

3.5 NOVEMBER 9 IN GERMAN HISTORY: WHY NOT A HOLIDAY?

? FOCUS QUESTION:

- What criteria should be used to determine a country's national day?

STANDARD #2 TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson focuses on the day November 9 in 20th-century German history. After the students have learned about four key events that occurred on this day, they will have the opportunity to graphically represent what they have learned and to reflect on why Germany chose October 3 rather than November 9 as its national day.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

November 9 has special significance for the German calendar, as four crucial events in modern German history occurred on this day: 1) the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and establishment of the Weimar Republic in 1918; 2) Adolf Hitler's unsuccessful Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in 1923; 3) *Kristallnacht* (The Night of the Broken Glass) in 1938; and 4) the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. On October 3, 1990, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) officially joined the Federal Republic of Germany, and the country was reunified after almost five decades of separation. Currently, October 3 is Germany's national day. Although the Day of German Unity, as it's called, is commemorated annually, the official celebrations usually take place in the capital of whichever state is presiding over the *Bundesrat* (Germany's upper house of parliament) that year.



🕒 TIME:

(2-3) 45 minute class periods

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- November 9 in German History (**Handout 3.5.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Treaty on the Establishment of German Unity (**Handout 3.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Poster Boards and Markers



PROCEDURE:

DAY 1:

- **Anticipatory Set:** One way in which countries demonstrate their national pride is by celebrating and commemorating significant historical events. What criteria are used to designate a national day? What is our national holiday and why was it selected?
- This lesson is based on a jigsaw format. Divide the class into four groups and then give each group a description of one event that occurred on November 9 (using the **November 9 in German History Handout 3.5.1 on the Instructional Resource Disc**). Groups should read their summaries together and work through the content collectively. Every member of the group should become an expert on the respective event.
- Form new groups consisting of no more than four students. Each student should represent a different expert group. Ask students to share the information about his or her event.

DAYS 2-3:

- Students reform the second, mixed groups created during the previous class period. Each group should be given a piece of poster board and markers so that they can create a poster showing the history of November 9 in Germany. The students should be instructed to design visual representations of each event.
- They may wish to use the Internet (if available) to download appropriate images; alternatively, they may wish to draw their own.
- The completed posters should be displayed around the classroom and then presented to the class by one member of each group.

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTIONS:

- The teacher should either distribute an excerpt of the Treaty on the Establishment of German Unity (**Handout 3.5.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**) or display a copy of it (on an overhead projector or as a PowerPoint presentation). The teacher should then facilitate a discussion on the following question: Why do you think reunified Germany chose October 3 as its national day rather than November 9?
- What criteria are used to make the determination of which dates on the calendar should be designated as “National Holidays?” Should November 9 be the German equivalent to July 4th (in the United States) or Bastille Day – July 14th (in France)?

MODIFICATIONS:

- Rather than using a cooperative learning activity, the teacher may ask students to prepare posters in pairs or individually.
- The teacher may want to create a few questions for each document that would help students with academic difficulties interpret the content.

EXTENSIONS:

- Teachers may assign students to conduct additional research on the four events either before or after the jigsaw activity.
- The teacher may assign students to write an op-ed piece on why they believe reunified Germany chose October 3 as its national day rather than November 9.

Sources:

Treaty on the Establishment of German Unity, Federal Republic of Germany-German Democratic Republic, August 31, 1990. Retrieved from <http://www.dipublico.com.ar/english/treaties/frg-gdr-treaty-on-the-establishment-of-german-unity-unification-treaty/>