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# Shigeru Mizuki's Hitler



## **SHIGERU MIZUKI'S HITLER**



## Synopsis

A master cartoonist and veteran tells the life story of the man who started the Second World War. Seventy years after his death, Adolf Hitler remains a mystery. Historians, military tacticians, and psychologists have tried in vain to unravel his complex motivations for leading Germany into the Holocaust and World War II. With "Shigeru Mizuki's Hitler," the manga-ka ("Kitaro," "NonNonba," "Showa: A History of Japan") delves deep into the history books to create an absorbing and eloquent portrait of Hitler's life. Beginning with Hitler's time in Austria as a starving art student and ending with a Germany in ruins, "Shigeru Mizuki's Hitler" retraces the path Hitler took in life, coolly examining his charismatic appeal and his calculated political maneuvering. The Munich Beer Putsch, Hitler's ascent to chancellor, the sudden death of his half-niece Geli, the Battle of Stalingrad, his relationship with Eva Braun, and his eventual demise: all are given equal attention in this thorough and compelling biography. In Mizuki's signature style, which populates incredibly realistic backgrounds with cartoony people, Japan's most famous living cartoonist has created an overview of Hitler's life that is as fascinating as it is informative.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Showa is literature, illustrated or not, at its finest: a story that sweeps you off your feet only to find, when you return to Earth, that nothing looks quite the same.”  
— Los Angeles Times on "Showa: A History of Japan"

Born March 8, 1922 in Sakaiminato, Tottori, Japan, Shigeru Mizuki is a specialist in stories of yokai and is considered a master of the genre. He is a member of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology, and has traveled to more than sixty countries around the world to engage in fieldwork on the yokai and spirits of different cultures. He has been published in Japan, South Korea, France, Spain, Taiwan, and Italy. His award-winning works include *Kitaro*, *Nonnonba*, and *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths*. Mizuki's four-part autobiography and historical portrait *Showa: A History of Japan* won an Eisner Award in 2015.

I immediately became a huge Shigeru Mizuki fan after reading this book. Led me to also read his series of books on Japan (between 1920s to 1989) and loved them all too. Very interesting account of Hitler's pre-military days and how he rose to "fame" and then how it all ended for him. I was amazed and intrigued throughout. However must warn readers that his books are written in the traditional Japanese format, which means the book must be read from (what we know as the) back to front. And for each page, the panels and speech bubbles have also got to be read from right to left. It took me quite awhile to get used to this. Totally worth the "trouble" :D

I wanted to get an overview of Hitler's life, and, given the stacks of books waiting to be read around my study, didn't feel I had time for another 1000-page biography right now. I was also curious to see what the vision might be of a Japanese artist and story teller who was an adult during WWII, and his take on Hitler vis-a-vis the Axis alliance. This was an excellent and accessible portrayal of Hitler's rise to power and the war years. It gave key facts and milestones, as well as interesting insights into Hitler's drive, tactics, and personality. And the graphic style was as excellent as Mizuki's other books, such as his terrific "Showa" multi-volume series on the history of Japan from the 1920's to the late 1980's. The book is very readable and provides a number of excellent footnotes and a very comprehensive glossary of all the key actors in Hitler's personal and political life. While this book will not substitute for a scholarly biography of Hitler, it is a worthwhile addition to the library of both casual readers and WWII buffs.

Not bad at all!

Great quality. Great service.

An austere telling of the Hitler biography.

Adolph Hitler and the nefarious depths he reached will probably always provide a topic of morbid fascination for anyone studying twentieth century history. Humanity can only hope that no one will ever surpass his single-minded power and raging cruelty. Even seventy years after his death he remains the unchallenged epitome of the corrupting influence of absolute power. Anyone applying the phrase "worse than Hitler" to any contemporary figure takes on a weighty burden of proof, as his seismic deeds still seem insurmountable. Only recently have more humanized depictions of Hitler been accepted. Some criticized the excellent 2004 film "Der Untergang" as showing Hitler as "too human." But of course he was human. To deny that risks the dangerous thought that he somehow stood outside of human nature as a singular exception and that something else like him cannot recur. Hitler remains important chiefly because his very existence demands scrutiny of the questions and assumptions that lurk beneath the form and purpose of human civilization.

Japanese artist Shigeru Mizuki, sadly recently deceased, apparently felt that Hitler required an investigation. Raised in Showa-era Japan, Mizuki served in the Japanese Army and saw World War II first hand. An air raid cost him an arm. In 1971 he created an epic manga in his inimitable style that focused squarely on the infamous Führer himself. Though it inevitably leaves out plenty, such as Hitler's childhood and his relationship with his mother, it nonetheless paints an interesting picture of a megalomaniac who, through circumstance and cunning, fell into a caustic place in human history. Of course he didn't accomplish all of this alone and so, following a short introduction and some beautiful and disturbing colored drawings, the book presents the cast of characters. Many of the names will look familiar, but others less so. Each also receives a Mizuki caricature, twisted and skewed as he often portrayed humans, but instantly recognizable. The first cartoony drawing of Hitler shown at a rally in full Nazi salute is jarring, but also slightly comical, as though hinting that this person took himself far too seriously and consequently grew too big for his human all too human britches.

A chilling scene follows the ominous portrait. A group of Jewish people huddle in a building awaiting the arrival of the Nazis. They squabble with each other, but soon the tapping of boots silences them with terror. Though the story overall doesn't emphasize the holocaust, it fully acknowledges its horrors and Hitler's racial prejudices. Cut to a scene of a broken aristocratic family. A son refuses to follow his father's cooperation with the Nazis. Then some scenes from the French Resistance culminate in a Nazi rally and another full page portrait. The massive waves of hands giving "Sieg Heils" are mesmerizing. This dramatic prologue then asks "what kind of human being is this Adolph Hitler?" From this point on the narrative almost exclusively follows Hitler's life chronologically from his time as an art student to his 1945 suicide in Berlin. His meteoric rise from

vagrancy to political power takes up the bulk of the book. His artist years depict him as frustrated, temper prone and completely self-absorbed with his own "destiny" relative to Germany. To make some money, Reinhold Hanisch sells his portraits through appeal to "starving artist" pity. Later, Hitler tries avoiding military service by fleeing to Munich, but the authorities catch up to him. Blaming his misfortunes on the Jews, he eventually becomes a fervent German nationalist and serves in World War I. His astounding bravery earns him high honors, but a mustard gas attack at Ypres leaves him debilitated at War's end. Ordered to spy on the DAP, he finds himself embroiled in its debates and by 1920 he has largely conquered the once ragtag group and renames it the "National Socialist German Workers Party," or the Nazi party. Rudolph Hess then appears, brilliantly depicted as a mass of eyebrows. The story covers the infighting, violence and threats that solidified Hitler's hold on the party. Then comes the failed Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, including an appropriately disturbing drawing of Hitler with an immensely elongated mouth and tongue, the writing of "Mein Kampf," the founding of the SA and Hitler's shocking rise to German Chancellor in 1933. Along the way, his apparently obsessive love for his half-sister's daughter, Geli, provides a bizarre but strangely humanizing interlude. More familiar historical episodes follow, including the "Night of the Long Knives," the creation of the office of Führer following the death of President Hindenburg in 1934 and the events that led up to World War II. Mizuki's amazing drawings of Mussolini in particular really reveal his tragically comic personality and vain ambitions. Many other drawings express grandiose yearnings for power. At one point, Hitler straddles Czechoslovakia with a knife and fork. Neville Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement don't receive the usual virulent satire seen in the west. He's depicted mostly as a victim of Hitler's treachery. The Nazi alliance with Japan receives a light, almost cautious treatment, probably to keep the focus on Hitler who slowly realizes his dream of German world domination and the "Thousand Year Reich." Hitler does show considerable shock at the invasion of Pearl Harbor. A few of the famous assassination attempts, such as Claus Von Stauffenberg's nearly successful bombing, make Hitler reel with vengeance. As the end looms, along with the Soviet Army, Mizuki includes Albert Speer's confession to Hitler that he didn't carry out his horrifying Nero Decree, Hitler's last testament dictated to Traudl Junge, Hitler gifting supporters vials of poison and his double suicide with Eva Braun, pictured mostly behind closed doors. Throughout, asterisks in the text point to extensive end notes containing additional information on events and people. These illuminate specific elements of the story, but some may find the constant flipping back and forth slightly disruptive to the narrative flow. One of the most fascinating things about Mizuki's portrayal of Hitler, which the introduction also stresses, is that it shows a Japanese perspective of Hitler. Though the story doesn't stray too far from the European or

American versions, the telling of the story has some unique elements, most notably in its format, namely manga. The drawings shift from ultra-realism to cartoony simplicity to an overlapping of the two. This keeps the popular manga style intact while simultaneously rooting the narrative to real historical events. This technique seems to say: "This is more than a comic. It is not fantasy. This happened." But does this book include anything new about Hitler? It does make a solid attempt to explain Hitler as an embittered human being who took his rage out on the entire world. But those who have studied this topic in detail may acquire little new information. Its age alone probably makes that unavoidable. Nonetheless, it would still provide a great and accessible introduction to this historically impossible to avoid subject, especially for manga fans. Ultimately, regardless of the timeliness of its content, it represents a masterwork of manga by one of manga's undisputed masters. This amazing merging of critical history with incredible artwork makes for an experience that few will want to miss.

Great price for such a fantastic Graphic Novel. Was in new condition and safely packaged. Overall no complaints!

We can appreciate the manner in which manga permits the reader to quickly engage and grasp the arc of a life or story, with more or less detail - both visual and textual - as suits the author/illustrator's purpose. Mizuki's laserlike focus on the quotidian Hitler's personality-driven rise and fall permits him to set aside the Holocaust without completely ignoring it, but Mizuki's "Hitler, in the end, was just a man" project would have been fatally undone by giving "just a man" principal agency in the murder of 6 million Jews. That man would be a monster, one who presided over a program of mass extermination, the vast, costly logistics of which were not only an unconscionable machinery of death but an insane, needless, central contributor to Germany's defeat in the war. Even without the Holocaust, however, and despite the light-handed narrative tone that quickly engages the reader, Hitler's monstrosity still comes through in Mizuki's spare, powerfully illustrated account.

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