# The Nazi Consolidation of Power

**1. Parliament: “Were the Nazis responsible for burning down the German Reichstag?”**

**What happened?**

In February 1933, only a month after Hitler became Chancellor, the Reichstag Parliament building mysteriously burnt to the ground. Hitler claimed that the communists were responsible and called fresh elections. The Nazis won a record amount of seats. Hitler was now in a position to pass whatever laws he wished…



# Who was responsible?

Some historians insist that the Nazis started the fire themselves. Others insist that the fire was started by the communists and Hitler just took advantage of it. **Your Task is to investigate the evidence and reach your own conclusion on this genuine mystery.**

# The Nazis on Trial

**Stage 1: Choosing your witnesses Paired Task**

1. You have been provided with a **Witness Statements Sheet** to each pair of students in the class.

Label and organise them into: (i) Prosecution witnesses (=blaming the Nazis for the fire); (ii) Defence Witnesses (blaming the communists).

1. Decide upon three "star" witnesses in each pile.

# Group Task

* The class will now be divided into two teams:
* The PROSECUTION team will try to prove the Nazis started the fire themselves.
* The DEFENCE team will try to prove that the Nazis did not start the fire.

1. As a group, discuss your findings and settle upon three "star" witnesses for your side. Keep your choices secret from the other group!
2. Once you are in agreement, the teacher will give a **Witness Report Sheet** to each group.
3. Each group will have a few minutes to decide whether to "stick" with their chosen witnesses, or to "swap" one or more of their witnesses for others they consider more reliable.

# Stage 2: Preparing the questions and answers for the examination of your witnesses

* Both teams now need to provide at least **THREE** questions for each of their THREE witnesses.
* Both teams must also decide who should be in role as each of the **witnesses** when the trial starts.
* Rehearse the questions, and make sure each "witness" knows how to respond.
* You will also need to nominate a **scribe** who will be able to help write up the proceedings during the trail and share this with the group.
* **TIP**: One question should cover what the witness knows; at least one should cover why we should trust them.

# NOTE: you will NOT be allowed to use notes when you are in the witness box. You will have to answer the questions from memory!

**Stage 3: Preparing questions for the cross-examination of your opponents' witnesses**

* You will now be asked to publicly name which witnesses it will use. These can be recorded in the **Trial Record Sheet** by the teacher.
* For several minutes, each team should consider what questions they can put to each of their opponents' witnesses. These "cross examination" questions should aim to discredit the witnesses!

# Stage 4: The Trial

* The judge will call each of the **prosecution** witnesses in turn.
  + The witness will answer the three questions provided by the prosecution.
  + The witness will answer the three questions provided by the defense.
* The judge will then call each of the defense witnesses in turn, and the process will be repeated.
* The scribe will record the main findings as the trial proceeds.