



MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND HOLOCAUST EDUCATION
EDUCATING FOR A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE

How Would You Vote?

Lesson Plan



This lesson plan was adopted from educational materials developed for the Arthur and Rochelle Belfer National Conference for Educators at the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

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How Would You Vote?

Goals:

- Students will discuss the voting process and how most voters select a party based upon one or two issues
- Students will review the three political platforms presented to the German public during the 1932 presidential election
- Students will understand the importance of the character of the politician and being an informed citizen

Materials:

- The History Place: The Rise of Adolf Hitler
<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/riseofhitler/runs.htm>
- The three Platform descriptions (A, B, C)
- German Voter Biographies (6)
- Whiteboard and marker
- Shoebox made as a ballot box
- Paper ballots
- Scrap paper

This activity meets the following Georgia Performance Standards:

SSWH18 The student will demonstrate an understanding of the global political, economic, and social impact of World War II.

b. Identify Nazi ideology, policies, and consequences that led to the Holocaust.

QCC: World History:

Topic 18: Impact of Ideas, Individuals, and History

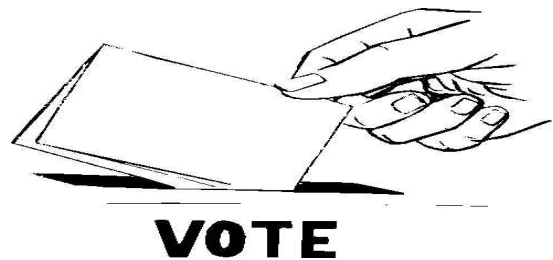
Topic 23: Human Rights

QCC: Citizenship

Topic 1: Democracy

Topic 4: Freedom of Conscience Expression

Topic 7: Tolerance



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Activity:

Step 1: Begin by asking students to generate a list of today's political issues and write them on the board (save this for later). Discuss how most people vote for one or two issues that concern them. Have them write on a scrap piece of paper the top two issues that concern them today.

Step 2: Explain the political environment during the 1932 elections.

Explain that the Treaty of Versailles put a formal end to World War I, but that its signing crushed Germany. Ask students to discuss how the following tenants of the treaty would have affected the German people:

" . . . on June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the victorious Allies and was then dutifully ratified by the German democratic government. Under the terms of the treaty, Germany alone was forced to accept responsibility for causing the war and had to pay huge war reparations for all the damage. Germany also had to give up land to France and Poland. The German Army was limited to 100,000 men and was forbidden to have submarines or military aircraft."

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/riseofhitler/ends.htm>

Explain the German economic situation after the stock market crash of 1929 and the impact of war reparations and inflation.

Explain the conservative backlash against cultural changes in art, music, and social norms under the Weimar republic.

Explain how a series of chancellors began to rule according to "emergency power decree" instead of parliamentary democracy, which further undermined democratic participation in Germany.



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Activity:

Step 3: Divide students into six groups. Have them read the three political platforms included in this lesson plan from the 1932 German election in which Adolf Hitler ran. (The platforms are only identified as A, B, or C. The party affiliation will be revealed at the end of the lesson.)

Step 4: Assign each group of the six German biographies and have them read, discuss, and determine which platform (A, B or C) their German would vote for.

Step 5: On the whiteboard create a column for A, B, and C. After ten minutes' discussion in groups, have students report to you how they believe their person would have voted and what factors made them come to that conclusion. Record the vote under the appropriate column.

Step 6: Have students try to identify which of their own current issues fit within each of the three party platforms from the German election. Write the issues under each of the columns that are on the board. (Sample issues: gun control, civil liberties, immigration, environmental protection, health care)

Step 7: Hand out ballots to each student and have them write down which party they would vote for (A, B or C) according to the issues that are important to them and place it in the ballot box. Have one student count the ballots out loud and one student record the votes in the appropriate column.

Step 8: Reveal to the class the affiliation of each party platform:

A= Communists;

B= Weimar Democratic Party;

C= Nazi Party



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The Weimar party, with its candidate, incumbent Field Marshall von Hindenburg, won by a slim margin. However, by January of 1933, Hindenburg handed over the chancellorship to platform C's candidate, Adolf Hitler, whose Nazi party had swept the election the previous year in nearly every political office.



Results of the 1932 election:

Presidential Elections:

Paul von Hindenburg: 53.1%
 Adolf Hitler: 36.7 %
 Ernst Thälmann: 10.1%

Parliamentary Elections:

NAZI Party: 37.8%
 Social Democrats: 21.9%
 Communist Party: 14.6%

Reichstag Elections, 1928-1933

Party Representation in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic						
Party	May 1928	Sept. 1930	July 1932	Nov. 1932	Mar. 1933	Nov. 1933
National Socialist (Nazi)	12	108	230	196	288	661
German National Peoples	78	41	37	51	52	
German Peoples	45	30	7	11	2	
Economic	23	23	2	1		
Catholic Center	61	68	75	70	74	
Bavarian Peoples	17	19	22	20	18	
State (Democrats)	25	15	4	2	5	
Social Democrat (Socialist)	153	143	133	121	120	
Communist	54	77	89	100	81	
Other Parties	23	53	9	12	7	
Totals	491	577	608	584	647	661

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How Would You Vote?

Platform A

We are committed to the overthrow of the presently existing, oppressive Republic and all of its economic and social institutions. The party favors:

- *The abolition of private property – when property is not owned publicly, it cannot be distributed to those who are poor, cold, sick or hungry.*
- *The establishment of land reform programs in which the government will take over the land and distribute it for the common good of all.*
- *Transfer of all industries to the government so that they can be operated for the benefit of all people.*
- *A foreign policy that will build friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union since we share interests.*
- *To the German people: the cause of your misery is the fact that French, British, and American capitalists are exploiting German workers to get rich themselves. Germans, unite and remove this terrible burden.*



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Platform B

This party wishes to maintain the Republic and to encourage Germany to take its place among the free governments of Europe.

- *We support the present German Republic in which freedom, democracy, and justice live in the hearts of German countrymen.*
- *We will honor all of Germany's obligations, political and financial, in order that Germany's honor will increase in the eyes of the world.*
- *We plan to increase jobs through a program of public works.*
- *We will establish unemployment compensation for up to a six month period.*
- *We will cut government expenditures to lower taxes.*
- *We believe in the right of those who disagree with the party to speak and write their opinions freely.*



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Platform C

We demand:

- *A union of all Germans to form a great Germany on the basis of self-determination of peoples.*
- *Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles.*
- *Land and territory (colonies) for our surplus population.*
- *The requirement that all German citizens have German blood.*
- *Non-citizens will live in Germany as foreigners only, subject to laws governing aliens.*
- *The vote will be allotted to citizens, only, as will the privilege of holding office.*
- *If it becomes impossible for the mother-land to feed the entire population, aliens must be expelled.*
- *No further immigration of non-Germans will be allowed. Any non-German who arrived after April 2, 1914, shall leave immediately.*
- *A thorough reconstruction of our education system will ensue, with the science of citizenship taught from grade one.*
- *All newspapers must be published in German, by German citizen-owners.*



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How Would You Vote?

German Voter Biography 1: Otto Hauptmann

Otto works in a factory in Berlin. Although his trade union is actively working for better conditions and higher wages, it has not made many gains for the workers. Hauptmann blames their failure on the 1923 inflation and the current depression. He believes that the union would be more successful if the economy were not doing so poorly. Still, it is the union that has kept him employed. Many of his friends have been laid off, but the union persuaded the factory owners to keep men with seniority. In factories with weak unions, owners only keep younger workers, claiming they are more productive. Otto worries about some of the ideas of his fellow workers. Many think the only way to end the depression is to allow the government and workers to control the factories. Otto believes that the workers will continue to get fair treatment as long as the unions remain strong. Moreover, he believes that managing the factories and the government should be left to those who understand these complicated jobs.

German Voter Biography 2: Gerda Munchen

Gerda Munchen is the owner of a small Munich grocery store started by her parents. For years, her parents have saved to send her to the university. But Gerda chose not to go and the money stayed in the bank. In 1923, she planned to use the money to pay for her children's education. But, just before her daughter was to leave for college, inflation hit the German economy. The bank informed Gerda that her savings was now worthless. This was a blow to the whole family. Gerda does not think she will ever regain her savings and with so many people out of work, sales are down at the family store. Another problem the family store faces is how to compete with the larger chain stores, which can offer much lower prices. She and her children question a system that has made life so difficult for hardworking people.

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German Voter Biography 3: Elisabeth von Kohler

Elisabeth von Kohler, a prominent attorney who attended the University of Bonn, has a strong sense of the German tradition. She believes that Germany's contributions to western civilization have been ignored. Now that The Great War is over, Elisabeth would like to see the Germany lead a democratic Europe. She disapproves with the way Platform B would allow the free expression of extremist views. Her sense of justice is even more outraged by the way the Allies, particularly France, view Germany – as barbarian simpletons. She would like to prove to the world that Germans are indeed a great race. She is proud to be an attorney and a German woman.

German Voter Biography 4: Eric von Ronheim

Eric von Ronheim, the head of a Frankfurt textile factory, is very concerned about the economic depression. Sales are down and so are profits. If the Germans had not been treated so ruthlessly under the Treaty of Versailles, he argues, the nation would be far better off. Instead, the government has had to impose heavy taxes to pay reparations to its former enemies. As a result, Germans are overtaxed with little money to spend on textile and other consumer goods. The world-wide depression has made matters worse by limiting foreign markets for German products. Even if the depression were over, Eric does not think taxes would come down because of the reparation payments. Eric considers the idea of government controlled factories and friendly relationships with the Soviet Union a serious threat to Germany. As a business owner, he fears the agenda of Platform A: Under its provisions, he would receive no compromises from unions or government. He also feels Platform A makes Germany subservient to its former enemy, Russia.



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German Voter Biography 5: Hermann Struts

Hermann Struts, a lieutenant in the German army, fought bravely during World War I. He comes from a long line of army officers and is a graduate of the German military academy. Struts has always taken pride in the army's ability to defend the nation and its strong leadership. Yet Hermann is bitter about being passed over for promotion these last ten years. Few soldiers have been promoted, mainly because the German army was so reduced by the Treaty of Versailles. In the old army, Struts would have been at least a captain by now and possibly a major. The Treaty, he argues, has done irreparable harm not only to Germany's honor but also to his own honor as a soldier. He feels that if the civilian government had refused to sign the Treaty and allowed the army to continue to fight, both he and Germany would be better off.

German Voter Biography 6: Karl Schmidt

Karl Schmidt is unemployed and lives in the rich steel-producing Ruhr Valley. Like many of his neighbors, he lost his job because of the economic depression. Yet Karl notices that the owners of the steel mills still live in big houses and drive expensive cars. Why are they protected from the depression when workers suffer? Although the government provides unemployment compensation, the money is barely enough to support Karl, his wife and two children. However, the government claims that it cannot afford to continue even these payments much longer. Karl feels the government would be in a stronger position to help people if it cut off reparations. But he also knows that if the government did so, the French might occupy the Ruhr valley just as they did in 1923. What is needed is a government that is responsive to the workers, perhaps even one that is run by the workers, as some of his friends believe. He is convinced that Germany needs a government that is strong enough to stop reparation payments.

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