

3.6 GERMANS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO WORLD CIVILIZATION

? FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- In what ways do individuals influence the times in which they live?
- Conversely, how do individuals reflect the cultural, intellectual, and moral values, or *zeitgeist*, of the times in which they live?
- What characteristics allow individuals to transcend time and become major contributors to world civilization?

STANDARD #1 CULTURE.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

Students will research three individuals who made significant contributions in one of the following fields: music, philosophy, literature, politics, science, or art. Students should be able to work in areas of interest to them. Next they will create trading cards modeled after baseball cards that highlight important events from each figure's life, including his or her specific achievements. Using the trading cards, students will write an essay in which they discuss the impact of these individuals on their fields and in what ways these individuals reflect their respective *zeitgeist*.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Throughout their history, Germans have not only contributed to German society and culture, but they have also had a far-reaching impact on the fields of music, philosophy, literature, politics, science, religion and art. Bach, Marx, Bismarck, Remarque, Kepler, Luther and Dürer stand out in their respective fields.



🕒 TIME:

(2-3) 45 minute class periods

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:

- Famous Germans Throughout History (**Handout 3.6.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Trading Card Template (**Handout 3.6.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**)

📧 PROCEDURE:

DAY 1:

- **Anticipatory Set:** The teacher should introduce the concept of *zeitgeist* by asking students to characterize the time in which they are living in terms of cultural, intellectual, and moral values. What is the *zeitgeist* of our era? Students should then consider the ways in which they are products of their time. They should also brainstorm current leading personalities in the areas of art, music, science, literature, and politics. How do these individuals reflect the contemporary *zeitgeist*? The concept of *zeitgeist* needs to be continually reinforced throughout the lesson with examples from contemporary society.

- Present students with a list of categories—music, philosophy, literature, politics, science, and art—and ask them to select one that interests them. Next they will choose three individuals to research who have made significant contributions in their respective fields, both to German society and culture as well as to world civilization. Distribute Famous Germans Throughout History (**Handout 3.6.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**).
- Using the Trading Card Template (**Handout 3.6.2 on Instructional Resource Disc**), have students complete research on their chosen individuals.

DAYS 2-3:

- The final product of this lesson is an essay that students write in class. To prepare for this essay, they need to research, take notes, and construct three trading cards. Teachers may assign the research for homework. Alternatively, teachers may take students to the library or computer lab to conduct their research during class.
- After students have completed their research and created their trading cards, they are ready to write an essay in which they should describe the impact of notable Germans on their fields and discuss the ways in which these notable Germans reflect their respective *zeitgeist*.

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTION:

- Once students have conducted their research and written their essays, the teacher should facilitate a discussion of the focus questions. Students should use their research to support their arguments.

MODIFICATIONS:

- If the student population is unable to grasp the concept of *zeitgeist*, teachers should simplify the lesson by asking students to compile a list of contributions made by Germans to world civilization.
- The teacher might adjust the required number of individuals to research.
- Rather than write an essay, students could choose someone from the list of notable Germans and assume that person's identity. Their assignment would be to apply to the *Zeitgeist* Hall of Fame by writing a letter of application along with a résumé.

EXTENSION:

- Once students have completed their research, teachers may expand the lesson by asking them to create group presentations (possibly with PowerPoint) on the different fields of endeavor.