

German and Germans
By Helga von Schweinitz

Not-so-serious Reflections
with Vocabulary Exercises

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by Helga von Schweinitz

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Mark Twain in
The Awful German Language:

...a gifted person ought to learn English in thirty hours,
French in thirty days,
and German in thirty years.

A Word to the Reader

The articles on even numbered pages appeared originally in the bi-monthly *Schulhaus Reporter* in a regular column called "Helga's Corner" which is published by the German -Texan Heritage Society headquartered in Austin, Texas.

This is the second book in the series based on "Helga's Corner". Responding to popular demand I added vocabulary exercises and a few pages with cultural contents to the articles for this edition.

German and Germans can be read and enjoyed by people who have *keinen blassen Schimmer* (not the faintest idea) of German. However, the vocabulary exercises are meant for people with some knowledge of German or at least with the wish they had some knowledge of German. The articles are opinion pieces.

The exercises can be done or ignored. They are meant to help the reader learn some of the new words he finds in the text. Writing them at least once is supposed to improve memorizing them. Since I am not available to correct any mistakes you make, you simply have to live and cope with that. Many of the readers know German at least as well as I do. They can do the exercises to make themselves feel good.

Viel Spaß beim Lesen und Lernen!

Helga von Schweinitz

REISEN

WO ESSEN WIR HEUTE?

FERIEN UND URLAUB

EINE KALTE PLATTTE

WER IST DER VATER?

SO'N DINGSBUMS.

DER KAFFEEKLATSCH

BENIMM DICH!

BITTE, PLATZEN SIE NICHT!

DER BLEISTIFT

DER DEUTSCHE BAUM

DER FÜHRER

DER KATER

DER SCHIEBER

ADELIG.

DER MEISTER

ES ZIEHT!

DIE SPINNT!

FREDERICK THE GROSS

FREUND?

DIE GEMÜTLICHKEIT

DER KUCKUCK

ICH BIN AM LESEN.

STROKE

ICH BIN JA SO SELIG .

IN PIKANTER SOÙE

LIEBE FRAU HELGA.

LUSTIG IST DAS ZIGEUNERLEBEN!

MEIN VEREIN

MUDDER GLEICHT DIE ALTE KATZ

NÜCHTERN?

NULLEN

DAS REIßVERSCHLUSSSYSTEM

WIR TÄTEN SCHON WOLLEN...

WOHNKULTUR

ANGST

GESUNDHEIT

DIE TEUTONEN

DICHTER UND DENKER

Reisen

Deutsche reisen gerne. Most Germans love to travel and have enough vacation to take several trips a year. They usually don't just want a change from everyday life, **einen Tapetenwechsel**. They prefer to travel with a purpose.

There is above all **die Bildungsreise** to give them an education; **die Weltreise** takes them around the world and makes them experts on international affairs; **die Kreuzfahrt** on a cruise ship lets them bathe in the feeling that the crew pampered them more than the other passengers. A **Reiseagentur** can book **Tagesreisen und Wochenendreisen**, day and weekend trips, under special themes like sampling beer and bread in Bamberg, or a **Fahrt ins Blaue**, destination unknown.

Now there is a revival of an old way of traveling: **zu Fuß pilgern**, to do a pilgrimage on foot. Being **ein Katholik** does not seem as important as being free of corns (**Hühneraugen**) and other ailments of the feet, because **der Pilger** will spend weeks or months hiking under often painful conditions and with unavoidable hardships to one of the many blessed places in **Europa** in order to find himself (**sich**) or his faith (**seinen Glauben**), a reason for being (**den Sinn des Lebens**) or whatever might move him. In the Middle Ages (**im Mittelalter**), even persons of consequence **pilgerten**, often to do penance, as did king **Heinrich IV** on his **Bußgang nach Canossa** in 1077.

Many roads lead to Rome, of course, but another popular route for a pilgrimage is **der Jakobspfad**, the St. James pilgrimage, especially the 860 km long section running through northern Spain ending in Santiago de Compostela. Shirley McClain did it.

Should your physical condition or time restraints keep you from **zu Fuß pilgern** while in **Europa**, you can hop on a chartered train and zip to – for example – Lourdes in **Frankreich**. A father confessor (**ein Beichtvater**) is on board for the convenience of those who have sinned. Look for the compartment with a discrete red curtain in front of the door.

Übung

Reisen

Please fill in the blanks with German words taken from the text on the previous page.

- 1 Don't travel (on foot) _ _ _ _ if you have (corns)
_ _ _ _ _ .
- 2 (In the Middle Ages) _ _ _ _ _ nobody took the train to Lourdes.
- 3 After spending two weeks in (France) _ _ _ _ _ , you might be in need of a (father confessor) _ _ _ _ _ .
- 4 Peter's grandmother gave him money for an (educational trip) _ _ _ _ _
_ _ _ _ _ to Holland to study Dutch painters. He learned a lot about smoking marijuana.
- 5 I am forever trying to find (the meaning of life) _ _ _ _ _
_ _ _ _ _ . Aren't you?
- 6 After a semester in Holland, Peter spent three months on a pilgrimage in Spain to find (himself) _ _ _ _ _ and something he could call his (faith) _ _ _ _ _
.
- 7 I book my trips through a (travel agency) _ _ _ _ _ , not on my computer because it has an attitude.

Wo essen wir heute?

Many Germans like to eat out. Being invited for dinner to a friend's house is not as common as in the States. They often meet with friends in a **Restaurant**, which is a generic word.

With so many ethnic eateries available, they might say: "Um sieben Uhr beim Chinesen (beim Italiener, beim Jugoslawen, beim Türken,).

A respectable place to eat is usually **der Ratskeller**, which is not a rat cellar but a restaurant in the **Rathaus** (city hall).

For a quick fix (**Schnellimbiss**) you can treat yourself to a **Hamburger mit Pommes und Bier** at McDonalds or order **eine Pizza in Pizza Hut** (pronounced "pitsa hoot"). There is a German chain called **der Kochlöffel**; in many of those you can't sit down, you have to devour your food standing at a high table. For a quick, inexpensive **Tasse Kaffee** one stops **bei Tschibo**.

Many **Kaufhäuser** (department stores) have a self service restaurant (**Selbstbedienung**) buffet on the top floor.

Other restaurants call themselves **Lokal, Gasthof, Gaststätte, Raststätte** (along the **Autobahn**), or **Gaststube**. **Ein Gasthaus**, however, is a small hotel and often serves only breakfast.

Although **Gast** means "guest", neither meals nor rooms are free. The sign **Zimmer frei** says "vacancy", not free as in "at no cost". Still, many **Gaststätten** and **Gasthäuser** have free parking for their guests and post a sign: **Für Gäste frei**.

Übung

Wo essen wir heute?

Depending on what you fancy for dinner, you choose the appropriate eatery from those mentioned in the previous article.

Reis mit Garnelen in Sojasoße: Wir essen beim _____.

Ravioli und Chianti: Wir gehen zum _____.

Pizza auf amerikanische Art: Wir kaufen sie bei _____.

Abendessen im Rathaus: Wir bestellen einen Tisch im _____.

Turkey with all the fixin's: Wir essen beim T ü r k e n (just kidding).

What kind of a sign must you look for if you want the following:

Self Service: _____.

Free parking near a restaurant: _____.

A small hotel _____.

City hall _____.

Ferien und Urlaub

Vacations and leave, **Ferien und Urlaub**, are almost treated like birthrights in Germany. Labor laws and traditions favor taking at least three weeks at a time to refresh body and soul from the stress of work. My brother, when he held an upper management position, was taking seven weeks of leave per year, 3 -2-2. Every other year he added a month **auf Kur**, in a spa, paid for by the national health system. However, when he did work, he gave it 100% and more.

School vacations do not all take place at the same time throughout Germany, but when they hit a region, entire companies, stores, even **Restaurants und Hotels** might close and hang out the sign: **Wegen Ferien geschlossen**. These weeks off are supposed to benefit your **Gesundheit** (health), therefore you travel, **du gehst auf eine Reise**.

Preferred destinations are wherever you can soak up **Sonnenschein**, cheap charter flights making it very affordable, **billig**. On Mallorca I found an entire hotel booked by **Senioren aus Berlin**, who preferred chef Antonio's **Erbsensuppe mit Frankfurter Würstchen** to any Spanish dish. In Playa del Carmen **in Mexiko**, fajitas are sold as **Geschnetzeltes**. On Thailand's beaches ladies offer massages described as "**Gut für Papa**".

Of course, many Germans have to plan all trips as **eine Bildungsreise** (an educational journey), be it to learn about **die Renaissance in Florenz** or to study hummingbirds, **Kolibris, auf Kuba**.

Urlaub is related to **erlauben**, meaning you are permitted to leave, which takes us to the English translation: leave. For some people that means leaving part of their normal self - maybe even some of their inhibitions - at home and taking the highly recommended **Ferien vom Ich**.

Übung

Ferien und Urlaub

Please copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding article. Remember, all German nouns are capitalized.

Good for daddy _ _ _ _ _

vacations _ _ _ _ _

leave _ _ _ _ _

closed due to vacation _ _ _ _ _

health _ _ _ _ _

sunshine _ _ _ _ _

seniors _ _ _ _ _

educational journey _ _ _ _ _

vacation from myself _ _ _ _ _

hummingbirds _ _ _ _ _

Cuba _ _ _ _ _

pea soup with Frankfurter hot dogs _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

Eine Kalte Platte

Eine kalte Platte is a delicious alternative to *Wiener Schnitzel*, *Bratwurst mit Sauerkraut* or *Rouladen mit Rotkohl* when you want to offer a genuine German meal, especially *zum Abendbrot* (for supper) or after midnight when hosting a small number of guests.

It is not like offering some quick sandwiches Anglo-American style.

For my *kalte Platten* I spread *Butter* on halved slices of various types of solid bread like *Pumpernickel*, *Bauernbrot* or some other *Brot* with a crust. Then I add a single layer of *Aufschnitt* (cold cuts), cheese or seafood. I don't put any bread on top so that the palate immediately experiences the taste of the top layer and is pleased and satisfied with a small amount.

Although the selection of cold cuts in American supermarkets is not as wide as in Germany, the deli sections offer enough choices: *Schinkenwurst*, *Zungenwurst*, *Fleischwurst*, *Blutwurst*, *Leberwurst*, and also different kinds of ham (*Schinken*) of which the smoked and uncooked *Westfälischer Schinken* is the most German. Everything should be sliced thin.

A *Käseplatte* features cheese, of course, and the seafood often consists of *geräucherter Seelachs* (smoked salmon) available in small packages, already sliced. *Kaviar* should be served only by hosts with a good *Kredit* rating.

Kalte Platten with some small plates on the table in the middle of a group of friends, eliminate the need for people to get up and help themselves from a *Buffet*, and everybody can be a constant part of the conversation - which, if it keeps with current German custom, would center on how Americans should straighten out their foreign policy. They have the additional benefit of not showing how much you actually eat, because you grab one little *Schnittchen* (slice) at a time as the evening progresses.

Übung

Eine kalte Platte

Unscramble the words in the left column. The answers are somewhere in the right column.

RABBENTOD	_____	<i>KALTE PLATTE</i>
WUTBLURST	_____	<i>SCHINKEN</i>
LATEK PATTLE	_____	KAVIAR
SCHALESE	_____	<i>ABENDBROT</i>
RUMPENPICKEL	_____	<i>AUFSCHNITT</i>
VARIAK	_____	<i>SEELACHS</i>
SCHIKNEN	_____	WIENER SCHNITZEL
NUTTISCHAF	_____	<i>KÄSEPLATTE</i>
REWEIN LENZTISCH	_____	PUMPERNICKEL
KÄSPALETTE	_____	<i>BLUTWURST</i>

Wer ist der Vater?

Helping people researching their German ancestry often makes me the bearer of surprising, sometimes unwelcome, news. The identity of the mother (*Mutter*) is usually not in doubt. However, there can be a problem with the *Vater*, especially when we are looking at the first born child, *das erstgeborene Kind*. Truth be told, *wer war der leibliche Vater* (the biological father)? The folks in the old country had profound morals and ethics and pious intentions, but they used unreliable methods of birth control. Even if the wedding took place seven months before the birth of the child, *der leibliche Vater* could have been the son of the landowner, and the pregnant servant was then quickly married off to a farm hand.

Occasionally I see a document called a *Vaterschaftsbekennntnis*, which states that a certain man acknowledges that he is the father of the child born *unehelich* (out of wedlock) by a certain woman whose first and maiden names are given. If he later marries her, that fact is often hand written on the margin of the document. Most baptism entries in church records note whether a child was *ehelich* (legitimate) or *unehelich*. Legitimacy was obviously not taken for granted. (*Jakob, der eheliche Sohn des Abraham ...or ...Johanna, die uneheliche Tochter der Karoline...*)

Considering how much shame, ostracism and cruelty these children and their mothers often had to suffer, each case that comes to my attention makes me feel sorry for them.

When the father becomes a *Witwer* (widower) he may later become a *Stiefvater* (stepfather) to the children of his new *Ehefrau* (wife).

Most fathers agree with Germany's most famous humorist, Wilhelm Busch: To become a father is not hard; to be one, though, is very much so.

Vater werden ist nicht schwer – Vater sein dagegen sehr.

Übung

Wer ist der Vater?

Please select the right German words for the English "fatherwords" from the following list and write them twice next to English version.

a) der Vater b) Stiefvater c) Großvater d) Urgroßvater
e) Schwiegervater f) Adoptivvater g) der leibliche Vater h) Stammvater
i) Vaterland j) Vaterlandsliebe k) Vaterschaft l) Vatermörder m) das
Vater-unser n) das Vaterhaus

- 1) the father _____
- 2) grandfather _____
- 3) father-in -law _____
- 4) paternity _____
- 5) fatherland _____
- 6) ancestor _____
- 7) the Lord's prayer _____
- 8) great grandfather _____
- 9) adoptive father _____
- 10) stepfather _____
- 11) patriotism _____
- 12) paternal house _____
- 13) the biological father _____
- 14) high stand-up collar on a shirt _____

And then there is the Godfather: **der Pate**

1/a 2/c 3/e 4/k 5/i 6/h 7/m 8/d 9/f 10/b 11/j 12/n 13/g 14/l

So'n Dingsbums.

You know the story of Baron What's-his-name. He sat on a thingamabob and soon made a whatyemacallit on the moon. The story is, of course, a big you-know-what-I-mean.

The vague expressions I've just used are some of the kindest words in the English language, because they let us continue what we want to say although we can't think of the right words at that moment.

German is just as considerate, especially in casual conversation. Most of these expressions come from the word for thing: *das Ding* (pl. *die Dinge*). To be even less precise you can use *so'n or so'ne* instead of the article. They all mean something like thingamabob.

das Dings (pl. die Dinger): Mein Dings am Fotoapparat ist kaputt.

die Dinger: Ich brauche zehn so'ne Dinger für das Dirndl.

das Dingens: Ich möchte so'n Dingens für meine Tür haben.

das Dingsbums: Hast du mein Dingsbums irgendwo gesehen?

Dingsda: (often used for a place name) *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* (a popular operetta: The Cousin from What's-that -place)

So-und-so: Frau So-und-so ist im Hotel zur Post.

Back to the story of Baron Münchhausen. Er setzte sich auf so'n Dings und machte bald eine Dingens auf dem Mond. Die Geschichte ist natürlich eine große Lüge, a big lie.

I hope this lesson taught you to glide right over an otherwise awkward moment when you want to introduce a person and you have forgotten the particulars: Just mumble something like: "Hier ist Frau von Dingens aus Dingsda." Or : "Ich möchte Herrn Dr. Dingsbums aus Kassel vorstellen."

Übung

So'n Dingsbums

Please, copy the following sentences, but replace the underlined word with one of the Dings-words.

Der Filter an meiner Kamera ist kaputt.

Ich brauche einundvierzig so'ne Perlen für die Kette.

Hast du mein Buch irgendwo gesehen?

Ich muss einen großen Tannenbaum für die Schule kaufen.

Seine Kusine aus Fürstenfeldbruch kommt übermorgen.

Herr Schreiner-Wintermann war Oberbürgermeister von Karl-Marx-Stadt.

Der Kaffeeklatsch

A typical Kaffeeklatsch is a small gathering of women enjoying an afternoon with Kaffee und Kuchen (coffee and cake) and a casual conversation which is often called Klatsch.

Die Damen ziehen sich nett an. (The ladies dress nicely). Die Gastgeberin (the hostess) has the opportunity to use ihr feines Silberbesteck, ihr gutes Porzellan und eine hübsche Tischdecke (her fine silver flatware, her good china and a pretty tablecloth). It is a socially accepted chance to get away from husband and children for a few hours.

Those early German pioneer women in America who could afford the luxury of a Kaffeeklatsch were fortunate indeed. Even today there are Kaffeeklatsch gaggles around, and I go to one of them regularly.

The verb klatschen has many meanings, including to clap and to applaud: Das Publikum klatschte drei Minuten lang (the audience applauded for three minutes). However, in the phrase Klatsch und Tratsch both words mean gossip. Klatsch und Tratsch can stand for malicious talk über andere Leute (about other people), but it can also be a casual, drawn-out exchange of useful or useless information.

Still another word with klatsch is klatschnass (soaking wet): Wenn die Damen beim Kaffeeklatsch im Garten sitzen wenn es regnet, dann werden sie klatschnass.

Übung

Der Kaffeeklatsch

At a recent *Kaffeeklatsch*, the ladies sampled too much of the *Kirschlikör* and got their words all scrambled . Please, unscramble them.

The correct words are in the right column.

EFEFAK DUN HENUCK _____ *GASTGEBERIN*

LORZEPLAN _____ *KLATSCH UND TRATSCH*

SKANLECHT _____ *KAFFEE UND KUCHEN*

RÜBE EDRANE LUETE _____ *PORZELLAN*

STIBBELSECKER _____ *KLATSCHEN*

SCHLAKT NUD SCHRATT _____ *TISCHDECKE*

NACHTKLASSS _____ *ÜBER ANDERE LEUTE*

TICKSCHEDE _____ *SILBERBESTECK*

BERGSTAIGEN _____ *KLATSCHNASS*

Benimm dich!

A wave of interest in *gutes Benehmen* (good manners) goes through Germany these days. Television, night-school classes, company sponsored seminars and even private tutors for teenagers are in on this.

The following two behaviors are considered *schlechte Manieren* (poor manners) in most cultures:

Man spricht nicht mit vollem Mund . (Don't talk with your mouth full.)

Man kaut nicht mit offenem Mund. (Don't chew with your mouth open.)

When the rules of proper conduct are broken, a mother might say: “**Benimm dich!**” (“Mind your manners” or “Behave yourself”).

Here are three examples how German *gutes Benehmen* differs from American good manners:

Man hat beim Essen beide Hände auf dem Tisch. (Keep both hands on the table when eating).

Man schüttelt zuerst die Hand der Dame, dann die Hand des Herrn. (Shake the lady's hand first, then the gentleman's). Don't shake only the gentleman's hand.

Wenn ein Mann und eine Frau in ein Restaurant, eine Kneipe oder eine Bar gehen, geht der Mann zuerst in den Raum. (When a man and a woman go into a restaurant, pub or bar, the man enters the room first.). My German brother-in-law doubts the chivalry of Texan men who send the ‘ladies first’ when entering an establishment while the whole world knows that in Texas flying bottles, fists and bullets might be welcoming a new customer.

And then there is doing the right thing at the wrong time (*das Richtige zur falschen Zeit tun*), like when my father put his hand on my mother's hip while we children were around. My mother would give him that forbidding stare and whisper: “**Rudi! Benimm dich!**”

Übung

Benimm dich!

Please, fill in the blanks in these statements about good and bad German manners.

You may look at the text on the previous page for help.

Man spricht n _ _ _ _ m _ _ v _ _ _ _ _ Mund.

Man kaut nicht m _ _ o _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Mund.

Beim Essen hat man b _ _ _ _ H _ _ _ _ auf d _ _ Tisch.

Wenn ein Mann und eine Frau in ein Restaurant gehen, geht der Mann

z _ _ _ _ _ in d _ _ R _ _ _ _.

Man schüttelt zuerst die Hand d _ _ D _ _ _ , dann die Hand d _ _ H _ _ _ _ _.

Wenn ein Kind mit vollem Mund spricht, sagt die Mutter: „Du hast

s _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ M _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .“

Wenn ein Mann schlechte Manieren zeigt, sagt die Frau: „Mann,

b _ _ _ _ _ d _ _ _ _ !“

Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!

Learning a language includes memorizing thousands of words of vocabulary, and we appreciate all the help we can get. Textbooks suggest that we learn clusters of related words. They point out that many nouns of the masculine gender are actually the stem of a verb: **der Rauch - rauchen** (the smoke – to smoke); **der Sitz – sitzen** (the seat - to sit).

However, this simple rule is a trap that can get you into trouble because, too often, the verb has no meaningful relationship to the noun which looks like its stem. Here are some false friends:

weinen – der Wein (to cry – the wine)

wachsen – der Wachs (to grow – the wax)

stiften – der Stift (to donate – the peg)

reisen – der Reis (to travel – the rice)

streichen – der Streich (to paint – the prank)

kriegen – der Krieg (to get – the war)

Der Sitz and **der Platz** can both mean „the seat“. When you ask somebody in a crowded restaurant if you may share his table – which is okay in Germany – you can ask: **“Ist dieser Sitz noch frei? Darf ich hier sitzen?”** However, if you use **Platz** instead of **Sitz**, you should not ask: **“Ist dieser Platz noch frei? Darf ich hier platzen?”** If you say that, the person you asked might jump up and run away, because **platzen** means “to burst”, “pop” or “explode”. You were actually asking: “May I explode here?”

Bitte, platzen Sie nicht an meinem Tisch!

Übung

Bitte, platzen Sie nicht!

Referring to the text on the left, please write the German word on the line.

- 1 - *Ich möchte* (cry) _ _ _ _ _.
- 2 - *Liebfraumilch ist ein deutscher* (wine) _ _ _ _.
- 3 - *Hier ist es sehr still; man hört das Gras* (grow) _ _ _ _ _.
- 4 - *Hast du* (wax) _ _ _ _ _ *im Ohr?*
- 5 - *Er muss nach China* (travel) _ _ _ _ _.
- 6 - *Die Chinesen essen viel* (rice) _ _ _ _.
- 7 - *Darf ich hier* (sit) _ _ _ _ _?
- 8 - *Ist der* (seat) _ _ _ _ *noch frei?*
- 9 - (Smoking) _ _ _ _ _ *verboten!*
- 10 - (Smoke) _ _ _ _ _ *von Zigaretten stinkt.*
- 11 - *Der Ballon wird bald* (pop) _ _ _ _ _.
- 12 - *Er hat einen guten* (place) _ _ _ _ _ *in der Oper.*
- 13 - *Wir* (get) _ _ _ _ _ *unsere Post jeden Tag ausser Sonntag.*
- 14 - *Der Bürgerkrieg war der* (war) _ _ _ _ _ *zwischen den Nordstaaten und den Südstaaten.*

Der Bleistift

Some people find learning vocabulary expressions easier when they are grouped around one basic word. Let's take **Blei** which rhymes with lie. It means lead (the metal).

Der Bleistift is a pencil (The first mass produced pencils were made in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1662). I thought **ein Bleistift** had **eine Mine aus Blei**. **Pustekuchen!** Wrong! Nowadays (*heutzutage*) **ist die Mine im Bleistift aus Graphit** mixed with other compounds.

Blei ist ein schweres (heavy) **Metall**. **Es ist giftig** (poisonous) as you can get **Bleivergiftung** from **Blei** in paint or water pipes or in wine decanters made of **Bleikristall**, or in goblets of almost pure **Blei** that led to the Romans' demise.

Der Drehbleistift is the mechanical pencil, even though it has a **Graphitmine**. **Der Bleistiftanspitzer** is used to sharpen the **Bleistift**. **Bleisoldaten** are collectors' items and are now made of tin to prevent **Bleivergiftungen** in would-be-generals.

An old German and Austrian New Year's Eve (**Silvester**) custom and party game is **Bleigießen**. (I found several sets offered on the internet by simply googling **Bleigiessen**). One guest after another smelts a small piece of **Blei** on a spoon over a candle. The molten metal is then poured into a bowl of ice cold water where it takes on a bizarre shape. In a wild discussion the other guests decide what this lead figure looks like, and the Master of Ceremony checks on a chart to find out, what this creation by Fortuna promises the owner for the coming year. Last **Silvester** my chunk of **Blei** turned into a little devil – **ein kleiner Teufel**. That meant: **Vorsicht!** Somebody is trying to seduce you!! **Mich verführen?**

I am still waiting.

Übung

Der Bleistift

Please write the German words twice.

the pencil _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

mechanical pencil _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

nowadays _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

poisonous _ _ _ _ _

lead poisoning _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

pencil sharpener _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

lead pouring _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

to seduce _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Der deutsche Baum

Germans have always loved and valued trees. They need a permit to fell a tree - even on their own property - if the circumference of the *Stamm* (stem) at the height of 1 *Meter* exceeds 80 *Zentimeter*.

Der Tannenbaum (die Tanne), the pine tree, gained international importance by becoming the “Christmas tree”. Without embarrassment we sing :... *wie treu sind deine Blätter!* ...how faithful are your leaves! Have you ever seen a pine with leaves?

Die Linde, the lime tree, is close to the German heart. Most villages had a *Lindenbaum* in their center under which young men and women would meet - the stuff for many songs of love and broken hearts. In the Middle Ages the elders would come together *unter der Dorflinde* to hold court or counsel. Berlin has the famous avenue *Unter den Linden* which is lined with lime trees.

Die Eiche, the oak, is *das Symbol* of strength, age and tradition. The German state uses its leaves to present its values, like on some coins. *Die Eiche* has a long life, its wood is strong and beautiful. A big *Eichentisch* adds an aura of dignity to one's dining room.

Die Buche, the beech tree, lent its name to words like *Buch* (book), *Buchstabe* (letter) and *Bücherei* (library). Sticks (*Stäbe*) of the *Buche* were used to form letters, and it was easy to carve straight lines into *Buchenholz* (beech wood).

There is a trusted word of wisdom in German with regards to finding shelter from the *Blitz* during a thunderstorm: “**Eichen sollst du weichen** (avoid), **Buchen sollst du suchen** (seek). *Warnung!!!* Modern science tells us that the *Buche* is just as dangerous a shelter as the *Eiche*.

Übung

Der deutsche Baum

Please, name the German trees mentioned in the preceding article.

die T _ _ _ _ or der T _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

die L _ _ _ _ or der L _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

die E _ _ _ _

die B _ _ _ _

Please, translate into German:

1. Oh pine tree, oh pine tree! How faithful are your leaves! (oh = o in German)

2. Oaks you shall avoid, beeches you shall seek. Warning!!!

3. book, letter, library

4. Berlin has a famous avenue called _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .

5. Before you hear *den Donner*, you usually see den _ _ _ _ _ .

Der Führer

So nimm denn meine Hände und führe mich is a line in a German hymn asking the Lord to take my hands and guide me.

Der Reiter führt sein Pferd ans Wasser can be said when the rider leads his horse to water.

...and lead us not into temptation appears in the German *Vater Unser* as *...und führe uns nicht in Versuchung*.

Ein Führer who works as a tourist guide is *ein Fremdenführer*.

Sometimes *führen* has a prefix and takes on a possibly negative connotation like in these examples: *Der Pastor verführte seine Assistentin*. (Gosh, I hope the Pastor did not seduce his assistant in the sanctuary), or *Du willst mich nur irreführen!* which is a good way of telling somebody that you think he is trying to trick you or lead you astray.

In most contexts, however, *führen* evokes a positive image, a leader or guide is taking care of the situation, you trust him.

What ingenious act of public relations was it then when in 1933 Adolf Hitler declared himself the *Führer*. He was not the *Präsident*, not the *Kanzler*, neither *König* nor *Kaiser*, he was - when I was a little girl in WWII Germany – *mein Führer*. If only he knew that the English were dropping these bombs on us all the time, I thought, he would tell them to stop it, after all, as *der Führer* he would know what had to be done to keep us safe.

Thus history has burdened one perfectly good word with such a dirty load, that I now hesitate to use this “F-word” in public. There are, however, *sehr gute Fremdenführer* all over the world who still allow the word *Führer* an aura of trustworthiness.

Übung

Der Führer

Please, fill in the blanks by referring to the preceding text.

So nimm denn _____ und führe mich.

Der Reiter führt _____ ans Wasser.

_____ in Versuchung.

Der Pastor _____ seine Assistentin.

Hitler war Deutschlands _____ von 1933 bis 1945.

Wilhelm der Zweite war der letzte deutsche _____.

Ludwig der Zweite war _____ von Bayern.

Theodor Heuß war der erste _____ der Bundesrepublik.

Konrad Adenauer war der erste _____ der Bundesrepublik.

Ein Führer für Touristen ist ein _____.

Der Kater

While translating the diary of a well-known German settler in central Texas, I was wondering why, after years of good health, he suddenly kept waking up with a catarrh: “*Ich wachte wieder mit einem Katarrh auf.*”

His Great-granddaughter (**Urenkelin**) explained to me: “Don’t tell anybody. After grandpaw-paw had started to grow sorghum and made molasses, he also built a still. So he often woke up with a hangover which he called catarrh to make it sound more acceptable.”

I realized a connection to the German word for a hangover, which is *ein Kater* which may be derived from **Katarrh** and is easier to spell.

In Texas pioneer days, **Katarrh** might still have been used to describe anything from a cold (**Erkältung**) to allergies (**Allergien**) to a hangover (**Kater**).

Kater was originally the word for a male cat, but since many more people wake up in the morning with a hangover than with a male cat, you really have to second-guess a person who tells you: “*Ach, ich habe einen schrecklichen Kater!*”

Most remedies for a **Kater** include *frische Luft* (fresh air), *etwas Saures* like a **Rollmops** (something sour like a rolled up marinated herring filet), and *viel Flüssigkeit* (liquid) like *Tomatensaft mit Tabasco*, and, *natürlich, zwei Aspirin*.

When you see dozens of Germans trooping through the local forest on a Sunday morning, they may be on their **Katerspazierang** for the *frische Luft*. Some restaurants in the woods cater to these customers by offering the needed *Flüssigkeit* in the form of a nice, cool beer, *ein kühles Bierchen*.

Übung

Der Kater

Please write the German word on the line next to the English one. You may refer to the text on the left.

Ich habe einen schrecklichen (hangover) _ _ _ _ _.

Du hast einen (male cat) _ _ _ _ _ namens Hannibal.

Er hat eine (cold) _ _ _ _ _.

Sie hat (allergies) _ _ _ _ _.

Wir haben (tomato juice) _ _ _ _ _ *zum Frühstück.*

Ihr habt (a nice cool beer) _ _ _ _ _ *zum Frühstück.*

Sie haben eine (great-granddaughter) _ _ _ _ _ *namens Lorelei.*

Ein (rolled-up marinated herring filet) _ _ _ _ _ , (fresh air) _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ *und* (two aspirins) _ _ _ _ _ *sind wie Medizin gegen einen Kater.*

Der Schieber

The German verb *schieben* (pronounced “sheebn”) means ‘to push’, but the long vowel *ie* suggests that this is not a fast motion but a slow pushing as in *Ich schiebe mein kaputtes Auto*. (I push my broken car). A short, quick pushing is *schubsen*.

Schieben (*schob, hat geschoben*) has lent itself to so many idiomatic expressions that I can only mention a few of them here.

Mein Onkel Willie war ein guter Schieber means that uncle Willie was good at bartering on the black market. He once succeeded in getting me a pair of warm gloves in exchange for a little bag of cigarette butts I had collected from the streets.

Mein Onkel Fritz schob eine ruhige Kugel bei der Stadt. He was working for the city and took things very easy on his job.

Mein Onkel Hermann made the most pleasant use of the *Schieber* as a type of dance. He would hold a woman close enough that his and her clothes were touching – *mit Tuchföhlung*. Then, no matter what the rhythm of the music was – except for the slow waltz, *der langsame Walzer* – he would use only a step – step – step *Schritt* (*step*) to move his lady across the dance floor. No fancy footwork. Had he danced in Austin’s Broken Spoke he would have turned the Texas two-step into a *Schieber*.

Parties in Germany often last into the early hours of the morning. After midnight and ample libations, only a few people can manage to dance anything but the comfortable *Schieber*. Even the worst singers tend to sing along at that time, although the only text they know is *lalalala*.

Schieben – it’s such a good word. As they say about *das kaputte Auto*: If you love it, you push it: *Wer’s liebt, der schiebt*.

Übung

Der Schieber

Please translate the following phrases into German. The text on the previous page has all the terms needed.

I push my broken car.

Willie was a good barterer on the black market.

Fritz took things easy while working for the city.

The slow waltz

My uncle Hermann

With clothes touching

The broken car: if you love it, you push it.

Adelig.

Some German last names, like mine, *von Schweinitz*, begin with *von*, pronounced “fon”.

During centuries of feudalism in Europe, governments were structured like pyramids with a base of *Untertanen* (subjects) who had a variety of rights and obligations, and a *Prinz, König* or *Kaiser* at the top. Some men were chosen by the prince, king or emperor to fill the ranks in between. They were given more responsibilities and obligations than commoners in return for certain privileges. They were also allowed to embellish their names with a simple *von* or a title such as *Freiherr* (Baron) , *Graf* (Count), *Herzog* (Duke), and *Fürst* (Prince). The honor of being *in den Adel erhoben* (elevated to the nobility) was often based on heroic deeds in battle, on colonizing uncultivated land or on other acts of value to the royals.

Later on, titles of nobility were passed out to reward academic achievements, to make rich merchants socially acceptable at court, and to give very capable commoners a standing in polite society. Titles were passed on from the father to all of his legitimate offsprings - generation after generation.

Many families with “von” names, like the von Schweinitzes, have their origin in the early middle ages when they followed a call eastwards to the swamps along the Oder river. They were given land to dry out and cultivate and to establish settlements. They were given the title *von* to indicate that they were *der Herr* (the lord) and in charge of the place and thus responsible for the wellbeing of the people working on their *Gut* (estate).

These land owners became the *Landadel* (landed gentry).

As part of the Treaty of Versailles of 1918, German nobility lost the right to carry titles. The “*von*” however, became part of the last name. Consequently, in the U. S. I am listed under V (von Schweinitz or Vonschweinitz) even in the Library of Congress. In Germany the “*vons*” indicate the *von* by putting a *v.* behind the last name. In a German phone book you would find me under “*Schweinitz, v., Helga*”.

Adel comes from *edel*, meaning “noble”. In my interactions with many families *vom Adel* I noticed that not all people of nobility are noble in character and action. Being *adelig* (of nobility) really seems to mean that you are supposed to *strive* to be noble in character and action - just like everybody else.

Übung

Adelig

Please, find the proper person from this list and write his name on the line preceding the rest of the sentence. The answers are on the bottom of the page.

1. Otto Fürst von Bismarck
2. Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen
3. Philip Herzog von Windsor
4. Kaiser Wilhelm der Zweite
5. Felix Graf von Luckner
6. König Ludwig der Zweite von Bayern
7. Prinz Albert von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha
8. Carl Maria von Weber

a. _____ ist der Ehemann von Queen Elizabeth II.

b. _____ baute Schloss Neuschwanstein.

c. _____ war der letzte deutsche Kaiser.

d. _____ ist in Amerika als "Red Baron" bekannt.

e. _____ heiratete 1840 seine Cousine Victoria, Königin von England.

f. _____ war Reichskanzler und Ministerpräsident von Preußen.

g. _____, der "Seeteufel", kaperte im Ersten Weltkrieg viele feindliche Schiffe.

h. _____ komponierte die romantische Oper "Freischütz".

a/3 b/6 c/4 d/2 e/7 f/1 g/5 h/8

Der Meister

Everybody is or should be a master (*ein Meister*) in some skill or area of knowledge. A woman would be *eine Meisterin*.

While in the American system you can earn a Master's degree for academic studies at a university, the German "**Meister**" usually refers to a certified level of skill and knowledge in a craft or trade. A **Tischlermeister** (master carpenter), for example, has been a **Lehrling** (apprentice) for three years, then a **Geselle** (journeyman) for three years, and then he has passed rigid examinations to obtain a certificate called **Meisterbrief**. **Ein Meister** is well respected by society and takes positions of consequence in organizations like the **Industrie- und Handelskammer** (Chamber of Commerce).

Only a **Meister** can train a **Lehrling**. German folklore and folk songs tell of the importance of the **Meister** as being responsible for fortifying his young charges with high moral values in addition to the tricks of the trade. His wife, **Frau Meisterin**, does not have to have any skills but was usually praised for her cooking in the days of travelling journeymen.

Meister also means champion (**Max Schmeling war Weltmeister im Boxen**), **Meisterschaft** means championship or cup. That leads us to the most important word in the language of many a German: **die Fußballweltmeisterschaft**, the world cup in soccer which takes place every four years. An unusual display of flags and patriotism surfaces when the German team is among the best. You should go there for the excitement when it takes place in Germany.

If you excel in any field, you can call yourself a **Meister** of sorts. **Ich, z. B.** (I, for example), **bin Meisterin im Aufschieben** (a master in procrastinating).

Übung

Der Meister

Als Onkel Ewald vierzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er (apprentice)

_____ bei Tischlermeister Meyer.

Als Onkel Ewald siebzehn Jahre alt war, wurde er (journeyman)

_____ *bei* (master carpenter) _____ *Klostermann.*

Von 1940 bis 1951 war Onkel Ewald in Russland und Sibirien.

1957 wurde Onkel Ewald (master) _____.

Er war auch in der (chamber of commerce) _____ - _____

_____.

Als ich vierzehn Jahre alt war, machte Onkel Ewald einen Nähkasten (sewing box)) für mich.

Onkel Ewalds Hobby war (soccer) _____. Er spielte links außen.

Es zieht!

Ziehen: es zieht; es zog; es hat gezogen. Remember that the German z is pronounced like ts. **Es zieht** sounds like “ess tseet” and means that there is a draft. It is important to recognize the expression when you gasp for fresh air in a crowded bus or train in Germany and you open a window a bit. Some fellow-passengers will fear catching a cold, pneumonia or even death from the fresh air they construe as a draft, and they’ll shout: **“Es zieht!!!”**.

The verb **ziehen** has so many meanings, that you might catch a nervous breakdown trying to learn them all. Here are just a few **Beispiele** (examples).

To pull: Der Hund zieht mich aus dem Haus.

To draw: Siegfried zog sein Schwert.

To move: Ich bin nach Pflugerville gezogen.

To haul: Michael hat das Boot an Land gezogen.

With prefixes, the translation possibilities seem endless. **Wir erziehen unsere Kinder, ehrlich zu sein** says that we raise our children to be honest. **Wenn ich zwei von sechs abziehe, habe ich noch vier** means $6 - 2 = 4$.

Eine Ziehmutter is a foster mother. Eine Ziehharmonika is an accordion. In German you pull it apart to draw the air in, in English you squeeze that squeeze-box to get the air out.

What do you say to those who yell at you: **“Es zieht!!”**?

With a smile and a strong American accent you let them know that nobody ever died of stinking: **“Okay, es ist noch nie jemand erstunken.”** Then you close the window.

Übung

Es zieht!

Please translate the following sentences into German. You may consult the text of the forgoing article.

There is a draft! _____

Siegfried drew his sword. _____

The dog pulls me out of the house. _____

Michael hauled the boat ashore. _____

I moved to Pflugerville. _____

We raise our children. _____

If I take two away from six, I still have four. _____

Die spinnt!

German has many phrases expressing that somebody is nuts, a little crazy, off the rocker.

Here are a few that can be used in polite society. It is also good to know that in casual German personal pronouns like “*er*” and “*sie*” can be replaced by the definite article, like “*der*”, “*dem*”, “*die*” etc., and “*ja*” and “*wohl*” are often added for emphasis.

Der ist ja verrückt.

Die hat einen Vogel.

Bei dem piept's ja.

Die ist wohl nicht ganz bei Trost.

Der hat sie nicht mehr alle.

Die hat nicht mehr alle Tassen im Schrank.

Bei dem ist wohl eine Schraube locker.

My favorite, short and to the point: ***Die spinnt!***

There is a wordless gesture Germans use: If someone looks at you and tips with his index finger on his forehead, he is telling you that you have a little bird inside your head, that you are a bird brain. Don't give this signal - also called the driver's salute - to a German policeman (***Polizist***). He takes it as “***Beamtenbeleidigung***” which means “insulting an officer of the state” and is punishable by law.

Now underline and learn your favorite phrase and use it when appropriate.

Übung

Die spinnt!

Although one has to be careful in whose presence one calls whom crazy, there are situations that just ask for such a comment.

The following English phrases are an attempt to translate the German phrases used in the preceding text. Try to match the German with the English.

She no longer has all cups in the cabinet.

He is crazy.

She has a bird.

It peeps in him.

He does no longer have them all.

He has a screw loose.

She is spinning.

Now pick out two favorites and copy them again to help you memorize them.

Frederick the Gross

My German class had read an anecdote telling how Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, sided with a common miller in a property dispute. One of my sometimes brilliant students asked me: “How come we Americans call him ‘Frederick the Great’, but the Germans call him ‘gross’ like in ‘*Friederich der Grosse*’?” That led to a lesson in which we marveled at the great number of English translations of the German word **groß** which can also be spelled **gross** if the keyboard has no **ß**.

great – Peter der Große war Zar von Russland.

tall – Napoleon war nicht groß.

large - Brasilien ist ein großes Land.

big (elder) – Meine große Schwester ist kleiner als ich.

big (size) – In Idaho wachsen große Kartoffeln.

grand – Der Wolf fraß die Großmutter.

with over 100 000 inhabitants – **Köln ist eine Großstadt.**

super – Die Sowjetunion war eine Großmacht.

whole – Der Einzelhändler kauft vom Großhändler.

This list goes on and on – just look in your dictionary under **groß**.

Newcomers to the English language often misunderstand the English ‘gross’ to mean ‘big’. I did so when my tax preparer grossed me out at the end of my first year in the USA by talking about my ‘gross’ income although I was making only one dollar an hour.

Übung

Frederick the Gross

Referring to the text on the left, please fill in the blanks.

Napoleon war nicht ____.

Peter der Große war ____.

Der Wolf fraß die ____.

In Idaho ____ **große** ____.

Der Einzelhändler kauft vom ____.

Der Großhändler verkauft an den ____.

Köln ist eine ____.

Der Kölner Dom ist in ____.

____ ist ein großes Land in Südamerika.

Unter Stalin war die ____ eine Großmacht.

Freund?

We often translate the word friend with *Freund*. However, they have different meanings within the cultural settings of the United States and Germany. In English I refer to hundreds of people as “my friends”. In German I have few people I call *Freund* (or *Freundin* for a female).

Most of the folks I know are *gute Bekannte* (good acquaintances). To be a *Freund* involves commitment, loyalty, and usually common experiences in the past. “Buddy” might be a good translation in some cases.

German literature has through centuries glorified the virtues of *Freundschaft* (friendship). In Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” (set to music by van Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony), you are invited to join in the jubilation if you are fortunate enough to be a friend’s friend, *eines Freundes Freund zu sein*.

Of course, in the world of German teenagers and love, words take on a different nuance. When I was seventeen I answered *ja* when my aunt Johanna asked me: “*Hast du denn schon einen Freund?*”. She understood my *ja* to mean “Helga is seriously dating”, and she advised me to leave school and learn something useful before entering motherhood - *Freund* as the committed boyfriend.

For 27 years, from the time aunt Johanna’s boyfriend moved in with her to the day she died, aunt Johanna referred to him as her “*Bekannter*”.

Übung

Freund?

Here are some quotations about friends and friendships. At the bottom of the page, copy the two quotations you like best and try to memorize them.

Wem der große Wurf gelungen,

Whoever has had the great fortune

Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,

To be a friend's friend,

Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,

Whoever has found a gracious wife,

Mische seinen Jubel ein.

Add his jubilation to ours.

Friedrich von Schiller

Im Unglück erkennt man die Freunde. In misfortune you recognize friends.

Johann Gottfried von Herder

Der Mensch hat nichts so eigen,

Man has nothing more special,

So wohl steht ihm nichts an,

Nothing suits him better

Als daß er Treu´ erzeigen

Than showing loyalty

Und Freundschaft halten kann.

And keeping a friendship.

Simon Dach

Ein leicht erwärmter Freund

A friend who warmed up easily

Wird leicht erkältet sein.

Will easily get cold.

Friedrich Rückert

Die Gemütlichkeit

Even if you have a difficult time pronouncing this German word, you probably know what it means - at least what it means to you. You might remember an evening in the company of cheerful people, with relaxed conversation, maybe a few songs and a few mugs of beer. This is the standard American concept of *Gemütlichkeit*.

The base word is *das Gemüt*. The stem *-müt-* is related to the English word mood. *Das Gemüt* is the imagined place where your soul, your heart, all feelings and your disposition and your value system dwell. There are countless idioms using this word.

Der lange Winter schlägt mir aufs Gemüt, wrote my nephew Thomas, to tell me, that the long winter is dampening his spirit. As a child, I was popular with uncles and aunts because I was usually cheerful and had *ein fröhliches Gemüt*.

The adjective *gemütlich* can describe a person's character, but it more often relates to the cozy, comfy ambience of an event or a place, like sharing a casual dinner with good friends. *Wir waren bei Schmidts zu einem gemütlichen Abendessen*. The greatest compliment you can pay your hosts is "*Bei euch ist es immer so gemütlich*." Of course, a place can be *ungemütlich*, like when it is too *laut, kalt* and drafty (*es zieht!*)

The German-American *Gemütlichkeit* carries a lot of happy memories and tradition, some of them based on students at German universities toasting to wine, song and whatever else : *Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit! Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit!*

Ein Prosit

Ein Prosit, ein Prosit der Gemütlichkeit

<http://lirged.org>

Ein Prosit ein Prosit der Ge-

The first system of musical notation for 'Ein Prosit'. It consists of a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics 'Ein Prosit ein Prosit der Ge-' are written under the vocal line.

müt-lich-keit. Ein Prosit ein

The second system of musical notation. It continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics 'müt-lich-keit. Ein Prosit ein' are written under the vocal line.

Pro-sit der Ge-müt-lich-keit.

The third system of musical notation, concluding the piece. The lyrics 'Pro-sit der Ge-müt-lich-keit.' are written under the vocal line.

Der Kuckuck

Der Kuckuck ist ein Zugvogel, a migratory bird that lives mainly in dense forest areas and is seldom seen. Its simple two note call and its peculiar behavior have given the word **Kuckuck** many meanings in German life and language.

If you have money in your pocket when you hear the first coo-coo call in the spring on your stroll through the forest (*Waldspaziergang*), you'll have money all through the year. Children sing many *Kinderlieder* like **Kuckuck, Kuckuck, ruft's aus dem Wald....** You call **Kuckuck** when you play peek –a –boo.

However, *der Kuckuck* also gets involved in many troublesome aspects of life. “May the devil take you” can be said as *Soll dich der Kuckuck holen!* If you don't pay your debts, the bailiff, *der Gerichtsvollzieher*, will put pawn stickers on your furniture, and you can tell your friends: *Bei mir klebt der Kuckuck an den Möbeln.*

Since the hen of the “European Common Cuckoo”, the type that lives in Germany, lays her eggs in other birds' nests, there are erotic connotations. English has the “cuckold”, the man whose wife has an extra-marital affair (*Sie macht einen Seitensprung*). A child resulting from that affair is called a cuckoo's egg, *ein Kuckucksei*. Most American cuckoos, by the way, do build a nest for their eggs, but only a flimsy one.

And then there is the cuckoo clock. It has its beginning in 1737 in Schönowald in the Black Forest. Some new models can be set so that they don't coo-coo at night. The twelve **Kuckuck Kuckuck...s** of my old **Kuckucksuhr** at midnight can drive anybody to fly over the cuckoo's nest.

Übung

Der Kuckuck

The European common cuckoo lays her eggs in other birds' nests. I wonder if she ever checks on her chicks' wellbeing. Instead of worrying about the little cuckoos, let's concentrate on learning some German words. Please, look for the German translation of the listed words and phrases in the previous article. Write them down and say them out loud.

the cuckoo _ _ _ _ _

a migratory bird _ _ _ _ _

stroll through the forest _ _ _ _ _

children's songs _ _ _ _ _

bailiff _ _ _ _ _

extra- marital affair _ _ _ _ _

cuckoo's egg _ _ _ _ _

cuckoo clock _ _ _ _ _

peek-a-boo _ _ _ _ _

For extra credit: When and where was the first *Kuckucksuhr* built?

Ich bin am lesen.

Our spoken language varies from the way we write about something. We choose different words and often use verbs in forms not taught in school. An example in German is the use of the infinitive preceded by **am** to indicate that something is happening at that moment like the English ...ing does in: The dog is barking – **Der Hund ist am bellen** instead of **Der Hund bellt**. Another example (**Beispiel**): "Be quiet! I am watching the news." „**Sei still! Ich bin die Nachrichten am angucken.**” Regulation German would be "**Sei bitte still! Ich gucke die Nachrichten an.**"

Before my last visit to Germany I called my niece on a remote farm north of Berlin (**janz weit draußen**) who was almost due to deliver a baby. I knew a midwife (**Hebamme**) had already moved in with her. Eight-year old Stefan answered the phone shouting: „**Mama ist gerade ein Kind am kriegen.!**” Then he hung up. I knew it was happening right then and I sensed his excitement. Had he said: „**Mama kriegt ein Kind**”, he might have simply confirmed that she was pregnant.

We once spent a night in a barn in the Lüneburger Heide because a thunderstorm had stopped us bicycle tourists from pedaling to the next town. The farmer’s dog began barking at four in the morning and was still barking at six when I wrote in my diary: **Der dumme Hund bellt seit vier Uhr!!!** However, I wrote this after I had vented my anger by calling the farmer on my cell phone (**Handy**) yelling: **Der blöde Köter ist seit vier Uhr am kläffen!** I would never write that language in my diary.

If somebody disturbs you while you are reading this, tell that person: „**Sei still! Ich bin Helga’s Corner am lesen.**”

Übung

Ich bin am lesen.

Please, copy the German translation of the following words or phrases from the preceding text. If there is a choice between two phrases, choose one of them. If you are the type of person who finds it hard to make choices in certain situations (like I am), copy both versions.

The dog is barking.

I am watching the news.

mid-wife

Be quiet!

Mama is having a baby

the stupid dog

cell-phone

The stupid dog is barking since 4 o'clock.

I am reading

Stroke

While spending long, quiet hours at my husband's bedside in the hospital, it occurred to me that the English word "stroke" has to be translated into German in an amazing number of ways. I am telling you a true story now using "stroke" in a variety of meanings:

Hans complains of a light headache, so I stroke (*streichle*) his head. Then he complains of blurred vision and slurs his speech, and I immediately have this stroke of genius (*genialer Einfall*), jump to the *Telefon*, dial 911 and yell: "My husband is having a stroke (*Schlaganfall*)!" With a stroke of luck (*mit viel Glück*) the *Ambulanz* arrives within three minutes.

Hans survives the massive stroke and is now recovering – slowly, like swimming for miles in rough water, one stroke at a time (*Zug um Zug*).

Then comes the moment when I have to tell the relatives in Germany about this stroke of fate (*Schicksalsschlag*). I use a vocabulary list I made of illnesses often mentioned in letters and old documents:

He had a stroke : Er hatte einen Schlaganfall. or: Er hatte einen Gehirnschlag; Schlag; Apoplexie; Schlagfluß.

While a *Schlaganfall* occurs in the brain (*im Gehirn*), one can suffer another type of "*Schlag*": a *Herzschlag* (heart-attack), also known as *Herzinfarkt*.

Der Patient sagt "Vielen Dank" für all die Wünsche zur guten Besserung, und für die Karten, Blumen, Besuche, E-mails, Telefonanrufe, Schokolade und Tomatensuppe.

Übung

Stroke

Find the German translation for the given English words in these syllables.

The German words can all be found in the preceding text.

a – an – an - be – blu – che – de – ein – fall – fall- farkt – fe - fon - ge – glück
– herz – in - ko – la – le - ler – ma – men – mit – ni – pe – ru - schlag – scho – su
– sup – te - ten – to – viel

stroke (in the brain)_____

heart attack _____

with a stroke of luck_____

stroke of genius_____

flowers _____

visits_____

chocolate _____

tomato soup _____

telephone calls_____

Ich bin ja so selig.

There are moments in life (*im Leben*) when we feel part of everything good in the universe, when we are experiencing utter bliss. The German adjective for that state of happiness is not *glücklich* but *selig*. An example would be the minute you take off your boots after a long hike. You say: “*Ach, ich bin ja so seeeeeelig!*” The word bliss does not have the sound quality, it is too short and can’t be stretched out like *selig*, and let’s not talk about the word utter.

Selig is related to *die Seele*, the soul, and thus indicates a connection to the spiritual. Savoring a soft boiled egg, *ein weich gekochtes Ei*, can be like eating soul food; it is for me – a combination of the mundane and the spiritual. However, *meine selige Mutter* is in English my late mother. When the pope beatifies you, that event will be your *Seligsprechung*.

Selig comes in many word combinations like *armselig*. *Ein armseliger Mensch* is a person to be pitied; the adjective makes no statement on the condition of his soul. The most intriguing word, however, is *Habseligkeiten*. The *Hab*-part means 'have', but ...*seligkeiten*? *Habseligkeiten* is “everything a person owns”. Does that say that owning something makes a person happy, *selig*? It does not usually refer to a house full of stuff (*Kram*) but to more manageable amounts as in: *1957 packte ich meine Habseligkeiten in einen Koffer und wanderte nach Amerika aus*.

I packed into that suitcase everything I considered necessary for survival in a strange land, including a book on the Italian Renaissance, a book with poems by Rilke, and Hemingway’s *Der alte Mann und das Meer*. Assessing my *Habseligkeiten*, I thought: *Ich bin ja so selig, dass ich all diese schönen Dinge habe*.

Übung

Ich bin ja so selig.

Please list a few things or situations that make you *selig*.

Try to do it in German. Use a dictionary if you want to.

Don't worry too much about correct grammar unless it makes you *selig* to have everything perfect.

[illegible]

In pikanter Soße

“In spicy sauce” read the fine print on the lid of the imported can of *Brathering*. *Bratheringe* are fried herrings in a mild marinade, thus becoming *eingelegte Bratheringe*, a delicacy to my palate. Why would a German company spoil a *Brathering* by adding a spicy sauce? After opening the can and taking a bite of the fish I realized to my great joy that the company had made a mistake in translating. They thought “spicy” implied a well balanced blend of spices (*Gewürze*). To us Americans “spicy” has taken on the meaning of “hot,” as in “My doctor told me to lay off spicy food.” He was not talking about the cinnamon I mix with sugar and milk for my rice pudding.

Scharf is the German word for “spicy” or “hot.” *Drei-Alarm Chili ist zu scharf für mich*. Marinated or pickled food is called *eingelegt* or *sauer* and is usually much milder than the American versions.. *Eingelegte Gurken* are pickles; a *Sauerbraten* is a roast which is marinated before it is roasted.

Other words to look for in search of a tasty sauce are *würzig* and *pikant*. *Würzig* is based on *Gewürze* and promises a rich flavor, while *pikant* is almost asking for a gourmet to appreciate it. *In pikanter Soße* always awakens the *Feinschmecker* (gourmet) in me.

That translation error of the German company almost led me not to buy that delicious can of fish. It should have said “*Brathering in pikanter Soße*” on the lid.

I bought all of the three cans of *eingelegte Bratheringe* that were on the shelf of my supermarket last year. I haven’t seen any since.

Übung

In pikanter Soße

The following printed list is made up of German words from the preceding article.

The letters are not in the original sequence. Please straighten them out.

KATPIN_____

ZERGÜWE_____

ESOß_____

BINGRATHER_____

MECKERFISCHEN_____

EUBANERRATS_____

KRUGEN_____

RAUSE_____

FARSCH_____

LEGGETINE_____

DIRE-MALAR LICHİ_____

Liebe Frau Helga.

Many people seem to think that I have an answer to every question. Here are the answers to some I found in my email:

“Dear Helga. Why are *Dirndls* sexy and *Lederhosen* dorky?” My comment is that sexyness is in the mind of the beholder. By design, *Dirndl* dresses draw attention to that part of the female anatomy which naughty Germans refer to as *Balkon*. Sometimes there is a cleavage, sometimes the protruding white blouse has that effect. As for *Lederhosen* - admittedly I grew up in North Germany and consider these pants not part of my culture but as belonging to alpine regions like Bavaria – I consider them only one step up from the fur wraps Neanderthal men were sporting. *Vom Fell zum Leder*, from fur to leather, is a small step. Many Bavarians have not yet advanced to spandex, microfiber or nanobritches. *Lederhosen* don’t have to be dry-cleaned or washed, which makes them economical garments for a man to wear and should have great appeal, sexy or not, to the *sparsame Hausfrau*, the frugal housewife.

“Dear Helga’s Corner. Are steins made to keep the beer cold?” My response: “*Nein, no, nein*”. Germans like their *Bier* at room or basement temperature. Steins are made to hold the beer until you drink it. *Stein* is the German word for stone. Most steins are stone ware. *Ein Maßkrug* is one of the German words for this mug, *a Maß* for short. *Der Deckel*, lid, keeps other people’s spit out of your *Bier*, and nowadays we see that protection on coffee mugs as well.

“Liebe Frau Helga! Warum ist deutscher Kartoffelsalat warm?” What Americans call German potato salad is an insult to a perfectly good vegetable and is served warm in Bavaria. You peel and boil potatoes, slice them, add onions, bacon drippings and vinegar and eat it before it gets cold. The more refined version has *Mayonnaise* and is kept cold. Remember, *die Kartoffel* is native to the Americas and was not popular in *Europa* until centuries after 1492.

Can you see this American tourist in Bavaria in his *Lederhosen*? He is gobbling up *warmen Kartoffelsalat*, gazes at the cleavage of a *Dirndl* and lifts a mighty *Maß*. *Prost*.

Übung

Liebe Frau Helga

Please, copy the German words and phrases printed in bold letters on the preceding page. Make sure you know what they mean.

Words from the 2nd paragraph: (sample: **Dirndl** - **Balkon** - ...)

Words from the 3rd paragraph:

Words from the 4th paragraph:

Please, draw a lady in a **Dirndl** and a guy in **Lederhosen**.

Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben!

Happy is a gipsy's life...This popular, cheerful song about gipsies (**Zigeuner**) says that their life is **lustig**, meaning cheerful and enjoyable. Their life is not "lusting" as my friend Pete had translated the word **lustig**.

The adjective **lustig** has many meanings: **eine lustige Geschichte** is a funny story; **ein lustiger Mensch** is a cheerful person. The noun **Lust** has many uses as well - and none of them means "lust" in the sense an American might find it in his heart.

Ich habe Lust, ins Kino zu gehen means "I feel like going to the movies". **Ein Lustspiel** is a comedy. **Die Wanderlust** is the hankering for the wide blue yonder.

Of course, even a German might be lusting and craving now and then for one thing or another. The word for that is **lüstern**. **Der Präsident lüstert nach**...whatever.

Since **Lust** and lust are linguistically related, there are overlapping words like **der Lustmolch** which is a man with a keen interest in women.

Not only **Zigeuner** are considered **lustig**, so are the people in the Austrian and now Italian area of the Tirol. A children's song tells us: **Die Tiroler sind lustig, die Tiroler sind froh, sie verkaufen ihre Bettchen und schlafen auf Stroh** - they sell their beds and sleep on straw. In other words, poverty makes them happy and carefree.

I prefer to identify with the **Zigeuner**, because the song about them continues by giving the reason for their happiness: they don't have to pay taxes to Cesar, the **Kaiser** (at least they didn't in the good old days) :... **brauchen dem Kaiser kein Zins zu geben. Fariah, fariah, ho!**

Alle Vögel sind schon da

1. Al - le Vö - gel sind schon da, al - le Vö - gel
al - le. Welch ein Sin - gen, Mu - si - zern,
Pfei - fen, Zwi - t - schern, Ti - ri - liern: Früh - ling will nun
ein - mar - schiern, kommt mit Sang und Schal - le.

2. Wie sie alle lustig sind, flink und froh sich regen. / Amsel,
Drossel, Fink und Star und die ganze Vogelschar / wünschen
uns ein frohes Jahr, lauter Heil und Segen.

3. Was sie uns verkünden nun, nehmen wir zu Herzen: / Wir
auch wollen lustig sein, lustig wie die Vögelein, / hier und
dort, feldaus, feldein, singen, springen, scherzen.

All birds are already here/ All birds, all./Hear that singing, music making/

Whistling, chirping, tirileering!/ Spring will now come marching in,/ Comes
with songs and sounds.

How they all are merry now,/ Moving gay and nimble!/ Blackbird, thrush and
finch and starling/ And the 'ntire flock of birds,/ They wish us a happy year,/ Lots of
health and blessings.

What they all announce to us,/ We accept in our heart./ We would like to be as
merry,/ Merry as the little birds,/ Here and there, in all the fields,/ Sing, and dance,
be happy.

This poem written by Hoffmann von Fallersleben in about 1839 for an old
folk tune, is a staple in children's songs and makes the singers feel as *lustig* and
happy as little birds in the spring.

Mein Verein

Ein Verein (pronounced “fair ine”) is a club, society or organized group. Many German sports fans identify with a *Sportverein* in the same way Americans name their college as their favorite team. When the former teenage tennis star Boris Becker won at Wimbledon, his training and support came from his home-town *Tennisverein*.

My father played soccer for a *Fußballverein* called “*Spiel und Sport*” while he went to college. How great was then his disappointment when his son, my brother, decided to play *Fußball* in another local *Verein*! *Vereinstreue* (loyalty to your club) is a sign of good citizenship and sometimes runs in families.

Germans settling in other countries – be it in *Australien, Afrika oder Amerika* – took their love for *Vereine* along. They often founded a *Gesangverein* soon after their first harvest. Many of them are still viable choirs, with names like *Saengerrunde, Liederkranz, Beethovenchor* and *Frohsinn*.

Next on the scene was often the *Schützenverein*, a shooting society. Its origin lies in the Napoleonic era, when German states were allowed only a small army. A *Schützenverein* offered many men the opportunity to be trained in the use of arms in a civilian setting.

Great enjoyment and loyalty are also found in *Vereine* cultivating local traditions like *Ostfriesenvereine*.

What *Verein* would I join in Germany? I would look for a *Deutsch-Texanischer Freundschaftsverein*, maybe similar to the German-Texan Heritage Society in Texas. However, the “Texans” in *Deutschland* would probably come in cowboy boots (*Stiefel*) and Stetsons to the *Vereinssitzung*.

Übung

Mein Verein

What type of *Verein* or *Club* would you join?

Pick one of the following clubs to match the person's talent:

Gesangverein	Fußballverein	Tennisclub	Schützenverein
Tanzclub	Wanderverein	Skiclub	Skatclub
Bergsteigerverein	Wildwestverein	Kegelclub	Tischtennisverein

Marianne loves to tango : _____

Willy fancies himself a good shooter:_____

Theodor itches to kick a ball around:_____

Mario thinks people love to hear him sing:_____

Boris loves a racket: _____

Hillary likes to climb:_____

Bill knocks them all over:_____

Karl says all Texans are either cowboys or Indians:_____

Hans and Hanna play ping and pong:_____

Jack of club is the best card in this club:_____

Ted enjoys going downhill fast: _____

Liz hikes over the hills and through the dales:_____

Mudder gleicht die alte Katz

Following the first World War, many German-Americans spoke German without the benefit of having learned proper grammar or spelling. They wrote it down as they thought it might be understood by others. Present day descendants with even less knowledge of the language but armed with a dictionary, are trying to translate those old letters, diaries and church minutes. Here are some examples on which I was asked for a second opinion. You can try to do your own translation first, then look at the bottom of the article for my guesses at what they meant.

1 **Unsere Mudder gleicht die alte Katz:** Our mother looks like the old cat.

2 *...dann kamen die trei Waisen aus dem Morgen land:* ...then came the three orphans from the acre of land.

3 *..., das unsere Amma gestern gestorben ist. Sie war Papa seine Mutter:* ...that our nursemaid died yesterday. She was Daddy's mother.

4 *Karl is nach Essen mit die fell von eine stink katze und einen gestopfte wash bärn für Emmas kinder:* After the meal Karl is with the skin of a stinking cat and a darned wash bear for Emma's children.

5 *Der Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts an und haben nichts gemerkt:* The river was gone, but we were naked and did not notice anything.

6 **Das Ruck grat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen:** The jerk just broke, and he died without pain.

Helga's suggestions:

1 Our mother likes the old cat.

2 ...then came the three Wise Men from the Orient.

3 ... that our grandma died yesterday. She was daddy's mother. (*Amma* and *Omma* are regional pronunciations of *Oma*).

4 Karl went to the (town of) Essen with the skin of a skunk and a stuffed raccoon for Emma's children.

5 The electricity was off, but we had nothing turned on and did not notice it.

6 The spine broke, and he died without pain.

Übung

Mudder gleicht die alte Katz.

There is nothing very wrong with speaking and writing German the way one learned it at home in a foreign country, even if it is rather different from today's high German. However, the wrong selection of a word with several meanings can lead to astonishing misunderstandings – see the predicament with “like” meaning “similar” and “love”, and **Strom** meaning river and electricity.

Please, copy the corrected text and read it aloud.

Mudder gleicht die alte Katz

Mutter liebt die alte Katze.

...die trei Waisen aus dem Morgen land

...die drei Weisen aus dem Morgenland

Sie war Papas seine Mutter.

Sie war Papas Mutter.

...mit dem Fell von einem stink katze

...mit dem Fell von einem Stinktier

Der Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts an.

Der (elektrische) Strom war weg, aber wir hatten nichts angeschaltet.

Das Ruck grat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen.

Das Rückgrat brach, und er starb ohne Schmerzen.

Nüchtern?

German has some words with two or more different meanings. These words are mean, I mean: mean! One of those traps is **nüchtern**, which can mean „sober“, but also „having an empty stomach“. Here are some other examples with translations which can easily be wrong for the situation.

das Rezept = recipe; prescription

Der Arzt gab mir ein Rezept für meine Bronchitis.

The doctor gave me a recipe for my bronchitis.

die Karte = map; postcard

Schick mir bitte eine Karte vom Hotel.

Please send me a map of the Hotel.

verlegen = misplace; publish

Der Verleger hat mein Buch verlegt.

The publisher misplaced my book.

Sie, sie = you; she; they

Sie riechen nicht so gut.

You don't smell so good.

Arme = arms; poor people

Nackte Arme sind in dieser Kirche nicht erlaubt.

In this church naked poor people are not allowed.

das Schloss = palace; lock

Der Fürst sammelt alte Schlösser.

The prince collects old palaces.

die Decke = blanket; ceiling

Liebling, die Decke ist schmutzig.

Honey, the ceiling is dirty.

Imagine my embarrassment recently. I was resting on the couch, day-dreaming in German, when the phone rang: “Dr. Snor wants you to come in for a blood test tomorrow morning”. Intending to ask if I had to come on an empty stomach, I sure enough picked the wrong translation of **nüchtern** and asked her: ”Do I have to be sober?” Her reply was a long silence and then: “Ma'm? Will that be a problem?”

Übung

Nüchtern?

Please translate the following sentences into German and write them on the lines provided:

The doctor gave me a prescription.

They don't smell so good.

Naked arms are not allowed in this church.

The prince collects old locks.

Darling, the blanket is dirty.

I am sober.

Nullen

A German's birthday can be as disastrous as a stock-market crash if it is a birthday ending in zero, *Null* - like in 50 or 60, or worse, in 70. (*der siebzigste Geburtstag*). *Man nullt* on that day and owes the world an unforgettable celebration. Tradition demands that the honoree of the day, *das Geburtstagskind*, pays for the party, *die Feier*.

Last *Juni* my brother turned 70. *Die schriftliche Einladung*, the written invitation, *kam im April*.

Die Feier took place in the town's largest *Garten-Restaurant* and began with *Champagner* at 11 in the morning. *Um 12* a hot *Büffet* called *Brunch*, with exquisite delicacies, was devoured, accompanied by speeches and skits performed by his bowling club, *von seinen Kegelbrüdern*.

Mit vollem Bauch und vom Wein etwas wackelig auf den Beinen, stomachs filled and their legs a bit unsteady from the *Wein*, *die Gäste* then strolled *im Garten* until *Kaffee und Kuchen* were served at *3 Uhr 30*. More funny skits, this time by his *Sauna* buddies.

The first *Cognacs*, *ein Schnaps*, *noch ein Schnaps* - and *die Bar* opened and *ein Fass Bier* was *angezapft* and a memorable dinner was served. Some of the 60 guests went home after dinner. Taxis and designated drivers had been arranged well in advance.

Later that month my brother had to spend a round, *einen ausgeben*, for the *Senioren Tischtennis Club*, the church choir and the banker in charge of his accounts.

Warnung!!! When you are fixing to *nullen*, don't plan to celebrate the day with friends and relatives in Germany.

Übung

Nullen

On the morning after my brother's 70th birthday party, my diary entries testified to my befuddled mind. Some words were hard to unscramble. Please, give it a try.

You find the words spelled correctly in the preceding article. As you write them down, make a mental note of their meaning in English.

taggebrust _____

zigsbestie _____

eifer _____

frischleicht aleindung _____

kaeffe _____

kneuch _____

spansch _____

iber _____

riosenne _____

wungarn _____

lackewig _____

schittinnes _____

lunnel _____

niene eusebang _____

betüff _____

Das Reißverschlussystem

Meine Reise durch Deutschland im Juni und Juli 2008 hat mir viele gute Erinnerungen geschenkt. I really have so many good memories of that trip through Germany. **Hier ist eine Liste** of some words that evoke positive images:

Freundliche und hilfsbereite Menschen. People were genuinely friendly and eager to help. Even Railroad employees ***in Uniform*** carried ***meine Koffer***. Teenagers offered me their ***Sitze im Bus***.

Die deutsche Fahne, schwarz, rot, gold. Until a few years ago many Germans considered waving a flag the first step towards dangerous nationalism. The world soccer cup in Berlin in 2006 changed all that. ***Schwarz, rot gold*** flies from ***the Balkon***, from ***Autos, auf T-shirts***, it's even painted on cheeks.

Toleranz. The ***Fußballspiele***, soccer games, for the European cup were dominating life while I was there. All over Germany ***die Türken, die Spanier, die Polen*** all hoisted and showed off their national flags openly and with pride.

Gastfreundschaft. Meine Gastgeber, my hosts, all friends or relatives, were so warmhearted and generous! To be a good guest, you should stay for only two or three days, which I did. ***So ist man ein guter Gast.***

Nicht meine Schuld . Niemand hat mir den Krieg in Irak in die Schuhe geschoben. It was a great relief that nobody blamed me, the American, for the Iraq war. They blamed Washington.

Das Reißverschlussystem, the system that functions like a zipper. The post-WWII generation that had to fight for everything they needed, is off the road, so to speak, and a more relaxed attitude towards living, problem- solving and especially driving has taken over. When a huge crowd in thousands of cars had to go home after watching Germany play against Spain on a big screen near the Rhine in Koblenz, the traffic on two roads had to be merged into a single lane. Patiently the drivers took turns entering that one lane, one from the right, one from the left, just like a ***Reißverschluss***. This seems to me to be ***das Symbol für das neue Deutschland.***

Ich freue mich auf meine nächste Reise nach Deutschland.

Übung

Das Reißverschlussssystem

Please translate the following English phrases into German using the text on the left as reference.

in June and July _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

good memories _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

my trip through Germany _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

friendly people _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

my suitcases _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

the German flag _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

black, red, gold _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ , _ _ _ , _ _ _ _

the Turks _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

tolerance _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

my hosts _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

a good guest _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

not my fault _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

zipper _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Wir täten schon wollen...

There are verbs in English and in German that often annoy me either through their meaning or their irregular forms. Let's consider "to trust", *trauen* in German. "You can trust me", in *Du kannst mir trauen*, tells me not to trust that person, a red flag goes up. However, *Ich traue mich nicht* means I don't dare, and in the past tense that would be *Ich habe mich nicht getraut*. For you and me together it would be *Wir haben uns nicht getraut*, we didn't dare; no red flag.

I wanted to translate into English a quote from Bavarian humorist Karl Valentin (pronounced "Fallenteen") the other day. I had to deal with several irregular verbs with multiple meanings and with Bavarian grammar. After a sleepless night I gave up and thought I let my readers help me by sending me their version of a translation. (helgavs@aol.com)

The verbs Valentin used in his famous lines:

like: We don't like that. *Wir mögen das nicht.*

want: We want that. *Wir wollen das.*

be allowed: We are allowed to. *Wir dürfen das.*

would do: We would do that. *Wir täten das.*

dare: We don't dare. *Wir trauen uns nicht.*

Here are Valentin's two lines which describe a state of mind that so many of us choose to be in more often than *wir täten sollen*.

Mög'n täten wir schon wollen,
aber dürf'n haben wir uns nicht getraut.

Übung

Wir täten schon wollen...

When the preceding article was first published, I, the author, was delighted at the great number of responses from readers who tried to find the full meaning of Valentin's saying. To calm down everybody's confused mind, let us now do some routine grammar exercise.

Please, copy the following sentences and also fill in the dotted lines.

mögen:	Wir mögen das.	Ich mag das.	Er mag das.
	_____	_____	_____
	Wir mögen das nicht.	Ich mag das nicht.	Er.....
	_____	_____	_____
wollen:	Wir wollen das.	Ich will das.	Er will das.
	_____	_____	_____
	Wir wollen das nicht	Ich.....	Er.....
	_____	_____	_____
dürfen:	Wir dürfen das.	Ich darf das.	Er darf das.
	_____	_____	_____
	Wir dürfen das nicht.	Ich.....	Er.....
	_____	_____	_____
tun:	Wir täten das.	Ich täte das.	Er täte das.
	_____	_____	_____
	Wir täten das nicht.	Ich.....	Er.....
	_____	_____	_____

sich trauen:

Wir trauen uns.

Ich traue mich.

Er traut sich.

Wir trauen uns nicht.

Ich traue.....

Er.....

Wohnkultur

The verb **wohnen** refers to your place of residence and has among its many translations “to live” and to “reside”. **Frau Wagner wohnt in Bremen. Sie hat eine kleine Wohnung**, a small apartment.

Wohnkultur describes the way you keep your immediate surroundings. It is part of a life-style on which many Germans pride themselves. You present yourself through your choice of furniture, wallpaper, the latest appliances, lampshades, works of art and other visual testimony to your personality. None of them seems more important than the treatment of your windows. **Das Fenster** has to please not only you but all the people walking by the **Haus** you live in.

I once inherited a slightly neglected **Haus** in the small town of Bad Salzuflen. Before I spent a **Pfennig** on fixing the plumbing and other interior problems, I spent a **Vermögen**, a fortune, on beautifying the front of the house, mainly with **Blumen**, flowers.

I stuck **Geranien** in all the flowerboxes (**Blumenkästen**). **Gardinen**, expensive lace curtains, adorned the **Fenster** on the inside, but in the parlor they were only half-length, because on the wide marble **Fensterbank**, window-sill, I cultivated an eclectic collection of flowering potted plants, **Topfblumen**, and a **Kaktus** that never bloomed for me.

With a guy from the nursery I planted **Rosen, Jasmin und Rhododendron in den Vorgarten** (front yard).

Not until then was I finally ready to call the plumber.

I realized that the priorities in my **Wohnkultur** had been set by what is not really a bad standard – that of “What will people think of me?” - **Was sollen denn die Leute von mir denken?**

Übung

Wohnkultur

Please translate the words in parenthesis into German.

Frau Wagner (resides) _ _ _ _ _ **in Bremen.**

Sie wohnt in einer kleinen (apartment) _ _ _ _ _ .

Ihre Wohnung hat viele (windows) _ _ _ _ _ .

Frau Wagner liebt (flowers). _ _ _ _ _ .

Sie hat (potted plants) _ _ _ _ _ *auf der großen* (window sill)
_ _ _ _ _ *im Wohnzimmer.*

In den Blumenkästen wachsen (geraniums) _ _ _ _ _ .

In Frau Wagners (front yard) _ _ _ _ _ *steht ein* (cactus)
_ _ _ _ _ . **Er ist krank.**

Im Garten wachsen rote und gelbe (roses) _ _ _ _ _ .

Der (jasmin) _ _ _ _ _ **duftet sehr gut.**

Name two of Mrs. Wagner's plants that do well in Texas:

Angst

Angst gripped Professor B. when he opened the 2008 year-end statement from his investment manager. The entire world was in a financial crisis. “My nest egg shriveled like a **Bratwurst** on hot coal,” he moaned, showing overwhelming **Weltschmerz** on his face.

“I told you not to invest in stocks, not at your age”, giggled his colleague beaming with **Schadenfreude**.

He blew his nose to collect himself. “**Gesundheit!**” she said and added “anyhow, money in the bank is a poor **Ersatz** for genuine happiness. Grasp the **Zeitgeist**, friend, toss the **Poltergeist** of old and trust our new president.”

After lunch Professor B. **schlepped** himself to his trusted old **Volkswagen** and drove out of town giving himself to the **Fahrvergnügen** no other car had ever given him. “For me, there is happiness in simply going somewhere, just anywhere,” he thought. Even in **Kindergarten** his mother had excused his wandering off episodes with an inherited **Wanderlust**.

Shifting down into second gear as he passed some sheep, the solution to America’s problems came to him: Our president must convince all people in crowded cities that they need more **Lebensraum**, that they have to spread out over the empty spaces in the mid-western states. That building boom might even force St. Nick to rehire **Donner** and **Blitzen** whom he had fired after last year’s poor Christmas sales.

Filled with new **Lebenslust**, Professor B. sang loud and unabashed: “**Mein Vater war ein Wandersmann...**”

Übung

Angst

Write the correct German word on the line next to the English word or phrase that comes close to a translation.

Angst Bratwurst Schadenfreude Ersatz Lebensraum Blitz
Zeitgeist Volkswagen Wanderlust Kindergarten Weltschmerz

lightning _ _ _ _ _

enjoying other people's misfortune _ _ _ _ _

an educational place for young children _ _ _ _ _

substitute _ _ _ _ _

sausage for grilling or frying _ _ _ _ _

all the world's misery _ _ _ _ _

the spirit of the times _ _ _ _ _

folk's wagon with initials V and W _ _ _ _ _

yearning to physically go somewhere _ _ _ _ _

space to live in and to expand in _ _ _ _ _

Gesundheit

Good health (*Gesundheit*) is nothing to sneeze at. Germans wish you “*Gesundheit*” after you sneeze. Many of them also seem to be in a craze presently to work toward better health, creating no end of problems for themselves.

Those with enough money buy “*Bio* ...” which corresponds to our “organic”. *Bio-Äpfel*, *Bio-Bananen* and *Bio-Dill* are easy to find. However, if you insist on *Bio-Hähnchen* (organic chicken) and *Bio-Wein* when you travel, like some of my companions did, you might have to shop around for a while.

The worst experience during my recent trip to Germany was the fact, that most people ate only one (1) *Brötchen* for breakfast instead of the traditional two. I stuck to tradition.

Keeping *fit* through physical activity is another temptation to overdo it. My very own brother, 71, runs for 3 km before breakfast. My classmates at our reunion discussed their weekly regiments: *Nordic walking* which makes them swing two long poles like cross-country skiers. *Tennis*, *Schwimmen*, *Radfahren* (biking), *Gymnastik*, *Wandern* or *Golf*. That they did too much of whatever they did was obvious because they all complained of aches and pains and joint replacements.

I tend to keep exercise within reasonable limits, and so it filled me with satisfaction and comfort when I listened to their laments of *Tennis-Ellbogen*, *Herzinfarkt beim Tennis-Doppel*, *neue Kniegelenke*, *neue Hüften* (new knees and hips), and *Lendenwirbelsäulensyndrom* which is a lower back problem. I don’t suffer from any of those maladies.

My 2009 trip to Germany taught me a lesson: Should I ever feel the urge to walk around Lake Pflugerville, about three miles, I know it is time to retire to my couch, munch on an organic apple and listen to classical music until the urge floats away. *Eine gesunde Kombination: eine Couch, ein Bio-Äpfel und klassische Musik.*

Übung

Gesundheit

Please, write down six types of exercise (in German, of course).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Write down four kinds of trouble caused by too much exercise:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Write down four organic food items:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Die Teutonen

A Texas rancher asked me: “Can you help me find a wife for my son? We are millionaires with vast land holdings in two counties. Only condition is, she has to be of Teutonic extraction.” When I heard “vast land holdings” I was tempted to offer my daughter who wanted to raise horses on a big scale. But then I wasn’t sure about the full meaning and implications of “Teutonic extraction” and kept quiet.

Shortly after this encounter, “Texas Highways” magazine published an article about the German-Texans titled “Tracing Texas’ Teutonic Lineage” (Sept. 1993). That made it clear, that - at least in Texas - Teutonic can mean not only Germanic but also simply German. However, the German word *teutonisch* refers only to a particular Germanic tribe, *die Teutonen*.

The syllables *Teuto* are also found in the name *Teutoburger Wald* which is a stretch of forested hills in northern Germany where one of the world’s most important battles took place in the year 9 A.D.. *Hermann*, commanding the army of the Germanic tribe called Cherusci, defeated the advancing Roman army and stopped them from expanding their influence further north. *Hermann der Cherusker* lives on in folklore and is celebrated in two enormous monuments, one in the *Teutoburger Wald*, and a replica near New Ulm, Minnesota. The victorious *Hermann* is also the hero for whom German immigrants named a still active insurance company, the “Sons of Hermann”.

When *Hermann* fell in love with maiden *Thusnelda*, and when her father refused to give her to him, he kidnapped her and made her his wife. Somehow that led to “*Thusnelda*” meaning wife, like in: *Kennst du seine Thusnelda?* (Do you know his wife?)

I hope the son of the rancher with vast land holdings in two counties has found his *Thusnelda* by now, Teutonic or not.

Übung

Die Teutonen

The battle in the *Teutoburger Wald* in 9 A. D. between the Romans and the Cheruski inspired Joseph Viktor von Scheffel 1847 to this tongue-in-cheek ballad which is still sung and shouted by hikers and at parties. Most of the 15 verses are a gruesome description of battle scenes, so I print out only two. For the melody go to <ingeb.org>. This translation is by Randy Rupley.

Als die Römer frech geworden,	When some naughty Romans legions,
Sim serim sim sim sim,	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
Zogen sie nach Deutschlands Norden,	Tried to conquer German regions,
Sim serim sim sim sim,	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
Vorne mit Trompetenschall,	Leading with the trumpets call,
Tä te rä tä tä tä,	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
Ritt der Generalfeldmarschall,	Rode the General Field Marshall,
Tä te rä tä tä tä,	Tey ratey tey tey terey
<i>Herr Quintilius Varus</i>	Mr. Quintilius Varus,
Wau wau wau wau wau wau,	Vow, vow, vow, vow, vow, vow,
Herr Quintilius Varus,	Mr. Quintilius Varus,
<i>Schnäde räng täng, schnäde räng täng,</i>	
Shnade uh rang tang,shnade uh rang tang	
Schnäde räng täng de räng täng täng.	
Shnade uh ran tang darang tang tang.	
In dem Teutoburger Walde,	Out in the teutoburger trees,
Sim serim sim sim sim sim	Sim serim sim sim sim sim,
Hu! Wie pfiff der Wind so kalte.	Huh! Whistling in the cold breeze,
Sim serim sim sim sim sim	Sim serim sim sim sim sim
Raben flogen durch die Luft,	Raven flying in the air,
Tä te rä tä tä tä,	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
Und es war ein Moderduft	The stench of death was everywhere,
Tä te rä tä tä tä	Tey ratey tey tey terey,
Wie von Blut und Leichen.	As if from blood and bodies.
Wau wau wau wau wau wau,	Vow, vow, vow, vow, vow, vow,
Wie von Blut und Leichen,	As if from blood and bodies.
<i>Schnäde räng täng, schnäde räng täng,</i>	
Shnade uh rang tang, shnade uh rang tang	
Schnäde räng täng de räng täng täng.	
Shnade uh rang tangdarang tang tang	

p.s. It was discovered just a few years ago that this historically important battle did not take place in the Teutoburger Wald but near Kalkriese, more than an hour of fast driving NE of the location of the Hermanns Denkmal which commemorates the event. The battle is now called *die Varusschlacht*.

Dichter und Denker

Germans don't think of themselves as living in the "land of Krauts"; they say they live *im Land der Dichter und Denker*, in the land of poets and thinkers. Among themselves, though, they use special terms for certain groups of the population.

Der deutsche Michel is a term for the unpolitical, poorly informed, good-hearted, hard-working fellow. In cartoons he has a round face and belly, and he wears a sleeping-cap.

Das Müller Lieschen is the simple woman, not well educated, who gets her opinions and knowledge of the world by reading tabloids like *Das Bild*.

Otto Normalverbraucher is the average consumer.

Die Wessis is a derogatory name used by people in former "East" (*Ost-*) Germany for West Germans who bought up privatized properties and businesses in the east after unification in the early 1990s, when the *Ossis* did not yet have enough money to do so.

Die Ostfriesen are to Germany what the Aggies are to Texas. East Friesland (*Ostfriesland*) is a flat, low-lying region bordering the North Sea, and the *Ostfriesen* are the tribe or population living there. You can google *Ostfriesen-Witze* like this one on the Internet. „*Wieviele Ostfriesen braucht man, um ein Schiff zu taufen?*“ In Texas you would ask how many Aggies it takes to baptize a ship. *Antwort: „1001(Eintausendundeinen). Ein Ostfrieser hält die Flasche, 1000 (tausend)Ostfriesen werfen das Schiff gegen die Flasche.“*

Übung

Dichter und Denker

Germany is “*das Land der Dichter und Denker*”. Can you match the *Dichter or Denker* with one of their works? The answers are at the bottom of the page

- a Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832) _____
- b Friedrich von Schiller (1759 – 1805) _____
- c Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) _____
- d Hermann Hesse (1877 – 1962) _____
- e Wilhelm Busch (1832 – 1908) _____
- f Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) _____
- g Bertolt Brecht (1889 – 1956) _____
- h Günter Grass (1927 - _____

1 Max und Moritz, 2 Das Glasperlenspiel, 3 Die Dreigroschenoper, 4 Die Räuber, 5 Faust, 6 Also sprach Zarathustra, 7 Die Blechtrommel, 8 Kritik der reinen Vernunft

a/5 b/4 c/8 d/2 e/1 f/6 g/3 h/7

THE END

DAS ENDE