

Name:

Date:

Discrimination in Canada: No. 2 Construction Battalion and the MS St. Louis Questions

Use the “No. 2 Construction Battalion (The Canadian Encyclopedia)” handout to answer these questions

1. Do you think there should be any restrictions on who can join the armed forces? Why or why not? What would influence your thinking about this issue?

2. For what reasons were many Canadian Black men rejected when trying to enlist for service in the First World War?

3. How did leaders of Black communities and senior militia officials across Canada try to create change?

4. Why did the British War Office approve of a Black labour battalion instead of a Black infantry battalion?

5. View the recruitment poster for the No. 2 Construction Battalion. What is the overall message of this poster?

6. Do you think that the poster would have been effective during the First World War? What would you change on the poster to make it more effective?

7. Where was the headquarters of No. 2 Construction Battalion? From where did it recruit men?

8. Why do you think hundreds of Black men from across Canada volunteered to serve a country that not long ago turned them away? Would you have fought for Canada if you were in a similar position?

9. View the photo of the officers of No. 2 Construction Battalion. How many of the officers were Black?

10. Where did the men serve beginning on May 21, 1917? What supporting tasks did they perform?

11. Why was their work essential for the war effort?

12. Why do you think it is important to recognize the service of these men? What can you do in your life to counter attitudes of exclusion?

13. What significant event happened on July 9, 2022? During his speech, Prime Minister Trudeau said, "Today, I hope all Canadians will take a new look at our history and seek out the unwritten and untold stories. Like that of No. 2 Battalion, which shows us that the strength and resilience in our common humanity go much deeper than the colour of our skin." What are your thoughts about this statement?

Use the “MS St. Louis (The Canadian Encyclopedia)” handout to answer these questions

14. Do you think when a government oppresses or commits violence against the people of its own country, other countries have a responsibility to intervene, stop the oppression or violence, and help the victims? Explain.

15. What “push” factors – events and pressures that motivate people to leave their countries – existed for hundreds of thousands of German Jews in the 1930s?

16. When did the MS St. Louis depart Hamburg, Germany? Who were the passengers onboard and why were they sailing on this ship?

17. What happened when the ship arrived in Havana Harbor on May 27, 1939?

18. How do you think anti-semitism contributed to the Cuban government’s decision to turn most of the refugees away?

19. What was the reason given by American officials for refusing to accept the refugees on the MS St. Louis?

20. Who petitioned the Canadian Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King on June 7, 1939, requesting that Canada provide sanctuary for the refugees?

21. Why did Canada refuse to accept the refugees?

22. Identify the countries that accepted the refugees from the MS St. Louis. Why did the previous Cuban, American, and Canadian rejections prove to be a death sentence for many of the passengers?

23. Who did Canada's immigration policy favour? Who did it discriminate against?

24. How did Canadian government policies and the Great Depression affect the ability of Jewish refugees to immigrate to Canada?

25. What do you think the tragedy of the MS St. Louis teaches us about how the world viewed Jews during the interwar years? Are there people who are being treated like "the unwanted" now? How can you help to create communities where all people are respected and valued?

26. How do you think governments should respond to refugee crises today?