

Standards Focus: Historical Context***Hitler's Plan***

Food shortages, few jobs, money troubles — those were some of the problems the German people faced in the 1930s. Many people were unhappy and angry. Then, in 1933 a man named Adolf Hitler came to power. He promised a bright future for Germany. Many Germans were ready to listen to him and follow his ideas.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi political party believed that Germany could become a great nation. They believed that one way to do this would be to get rid of the Jewish people. The Nazis blamed the Jews for Germany's troubles. As scapegoats, the Jewish people were the target of many injustices. Their property was taken or destroyed; Jewish students were barred from public schools. Jews weren't allowed in public swimming pools and stores. They were required to sew a Star of David patch on their clothes so they could easily be identified. Eventually, the Nazis gathered the Jews and shipped them to concentration camps where they either worked in horrible conditions or were executed.

Hitler also believed that Germany would become a great nation when it expanded its borders. The Nazi's strong military began invading its neighboring countries. By 1939, Czechoslovakia and Austria had come under Germany's power. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, France and Britain felt Germany was getting out of control, and World War II began.

But Hitler was not just interested in taking over Poland. The Nazis continued invading their neighboring countries. Its powerful military was no match for smaller, weaker nations. In April of 1940, the Nazis invaded Denmark and Norway. In May of 1940, the Nazis occupied France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In 1941, the Nazis took over Greece and Yugoslavia. As the Nazi military moved from country to country in Europe, Jews were herded up and sent to concentration camps.

Not everyone believed that Hitler and the Nazis were right. Some people, either alone or in groups, worked against the Nazis. These resistance fighters helped Jews escape or hide; some destroyed railroad lines, and some wrote anti-Nazi newspapers. No matter what they did, though, being a member of the resistance was dangerous. Often the punishment for helping a Jew was death.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in 1941, the United States entered World War II. The war continued until 1945 when Germany surrendered. By the time the war ended, 6 million Jews had lost their lives.

**Star of David****Neutral Countries**

Sweden and Switzerland remained neutral countries during the war. That means they didn't become involved in fighting with or against the Germans.

Scapegoat

The term "scapegoat" comes from an ancient Jewish practice. People's sins would be symbolically placed on a goat. The goat was then sent out into the desert. By doing this, people believed their sins left them.

Today, the word "scapegoat" means a person or thing that is blamed for another's troubles or mistakes.

Nazi

The word Nazi is a German abbreviation for the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing—Hitler’s Plan

Directions: After reading the article, complete the following activities.

- Working with a partner, use the chart below and the events from the article to create a World War II timeline. In the first column, write the date. In the second column, record a brief description of what happened. The first date has been done for you.

| Event Date | What Happened? |
|------------|--|
| 1933 | <i>Hitler came to power in Germany</i> |
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- Using the article and your timeline, locate the countries the Nazis invaded on the map on page 17. Using colored pencils, indicate the different years the countries were invaded. Create a key at the top of the page.
- What does the word *scapegoats* mean in the following sentence? Circle the correct answer.

As scapegoats, the Jewish people were the target of many injustices.

- Scapegoats means:
- the victims who are blamed for something they didn’t do
 - the people who blamed others for doing something wrong
 - the true reason there are problems in the world
 - the people who were responsible for Germany’s problems