

Read the information, and underline (and number) the answers in the text for the questions that follow.

### The Birth of the Weimar Republic

In November of 1918, Germany surrendered in World War I. In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed and deprived Germany of various territories, demilitarized the country, and forced Germany to pay heavy reparations. With the ending of World War I and Germany's defeat, the imperial government came to an end and German leaders created a democratic government known as the Weimar Republic. In this new democratic government, there was a **chancellor** or prime minister. Under this new democratic government, women were allowed to vote, there was a bill of rights and political parties were able to form.



### Problems in the Weimar Republic

Despite the hopes of a new democracy, Germany suffered from a range of early political and economic problems.

#### Political Problems

Politically, the Weimar Republic had many small political parties so it was nearly impossible to form a coalition. The Weimar Republic was criticized by both conservatives and leftists. Conservatives thought the Weimar Republic was too weak. Leftists and communists demanded the changes they'd heard Lenin brought to Russia. In addition to the critiques of the Weimar Republic, many Germans were still angered by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Having to pay such large reparations negatively impacted the economy. Not only did the Treaty of Versailles impact the economy, it also impacted German nationalism and the sense of pride they had for their country. Germans of all classes began to believe the Weimar Republic was weak and not doing enough to protect German pride.

#### Economic Problems

The political problems were compounded by economic problems. In 1922 and 1923, Germany experienced rampant inflation. Inflation is the rise in prices and the fall in the value of money. Many Germans who lived on fixed government incomes found their money to be worthless. In addition to inflation, Germany began to fall behind on reparation payments as mandated in the Treaty of Versailles. When the Weimar Republic was unable to make payments, France occupied the Ruhr Valley. The German workers in Ruhr Valley refused to work, but were still paid by the government with newly printed money. The newly printed money only created more inflation and soon the German currency (*marks*) were worthless.

Angered, bittered and humiliated, Germans began to look for **scapegoats** [people who are unfairly blamed for all problems] to explain their political and economic problems. Many Germans looked to German Jews as the reason for Germany's problems. These political and economic problems caused many people to lose faith in the Weimar Republic and they began to look to extremist leaders to solve the problems it seemed the Weimar Republic was unable to solve.

To help the economy recover, the United States loaned Germany money and a new plan was developed by Western nations to reduce reparation payments. Between 1924 and 1929, Germany was able to experience a period of prosperity.

1. What did the Treaty of Versailles require Germany to do?
2. What form of government emerged after Germany's defeat in World War I?
3. In this new government, what three new freedoms were Germans granted?
4. Identify three *political* problems in the Weimar Republic.
5. Identify two (2) *economic* problems in the Weimar Republic.
6. Why did the scapegoating of Jewish people happen during these times of political and economic trouble in Germany?
7. Why did Germans begin to look to extremist leaders during these times of political and economic trouble?
8. How was Germany able to experience a period of prosperity between 1924 and 1929?

## The Rise of Adolf Hitler

Hitler's rise to power cannot be attributed to one event. There were **multiple causes** for Hitler's rise to power including events happening throughout the world and events happening within Germany. Hitler was able to **exploit** these events and in 1933 he **legitimately** gained power to become chancellor through the support of conservative politicians.

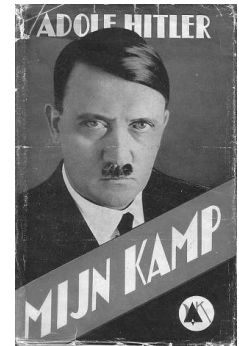
### Hitler's Early Life

In 1919, Hitler joined a the German Worker's Party, a right-wing extreme nationalist party in Munich. This party focused on creating a **scapegoat** for the outbreak of the war and Germany's defeat. The scapegoats were found in "international Jewry," communists and politicians across the party spectrum. He quickly moved up the ranks in this organization and grew into an effective speaker and delivered speeches in front of large crowds in Munich. His speeches spoke against the Treaty of Versailles, Marxists and Jewish people. His speeches brought large crowds because of the economic crisis and the continued anger over the World War I defeat and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. In July 1921, Hitler was introduced as Führer and Hitler changed the name of the party to the National Socialist German Workers Party, or Nazi party for short.

### The Beer Hall Putsch and Hitler's Incarceration

By 1923, the Nazi party had 55,000 members and was stronger than ever. Still angered by the economic and political problems of inflation and poor leadership, Hitler decided to take matters into his own hands. From November 8 to November 9, 1923, Hitler and his followers staged the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, a failed takeover of the government in Bavaria, a state in southern Germany. The Nazi party was banned, and Hitler was prevented from speaking in public until 1927 because his speeches were considered too inflammatory and agitating. In April 1924, he was sentenced to 5 years in jail for treason. While the takeover was unsuccessful, the attempt brought Hitler and the Nazis national attention.

While incarcerated, Hitler wrote a **manifesto** [a public declaration of policy and ideas] entitled *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"). This text outlined the ideas that inspired his millions of followers. The manifesto illustrates his strong and extreme German nationalism, his violent **anti-semitism** [hostility to or prejudice against Jews] and his anticommunism.



Some of the ideas discussed in *Mein Kampf* include:

| Anti-Semitism   | Racial Purity   | "Undesirables"   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hitler blamed Germany's problems on the parliament of the Weimar Republic, the Jews, and Social Democrats, as well as Marxists. He believed that all of these people were all working for Jewish interests. He wrote about the Jews as corrupters of the nation that should be subjected to poison gas.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hitler believed that racial purity was an absolute necessity for a renewed Germany</li><li>Hitler divided humans into categories. At the top, is the Germanic man with his fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes. Hitler refers to this type of person as an Aryan. Hitler believed that Aryans were the supreme form of humans, or <b>master race</b> and that everyone else was inferior.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hitler stated that the destruction of the weak and sick is far more humane than their protection. Hitler believed in destroying "the weak" in order to provide the proper space and purity for the "strong".</li></ul> |

Hitler only served nine months of his five year sentence. During his incarceration, he decided that the success of the Nazis lie not in a violent overthrow of the Weimar Republic, but by winning power through constitutional means. Once he legally gained power, he could transform Germany into a nation that aligned with his doctrine. Upon his release, Hitler reorganized the Nazi party into a proper political organization and sought to compete for votes with other political parties. By 1929, the Nazi party had become an official national political party.

9. What type of political group did Hitler join when the war ended? Why?

10. What was the Beer Hall Putsch? Why did Hitler do this?

11. According to *Mein Kampf*, what were Hitler's views on Jewish people? racial purity? undesirables?

12. How did Hitler's incarceration impact his decision about how he would gain power in Germany?