Witnesses and Justice

Trace the Holocaust through accounts and world responses

WH.6.5 "Examine the causes, course, and effects of the Holocaust, including accounts of camp victims, survivors, liberators, and perpetrators, and summarize world responses, including the Nuremberg Trials."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two causes of the Holocaust, circle one detail from each of a victim, survivor, perpetrator, and liberator account, and number two different world responses to Nazi crimes.

What the Accounts Reveal

1. In 1933, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took power in Germany. They blamed Jews for the country's problems and turned prejudice into law, stripping Jewish people of rights and property. Nazi rule also targeted Roma, people with disabilities, and others it labeled undesirable. During World War II, German forces occupied much of Europe, bringing millions more Jews under Nazi control. Officials forced Jewish families into crowded ghettos, then sent many by train to killing centers in occupied Poland. This organized persecution grew into the Holocaust, the Nazi genocide that murdered about six million Jews.

2. At Auschwitz, Nazi officials selected arriving prisoners for forced labor or immediate murder. Those kept alive faced hunger, disease, and violence. Zalmen Gradowski, a Jewish prisoner later killed at Auschwitz, secretly wrote about the murders he witnessed there. His account survived because he buried his writings. Survivor Primo Levi later described the exhaustion and loss of dignity he experienced as a prisoner in the Auschwitz camp system. Rudolf Höss, the former Auschwitz commandant, testified after the war about the camp's mass killings. Read together, these accounts show what prisoners endured and how officials organized the crimes.

3. In April 1945, U.S. troops entered Ohrdruf, a Nazi concentration camp in Germany. General Dwight D. Eisenhower visited and urged others to see the evidence of Nazi crimes for themselves. Liberation did not erase survivors' hunger, illness, or lost families. During the war, many governments had refused Jewish refugees or failed to stop the killing. Afterward, aid groups helped displaced survivors, while the Nuremberg Trials prosecuted leading Nazi officials in 1945 and 1946. The trials used documents and testimony to expose crimes and hold individuals responsible. In 1948, countries adopted the Genocide Convention, promising to prevent and punish genocide.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Nazi laws and wartime expansion work together to make mass deportation possible?

2. What do Gradowski's and Höss's accounts reveal from different positions about the killings at Auschwitz?

3. How does Levi's account complicate the idea that liberation ended survivors' suffering?

4. How did responses to Nazi crimes differ during the war and after it? Give one example from each period.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word museum label for a display about Gradowski's writings and Eisenhower's visit to Ohrdruf. Explain how Nazi policies led to camps, compare what these two accounts reveal, identify an effect on survivors, and judge how one postwar response addressed the crimes.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two causes of the Holocaust, circle one detail from each of a victim, survivor, perpetrator, and liberator account, and number two different world responses to Nazi crimes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Nazi laws and wartime expansion work together to make mass deportation possible?	**Nazi laws stripped Jews of rights and property. Wartime expansion brought millions more Jews under Nazi control, allowing officials to force families into ghettos and deport many to killing centers.**
2	What do Gradowski's and Höss's accounts reveal from different positions about the killings at Auschwitz?	**Gradowski recorded murders he witnessed as a prisoner. Höss, the former commandant, testified about mass killings carried out at the camp.**
3	How does Levi's account complicate the idea that liberation ended survivors' suffering?	**Levi described exhaustion and loss of dignity during imprisonment. The passage explains that survivors still faced hunger, illness, and the loss of family after liberation.**
4	How did responses to Nazi crimes differ during the war and after it? Give one example from each period.	**During the war, many governments refused Jewish refugees. Afterward, the Nuremberg Trials prosecuted leading Nazi officials. Other supported postwar examples include aid for displaced survivors and the Genocide Convention.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Nazi leaders turned hatred of Jews into laws that took away rights, then used wartime control of Europe to deport families to camps. Gradowski's buried writing records murders from inside Auschwitz, while Eisenhower's visit to Ohrdruf shows how liberators confronted evidence of Nazi crimes. Their different positions help reveal both the killing and its discovery. Liberation did not restore survivors' lost families or health. The Nuremberg Trials used testimony and documents to prosecute leaders, a response that held individuals responsible but could not undo those losses.

Accept answers that accurately connect policies and wartime control to deportation, distinguish the witnesses' positions, and explain a supported world response. The museum label may judge a different postwar response if it supports that judgment with passage evidence.