Beliefs Across Borders

Assess how Nazi racial ideology shaped expansion and occupation.

SS24.HOS.6c "Assess how the Nazis' antisemitism and racial beliefs influenced their foreign policy.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Nazi racial beliefs, circle actions that crossed borders, and draw arrows from beliefs to the actions or consequences they helped shape.

Conquest and Racial Ideology

1 In 1938, crowds watched German troops enter Austria after Hitler forced its annexation to Nazi Germany. Nazi leaders described Germans as one racial community that should live under one state. That belief helped justify crossing a border to absorb Austria. When Germany gained the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia later that year, Hitler again claimed to defend ethnic Germans. The Munich agreement transferred the region without Czechoslovakia at the talks. These claims appealed to some observers, but Nazi rule also brought persecution of Jews in newly controlled territory. Racial unity was both a foreign policy argument and a way to extend Nazi power.

2 Hitler also sought Lebensraum, or "living space," in eastern Europe for Germans. Nazi ideology treated Slavic peoples as inferior and cast Jews as enemies, not as citizens with equal rights. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France then declared war on Germany. Nazi officials took Polish land for German settlement, expelled many residents, and attacked Polish leaders. They forced Jews into ghettos in occupied Poland, depriving them of freedom and basic needs. The invasion served military goals too, but racial beliefs shaped what Germany planned to do with the people it conquered.

3 In June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Nazi leaders wanted land, food, and other resources, but they also framed the campaign as a racial war. German forces and mobile killing units murdered Jewish civilians in mass shootings behind the front. They also killed or deliberately starved many Soviet prisoners of war. As Nazi armies occupied more territory, antisemitic policies reached more Jewish communities. Nazi leaders later organized deportations of Jews from across occupied Europe to killing centers, most of them in occupied Poland. Military and economic aims mattered, yet racist beliefs made conquest and the destruction of whole groups part of the same policy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did claims about racial unity help Nazi leaders justify taking territory in 1938? What happened to Jews in newly controlled territory?

2. How did Nazi beliefs about Slavic peoples and Jews shape German plans for occupied Poland?

3. How did antisemitism shape both the conduct of the 1941 invasion and later policies across occupied Europe?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say racial beliefs were the only influence on Nazi foreign policy? Use one example from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 100 word museum label evaluating this claim: "Nazi racial beliefs mattered only as an excuse for taking land." Use evidence from two different years in the passage and acknowledge one other motive for expansion.

ANSWER KEY

Beliefs Across Borders

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HOS.6c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Nazi racial beliefs, circle actions that crossed borders, and draw arrows from beliefs to the actions or consequences they helped shape. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did claims about racial unity help Nazi leaders justify taking territory in 1938? What happened to Jews in newly controlled territory?	**Nazi leaders claimed Germans should live under one state, using that belief to justify taking Austria and the Sudetenland. Jews faced persecution under Nazi rule.**
2	How did Nazi beliefs about Slavic peoples and Jews shape German plans for occupied Poland?	**Nazi officials took land for German settlement, expelled many Polish residents, and attacked Polish leaders. They forced Jews into ghettos.**
3	How did antisemitism shape both the conduct of the 1941 invasion and later policies across occupied Europe?	**During the invasion of the Soviet Union, German forces and mobile killing units shot Jewish civilians. Later, Nazi leaders organized deportations of Jews from across occupied Europe to killing centers.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say racial beliefs were the only influence on Nazi foreign policy? Use one example from the passage.	**Other aims mattered too. For example, Nazi leaders sought land, food, and other resources when they invaded the Soviet Union.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The claim misses how Nazi beliefs affected people after borders changed. In 1938, Hitler used the idea of uniting Germans to justify taking Austria, where Jews then faced persecution. In 1941, the invasion of the Soviet Union brought mass shootings of Jewish civilians by German forces and mobile killing units. These actions show that antisemitism shaped occupation, not just arguments before an invasion. Nazi leaders also sought land and resources, so ideology was not the only motive, but it shaped how they treated people they conquered.

Accept different supported evaluations if students use evidence from two distinct years and identify a nonideological motive. Look for a distinction between beliefs used to justify expansion and beliefs shaping actions in occupied territory.