**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# Hitler's Early Life (Questions & Answers)

<http://spartacus-educational.com/EXAManswerFWW6.htm>

Q1: According to Source A, what was Hitler's opinion of his schoolteachers?

C1: Hitler argues that his teachers "had no sympathy with youth" and that their main objective was to "stuff our brains" with facts. He also says that students were "persecuted" for originality. Hitler also claims that "the only model pupils whom I have ever known have all been failures in later-life."

Q2: Does Source B support Hitler's opinion expressed in Source A. If not, can you give any reasons for this?

C2: Hitler argues in [*Mein Kampf*](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERmein.htm) (1925) that his history teacher, Dr. [Leopold Potsch](http://spartacus-educational.com/Leopold_Potsch.htm), was an excellent communicator: "This old gentleman's manner was as kind as it was determined, his dazzling eloquence not only held us spellbound but actually carried us away. Even today I think back with gentle emotion on this gray-haired man who, by the fire of his narratives, sometimes made us forget the present; who, as if by enchantment, carried us into past times and, out of the millennial veils of mist, molded dry historical memories into living reality."

It has been argued that [Adolf Hitler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhitler.htm) admired Potsch's political opinions as much as his teaching abilities. In another passage in his autobiography he comments: "There we sat, often aflame with enthusiasm, sometimes even moved to tears . . . He used our budding national fanaticism as a means of educating us, frequently appealing to our sense of national honour. This teacher made history my favourite subject. And indeed, though he had no such intention, it was then that I became a young revolutionary."

Q3: Hitler often boasted that he was very good at history at school. Which source raises doubts about Hitler's claim that he was good at history?

A3: Joachim C. Fest in Source G points out that Hitler's report of "September 1905 rates his history, in which he was supposed to have been ahead of the whole class, as only satisfactory".

Q4: Do the authors of Sources C, E and G agree about the personality of Adolf Hitler?

A4: Sources C and E both describe him as "lazy" whereas Source G claims that his "abilities were thwarted by lack of self-discipline". Joachim C. Fest supports this assertion with quotations from his school reports. Two of the sources agree that he did not like to be corrected. "He reacted with ill-concealed hostility to advice or reproof." (Source C) and "he feared their judgment, and hence shunned doing anything which he would have had to submit to their judgment" (Source E).

Q5: After reading Source F, describe the impact that Hitler's parents had on him.

A5: Louis L. Snyder argues that Hitler's father approach to discipline had a profound impact on his personality: "Adolf feared his strict father, a hard and difficult man who set the pattern for the youngster's own brutal view of life... This sour, hot-tempered man was master inside his home, where he made the children feel the lash of his cane, switch, and belt. Alois snarled at his son, humiliated him, and corrected him again and again." Snyder is not alone in believing that this influenced Hitler's political opinions: "It is probable that Adolf Hitler's later fierce hatreds came in part from this hostility to his father. He learned early in life that right was always on the side of the stronger one."

Hitler had a very different relationship with his mother. According to Snyder: "Hitler's mother was a quiet, hardworking woman with a solemn, pale face and large, staring eyes. She kept a clean household and labored diligently to please her husband. Hitler loved his indulgent mother, and she in turn considered him her favorite child, even if, as she said, he was moonstruck. Later, he spoke of himself as his mother's darling. She told him how different he was from other children. Despite her love, however, he developed into a discontented and resentful child. Psychologically, she unconsciously made him, and through him the world would pay for her own unhappiness with her husband." Snyder believes that his mother's love gave him a degree of self-belief that was in itself a problem when he became an adult.

Q6: Read about [Konrad Heiden](http://spartacus-educational.com/Konrad_Heiden.htm) and then explain if he is a reliable source of information on [Adolf Hitler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhitler.htm).

A6: Konrad Heiden was a student during Hitler's early political career. As a socialist he was totally opposed to Hitler's policies. He admitted: "In 1923, as the leader of a small democratic organization in the University of Munich, I tried, with all the earnestness of youth, and with complete lack of success, to annihilate Hitler by means of protest parades, mass meetings, and giant posters."

When he became a journalist he maintained his opposition to Hitler and attempted to expose some of his dark secrets, including his relationship with [Geli Raubal](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERraubal.htm), his young niece. When Hitler gained power Heiden was forced to flee from Germany. As [The New York Times](http://spartacus-educational.com/USAnytimes.htm) pointed out: "To the leaders of the Third Reich. Heiden was a hated and sought-after enemy. One of the Nazis' acts upon taking over a country was always to ban and burn his books. The writer was a propagandist of a special kind-one who used objectivity and documents to destroy the object of his derision.... In 1932 his first book, History of National Socialism was publicly burned by the Nazis, who were then on the brink of gaining power. When they took over... In 1933, he fled."

From the safety of [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland) he published [Birth of the Third Reich](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Konrad+Heiden+&rh=n%3A266239%2Ck%3AKonrad+Heiden+) (1934) and [Hitler: A Biography](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Fuhrer-Hitlers-Rise-Power/dp/078670683X/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1383546576&sr=1-2&keywords=Konrad+Heiden%2C+Hitler%3A+A+Biography) (1936). Heiden was clearly not an objective historian. In fact, he devoted his adult life to opposing the policies advocated by Hitler. Although he was not objective, that does not mean that he was an "unreliable" historian. In fact, he is one of the best sources we have on Hitler's early life. The information in Heiden's books were an important counter-balance to the pro-Hitler propaganda produced by the Nazi government.