

Dear 8th Graders,

When I suggested several options for your summer biography and took a poll, most of the class expressed interest in learning more about Adolph Hitler. I've decided to limit the choices to just two. Alongside the Hitler biography, you have a second choice to read a biography of Gandhi. Both historical figures were change agents, and both will provide valuable lessons in character formation and forms of power. You may choose to gain more insight into how Hitler became such a destructive force in the world, or you can gain an appreciation of how Gandhi became such a positive force in the world.

Instead of a book report, I would like you to respond to the biography in the form of a letter. This should be like the letter I had you write to Jane Addams during our study of the Progressive Era last fall, but longer (about two pages, single space), since you have more information to base your letter on. As I asked you to do in your letter to Jane Addams, try to balance observations and complements with questions, and be as specific as possible. Obviously, a letter to Hitler will have more criticisms than compliments, but should also have lots of observations and questions— What surprised, disturbed, or puzzled you? What would you ask Hitler if you had the chance to do so? We will use the letters to Hitler to prime the pump for our continued study of World War II, and we will put the letters to Gandhi in a vault until we conclude our study of World War II and turn to Decolonization after the war. At that point, those letters will be used in a classroom activity.

I have more than enough copies of the Gandhi biography, so be sure to sign one out before you leave for the summer. I have a limited number of copies of the Hitler biography in the history room. If I don't have a copy for you, you can order it from a bookstore, online, or through interlibrary loan at your local library: *Hitler*, by Albert Marrin, 2002.

Best Regards,

Dr. Freeberg  
Spring, 2022