

CHAPTER  
**16**

**SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE** *Developing Historical Perspective*

**Section 2**

*How did Adolf Hitler, seen as a madman by many today, manage to come to power in Germany? Read this excerpt from a speech Hitler gave to German munitions workers near the end of 1940, and try to hear his words as the audience did—that is, without the knowledge history gives. Then answer the questions at the bottom of the page. (See Skillbuilder Handbook, p. R11.)*

We find ourselves amid a controversy which aims at more than victory of one or another country. In fact, it is a struggle of two worlds. Forty-six million English rule and govern a total territory of roughly 40,000,000 square kilometres in this world. Eighty-five million Germans have a living space of hardly 600,000 square kilometres and these only through our own initiative. This earth, however, was not distributed by Providence or by almighty God.

This distribution is being taken care of by the peoples themselves, and this distribution chiefly took place in the past 300 years at a time when our German people were domestically unconscious and torn apart.

The right to live constitutes a claim of fundamental nature. The right to live includes the right to the soil, which alone gives life. For this claim, peoples have even fought when a lack of wisdom threatened to interfere with their relationship for they knew that even bloody sacrifices are better than the gradual dying of the nations. National unity was our first demand. Piece by piece and move by move this was realized. . . .

Our ideal is that every position in the country

shall be filled by a true son of the people. We want a State in which birth matters nothing, achievement means everything. For this we are working with tremendous fanaticism. Contrasted with this is the idea of our enemies—a fight for egoism, for capital, for individual and family privileges. . . .

How often have I stretched out my hand! I was not in any mood to arm. That devours so much labor power. I wanted to use German labor power for other plans. My ambition is to make the German people rich and the German land beautiful. I would like us to have the most beautiful and the best culture. I was determined to rear our structure in the world, to widen our position and, secondly, to arm at home so that the German soldier must no longer stand alone on the front, lonely and the victim of superior forces.

Then I did everything humanly possible to avoid conflict. I made offer after offer to the English, but there wasn't anything to be done—they wanted war. For seven years Churchill said "I want war." Now he has it.

*from Adolf Hitler's speech, reprinted in Time (December 23, 1940), 17–18.*

1. Hitler referred to a number of subjects that appealed to the emotions of his audience. List some of those appeals.

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2. What do the topics Hitler chose to speak on tell you about the needs and views of the people in his audience?

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