



CALIFORNIA TEACHERS COLLABORATIVE FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Room 5: World War I and the Rise of the Nazis

Audience: Grades 6 - 8

Time: 45-60 Minutes

Student Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

1. Analyze the major causes and consequences of World War I by examining primary sources and identifying how the Treaty of Versailles created conditions for future conflict.
2. Evaluate how economic hardship and political instability in post-WWI Germany contributed to the rise of the Nazi Party by analyzing historical evidence and making cause-and-effect connections.
3. Explain how Hitler and the Nazi Party used propaganda and nationalist ideology to gain and maintain political power by examining specific examples of Nazi propaganda techniques and their impact.
4. Connect historical events from WWI to WWII by creating a timeline that demonstrates the relationship between key events, political decisions, and their consequences.

Aligned Standards (California Common Core)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions. (Addressed through analysis of WWI primary sources and Nazi propaganda materials)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts). (Addressed through analysis of Nazi propaganda and political speeches)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts. (Addressed through timeline construction and analysis of historical images/propaganda posters)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources. (Addressed through document analysis activities and written responses about the rise of Nazi power)

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Context:

This room 5 explores the profound connection between World War I (1914-1918) and the subsequent rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany.

As students navigate through this virtual space, they will encounter historical photographs, documents, propaganda posters, and multimedia presentations that illustrate how the devastation of the First World War created the conditions that allowed extremist ideologies to flourish during the Holocaust.

World War I, known as the "Great War," was supposed to be the conflict that would end all wars. However, the aftermath of the war left Germany in a devastating situation. The country faced severe economic challenges and felt unfairly punished by the international community. These difficult conditions created the perfect environment for a new political movement to emerge. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took advantage of the people's frustration, promising hope and a better future. In the 1924 elections, the Nazis initially received only 3% of the vote, but they strategically used propaganda—including newspapers, posters, and leaflets—to spread their message and gradually gain political power.

As Hitler's influence grew, he began to outline his dangerous and hateful vision for Germany and Europe. In his book "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle), he detailed his antisemitic beliefs and plans for territorial expansion. Hitler wanted to dominate Europe, starting with Poland, and eventually set his sights on conquering the Soviet Union. He viewed Jewish people and Slavic populations as inferior and developed plans to eliminate or enslave them. The Nazi regime's aggressive policies led to World War II, which began in 1939 and became a global conflict. During the war, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, a massive invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941,

breaking a non-aggression pact and expanding the war's devastation. Other countries, like Romania, became allies of Nazi Germany, further spreading the conflict and its destructive ideology.

Thinking Strategies

Critical Contextual Analysis

- Examine historical events within their full social and economic context
- Understand how economic hardship can create fertile ground for extreme political movements
- Investigate the connections between societal struggles and political ideologies

Cause and Effect Reasoning

- Map out how World War I's aftermath directly contributed to the rise of Nazi Germany
- Identify the chain of events that led to Hitler's political ascension
- Analyze how specific historical conditions created opportunities for radical political change

Perspective Taking

- Try to understand different perspectives of people living through this historical period
- Consider how ordinary Germans might have been drawn to Hitler's promises
- Examine multiple viewpoints, including those of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders

Compare and Contrast

- Compare the political and economic conditions in Germany before and after World War I
- Contrast democratic processes with authoritarian regime tactics
- Examine how different countries responded to similar post-war challenges

Systems Thinking

- Recognize how political, economic, and social systems interact
- Understand how individual actions can influence larger historical movements
- Analyze the complex interconnections between different historical factors

Glossary:

Key Terms

- **World War I (Great War):** A global conflict in the early 20th century that was optimistically believed to be the "war to end all wars." It ultimately set the stage for future conflicts, particularly World War II.
- **Nazi Party:** A political party in Germany led by Adolf Hitler that rose to power in the 1920s and 1930s, capitalizing on economic hardship and using propaganda to gain political influence.
- **Adolf Hitler:** The leader of the Nazi Party who became Chancellor of Germany, known for his extreme antisemitic views, expansionist ambitions, and responsibility for initiating World War II.
- **Mein Kampf:** Hitler's 1925 autobiographical manifesto that outlined his political ideology, antisemitic beliefs, and future plans for Germany, including territorial expansion and persecution of Jewish people.
- **Operation Barbarossa:** The codename for Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, launched on June 22, 1941, breaking the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact of 1939.
- **General Antonescu:** The Romanian political and military leader who allied Romania with Nazi Germany from 1940 to 1944, sharing its antisemitic agenda and hoping to reclaim territories from the Soviets.
- **World War II:** A global conflict that followed World War I, characterized by Nazi Germany's attempt to dominate Europe and the world, ultimately involving most of the world's nations.
- **Great Patriotic War:** The term used by the Soviet Union to describe World War II, emphasizing the Soviet Union's struggle against Nazi Germany.
- **Transnistria:** An area of Ukraine under Romanian control between 1941 and 1944, which became an administrative seat during World War II.
- **Propaganda:** A strategic communication method used by the Nazi Party to spread their ideology, manipulate public opinion, and increase political support, involving extensive use of newspapers, leaflets, and poster campaigns.

Timeline: World War I and Hitler's Rise to Power Timeline

Pre-War Period

- 1889: Adolf Hitler born in Austria
- 1914, June 28: Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand sparks World War I
- 1914-1918: World War I rages across Europe

World War I and Immediate Aftermath

- 1917: United States enters World War I
- 1918, November 11: World War I ends with Germany's defeat
- 1919: Treaty of Versailles signed, imposing harsh penalties on Germany
- 1919: Hitler joins the German Workers' Party (early Nazi Party)

Hitler's Early Political Career

- 1920: Nazi Party formally established
- 1923: Hitler attempts a failed coup in Munich (Beer Hall Putsch)
- 1924: Hitler imprisoned, writes "Mein Kampf"
- 1924: Nazi Party receives only 3% of votes in elections

Rise to Power

- 1929: Great Depression begins, creating economic crisis in Germany
- 1930: Nazi Party gains significant electoral support
- 1933, January 30: Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
- 1933, March: Nazis pass Enabling Act, giving Hitler dictatorial powers
- 1934: Hitler becomes Führer, combining roles of Chancellor and President

Expansion and World War II

- 1935: Germany begins military rearmament
- 1938: Germany annexes Austria
- 1938: Munich Agreement allows Germany to take part of Czechoslovakia
- 1939, September 1: Germany invades Poland, starting World War II
- 1941, June 22: Operation Barbarossa - Germany invades Soviet Union
- 1945, April: Hitler commits suicide
- 1945, May: World War II ends in Europe

Materials:

- [Read about the museum](#)
- [Access to virtual museum Room 5](#)
- [World map](#)
- [Timeline of World War I](#)
- [Primary source documents](#) (e.g., letters, speeches, photographs)
- [Digital resources](#)
- [Google Slides](#)

- [Handout 1](#)

Differentiation:

- Provide students with graphic organizers, sentence starters, and scaffolding to support their understanding of complex text.
- Pre-teach key terms, offer graphic organizers to help students process information, and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways.
- Encourage students to research a specific topic in greater depth, create a multimedia presentation on a key event, or develop a historical fiction story set during World War I.

Assessment: [Summative Assessment](#)

- **Anticipation Guide:** Create a worksheet with controversial statements about war, nationalism, and political leadership. Students mark whether they agree or disagree and discuss their responses before beginning the unit.
- **Image Analysis:** Show carefully selected historical images without context and ask students to describe what they see, generate questions about the images, and predict potential historical narratives.
- **Key Terms Preview:** Create a "Word Wall" with key historical terms. Students define terms in their own words, draw visual representations, and create example sentences.
- **Timeline Construction:** Provide a blank timeline from 1914-1945. Students research and place 5-10 major events they already know.
- **Concept Mapping:** Create a concept map with the central concept "Political Leadership During Crisis." Students brainstorm connected ideas to encourage abstract thinking about historical processes and reveal prior understanding and misconceptions.
- **Personal Connection Activity:** Have students write a reflective piece about a time when they or someone they know felt frustrated by difficult circumstances or what makes people vulnerable to persuasive leaders. This builds empathy and personal connection to historical learning.

Lesson/Activity:

Pre-Lesson Activities

Anticipation Guide

- Create a worksheet with controversial statements about war, nationalism, and political leadership
- Examples:
 - "Economic hardship can make people support extreme political ideas"
 - "One person can dramatically change the course of history"
- Students mark whether they agree or disagree
- Discuss responses before beginning the unit to activate prior knowledge

Image Analysis

- Show carefully selected historical images without context
- Could include:
 - Post-World War I economic scenes in Germany
 - Political propaganda posters
 - Maps showing European territorial changes
- Ask students to:
 - Describe what they see
 - Generate questions about the images
 - Predict potential historical narratives

Key Terms Preview

- Create a "Word Wall" with key historical terms
- Terms like:
 - Nationalism
 - Propaganda
 - Economic Depression
 - Scapegoating
- Students:
 - Define terms in their own words
 - Draw visual representations
 - Create example sentences

Timeline Construction

- Provide blank timeline from 1914-1945
- Students research and place 5-10 major events they already know
- Encourages historical thinking and reveals existing knowledge
- Creates anticipation for deeper learning

Concept Mapping

- Central concept: "Political Leadership During Crisis"
- Students brainstorm connected ideas
- Encourages abstract thinking about historical processes
- Reveals prior understanding and misconceptions

Lesson Plan

Objective:

- Students will understand the key events and consequences of World War I and the rise of Adolf Hitler.

Procedure (90 Minutes):

1. Hook: Begin with a thought-provoking question, such as "What is the cost of war?" or "Can a single event change the course of history?"
2. Overview of WWI:
 - Briefly explain the main causes: imperialism, nationalism, militarism, and the spark that ignited the war - the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.
 - Discuss the major battles and the human and economic costs of the war.
 - Analyze primary source documents to provide personal perspectives on the war.
3. The Treaty of Versailles and Its Impact:
 - Explain the terms of the treaty and how it harshly punished Germany.
 - Discuss the economic and political instability in Europe after the war.
4. The Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party:
 - Explain the conditions in Germany that allowed Hitler to rise to power (economic depression, political instability, and social unrest).
 - Discuss Nazi ideology, propaganda techniques, and the persecution of minorities.
5. The Road to War:
 - Explain German aggression, the policy of appeasement, and the events leading to the outbreak of World War II.

Discussion Questions

World War I

1. Causes of War:
 - What were the main causes of World War I?

- How did nationalism, imperialism, and militarism contribute to the outbreak of the war?
- Was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand the sole cause of the war?
- 2. The Human Cost:
 - What were the human costs of World War I?
 - How did the war impact soldiers, civilians, and the global economy?
- 3. The Treaty of Versailles:
 - What were the main provisions of the Treaty of Versailles?
 - How did the treaty impact Germany?
 - Do you think the Treaty of Versailles was fair? Why or why not?
- 4. The Impact of the War:
 - How did World War I shape the 20th century?
 - What were the long-term consequences of the war?

The Rise of Adolf Hitler

1. Economic and Political Conditions in Germany:
 - What were the economic and political conditions in Germany after World War I?
 - How did these conditions contribute to the rise of the Nazi Party?
2. Nazi Ideology and Propaganda:
 - What were the core beliefs of the Nazi Party?
 - How did the Nazis use propaganda to gain support?
 - Why were people drawn to the Nazi ideology?
3. The Role of Fear and Hatred:
 - How did the Nazis use fear and hatred to manipulate people?
 - What role did antisemitism play in the rise of the Nazi Party?
4. The Road to War:
 - How did Hitler's aggressive foreign policy lead to World War II?
 - What were the consequences of appeasement?

Supplemental Resources

Research Projects:

- **Analyze Primary Sources:** Provide students with primary sources, such as letters, diaries, or newspaper articles, and ask them to analyze the information and draw conclusions.

- Investigate a Specific Historical Figure: Students can research the life and impact of a significant historical figure, such as Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, or a lesser-known figure.
- Compare and Contrast Different Perspectives: Have students compare and contrast the perspectives of different groups, such as soldiers, civilians, and political leaders.

Community Engagement:

- Visit a Local War Memorial: Organize a field trip to a local war memorial or cemetery to honor the sacrifices of those who served.
- Interview a Veteran: If possible, arrange for students to interview a veteran who served during World War II (or a family member of a WWII veteran) or another conflict.
- Volunteer at a Local Museum: Encourage students to volunteer at a local museum that has exhibits related to World War I or the Holocaust.

References

Related Literature and Media (Require Teacher Preview)

Historical Fiction

Marshall, A. (2018). *The Winter Soldier*. Little, Brown and Company.

Wood, T. E. (2021). *The war nurse*. Sourcebooks Landmark.

McLain, P. (2022). *The war librarian*. Ballantine Books.

Lowry, L. (1989). *Number the stars*. Houghton Mifflin.

Zusak, M. (2005). *The book thief*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Non-Fiction Texts

Donnelly, J. (2018). *What was World War I?* Penguin Workshop.

Stead, M. (2021). *The first world war: A captivating guide to World War I*. Captivating History.

Hale, N. (2014). *Treaties, trenches, mud, and blood: A World War I tale*. Amulet Books.

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Shuter, J. (2002). *Prelude to the Holocaust*. Heinemann.

Documentaries

The World at War. (1973). [Television series]. Thames Television.

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Online Resources

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World War I Centennial Commission. (2024). *Commemorating the Great War*.
<https://www.worldwar1centennial.org>

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<https://www.khanacademy.org>

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