Hitler Youth and German Girls League
By Sharon Fabian

In Nazi Germany there were clubs for boys and girls. Most young people belonged to one of them. Hitler Youth was for the boys, and the German Girls League was for the girls. The clubs had athletic and educational activities, but they also trained the young people of Germany to believe in the Nazi ideas. At that time, with so many young people belonging, they were probably popular clubs. Today, Hitler Youth and the German Girls League are seen more as propaganda organizations that manipulated young people into joining the Nazis at an early age. Read the following information, and see what you think.

Boys between the ages of 13 and 18 belonged to Hitler Youth. They wore a uniform that included black pants and a brown shirt with the swastika symbol. They were awarded a little dagger with the inscription "Blood and Honor."

Hitler Youth participated in athletic activities designed to build up their strength. They went on marches that took several days with only army rations to eat. They also learned how to shoot a pistol. They learned to use a bayonet and to throw a grenade. They learned to read a map, dig a trench, and crawl under barbed wire.

They memorized a poem praising Hitler and a prayer addressed to "my Fuehrer" (Hitler).

They were taught to believe in anti-Semitism.

By 1936, Hitler Youth had 4 million members, and in fact, every boy was expected to join. The clubs now had 8,000 full time leaders and over 700,000 part time leaders. Many of the leaders were Nazi teachers.

Some Hitler Youth were trained to be speakers. These boys had memorized the Nazi principles, called National Socialism, perfectly. They could give speeches to attract more people to the Nazi cause.

Mainly, Hitler Youth were in training to be soldiers. With all of its boys trained in the skills of a soldier and in the beliefs of the Nazis, the Nazi Party believed that it would have a steady supply of new soldiers when the boys grew up.

Training in the German Girls League also included athletics because Hitler believed that all German youth should be physically strong. Girls developed their strength by marching, throwing a ball, and swimming.

The girls were not preparing to be soldiers, however. They were preparing to be wives and mothers. Hitler taught that it was the duty of each German girl to keep house for her husband and to raise children - children who would grow up to be Nazis too.

One poster about the German Girls League shows a smiling girl in front of a flag with a swastika symbol. The caption on the poster says, "Every girl belongs to us."

More than anything else, members of the Hitler Youth and the German Girls League were taught to be loyal to Hitler. They were told that they were outgrowing the childish ideas they had learned at home, and that, now, they were moving on to something more important.

They were also taught to report to their leaders about anyone who disagreed with the Nazis. This included their teachers and their parents.

In Hitler Youth and the German Girls League, adults they should have been able to trust were teaching young people prejudice and violence. At the time, these young people had no way of understanding what Hitler and the Nazis really stood for.
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Questions

1. Hitler Youth was a club for ______.
   A. German boys  
   B. adult soldiers  
   C. German boys and girls  
   D. German girls

2. Members of Hitler Youth learned ______.
   A. athletic skills  
   B. military skills  
   C. Nazi beliefs  
   D. All of the above

3. One of the main purposes of Hitler Youth was to provide a new supply of ______.
   A. soldiers  
   B. good students  
   C. fast swimmers  
   D. workers

4. If a member of Hitler Youth found out that his parents' beliefs were different from Hitler's beliefs, he was taught to ______.
   A. listen to his parents  
   B. report on his parents  
   C. ask his teachers  
   D. make a good decision

5. The Nazi club for German Girls was called the ______.
   A. Nazi Girls Club  
   B. Hitler Youth  
   C. German Young People  
   D. German Girls League

6. According to Nazi beliefs, it was the duty of a German girl to ______.
   A. serve in army hospitals  
   B. fight in a war  
   C. become a wife and mother  
   D. help the soldiers

7. Members of Hitler Youth had to memorize a poem that praised ______.
   A. Hitler  
   B. their parents  
   C. Germany  
   D. God

8. Members of Hitler Youth and the German Girls League were free to learn about and explore a variety of ideas.
   A. false  
   B. true

Do you think that weapons' training was an appropriate skill to teach in a club for teens? Why or why not? Do you think that there are any circumstances in which young people should learn about the use of a weapon? Explain.
Members of Hitler Youth and the German Girls League were taught to put their loyalty to Hitler above everything else, even their loyalty to their family. This must have put them in a difficult position. What advice would you give to a young person who was taught not to believe in his or her family’s values?