the events leading to the Holocaust, familiarise yourself with this timeline at <http://www.het.org.uk/index.php/the-holocaust-general>

For background information about Jewish life in Paris before and during Nazi occupation go to <http://www.het.org.uk/index.php/the-holocaust-general> and <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005453>

BEFORE VIEWING

The Holocaust and World War II have inspired many directors but *La Rafle* is the first film which has thoroughly focused on the Vél' D'Hiv round up. No other film has dealt directly with this topic.

Director and scriptwriter Rose Bosch originally trained as an investigative journalist and her background was useful when she started researching this event back in 2005. Going through original archives, radio and TV interviews, she was able to identify the real Annette Monod and later on, Joseph Weismann.

She also enlisted veteran campaigner Serge Klarsfeld who has spent the past 30 years of his life hunting Nazi fugitives and their accomplices. His help was invaluable as a historical consultant as was his involvement in the trials of René Bousquet and Pierre Laval, who both appear in the film.

- Compare the posters of the film published in France and in the UK and explain the differences between these.
- Watch the trailer for the film and identify the main themes.
- Do some online research and find three positive and three critical responses to the film.
- Research Rose Bosch online and explain how her family and her background are important to understand her choice of topic.

HISTORY OR DRAMA?

The opening scene sets the tone for the film. The written warning at the beginning – also repeated at the end – informs the audience that the story is based on true events lived by real people. Then *La Rafle* begins with archive footage of Hitler's triumphant tour of Paris in June 1940 after the German invasion.

- How and why does Rose Bosch blur the limits between drama and history?
- How does Rose Bosch create a sense of authenticity?
- Make a list of all the conventions and techniques used to make the film look like a documentary (consider characters / music / font of credits / people / script).
- How can you test the reliability of this representation of what happened in Paris in July 1942? What sources could you refer to in order to assess the authenticity of *La Rafle*?

NARRATIVE

The main plot of the film deals with the round up of the Jews in Paris and their deportation to death camps told through the eyes of two main historical characters: Joseph and Annette. The secondary plot focuses on the negotiations between the French and German authorities on the technical aspects of the arrest and despatch of the Jews.

- What value does eyewitness testimony contribute to this representation of the events in Paris in 1942?
- To what extent might the film have had a greater impact on the audience with a neutral voiceover narrating the story?
- What do you consider to be the director’s main purpose in making this film?

The film represents the events chronologically starting in June 1942 and ending a few weeks later with the final deportation of the children to concentration camps. The prologue shows Hitler’s visit to Paris and the epilogue depicts Annette’s reunion with Joseph and Nono.

The screenplay is composed of three distinctive parts. It starts with the Weismann family’s day-to-day routines and concerns in Montmartre then it moves on with the imprisonment in the Vélodrome d’Hiver and it ends with the stay in the transit camp in Beaune-la-Rolande before their despatch.

Fill in the grid for each part:

	Main Characters	Action	Mood	Your Response
Montmartre				
Vél d’Hiv				
Beaune				

CHARACTERISATION

Many critics believe the decision to use the children’s perspective to tell the story was a deliberate attempt to make the film more dramatic and appealing to the audience. However Le Figaro suggests that Rose Bosch wanted to use a different point of view to differentiate her film from others.

- Why do you think children’s testimony can be so powerful?
- Are the emotions created in the audience working against the message of the film?
- How does the director counterbalance the children’s simple views on the event and explain to the viewers the changes affecting their lives?

Jean Réno and Gad Elmaleh are talented and renowned French actors who play in a genre they have not had the chance to explore in their acting careers.

- Are you convinced by their acting performance?
- Would you say that their characters are underdeveloped? If yes, can you explain this directorial decision?
- Is the use of famous actors distracting the audience from the purpose of the film?
- Name three famous actors of your choice for Dr David Sheinbaum, Schmuël Weismann and Annette Monod and justify your answers.

MISE EN SCENE

In La Rafle different people, situations and themes can be opposed.

- Illustrate each theme with a scene from the film and propose an opposite:

Happiness	Duty	Politicians
Trust	People	Daily routine
Occupied Zone	Cowardice	Courage
Firemen	Children	Secret
State	Hunger	

FILMMAKING TECHNIQUES

Compare the camerawork in the scenes featuring Pétain, Laval, Bousquet and Hitler with the rest of the film and explain the use of static and dynamic camera moves.

- Explain how the cold calculation of the deportation and extermination of the Jews is supported by still shots.
- Justify the choice of a hand-held camera for the raid scenes.
- What effect does this technique have on the viewers?

AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

Only half a century later, on 16th July 1995, Jacques Chirac officially recognised the responsibility of the French authorities in the Vél d'Hiv round up.

- Why do you think that for many years French history chose to blur or omit the events shown in the film?
- What are the difficulties for France in coming to terms with its wartime past?
- Would the impact on the audience have been greater if La Rafle had been made shortly after the war?
- Do you agree this film is a tribute to the deported French Jews? Give reasons for your answer.
- What do you think is the principal objective of the film: to move, educate or remember?
- Newspaper La Tribune de Genève said the film has a pedagogical value which is in the public interest. What do you think this might mean?
- Explain why you think L'Education Nationale has fully supported this film.

CONTROVERSY

In September 2010, in an interview for the promotion of the DVD, Rose Bosch sparked a controversy comparing viewers who were not moved by the film to Hitler: "one can only cry after watching the film (...) if not it is either a lack of compassion or belief that human emotions are an abomination and a weakness".

- Do you agree with this statement?
- Try to construct arguments for and against this statement.

STATEMENTS AND QUOTES

Name the characters in the film that say the following words and explain what you think they mean:

- “It’s not the dead you should fear, it’s the living.”
- “Are they gonna hurt my teddy?”
- “You’ll never succeed, you’ll never destroy us.”
- “To fight Hitler is to fight the anti-Christ.”

Look at the following statements by Hitler. How has the director represented some of this Nazi ideology in the film?

- “How fortunate for governments that the people they administer don’t think.”
- “Humanitarianism is the expression of stupidity and cowardice.”
- “I do not see why man should not be just as cruel as nature.”
- “The art of leadership...consists in consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up that attention.”
- “Demoralise the enemy from within by surprise, terror, sabotage, assassination. This is the war of the future.”

INTERESTING LINKS

<http://www.larafle-lefilm.com/enseignants/>

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/cinema/2010/03/10/03002-20100310ARTFIG00534-l-education-nationale-partenaire-et-prescripteur-du-film-.php>

<http://journal.tdg.ch/actu/culture/rafle-revient-annees-noires-2010-03-09>

http://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2010/03/09/la-rafle-l-eprouvant-spectacle-de-la-rafle-du-vel-d-hiv_1316618_3476.html

http://programmes.france2.fr/la-rafle-du-vel-dhiv-une-histoire-francaise/index.php?page=article&numsite=5126&id_rubrique=5132&id_article=15440

<http://www.zerodeconduite.net/blog/index.php?itemid=18773>

<http://lyonelkaufmann.ch/histoire/2010/03/13/links-for-2010-03-12/>

<http://www.20minutes.fr/cinema/600832-cinema-la-realisatrice-la-rafle-compare-spectateurs-insensibles-film-hilter>

http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm_gen_cfilm=129166.html

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