Socratic Seminar 3: WWII & Today’s Refugees

Using Academic Language Stems:
Try to use these sentence starters when you speak. Put an “X” next to one each time you or your inner circle partner uses it!

_____ “I agree/disagree with ___ because…” _____ “What you said makes me think of…”
_____ “I believe that ___ because…” _____ “Who can provide some evidence that…?”
_____ “Based on the reading…” _____ “Can you please clarify what you said about…?”

Seminar Essential Topic/Question:
• Should today’s refugees be treated similarly or differently by the U.S. than they way they were treated during WWII?

Related questions:
• What can we learn from the SS St. Louis?
• In what ways are today’s refugees similar or different from WWII Refugees?
• How do you think the U.S. should respond to the refugees who are fleeing their countries?

AFTER SOCRATIC SEMINAR: Give yourself a score for the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Exceeds (4)</th>
<th>Meets (3)</th>
<th>Nearly Meets (2)</th>
<th>Beginning (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation (SL.1.a)</td>
<td>1.____ Student has clearly read and marked the text for discussion material, and comes ready with multiple higher level questions to present to peers</td>
<td>1.____ Student has read and/or researched material under study, and comes ready with 1 or 2 higher level questions to present to peers</td>
<td>1.____ Student has read and/or researched some of the material under study, may have questions to present to peers, but they may not be higher level or appropriate for the discussion</td>
<td>1.____ Student has not read and/or researched the material under study, and/or is not prepared with questions to present to peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtful Participation (SL.1 and SL.1.d)</td>
<td>2.____ Participates thoughtfully in the discussion at least 3 times by responding to others, asking questions, summarizing main points, or clearly and persuasively expressing their own ideas on the topic</td>
<td>2.____ Participates thoughtfully in the discussion 2-3 times by responding to others, asking questions, summarizing main points, or offering their own views and understanding of the topic</td>
<td>2.____ Participates in the discussion at least once by responding to others, asking questions, summarizing main points, or offering their own views and understanding of the topic</td>
<td>2.____ Does not participate in the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence (SL.1.a)</td>
<td>3.____ Refers at least once to evidence from the text by clearly explaining: • WHAT the author says (and in what context) • WHAT the quote means • How/Why this MATTERS to the discussion and/or the students’ perspective</td>
<td>3.____ Refers to evidence from the text, but may be missing explanation of one of the following: • WHAT the quote means • How/Why this MATTERS to the discussion and/or the students’ perspective</td>
<td>3.____ Refers to evidence from the text, but does not explain 1 or more of the following: • the context or the quote • the meaning of the quote • how/why the quote matters to the conversation or the students’ own perspective</td>
<td>3.____ Does not refer to evidence from the text</td>
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Preparation for Socratic Seminar: WWII & Today’s Refugees

A. What happened with the SS St. Louis? When did this occur? __________________________________________________________

B. In what countries did the SS St. Louis try to dock? Why were they refused? Where did it finally find safe haven for refugees to dock? __________________________________________________________

C. In what ways are the struggles of the Syrian refugees similar to that of the Jews during WWII?

D. Are there any similarities between the U.S. accepting/rejecting refugees during WWII and now? Explain.

E. In the article titled “What the Holocaust Can Teach Us,” David Bier asserts, “the lesson the Holocaust taught us is that we need to deal with these concerns [about refugees] without abandoning America’s moral leadership.” How do you think the U.S. should proceed? Explain: __________________________________________________________

F. Seminar Essential Question: Do you think today’s refugees should be treated similarly or differently than the U.S. response during WWII? Give specific examples, and cite evidence to support your answer:

Example 1: __________________________________________________________

Example 2: __________________________________________________________

G. Brainstorm and write down 2 higher-level questions you can ask to encourage conversation:

1. __________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________
SS St Louis: The ship of Jewish refugees nobody wanted

By Mike Lanchin BBC World Service

On May 13, 1939, more than 900 Jews fled Germany aboard a luxury cruise liner, the SS St Louis. They hoped to reach Cuba and then travel to the US - but were turned away in Havana and forced to return to Europe, where more than 250 were killed by the Nazis.

"It was really something to be going on a luxury liner," says Gisela Feldman. "We didn't really know where we were heading, or how we would cope when we got there."

At the age of 90, Feldman still clearly remembers the raw and mixed emotions she felt as a 15-year-old girl boarding the St Louis at Hamburg docks with her mother and younger sister.

"I was always aware of how anxious my mother looked, embarking on such a long journey, on her own with two teenage daughters," she says.

In the years following the rise to power of Hitler's Nazi party, ordinary Jewish families like Feldman's had been left in no doubt about the increasing dangers they were facing.

Jewish properties had been confiscated, synagogues and businesses burned down. After Feldman's Polish father was arrested and deported to Poland, her mother decided it was time to leave.

Feldman remembers her father pleading with her mother to wait for him to return but her mother was adamant and always replied: "I have to take the girls away to safety."

So, armed with visas for Cuba which she had bought in Berlin, 10 German marks in her purse and another 200 hidden in her underclothes, she headed for Hamburg and the St Louis.

"We were fortunate that my mother was so brave," says Feldman with a note of pride in her voice.

Tearful relatives waved them off at the station in Berlin. "They knew we would never see each other again," she says softly. "We were the lucky ones - we managed to get out." She would never see her father or more than 30 other close family members again.
By early 1939, the Nazis had closed most of Germany's borders and many countries had imposed quotas limiting the number of Jewish refugees they would allow in.

Cuba was seen as a temporary transit point to get to America, and officials at the Cuban embassy in Berlin were offering visas for about $200 or $300 each - $3,000 to $5,000 (£1,800 to £3,000) at today's prices.

When six-year-old Gerald Granston was told by his father that they were leaving their small town in southern Germany to take a ship to the other side of the world, he struggled to understand what that meant.

"I'd never heard of Cuba and I couldn't imagine what was going to happen. I remember being scared all the time," he says, now aged 81.

For many of the young passengers and their parents however, the trepidation and anxiety soon faded as the St Louis began its two-week transatlantic voyage.

The captain allowed traditional Friday night prayers to be held, during which he gave permission for the portrait of Adolf Hitler hanging in the main dining room to be taken down.

Six-year-old Sol Messinger, who was travelling with his father and mother, recalls how happy everyone seemed. In fact, he says, the youngsters were constantly being told by the adults that they were now safe from harm: "We're going away," he heard people say again and again on that outward journey. "We don't have to look over our shoulders any more."

But as the luxury liner reached the coast of Havana on 27 May, that sense of optimism disappeared to be replaced by fear, then dread.

Granston was up on deck with his father and dozens of other families, their suitcases packed and ready to disembark, when the Cuban officials, all smiles, first came aboard. It quickly became clear that the ship was not going to dock and that no-one was being allowed off. He kept hearing the words "mañana, mañana" - tomorrow, tomorrow. When the Cubans left and the ship's captain announced that people would have to wait, he could feel, even as a little boy, that something was wrong.
For the next seven days, Captain Schroder tried in vain to persuade the Cuban authorities to allow them in. In fact, the Cubans had already decided to revoke all but a handful of the visas - probably out of fear of being inundated with more refugees fleeing Europe.

The captain then steered the St Louis towards the Florida coast, but the US authorities also refused it the right to dock, despite direct appeals to President Franklin Roosevelt. Granston thinks he too was worried about the potential flood of migrants.

By early June, Captain Schroder had no option but to turn the giant liner back towards Europe. "The joy had gone out of everything," Feldman recalls. "No-one was talking about what would happen now."

As the ship headed back across the Atlantic, six-year-old Granston kept asking his father whether they were going back to see their grandparents. His father just shook his head in silent despair.

By then, people were openly crying as they wandered the ship - one passenger even slit his wrists and threw himself overboard out of sheer desperation. "If I close my eyes, I can still hear his shrieks and see the blood," Granston says quietly.

In the end, the ship's passengers did not have to go back to Nazi Germany. Instead, Belgium, France, Holland, and the UK agreed to take the refugees. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) posted a cash guarantee of $500,000 - or $8 million (£4.7m) in today's money - as part of an agreement to cover any associated costs.

On June 17th, the liner docked at the Belgian port of Antwerp, more than a month after it had set sail from Hamburg. Feldman, her mother, and sisters all went on to England, as did Granston and his father.

They both survived the war, but between them, they lost scores of relatives in the Holocaust, including Feldman's father, who never managed to get out of Poland. Messinger and his parents went to live in France, but then had to flee the Nazis for a second time, leaving just six weeks before Hitler invaded.

Two-hundred-and-fifty-four other passengers from the St Louis were not so fortunate and were killed as the Nazis swept across Western Europe.

What happened next?

- 288 passengers went to Great Britain, all of whom survived WW2 except one who died in an air raid in 1940
- The Netherlands took 181 people, Belgium 214 and France 224
- 87 of these emigrated before Germany invaded - of the 532 left, 278 survived and 254 died
- The journey was the subject of the 1976 film Voyage of the Damned

Adapted from: http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-27373131
Holocaust Museum Condemns Treatment Of Syrian Refugees In U.S.

"While recognizing that security concerns must be fully addressed, we should not turn our backs on the thousands of legitimate refugees."

Alana Horowitz Satlin, The Huffington Post, Posted: 11/20/2015

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum condemned the U.S. treatment of Syrian refugees on Thursday and compared their plight to the ordeal of Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust.

Over half of U.S. governors and a slew of national and local lawmakers have recently said they would turn away Syrian refugees in light of last week's attacks in Paris. During World War II, the U.S. government rejected thousands of Jews fleeing Europe, fearing they were Nazi spies.

Here's the museum's statement:

Acutely aware of the consequences to Jews who were unable to flee Nazism, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum looks with concern upon the current refugee crisis. While recognizing that security concerns must be fully addressed, we should not turn our backs on the thousands of legitimate refugees.

The Museum calls on public figures and citizens to avoid condemning today's refugees as a group. It is important to remember that many are fleeing because they have been targeted by the Assad regime and ISIS for persecution and in some cases elimination on the basis of their identity.

A number of other commenters also noted the similarities between the current refugee crisis and the wave of people fleeing Europe during World War II.

"With politicians in the U.S. and Europe again calling for refugee bans in the name of national security, it's easy to see parallels with the history of World War II," Smithsonian Magazine's Daniel A. Gross wrote.

The country's largest Orthodox Jewish lobbying group also urged Americans to remember the past.

"We cannot and should not blame [refugees] for the actions of an evil terrorist organization," the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center said in a statement. "The Jewish community has an important perspective on this debate. Just a few decades ago, refugees from the terror and violence in Hitler’s Europe sought refuge in the United States and were turned away due to suspicions about their nationality."

Georgette Bennett, the president of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding and the daughter of Holocaust survivors, said that U.S. politicians' opposition to receiving Syrian refugees reminded her of "the refusal to allow the passengers of the St. Louis to disembark in an American port, sending them back to Europe -- many to their deaths."

The MS St. Louis was a German ship that carried hundreds of Jews who were trying to escape Nazi Germany in 1939. The U.S., Canada and Cuba all turned the ship away, and those aboard were forced to return to Europe, which would soon be taken over by the Nazis.

From: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/holocaust-museum-syrian-refugees_564f10ede4b0d4093a573793
Government officials have justified their lethargic response to the Syrian refugee crisis by citing security concerns. This excuse isn't new. America's security fears during World War II led to the rejection of Jews fleeing the Holocaust--and to the remorse that prompted the creation of the refugee process. Rather than repeat the mistake we promised never to forget, we must learn to address our fears without forgetting our humanity--and this begins by welcoming refugees who want nothing but to build a life of opportunity and peace.

Since the onset of the Syrian civil war, the United States has admitted 1,854 of Syria's nine million refugees--even as tens of thousands of civilians are being killed in the country's conflict, and many others are drowning in the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean. The reason for the slow response, officials claim, is that we are putting America's security at risk by fast-tracking their admission.

Sound familiar? The State Department's response to the Syrian crisis virtually mirrors its official response to the Holocaust. From the outset of World War II, the State Department set up high security standards on the pretext that refugees could be German spies, while only admitting token numbers.

In 1939, German Jews frantically applied for U.S. visas. Because the U.S. issued so few, some Jewish refugees headed to Cuba to wait for their visas to become available. This, however, took a tragic turn in 1940 when the St. Louis, full of Jewish refugees, was denied entry to Cuba. The desperate pleas passengers sent to the U.S. State Department were denied. Forced to return to Europe, 532 passengers suffered through the Holocaust--and half were killed.

Despite this tragedy, the State Department tightened immigration requirements in 1940, halving all immigration to the country. In fact, the department essentially endorsed the decision to turn back the St. Louis in June 1940, discouraging Caribbean countries from accepting Jews, and stating that "spies had infiltrated the refugee stream."
It didn't stop there. That same year, the State Department slashed refugee immigration to 25 percent of its former limit. The reasoning behind this? That Axis powers were supposedly dispatching agents as refugees into the West. Even after the U.S. officially acknowledged the Holocaust, the State Department resolutely upheld its restrictive policies.

Even the White House endorsed the restrictions. "The refugee has got to be checked," President Roosevelt said, "because, unfortunately, among the refugees there are some spies, as has been found in other countries." He conceded that this was "a very, very small percentage of refugees coming out of Germany," yet insisted that the impossible vetting process was necessary.

In hindsight, it is easy to scoff about American fears about German refugees. But in the midst of a world war, concern about German espionage was not completely unfounded. The Nazis funded right-wing organizations in Cuba and elsewhere, and in June 1941, the FBI arrested 33 German spies in New York. The president feared that German Jews might be forced to spy in order to protect their families in Germany. At least one Nazi spy pretending to be a refugee was arrested in Cuba.

The State Department was genuinely torn over the issue. Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long, who controlled much of U.S. visa policy during the war, articulated this internal conflict in his diary: "The refugee problem is a thorny one--and there is plenty of criticism either way the decision lies," he wrote. "I weather that--and try to play it safe."

Today, we continue to play it safe. The U.S. refugee process has screeched to a halt. According to aid groups, some U.S. refugee applications are taking 33 months to process. In contrast, Germany has sped up processing times, lowering waits from 7.1 to 5.3 months, even as it plans to accept more than a million Syrians.

Of the millions of refugees admitted in U.S. in the past several decades, including hundreds of thousands from the Middle East, none of them has ever successfully completed an act of terrorism in the United States. Yet we have chosen to let people starve, drown, or be murdered in the name of security. Our insecurity has led to callous inhumanity.

Anxieties over refugees are not entirely irrational. Just as there were bad guys in Germany, there are bad guys in Syria--and everywhere else. But the lesson the Holocaust taught us is that we need to deal with these concerns without abandoning America's moral leadership. It is time that we applied that lesson in Syria today.

From: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-bier/holocaust-syrian-refugees_b_8351794.html