



CIVICS

MIGRATION AND GERMAN IDENTITY

**How has migration shaped German identity
since World War II?**

**High
School**

Migration & German Identity: How has migration shaped German identity since World War II?

C3 Framework Indicator	D1.1.6-8, D1.2.6-8, D2.Geo.6.6-8, D2.His.2.6-8, D2.His.4.6-8, D2.Eco.3.6-8, D4.1.6-8	
Staging the Compelling Question	Discuss what factors affect migration and how a country's identity is shaped by migrants.	
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What historical events have influenced migration patterns in Germany?	How has migration to and from Germany changed since 1933?	How have policies around migration and refugees evolved over time?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Group activity researching to discover major time periods based on historic events that affected migration patterns in Germany	Investigate push and pull factors affecting migration in specific time periods and/or during historic events	Sort events and policies showing migration patterns into their correct time period/historical context
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Handout 1	None	Internal migration in Germany from 1991-2022 . bnp.de Immigration . Makeitingermany.com How Many Refugees Came to the United States from 1933-1945? USHMM.com Emigration, 1933-1941 . theholocaustexplained.com
Summative Performance Task	Argument: Analyze the key factors that have influenced migration patterns in Germany from the end of World War II to the present in essay format.	
	Extension: Role Play Activity in 5 groups (see below for list of groups) Have each group research to discover the perspectives of each group.	
Taking Informed Action: Using your voice to make change	Understand: What were the main causes and effects of German migration in the 20th century, and how did these migration waves shape the regions they moved to or left behind?	
	Assess: Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a different country or region that received German migrants (e.g., the U.S., Argentina, France, or Germany itself after reunification) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask each group to research and assess the effects of German migration on their assigned country's economy, culture, and society. They could focus on aspects such as: Economic and cultural contributions (language, food, traditions) and societal challenges (discrimination, integration challenges) 	
	Act: Ask students to think about contemporary migration trends, particularly in relation to Germany. Have them create a public service announcement (PSA) that connects past and present migration issues, raising awareness about the continuing relevance of migration today	

MIGRATION AND GERMAN IDENTITY

Target Grade Level: 10

Target Course: Civics/Government/World History

Compelling Question

How has migration shaped Germany's identity, economy, and society since World War II?

Inquiry Overview

This lesson about changing migration in Germany since 1933 guides students through an exploration of key moments, factors, and consequences of migration patterns in Germany over the past century. The focus is on developing critical thinking skills by analyzing historical sources, interpreting different viewpoints, and understanding the causes and effects of migration.

Teacher Background Information

To explore the changing migration in Germany, the context of this lesson includes major events affecting migration. This includes the Nazi regime and WWII, post-war displacement, the immigration and integration challenges of the 1970's and 1980's, the reunification of Germany, and the present refugee crisis and the rise of nationalism. This can provide important context for broader historical narratives. Many teachers, especially in subjects like World History, Social Studies, or Geography, may encounter these global migration trends indirectly when discussing topics like immigration, refugees, or the impact of World Wars. Being informed on the migration history of one of Europe's largest nations can enrich their ability to contextualize global shifts in population, culture, and identity. Migration history can connect to various subjects such as sociology, economics, and even literature. A teacher who does not teach German history specifically may still draw on German migration as a topic in broader discussions about human geography, labor migration, or the impact of historical events on population movements.

Suggested Time Frame

Three 40-minute class periods

Concept List

- Gastarbeiter
- Asylum
- Refugee

Instructional Resources

- Internet Access
- Handout 1
- "Internal migration in Germany from 1991-2022" bpb.de, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/regionalprofile/english-version-country-profiles/548461/internal-migration-in-germany-from-1991-2022/>.
- "Immigration" makeitgermany.com, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/discover-germany/immigration>.
- "How Many Refugees Came to the United States from 1933-1945" ushmm.org, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/how-many-refugees-came-to-the-united-states-from-1933-1945>.
- "Emigration, 1933-1941" theholocaustexplained.org, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/resistance-responses-collaboration/responses/emigration/>.

NCSS Thematic Strands

- Time
- Continuity
- Change

C3 Framework Indicators

- **D1.1.6-8:** Create essential questions that help to investigate a topic or an issue.
- **D1.2.6-8:** Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue or a broad theme in the social studies.
- **D2.Geo.6.6-8:** Explain how the connections between human populations and the environment have changed over time.
- **D2.His.2.6-8:** Analyze the multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.
- **D2.His.4.6-8:** Explain how a historical event, idea, or development has shaped or continues to shape a particular region or global system.
- **D2.Eco.3.6-8:** Analyze how economic decision-making influences global trade, human migration, and the global economy.
- **D4.1.6-8:** Construct arguments or explanations about social studies topics using evidence from multiple sources.

Outcomes for Student Learning

- Students will explore how migration to and from Germany has changed since 1933 and how historical, political, and social factors have shaped migration policies and experiences

Germany-Related Learning Goals

- Students will understand the major historical events and policies that influenced migration to and from Germany after WWII, including the consequences of the war, the division of Germany during the Cold War, and reunification.

Compelling Question

How has migration shaped Germany's identity, economy, and society since World War II?

Introductory Activity

- What are push and pull factors that cause groups of individuals to come to or leave a country or region?
- Think, pair, share: Have students think on their own, write down their ideas, then compare with a partner in class.
- Finally, a class discussion.
 - Push factors could include: economic hardship, political instability, environmental factors, social factors such as persecution or the desire for more freedom.
 - Pull factors could include economic opportunities, safety, better living conditions, personal or family reasons, or social conditions.

Supporting Question 1

What historical events have influenced migration patterns in Germany?

► Formative Performance Task 1

Break students into 5 groups with the following task:

1. Conduct research on the Internet to determine the major historical events and/or time periods that they believe were most important in influencing migration patterns in German History
2. Ask students to determine four major events or time periods since 1933 that they believe had the biggest effect on migration patterns
3. Solicit group responses

Hang up Student Handout 1: There are five headings, on separate pages, this will be used for the third supporting question. (Teacher note: hang up each heading separately around the room)

► Resources

- Student Handout 1

Supporting Question 2

How has migration to and from Germany changed since 1933?

► Formative Performance Task 2

- Ask students to work in their small groups to anticipate how migration changed during the specific time periods.
- Students should write down whether migration to Germany increased, decreased, or stayed the same, and the rationale for their decision. They should anticipate emigration as well - did it increase, decrease, or stay the same, and again, a rationale.

► Resources

- None required

Supporting Question 3

How have policies around migration and refugees evolved over time?

► Formative Performance Task 3

- Student groups will be given cut outs of different immigration and emigration policies and facts. Provided in Answer Key to Student Handout 1
- They will have to place the strips into the matching headings

► Resources

- Internal migration in Germany from 1991-2022” bpb.de, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/regionalprofile/english-version-country-profiles/548461/internal-migration-in-germany-from-1991-2022/>.
- “Immigration” makeitingermany.com, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/living-in-germany/discover-germany/immigration>.
- “How Many Refugees Came to the United States from 1933-1945" ushmm.org, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/how-many-refugees-came-to-the-united-states-from-1933-1945>.
- “Emigration, 1933-1941" theholocaustexplained.org, 6 Nov. 2025, <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/resistance-responses-collaboration/responses/emigration/>.

Summative Performance Task

Essay / Presentation	Students will write a 500-600 word essay analyzing the key factors that have influenced migration patterns in Germany from the end of World War II to the present.
Extension Option	<p>Role Play Activity: Keep students in their five separate groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Migrants (e.g., Turkish "guest workers", refugees from Eastern Europe). 2. Government officials (German authorities overseeing migration policy). 3. Employers (German companies hiring migrant labor). 4. Local citizens (German citizens reacting to new migration trends). 5. Social activists or NGO workers supporting migrants. <p>Have each group research to discover the perspectives of each group in the migration process and policies in Germany since WWII</p>

Taking Informed Action

Understand	<i>What were the main causes and effects of German migration in the 20th century, and how did these migration waves shape the regions they moved to or left behind?</i>
Assess	<p><i>Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a different country or region that received German migrants (e.g., the U.S., Argentina, France, or Germany itself after reunification)</i></p> <p><i>Ask each group to research and assess the effects of German migration on their assigned country's economy, culture, and society. They could focus on aspects such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Economic and cultural contributions (language, food, traditions) and societal challenges (discrimination, integration challenges)</i>
Act	<p><i>After reflecting on historical migration patterns, ask students to think about contemporary migration trends, particularly in relation to Germany (e.g., the recent Syrian refugee crisis, intra-European migration within the EU, or the effects of globalization on labor markets)</i></p> <p><i>Have them create a public service announcement (PSA) that connects past and present migration issues, raising awareness about the continuing relevance of migration in today's world</i></p>

Modifications for Differentiation

- Provide pre-selected, simplified articles or videos about each migration wave/topic that break down key concepts in a clear, digestible format.
- Offer visual aids like charts, infographics, or timelines to summarize key events, policies, and migration trends.
- Allow students to work with graphic organizers (e.g., Venn diagrams, cause-and-effect charts) to help structure their thinking and organize information.
- Break the role-play into smaller, manageable parts. For instance, students could first act out a scene where they represent just one specific migration group (e.g., a Turkish guest worker in the 1960s) before moving on to a larger, more complex role-play that integrates multiple perspectives.



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