

Joe and Max

Joe Lewis and Max Schmeling met two times in the boxing ring. The first time, in 1936, Max won. He was the first fighter to ever beat Joe.

At that time, Joe was a young, rising American star. Max was an older heavyweight champ from Germany. They couldn't have been more different. When Max won, people started demanding a rematch right away.

It took two years for them to fight again. During the intervening time, Hitler's Third Reich was growing in power and the world was heading towards World War II. Some people thought that the fight between Joe and Max represented the fight between Hitler's Nazis and the U.S. and European Allies.

Max was unfairly labeled as a Nazi sympathizer. However, he did not like Hitler and refused to join the Nazi party. He even risked his life to hide two Jewish brothers in 1938 when Nazis attacked Jewish homes and businesses.

The rematch between Joe and Max finally happened in 1938. A crowd of 70,000 gathered to watch. After the huge build up, the fight only lasted 124 seconds. Joe won with a first-round knock out. In his 1978 autobiography, Joe wrote, "To me and Schmeling, it was just best man wins, but we both knew what was at stake. To the world, Schmeling's defeat foretold of things to come for Nazi Germany."



Despite being different ages, different races, different nationalities, and on different sides in a world war, Joe and Max became friends outside of the boxing ring. “It wasn’t until after World War II that I saw him again,” Joe wrote in his autobiography. “We hugged each other and we’re real friendly and kept in touch by phone.” Max gave financial help to Joe in the 1950s. He also paid for part of Joe’s funeral and was one of the pallbearers carrying his coffin. What started in the boxing ring became an enduring friendship.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

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 - a. 1938
 - b. 1978
 - c. 1936
 - d. 1924

2. Who won their rematch?
 - a. Max
 - b. Joe
 - c. They didn't have a rematch
 - d. They tied

3. Which of Max's actions showed that he was not a supporter of Hitler's Third Reich?
 - a. He refused to join the Nazi party
 - b. He fought Joe Lewis
 - c. He hid two Jewish brothers
 - d. A and C

4. What is the lesson of Joe and Max's friendship?
 - a. It is possible to be friends with someone different from you
 - b. Germans and Americans can be friends
 - c. Boxers are always friends
 - d. Friends help pay for each others funerals

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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