

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide



## The West Between the Wars, 1919–1939

### Lesson 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

*What can cause economic instability? How might political change impact society?*

#### Reading HELPDESK

##### Academic Vocabulary

**require** to demand as being necessary

**prohibit** to prevent or to forbid

##### Content Vocabulary

**Nazi** shortened form of the German National, or the National Socialist German Workers' Party; a member of such party

**concentration camp** a camp where prisoners of war, political prisoners, or members of minority groups are confined, typically under harsh conditions

**Aryan** a term used to identify people speaking Indo-European languages; Nazis misused the term, treating it as a racial designation and identifying the Aryans with the ancient Greeks and Romans and twentieth-century Germans and Scandinavians

#### TAKING NOTES: *Categorizing Information*

**ACTIVITY** As you read, use a chart like the one below to list anti-Semitic policies enforced by the Nazi Party.

| Anti-Semitic Policies |
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## The West Between the Wars, 1919–1939

### Lesson 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany, *continued*

#### IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Germany had to deal with the major problems of losing World War I and the Great Depression. As a result, Germans found extremist parties more attractive. Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party promised to build a new Germany. His party's propaganda appealed to a sense of national honor and promised a new Germany.

#### Hitler and Nazism

**Guiding Question** *What was the basis of Adolf Hitler's ideas?*

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. He had been a failure in school. He traveled to Vienna to become an artist, but he was rejected as a student by the art academy. Hitler developed his basic political ideas in Vienna. Racism, especially anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews), was the basis of Hitler's philosophy. Hitler was also an extreme nationalist.

Hitler served four years on the Western Front during World War I. Afterward, he remained in Germany and entered politics. In 1919 he joined the little-known German Workers' Party. It was one of several right-wing, or extremely conservative, nationalist parties in Munich.

Hitler had taken total control of the party by the summer of 1921. By then the party had been renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, an abbreviation of the German name), or **Nazi**, for short. Within two years, 55,000 people had joined the party. There were 15,000 members in the party militia. The private army was known as the SA, the Storm Troops, or the Brownshirts (after the color of their uniforms).

Hitler became too confident in the party's power. He led an armed uprising, or revolt, against the government in Munich in November 1923. This uprising, called the Beer Hall Putsch, was quickly stopped. Hitler was sentenced to prison. He wrote *Mein Kampf*, or *My Struggle*, while in prison. The book gave an account of his basic political ideas.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler presented his feelings of extreme German nationalism, strong anti-Semitism, and anticommunism. He used Social Darwinism (a theory about how fit or strong nations will be successful) to link his feelings and present a theory of struggle. His theory emphasized the right of "superior" nations to *lebensraum* (LAY-buhnz-ROWM)—"living space." So, these nations were justified in their expansion. He supported the right of "superior" individuals to gain authoritarian leadership over the masses.

#### Rise of Nazism

In prison, Hitler realized that the Nazis would have to gain power by legal means. They were not strong enough to stage a violent overthrow of the Weimar Republic. The Nazi Party would have to be a mass political party. It would have to compete for votes with other political parties.

Once out of prison, Hitler expanded the Nazi Party in Germany. Its party organization extended throughout the nation by 1929. Three years later, it had 800,000 members. It had become the largest party in the Reichstag, the German parliament.

There is no question that Germany's economic problems were a crucial factor in the Nazi rise to power. Unemployment had greatly risen, growing from 4.35 million in 1931 to about 5.5 million by the winter of 1932. Hitler promised a new Germany based on nationalism and a strong army.

#### The Nazis Take Control

After 1930, President Hindenburg supported the German government's rule by decree, or order. The Reichstag had little power. The right-wing elites of Germany looked to Hitler for leadership. These

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## The West Between the Wars, 1919–1939

### Lesson 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany, *continued*

included the industrial leaders, landed aristocrats, military officers, and higher government officials. Hindenburg was under great political pressure. In response, in 1933, he allowed Hitler to become chancellor and to create a new government.

Within two months, Hitler prepared the way for the Nazi Party's complete control over Germany. On March 23, 1933, Hitler legally seized power when a two-thirds' vote of the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act. This law gave the government the power to ignore the constitution for four years. During that time, the government could issue laws to deal with the country's problems. Hitler no longer needed the Reichstag or President Hindenburg. The parliamentary body itself had made Hitler a dictator.

Nazis immediately used their new power. They quickly brought all institutions under their control. They removed democratic elements from the civil service, the government employees who help run the government. They also removed Jews—whom they blamed for Europe's economic troubles. They set up prison camps called **concentration camps**. People who opposed the Nazis were sent there. All political parties except the Nazis were abolished.

By the end of the summer of 1933, only seven months after being appointed chancellor, Hitler had established the basis for a totalitarian state. When Hindenburg died in 1934, the office of president was abolished. Hitler became sole ruler of Germany. People took oaths of loyalty to their *Führer* (FYUR • uhr), or "Leader."



#### Reading Progress Check

**Identifying Central Issues** How did the Enabling Act contribute to Hitler's rise to power?

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## The Nazi State, 1933–1939

**Guiding Question** *How did Hitler build a Nazi state?*

Hitler wanted to create a totalitarian state. He did not want power just to have power. He wanted power in order to reach his goal—an **Aryan** racial state that would dominate Europe and possibly the world for many years to come. (*Aryan* names people who spoke one of a family of languages called Indo-European. These languages are spoken through most of Europe and much of Asia. They include English, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, and Persian). The Nazis misused the term *Aryan*. To them, it became a racial description that linked Aryans with ancient Greeks and Romans and twentieth-century Germans and Scandinavians (people from countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). The Nazis believed the Germans were the true descendants and leaders of the Aryans. They planned to create an empire of Aryans.

To achieve his goal, Hitler needed the German people to be actively involved. His plan was to create a society that was completely run by the government. All organizations and activities, including work, education, or enjoyment, would be under the party's control. As a result, people would lose their individuality. They would become part of the collective that made up the totalitarian state.

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### Lesson 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany, *continued*

The Nazis used several methods to create a totalitarian state. For one, they used mass demonstrations and spectacles. They brought the German people together in large numbers to show support for Hitler's policies. Every September, the Nazis held party rallies at Nuremberg. These meetings, as well as others, created mass excitement and enthusiasm.

#### The State and Terror

Hitler had to protect his position as the one and only ruler of Nazi Germany. Hitler used terror to maintain control over citizens. The *Schutzstaffeln* (SHOOTZ • staff • eln) ("Guard Squadrons"), known as the SS, were a key instrument of terror. The SS originally worked as Hitler's personal bodyguard. SS leader Heinrich Himmler came to control both the secret police forces that he had established and the regular police forces.

The SS was based on two principles: terror and ideology. Terror included the instruments of murder and repression, or stopping any opposition. These included secret police, criminal police, and concentration camps. Later, they included execution squads and death camps (concentration camps where prisoners were killed). Himmler's ideology came directly from Hitler. The chief goal of the SS was to promote the "Aryan master race."

#### Economics

Hitler quickly addressed the country's economic problems. He needed to put people back to work and end the depression in Germany. He used public works projects and grants to private construction companies as ways to provide people with jobs. A massive rearmament program, however, was the real solution to the unemployment problem. Hitler ordered the manufacture of weapons for a powerful new German military. Unemployment dropped from more than 5 million people in 1932 to less than 500,000 in 1937. The regime claimed full credit for solving Germany's economic problems. Its part in ending the depression led many Germans to accept Hitler and the Nazis.

#### Women and Nazism

Women played an important role in the Aryan state. They were to have children who, the Nazis believed, would bring about the triumph of the Aryan race. The Nazis believed men were meant to be warriors and political leaders. They thought that women were meant to be wives and mothers. In this way, each group could best serve to "maintain the whole community."

Nazi ideas limited women's employment opportunities. The Nazis thought jobs in heavy industry might stop women from bearing healthy children. Nazis also considered university teaching, medicine, and law unsuitable for women, especially for married women. Instead, they encouraged women to enter such occupations as social work and nursing. The Nazi regime used campaigns against working women. It used slogans such as "Get hold of pots and pans and broom and you'll sooner find a groom!"

#### Anti-Semitic Policies

From its beginning, the Nazi Party reflected Adolf Hitler's strong anti-Semitism. Once in power, the Nazis put their ideas into action.

In September 1935, the Nazis announced new anti-Semitic laws at the yearly party rally in Nuremberg. These Nuremberg laws defined who was considered a Jew. For example, anyone with even one Jewish grandparent was considered a Jew. They also stripped Jews of their German citizenship and civil rights. They did not permit marriages between Jews and German citizens.

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide



## The West Between the Wars, 1919–1939

### Lesson 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany, *continued*

Eventually, German Jews were also **required** to wear yellow Stars of David. They also had to carry identification cards saying they were Jewish.

The Nazi anti-Semitism moved to a more violent period on the night of November 9, 1938. This night is known as *Kristallnacht*, or the “night of shattered glass.” The Nazis went on a destructive rampage. They burned synagogues and destroyed some 7,000 Jewish businesses in Germany, Austria, and in the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. The Nazis arrested 30,000 Jewish males and sent them to concentration camps. Soon Jews were not allowed to use public transportation or to enter public buildings, including schools and hospitals. They were **prohibited** from owning, managing, or working in any retail store. Finally, the SS encouraged Jews to leave Germany. The Jews who escaped the country were more fortunate than those who stayed.

### Culture and Leisure

A series of inventions in the late 1800s led the way for a revolution in mass communications. Especially important was Guglielmo Marconi’s discovery of wireless radio waves. There were 9 million radios in Great Britain by the end of the 1930s. Full-length motion pictures, or movies, appeared shortly before World War I. By 1939, about 40 percent of adults in the more developed countries attended a movie once a week.

Radio and the movies could be used for political purposes. Radio offered great opportunities for reaching the masses. The Nazi regime promoted radio listening. For example, it encouraged manufacturers to produce inexpensive radios that could be paid over time on an installment plan.

Film could also be used as propaganda. Joseph Goebbels (GUHR-buhlz), the German propaganda minister, believed that film was a modern way of influencing people. Goebbels created a special film division in his Propaganda Ministry. This film division made both dramatic feature films and documentaries. These films carried the Nazi message.

The Nazis also used mass leisure activities to control the people. The Nazi regime adopted a program called *Kraft durch Freude* (“Strength through Joy”). The program offered leisure activities to amuse the working class. These activities included concerts, operas, films, guided tours, and sporting events. Hitler used sporting events like the Olympic Games to show Germany’s physical strength and power to the world.



#### Reading Progress Check

**Predicting Consequences** How do you think the Nazi control of media such as radio and film helped keep the regime in power?

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