

5.1 GERMAN POST-REUNIFICATION TIMELINE

? FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- How does a divided country become one again?
- What is actually meant by “reunification?”

STANDARD #2 TIME, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE.

STANDARD #6 POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE.

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson focuses on the events which have shaped reunified Germany since 1990. Students will have the opportunity to review the chronology of the political, social, economic, cultural, and international events, as they affected the so-called reunification of Germany: the dismantling of the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) and its “absorption” into the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). After studying specific events in Germany from the past 20 years, students will be asked to identify themes which can be the basis of a designed and constructed board game. By creating this board game, students will graphically represent the highlights of the contemporary period.

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Germany has been reunited since October 3, 1990. The peaceful revolution of the people in the German Democratic Republic contributed to the collapse of the Berlin Wall that had both physically and symbolically divided Germany into East and West. Two nations that were one country until 1949, but since separated ideologically for 40 years, now confronted many challenges (Pulzer, 1996). Technically, Germany was not actually “re-unified.” The German Democratic Republic was dissolved and the people and area of eastern Germany became part of the Federal Republic of Germany. How has the Federal Republic developed over the past 20 years and beyond? What characterizes politics, business, science, society, and culture in today’s Germany? What principles dominate its society? What historical developments have influenced German life? Twenty years after the reunification great progress has been made. However, enormous challenges remain, which the German people must overcome together (Turner, 1992). To learn more about the German reunification teachers may want to read the following books:

Pulzer, P. *German Politics, 1945-1995*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

Turner, H.A. *Germany from Partition to Reunification*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.



TIME:**(7-8) 45 minute class periods****INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:**

- Reunified Germany Timeline (**Handout 5.1.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**)
- Access to the Internet
- Foam boards, markers, computer printer, scissors, etc.

PROCEDURE:**DAY 1:**

For homework prior to this lesson, the students should read about the collapse of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989) and on the events leading up to the German reunification (October 3, 1990). This reading assignment should be the basis for discussion to introduce the topic of German Reunification. The teacher may assign sections in the students' textbook or several short articles which can be found online (see examples below):

- Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in London. (2011). *A short history of German Reunification*.
- Schmemmann, S. (2009, November 9). A Fateful Day, and the East Tasted Freedom. *The New York Times*.

Anticipatory Set: How does a divided country become one again? What steps are necessary to bring about a peaceful reunification? What are the obstacles that must be overcome?

It is important that the teacher emphasizes that, technically, Germany was not actually “reunified.” The German Democratic Republic was dissolved and the people and area of eastern Germany became part of the Federal Republic of Germany. The teacher might want to look at the example of the United States in the post-Civil War Reconstruction period. The analogy of incorporating the people and area of the Confederacy into the Union after the Civil War works here.

DAYS 2-8:

The major activity of this lesson is the student design and construction of a board game to demonstrate their comprehension of the events of the past 20 years as Germany has continued to progress as a unified nation. The students may select a single theme (e.g. the GDR or the city of Berlin) or present a broader overview of contemporary Germany. This activity requires an understanding of chronology and the use of timelines to graphically represent the sequence of events.

Students (in groups of four) will research, design, and create a board game based on information in the Reunified Germany Timeline (**Handout 5.1.1 on Instructional Resource Disc**). This project requires the use of multiple abilities so that every student can contribute. Each student should be given a defined role (i.e. techie, artist, scribe, manager). As students work on the project, the teacher should serve as a resource. This project challenges students to exercise higher-level thinking skills—comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and most important, synthesis—to complete complex problem-solving tasks. The project focuses on key questions, difficult issues, essential understanding, and important concepts.

The students must conceive the game, come up with questions and their answers, design and construct the board, write directions, create the game pieces, and then teach another group how to play it.

To do this, the students will need to research their topic thoroughly enough to come up with questions to be answered (and they will need to know the answers). They should start with the historic timeline, but will need to use the Internet and print sources to gain additional and more detailed information. This research reinforces the unit study while providing additional historical information, compelling images, and avenues for further research and study.

Each student will be assigned a specific role and task in the group: *Techie* (oversees Internet research), *Artist* (draws or selects cutouts for the final version of the board game), *Scribe* (writes questions, answers, and rules), *Manager* (makes sure everyone in

the group contributes, stays on task, selects, gathers and returns materials).

The final board game should be constructed on foam board (cut to the appropriate size); all lettering must be neat, consistent in size and style, and easy to read. Rules for the game should be easy to understand, typed, and mounted on foam board or cardstock. Question cards will be made of cardstock. The group needs to decide what to use as the players' token pieces and find or create them. Ideally, they should relate to the theme of the game.

Time Frame:

- (1) 45-minute class period: Determine the theme, conceptualize the game, and begin research.
- (1) 45-minute class period: Research the information.
- (1) 45-minute class period: Brainstorm ideas for the layout of the board and how the game will be played (i.e. the rules).
- (2) 45-minute class periods: Construct the game and all necessary components (e.g. question cards, game pieces, etc.).
- (1) 45-minute class period: Play the game; work out any issues.
- (1) 45-minute class period: Teach another team to play it.

WHOLE GROUP REFLECTIONS:

- After completing the project, students should write evaluations of the group process and of the other games created in the class. These evaluations enrich class discussion and promote critical thinking.
- The students should share their understanding of the challenges Germany faced in 1990 and whether the German people have succeeded in meeting these.

MODIFICATION:

- For the sake of time, the teacher might substitute the creation of a Jeopardy-style game for the board game. The students would create the categories and write the "answers."

EXTENSION:

- The teacher may assign the students a five-paragraph essay in which they answer the following question: "Has the Federal Republic of Germany succeeded in meeting the challenges of Germany's historic reunification?"