

READING #1

My Name is Adolf Eichmann

Lenny Bruce

In this selection by satirist Lenny Bruce, which he adapted from a poem by Catholic theologian Thomas Merton, Adolf Eichmann defends his role in the Holocaust. Eichmann was a “Jewish expert” in the Nazi SS who was responsible for the administration of the murder of the Jews of Europe. His argument raises disturbing questions about the nature of human evil and our own possible participation in such events.

Source: Bruce, Lenny. “My Name Is Adolf Eichmann.” *The Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience—An Anthology for Students*. Harry Furman, ed. New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1983. New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

My name is Adolf Eichmann

The Jews came every day
to bathe they thought would be
fun in the showers.
The mothers were quite ingenious
They would take the children
and hide them in bundles of clothing.
We found the children, scrubbed them,
put them in chambers, and sealed them in.
I watched through the portholes
as they would daven and chant
“Hey, mein Liebe, He
yyyy.”
We took off their clean Jewish love-rings,
removed
their teeth and hair—
for strategic defense.
I made soap out of them,
I made soap out of all of them;
and they hung me,
in full view of the prison yard.
People say,
“Adolf Eichmann should have been hung”
Nein.

Nein, if you recognize the whoredom
in all of you,
that you would have done the same,
if you dared know yourselves.
My defense?
I was a soldier.
People laugh
“Ha ha! This is no defense
that you are a soldier.”
This is trite.
I was a soldier,
a good soldier.
I saw the end of a conscientious day's
efforts.
I saw all the work that I did.
I, Adolf Eichmann,
watched through the portholes.
I saw every Jew burned
and turned into soap.
Do you think yourselves better
because you burned your enemies
at long distances with missiles?
Without ever seeing what you'd done to
them?
Hiroshima...Auf Wiedersehen...

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Post-Reading Questions/Discussion

Use complete sentences and examples from the poem (you can cite line numbers) for your answers!

1. What is Adolf Eichmann's defense for his actions?
2. Does Eichmann's description of himself as a soldier make any difference to you? Explain.
3. How do you react to Eichmann's comparison of his actions with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima by the United States in World War II? To you, is there any equivalence between dropping an atomic bomb during war or sending humans to a gas chamber during a genocide? **(Lines 41-44)**
4. Is a man like Eichmann "evil"? Why or Why not?

5. Do you believe that there are certain human acts that are absolutely “good” or “evil” under any circumstances? What, then, is your definition of “good” and “evil”?

6. Given this is a **satire!!** What is the author, Lenny Bruce trying to say ?