

Second Place
Writing – Division II – Nonfiction

“Tragedy and Oppression”

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The Holocaust was a tragedy that destroyed the lives of many Jewish citizens all across Europe. One of the most brutal, horrific times in mankind's history. An estimated six million Jews were killed between the years 1938 and 1945. The persecution of Jewish culture spurred a shock throughout Europe and caused many to lose their families. Even though the mass genocide of the Jewish people was a tragedy, we can never forget the atrocities committed by the Nazi party, for if we forget the events that happened then we would be letting the crimes of those responsible be forgotten, therefore letting those responsible win over the victims of the Holocaust.

On January 30th, 1933 Hitler was appointed as chancellor of Germany. In August of 1934, the president of Germany died and Hitler elected himself Fuhrer. From this point on Hitler pushed his antisemitic, anticommunist, and anti-democratic views. Hitler and his Nazi party sought to create a volk society, one in which all people were united behind Hitler. In reality, the third Reich became a harsh police state. Hitler assumed more and more power within Germany by placing Nazi officials in government positions. Hitler moved quickly to convert Germany from a democratic society to a one-party dictatorship. Hitler employed countless propaganda and used censorship to glorify his regime.

By 1941 Hitler had decided to move forward with his "Final Solution" for the Jews of Europe. Hitler and the Nazi party began to target Jewish communities across Germany. He implemented laws and policies that targeted Jewish communities. These policies led to starvation, disease, random acts of terror, and mass shootings and gassings. As part of the "Final Solution" Germany created concentration camps where Jews and other prisoners were forced to work or die. Inside these camps, if you didn't work you were led to showers where carbon monoxide or Zyklon B was released killing everyone inside. Near the end of the war, Nazi

captors forced their prisoners to go on long and brutal "Death Marches". On these marches, anyone who could not keep up would be shot.

By the latter half of 1945, most killing camps were evacuated and their prisoners were either rescued or taken further inside Germany by death marches. During this time many Jews within camps revolted in some cases leading to the salvation of the camp and the prisoners inside. At this time Germany was facing pressure from the Allies. Soviet forces were the first to liberate concentration camp prisoners. British, Canadian, American, and French troops also liberated prisoners from death camps. Although the Germans had worked to hide their crimes, they were unable to hide everything. Upon arrival, soldiers were faced with "living skeletons" and mounds of corpses piled like firewood. After liberation and the crimes of Germany were revealed, many high-ranking Nazi officials were tried for the crimes of the Nazi party, including the Holocaust. These trials became known as the Nuremberg Trials. The series of trials was held in Nurnberg, Germany, from 1945–1946. In all, 199 defendants were tried, 161 were convicted and 37 were sentenced to death.

The Holocaust was an event that broke up many families and ruined many lives, and even though the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are dead or dying, we can't let ourselves forget the atrocities wrought by Hitler and other leaders of the Nazi party. Lest we forget the pain they spread throughout the lives and families of Jews all across Europe. Lest we forget the crimes and atrocities committed by Nazi Germany, for if we choose to forget it would be as if we had given up on punishing them for their crimes. Lest we forget the pain and anguish the victims had to bear. If we choose to forget the Holocaust we would be accepting the crimes and oppression that were wrought by Nazi Germany and disregarding the lives of their victims.

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