Hitler and the Rise of Nazi Germany

In November 1923, a German army veteran and leader of an extremist party, Adolf Hitler, tried to follow Mussolini’s example by staging a small-scale coup in Munich. The coup failed, and Hitler was soon behind bars. But Hitler proved to be a force that could not be ignored. Within a decade, he made a new bid for power. This time, he succeeded by legal means.

Hitler's rise to power raises disturbing questions that we still debate today: Why did Germany, which had a democratic government in the 1920s, become a totalitarian state in the 1930s? How could a ruthless, hate-filled dictator gain the enthusiastic support of many Germans?

The Weimar Republic’s Rise and Fall

As World War I drew to a close, Germany trembled on the brink of chaos. Under the threat of a socialist revolution, the kaiser abdicated. Moderate leaders signed the armistice and later, under protest, the Versailles treaty.

In 1919, German leaders drafted a constitution in the city of Weimar (vair-uhm). It created a democratic government known as the Weimar Republic. The constitution set up a parliamentary system led by a chancellor, or prime minister. It gave women the vote and included a bill of rights.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use words from this section.

**High-Use Words**

<table>
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**Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 49**

**Teaching Resources, Skills Handbook, p. 3**

For more information, see:**

- Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 19
- Teaching Resources, Skills Handbook, p. 3

**Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 261**

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**Prepare to Read**

**Build Background Knowledge**

Ask the students to recall the terms of the peace treaty forced on Germany after World War I. Ask students to speculate how the people of Germany probably felt after World War I.

**Objectives**

- Analyze the problems faced by the Weimar Republic.
- Describe the Nazi party’s political, social, economic, and cultural policies.
- Summarize authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Set a Purpose**

- **WITNESS HISTORY** Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

**Ask What did the narrator fear most that night? (She was afraid of being killed.) What does her experience suggest about the Nazis’ methods? (Sample: ruthless)**

**Focus**

- Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (Answer appears with Section 5 Assessment answers.)

**Preview**

- Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.

**Note Taking**

- Have students read this section using the Guided Questioning strategy (TE, p. T20). As they read, have students fill in the flowchart identifying main ideas about Germany after World War I.

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**WITNESS HISTORY**

The Nazis in Control of Germany

In the 1930s, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party brought hope to Germans suffering from the Great Depression. On the dark side of Hitler’s promises was a message of hate, aimed particularly at Jews. A German Jewish woman recalls an attack on her family during Kristallnacht, a night in early November 1938 when Nazi mobs attacked Jewish homes and businesses.

“...They broke our windows, and the house became very cold . . . We were standing there, outside in the cold, still in our night clothes, with only a coat thrown over. . . . Then they made everyone lie face down on the ground . . . ‘Now they will shoot us,’ we thought. We were very afraid. They broke our windowpanes, and the house became very cold . . . ‘Now they will shoot us,’ we thought. We were very afraid. Then they made everyone lie face down on the ground . . . ‘Now they will shoot us,’ we thought. We were very afraid. This time, he succeeded by legal means. Hitler’s rise to power raises disturbing questions that we still debate today: Why did Germany, which had a democratic government in the 1920s, become a totalitarian state in the 1930s? How could a ruthless, hate-filled dictator gain the enthusiastic support of many Germans?

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**Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 261**
Political Struggles. The republic faced severe problems from the start. Politically, it was weak because Germany, like France, had many small parties. The chancellor had to form coalitions that easily fell apart. The government, led by moderate democratic socialists, came under constant fire from both the left and right. Conservatives demanded radical changes like those Lenin had brought to Russia. Conservatived—including the old Junker nobility, military officers, and wealthy bourgeoisie—attacked the government as too liberal and weak. They longed for another strong leader like Bismarck. Germans of all classes blamed the Weimar Republic for the hated Versailles treaty. Bitter, they looked for scapegoats. Many blamed German Jews for economic and political problems.

Runaway Inflation. Economic disaster fed unrest. In 1923, when Germany fell behind in reparations payments, France occupied the coal-rich Ruhr Valley (see). Germans workers in the Ruhr protested using passive resistance and refused to work. To support the workers, the government continued to pay them, and printed huge quantities of paper money to do so. Inflation soon spiraled out of control spreading misery and despair. The German mark became almost worthless. An item that cost 100 marks in July 1922 cost 944,000 marks by August 1923. Silverse was by billions of marks, but they still could not keep up with skyrocketing prices. Many middle-class families saw their savings wiped out.

Recovery and Collapse. With help from the Western powers, the government did bring inflation under control. In 1924, the United States gained British and French approval for a plan to reduce German reparations payments. Under the Dawes Plan, France withdrew its forces from the Ruhr, and American loans helped the German economy recover. Germany began to prosper. Then, the Great Depression hit, reviving memories of the 1930s. Many middle-class families saw their savings wiped out.

Weimar Culture. Culture flourished in the Weimar Republic even so this government struggled through three crises after crisis the tumultuous times helped to stimulate new cultural movements, such as dadaist art and Bauhaus architecture. Berlin attracted writers and intellectuals from around the world, just as Paris did. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht sharply criticized middle-class values with the Threepenny Opera. The artist George Grosz, through scathing drawings and paintings, blasted the failings of the Weimar Republic. However, many believed that this modern culture and the Weimar Republic itself were not in keeping with Germany's glorious past. The government, led by moderate democratic socialists, came under constant fire from both the left and right. Conservatives demanded radical changes like those Lenin had brought to Russia. Conservatived—including the old Junker nobility, military officers, and wealthy bourgeoisie—attacked the government as too liberal and weak. They longed for another strong leader like Bismarck. Germans of all classes blamed the Weimar Republic for the hated Versailles treaty. Bitter, they looked for scapegoats. Many blamed German Jews for economic and political problems.

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The Nazi Party's Rise to Power. Adolf Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. When he was 18, he went to Vienna, then the capital of the multinational Hapsburg empire. German Austrians...
The Nazi Party’s Rise to Power

Instruct

■ Introduce Display Color Transparency 172: Hitler at Nuremberg Stadium. Based on class in the photograph of Hitler giving a speech at Nuremberg Stadium, have students predict what kind of leader he would be.

■ Color Transparencies, 172

■ Teach Ask students to briefly describe Hitler’s life, after reading the text and the Biography on this page. Then ask: What actions and promises enabled Hitler to become dictator of Germany? (He made use of the frustrations brought on by the depression and fear of communists to gain the support of many Germans. After his election as chancellor, he suppressed all opposition.) What ideas did Hitler put forward in Mein Kampf? (His brand of extreme nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism)

Independent Practice

Have students make a timeline, charting the Nazi party’s rise to power.

Monitor Progress

As students create their timelines, circulate to ensure they understand the conditions that paved the way to Hitler’s rise to power.

Answers

BIOGRAPHY to understand how events from his upbringing would have affected his later actions

■ The Nazi party’s ideology was based on anti-Semitism, pride in Germany’s past, and revenge for the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler planned to defy the Versailles treaty, create jobs, and bring Germany back to greatness.

History Background

The Fortunes of the Young Hitler

As a young man, Hitler moved to Vienna from the Austrian countryside to try to become an artist. Although he had some talent, the Academy of Fine Arts denied him entry twice. He remained in Vienna, living in poverty. However, he soon found his niche—as a soldier in the German army during World War I. He served bravely and received an unusual number of awards. He was wounded in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, and again when he was gassed in 1918. After the war, Hitler finally gained financial security with the publication of his manifest, Mein Kampf in 1925. When he became chancellor of Germany in 1933, sales skyrocketed, making him a millionaire.
The Third Reich Controls Germany

Once in power, Hitler and the Nazis moved to build a new Germany. Like Mussolini, Hitler appealed to nationalism by recalling past glories. Germany’s First Reich, or empire, was the medieval Holy Roman Empire. The Second Reich was the empire forged by Bismarck in 1871. Under Hitler’s new Third Reich, he boasted, the German master race would dominate Europe for a thousand years.

To combat the Great Depression, Hitler launched large public works programs (as did Britain and the United States). Tens of thousands of people were put to work building highways and housing or replanting forests. Hitler also began a crash program to rearm Germany and schemed to unite Germany and Austria. Both measures were a strong repudiation, or rejection, of the hated Versailles treaty.

Germany Becomes a Totalitarian State

To achieve his goals, Hitler organized an efficient but brutal system of terror, repression, and totalitarian rule. Nazis controlled all areas of German life—from government to religion to education. Elite, black-uniformed SS troops enforced the Führer’s will. His secret police, the Gestapo (guh STAH poh), rooted out opposition. The masses, relieved by belief in the Nazis’ promises, cheered Hitler’s accomplishments in ending unemployment and reviving German power.

Those who worried about Hitler’s terrorist apparatus quickly became its victims or were cowed into silence in fear for their own safety.

The Campaign Against the Jews Begins

In his fanatical anti-semitism, Hitler set out to drive Jews from Germany. In 1935, the Nazis passed the Nuremberg Laws which deprived Jews of German citizenship and placed severe restrictions on them. They were prohibited from marrying non-Jews, attending or teaching at German schools or universities, holding government jobs, practicing law or medicine, or publishing.

“Night of Broken Glass”

On the night of November 9, 1938 and into the next day, German mobs smashed the windows of Jewish homes and business, looted Jewish shops, and burned synagogues. Many Jewish people were dragged from their homes and beaten in the streets. Not only did the Nazi government authorize these attacks, it made the Jewish victims pay for the damage.

Hitler’s Popularity

Hitler promised Germany an economic recovery—and he delivered it. As most of the world was gripped by the Great Depression, Hitler launched a massive public works program. Millions of Germans were employed constructing superhighways, office buildings, sports arenas, public housing, and military materials. As a result, unemployment dropped from six million in 1932 to one million in 1936. By 1938, there was a shortage of workers and women began taking jobs outside the home. Between 1932 and 1938, the standard of living for employed Germans rose by more than 20 percent. For the masses of ordinary Germans, those who were not Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, communists, or other persecuted minorities, Hitler had produced an economic miracle.

Teach

Ask What did Hitler do in defiance of the Versailles treaty? (built up Germany’s military and schemed to unite Austria and Germany)

How did Hitler expand his control over the German people? (He brought business and labor under his control; he indoctrinated young people with Nazi ideology; he limited women’s roles; he organized a system of terror and repression of opposition; he placed severe restrictions on Jews; he demanded that education and the arts reflect Nazi values; and he sought to replace religion with his racial creed.)

Quick Activity

Ask students to look at the images on this page and the next page. Read the captions and discuss the visuals as a class. Ask students to use the visuals to describe what life was like in the Third Reich.

Independent Practice

Viewpoints To help students better understand the propaganda techniques used by Hitler, have them read the selection Hitler’s Propaganda Machine and complete the worksheet.

Monitor Progress

Have students reread the black headings and summarize the content under each one. Ensure that students understand that Hitler’s regime was based on totalitarian control of the German state and people.
Authoritarian Rule in Eastern Europe

Instruct

- **Introduce** Remind students that the entire world faced economic problems from 1919 to 1939. Ask them to recall how Britain, France, Italy, and Germany responded to this challenge and then have them predict how the nations in Eastern Europe would react to the same challenge.

- **Teach** Ask What problems did the new nations in Eastern Europe face in the postwar years? (lack of capital to develop industry, social inequalities, little experience in democracy, and ethnic and religious tensions) Where did dictators use these problems to gain power? (Every Eastern European country except Czechoslovakia and Finland) How were these dictators similar to Hitler? (They promised order and won the support of the military and the wealthy, and they used Jews as scapegoats for many problems.)

Quick Activity Display Color Transparency 179: Ethnic Groups of Eastern Europe, 1939. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion on how these ethnic groups were a source of conflict after World War I.

Color Transparencies, 173

Independent Practice

Have students fill in the Outline Map Fascist Governments in Europe, 1939 and label the areas taken over by fascist dictators.

Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 56

Monitor Progress

- Circulate to make sure students are filling in their Outline Maps accurately.
- Circulate to make sure students are filling in their Outline Maps accurately.

Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 58

- Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Vocabulary Builder

Regime—(ruh ZHEEM) n. a government in power

Nazi Book Burnings Nazi burned books of which they disagreed, such as All Quiet on the Western Front, in huge, organized public bonfires. The Nazis burned Hammerstein’s novel as an insult to the German military.

Purging German Culture The Nazis also sought to purge, or purify, German culture. They denounced modern art, saying that it was corrupt by Jewish influences. They condemned jazz because of its African roots. Instead, the Nazis glorified old German myths such as those re-created in the operas of Richard Wagner (VAHG nur).

Nazi Youth Hitler despised Christianity as “weak” and “flabby.” He sought to replace religion with his racial creed. To control the churches, the Nazis combined all Protestant sects into a single state church. They closed Catholic schools and rastered the Catholic clergy. Although many clergy either supported the new regime or remained silent, some courageously spoke out against Hitler.

Checkpoint How did the Nazi party maintain its control of Germany?

Authoritarian Rule in Eastern Europe

Like Germany, most new nations in Eastern Europe slid from democratic to authoritarian rule in the postwar era. In 1939, a dozen countries were carved out of the old Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and German empires. Although they differed from one another in important ways, they faced some common problems. They were small countries whose rural agricultural economies lacked capital to develop industry. Social and economic inequalities separated...
poor peasants from wealthy landlords. None had much experience with the democratic process. Further complicating the situation, tensions leftover from World War I hindered economic cooperation between countries. Each country in the region tended to be independent of the neighbors, which hurt all of them. The region was hit hard by the Great Depression.

**Ethnic Conflict** Old rivalries between ethnic and religious groups created severe tensions. In Czechoslovakia, Czechs and Slovaks were unwilling partners. Serbs dominated the new state of Yugoslavia, but restless Slovenes and Croats living there pressed for independence. In Poland, Hungary, and Romania, conflict flared among various ethnic groups.

**Democracy Retreats** Economic problems and ethnic tensions contributed to instability, which in turn helped fascist rulers gain power. In Hungary, military strongman Nicholas Horthy (HOR-thye) oversee a Communist-led government in 1919. By 1930, the military were Joseph Pilsudski (pil-suhh-kah) held control over Poland. Eventually, right-wing dictators emerged in every Eastern European country except Czechoslovakia and Finland. Like Hitler, these dictators promised order and won the backing of the military and wealthy. They also turned to anti-Semitism, using Jewish people as scapegoats for many national problems. Meanwhile, strong, aggressive neighbors eyed these small, weak states of Eastern Europe as tempting targets.

**Checkpoint** Why did authoritarian states rise in Eastern Europe after World War I?