

Introduction

Imagine a family separated for forty years and then having the opportunity to come together and be reunited as a family. What would have changed over those forty years? How would the family begin the process of getting to know each other again? What problems would arise? What opportunities would there be? How long would this process of becoming one family again take? This is the situation Germany faced after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even today, Germany is still in the process of bringing its family back together again and solving the problems associated with reunification. Germany is in the process of learning from its history and bringing its “family” back together to take a position as one of the leading powers of the world.

The Federal Republic of Germany is Europe's largest country, both in economic power and population. Germany is officially called the Federal Republic of Germany. It is situated in the heart of Europe surrounded by the North Sea, Denmark, and the Baltic Sea on the north; by Poland and the Czech Republic on the east; by Austria and Switzerland on the south; and by France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands on the west. It is a parliamentary federal republic of sixteen states with Berlin as its capital and seat of government. After reunification in 1990, it became a founding member of the European Union, having the largest population among the nations of the European Union. Germany has the world's third largest economy and is one of the largest exporters of goods to other parts of the world.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, more Americans identified Germany as their ancestral home than any other single country. They came to the United States for a variety of reasons. Most came on their own, while others were fleeing the horrors of war. Their coming enriched our culture and contributed to our economic and political development. For this reason, students in American high schools need to know far more about Germany than can be learned from a chapter in a world history textbook.

Since the world history curriculum is crowded with “essential content” teachers need to determine where and when to stop and have students think about and apply the content they are learning. It is for this reason that each of the lessons is divided into three steps:

- **Gathering Information** about the Topic
- **Extending and Refining the Information** – Using Thinking Skills to Process the Information
- **Applying the Information** – Using the information in a new context – Applying the information to problem solving and decision-making

Each lesson also includes:

- **Focus Questions** to guide the instruction. Careful use of the material included in the lesson and use of the suggested strategies will enable the students to talk intelligently about the focus questions.
- An outline of essential content. Creative thinking depends on students having a firm knowledge base.
- Suggested **Checks for Understanding**. Formative assessments provide feedback to students on the road to understanding.

A **Transfer Task** for each topic is provided at the beginning so that students will know the kind of thinking expected of them after they complete all lessons for a topic. The transfer task should be reviewed with the students prior to teaching the topic and then administered to the students at the end of the lessons.

Obviously, for students to do well on the transfer task, it would be better if all lessons were taught using all of the suggested strategies. However, the reality is that teachers need to use their judgment as to how they use the material. For example:

- Teachers may want to teach both topics using the materials as suggested and using the transfer task at the end of each topic.
- Teachers may want to use only one of the topics to coincide with a unit they are teaching from another source.
- Teachers may want to use selected handouts, lessons, and strategies to support lessons from their own curriculum materials.