Camps and Their Purposes

Read how the Nazi camp system changed and why camp types could overlap.

TOT.C.7.7 "Describe the origins, purpose, and conditions associated with various types of camps, including forced labor camps, concentration camps, transit camps, and death camps (e.g., Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, Treblinka)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline clues about when each camp type emerged, circle its purpose, and box words describing prisoners' conditions.

A Changing Camp System

1 The Nazi camp system changed as Nazi Germany expanded its persecution across Europe. After taking power in 1933, the Nazis opened concentration camps to imprison people they labeled enemies, including political opponents. Later, Jews and other targeted groups were imprisoned there too. Guards held prisoners without fair trials in crowded, harsh conditions. A concentration camp was a broad category of imprisonment, not a single kind of work site. As war spread, camp locations and functions multiplied.

2 During World War II, the Nazis used forced labor camps to extract work for factories, construction, and other projects. Prisoners faced long hours, hunger, disease, and violence; many died. Some concentration camps also forced prisoners to work, so these categories could overlap. Transit camps served a different immediate purpose: they held people before deportation elsewhere. At Westerbork in the occupied Netherlands, prisoners waited under guard for trains that carried many of them to concentration camps or killing centers in occupied Poland.

3 Beginning in 1941, Nazi leaders built killing centers, often called death camps, to murder Jews on a vast scale as part of the Holocaust. Sobibor and Treblinka, in German-occupied Poland, were built chiefly for mass murder; most arrivals were killed soon after leaving the trains. Auschwitz-Birkenau combined mass killing with prisoner confinement and forced labor. Guards selected some arrivals for work and sent others to gas chambers. These differences show why a camp's label alone cannot describe every prisoner's experience.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the Nazis first open concentration camps, and what conditions did prisoners face?

2. How could a concentration camp also function as a forced labor camp?

3. How did the immediate purpose of a transit camp differ from that of a forced labor camp? Use Westerbork as an example.

4. How did Auschwitz-Birkenau differ from Sobibor and Treblinka in purpose and prisoners' experiences?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label correcting the claim, "All Nazi camps served the same purpose." Compare the purposes and conditions of at least three camp types, show how the system changed over time, and explain why one camp could fit more than one type.

Camps and Their Purposes

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline clues about when each camp type emerged, circle its purpose, and box words describing prisoners' conditions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the Nazis first open concentration camps, and what conditions did prisoners face?	**After taking power in 1933, the Nazis opened them to imprison people they labeled enemies. Prisoners were held without fair trials in crowded, harsh conditions.**
2	How could a concentration camp also function as a forced labor camp?	**Some concentration camps forced prisoners to work. Forced labor served Nazi factories, construction, or other projects under dangerous conditions.**
3	How did the immediate purpose of a transit camp differ from that of a forced labor camp? Use Westerbork as an example.	**Transit camps held people before deportation. At Westerbork, prisoners waited under guard for trains; forced labor camps extracted prisoners' work.**
4	How did Auschwitz-Birkenau differ from Sobibor and Treblinka in purpose and prisoners' experiences?	**Sobibor and Treblinka were built chiefly for mass murder, and most arrivals were killed soon after arrival. Auschwitz-Birkenau combined mass killing with confinement and forced labor.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After 1933, Nazi concentration camps imprisoned people labeled enemies, often without fair trials and in harsh conditions. During World War II, forced labor camps exploited prisoners through exhausting work, while transit camps such as Westerbork held people under guard before deportation. Beginning in 1941, killing centers such as Treblinka were used for mass murder, with most arrivals killed soon after reaching the camp. These labels could overlap: Auschwitz-Birkenau was a killing center where some prisoners were also confined and forced to work.

Accept accurate comparisons that distinguish imprisonment, forced labor, deportation, and mass murder. The museum label should include four sentences, at least three camp types, change over time, conditions, and a valid example of overlap.