

Teaching notes

Activity 1: Preparation time

You will need two confident pupils to prepare and act out the script. This is not a transcript of an actual interview, but a creative piece of drama! They should use this section of the lesson to read through and rehearse. If you have a very reluctant class you could allocate the roles to pairs so they can swap in.

The rest of class should be divided into three large groups; the ex-soldiers, the businessmen and the Communists, and given an audience planning sheet each. Their tasks, as outlined on the sheets, are to record key elements of Stresemann's recovery policies, consider what they like and dislike about him, and finally to prepare questions to challenge 'Stresemann' at the end of the interview.

Activity 2: The performance

The pair read through the script (with as much dramatic license as they like!) whilst the rest of the class watch.

For setting the atmosphere you might play the theme tune to a news show, like this one:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrQ6v_O5WqM.

Activity 3: The hot seat

Once the performance is finished, the rest of the class have their opportunity to ask Stresemann questions about his career. This might lead naturally into a discussion about his achievements and the limitations of his success.

An Interview with Gustav Stresemann c. 1929

- Interviewer:** *Guten tag Gustav.* Welcome and thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today on Good Morning Germany.
- Stresemann:** *Danke Schön.*
- Interviewer:** Gustav, you are hugely famous because of your role in German politics but can you tell us a little bit about your earlier life?
- Stresemann:** Certainly. My father was an innkeeper and I was born in Berlin in 1878. I attended university in Berlin and Leipzig where I studied History, literature and economics. After completing my studies, I then worked for the German Chocolate Makers' Association. I started to get interested in politics and in 1902 I founded the Saxon Manufacturers' Association. The following year I joined the National Liberal Party.
- Interviewer:** What sort of party was that?
- Stresemann:** Well it was a right-wing party but I was in favour of the more moderate wing of the party who wanted an improvement in welfare provision. I did get elected to the Reichstag but my slightly more liberal view upset my conservative colleagues and I was ousted from the party's executive committee in 1912. Later that year I lost my seat in Parliament.
- Interviewer:** That must have been upsetting – and it seems odd now that you are perhaps the leading minister in the land! What did you do next?
- Stresemann:** I took a couple of years out of politics and returned to business but I was back in the Reichstag in 1914. Unfortunately I was not in good enough health to fight in the war.
- Interviewer:** Oh dear – I do hope you are fit now?
- Stresemann:** Well I have been having some heart trouble and my doctor is concerned I may have a stroke or a heart attack. But I will keep working as long as I can – I want to see Germany great again!
- Interviewer:** I do hope you achieve that. Let's go back to the war years – how were you involved if you weren't actually fighting?
- Stresemann:** Well I passionately backed the war effort. I supported the generals, particularly Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and I suppose you could say I became more right wing in my views.
- Interviewer:** What about after the Armistice? Those were tough times for Germany!

- Stresemann:** Yes they were. I formed the German People's Party. I was sympathetic to the Freikorps and welcomed the defeat of the Spartacists in Berlin in 1919. However, I became increasingly concerned by the use of violence of the right-wing groups and, after the murder of Walther Rathenau, I decided to argue in favour of the Weimar Republic and in 1923 I became Chancellor. However, that only lasted 100 days and from 1923 to now I have been foreign minister.
- Interviewer:** That was a time of huge economic instability and political unrest in Germany but as Chancellor and then Foreign Minister you appear to be bringing this under control. Could you explain how you solved the most immediate economic problem faced by Germany in 1923 – hyperinflation?
- Stresemann:** Firstly, I introduced a new currency, called the Rentenmark, to replace the old worthless mark. If you remember, there was great deal of this old worthless money in circulation – some workers were even collecting their earnings in wheelbarrows. This had to stop.
- Secondly, I ordered all the striking Ruhr workers to go back to work and start production of coal and steel again.
- Thirdly, I agreed that Germany should start paying reparations again. This last move made me unpopular which is why I had to give up the chancellorship and become foreign minister instead in 1923.
- Interviewer:** As we know, the Rentenmark helped to stabilise the German currency. However, you realised that this alone was not enough and that Germany needed to avoid another financial collapse in the future. Can you outline what you did?
- Stresemann:** Certainly. In 1924 Germany, Britain, France and the USA signed the Dawes Plan. This said that the USA would loan Germany 800m marks. The Dawes Plan also said that we could spread the burden of our reparations payments over the following few years – this eased the burden of our debts considerably. Rather than being excessive from the start the Dawes plan said that our repayments would start at 50 million and rise slowly to 125 million. After this, reparations payments would be linked to the prosperity of our economy rather than just be set without regard to our economic situation. This meant that if the economy was doing badly we wouldn't have to pay such heavy reparations.
- Interviewer:** This was a great coup for you and really helped to improve our economy. The results of the Dawes plan were very beneficial – Germany began to produce more goods, our exports rose and unemployment fell. Abroad, countries had their faith restored in Germany and they began to invest again. By 1925 all the French and Belgium troops had even pulled out of the Ruhr. Many of us in Germany really began to feel that things were on the up. Finally, by 1929 the Young Plan extended the deadline for reparations payments for another 59 years – just re-enforcing the success of the early Dawes plan.

Stresemann: I agree. The success of the Dawes plan was a big boost to morale. It helped restore public confidence and, interestingly, the return of economic stability also made politics more stable. One politician who I know who had led opposition to Ebert told me 'the Republic is beginning to settle and the German people are becoming reconciled to the way things are'. There was less opposition to the government and extremist groups were less vocal.

Interviewer: Yes, with economic recovery and political stability our relations with other countries also began to improve. Can you tell me how you managed to make Germany acceptable again to the European powers?

Stresemann: Firstly, in 1925 I made sure Germany signed the Locarno Treaty – in this treaty we agreed to accept our western borders with France and Germany.

Secondly, in 1926 Germany was allowed to enter the League of Nations. This was a great step as once Germany was in the League I could work to lighten reparations payments. It was for these two things that I was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926.

Thirdly, in 1928 Germany signed the Kellogg-Briand pact with 60 other countries. This said that these countries would never go to war against each other.

Interviewer: Many have claimed that your greatest successes were in your foreign policy and from your track record this indeed seems to be the case. Thank you for speaking to us on 'Good Morning Germany' Gustav and we look forward to having you on our programme again soon.

Stresemann: It was a pleasure to be here.

Interviewer: Now do any of our studio audience have any questions for Gustav?

Audience planning sheet 1: Ex-soldiers

Task 1: Jot down everything you can remember about Gustav Stresemann's policies and actions. You might find it helpful to divide your ideas into what he did to help the economy, and what he did to help Germany's relationship with other countries (foreign policy).

Economy

Foreign policy

How did Stresemann help Germany to recover?

Task 2: Imagine you fought and were injured in the Great War. You think that Germany was stabbed in the back by the politicians at Versailles. You think that Germany should be great again and that the humiliating peace settlement should be overturned. You supported the Freikorps and are worried that Communists will ruin Germany in the future.



What do you **like** about Stresemann's policies?

-
-
-

What do you **dislike**?

-
-
-

What **questions** would you like to ask Stresemann?

-
-
-

Audience planning sheet 2: Businessmen

Task 1: Jot down everything you can remember about Gustav Stresemann's policies and actions. You might find it helpful to divide your ideas into what he did to help the economy, and what he did to help Germany's relationship with other countries (foreign policy).

Economy

Foreign policy

How did Stresemann help
Germany to recover?

Task 2: Imagine you are a businessman. You were bankrupted in 1923 during the period of hyperinflation. You have slowly been rebuilding your manufacturing business and are starting to trade with other European countries.



What do you **like** about Stresemann's policies?

-
-
-

What do you **dislike**?

-
-
-

What **questions** would you like to ask Stresemann?

-
-
-

Audience planning sheet 3: Communists

Task 1: Jot down everything you can remember about Gustav Stresemann's policies and actions. You might find it helpful to divide your ideas into what he did to help the economy, and what he did to help Germany's relationship with other countries (foreign policy).

Economy

Foreign policy

How did Stresemann help Germany to recover?

Task 2: Imagine you are a Communist. You believe that workers should unite and be in control of all business and production. You are inspired by what is happening in Russia.



What do you **like** about Stresemann's policies?

-
-
-

What do you **dislike**?

-
-
-

What **questions** would you like to ask Stresemann?

-
-
-