

## **Remembering the Weimar Republic** *Germany in the Era of Hyperinflation*

### **Author**

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**Grades:** 9-12

**Subjects:** Contemporary World Affairs, Global History, Economics

**Overview of Lesson Plan:** In this lesson, students explore the history of the economic policies and problems of Germany's Weimar Republic and how hyperinflation plagued Germany and helped fuel the eventual rise of Adolf Hitler.

**Suggested Time Allowance:** 1 hour

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Explore the legacy of the Weimar Republic by reading and discussing "Germany in the Era of Hyperinflation"
2. Understand why Germany was reluctant to initiate the kinds of expensive stimulus programs promoted by the United States in 2008 & 2009

### **Related Article**

'Germany in the Era of Hyperinflation'

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-641758,00.html>

### **Resources / Materials:**

-pens/pencils/markers

-copies of the article 'Germany in the Era of Hyperinflation' found online at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-641758,00.html> (one per student)

-dictionaries

--images from the introductory slideshow, 'The Weimar Republic', found online at

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_146-1971-109-42,\\_Inflation,\\_Schlange\\_vor\\_Lebensmittelgesch%C3%A4ft,\\_Berlin.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1971-109-42,_Inflation,_Schlange_vor_Lebensmittelgesch%C3%A4ft,_Berlin.jpg)

[http://www.paddypowertrader.com/uploads/blog/jul28\\_09\\_vob\\_dw.gif](http://www.paddypowertrader.com/uploads/blog/jul28_09_vob_dw.gif)

[http://michaelbunker.com/uploaded\\_images/weimarburningmoney-761986.jpg](http://michaelbunker.com/uploaded_images/weimarburningmoney-761986.jpg)

## 1. WARM-UP/:

The introductory slideshow "The Weimar Republic" serves as a good introduction to this particular time period in Germany history. Print out the images from the slideshow and post them around the classroom.

When students arrive, inform them that the classroom has been set up as a Weimar Republic gallery, and provide a brief verbal introduction if necessary. Instruct them to take a gallery walk, examining the images. As they walk through the gallery, ask them to note what surprises them and what they wonder about in their journals.

Next, bring the class together for discussion. Ask: What time period are these photos from? How can you tell? What was the Weimar Republic? What did you see in the slideshow that surprised you? What questions does it raise? What do you want to know more about? Why are we looking back to this time period? Go around the room and have students share what they know about the current financial crisis.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: As a class, read and discuss the article 'Germany in the Era of Hyperinflation' <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,druck-641758,00.html>

focusing on the following questions:

- a. Why did journalist Eugene Xammar have a stroke of reporter's luck when he was sent to Berlin by the Barcelona daily newspaper for which he worked?
- b. What happened to the German mark from 1914 until November 1923?
- c. What happened to the family that sold its house to emigrate to America?
- d. What is the national trauma that can still be felt to this day in Germany?
- e. What fear is etched into the German psyche?
- f. How did the problem begin?
- g. What was the congenital defect of the Weimar Republic?
- h. What did the monetary depreciation initially accomplish? How?
- i. What destabilized the Weimar economy?
- j. Why did the descent of the mark begin in 1922?
- k. What did it mean 'to stare with full barns' and 'We're drinking away Grandma's house'? How did they relate to the German economy?
- l. What were rentenmarks? Who were the winners and losers with the introduction of the rentenmarks? Why?

### 3. ACTIVITY:

Inform students that they are going to work in small groups to act as curators of a class museum exhibit that will look back at the history of the Weimar Republic.

Directions: In your group, research the Weimar Republic. Then you will share what you've learned by curating a museum exhibit made up of artifacts from the 1920s. Use the questions below to guide your research and provide the background for your exhibition tags but feel free to move beyond them to develop greater expertise on the topic. Also provided here are the guidelines for creating your exhibit and some suggested resources for your research.

#### The Weimar Republic

When was it? What characterized it? How did people's daily lives change during this time? How did it end?

#### Creating Your Exhibit:

Your exhibit should include

- a paragraph introducing the viewer to your area and other information you discovered
- a collection of several audio-visual artifacts (photographs, drawings/paintings, maps, charts, graphs, audio clips, excerpts from writings of the time, etc.)
- a signed exhibition tag to accompany each artifact consisting of a paragraph describing the artifact and putting it in historical context

### 4. FOR HOMEWORK

Individually, students pair one of the Weimar Republic artifacts they saw in the classroom museum with a similar contemporary item and write a short compare-and-contrast essay. In their writing, students should reflect on the artifacts they have paired to bring out the similarities and differences between the Weimar Republic and now, as well as discuss what they have learned from history and how it might apply to the position the United States is in today.