

History, Weimar and Nazi Germany

Lesson 9

Worksheet:

Were the twenties a 'golden age' for *all* Germans?

Mr McNally



Changes in unemployment

The years **1924-29** generally oversaw a period of positivity in regards to employment (people getting jobs and work). The rate of **unemployment** had dropped from 2 million in 1924, to 1.3 million by 1928, with a lot of jobs being created in the **industrial sectors**. Furthermore, the **Weimar Republic** also looked at ways of providing for the unemployed.

In 1927, an **Unemployment Insurance Act** was established in which workers would pay 3% of their wages. In return they would receive around 60 marks per week if they fell out of work or became sick. This was much more advanced than in other countries of that time.



Changes in work

The years 1924-29 saw German workers benefit from a rise in the value of **'real wages'**. This increase to around 25% by **1928** and meant that Germany had some of the best paid workers in Europe.

German workers also benefited from the **reduction** of average working hours per week. In **1925**, most workers would work 50 hours per week whereas by **1927**, they worked 47 hours on average.

This shows that many German workers earned more and worked less than in previous years. However, this did not impact every industry the same. **Middle-class** professions such as doctors and lawyers, and farmers did not benefit to the same extent as industrial workers.



Changes in housing

The **Weimar Government** aimed to deal with the critical housing **shortages** that occurred in certain parts of Germany. Between **1924-31** more than 2 million new houses were built. **Housing associations** were also set up to build houses in certain areas to prevent the rise in **homelessness**.

By 1929, the Weimar Republic was spending 33 times more on housing than Germany had done in 1913. As a result, the rate of homelessness had **dropped** by more than 60% by **1928**.



Changes for women

The **Weimar Republic** allowed women over the age of **20** to vote and women showed a huge interest in politics. The Weimar Constitution stated that there was to be **equality** for the sexes in regards to employment and **income**. Women in the Weimar Republic has some of the most **advanced** legal rights in the world.

Whilst women were supposed to be treated equal to men in the workplace, many women found themselves **excluded** from industrial jobs, which were considered 'male jobs', and most women were still expected to give up work when married. However, women did flourish in the **public sector** carrying out jobs such as teaching or working in the civil service.



Changes for women

Many women also had a lot more **social freedoms** during the Weimar Republic. They often drank and smoked in public and would frequent bars unescorted. In addition, the nature of women's fashion also massively changed. More women became fashion conscious and wore makeup with shorter styled skirts due to influences from magazines and abroad.

Not everyone agreed with the freedoms for women. Some people argued that it was changing the German tradition. Whilst, the new **liberal** attitudes seemed to have an impact on the birth and divorce rates. The birth rate **declined** in the 1920s than the previous two decades and divorce rates also **increased**.



Changes in culture

The 1920s saw a change in the nature of art. The pre-war **ensorship** was removed and artists were free to **express** their feelings. Art movements such as **new objectivism, modernism and expressionism** were popular and encouraged artists to show a non-**romanticised** view of the world. Art which criticised society started to appear.

There was also a change in architecture with the Bauhaus movement flourishing. This changed the **traditional** way in which German buildings looked and focused on a more modern and sleeker design than the previous bold and strong looking pre-war designs.



Changes in culture

The 1920s were considered a golden decade of cinema in Germany. The film Metropolis by director Fritz Lang was considered one of the most advanced films of its era. In addition, actresses such as Marlene Dietrich became universal superstars and were well known across the world.

In theatre shows were produced which criticised the German actions in the First World War.



Glossary

Unemployment - The amount of people without a job

Industrial sector - Manufacturing jobs in the factories

Real wages - The value of goods that wages bought

Homelessness - People who live on the streets and do not have a house

Income - The amount of money a person earns

Public sector - Jobs that are provided by the government. E.g. Teachers

Censorship - The banning of ideas and certain views

Romanticised - A hugely positive view of the world



Comprehension Questions

1. How did the Weimar Republic *improve* conditions for many German workers?
2. How did the Weimar Republic *improve the lives* of many German women?
3. What was the Bauhaus movement?
4. How did art develop during the Weimar Republic?
5. Challenge question: Make a judgement on whether life improved for many German women during the Weimar Republic.

P - I think that life did/did not improve for women ...

E - This is because ...

E - This shows that life did not improve for women because ...

L - Therefore, ...

