Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Global Studies II:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**The Horror of Auschwitz II: Testimony of Rudolf Hoss**

**Read the following selection and annotate the passage.**

* **Underline key ideas from each paragraph**
* **In the space provided to the right**
  + **summarize the key information from each paragraph**
  + **make connections to prior knowledge**
  + **create questions**
* **Circle or box new vocabulary**
* **Answer the questions at the end of the reading.**

*After the war, the Allied nations put German and Japanese leaders on trial for war crimes, including the operation of death camps such as Auschwitz. In the Nuremberg Trials of 1945-1946, held in the German city of Nuremberg, 19 top German were convicted, and 10 were executed by hanging.*

*Among Germans who submitted evidence for the Nuremberg Trials was a man named Rudolf Hoss (also spelled Hoess), who served as commandant at Auschwitz for two and a half years. (Hoss should not be confused with Rudolf Hess, a close confidant of Hitler’s who was a defendant at Nuremberg. Hess received a life sentence and a died in prison in 1987.)*

*The document below is an affidavit, or sworn statement, submitted by Hoss to the Nuremberg Tribunal.*

1. I am forty-six years old, and have been…a member of the SS since 1934…
2. …I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December, 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated there by gassing and burning, and at least another half million [died of] starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000. This figure represents about 70 percent or 80 percent of all persons sent to Auschwitz as prisoners, the remainder having been selected and used for slave labor in the concentration camp industries. Included among the executed and burnt were approximately 20,000 Russian prisoners of war (previously screened out of Prisoner of War cages by the Gestapo)…The remainder of the total number of victims included about 100,000 German Jews, and great numbers of citizens, *mostly* Jewish from Holland, France, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, or other countries. We executed about 400,000 Hungarian Jews alone at Auschwitz in the summer of 1944.
3. Mass executions by gassing [began] during the summer 1941 and continued until Fall 1944. I personally supervised executions at Auschwitz until of December 1943 and know by reason of my continued duties in the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps…that these mass executions continued as stated above…

6. The “final solution’ of the Jewish question meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe. I was ordered to establish extermination facilities at Auschwitz in June 1941. At that time there were already in the general government three other extermination camps; Belzek, Treblinka and Wolzek…I visited Terblinka to find out how they carried out their exterminations. The Camp Commandant at Treblinka told me that he had [killed] 80,000 in the course of one-half year. He was principally concerned with [killing] all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. He used monoxide gas and I did not think that his methods were very efficient. So when I set up the extermination building at Auschwitz, I used Cyclon B, which was a crystallized Prussic Acid which we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening. It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber…We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped. We usually waited about one-half hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of the corpses.

7. Another improvement we made over Treblinka was that we built our gas chambers to accommodate 2,000 people at one time, whereas at Treblinka their 10 gas chambers only accommodated 200 people each. The way we selected our victims was as follows: we had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming…prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the Camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were [always] exterminated since by reason of their youth they were unable to work. Still another improvement we made over Treblinka was that at Treblinka the victims almost always knew that they were to be exterminated and at Auschwitz we endeavored to fool the victims into thinking that they were to go through a delousing process. Of course, frequently they realized our true intentions and we sometimes had riots and difficulties due to that fact. Very frequently, women would hide their children under their clothes but of course, when we found them we would send the children in to be exterminated. We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies [spread through] the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz…

I understand English as it is written above. The above statements are true; this declaration is made by me voluntarily and without compulsion; after reading over the statement, I have signed and executed the same at [Nuremberg], Germany on the fifth day of April 1946.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences using details and evidence from the source.

1. Why were war crimes trials held in Nuremberg, Germany?

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1. Who was Rudolf Hoss?

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1. According to Hoss, what was the purpose of camps like Auschwitz?

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1. What did Hoss mean by the term “final solution’?

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1. How did the doctors at Auschwitz determine who would live and who would die?

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1. A. Why did Hoss refer to the methods of extermination used at Auschwitz as “improvements”?

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1. What does this tell you about the way the Nazis viewed the execution of millions of people?

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