Unit 2: Nazism In Power
Lesson 2.1: Hitler's Rise to Power

Background:
The Nazis did not seize power illegally. They used the democratic institutions that were created during the Weimar Republic (the government created after World War I when the Kaiser was pressured to step down). After coming to power, however, the Nazis established totalitarian rule (unrestricted power over its citizens) and took control of every aspect of German society. This enabled them to put their ideas into practice. Hitler's regime used the legal system to achieve its goals, but also relied on violence, intimidation, imprisonment, and propaganda (the systematic manipulation of public opinion). These ingredients strengthened the government's control and secured the people's obedience, both of which would be essential in eventually carrying out state-sponsored mass murder.

In addition to transforming everyday life in Germany, the Nazis took immediate steps to isolate and persecute the Jews who lived there, as well as other groups they saw as a threat to the state. Although they were able to implement their goals with little resistance, Nazi leaders often disagreed about matters of policy and procedure. It was not obvious in the early years of the regime that one of the ultimate goals would be the murder of all of the Jews of Europe.

Video Running Time: 15:45

Goal:
Explore and analyze how Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power and subsequently consolidated power while bringing the German people in line with Nazi beliefs and practices.

Essential Questions:
- How did Hitler come to power?
- How did Hitler consolidate power?

Learning Goals:
- Students will summarize how the Nazis codified into law the exclusion of Germany's Jews from society.
- Students will analyze how Hitler consolidated power and utilized fear and violence to accomplish his goals.
- Students will identify various individuals in the Nazi regime and their roles.

Success Criteria:
- Students will define the Nazi core beliefs.
- Students will trace Hitler's rise to power beginning in the early 1920s and how he manipulated the laws of the Weimar Republic.

- Students will show how the Nazis consolidated power using the indifference of the German people, the interests of specific groups in German society, intimidation, and indoctrination.
- Students will discuss the Nuremberg Laws and the process of making antisemitism a legal state policy.
- Students will explain the role of the SA, SS, SD, and Gestapo and the use of fear and violence by these groups.
- Students will identify and explain the roles of key individuals in the Nazi Party.

Topics For Further Discussion:
- How did the consolidation of power in the Nazi Party affect the life of all people who did not agree with Hitler?
- How did the Nuremberg Laws compare to the Jim Crow laws?
- What was going on in other countries in Europe and North America that aligned with Nazi propaganda?
- What were the Nazis' primary political messages in the early 1920s in the aftermath of the German defeat in World War I?
- What effect did the many political parties and their varying philosophies have on the Weimar Republic?

Recommended Background Reading from *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*

Unit 2 – Lessons 2.1; 2.2; and 2.3
Chapter 2
- Introduction to **Chapter 2: Nazism in Power**
- "Elite Cooperation" from the translation of *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit [The Office and the Past]* by Peter Hayes et al.
- "Street Level Coercion" from *Defying Hitler* by Sebastian Haffner
- "The Claims of Community" from *Belonging and Genocide* by Thomas Kühne

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Question	
On the Nazi Propaganda poster, what are some symbols you can see?	
What were the Nazi core beliefs?	
What were the results of the failed *Putsch*?	
How many elections did the Nazi Party win?	
How did Hitler use the events of the Reichstag fire, Article 48 (declaring a state of emergency), and the Enabling Act to gain power?	
What factors did Hitler and the Nazi Party use to consolidate power?	
How did the Nuremberg laws change life for Germany's Jews?	

Based on the Nazi state's rigid hierarchy, who had final say on everything?	
What do the four main groups (the SS, SA, Army, and Police) all have in common?	
What was the net effect of the consolidation and centralization of police power?	

Answer Key

Question	Possible Answers
On the Nazi Propaganda poster, what are some symbols you can see?	• Symbols of Communism – Hammer and Sickle, Red Flag of Soviet Union • Jewish Symbol – Star of David on pocket watch chain • Flags of WWII Allies – United States and Great Britain (Slide 4)
What were the Nazi core beliefs?	• Antisemitism • Anti-Communism • Social Darwinism • Nationalism • *Lebensraum* (room to live) (Slide 4)
What were the results of the failed *Putsch*?	• The Nazi Party was banned • Hitler was not allowed to speak publicly until 1927 • Hitler was tried for high treason and sentenced to five years in prison, but only served a sentence from April until December 1924 • While imprisoned, he wrote *Mein Kampf* – My Struggle • The SA and the Nazi Party were banned for a time after the *Putsch* (Slide 5)
How many elections did the Nazi Party win?	• 0 – The Nazi Party never won an election (Slide 6)
How did Hitler use the events of the Reichstag fire, Article 48 (declaring a state of emergency), and the Enabling Act to gain power?	• The fire led to the declaration of a state of emergency in which martial law was declared and individual rights were curtailed, resulting in Hitler gaining control of the government (Slide 7)
What factors did Hitler and the Nazi Party use to consolidate power?	• Indifference of the German people • Interests of the elites coincided with those of the Nazi Party • Intimidation of the German population • Indoctrination of the German people (Slide 8)

How did the Nuremberg laws change life for Germany's Jews?	• Removed Jews from German society and left them more isolated • Stripped Jews of full citizenship • Forbade marriage between Germans and Jews • Lineage of one's grandparents determined if one was a Jew (Slide 9)
Based on the Nazi state's rigid hierarchy, who had final say on everything?	• The Führer • Hitler was above the law (Slide 11)
What do the four main groups (the SS, SA, Army, and Police) all have in common?	• Ruled with fear and were often violent, secretive, and focused on enemies of the state, including Jews and anyone who did not follow the Nazi Party (Slide 12)
What was the net effect of the consolidation and centralization of police power?	• Enabled Himmler to have total control over the "Final Solution" • Permitted the Gestapo, which answered to no judicial or legal oversight and had no fear of repercussions, to carry out the racial goals of the Nazi Party • Gestapo operated outside the law (Slide 13)

Unit 2: Nazism In Power
Lesson 2.1: Hitler's Rise to Power

Slide 1 – Hitler's Rise to Power
Welcome to Lesson 2.1 of *How Was it Possible? A Holocaust Curriculum For and By Teachers™*, from The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. This presentation will give you an overview of "Hitler's Rise to Power." This lesson was prepared by Marie-Amalie Farris, who taught social studies and Holocaust Studies at Wellington Community High School in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Slide 2 – Hitler's Rise to Power
This photograph, from the late 1920s, shows Hitler standing amidst a large crowd during a Reich Party Day rally.

Slide 3 – The National Socialist German Workers' Party (The Nazi Party)
We begin with 1920 and The National Socialist German Workers' Party – The Nazi Party.

Slide 4 – Nazi Core Beliefs
This is a Nazi propaganda poster from World War II. Note the hammer and sickle on the red flag at the right, a symbol of communism. Note the Star of David on the man's pocket watch chain, a Jewish symbol. You also see the flags of the Allies from World War II – Germany's enemies – with the caption, "Behind the Enemy Powers… the Jew." The idea suggested here is that Jews were behind all of Germany's enemies.

The Nazi Core Beliefs included:

- Antisemitism, which is hatred of Jews;
- Anti-Communism, which is opposition to Communism, the ideology advocating an end to capitalism by a worldwide workers' revolution, leading to a classless society;
- Social Darwinism, which is a theory that individuals and groups are subject to laws of natural selection, with some groups "less fit to survive" than others;
- Nationalism, which is loyalty and devotion to one's nation, including the placing of that nation above all others; and
- *Lebensraum*, or "room to live," which is the idea that a state or nation, in this case Nazi Germany, believes a certain amount of territory is needed for its natural development.

Slide 5 – Nazi Party – The Early Years
The Nazi Party was originally known as the DAP, or German Workers' Party, and was renamed the NSDAP, or National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party, on February 24, 1920, in Munich, Germany.

In 1923 a *putsch*, which was a violent attempt to overthrow the German government, took place on November 8 and 9. Hitler and the SA (storm troopers, or the Brownshirts) wanted to take advantage of the social discontent caused by hyperinflation and attempted to launch a revolution from Munich.

The attempted coup was unsuccessful; sixteen members of the SA were killed by the army and became known as the "blood martyrs" in Nazi Party lore. Hitler fled and was arrested two days later.

The results of the failed *Putsch* included the following.

- The Nazi Party was banned.
- Hitler was not allowed to speak publicly until 1927.
- Hitler was tried for high treason and sentenced to five years in prison, but only served a sentence from April until December 1924.
- While imprisoned, he wrote *Mein Kampf* – My Struggle.
- The SA was banned along with the Nazi Party for a time after the *Putsch*.

This photograph from 1922, shows supporters of the early Nazi Party.

Slide 6 – Political Parties in the Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933)
This chart shows the major political parties in the Weimar Republic. Unlike the system in the United States, multiple parties existed, and to govern, a party had to either win at least 50.1% of the vote or be able to put together a coalition of parties to reach that percentage of votes in the Reichstag, the German Parliament.

Note that the Communist Party, the left-wing extremist party, and the Nazi Party, the right-wing extremist party, are polar opposites on this chart. The centrist parties were the Catholic and Liberal parties. Both wanted a parliamentary democracy and were supported by workers and the middle and upper classes. In the early years of the Weimar Republic, the Social Democrats had the most seats in the Reichstag but were still short of a majority. In order to form a government, they had to form a coalition with other parties.

In the May 1924 election, the Nazi Party received 0.12% of the vote and had no seats in the Reichstag. By the November 6, 1932, election, the Nazi Party received 33.1 % of the vote and had 196 seats in the Reichstag, still not a majority. **It is important to note that the Nazi Party never won a majority in any election.**

Slide 7 – Timeline
We will now discuss some of these dates in more detail.

January 30, 1933
When the November 6, 1932, election failed to yield a new government, Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany by President Paul von Hindenburg. The Chancellorship was a powerful position in running the German government; the President, at this time, was mostly a figurehead.

The events of 1933 and 1934, shown in this timeline, enabled Hitler to consolidate power. The Nazi Party systematically began the consolidation of power over all aspects of German society.

The Reichstag Fire was instrumental in Hitler's rise to power. On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag was set on fire. The next day, February 28, Hitler persuaded President Hindenburg to pass the Reichstag Fire Decree, an emergency law which restricted personal liberty, and suspended the right to assembly and the freedoms of speech and the press. The Nazis blamed the fire on the Communists and arrested a Dutch communist, who was tried and executed. Article 48 of the German Constitution, which allowed the President to declare a state of emergency in Germany in times of national danger and to rule as a dictator for short periods of time, was invoked.

On March 23, 1933, the Enabling Act was passed, empowering Hitler to create laws without the consent of the Reichstag.

From June 30 to July 2, 1934, known as The Night of the Long Knives, Hitler ordered a purge of the SA leadership including Ernst Röhm, its head.

On August 2, 1934, President Paul von Hindenburg died, and on the same day Hitler announced that the office of the President would be abolished, and he would be Führer and Chancellor. This was confirmed in a popular vote on August 19, 1934.

Slide 8 – Consolidation of Power
The Nazis attacked the idea of individuality, stressing loyalty to the community. Several factors aided Hitler's ability to consolidate power.

- Indifference – the Nazis gained from Germans' fatigue with politics.
- Interests – Nazi goals aligned with those of the military, the business community, and the diplomatic community.
- Intimidation – failure to comply with Nazi goals and edicts was met with shaming and violence.
- Indoctrination – great value was placed on comradeship, conformity, and community.
- Intoxication – "We are somebody again!" after the humiliation from the loss of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles.

Slide 9 – The Nuremberg Laws – September 15, 1935
The Nazi regime also passed a large number of antisemitic laws. Perhaps most important were the Nuremberg Laws, which were announced on September 15, 1935, at a Nazi Party rally.

These laws stripped Jews of full citizenship in the German state and forbade marriage between Germans and Jews. November 14 brought a supplemental decree which defined who was a Jew and who was a German. The lineage of one's grandparents would determine inclusion in, or exclusion from, German citizenship.

This essentially removed Jews from everyday life in German society.

As you can see from this graphic, in which the black circles represent Jewish relatives, and the open circles represent "pure-blooded" German relatives:

- 3 or 4 Jewish grandparents made one a Jew.
- If you had 1 or 2 Jewish grandparents you were considered a *mischling*, or mixed race.
- The Nazis initially determined if a *mischling* was a Jew based on their behavior and participation in the Jewish community.

The Nuremberg Laws were expanded over the next several years, adding approximately 400 more laws, all of which removed Jews from German society and left them more isolated.

Slide 10 – Key Organizational Units
Next, we will look at key organizational units of the Nazi Party and their leaders. The image on this slide is a recruiting poster for the Waffen-SS, a branch of the SS which served alongside the German armed forces.

Slide 11 – Nazi Leaders
Let us look at a few of the most prominent Nazi leaders:

Adolf Eichmann: In 1934, he joined the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), the Security Service, which was the intelligence arm of the SS and the Nazi Party. After March 1941, he became the director of the Jewish Affairs department of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). Eichmann was a central figure in the deportation of over 1.5 million Jews from across Europe to killing centers and camps.

Joseph Goebbels: Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment. Goebbels was a brilliant propagandist and instrumental in achieving public acceptance of the Nazis.

Reinhard Heydrich: One of the main architects of the "Final Solution" and Chief of the RSHA.

Heinrich Himmler: Reich Leader of the SS; the second most powerful man after Hitler and responsible for overseeing the "Final Solution."

And finally, Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany, the Führer.

In the Nazi state, a rigid hierarchy was established with everyone answering up the chain of

command and all power ultimately residing with the person at the top – Hitler. This was the *Führerprinzip,* or "leader principle." Simply put – the Führer's word was above all written law.

Slide 12 – Instruments of Nazi State Power
In the Nazi State there were 4 main groups that controlled the state and people's lives.

The SS – The *Schutzstaffel*, or "Protection Squadron," was composed of the racial elite and became an independent and powerful instrument within the Nazi state. It controlled the German police and the concentration camp system and was greatly feared. The SS carried out security-related assignments, without regard for legal restraint. The SS was identified by their black uniforms and the SS insignia on their collars, which looked like lightning bolts. Himmler was the head of the SS.

The SA, or "Storm Troop" was an organization whose members were known as the storm troopers or the Brownshirts. Formed in 1921 and commanded by Ernst Röhm, they were a violent paramilitary force that was made up of unemployed and disengaged men, many of whom fought in World War I. The SA provided Hitler's security detail and provided military support to enforce Hitler's orders. As the SA grew, they interfered with the meetings of opposing political parties, fought in the streets with other paramilitaries, intimidated Jews, and others, and kept people from voting.

The Army, which was part of the Wehrmacht (the general name for the German armed forces, which also included the air force and the navy), was another instrument of state power, mostly in territories occupied by the Germans.

The Police – In 1936, when Himmler became Chief of the German Police, he established two sections – the Order Police, which were Nazi Germany's uniformed police services, and the Security Police, which included the Gestapo (the secret state police) and the Kripo (the criminal police). The German Police played a major role in implementing Nazi policies, especially as they related to Jews. The Order Police participated in mass shootings of Jews.

Slide 13 – Security Police and Uniformed Police Structure – 1939
This chart is a way to visualize the hierarchy of the Security and Uniformed Police Structure as of September 1939.

The Gestapo, the political police force of Nazi Germany**,** was responsible for protecting the Nazi regime from its alleged political and racial enemies and was synonymous with terror. It answered to no judicial or legal oversight and thus had no fear of repercussions. The Gestapo operated outside the law and assisted the SS, occupation authorities, and civilian administration in the round-up and deportation of Jews.

As you can see from the chart, the Gestapo, the Criminal Police, the Security Service, and the Uniformed Police all reported up to Himmler, who answered directly to Hitler. The net effect was the consolidation and centralization of police power.

Slide 14 – Summary – Hitler's Rise to Power
As we summarize Hitler's Rise to Power, remember that the Nazi Party gained strength in the late 1920s and 1930s without ever winning a majority of the vote. Hitler was appointed Chancellor and quickly consolidated power through anti-democratic laws and violence while maintaining antisemitic and anti-Communist beliefs and promoting ideas of Social Darwinism, nationalism, and *Lebensraum*. Nazi Germany was a one-party system with no checks and balances.

The SA, SS, SD, and Gestapo were key organizational units and instruments of terror in Nazi Germany. The Reich Security Main Office/RSHA was responsible for dealing with "The Jewish Question" and ultimately had the most influence over the "Final Solution."

Thank you for joining us today as we learned about "Hitler's Rise to Power." Please continue your educational journey with us. This concludes our presentation of Lesson 2.1 from *How Was it Possible? A Holocaust Curriculum For and By Teachers™*. On behalf of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, thank you.

Name:_____

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Circle the correct answers below.

1. Which was not a Nazi core belief?
    a. Social Darwinism
    b. Antisemitism
    c. Nationalism
    d. Communism

2. How many elections did the Nazi Party win a majority?
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3

3. Which of the following is a method used by Hitler and the Nazi Party to consolidate power?
    a. Capitalized on the political activism of the German people
    b. Utilized violence against and shamed anyone who did not comply with Nazi edicts
    c. Supported social services to help those in need
    d. Fostered support for international mandates under the Treaty of Versailles

4. What did the SS, SA, Army, and Police all have in common?
    a. Tried to suppress violence
    b. Ensured that everyone had a fair trial
    c. Did not use fear as a weapon against people
    d. Focused on enemies of the State, which included the Jews and anyone who did not fit into Nazi racial policy

5. Based on the Nazi State hierarchy, who had the final say on everything?
    a. The SA
    b. The SS
    c. Hitler
    d. German citizens

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Lesson Quiz with Answers Highlighted and Bolded

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Link to Google Form Quiz (Instructions Available in the Appendix)
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1HoDNpbP1MxC6Lexu5pQs6AAqHYTTF1ZsjZn1I7UKE5k/copy

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Slide 1 - Yevgeny Khaldei via Getty Images
Slide 2 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
Slide 3 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Dottie Bennett
Slide 4 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Helmut Eschwege
Slide 5 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joanne Schartow
Slide 5A - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Slide 5B - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of William O. McWorkman
Slide 5C - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of courtesy of Dottie Bennett
Slide 5D - United State Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joseph H. Williams
Slide 6 - The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous
Slide 7 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of B. I. Sanders
Slide 7A - National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
Slide 7B - Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-02937 / Fotograf(in): Pahl, Georg, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=102-02937
Slide 7C - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Slide 8 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Michael O'Hara
Slide 9 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hillel at Kent State
Slide 10 - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Galerie Prospect
Slide 11 (Top - Left to Right 1) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
Slide 11 (Top - Left to Right 2) - Yad Vashem, Photo Archive, Jerusalem
Slide 11 (Top - Left to Right 3) - Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2007-0188 / Fotograf(in): o.Ang, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=146-2007-0188
Slide 11 (Top - Left to Right 4) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of William O. McWorkman
Slide 11 (Top - Left to Right 5) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of William O. McWorkman
Slide 11 (Bottom - Left to Right 1) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
Slide 11 (Bottom - Left to Right 2) - Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-S72707 / Fotograf(in): Bauer, Friedrich Franz, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=Bild+183-S72707
Slide 11 (Bottom - Left to Right 3) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Geoffrey Giles
Slide 11 (Bottom - Left to Right 4) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of William Gallagher
Slide 11 (Bottom - Left to Right 5) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Geoffrey Giles

Slide 11 (Background Image) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joanne Schartow

Slide 12 (Top Left) - Bundesarchiv, Bild 101III-Altstadt-065-05 / Fotograf(in): Altstadt, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=Bild+101III-Altstadt-065-05

Slide 12 (Top Right) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of James Sanders

Slide 12 (Bottom Left) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

Slide 12 (Bottom Right) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Michael O'Hara

Slide 13 (Left) - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

Slide 13 (Center) - Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-S72707 / Fotograf(in): Bauer, Friedrich Franz, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=Bild+183-S72707

Slide 13 (Right) - Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-2007-1010-502 / Fotograf(in): Waske, Bruno, https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/en/search/?yearfrom=&yearto=&query=Bild+183-2007-1010-502

Slide 13 (Chart) - Adapted from work of Regent Professor Edward Westermann, Texas A&M University - San Antonio