Choices Under Pressure

How German Jews responded to exclusion, 1933 to 1939

SS24.HOS.7d "Assess how German Jews reacted to increasing exclusion and isolation in German society between 1933 and 1939 and describe the strategies they employed both to leave Germany and to enlist help from non-Jews in Germany."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two responses to exclusion, circle two obstacles to leaving Germany, and put a star beside two ways German Jews sought help from non-Jews. Use your marks to consider what each response could and could not do.

Seeking Safety and Support

1. When the Nazis took power in 1933, they urged customers to boycott Jewish shops and pushed Jews out of many public jobs. Some German Jews tried to keep their businesses open and relied on Jewish organizations for schooling, aid, and community life. Others began planning to leave. Responses differed by age, money, and family ties. Leaving a home built over generations was painful, and in 1933 many still hoped the restrictions would end.

2. After the 1935 Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of citizenship and banned marriage between Jews and people classified as having "German or related blood," exclusion grew deeper. Families seeking to emigrate needed passports and permission to enter another country. Foreign visa limits, fees, and Nazi restrictions on taking money abroad made departure difficult. Some sought relatives overseas who could provide support or paperwork. In 1938, Nazi authorities forced many Jews to register property, adding another way to control what they owned.

3. German Jews also asked non-Jewish Germans for help. A trusted neighbor might buy food when a Jewish family was turned away, or a former colleague might write a reference to help someone seek work abroad. After the November 1938 attacks on synagogues, homes, and shops, some non-Jews offered temporary shelter. Such help varied, and fear of Nazi punishment kept others from helping. Neither a neighbor's aid nor an application to leave could guarantee safety as persecution intensified.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might a family have kept its business open in 1933 rather than immediately trying to leave?

2. How could relatives overseas help a family trying to leave, and why might departure still be difficult?

3. How could a non-Jewish German help a Jewish family, and what might limit that help?

4. How did the responses described in the passage reflect the worsening exclusion from 1933 to 1938?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief, historically grounded account of decisions a fictional German Jewish family might weigh in late 1938. Include one step toward leaving Germany, one request for help from a non-Jew in Germany, and a limit of each; do not claim either ensured safety.

Choices Under Pressure

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two responses to exclusion, circle two obstacles to leaving Germany, and put a star beside two ways German Jews sought help from non-Jews. Use your marks to consider what each response could and could not do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might a family have kept its business open in 1933 rather than immediately trying to leave?	**Leaving a longtime home was painful, and many still hoped the restrictions would end.**
2	How could relatives overseas help a family trying to leave, and why might departure still be difficult?	**Relatives could provide support or paperwork, but visa limits, fees, and restrictions on taking money abroad could still block departure.**
3	How could a non-Jewish German help a Jewish family, and what might limit that help?	**A neighbor could buy food or offer shelter, but help varied, and fear of Nazi punishment kept some people from helping.**
4	How did the responses described in the passage reflect the worsening exclusion from 1933 to 1938?	**Some initially kept businesses open and hoped restrictions would end. As exclusion deepened, families sought ways to emigrate and, after the November 1938 attacks, some sought temporary shelter.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In late 1938, the family might ask relatives overseas for paperwork to support a visa application. Even with their relatives' help, foreign visa limits and restrictions on taking money abroad could prevent them from leaving. After the November attacks, they might ask a trusted non-Jewish neighbor for temporary shelter. The neighbor might refuse out of fear, and shelter would not end the laws excluding the family from German society. The family would have to weigh uncertain options under growing danger.

Accept other responses grounded in the passage that explain both a strategy and its limits. Do not require students to suggest that all German Jews made the same choices.