The False Foundation

Trace how false racial claims shaped Nazi policy.

TOT.C.5.1 "Explain the Nazi concept of an Aryan race and how eugenics and pseudoscience racism provided a foundation for Nazi racial beliefs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the Nazi claim about "Aryans," circle one false claim from eugenics and one from pseudoscientific racism, and number two policies those ideas helped justify.

A Claim Made to Look Scientific

1 In Nazi Germany, an ancestry form could affect whether a person could marry or hold certain jobs. Nazi officials called their preferred group the "Aryan race," meaning people they imagined as having pure Germanic ancestry. They treated Jewish people as a separate, inferior race, though Jewish identity is not a biological race. "Aryan" had older uses linked to languages, not a scientific category for ranking humans. No distinct biological "Aryan race" exists.

2 Eugenics was the idea that a population could be "improved" by controlling who could have children. Supporters wrongly treated complex human traits, such as intelligence, as simple inherited qualities. Eugenics had followers outside Germany before the Nazis took power. Nazi leaders used its language of heredity to justify forced sterilization of people they labeled "unfit." Their goal was not health for all, but control over whose lives and families counted.

3 Pseudoscientific racism gave these beliefs a false appearance of proof. Researchers serving Nazi policy measured features such as skull shape and claimed they revealed a person's worth or ancestry. Such measurements cannot sort people into superior and inferior races. Nazi officials combined those false claims with ancestry records to classify people under racial laws. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of citizenship and banned marriages between Jews and people classified as having "German or related blood."

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Nazis use "Aryan" as a racial claim, and why is that claim false?

2. How did the eugenics claim about inherited traits support forced sterilization?

3. Why did skull measurements appear to support Nazi racial beliefs, and why was that support false?

4. How did ancestry records and false racial claims work together under the Nuremberg Laws?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum is preparing a label for a replica Nazi ancestry form. Write four sentences explaining what the form assumed about ancestry, how eugenics and pseudoscientific racism supported that assumption, one policy it helped justify, and why its racial categories were false.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the Nazi claim about "Aryans," circle one false claim from eugenics and one from pseudoscientific racism, and number two policies those ideas helped justify. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Nazis use "Aryan" as a racial claim, and why is that claim false?	**Nazis used it for a supposedly superior group with pure Germanic ancestry. There is no distinct biological Aryan race.**
2	How did the eugenics claim about inherited traits support forced sterilization?	**Nazis claimed that people they labeled "unfit" would pass on undesirable traits, so they used eugenics to justify preventing them from having children.**
3	Why did skull measurements appear to support Nazi racial beliefs, and why was that support false?	**The measurements appeared to provide physical proof of racial rankings, but skull shape cannot reveal a person's worth or sort people into superior and inferior races.**
4	How did ancestry records and false racial claims work together under the Nuremberg Laws?	**Officials used ancestry records to classify people by false racial categories. The laws then denied Jews citizenship and banned certain marriages.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The form assumed that ancestry could place people into an "Aryan" group and supposedly inferior groups. Eugenics supported this idea by wrongly treating complex traits as simple qualities passed from parents to children. Pseudoscientific racism added false claims that physical measurements proved racial differences in human worth. Officials used such categories to enforce the Nuremberg Laws, even though no distinct biological "Aryan race" exists.

Accept explanations that connect a false claim about inherited or measurable racial differences to a specific Nazi policy. Students should identify the categories as Nazi inventions, not valid biological groups.