

TSSMTM
Creating VCE Success

SAMPLE

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“Maestro”

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AREA 1: READING & RESPONDING

Chapter 1 **AUTHOR NOTES**

Peter Goldsworthy has written several novels, poetry and short stories. He has won various awards for his writing, including the Commonwealth Poetry Prize and the Bicentennial Literary Award. He also won an award for his opera, 'Batavia'. Despite the success of his novels, it is poetry and short stories that he prefers to write.

Born in 1951, in Minlaton, South Australia, Goldsworthy is considered an important contemporary Australian author. He grew up in a number of country towns and completed his schooling in Darwin, the setting for his novel, 'Maestro'. He then studied medicine at the University of Adelaide, where he still lives. He continues to practice medicine and write. Goldsworthy's writing has been translated into a number of European and Asian languages and his novels have sold over a quarter of a million copies in Australia alone.

'Maestro', first published in 1989, was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award.

Chapter 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The protagonist of 'Maestro', Paul Crabbe, is still a child in the 1960s and is thus far removed from the experience and knowledge of war. The Second World War, which Keller witnessed, began in 1939 and lasted until 1945. Australia became involved in this war because of its ties to the mother country, England and lost many of its citizens, but it was Europe that was the scene of the horrifying abominations of the Holocaust, which is the primary point of historical interest in this novel. Hitler, the engineer of the Holocaust, was able to excite an extraordinary following in Germany, a country floundering after the ravages of the First World War. Unfortunately, part of his vision for a better, more united and stronger Germany involved a nationalistic fervour which enabled his anti-Semitic views to take hold.

Unsuccessful as the artist he longed to be in the grand city of the Arts, Vienna, Hitler led a largely idle youth frustrated by poverty. He eventually found purpose by joining the German Workers' Party in 1919, at age 30. It was here that he discovered he had a gift as a brilliant orator, able to stir up great feeling and enthusiasm in his listeners. Right from the beginning of his political career he seized upon fashionable Viennese anti-Semitic sentiment, by asserting that the Jews were responsible for Germany's problems. Hitler found he was able to attract many disillusioned people, especially alienated soldiers initially, and his movement began to grow.

Hitler attracted popularity as a prominent political voice in Germany by promises of solving the unemployment problems and promoting peace with France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. He said in order to achieve these goals he must first get support to pass the Enabling Act. Effectively Hitler ended Democracy legally with this act and Germany became controlled by a Dictatorship. It was Goebbels relentless, misleading propaganda and the frenzy of Nationalism and the unification it promised which allowed people to be duped. Hitler was now free to pursue his hatred of the Jews, which was the very reason he got involved in politics in the first place. Many intellectuals and academics fled the country fearing for their safety.

Now Hitler was Dictator the Nazi machine took full flight and the annihilation of free speech, free thought and entire groups of people began. Gypsies, the disabled, unborn babies with the risk of inherited genetic diseases, homosexuals, and most significantly, an entire race, the Jews, were targeted for eradication. The Gestapo (secret police) helped achieve the Nazi ideals as each Gestapo agent operated at the centre of a large circle of informants and spies who exposed citizens.

The targeting of Jews by the Nazis began by a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses, the exclusion of them from the Arts, and the prohibition of them owning land or being newspaper editors. Initially they were denied health insurance, banned from the German Labor Front, prohibited from getting legal qualifications and from serving in the military. These laws were just the beginning of increasingly more restrictive and isolating policies. Once the Gestapo was placed above the law in February 1936, the persecution escalated at an alarming rate. In March 1938 the Nazi troops stormed Austria, which had a population of 200,000 Jews and is the setting of Keller's tragedy.

Jews gradually lost all rights until they were completely isolated and thoroughly persecuted. This began not only to happen in Germany and Austria, but Poland and France, Croatia, Norway, Hungary, Slovakia, Russia and many other countries. In 1941 and 1942 an increasing number of Jews were not only being sent to concentration camps as forced laborers, but began to be killed en mass. This was the implementation of 'The Final Solution', the end of the 'Jewish problem'. The Nazi goal was to systematically dehumanize and exterminate an entire race of people and they may have succeeded if they weren't stopped by the Allies advance

in 1945. Hitler, recognising Germany's defeat, committed suicide before he could be captured. The Jews that had survived the ravages of the camps were freed, but not before over five million Jews had been wiped out in the worst genocide the world had seen.

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