

Foundational Knowledge of Germany in Transition, 1919-1939



(What you **MUST** know to get a
Grade 4+)

This is a revision list/checklist of the essential knowledge that will help you get a grade 4. If you know 3 things about each topic, you have the knowledge required to gain at least half marks on a question. Remember, in History, half marks can equal a grade 5/6!

| Theme | Topic | 3 Things You Must Know |
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| <p style="text-align: center;">Impact Of The First World War What challenges were faced by the Weimar Republic from 1919-1923?</p> | Impact of Versailles | BRAT – Blame – Article 231 Germany have to accept total blame for WW1 |
| | | BRAT – Reparations – £6.6Billion owed to allies |
| | | BRAT – Army/Territory – Reduced to 100,000 men, limited Navy; no U-Boats; planes; tanks; Rhineland demilitarised; 13% land loss; 6 million Germans displaced. |
| | weaknesses of Weimar government | Article 48 – Presidential emergency powers overrides democracy |
| | | Proportional representation – leads to coalition governments (no majority ever gained); lack of progress. |
| | | November Criminals – had to sign Armistice & Treaty Of Versailles (very unpopular) |
| | Political instability – Spartacist | Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht led a communist takeover Jan 6 th 1919. |
| | | Weimar forced to use the Freikorps (ex WW1 soldiers) to put down rebellion. |
| | | Freikorps executes Spartacist leaders and stops the rebellion. |
| | Political instability – Kapp Putsch | Freikorps attempt to take power led by Wolfgang Kapp (March 20 th 1920) |
| | | Want to be the army but are to be disbanded due the Treaty of Versailles so they rebel. |
| | | President Ebert calls on the people (workers) to go on strike and the Putsch soon ends. |
| | Political instability – Munich Putsch | Nov 8/9 th 1923 Adolf Hitlers attempt to take power in Munich with the Nazis/SA. |
| | | Hitler and 600 Nazis burst into Beer Hall nationalist meeting and force Von Kahr; Von Lossow & Von Seisser to support their putsch instead. |
| | | Plot discovered and stand off between police and Nazis – 16 Nazis killed and 4 policemen. He went on trial for treason. He was sentenced to 5 years but only served 9 months. |
| | Events in the Ruhr 1923 | France and Germany invaded the Ruhr in 1921 and 1923 when Germany failed to pay their reparations. The French were angry as they needed money to pay off their war debts to the USA. |
| | | The occupation was met by passive resistance and industrial sabotage. German workers went on strike in protest. A number of strikers were shot by French troops. |
| | | The strikers became German heroes and the government printed more money to pay them even though less goods were being produced. |
| | Hyperinflation | The extra strike money plus the collapse in production turned inflation into hyperinflation. |
| | | People with savings or on a fixed income like pensions found themselves with nothing. They blamed Weimar politicians. |
| | | Hyperinflation did benefit some people – businessmen with loans were able to pay them off easily. Serious food shortages led to a rise in prices which helped farmers. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">The Recovery of Weimar Why were the Stresemann years considered a 'golden age'?</p> | Dawes Plan 1924 | Reparation payments reduced and became more manageable. |
| | | Ruhr area was to be evacuated by Allied occupation troops. |
| | | The USA would give loans to Germany - \$3000 million over 6 years. |
| | Young Plan 1929 | Reparations were reduced from £6,600 million to £1,850 million. |
| | | The length of time Germany had to pay was extended to 59 years. |
| | | Right-wing politicians objected to any more payment of reparations. |
| | Rentenmark and extent of recovery | November 1923 Stresemann introduced the Rentenmark to replace the mark and end hyperinflation – in 1924 this became the Reichsmark. |
| | | Public works programmes provided new stadiums, apartment blocks etc. Businesses paid off their debts and there were fewer strikes. |
| | | Unemployment fell from 9 million in 1926 to 6 million. However farmers continued to struggle and the lower middle-class did not fully recover from the savings they lost to hyperinflation in 1923. |
| | Relationship with other countries | Locarno Pact 1925 – signed with Britain, France, Belgium and Italy to keep existing borders the same. |
| | | League of Nations 1926 – Germany were given a permanent seat. It confirmed their return to Great Power Status. |
| | | Kellogg-Briand Pact – signed with 64 other countries and agreed they would keep their armies for self-defence and solve all international disputes 'by peaceful means'. |
| | Result of Stresemann's foreign policies | 1925 – France withdrew from the Ruhr. |
| | | Allies agreed to the Dawes Plan and Young Plan. |
| | | Stresemann re-established the international position of Germany and brought closer relations with Britain and France. |
| | Political Developments | 1924-29 saw greater support for the Social Democrats and less support for extremist groups such as the Nazis. |
| | | The political stability was due to Stresemann and Hindenburg and made Stresemann the most popular political leader of the Weimar Republic. |
| | | Hindenburg was elected president in 1925. |
| | Social Developments | There were improvements in wages, housing and unemployment insurance. Between 1924 and 1931 more than 2 million new homes were built. |
| | | Unemployment Insurance Law in 1927 gave benefits for war veterans, wives of the war dead, single mothers and disabled people. |
| | | Women over 20 were given the vote and had equality in education and pay. They had more freedom socially, could go out unescorted, drank and smoke in public and were fashion conscious. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Nazi rise to power and end of Weimar Republic</u> How and why did the Weimar Republic collapse between 1929 and 1933?</p> | Early development of the Nazi Party | The '25 Point Programme' was the political manifesto written by Hitler and Drexler. |
| | | Hitler became leader in 1921 and changed the party name from the German Workers Party (DAP) to the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). He adopted the title Fuhrer and developed the use of the Swastika. |
| | | In 1921 Hitler set up the SA, led by Ernst Rohm – an armed group of mostly ex-military men who were in charge with protecting Nazi speakers from attacks by rival political groups. |
| | Munich Putsch | Hitler thought the time was right for the Nazi Party to seize power. The Putsch failed and its leaders were arrested. |
| | | The Nazi Party was banned and Hitler was put on trial, which gave him national publicity. He criticised the 'November Criminals', the Treaty of Versailles and the 'Jewish Bolshevists' who had betrayed Germany. |
| | | Whilst in prison for 9 months Hitler realised the Nazi party needed to change strategy and build upon recent publicity to get a majority in the polls and be elected officially. |
| | Further development of the Nazi Party | After prison he created his own bodyguard, the SS. |
| | | He introduced the Hitler Youth to attract younger members. |
| | | He used every opportunity to attack the weakness of Weimar and started to get support from all classes. |
| | Social and political impact of the Depression | By 1932 there were 6 million unemployed Germans – four in every ten workers without a job. |
| | | Many people could no longer afford their rent and ended up homeless. |
| | | The government paid out unemployment benefits but they were getting less in taxes so there was talk of benefit cuts. |
| | Increasing support for the Nazis | The Weimar government appeared to be doing too little, too late and in desperation people began to turn to the extremist parties like the Nazis. |
| | | Hitler was a gifted public speaker and by using propaganda (e.g. posters and rallies) he ensured everyone heard the Nazi message. |
| | | The SA played a vital role in protecting the Nazi speakers during election meetings and also in disrupting the meetings of their political rivals. |
| | Coalition of Brüning | The weak coalition governments of Weimar collapsed, resulting in three general elections between 1930 and 1932. |
| | | Hindenburg appointed Brüning but he lacked a majority and had to rely on Hindenburg and article 48 to allow him to rule. |
| | | Brüning and his government became more and more unpopular. They were forced to cut unemployment benefits and he became known as the 'hunger chancellor'. |
| | Coalitions of von Papen and von Schleicher | Hitler stood against Hindenburg to be president in 1932. Although he lost he was becoming a well-known figure in German politics and after the Nazi party had success in the July election he should have become Chancellor. |
| | | However Hindenburg hated Hitler and appointed Franz von Papen instead. He didn't have a majority so called another election where the Nazi party still got the most votes. Hitler again demanded the post of Chancellor and was again denied it. |
| | | Hindenburg appointed von Schleicher instead but his working majority failed. Von Papen managed to persuade Hindenburg to appoint a Nazi-Nationalist government with Hitler as Chancellor and von Papen as vice Chancellor. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Consolidation of Power 1933 – 1934</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How did the Nazis consolidate their power between 1933 and 1934?</p> | Importance of the Reichstag Fire | Hitler's position as Chancellor was not strong as the Nazi-Nationalist alliance did not have a majority in the Reichstag. He persuaded Hindenburg to call an election, |
| | | One week before the election the Reichstag building was set on fire. A young Dutch communist was arrested and charged. Hitler was able to argue that communists were planning a revolution. |
| | | He persuaded Hindenburg to sign the 'Decree for the Protection of the People and the State' which gave Hitler the power to restrict free speech and put enemies in prison without a trial. |
| | 1933 election | In the March election the Nazis won 288 seats but still lacked an overall majority. A coalition was formed with the National Party. Hitler was disappointed about this as he needed two thirds of the seats to pass his Enabling Bill. |
| | | On the day the Enabling Act was discussed Hitler banned the communists from attending and surrounded the building with SA men who prevented the opponents from entering. |
| | | Through the use of the Enabling Act Hitler was able to establish his dictatorship. |
| | Use of the Enabling Act | Ban on political parties – Nazi Party was now the only legal party and Germany was now a one party state. |
| | | Control of the press – in October 1933 the Reich Press Law imposed strict control and censorship of the press. |
| | | Trade unions banned – replaced by the German Labour Front (DAF) and strikes were made illegal. |
| | Removal of political opponents | Hitler wanted Gleichschaltung (full Nazification) – to achieve this he got rid of any organisations who could resist this. |
| | | KPD (communist party) had been banned after the Reichstag fire. The Law Against the Formation of Parties was passed in 1933 which banned all other political parties. |
| | | The DAF (German Labour Front) replaced all trade unions and decided wages, workers could not work without their DAF work book. It meant workers had far less rights. |
| | Night of the Long Knives | The leader of the SA, Ernst Rohm, wanted to merge the army with the SA and began pushing for a social revolution which would do away with Germany's class structure. |
| | | Hitler now saw the SA and its leadership as an increasing threat to his power. He needed the support of the army but the army generals would never agree to Rohm's demands for the SA to control them. Hitler had to choose between them. |
| | | Hitler chose the army. In Jun 1934 he used to SS to carry out a purge at night. Over 400 'enemies of the state' were arrested and shot by the SA, including Rohm. |
| | Importance of the Night of the Long Knives | It got rid of would-be opponents to Hitler's rule. |
| | | It secured the support of the army. |
| | | It relegated the SA to a minor role and provided Himmler with the opportunity to expand the SS. |
| | Death of Hindenburg: Hitler becomes Fuhrer | Hitler seized the opportunity to combine the two posts of president and Chancellor when Hindenburg died, and gave himself the new title of Fuhrer (leader). |
| | | He was now Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. |
| The army had to swear an oath of loyalty to the Fuhrer. | | |

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Nazi economic, social and racial policies</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">How did Nazi economic, social and racial policy affect life in Germany?</p> | Policies on German workers | The RAD made it compulsory for all men aged 18-25 to serve in the RAD for six months doing manual labour. |
| | | Men were put to work on public works schemes which included the building of 7000km of autobahns (motorways), tree planting and the building of hospitals, schools and houses. |
| | | Hitler's decision to re-arm transformed German industry and created jobs. |
| | Control and rewards of the workforce | Hitler saw trade unions as the breeding ground for socialism and communism so to avoid strikes and industrial unrest he banned the unions and replaced them with the DAF. |
| | | To reward loyal workers the Strength through Joy (KdF) organisation was set up. It improved leisure time by paying towards leisure activities for workers, e.g. sporting events, theatre trips, holidays and cruises. |
| | | The Beauty of Work organisation aimed to improve working conditions by building canteens and sports facilities. In 1938 the Volkswagen Scheme was introduced to allow workers to pay weekly instalments towards a car. |
| | Policies towards women | Nazi policies were very traditional and introduced policies which reversed many of the gains made by women during the 1920s. |
| | | Three Ks – Kinder, Küche, Kirche (Children, Kitchen, Church). Expected to give up their jobs, to get married and start a family. |
| | | Law for the Encouragement of Marriage – provided loans to encourage couples to marry, provided the wife left her job. Couples kept ¼ of the loan for each child born. The Motherhood Cross medal was given to reward women with large families. |
| | Education | Teachers had to belong to the Nazi Teacher's League, promote Nazi ideas in the classroom and swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler. |
| | | Strictly controlled, lessons started with pupils saluting and saying 'Heil Hitler'. |
| | | Textbooks were rewritten to reflect Nazi views – history textbooks contained a heavy emphasis on the evils of communism and the Jews who were blamed for the problems of the Depression. |
| | Control of the youth | Hitler Youth movement 1925 – Hitler Youth Law made it difficult to avoid joining . |
| | | Second Hitler Youth Law in 1939 made membership compulsory – by 1939 there were 7 million members. |
| | | Boys were instructed in military skills such as shooting, map reading and drill. Girls learnt domestic skills to prepare for motherhood and marriage. |
| | Treatment of Jewish people | In Mein Kampf Hitler spelt out his ideas on race – he argued that pure Germans (Aryans) were the master race – tall, blonde hair and blue eyes. |
| | | He said the Aryan race had been contaminated by 'subhumans' – the 'unmentionables'. |
| | | To rebuild the 'master race' it would be necessary to introduce selective breeding. The mentally ill, physically disables, homosexuals, black people and gypsies were sterilised. |
| | Policy of Antisemitism | To begin with Jews were encouraged to leave the country. Jewish shops and businesses were boycotted and they were banned from certain jobs. |
| | | Kristallnacht showed an escalation in violence – 7500 Jewish shops were destroyed, 400 synagogues were burnt down. Over 30,000 Jews were arrested. |
| | | By 1939 Jews were evicted from their homes and forced into ghettos. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Terror and Persuasion What methods did the Nazis use to control Germany?</p> | Nazi police state - SS | Wore black uniforms and were led by Himmler. |
| | | After the Night of the Long Knives the SS replaced the SA as the main security force, responsible for removing all opposition to the Nazis. |
| | | SS officers had to be pure Aryans – by 1934 there 50,000 SS members. |
| | Nazi police state - Gestapo | Under the control of the SS. |
| | | Gestapo became feared as they could arrest and imprison suspected ‘enemies of the state’ without trial. |
| | | Many of those arrested ended up in concentration camps – by 1939 160,000 people were under arrest for political crimes. |
| | Control of legal system | Judges and lawyers had to belong to the ‘National Socialist League for the Maintenance of Law and Order’ which forced them to accept Nazi policy. Anyone who refused was sacked. |
| | | German Lawyers Front was set up and its 10,000 members swore an oath of loyalty to the Fuhrer. |
| | | The People’s Court was set up to try enemies of the state and by 1939 had sentenced over 500 people to death. Crimes included listening to foreign radio stations. |
| | Goebbels and propaganda | Ministry for Popular Entertainment and Propaganda was set up under Goebbels. It aimed to control the thoughts, beliefs and opinions of the German people and brainwash them. |
| | | Methods included cinema, rallies, radio and posters. |
| | | An annual mass rally of over 100,000 was staged in Nuremberg – floodlights, stirring music, flags and banners were followed by a speech by Hitler. |
| | Censorship of newspapers | Goebbels was in charge of censorship – newspapers, books, music, theatre, architecture and art were all censored to only show what the Nazis wanted people to see. |
| | | Editors were told what they could print. |
| | | By 1935 the Nazis had closed down thousands of magazines and newspapers. The German Press Agency told editors what foreign stories to print. |
| | Censorship of books and music | All books were censored and those published had to put across the Nazi message. |
| | | Over 2500 writers were banned and some authors went into exile. Books that were banned were destroyed in mass bonfires. |
| | | Hitler hated modern music, jazz in particular. He preferred German folk music. |
| | Censorship of the arts | Theatre plays were supposed to focus on German history and political drama. Cheap tickets encouraged people to see Nazi inspired plays. |
| | | Hitler liked architecture inspired by the ancient Greeks and Romans as they had not been influenced by the Jews. |
| | | Hitler hated modern art and preferred imagery that promoted the Nazi ideals, e.g. women as housewives and mothers. |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Hitler's Foreign Policy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What factors led to the outbreak of war in 1939?</p> | Foreign policy aims | Reverse the Treaty of Versailles – restore German territory and to build up the German armed forces. |
| | | Unite all German-speaking people – create a ‘Greater Germany’ by uniting all Germans into one homeland. |
| | | Lebensraum – get ‘living space’ in eastern Europe for the growing population of Greater Germany. |
| | Rearmament and conscription | After the 1932 world economic depression countries were now more concerned about focusing on their internal issues than issues abroad. |
| | | The League of Nations was seen as weak so it made it easier for Hitler to break the Treaty of Versailles and begin building up Germany’s armed forces. |
| | | The British people and politicians felt that Germany had been harshly dealt with by the Treaty of Versailles. |
| | Disarmament Conference | Countries met to discuss ways in which they might disarm to prevent war in future. The conference failed because of differences between France and Germany. |
| | | Hitler could now say he wanted to re-arm for self defence against the growing armies of France and the Soviet Union. In 1933 he withdrew Germany from the League of Nations. |
| | | In 1935 Hitler built the army, navy and airforce up openly, from 100,000 in 1933 to 1.4 million in 1939. |
| | Stresa Front 1935 | German rearmament alarmed the European powers so to restrict this France, Italy and Britain met at Stresa. They formally protested about Hitler’s plans, but the show of unity did not last long. |
| | | The Anglo-German Naval Treaty said Germany was allowed to build a fleet up to 35% of the size of Britain’s, which encouraged Hitler to break the ToV further. |
| | | The Italian invasion of Abyssinia destroyed co-operation between France, Italy and Britain. |
| | Attempts to unify German-speaking people | Remilitarising the Rhineland, 1936 – had been demilitarised under the ToV. Hitler was convinced neither Britain nor France would stop him. He was correct. |
| | | Anschluss 1938 – Mussolini was on Hitler’s side and Hitler encouraged the Nazi party in Austria to demand union with Germany. After a vote in Austria 99.75% of Austrians voted in favour of uniting. Britain, France and the League protested but did not take action. |
| | | Sudetenland Crisis 1938 – Hitler promised to support the Germans in the Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia) who were rebelling. At the Munich Conference the UK, Germany, Italy and France agreed the Sudetenland would be given to Germany. They believed they had avoided war by allowing this as Hitler promised he wouldn’t invade the rest of Czechoslovakia, which he did in 1939. |
| | Alliances and agreements between Germany and other countries | Non-aggression pact with Poland 1934 – Hitler promised to accept the borders of Poland and encouraged trade. |
| | | Rome-Berlin Axis 1936 – Italy and Germany signed the pact to stop the spread of communism in Europe. |
| | | Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939 – Hitler needed the help of the Soviet Union to destroy Poland. They agreed not to support attacks on each other and secretly agreed to divide Poland. |
| | Outbreak of WW2 in Europe | Germany invaded Poland on 1 st September 1939. |
| | | Britain and France gave Hitler an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of all troops for Poland. |
| | | Hitler did not reply, and on 3 rd September, Britain and France declared war on Germany. |