

GERMAN CULTURE COURSE

German Literature

From the Nibelungenlied and Luther to Goethe, Kafka and Sebald: the German-language tradition and the ambitious bargain.

10 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

GERMAN LITERATURE

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German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · Why German Literature? Scope & Sources

Germany has long been called the "land of poets and thinkers" (Land der Dichter und Denker), a phrase that flatters a literature and also hides how late and how unevenly a German national literature came together. German was spoken across many states for centuries before there was one German country, and the writers of Weimar, Vienna, Prague and Berlin wrote for readers who did not share a capital. This first chapter sets out the scope of the course, how the language developed, how names and translations are handled, and which sources to use. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

A Literature Without a Single Capital

Many states, one language

Until the unification of 1871 the German-speaking lands were divided into dozens of kingdoms, duchies and free cities (check). A German literature existed as a shared tongue and a shared reading public long before it existed as a shared state.

Dialects and a standard

Spoken German varied widely by region. A written standard took shape over the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, helped by Luther's Bible and by the printing press (Chapter 3; check). Today's standard German is a product of that history.

Writers on the edges

Many major German-language writers lived outside Germany itself, among them Kafka in Prague and Musil in Vienna (check). The course keeps to the German story and names them where they are inseparable from it.

The "Land of Poets and Thinkers"

- **The phrase.** It became popular in the nineteenth century and is often traced to the idea of Germany as a cultural nation before it was a political one (check the origin).
- **Weimar and Goethe.** Around 1800 Goethe and Schiller made the small town of Weimar a literary centre (Chapter 5).
- **The Romantic turn.** Romanticism gave German writing a lasting interest in folk tale, nature and the inner life (Chapter 6).
- **Modernism.** The early twentieth century produced Kafka, Rilke and Thomas Mann (Chapter 8).
- **After catastrophe.** The Nazi era, exile, division and reunification shaped what German writers could say and how they said it (Chapters 8 to 10). The phrase "land of poets and thinkers" has a hard edge after that history, and later writers wrote against it as well as from it.

Scope of the Course

Period (check)	Chapters	Examples
Medieval to Baroque	2, 3	The *Nibelungenlied*, Walther von der Vogelweide, Luther, Grimmelshausen
Enlightenment to Romanticism	4, 5, 6	Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Hoffmann, Heine, the Brothers Grimm
The nineteenth century	7	Büchner, Storm, Fontane, Nietzsche
Modernism and its aftermath	8, 9	Kafka, Rilke, Mann, Brecht, Celan, Grass, Christa Wolf
Contemporary	10	Sebald, Schlink, Herta Müller, Kehlmann, Erpenbeck

The course is Germany-centred. Austrian and Swiss writers appear mainly where they are inseparable from the story, and a full survey of German-language literature would be a separate course. It covers the major texts and the arguments about how they are read, not a complete list of authors.

Names, Titles and Translation

Two things to settle at the start

Titles. The course gives German titles in italics with the usual English title beside them, for example *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), and English titles often differ from the German (check each). **Translations.** Most readers will meet these authors in English, and translations vary in accuracy and age. Some classics have been translated many times, and older versions may read stiffly or take liberties. When the course quotes, it quotes briefly, names the translator where it can, and treats any quotation as the translator's version of the original (check availability and translators).

Myths to Test

Common claim	The question a careful reader asks (check each)
German literature is heavy and philosophical.	Which writers fit that picture, and which (Heine, Fontane, Kehlmann) are light, ironic or funny?
Goethe is the whole of German literature.	What did Goethe write, and what did his contemporaries and successors do differently?
Kafka is a German writer in the usual sense.	What does it mean that he wrote in German in Prague, and how is he claimed?
Nazi-era culture was a gap in German writing.	Who stayed, who left, who was silenced, and what was published? (Chapter 9)
East and West German literature were separate worlds.	What did writers share, and how did censorship and the market differ?
The Brothers Grimm simply wrote down folk tales.	How much did they collect, edit and rewrite? (Chapter 6; see also *The Brothers Grimm & German Fairy Tales*)

Sources to Use

- **The texts,** in named translations, with a bilingual edition where possible so that readers with some German can compare.
- **Literary histories,** which differ on emphasis and canon. Check which are available in English and how recent they are.
- **Archives and museums,** such as the German Literature Archive in Marbach and the Goethe houses in Weimar and Frankfurt (check names and what is open).

- **Translators' prefaces and reviews,** which show how a text was understood when it reached English.

A British comparison

English literature also grew without one literary centre in its early centuries, and English writers have been claimed as national voices (Shakespeare, Dickens) in a way that parallels Goethe. The difference is that Britain had a political state around its language well before Germany did, so the German writers' cultural nation preceded their country in a way that has no close British equivalent.

Check the details

Every name, date and attribution in this course comes from general knowledge and is marked "check" where it is uncertain. Literary histories are revised, so verify against current sources before quoting anything. The Nazi era and its aftermath are handled factually in later chapters, with attention to how culture was used and how Germany later confronted it.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

List five German-language writers you already know of, and for each say one thing you believe about them, marking it as documented, claimed or unknown.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Choose one of the myths in the table and write a short plan for testing it: what evidence you would look for and where.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain why a literature can exist before the state that later claims it, using German literature as your example, and say what difference that makes to how the writers are read.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The idea:** the "land of poets and thinkers", a cultural nation before a political one (check)
- **The language:** dialects, then a standard shaped by Luther and print
- **The course:** medieval to Baroque, Enlightenment to Romanticism, the nineteenth century, modernism and aftermath, contemporary
- **Scope:** Germany-centred; Austrian and Swiss writers where unavoidable
- **The caution:** most readers meet the texts in translation, which is itself an interpretation

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 2 · Medieval Voices

The oldest German literature survives in fragments, and its great flowering comes around 1200, in the courts of the Holy Roman Empire. This chapter looks at the earliest scrap of heroic verse, the Nibelungenlied, the knightly romance in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, and the love lyric of the Minnesänger, above all Walther von der Vogelweide. It treats these as works read in the Middle High German of their day and mostly in translation now. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

From Fragments to Courts

The earliest verse

The *Hildebrandslied*, a fragment of heroic poetry about a father and son who meet in battle, survives in a single manuscript copied around the ninth century (check). It is the best-known piece of Old High German heroic verse, and it breaks off before the ending.

Middle High German

Around 1200 courtly poets wrote in Middle High German, a written language that varied by region (check). Their audiences were nobles listening to recitation, and most poems were meant to be heard or sung, not read silently.

Three kinds of poetry

Heroic epic (*Nibelungenlied*), courtly romance (*Parzival*, Gottfried's *Tristan*) and the love lyric of the Minnesang together make up what is often called the classical period of medieval German literature (check the label).

The *Nibelungenlied*

- **What it is.** An anonymous epic poem written down around 1200, probably in the Danube region of Bavaria and Austria (check), in stanzas of four long lines.

- **The story.** Siegfried wins Kriemhild, helps Gunther win Brünhild by trickery and is murdered by Hagen. Kriemhild takes a terrible revenge years later that destroys the Burgundians and herself.
- **The tone.** The first half is a courtly tale of love and honour. The second is a bleak story of vengeance and loyalty pushed to destruction.
- **Sources.** It draws on older heroic legends, some going back to the fifth century (check), reworked in a courtly setting.
- **Afterlife.** Rediscovered in the eighteenth century and made a national epic in the nineteenth, it later inspired Wagner's *Ring* cycle (see *German Music*) and was misused by nationalists (check the details and the political uses).

Parzival and the Courtly Romance

Work and author (check each)	Note
Parzival, Wolfram von Eschenbach (about 1200 to 1210)	A long Grail romance about a young knight who grows up ignorant of the world, fails at the Grail castle by not asking the right question, and later returns. It follows a French source by Chrétien de Troyes and reshapes it with a stronger moral and spiritual drama.
Tristan, Gottfried von Strassburg (about 1210)	A romance of the lovers Tristan and Isolde, unfinished, with a more worldly and psychological treatment of passion.
Iwein and *Erec*, Hartmann von Aue	Arthurian romances that brought French models into German and set a standard for courtly verse.

Wolfram's voice

Wolfram speaks to the audience in a jokey, personal way, calls himself a knight who cannot read (check how seriously to take that), and mocks his rivals. This mix of high seriousness and humour is a mark of the period and a reminder that poems were performed to listeners.

Minnesang and Walther von der Vogelweide

Minnesang

Minne means courtly love. The Minnesänger sang of a lady who could not be won, in a convention of longing and service. Poems survive mostly in large manuscripts compiled later, such as the Manesse manuscript of the fourteenth century (check).

Walther von der Vogelweide

Active around 1200 (check dates), Walther wrote love songs, but also political and moral verse, commenting on emperors and the Pope. His poem "Under der linden", about a girl's secret meeting in the open, is among the best known.

The music

Most Minnesang was sung, but only a small number of melodies survive and their rhythm is uncertain (check), so modern performances involve reconstruction.

A British comparison

The closest British parallel is the Arthurian tradition, with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Malory, which also draws on French romance. The *Nibelungenlied* can be set beside Beowulf as a heroic poem of a doomed society, though Beowulf is much older (check).

Check the details

Dates of medieval works are approximate, authors are often known only by name, and the manuscripts are later copies. Read a translation that says which edition it follows, and verify claims about the poems' origins and later political use before repeating them.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Summarise the story of the *Nibelungenlied* in two halves and explain how the tone changes between them.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Compare a heroic epic and a courtly romance from this chapter in terms of subject, values and the audience they imagine.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain why medieval poems are hard to date and attribute, and how a reader should treat a claim such as "Walther wrote this in 1198".

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Earliest verse:** the *Hildebrandslied* fragment (check)
- **Epic:** the *Nibelungenlied*, anonymous, about 1200 (check)
- **Romance:** Wolfram's *Parzival*, Gottfried's *Tristan*, Hartmann
- **Lyric:** Minnesang, Walther von der Vogelweide
- **The caution:** approximate dates, later manuscripts, translation choices

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 3 · Reformation to Baroque

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries changed German writing in two ways. Print and the Reformation put books, and a more uniform written German, in many more hands. Then the Thirty Years' War devastated much of the German lands and left its mark on the literature that followed. This chapter looks at Luther's Bible, the popular chapbooks including the Faust book of 1587, the poets of the Baroque, and Grimmelshausen's war novel Simplicissimus. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

Print and Luther's Bible

The press

Johannes Gutenberg's printing with movable type in Mainz, around 1450, made books cheaper and faster to produce (check). Within a few decades printing houses spread across the German towns, and pamphlets became a medium of public argument.

Luther's translation

Martin Luther translated the New Testament in 1522, working at the Wartburg, and the complete Bible appeared in 1534 (check). It was widely printed and read, and it reached readers across the German lands.

Luther and the language

Luther said he aimed to write German as ordinary people speak it, and defended his choices in the *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* of 1530 (check). Historians now think a written standard was already forming, and that Luther's Bible helped to spread and shape it rather than create it from nothing (check the debate).

Popular Books and the Faust Book

- **Satire.** Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (*Ship of Fools*, 1494) was a bestseller of illustrated moral satire (check).
- **Tricksters.** The chapbook *Till Eulenspiegel*, printed early in the sixteenth century (check), collected the pranks of a peasant rogue and was translated widely.
- **The Faust book.** The *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, printed in Frankfurt in 1587 (check), told of a learned man who made a pact with the devil for knowledge and power and was carried off to hell. It was a moral warning in a Lutheran spirit, and it became the starting point for Marlowe's play and, much later, for Goethe's *Faust* (Chapter 5).
- **A real person?** A man called Faust seems to have lived in the early sixteenth century, but little is certain about him (check), so the legend is better treated as a story that grew than as a biography.

The Baroque and the Thirty Years' War

Name and work (check each)	Note
Martin Opitz, *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* (1624)	A handbook that set rules for German verse, arguing that German poetry should follow stress patterns and be taken as seriously as Latin and French.
Andreas Gryphius (1616 to 1664), sonnets	Poems of vanity and death written in the shadow of the war; "Tränen des Vaterlandes" is a famous example.
Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (about 1621 to 1676), *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* (1668)	A picaresque novel of a boy swept through the Thirty Years' War as page, soldier, rogue and hermit. It is the best-known German work of its century.

The war in the books

The Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648) was fought largely on German soil and caused great loss of life and destruction, though historians debate the scale of the population loss in different regions (check). Gryphius's poems and Grimmelshausen's novel are among the most direct literary records of it, and they show a world where order seemed to have collapsed. Treat their pictures as literature shaped by conventions, not as plain reportage.

Baroque Themes

- **Vanity.** The Latin *vanitas* idea that worldly things are fleeting runs through the poetry.
- **Memento mori.** Reminders of death appear alongside enjoyment of life.
- **Theatre of the world.** The stage as an image of life was a favourite of the period (check examples).
- **Learning and language societies.** Groups such as the Fruitbearing Society (founded 1617; check) promoted German as a literary language.

A British comparison

The English Bible of the same era, the King James Version of 1611, shaped English in a way often compared with Luther's. The English metaphysical poets, such as Donne, wrote on death and vanity at the same time as the German Baroque poets, and the English Civil War of the 1640s parallels the German experience of war, though on a far smaller scale of destruction (check).

Check the details

Dates, attributions and the effects of the war are from general knowledge, and the Faust legend and the role of Luther's Bible are both debated. Verify with a literary history and the editions you read. Older texts are usually read in modernised German or in translation, so check which.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain how print and Luther's Bible changed the position of written German, and note one reason to be careful with the claim that Luther "created" modern German.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Describe the Faust book of 1587 and say what message it carried for its first readers.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Compare how Gryphius and Grimmelshausen record the Thirty Years' War, and say why neither should be read as plain reportage.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Print:** Gutenberg, about 1450 (check)
- **Luther:** New Testament 1522, Bible 1534 (check)
- **Faust book:** 1587, the pact and the warning
- **The war:** 1618 to 1648; Gryphius, Grimmelshausen
- **The caution:** legends and literary conventions are not reportage

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 4 · Enlightenment & Sturm und Drang

In the eighteenth century German writing moved from the margins of European literature to a leading place. Writers argued for reason, tolerance and a theatre of their own, and then a younger generation rebelled in the name of feeling and genius. This chapter looks at the German Enlightenment and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, at the movement known as Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress), at the young Goethe's novel The Sorrows of Young Werther and at Schiller's first plays. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

The Enlightenment and Lessing

The German Enlightenment

The *Aufklärung* promoted reason, criticism and education, and writers argued about taste, religion and the purpose of art (check). Literature in German was still often seen as provincial next to French, and a goal of the period was to build a theatre and a critical culture of its own.

Lessing the critic

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 to 1781) wrote criticism, plays and philosophy. *Laokoon* (1766) argued about the different limits of poetry and painting, and his theatre criticism in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* pushed German drama away from French models (check).

Lessing's plays

Emilia Galotti (1772) is a middle-class tragedy set at a prince's court. *Nathan der Weise* (1779), a play of religious tolerance set in Jerusalem, centres on a Jewish merchant and has the parable of the three rings at its heart (check). It became one of the most performed and debated German plays.

Sturm und Drang

- **The name.** It comes from a play of 1776 by Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, whose title was later taken for the movement (check).
- **The spirit.** A young generation of the 1770s valued feeling, nature, originality and the individual "genius" over rules and reason alone.
- **Herder.** Johann Gottfried Herder encouraged writers to look to folk song and to the character of each people's language, ideas that later fed Romanticism (Chapter 6; check).
- **Shakespeare.** Writers of the movement admired Shakespeare's freedom as a model against French classical rules.
- **A short phase.** It lasted roughly from the late 1760s to the mid 1780s (check), and many of its leading figures moved on to a calmer style.

Goethe's *Werther*

Point (check each)	Note
The author	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, born in Frankfurt in 1749, was in his early twenties when he published *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) and *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774).
The form	An epistolary novel: letters from a sensitive young man to a friend, edited by a framing voice.
The story	Werther falls in love with Lotte, who is engaged to another man, and cannot bear his position; the book ends with his suicide.
The reaction	It was an immediate success across Europe and made Goethe famous. Readers dressed like Werther, and claims were made that the book prompted imitation; how far this happened is debated, and some authorities restricted it (check).

Handling the subject

Werther ends with a suicide, and discussions of the novel's effect have sometimes been exaggerated. A careful account separates what is recorded, such as bans in some places and the book's strong emotional reception, from later legend (check). Goethe himself later distanced himself from the book's mood. If this subject is close to you, take care with the novel and talk to someone you trust.

Schiller's Early Plays

- **Friedrich Schiller** (1759 to 1805) wrote *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, 1781), a drama of two brothers and a band of outlaws, which was a sensation in its first stagings (check).
- **Later early plays.** *Kabale und Liebe* (*Intrigue and Love*, 1784), a middle-class tragedy of love across class lines, and *Don Carlos* (1787), a historical drama of political freedom (check).
- **Freedom as a theme.** Schiller's work returns to political and personal freedom, which made him a figure of German national and liberal feeling in the following century.

A British comparison

The closest British parallel is the early Romantic cult of feeling around Burns and Wordsworth, and the Gothic novel, which was fashionable at the same time. *Werther* can be set beside Richardson's and Goldsmith's novels of sentiment, and Schiller's rebellion beside the English reception of Shakespeare (check).

Check the details

Dates, titles and claims about the effect of *Werther* are from general knowledge. Verify against a literary history and the edition you read, and remember that the movement's name and boundaries were fixed by later critics.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain what Lessing contributed to German literature as critic and as playwright, naming one work from each role.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

List three values of Sturm und Drang and say how they differ from those of the Enlightenment.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Describe how you would test the claim that *Werther* caused a wave of imitations, and what you would call it if the evidence were thin.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Lessing:** *Laokoon*, *Emilia Galotti*, *Nathan der Weise* (check)
- **Sturm und Drang:** feeling, genius, nature, against rules
- **Goethe:** *Götz* 1773, *Werther* 1774 (check)
- **Schiller:** *Die Räuber* 1781, *Kabale und Liebe*, *Don Carlos*
- **The caution:** the effect of Werther is debated

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 5 · Weimar Classicism & Goethe's Faust

In the years around 1800 the small court town of Weimar became a centre of German writing, home to Goethe and, for a decade, Schiller. Their "Weimar Classicism" turned from the storm of the 1770s to balance, form and the idea of the fully developed human being. This chapter looks at the Weimar partnership, at the Bildungsroman and at Goethe's life work Faust, which grew from the legend of Chapter 3 into a two-part drama written over about sixty years. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

Weimar

A small court

Goethe came to Weimar in 1775 at the invitation of the young Duke Karl August and stayed for the rest of his life, serving in the duchy's government as well as writing (check). Herder and later Schiller joined the circle there.

The Italian journey

In 1786 Goethe travelled to Italy for nearly two years (check), and the experience of classical art turned his work towards the ideals of order, clarity and harmony. Plays such as *Iphigenie auf Tauris* belong to this turn.

Goethe and Schiller

From 1794 the two writers were close friends and collaborators until Schiller's death in 1805 (check). They exchanged letters, criticised each other's work and edited periodicals together. Schiller's late plays include *Wallenstein* and *Wilhelm Tell* (1804; check), and his "Ode to Joy" was later set by Beethoven (see *German Music*).

Weimar Classicism

- **The label.** "Weimar Classicism" is a critics' term for roughly 1786 to 1805 (check), and not all the writers' work fits it.
- **The ideals.** Harmony of form and content, models from ancient Greece, and the shaping of the whole person (*Bildung*).
- **Against the extremes.** It reacted to both the excesses of Sturm und Drang and the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment (Chapter 4).
- **Overlap with Romanticism.** The two movements were contemporary, and the Romantic circle at Jena was often critical of Weimar (Chapter 6; check).

The Bildungsroman

A German form

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 1795 to 1796) follows a young man from a merchant's family who joins a theatre company and searches for a role in life. It is usually named as the model of the *Bildungsroman*, a novel of formation in which the hero develops through experience (check; the term itself was applied later). The pattern shaped many later German novels, among them Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (Chapter 8).

Faust

Stage (check each)	Note
Source	The Faust book of 1587 (Chapter 3), and Marlowe's English play; Goethe knew the puppet-theatre versions too.
Early drafts	The so-called *Urfaust*, from the 1770s, includes the story of Gretchen.
Part One	Published in 1808. Faust, a scholar dissatisfied with learning, makes a wager with Mephistopheles. He seduces Gretchen, who is destroyed.
Part Two	Finished in 1831 and published after Goethe's death in 1832. A larger, stranger, more symbolic drama of politics, classical myth and Faust's last activity.

- **The wager.** Faust does not sell his soul for pleasure. He bets that Mephistopheles can never give him a moment so fulfilling that he will want it to last. This differs from the 1587 book's simple pact and warning.
- **The Prologue in Heaven.** The play opens with a scene in the manner of the Book of Job, in which God allows the devil to test Faust (check).
- **Redemption.** Faust is saved at the end, which departs from the older legend and is much debated (check how the last scene is read).
- **Reading Faust.** It is long, uses many verse forms and is hard to translate. Several English versions exist, and choosing one affects what you meet (check which).

A British comparison

The nearest British parallel is the way Shakespeare is held to be the national poet, or Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a poem on the same themes of temptation and free will. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (about 1592; check) tells the older Faust story as a plain tragedy of damnation, which makes a useful contrast with Goethe.

Check the details

Dates, the labels "Weimar Classicism" and "Bildungsroman", and readings of Faust's ending are from general knowledge and are debated. Verify with a literary history and the edition you use, and note that for both parts the translation matters greatly.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the ideals of Weimar Classicism and how they reacted to Sturm und Drang.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Define the *Bildungsroman* using *Wilhelm Meister*, and name one reason to treat the label with caution.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Compare Goethe's Faust with the Faust book of 1587 in terms of the bargain, the hero's fate and the message.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Weimar:** Goethe from 1775, Schiller friendship 1794 to 1805 (check)
- **Ideals:** harmony, ancient models, *Bildung*
- **Novel:** *Wilhelm Meister*, the Bildungsroman model
- **Faust:** Part One 1808, Part Two 1832 (check)
- **The caution:** labels are later; translations differ widely

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 6 · Romanticism & the Fairy Tale

German Romanticism began in the 1790s as a movement of young writers who wanted to make life and art one, and it spread to poetry, tale, song and scholarship. It looked to the Middle Ages, to nature, dreams and the folk, and it left Europe two durable gifts, the literary fairy tale and the study of folk tradition. This chapter follows the early circle at Jena, the poets Novalis and Eichendorff, the uncanny tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann, the ironic Heinrich Heine and the Brothers Grimm. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

The Romantic Turn

The Jena circle

Around 1798 a group in Jena, including the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and Ludwig Tieck, set out a programme for "Romantic poetry" in their journal the *Athenäum* (check). They wanted a poetry that mixed genres, criticism and philosophy, and that stayed unfinished and open.

Novalis

Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772 to 1801) died young. His *Hymnen an die Nacht* (*Hymns to the Night*, 1800) and the unfinished novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, with its image of a blue flower, became symbols of Romantic longing (check).

Against Weimar?

The Romantics admired Goethe but also argued with the classical ideal of balance (Chapter 5). They preferred the fragment, the dream and the medieval to the Greek, though the dividing line is less sharp than it looks (check).

Poets, Songs and Strange Tales

Writer and work (check each)	Note
Joseph von Eichendorff (1788 to 1857)	Poems of forests, wandering and homesickness, many set to music by Schumann, Wolf and others (see *German Music*). His novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (*Life of a Good-for-Nothing*, 1826) is a light, lyrical tale of a wandering young man.
E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776 to 1822)	Lawyer, composer and writer of uncanny tales. *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*, 1816) is a story of madness and an automaton, and Freud later wrote about it. *Nussknacker und Mausekönig* (1816) is the source of the ballet *The Nutcracker* (check).
Heinrich Heine (1797 to 1856)	Born into a Jewish family in Düsseldorf; his *Buch der Lieder* (1827) made him famous, with poems such as the "Loreley". He moved to Paris in 1831 and combined Romantic form with irony and political satire (check).

Heine's irony

Heine uses Romantic images (the moonlit river, the lost love) and then undercuts them with a sharp last line. His later work attacked German nationalism and censorship, and his books were banned in several German states in the 1830s (check). A line from his early play *Almansor*, "Where they burn books, they will in the end burn people too" (1821), is often quoted in connection with the Nazi book burnings of 1933 (check the wording and origin).

The Brothers Grimm

- **The collection.** Jacob (1785 to 1863) and Wilhelm (1786 to 1859) Grimm published the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) from 1812, with later editions revised many times (check).
- **Collecting or writing?** The tales came from friends, acquaintances and printed sources, not only from peasants, and Wilhelm in particular revised the style and content over the editions (check; see *The Brothers Grimm & German Fairy Tales*).
- **Scholarship.** The brothers were also pioneers of the study of German language and folklore, including a historical dictionary begun in the 1830s and a grammar (check).
- **The Göttingen Seven.** Both brothers were dismissed from their university posts in 1837 for protesting against the abolition of a constitution (check).

- **The Kunstmärchen.** Alongside the folk tale, Romantic writers composed literary fairy tales by named authors, for example Hoffmann and Tieck.

Romantic Themes

- **Longing** (*Sehnsucht*) for something distant in time or space.
- **Nature and the forest** as a place of freedom and danger, still a strong image in German culture.
- **The uncanny** and the double, where the familiar turns strange.
- **The folk** as a source of poetry, which fed both fine scholarship and, later, nationalism (check how the Romantic idea of the folk was used).

A British comparison

English Romanticism ran parallel, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, and Coleridge spent time in Germany and was influenced by its thought (check). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and the Gothic tradition can be set beside Hoffmann, and the Grimms' collection beside the work of Scottish and English collectors of ballads and tales.

Check the details

Dates, titles and the history of the Grimm collection are from general knowledge, and the picture of the brothers as simple collectors has been revised by scholars. Verify with the editions you use, and be careful when attributing political meaning to Romantic images, which were used by very different movements.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe three characteristics of German Romanticism and give one writer or work to illustrate each.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Explain how Heine uses Romantic conventions and why his work differs from that of Eichendorff.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Assess the claim that the Brothers Grimm "simply wrote down what peasants told them", and say how you would check it.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Early circle:** Jena, the Schlegels, Novalis, Tieck (check)
- **Poets and tales:** Eichendorff, Hoffmann, Heine
- **The Grimms:** *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* from 1812 (check)
- **Themes:** longing, nature, the uncanny, the folk
- **The caution:** the "folk" idea served different politics

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 7 · Realism & the Nineteenth Century

The middle decades of the nineteenth century brought political ferment, the failed revolution of 1848, rapid industrial change and, in 1871, a German state. Writing turned from the dream of Romanticism to the observation of ordinary life, though German realism stayed more restrained and poetic than its French or British counterparts. This chapter looks at the radical young playwright Georg Büchner, at the "Poetic Realism" of Theodor Storm and Theodor Fontane, and at Friedrich Nietzsche, whose prose changed German thought. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

The Years Before 1848

Censorship and the Vormärz

The *Vormärz* ("before March") is the period before the revolutions of March 1848, when German states censored writers and many liberals were in exile or prison (check). Heine (Chapter 6) and the writers of "Young Germany" were banned for a time in the 1830s.

Büchner

Georg Büchner (1813 to 1837) died at 23. He wrote a revolutionary pamphlet, *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834), the play *Dantons Tod* (*Danton's Death*, 1835), the story *Lenz* and the unfinished *Woyzeck* (check).

Woyzeck

A fragmentary play in short scenes about a poor soldier driven to murder, based on a real case (check). It was not published until 1879 and was first staged in 1913, after which it became very influential on modern theatre and later inspired Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* (see *German Music*; check).

Poetic Realism

Writer and work (check each)	Note
Theodor Storm (1817 to 1888)	A north-German poet and novella writer. *Der Schimmelreiter* (*The Rider on the White Horse*, 1888) is a dyke-builder's story on the North Sea coast, with a ghostly frame.
Gottfried Keller (1819 to 1890)	A Swiss writer whose novel *Der grüne Heinrich* (*Green Henry*) is in the Bildungsroman tradition (Chapter 5). Swiss, so touched on only briefly.
Theodor Fontane (1819 to 1898)	Journalist and travel writer who began novels late. *Effi Briest* (1894 to 1895) is the story of a young woman in a loveless marriage in Prussian society; *Der Stechlin* is his last novel.

- **"Poetic" realism.** The label, applied by later critics, describes writing that observes the real world but softens or frames its harshness, often in a novella (check).
- **Where is the big social novel?** German readers often point to the lack of a Dickens or Balzac, since the country had no single capital and no single society to portray (Chapter 1; check how far this is a fair view).
- **Industrial change.** Railways, cities and factories appear in the background of this writing more than as its subject.

Fontane's *Effi Briest*

Reading Effi Briest

Effi marries a much older Prussian official. A brief affair, which the husband discovers years later, leads to a duel, a divorce and her social ruin. Fontane does not condemn her directly. He shows how an honour code, enforced by the people around her, destroys someone who did not intend harm. The novel is praised for its restraint, dialogue and use of hints and what is left unsaid (check). Compare Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* on the same theme of adultery and society (check).

Nietzsche as a Writer

- **Friedrich Nietzsche** (1844 to 1900) was a philologist who became a philosopher and wrote in aphorisms, essays and prose-poetry as much as in treatises (check).

- **Style.** *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883 to 1885) is written in the manner of a scripture, with parable and rhythm (check). His German prose has had a lasting influence on writers.
- **Music.** Nietzsche admired and then broke with Wagner (see *German Music*; check).
- **Misuse.** His ideas were later distorted by others, including the Nazis, partly through the editing of his papers by his sister (check the details). Reading him in a reliable edition matters.

A British comparison

The British Victorian novel of Dickens, George Eliot and Hardy is the natural contrast: larger in scale and more openly concerned with social conditions. Fontane's quiet irony is closer to the work of Jane Austen in an earlier time, though the society he shows is Prussian and strictly ruled by honour (check).

Check the details

Dates, titles and the labels "Vormärz" and "Poetic Realism" are from general knowledge and were fixed by later critics. Verify with a literary history. On Nietzsche, take care to read reliable editions and not rely on slogans.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why Büchner's *Woyzeck* was ahead of its time and what its fragmentary state meant for its reception.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Describe what "Poetic Realism" means and use *Effi Briest* or *Der Schimmelreiter* to illustrate it.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain why Nietzsche's works have been easy to misuse and how a careful reader should respond.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Büchner:** *Woyzeck*, first staged 1913 (check)
- **Poetic Realism:** Storm, Keller, Fontane
- **Fontane:** *Effi Briest*, honour and silence
- **Nietzsche:** aphorism and prose-poetry; misuse
- **The caution:** the labels are later; read reliable editions

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 8 · Modernism & the Weimar Years

The early twentieth century was a time of great upheaval: the First World War, the end of the German and Austrian empires, revolution, inflation, and then the short-lived Weimar Republic (1919 to 1933). It was also a period of extraordinary literary range. This chapter looks at the German-language modernists: Kafka writing in Prague, Rilke's poetry, Thomas Mann's novels, Hermann Hesse, Bertolt Brecht's theatre and Alfred Döblin's city novel. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

A Time of Breakdown and Invention

Expressionism

Before and during the First World War a group of poets and playwrights wrote in a violent, intense style about the city, war and the self, in what is called Expressionism (check). Poets such as Georg Trakl and Gottfried Benn belong to it, as do the Expressionist film and painting treated in *German Film & Television*.

The Weimar Republic

Berlin in the 1920s was a centre of theatre, cabaret, film and publishing, with great freedom and great instability (check). The decade also saw the Bauhaus (see *Bauhaus & German Design*) and new music.

A German-language world

German-language writing in this period was spread across Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Zurich. Vienna produced Musil, Schnitzler and Karl Kraus (check), but the course keeps to the German story, as set out in Chapter 1.

Six Writers

Writer and work (check each)	Note
Franz Kafka (1883 to 1924)	A German-speaking Jewish insurance clerk in Prague. *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915) turns a man into an insect. *Der Process* and *Das Schloss* (*The Castle*) were unfinished and published after his death. He asked his friend Max Brod to burn his manuscripts, and Brod published them instead.
Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 to 1926)	Born in Prague, a wanderer across Europe. His *Duineser Elegien* (*Duino Elegies*) and *Sonette an Orpheus* (both 1923) are among the most admired German poems of the century; *Briefe an einen jungen Dichter* (*Letters to a Young Poet*) is widely read.
Thomas Mann (1875 to 1955)	*Buddenbrooks* (1901) is the saga of a merchant family's decline; *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924) is a novel of ideas set in a Swiss sanatorium. He won the Nobel Prize in 1929 (check).
Hermann Hesse (1877 to 1962)	*Der Steppenwolf* (1927) and later novels of spiritual search made him hugely popular, and he won the Nobel Prize in 1946 (check).
Bertolt Brecht (1898 to 1956)	Playwright and poet. *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*, 1928), with music by Kurt Weill (see *German Music*), was a hit. His "epic theatre" aimed to make audiences think, not just feel.
Alfred Döblin (1878 to 1957)	*Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) follows a petty criminal through the city in a collage of voices, headlines and songs.

Kafka and "Kafkaesque"

Kafka's stories are about guilt, power and bureaucracies that no one fully understands. The word "Kafkaesque" has become a general English term, but it often loses the humour, the precision and the Prague setting of his writing (check). The decision to publish his manuscripts against his wishes is still discussed (check how Brod's choice is judged).

Weimar and Its Limits

- **Mass culture.** Newspapers, cabaret, radio and film reached large audiences, and writers such as Erich Kästner and Kurt Tucholsky wrote satire and journalism for them (check).

- **Political tension.** The republic faced economic crisis, with the hyperinflation of 1923 and the depression after 1929 (check), and strong enemies on the left and right.
- **The end.** The Nazi takeover of 1933 ended this world. Many of these writers left, were banned or were killed (Chapter 9).

A British comparison

English modernism, with Joyce, Woolf, Eliot and Lawrence, ran in parallel, and Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) can be set beside Rilke or Benn as a response to the breakdown after the war. Mann's family saga *Buddenbrooks* is often compared with Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (check).

Check the details

Dates, titles and prizes are from general knowledge. Verify with a literary history, and use a recent translation for Kafka, Rilke and Mann, since older versions have been criticised. Some of the material in later years (the Nazi seizure of power and its aftermath) is taken up in Chapter 9.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe what makes Kafka's writing distinctive and explain why the term "Kafkaesque" can mislead.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Compare Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht in terms of form, audience and attitude to society.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain how the Weimar Republic both helped and endangered literature, giving two examples.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Kafka:** Prague, *Die Verwandlung* 1915, unfinished novels (check)
- **Rilke:** *Duino Elegies*, *Sonnets to Orpheus* 1923
- **Mann:** *Buddenbrooks*, *The Magic Mountain*, Nobel 1929
- **Brecht and Döblin:** epic theatre; the city novel
- **The caution:** use recent translations; labels flatten the writers

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 9 · Exile, Division & the Postwar Voice

The Nazi seizure of power in 1933 broke German literature in two: a literature in exile and a literature at home under censorship. After 1945 the country was divided, and writers in East and West had to decide how to speak about what had happened. This chapter handles that history factually, with attention to what writers did and how they wrote about it. It covers the book burnings, exile, the "zero hour" debate, Gruppe 47, Böll, Celan and Grass in the West, and Brecht and Christa Wolf in the East. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

1933 and Exile

Book burnings

On 10 May 1933 students and Nazi organisations burned books by Jewish, left-wing and other writers in Berlin and other university towns (check). Authors affected included Heine, who had long been dead (Chapter 6), Mann, Remarque, Kästner and many others.

Writers in exile

Thousands of writers left Germany and Austria. Thomas Mann went to Switzerland and then the United States, Brecht to Scandinavia and then the US, Stefan Zweig to Britain and later Brazil, where he died in 1942 (check). Exile publishers in Amsterdam and elsewhere kept German-language writing alive.

Murdered and silenced

Many Jewish writers were persecuted, deported or killed in the Holocaust, and others were imprisoned or silenced (check examples). Their loss is part of the story of German literature and not a footnote.

- **Writing at home.** Some writers stayed in Germany and published under censorship. Later, a debate arose about "inner emigration", the claim that some had kept their integrity by internal withdrawal. Mann and others disputed this in 1945 (check the details of the debate).

- **Judging individuals.** The record of each writer under the regime varies from active support to quiet resistance, and should be checked person by person, not assumed (check).

The West After 1945

Writer and work (check each)	Note
Gruppe 47	A loose circle of writers around Hans Werner Richter that met from 1947 to read and criticise new work, and set the tone of West German literature for two decades (check).
Heinrich Böll (1917 to 1985)	A soldier in the war who wrote short stories and novels on the war, ruins and the postwar Federal Republic. Nobel Prize 1972 (check).
Paul Celan (1920 to 1970)	A Romanian-born Jewish poet writing in German. "Todesfuge" (1948), a poem of the camps, is among the best-known poems of the century. He died in Paris in 1970 (check).
Günter Grass (1927 to 2015)	*Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1959), a novel narrated by a boy who stops growing, through Danzig and the Nazi years. Nobel Prize 1999. In 2006 he disclosed that he had served in the Waffen-SS as a teenager, which caused controversy (check).

How to write after 1945

Writers faced the question of whether a literary language compromised by propaganda could be used at all. Celan answered by changing the language, writing compressed, broken poems that refuse easy consolation. Böll and Grass answered through narrative, one with plain stories of ordinary people, the other with comic exaggeration. The "zero hour" (*Stunde Null*) idea of a clean start was always debated, since many people and institutions continued after 1945 (check).

The East

- **Division.** From 1949 two states existed, the Federal Republic in the West and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East, and literature was shaped by their different systems (check).
- **Brecht.** He returned to East Berlin and founded the Berliner Ensemble in 1949 (check), working within a state that praised and watched him.
- **Christa Wolf (1929 to 2011).** Her novels, including *Der geteilte Himmel* (*Divided Heaven*, 1963) and *Kassandra* (1983), were widely read in both states. A debate in 1990 over her short book *Was bleibt* and her past contacts with the state security service (Stasi) became part of a wider argument about how to judge writers of the GDR (check the details).
- **Censorship and expulsion.** The state controlled publishing, and the singer-poet Wolf Biermann was stripped of his citizenship in 1976 while on tour in the West (check), after which some writers left.
- **1989.** The fall of the Wall in November 1989 and reunification in 1990 opened a new phase, which Chapter 10 picks up.

A British comparison

There is no close British parallel. The nearest points are the exile and return of British and European writers during the Second World War, and the Cold War experience of writers from the Eastern bloc who settled in Britain (check). Orwell's essays on language and politics are a useful comparison for the German question of what words could still be trusted.

Check the details

This history is sensitive and the facts matter. Dates, prizes and individual writers' records (including Grass and Wolf) are from general knowledge and have been revised by later research and archives. Verify with scholarly sources and survivors' accounts, and avoid slogans in either direction.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Describe the effect of 1933 on German-language literature, covering the book burnings, exile and writers who stayed.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Compare how Celan and Grass respond in their writing to the Nazi past, with one work from each.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain why judging writers of the GDR, or writers of the Nazi years, requires evidence about each individual, and describe the evidence you would seek.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **1933:** book burnings, exile, inner emigration debate (check)
- **West:** Gruppe 47, Böll, Celan, Grass
- **East:** Brecht, Christa Wolf, Biermann 1976
- **Question:** how to write after catastrophe
- **The caution:** check each writer's record; avoid slogans

German Literature

Course 1 · Chapter 10 · Capstone: Faust's Long Shadow

This last chapter does two things. It looks at the German-language writing of the generation since reunification, and it follows one thread through the whole course: the ambitious bargain, a person who reaches for more than the world allows and pays for it. The thread runs from the Faust book of 1587 through Goethe to Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus, and it gives a way of reading the changes in German writing across four centuries. The chapter ends with a timeline, a table of myths, and a six-question method for testing claims about literature. Names and dates are from general knowledge and flagged "check".

Contemporary Voices

Writer and work (check each)	Note
W. G. Sebald (1944 to 2001)	Born in Bavaria and lived in England. *Die Ausgewanderten* (*The Emigrants*, 1992) and *Austerlitz* (2001) blend memoir, fiction and photographs in long, wandering sentences about memory and the Holocaust.
Bernhard Schlink (born 1944)	*Der Vorleser* (*The Reader*, 1995) is about a young man's affair with an older woman who proves to have been a camp guard, and about the question of guilt across generations.
Herta Müller (born 1953)	A Romanian-German writer from the Banat region who emigrated to West Germany in 1987. *Herztier* (*The Land of Green Plums*) draws on life under the Ceaușescu dictatorship. Nobel Prize 2009 (check).
Daniel Kehlmann (born 1975)	*Die Vermessung der Welt* (*Measuring the World*, 2005), a comic novel about Gauss and Humboldt, was a huge international success.
Jenny Erpenbeck (born 1967)	Born in East Berlin. *Gehen, ging, gegangen* (*Go, Went, Gone*, 2015) is about refugees in Berlin, and her novel *Kairos*, set in the late GDR, won the International Booker Prize in 2024 (check).

- **Themes.** Memory and the Holocaust, the legacy of the GDR, migration and the question of who counts as German.

- **Translation.** As in Hungary and elsewhere, reach abroad depends on translators and prizes (check the translators of each).
- **Beyond Germany.** Austrian, Swiss and migrant-background writers in German widen the picture (check); this course has kept to the German story.

The Thread: The Ambitious Bargain

1587: the warning

In the Faust book (Chapter 3), a learned man sells his soul for knowledge and power and is damned. The message is a Protestant warning against going beyond limits.

1808 and 1832: the wager

In Goethe's play (Chapter 5), Faust bets that no moment will satisfy him. He errs, destroys Gretchen, strives to the end and is saved. Striving is now both danger and value.

1947: the catastrophe

In *Doktor Faustus*, Thomas Mann tells the story of a composer who makes a pact for genius, as an allegory of Germany's path to Nazism, written in exile (check). The bargain is now a national tragedy.

Reading with the thread

Other chapters fit the pattern: Siegfried and Kriemhild's vengeance (Chapter 2), the war-ruined world of Grimmelshausen (Chapter 3), Werther's overreaching feeling (Chapter 4), Hoffmann's artists driven mad (Chapter 6), Fontane's honour code (Chapter 7), and Mann's and Grass's responses to the Nazi years (Chapters 8 and 9). Not everything fits, and a reader should be wary of a thread that explains too much. It is a way to read, not a law of German culture.

A Timeline

Period (check each)	Landmark
About 1200	Nibelungenlied, Parzival, Walther (Chapter 2)
1522 to 1587	Luther's Bible and the Faust book (Chapter 3)
1770s to 1805	Sturm und Drang and Weimar (Chapters 4, 5)
1808 to 1832	Faust Parts One and Two (Chapter 5)
1798 to 1850	Romanticism and the Grimms (Chapter 6)
1830s to 1890s	Büchner to Fontane and Nietzsche (Chapter 7)
1900s to 1933	Kafka, Rilke, Mann, Brecht (Chapter 8)
1933 to 1989	Exile, division and the postwar voice (Chapter 9)
1990 onward	Sebald, Müller, Kehlmann, Erpenbeck (this chapter)

Myths and Evidence

Common claim	What to check
"Luther created modern German."	A written standard was forming already; Luther helped spread it (Chapter 3).
"Goethe is German literature."	Look at the range of his contemporaries and successors (Chapters 1 and 5).
"The Grimms just wrote down peasant tales."	Compare editions and sources (Chapter 6).
"Werther caused a wave of suicides."	Reports, bans and later legend differ (Chapter 4).
"Nietzsche was a Nazi philosopher."	Check editing, sources and his own statements (Chapter 7).
"German writers either supported the Nazis or left."	Look at each person's evidence (Chapter 9).

A Six-Question Method

1. **Who says it?** A critic, a translator, a publisher or a politician?
2. **What is the evidence?** The text, a letter, a review of the time, or a later memory?
3. **When was it written?** Near the events, or long afterwards?
4. **Which translation?** Does the claim depend on one translator's choice?

5. **Who gains?** Does it serve a nation, a school, a party or a sales campaign?
6. **What would change my mind?** What evidence would show the claim to be false?

A worked example

Claim: "Goethe's Faust is the story of the German national character." Apply the method. Who says it? Many nineteenth-century critics and nationalists. Evidence: the play, which has no such statement and offers many readings. When? Much of the claim dates from the period of unification and later. Translation: the claim usually rests on summaries, not on the text. Who gains? Those who wanted a national epic. What would change my mind? Evidence that Goethe or his early readers saw it this way. Result: a claim made about the play by later readers, which the text does not require, so label it "interpretation" and not "fact".

A British comparison

British writers also tell the story of the overreaching figure, from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Milton's Satan to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Chapter 6). The question of whether a national character can be read from a national literature has a close parallel in the way Shakespeare and Dickens are used to explain "Englishness".

Check the details

Dates, prizes and the status of contemporary reputations should be verified against current sources. This course is an overview from general knowledge, and its flagged items serve as a reading and fact-checking list.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Trace the ambitious-bargain thread through at least four chapters, and say where the thread does not fit.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Apply the six-question method to the claim "Luther created modern German", or another claim from the course, and give a verdict.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Compose a reading plan of five German-language works in English translation, justifying each choice and noting which translation to look for.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **The thread:** the ambitious bargain, 1587 to 1947
- **Contemporary:** Sebald, Schlink, Müller, Kehlmann, Erpenbeck (check)
- **Method:** who, evidence, when, translation, who gains, what would change my mind
- **Habit:** mark unproven claims as "claimed" or "interpretation"

Course complete

You have finished *German Literature*: the idea of a literature without a single capital, the medieval voices, Reformation and Baroque, the Enlightenment and Sturm und Drang, Weimar and Faust, Romanticism, realism, modernism, exile and division, and the contemporary voices, with a method for testing claims. Related courses include *The Brothers Grimm & German Fairy Tales*, *German Music*, *German Film & Television* and *Bauhaus & German Design*.