

Zacharias not Zeppelin: Germany to scrap Nazi-era phonetic table

Level: Advanced – Teacher’s Notes

Article summary: Germany plans an overhaul of its phonetic alphabet to remove words introduced by the Nazi regime.

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Vocabulary

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student; NATO phonetic alphabet (available online)

1. Warmer

This task introduces the topic of making spelling things out clearer and easier by allocating words to letters. Individually, students choose four words that start with the letters a, b, c and d and write them on the lines. Then they compare their choices by reading their sentences to each other.

2. Key words

- a. Students read the words in the box and match them to the definitions below. Tell them to scan the article and underline the words as they find them. This will help them check their answers as well as see how the words are used in context.

Key:

1. *scrap*
2. *regime*
3. *abolish*
4. *ombudsman*
5. *antisemitism*
6. *tackle*
7. *seep into*
8. *Aryan*
9. *eradication*
10. *advocate*
11. *relic*
12. *habitually*

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand them and know how they are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *tackle*
2. *habitually*
3. *relic*
4. *seep into*
5. *regime*
6. *ombudsman*

- c. There are three very similar words in this task: *scrap*, *abolish* and *eradicate*. They all mean to get rid of but with different degrees of strength. Use this as an opportunity for the students to expand their vocabulary, exploring when to use each word.

Key:

verb	noun
<i>scrap</i>	<i>scrapping</i> <i>scrap</i>
<i>abolish</i>	<i>abolition</i> <i>abolitionist</i>
<i>eradicate</i>	<i>eradication</i>

3. Comprehension check

Students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the article. They should correct any that are false using information from the article.

Key:

1. *False. It is going to scrap its current phonetic alphabet and go back to using the one that was in use there before 1934.*
2. *False. The Weimar table is the one that was in use before the Nazi era and was adapted by the Nazis to remove all Jewish names that it contained.*
3. *True.*

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4. *False. Michael Blume has recently taken up the position of ombudsman for antisemitism in the German state of Baden-Württemberg.*
5. *False. Some words were changed back in the late 1940s, but the Nazi version has remained the one that most people still use.*
6. *True.*

4. Using key language

- a. Students match the words to make word pairs from the article, then find them in the article. Note that in the article some of the word pairs appear in different forms, for example *paying attention*.

Key:

1. *d*
2. *e*
3. *f*
4. *c*
5. *a*
6. *b*

- b. Students work with a partner and use the word pairs to write a short summary of the article. If they are unsure of any of the meanings of the pairs, make sure they find example sentences in dictionaries or online before they write their summary.

5. Discussion

Students discuss the questions, which are directly related to the topic of the article. Ask students to be alert to the sensitivities of their particular group when discussing the second and third questions.

6. In your own words

- a. First ask the whole class to remember all the words used in the NATO phonetic alphabet.
- b. Students can check their answers and fill in any missing words by searching online for the NATO chart, which provides not only the words used but additional information such as how to say the words.

- c. In groups, students create a new phonetic alphabet using the names of towns, cities, lakes, rivers and places of interest in their country or area. Ask them to include pronunciation help in a similar way to the NATO chart.

Ask each group to present their new alphabet and say why they have chosen each word to represent a letter.

To round off this task, ask the class to agree which words they will use for their definitive local phonetic alphabet. To do this, they should combine the words they liked best from each group's chart.