Country of the Week: Germany

Germany is one of the most powerful nations in the world.

Country of the Week
Germany
Chancellor
Angela Merkel

Hamburg
City Hall

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BASIC Germany is one of the most powerful countries in the world. It is only a bit larger than the state of New Mexico. But it has a population of more than 82 million people. **In what continent is it located?** *(Europe.)* Germany is in the center of Europe and borders nine other countries. **From the map, can you name some of them?** *(France, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, and others.)* It also borders the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Germany has many beautiful areas, like the one in the photo at right. **What do you see in this picture?** It also has so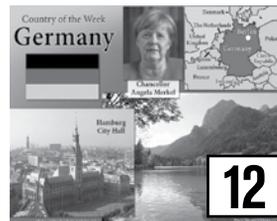me of Europe's greatest cities. The picture here shows the country's second-largest city, Hamburg. **From the map, what is Germany's capital city?** *(Berlin, which is also the largest city.)* Germany has a very strong economy. Angela Merkel—*ON-gah-lah MUR-kul*—is the country's chancellor, or leader. She has been in charge of Germany for sixteen years, but she is going to retire after the next election and a new leader will take over. NEXT

GENERAL Germany is slightly larger than the state of New Mexico, but it has a population of more than 82 million people. It borders nine other European nations. **From the map, can you name some?** *(France, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, and others.)* Germany also borders the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Germany has many beautiful areas, featuring mountains and valleys, like the one at right. **What do you see in this photo?** Part of the mountain range called the Alps is located there. It also contains some of the oldest and most important cities in Europe. Hamburg, the country's second-biggest city, is shown here. **What is the largest city in Germany?** *(Berlin, the capital.)*

Germany has a high number of recent immigrants. In the past few years, it has taken in more than one million refugees from people escaping war in Africa and the Middle East. One reason so many immigrants settle in Germany is that it has one of the world's largest economies. Germany exports more machinery, vehicles, and other manufactured items than almost any other nation. It also exports valuable minerals such as coal, iron, and uranium. Germans also receive government benefits, like free healthcare and low-cost college tuition. **Would you like Americans to get these services?** On September 26th, Germany will hold an election to choose the country's leader for the next four years. Angela Merkel—*ON-gah-lah MUR-kul*—who has served as chancellor since 2005, has chosen not to run again. During her time in office, she has been called the most influential politician in the world. **Do you agree? Why or why not?** NEXT

ADVANCED Germany borders nine other European countries. **Can you name any?** *(Poland, France, Austria, Belgium, and others.)* It also borders two major bodies of water that are part of the Atlantic Ocean: the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Tourists flock to Germany to see beautiful mountains and valleys, as shown here, as well as historic castles and other sites. Tourists also visit Germany's second largest city, Hamburg, and its capital and largest city, Berlin, to experience the rich culture, architecture, and famous food of Germany.

Germany is about the size of New Mexico, but more than 82 million people live there. Germany has the world's fifth-largest economy, and leads the world in exports of cars, electronics, industrial equipment, and pharmaceuticals. It is also a leader in both coal mining AND solar and wind power. Germans enjoy a high standard of living. The government provides benefits that include high unemployment pay, universal healthcare, and inexpensive college tuition. **Would you like to see the U.S. offer such benefits?**

Angela Merkel has been Germany's chancellor since 2005. She is often seen as the unofficial leader of the European Union due to her power and influence. She has also been a bold leader during Europe's refugee crisis, welcoming more than one million people from the Middle East and Africa into Germany. **How will this help Germany's economy?** *(It provides a younger workforce for a country with an aging population.)* Germany is having an election on September 26th; however Merkel has chosen not to run again. **What is your opinion of her as a leader?** NEXT

Country of the Week: Germany (cont'd)

Germany was once called "the land of poets and thinkers."

Ludwig von Beethoven

Germany in World War II

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BASIC Germans are proud of most of their country's history and culture. Many famous musicians and writers grew up and lived in Germany. **Who was Ludwig van Beethoven?** *(One of the most famous music composers of all time.)* But there are some parts of German history that its people are not proud of at all. Starting in the 1930s, the Nazi Party took over German politics. This party believed that white, non-Jewish Germans were better than all other people. **Who was the leader of the Nazi Party?** *(Adolf Hitler.)* Hitler invaded other countries in Europe. This led to World War Two. After Germany lost this war, the US, Great Britain, France, and Russia divided up Germany. The Soviet Union, led by Russia, kept East Germany, but the other countries soon left West Germany to be on its own. In 1989, as the Soviet Union was coming to an end, Germans broke down the wall that separated East and West Berlin, as you see in the bottom picture, and the country was brought together again. **Why do you think this was so important for Germany?** END

GENERAL The German people are proud of their culture. This country was often called "the land of poets and thinkers." Some of the most famous music composers of all time lived in Germany. One of them, Ludwig van Beethoven, is shown here. Can you think of others? *(Wolfgang Mozart, J.S. Bach, Richard Wagner, and so on.)* **What else do you think of when you think of German culture?**

Germany's history from the 20th century is not as inspiring. After Germany lost World War One, a terrible dictator gained power. **Who was this dictator?** *(Adolf Hitler, who founded the Nazi Party.)* He blamed Germany's problems on Jewish people and other groups. **Why do you think Germans listened to him?** In 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and started World War Two. The Nazis also started a period called the Holocaust in which they killed millions of people, including six million Jews in Europe.

In 1945, Hitler was finally defeated by Great Britain, France, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. These countries divided Germany into four zones. Britain, the U.S., and France soon gave their zones back. This area became West Germany. But the Soviet Union kept East Germany. In 1961, they built a wall between East and West Berlin. In 1989, protesters in East Berlin began demanding that the wall be torn down. The protests grew, with East and West Germans standing on the wall and then knocking it down. The bottom photo shows this dramatic event. **What do you see in this photo?** In 1990, East and West Germany were reunited as a single country. **What do you think the wall symbolized for Germans?** END

ADVANCED Germany was once divided into locally ruled states. These states shared a common language and a vibrant culture, which produced many of the world's greatest authors, philosophers, and composers, including Ludwig van Beethoven. **How many other famous Germans can you name?** *(Wolfgang Mozart, Karl Marx, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Albert Einstein, to name a few.)* In 1871, Germany became one nation. But expansion of the empire helped trigger World War One. Germany's loss in that war devastated its economy, helping a militant party to take power. **What was it called, and what was its ideology?** *(The National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, believed that white non-Jewish Germans were genetically superior to any other people on Earth.)*

The Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, setting off World War Two. They also started what later came to be called the Holocaust, during which they murdered ten million people, including six million Jews. In 1945, the Allied Forces finally defeated the Nazis and divided Germany into four zones. The Western powers soon turned over their zones to German leadership. The Soviet Union, however, kept East Germany. **What did it do to keep East Berliners from escaping to the West?** *(It built the Berlin Wall in 1961.)* In 1989, in the face of huge demonstrations in East Berlin, the wall was brought down. East and West Germany formally reunited the next year. Today, Germany is one of the most tolerant and progressive countries in the world. **How do you think it is affected by its past?** END