Rights After Ruin

Trace how Holocaust-era abuses shaped a worldwide statement of rights.

SS24.HOS.21b "Analyze the influence of the Holocaust on the drafting and substance of the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two Holocaust-era abuses, circle two protections in the declaration that respond to them, and number one drafting choice that made the statement international.

From Persecution to a Declaration

1 In 1935, Nazi Germany's Nuremberg Laws stripped German Jews of full citizenship rights and barred marriages between Jews and people classified as German. Later, Nazi authorities forced Jews into ghettos, deported them, and murdered six million. They also persecuted Roma, people with disabilities, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among others. These crimes exposed what could happen when a government decided whose lives and rights counted. After World War II, many leaders argued that protecting people could not be left entirely to their own governments. They wanted a shared standard against such abuses.

2 In 1946, the United Nations created a Commission on Human Rights to draft a worldwide statement of rights. Representatives from different regions shaped the text, including Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States, P. C. Chang of China, and Charles Malik of Lebanon. Indian delegate Hansa Mehta helped change the opening words from “All men” to “All human beings.” The Holocaust was not the only influence, but its aftermath made the danger of unchecked state power urgent. The General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, presenting rights as belonging to everyone, not as gifts from governments.

3 The declaration does not name the Holocaust, yet several articles answer dangers it revealed. Article 2 rejects discrimination based on race or religion, while Article 15 protects the right to a nationality and rejects arbitrary loss of it. Article 5 bans torture and cruel treatment; Article 9 rejects arbitrary arrest and detention. Article 18 protects freedom of religion, including the freedom to change belief. For people fleeing persecution, Article 14 recognizes a right to seek and enjoy asylum, but it does not guarantee entry to another country. The declaration set a standard; by itself, it was not a binding treaty.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Holocaust help shape the decision to draft an international declaration rather than leave rights entirely to national governments?

2. How does Article 2 answer the injustice of the Nuremberg Laws?

3. How do Articles 14 and 15 address different dangers for people fleeing persecution or stripped of citizenship? Include one limit of Article 14.

4. How do Articles 5 and 9 respond to different harms described in the account of Nazi persecution?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 95 word museum label explaining why Article 18 belongs in a story of the Holocaust's influence on the declaration. Connect the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses to religious freedom, explain why drafters framed rights for everyone, and identify one limit of what the declaration alone could do.

ANSWER KEY

Rights After Ruin

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HOS.21b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two Holocaust-era abuses, circle two protections in the declaration that respond to them, and number one drafting choice that made the statement international. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Holocaust help shape the decision to draft an international declaration rather than leave rights entirely to national governments?	**Nazi abuses showed the danger of leaving rights entirely to governments. Leaders sought a shared international standard that treated rights as belonging to everyone.**
2	How does Article 2 answer the injustice of the Nuremberg Laws?	**The laws denied Jews equal rights based on Nazi racial classifications. Article 2 rejects discrimination based on race or religion.**
3	How do Articles 14 and 15 address different dangers for people fleeing persecution or stripped of citizenship? Include one limit of Article 14.	**Article 15 protects the right to a nationality against arbitrary loss. Article 14 protects the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution, but does not guarantee entry to another country.**
4	How do Articles 5 and 9 respond to different harms described in the account of Nazi persecution?	**Article 9 rejects arbitrary detention, which relates to forcing Jews into ghettos. Article 5 bans cruel treatment, which responds to the brutal treatment of people under Nazi persecution.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Under Nazi rule, Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs. Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects freedom of religion, including the freedom to change belief. That protection reaches beyond one persecuted group: it treats religious freedom as a right for everyone. After the Holocaust exposed the danger of unchecked government power, drafters from several countries presented rights as belonging to all people. Yet the declaration was not a binding treaty. Its adoption set a standard, but could not by itself force a government to obey it.

Accept other accurate links between the named Nazi abuses and the cited articles. Responses should distinguish the declaration's international standard from a binding treaty or a guarantee of asylum.