COMMON CORE ACTIVITY:
A Close Reading of the Nationalist Speech by Otto von Bismarck

Global History Data Analysis Committee
Marc Fleming
Olympia High School Assistant Principal
Lauri Secker        Carl Stresing
Olympia High School        Athena High School
COMMON CORE ACTIVITY:
A Close Reading of the Nationalist Speech by Otto von Bismarck

Activity Summary

This activity has been developed to guide students and instructors in a close reading of the Nationalist Speech by Otto von Bismarck. The activities and actions described below follow a carefully developed set of steps to assist students in increasing their familiarity and understanding of Otto von Bismarck’s speech through a series of text dependent tasks and questions that ultimately develop college and career ready skills identified in the Common Core Standards and the Global History and Geography Priority Power Standards.

**Reading Tasks:** Students will silently read the passage, and then following along with the text as the teacher and/or students read aloud. The teacher will then lead students through a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel students to reread specific passages and discover the structure and meaning of the Nationalist Speech by Otto von Bismarck.

**Vocabulary Tasks:** Most of the meanings of words in this selection can be discovered from careful reading of the context in which they appear. This practice is both called for by the standards and is vital. Teachers must be prepared to reinforce it constantly by modeling and holding students accountable for looking in the context for meaning as well.

**Discussion Tasks:** Students will discuss the passage in depth with their teacher and their classmates, performing activities that result in a close reading of Bismarck’s text. The goal is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text.

**Writing Tasks:** Students will paraphrase different sentences and paragraphs of Otto von Bismarck’s speech and then write a full summary of the path to independence and the establishment of a German empire.

**Text Selection:** Otto von Bismarck’s speech is arguably one of the most important speeches within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On April 1, 1895, German nationalist Otto von Bismarck delivered a speech to a delegation of students in Friedrichsruh on his 80th birthday. He reviewed key events that led to the unification of Germany and promoted the idea of German unity. As you read part of this speech, consider his hopes and dreams for future generations of Germans.
Outline of Activity

Section 1
1. Student silently read Otto von Bismarck’s Nationalist Speech, while circling unfamiliar words.
2. Then teacher reads the Nationalist Speech out loud to the class while students follow along in the text and highlight/underline important ideas or sentences.
3. Students respond to guided questions and tasks independently about the first paragraph, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2, 4 & 5; W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.
4. Teacher will facilitate a class discussion on the guided questions and the identified vocabulary.
5. After the discussion of the questions, students will summarize the first paragraph. Student will use the answers to the discussion questions to formulate their summation.

Section 2
1. Students re-read the second paragraph and respond to guided questions and tasks independently, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2, 4 & 5; W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.
2. Teacher will facilitate a class discussion on the guided questions and the identified vocabulary.

Section 3
1. Students re-read the third and fourth paragraphs and respond to guided questions and tasks independently, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2, 4 & 5; W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.
2. Teacher will facilitate a class discussion on the guided questions and the identified vocabulary.
3. Using at least three pieces of evidence from the primary source, students should summarize the path to independence and the establishment of a German empire in a paragraph.
Gentlemen! I have just heard from the lips of your teachers, the leaders of higher education, an appreciation of my past, which means much to me. From your greeting, I infer a promise for the future, and this means even more for a man of my years than his love of approbation. You will be able, at least many of you, to live according to the sentiments which your presence here today reveals, and to do so to the middle of the next century, while I have long been condemned to inactivity and belong to the days that are past. I find consolation in this observation, for the German is not so constituted that he could entirely dismiss in his old age what in his youth inspired him. Forty and sixty years hence you will not hold exactly the same views as today, but the seed planted in your young hearts by the reign of Emperor William I will bear fruit, and even when you grow old, your attitude will ever be German national because it is so today.

We had to win our national independence in difficult wars. The preparation, the prologue, was the Holstein war. We had to fight with Austria for a settlement; no court of law could have given a decree of separation; we had to fight. That we were facing French war after our victory at Sadowa could not remain in doubt for anyone who knew the conditions of Europe. After the war had been waged everybody here was saying that within five years we should have to wage the next war. This was to be feared it is true, but I have ever since considered it to be my duty to prevent it. We Germans had no longer any reason for war. We had what we needed. To fight for more, from a lust of conquest and for the annexation of countries which were not necessary for us always appeared to me like an atrocity; I am tempted to say like a Bonapartistic and a foreign atrocity, alien to the Germanic sense of justice.
The men who made the biggest sacrifices that the empire might be born were undoubtedly the German princes, not excluding the king of Prussia. My old master hesitated long before he voluntarily yielded his independence to the empire. Let us then be thankful to the reigning houses who made sacrifices for the empire which after the full thousand years of German history must have been hard for them to make. . . .

I would then—and you will say I am an old, conservative man—compress what I have to say into these words: Let us keep above everything the things we have, before we look for new things, nor be afraid of those people who begrudge them to us. In Germany struggles have existed always. . . . Life is a struggle everywhere in nature, and without inner struggles we end by being like the Chinese, and become petrified. No struggle, no life! Only, in every fight where the national question arises, there must be a rallying point. For us this is the empire, not as it may seem to be desirable, but as it is, the empire and the emperor, who represents it. That is why I ask you to join me in wishing well to the emperor and the empire. I hope that in 1950 all of you who are still living will again respond with contented hearts to the toast.

LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR AND THE EMPIRE!

Paragraph 1

1. Who is Otto von Bismarck addressing in the Nationalist Speech?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. What does Otto von Bismarck mean by the statement “From your greeting, I infer a promise for the future…”?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2a. Who represents the “promise”?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. In paragraph 1, Otto von Bismarck refers to “the sentiments” or “feeling” that brought the audience to his speech. Develop a prediction about “the sentiments” Otto von Bismarck is referring to in his speech.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
4. During whose reign where the attitudes of the German audience developed?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 2

5. What were three of the nation-states Germany had to fight to achieve national independence?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

6. How did Otto von Bismarck disagree with the German population relating to future wars following national independence?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

7. How did Otto von Bismarck justify his opinion about future wars given his opinion about past wars?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 3

8. According to Otto von Bismarck, who made the biggest sacrifice for the empire to gain national independence?

___________________________________________________________________________
9. What does Otto von Bismarck mean by the statement “My old master…yielded his independence to the empire”?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

10. What was the sacrifice made and why was it “hard for them to make”?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

11. Why were they willing to make the voluntary sacrifice?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 4

12. Paraphrase the quote “Life is a struggle everywhere in nature, and without inner struggles we end by being like the Chinese, and become petrified. No struggle, no life!”

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
13. What is the “rallying point” for German nationalism according to Otto von Bismarck?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

14. What was the Otto von Bismarck’s rallying cry for German nation-state?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

15. According to the source of the document, how does “blood” relate to the National Speech from Otto von Bismarck?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

16. In paragraph 1, Otto von Bismarck refers to “the sentiments” or “feeling” that brought the audience to his speech. Using evidence from the text, describe if your prediction about “the sentiments” Otto von Bismarck is referring to in his speech changed after your close reading.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Directions
Using at least three pieces of evidence from the primary source, students should summarize the path to independence and the establishment of a German empire in a paragraph.