Doors to Safety

U.S. policy and public attitudes toward refugees from Nazi persecution

SS24.US2.6b "Critique the evolving United States policy and public attitudes toward Nazi Germany and the growing refugee crisis as the Holocaust began."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three U.S. policy choices, circle two signs of public attitudes, and place a question mark beside one choice you think deserves criticism.

Concern Without Entry

1. In 1933, as Nazis drove Jewish people from jobs and public life, some families sought safety in the United States. American immigration rules, shaped by a 1924 law, limited entry by country of origin. Officials could issue visas within those limits, but paperwork and proof that newcomers would not need public aid often delayed applicants. Many Americans criticized Nazi persecution, yet federal leaders did not seek to expand immigration quotas. For a family trying to leave Germany, sympathy from abroad meant little without a visa. This gap between words and admission policy raises a question: whose safety did the rules protect?

2. After the violent Nazi attacks of November 1938, known as Kristallnacht, calls to help refugees grew louder. Religious groups and other advocates urged the United States to admit more people. Yet polls found that most Americans opposed increasing immigration, amid economic fears, antisemitism, and suspicion of foreigners. At a 1938 international meeting in Évian, France, U.S. representatives expressed concern but offered no major increase in admissions. In 1939, Congress considered a bill to admit 20,000 German refugee children outside existing quotas; it failed. The clash between rescue appeals and resistance mattered because children facing danger remained subject to strict entry rules.

3. In 1939, the ship *St. Louis* carried Jewish refugees toward Cuba. After Cuba refused most passengers, the United States would not admit them without valid visas. The ship returned to Europe, where several countries accepted its passengers; some were later murdered under Nazi rule. By late 1942, U.S. officials publicly confirmed reports of the Nazi plan to murder Europe's Jews. Newspapers reported mass murder, and rescue advocates pressed officials to act. In 1944, Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board, which supported rescue efforts. Judging this record requires weighing stated concern against the chances people actually had to survive.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did criticism of Nazi persecution conflict with U.S. immigration policy in the 1930s? Explain one effect on refugees.

2. What does the response to Kristallnacht reveal about competing public attitudes toward admitting refugees?

3. How does the *St. Louis* episode test the value of U.S. expressions of concern for refugees?

4. What changed in the U.S. response between late 1942 and 1944, and why might a critic call the change late?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word advisory note dated early 1943 to a U.S. senator. Recommend one specific refugee-policy change, address one likely public objection from the passage, and use two historical examples from different paragraphs to explain your recommendation. Do not refer to events after early 1943.

ANSWER KEY

Doors to Safety

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.6b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three U.S. policy choices, circle two signs of public attitudes, and place a question mark beside one choice you think deserves criticism. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did criticism of Nazi persecution conflict with U.S. immigration policy in the 1930s? Explain one effect on refugees.	**Many Americans criticized Nazi persecution, but federal leaders did not expand quotas. Refugees could still be delayed or denied visas, limiting their chances to escape.**
2	What does the response to Kristallnacht reveal about competing public attitudes toward admitting refugees?	**Religious groups and other advocates called for more admissions, while polls found that most Americans opposed increasing immigration.**
3	How does the *St. Louis* episode test the value of U.S. expressions of concern for refugees?	**Expressions of concern did not secure entry for the passengers. The United States required valid visas, so the ship returned to Europe, where some passengers were later murdered.**
4	What changed in the U.S. response between late 1942 and 1944, and why might a critic call the change late?	**After officials confirmed reports of mass murder, Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board in 1944 to support rescue. A critic could argue that earlier entry restrictions had already limited refugees' chances to escape.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Senator, I urge you to increase refugee admissions and simplify visa paperwork for people fleeing Nazi persecution. In 1939, Congress failed to pass a bill that would have admitted 20,000 German refugee children beyond existing quotas. That failure limited children's escape options. When the *St. Louis* reached the Americas, the United States refused its passengers entry without valid visas, and some were later murdered. Some voters fear that newcomers will need public aid. Sponsorship could address that worry without treating missing paperwork as a reason to leave people in danger. After officials confirmed reports of mass murder, delay is harder to defend.

Accept other supported critiques that distinguish public attitudes from government policy. Do not accept claims that all Americans opposed refugees or that all *St. Louis* passengers were murdered.