Camps and Their Roles

Read how different camps functioned within Nazi persecution.

SS24.WH.11c "Explain the roles of different types of camps in the Holocaust, including slave labor, transit, concentration camps, and killing centers."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a phrase that explains the main role of each of the four camp types, then circle evidence that one site served more than one role.

Different Roles, Connected Sites

1. In Nazi-occupied Europe, a train station could become a step in a system of persecution. Nazi authorities and their collaborators forced Jewish people from their homes and sent them to camps. Roma people and other targeted groups were also imprisoned and killed. A transit camp was a holding point before deportation to another location. People might wait there in crowded, unsafe conditions while officials arranged trains. Westerbork in the Netherlands served this role: many Jewish prisoners were sent from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Sobibor. A transit camp's main role was moving prisoners onward, not providing a safe place to stay.

2. Concentration camps held people whom the Nazi regime imprisoned without fair trials. Guards controlled daily life through violence, hunger, and harsh rules. At Dachau, established in 1933, prisoners included political opponents and, later, people targeted for other reasons. Nazi authorities also created slave labor camps, where prisoners were forced to work for factories, farms, or construction projects without freedom or adequate food. Some concentration camps had labor sites attached, so these categories could overlap. At the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, prisoners were forced to build weapons in underground tunnels. Exhaustion, disease, and abuse killed many prisoners; forced labor was another form of persecution.

3. Killing centers had a different primary purpose: the systematic murder of people, especially Jews. At Treblinka in occupied Poland, Nazis killed most people shortly after arrival, often in gas chambers. Auschwitz-Birkenau was both a concentration camp complex and a killing center. There, guards selected some arrivals for forced labor and murdered many others. These examples show why camp labels describe functions rather than separate, unchanging boxes. A person could be held at a transit camp, deported to a killing center, or forced to labor at a concentration camp. No single route describes everyone's experience, but each kind of camp served Nazi persecution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the main role of a transit camp differ from that of a killing center?

2. How did a slave labor camp's role differ from a concentration camp's broader role?

3. How did Auschwitz-Birkenau serve more than one camp role?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say that everyone sent from a transit camp went on to forced labor? Use evidence from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 95 word museum label for a visitor who thinks every Nazi camp served the same purpose. Explain the main role of all four camp types, include one historically accurate example from the passage, and explain how roles could overlap. Use your own wording.

ANSWER KEY

Camps and Their Roles

GRADE 9 · SS24.WH.11c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a phrase that explains the main role of each of the four camp types, then circle evidence that one site served more than one role. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the main role of a transit camp differ from that of a killing center?	**A transit camp held people before deportation elsewhere; a killing center's primary purpose was systematic murder.**
2	How did a slave labor camp's role differ from a concentration camp's broader role?	**A slave labor camp forced prisoners to work. A concentration camp imprisoned people under brutal conditions and could include forced labor sites.**
3	How did Auschwitz-Birkenau serve more than one camp role?	**It was a concentration camp complex and a killing center. Guards selected some arrivals for forced labor and murdered many others.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say that everyone sent from a transit camp went on to forced labor? Use evidence from the passage.	**Westerbork sent prisoners to Auschwitz-Birkenau or Sobibor. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, guards selected some arrivals for labor but murdered many others; Treblinka shows that killing centers murdered most arrivals.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nazi camps did not all have the same primary purpose. Transit camps held people before deportation to other places. Concentration camps imprisoned people under brutal conditions, while slave labor camps forced prisoners to work for Nazi projects. Killing centers were sites of mass murder. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, guards murdered many arrivals and selected others for forced labor, showing that a site could serve more than one function. These labels describe what authorities did at a place, not a single path followed by every prisoner.

Accept descriptions that distinguish each camp type's main function while recognizing that functions could overlap. Students should not suggest that all prisoners followed the same route.