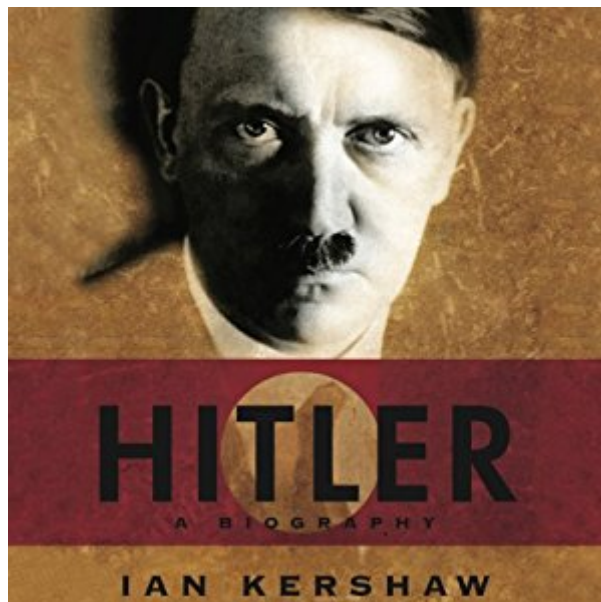


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Hitler: A Biography



Synopsis

Hailed as the most compelling biography of the German dictator yet written, Ian Kershaw's *Hitler* brings us closer than ever before to the heart of its subject's immense darkness. From his illegitimate birth in a small Austrian village to his fiery death in a bunker under the Reich chancellery in Berlin, Adolf Hitler left a murky trail, strewn with contradictory tales and overgrown with self-created myths. One truth prevails: the sheer scale of the evils that he unleashed on the world has made him a demonic figure without equal in the 20th century. Ian Kershaw's *Hitler* brings us closer than ever before to the character of the bizarre misfit in his 30-year ascent from a Viennese shelter for the indigent to uncontested rule over the German nation that had tried and rejected democracy in the crippling aftermath of World War I. With extraordinary vividness, Kershaw recreates the settings that made Hitler's rise possible: the virulent anti-Semitism of prewar Vienna, the crucible of a war with immense casualties, the toxic nationalism that gripped Bavaria in the 1920s, the undermining of the Weimar Republic by extremists of the Right and the Left, the hysteria that accompanied Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 and then mounted in brutal attacks by his storm troopers on Jews and others condemned as enemies of the Aryan race. In an account drawing on many previously untapped sources, Hitler metamorphoses from an obscure fantasist, a "drummer" sounding an insistent beat of hatred in Munich beer halls, to the instigator of an infamous failed putsch and, ultimately, to the leadership of a ragtag alliance of right-wing parties fused into a movement that enthralled the German people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ian Kershaw's monumental biography of Adolf Hitler, more than a thousand pages long (previously published as two volumes). It is a long read, but it is a fascinating story, never boring. Reading it, what I find most incredible about Hitler's life is how someone who came out of World War I without seemingly any future prospects could become in a few years time one of the most important men of the 20th century, the man responsible for millions of dead in history's bloodiest war. The day Hitler turned 30 years old, April the 20th, 1919, Hitler must have felt an abject failure: his beloved Germany had recently lost the war, Munich was in the hands of the communist Bavarian Soviet Republic (though it seems that Hitler quietly supported the Soviet republic at the time, out of opportunism more than out of belief), if he was going to be discharged soon from the demobilizing army, as it seemed likely, he seemingly had no prospect of any civilian job. Looking at the past, he could have seen how he had failed as an artist, have few friends for the last years, was never able to have a girlfriend. Despite all this, and under an extraordinary set of circumstances, in a few months his life would be changed when as an army spy he joined the little known NSDAP. In a few years time, he would become a national figure, the unquestionable leader of Germany's extreme nationalists. In fourteen years, he would become the leader of Germany. The book has some good material on Hitler's childhood in conservative, provincial Austria. It is interesting to read how much his mother Klara spoiled him. As a young man, Hitler was lazy and bohemian, never having a regular job. He thought he was a great artist, so he felt crushed when the Art Academy in Vienna rejected twice his application.

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