

Chapter-3

Albert Einstein at School

Albert Einstein at School - By Patrick Pringle

Short Answer Questions:

1. **Why did Albert feel his medical certificate was burning a hole in his pocket?**

Answer: Before Albert could get an appointment with the head teacher to show him the medical certificate which certified him that he needed to be away from the school at least for six months because of nervous breakdown, the head teacher himself summoned him to his room and informed that he was being expelled from the school. Albert felt the certificate burning in his pocket as it was rendered worthless.

2. **What according to the head teacher were Albert's faults?**

Answer: According to the head teacher, Albert was guilty of refusing to learn and not allowing others learn and of being in constant rebellion at school with his teachers.

3. **What was the atmosphere in Albert's place of lodging which used to trouble him so much?**

Answer: The atmosphere was one of slum violence. His landlady used to beat her children regularly and every Saturday her husband came drunk and beat her.

4. **Why did Albert need a medical certificate so badly?**

Answer: Albert wanted to get rid of the school where he was studying and wanted to go to Milan to get admission in an Italian college or institute on the merit of his acknowledged expertise in Mathematics. However it was his father's wish that Albert get a diploma in that school. He felt that his father would send him back to school if he left it that way. A medical certificate certifying that he could not continue in school because of health reasons could convince his father.

5. **What was the doctor's reaction when Albert visited him?**

Answer: The doctor received Albert cordially and listened to his problem in a friendly manner. He even agreed that Albert was really in a state of nervous breakdown otherwise he would not have come to him for a certificate in that line.

Long Answer Questions:

1. Describe the exchanges between Albert Einstein and the history teacher. What characteristics of Einstein's nature are highlighted by this exchange?

Answer: This biographical piece first presents Albert in confrontation with his history teacher. When the teacher asks him in what year the Prussians had defeated the French at Waterloo, Albert flatly replies that he did not know and this leads to a heated exchange between them. When he is further asked why he did not try to learn them, he again replies honestly that there is no point in learning dates which could be checked in a book by anyone. This reply angers his teacher greatly who responds asking him again whether he saw no point in learning facts which forms the basis of school education at that time. To this again Albert honestly replies that he did not see any point in learning facts. Now his teacher becomes sarcastic and asks him to tell the class the Einstein theory of Education. Ultimately Albert opines that he did not see any point in learning dates of battles or which army killed more men but he would be rather interested to know why those soldiers were trying to kill each other. This made his teacher go mad with anger and he scolded Albert viciously and asked him to stay back after school for an extra period.

This exchange brings out the unthinking honesty of Albert as a child. He of course lacked tactfulness and was very straightforward. He spoke whatever was in his mind. Of course, he used to feel miserable in classes like that of history. His mind was a great mind of science which used to be in search of the true working of the universe and time and other dimensions.

2. Describe the circumstances leading to Albert getting a medical certificate issued declaring him unfit to continue school.

Answer: Value Points:

- Albert used to feel miserable at school which basically taught arts subjects.
- had regular confrontations with his teachers because of his honest replies.
- The environment of his lodging place was also miserable.
- Wanted to get rid of his school where he was because of his father's wish
- So wanted to have a medical certificate certifying that he needed to stay away from school because of nervous breakdown.
- His friend Yuri helps him.
- Albert is sent to a friend of Yuri who had freshly become a doctor.
- He gets a certificate as suffering from nervous breakdown.

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- His medical certificate becomes useless as the school itself expels him.

3. Describe the events leading to Albert's expulsion from his school.

Answer: Value Points:

- Albert was disinterested with his school which basically taught arts subjects like History.
- Used to come into confrontation with teachers because of his unthinking honesty
- Felt miserable at school and in his place of lodging which was full of chaos and
- domestic violence.
- Wanted to go to Milan for studying in an Italian School or college on the merit of his acknowledged superior Mathematical expertise
- Needed a medical certificate certifying him unfit to continue in school
- Manages such a certificate from a doctor referred by his friend Yuri
- However the head teacher summons him before he gets an interview with him
- He is informed that he has been expelled from school
- Reasons- refusal to learn, constant rebellion against teachers.
- Albert feels hurt in spite of the fact that he himself wanted to get rid of the school.