

Context:

The Weimar Republic 1918 - 1933

AP European History, 10th grade

Time - One block, approximately 100 minutes

Why did the Weimar Republic fail?

- Weak economy – hyperinflation, unemployment, depression
- Political instability – weakness within, lack of confidence in government, many competing political parties
- Bitterness – over Treaty of Versailles, reparations, loss of territory
- Rise of the Nazis/Extremism – anti-Semitism, exploitation of the democratic system, above reasons allow Nazis to gain support

Overview:

This lesson is on the instability of the Weimar Republic. Students should be able to identify the major causes of its failure by the end of this lesson. Students should also realize that these reasons are interrelated.

The Weimar Republic was instituted in Germany at the end of World War I. Its leader signed the Treaty of Versailles, which forced Germany to pay reparations to the victors. Germany also lost territories to surrounding countries. This period is marked by economic, social, and political instability. These problems led to the failure of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazi party. There was a weakness within the system of the Weimar Republic. There were no checks and balances, so the party in charge had the power. This allowed the Nazi party to exploit the existing system and eventually take over.

Instructional Model:

This lesson is taught using the inquiry instructional model. During this lesson students will look at data sets containing primary sources in order to interpret the information in the documents. First, individual students will think about the question and come up with their own hypotheses using their background knowledge about the subject. Then the students will talk in small groups about what they came up with for answers. Then the whole class will generate initial hypotheses about the topic. Then students will critically analyze data sets in small groups as they relate to the major question. After evaluating each data set in their groups, the whole class will alter the initial hypotheses and choose the major causes for the instability and failure of the Weimar Republic. Afterwards, students will independently assess which causes were most influential. This topic is a good match for this model because the failure of the Weimar Republic happened for multiple and interrelated reasons.

Objectives: (This is for an AP class, so the VA SOLs do not apply directly)

- The students will demonstrate knowledge of political, economic, and social developments that led to the failure of the Weimar Republic in Germany. (NCSS, time/continuity/change, groups/institutions, and power/authority/governance)
- The students will be able to use maps, pictures, and primary documents to interpret the multiple causes of the instability and failure of the Weimar Republic. (AP standards, multiple causality & periodization)
- The students will be able to provide written conclusions based on evidence. (AP standards, fostering good writing skills)

Assessment:

- Students will be assessed as they participate in the discussions of the whole class and particularly in the small groups. Contributions should be based on the documents and demonstrate students' abilities to make connections between the data sets and the causes of the instability and failure of the Weimar Republic.
- For homework, students will write one page (at least three paragraphs) responding to the question: Why did the Weimar Republic fail? Be sure to give evidence supporting your answer. Students should demonstrate that they have thought about the question, the answers, and the supporting evidence. The papers will be graded based on the following criteria:
 - The paper will describe at least three causes that the student finds most compelling.
 - The paper will have evidence from the data for each of these causes.
 - The paper will recognize that these causes are connected and demonstrate through sentences that connect one idea or paragraph to the next.
 - The paper will have limited grammatical and spelling errors.

The first type of assessment should tell me how the lesson is going and if I need to make any changes as the lesson continues or for future teachings. The short paper is appropriate homework for AP students to show what they learned from looking at documents. This will tell me who was really engaged with the lesson and what they took from it. Students will receive written feedback on this homework.

I. Engagement in the inquiry

There will be a picture on the projector screen (or printed in handouts depending on the room we are in that day) when the lesson begins. The picture is of a man sweeping money out of the streets. This image shows that the money is worthless, as the German marks were during this time. This image should hook the students because it is a surprising thing to see someone treating money like trash. The whole class will talk about what they see in the image. They

should conclude that the money is practically worthless. This image is included at the end of the lesson plan.

Students will use their prior knowledge and common sense to generate initial hypotheses. They will have been studying World War I and the Treaty of Versailles prior to this lesson and may be able to identify emerging issues. They will also have read a section in their textbook about the Weimar Republic for homework prior to this lesson.

II. Elicit Hypotheses

I will write the question on the board and ask students to generate answers. First, they will think about answers as individuals. Then they will share their thoughts with their small group. The class will come back together as whole to give the causes that their groups thought were most compelling. I will write these on the board. I will be sure to tell the students that they can guess, and we will have the opportunity to revise our answers after we learn more.

III. Data Gathering and Processing

After a list of hypotheses has been generated by the class, the small groups will receive a data set that they will read and discuss. Students will notice that this activity is related to the Document Based Questions (DBQs) that they will see on the AP test. They should jot down a few notes about the data and any conclusions that they draw from the evidence. This data collection and note taking step will be repeated until students have seen all the data sets. The class will be reminded of the overall question and to remember the hypotheses generated after each data set. The data sets will be divided into categories that align with the major causes outlined at the beginning of the lesson plan. This lesson will help to prepare students for DBQs on the AP test. They will be familiar with the steps of this process by this point in the year. They should be trying to identify causes, so that they can divide the data sets into those major categories. These causes are interrelated and overlap, so some pieces in the data sets may relate to more than one cause. This also aligns with what they will see on DBQs. The data sets are included at the end of the lesson plan. They include a map, posters, texts, quotes, and other sources. The texts and images are spread out among the data sets giving students variety and hopefully keeping them interested.

IV. Revising Hypotheses

In their groups, students will decide which hypotheses have the most support according to the evidence. Each group will choose two or three causes and come up with reasons why they chose those causes. Students should recognize that some of the causes are connected.

V. Conclusion

The class will come back together as a whole. Each group will say which causes they chose, and then the class will see which causes were chosen most often by the groups. Those should be the

major causes identified at the beginning of this lesson plan. There will be a discussion on how these causes are connected and related. They are not necessarily distinct and separate. Homework will be explained and written instructions given to the students.

Resources:

- White board, markers, and erasers
- Computer with Internet and PowerPoint
- Data sets, copies for each group (included at the end of lesson plan)
- Classroom set up in groups

Differentiation:

The data sets will include visuals (pictures, maps, political cartoons) and texts of different lengths and reading levels. Students will work in groups and as individuals. Students will discuss and write down their hypotheses and final thoughts. This variety offers students various ways to take in the information and share what they know.

This lesson challenges students to interpret documents. Students will construct their own knowledge on the topic as they interpret and make connections. The information is not simply being provided to them, so they will be using a different skill set than is used in other lesson types.

Adaptations:

I have no specific information yet on my students regarding IEPs and 504s, but this lesson is built to work for students of all kinds. The class is structured and repetitive as the multiple data sets are being studied for students who need that type of environment. There is variety in the material and the ways students are working. This should be helpful for students who have trouble paying attention to one activity for a long time. This lesson is challenging and yet achievable for students. It is especially useful for those who will be presented with a document question on the AP test.

Reflections:

I anticipate the most difficult part of this lesson to be the initial hypothesis generation. Students may not be able to identify emerging issues in the Interwar Period in Germany without some background knowledge. This is why I suggest that they read the section in their textbook prior to class on the Weimar Republic to get the bare basics.

There may also be some issues with switching from individual work to group work and coming back to the whole class. This lesson will be taught in the spring, so I hope to have developed some respect and cooperation between myself and the students by this time. I will most likely use the same way of getting students attention to come back to the whole class as my cooperating

teacher so that the students have continuity and familiarity with the way class is run. I am still developing the exact style of classroom management that I will want to use.

I am a bit concerned about the amount of documents. I will have a whole block of approximately 100 minutes to teach the lesson, so I think that is enough time for students to get through all the data sets and have time to revise the class hypotheses and conclude. If time seems to be an issue, I can always adapt and reduce the amount of documents given to the students. Most of the documents with text are short. Also the texts are spread out over the four data sets, as are the images. This should help keep students from getting frustrated with the amount of reading. This is for an AP class, so these students will need to be able to read and interpret documents quickly for the AP test. This lesson will be very good practice for that aspect of the AP test.

Hook Image



<http://listverse.com/2010/08/10/10-great-financial-collapses-in-history/>

Data Set 1

War is romantic, with a mystic and poetic element in it. But today only the insensible would deny that it is an utter distortion of the poetic. To save our nation from falling into disrepute, we must learn to understand that a warlike and brawling spirit is not essential to us. War is a lie, its issues are a lie; whatever honorable emotion the individual may bring to it, war itself is now stripped of all honor, and reveals itself as the triumph of all that is brutal and vulgar in the soul of man, the archenemy of culture and thought, a bloody orgy of egotism, corruption and vileness. My aim is to win you to the side of the republic; to the side of what is called democracy, and what I call humanity, because of a distaste I share with you for war. The republic is our fate. Freedom is no joke. Its other name is responsibility; the word makes it only too clear that freedom is truly a heavy burden. The republic—still and always Germany! Democracy!

Thomas Mann, novelist – speech to German university students, 1922

Whoever has learned from the events of the past five years knows that it is not the nationalists and the monarchists who represent the real danger but the absence of substantive content and ideas in the concept of the German republic, and that no one seems able to succeed in vitalizing that concept. Our republic is not yet an object of mass consciousness. It is merely a constitutional document and a governmental administration. Nothing is there to make the heart beat faster. Around this state, lacking any ideas and with an eternally guilty conscience, there are grouped a couple of so-called constitutional parties, likewise lacking an idea and with no better conscience, which do not lead but administer.

Carl von Ossietzky, journalist – 1924



“Women! Equal Rights – Equal Responsibilities. Vote Social Democratic!” – SPD poster

Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy, Eric D. Weitz



“Bolshevism Brings War, Unemployment, and Starvation” – Association to Fight Bolshevism poster, 1918

Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy, Eric D. Weitz

Data Set 2

Erzberger... has suffered the fate which the vast majority of patriotic Germans have long desired for him. Erzberger, the man who is alone responsible for the humiliating armistice; Erzberger, the man who is responsible for the acceptance of the Versailles "Treaty of Shame"; Erzberger, the man whose spirit unhappily still prevails in many of our government offices and laws, has at last secured the punishment suitable for a traitor... The majority of the German people breathe a sigh of relief at this moment. A man like Erzberger, who carried the primary responsibility for the misfortunes of our Fatherland, was a standing menace to Germany so long as he was alive... We must learn to hate our enemies abroad, but we must also punish the domestic enemies of Germany with our hatred and our contempt. Compromise is impossible. Only extremism can make Germany again what it was before the war.

German National People's Party (DNVP), right-wing political party, written in 1921 after the murder of Matthias Erzberger who signed the armistice and supported the republic

Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy, Eric D. Weitz

ARTICLE 231: The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

ARTICLE 232: The Allied and Associated Governments recognize that the resources of Germany are not adequate, after taking into account permanent diminutions of such resources which will result from other provisions of the present Treaty, to make complete reparation for all such loss and damage. The Allied and Associated Governments, however, require, and Germany undertakes, that she will make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property during the period of the belligerency

The Treaty of Versailles - 1919

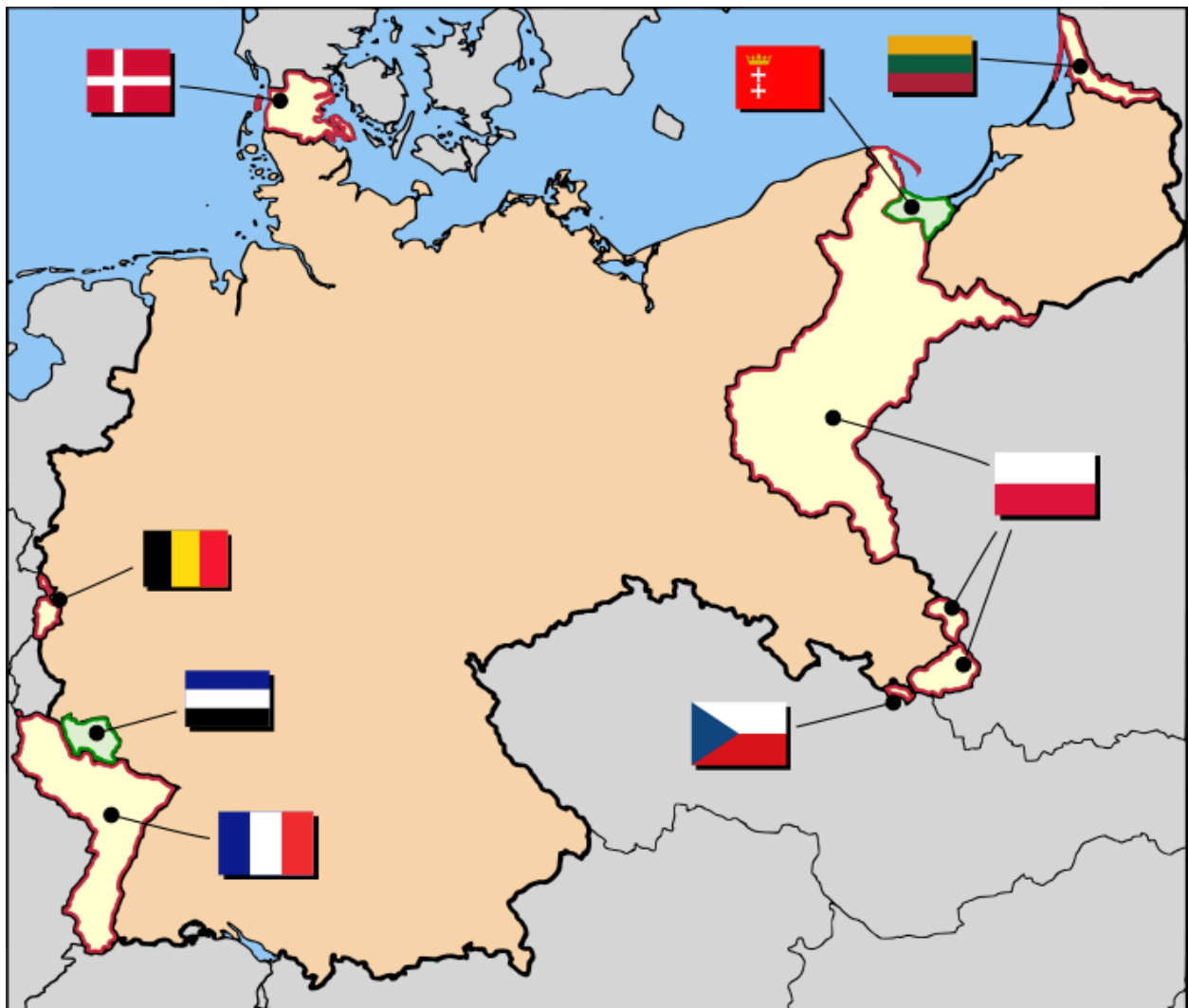
(The final reparations payment was made by Germany on Oct 4, 2010)

http://wwiarchives.net/servlet/doc/Tov_articles_231-247

In Berlin in November 1918 I witnessed the beginnings of revolution. The German revolution was drearily philistine, lacking in all fire and inspiration. The Social Democratic Party was unfit to govern. Most characteristic of the Social Democratic Party's mentality was the speech from the Reichstag steps, delivered by Scheidemann*, who, in proclaiming the Republic, began his oration with the following: "The German people have won all along the line." A stupid lie! And a very cruel piece of self-deception! No, alas, the German people had not "won"—it had been conquered, overpowered by a host of enemies, wretchedly misled politically, reduced by famine, and stabbed in the back!

*Weimar Republic's first chancellor

Bernhard, Prince von Bülow, Chancellor of Germany from 1900 to 1909 – memoirs, 1931

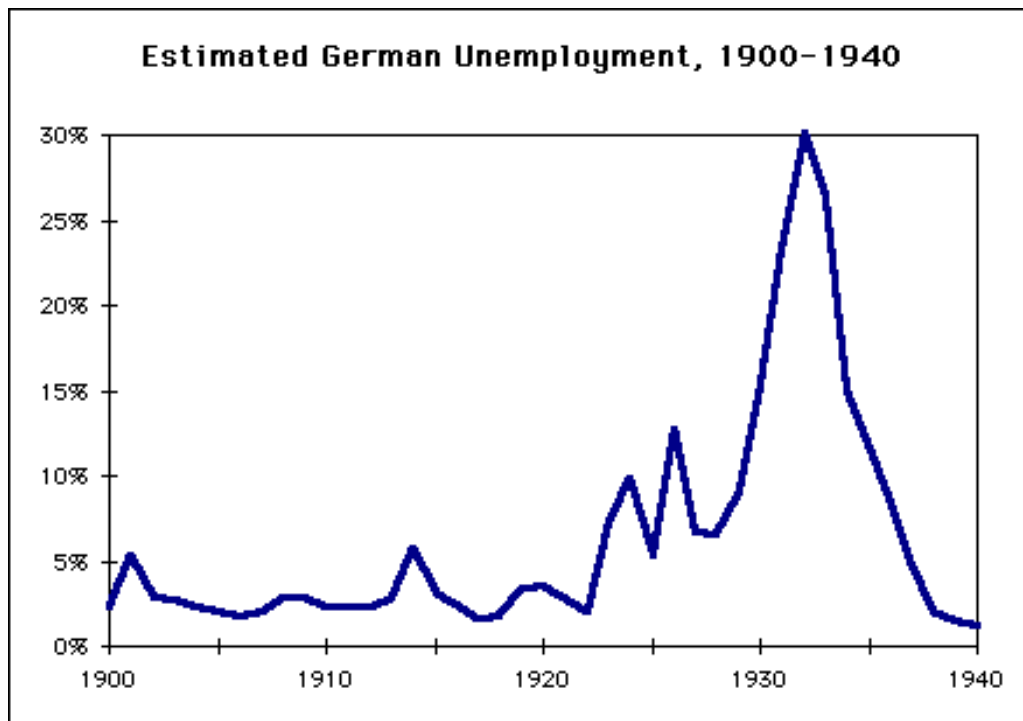


Annexed sections of Germany after World War I with the countries that gained the territories
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_Republic - adapted from a map written in German

Data Set 3
 US dollar quotations for the Mark, selected dates

July 1914	4.2
January 1919	8.9
July 1919	14.0
January 1920	64.8
July 1920	39.5
January 1921	64.9
July 1921	76.7
January 1922	191.8
July 1922	493.2
January 1923	17,972.0
July 1923	353,412.0
August 1923	4,620,455.0
September 1923	98,860,000.0
October 1923	25,260,208,000.0
November 1923	4,200,000,000,000.0

Germany: Politics, Society, and Culture 1914 – 1933, Matthew Stibbe



http://econ161.berkeley.edu/tceh/Slouch_Purge15.html

It certainly has been a shock to me to see how the middle class lives, what terrible poverty there is to be found behind closed doors. In well-furnished houses there are chairs devoid of leather which has been used for shoes, curtains without linings, which have been turned into garments for the children, and a woman student lucky enough to possess a nightdress or two has cut them up to wear as chemises, using the odd bits from the sleeves and hem to make pocket handkerchiefs. This sort of thing is not the exception but the rule. I know many families where before the war two servants were kept, now they do their own housework; and instead of dinner in the evening they have plain brown bread and weak tea without milk or sugar, and only one meat meal a week.

British observer in Germany, 1920s

Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy, Eric D. Weitz

“My father was a lawyer, and he had taken out an insurance policy in 1903, and every month he had made the payments faithfully. It was a 20-year policy, and when it came due, he cashed it in and bought a single loaf of bread.”

Walter Levy, German-born oil economist in New York

www.pbs.org



German Fifty Million Mark – 1923 *Weimar Germany 1918-1933*, John R.P. McKenzie

Data Set 4

“Germans have two passions: beer and anti-Semitism... the beer is 28 proof, but the anti-Semitism is a 100 proof.”

Kurt Tucholsky, left wing intellectual – 1921

The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy, Paul Bookbinder

We are entering the Reichstag in order that we may arm ourselves with the weapons of democracy from its arsenal. We shall become members of the Reichstag in order that the Weimar ideology should itself help us to destroy it. We are content to use all legal means to revolutionize the present state of affairs. We come as enemies! Like the wolf falling upon a herd of sheep, that is how we come.

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Party member – speech to Nazi Party members, 1928



Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-13203A
Foto: o. Ang. | März 1932

Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy, Eric D. Weitz

Homework Assignment:

For homework, write one to two pages (at least three paragraphs) responding to the question: Why did the Weimar Republic fail? Be sure to give evidence supporting your answer.

Demonstrate that you have thought about the question, the answers, and the supporting evidence.

- Describe at least three causes that you find most compelling.
- Support your choices with evidence from the data for each of these causes.
- Show that these causes are connected. Use sentences that connect one idea or paragraph to the next.
- The paper will have limited grammatical and spelling errors.