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

Level: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. **Choosing a word for each letter makes it easier to spell things out. Choose a word for each letter below. For example, *A is for apple.***

A is for _____.

B is for _____.

C is for _____.

D is for _____.

b. **Now compare your sentences.**

2 Key words

a. **Match the words in the box to the definitions below. Then find the words in the article to check your answers and read the words in context. The paragraph numbers will help you.**

> **equivalent   ombudsman   particularly   scrap   spelling**

1. decide not to continue with something; get rid of something _____ (para 1)

2. the correct way of writing a word _____ (para 1)

3. especially _____ (para 2)

4. something that has the same size, value, importance or meaning as something else _____ (para 4)

5. someone who deals with complaints that people make about a particular type of organization _____ (para 5)

> **antisemitism   era   impact   state   still**

6. hatred or prejudice towards Jewish people _____ (para 5)

7. a part of a country that has its own government for some things _____ (para 5)

8. used for saying that something continues _____ (para 6)

9. a period of time _____ (para 9)

10. an effect or influence _____ (para 9)

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b. **Complete the table of stress patterns with some of the key words.**

Oo	oOooo
e.g. *spelling* _____ _____	_____
oOoo	**Ooo**
_____	_____

c. **Use some of the key words from task a. to complete these sentences.**

1. Eight kilometres is the _____ of five miles.

2. There is a lot of desert in the _____ of Nevada.

3. Video calling has had a big _____ on our work lives.

4. If you are not happy, you can complain to the university's _____.

5. I am _____ using my old computer. I don't need a new computer.

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1 Germany is going to scrap its phonetic spelling table. The Nazis introduced the table in 1934.

2 The table gives code words to each letter of the alphabet to help communication and avoid confusion, particularly on the radio and telephone. Germans first used it in the late nineteenth century, but in 1934, the Nazis changed it to remove all its Jewish names.

3 They changed "Samuel" to "Siegfried" for the letter S, "Zacharias" to "Zeppelin" for Z, and "David" to "Dora". They changed Jewish names to Nordic names, and where they could not find names, for example N (originally "Nathan"), they chose an object or place name instead, such as "Nordpol" (North Pole).

4 The international equivalent is the NATO phonetic alphabet. It uses the words Alfa, Bravo, Charlie etc. The German equivalent uses Anton, Berta, Cäsar.

5 Michael Blume is the ombudsman for antisemitism in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. He wants to get rid of the Nazi version of the phonetic alphabet.

6 The Germans officially changed back some words in the late 1940s – they changed Siegfried back to Samuel, for example. But the Nazi era version is still the one that most people use.

7 Blume wants to change back to the pre-1934 version. Germans will use that until autumn 2022. After that, there will probably be a new version with city names.

8 The president of the Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, welcomed Blume's idea. He said, it is "time we free ourselves from the language of the Nazis."

9 Clemens Schwender is a professor of media who has studied spelling tables. People still using words such as Siegfried and he says, "This shows that the twelve years of the Nazi era still have an impact."

10 Many people in Germany do not know that some of the code words come from the Nazis. They use these words all the time in daily life to spell out words over the telephone.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Germany has decided to start using its own phonetic alphabet and start using the official NATO phonetic alphabet.

2. The Nazis developed the pre-1934 German phonetic alphabet.

3. Many German speakers use the phonetic alphabet without knowing about its Nazi connections.

4. The president of the Central Council of Jews is pleased with Michael Blume's plan to change Germany's phonetic alphabet.

5. This is the first time that there have been any changes to the German phonetic alphabet since the end of the Second World War.

6. Germany plans a new phonetic alphabet with city names for late 2022. Until then, they will use the pre-Nazi version.

4 Using key language

a. **Match the words to make word pairs from the article. Then find them in the article to check your answers.**

1.	phonetic	a. life
2.	avoid	b. back
3.	change	c. alphabet
4.	daily	d. out
5.	spell	e. confusion

b. **Now use the words pairs to complete this short summary of the article.**

Many German speakers use the ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯(1)
as part of ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯(2)
to ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯(3) words on the phone. The code
words for the letters help to ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯(4).
The Nazis added some of the words and stopped using Jewish names. The Germans are going to
⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯(5) the alphabet, until there is a new version
with city names.

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5 Discussion

- In your language, do you use code words to spell out words?

- Practise spelling out your full name, or the name of a friend or relative, in English. Use code words. Can your partner spell the name correctly?

6 In your own words

a. What words are used in the NATO phonetic alphabet? Alfa, Bravo, …

b. To check your answers and to find out more about the NATO phonetic alphabet, codes and signals, search online for *NATO phonetic alphabet, codes and signals*.

c. Create a new phonetic alphabet using the names of towns, cities, lakes, rivers, etc. in your country or area. Read out your new alphabet and say why you chose each word. For example, *We chose … for the letter … because it is the biggest lake in our state.*