Nuremberg Laws Handout

1.What was the Reichstag?

2. What was the title of Hitler’s book?

3. What three topics did Hitler discuss in his book?

4. If Hitler outlined his thoughts and plans concerning Jews, why do YOU THINK people were shocked about the Holocaust occurring?

5. What was the German government called following WWI?

6. How did Hitler describe Jews when he spoke to crowds?

7.Who did Hitler particularly appeal to?

8. Why do YOU THINK Hitler appealed to those particular groups?

9.In your own words, what did the Nazis do April 1, 1933?

10. April 7, 1933?

11. May 10, 1933?

12. July 1933?

13. How many and who (what professions) lost their positions in Germany due to Nazi oppression?

14. In the last paragraph, what are the three (rather odd) laws passed regarding Jews?

15. What were the Nuremberg Laws designed to do?

16. Why were they called the Nuremberg Laws?

17. In your own words, what did 1 do?

18. In your own words, what did 2 do?

19. How was it decided who was Jewish?

20. Why, briefly in 1936, were the Nuremberg Laws not enforced?

21. What precipitated in mid-1941 the beginning of the mass extermination of Jews?

Now read the following excerpt concerning Jewish refugees seeking asylum.

This refugee crisis created a dilemma for many nations, including the United States. How would they respond to the refugees’ plight? Would they welcome refugees or refuse them admission?

In July 1938, delegates from 32 nations met in Evian, France, to discuss how to respond to the refugee crisis. Each representative expressed regret about the current troubles of refugees, but most said that they were unable to increase their country’s immigration quotas, citing the worldwide economic depression. The representatives spoke in general terms, not about people but about “numbers” and “quotas.”

In the end, only one country, the Dominican Republic, officially agreed to accept refugees from Europe. (Dictator Rafael Trujillo, influenced by the international eugenics movement, believed that Jews would improve the “racial qualities” of the Dominican population.) Throughout the 1930s, other countries, including Bolivia and Switzerland, as well as the Shanghai International Settlement and the British protectorate of Palestine, admitted Jewish refugees. Still, the number of refugees far exceed the opportunities, both legal and illegal, to emigrate. After the Evian conference, Hitler is said to have concluded, “Nobody wants these criminals.”

Like most other countries, the United States did not welcome Jewish refugees from Europe. In 1939, 83% of Americans were opposed to the admission of refugees.

 In the midst of the Great Depression, many feared the burden that immigrants could place on the nation’s economy; refugees, who in most cases were prevented from bringing any money or assets with them, were an even greater cause for concern. Indeed, as early as 1930, President Herbert Hoover reinterpreted immigration legislation barring those “likely to become a public charge” to include even those immigrants who were capable of working, reasoning that high unemployment would make it impossible for immigrants to find jobs.

Martha and Waitstill Sharp challenged this strong tide of opinion when they agreed to travel to Europe to help victims of the Nazi regime. They were among a small number of Americans who worked to aid refugees despite popular sentiment and official government policies. Many of those involved had friends and relatives abroad. They inundated members of Congress and government officials with letters and telegrams. A smaller number still, including the Sharps, actually traveled to Europe in an attempt to aid the refugees. Most rescue and relief work was done under the auspices of aid groups such as the Unitarian Service Committee (created through the Sharps’ work), the American Friends Service Committee (run by the Quakers), the Committee for the Care of European Children, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Some American government officials also recognized the danger and looked for ways to bring more refugees into the country. At a time when having the right “papers” determined a refugee’s chance of survival, immigration policy was crucial. In 1939, Senator Robert Wagner, a Democrat from New York, and Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers, a Republican from Massachusetts, sponsored a bill that proposed to allow German Jewish children to enter the United States outside of official immigration quotas. The bill caused a loud and bitter public debate, but it never even reached a vote in Congress.

In 1940, members of the President’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees argued with the State Department to simplify immigration procedures for refugees. This effort was also defeated. Refugees had an ally in First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who supported liberalizing immigration laws, wrote about the refugee crisis in her weekly newspaper column, and worked behind the scenes to effect change. Mrs. Roosevelt’s interventions successfully helped some individual refugees, particularly artists and intellectuals, but she was not able to shift national policies. Those in power in the State Department insisted on enforcing the nation’s immigration laws as strictly as possible. Breckinridge Long, the State Department officer responsible for issuing visas, was deeply antisemitic. He was determined to limit immigration and used the State Department’s power to create a number of barriers that made it almost impossible for refugees to seek asylum in the United States. For example, the application form for US visas was eight feet long and printed in small type. Long believed that he was “the first line of defense” against those who would “make America vulnerable to enemies for the sake of humanitarianism.” Long and his colleagues at the State Department went so far as to turn away a group of Jewish refugees aboard the *St. Louis* in May 1939 when the German ocean liner sought to dock in Florida after the refugees were denied entry to Cuba. Following their deportation back to Europe, many of these people perished in the Holocaust.

22. Why did nations meet in Evian, France?

23. What country agreed to take Jewish refugees?

24. What percentage of Americans were opposed to welcoming Jewish refugees in 1939?

25. What is the first reason Americans didn’t support allowing Jewish refugees in described here?

26. Who were the Sharps and what did they do?

27. What did Senator Wagner and Congresswoman Rogers do?

28. What happened with their bill?

29. What did Eleanor Roosevelt do?

30. What did Breckenridge Long do?

31. How did the U.S. State Department make it harder for refugees to seek asylum?

32. What happened with the *St.Louis* in May 1939 and what happened to the people aboard?

Answer alone

Should America have accepted more Jewish refugees seeking asylum?

Do you think Americans would have accepted more Jewish refugees if they had had a complete understanding of what was going to happen to those Jews seeking asylum?

Have you been aware of the refugee seekers who exist today? Does examining the refugee crisis in WWII change the way you view asylum seekers today? Why or why not?