Educating the Hitler Youth

“I begin with the young… my magnificent youngsters! Are there any finer ones in the world? Look at these young men and boys! What material! With them, I can make a new world,” Hitler announced to a crowd in 1933. (qtd. in Pagaard 191) Starting in the 1920s onward, Hitler and the Nazi Party targeted the youth of Germany in order to begin a movement led entirely by the group, called the Hitler Youth or Hitlerjugend, to create a better future for Germany. Hitler believed that the youth with its strength, energy, and fervor would lead the rest of the country in taking over Europe and building the Nazi Party regime.

According to Hitler, the best way to indoctrinate the youth was by enveloping them in Nazi ideology at every single stage of development in one single entity. (Welch 72) Thus, the educational system proved the perfect entity to indoctrinate the youth—Nazi propaganda could be instilled into every single stage of development within the educational system, from the kindergarten and primary grade levels to the university and advanced grade levels, in the single schooling entity. What resulted from Hitler’s plan to completely restructure the educational system was that schools that formerly focused on academic achievements were now turned into propaganda powerhouses that left no room for intellectual or academic pursuits. The Nazis controlled their propaganda powerhouses by manipulating and controlling the three “gears” within their machine-like institutions—the school environment, the teachers and professors, and the class curriculum. The Nazis controlled and manipulated these gears in such a way where the end result of an “education” in Nazi Germany was for all of its students to ultimately join the Hitler Youth army.
Many of these students’ parents showed opposition toward their children joining the Hitler Youth. However, the propaganda that the Nazis used to establish control over the youth proved more powerful than what any parents told their children in terms of staying away from Hitler and the Party—education and Nazi ideology proved to be far stronger than family ties and beliefs.

The Nazis taught children in the Hitler Youth that devotion to the state was much more important than devotion to family. Thus, many of the students’ parents were opposed to their children joining the Hitler Youth, even if it was dangerous for parents to show such unpatriotic sentiment against the Nazi Party. According to Susan Campbell Bartoletti in *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow*, parents who opposed to their children joining the Hitler Youth did so for a variety of reasons. (30-31) For some parents, it was financially difficult to buy the required uniform and to pay the monthly dues. For others, the schedule of Hitler Youth members disrupted and interfered with academics, chores at home, and church services on the weekends. Jean-Denis G.G. Lepage, in *Hitler Youth 1922-1945: An Illustrated History*, agreed that some parents also had doubts about their children’s treatment in the Hitler Youth because it interfered with the students’ health, happiness, and education. (82) As Jost Hermand remembered:

“…My mother, who was glad that I was now a high school student, pushed me relentlessly toward bourgeois things and wanted me to speak High German. She thought the Nazis too vulgar for words… My mother had strong objections to the Hitler Youth… she showed a great deal of understanding for my problems and indeed tried in every possible way to set me against the organization.” (3-4)

Some did not believe in Hitler or in his promises for the nation. Fifteen-year-old Melita Maschmann’s parents did not support her joining the *Bund Deutscher Madel* (the group for the girls that was equivalent to the Hitler Youth group for boys) because they did not see Hitler
using his money and his title to make contributions to the well-being of the people. (Bartoletti 16, 18-19) Sixteen-year-old Henry Metelmann’s mother cried when she heard the news about Hitler’s installation in the new regime—“How can Hindenburg do this to us? Install gangsters in government without giving us a chance to vote on it?” (qtd. in Bartoletti 20) Many parents also saw the Hitler Youth as an inevitable path to violence, war, and destruction for their children’s futures and did not want their children prepared for such things. Willi Weisskirch’s father, upon reading the newspaper headlines, said, “Oh my God! Now there will be a war. Hitler is the chancellor now, and that means war!” (qtd. in Bartoletti 21) Likewise, Inge Scholl, another former Nazi-controlled school student, remembered:

“[W]e could not understand why our father did not happily and proudly say ‘yes’ to it all. On the contrary, he was quite opposed to it and on occasions he would say: ‘Don’t believe them [Hitler and the Nazis]; they are wolves and wild beasts, and they are frightfully misusing the German people.’ And on occasions he compared Hitler with the Pied Piper of Hamelin, who enticed the children with his pipe to follow him into perdition.” (qtd. in Mosse 272)

However, such reasons were not strong enough as a majority of children in schools did give up their lives to join the Hitler Youth. Parents who finally relented and gave in to their children joining the Hitler Youth did so because of various reasons. Some feared Hitler and of the Nazis’ punishments against them—especially if their own children, influenced by teachers inside of schools, should speak out against them. Others had a greater fear of the communist enemies compared to the consequences of their children joining the Hitler Youth. (Bartoletti 10, 34-35) Fourteen-year-old Herbert Norkus’ parents had forbidden him to join the group, saying that it was “too dangerous.” However, they “had feared the Communist or ‘Reds’ even more” and thus gave in to Norkus joining the group on the condition that he “keep himself distant from
the Reds” and find a sense of discipline. (Bartoletti 10) Many had the fear of breaking the law that was passed in 1936, requiring “all healthy young Germans ‘to be educated physically, intellectually, and morally in the spirit of National Socialism,’ which if broken was punishable with heavy prison sentences or resulted in their children being taken away from them. As Metelmann said, “My father did not like the idea that I should join what he called the Brown Pest. But he relented because he thought it unwise not to.” (qtd. in Bartoletti 35)

Most parents faced no other option other than to give up their children to the Nazi Party and the Hitler Youth, but there were those who protested and kept their children away. According to Gerhard Rempel in Hitler’s Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS, parents who failed to register their child into the group faced “a fine of 150 RM or imprisonment,” while those who kept their child from performing Hitler Youth duties were punished with “up to five years imprisonment and a maximum fine of 10,000 RM.” (68)

Parents and their children were caught in an ideological trap where the Nazi Party used terror to claim the people’s private lives with their families and where a child’s participation in the Hitler Youth created tension at home. As Lepage said, “In the long term, the Nazis intended to reduce the role of parents…” to make indoctrination of the youth more successful. (82)

Once the Nazis successfully stole away every sense of parental control from by making it compulsory for the young to join the Hitler Youth, they moved on to the next step of mass youth indoctrination. Following Hitler’s plan of enveloping the youth with Nazi ideology at every stage of development within a single entity, the Party seized control of the educational system and completely restructured it to be a propaganda powerhouse controlled by three gears—the school environment, the teachers and professors, and the class curriculum.
The first gear that the Nazi Party manipulated to control its propaganda powerhouse was the environment of the Nazi-controlled schools, also known as National Schools. The atmosphere inside of these buildings suppressed every form of what a conventional education should include—freedom of thought, creativity, originality, and individuality. Under the new Nazi authority, the environment of schools and universities transformed to reflect authoritarian and nationalist principles. The Party forced all students to think exactly the same without the rights to question their authorities or the materials that they were studying.

In “Teaching the Nazi Dictatorship: Focus on Youth,” Stephen Pagaard described the Nazi slogans and signs of the swastika that hung all over the building, and the pictures of Hitler that hung in every classroom. Students were forced to announce “Heil (Hail) Hitler!” between fifty to one hundred fifty times every day in schools. (See Fig. 1) Another greeting between students during the war was also “Gott strafe England,” or “May God punish England.” (191-192) Karl Schnibbe remembered what it was like to go to school during the Nazi takeover: “In the morning, we stood at attention, and there was the Nazi flag. We always had to start class with ‘Heil Hitler!’ There was no more, ‘Good morning, children.’” (qtd. in Bartoletti 39)
The Nazis redefined what detentions and expulsions meant, as well. Students who had to serve a detention underwent a “youth service arrest,” which was a more severe form of punishment than a normal detention, but not as harsh as imprisonment. These arrests entailed ten days of detention where the punished student had to perform community services while living off of only bread and water. The Nazis considered this new form of detention “the most modern means of Nazi education.” (Rempel 71) Expulsion was an even worse punishment compared to detention because what resulted was that “such individuals could never again become HJ [Hitlerjugend] leaders, join the party, embark on academic careers, or become military officers.” (Rempel 69)

In addition to changes in the classroom environment, changes to the entire school-wide environment were made as well. These school-wide changes included ceremonies that aimed at creating a sense of community and unity. Hermann Klauss, a writer during the time of the Nazi takeover of education, wrote:
“The daily school work all too easily leads a class to withdraw into its work assignment and to a separation from the school community and the outside world. At a festivity, however, teachers and students stand together, whether the occasion is a simple flag-raising ceremony or a great celebration involving the whole school community. Nowhere can we discern the spirit that prevails in a community as clearly as in the manner in which its celebrations are conducted.” (qtd. in Mosse 127)

These festivities included marches, passionate speeches, powerful songs, and an abundance of banners and flags that appealed to both teachers and students alike. Teachers and students were of course required to raise their hands for the “Heil Hitler!” greeting at every ceremony. (See Fig. 2)

One example of a song that students sang during ceremonies was when leaders raised the Nazi flags:

“
We boys carry the flag for the assault of youth.
It shall stand and rise and glow like fire in the skies!
We are sworn to the flag
For always and ever.
Forever cursed be he
Who besmirches the flag.
The flag is our faith
In God and Volk and Land.
Whoever wants to rob us of it
Must take our life and hand.
For our flag we will care
As we do for our own mother,
For the flag is our tomorrow
And our honor and courage!” (qtd. in Mosse 131)

Songs like these clearly invoked patriotism and nationalism for the German people and the German nation.
Ceremonies celebrated a variety of events, including “The Day of the Führer” on April 20 (Hitler’s birthday) to “Heroes’ Memorial” on November 9 (commemorating injured and fallen Hitler Youth comrades). (Mosse 128-129) At ceremonies that celebrated the Hitler Youth soldiers who passed away in the line of duty, banners and posters saying, “Remember the Victims” rallied the youth in order to raise patriotism within them, getting them to join the Hitler Youth. (Luckert and Bachrach 50, 53)

The black, red, and gold banners of the Republic that formerly hung within classrooms and from flagpoles in the school buildings were ripped down and then placed with the Nazi banners. The Party took down all portraits of former Weimer leaders, including that of President Ebert, that adorned the classrooms, burned them in the school playgrounds, and replaced them with portraits of Hitler. (Koch 167-168) The Party also reduced or outright abolished religious instruction in various schools, getting rid of school prayer and Christian symbols and images
found in classrooms. (Lepage 91) All of these changes in the atmosphere of the classrooms and school buildings instilled in the youth and its teachers a strong sense of patriotism and loyalty solely to the Nazi Party.

The second aspect of the educational system that Hitler and the Nazis seized control of within their propaganda powerhouses was the teachers and professors. The atmosphere at schools and universities was authoritarian and teachers were expected to uphold this structure by demonstrating their support and fervor for the Nazi Party and its doctrines through their teaching. In 1935, an order from the Minister of Education, Bernhard Rust, outlined what was expected from teachers:

“Teachers are directed to instruct their pupils in ‘the nature, causes, and effects of all racial and hereditary problems,’ to bring home to them the importance of race and heredity for the life and destiny of the German people, and to awaken in them a sense of their responsibility toward ‘the community of the nation’ (their ancestors, the present generation, and posterity), pride in their membership in the German race as a foremost vehicle of hereditary Nordic values, and the will consciously to cooperate in the racial purification of the German stock.” (qtd. in Mosse 283)

The Party reformed and purged the nation’s educational system first by getting rid of every teacher that it considered liberal, democrat, or “politically unreliable.” According to Ilse Mckee, a former student within a National School, “The Government was probing into the past history of every teacher, exploring his political background. Many were dismissed and it was dangerous to act as anything but a National Socialist.” (qtd. in Mosse 278) The Nazis also fired Jewish teachers regardless of their educational background, teaching abilities, or academic accomplishments. (Bartoletti 40) Thus, schools all over Germany lost a number of distinguished scientists, mathematicians, engineers, jurists, and Noble Prize winners, such as Albert Einstein. (Lepage 90) According to data collected a year after the purging began in 1933, on suspensions,
dismissals, and premature retirements of teachers who were politically Left, “non-Aryan,” or both:

“…14.34% of the entire university teaching staff and 11% of university professors were dismissed… if one looks at the impact of the dismissals or suspensions on the individual universities[,] Düsseldorf lost 50%, Berlin and Frankfurt/Main 32% each, Heidelberg over 24%, Breslau 22%, Göttingen, Freiburg, Hamburg, and Cologne lost between 18 and 19% of their teaching body.” (qtd. in Koch 176-177)

Nazi educators who were able to keep their positions because the Party deemed them purely German and politically sound were then given a choice: join the National Socialist Teachers League and educate their students on National Socialism or else be dismissed. (Bartoletti 39) Thus by 1936, 97% of all public school teachers (about 300,000 people) were members of the League, making up the largest numbers of people joining the Nazi Party more than any other profession. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Propaganda Themes) As a member of the League, teachers had to participate in a one-month training course that included drills and lectures focusing on Nazi theories that educators were then supposed to pass onto their pupils in the classrooms. By 1939, 210,000 teachers were trained in the theories of the “spirit of militarism, paganism, anti-Semitism, and the cult of the perfect ‘Aryan’ racial type.” (Lepage 90) The Party expected its teachers to recruit 100% of its students to become Hitler Youth members, and thus teachers inside of National Schools pressured their students to join the Nazi youth group. (Bartoletti 40)

Alfred Bäumler, one example of a teacher who was a Nazi follower, taught his students that they “must be imbued with the active heroic spirit ‘of a proud Germanic warrior’ rather than with what he saw as decadent ‘spiritualism.’” Following Nazi theories, he taught that his students must be prepared for action and war against barbaric groups that threaten Germany’s existence.
Alfons Heck recalled how his teacher also bullied Jewish students to teach students anti-Semitic sentiments: “Herr Becker made the Jewish children sit in a corner, which he sneeringly designated as ‘Israel.’ He never called on them… We quickly realized that he wanted us to despise the Jews.” (qtd. in Bartoletti 42)

90% of professors in universities anxiously waited for moments to prove their loyalty to the Party. These moments oftentimes came during their research and lectures. One professor at the University of Rostock, Pascual Jordan, taught physics and one of the founders of quantum mechanics. He used his position to prove loyalty to the party by claiming “that the leadership principle (das Führerprinzip) was present in the molecular structure of matter.” Another professor who worked on scientific research, Johannes Stark, was “a virulent critic of Albert Einstein and his Theory of Relativity… [and he] denounced all Jewish physicists as egocentric liars interested only in personal publicity and commercial gain.” (Lewis 69-70)

However, there were teachers who refused to undergo Nazi indoctrination and refused to pass Nazi ideologies onto their students. These teachers quit; those who refused to teach Nazi theories in schools but did not quit underwent harsh consequences. (Bartoletti 40) In Rita S. Botwinick’s book, Winzig, Germany, 1933-46: The History of a Town under the Third Reich, she gave an example of a head of a public school, Rektor Spieler, who was removed from office because he committed the following errors inside of the school:

“1. The Rektor had displayed an un-German sympathy toward the Jewish children in Winzig. For example, he had permitted the itinerant Jewish religion teacher the use of his office for instruction. He had permitted a Jewish girl to be crowned at the Kinderfest. He had punished an Aryan boy for beating up a Jewish child… 2. The Rektor had refused to fly the swastika from the school’s flagpole after the election of 1932… 3. The minutes taken by Spieler when he was secretary of the teachers’ association revealed anti-Nazi commentaries… 6. Spieler replaced signs reading “Shut the door” with signs requesting,
“Please, close the door.” This revealed an un-Aryan attitude. Children must be commanded, not asked to obey. Spieler had failed to attend a meeting featuring an important Nazi speaker…” (54, 56)

Educators who committed similar anti-Nazi actions also faced other consequences, including being sent to concentration camps or “harassed, dismissed, forced into exile and retirement, and even imprisoned.” (Lepage 93)

In terms of determining exactly what the teachers and professors under National Schools stood for and what their roles were, writer Hermann Klauss wrote in 1941:

“The teacher is not just an instructor and a transmitter of knowledge. He is more than that. He is a soldier, serving on the cultural-political front of National Socialism. True, the battle on this front is of a different nature and is fought with different weapons, but it is no less important because the struggle is for the soul of the people [students].” (qtd. in Mosse 127)

As a result of the Party’s belief in this ideology, it purged the schools and universities, and left behind in these institutions only one type of teacher—that type which belonged to a group of educators that was heavily indoctrinated with Nazi theories and who was completely loyal to Hitler and the Party. Thus, students became heavily indoctrinated with Nazi ideologies themselves, as they had only one point of view to learn from.

The third and final gear that the Party manipulated to power the propaganda powerhouses was the class curriculum of every school and university. The Nazi Party exerted a particular amount of indoctrination of the youth through the schools’ and universities’ curriculum and coursework. In beginning and intermediate schools and universities taught the usual subjects—science, history, geology, writing, and math. However, each of these courses had a Nazi ideological twist to them with anti-Semitic elements and examples of war and violence permeated every topic. The Nazi Party modeled its new standardized educational curriculum
after the ideology of \textit{Weltanschauung}, meaning “worldview,” with the intent of molding students into fervent Nazis who were indoctrinated with Nazi theories. (Bartoletti 38)

No longer objective and purely scientific, science transformed into a subject that was completely based on Nazi ideology and dangerously anti-Semitic. \textit{Erblehre und Rassenkunde}, or “inheritance and racial science” replaced biology and other natural science courses. (Pagaard 192) Nazi scholars glorified the “Aryan” race, calling for the mass reproduction of the race, while claiming that Jews and other “inferior” peoples were “parasitic bastard races” that were a threat to German culture and civilization, as well as to world peace. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

The Nazis emphasized for girls in particular the preparation for future roles as wives and mothers. According to Pagaard, “The Nazi motto for women was "\textit{Kinder, Kirche, Kueche}" (children, church, kitchen).” (196) One textbook, \textit{Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen} (“Life Skills for Secondary Schools”), that was made specifically for 5\textsuperscript{th} grade girls in middle schools in biology classes preached how important it was for each species of animals to mate with only the same species, and how female animals had an important role of reproducing as many babies as they possibly could in order to preserve the existence of their own species:

“Among all living creatures, we can see a further natural law: the production of numerous offspring. Nowhere on earth do we find a form of life that produces only one or two offspring (corresponding to the number of the parents). That would inevitably lead to extinction. The elephant has the longest period of procreation, from its 30\textsuperscript{th} to 90\textsuperscript{th} year. It brings about six offspring into the world.” (Calvin German Propaganda Archives)

In the same textbook, the Party then applied these concepts to humans and their lives, preaching that humans, likewise, had to keep to their own ethnic group, and that females had an important
role of reproducing as many children as they possibly could in order to preserve their ethnic group and to help the population of that group survive and expand:

“History provides us with enough examples to prove that mankind, too, is under this law. In the midst of their prosperity, the Romans lost the desire to have children. They sinned against the law of maintaining the species. Their state was undermined and overcome by foreign peoples in a short time. The ethnic traits of the Romans thus vanished. Our nation, too, once hung in the balance. National Socialism restored to the German people the will to have children, and preserved our people from certain decline, which would have been inevitable under the law of species and the law of the greater number of offspring... A large number of offspring are an important means in the struggle for survival of the species.” (Calvin German Propaganda Archives)

Race studies also focused on the supposed racial differences between different ethnic groups. Lessons claimed that Aryans were “superior” while Gypsies, blacks, Slavs, and Jews were “inferior.” Henry Metelmann recalled: “It was drilled into us that we were the privileged members of the *Herrenrasse* (master race) and that it was our God-given duty to bring order and sense into a wicked world, if necessary by force.” (qtd. in Bartoletti 42) One textbook used to reflect these concepts was *New Elements of Racial Research*, where the author, Hermann Gauch, wrote:

“Generally speaking, the Nordic race alone can emit sounds of untroubled clearness, whereas among non-Nordic men and races, the pronunciation is more impure, the individual sounds more confused and more like those made by animals, such as barking, snoring, sniffing and squeaking. That birds can learn to talk better than other animals is explained by the fact that their mouths are Nordic in structure—that is to say, high, narrow and short-tongued. The shape of the Nordic gum allows a superior movement of the tongue, which is the reason why Nordic talking and singing are fuller.” (qtd. in Lewis 74-75)

The Party used Will Vesper’s translation of Tacitus’s *Germania* to further shine a better light upon the German ethnic group. In this version of the book, the Nazis depicted the Romans as degenerates, highlighting their immoral ways of life (“weakening their martial resolve and
besmirching their honour”). Meanwhile, German tribes were “models of vitality, deeply attached to the soil, racially pure, physically strong and healthy, devoted to the leadership principle and utterly fearless in war.” (Lewis 78)

Race studies lessons rejected “undesirable” elements in the population, including homosexuals and the disabled. They stressed the importance and necessity of maintaining German blood purity where the German people were not to mix with other ethnic groups, as well. (Pagaard 194) Hermand recalled an experience when his teacher called on him because he represented the perfect Aryan:

“…In the course of her explanation of the Nordic racial type, the teacher asked me to stand up and pointed to my ‘ash blond’ hair, my ‘deep blue’ eyes, and the ‘length’ of the back of my skull… When entering the school, I had had to hand in a detailed genealogical chart because of my French name (d’Hermand). So it came as a surprise to find out that I was a real ‘German’ type.” (qtd. in 25)

In Figure 3, a professor is teaching his students the differences between “pure blooded Germans,” “Mischlings,” (‘of mixed blood’) and Jews. Figure 4 is the chart that the professor in figure 1 was using. In these particular lessons, professors taught their students that:

“People with 4 non-Jewish, German grandparents (white circles) were declared to be of ‘German blood.’ The Nazi state classified people as ‘Jews’ if they were descended from 3 or more Jewish grandparents (black circles in top row right). Having one or two Jewish grandparents made someone a ‘mischling’ (of mixed blood).” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Propaganda Themes)
Lessons also taught students how to identify Jews through physical traits that the Nazis claimed characterized these “inferior” people who were a threat to Germany and to world peace. “We were always told that the Jews were the cause of our misfortune,” said Karl Schnibbe. (qtd. in Bartoletti 42) Two very popular children’s books that the National Schools used to indoctrinate anti-Jewish sentiment in the young were *Der Giftpilz* (“The Poisonous Mushroom”) by Ernst Hiemer and *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid, und keinem Jud' bei seinem Eid* (“Trust No Fox on the Green Heath, and No Jew Upon His Oath”) by Elvira Bauer. (Pagaard 192)

On page two of *The Poisonous Mushroom*, the illustration shows a student learning how to identify Jews through physical characteristics, including the shape of the people’s noses and the stance and face shape of a Jewish man. The caption on the page reads, “The Jewish nose is crooked. It looks like a six.” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Propaganda Themes) (See Fig. 5)
In *Trust No Fox*, the Nazi racism against Jews was also overwhelming. On page three of the book, Bauer directly compared Germans versus Jews by portraying the Germans as portrayed as strong and hardworking, while portraying the Jews as ugly, lazy, and worthless. (See Fig. 6)
Page eleven showed another example of extreme anti-Semitism, where the Jewish lawyer took away all of the German farmer’s goods, tricking him many times and getting fat and ugly after eating all of the goods. (See Fig. 7)
Taking advantage of preexisting images and stereotypes, the Party “portrayed Jews as an ‘alien race’ that fed off the host nation, poisoned its culture, seized its economy, and enslaved its workers and farmers” in these children books that hundreds of thousands of students read. (Luckert and Bachrach 86)

In an attempt to make racial science sound scientific, Nazis implemented the theory that explained, “harmful germs could corrupt the whole body, so, in society, the Jews damaged the whole people” and threatened the “health” of German society. (Lepage 92) Thus, racial science was not based on science at all, but rather on repetition appealing to passion more than to reason.
History was completely rewritten to focus on Germany’s greatness while at the same time advocating incredible racism. Thin pamphlets that narrated Hitler’s life and other heroic German tales replaced bulky history textbooks. (Lepage 91) Lessons detailed Germany’s nationalism and how powerful the nation was, contrasting the valiant struggles of the Nazi Party with the Weimar Republic, which was “an evil entity that was run by liberals who had betrayed Germany by signing the Treaty of Versailles and by ‘letting loose all manners of permissiveness, sexual, social and political.’” (Lewis 73) Lessons also preached about how destructive the Jewish people and other racial enemies were to the nation. Textbooks often blamed Germany’s loss in World War I on the Jews to “prove” how destructive the Jews were. (Pagaard 193) Students learned that the Jews strived for world domination, which was a dangerous threat to Germany and to world peace.

Lists of essay topics handed out to high schools carried only one correct answer and restricted room for original and creative thought. For example, one essay topic on the wars of liberation against Napoleon was to be immediately related to the Third Reich without any other elements in between, such as Napoleon’s victories. (Mosse 267) Aside from that example, other history essay titles were “Adolf Hitler, the Saviour of the Fatherland,” “The Renewal of the German Racial Soul,” and “What Enables Adolf Hitler to be the German Fuhrer and Reichschancellor.” (Lewis 73)

History books oftentimes contained stories of German heroes who fought for the home country—always with enthusiasm and courage. These stories were meant to inspire the youth reading them in the classrooms, where their plots contained details on how “the [soldiers’] deaths were always the hero’s death” and on how the deaths indicated the sacrifice, honor, and
“willingness to die for the glory of the Fatherland.” (Donson 586-587) Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”) became the most important textbook for every history class. Hitler was depicted as the liberator of Germany, and Ilse Mckee remembered, “We read and discussed it with our master, chapter by chapter, and when we had finished we started again from the beginning.” (qtd. in Mosse 278)

Geography classes, closely related to history classes, were also greatly racist and again rewritten with false, propaganda-filled themes made to fit Hitler’s aggressive expansion policy. Such themes included explanations of why the Germans needed more land and living space (“Lebensraum”) and about racial migration and the need to acquire overseas colonies. (Pagaard 193-194) An excerpt from a middle school geography book published during the war by the Nazi Party said:

> “Since we do not want to be a dying people, our goal is to increase our birth rate. But **for a growing population we need space** if we do not again want to see large amounts of German blood emigrating to other nations, as was the case before the World War… We must demand the return of our colonies not only for reasons of honor and equality, but also **for economic reasons and to provide space for emigration**. Germany today does not have the ability to meet its needs for food and raw materials from its own holdings, as do the major colonial powers… Colonies are not an expression of imperialist thinking for the German nation, no outward sign of power and assertion, but rather **they are a necessity of life**… **Our demands for their return show the way from the Greater German Reich of the present to the larger Germany of the future.**” (Calvin German Propaganda Archives)

The Party hoped that students shared the same sentiment: Germany had been “left out” of acquiring new lands as the British empire and Spanish empire continued to seize new lands. (Lewis 74)

The Nazis even managed to integrate racist, anti-Jewish sentiments into mathematics to ensure that they controlled every aspect of their students’ studies. One sample problem that
showed this asked students, “In Germany the people of foreign race are the Jews. In 1933 Germany had 66,060,000 inhabitants. Of those, 499,682 were practicing Jews. How much is that in percent?” (Kater 65) Simple addition and subtraction problems also factored in war and violence, since war was considered the most glorious and courageous demonstration of devotion to the state. Students worked on problems where they were expected to “calculate the trajectories of artillery rounds or the ratios between various types of military aircraft.” (Pagaard 194)

Another example of a mathematical problem that students had to solve was:

“Question: A plane flying an average of 240 kilometers an hour flies to a town 210 kilometers distant, spends 7.5 minutes dropping bombs and returns. How long was the flight?

Answer: Flight to town = 52.5 minutes; Time dropping bombs = 7.5 minutes; Flight back = 52.5 minutes; Flight time = 1 hour 52.5 minutes.” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Propaganda Themes)

Mathematics textbooks also contained problems alluding to the Nazi ideology of persecuting disabled people as they included “calculations of the cost to produce lunatic asylums as opposed to workers’ housing.” (Lepage 92) One sample problem that exemplified this shocking topic was:

“A mentally-handicappe person costs the public 4 Reichsmark per day, a cripple 5.50 Reichsmark and a convicted criminal 3.50 Reichsmark. Cautious estimates state that within the boundaries of the German Reich 300,000 persons are being cared for in public mental institutions. How many marriage loans at 1,000 Reichsmark per couple could annually be financed from the funds allocated to institutions?” (Koch 174)

Propaganda films covering all of these different school subjects were shown regularly in classes as another method (in addition to textbook readings and lectures) to teach the students the Nazi ideologies. These films were paired with printed notes, lectures that explained key concepts before movie screenings, discussions to indoctrinate the youth, and exams that reinforced key
terms. (Welch 69-70) As John Altmann says in his journal article, “Movies’ Role in Hitler’s Conquest of German Youth:”

“The films were mostly ten minute shorts. They were run in conjunction with printed forty-minute lectures, given in advance of the showing. After the lecture and film, the pupils took an examination on each topic to impress the theme more firmly on their minds. The lantern slides likewise applied visual education as a shortcut to an understanding of political as well as general themes. After five years of occupation, Germany's school-film propaganda had infected many children with Nazi ideas.” (379)

Since these films were created for all subjects—namely history, biology, geography, and botany—they served as a nice wrap-up conclusion for each course’s lesson in the Nazi-controlled schools. Bernhard Rust, Minister of Education, ordered these propaganda films to be shown in all German schools because he believed that they were the most effective way to teach students Nazi theories in all curriculum courses. He said that:

"The leadership of Germany more and more comes to believe that schools have to be open for the dissemination of our ideology. To do this job we know of no better means than the film. The film is necessary, above all, for the youngest of our citizens—the school children. The film has to bring near to them all political problems of today, knowledge about Germany's great past, and understanding for the development of the Third Reich." (qtd. in 381)

These films took advantage of the youth’s eagerness for adventure and danger, instilling these elements into the short propaganda reels. (380-381) The content of these films usually included scenes contrasting the “new, strong, national Socialist Germany” against the “old, corrupt, Jewish-Bolshevized Weimar Republic” and scenes where the youth sang about the “reborned strength of the Germany of Adolf Hitler” while mocking at the “decaying of the Jewish-democratic world” and insulting the “murderous Bolshevist Russia.” (384) Such scenes supported themes in films that preached theories on the need for Germany’s colonial expansion. (Welch 71)
Through a variety of methods, from lectures to rewritten textbooks to film, the Party and its Nazi educators managed to indoctrinate hundreds of thousands of students through their studies. Taking away traditional learning strategies also contributed to the indoctrination process. Students could not question their professors or the content of their studies, and “lessons were meant to be absorbed, not discussed.” (Lewis 68) The state’s primary goal in terms of its standardized curriculum was that every boy and girl should graduate with a “racial consciousness,” which was the only way to “ensure that the child would become a valuable member of the national community.” (Koch 162) As Hitler stated in Mein Kampf, “No boy or girl should leave school without realizing the necessity and the nature of the purity of blood.” (qtd. in Koch 165)

What resulted from Hitler’s plan to indoctrinate the youth was the Nazi’s complete restructuring of the entire educational system, establishing propaganda powerhouses in place of traditional schools and universities. In order to control their propaganda powerhouses, the Nazis manipulated and controlled the three gears to their machine—the school environment that students were immersed in everyday, the teachers and professors that were responsible for instructing them Nazi theories everyday, and the class curriculum that they studied everyday. Taking away all sense of academic and intellectual meaning, Hitler’s plan resulted in the deterioration of a world-class education across Germany.

Up until 1933, the entire world had admired Germany’s educational system—from the kindergarten to the university grade levels—for its comprehensiveness and breadth. However, once the Nazis took over and implemented National Schools with new, ideological standards, chilling changes occurred. Immediately, the Party tore down any signs of the former Republic
inside the buildings; removed all Jewish and politically unreliable teachers and professors; and standardized the class curriculum to reflect fanatic and racist ideology. (Lepage 6)

The schooling structure was heavily anti-traditional, anti-knowledge, and especially anti-parent. (Kater 49) Hitler believed that the older generation was going to “rot” soon and he did not want it to influence the newer, younger generation that he was so confident, held the future of Germany in its hands. As the Hitler Youth’s education took away more time and energy away from personal and family life, many parents firmly opposed against their children joining the ranks of the Nazis. However, the Nazis retaliated with a variety of punishments, from fines to imprisonment, along with ideological concepts in schools that successfully stole these parents’ children away from them—in the end, propaganda in the schools taught by Nazi followers proved to be far stronger than family values parents tried to teach their students.

The Nazi Party redefined education under their governing system to reflect obedience, service, camaraderie, and the value of physical strength. The Party deemed that Nazi character was superior to intellect, and thus students were to always put Nazi dogma and Hitler Youth duties first. (Kater 49) According to Hitler, “A change in education is a further necessity: today we suffer from over-education. Only knowledge is prized. The know-it-alls are the enemies of action. What is needed is instinct and will.” (qtd. in Mosse 10) In other words, the Party got rid of all intellectualism within the schools and universities and transformed them into buildings that were basically training camps for the students for their inevitable futures of becoming soldiers who would serve Hitler and the Nazi Party. Thus, creative ideas, independence and knowledge were considered dangerous and destructive to the Nazi-controlled schools, and in the long-term, to Germany under Hitler. What arose from the abolishment of traditional education was
uniformity of thinking and beliefs in very racist and ideological ideals. The total obedience that teachers and students gave to the Nazi-controlled schools mirrored the total obedience the state gave to Hitler in the bigger picture.

The Nazis’ educational system appealed more to passion rather than reason. In an attempt at building students into future soldiers and Nazi Party technocrats where only accepted Nazi philosophy was drilled into the youth’s minds, “a whole generation of children [was] fooled by the state and deceived by indoctrination.” (Lepage 83)
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