

Hitler Study Guide

Hitler by Ian Kershaw

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Hitler Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Fantasy and Failure.....	4
Drop-Out.....	5
Elation and Embitterment.....	6
Discovering a Talent.....	7
The Beerhall Agitator.....	8
The Drummer.....	9
Emergence of the Leader.....	11
Mastery Over the Movement.....	12
Breakthrough.....	14
Levered into Power.....	16
The Making of the Dictator.....	17
Securing Total Power.....	19
Working Towards the Fuhrer.....	20
Characters.....	22
Objects/Places.....	25
Themes.....	27
Style.....	29
Quotes.....	31
Topics for Discussion.....	33



Plot Summary

Adolf Hitler's father changed his name from Alois Schicklgruber to Alois Hitler some thirteen years prior to Hitler's birth. Hitler was said to have claimed that was a good decision. Hitler and his father never got along. Hitler's mother, Klara Polzl, was ineffective against Hitler's domineering father though she was likely the only person he really cared for over the course of his entire life. After his father's death, Hitler moved to Vienna, ostensibly to study art. He was not accepted to the university and lived almost on the streets after his mother's death of breast cancer. For awhile Hitler made a reasonable living creating small paintings sold by a friend. When he failed to register for the military, he fled Vienna to keep from being jailed. He was tracked down in Munich but found unfit for service and released. Soon after, he joined the Bavarian military as an Austrian, probably on a clerical error.

Hitler was taken with the military life. Though he saw heavy fighting and dangerous situations, he was part of a group and seemed taken with that unity. He won the iron cross twice during World War I and found ways to remain in the army for as long as possible. After the war but before being mustered out of the army, Hitler proved what he had always known, which is that he had the gift of public speaking. He was recruited as a propaganda specialist for the Nazi Party and was soon in the thick of that organization. His rise through the ranks was inevitable but he continued to seek advances for the Party rather than personal gain for some time.

Hitler was eventually jailed for thirteen months after a failed coup and it was during this time that he solidified his plans for a personal rebuilding of the Party with himself as leader. Through elections, the Party gained political power and Hitler was eventually named Chancellor.

His use of propaganda and theatrics was unlimited and Hitler could do anything to gain the confidence of his audience. He once stood with his arm outstretched for seven hours as some 110,000 members of the Young Hitler organization trooped past. Once out of the public eye, he collapsed with exhaustion.

As chancellor, Hitler had a great deal of power and continued to work toward putting the Nazis in full control of the country. In an unprecedented move, he made himself supreme commander of the government and the military upon the death of the former Reich President. He continued to promote his plans of land expansion and eradication of the Jews. When someone opposed him, Hitler struck forcefully, killing several of his opponents. This earned the condemnation of the rest of the world but the admiration of the Germans who saw Hitler's actions as a decisive way of eliminating a scourge.



Fantasy and Failure

Fantasy and Failure Summary and Analysis

The author began with a look at Adolf Hitler's family. Hitler's father, in 1876, thirteen years before Hitler's birth, changed his name from Alois Schicklgruber to Alois Hitler. The author noted that "Heil Schicklgruber" doesn't have the same ring as "Heil Hitler." Hitler's father, Alois, was unloving and strict but his mother, having lost several children in infancy, was overly protective and might have been the only person Hitler really loved.

In part two, Hitler's was a good student, making good grades without putting out a great deal of effort. He enjoyed the American adventure series about Indians written by Karl May and, as leader of the German Army, insisted that his generals read these to improve their imaginations. As Hitler was about to embark on his secondary education, his only remaining living brother died. His half-brother was by then living away from home and at odds with their father. This meant that all the career ambitions Alois held for his offspring rested with Hitler. Alois wanted his son to follow in his footsteps and become a civil servant. He was transferred to another school but hated it and showed signs of immaturity in his performance and his lack of new friendships. In 1905, having suffered a series of failed classes, he convinced his mother to allow him to drop out. He was sixteen with no plan for the future. He developed a close friendship with August Kubizek, known as "Gustl." He eventually convinced his mother to send him to Vienna where he planned to study painting. He was not admitted to the program, a fact that he said was a serious blow. He was called home when his mother's battle against breast cancer worsened and was with her when she died. Her doctor, who happened to be Jewish, wrote later that Hitler was grief stricken. Hitler then returned to Vienna, ostensibly to become an architect although he actually returned to a life of idle laziness with no goals.

There is some question about Hitler's grandfather but the author dispelled the rumor that Hitler might have had a Jewish grandfather. The author believed it more likely that Hitler's grandfather was either the man who eventually married Hitler's grandmother, Johan Georg Hiedler, or Georg's brother, Johan Nepomuk Heidler.

Hitler's attitudes and self-confidence were seen in his decision to study painting. He wrote that he had not given any thought to the idea that he might not be accepted into the program. He had simply expected to fly through the entrance exams and pass. Another aspect of his attitude was seen when he and his friend Gustl bought a lottery ticket. Hitler expected to win, so much so that he made plans of the kind of house he planned to design and build for he and Gustl to share once they had the money. When the ticket failed to produce the expected windfall, Hitler was furious with the state lottery commission.



Drop-Out

Drop-Out Summary and Analysis

For five years, Hitler lived in Vienna. There were many Jews and the anti-Jewish sentiment was strong. Hitler watched those who led those movements and learned lessons, including how to use a crowd for his own purpose, the value of propaganda, and hatred of organized labor. In part two, Hitler was eighteen and living in Vienna and corresponded with his family for only a few years. His friend Gustl lived with him for a time and said that Hitler often went off on tirades, ranting about everything and everybody. Hitler read a lot, including the newspapers. In part three, Gustl brought home a young female music student for study and Hitler became angry, saying that education was wasted on women. He never drank and avoided prostitutes as morally "decadent" and crawling with infections. His purpose seemed to be to "uphold the strength and purity of the German race."

Hitler decided to make a second application to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna but was denied even the opportunity to take the entrance exam. In part four, he stayed nine months in Felberstrabe but little is known of this period. He moved several times and was virtually living on the streets when he met a man named Reinhold Hanisch. Hanisch convinced Hitler to sell small paintings and he sold them, splitting the profits and making them both a reasonably comfortable living. One of the customers was a Jew named Josef Neumann and it was likely that Hitler was on "friendly terms" with him. In part five, Hitler began reading more about Jews and began to form his hatred of them. About this time, Hitler claimed to have realized that Jews were not a religious faction but an entire race of people in and of themselves.

In part six, Hitler left Vienna. Though he gave several lofty reasons, the author pointed out that Hitler had failed to register for the military, an action punishable by law, and was forced to flee the country or face the penalties. Rudolf Hausler, a young shop assistant who was apparently between jobs, accompanied Hitler to Munich.

The author noted that Hitler talked of his voracious appetite for reading and claimed to have read authors such as Goethe, Dante and Neitzsche, but that there wasn't evidence that he did read those authors. He did admire people who had artistic, writing and musical talent. The author also noted that there were those who talked about Hitler's hatred of Jews at this time but the author said that the basis of hatred was already in place but the consuming hatred had not yet been set in place. The author noted that Hitler began buying anti-Semitic material and that he began to associate Jews with "dirt and disease." It seems likely that the material he was reading forged these associations.



Elation and Embitterment

Elation and Embitterment Summary and Analysis

In part one, the author noted that Hitler's future was changed with the advent of World War I. In part two, Hitler moved to Munich and he and Hausler rented an apartment from Joseph Popp. Hitler continued to read but not for new information. He sought out reading material that would confirm his emerging prejudices, especially against the Jews. In 1913, Hitler was arrested for failure to register for the military in Vienna but a problem with conveying the orders for the date he was to appear in court earned him a few extra days. He was sent to Salzburg to face the charges but was found "too weak to undertake military service" and was released.

In part three, Hitler joined the Bavarian Army as an Austrian. The author noted that Hitler claimed later to have received special permission to do so but that it was more likely that he was accepted to the military as a clerical error in the rush of young men desiring to fight. Hitler was assigned the duties of courier and was often caught in heavy fire as he carried his messages. He received the Iron Cross twice. He spent two months in a Red Cross hospital at Beelitz which is near Berlin. In part four, Hitler was angry over the attitudes of the people who complained about the deprivations of the war. Increasingly, Jews took the blame for various aspects of the war and the loss. In part five, Hitler noted the morale problems.

Hitler claimed to have gone to Munich in order to train as an architect though he also claimed at another time to have already had that training and to have plans to become a master builder. It's interesting that this man who became such an important leader to the German people was so lacking in personal ambition and drive. Hitler truly believed that his charisma and personality, although he did not refer to those traits specifically, should be enough for him to be successful. That may be why, in the end, that's exactly what happened.

Hitler was sent into the heat of battle soon after his induction into the military. From there, he wrote letters to Joseph Popp, his landlord and a man the author described as "an acquaintance." Hitler had not kept up with family and had established no lasting friendships in his entire life. The army, however, provided friendships. Though Hitler remained at the edge of the group, he was still part of the group. Another interesting point is that Hitler took in a stray dog named Foxl. The author noted that when Foxl went missing, Hitler took the loss hard and showed emotions that he'd never shown when his fellow military recruits were killed.



Discovering a Talent

Discovering a Talent Summary and Analysis

In part one, the German people were in upheaval as the workers took over the government fell. The Bavarian revolution created the perfect situation for Nazi propaganda. In part two, Hitler returned to Munich in 1918 and received a new military assignment. Hitler tried to remain in the military as long as possible, realizing that making a living in the turmoil of civilian life would be much more difficult. In part two, he was eventually assigned to the socialist government to provide troops with "educational material" which was really propaganda. It's likely that he didn't believe in the socialist government but was merely avoiding demobilization.

In part three, Hitler came to the attention of a commander, Captain Karl Mayr, through a series of events. Hitler was assigned to Mayr's department which was charged with choosing "propaganda agents." Hitler had a talent for the public speaking and put everything he had into the task at hand. He found he was able to sway those in his audience and claimed in his own writings to have "nationalized" his audiences. Hitler's stand on Jewry became clear during this time and though he was apparently told to tone down his public comments, a question regarding the socialist government's "official stand" on the "Jewish question" was referred to Hitler. Hitler said that the stand should be based on facts, not emotion, and that the systematic elimination of Jewish rights and then of the Jewish people was the answer.

In part four, one of Hitler's duties was to observe small parties springing up around the country and it was here that he first saw the German Workers' Party. He spoke out at that meeting, was invited to membership and joined. Hitler claimed to have wrangled at length with the decision of whether to join but the author noted that Mayr probably ordered Hitler to join in order to foster the group's growth. By the time he was out of the army, he had the background for political agitation and public speaking and had grown an audience. In Munich, he had become something of a legend already and patrons paid him to further the national cause.

Hitler apparently had no real intention of joining the German Workers' Party upon seeing the members in action for the first time. The author noted that Hitler held to the idea that he might begin a party of his own design. This was probably another pipe dream like so many Hitler had held to in the past. He wanted to be an architect or a painter but had lacked the initiative to take the steps necessary to make it happen. This apparently was the case again and though he had the ideals and the ability, he lacked the drive.



The Beerhall Agitator

The Beerhall Agitator Summary and Analysis

In part one, Hitler's speeches held wide appeal and the author noted that there was no need for deeply refined ideals. The people wanted simplistic slogans and Hitler was good at rousing emotional responses of anger and resentment. A railroad worker named Anton Drexler founded the movement that would become the German Workers' Party and eventually proposed that it should not allow Jews in the membership. When Hitler attended the first meeting, there were forty-one members present. In part two, there is an effort to promote the party and a large meeting is held during which Hitler is the second speaker. By Hitler's account, his words that night united those present to a new sense of nationality. One of the leaders of the group, Karl Harrer, soon broke off because of a conflict of ideals and goals. Crowds, increasing in number, continued to flock to meetings to hear Hitler. Hitler was later appointed chairman of the committee and some two thousand people attend the first meeting over which he presided. The author noted that there was little reaction from the press. He is soon the party's "star speaker" and the promise of his appearance is enough to draw hundreds or even thousands of listeners.

In part four, Hitler's speeches called for an end to the Jewish race though he declared that hatred is pointless without action. He said that Jews should be interred in concentration camps as a temporary measure but that they should be removed as a permanent measure. The author noted that many people felt this to mean Jews would be exiled from Germany. In part five, two men, Mayr and poet Dietrich Eckart, are important to Hitler's rising fame as a political speaker. Eckart apparently introduced Hitler to the bourgeois and provided financial support for the still struggling party. In part six, Hitler is supported by the party and critics cite his opulent lifestyle. In part seven, Dr. Otto Dickel emerges on the scene and vies Hitler for popularity as a party speaker. Hitler breaks with the party but party leaders see his leaving as the final blow and meet his conditions of return, including that the chairman of the party committee have "dictatorial power." There are soon other changes that point the party on the road to becoming a "Führer Party."

The author noted in the opening pages of this chapter that Hitler would not have been one of thousands of disenfranchised veterans after the war if it had not been for the political climate, his ability for public speaking, and the fact that he'd been noticed by political figures.

It's interesting that Hitler and Drexler came up with the idea of creating a committee of sorts to direct the German Workers' Party and that they proposed that this committee would be elected. It seems, considering Hitler's opposition to democratic processes, that he had every intention of abiding by the decisions of the voters in this situation. However, it might also have been that he was confident that he would be chosen as part of this committee.



The Drummer

The Drummer Summary and Analysis

In part one, the author noted that the political climate of the day was vital to Hitler's success as a public speaker. There was upheaval in the country that made the people ready for his message. In part two, prices were outrageously inflated, even more so than at the end of the war. Hitler remained dissatisfied with the amount of publicity being given to the party and arranged a violent attack against a separatist leader named Otto Ballerstedt. The attack was so successful that the police arrived but still had to call on Hitler to bring an end to the brawl. Ballerstedt pressed charges and Hitler was brought to court. He was sentenced to three months in jail for disturbing the peace. Two months were suspended on the condition of future good behavior but Hitler spent a month in jail at the Stadelheim prison, located in Munich, and the two months suspended sentence were effectively forgotten. Hitler continued to seek out opportunities for coverage by the press.

In part three, the German word "Führer" meant leader and around the time of these events, Hitler was not yet referring to himself as the one and only leader of the party. Instead, he referred to the need for leadership but insisted that the people must have the mechanism in place first and then hope that "God" would provide the leader capable of the task. Mussolini arrived on the forefront of the political scene and Hitler was apparently taken with the idea of setting himself up as that kind of leader. He told the people that there was need for that kind of action in Germany but that it required boldness. Though he continued to say that there was a need for "leaders," indicating the plural and avoiding the mention of a dictator. His self-perception and goals were apparently changing during this period.

Hitler continued to solicit followers and patrons. Among those was Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, an American-educated publisher who opened many doors for Hitler. Hitler seemed to like both Putzi and his wife and seemed to enjoy spending time in their home, but the author noted that, as always, he was looking for what Putzi and his family could provide in the way of aid for Hitler's goals. In 1923, Hitler's party merged with several others. In part six, the Communists clashed with the government and the clashes are often bloody. The clash became serious and Hitler walked into a rally and declared himself head of the new government. He insisted that the action was aimed against the "Berlin Jew government." Government officials were taken into custody on Hitler's authority but word is quickly out and Hitler moved between locations, trying to maintain his tenuous hold on the government. Several taken into custody are allowed to leave while Hitler is away and the situation goes against him. Hitler was soon arrested and taken to prison at Landsberg am Lech near Munich. In part seven, the financial situation of the country begins to stabilize. In 1924, Hitler stood trial. No mention is made of the fact that Hitler was on probation from the earlier disturbing the peace charge or of the fact that four police officers were killed in the attempted coup. His

sentence was light and the time served filled with respect from the jailers and correspondence from followers, leaving him with plenty of time to make plans.

The reader should be aware that the German Workers' Party, of which Hitler was emerging as the leader, will become known as the Nazi Party. That word "Nazi" was already being used by the time of the events of this chapter and the author seems to use the two interchangeably along with National Socialist German Workers' Party.

The merger of Hitler's party with several others effectively put him out of power. While he had been literally a dictator in his own party, he was now being used by those with the real power to "whip up" sentiment. The author noted that, once again, Hitler is somewhat aimless just as he had been when his dreams of a career in art fell through.



Emergence of the Leader

Emergence of the Leader Summary and Analysis

In part one, Alfred Rosenberg was left in charge of the party during Hitler's thirteen months in prison. Rosenberg is editor of the "Volkischer Beobachter." Rosenberg had expected that having Hitler's support would mean that people would follow him but quickly discovered this was not the case. In fact, the Nazi party was formally banned during this time. There were additional factions emerging and converging and Hitler, from his jail cell, refused to commit to any particular cause, possibly to better his chances of early release. In part two, that opportunity for early release came and Hitler's supporters came out on his behalf while opponents said he would certainly return to his previous paramilitary work upon release. The supporters won out and Hitler was released after serving a fraction of the total sentence.

In part three, Hitler's book, "Mein Kampf," was released and though Hitler had expected that it would be much sought after, it had limited success. Hitler's philosophy had changed by this point with "Marxism" and "Jewry" becoming interchangeable and completely connected. Hitler, to some degree, stopped publicly focusing on his hatred of the Jews but in his mention of Marxism as the enemy really continued to encompass Jews as well. Another theory gaining importance in Hitler's philosophy was the idea of "attaining living space" for Germans "at the expense of Russians." In part four, the author made the point that Hitler's options upon being released from prison were limited. He could not return to a life of anonymity nor could he take up a "bourgeois" lifestyle. By the time he was released, he'd had a great deal of time to think about himself and to plan how he wanted the world and the party to see him. He'd also had time to write and think about philosophies for the party. With this new focus on Hitler's part, change was inevitable.

The party had suffered during Hitler's absence. As would have been the case with any movement of this kind, the removal of the most dynamic and focused person involved had left a void. It would be noted that Hitler had the ability to take a room filled with skeptics and sway them to his way of thinking. This ability was what created the initial momentum of the Nazi Party and what kept them growing. However, there were internal problems, struggles for power within the central committee and a myriad of other nagging issues that would probably have kept the Nazi Party relegated to fill the role of one of many problems facing the government at this time except for Hitler's jail time. The jail sentence allowed him time to figure out what he wanted from the party and what he wanted for his own role. The problem with Hitler continued to be that he had no real idea how to go about making it happen. Eventually, he found his way but it remained his ability to sway people to his way of thinking that made that happen rather than any concrete and detailed plan on his own part.



Mastery Over the Movement

Mastery Over the Movement Summary and Analysis

In part one, Hitler spent Christmas Eve of 1924 with Putzi Hanfstaengl and his family in Munich. Putzi said that Hitler had become relaxed at one point but at another had marched around in irritation, then apologized, saying that he'd become accustomed to thinking that "he was being observed through a peephole." Putzi put the entire situation down to elaborate acting. He said that he'd visited Hitler in prison and that Hitler had never been watched through a peephole and that a peep hole didn't even exist. In part two, a ban has been imposed so that Hitler cannot speak in public though he has succeeded in having the ban against the Nazi Party lifted. The party at this point is smaller than it had been before his prison term but Hitler has shored up the organizational aspect and the party is overall stronger.

In part three, Hitler was surrounded by personal staff, including secretaries and bodyguards, so that he was all but unapproachable by anyone else. This includes his upper officials within the party. He did this in order to increase the sense of mystery and it worked. He was also a "consummate actor." The bouts of acting included his attention to ladies, kissing hands and pretending to be the "friendly uncle" handing out treats to school children. But is also included tirades that were apparently uncontrolled anger but in actuality, his temper was in tight control. Hitler watched as Mussolini posed for pictures and appeared in public in swim suits but Hitler hated to be seen in any casual stand, even wearing a tie during his time in jail. He carefully avoided any situation that might carry any level of embarrassment or ridicule. He got away to the country whenever he could and there met a nineteen-year-old girl named Maria Reiter, called Mimi. Hitler spent time with her and she fell in love, going so far as to attempt suicide when her love was not returned. By 1931, Hitler was associated with a woman named Geli Raubal. His second book was released.

In part four, the ban against Hitler speaking was released in Saxony and other states soon followed the lead. Attendance was sporadic and officials believe Hitler has lost his edge, meaning the Nazi Party has lost the potential to be a threat to the government. In part five, the economy downturn that would lead to the Great Depression began. This crisis would prove vital to the failing Nazi Party and its leader.

Hitler was able to take on any personae he needed to sway those in his current audience, whether that was a formal gathering or a dinner party. In some cases, he looked like the "friendly uncle" providing treats to school children and seemed to be one of them when speaking to the peasants and field workers. He never seemed to quite fit in at elaborate dinner parties with society's elite but did exude a "respectable" personality and his fellow dinners apparently accepted him as somewhat rustic and unashamed of that. This ability was not unique to Hitler and has been seen throughout history in the most successful public speakers and politicians. The interesting thing about Hitler is his unwillingness to really work at anything else he'd ever attempted. He



had a natural talent here, but he was also meticulous in planning events, entrances and speeches, just as if they had been stage performances in front of paying audiences. Hitler's core ideal that he used for all aspects of deciding Nazi Party business and one he apparently made his officers believe was that all orders flowed down from Hitler and all responsibility flowed up to him.



Breakthrough

Breakthrough Summary and Analysis

In part one, Hitler realized that the time was perfect to demand some positions within the government and he did. The demands were met and those appointed to key positions began to move their departments toward Nazi Party ideas. Hitler saw the tide turning in favor of the Nazi Party. In part two, the government faced increasing unrest fueled by questions of unemployment and employer unemployment contributions. Mistakes within the current government further hurt the situation. In part three, there were problems within the Nazi Party as well and some of these were made public. However, the problems blew over by the summer of 1930 with elections about to occur. In part four, the Nazi Party advanced within the government were made and in the course of one election, the membership became the second largest in terms of government control. In part five, Hitler created situations designed to make it clear that the Nazi Party planned a legal takeover of power rather than a violent coup.

In part six, several who were near him often revealed that he never drank, smoked or had affairs with women. One man said that Hitler had apparently expounded on his choice to become a vegetarian, saying that he'd had symptoms that convince him he had developed stomach cancer. Hitler then went on a tirade, telling the man that he had a limited amount of time to complete the tasks he'd set for himself. The man doesn't count it a moment of weakness in which Hitler had suddenly felt the need to confide in someone, but had believed it to be a sign of mental imbalance. In part seven, conflicts within the Nazi Party continued but it became increasingly popular to join one of the parties and members often marched to church or other functions wearing their uniforms.

In part eight, Hitler did have something of a personal life. In 1931, a young woman named Geli Raubal had been living with him for some time. She referred to him in public as "Uncle Alf" and was often seen with him. There was possibly nothing more than superficially physical in their relationship but he always enjoyed having pretty women around him, apparently as ornamentation. Geli was actually the daughter of Hitler's half-sister, Angela. Hitler was demanding and controlling of Geli and when she demanded freedom, he was angry, ensuring that she was always adequately chaperoned. In September of 1931, Geli was found dead in Hitler's apartment, shot to death by his gun. Hitler's opponents flooded the newspapers with stories of lurid sex between Hitler and Geli while the Party's stand was that she had been playing with his gun when it fired. Hitler wasn't at home at the time and it seemed unlikely that he would have hired someone to kill her and then had the murder carried out in his own apartment.

In part nine, the collapse of two major banks sent even more people looking for an alternative to the democratic government that they saw as responsible. In part ten, the Nazi's "propaganda machine was in top gear" with Hitler touring cities by plane to further the slogan, "The Fuhrer over Germany." One teacher recounted seeing Hitler in action. She said that he avoided "unspecified and specified promises" and also avoided



personal attacks against his opponents. She noted that many looked at him as "the savior." In part eleven, leaders of the Reich realize their system is collapsing. In part twelve, a major election is to occur in 1932 and Hitler sees it as a vital opportunity to gain power. When the election was over, the Nazis were the largest party in political power. Hitler demanded additional power from the government but the Reich president refused, saying that he couldn't hand over that kind of power to one so totally intolerant of others.

The chapter begins with the story of how one man became a member of the Nazi Party. He said that there was an artificial sense of shortage, specifically of food, and that this was being manipulated by the Jews. As the economic situation turned for the worse, the people apparently focused more on the Jews as being the reason for the shortages of food, services and money. The man in this case said that the Communist Party members were the only people who were happy with the situation, prompting others to seek some alternative. The Nazi Party, or National Socialist Workers' Party, seemed the only option to men like this.

Levered into Power

Levered into Power Summary and Analysis

In part one, there was an incident in which the government sentenced several party members to death for "political violence." Hitler used the sentences, which were unpopular among the people, as an opportunity for propaganda. He said that he would not "participate in a government capable of such sentences." He referred to the government as "bourgeois." There was later a gathering of Hitler Youth in Potsdam with some 110,000 youngsters in attendance. They wildly approved of Hitler's appearance and he stood at attention, arm outstretched, for the seven hours it took for the entire group of youngsters to troop by him. Only when it was over did he collapse in exhaustion. About this time, a young woman named Eva Braun, apparently in sorrow over her unrequited love for Hitler, shot herself but was able to call for help after firing the gun. Hitler rushed to her side but there was not the public scandal there had been with Geli's death.

In part two, the "political stalemate" continued. In part three, some feared the party is near to falling apart. In part four, the year was 1932 and the depression continued with many blaming Jews. A Jewish movement called Centralverein was one of the few that worry about the Nazi program of Jewish persecution. Most of the Jewish movements were calmly passive, believing the danger would simply pass with time. In part five, some accepted that Hitler would eventually lead the government. In part six, Hitler took over as Reich Chancellor and democracy effectively came to an end.

Officials in the government sought ways to incorporate Hitler, apparently hoping to have him as a member of the existing government, thereby eliminating the power he had as an opponent and limiting the amount of power he had within the government. Hitler refused to take any position other than chancellor and refused to be a figurehead at all.



The Making of the Dictator

The Making of the Dictator Summary and Analysis

In part one, Hitler was initially somewhat reserved in cabinet meetings and willing to listen to information, advice and suggestions. He soon held a radio broadcast and was not his usual dynamic self, sweating and lacking completely in the animation and emotion that usually swayed audiences. He said that he hoped there would never again be a need for an army but almost in the next breath pledged the "training of youth and strengthening of the will to fight" as top priorities. Reactions are mixed, especially among military leaders. In part two, Hitler knew nothing of economic theory but the economy was beginning a slow climb on its own. Hitler's interest in cars made the automotive industry leaders believe he had an interest in the industry and that industry was soon on the increase as well. In part three, there is an "emergency decree" by Hitler's administration. The public announcement assured the people that it was a matter of public interest. The decree put a stop to many personal freedoms, including freedom of speech and press and assurances of privacy.

In part four, the first concentration camp was established at Dachau at the site of a former powder mill. There was a press conference to announce the establishment of the camp and its purpose to hold Communists and Marxists. In part five, the Nazi Party creates a coordination effort that seeks control of almost every aspect of daily life. The quiet discrimination and persecution of Jews becomes an all-out effort with violence and intimidation an everyday occurrence. The remaining political parties began to cave in to the Nazis. In part six a new word was introduced. This was "nazification," which is sometimes camouflaged as "coordination." Under this program, a civil service law is enacted and many intellectuals including professors at the universities were forced into exile. All who declared their intention to remain at the Prussian Academy of Arts were forced to declare fealty to Hitler's government. Books by authors deemed unfit by the government were burned.

In part seven, Hitler remained an object of adulation. He was seldom directly involved in any of the events during the early part of his chancellorship but was undoubtedly "the beneficiary." In 1933, the "Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring," otherwise known as the sterilization law, was put into effect and some 400,000 people were sterilized, some for "diseases" as questionable as alcoholism. In part eight, Hitler removed Germany from disarmament talks being held in Geneva.

The author noted that many people, probably especially the common people of Germany, had suffered so completely with the depressed economy that they were indifferent to the news that Hitler had been named Chancellor. This may almost seem unbelievable considering what history proved was to happen next, but it was likely the case. People had, over the past few years, scrambled just to stay alive and eat. The intricacies of politics and probable long-term impacts were likely of little interest.



By the time Hitler had spent a few months as Chancellor, he was wildly popular. The German people held him up as something of a god and it seemed that it could be partly attributed to the fact that times were simply better than they had been prior to Hitler's taking office. Of course, what people didn't realize was that the world's economy was on the mend and would have improved without Hitler's help. Those things that can be attributed to Hitler's government policies were not even his idea. The author notes that in one case, an idea that was presented to Hitler was initially ignored and that he had to be "sold" on the idea before allowed it to be made policy.

Securing Total Power

Securing Total Power Summary and Analysis

In part one, Hitler clashed with Captain Ernest Rohm, head of the Nazi storm troopers. In part two, Rohm gathered a forceful following but Hitler took no immediate action. In part three, Hitler was reluctant to make a public display of the fact that one of his high officials had to be killed in order to end his opposition to Hitler. While Hitler put off dealing with Rohm, he dealt decisively with problems in Berlin. Many were outright murdered and there was little doubt as to Hitler's plans to deal with those who opposed his will. In part four, the rest of the world was horrified at his actions but the people of Germany approved. The general German public had no idea and didn't care about the intrigues behind the scenes. All they knew and all they cared to know was that Hitler had removed a "scourge." In part five, the problems and turmoil escalate. In part six, the Reich President, Paul von Hindenburg died. As Hindenburg was literally on his death bed, Hitler rushed through orders that effectively eliminated the presidency upon Hindenburg's death and made Hitler, as Chancellor, the supreme ruler of government, the Party, and the army.

Hitler and Rohm had a long history, dating back to the days when Hitler was a young military recruit. Rohm was among those arrested after the coup attempt. Rohm was homosexual which is interesting considering Hitler's stand on such things. However, at one point Hitler was known to have stood up for Rohm, basically saying that whatever happened in private was not the business of the Nazi Party and that the Party's duty was not to enforce or ensure morality.



Working Towards the Fuhrer

Working Towards the Fuhrer Summary and Analysis

In part one, followers noted that Hitler became even more distant after Hindenburg's death, often refusing to see anyone unless he had summoned them to him. Corruption abounded. Already largely unavailable, Hitler would completely ignore any official who fell out of his favor. He watched films regularly and demanded something new be available each evening. By the middle of the 1930s, Hitler was also ignoring the Party. He made two annual speeches but otherwise invoked the Party only when it would gain something for him. This wasn't a new idea and he had always referred to the Party as a means to an end.

In part two, there were problems with Poland. Issues at home again came to the forefront and Hitler, giving officials only a one-day notice, called a meeting in which he went on for more than an hour on the need for restored faith in the nation and military. Germany remained out of peace talks and in the mid-1930s, the Germans announced the existence of a national Air Force, a violation of previous peace treaties. Germany was soon in heated negotiations for peace though Hitler always demanded more concessions than he was willing to give.

In part three, anti-Jewish propaganda and discrimination abounded. Jews were banned from entire cities. There were riots and the government finally had to intervene, restoring some degree of order. Demands for laws against Jews having relationships with non-Jews are issued to the government. The reason cited was to prevent the contamination of the German race. The government passed new laws. These were approved and presented by Hitler to limit Jewish rights. The next step was for officials to decide exactly what level of Jewish blood was needed to qualify as a Jew under these new laws. That question was finally settled with three-quarters Jewish ancestry and whether the person was a practicing Jew standing as important aspects of determining who was subjected to the law.

In part four, the price of food skyrocketed and people became angry at the government's lack of control on this front. There was also increased unemployment which created unrest. Hitler made the decision to occupy a demilitarized zone, Rhineland. In part five, Hitler was condemned by the League of Nations and warned that Britain is angry at the move, but ignored all the warnings of imminent war. In part six, the German people were ecstatic at the occupation of Rhineland. He addressed a crowd with the thought that he had always known this would be the ultimate goal. The author noted that the people cheered this statement but couldn't have known that the path Hitler was taking his country on "led into the abyss."

The author noted that Hitler's decision to take himself away from his officials was not like any other head of government. Mussolini, who Hitler admired, maintained a cabinet of officials who apparently had access to Mussolini. After 1938, Hitler's cabinet, though

officially still in place, never met. Hitler went so far as to ban his officials from meeting together to discuss politics or policy. The result of this was that there was no setting of priorities. By the same token, Hitler - without the benefit of intelligent conversation and debate at his disposal - often made decisions based on some biased or trivial piece of information.



Characters

Adolf Hitler

Best known as leader of the German military and the man responsible for the program that killed some six million Jews, he was born the son of a dictatorial father and a loving but ineffectual mother. He was one of several children though the only one of his mother's sons to survive to adulthood. Hitler's anti-Semitic views were not evident in his early life. The rumors that he might have had Jewish blood were discredited by the author of this book. As a very young boy, Hitler was liked by his classmates and enjoyed school. He was an excellent student in the early grades but his performance fell dramatically in later years. He wanted to be an artist or an architect but was unable to focus on studies or a course of action long enough to make either come to fruition. He had trouble making friends as an adult and seemed to have only one close relationship at a time. He avoided drink and prostitutes as weakness and early touted his efforts to keep the German race pure. He loved the military, probably because there was a sense of belonging associated with the service. He survived several dangerous battles and was awarded the Iron Cross twice. He became a noted public speaker and gained the attention of his superiors, which was the launching point for his political career. Ultimately, his hatred of the Jews became the cornerstone of his life. He used emotion to stir others to anger and action though he personally stated that emotion against the Jews was pointless.

Klara Polzl

Mother of Adolf Hitler, she was born in 1860 and died in 1902. Klara was more than twenty years younger than Hitler's father, Alois Hitler. She was pregnant with their first child before their marriage and Hitler was the fourth of six children born of that union. Klara lost her three oldest children when each was younger than three and that likely made her more protective of her surviving children, including Hitler, his younger sister Paula and his younger brother, Edmund. Edmund's death at age six probably increased this protectiveness. There is evidence that Klara's husband, Alois, was domineering and Klara was likely beaten emotionally and possibly physically by her husband. Although most young boys would chafe against the protectiveness of their mother, Hitler apparently understood and accepted his mother's attitudes and actions. She allowed him to go to Vienna as a young adult, expecting that he would study art there. The author noted that Hitler was so devastated at having not been accepted into the art academy that he did not tell his mother of this failure. Klara contracted breast cancer and was near death when Hitler again traveled to Vienna. As she neared the end of her life, Hitler returned to be with her and stayed at her side until her death. The author noted that this was probably the one person Hitler actually loved during his life.



Alois Hitler

Born Alois Schicklgruber, he changed his name to Hitler after the death of both his parents. He was born in 1837, married three times and his marriage to Hitler's mother was his last. He was a domineering person and worked as a civil servant. He wanted Hitler to follow in his footsteps and this desire created friction between father and son. He died in 1903.

August Kubizek

Known as Gustl, he went with Hitler to Vienna where he studied music while believing that Hitler was studying art. Gustl recounted a time when he brought a young music student home to study and Hitler became angry, saying that education was wasted on women.

Rudolf Hausler

This is a young man who worked as a shop assistant but who was unemployed when he met Hitler in Vienna. He was Hitler's traveling companion to Munich and lived with Hitler there for a short period of time though he eventually moved out because of Hitler's habit of staying up late into the night reading.

Joseph Popp

The man who owned the apartment building where Hitler and Hausler lived in Munich. Although Hitler apparently forged no lasting friendship with Popp, he wrote a letter to Popp from the front lines of fighting soon after his induction into the Bavarian military.

Ernst

An American-educated publisher, he becomes a supporter of Hitler and provides not only financial support, but opens his home to Hitler. Putzi's wife believes Hitler to be "neutered" and Putzi calls Hitler "impotent" with regard to sex. Putzi flees the country after Hitler's failed coup but entertained Hitler in Munich after Hitler's release from prison.

Geli Raubal

The daughter of Hitler's half sister, Geli was often seen with Hitler and he afforded her time and attention that he was never willing to give up for anyone else. It seems that Hitler might have become dependent on Geli and when she wanted to leave the country, Hitler became controlling and made certain that she was always supervised. She was found dead in Hitler's apartment, killed by his gun. The Party said that she had



accidentally killed herself while playing with the gun but Hitler's opponents put the blame on Hitler.

Maria Reiter

A young girl who met Hitler while he is in the country on something of a holiday. He began to spend a great deal of time with her and she apparently fell in love with him. Maria seemed to have built up something of a fantasy relationship with Hitler and was devastated when Hitler did not return her affections. She tried to commit suicide by hanging herself but was found before she could complete the deed.

Eva Braun

Another young woman often associated with Hitler, she apparently also fell in love with Hitler but was angry when he spent so much time away from her, engrossed in his politics. She shot herself in an apparent suicide attempt though she was able to call for help after the injury. Hitler rushed to her side but nothing more came of the relationship.



Objects/Places

Vienna

This is where Hitler lived for five years following the death of his mother.

Munich

This is where Hitler went when he left Vienna.

Foxl

This is the name of a dog that Hitler took care of while in the Bavarian Army.

The Bavarian Army

This is Hitler's first military association, it was likely that he was inducted because of a clerical error.

The National Socialist German Worker's Party

This is one of the people's parties that sprang up around the country following World War I. Hitler became a member of this party, which was later the Nazi Party.

Stadelheim

This is the prison in Munich where Hitler served a month for disturbing the peace.

Landsberg am Lech

This is the prison where Hitler spends thirteen months after a failed coup.

Potsdam

This is where the Hitler Youth Rally drew some 110,000 young people.

Centralverein

The Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, this was one of many groups who anxiously watched the growing anti-Semitic stand taken by the Nazis.

Rhineland

This is the demilitarized zone that Hitler occupied that prompted World War II.



Themes

Hitler's Quest for Power

Hitler's quest for power was present from the time of his youth but he had little in the way of goals to make it happen. As an adult, he desired that power but it took a long time for him to create any real plan toward reaching that role. Hitler believed himself special from childhood and some believed that he was devastated to learn that he was not set apart as an adult. Hitler wanted recognition as an artist or architect, but lacked the drive to get the education necessary for either. He was eventually picked out as a potential speaker and it was that step that pointed him on the road to government leader. Even after Hitler had started on that path, he lacked specific plans to reach his goals. It was only after he saw the public face of Mussolini and spent some time in jail that Hitler's plans and goals solidified. Even then, his quest for power was fraught with non-specifics. He did not really know what he was going to do in most situations until the situation arose. Like many leaders, Hitler's goals fed off his successes. As he began to realize that he was important to the people of the Nazi Party, he began to formalize his goals to become more important. This was seen in his determination to accept nothing less than an appointment as chancellor.

The Power of Propaganda

Propaganda, as seen in the programs of German government officials during this time, were a means to an end. It was an important tool for distribution of information in the form approved by the government. Hitler quickly realized the power of propaganda and used it in a variety of ways. One example of Hitler's use of propaganda was seen when the Nazi Party was planning a rally. The Party had planned a rally and this event was to be something bigger and more extensive than anything else the Party had done. There were huge colorful posters urging attendance. Smaller rallies were also held, promoting the event which was a huge success. During the event, Hitler used slogans, key words and catchy phrases, all part of his propaganda program, to sway the audience. In this, Hitler was a master. Of course, he was taught the power of propaganda by the military. Prior to his release from his military duty, he was a paid member of the propaganda program. Hitler's personal propaganda program included the promotion of a plan to eliminate the Jews and to expand Germany's land holdings. This use of propaganda was so successful that Hitler convinced a government to name him to the office of chancellor, earned the backing of a majority of the German voters, and led a nation into war.

Prejudice

Hitler's prejudice against the Jews was not something Hitler learned at a young age although he probably had the basis for that prejudice from childhood. Hitler explained



his prejudice by saying that he had come to realize some specific points about the Jews. He said he learned that Jewry was not a religion but was an entire race of people. He also came to associate Jewish people with negatives. He said that they were "dirty" and did not deserve any rights as human beings. Hitler's prejudice extended to anyone who was not of the "pure German race" and he proposed severe penalties for anyone who mixed the Jewish and German races. This kind of prejudice was rampant during this time in Germany. The people were looking for a "scapegoat" for the economic situation. The Jews were suitable for that purpose and the prejudice against the Jews was rampant. There was also a great deal of prejudice against anyone who was, in the mind of the Germans, less than perfect. This prejudice was also so rampant that a law was passed ordering the sterilization of hundreds of thousands of people. Hitler's prejudice was more intense than that of most, so much so that there were those who predicted that Hitler, given the power of the government, would create an "abyss" in Germany.

Style

Perspective

The story is written in the third-person point of view from a historical perspective. The author presented the information not as a story but as a historical documentation of the life of Hitler and the events that put him in power over Germany. The author used a combination of historical facts and conjecture to make specific points. The book includes a list of works cited and that list is very lengthy. Among the more prominent works cited were those of Hitler himself and of several who were in close contact with him during various points of his life. However, the author pointed out that some of these perspectives may be skewed and therefore may not be reliable. An example of this occurs when the author cited the words of a man who had shared an apartment with Hitler when they were both young men. By the time this source's book was written, he had already read Hitler's book, "Mein Kampf." The author points out that Hitler's own words probably made an impression on the man who depended more on Hitler's memories than his own. There are other instances in which the author discredits or warns about the possible inconsistencies of a particular source. Several of these occurred when the author used the words of Hitler's opponents. The author warns that their words may have been slanted against Hitler without foundation. Finally, the author warns about the perspective of Hitler himself. As is typically the case with biographies, Hitler's words about his own situation were probably romanticized or changed to put Hitler's actions and thoughts in a better light.

Tone

The tone of the book is very neutral which is interesting considering the dark topic. The author is apparently very knowledgeable about Hitler, having released several books on the topic. The information is presented in a very straight-forward manner with little emotion involved. The reader who is expecting this to be a story of Hitler, his life or his actions will probably be disappointed. The book is presented as a historically-accurate documentation of Hitler's rise to power. The author sets out facts of the political and social climate of Germany and the world in the specific time period. He also reveals a great deal about Hitler as a person. Even these personal aspects of Hitler's life, however, are presented as dry facts. The tone is made slightly more personal by the inclusion of a series of photos. There are two sets of pictures including a school days photo of Hitler as well as pictures of Geli Raubal with Hitler sometime around 1930. The language is sometimes convoluted and readers may find that it's difficult to keep track of the various people and organizations mentioned. The index helps in that respect by providing a way to find first references of important people, places, organizations, and events.



Structure

The book is divided into thirteen chapters. These are titled Fantasy and Failure, Drop-Out, Elation and Embitterment, Discovering a Talent, The Beerhall Agitator, The Drummer, Emergence of a Leader, Mastery over the Movement, Breakthrough, Levered into Power, Securing Total Power, and Working Towards the Fuhrer. The chapter titles are important clues as to the contents of those chapters, although they may not make sense until after the chapter is read. For example, the chapter titled "Beerhall Agitator" is about Hitler's rise as a public speaker. Many of his early speeches are made in beer halls around Munich and his chief means of stirring interest is as an agitator. The chapters are further divided into parts. These parts are not named but are merely numbered with Roman numerals. The number of parts included in a chapter vary. For example, the chapter titled "Breakthrough" has twelve parts. The chapter titled "Discovering a Talent" has only four. The length of the chapters and of the parts also vary. Some chapters also include a section prior to any of these numbered parts. These sections are not numbered and typically include some pieces of general information or other details that will help the reader better understand the coming events and information. The book is not presented as a story and the events are not presented in chronological order. In some cases, the author reveals a particular overview or idea, usually related to the political climate of the day. The author then goes back and more thoroughly describes the events leading up to something that he's already revealed. This is sometimes confusing because the author does not often offer any clues that he is making these alterations to the time line.

Quotes

"Speculation though it must remain, it takes little to imagine that his later patronizing contempt for the submissiveness of women, the thirst for dominance (and imagery of the Leader as a stern, authoritarian father-figure), the inability to form deep personal relationship, the corresponding cold brutality towards humankind, and - not least - the capacity for hatred so profound that it must have reflected an immeasurable undercurrent of self-hatred concealed in the extreme narcissism that was its counterpoint must surely have had roots in the subliminal influences of the young Adolf's family circumstances" (Fantasy and Failure, pg. 13.)

"'Altogether, in these early days in Vienna,' commented Kubizek, 'I had the impression that Adolf had become unbalanced.' The tirades of hate directed at everything and everybody were those of an outsized ego desperately wanting acceptance and unable to come to terms with his personal insignificance, with faily and mediocrity" (Drop-Out, pg. 39.)

"Not a deliberate choice, but making the most of the conditions in which he found himself provided Hitler with his entry into politics. Opportunism - and a good slice of luck - were more instrumental than strength of will" (Elation and Embitterment, pg. 105.)

"He wrote that anti-Semitism should be based not on emotion, but on 'facts,' the first of which was that Jewry was a race, not a religion. Emotive anti-Semitism would product programs, he continued; anti-Semitism based on 'reason' must, on the other hand, lead to the systematic removal of the rights of the Jews" Discovering a Talent, pg. 125.)

"She took Hitler's attention in her stride. 'Believe me, he's an absolute neuter, not a man,' she told her husband. Putzi himself believed, for what it was worth, that Hitler ws sexually impotent, gaining substitute gratification from his intercourse with the 'feminine masses" The Drummer, pg. 187.)

"He could be the model of friendliness in public to someone he was privately castigating and deriding. The play-acting and hypocrisy did not mean that he was solely a cynical manipulator, that he did not believe in the central tenets of his 'world view'" (Mastery over the Movement, pg. 280.)

"Without allies in high places, able eventually to persuade the Reich President to change his mind, Hitler would never - even as head of a huge movement, and with over 13 million supporters in the country - have been able to come to power. That power was refused Hitler after he had won a victory, and handed to him after he had suffered a defeat in the ensuing Reichstag election in November, was not attributable to any triumph of the will" Breakthrough, pg. 374.)

"The anxiety to destroy democracy rather than the keenness to bring the Nazis to power was what triggered the complex developments that led to Hitler's Chancellorship. Democracy was surrendered without a fight" (Levered into Power, pg. 424.)



"I solemnly prophesy that this accursed man will cast our Reich into the abyss and bring our nation inconceivable misery. Future generations will damn you in your grave for what you have done" (Levered into Power, pg. 427.)

"Outside Germany there was horror at the butchery, even more so at the gangster methods used by the state's leaders. Within Germany, it was a different matter" (Securing Total Power, pg. 517.)

"According to the official figures, 89.9 percent of the voters supported Hitler's constitutionally now unlimited powers as head of state, head of government, leader of the party and Supreme Commander of the armed forces. The result, disappointing though it was to the Nazi leadership, and less impressive as a show of support than might perhaps have been imagined when all account is taken of the obvious pressures and manipulation, nevertheless reflected the fact that Hitler had the backing, much of it fervently enthusiastic, of the great majority of the German people" (Securing Total Power, pg. 526.)

"His mastery over all other power-groups within the regime was by now well-nigh complete, his position unassailable, his popularity immense. Few at this point had the foresight to realize that they path laid out by Providence led into the abyss" (Working Towards the Fuhrer, pg. 591.)



Topics for Discussion

Describe Hitler. What were his strengths and weaknesses as a leader? What were his personal strengths and weaknesses?

Hitler seemed to fit in very well to the military life. Describe how he came to be in trouble for avoiding the military in Vienna. What was the outcome of that situation? How did he become involved in the military later?

Describe Hitler's rise to political power. What are the obstacles he faced along the way? What was the world situation at this time? What was the economic situation in Germany at this time? Did these situations help or hinder his rise to power?

Hitler had a great prejudice against Jews. How did that prejudice come to be? What was the social situation in Germany that fueled those prejudices with the general population?

Who were Hitler's parents? How might their strengths and weaknesses have impacted Hitler's personality? Hitler was very close to one of his parents. Which one? Why? List his siblings. What were their fates?

There were three women associated with Hitler personally. List them and compare what you know about the three of them.

Describe Hitler's trip to Vienna. What was his stated purpose for the trip? What did he actually accomplish there? What did he tell people?

Describe Hitler's use of propaganda and theatrics. Did he use these tools effectively? Support your answers.