Words and Rescue

How the U.S. government responded to news of the Shoah

USH.C.5.3.A "Describe the United States of America government's reactions to news of the Shoah during the war including condemnation of Nazi genocide of Jews and creation of the War Refugee Board."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the U.S. government's public response to the news, circle actions taken to help people in danger, and number these reactions in the order they happened. Use your marks to compare what the government said with what it did.

From Condemnation to Rescue

1. In August 1942, a U.S. diplomat in Switzerland passed on a report that Nazi Germany planned to murder Europe's Jews. U.S. officials did not immediately make the report public, in part because they sought confirmation. By November, the State Department had confirmed reports of systematic killing. This genocide is known as the Shoah. The news posed two different questions for the U.S. government: What should it say about the crimes, and what should it do for people still in danger? Those questions mattered because a public statement could name the crime, but it could not by itself open a border or move a person to safety.

2. On December 17, 1942, the United States joined other Allied governments in a public declaration condemning the Nazi government's "bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination" of Jews in Europe. The declaration described Jews being taken from occupied countries and killed. It promised that those responsible would not escape punishment. This was an official condemnation, not a rescue plan. During 1943, U.S. agencies also faced criticism for barriers that slowed refugee admissions and for not doing more to aid people trapped in Nazi-controlled areas. A government could denounce mass murder while still leaving urgent questions about rescue unanswered.

3. In January 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board after Treasury officials urged stronger action. The board brought together the Treasury, State, and War Departments to support efforts to rescue people threatened by the Nazis. It worked with aid groups, sent funds to relief operations, and backed the mission of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, whose protective documents and safe houses helped Jews in Budapest. These steps offered a different government reaction: organizing help rather than only speaking against the killings. The board began late in the war, however, and could not save everyone at risk.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did U.S. officials react to the report received in August 1942, and what changed by November?

2. What did the December 1942 declaration say about the killing of Jews, and what did it promise?

3. Why did the 1942 declaration leave questions about the U.S. response unanswered?

4. How did creating the War Refugee Board change the U.S. response? Give one example of its work.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 90 word museum label answering a visitor who asks, "Was the U.S. response to news of the Shoah only a public statement?" Explain the December 1942 declaration, the January 1944 War Refugee Board, one example of the board's work, and a limit of the response.

ANSWER KEY

Words and Rescue

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.5.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the U.S. government's public response to the news, circle actions taken to help people in danger, and number these reactions in the order they happened. Use your marks to compare what the government said with what it did. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did U.S. officials react to the report received in August 1942, and what changed by November?	**They did not immediately make the report public while they sought confirmation. By November, the State Department had confirmed reports of systematic killing.**
2	What did the December 1942 declaration say about the killing of Jews, and what did it promise?	**It condemned the Nazi extermination of Jews and promised that those responsible would not escape punishment.**
3	Why did the 1942 declaration leave questions about the U.S. response unanswered?	**It condemned the killings but was not a rescue plan. People still faced danger, and U.S. agencies were criticized for barriers to refugee admissions and insufficient aid.**
4	How did creating the War Refugee Board change the U.S. response? Give one example of its work.	**It organized rescue and relief efforts, rather than only condemning the killings. For example, it backed Raoul Wallenberg's mission to help Jews in Budapest.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The U.S. response to news of the Shoah was not one single action. In December 1942, the United States joined Allied governments in condemning the killing of Jews and promising punishment for those responsible. In January 1944, Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board to organize rescue and relief. The board supported Raoul Wallenberg's work to protect Jews in Budapest. This shift from public condemnation to direct aid mattered, but the board began late and could not reach everyone in danger.

Accept accurate descriptions of condemnation, the promise of punishment, and the board's rescue or relief work. For the museum label, look for a distinction between public statements and direct aid, plus a limit supported by the passage.