Justice on Trial

The Eichmann trial and its lasting questions

SS24.HOS.21c "Explain the effects of the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961 on policy concerning crimes against humanity, capital punishment, accountability, and the testimony of survivors."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline two details about legal policy, circle one detail about personal responsibility, and number two details showing how survivor testimony reached or affected the public.

A Trial Heard Around the World

1. In 1961, a courtroom in Jerusalem became a place where the world heard about the Holocaust. Adolf Eichmann, a former Nazi official, had helped organize the deportation of Jews to ghettos and killing centers. Israeli agents had captured him in Argentina and brought him to Israel, a move that sparked a dispute over Argentina's sovereignty. Israel tried him under a 1950 law that covered Nazi crimes, including crimes against humanity, even when committed outside Israel. The trial raised a difficult policy question: Who may prosecute crimes that shock humanity when they cross borders and states?

2. Prosecutors presented documents and called survivors to describe what had happened to people caught in Nazi policies. Some witnesses spoke about experiences beyond Eichmann's direct actions, giving the public a fuller view of the Holocaust. Broadcast reports carried their words to audiences far beyond the courtroom. Survivor testimony became a powerful part of public understanding, rather than only a source of facts for judges to weigh. The court also treated Eichmann as an individual responsible for his actions. His claim that he was following orders did not excuse his role in organizing deportations.

3. Eichmann was convicted in 1961 and executed in 1962 after his appeal failed. Israel's law allowed the death penalty for Nazi crimes, and the case reopened debate about whether a state should execute even a person convicted of mass murder. His trial did not create a world court or a new international law. Instead, it drew attention to the possibility of prosecuting crimes against humanity across national borders and to the limits and disputes involved. The case showed that official rank and orders could not erase personal responsibility, while survivors' public testimony influenced how later generations learned about the Holocaust.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the trial raise a policy question about prosecuting crimes against humanity?

2. What debate about capital punishment did Eichmann's sentence reopen?

3. How did the court's response to Eichmann's claim about following orders affect the question of accountability?

4. How did survivor testimony affect the trial's impact beyond the courtroom?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence label for a museum exhibit about the trial. Connect at least three of these topics: cross-border prosecution, capital punishment, individual accountability, and survivor testimony. Include one limit on what the trial changed.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two details about legal policy, circle one detail about personal responsibility, and number two details showing how survivor testimony reached or affected the public. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the trial raise a policy question about prosecuting crimes against humanity?	**Israel tried Eichmann for crimes committed outside its borders, raising the question of which states may prosecute crimes that cross borders.**
2	What debate about capital punishment did Eichmann's sentence reopen?	**It reopened debate about whether a state should execute even someone convicted of mass murder.**
3	How did the court's response to Eichmann's claim about following orders affect the question of accountability?	**The court held Eichmann individually responsible; following orders did not excuse his role in organizing deportations.**
4	How did survivor testimony affect the trial's impact beyond the courtroom?	**Broadcast reports brought survivors' words to a wider audience. Their testimony shaped public understanding of the Holocaust and how later generations learned about it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1961, Israel tried Adolf Eichmann for Nazi crimes committed outside its borders. The trial brought attention to questions about which states may prosecute crimes against humanity. It also showed that following orders did not excuse Eichmann's role in organizing deportations. Survivors' testimony reached people far beyond the courtroom through broadcast reports. Eichmann's execution reopened debate about the death penalty, even for a person convicted of mass murder. The trial did not create a world court or a new international law.

Accept accurate connections among at least three listed topics and a clear limit, such as the fact that the trial did not create a world court. Do not accept claims that the trial established a new international law or ended debate over capital punishment.