Justice After Atrocity

How the Nuremberg Trials shaped international accountability

TOT.C.7.10 "Analyze the international community's efforts to hold perpetrators responsible for their involvement in the Shoah (Holocaust) including the purpose and outcomes of the Nuremberg Trials as they related to crimes against humanity, genocide..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the tribunal's purpose and one outcome, circle two limits on what it could try, and number the IMT and the UN's later action in time order to track how international accountability developed.

What Could Nuremberg Judge?

1. In 1945, Allied investigators gathered Nazi orders, photographs, and testimony about the murder of Europe's Jews. The Shoah had killed about six million Jews. The United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union created the International Military Tribunal (IMT) at Nuremberg to prosecute major leaders of Nazi Germany. Rather than treating mass murder as an unavoidable part of war, the Allies sought to assign responsibility to named individuals. The tribunal's charter gave judges authority over war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity, including murder and persecution of civilians.

2. At the trial, prosecutors used documents and witnesses to connect leaders to organized persecution and killing. The IMT could judge crimes against humanity only when they were linked to war or another crime within its charter. This rule limited its power to judge earlier atrocities without such a link. Prosecutors used the word genocide to describe the planned destruction of groups, especially Jews, but genocide was not a separate crime in the IMT charter. In 1948, the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention, which defined genocide as an international crime and required countries to prevent and punish it.

3. In 1946, the IMT convicted 19 defendants and acquitted three; sentences for those convicted included prison and death. Its judgments rejected the claim that following a superior's orders automatically removed personal responsibility. Yet jurisdiction was narrow: the IMT tried major European Axis criminals, not every participant in the Shoah, and Allied actions were not put on trial there. Later courts in Germany and elsewhere prosecuted additional perpetrators, though many were never charged. The Nuremberg proceedings established an influential model of individual accountability while exposing a continuing challenge: international justice depends on which courts have authority and which suspects can be brought before them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the Allies create the IMT instead of treating mass murder as an unavoidable part of war?

2. How did the IMT charter limit which crimes against humanity the judges could hear?

3. How did the treatment of genocide change between the IMT trial and the UN's action in 1948?

4. What do the IMT's verdicts and the people it did not try show about both the reach and the limits of its work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are helping write the rules for a new international court. In 5 to 7 sentences, propose two rules about which crimes or people it can try and one way to reduce selective justice; use at least two facts about Nuremberg to explain your choices.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the tribunal's purpose and one outcome, circle two limits on what it could try, and number the IMT and the UN's later action in time order to track how international accountability developed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the Allies create the IMT instead of treating mass murder as an unavoidable part of war?	**They wanted to hold named Nazi leaders personally responsible for crimes, including the murder and persecution of civilians.**
2	How did the IMT charter limit which crimes against humanity the judges could hear?	**The crimes had to be linked to war or another crime within the charter, limiting the tribunal's ability to judge earlier atrocities without that link.**
3	How did the treatment of genocide change between the IMT trial and the UN's action in 1948?	**Prosecutors used the word genocide, but it was not a separate crime in the IMT charter. The 1948 Genocide Convention defined it as an international crime and required countries to prevent and punish it.**
4	What do the IMT's verdicts and the people it did not try show about both the reach and the limits of its work?	**The IMT convicted 19 defendants, showing that major leaders could be held personally responsible. It did not try every participant in the Shoah or put Allied actions on trial, so its reach was limited.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A new court should be able to prosecute genocide even when the killing is not connected to a war. At Nuremberg, genocide was not a separate crime in the charter, and crimes against humanity needed a link to war or another charter crime. The court should also be able to try leaders and lower-level organizers from every side of a conflict. The IMT focused on major European Axis criminals, leaving many other participants outside its reach. To reduce selective justice, judges should be appointed by countries that did not fight in the conflict. Independent judges could apply the same rules to all suspects.

Accept different proposed court rules if the response contains two clear jurisdiction rules, one measure against selective justice, and accurate explanations tied to at least two Nuremberg facts. For the marking job, students may choose different outcomes or jurisdictional limits supported by the passage.