

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: ALBERT EINSTEIN AT SCHOOL



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~Summary~

-by Patrick Pringle

Einstein in History Class

The narrative begins with Einstein being asked by his history teacher, Mr Braun, about the year in which the Prussians defeated the French at Waterloo. Einstein frankly replied that he did not remember and he didn't see any point in learning dates. Mr Braun was amazed that Einstein didn't believe in learning facts. According to Einstein, learning facts was not education at all. He thought that ideas were more important than facts. The teacher asked him to explain 'Einstein's theory of education'. Einstein shyly elaborated that he would be more interested in learning the reason why soldiers killed each other instead of learning years or dates, or which of the armies killed more men.

Einstein Gets Scolded

Mr Braun was shocked and furious. He believed that Einstein had no desire to learn and was wasting his father's money. Mr Braun did not agree with Einstein's views on education. He punished Einstein by asking him to stay for an extra period in school. He also told Einstein that he was a disgrace to the school and ought to be ashamed of himself. The teacher suggested Einstein to call his father to take him away.

Einstein Hated the Atmosphere of Slum Violence

Einstein felt miserable that day. He wished his father would take him away. His father was not rich. So, Einstein lived in one of the poorest areas of Munich. He hated the slum violence there. Einstein had no comfort there. The atmosphere was bad as his landlady beat her children regularly and every Saturday her husband, a drunkard, beat her. The only comfort for Einstein was when he played his violin, but that was also, stopped by his landlady because its sound disturbed her. All this made him miserable.

Einstein shared his pain with Yuri, his only friend in Munich. Yuri tried to convince by telling him that he was lucky to at least have his own room.

Yuri also told Einstein that he was sharing a room with students who were not civilised at all and they fought with each other. One of the students got killed the previous week in such a duel. The authorities did not take action and merely told them not to engage in such fights. Einstein got disgusted after hearing this account.

Einstein Met his Cousin Elsa

Einstein was doubtful about passing his exams for the school diploma. He told Elsa, his cousin, the same when she next came to Munich. She used to visit Einstein occasionally but she lived in Berlin, where her father had a business. Elsa tried to counsel him. She told him that she knew a lot of boys who were more stupid than him and they all had passed the exam. She counselled him to continue his studies in the school.

Einstein explained his helplessness by saying that he was no good at learning things by heart. He was reading a book on geology, which was not even a part of his diploma. Still, he was studying it because he liked it. Apart from books on science, his only comfort was playing his violin, until his landlady asked him to stop.

Einstein's Plan to Get Away from School

Einstein thought that it was meaningless for him to stay on in Munich. It was no use wasting his father's money and everyone's time. Einstein suddenly got an idea. He met Yuri and asked him if he knew a doctor. Einstein wanted to get a medical certificate to show that he had a nervous breakdown and he should stop going to school. Yuri doubted that the doctor will believe Einstein. Einstein commented that he would have a real nervous breakdown to make matters easier for the doctor.

The Doctor Gives Einstein a Medical Certificate

Yuri found a recently qualified doctor, Dr Ernst Weil. Yuri warned Einstein against trying to deceive Ernst, but to be frank and honest.

Einstein met Dr Ernst the next day. Dr Ernst informed him that Yuri had told him about his troubles. Einstein informed him about his plans to move to Milan. Dr Ernst gave him a medical certificate stating that Einstein was suffering from nervous breakdown and should stay away from school for six months. Einstein thanked the doctor and took Yuri for a meal.

Einstein Seeks a Reference

Einstein told Yuri that he would leave school forever as he never wanted to come back to that school. Yuri suggested him to take a reference letter from his maths teacher, to Mr Koch, before going to the headmaster. Mr Koch really admired Einstein for his brilliance and gave him the reference.

Einstein Summoned By Head Teacher

Before Einstein had a chance to give the medical certificate to the head teacher, he was summoned to the head teacher's office. The head teacher told him that he was expelled from the school and he should leave immediately.

When Einstein wanted to know the reason, the head teacher told him that his presence disturbed the class so much that no teaching could be done.

Einstein Happy to Leave the School

When Einstein heard this, he felt sad that he had unnecessarily wasted time and effort in procuring a medical certificate. Einstein was tempted to tell the head teacher what he thought about the school or about the teachers but somehow stopped himself. But he did not feel ashamed in being expelled and walked out keeping his head high. He did not say goodbye to any teacher or student inside the school.

The only person he wanted to meet before leaving was Yuri, who wished him good luck and wished that he would be happier in Milan as it was a wonderful place.

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NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 31)

(Reading with Insight)

Question 1. What do you understand of Einstein's nature from his conversations with his history teacher, his mathematics teacher and the head teacher?

Answer: The conversation between Einstein and his teachers demonstrates that he was a truthful student. He acknowledges his flaws without hesitation. Though Albert's History teacher thought he was a disgrace because he failed to learn the facts and figures, Albert never insulted him. He only said what he wanted in front of the teacher. The Mathematics teacher, on the other hand, thought highly of him and stated that he could not even teach him any longer since he already knew everything. The headmaster wanted Albert to leave the school because it was nearly impossible to teach the other students when he was present. Albert was a bit of a rebel, but he was a good person.

Question 2. The school system often curbs individual talents. Discuss.

Answer: According to the story, the school system is given priority on learning facts and dates over learning ideas. Rather than highlighting the fact that they had such a brilliant student among them, the headteacher expelled Albert from school. This demonstrates how the school was only concerned with imparting bookish knowledge to the students. This type of education continues to exist today when children's talents are ignored in favor of grades and marks. The education system is set up in such a way that brilliant students like Albert are regarded as inept and unfit rebels whose presence makes it more difficult for the teacher to teach other students.

Question 3. How do you distinguish between information gathering and insight formation?

Answer: There is a significant difference between the concepts of gathering information and forming insights. The collection of data and facts is referred to as information gathering. It refers to knowledge of specific events or situations gathered or obtained through communication. It is a passive process with a low level of comprehension. It is merely a mechanical approach that supports fact memorization.

Insight formation, on the other hand, relates to one's way of seeing things as a result of a thorough understanding of the topic. The ability to discern the true nature of a situation is referred to as insight. As a result, it may vary from person to person, depending on everyone's concepts and ideas.