The Great Depression in Germany

Directions: Read the following personal accounts the Great Depression had on Germans and answer the questions that go with that account.

During the inflation years, people who had saved their money in banks or were living on pensions or disability checks found themselves bankrupt. Those with jobs found that their salary increases could not possibly keep up with the almost instantaneous rise in prices. Artist [George Grosz](https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/personalities/george-grosz-1893-1959-personalities) described what shopping was like in those days.

Lingering at the [shop] window was a luxury because shopping had to be done immediately. Even an additional minute meant an increase in price. One had to buy quickly because a rabbit, for example, might cost two million marks more by the time it took to walk into the store. A few million marks meant nothing, really. It was just that it meant more lugging. The packages of money needed to buy the smallest item had long since become too heavy for trouser pockets. They weighed many pounds. . . . People had to start carting their money around in wagons and knapsacks. I used a knapsack.

Under the leadership of [Gustav Stresemann](https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/personalities/gustav-stresemann-1878-1929-personalities), a conservative politician who supported the republic, the government eventually brought inflation under control. But it took time and many people could not forget that the government had allowed it to happen. One German expressed their feelings when he wrote:

Of course all the little people who had small savings were wiped out. But the big factories and banking houses and multimillionaires didn't seem to be affected at all. They went right on piling up their millions. Those big holdings were protected somehow from loss. But the mass of the people were completely broke. And we asked ourselves, "How can that happen? How is it that the government can't control an inflation which wipes out the life savings of the mass of people but the big capitalists can come through the whole thing unscathed?" We who lived through it never got an answer that meant anything. But after that, even those people who used to save didn't trust money anymore, or the government. We decided to have a high-ho time whenever we had any spare money, which wasn't often.

In a letter [Bertha Pappenheim](https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/personalities/bertha-pappenheim-1859-1936-personalities) wrote in 1923, she recounts the story of a trip she took in Germany to inspect some foster homes. In this excerpt, she talks about the impact of inflation on German citizens:

We traveled from Isenburg to Frankfurt, where Emmy debarked, then continued by a roundabout way. It was cold; heat did not reach our car. We changed trains in Eberstadt. To understand the conditions in Germany, one only has to look and listen in a fourth-class car; tired, worn, angry faces. And what rags, what talk! How one has to slave to earn nothing at all. All those millions buy nothing. Bread is 600 billions (today, 850 billions). A pale sickly woman sitting next to me seemed not have learned the price yet. She bobbed up, repeating desperately, “600 billions!” The others griped about the young folks who earn money but won’t help, they only smoke cigarettes and wear sheer stockings. And about the peasants who hide potatoes, feed them to the livestock and sell them for dollars only.

Dominick Han: A German Worker’s Diary in 1932

April 17th, 1932

The Wall Street crash three years ago totally changed our life.[[1]](https://blackmonday1929.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/dominick-han-a-german-workers-diary-1/#_ftn1) After the inflation, the German economy was getting better all the day. The government said people’s income increased 25 percent in 3 years, but my income only grows 15%.[[2]](https://blackmonday1929.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/dominick-han-a-german-workers-diary-1/#_ftn2) On the day of Black Monday, October 28, 1929, even though the government said the crash is Americans’ problem and will not have a huge influence on Germany, people still hesitate about its influence on Germany. Turns out people were right. The GDP of Germany decreased for 37%, and amount of the industrial production in 1932-33 is only the half of the number in 1927-28; last year the official number of unemployed was 6 million people, one third of working class people was under unemployment![[3]](https://blackmonday1929.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/dominick-han-a-german-workers-diary-1/#_ftn3) And there are unemployed people who haven’t worked for years and the government stopped their refuge, so the number of unemployed is actually higher. German population is around 65 million now, which means more than ten percent of people can’t get a job.[[4]](https://blackmonday1929.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/dominick-han-a-german-workers-diary-1/#_ftn4) Although I haven’t lost my job, yet, my salary decreased over 30% and my job is in danger because there are many unemployed people that want to work at a lower salary. I talked to my boss and temporarily kept my job. Months ago, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazi Party), made a speech in which he promised to use policies to decrease the number of unemployed people and reform German economic.[[5]](https://blackmonday1929.wordpress.com/2014/11/17/dominick-han-a-german-workers-diary-1/#_ftn5) My friends and I discussed this and we decided to support the Nazi Party next year.

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Depression Accounts

George Grosz

1. Why would people have to go into the store immediately to buy something they wanted?

2. How much might something go up in price in a matter of seconds or minutes?

3. The price going up quickly was not the main problem for Germans, what effect did the fast price increases have on people? What did they use to carry the money?

Gustav Stresemann

4. Who was not affected by the inflation?

5. What did the inflation do to people who were not multimillionaires?

6. What did people lose trust for during the time of inflation?

Bertha Pappenheim

7. How had the depression and inflation affect the people on the train, according to Bertha?

8. How did she describe their clothing?

9. Why was the one lady surprised about?

10. What does it mean if some people were smoking cigarettes and wearing stockings? What did the poor hide?

Dominick Han

11. According to Dominick, was the inflation bad for Germany? What does he blame for making the German economy worse?

12. GDP = Gross Domestic Product- The monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. The higher the GDP percentage, the more money that country is making.

Why was it bad for Germany’s GDP to decrease by 37%

13. How many people were unemployed, according to Dominick? What percentage of the German population was this?

14. What happened to Dominick’s salary? What kind of impact would this have on Dominick?

15. Why was Dominick going to vote for Hitler in the next election?