The Final Months

Persecution, death marches, and the Allied advance

SS24.HOS.19 "Explain the purpose of the Death Marches. 19a Evaluate the effect of Nazi policies on other groups targeted by the government of Nazi Germany, including the Roma, Sinti..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two purposes of the death marches, circle a Nazi policy and its effect on each targeted group, and number four dated events to trace the Allied advance and German surrender.

As the Allies Closed In

1. Nazi persecution reached beyond Jewish communities. Nazi officials classified Roma and Sinti people as racial enemies, stripped many of rights, and deported thousands to camps. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, entire Roma and Sinti families were imprisoned. In August 1944, the SS murdered the thousands who remained in its so-called family camp. People with disabilities faced forced sterilization; many were later murdered through a program often called T4. Nazi leaders formally halted its centralized killing operation in 1941 after public protests, but killings continued in other forms. These policies destroyed families and lives while denying targeted people basic protection.

2. By late 1944 and early 1945, Allied armies were closing in on German-held territory. SS guards forced prisoners from camps onto long journeys on foot and in crowded trains. These evacuations, known as death marches, aimed to keep prisoners from being freed by Allied troops and to move them deeper into German-controlled areas. Guards sometimes also tried to preserve prisoners as forced laborers. Many prisoners had little food or warm clothing; guards shot people who could not keep up. Others died from hunger, cold, or exhaustion. The marches extended Nazi violence even as the regime lost ground.

3. The sequence of the final months shows how the military advance and the marches connected. In January 1945, Soviet forces advanced toward Auschwitz, and the SS marched tens of thousands of prisoners west; Soviet troops liberated the camp on January 27. In March, American forces crossed the Rhine into Germany, while Soviet forces pressed toward Berlin from the east. Soviet troops began their assault on Berlin in April; the city fell on May 2. Germany signed an unconditional surrender on May 7, effective May 8 in Europe. Allied victory ended Nazi rule, but survivors still faced the losses caused by its policies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did SS guards force prisoners on death marches as Allied armies approached, and what happened to many prisoners?

2. How did Nazi policies affect Roma and Sinti families? What does the August 1944 event show about the extent of that harm?

3. What changed when Nazi leaders formally halted the centralized T4 killing operation in 1941, and what did not change for people with disabilities?

4. Trace the Allied advance from Auschwitz to Berlin, then state when Germany's surrender took effect.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word museum caption explaining how the Allied advance led to death marches and comparing the effects of Nazi policies on Roma and Sinti people and people with disabilities. Include at least two dated milestones in order, and end with Germany's surrender.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two purposes of the death marches, circle a Nazi policy and its effect on each targeted group, and number four dated events to trace the Allied advance and German surrender. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did SS guards force prisoners on death marches as Allied armies approached, and what happened to many prisoners?	**Guards sought to prevent prisoners from being freed, move them deeper into German-controlled territory, and sometimes keep them as forced laborers. Many were shot or died from hunger, cold, or exhaustion.**
2	How did Nazi policies affect Roma and Sinti families? What does the August 1944 event show about the extent of that harm?	**Many lost rights and were deported and imprisoned together. The murder of thousands remaining in the Auschwitz-Birkenau family camp shows that the persecution destroyed entire families and took many lives.**
3	What changed when Nazi leaders formally halted the centralized T4 killing operation in 1941, and what did not change for people with disabilities?	**The centralized operation was formally halted, but killings continued in other forms. People with disabilities had also faced forced sterilization.**
4	Trace the Allied advance from Auschwitz to Berlin, then state when Germany's surrender took effect.	**Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945. American forces crossed the Rhine in March as Soviet forces advanced toward Berlin, which fell on May 2. Germany's surrender took effect on May 8.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In January 1945, Soviet troops approached Auschwitz, and SS guards drove prisoners west to keep them from being freed. Soviet troops liberated the camp on January 27, but many prisoners had already faced deadly marches. Nazi policies imprisoned and murdered Roma and Sinti families, while people with disabilities faced forced sterilization and murder that continued after T4's centralized operation was formally halted. American forces crossed the Rhine in March, and Soviet troops took Berlin in May. Germany signed an unconditional surrender on May 7 that took effect on May 8.

Accept captions that accurately connect the Allied advance to the purpose of the marches, compare the groups' experiences, and place two dated milestones in order. A response may describe surrender as signed on May 7 or effective on May 8 if it distinguishes those dates correctly.