

Candidate 4

To what extent is bravery shown by each character throughout the film?

La Vita è Bella is a film directed by Roberto Benigni, it is set in the 1930's during the Second World War in Tuscany, Italy, the theme of Bravery is apparent all throughout the film and each character has a completely different reaction to the pressures which reflects their personalities. The film is made up of two distinct parts, the first concentrates on Guido and Dora's romance and their blossoming relationship and the second is based more around Guido and Giosue in the concentration camp.

Firstly, the traumatic event that was the Holocaust is incomparable to any other, it is way more complicated than any other kind of disasters. "Natural disasters test an individual's bravery but are initiated in ways that are normally wholly external to humanity. The Holocaust, in contrast, was the direct result of individual choices and decisions" (3). The Jews were tortured day in and day out, year after year, and the consequences of this affected the rest of their life. Many Italians had to make very hard decisions in conflicts, "A Nazi official with a Jewish uncle would have had to weigh his allegiance to his state against his allegiance to his family"(3), being brave is not a simple concept like being courageous when faced with a threat, sometimes it is dependent on more than one or two factors. Benigni effectively depicted the characters in situations where it wasn't just one person's life at risk, he included decisions where the main characters had to make decisions that would either positively or negatively impact the other people in the story.

Next Guido, as the main protagonist in the film he shows immense bravery from the offset he has a way of making seemingly magical things happen by manipulating his surroundings, we see Guido fall in love with Dora even though she is soon to marry another man, Guido treats her like a princess this is apparent when he refers to her as "Buongiorno Principessa" (1) when speaking to her. When Dora is having her engagement party at the hotel that Guido is working at, Guido bravely rides in on his uncle's horse whisking Dora away showing that "such bravery is possible and highly desirable" (3). However, Guido's true bravery becomes even more apparent when they are about to board the train to go to the concentration camp. He has to not only stay strong for his own good, but he also has to stay strong for his son Giosue, Guido turns the experience in the concentration camp into a game for his young son Giosue. He tells him that every time he hides and doesn't make a noise, he will earn points, because Giosue's favourite toy is a tank, Guido tells him that he could win a real tank at the end of the game if he has the most points. For me the part of the film which stands out the most by far is in the second half where Guido bravely keeps up the comedy in front of his son as they endure the hellish life inside a concentration camp.

Dora is a prime example of bravery in the film, she faces many problems throughout the film and manages to overcome them. In the beginning of the film we see Dora in a relationship with a man she doesn't love or want to be with, and she is surrounded by people who are not like her, it takes a lot of bravery for her to leave her fiancé because there were a lot of people who were at the engagement party and were expecting her to marry this man. She felt trapped like she would let everybody down. However, when she meets Guido and becomes charmed by the enchanted situations which they seem to find themselves in this changes, she realises that she has a choice and that there are other options out there for her, she bravely leaves what she is used to and follows her heart and she becomes far happier in doing so. This is somewhat the same idea as what other Italians face just under different circumstances, instead of being trapped in a relationship they were trapped by the government. Dora's family were not Jewish but after discovering that her husband and son had been taken, she races to the train station and demands that she too should be put on the train, in my opinion this is the biggest sacrifice she could have made, which eventually pays off because she is reunited with her son at the end of the film.

Lastly, Giosue has to be brave too to some extent, because in reality he doesn't really know what is going on he has to just believe what his father is telling him. When the German Officer catches Guido talking to Giosue in the courtyard, he has to stay quiet to make sure that no one realises that he speaks Italian not German, he almost gets caught when he says "Grazie" (1) to Guido when he is getting given his food during the big meal with all of the important people, with quick thinking from Guido thankfully the situation gets resolved. In the ending scene when all of the Germans had left the concentration camp after they had been found out Giosue comes out of the box and sees the tank coming through the gates he realises that all of his bravery has paid off, but as a child he won't understand that it was just by chance that the tank was there, he will just believe what his dad told him, this scene is very bittersweet because Guido sacrificed his own life to save his son.

In conclusion, each of the characters in the film were extremely brave throughout the whole story with several stand out moments that furthered the storyline and added suspense and tension for the viewer.

952 words

Bibliography

- (1) Benigni, Roberto, "La Vita è Bella", Florence, Cecchi Gori Distribuzione. 1997
- (2) La Vita e Bella Script
- (3) "Life is Beautiful", Available: <https://www.gradesaver.com/life-is-beautiful/study-guide/themes>
- (4) <https://www.cinematografo.it/cinedatabase/film/la-vita-bella/35203/>