**World War II 5 - War Crimes Trials**

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| **Aim:** | **Date:** |
| **Key Words:**  **1.**  **2.** |  |

**A. The World Learns the Truth**

Most of the world was unaware of the concentration camps and extermination camps until after the Allies invaded them. On April 16, 1945, radio news reporter, Edward R. Murrow arrived in Buchenwald to cover the story first hand for CBS; his report was entitled “They Died 900 a Day in ‘the Best’ Nazi Death Camp.”

“There surged around me … men and boys reached out to touch me. They were in rags …Death already had marked many of them, but they were smiling with their eyes. I looked out over the mass of men to the green fields beyond, where well-fed Germans were … (pile of bodies in the camp) appeared that most of the men and boys had died of starvation; they had not been executed. But the manner of death seemed unimportant. Murder had been done at Buchwald. God alone knows how many men and boys have died there during the last 12 years.”

*How would you describe what Murrow told the world?*

*How do you think the world should respond?*

**B. War Crime Trials**

Using the law is one way for people to seek justice after instances of brutality and violence. For the first time in history, a series of international trials were set up to punish those who committed war crimes during World War II. The two major international trials were the Nuremberg Trials and the Tokyo War Crimes Trials.

*How were these trials a turning point in world history?*

**C. Nuremberg Trials**

The first international war crimes trial began in 1945 in Nuremberg, Germany. The winning powers (U.S., France, Britain and the USSR) sent judges that charged 22 Nazi German leaders and many others within Hitler’s government with war crimes. They all pled not guilty and said they were “just following orders”. The charges were:

* Crimes against peace (planning, preparation, initiation of war)
* Committing war crimes (unnecessary destruction of cities, killing POWs)
* Crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, enslavement)

Penalties Received: Only 12 Nazis were sentenced to death; 7 were sentenced to prison terms and others were found not guilty or had their charges dismissed. The decision-making Nazi generals either: escaped, committed suicide, or were killed.

*Did the Nazis receive the penalties they deserved? Why or why not?(Claim and evidence)*

**D. The Tokyo War Crimes Trials (1946-1948)**

Japanese war criminals were also tried by an international deciding body in Tokyo. 28 men were brought to trial. The accused included nine civilians and nineteen professional military men. Charges were:

Penalties Received: 25 men were found guilty. Seven were sentenced to death by hanging and sixteen to life in prison. 13 of those who were imprisoned were released, after spending less than eight years for their crimes against millions. Many of these men died in prison. One high-ranking politician, sentenced to 20 years in prison, was released after serving only two years of his term. Soon, he became the foreign minister (major leader) of Japan.

*Was justice served? Why or why not? (Claim and evidence*