

2.5 YOUTH IN GERMANY

? FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- Is there a universal youth culture?
- Are there unique societal factors that would distinguish youth from one country to another?

STANDARD #1 CULTURE.

STANDARD #4 INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY.

STANDARD #5 INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson investigates what the youth in Germany are thinking and doing. Using primary source documents written by German students, YouTube clips, and current music lyrics, students will explore their interests (e.g. music, sports, socio-politics, and religion). What are the attitudes toward family, peer groups, discrimination, and relationships? How are the rites of passage handled, e.g. driving, drinking, dating, etc.? Who are their heroes? Students will then compare and contrast their lives in the United States with their German counterparts. The purpose of this lesson is to help American adolescent students to overcome possible stereotypes and increase intercultural awareness of their German peers.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Contemporary youth culture is both unique to a nation and region as well as universal. High school students in different communities in Germany were asked to respond to the question: "What does it mean to be German?" (**Handouts 2.5.1 and 2.5.2**). These students live in Berlin, the capital, Bösel and Vechta in the northwest, Gundelfingen in the southwest corner near the Black Forest and Schwerin, a city in former East Germany near the Baltic Sea. These locations range from urban to suburban to rural settings.

These students attend *Gymnasium* or *Realschule*; both are types of secondary schools in Germany (refer to Lesson 2.4). The *Realschule* offers a broader, more general education that is vocationally oriented. The *Gymnasium* is designed to provide students with an education that will help them pass their final exam, the *Abitur*, allowing them to study (usually tuition free) at a German university. The students receive intensive, specialized instruction to prepare them for academic work at a high level.



🕒 TIME:

(3-4) 45 minute class periods

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- German Students' Responses: What does it mean to be German? What is Germany? Whom do you admire in Germany today? (**Handout 2.5.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- German Students' Responses: What do I do in my free time? (**Handout 2.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Youth Today: Comparison/Contrast Chart (**Handout 2.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Music Lyrics and Links (**Handout 2.5.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Access to Internet (YouTube)

PROCEDURE:



DAY 1:

Anticipatory Set: The teacher should ask the students to write a short essay in which they answer the question, "What does it mean to be American?" The teacher may refer to the Youth Today: Comparison/Contrast Chart (**Handout 2.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**) that lists topics that may be suggested to students before they write their pieces. As students share their thoughts during a class discussion, the teacher should project the chart and fill in the categories as students share their comments. Students should also have a hardcopy to fill in the chart over the next few days. Perhaps more/different topics will be added.

Next, the teacher should distribute the handout, German Students' Responses: What does it mean to be German? What is Germany? Whom do you admire in Germany today? (**Handout 2.5.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**). Depending on the class size, the teacher could divide students into pairs giving each a different set of student responses. The teacher should follow the same procedure with the handout, German Students' Responses: What do I do in my free time? (**Handout 2.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**).

As students analyze the comments, they should attempt to fill in the Germany column of the Youth Today: Comparison/Contrast Chart (**Handout 2.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**) and share their findings with the class. Students should compare the columns. Are there any common denominator(s) between the two groups?

DAY 2:

The lyrics of the music to which students listen, most often deal with issues they find important and to which they can relate. Students should listen and watch music videos of German bands through the links provided on the handout Music Lyrics and Links (**Handout 2.5.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**); the teacher should either project the lyrics or distribute them to students in hard copy (**Handout 2.5.4**). After each song, the class should discuss what German youth find important; they should continue filling in the chart. Note: The teacher may choose to view 2-3 of the music videos listed on the handout Music Lyrics and Links (**Handout 2.5.4 on Instructional Resource Disc**). *Previewing is essential as some of these music videos may have content that could be controversial.*

DAY 3:

To learn more about German students, divide the class into 3 groups. Students will rotate through 3 "centers" gathering more data to add to their chart. Allow 15 minutes per center.

Center 1: Students will access the following site for more details. Meet the Germans: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lp/prj/mtg/typ/enindex.htm>

Center 2: Students will access the following site for more details. Youth in Germany: <http://www.goethe.de/ges/soz/dos/jug/enindex.htm>

Center 3: Using the Internet, allow students to research the legal drinking age in Germany and the age when Germans receive their driver's license.



WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- As a culminating activity, pairs of students should write and perform a 2-3 minute dialogue between an American and German student discussing one similarity and one difference of their culture. They should use the data gathered on the Youth Today: Comparison/Contrast Chart (**Handout 2.5.3 on Instructional Resource Disc**). Each pair needs to display an 8x10 sign with symbols indicating either a similarity or a difference between their cultures. The sign should be displayed during their presentation.

MODIFICATION:

- Students may write an essay (1) comparing/contrasting their lives as an American youth with a German youth, or (2) describing how their lives would be different/similar if they lived in Germany.

EXTENSIONS:

- The teacher may wish to show the students a website and initiative (*Step Into German*) produced by the Goethe-Institut as part of the annual contest to promote learning German among North American students. The theme for 2011 was “Mad About Music: Young Rock in Germany.” The webpage is <http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/saf/prj/sig/enindex.htm>
- Students always enjoy “meeting” peers from other countries. Videoconferencing and “Skyping” are outstanding means to link American and German classes. To continue their interest in learning more about German students, the teacher may want to try to find a German teacher who is willing to collaborate. For assistance in making the connection with a teacher in Germany, contact the Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP) office in Washington, DC: <http://www.goethe.de/top>.
- If there is a German exchange student in the high school, the student might be invited to share his/her reflections on the similarities and differences in youth culture in the United States and Germany.

