

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

HITLER'S LAST DAYS

BY BILL O'REILLY

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS

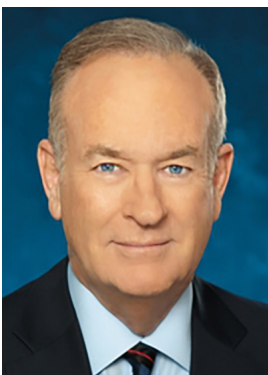


ABOUT THE BOOK

By early 1945, the destruction of the German Nazi State seems certain. The Allied forces, led by American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, are gaining control of Europe, leaving German leaders scrambling. Facing defeat, Adolf Hitler flees to a secret bunker with his mistress, Eva Braun, and his beloved dog, Blondi. It is there that all three will meet their fate, thus ending the Third Reich and one of the darkest chapters in modern history.

Hitler's Last Days is a gripping account of the death of perhaps the most reviled villain of the 20th century—a man whose regime of murder and terror haunts the world even today. Adapted from Bill O'Reilly's historical thriller *Killing Patton*, this book will have young readers—and grown-ups too—hooked on history.

Ages 10–14 • HC: 9781627793964 • eBook: 9781627793971 • CD-Audio: 9781427263834



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill O'Reilly is a former high school history teacher and the author of several bestselling books, including *Lincoln's Last Days*, *Kennedy's Last Days*, and *The Last Days of Jesus*. He is also the anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor*, the highest-rated cable news show in the country.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

USING *HITLER'S LAST DAYS* WITH THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Hitler's Last Days is appropriate for grades 5–12 as a supplemental text in history and English. The book, while engaging, is a top-notch, researched text that uses many primary sources and historical pictures to bring the last days of the Nazi regime to life for students. The Common Core Standards presented here for English/Reading are an example from the sixth grade; teachers may want to visit the Common Core State Standards website to apply their own grade-level equivalents. The subheadings and numerical references will help users easily locate the coordinating standards for specific grade levels.

PRE-READING

Brainstorm a list of everything you know about the leader of the Nazi party, Adolf Hitler. Then, in pairs, discuss why it is important to study someone who was so cruel toward his fellow human beings. What can we hope to learn by examining his life? When and how can a person of such influence and bad intentions be stopped?

KEY PLAYERS

Create a bulletin board from the Key Players section of the book. Or have students create a bookmark to use as a reference for class discussion and partnership questions.

After each section, discuss how the author brings the key players to life. How are they introduced? How do we learn more about them as the book progresses? Is through actions? Their decisions? Their treatment of others? What they say? Or what others say about them?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated on a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions can be used individually to check comprehension of the material, or for pairs of students to answer together before participating in a class discussion.

PART ONE: THE WOLF'S LAIR

Chapter 1

1. List the ten most important facts that you learn in this chapter. Rank them from most important to least important, and be prepared to defend your rankings.
2. Why do you think some people pursue power at any price? How do we prevent the next Hitler?

Chapter 2

1. What foolish move does Eisenhower call for?

2. Do you find the study of military tactics at all interesting? Why or why not?

Chapter 3

1. Who is Otto Skorzeny? What role does Hitler want him to play in his scheme?
2. Explain why Hitler needs new commanders at this stage in the war.

Chapter 4

1. What orders does Eisenhower face from Chief of Staff George Marshall? Why is it difficult for him to move troops on offense?
2. List the details of Hitler's plans and his advantages.

Chapter 5

1. What signs convince Colonel Oscar Koch that the Germans are planning an offensive? What is the reaction to his hypothesis? Why?
2. What is Patton's plan for December 19, 1944? Why is Patton conflicted?

PART TWO: THE LAST DESPERATE EFFORT

Chapter 6

1. Why didn't Eisenhower suspect an assault through the Ardennes?
2. What are the orders for Skorzeny's men? What risks do they face beyond those of a typical soldier?

Chapter 7

1. Explain why Elsenborn Ridge and the Losheim Gap are strategic locations to both the Allies and the Nazis. Why must the Ninety-Ninth hold the line at all costs?
2. List the advantages and disadvantages of both fighting forces (the Ninety-Ninth Division vs. the German Twelfth and Third SS Panzer) as they prepare to face-off.

Chapter 8

1. Describe the German First SS Panzer Division and their leader.
2. Summarize their actions in the tiny village of Honsfeld and explain what it reveals about their brutality. How do the Americans react?

Chapter 9

1. Describe General George S. Patton and his leadership style.
2. What is Patton's unlikely (and near impossible) plan to shut down the German offensive?

Chapter 10

1. Explain why the tiny town of Bastogne is so strategic in this war.
2. Who will try to hold it? How? What happens if they fail?

Chapter 11

1. What does German General Heinrich Lüttwitz offer Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe's men, who are surrounded in Bastogne? Why?

2. What is McAuliffe's response to the offer? Why does he make such a simple remark? What is the reaction on the German side?

Chapter 12

1. To whom does Patton appeal for help and success in his mission? Specifically, what does he need?
2. Were you surprised by the tone of his address to this particular audience? Why or why not? What does it reveal about his character?

Chapter 13

1. List the effects of Skorzeny's Operation Greif on the American effort.
2. Summarize Joachim Peiper's problems outside La Gleize. Why does he disobey a direct command?

Chapter 14

1. How does Lieutenant Colonel "Abe" Abrams decide on the best method to aid the surrounded town of Bastogne? What does he decide?
2. Study the map in the last chapter (p.98). What can you understand by closely reading a map that can be difficult to convey in words? What did you learn or understand better by studying the map?

Chapter 15

1. Explain why Patton is furious after the Battle of the Bulge.
2. Who took credit for the successful mission? Who do you think most deserved it? How much does it matter to get the credit one deserves?

Chapter 16

1. Summarize in your own words what happened to Anne Frank and her family.
2. How are the Franks representatives of millions of Jewish families in Europe? What is the most frightening thing you learned in this chapter?

PART THREE: IN THE FÜHRERBUNKER

Chapter 17

1. Describe Hitler's life once he moves back to Berlin, near the end of the war.
2. What does he still believe? Why does he believe this?

Chapter 18

1. What significant event happened on March 7, 1945?
2. Why was this day such a turning point of the war?

Chapter 19

1. Describe the Siegfried Line and the Rhine River as obstacles to Allied victory. How are they overcome?
2. How does Patton put Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in his place?

Chapter 20

1. What happens to two of Hitler's favorites, Peiper and Skorzeny?

2. Describe Hitler's methods of coping with the inevitable end of the war, both as a military strategist and personally. What inspired him? What news, when it came, did he relish?

Chapter 21:

1. Describe the cache discovered in the Merkers salt mine and its significance.
2. How did military personnel (including leaders) react to tours of concentration camps? How do you think these atrocities were able to go on for so long?

Chapter 22:

1. Describe Hitler's physical health as the Russians close in around Berlin.
2. Explain Hitler's relationship with Eva Braun and how she attempts to ignore reality.

Chapter 23:

1. Summarize where the conflict stands in April of 1945.
2. What detail reveals the German soldiers' fear of the Russians?

Chapter 24:

1. Describe what life is like in Berlin for its inhabitants at this point.
2. Explain why General Walther Wenck lies to his superior officer, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel.

Chapter 25:

1. Describe the battle for Berlin near the end of the war. What is the most frightening part to you?
2. What does Wenck do instead of following his order? How does that work out for him and his men?

Chapter 26:

1. Why did Hitler marry Eva Braun, then end their lives together?
2. Describe how the two were found. What does his suicide reveal about Hitler?

Epilogue

1. What are the outcomes of the Battle of Berlin?
2. Why do you think the Allies allowed the Russians to take the city on their own?

CCSS: RI.6.2. Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

1. Have students sort the vocabulary words from each chapter into the categories below:

This word is completely new to me:	I've heard this word before:	I could use this word correctly in a sentence:	I could define this word in my own words:

VOCABULARY WORDS

- **Chapter 1:** audacious, discretionary, tactical
- **Chapter 2:** infantry, stalled, unbeknownst
- **Chapter 3:** missions, infiltrate
- **Chapter 4:** château, punctuated, atomic
- **Chapter 5:** reconnaissance, scrutinized, detachment
- **Chapter 6:** legendary, neutralized, commando, penetrable
- **Chapter 7:** abruptly, pronounced, inevitable
- **Chapter 8:** tutelage, fanatical, feinting, prestigious
- **Chapter 9:** sentry, irascible, fatuous
- **Chapter 10:** hamlet, devastation, reinforcements
- **Chapter 11:** foxhole, gallant, arrogant, annihilated
- **Chapter 12:** votive, daunting, vital, theological
- **Chapter 13:** bunker, deteriorate, absentmindedly, innuendo, hysteria, insatiable
- **Chapter 14:** volatile, variance, induce
- **Chapter 15:** inaugural, strategic, crucial
- **Chapter 16:** artillery, crematoriums, inferno, pesticide, atrocities
- **Chapter 17:** eradicating, charisma, charade
- **Chapter 18:** symbolism, amphibious
- **Chapter 19:** impassible, interspersed, candidly, munitions
- **Chapter 20:** protocol, debilitating, fetid, belies
- **Chapter 21:** wretched, smuggle, stimulated, dissolution, emaciated, malnourished
- **Chapter 22:** callous, ruthless, indispensable, resounding, nocturnally, cyanide
- **Chapter 23:** civilian, refugee
- **Chapter 24:** impose, prematurely
- **Chapter 25:** frantically, penetrate
- **Chapter 26:** somber, pragmatically
- **Chapter 27:** pinnacle, brutality, inflicted

2. Then have students learn three to five of the words that appear in the first column for them by checking an online or print resource, making flash cards or trying to discern the meaning from the context in which it appears.

3. Choose at least ten vocabulary words and create flash cards with: a definition, synonyms and antonyms, and a picture that helps the student remember it.

4. Write a new sentence for each word that reveals its meaning clearly.

CCSS: RH.6-8.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

AFTERWORD

Create a graphic organizer that summarizes the post war lives and legacies of the war's key players.

The Rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

Design a time line of key moments in Hitler's life and rise to power based on this section.

The Symbol of the Swastika

What was the original meaning of the swastika? Where is it still used today? Do you think it should be used or avoided now? Why?

Hitler's Stature, Health, and Diet

Paraphrase the most important information from this section. Pretend you will be writing a report on it and take notes on the key facts and details. Be certain to put it in your own words!

The Toothbrush Mustache

What are some of the theories about why Hitler chose this fashion statement for his facial hair?

German Soldiers and Police: The Wehrmacht, SS, and Gestapo

Create a Venn diagram or other graphic organizer that explores the differences between these three unique arms of Nazi power.

Joseph Stalin and the Russian Army

Summarize the German/Russian conflict through this period. What was the ultimate cost to civilians? Why were things difficult between the Allies and the Russians? How was it resolved (or not)?

The Red Ball Express

List the complications for the Red Ball Express from most important to least important. Explain why this system was so vital to Patton's success.

The Eagle's Nest

Describe the Eagle's Nest and its purpose during the war. What did it become right after the Nazis surrendered?

Inside Hitler's Bunker

Explain what life was like inside Hitler's bunker in Berlin. Why was it such a depressing place to work?

Nazi Cash, Art, and Stolen Possessions

What stockpiles were discovered from the German occupation across Western Europe? What was the money to be used for? What was the intent for the art?

Concentration Camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau

What were the five most shocking details or facts that you learned in this section? What questions does it leave in your own mind? How can we prevent atrocities like this in the future?

The Nuremberg Trials

Explain the different charges against the leaders of the Nazi Party. Do you think justice was served with these tribunals, or not? Is it possible to get justice for such overwhelming loss?

Last Will of Adolf Hitler

What does this letter/testimony reveal about Hitler’s personality? Were there any surprises here for you?

CCSS: RI.6.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

CCSS PROJECTS

LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES: Teaching the Holocaust

Visit the Holocaust Museum website for many resources to tackle this difficult topic with middle school and high school students: ushmm.org

In the search bar, insert the term “Auschwitz-Birkenau.” Then have students take notes in the graphic organizer below (or on their own paper). Have them read the section on this concentration camp in the book (pages 272–283) and compare and contrast the information that they learned from each resource. After filling out the graphic organizer, have students write a response to the questions below and discuss in small groups.

	Holocaust Memorial Museum, site	<i>Hitler’s Last Days</i>
Auschwitz-Birkenau		

1. How did the online research expand your understanding of the book? Which sources did you find most compelling (video, photos, documents, etc.)?
2. What do you think is the most important thing for young people to understand about this topic? What should never be forgotten?

CCSS: RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Reading rigorous material such as primary documents is a requirement for preparing students for college and beyond. Have students read and annotate General Patton’s diary, then discuss the similarities between Chapter 12 and his diary.

You can find General Patton's diary here: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/wwarii/patton.html>

CCSS: RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

READING STRATEGY/RESEARCH: Paraphrasing information

Beginning with the Afterword, have students practice the art of paraphrasing. Supply students with the definition and instructions provided in the grid below to use as a guide. You could assign small groups these chapters to jigsaw the information contained within them, or have students choose the three topics they're most interested in learning more about. An example is provided below.

<p>PARAPHRASE - a retelling of information in your OWN words. Often used for research.</p>	<p>Choose an important paragraph or two from the text and TAKE NOTES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. READ carefully. 2. Close the book. 3. Write bullet points with as few words as possible. 4. Outline, don't write in complete sentences. 5. CITE the source. Anything that isn't common knowledge has to have the original source documented
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Example:

<p>Information needed for citation:</p> <p>Title: Hitler's Last Days Author: Bill O'Reilly Publisher: Henry Holt and Company Copyright: 2015 Pages: 228-229</p>	<p>Paraphrase:</p> <p>George Patton (U.S. Army General) Died: 12/21/1945, car accident Buried with his men outside Luxembourg City</p>
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CCSS: RI.6.5. Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

CREATIVE WRITING

Write a letter home from one of the key players or an ordinary citizen caught between battles during this critical moment in history. What is happening, specifically? Be sure to describe the landscape and people using as many senses as you can (not just visual).

Compare your piece to the nonfiction text of Bill O'Reilly, the author. How does changing the point of view of a piece change the way you understand the information it contains? Why do you think O'Reilly wrote in a formal third person style?

CCSS: RI.6.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

MUSIC

Listen to the music of the time period at 6thcorpsmusic.us.

Then write a journal response about it. Why do you think so many of the songs had such an upbeat tone? What can music provide to people who are struggling? How does experiencing an art form of a period change your perspective about that period? What other arts might open a window to your understanding of WWII and the people who were there?

CCSS: RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

About the Author of the Guide

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn, author of *The Second Guard* and an English teacher at Lakota West.