

Simulation Game “The Duke grants an Audience”

Objective:

The objective of the simulation game is to simulate the political and economical situation in the residence city in 1774/75, before the pupils visit Weimar. The pupils receive information on Weimar’s special situation, process it and then attempt to utilise it to make decisions in a role-playing game. It should become clear to them that the course of history, or as in this case, literature history (Weimar Classics) is determined by the concurrence of particular historical prerequisites, personalities, accidents and catastrophes.

Because the upbringing of the young Duke Carl August, whose reign of Weimar began in 1775, was strongly influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the following preparatory homework is recommended.

Preparatory homework / Short presentation:

- Inform yourself / your classmates about the meaning of the Enlightenment!

The pupils’ answers can also be discussed in groups first, before one group member (perhaps with visual aids) presents the results.

The teacher moderates the answers offered and writes the important facts on the blackboard or a transparency. (10 min.)

Answer:

- “The term ‚Enlightenment‘ is used to characterise an overall European phenomenon that grew throughout England and France and then gradually spread through Germany during the 18th century. On the basis of scientific knowledge, intelligence and rationality became the guidelines for actions in all areas.”¹
- “The Enlightenment movement was an intellectual attitude and a political way of thinking that considered rationality to be the character of the human being and ordered all his actions to stand before rationality’s seat of judgement.”²

Contents:

- Tolerance precept (Lessing – tolerance of religions)
- Idea of humanity (human = inherently good, equal rights for nobility and bourgeoisie)
- Reflection about the absolutist state and human rights (absolutism – enlightened absolutism)
- Improvement of historical reality by way of human education (didactic function of literature, idea of prince’s education)
- Tension between bourgeois morals and noble status ethics (removal of status differences → bourgeois tragic drama)

- Scientific research → experiments instead of speculation (knowledge for everyone → libraries, encyclopaedias)
- Emphasis on intelligence rather than faith (progress of knowledge)
- Religion of rationality competes with the existing religion of revelation

“Have the courage to use your own mind!” (Immanuel Kant)

1. Introductory Phase Audio-Text (20 min.)

The following audio-text is to help introduce the pupil to the special historical situation in Weimar in 1774/75.

Audio-Text:

In the year 1775, Carl August takes over reign in Weimar at the age of only 18 years. His mother, Duchess Anna Amalia, was born a princess of the duchy of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Anna Amalia's upbringing was influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, in fact one could say that she grew up in one of the most enlightened courts of the German Nation of the Holy Roman Empire.

Early on, at 16 years of age, she was married to Carl August's father, the 18-year-old Weimar Crown Prince Ernst August Constantin. Upon taking over reign, she had to immediately assume the role of the duchess without having the opportunity to prepare herself for the role of the “Mother of the country” over a period of several years as most duchesses did.

Already in 1758, when Anna Amalia was expecting her second child, her husband died and left her a widow. For this reason, she assumed the regency over her sons and endeavoured to be included in the political decision processes of her ministers and to sign all regulations herself. The duchess, still very young herself, carried the entire responsibility. The transitory nature of her reign as well as court intrigues made her regency difficult. As an absolutist ruler, Anna Amalia reactivated the estates of the country and regularly called parliament sessions and assemblies of the estates in order to gain their political support.

Her reign was also burdened by financial worries. Her husband had left the duchy in great debt due to his ambitions in building and military defence as well as the consequences of the seven-year war. When she initiated the installation of a library at the “Little Green Palace” in 1766, the investment had to be paid from the duchess' own private funds. Her own book collection comprised 5,000 volumes at this time and belonged to the most extensive personal libraries owned by German duchesses in the 18th century. Thus, she was able to make her interest in books and literature known, and also offered all Weimar citizens who were able to read the opportunity to borrow books.

Her court's problem was that the budgeted expenses were always exceeded despite all plans to save money, and she was not able to solve it during the course of her entire regency. Thus, she was not able to reduce the existing financial worries. In spite of this, she was able to accomplish much for the cultural development of her territory, in addition to her library: She wrote music, played music herself, made drawings and brought renowned theatre troupes to her theatre. There were three performances per week, and entrance was free and without restriction to the general public. Anna Amalia did not attempt to economise in the area of art and culture, because she was convinced that princely representation was necessary for the reputation of her small dynasty.

In addition, she gave her sons an excellent princely education including the appointment of Christoph Martin Wieland, an admired bourgeois man of letters, to teach Carl August. Wieland educated the prince according to the basic elements of the Enlightenment: humanistic, cheerful, endearing and without authoritarian pressure. Anna Amalia also appointed the literarily talented Carl Ludwig von Knebel as the prince's instructor. This was her method of keeping writers and artists at her court: They received a position and with that, the opportunity to work as a civil servant. In spite of it all, before the crown prince took over power, a catastrophe took place: The Wilhelmsburg Palace burnt down almost to the foundations on 6 May 1774. Only the palace tower, the adjacent older buildings, and the vaulted cellar with the main archive were spared.

Anna Amalia did not pass on piles of riches to Carl August, "no powerful troops", but only "a solid and multi-faceted education in the spirit of the Enlightenment" and a court "at which culture, art and sciences were respected and supported."³ as well as a duchy without a palace!

Carl August assumed an indebted and not exactly attractive duchy that also, because of the lacking palace, was hardly able to represent itself publicly. Because the Wilhelmsburg had burnt down, there was no festival hall for theatre performances, concerts and festive dinners. Therefore it was difficult to invite guests to the court, since there wasn't enough appropriate lodging. The reputation of the duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach threatened to suffer. In Weimar, which resembled more a village or a farmer's town in the year 1774, there were only 6,000 inhabitants. To make matters worse, the territory was very small.

The army was very weak, since Weimar was not immediately threatened by the military in neighbouring territories.

There were no resources of raw materials in the duchy except for wood from the Thuringian Forest and porcelain production sites. Thus, Carl August lacked the lucrative tax income of this area as well.

The 18-year-old Carl August assumed a difficult inheritance in 1775. It was now his turn to "rescue" his territory, so that it would not lose its economical and political right to exist.

Solution: In the evaluation of the key words / mind map, the contradiction between the duke's requirement of following the ideas of the Enlightenment (respect of art, culture and sciences) and the lack of the city palace should be developed! (10-15 min.)

Assignment for pupil:

- Listen to the text twice!
- Write down key words that characterise Duke Carl August and his territory at the time he took over power!

(Assignment on blackboard)

Variation:

- *Draw a mind map! Duke Carl August and his territory 1774/75 (10 min.)*

Answer:

- This task should make it clear to the pupils that in this case a catastrophe (palace fire) created a completely unique and special historical situation, with the consequence that Weimar developed into a centre of German intellectual life, which became renowned throughout Europe. (10-15 Min.)

2. Development Phase “The Duke grants an Audience” (15 min.)

The teacher has the pupils draw cards to form the groups. There are cards A, B, C, D and E (this can also be done by counting down in alphabetical order). The pupils are not yet told which letter stands for which social class!

Distribution of Groups / Game Groups:

- A: Duke
- B: Nobles
- C: Merchants
- D: Teachers
- E: Farmers

The pupils divide up into their groups and find out which social class they belong to and the respective task / role they play:

A: You are the DUKE's interest group!

- While the other groups prepare themselves for the role they play, you develop a five-point rescue plan for your territory! Present your Master Plan (rescue plan) and begin with the words “My plan is ...”
- **Directions for the rescue plan:** Think about which means you may use as a duke to make the different social classes more strongly identify themselves with the duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach! As the duke, what could you do to make the people (regardless which social class) enjoy living in your duchy?
- **Directions for the role-playing game:** When you portray the duke, you should primarily accept cost neutral or low-cost demands! During the game, consider which of the demands could benefit you. Whatever you do, you and your territory must profit!

B-E: You represent the interest group for the B-Nobles, C-Merchants, D-Teachers, E-Peasants!

- Choose demands and arguments that you want to present to the duke in order to improve the situation of your social class! (each group receives its own task card)

The pupils take their tasks (card) / role description and the playing cards and work on their tasks in groups. If possible, the groups should work in separate rooms, but at least the “dukes” should have a room to themselves. The groups document their results in writing on a Din 5 (half page) piece of paper or a poster. In each group, a speaker / petitioner is selected, who will present their requests to the duke.

Playing Cards

- each group receives a card with the task (task card)
- in addition, there are four playing cards for each interest group: one introductory card with an illustration, one card about the social position, one about the financial situation and one that explains the important special aspects about this social class

3. Game Phase (20-25 min.)

After the Development Phase, the groups submit their written request to the game leader / teacher for an audience with the duke. One of the dukes (change for each of the groups requesting an audience) steps in front of the group with the request / petition. The conversation between the duke and the petitioners from each social class should be portrayed as a role-playing game.

Explanation (should be given to the pupils by the game leader before or after the role-playing game):

Only nobles were allowed to attend the regular audiences in the Landschaftsgebäude, later called the Fürstenhaus (Duke's House) during the period when there was no palace, or later in the palace (after reconstruction). The audiences for the subjects from the lower classes took place at the so-called Landtagen or Diets (assemblies of representatives of feudal estates), during the duke's horse rides, or during hunting trips.

4. Reflection Phase

In the reflection phase, the pupils may be given following questions:

- Was the duke, who was raised in the spirit of the Enlightenment, portrayed convincingly?
- Is his five-point-rescue plan for the territory feasible? (Bonus – see below, can also be left out if this point is to be discussed separately)
- Which interest group was successful in having its interests be heard, which were less successful?
- What strategies did you use? Did you have to change your strategy?
- What information was important for your decisions and what information was less important?

Bonus: Development of a rescue plan for the territory (15 min.)

The pupils have intensely experienced what problems confronted the young duke when he assumed power. It was his task to develop ideas to rescue his territory

Note: This task was already solved by the “dukes”! It also can be done by the other pupils in groups. The pupils who portrayed the DUKE then need a new task!

New Task 1: Five-Point Rescue Plan (This task can be done in group work.)

- Imagine that you are the young Duke Carl August!
- On the basis of the facts that you learned during the role-playing game, draft a five-point rescue plan for your territory with which you try to win the favour of your subjects!
- Directions for the rescue plan: Think about which means you may use as a duke to make the different social classes more strongly identify themselves with the duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach! As the duke, what could you do to make the people (regardless of their social class) enjoy living in your duchy?

Solution 1: Example of a Five-Point Rescue Plan

Establishing an identity for the people: The duke has to ensure a politically sovereign, organised and orderly state as the living community for its inhabitants.

1. **In order for them to be able to “identify” with their state** and consequently enjoy it, he must improve the living conditions in the residence city (i.e. improving streets, the cleanliness of the city – livestock is herded through Weimar, the chamber pots are emptied out of the windows of the houses). Furthermore, the significance of the German language for literature, theatre performances and court etiquette must be strengthened, because French (as the court language) and Latin as the scholarly language, have begun to take over since the beginning of the 18th century. German – the language of the people, and thus also the language of fairy tales and folk songs – must be established and upgraded to create an identity for the people. The creation of identity and national consciousness is also very important nowadays. Because of the misuse by National Socialism and later by radical right-wing parties and organisations, the statement “I am proud to be a German!” may be interpreted in different ways. Can one be proud of a country as a citizen? Should one be able to say: I like living in my country?
2. **Law reforms / better, more comprehensible and practically oriented laws:** The number of existing laws must be reduced. New laws should be created on the recommendation of competent (!) advisors. Carl August appointed J.W. Goethe as a Secret Councillor (advisor in legal questions) for example, who was to give him a qualified, thorough and detailed judgement on all thinkable questions of state politics. Beginning in 1779, Goethe took responsibility for the War Department, the Building Department for Roads, Paths and Waterways, the Ilmenau Tax Department as well as the re-institution of the Ilmenau mining operations. “It wasn’t seldom, ..., that he and Carl August would discuss political subjects deep into the night, until they would fall asleep, leaned up against each other.”⁴ “I am now completely wound up in all

court and political business and will almost not be able to ever leave here again.”⁵ (Goethe to Merck in January 1776)

- 3. Improvement of Education for the State Inhabitants:** The educational situation in the German states was catastrophic at the beginning of the 18th century: 80-90 percent of the population was illiterate! When Carl August took over power, there was very little possibility for children of the populace to educate themselves or at least learn to read and write. Schoolmasters (teachers) were not usually paid a salary. And if they did receive one, it was never enough to make a living. Additional pay was in the form of natural goods, i.e. a log of firewood during the winter, eggs on Martin’s Day or the invitation to dinner with more wealthy families (schoolmaster feeding). The institution of the “Rechenpfennig” (“Maths Penny”) was also interesting – an extra amount of pay for the instruction of children who could afford the luxury of learning maths in addition to religion and reading. (see also PLAYING CARD: Teacher, financial situation)

J.W. Goethe, who Carl August had invited to come to Weimar, endeavoured to improve the school system, to improve the financial situation of the schoolmaster class as well as the institution of systematic qualification for teachers. In 1822 the construction was begun on a “Bürgerschule” (bourgeoisie school) that Goethe founded and then inaugurated in 1825. Johann Gottfried Herder also pressed for a reform of the “Volksschulwesen” (elementary schools), which led to the founding of a teachers’ school in Weimar in 1788, which Herder directed until his death.

During the 18th century, the number of illiterates dropped to 50 percent, so that the book market rapidly gained in importance and the people’s need to read increased.
- 4. Support of the people’s “Zerstreuung” (leisure activity), i.e. support of art, architecture, culture, theatre and literature:** The reconstruction of the Weimar palace had to be progressed, or the temporary move of the court to alternative locations (Park on the Ilm river, “Landschaftshaus”, later Duke’s House) had to be organised. Carl August made the decision to use the “Landschaftshaus” in the park as the future residence. In addition the park, which was just being developed, could also be used by the people of his duchy, as it was open to the public. In this context, the emergence of the “Liebhabertheater” (amateur theatre) is especially worth emphasising. It emerged for two reasons: firstly, the former venue in the east wing of the palace had been destroyed by the palace fire, and secondly, it became the centre of an enthusiastic literary exchange that emerged after Duke Carl August took over power and a literary circle formed around the former regent, Anna Amalia. “The Liebhabertheater reflected the unconventional mingling of court nobility and the increasing number of bourgeois writers and artists attracted to and accepted by the liberal atmosphere in Weimar.”⁶

Soon after his arrival in Weimar, J. W. Goethe assumed a leading and respected role at the Liebhabertheater. Carl August had not only hired Goethe as an advisor in political affairs, but also as a literary genius who could make his court famous. The Liebhabertheater played in the Redoute House on the Esplanade, in the newly built Komödienhaus and at Anna Amalia’s summer residences (Ettersburg, Tiefurt), “usually outdoors, where a larger people’s audience could take part.”⁷

Carl August’s instruments of cultural development were the maintenance of libraries, the theatre, the Mal- und Zeichenschule (school of painting and drawing), the garden culture, architecture, building projects and the magazines (i.e. “Der Teutsche Merkur”).

Furthermore, a completely new kind of reading culture emerged during the 18th century. For the first time, reading was done purely for pleasure and enjoyment (before: reading was exclusively for education and enlightenment).

5. **Expediting economic development:** “The economic foundation of the feudal system in Germany in the 18th century was old-fashioned farming limited to supplying small, closed territories, and livestock farming dependent upon pastureland. Sixty percent of the population was employed in farming. Most of the products that the farmer needed he produced himself. There was very little trade with the city or other more distant regions. As late as 1850, the country population consumed two-thirds of its own production, the remaining third went to the cities,...”⁸

Since the industrial development was yet in the future, the compulsory services of the farmers (a horse farmer had to care for ca. 1 ha for the landlord and received 2 pounds of bread and a “little cheese” as pay) were limited and precautionary measures were taken in case of business losses. (see also PLAYING CARD: Peasants, financial situation)

Furthermore, the innumerable customs barriers that hindered trade had to be taken down so that the trade of food and goods could flourish. This made it necessary to build roads and streets (see also I.). The medieval streets were very unsuitable for Weimar. Weimar was not connected to the trade routes. (See also PLAYING CARD, Merchants, special aspects of this social class)

Not until 1800 did the travelling situation improve when the city became a main intersection of roads.

The extra comments on the Five-Point Plan may serve the teachers as supplemental information on Weimar’s historical situation.

New Task 2:

Think about how you could convince a writer like Johann Wolfgang Goethe to stay in your duchy!

Solution 2:

Possibilities / Circumstances to help Johann Wolfgang Goethe decide to stay in the duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach:

- Development of friendship between Carl August and Goethe
- Becoming a citizen of the city of Weimar (prerequisite: purchase of land or a permanent residence in the city: in spite of his financial difficulties, the duke purchased the garden of the deceased Elisabeth Börner near the “Star” in 1775 for 600 Taler. The money was taken from Carl August’s private funds, but understandably he did not want to be named as the buyer.)
- Assignment of various positions to the bourgeois Goethe (appointed to the “Geheimen Legationsrat” with a seat and voting rights in the “Geheimen Conseil”, Secret Council, on 11 June 1776). “I am now completely wound up in all court and political business and will almost not be able to ever leave here again. My position is advantageous enough, and the duchies of Weimar and Eisenach are always a showplace to see whether the world role looks good on me.” (Goethe in a letter to Merck, 22 January 1776)
- Payment of a regular salary (Goethe’s starting salary was 1200 Taler, in comparison to the average earnings of the upper employment levels of 600 Taler.)
- → **Overcoming the differences in social status between the noble duke and the bourgeois Goethe**

¹ Langer, Klaus/ Steinberg, Sven (1998): Deutsche Dichtung. Literaturgeschichte in Beispielen für den Deutschunterricht, 2nd printing, Munich 1998, p.81

² Schlegel, Rolf (2007): Kurz und schmal war sein Land, mäßig nur, was er vermocht...!?, Stollberg 2007, p. 15

³ Ibid, p. 34

⁴ Klassik Stiftung Weimar , ed. (2007): Ereignis Weimar. Anna Amalia, Carl August und das Entstehen der Klassik 1757- 1807. Catalogue of the exhibition in the Palace Museum Weimar, Weimar 2007, p.91

⁵ Klauß, Jochen (1989): Goethe unterwegs, 1st printing, Weimar 1989, p.21

⁶ Günther, Gitta/ Huschke, Wolfram/ Steiner, Walter, ed. (1998): Weimar. Lexikon zur Stadtgeschichte, Weimar 1998, pp.277-278

⁷ Ibid, p. 278

⁸ Holtzhauer, Helmuth (1969): Goethe-Museum. Werk, Leben und Zeit Goethes in Dokumenten. Berlin 1969, p.37