

Discussion Questions

Alfred Steer: Responsibility and Justice

Name _____

1. What were Alfred's impressions of Germany and its people while he was studying abroad in 1935?
2. What made Alfred a good candidate for participation in the International Military Tribunal and what was his role?
3. What were Alfred's expectations for the interpreters and translators he employed? Why?
4. What is Alfred's perception of Hermann Göring, the highest-ranking Nazi official tried at Nuremberg? What happened to Göring?

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5. How does Alfred describe Julius Streicher, another defendant? What happened to him?

6. Discuss ways in which the photo and film evidence presented, according to Alfred's testimony, may have impacted the final decisions that were rendered in the trials.

7. Julius Streicher was sentenced to death by the IMT for "crimes against humanity." What was his crime, and how did he perpetrate it?

8. Should a person like Streicher, who, by most accounts, never personally murdered anyone, be convicted of crimes against humanity and executed? Why or why not?

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9. Hermann Göring was convicted by the International Military Tribunal on four counts (crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit such crimes). Before the sentence could be carried out, however, he killed himself. Was justice served or was justice denied? Why?
10. In addition to Streicher and Göring, 20 other “major” war criminals were tried at the IMT on charges of crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy. According to the pre-lesson contextual reading, what was the outcome for the other 20?
11. Consider Alfred’s final words in his testimony: “What we did at Nuremberg, I think, is of epochal importance. We, for the first time in human history so far as I know, set up a court that sat in moral judgment, legal judgment on the people that started and pursued a war.” Through his lens, how was justice served as a result of the IMT’s proceedings?
12. Many of the defendants at Nuremberg claimed either they didn’t know what was happening or that they were following the orders of a higher authority. Construct a possible response to that argument.

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13. Why should so much care and consideration go into the translation, printing, and distribution of the court record and supporting documents from the IMT? In the larger sense, why is such accuracy and precision needed in the creation of any historical record?
14. Not everyone sees the outcome of the war crimes trials following the Holocaust in the same light. How might it also be viewed?
15. In addition to conducting trials, what are other ways in which justice can be accomplished for victims?
16. In the wake of the Rwanda Tutsi genocide in 1994, in 2001 the Gacaca court was established to pursue justice in a number of ways: bearing witness, speeding up prosecution, and reconciliation of all Rwandans in order to heal and build unity. After conducting a little research, discuss with classmates the pros and cons of this justice system.
17. How are the world in general and the United States specifically handling the current humanitarian crisis in Darfur?