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Jews in Germany (Nuremberg Laws)

What is an average day like for your family? Maybe it's a day in the middle of the week. You and your parents get ready for school and for work when you wake up in the morning. The trip to school is uneventful; maybe you're still trying to wake up. At school you do your class work, have lunch in the cafeteria, go outside for PE, and daydream about what you'll do on Saturday. After school, you join the rest of your family for dinner at home or go out to a fast food restaurant. Maybe you run a few errands with your parents or do a few chores. Then it's homework, a little TV or a video game, and time for a shower and bed.

You might call it a boring day, but to many other people, it would have been a day almost too good to imagine.

Jews who lived in Germany in the 1930s and the early 1940s had a life that is hard for us to imagine now. To them there was no average day. Each day brought new hardships and new life-threatening challenges.

At school, Jewish kids faced threats and intimidation. They were treated as outcasts. They might go to school one day and find out that their Jewish teacher had been fired and replaced with a teacher who followed the Nazi policy. The Nazi policy was hatred of Jews.

A Jewish kid might come home to find that her father had just lost his job because he was Jewish. On the way home, maybe she had passed a newspaper stand and had seen a paper with headlines that shouted threats and insults about Jews.

Maybe, one day, her best friend disappeared suddenly, sent alone by train to relatives who lived far away in a safer country.

In 1935, life under the Nazi policy of persecuting Jews became even harder. That year, the Nuremberg Laws were passed. These two laws made it official government policy: Jews were not wanted in Germany.

The first law, the Law of the Reich Citizen, declared that Jews were no longer German citizens. According to this law, only people with German ancestors, or "German blood," could be citizens.

The second law, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, placed legal restrictions on the lives of Jewish people. It declared that a Jew could not marry a German. Jews could not hire Germans to work in their houses, and Jews could not even raise the German flag.

These laws were the beginning of a landslide of restrictions that were eventually placed on Jews. Since they were



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not citizens, they could no longer vote or hold public office. They found it more and more difficult to go out anywhere in public. Often, Jews could not even find medical help when they needed it. Jewish merchants found their shops boycotted or painted with a yellow star warning people not to shop there. Many public facilities such as restaurants no longer served Jews. Many people lost their jobs. "Jews forbidden" signs appeared everywhere.

Many people kept hoping that things would get better, but that didn't happen. Soon, people began to hear of neighbors who had just disappeared, and they feared for their own family's safety. You've probably heard the story of Anne Frank and the diary that she wrote while in hiding. Her family hid to avoid being captured and sent to concentration camps. Many, many other Jews went into hiding too during the Second World War. Brave people risked their lives to hide them and to help others escape.

By the early 1940s, this was everyday life for Jews in Germany.

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Questions

- _____ 1. This article is mainly about _____.
A. why people risked their lives to help Jews hide or escape
B. Jewish life in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s
C. World War II
D. Anne Frank
- _____ 2. Jews were persecuted in Germany _____.
A. before World War II
B. during World War II
C. after World War II
D. both A and B
- _____ 3. Jews who were persecuted included _____.
A. teachers
B. parents
C. children
D. all of the above
- _____ 4. The Nuremberg Laws _____.
A. said that Jews could not be teachers
B. said that all Jews should leave Germany
C. declared that Jews were not citizens
D. made it illegal to persecute Jews
- _____ 5. The Nuremberg Laws _____.
A. said that Jews could not own businesses
B. declared that all Jews were criminals
C. said that Jews could not marry Germans
D. gave Jews the right to vote

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_____ 6. The Nazis _____.

- A. hated Jews
- B. won World War II
- C. helped Jews hide
- D. helped Jews escape

_____ 7. Which happened last?

- A. Jews began living in Germany.
- B. The Nazi Party was formed.
- C. The Nuremberg Laws were passed.
- D. World War II was fought.

_____ 8. The word _____, as used in this article, means treating a group of people badly.

- A. persecuting
- B. intimidation
- C. concentration
- D. Reich

☐ Some Jews left Germany in the early days of Nazi persecution, but many others stayed. Why do you think so many Jewish people stayed in German cities until it was too late to escape?

☐ Do you think something like this could ever happen again? Do you think there have been other events in history that were similar to this one? Write about your thoughts on either of these questions.

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