



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
CLASS XI
ALBERT EINSTEIN AT SCHOOL
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Summary

The father of modern physics, Albert Einstein is famous to have discovered the theory of relativity which marked a revolution in physics. However, how many of us know the fact that in his early school days he got expelled from his school. No teacher liked him and he too, in turn, disliked attending school. This led to the school finally taking a decision in chasing him away.

The narrative begins with Albert being asked about a date by his history teacher. This was when he was very abrupt and crude in replying that he found it pointless to memorize dates when one could flip through the necessary pages whenever one needed to. He believed in education but didn't consider learning facts as education. He hated school because he hated the conventional form of education and the teachers found him to be a 'disgrace.' Finally, the teacher, disgusted and fed up, asked him to be taken away by his father. Einstein also hated going home, not for the obvious reasons of bad food and lack of comfort, but because he hated the atmosphere of 'slum violence.'

He was so against the idea of going to school and adapting to the set educational pattern that he once confided in his friend that he thought he would never pass the exams for the school diploma. He once told his cousin Elsa that he wanted to study science simply because he liked it. He didn't need additional reasons to study the subject he was interested in. He was sent to Munich to study where within six months he grew disinterested and found it wrong to waste his father's money, especially when it was so unfruitful and unproductive.

This was the moment of Albert's childhood epiphany when he gleamed with a sudden bright idea of averting school forever. He asked his friend Yuri to search for a friendly doctor who would write him off as a lunatic at school. He wanted the doctor to certify him as a person suffering from nervous breakdown so that he could stay away from school. To this doctor, Albert revealed his love for mathematics and his maths teacher. Later, in school, he asked for a reference letter from his maths teacher. This is when he heard the most surprising comment from his maths teacher who said: I knew you were going to leave before you knew yourself.

Finally, the day when Albert was called by the headmaster he was not worried when this happened. However, he was taken aback when the headmaster said that he couldn't tolerate Albert's attitude towards education and his behaviour in the classroom which disturbed an ideal environment for studying. Thus, he wanted Albert to leave school. Albert felt the medical report burning a hole in his pocket.

He left the school where he had spent five miserable years, without turning his head to give it a last look. He felt like seeing only Yuri before he left Munich. Elsa was back in Berlin when he left. Yuri bade him farewell and wished him good luck.

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words.

1. 'I think it is not facts that matter, but ideas.' To whom did Einstein say this and why?
2. Why was Einstein's presence in the school a persistent soreness for his teachers and classmates?
3. Albert was equally unhappy at his lodging. Why?
4. Who was Elsa? What was her advice to Albert?
5. How did Albert fare in mathematics? What did his maths teacher Mr. Koch think about him?
6. Why does the biographer refer to Albert's interest in music as a comfort?
7. Why did Einstein require a medical certificate?
8. Who was Doctor Ernst Weil? How did he help Albert?
9. Why did Yuri call Albert 'the world's worst liar'?
10. Why did the head teacher summon Albert?

Answer the following questions in 120 words:

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

Albert Einstein At School by Patrick Pringle makes us reflect on the purpose of education – is it information gathering or insight formation. Einstein was an intelligent student but not good at rote learning of dates and facts in history, only his mathematics teacher acknowledged his brilliance.

Young Einstein hated learning dates and openly confessed that he did not see any point in learning dates as it could be looked up in books. Exchanges between Einstein and History teacher show that Einstein is honest and truthful. He admits his shortcomings frankly. He has firm and well defined opinions and explains precisely what he thinks. Thus his basic intelligence, logical reasoning and lucid expression are highlighted. It is important to see that he showed no disrespect to his teachers in spite of provocation.

Einstein's conversations with his mathematics teacher show the sparks of genius at a young age. He excelled in mathematics in which he had a natural inclination. His Mathematics teacher praises him and says that he couldn't teach Einstein more and probably he would soon be able to teach him. He further says that Albert was ready to enter a college or institute for the study of higher mathematics.

The encounter with the head teacher shows how Einstein kept his cool and confidence in grave situations.

Einstein was a thinker and an articulate student who was self-confident, candid, humble and strong willed.

2. What circumstances led to Einstein's expulsion from his school in Munich?

(introduction - got into a school in Munich - In spite of his best efforts - failed to cope with the circumstances - did not bother about poor food, lack of comfort or even the dirt and squalor - strong views about learning - annoyed almost all his teachers - wanted to know the reason or reasons about everything he was taught - unsatiating curiosity hampered the teaching process in his classes - Only his mathematics teacher recognized his ability - spoke highly

Very soon Einstein realized - wasting his time and his father's money - procured a medical certificate testifying to his nervous breakdown - recommending six month's absence from the school - before he could use it, - summoned him - told Einstein - go of his own accord, otherwise - formally expelled)