

## 3.1 TURNING POINTS



### FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- How are chronological historical events represented graphically?
- Why are “turning points” essential for understanding chronology?

### STANDARD #2 TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

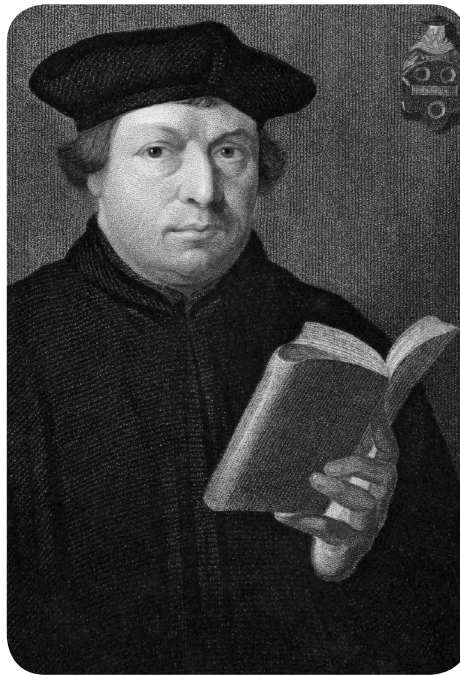
#### LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson focuses on significant events in German history from the defeat of the Roman legions in 9 AD through the election of Angela Merkel as the first female Chancellor in 2005. The students will have the opportunity to create a human timeline by physically placing these events in chronological order. The teacher may choose to present a PowerPoint reviewing these events so that students may learn in greater depth about significant events and historic personalities that contribute to the richness of German history.

#### TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to the National Center for History in the Schools, “chronological thinking is at the heart of historical reasoning. Without a strong sense of chronology-of when events occurred and in what temporal order-it is impossible for students to examine relationships among those events or to explain historical causality. Chronology provides the mental scaffolding for organizing historical thought” (NCHS, n.d.).

The history of Germany is intricately linked to the history of Europe. Major events such as the Crusades or rise of towns in the late Middle



Ages have involved the Germans. Through their actions, historical personalities such as Johannes Gutenberg or Martin Luther had an impact on more than just the people of Germany. In order to understand the emergence of a modern nation-state and Germany’s critical role in history, students must examine the influence of Napoleon Bonaparte and Otto von Bismarck, in addition to the major wars of the twentieth century: World War I, World War II and the Cold War. The amount of time and the depth of the study of German history (people and events) will depend on the grade level.

**TIME:**

2 (45-minute Class Periods)

**INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:**

- Events in German History PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.1 A on Resource Disc**)
- Events in German History Placards (**Handout 3.1 B on Resource Disc**)
- Graph paper
- Clothesline rope and clothespins

**PROCEDURE:****DAY 1:**

- **Anticipatory Set:** For homework the night before beginning this lesson, the teacher should ask the students to discuss with their parents or guardians and list on paper the most important events that have happened in their lives in the order that they occurred. In class, the teacher should introduce the idea of a personal timeline, which includes the events a person finds most important in their life and inform the students that this is what they had completed for homework. The students should share their “timelines” with their classmates. The teacher should explain that we can graphically represent the passage of time on a continuous line from left to right. The teacher should ask the students why they had selected the particular events they had included. This might lead to a discussion of “milestones” in a person’s life. After the students have completed this activity, the teacher should explain that like individuals, countries have histories, which can also be represented on timelines with milestone events called “turning points.”
- The teacher should distribute the Events in German History Placards (**Handout 3.1 B on Resource Disc**) and ask the students to concentrate only on the side with the number/dates. It would be best if the placards/pages were printed double-sided on cardstock so that the dates are on one side and events in German history on the other. Then, the teacher should instruct the students to arrange themselves (without talking) in sequence as a timeline according to the dates on their cards. The students should check to see if they are in chronological order.
- Next, the teacher should ask the students to turn the cards over and in order read aloud the event that is printed on the reverse side. The teacher should ask the students (as a class) if they are familiar with any of the events.

**DAY 2:**

The teacher should show the Events in German History PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.1 A on Resource Disc**), which illustrates each of the events from the previous day’s timeline construction activity. Based upon the degree of depth necessary, the teacher should explain the events represented on each slide. The visuals can serve as springboards for discussion.

**WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:**

- The teacher should facilitate a discussion of the impact that Germany has had on the history of the world. What impact has this activity had on their understanding of chronology or sequencing of events? Why are “turning points” essential for understanding chronology?

**MODIFICATIONS:**

- Students will create a “clothesline of German history” that will be hung in the classroom. This strategy is based on the students’ Events of German History Placards Activity of Day 1. The teacher will install a clothesline across the classroom, and the students will place the placards in chronological order.

- This lesson focuses on 24 events in German history. Depending on the age or ability level of the students or the amount of time that the teacher can devote to history, the teacher may wish to modify the number of events on the PowerPoint (**PowerPoint 3.1 A on Resource Disc**).
- Depending on the age or ability of the students, the teacher may require each student to research one or more events on the timeline and be prepared to share that information with the rest of the class.

### EXTENSION:

- This lesson focuses on sequence but not duration. The teacher may wish to help students develop a more accurate sense of chronology by building in a sense of duration. This lesson can also become a math lesson by having the students, on graph paper, mark off equidistant intervals of time (for example every fifty years) and then placing the events on the exact location on the timeline. In this manner, they will not only sequence the events, but also indicate the actual passage of time between events. This will result in the 19th and 20th century events grouped together at the right end of the timeline, while the earlier events will be stretched out much further from each other.

#### Source:

National Center for History in the Schools (n.d.) University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved on 17.1.13 from <http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/1.-chronological-thinking>