

Lesson Plan

Tracing Themes

Book: *Angela Merkel*

Series: World Leaders

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students study how people create and change government structures, using the career of Angela Merkel and the reunification of Germany as an example, and to help students practice tracing the development of an idea throughout a text, noting its relationship to supporting ideas.

Supplies

- *Angela Merkel* book
- Tracing Themes Guided Reading Assignment (attached)
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Have students read the *Angela Merkel* book. Print a copy of the Tracing Themes GRA for each student.

Activity

One of the main themes of Angela Merkel's life and political career was the division of East and West Germany after World War II (1939–1945) and the eventual reunification of the two halves of the country decades later. Today, students will trace this theme throughout the *Angela Merkel* book, examining how it impacted other events and experiences in her path to become Germany's chancellor. Students should use the book to answer the questions on the Tracing Themes GRA. Students should write their answers on a separate sheet of paper, making sure to use complete sentences written in their own words.

Evaluation

Using the attached answer key, give each student 2 points for each correct answer, for a total of up to 12 points.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading informational texts standards, grade 8 (RI 8.2; RI 8.3) and the National Council for Social Studies Standard 6.

Tracing Themes GRA

1. When Angela Merkel was born, Germany was split into East Germany and West Germany. Turn to page 9 and write two or three sentences describing this split and the differences it created between East Germany and West Germany.
2. Despite being born in West Germany, Merkel grew up in East Germany. Using the information in Chapter 2 (“Growing Up in a Divided Country”), write a paragraph summarizing how the divide affected her as she was growing up.
3. Turn to pages 17 to 19. What was changing or happening in East Germany during this time period? How did these changes affect Merkel? Write one paragraph that answers these two questions.
4. Read Chapter 4 (“Entering Politics”). Write a paragraph summarizing the changes in East Germany at this time. Write another paragraph summarizing what was happening with Merkel’s political career.
5. Turn to page 27 to 28. Write two or three sentences defining the EU. Then write two or three sentences explaining how East Germany affected the EU’s budget and what Merkel did as a result.
6. Finally, read Chapter 7 (“Challenges Continue”). How do you think Merkel’s background from her time in East Germany influenced the way she dealt with these challenges? Use specific details or examples from the chapter in your answer.

Tracing Themes GRA ANSWER KEY

1. When Angela Merkel was born, Germany was split into East Germany and West Germany. Turn to page 9 and write two or three sentences describing this split and the differences it created between East Germany and West Germany.

Sample answer: After World War II, Germany was divided into two separate countries with different kinds of governments. East Germany had a Communist government. West Germany did not.

2. Despite being born in West Germany, Merkel grew up in East Germany. Using the information in Chapter 2 (“Growing Up in a Divided Country”), write a paragraph summarizing how the divide affected her as she was growing up.

Sample answer: Merkel’s father was a pastor. The East German government opposed religion, so her family was watched closely. By 1961, the government chose to close off West Berlin. The government built a wall so that East Germans could not flee to West Germany. Merkel and her family were not allowed to visit people from West Germany any more.

3. Turn to pages 17 to 19. What was changing or happening in East Germany during this time period? How did these changes affect Merkel? Write one paragraph that answers these two questions.

Sample answer: By the end of the 1970s, the East German government again allowed some people to travel. So, Merkel was able to travel to West Germany in 1986. By 1989, protestors demanded freedom. East Germany responded by opening its borders on November 9. Crowds knocked down the wall that separated the two halves of Berlin. People were working to unite the two halves of Germany once more.

4. Read Chapter 4 (“Entering Politics”). Write a paragraph summarizing the changes in East Germany at this time. Write another paragraph summarizing what was happening with Merkel’s political career.

Possible answer: East Germany and West Germany were still divided. But many politicians wanted them to be united into one country. This process was known as reunification. In 1990, East Germany held a free election. Lothar de Maiziere won the election and signed a treaty that would unify the two halves of Germany. West Germany and East Germany were united on October 2, 1990. Helmut Kohl, the chancellor of West Germany, became the chancellor of the entire country.

Shortly after the Berlin wall fell, Merkel joined a political party called Democratic Awakening. This party became part of the Alliance for Germany. This group supported reunification. In 1990, Merkel joined the East German CDU. This party merged with the West German CDU on October 1. By 1994, Merkel was made the minister of the environment. In 1995, she spoke in front of a huge international audience at a United Nations conference. She continued to rise in the CDU until she became the chancellor of Germany in 2005.

5. Turn to page 27 to 28. Write two or three sentences defining the EU. Then write two or three sentences explaining how East Germany affected the EU's budget and what Merkel did as a result.

Possible answer: The European Union (EU) is a group of European countries that work together to address international issues. Each country pays part of the EU's budget. When Germany was reunited, the weak economy of East Germany made it more difficult for Germany to pay its portion of the budget. So, Merkel asked to have Germany's payment reduced. Her request was granted.

6. Finally, read Chapter 7 ("Challenges Continue"). How do you think Merkel's background from her time in East Germany influenced the way she dealt with these challenges? Use specific details or examples from the chapter in your answer.

Possible answer: Because Merkel grew up in East Germany, she knew what it was like to not be allowed to leave an area. As a result, she tended to support policies that were more open to refugees. Despite some protests, tensions, and compromises, she continued to be more supportive to refugees than the leaders of some other countries were.