

Grade 11

The Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre is pleased to offer a series of eight (8) units covering the following Grade 11 CAPS topic:

Ideas of Race in the late 19th and 20th Centuries – What were the consequences when pseudoscientific ideas of Race became integral to government policies and legislation in the 19th and 20th centuries?

*Case studies: **Australia** and the indigenous Australians; Nazi **Germany** and the Holocaust.*

Unit 5

Case Study: Nazi Germany Part 1

In this unit you will learn about the following:

- Recap of Grade 9 CAPS content on ‘Rise of Nazism’
- The Nazi Party’s racial ideology
- Nazi Germany’s use of positive and negative eugenics

RECAP OF GRADE 9 HISTORY

- **WWI 1914-1918**
- **GERMANY LOSES WWI**
- **TREATY OF VERSAILLES 1919**
 - **LOSS OF TERRITORY**
 - **RHINELAND OCCUPIED BY THE FRENCH**
 - **GERMANY AND AUSTRIA ARE SEPARATED**
 - **GERMANY TO TAKE FULL BLAME FOR WAR**
 - **GERMANY TO PAY REPARATIONS**

Let’s briefly recap the rise of Nazism, which you would’ve covered in Grade 9. Germany lost WWI (1914-1918). In 1919, Germany had to sign the Treaty of Versailles and the terms of the treaty were really harsh. Germany had to reduce its army drastically. It lost its colonies and land in Europe, including part of the Rhineland which was then occupied by the French. Many of these French occupiers were soldiers from France’s African colonies (e.g. Senegal). They also had to take full responsibility for the war and to pay reparations to other countries. In short, Germany’s economy was crippled by the early 1920s.

Between 1919 and 1933 Germany was a DEMOCRACY with a constitution similar to the one we currently have in South Africa

The economy was slowly coming back to life after the war because of loans from the USA

After WWI, Germany was a democracy known as the Weimar Republic, and it had a very progressive constitution. This constitution made everyone equal before the law, and protected citizens’ freedoms and rights. In the mid-1920s, Weimar Germany’s economy was revived through loans from the United States of America. The economy improved, so people had jobs, they could feed their families and seemed to be improving. Democracy flourished! But then something happened...

- In 1929 the stock market in America crashed which led to a worldwide economic depression
- The German economy was plunged into ruin
- Adolf Hitler had become leader of the National Socialist Workers Party (Nazis)
- The Nazis had tried to overthrow the government in 1923 but failed
- They decided to use the democratic process to gain power
- With the economic crash there was an opportunity to take control and dismantle the democracy and set in place a totalitarian regime where Hitler was the dictator and held complete control of the country and all its citizens and structures

In 1929 the American stock market crashed. The ensuing economic depression affected the whole world – but Weimar Germany, which relied on American loans, was particularly badly hit.

Now, 1929 was only 10 years after the Treaty of Versailles. People had just come out of that economic hardship when boom! Things went bad again. Suddenly, listening to extremist voices that promised change seemed logical.

By that stage, Adolf Hitler had become the leader of the National Socialist Workers Party, (NAZI) party, which he had first *joined* in September 1919. In 1923, the Nazis had tried and failed to overthrow the government in an event known as the Munich Putsch. Why had they failed? People were not interested extremists! After that failure, Hitler decided to use democracy to come to power (and then dismantle democracy!)

In 1929, people were ready for extremists/radicals. They wanted solutions. Hitler and the Nazis promised they would fix all of society's problems. So from 1928 to 1930 the Nazi party's share of the vote went from 2.5% to 18%! They never received a total majority, but by 1933, they had used various machinations to install Hitler as a **dictator**. As the country's leader, Hitler destroyed the constitution and implemented a totalitarian regime. Democracy was dead.

RACE:

THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION

Physical differences do not make “race”
Race is not a biological reality

Race means nothing unless it is given

- Social Meaning
- Public Policy
- Private Action
- Laws and Practices

Between 1933 and 1945 Germany was a **racial state**.

We covered the concept of race in Unit 1. We discussed the fact that race is not scientific is not biological. All human DNA is 99.9% the same. Race is not real - but racism is real. Why? Because humans make it real, by giving it social, political and societal meaning.

In the case of racial states, the concept of race underpins most legislation – making it very real for the citizens!

“While racial ideologies existed in other places, in Germany they enjoyed “the widest currency and the greatest political prominence: the Third Reich became the first state in world history whose dogma (ideology/worldview/belief) and practice was racism.”

Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ipperman, *The Racial State*

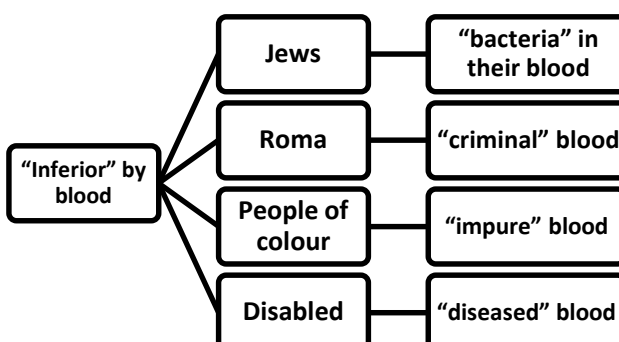
Look at the quote on the left. You know, from your own knowledge and the last four Units, that there were racial policies in other countries (including Australia, the United States of America and pre-apartheid South Africa). Racial ideologies existed in many places but in Germany they enjoyed the widest currency, which means everybody approved, and had the greatest political prominence. The Nazi Third Reich became the first state in world history whose dogma, which means ideology, world view, belief and practice, was racism. In 1948, South Africa followed in their footsteps when it legislated apartheid.

- **EUGENICS WAS THE BELIEF IN THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING THE HUMAN POPULATION**
- **NAZIS DID NOT USE THE TERM EUGENICS**
- **NAZIS SPOKE OF RASSENHYGEINE (“RACE HYGIENE”)**
- **THEY DID NOT CARE ABOUT IMPROVING THE HUMAN POPULATION**
- **THEY CARED ABOUT KEEPING GERMAN BLOOD PURE!**

Remember how, in Unit 3, we discussed the problematic but what Eugenicists believed to be noble intentions? We said that they wanted to improve the human population and rid society of problems. The Nazis didn't use the term eugenics, they had another word; they spoke of “Rassenhygiene”, which translates to Race Hygiene. We know all about hygiene; hygiene is making sure that you are clean. That no germs or infections or viruses get in. The Nazis didn't care about improving the whole of the *human population*. They were only interested in keeping **German blood** “clean” and “pure”.

Now, please remember that there is no such thing as “German blood”; no such thing as “South African blood”. There is only blood. But the Nazis believed absolutely in the concept of “pure” German blood – which they called “Aryan” blood. Only those who were “racially clean” or “pure” were welcome in Germany.

IDEOLOGY
NAZI WORLD VIEW
MASTERS AND SUPERIORS



According to Nazi ideology there were the Masters, the “Aryans”, and those who were Inferior. These people were classed inferior based on their *blood* which is something you cannot change.

The Nazis said that Jewish people were a “race” not a religion and they had bacteria in their blood, Roma and Sinti people (derogatorily termed “gypsies”) had criminal blood, people of colour (mostly children of French-African soldiers from the Rhineland) and all German citizens with disabilities had impure blood and needed to be persecuted.

POSITIVE 'EUGENICS': "THE BATTLE FOR BIRTHS"



In Unit 3 we discussed positive eugenics and negative eugenics. Let's see how the Nazi's applied positive "Rassenhygiene", Racial Hygiene.

Firstly, they released many propaganda images of the ideal German "Aryan" family. There were many people who had been living in Germany since the 7th century or even longer, but because they practiced Judaism or happened to be Roma or Sinti, their blood was considered to be impure and they were not considered to be *real* Germans.

On the left you see the ideal "Aryan" family. There's a strong man – always with blond hair and blue eyes. There is the eagle of war in the background, because "Aryan" men are warriors ready to conquer the world. The woman is also always depicted as blonde and blue eyed and fair and she is always surrounded by lots of blonde offspring. The little boy in the poster is wearing the uniform of the Hitler Youth.

In Unit 3 we learnt that eugenicists believed in improving public health. Well, Nazis did too. Here is a poster telling pregnant women that alcohol and nicotine are bad for you. In the 1930s this was very advanced thinking. Except this advice was only for a certain section of the population; if you were Jewish or Roma or black, they didn't care what you ate while pregnant. In fact they didn't want those women to have babies at all!

They called these programmes the **Battle for Births**. Think about that phrasing: it's a war against those with "impure blood", so those with "pure blood" must have lots of babies! And if a "racially pure" woman did have many babies, she received military awards for her struggle in this war. If she had 4 or 5 babies she got a bronze medal, 6 or 7 babies would merit a silver medal and mothers of 8 or more received get a gold medal. If she had 10 children, that 10th child became the godchild of Adolf Hitler.

NEGATIVE 'EUGENICS':

"Our starting point is not the individual, and we do not subscribe to the view that one should feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, or clothe the naked... our objectives are entirely different:

We must have a **healthy** people in order to **prevail in the world.**"

Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, 1938

Now, let's talk about negative eugenics.

Here's a quote from Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment.

What is propaganda? Essentially, it is brainwashing. The Nazis had a Minister of Brainwashing! Goebbels said the Nazis do not care about the individuals, but only about the well-being of the nation.

They weren't interested in looking after people. If you weren't able to take care of yourself for whatever reason you needed to get out; there was no room for you in Germany. There was no compassion.

FORCED STERILISATION

- From the 1920s-1970s
(**+/- 50 years**)
60,000 Americans were involuntarily sterilised
- Between 1933-1939
(**6 years**)
more than 400,000 German citizens were sterilised against their will and without their consent by the Nazi government

In Unit 3 we discussed how eugenicist thinking underpinned sterilization laws worldwide. Unsurprisingly, the first law the Nazis passed was a sterilization law.

Now look at the figures. In America from the 1920s to the 1970s 60 000 Americans were involuntary or forcibly sterilized. Now, obviously one person being involuntarily sterilized is one person too many.

But in 6 years, between 1933 and 1939, as many as **400 000 German citizens were forcibly sterilized** by the Nazi government.

People of colour, disabled Germans and those they termed "asocial" were sterilized without their consent and against their will.

In the next Unit we will look at how these negative eugenics programmes escalated to murder and, eventually, to the largest genocide on European soil.

QUESTIONS

1. Draw up a brief timeline of the Rise of Nazism (1919-1933), using this unit, your own knowledge and any additional material you may have
2. What term did the Nazis use in place of 'eugenics'?
3. Pick a poster on Page 4 and critically analyse the visual elements. How does this poster communicate Nazi ideology?
4. Describe in detail one of the positive 'Eugenics'/Rassenhygiene policies in Nazi Germany
5. Remember, the word 'Eugenics' comes from the Greek meaning 'well-born' or 'good creation'. Compare and contrast the use of this word and the Nazi term 'Rassenhygiene'.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre: <http://ctholocaust.co.za/>

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwVBUs5VqvsumuwDdzYIAaQ>

Nazi Germany Timeline: <https://www.historyonthenet.com/nazi-germany-timeline>

Roots of Nazi ideology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvCkw87FLZk>

The Biological State: Nazi Racial Hygiene, 1933-1939:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-biological-state-nazi-racial-hygiene-1933-1939>

Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race:
<https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/deadly-medicine-creating-the-master-race>

Racial hygiene and Nazism:
<https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/545134d251854fef6500001>

Under the cover of law: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/under-cover-law>