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Hitler on trial in Middlesbrough!

A party of Year 9 and 10 students attended 'Hitler on Trial' at the Little Theatre, Middlesbrough which was performed by the 'School History Scene' company. The session opened with an exam-busting workshop in which Josh Brooman, GCSE History Examiner and prolific textbook author, explained the thinking behind the examination syllabuses and gave practical tips on how students could improve their performance in their GCSE exams. Using a 16-page workbook written by 'history guru' Chris Culpin, students marked actual answers taken from past papers and listened to advice on how they could be improved.

After a short break, the tension mounted as the focus of the workshop changed to a courtroom drama in which students were asked to imagine a world in which Adolf Hitler was captured alive by British Special Forces in 1942 and put on trial for war crimes, starting with the charge of causing the Second World War.



Ernst Rohm SA
Leader

The small group of players took on the roles of various characters each of whom was called to the witness box. The Prosecuting Counsel opened the case for the prosecution by questioning a series of ordinary Germans who witnessed many of the key events in Weimar and Nazi Germany; a sailor who took part in the Revolution of 1918-19; a founder member of the SA (Sturmabteilung /Storm troopers /Brown Shirts); Gustav Stresemann's secretary; a security guard who witnessed the Reichstag Fire and a member of a jazz band that toured Germany during the 1930s.

Hitler, conducting his own defence, rejected the testimony of these 'ordinary people' and instead called a series of world leaders to give evidence whom he hoped would justify his actions. Neville Chamberlain, Benito Mussolini, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, General Hideki Tojo and Josef Stalin were all called to the stand. Each performance was very well delivered and students found the character of Mussolini particularly amusing!



Hitler interrogating
General Tojo from Japan

All pictures are courtesy of 'School History Scene' – 'Theatre productions to support the teaching of History'



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The play ended with the student audience voting on whether or not Hitler was guilty.

Overall, the audience voted that Hitler was guilty of causing the Second World War. Over 70% of students from LJS agreed with this conclusion. Miss Nicholson, Director of Global Studies, who organised the visit, said, 'The production challenged our students to think about contrasting interpretations of Nazi Germany and the causes of World war Two. Students rose to this challenge with many still debating the outcome on the bus back to school! The overall session had done much to reinforce the topics covered and build upon the skills necessary to enable students to succeed in their History GCSE Paper One examination later in the year.'



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