In 1919, the victorious Allies forced Germany to accept the Treaty of Versailles. Many German people just could not accept the treaty which they believed to be unfair. To make matters worse, Germany was hit by an economic crisis in which thousands of people lost their jobs and their savings. This added to their anger and resentment.

The National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis) seemed to offer the German people hope for the future. In 1933, the Nazis came to power. They set up a dictatorship under their leader, Adolf Hitler. He increased the size of the army and the navy and reduced unemployment. Then he set about overthrowing the Treaty of Versailles.

**Source A**

A cartoon published in 1919. Children in 1919 would be the soldiers of 1940. The four Allied leaders are, from left to right: Lloyd George (Great Britain), Orlando (Italy), Clemenceau (France) and Wilson (USA). They wrote the Treaty of Versailles.

The 'war guilt' clause
One of the items or clauses in the Versailles Treaty was Article 231. Article 231 forced Germany to accept responsibility for all the loss and damage caused by the war. The German people thought this was really unfair. They did not believe that they had started the war and, besides, more German soldiers had been killed than French, British or American ones.

**Source B**

The government of the German Republic says it is ready to accept and sign the peace treaty. But the government also believes that the conditions of the peace treaty are unfair.

A new republic
The German Kaiser (Emperor) had taken the German people into the war. But because Germany had been defeated, he could no longer stay as Emperor. So he gave up his throne.

After this, the German people set up a new system without an emperor, and where everyone could vote. The system was called the Weimar Republic, because Weimar was the city in Germany where it was agreed.

'Diktat'
The Germans had not taken part in drawing up the Treaty of Versailles. So they began calling it a 'Diktat' - a dictated treaty. Many German people believed that they did not have to obey the terms of the treaty because it had been forced on them.

**Source C**

Vengeance! German nation!
Today in the Hall of Mirrors (at Versailles) the disgraceful treaty is being signed. Don't forget it. The German people will regain their rightful place amongst the nations.

Who was to blame?
Most Germans blamed the Allies for what happened at Versailles. But some blamed their own politicians. These people said that the German army had not surrendered. And enemy troops had not invaded Germany either. Instead, it was their own politicians who had 'stabbed them in the back' by agreeing to the Treaty of Versailles.

Was there a solution?
A young ex-soldier, Adolf Hitler, began telling people that, if he gained power, he would scrap the Treaty of Versailles. Because so many people hated the treaty, there were plenty of people willing to listen to him.

**Questions**

1. How did Germany react to the Treaty of Versailles?

   The German government was shocked by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. It had been hoping that the treaty would be based on the Fourteen Points put forward by President Wilson of the USA (see page 23). Instead, the treaty seemed to be based on revenge. The German government complained bitterly about this to the Allies, but the Allies told the German government that if it did not sign the treaty, Allied soldiers would invade Germany. So the German government signed.

   [Image of cartoon showing children from 1919 as soldiers from 1940, with the four Allied leaders (Lloyd George, Orlando, Clemenceau, Wilson) in the background.]

2. What point in the cartoonist's thinking?

   Do you find it odd that, at the end of a terrible war, some people were expecting another war?
What problems faced the Weimar Republic 1919-24?

Source A

Article 1 The German Reich (state) is a Republic. Political authority comes from the people.

Article 22 Everyone in the country over the age of twenty could vote for delegates to the Reichstag, according to proportional representation.

Article 48 If public order is seriously disturbed, the President can take full control. He may use the army to restore peace if necessary.

The Weimar Constitution
The German people elected a new Parliament, the Reichstag, in January 1919. It was the members of this Parliament who were forced to accept the Treaty of Versailles. In August they drew up a new constitution (rules for government) for Germany, known as the Weimar Republic. It was one of the most democratic constitutions in the world.

The Reichstag
All men and women over the age of twenty were allowed to vote, and the vote was a secret one. This was quite new to the German people. They had been used to a strong dictatorship under an emperor and his ministers. Member of the Reichstag were elected by proportional representation. This meant that the more people who voted for a political party, the more seats in the Reichstag that party had.

Constitutional problems
There were many problems with the Weimar Constitution:
- The German people thought it was connected with the hated Treaty of Versailles.
- German people were not used to being able to vote for the government they wanted.
- Proportional representation meant that German governments were made up of several different parties. In times of crisis, these parties disagreed and governments often fell apart.

Economic problems
By the end of the war in 1918, Germany's economy was in a bad way. But the German government found it difficult to put things right for many reasons:
- The Allies forced Germany to pay for all the losses of the war. These payments were called reparations. The Allies said that Germany owed them $6,600,000 million. But they agreed that Germany could pay this in smaller amounts over a period of time.
- In 1923, the German government stopped making reparation payments.
- Then the French government sent troops into the Ruhr, Germany's main industrial region. These troops took over coal and industrial production, and sent the profits to the French government to make up for the missing payments.
- After this, German workers in the Ruhr went on strike. Industrial production there collapsed.
- Because it was short of money, the German government printed more and more of it.
- This made prices rise dramatically. This is called hyper-inflation.
- As a result, the value of people's savings fell dramatically. So these people stopped supporting the Weimar Republic.

The rising cost of bread and eggs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BREAD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>1.63 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1923</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1923</td>
<td>3.46 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>November 1923</td>
<td>1.512,000 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201,000,000,000 marks</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EGGS (1 egg)</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1923</td>
<td>3.50 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1923</td>
<td>4.000,000 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1923</td>
<td>2.000,000,000 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political problems

Assassinations
- Matthias Erzberger, who signed the Treaty of Versailles on behalf of Germany, was shot and killed in 1921.
- Walther Rathenau, the Weimar Republic's Foreign Minister, was murdered in Berlin by a gang of nationalist youths.

The Social Democrats
At first the Weimar Republic was ruled by moderates: the Social Democrats. They faced threats from groups on the far left and far right of politics. One of the most important challenges from the left came from the Spartacus League. The Kapp Putsch was a challenge from a right wing group.

The Spartacus League
One group of Germans wanted Germany to become a communist state. They called themselves the Spartacus League, and were led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In January 1919, they organized an uprising in Berlin. But the army crushed the rebels and killed the two leaders.

The Kapp Putsch (rising)
On 13 March 1920, Dr Wolfgang Kapp and 5,000 supporters marched on Berlin. They wanted to overthrow the Weimar Republic. But all the workers in Berlin went on strike, because no one wanted to work with Kapp and his followers. So, after four days, Kapp gave up.

The Munich 'Beer Hall' Putsch
On 8 November 1923, Adolf Hitler's private army, the Sturm Abteilung (storm troopers), surrounded a beer hall in Munich. Then Hitler took over the beer hall and told people about his plans for Germany.

The following day, Hitler led about 3,000 supporters in a march to the centre of Munich. They were going to take over the government of Bavaria and then march on Berlin. They were met by armed police. Hitler was arrested, tried and sentenced to five years' imprisonment in Landsberg Castle.

Source E
I am not a criminal. There is no such thing as treason against the traitors of 1918. History will judge us as Germans who only wanted to fight and die for the Fatherland.

Source D
A painting made in 1933 by a Nazi artist. It shows Hitler in the Munich beer hall in 1923. It is called in the beginning was the World.

Source C
The main cause of the Kapp Putsch was discontent in the army. The Versailles Treaty said that the army had to be reduced in size. A lot of soldiers would lose their jobs.

Most of the army officers were against the Weimar Republic. One of these officers was General von Luttwitz who controlled Berlin. He plotted with Wolfgang Kapp.

A painting made in 1933 by a Nazi artist. It shows Hitler in the Munich beer hall in 1923. It is called in the beginning was the World.

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Questions
1. Read the section headed Constitutional problems on Page 61.
   Which constitutional problem do you think was the most serious? Why?
2. Read the section headed Economic problems on Page 61.
   Which economic problem do you think was the most serious? Why?
3. Read the section headed Political problems on Page 62.
   a. Was the Weimar Republic put in danger by people on the far left of politics?
   b. Was the Weimar Republic put in danger by people on the far right of politics?

Summary
- June 1919 Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles.
- January 1919 Spartacist rising in Berlin.
- January 1919 Elections for Reichstag.
- March 1920 Kapp putsch.
- January 1923 German government stopped payment of reparations; French troops invaded the Ruhr.
- Summer 1923 Hyper-inflation in Germany.
- November 1923 Munich putsch.
The Stresemann era 1924-9

There was peace and prosperity in Germany between 1924 and 1929. This was largely due to the hard work of Gustav Stresemann.

**The Rentenmark**
As soon as Stresemann became Chancellor in 1923, he set about solving one of Germany's most urgent problems: hyper-inflation. He brought in a new currency, called the Rentenmark, and destroyed all the old bank notes. This worked, and the value of Germany's currency stopped falling.

**Reparations**
In 1924, Stresemann was made Foreign Minister. He wanted Germany to restart reparation payments. So did the Allies, because they needed the money from Germany to pay their debts to the USA.

**The Dawes Plan 1924**
Charles Dawes, an American, worked out a plan to help Germany. Under the plan, Germany agreed to give the Allies some of its industrial output each year. In return, France agreed to take French troops out of the Ruhr.

**The Young Plan 1929**
This plan helped Germany even more. Reparations were cut to 25% of their original amount, and the period over which they were to be paid was extended by 59 years.

But in 1931, the Great Depression forced Germany to stop reparation payments. And in 1933, the new Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, refused to make any more payments to the Allies.

**The Locarno Pact 1925**
Under this pact, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium agreed that the existing borders of Germany, France and Belgium should be kept the same for ever. But there was no pact about Germany's borders with Czechoslovakia, Poland and Austria. Stresemann hoped that Austria and Germany would eventually come together to form one country. So he deliberately kept Germany's eastern borders out of any international agreement.

**The League of Nations**
The Treaty of Versailles did not allow Germany to join the League of Nations. But Stresemann still thought that Germany should join as soon as possible. In that way, Germany would be seen as equal with the other League powers. Germany finally joined in 1926.

**Was Germany breaking the Treaty of Versailles?**
All this time, Germany was quietly building up its armed forces. So the German government was already breaking the Treaty of Versailles. The Allied governments knew what Germany was doing. But they were not worried because, throughout the Stresemann era, the German army was never strong enough to threaten international peace.

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**Source A**
Gustav Stresemann, Chancellor of Germany, 1923; Foreign Minister, 1923-9.

**Source B**
The policy of making Germany pay is dreadful. It brings misery to thousands of people.

Some preach it in the name of justice. Justice is not so simple.

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**Source C**
Germany has made no effort to carry out the peace treaty. This is because she does not believe she has been defeated.


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**Source D**
Because of the peace treaties of 1919, there have been many disagreements between the League and Germany. I hope that, now Germany is a member of the League, we can discuss these disagreements together.

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**Questions**

1. Make a list of the things Stresemann did to help the Weimar Republic.
2. Use the information and the suggestion to say something.

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Adapted from comments made by John Maynard Keynes, a British economist, about reparations.