

The Reichstag
If Walls Could Talk

Hale Edwards
Riverside Middle School
Greer, S.C.

With Thanks to the Goethe Institut
Transatlantic Outreach Program



www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauen/baubilan...

**The REICHSTAG
IF WALLS COULD TALK**

Author's Name: Hale Edwards

School's Name and Address: Riverside Middle School.
615 Hammett Bridge Road
Greer, S.C. 29650

E-mail address:hedwards@greenville.k12.sc.us

UNIT TITLE: The Reichstag-If Walls Could Talk

Essential Understandings

Many turning points in Germany's History have taken place within the Reichstag
How do they affect Germany today?

Big Concepts -

- 1) Much of Germany's History has been affected by events that have taken place in the Reichstag.
- 2) The difficulties experienced in German Reunification.

An Essential Understanding:

Students will understand that the reunification of Germany was difficult and still continues to be so and why.

Essential Questions –

- 1) How can events in the past affect a person's perception of a place in the present and in the future?
- 2) What important events have taken place in the Reichstag and how have they affected present day Germany?
- 3) Why was returning the Bundestag to the Reichstag controversial and does it continue to be so?

State Content Standard(s) and Performance Indicator(s)

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE STANDARDS

Standard 7-6: The student will demonstrate an understanding of international developments in the post-World War II world, including the impact of the Cold War on the world.

Indicator 7-6.2: Summarize the events of the Cold War, including the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe; the rise of the Communist party in China; the building of the Berlin wall; the economic and political competition for influence in Vietnam and Korea; the Cuban missile crisis; the revolutionary movements in Africa; the development of new military, nuclear, and space technology; and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Individual Summative Assessment

Assessment Type RAFT

Students: In order to show mastery of concepts learned in this Unit you will participate in a RAFT.

Directions/Criteria-

- 1) You will each be given a **R**ole (as a former East German citizen, West German Citizen, a member of the West German Parliament, a member of the former East German Government, or as a member of the international media.
- 2) Your **A**udience will be your classmates acting as citizens of a reunited Germany.
- 3) Your **F**ormat will be a persuasive paragraph using facts from concepts we have studied in this unit. You will write this paragraph as a television speech that will be delivered the night before a popular vote is to be taken.
- 4) Your **T**opic will be either for or against the return of the Bundestag to the Reichstag in Berlin.

Lesson One:

Essential Question: How can events in the past affect a person's perception of a place in the present and in the future?

Instructional Strategies and Learning Activities:

- 1) Have students write in their journal responses to the prompt: "Write about a public building that is important and about an event that has taken place there. The event could be a positive or negative".
- 2) Have students share their writing.
- 3) Brainstorm briefly a list of public buildings that students consider important, why, and events that have taken place in the building.
- 4) Show students pictures of public buildings and ask them to share how they feel when they see the buildings and why. (Suggestions: The US Capital, The Statue of Liberty, The White House, any of the monuments in Washington, DC).
- 5) Discuss the importance of the buildings/monuments. Make sure the discussion includes events that have taken place at the site, positive and negative.
- 6) Conclusion to lesson: Have students summarize the class discussion on the importance of public buildings/monuments and answer the Essential Question.

Lesson Two:

Essential Question: What important events have taken place in the Reichstag and how have they affected present day Germany?

Instructional Strategies and Learning Activities:

- 1) As students enter the classroom have pictures of the Reichstag displayed on an “overhead projector”.
- 2) Have students briefly write in their notebooks what they think it is and it’s importance.
- 3) Have students share their answers and then make sure they have the correct one: It is the building in Berlin Germany that houses the German Parliament, the Bundestag.
- 4) Divide students into cooperative groups and distribute the name of an event that has occurred in (or concerning) the Reichstag to student groups.
- 5) Give students this class session and at least one additional one to research the event they have been given and prepare a brief report to give to the class about the event.
- 6) Have students self evaluate their participation in researching and writing the group report and evaluate their team mates.
- 7) At the end of the final report, create a time line of the events for display in the class.
- 8) At the conclusion of the lesson, have students summarize in their note book the lesson and try to answer the Essential Question.

Lesson Three:

Essential Question: Why was returning the Bundestag to the Reichstag controversial and does it continue to be so?

- 1) Have students write their thoughts concerning the Essential Question in their notebooks.
- 2) Allow as many days for the RAFT and presentation of paragraphs (speeches) as you think necessary.
- 3) Explain the RAFT to students.
- 4) Randomly distribute student roles.
- 5) Have research materials, computers and passes to media center available in case students want to do additional research.
- 6) Have paragraphs/speeches presented to the class.
- 7) In conclusion, have students vote on the return of the Bundestag to the Reichstag.
- 8) In conclusion, have students summarize the lesson and answer the Essential Question.

Reichstag Picture



www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/bauen/baubilan...



"To The German People"

Self Evaluation for group work:

Name: _____

Project: _____

Name	Contributions to the group (Be Specific)	Grade	Reason for Grade (Be Specific)

Rubric for RAFT

Persuasive Essay : The Reichstag

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards	Score
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.	
Support for Position	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences).	
Evidence and Examples	All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.	At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.	Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.	
Accuracy	All supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts and statistics were inaccurately reported.	
Closing paragraph	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position statement begins the closing paragraph.	The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is restated within the first two sentences of the closing paragraph.	The author's position is restated within the closing paragraph, but not near the beginning.	There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.	

SUGGESTED EVENTS FOR RESEARCH

DATE	EVENT
June 9, 1884	Laying of corner stone for original building/was this controversial? Who designed the building
November 9, 1918	Philipp Scheidemann speech from balcony
1933	Fire/Hitler's rise to power
May 1945	Battle for Berlin
August 13, 1961	Construction of Berlin Wall (how does this affect the Reichstag)
October 4, 1990	One day after Reunification/the first sitting of the all-German Bundestag takes place in the Reichstag
June 20, 1991	The German Bundestag (meeting in Bonn) decides that the Bundestag should return to Berlin and the Reichstag
July 1993	The Bundestag's Council of Elders votes to refurbish the Reichstag. Norman Foster is selected
June 1994	The Bundestag's Council of Elders decides to build a new Cupola on top of the Reichstag
April 19, 1999	Bundestag takes possession of the rebuilt Reichstag. The next day is the 50 th anniversary of the German Bundestag

Background Information

- 1) The Reichstag, the seat of the German Parliament, is located in Berlin.
- 2) When the German Empire was founded in 1872 it was determined that a large Parliament building was needed in Berlin.
- 3) A competition between 103 architects was held in 1872.
- 4) The delay between the selection of the architect and the beginning of construction was due to purchasing property and arguments between Wilhelm I, Otto Von Bismarck, and members of the parliament about how construction should be handled.
- 5) Another contest was held to select an architect. Frankfurt architect Paul Wallot was chosen.
- 6) Construction of the Reichstag took place between 1884 and 1894
- 7) The Cornerstone was laid on June 9, 1884 by Wilhelm I.
- 8) Wilhelm I died (1888-the year of three emperors) before construction was completed. Wilhelm II objected to Parliament as an institution even more so than Wilhelm I.
- 9) The Reichstag was constructed mainly with war reparation money from France.
- 10) The original building received great acclaim for the construction marvel of the time, the steel and glass cupola.
- 11) The famous Quote, "Dem Deutschen Volke" ("To The German People") was added in 1916.
- 12) Originally the Reichstag building was constructed to house the original German Parliament of the German Empire known as the *Reichstag*.
- 13) The Reichstag building opened in 1894 and was the meeting place for the Reichstag until 1933 when the building burned.
- 14) The Kaiser abdicated after WWI. During the Revolutionary days of 1918, on November 9th, Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed Germany a Republic from a balcony window of the Reichstag.
- 15) During the days of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) the building continued to house the parliament which was still called the *Reichstag*.
- 16) The building reopened after reunification in 1999 and once again houses the German parliament now known as the *Bundestag*.
- 17) The term Reichstag now refers to the building only.
- 18) The term *Reichstag* as a parliament dates back to the Holy Roman Empire. The Reichstag as a parliament ceased to act as a true parliament during the Nazi years.

Third Reich-

- 1) Hitler was appointed *Reichskanzler*, January 30, 1933.
- 2) Building was set on fire February 27, 1933.
- 3) Hitler blamed the fire on the Communists.
- 4) Hitler and the Nazis used the fire as an excuse to suspend most of the human rights created under the 1919 constitution.
- 5) It has since been discovered that most likely the Nazis used underground tunnels to set the fire themselves.
- 6) During the years of Nazi (National Socialist Rule) the building DID NOT house the parliamentary sessions.
- 7) When and if the parliament met during the NAZI years it met across the street in a former Opera House (the Krolloper Building).
- 8) When the *Reichstag* gave up most of its powers with the Enabling Act it also met in the Krolloper Building.

World War II-

- 1) The building was used for propaganda demonstrations and for military purposes.
- 2) Building was damaged during air raids and was a major target for the Red Army during the Battle of Berlin.
- 3) Soviet Graffiti is still visible on the walls and the roof. The graffiti was preserved during reconstruction after reunification.

Cold War

- 1) Building was located along the Berlin Wall and physically within West Berlin.
- 2) During the Berlin Blockade the building was a rallying point where many West Berliners gathered and heard Mayor Ernst Reuter's famous speech in which he called for the people of the world to look at the city. "*Ihr Volker der Welt, schaut auf diese Stadt!*". (*Peoples of the world, look upon this city!*).
- 3) There was no use for the building during the Cold War as the capital of West Germany was moved to the city of Bonn in 1949.
- 4) In 1956 it was determined that the *Reichstag* should not be demolished but should be restored.
- 5) The famous cupola was too damaged to be saved and was demolished.
- 6) The Reichstag was reconstructed between 1961 and 1964 after another architectural contest. (Paul Baumgarten was the winner).

Reunification

- 1) After reunification the usefulness and practicality of the building was debated.
 - a. Many felt that the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich were tied to the Reichstag building making it inappropriate for a democratic institution.
 - b. Supporters of the return of the Bundestag to the Reichstag stressed that German democracy began during the Bismarck era of Prussian Rule calling the building the "cradle of German Democracy".
 - c. Hitler never governed from the Reichstag Building due to the fire.
- 2) The Bundestag (Parliament of West Germany) was not allowed to meet in Berlin due to the "1971 Four Power Agreement on Berlin".
- 3) East Germany was already in violation of the agreement since it had declared East Berlin its capital.
- 4) The building was used up until 1990 for occasional representative meetings.

- 5) Building had been used for a highly praised Permanent Exhibit on German History. (*Fragen an die deutsche Geschichte*-Questions on German History).
- 6) The Official Reunification ceremony of East and West Germany was held on October 3, 1990 at the Reichstag. Attending the ceremony, among others were: Chancellor Helmut Kohl, President Richard von Weizsacker, and former Chancellor Will Brandt. The ceremony was highly symbolic and moving and included a huge fireworks display. It was followed the next day by a meeting of the parliament of a united Germany symbolically in the *Reichstag*.
- 7) At reunification the role that Berlin would play in a united Germany had not been decided. Berlin's role was the topic of fierce debates in the *Bundestag* (parliament).
- 8) On June 20, 1991 by a slim majority it was decided that the government and the parliament should return to Berlin from Bonn.

Reconstruction of the Reichstag-

- 1) In 1992 architect Norman Foster won an architectural contest for the reconstruction of the Reichstag.
- 2) Foster winning entry was different from what was actually constructed including a cupola that was added.
- 3) The building was nearly gutted removing everything but the outer walls including all changes made during the 1960s.
- 4) The reconstruction has been considered a success despite the criticism for the disregard of the original construction and furniture
- 5) The *Reichstag* is one of Berlin's most visited attractions.
- 6) The glass cupola that was added as a gesture to the original construction allows people an impressive view of Berlin.
- 7) **The Building reflects the German government's idea of being "Transparent"**. The parliament can be seen from the cupola
- 8) Natural lights radiates through the cupola to the Parliament floor (Plenary Hall).
- 9) A large sunshield follows the sun's movement electronically and blocks direct light that could be damaging below.
- 10) Construction was finished in 1999 and the seat of parliament was transferred to the *Reichstag* in April.

- 11) There are many points around the Reichstag that pay respect to those killed during the Nazi years.
- 12) Graffiti scrawled across the walls of the building by Soviet Soldiers as they stormed the building in 1945 remains on the walls.
- 13) Bullet holes from the storming of Berlin bringing an end to WWII will remain.
- 14) A plaque to the reopening of the Hungarian border between Hungary and Austria is displayed on the northeast corner outside wall. The removal of this barrier helped to speed the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- 15) Crosses dedicated to Germans that died trying to escape to West Berlin are placed along the Spree River just outside of the Reichstag.
- 16) The Place of Remembrance and Members' Lobby.
 - a. Art work on display is entitled: *In Memory of the Members of Parliament in the Weimar Republic who were Persecuted, Outlawed or Murdered between 1933 and 1945* was designed by Katharina Sieverding.
 - b. The Member's Lobby is not designed as a place to mourn or as a warning but as a place of tranquility.
 - c. There is much symbolism within the painting including an x-ray image of a human backbone to demonstrate the courage of the Members of the Reichstag who "showed backbone" standing up to the National Socialists.
 - d. Democratic Germany is also portrayed as a "phoenix rising from the ashes".
 - e. The painting is also seen as "a warning not to take democracy for granted but to guard over it with unceasing vigilance".
 - f. Three "books of remembrance" are in the lobby to honor the memory of members of the Reichstag.
 - i. The center table bears a volume which commemorates with short biographies the 120 Members of the Reichstag who were murdered by the National Socialists.
 - ii. The other two books of remembrance "pay tribute to parliamentarians" that were either arrested or driven to emigration.
 - g. Outside of the building is a Memorial to the Murdered Members of Parliament. The memorial to the Members of the Reichstag that were murdered by the NAZIS consists of

broken tablets of Berlin cast iron "reminiscent of the narrow gravestones at Jewish cemeteries".

- i.* Names and dates are inscribed along the tablets' upper edges along with the places where the victims died. (Concentration camps).
- ii.* The memorial is unobtrusive for a reason, representing the quietness that the National Socialist disaster descended on Germany with the consent of far too many people.

Bibliography

Facts, *The Bundestag at a Glance*, 2006, German Bundestag, Public Relations Division

www.bundestag.de

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/322967.stm>

<http://www.aviewoncities.com/zzprint/printarticle.htm?ref=berlin/reichstag.htm&title=Reichstag>

www.scrapbookpages.com/Berlin202/Reichstag.html

<http://www.answers.com/topic/reichstag-building>