

# Lesson Plan – The Rise of the Nazi Party

## Introduction

Student age range: 14-16

Subject: History

Time required: 50 minutes

## Overview:

This lesson explores the conditions that enabled Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party to rise to power in Germany. Students will work with a timeline to establish key events from the end of World War I to the establishment of Hitler's dictatorship. Students will focus on cause and effect and draw links to the fragility of democracy during times of crisis.

## Essential questions:

- What was life in Germany like after World War One?
- How did Hitler and the Nazi Party rise to power?

## Learning objectives:

- Students will learn the context of the Nazi rise to power.
- Students will learn the important steps in the Nazi rise to power.

## Key issues/concepts:

- Continuity and change
- Cause and effect

## Materials:

**Fact Sheet – Rise of the Nazi Party**

**Handout - 'Mixed up' Timeline**

## Teaching notes:

Students should recognise the difference between attempting to take power illegally (through a coup), and taking power legally, using the existing democratic structures of Germany. This may lead to deeper thinking about the nature of democracy itself.

This lesson is an opportunity for students to engage with the core historical concept of cause and effect.

## Glossary:

- Treaty
- Great Depression
- Hyperinflation
- Democracy
- Reichstag
- Putsch / coup

## Lesson Instructions

### ONE – Germany in 1919 (10 minutes)

Teacher writes this quote on the board: *“The war has ended, quite differently indeed from how we expected. Our politicians have failed us miserably.”* Kaiser Wilhelm II (quoted in Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1967), p. 634.)

Class discussion of the question “What do you think life was like in Germany after World War I?”

This can lead to discussion of: “How do you think this created opportunities for the Nazi Party?”

### TWO – Timeline (30 minutes)

Students read the **Fact Sheet – Rise of the Nazi Party**.

Students consider the **Handout - Mixed Up Timeline**, reproduced below. Students create an accurate timeline by putting the events in order, and matching them to the relevant dates.

Class discussion to check students’ timelines are correct, and discuss events.

Students annotate their timeline by adding arrows and text where they identify cause and effect. Eg Treaty of Versailles leads to hyperinflation; Great Depression could be linked to the rise in seats held by the Nazi Party in 1932.

### 'Mixed Up' Timeline:

This timeline is also available as a separate document, called [Handout – Mixed Up Timeline](#).

Date	Event
1918	Nazi Party has 50,000 members
1919	Beer Hall Putsch leads to Hitler's imprisonment
1921	Nazi party holds approx 18% of seats in the Reichstag (Parliament)
1923	Hindenberg dies, and Hitler becomes Dictator
November 1923	End of World War I Signing of the Treaty of Versailles
1930-1932	Hitler becomes Chancellor
1930	Formation of the Nazi Party
November 1932	Hyperinflation
January 1933	Nazi party holds approx 33% of seats in the Reichstag (Parliament)
February 1933	The Great Depression
March 1933	Reichstag Fire, leading to the Reichstag Fire Decree, which suspends civil liberties
August 1934	Enabling Act is passed, allowing the Nazi Party to pass laws without the approval of the Reichstag

### Corrected Timeline (Do not distribute to students):

Date	Event
1918	End of World War I Signing of the Treaty of Versailles
1919	Formation of the Nazi Party
1921	Hyperinflation
1923	Nazi Party has 50,000 members
November 1923	Beer Hall Putsch leads to Hitler's imprisonment
1930	Nazi party holds approx 18% of seats in the Reichstag (Parliament)
1930-1932	The Great Depression
November 1932	Nazi party holds approx 33% of seats in the Reichstag (Parliament)
January 1933	Hitler becomes Chancellor
February 1933	Reichstag Fire, leading to the Reichstag Fire Decree, which suspends civil liberties

<b>March 1933</b>	Enabling Act is passed, allowing the Nazi Party to pass laws without the approval of the Reichstag
<b>August 1934</b>	Hindenberg dies, and Hitler becomes Dictator

### THREE – Application to the modern world (5 minutes)

Teacher writes another quote on the board: “*Hitler did not steal power. He was elected by his people and then he destroyed his people.*” Pope Francis, January 2017 (quoted in BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38708485>)

Teacher leads class discussion to examine the quote, noting:

- Hitler used the instruments of democracy to take dictatorial power
- The people were complicit partly because Hitler offered solutions during a difficult time. (Also note the role of propaganda, which is the subject of the next lesson, available [here](#).)
- The fragility of democratic institutions, and how authoritarian regimes can emerge in times of crisis.

### FINISHING UP (5 minutes)

As an exit ticket, or for homework, students provide a written response: Which event on the timeline do you consider the single most important moment in Hitler’s rise to power? Defend your response.

### Modifications:

Task Three can be replaced by the Finishing Up task, and students can be allowed more time for completing the Finishing Up task in class.

As an extension task, students could research to find three different news articles about Hitler’s rise to power. One should come from the German newspaper *Der Stürmer*, and two from non-German newspapers.

Then, students:

- consider the ways in which the rise of the Nazi Party was reported in these three newspaper reports.
- Identify the similarities and differences between the reports.

## Related lessons

After this lesson, we recommend you teach about Nazi propaganda. [Click here](#) to access a lesson plan called 'Nazi Propaganda', and other lesson plans for teaching about the Holocaust.

You can also see a suggested plan for teaching a full unit about the Holocaust at [this link](#).