# Doors to Safety

Barriers facing Jewish refugees seeking entry to the Americas

**SS24.HOS.9a** "Describe the difficulties European Jewish refugees faced when attempting to emigrate to the United States, Canada, and Latin America during the 1930s and 1940s.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Circle each destination named in the passage and underline barriers to entering it. Number two examples showing why plans or paperwork did not guarantee admission.

### A Journey Was Not Enough

1 Imagine a Jewish family in Berlin in 1938, trying to leave as Nazi persecution grows. The United States offered a possible destination, but its immigration law set annual limits by country of origin. Germany's quota could not accommodate everyone seeking entry. Applicants often waited for a visa and had to gather passports, birth records, and evidence of financial support, sometimes from sponsors. U.S. officials could reject people they believed might need public assistance. Some refugees struggled to secure documents while Nazi authorities restricted their rights and took their property. After the war began in Europe in 1939, travel routes became harder to arrange.

2 Canada also offered little room for Jewish refugees. During the Great Depression, its government sharply restricted immigration, and antisemitism influenced decisions about who could enter. Officials favored certain kinds of newcomers, such as people expected to farm, rather than opening a broad route for families fleeing Nazi persecution. In 1939, the ship St. Louis carried more than 900 Jewish passengers away from Germany. When Cuba refused most passengers permission to land, people appealed to Canada to accept them, but Canadian officials declined. The ship returned to Europe, where several countries took in its passengers. A voyage toward safety did not guarantee admission.

3 Latin America was not a single doorway: each country set its own entry rules. In Cuba, most St. Louis passengers had purchased landing permits, but Cuban officials refused to honor them after changing the rules. A paid document and a ship ticket were not enough. Other countries demanded visas, proof of funds, or special permits; restrictions and antisemitism could narrow the chances of admission. The Dominican Republic offered to accept Jewish refugees, yet relatively few settled there. Families weighing these destinations faced uneven policies and sudden setbacks, even as Nazi persecution and, later, the war made departure from Europe more urgent.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Describe two barriers a Jewish family might face when trying to enter the United States.

2. How did Canada's immigration policy affect the appeals made for the St. Louis passengers?

3. Why did purchased landing permits fail to secure entry to Cuba for most St. Louis passengers?

4. How did the Dominican Republic's approach differ from Canada's, and what limit does the passage note?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write five or six sentences to a fictional Jewish family seeking safety in 1939. Explain one obstacle in the United States, one in Canada, and one in Cuba or the Dominican Republic, then explain why a ship ticket alone could not ensure safety.

# Doors to Safety



## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each destination named in the passage and underline barriers to entering it. Number two examples showing why plans or paperwork did not guarantee admission. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Describe two barriers a Jewish family might face when trying to enter the United States. | **Annual limits by country could delay or prevent entry. Applicants also needed a visa and documents showing identity and financial support, and officials could reject those they thought might need public assistance.** |
| 2 | How did Canada's immigration policy affect the appeals made for the St. Louis passengers? | **Canada sharply restricted immigration and did not open a broad route for Jewish refugees. Its officials declined appeals to admit the passengers.** |
| 3 | Why did purchased landing permits fail to secure entry to Cuba for most St. Louis passengers? | **Cuban officials changed the rules and refused to honor most passengers' permits.** |
| 4 | How did the Dominican Republic's approach differ from Canada's, and what limit does the passage note? | **The Dominican Republic offered to accept Jewish refugees, while Canada declined appeals to admit the St. Louis passengers. Relatively few refugees settled in the Dominican Republic.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The United States limits immigration by country, and you may have to wait for a visa and show that you can support yourselves. Canada sharply restricts immigration and declined appeals to admit the St. Louis passengers. Cuba changed its rules and refused to honor most passengers' landing permits, even though they had been purchased. The Dominican Republic offered to accept refugees, but relatively few settled there. A ship ticket alone cannot protect you if officials refuse to let you enter.

Accept other passage-supported barriers, including difficulty obtaining documents and changing travel routes. For the final response, look for a distinct obstacle tied to each required destination and an explanation of why travel plans did not guarantee admission.