News and Closed Doors

Jewish refugees, public awareness, and responses to Nazi persecution

SS24.HOS.9 "Describe how Jewish immigration was perceived and restricted by various nations from 1933 to 1939.* 9a Describe the difficulties European Jewish refugees faced when attempting to emigrate to the United States, Canada..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two barriers Jewish refugees faced. Circle two kinds of news Americans could read, and number two different responses to persecution.

What People Knew, What Nations Did

1. In 1939, the ship St. Louis carried more than 900 Jewish refugees toward Cuba. Cuba allowed only a few to land. Appeals for entry to the United States and Canada failed, and the ship returned to Europe. U.S. immigration quotas, long waits, and requirements to prove financial support blocked many other applicants. Canada admitted very few Jewish refugees. Latin American countries varied: some offered refuge, but others tightened visa rules or turned people away amid economic fears and antisemitism.

2. People in the United States did not have to wait for the war to hear about Nazi persecution. American newspapers reported the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which stripped Jews of citizenship, and the violent attacks of November 1938, known as Kristallnacht. Reports described burned synagogues, smashed shops, and arrests. During World War II, news of mass killings also reached Americans, especially by 1942. Still, reports were uneven, some readers doubted the scale of the crimes, and knowing about persecution did not mean supporting more refugees.

3. Alabamians received many of the same newspaper reports as other Americans. Some Alabama Jewish congregations raised money to help people escaping Nazi persecution. Their aid could not change federal immigration quotas. Other residents worried about jobs during the Depression, and some held prejudices against immigrants and Jews. These different reactions show why a report of violence did not guarantee an open door. To judge public awareness, separate the information people could find from what each person believed or chose to do.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did barriers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America differ?

2. What did reports of Kristallnacht let American readers know, and what could those reports not guarantee?

3. How did Alabama responses show the difference between offering help and changing immigration policy?

4. How does the St. Louis show that sympathy for refugees did not always lead to permission to enter a country?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label correcting the claim, "Americans knew nothing about Nazi persecution." Include one news detail, one barrier refugees faced, and one Alabama response; explain why awareness did not always lead to admission.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two barriers Jewish refugees faced. Circle two kinds of news Americans could read, and number two different responses to persecution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did barriers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America differ?	**The United States had quotas, waits, and financial requirements. Canada admitted very few Jewish refugees. Latin American policies varied, but some countries tightened visa rules or turned refugees away.**
2	What did reports of Kristallnacht let American readers know, and what could those reports not guarantee?	**Readers could learn about attacks on synagogues and shops and the arrests of Jews. The reports did not guarantee that readers would support admitting refugees.**
3	How did Alabama responses show the difference between offering help and changing immigration policy?	**Some Jewish congregations raised money to help refugees, but their aid could not change federal immigration quotas.**
4	How does the St. Louis show that sympathy for refugees did not always lead to permission to enter a country?	**Cuba allowed only a few passengers to land, and appeals to the United States and Canada failed. The ship had to return to Europe.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

American newspapers reported the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, so information about Nazi persecution was available. Yet U.S. immigration quotas and financial requirements blocked many Jewish refugees. In Alabama, some Jewish congregations raised money to help people escaping persecution. Knowing about the danger did not mean that people supported changing admission rules.

Accept other accurate details from the passage. For the museum label, look for a clear distinction between available news and action, not a claim that every American read or believed the reports.