

A 'There is only one person who is master of this Empire and I am not going to tolerate any other.' **Kaiser Wilhelm speech 1891**

B 'The Kaiser is like a balloon...if you do not hold the string you never know where he'll be off to next.' **Chancellor Bismarck who resigned in 1890 after disagreements with the Kaiser**

C 'He is no longer in control of himself when he is in a rage. I regard the situation as highly dangerous. (Being with the Kaiser) is like sitting on a powder keg.' **The Kaiser's friend and adviser Eulenberg 1897**

D 'He was intelligent and well informed...had a dazzling personality and was charming.' **Lacey / Shephard GCSE textbook**

E 'He loves glory, he is ambitious and jealous. To get him to accept an idea you have to pretend it came from him.' **The Kaiser's friend and adviser Eulenberg**

F 'His moods and behaviour changed at any given moment.' **Ellis / Farmer A level textbook**

G 'His British uncle, Edward VII called Wilhelm 'the most brilliant failure in history.' Wilhelm hated Edward for this and resented the British royal family **G Kearey A level textbook CSE textbook**

H 'He wanted to make all of the decisions but he did not want to look at the detail to make a good decision.' **Lacey / Shephard GCSE textbook**

I 'In discussions with an English Ambassador Wilhelm was indiscreet. He called the King of Italy 'the dwarf', his Queen a 'peasant girl' and 'daughter of a cattle thief.'" **Lacey / Shephard GCSE textbook**

J 'Kaiser Wilhelm liked military displays and parades. He was happiest in uniform, in the company of generals and loved all aspect of German military life.' **McFahn, history teacher and author**

K 'Wilhelm was uninterested in public opinion and the Reichstag (parliament). He appointed Chancellors (Prime Ministers) he could control and listened to advice only from those he favoured. **Kearey A level textbook**

How early events explain his character.

His mother treated him cruelly when dealing with his disability. He may have learnt this from her.

Wilhelm's character.

Cruel and unpredictable



The “ups and downs’ of Wilhelm’s early life.

- 1. Wilhelm’s traumatic birth.** His breech birth was traumatic (breech is where the child is born feet first). His English doctor shook him when he was first born. It left his left arm permanently paralysed, damaged his balance and meant that his head leaned to one side. For the rest of his life he tried to cover up his disabled arm. Some think this caused him psychological problems.
- 2. His mother, Vicky was the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria found it difficult to love a son with physical defects.**
- 3. His mother wanted her son to be cured of his birth defects.** To stop his head leaning he was first made to wear an uncomfortable brace. Then he was forced to have a very painful operation. Tendons in his neck were cut. He was 6 and suffered much pain but had to put on a brave face.
- 4. His parents forced him to learn to ride horses** even though he kept falling off. As future Kaiser he needed to look the part they thought. Over and over, the weeping 8 year old prince was cruelly set on his horse until he could ride. He later remembered how he hated this experience.
- 5. His mother taught him that Germany was a backward country compared to England.** She wanted him to reform Germany when he became Kaiser but he thought she was anti German
- 6. When he visited England his Grandmother Queen Victoria, spoiled him.** He was her oldest Grandson and he was over indulged. He believed he could do no wrong. She had his portrait on the wall of her favourite sitting room in her favourite house on the Isle of Wight.
- 7. He was fiercely competitive with his uncle, who later became Edward VII.** They hated each other. Each year they tried to beat each other in the annual Isle of Wight yacht race. Both built tried to build bigger and grander yachts than the other.
- 8. He increasingly turned his back on his mother and listened to his German teachers who said he should rule as a Kaiser, alone.** He suspected his parents were putting English interests before Germany’s. This made him stubborn and less willing to listen to other people’s opinions.
- 9. He went to University to study law.** He was noted for his quick intelligence. but his tutors said he didn’t always read all of the papers he was given.

10. He joined the Prussian army at the age of 21 and became a lieutenant. He enjoyed being an officer. He loved the Prussian military. He came across as charming to many. He liked to give orders and not be questioned about them.

11. The Chancellor, Bismarck, tried to turn 21 year old Wilhelm against his parents. This really damaged his relationship with his mother and his father who he no longer trusted. When his father died he had the palace surrounded to ensure that his mother didn’t escape and change her father’s will.

12. When his father died of cancer, he was upset and blamed his mother for allowing English doctors to look after him – the same English doctors who in his view had caused his birth defects.

