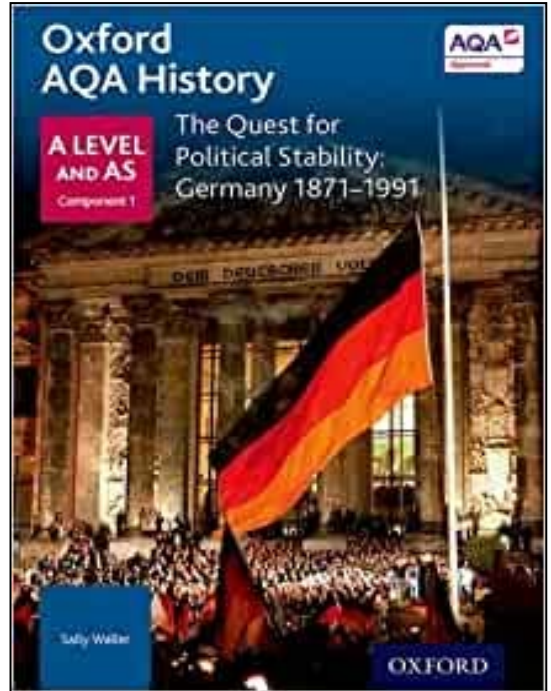
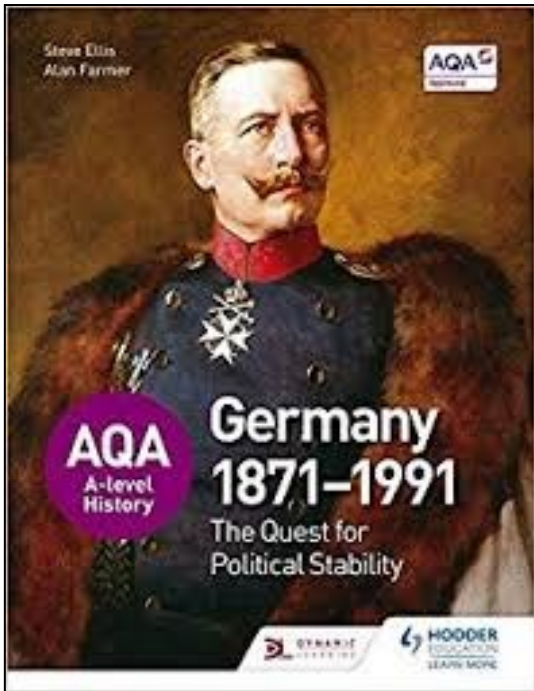


Barrow Hall College

AQA A-Level History



Germany Work Booklet

Unit 4: Recovery & Stability 1924 - 1929

Name:

Class:

Teacher:

How to use your Germany Workbook

Use the icons in your work booklet to guide you.



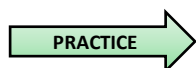
This is an activity for you to be getting on with independently as the lesson begins.



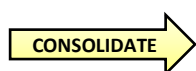
This is information you are being introduced to for the first time, make sure to read this as carefully as possible and highlight any key words or phrases.



These terms or phrases are key to understanding the topic we are studying make sure you know their meanings and that you feel comfortable using them.



This is your chance to work with the new information you are learning about, these short tasks will help develop your understanding of the topic of the lesson.



These short knowledge quizzes provide you with the opportunity to consolidate the key facts and figures from the lesson in one convenient place for revision.



At the conclusion of the lesson you will use this space to consider the enquiry question from the lesson and practice extended writing in your exercise book.



Lesson 1: Why did Germany's economy recover in the years 1924 -1925?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.

Why did Germany's economy recover in the years 1924–25?

By November 1923 the German mark was no longer worth the paper it was printed on. Serious political unrest looked set to continue unless something was done to stabilise the currency.

The stabilisation of the currency

Largely as a result of the prompting of Food and then Finance Minister Hans Luther, Stresemann's short-lived government in November 1923 accepted a new currency – the *Rentenmark* – to be based on Germany's agricultural property and industrial resources. The currency was to be supervised by a specially constituted authority, the *Rentenbank*, which issued a loan to the *Reichsbank*. The *Reichsbank* could then issue *Rentenmarks* to the value of its loan holding. *Rentenmarks* were valued at one gold mark each. Twelve noughts were struck off the mark so that one dollar was now equal to 4.2 *Rentenmarks*.

The agrarian backing for the new currency was largely fictitious because land is not convertible in the same way as gold. Nevertheless, since Germany lacked enough gold to launch a new bullion-backed currency, the psychological effect of the *Rentenmark's* mortgage helped to maintain its value. The restricted amount of the new currency available to the *Reichsbank* also prevented a slide towards inflation. The government could no longer draw on unlimited currency credits from the *Reichsbank* but had to try to balance expenditure against income.

The *Rentenmark* scheme's success was largely due to the firmness and energy of Luther, and to the financial skill of Currency Commissioner Hjalmar Schacht, who dealt with a host of problems arising from the new mark's introduction. As a result of the government's careful housekeeping and responsible fiscal policy, the new currency quickly stabilised and the *Rentenmark* was converted back into *Reichsmarks* in August 1924. The stabilisation programme meant that economic life revived throughout Germany, although dearer money initially caused a high level of unemployment.



How did the stabilisation of the currency help Germany's economy recover?



Lesson 1: Why did Germany’s economy recover in the years 1924 -1925?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann’s time as leader of Germany.

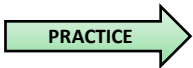
LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany’s recovery under Stresemann.

The Dawes Plan

The establishment of a stable currency and Stresemann’s promise to resume the payment of reparations provided a basis for international negotiations on Germany’s economic plight. The fact that a new French government, led by Edouard Herriot, replaced Poincare’s government, was also important. Herriot, facing financial problems of his own as a result of French occupation of the Ruhr, was more interested in conciliation than extortion.

Early in 1924 an inter-Allied Committee, chaired by two Americans, Charles Dawes and Owen D. Young, was set up to examine the problem of German financial stability. Its major concern was to establish a scale of reparations payments which would not prevent Germany from stabilising its currency and balancing its budget. In April 1924 the committee submitted its recommendations.

The Dawes Plan, while not reducing the overall reparations bill, proposed that it should be paid over a longer period. Germany was to make annual payments of 1,000 million marks (£50 million) in the first five years, after which time the payments were to rise to 2,500 million marks (£125 million). To ensure that Germany would make regular annual payments, the creditor nations were to be given a degree of control over Germany’s central banking system and also over the German railway system. Henceforward, these would be supervised by committees consisting of German and Allied representatives. While this was somewhat humiliating, the bitter pill was to be sweetened with a loan of 800 million marks (£40 million), which would help Germany start its payments. The promise that French forces would quit the Ruhr once Germany accepted the terms was also an implicit part of the Dawes Plan.



How did the Dawes Plan help Germany’s economy recover?



Lesson 1: Why did Germany's economy recover in the years 1924 -1925?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

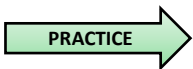
LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.

Many right-wing Germans were critical of the Dawes scheme simply because they opposed the notion of reparation payments. Others hated submitting to Allied controls over the central banking system and the railways. This was seen as a monstrous invasion of German sovereignty. The Nationalist Party (DNVP) campaigned against the Plan as a 'second Versailles'. But influential industrialists and members of the business community within the Party saw that the Plan would bring Germany great material advantages. In a crucial vote in the *Reichstag* in August 1924, the Nationalists split on the issue: 52 DNVP members voted in favour of the Dawes Plan and 48 against, ensuring that it was carried into effect.

The success of the Dawes scheme required a prosperous Germany. In 1924 there seemed some cause for optimism on this score. Germany undoubtedly had the physical capacity to increase production. Moreover, the prospect of further investments, particularly from the USA, had an immediate stimulating effect on the economy.



Why were some Germans opposed to the Dawes plan?



Why was there some cause for optimism in regards to the Dawes Plan?



Lesson 1: Why did Germany's economy recover in the years 1924 -1925?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.



📍 Key Knowledge Check 📍

When was the name of the new currency?	What was one dollar equal to?	Who was the Currency Commissioner?	What was Herriot more interested in?	How much was Germany expected to pay in the first 5 years?
How big was the loan given to Germany?	What did the creditors have control over?	Who were critical of the Dawes plan?	What did the DNVP call it?	What was the vote split in the DNVP?



Why did Germany's economy recover in the years 1924 -1925?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can explain why Germany's economy recovered in the years 1924 -1925.	Identify and explain factors that led to Germany's recovery.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



Lesson 2: Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?



LO: To know why the political situation remained unstable in Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the impact of this instability.

Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924–25?

German politics continued to be unstable in 1924–25. The fact that the SPD, the largest party in the *Reichstag*, objected to joining a coalition with bourgeois parties – for example, the DDP, Centre and DVP – meant it was virtually impossible to construct a government with a majority.

The situation in 1923–24

The SPD was outraged by the unequal treatment meted out to Bavaria and Saxony in the autumn of 1923. In Saxony an elected socialist government had been suppressed by the German army. Meanwhile, right-wing politicians in Bavaria had been left in power after the Munich Putsch, in which Kahr and others had been implicated (see page 102). SPD demands that Bavaria should be given the same treatment as Saxony were rejected by the bourgeois parties, who feared this would tear Germany apart.

When Stresemann lost a vote of confidence, President Ebert called upon Centre Party leader Wilhelm Marx to form a new government. Marx, a dull speaker who lacked popular appeal, was a capable administrator, an open-minded pragmatist, and a man with the courage to take tough decisions. He was to be the Republic’s longest-serving chancellor. His government was a coalition of the Centre, BVP, DVP and DDP.

Marx’s minority government, reliant on the support of the SPD, had to take some unpopular decisions. Many of the middle class had lost all their savings in the hyperinflation but the government could not afford any compensation. In an effort to cut back government expenditure, pay in the civil service was reduced to below pre-1914 levels.



Summarise the situation in Germany between 1923 – 24.



Lesson 2: Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?



LO: To know why the political situation remained unstable in Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the impact of this instability.

The 1924 elections

The radical right and left made significant gains in the May 1924 elections. The parties in the centre lost voters to the DNVP, whose electoral campaign was based on a repudiation of the Dawes Plan. The DNVP, with 20 per cent of the vote, became the second largest party in the *Reichstag*. Even the Nazis, whose leader, Hitler, was in prison, won 6.5 per cent of the vote. On the left, the SPD lost ground and a large numbers of workers turned to the Communist Party (KPD) which won 12.6 per cent of the vote. The KPD was henceforward a dangerous magnet for working-class militants, especially the young.

Marx's minority government had great difficulty in gaining a majority on any proposal (for example, the ratification of the Dawes Plan). After a series of defeats in the *Reichstag*, Marx called for fresh elections in December 1924. By then the economy was showing signs of recovery. Unemployment was falling and wages were rising. In these circumstances, the SPD made significant gains at the KPD's expense. On the right the Nazis lost more than half their support. However, the DNVP managed to improve its showing.

After lengthy negotiations, a government was formed in mid-January 1925 under Hans Luther. He was without a party affiliation and had gained a reputation as an effective minister of finance. The new coalition included members of the DNVP for the first time – a major achievement because the Party had previously adopted a policy of outright opposition to the Republic. The DNVP soon found itself in the embarrassing situation of supporting policies it had denounced during the election campaign.



Explain the key takeaways of the 1924 elections

Key Takeaways
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Lesson 2: Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?



LO: To know why the political situation remained unstable in Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the impact of this instability.

Election date		Party							
		DNVP	DVP	Centre	BVP	DDP	SPD	KPD	NSDAP
May 1924	Votes (millions)	5.6	2.7	3.9	0.9	1.7	6.0	3.6	1.9
	%	19.5	9.2	13.4	3.2	5.7	20.5	12.6	6.5
	No. of seats	95	45	65	16	28	100	62	32
Dec 1924	Votes (millions)	6.2	3.0	4.1	1.1	1.9	7.9	2.7	0.9
	%	20.5	10.1	13.6	3.7	6.3	26	9.0	3.0
	No. of seats	103	51	69	19	32	131	45	14
May 1928	Votes (millions)	4.4	2.7	3.7	0.9	1.5	9.2	3.2	0.8
	%	14.2	8.7	12.1	3.1	4.9	29.8	10.6	2.6
	No. of seats	73	45	62	16	25	153	54	12

Figure 1 Results of elections to the Reichstag, 1924.

Chancellor	Date	Partners
Gustav Stresemann (DVP)	August 1923–October 1923	SPD, DDP, Centre, DVP
Gustav Stresemann (DVP)	October 1923–November 1923	DDP, Centre, DVP
Wilhelm Marx (Centre)	November 1923–June 1924	DDP, Centre, BVP, DVP
Wilhelm Marx (Centre)	June 1924–January 1925	DDP, Centre, DVP
Hans Luther (Non-party)	January 1925–December 1925	DVP, DNVP, BVP
Hans Luther (Non-party)	January 1926–May 1926	DDP, DVP, BVP
Wilhelm Marx (Centre)	May 1926–December 1926	DDP, Centre, DVP, BVP
Wilhelm Marx (Centre)	January 1927–June 1928	DVP, DNVP, BVP
Hermann Müller (SPD)	June 1928–March 1930	SPD, DDP, Centre, BVP, DVP

Figure 2 German Chancellors and coalition partners: 1923–30.

- 1 Explain why the SPD did so much better in December than in May 1924.
- 2 Why were there two elections in 1924?



Lesson 2: Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?



LO: To know why the political situation remained unstable in Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the impact of this instability.

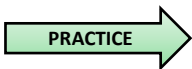
The 1925 presidential election

In February 1925 President Ebert died. A new presidential election followed. In the first round of voting none of the politicians managed to win an overall majority. Accordingly, the SPD and the Democrats decided to unite their forces behind the Centre Party candidate, Wilhelm Marx. The right-wing parties rallied around Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg, the hero of the First World War. In the second round of voting, Hindenburg (with 48.3 per cent of the vote) defeated Marx (with 45.3 per cent). Had the Communists not run their own candidate Ernst Thalmann, who won 2 million votes, Marx might have won – assuming Thalmann’s supporters had voted for him rather than for Hindenburg.

Hindenburg’s election was in many ways a vote against the Republic. Hindenburg, who never identified himself whole-heartedly with Weimar, still felt bound by ties of loyalty to Wilhelm II and had many anti-Republican figures among his friends. Nevertheless, Hindenburg’s status gave the Republic added authority. Moreover, he accepted the Weimar constitution and did not set out to betray it. Indeed, he proved a great disappointment to those on the right who hoped he might support a monarchist restoration.



Why was there a Presidential Election in 1925 and what was the outcome?



Why was Hindenburg’s election considered a ‘vote against the Republic’?



Lesson 2: Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?



LO: To know why the political situation remained unstable in Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the impact of this instability.

CONSOLIDATE

Key Knowledge Check

Who was the largest party in the Reichstag between 24-25?	Who replaced Stresemann?	What had the middle classes lost?	Who did the centre parties lose votes to?	How much of the vote did the Nazis gain in 1924?
What was falling by the time of December elections?	Who was the biggest party in May 1928?	When did Ebert die?	Who replaced him?	Why did Marx lose?

APPLY

Why did the political situation remain unstable in the years 1924-25?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can explain why Germany's political situation remained unstable in 1924 -1925.	Identify and explain factors that led to instability.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.

Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929)

Stresemann is generally considered to be the most influential cabinet minister in the Weimar Republic period. Born into a lower middle-class family, he nevertheless had an excellent education, eventually achieving a doctorate. At university, he involved himself in politics. His student views, which combined liberalism with strident nationalism, did not change much during the course of the rest of his life. Joining the National Liberal Party, he was elected to the *Reichstag* in 1907. By 1917 he was National Liberal leader. He briefly joined the German Democratic Party after the war but was expelled for his right-wing views. He then gathered the main body of the old National Liberal Party into the German People's Party (DVP) with himself as chairman. Most of the Party's supporters were middle- and upper-class Protestants. The DVP supported Christian family values, secular education and lower tariffs, and was hostile to socialism in all its forms.

By the early 1920s Stresemann was prepared to co-operate with the parties of the left and centre, while remaining a monarchist at heart. In August 1923 he became chancellor of a coalition government. The following month he courageously called off resistance against French occupation of the Ruhr (see page 101). He also supported the introduction of the *Rentenmark* in an attempt to end hyperinflation.

Losing the support of the SPD, his coalition government collapsed in November 1923. Although he was no longer chancellor, he remained foreign minister for the rest of his life, serving in eight successive governments ranging from centre-right to centre-left. As foreign minister, his greatest achievement was probably the Locarno Treaty with the Western powers in 1925 – for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926.

Stresemann's politics defy easy categorisation. He was undoubtedly a liberal, who favoured democracy. But he was also a German nationalist who wished to overthrow the Versailles Treaty. He believed the best way to achieve this was to win the friendship and co-operation of Britain and France.



Use the information above to create a mind map of key information on Gustav Stresemann on the next page.

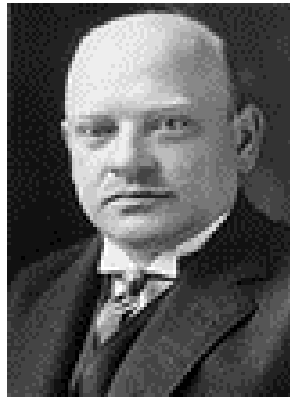


Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.





Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

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Improved international relations

How successful was Stresemann in diplomatic terms?

After French forces left the Ruhr, Foreign Minister Stresemann managed to improve Germany's relations with Britain and France. Like the vast majority of Germans, Stresemann hoped to revise the Versailles settlement, especially in the east. But he was a pragmatist. Unlike many nationalists, he recognised that Germany lacked the power to challenge Poland, never mind Britain and France. If offensive action was out of the question, Stresemann's only recourse was diplomacy. He appreciated it would be no easy matter achieving his aims when, as he himself once remarked, he was backed up only by the power of German culture and the German economy. In essence, Stresemann's general strategy was in the tradition of Wirth's fulfilment policy (see page 98). In the long term, he wanted Germany to be the leading power in Europe once again. To that end co-operation with the Western powers seemed to be in Germany's best short-term interests.

PRACTICE

Explain the key takeaways of Stresemann's approach to leadership.

Key Takeaways





Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

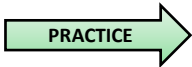
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The Locarno Treaties

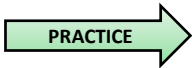
After months of negotiations, the Locarno Treaties were signed in December 1925. By the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, Germany, France and Belgium agreed to respect their existing frontiers. Britain and Italy assumed the role of guarantors. By the Treaties of Arbitration, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia agreed to settle future disputes peacefully. However, unlike in the West, Germany did not accept the finality of its frontiers in the east. Indeed, Stresemann made it perfectly clear that he hoped to revise Germany's frontiers with Poland at some stage in the future.

The Locarno Treaties were undoubtedly a success for Stresemann. No longer diplomatically isolated, Germany was again treated as an equal partner. In confirming the status quo in the West, Stresemann had curtailed France's freedom of action. The occupation of the Ruhr or annexation of the Rhineland were no longer legitimate French options.

The Locarno Treaties indicated that a new era of peaceful co-operation had begun. In 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. While Stresemann regarded the League with no more enthusiasm than most Germans, he realised that Germany would be better able to defend its interests from within the League than if it stayed outside. Relations between Germany and the Western powers continued to improve.



What were the Locarno Treaties?



Why was the signing of the treaties a real positive for Germany?



Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



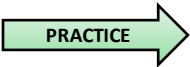
LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

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How successful was Stresemann?

Given Germany's weak position, Stresemann had achieved a great deal in a short space of time, particularly considering the situation in 1923 and the internal and external forces stacked against him. Able to use only conciliatory methods, his policies resulted in Germany regaining diplomatic influence and the ability to influence the Allies.

However, it may be that Stresemann's achievements have been exaggerated. There is no doubt that circumstances, especially Britain and France's willingness to co-operate, worked strongly in his favour. Moreover, it can be claimed that he failed to achieve his aims. There was no early restoration of German sovereignty over the Saar and the Rhineland as he had hoped. Indeed, Stresemann became increasingly disappointed by the slow pace of revision of the Versailles Treaty. His right-wing opponents in Germany were even more scathing of his failure on this score. Unsurprisingly, Stresemann was rated more highly abroad than he was in Germany.



Complete the table below using the information above:

Successful?	Overrated?



Lesson 3: To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader as foreign minister.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann.



Key Knowledge Check

What was Stresemann's political views?	When did he become Chancellor?	What did he become after being Chancellor?	What was Stresemann's only recourse?	What was the Germany's best short term option?
When was the Locarno treaty signed?	What was Germany admitted to because of it?	What began to improve?	Who was scathing of Stresemann?	Where was he rated more highly?



To what extent does Stresemann deserve praise for Germany's recovery?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate Stresemann's contribution to Germany's recovery?	Identify and explain factors that led to recovery.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



LO: To know key economic events between 1925 to 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's economic recovery.

Economic progress

Between 1924 and 1929 there was monetary stability and (thanks to the Dawes Plan) a significant influx of foreign capital – around 25.5 billion marks. Foreign investors, especially Americans, were attracted to Germany because of its relatively high interest rates.

German industry, despite its loss of resources arising from Versailles, did well. By 1928 production levels generally exceeded those of 1913. This was the result of more efficient production techniques, particularly in coal mining and steel manufacture. German industry also achieved economies of scale by the growing number of cartels. Between 1925 and 1929 German exports rose by 40 per cent. The chemicals giant I. G. Farben became the largest manufacturing enterprise in Europe.

This economic progress was reflected in social terms. A state arbitration scheme was introduced in 1924 to try to prevent strikes. Workers, through their trade unions, were able to argue their case for more pay or less hours before neutral judges who were often sympathetic to the workers' claims. Hourly wages rose in real terms every year from 1924 to 1929. As a result, national income was 12 per cent higher in 1928 than in 1913. There were also improvements in the provision of social welfare:

- There were generous pension and sickness benefits.
- In 1927 a compulsory unemployment insurance covered 17 million workers – the largest of its kind in the world.
- Better health insurance meant that there was better medical provision.
- Public spending on housing grew rapidly throughout the 1920s. By 1929 the state was spending 33 times more on housing than it was spending in 1913. The result was to considerably improve the quality of homes.
- State subsidies were provided for the construction of local amenities – parks, schools and sports facilities.

These developments, alongside the more overt signs of affluence, such as the increasing number of cars and the growth of the cinema, suggested that the economy was booming.



Summarise Germany's economic progress between 1924 and 1929.



Lesson 4: Was Germany’s seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?



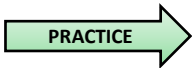
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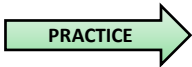
Economic weakness

In many respects, Germany’s economic recovery was deceptive. There was economic growth but it was far from even. Germany’s trade figures always showed imports exceeding exports. Unemployment never fell below 1.3 million in the period and by 1929 had reached nearly 3 million – 14.5 per cent of the workforce. The fall in world prices from the mid-1920s placed a great strain on farmers who made up one-third of Germany’s population. By the late 1920s per capita income in agriculture was 44 per cent below the national average. Subsidies and protective tariffs only partially alleviated the problem. The marked decline in the income of such a sizeable section of the population contributed to a contraction in demand within the economy as a whole.

German economic historian Kurt Borchardt (1982) claimed the years 1924–29 were years of slow growth and ‘relative stagnation’. Germany, Borchardt argued, was living well beyond its means. Not only were public finances out of control but wage levels were rising excessively without taking sufficient account of productivity. Borchardt claimed that this was the result of government intervention in the labour market which generally exhibited too much sympathy towards organised labour. For example, the introduction of compulsory wage arbitration and the higher employer contributions for social insurance both increased production costs, which led to lower investment and sluggish economic growth. Borchardt maintained that the Weimar economy was ‘a sick economy which could not possibly have gone on in the same way, even if the world depression had not occurred’.



Why could Germany’s growth be described as ‘deceptive’?



What does Borchardt suggest about Germany’s economy?



Lesson 4: Was Germany’s seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?



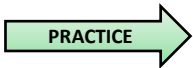
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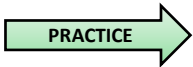
Rural problems

A third of the German population still lived and worked on the land. Rural Germany had long been anxious about long-term flight from the land and the competition of cheaper foreign foodstuffs. While farmers had benefited from a doubling of prices during the war, they had been obliged to put up with stringent government controls. From the outset, most had been bitterly antagonistic towards the Weimar Republic, which they saw as serving the selfish interests of the industrial proletariat and urban consumers.

Hyperinflation had offered farmers temporary relief from the burden of debt. However, after 1923 they faced heavy taxes on landed property. These were obviously resented by farmers who saw them as being used to subsidise the unemployed and a growing army of bureaucrats. Forced to purchase fertiliser, machines, seed and stock, most farmers were soon back in debt. The fact that they were dependent on expensive short-term loans did not help. Nor did a series of natural disasters – floods, hail and outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease. If this was not bad enough, farmers faced a crisis in the late 1920s as world food prices collapsed. Farmers grew increasingly angry. They regarded themselves as vital to the economy and society. But successive Weimar governments appeared to disregard their interests, preferring to support policies which ensured that urban workers were fed cheaply. By the late 1920s there were rural protests across Germany as desperate farmers, large and small landowners alike, turned more militant.



How did rural people feel about the Weimar Republic initially?



How did the economic situation worsen for farmers as the period went on?



Lesson 4: Was Germany's seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?



LO: To know key economic events between 1925 to 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's economic recovery.

Financial problems

In an effort to prevent a repetition of hyperinflation, the *Reichsbank* was prevented by the Dawes legislation from allowing its interest rate to drop below five per cent. High interest rates proved attractive to overseas investors who could achieve better returns on capital lent on a short-term basis to Germany, than they could from longer-term investments in their own countries. But Germans, who had lost a great deal of money in the post-war inflation, were less inclined to save or invest. Starved of investment capital from within Germany, the economy increasingly relied on investors from abroad. As a result Germany's economic well-being became dependent on, and vulnerable to, the investment whims of foreign capital.

Government finances remained a cause for concern. While the government succeeded in balancing the budget in 1924, from 1925 it continually ran deficits while at the same time continuing to expand its financial commitments. It was thus increasingly forced to rely on international loans. Indeed, the reparation payments made by Germany in this period were really being financed by foreign loans.

PRACTICE →

Create a mind map of the different financial problems in Weimar Germany:





Lesson 4: Was Germany's seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?



LO: To know key economic events between 1925 to 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's economic recovery.

Source D A police report of a mass demonstration by farmers in the city of Oldenburg in north-west Germany in January 1928.

In meetings of the rural population which were held in many places in the state of Oldenburg during the past weeks, the majority of those participating demanded again and again that an open-air protest meeting should be held in the state capital of Oldenburg, in order to give weight to the demands of the rural population, outlined below, which emerged in the meetings and were in the meantime formulated by a committee. It would also open the eyes of the state government to the masses of discontented who stand behind these demands ... According to fairly accurate estimates approximately 20,000 country people had assembled in the Horsefair by 12 noon ...

The general secretary of the Oldenburg Farmers' Association ... announced the following demands ...

- An **embargo** on all superfluous foreign imports.
- Protection of agriculture through tariffs equivalent to those already applied to industry ...
- Tax remission for farmers, craftsmen, and shopkeepers who are in distress.
- Speedy radical reduction of government activity and expenditure ...
- Reduction of social insurance contributions to a level which business can stand ...
- Availability of long-term cheap credit for the improvement of the debt situation with the aim of wiping out debts ...

The reading out of the demands drew loud and prolonged applause from the majority of the participants.

1 According to Source D, what were the main grievances of north-west German farmers?

2 Why were most German farmers discontented by 1928?



Lesson 4: Was Germany's seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?



LO: To know key economic events between 1925 to 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's economic recovery.

CONSOLIDATE

Key Knowledge Check

How much was invested in Germany from abroad?	What had exceeded pre 1913 levels by 1928?	What rose year on year between '24-29?	What did unemployment never fall below?	What did Borchardt claim?
What collapsed in the late 1920s?	What increased in the 1920s?	What was the interest rate not allowed to drop below?	Why was it not allowed to drop?	What was financed by foreign loans?

APPLY

To what extent was Germany's seeming economic success from 1925 to 1929 a false prosperity?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate the extent of Germany's economic success between 1925 and 1929.	Identify and explain factors that led to recovery.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

To what extent was Germany politically stable by 1929?

German politics remained unstable in the late 1920s. Nevertheless, most Germans in 1928 voted for parties which supported the Republic. The likelihood of the Communists on the left or the Nazis on the right ever winning power seemed remote.

The political situation, 1925–28

The Locarno Treaty was opposed by the Nationalists who saw it as a craven appeasement of the Western powers and they withdrew their support for Hans Luther's government. The Treaty was only ratified with the backing of the SPD. But the SPD refused to join Luther's minority coalition. The Luther government fell a few weeks later over the question of whether German embassies should be allowed to fly the black, white and red flag (flown by German merchant ships) in place of the black, red and gold flag symbolic of republicanism.

A new minority government was formed in May 1926 under Wilhelm Marx but the SPD continued to stand aloof. In December 1926 Philipp Scheidemann made a sensational speech in the *Reichstag* in which he exposed the illegal financing of armaments and the close links between the *Reichswehr* and right-wing paramilitary groups which were designed to circumvent the restriction of the army to 100,000 men. He also stated that the KPD was well aware that armaments, forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles, were being imported from the USSR. The Marx cabinet fell as a result of these revelations. But there was no alternative to yet another minority government under Marx in which the DNVP played a prominent role. The appointment of Walter von Keudell, an avowed anti-Semite and a leading figure in the Kapp Putsch (see page 95) as Minister of the Interior was an indication of a sharp right turn.

The *Reichswehr*

The *Reichswehr* showed a greater willingness to collaborate with Republican politicians after Von Seeckt's resignation in 1926. His successor General Wilhelm Heye made genuine efforts to improve relations with the government. The government, in turn, provided the army with more money than it should have done under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Fundamentally the army had changed very little since 1919. The officer corps was overwhelmingly anti-Republican. Recruitment was restricted largely to men of nationalist or apolitical backgrounds, mainly from rural areas.

The fourth Marx cabinet was responsible for the most important piece of social legislation in the Republic's history – the unemployment insurance bill of July 1927. Financed by both employers and employees, it provided comprehensive coverage for all employees. The state was obliged to grant a bridging loan if the unemployment insurance fund fell into the red. The new system was admirably suited to deal with the problems of moderate unemployment as existed in 1927. However, it was certain to be an embarrassment if unemployment rapidly increased.

Marx's government fell over a failure to reach a compromise, this time over the financing of confessionals schools.



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

The 1928 elections

The election campaign of 1928 was dominated by the issue of whether the proposed building of the **pocket-battleship** Battle Cruiser 'A' should go ahead. The SPD and Communists demanded that the money designated for the ship should be spent on free school meals for the needy.

The May 1928 elections produced a clear victory for those parties which accepted the Weimar constitution. Extremists on the right and left gained less than 30 per cent of the votes cast. (This figure includes the supporters of the DNVP which had participated in Republican cabinets.) The DNVP lost 30 seats in 1928. The Nazis won only 2.6 per cent of the vote, gaining twelve *Reichstag* seats. The SPD gained 22 seats and the KPD (with 10.6 per cent of the vote) increased their seats by nine. There was also a rise in the vote of splinter parties. The *Bauernbund*, for example, which represented farmers' interests, won 4.5 per cent of the vote.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

Chancellor Hermann Müller

After the 1928 elections, SPD ministers entered the cabinet for the first time since 1923 and an SPD member, Hermann Müller, became chancellor. Müller's ministry included members of the SPD, DDP, DVP, Centre and BVP. President Hindenburg seemed quite willing to work with the SPD. Indeed, he came to have a high opinion of Müller, comparing him favourably with other chancellors. Unfortunately, Müller lacked the qualities to inspire his followers or to make a great impact as a national leader. The Müller government was immediately faced with a crisis when the cabinet decided to go ahead with the building of Battle Cruiser 'A', even though the SPD had fought the election campaign in fierce opposition to the proposal. When the bill was debated in the *Reichstag*, the SPD, with the exception of only Müller and the three SPD cabinet ministers, voted against it. The bill was nevertheless approved.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

Changes in the Nationalist Party

The DNVP's sharp fall in support – down from 20.5 per cent in 1924 to 14.2 per cent in 1928 – led to demands for change within the Party. Some members, willing to co-operate with other parties in order to influence the conduct of the government, wanted the DNVP to renounce the desire for the return of the monarchy and accept the permanence of the Republic. But many DNVP supporters opposed such action. They rallied around Alfred Hugenberg, Germany's most influential newspaper and film company owner. Offering the cash-stripped Party financial aid and the propaganda machine of his media empire, Hugenberg was elected leader of the DNVP in October 1928. The policy of the DNVP now became one of strident and unrestrained opposition to the Republic.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

The Nazi Party, 1924–28

In May 1924 the Nazis, in alliance with other parties of the extreme right, had won 1.9 million votes (6.5 per cent) in elections to the *Reichstag*. By December 1924 the figure had fallen to 907,000 votes – 3 per cent. Nevertheless, Hitler was convinced that the Nazis must win power by democratic means.

It seemed highly unlikely that Hitler would ever win power democratically. If he was to win mass support, he needed discontent and Germans were less discontented as the economic situation improved. Moreover, the NSDAP had fallen apart during his year in prison and he was banned from speaking publicly in most German states.

In 1925 Hitler re-established control over the NSDAP in Bavaria. Throughout 1925 the Party was reorganised. In May 1926 a new centralised structure was introduced which stressed complete obedience to Hitler – the all-powerful *Führer* (leader). He saw off the challenge from north German Nazis, led by Gregor Strasser, who wanted to make the Nazi programme more socialist. In the late 1920s Hitler reorganised his Party. A host of new departments – for example, for youth, students and women – were set up. Elaborate Nazi ritual was established and the Party's first Nuremberg rally was held in 1927. Hitler developed a new image for himself. No longer a revolutionary fanatic, he appeared instead a calm, reasonable man awaiting the call of history – which must surely come. That call did not come in 1928. Although his Party had some 100,000 members by 1928 (partly because it had succeeded in absorbing many of the other *volkisch* groups), in the May elections the Nazis won only 2.6 per cent of the vote.

Failing to win much support from industrial workers, the Nazis turned their attention to the distressed farmers in north Germany (see page 123–4). The Nazis promised to guarantee prices and markets for German agricultural products. They also emphasised the importance of farmers – Germany's lifeblood according to Nazi propaganda. From the outset many farmers had been bitterly antagonistic towards the Weimar Republic, which they saw as serving the selfish interests of the industrial proletariat and urban consumers. As food prices fell, discontented farmers began to flock to the Nazi Party in late 1928.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

The Young Plan

In February 1929 a committee of experts met to discuss a final plan for reparations. It was headed by Owen Young, an American who had been vice-chairman of the Dawes Committee. For the first time the timescale for reparation payments was set. Germany was to pay 2,000 million marks a year (rather than the 2,500 million marks as laid down by the Dawes Plan) for the next 59 years. The German government was made responsible for the payment. Allied controls over Germany's railways and banking system were to be dropped so that Germany regained its economic sovereignty. Moreover, if Germany agreed to the plan, the French promised to evacuate the Rhineland by mid-1930, five years ahead of schedule. The Young Plan was signed in June 1929.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?



LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.

Opposition to the Young Plan

Although the effect of the Young Plan was to reduce Germany's reparation payments, Nationalists, rejecting the whole concept of reparations, furiously opposed the scheme. In July 1929, DNVP leader Hugenberg formed the *Reich* Committee for a Referendum to oppose the Young Plan. (Article 73 of the Constitution allowed political parties to petition for a referendum.) This committee included representatives from the DNVP, the *Stahlhelm*, the Pan-German League and the Nazi Party. The Nazis – rabble rousers, radicals, socialists as well as nationalists – were an unusual ally of what was otherwise a socially conservative movement. But Hugenberg believed that Hitler's dynamic oratory would assist the Nationalist cause.

The campaign against the Young Plan culminated with a plebiscite in December 1929. Only 5.8 million Germans voted against the Young Plan, far less than the 21 million votes needed. In March 1930 the *Reichstag* accepted the Young Plan. In June 1930 French forces evacuated the Rhineland.

The campaign against the Young Plan – albeit a failure – proved a godsend for Hitler. By associating with the Nationalists, he and his Party gained an aura of respectability they had previously lacked. Hitler came into contact with men of wealth and influence who could be of great material help to his Party. Even more important was the publicity Hitler received from Hugenberg's media empire.

Hitler, rather than trying to win the working class away from the Marxist parties, now began to focus his attention on the disaffected middle classes. Many Germans were attracted by Hitler's promises that National Socialism would supersede all conflicts of class and interest and create a harmonious 'racial community'. Money began to flow into the Party's coffers. A Nazi surge had begun in late 1928 as the Party's focus on northern farmers began to pay dividends. By 1929 the Nazis were winning 10–20 per cent of the vote in state and local elections across northern Germany.

PRACTICE

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Stable

Unstable



Lesson 5: How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

LO: To know key features of the political situation in Germany by 1929.

LO: To be able to evaluate the stability of German politics by 1929.



CONSOLIDATE

Key Knowledge Check

Who are Reichswehr?	Who was appointed Minister of the Interior?	What was introduced in July 1927?	What was the political debate in 1928 over?	What groups did well in the may 1928 elections?
Who became Chancellor in 1928?	Who didn't vote for Battle Cruiser 'A'?	What was the policy of DNVP after 1928?	What was the vote share of the Nazis in 1928?	Who began to support the Nazis in 1928?

APPLY

How politically stable was Germany by 1929?

Success Criteria:

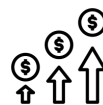
Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate the stability of Germany politically by 1929.	Identify and explain factors that led to stability / instability.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>

Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



The impact of war and post-war economic problems and policies

To finance the war, the government of the Kaiserreich decided against imposing new taxes or raising money by increasing taxation of the wealthy. Instead it issued **treasury bills** and (as authorised by the Reichstag) borrowed heavily from anyone prepared to provide 'war loans' on the understanding that they would receive repayment, with interest, after the war. To ensure a constant supply of money, the government put more into circulation, abandoning the link between paper money and gold reserves that had existed before the war. The expectation was that victory would more than enable the government to pay back what it had borrowed.

The circulation of paper money increased from 2000 million Marks-worth in 1913 to 45,000 million in 1919. At the same time, the amount of money owed by the government (the National Debt) grew from 5000 million to 144,000 million Marks in the same period. Since the war years saw a fall in productivity (at an annual average rate of 4 per cent per year), the value of the currency fell and in 1919 it was worth less than 20 per cent of its pre-war value. The price of basic foodstuffs and consumer goods tripled or more during this inflationary period, and prices of goods in short supply rose even more rapidly on the **Black Market**.

Defeat in the war in 1918 ended Germany's hopes of repaying its debts from annexations and reparations. Instead, following the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, land and colonies were lost, the reparations taken from Russia after March 1918 ceased, and the coal mines of the Saar were passed to the French, to be run for their benefit for 15 years. Germany had to supply free coal to France, Belgium and Italy and 90 per cent of its merchant fleet was surrendered to the Allies. Worse still, in 1921 Germany was presented with a reparations bill for £6.6 billion, payable in goods and gold marks.

Despite the defeat, government borrowing continued. The new government dared not devalue the currency (which would have made the paper money in circulation worth less and so reduced the value of savings) for fear of the political repercussions. In any case, Germany needed capital to rebuild industry, re-start trade, maintain pay for civil servants, meet the post-war demands for pensions and welfare benefits, and pay compensation to those who had lost land under the Treaty of Versailles.

Key Points

KEY TERM

treasury bill: provincial banks purchased short-term treasury bills from the Reich central bank, which could be redeemed at a higher value; the deposits of the provincial banks were thus 'lent' to the government to support the war effort

Black Market: illegal trade in rationed or scarce commodities

Key Points

Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



It has been suggested that allowing some post-war inflation was economically wise. It stimulated economic activity and, compared with Britain, unemployment rates were quite low. By 1921 there was only 1.8 per cent unemployment in Germany compared with nearly 17 per cent in Great Britain. This, in turn, encouraged investment, especially from the USA, and the economy grew rapidly between 1920 and 1922. However, there were danger signs by 1920. Prices doubled between 1918 and 1919 and quadrupled between 1919 and 1920, reaching a point 14 times higher than they had been in 1913.

The 1920 coalition was dominated by the Zentrum, which was supported by many of the powerful German industrialists. These elites were able to benefit from inflation by taking short-term loans from Germany's central bank to expand their businesses. They could subsequently repay these with inflated currency. They were also able to make seemingly generous wage agreements that could be paid with worthless money. Furthermore, inflation had the effect of lessening the government's burden of debt (although the reparations themselves were not affected because these were paid in gold marks or goods). Indeed, it is often suggested that the German politicians had a vested interest in allowing inflation to continue unchecked. There was the hope that it might convince the Allies that their demands for reparations were too great. Also, for the right-wing elites, it became almost a patriotic 'duty' to avoid taxes and to speculate against the Mark as a means of showing their objection to the 'unreasonable' Allied demands. This fuelled inflation.

Key Points

PRACTICE

Explain the key takeaways of post war economic problems and policies.

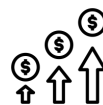
Key Takeaways



Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



Reparations and hyperinflation

The Treaty of Versailles had made it clear that Germany would have to pay reparations. Interim payments were demanded while a commission worked to determine the scale of damage caused by Germany. By the time the commission reached its decision in May 1921, the Allies estimated that they had received 2.6 billion gold marks' worth of goods (made up of almost the entire German merchant fleet, 5000 railway locomotives, and over 100,000 each of railway wagons, horses, cattle and agricultural machines). France also had the value of the Saarland coalfields, worth a further 2.5 billion Marks. However, the Germans claimed to have already made payments of around 37 billion Marks.

A CLOSER LOOK

Reparations

Historians differ in their opinions of the reparations bill. Some consider it crippling; others that it was actually quite manageable (only 2 per cent of Germany's national output). However, there were other important economic problems:

- In order to acquire currency with which to pay the 'cash' demands of the reparations, Germany needed to export goods. However, Germany's traditional western European trading partners were anxious to rebuild their own economies and did not want to buy German goods.
- The western European nations were in debt to the USA. The receipt of reparations did not help to stimulate the European economies (and consequently European trade with Germany) but tended to go straight to the USA.
- Reparations came at a time when Germany was already facing large payments for the interest on loans raised during the war, for pensions, and for social welfare payments.

While Walther Rathenau was the Minister of Reconstruction in 1921, he tried to cooperate with the Allies, hoping that a willingness to meet demands would win sympathy. He fully expected that, once it became clear that reparation demands were beyond Germany's capabilities, the Allies would revise them. This policy of '**fulfilment**' encouraged politicians to leave the economy alone. If Germany showed that it could manage the payments, the whole purpose of the 'fulfilment' policy would disappear.

Germany paid its first reparations instalment (£50 million) at the end of May 1921. However, by January 1923 the Germans had fallen behind and the French accused them of deliberately defaulting on their coal and timber deliveries to France. Thus, in accordance with the terms laid down by the Allies, on 11 January French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr.

A CLOSER LOOK

Failure to pay reparations

In January 1922 Germany tried to negotiate a reparations extension and further loan. In November 1922 it asked for a four-year non-payment period and a loan of 500 million gold marks. The French were very suspicious of this request, particularly since the Germans had just negotiated the **Treaty of Rapallo** with Russia, which contained provisions for economic cooperation between the two countries. A conference in Paris in January 1923 failed to settle the dispute.

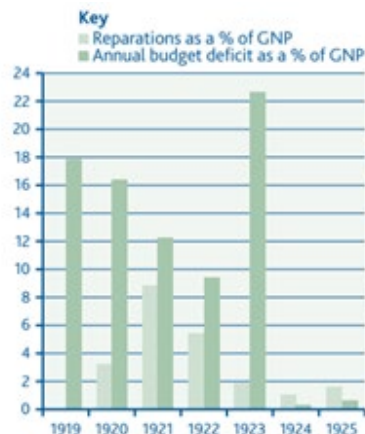


Fig. 2 Reparations and annual budget deficits as a percentage of Gross National Product, 1919–25

CROSS-REFERENCE

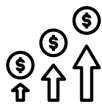
The policy of **fulfilment** is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Key Points

Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



Chancellor Cuno responded by stopping all reparations payments and ordering a policy of 'passive resistance'. Workers were promised that their wages would continue if they obeyed the call not to work for the 'enemy'. The **Ruhr occupation** worsened the country's economic situation in a number of different ways:

- Paying the wages or providing goods for striking workers was a further drain on government money.
- Tax revenue was lost from those whose businesses ceased and from workers who became unemployed.
- Germany had to import coal and pay for it from the limited foreign currency reserves within Germany.
- Shortages of goods pushed prices up further.
- International confidence in the value of the Mark collapsed.

Inflation, which had exceeded 100 per cent for most of 1920 but had dropped in the first half of 1921, rose sharply. In July 1922 the monthly rate of inflation passed 50 per cent for the first time – technically the threshold for **hyperinflation**. Two years of economic chaos followed. The scale of the damage may be seen in Fig. 3.

By November 1923 the currency was worthless. There were 300 paper mills and 2000 printers working day and night to provide sufficient paper money and notes of ever higher denominations had to be printed. Workers were having to be paid daily or even twice daily as prices rose by the hour. Once received, the paper notes were spent as fast as possible, before the currency devalued further, but it was not always easy to find goods to buy. There were serious food shortages, since farmers were not prepared to sell their produce for worthless money. Barter became common.

Key Points

PRACTICE

Explain the key takeaways of Reparations and Hyperinflation

Key Takeaways

JUST
EAT

Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?



LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



The Dawes and Young Plans and foreign loans

Gustav Stresemann became Chancellor in August 1923. He called off passive resistance and appointed the expert **Hjalmar Schacht** as Reich Currency Commissioner. In November 1923 Schacht introduced the Rentenmark, valued at 1 Rentenmark to 1 trillion old Marks. This new currency was backed by land and industrial resources (rather than by gold) and its supply was strictly limited. It was therefore regarded as safe and consequently held its value.

Schacht also took over the leadership of the Reichsbank and a range of fiscal measures were adopted to reduce inflation and balance expenditure against income. The government stopped offering credit to industry, lending rates were controlled, and new taxes on both individuals and companies were introduced, so reducing spending power. This enabled the government to reinvest a larger proportion of the nation's wealth. The government-operated post office and railways, for example, formed their own banks in which they built up the capital they needed for investment.

These changes helped the economy to grow rapidly in 1924 and 1925. Prudently-run companies prospered, although those that had relied on cheap credit crumbled. The number of companies that went bankrupt in Germany rose from 233 in 1923 to over 6000 in 1924, but this helped to make the economy more efficient and faith in the Reichsbank returned. The old inflated Marks were gradually cashed in and in August 1924 the Rentenmark became the Reichsmark.

This was backed by the German gold reserve, which had to be maintained at 30 per cent of the value of the Reichsmarks in circulation. Inflation ceased to be a problem and the value of the new currency was established at home and abroad.

Ending hyperinflation and economic growth also demanded a solution to the problems caused by reparations. In November 1923 Stresemann asked the Allies' Reparations Committee to set up a committee of financial experts to address Germany's repayment concerns.

Under the chairmanship of the American banker Charles Dawes, an agreement was reached in April 1924 (by which time Stresemann was Foreign Secretary rather than Chancellor). The Plan stated the following:

- The reparations payment of £6.6 billion remained but the amount to be paid each year would be reduced until 1929, when the situation would be reappraised.
- Germany should pay 1000 million Marks immediately (a fraction of what had been expected before), and this sum would be raised by annual increments over five years to 2500 million Marks per year. After this, the sum paid would be related to German industrial performance.
- Germany should receive a large loan of 800 million Marks from the USA to help get the Plan started and allow for heavy investment in the German infrastructure.
- Germany would reorganise the Reichsbank (under Allied supervision) and establish a new stable currency (confirming changes already underway).
- Any sanctions for non-payment of reparations would need to be taken after consultation between all the Allies (not just France acting alone).

The 'national opposition' (mainly the DNVP but also smaller right-wing groups like the Nazis) bitterly attacked this policy of compromise, but it was accepted by Germany and the Allies in July 1924. It brought several benefits to Germany:

- An acceptance by the Allies that Germany's problems with the payment of reparations were real.
- Loans to the value of 25.5 billion Marks received between 1924 and 1930, mainly from the USA. These helped to provide new machinery, factories, houses and jobs (22.9 billion were repaid in reparations over the same period).
- The evacuation of the Ruhr (accomplished in 1924 to 1925) and better relations with France.
- Renewed financial confidence and optimism within Germany.

Key Points



Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



PRACTICE

Explain the key takeaways of the Dawes and Young plans

Key Takeaways



Lesson 6: How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

LO: To know key events of Stresemann's time as leader of Germany.

LO: To be able to evaluate the extent of Germany's recovery under Stresemann..



CONSOLIDATE

Key Knowledge Check

What happened to the value of goods on the Black Market?	What did the Government dare not do?	By 1920 by how many times had prices increased?	What became a patriotic duty among the right?	What had the Germans claimed to have paid?
What is a policy of fulfilment?	Who was the Treaty of Rapallo between?	What did Chancellor Cuno order?	What was the name of the American Banker who helped the German economy?	Who opposed any payment of reparations?

APPLY

How stable was Germany's economy by 1929?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate the stability of Germany's economy by 1929.	Identify and explain factors that led to stability / instability.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?

LO: To know key features of German society during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German society in the 1920s.



German society and culture

How progressive was German society and culture in the 1920s?

It is often claimed that the cultural climate of the Weimar Republic was astonishingly rich and fertile. Arguably Berlin, rather than Paris, became the cultural and artistic capital of Europe in the 1920s. Did these developments reflect a progressive society?

German society

German society in the 1920s was not dissimilar to that in the years before 1914. Given that most Germans lived in cities rather than working on the land, German society was more diverse – and advanced – than most societies in Europe.

The elite

Five per cent of the population (of some 64 million by 1929) were in the economic elite – rich industrialists, successful entrepreneurs, wealthy financiers or great landowners. Thanks to their material assets, most had weathered the storm of inflation. They remained the objects of envy, denounced on the left as capitalist exploiters. Accordingly, most felt threatened by the organised working class. Many looked for an authoritarian solution to the pressing social, economic and political problems that beset the Republic.

The middle classes

The middle class made up at least a third of the population, ranging from doctors, lawyers and professors at the top to the growing number of people in the lower ranks of the civil service and in service industries and white-collar occupations at the bottom end. The middle classes found themselves uncomfortably trapped between big business and organised labour. Most longed for stability, an end to the increasingly virulent class antagonisms and a renewed sense of community.

The working classes

The working classes comprised over 50 per cent of the population. Whatever Communists liked to think, the working class was far from united. There were a great number of working classes. Wages varied from industry to industry. Some workers were skilled, others unskilled. There were important regional and religious differences. Farm labourers, who earned a pittance, had little in common with industrial workers. Nevertheless, the proletariat did have some sense of comradeship. The call for socialist policies – whether Marxist or of a more moderate nature – was a source of concern to many non-proletarian Germans.



Use the information above to create a mind map of key information on German society on the next page.



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?

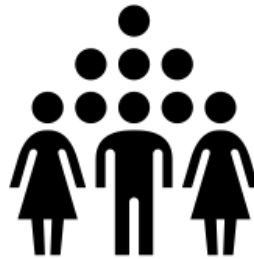
LO: To know key features of German society during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German society in the 1920s.



German society and culture

How progressive was German society and culture in the 1920s?





Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German society during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German society in the 1920s.

German women

The role of women and the debate about their status was an important feature of Weimar society. The media propagated the idea of the Weimar ‘new woman’. Illustrated magazines displayed images of cigarette-smoking, silk-stockinged, short-skirted, lip-sticked young women out in the streets, in bars or on the sports field. The ‘new woman’ image had some social reality.

- Women had gained formally equal rights under the Weimar constitution.
- There was a growing number of women in new areas of employment, especially in public services (for example, the civil service, teaching or social work), in shops and on assembly lines.
- More women (particularly those who were young and single) spent their leisure time at sports clubs, dance halls and in cinemas.
- Women had more sexual independence.

Women thus constituted a more visible presence in the public sphere and in the economy than they had done before 1918.

Nevertheless, the ‘new woman’ wasn’t entirely a reality.

- The proportion of women who worked outside the home during the 1920s remained roughly the same as before 1914 – as did their type of work.
- Despite the large numbers of women who worked during the war in so-called ‘men’s jobs’, for example, heavy industry, these better-paid jobs were taken back by men after 1918.
- Social attitudes to women’s role in society remained conservative. Hitler’s view – that women’s role was in the kitchen, at church and producing children – was the view of many Germans – male and female. Married women were not expected to work outside the home. Those who did – the so-called *Doppelverdiener* – became a source of considerable controversy.

Type of employment	Percentage of the workforce that was female	
	1907	1925
Domestic servants	16	11.4
Farm workers	14.5	9.2
Industrial workers	18.3	23
White collar and public employment	6.5	12.6
Percentage of women in employment	31.2	35.6

Figure 3 Women in employment in Germany: a comparison between 1907 and 1925.



Use the information above to complete the table on the next page.



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German society during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German society in the 1920s.

PRACTICE 

Complete the table below using the information above:

Evidence that women's lives changed:	Evidence that women's lives stayed the same:



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

The changing urban landscape

In the 1920s local governments attempted to improve the urban environment. Effort was particularly focused on the construction of new public parks, libraries, transport and housing schemes. Such reforms, often supported and implemented by Social Democrats, were fuelled by an optimistic vision of the hygienic management of cities and their populations. The public authorities in Berlin, for example, promoted the city as one which had an efficient infrastructure, combating social evils through appropriate welfare intervention and encouraging a democratic culture based on a rational lifestyle balancing work, domesticity and healthy leisure pursuits. Modern architects associated with the Bauhaus (see page 128) believed such a culture would be fostered by functionally designed mass housing projects. From the mid-1920s they gained major contracts in the capital. Building societies and the electrical engineering company Siemens commissioned housing projects and under Martin Wagner, director of the municipal central building administration from 1927, police stations and public swimming baths came to be designed in the new style. Even if these projects comprised only a fraction of new buildings, they were striking symbols of the 'New Berlin'. It should be said that at the same time department stores and advertising hoardings were shaping cities in a different way as sites of consumerism.

Anti-urbanisation

Some Germans – right and left – disliked the growing urbanisation of Germany.

- Anti-urbanism was particularly associated with right-wing volkisch groups who saw a return to working and living on the land as the route to Germany's national rebirth.
- Some on the extreme left denounced modern cities as steeped in the evils of capitalism and saw rural communes as the road to a classless and peaceful society.



How did local governments attempt to improve the urban environment?



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

Education

The German education system, with its emphasis on obedience and authority, had long been a target of Social Democrats and liberal critics of the old order. Once that order collapsed they hoped to be able to do something to alter the education system. In particular, reformers aimed to:

- break down the old religious barriers which kept Catholic and Protestant children apart
- end the virtual **monopoly** by the middle classes of secondary-grammar and higher education
- develop a more democratic consciousness among teachers which would be passed on to their pupils.

The reformers had limited success.

- While more secular and inter-denominational schools were established, the majority of schools remained denominational. The Catholic Centre Party was at odds with the SPD on this issue.
- The lack of an adequate scholarship system still prevented most gifted working-class children from getting secondary education. In 1930 only about 7 per cent of secondary-school pupils were from working-class families.
- Old monarchical-conservative ideas persisted, particularly among secondary-school teachers. Many ignored appeals from politicians for the teaching of loyalty to the Republic's democratic ideals. Most university professors were also nationalist-inclined – as were the majority of their students who sometimes hounded those lecturers who were known to have socialist or pacifist views.

Education experimentation

A few new schools were established in Germany, using experimental methods of learning. The most famous were those influenced by the ideas of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner whose first Waldorf school was set up in Stuttgart in 1919. Steiner's methods stressed the role of imagination in learning and favoured integrating intellectual, practical and artistic activities across the curriculum rather than learning through particular academic disciplines.



Complete the table below using the information above:

Evidence that education changed:	Evidence that education stayed the same:



Lesson 7: How far did German society change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German society during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German society in the 1920s.

CONSOLIDATE

📍 Key Knowledge Check 📍

Where did most Germans live in the 1920s?	What % of the population were in the economic elite?	What % were the middle classes?	What % were the working classes?	What had women gained under the Weimar constitution?
What is a Doppelverdiener?	Who supported social reforms of cities?	Which city changed the most?	Why did education not really change?	Who set up the Waldorf school?

APPLY

How far did German society change between 1914-1929?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate the extent of change in Germany society between 1914 and 1929.	Identify and explain factors that led to change.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

Weimar culture

Artistic conventions and established assumptions about the function of art had been widely challenged in Wilhelmine Germany (see pages 47–9). However, aesthetic experiment flourished in the Weimar Republic as never before. In the 1920s there was experimentation in all forms of culture – literature, art, architecture, music, dance, drama and the cinema. The republican state itself fostered artistic pluralism.

- The Weimar constitution declared, albeit with some qualifications, that censorship ‘does not take place’ and proclaimed the freedom of the arts and scholarship.
- The newly democratised municipal and regional governments became a source of patronage, sometimes favouring the performance or display of avant-garde works as a badge of their progressiveness. Despite the problems of public finances in the early 1920s, politicians at local level continued to channel substantial public funding into the arts.

To many foreign observers and visitors, Weimar Germany seemed outstanding for its diverse, cosmopolitan and innovative cultural climate.

But Germans were bitterly divided about the cultural changes that were taking place. While some applauded the various manifestations of cultural modernity, others were hostile to phenomena as diverse as jazz, anti-war paintings, cinema and pulp fiction. In the eyes of their enemies these types of cultural output became the scapegoat for Germany’s problems. Cultural conservatives accused them of undermining social stability, moral values and cultural standards. Right-wing attacks on modernism and mass culture became attacks on the Republic itself, which because it provided a framework for cultural innovation became identified with it. Through such attacks, cultural debates in Weimar Germany became polarised to an extreme and politically destabilising degree.

PRACTICE

Explain the key takeaways of Weimar culture.

Key Takeaways





Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

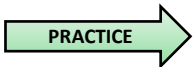
The Bauhaus movement

During the 1920s Germany became a leading centre of creative effort, particularly in architecture. The Bauhaus in Dessau, a new school of architecture and design set up by Walter Gropius in 1919, became famous for breaking down the barriers between art and science and bringing into design the techniques of engineering. As well as stressing the relationship between art and technology, the Bauhaus movement emphasised functionality of design and freedom from the past. Its basic idea was to discard conventional ornamental styles for functional ones of steel, glass and concrete. The new designs were meant to give people a greater insight into reality, and make life easier – especially for women.

The Bauhaus style – austere and rectangular – spread rapidly across the whole of Germany, impacting on both domestic and public architecture. In 1928 in Stuttgart, a city not usually noted for being progressive, an architectural exhibition was held for which members of the Bauhaus including Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Mendelsohn and Le Corbusier designed ‘the new house’. The city government then provided the money for the plans to be transformed into bricks and mortar. Bauhaus’s architectural style brought with it similarly revolutionary designs in furniture and interior decoration.



Photograph of the exterior of the Bauhaus factory at Dessau, designed by the architect Walter Gropius.



Make a list of key features of the Bauhaus movement



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

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Literature and drama

In literature Weimar provided the climate in which experimentation could occur. The modernistic style and content offered by new German writers in the novels of the 1920s stood for frankness, especially in sexual matters, and for (often bitter) social comment. Perhaps the most successful Weimar novel was Eric Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* – a book highly critical of the First World War. First serialised in a Berlin newspaper, it quickly became a worldwide bestseller in 1929. Remarque, like the brothers Heinrich and Thomas Mann, and the writer Alfred Döblin, presented a bleak look at the world and the failure of politics and society.

In the 1920s Berlin became a mecca for theatre-goers. The works of dramatists such as Peter Lampel concentrated on a range of social issues. *The Threepenny Opera*, produced by Erwin Piscator in 1928, was deliberately Marxist in bias. The aim of agitprop theatre, associated with Bertolt Brecht, was to add elements of public protest (agitation) and persuasive politics (propaganda) to the theatre in the hope of creating a more involved and activist audience. (Agitprop is a combination of the words 'agitation' and 'propaganda'.) Brecht's theatre in Berlin was regarded as one of the most progressive in Europe.



Make a mind map of the different features of literature and drama from the period.





Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

Visual art

German visual art was strongly influenced by German Expressionism in 1918. However, in the early 1920s, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement emerged – in part a reaction against the romanticism, fantasy, subjectivity, raw emotion and impulse of Expressionism. Most of those who painted in its style focused on precision and depicting the factual. Most were left-leaning: their paintings show the horrors of war, social hypocrisy and the plight of the poor. Artists linked to *Neue Sachlichkeit* included Otto Dix, George Grosz, Max Beckmann and Käthe Kollwitz. Dix and Grosz referred to their own movement as *Verism* – a reference to the Roman classical approach called *verus* meaning ‘truth’. In their art, they were striving to portray both a sense of realism and a criticism of life in Weimar Germany.

PRACTICE

Make a mind map of the different artists from the period.





Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

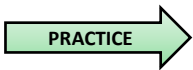
LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

The importance of Berlin

Berlin was generally seen as the centre of revolutionary art and cultural experiment. Much of the artistic avant-garde gravitated to Berlin where they found institutional support and receptive audiences. Thus the musician Schoenberg began teaching classes in composition at the Prussian Academy of Arts in 1925 and new musical works were premiered in the city's main concert halls. Berlin art galleries promoted the work of contemporary German painters.

In the 1920s, foreign writers and artists travelled to the German capital, attracted by the city's dynamic culture. The German capital had a reputation for its exotic – not to say erotic – nightlife. The cabaret scene in Berlin was described by British author Christopher Isherwood in his novel *Goodbye to Berlin*, on which the musical *Cabaret* was based. There were hundreds of nightclubs. Such venues provided outlets for experimental performers. They were also places where a sub-culture such as that of Berlin's gay community could thrive.

At the same time, Berlin was developing as a centre of mass cultural production – in journalism, film and fashion – and as a showcase for the latest cultural imports from abroad, especially the USA. While American cultural influence on Germany was by no means restricted to Berlin, cultural imports from the USA found particularly enthusiastic audiences in the German capital in the 1920s. Jazz was one of the most popular cultural imports from the USA. Jazz-playing dance bands could be found all over Berlin in hotels, cafes and bars. American films seemed to be better received in Berlin than elsewhere in Germany. In its embracing of American culture, Berlin seemed to some observers more American than America.



Summarise the importance of Berlin culturally during the Weimar period.



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

The impact of the avant-garde

The various competing styles and versions of modernism, though flourishing spectacularly in the Weimar years, never actually dominated German cultural output in quantitative terms or in terms of public performances, exhibitions or bestseller lists. Modernist works were received differently in different parts of Germany. If Berlin was the avant-garde pace-setter, some provincial areas dragged their heels with regard to modernism.

Nevertheless, there were important centres of avant-garde creativity outside Berlin. The Bauhaus, for example, set up in Weimar and moved to Dessau in 1925. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* visual arts movement flourished in a number of cities – notably Dresden, Karlsruhe, Munich, Hanover, Cologne and Dusseldorf. Artistic modernism was promoted by some (but by no means all) provincial city politicians who sought to ‘catch up’ with Berlin not only in the quality of their town’s cultural facilities but in the content of its publicly subsidised arts programme. In the Ruhr, for example, the city councils of Bochum and Essen backed the conductor Rudolf Schulz-Dornburg in his efforts to convert local audiences to the works of musicians like Schoenberg and Stravinsky.

But on the whole theatre directors and conductors in provincial towns tempered their enthusiasm for new work with consideration for the preferences of their paying audiences. Concert and theatre audiences were still predominantly middle class and tended to be middle-of-the-road in taste. Theatre schedules and concert programmes including more advanced contemporary works tended to be cushioned by more familiar fare to keep audiences happy. The need for caution was underlined by cases where the scheduling of avant-garde work provoked outright hostility – as did Bartók’s world premiere of *The Miraculous Mandarin*, performed in the Cologne Opera House in 1926. The performance ended with the audience yelling and booing.

Public reaction to the works of modernists was predictably diverse, ranging from enthusiasm through respectful curiosity to suspicion, bewilderment or downright hostility.



How much of an impact did the ‘avant-garde’ have in Weimar Germany?



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

Mass culture

The impact of the avant-garde was felt most in the world of ‘high’ culture – a sphere dominated by an educated, essentially middle-class public. Changes in the cultural sphere which had a greater impact on the mass of the population were those resulting from the development of radio and cinema.

The impact of radio

The first public radio programme began broadcasting in 1923 from Berlin. Soon other regional stations started up. The number of registered radio listeners increased steadily and by 1932 there were 4.2 million registered radio sets. However, there were significant disparities across Germany in the distribution of listeners. For most of the 1920s, regional transmitters emitted such weak signals that to pick them up outside a certain radius would-be listeners needed an expensive radio set, which few Germans could afford. In 1927 less than a third of Germans lived in areas within which cheaper ‘detector’ sets could be used.

The difficulties with reception and the resulting costs of buying radio sets, together with the often highbrow programmes offered, made radio a medium which was used disproportionately by the middle classes. Moreover, given the difficulties with reception, it was a medium of urban-dwellers. In 1932, in villages of fewer than 2,500 inhabitants only 10 per cent of households had a radio. The sluggish take-up of radio in rural areas was in spite of the efforts of ‘radio vans’ equipped with demonstration sets which travelled round the countryside trying to drum up interest in the medium. It confounded the hopes of radio companies and politicians that radio was the medium with the potential to bring the wider world to rural Germany and perhaps even counteract the flight from the land by making rural life less monotonous.



How much of an impact did the radio have in Weimar Germany?



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

The cinema

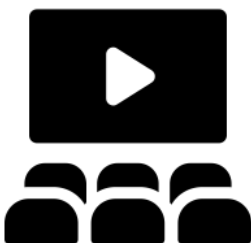
Cheap entertainment outside the home could be found at variety theatres, new sports stadia, dance halls but above all at the cinema. By 1930 there were more than 5,000 cinemas in Germany; in 1928 around 353 million cinema tickets were sold – to people of all classes. By comparison, attendance figures for the performances staged by municipal theatres in 87 towns and cities in 1926–27 were just under 12 million.

Cinema for most of the Weimar period meant silent films; ‘talkies’ only appeared in the final years of the Republic. Much of the German film production after 1918 was concerned, like much of production elsewhere, with escapist themes – comedies, adventures in far-off places, detective stories, fantasies and musicals. But more serious themes were dealt with too.

Serious film directors were often concerned with the same issues as serious writers. Unlike the writers, they had the problem of financing their projects. The UFA organisation (Universum Film AG – a German motion-picture production company, founded in 1917) possessed a dominant position both in the production and distribution of films. From 1927 this company was controlled by Alfred Hugenberg, a right-wing businessmen who controlled a great media empire (see page 134). Hugenberg had no enthusiasm for critical or controversial themes. Nevertheless the UFA did fund *Metropolis* (1927), a film directed and written by Fritz Lang. The film, a pioneering work of science fiction genre, cost 5 million *Reichsmarks* to make – the most expensive film released up to that point. Set in the future, it follows the attempt of Freder, the rich son of the city’s ruler, and Maria, a poor worker, to overcome the vast gulf separating the classes of *Metropolis*. Some critics praised the film’s social metaphors. Others dismissed it as unconvincing and overlong.

People of all classes attended the cinema, often viewing the same films – which were far more likely to be costume dramas than futuristic, expressionist or serious films. However, it seems unlikely that there was any sense of class unity arising from a common experience of the same entertainment – which was quite likely to be American-produced.

Access to the cinema varied greatly depending on the region and the size of the locality. Some rural areas were miles from the nearest cinema. In such places, leisure continued to revolve around pubs and clubs, with men constituting the majority of regular pub-goers and club members. (Once women got married, they generally stayed in while their husbands went out in the evenings.)



**Use the information above
to complete the mind map
on the next page.**



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?

LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.



How far did Cinema change during Weimar Germany?





Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

The reaction against modernism

Partial though it was, the impact of artistic modernism and mass culture in the Weimar period was sufficient to spark a powerful backlash. Middle-class Germans were accustomed to the idea of Germany as an outstanding ‘cultural nation’ with a heritage meriting protection. To many Germans, developments in Berlin (in particular) embodied important shifts in culture and society which were affecting Germany generally. Accepted norms governing the form and content of ‘high culture’ were being challenged by the avant-garde. ‘Mass culture’ was becoming more pervasive. The rise of the cinema and the radio appeared to be loosening people’s ties to the traditional cultural milieu.

Right-wing opposition

The harshest attacks on modernism and the greatest anxieties about the impact of modernisation on cultural life came from bourgeois organisations and from the right.

- Many conservatives believed that Weimar’s cultural life was irredeemably debased by foreign and Jewish influence and ‘shallow materialism’. The Nazis and other groups on the far right believed that the avant-garde had to be destroyed and that a new order was needed to ensure the victory of German *Kultur* over ‘Americanisation’.
- Many Church organisations campaigned against ‘immorality’ in modern life, whether this took the form of atheism, nudity, pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, birth control or abortion.
- Others simply railed against the ‘tides of filth’ engulfing Germany and called for tougher censorship as a matter of cultural hygiene. One step in this direction was the passing by the *Reichstag* of a bill to ‘protect youth from pulp fiction and pornography’ in 1926. On the basis of this law, a list was set up of publications which were not to be sold to young people under 18: ‘true-crime’ publications, erotic magazines and sex education books were among the 103 publications on the index by 1930.
- Various groups were founded to protect authentic German culture, threatened from Berlin and other cities. Many groups celebrated regional folk traditions as a bulwark against what were seen as the homogenising and centralising influences of modern urban culture.

Left-wing opposition

A sense of alienation from – and alarm about – the new cultural forces was not restricted solely to the middle classes nor politically to the parties of the right. While left-wing intellectuals were often committed advocates of artistic modernism, many Social Democrats were more inclined to approve traditional culture than the works of the avant-garde. Communist cultural organisations, meanwhile, pursued their own goals of creating a proletarian counter-culture. The left generally was also dubious about many aspects of commercial mass culture. Social Democrats were as concerned as bourgeois organisations about the impact of pulp fiction on youthful minds. Both the SPD and Communist Party regarded the rise of cinema with concern, fearing that the labour movement would never be able to offer a socialist alternative to match the sophisticated products of the international film industry.

Nevertheless, on the whole, there was more curiosity on the political left than on the right regarding both avant-garde art and the new forms of mass communication.

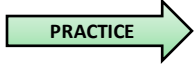


Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.



Complete the table showing how different groups opposed the cultural changes:

Right-Wing Opposition	Left Wing Opposition



Lesson 8: How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?



LO: To know key features of German culture during the 1920s.

LO: To be able to evaluate the nature of German culture in the 1920s.

CONSOLIDATE

Key Knowledge Check

What was the leader of the Bauhaus movement?	Who wrote <i>All Quiet on the Western front</i> ?	What type of Artist was George Grosz?	What was Berlin seen as the centre of?	What disrupted the performance of <i>The Miraculous Mandarin</i> ?
How many radios existed in 1932?	By 1930 how many cinemas existed?	Who did the right blame this new culture on?	Who were concerned by the rise of Cinema?	What were the 1920s defined as?

APPLY

How far did German culture change between 1914-1929?

Success Criteria:

Learning Outcome	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
I can evaluate the extent of change in German culture between 1914 and 1929.	Identify and explain factors that led to change.	Give a precise historical example of the impact they had.	Evaluate the importance of each factor.
Sentence starters	<i>On one hand it could be argued that This was because...</i>	<i>For example, An example of this was</i>	<i>Perhaps the most significant reason for the..</i>