



## *Hitler Youth* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

**Subjects:** National Socialism and youth; Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945)—Germany

**Awards:** Newbery Honor Book, Sibert Honor Book, Ten Best Books for Young Adults, Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, Horn Book Fanfare

**Book Lists:** Europe, Gifted, Middle School, Reluctant Readers

**Props:** Photos from book

**NF**

---

This book is not about Adolf Hitler. It is the story of the estimated seven million boys and girls who followed Hitler and the National Socialist (Nazi) Party during the years 1933 to 1945. This was a time when Germany was suffering from a weak, unstable government, high unemployment, and widespread poverty. The Nazi Party promised young Germans a great future in a great Germany if they joined the Hitler Youth.

This book tells the true stories of some of those children affected by the Hitler Youth. (*Show pictures on pages 4 and 5*) This is Alfons Heck, who when he was barely 16 commanded 800 Hitler Youth Troops. He continued to be promoted, reaching the equivalent rank of Major General, until before he was 17 he commanded 6,000 Hitler Youth Troops. This is Helmuth Hubener, who printed and distributed anti-Nazi leaflets—a crime punishable by death under Nazi law. This is Dagobert Lewyn, who was a Jew and suffered humiliation and persecution at the hands of the Hitler Youth. This is Elisabeth Vetter who at the age of 8 was scolded by her parents for her loyalty to Hitler. She told her Hitler Youth leaders what her parents said and her parents were arrested. This is Henry Metelmann, who at 16

became a tank driver and saw action in France, Russia, Poland, and Austria. But, there were so many more. They flocked to and admired Adolf. And Adolf Hitler in turn admired them. He saw the natural energy and drive that young people possess. He understood that young people could be a powerful political force that could help shape Germany's future. In his quest for power, Hitler harnessed their enthusiasm and loyalty. Hitler once said, "begin with the young. We older ones are used up . . . But my magnificent youngsters! What material! With them I can make a new world." And he tried.

Formed officially in 1926, the Hitler Youth offered its members excitement, adventure, and new heroes to worship. It gave them hope, power, and the chance to make their voices heard. Given such great opportunities, what youth would turn away? Now, knowing what we know of Adolf Hitler, perhaps we cannot imagine being persuaded by him. But they didn't know what we know. They saw only hope and a great future for Germany. Walk a mile in their shoes and learn what it meant to be a Hitler Youth. (*Show picture on page 6, hold up book*) *Hitler Youth* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti.