

The Holocaust

Concentration Camps and Extermination Camps

Before 1942, most Jewish people who were arrested in Germany were sent to concentration camps. In 1942-1943, they were often sent directly to death camps. Concentration camps were places where people were forced to work. Extermination camps simply killed large numbers of people.

In labor camps, Jewish men and women were forced to work 12 hours a day. They had little food and many became **emaciated**¹. Their houses were overcrowded rooms with bunk beds. The prisoners' only clothing was **rag**s². Many people became sick or too weak to work. Instead of taking care of the sick and weak, the guards killed them.

Some people tried to escape concentration camps. But the camps were fenced in **barbed**³ wire. Men from lookout towers tried to spot people running away. Sometimes the camps were divided into a concentration camp on one side and an extermination camp on the other side. Once prisoners arrived, they were told to form a line. A guard at the front of the line sized each person up. He told them to go to the right or to the left. One way was forced labor for those who seemed young and healthy. The other way was death. At the time, the prisoners did not know what to expect. They were told to prepare for a shower in a huge room. But the room was actually a gas chamber. The guards locked the doors and poisonous gasses killed all of the people in the room.

Nazi Germany had about 22 camps where prisoners were sent. Not all of the victims were Jewish, but most of them were. About 6 million Jewish people were killed in barely five years. They came from many countries, including Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Poland. Concentration camps were the way that Hitler carried out his hatred. This hatred and **prejudice**⁴ itself was at the root of the horror of the Holocaust.

¹ **emaciated**: extremely thin

² **rag**s: shabby, very worn, torn clothing

³ **barbed**: having sharp points that stick out

⁴ **prejudice**: unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group, or a race

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The difference between a “concentration camp” and an “extermination camp” was that
 - a. in concentration camps, the people were automatically killed, and in extermination camps they were forced to work.
 - b. in concentration camps, the people were forced to work, and in extermination camps, they were automatically killed.
 - c. in concentration camps, people concentrated on living, and in extermination camps, people invented ways to exterminate cockroaches and other bugs.
 - d. there is no difference between the two types of camp.

2. All of the following is true about the labor camps *except* that
 - a. the prisoners often became sick and too weak to work.
 - b. sometimes they were divided into a labor camp and an extermination camp.
 - c. some people tried to escape the labor camps.
 - d. their only purpose was to kill the Jewish people in gas chambers.

3. A person in the concentration camps might have described her life as being
 - a. interesting and exciting.
 - b. horrible and difficult.
 - c. run and carefree.
 - d. challenging and worthwhile.

4. The Jewish people who went to the concentration camps came from some of the following countries:
 - a. The United States, Canada, and Japan.
 - b. Mexico, Brazil, and Sweden.
 - c. Belgium, France, and Greece.
 - d. China, Ireland, and Scotland.

5. When prisoners arrived at these camps, they were told to go left or right. They didn’t know it, but the choices were
 - a. the German side or the Jewish side.
 - b. work camps or death.
 - c. work camps or showers.
 - d. showers or bath.

6. Name at least one way that the Germans kept the prisoners from escaping.

7. What was the root or reason for these horrible camps?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ it seems that the majority of the prisoners were Jewish, Hitler also punished people from other countries.

- a. Before
- b. Since
- c. Although
- d. And

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Because Hitler had so much hatred for the Jewish people, he had them sent to either concentration camps or extermination camps throughout Europe.

Who? _____

What? had Jewish people sent to either concentration camps or extermination camps

Where? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** prejudice: unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group, or a race.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 730

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: This passage describes the differences between the concentration and extermination camps, the people who were sent there, and the culture of hatred that permeated Germany during the Holocaust.

1. The main difference between a “concentration camp” and an “extermination camp” was that
 - a. in concentration camps, the people were automatically killed, and in extermination camps they were forced to work.
 - b. in concentration camps, the people were forced to work, and in extermination camps, they were automatically killed.**
 - c. in concentration camps, people concentrated on living, and in extermination camps, people invented ways to exterminate cockroaches and other bugs.
 - d. there is no difference between the two types of camp.
2. All of the following is true about the labor camps *except* that
 - a. the prisoners often became sick and too weak to work.
 - b. sometimes they were divided into a labor camp and an extermination camp.
 - c. some people tried to escape the labor camps.
 - d. their only purpose was to kill the Jewish people in gas chambers.**
3. A person in the concentration camps might have described her life as being
 - a. interesting and exciting.
 - b. horrible and difficult.**
 - c. run and carefree.
 - d. challenging and worthwhile.
4. The Jewish people who went to the concentration camps came from some of the following countries:
 - a. The United States, Canada, and Japan.
 - b. Mexico, Brazil, and Sweden.
 - c. Belgium, France, and Greece.**
 - d. China, Ireland and Scotland.
5. When prisoners arrived at these camps, they were told to go left or right. They didn't know it, but the choices were
 - a. the German side or the Jewish side.

- b. work camps or death.
- c. work camps or showers.
- d. showers or bath.

6. Name at least one way that the Germans kept the prisoners from escaping.

Suggested answer: The Germans kept the prisoners from escaping by keeping them in camps that were fenced in barbed wire. There were lookout towers to spot people who might try to run away. There were many guards. In addition, the prisoners were forced to work and were not given enough food. They were, as a result, weak and thin and probably not strong enough to run away.

7. What was the root or reason for these horrible camps?

Suggested answer: It was the way Hitler could carry out his hatred for certain people, mainly Jewish people.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ it seems that the majority of the prisoners were Jewish, Hitler also punished people from other countries.

- a. Before
- b. Since
- c. **Although**
- d. And

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Because Hitler had so much hatred for the Jewish people, he had them sent to either concentration camps or extermination camps throughout Europe.

Who? **Hitler**

What? had Jewish people sent to either concentration camps or extermination camps

Where? **Europe**

Why? **he had so much hatred for them**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** prejudice: unfriendly feelings directed against an individual, a group, or a race.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.