

Handout

Close Reading Guide: Hitler's Speech

On February 1, 1933, Adolf Hitler delivered his first radio address to the German people as chancellor. A close reading of this speech (see "Hitler's First Radio Address" in Chapter 5 of *Holocaust and Human Behavior*) will help you analyze it deeply and decipher Hitler's many messages. In order to do so, read the document several times. Use the questions below to help you focus and guide your analysis during each reading.

First Reading: Focus on these questions, seeking answers directly from the text.

- What picture does Hitler paint of Germany? What words does he use to describe the country?
- Who or what does he seem to believe is the cause of Germany's problems?
What words does he use to describe those he blames?
- What does he say about the past? How does he describe the future?
- What warning does he seem to give the people of Germany about their future?
- How does Hitler describe the work that must be done? What adjectives does he use to describe it?
- What actions does he say the new government will take?
- What actions is he asking his listeners to take?

Second Reading: Answer these questions based on your understanding of the text.

- Why might people in the Weimar Republic find Hitler's message attractive?
- Based on this speech, what issues do you think Germans were most concerned about in 1933?
- How does Hitler use measurements of time to convey his message? What effect do you think that might have had?
- Do you think people believed Hitler could accomplish the entirety of his promises and message?
- Is there anything you expected to see in this speech that is missing? Why might Hitler have left out ideas that he felt strongly about?
- Should political leaders give speeches telling us what we want to hear? Or should they give speeches trying to persuade us of ideas we might not already support? What might be the purpose of each kind of speech? Which strategy do you think Hitler is taking here?