

Is It Acceptable to Use The Name of Hitler in a Board Game?: Secret Hitler

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Secret Hitler is a board game with a concept like Among Us. There are liberals, fascists, and one Hitler. The identities are disguised, no one knows who the liberals or fascists are, you only know your own identity for sure. The goal of the game is to have enough laws passed in your ideology to win, accompanied by a pretty complicated process. This game has sparked a lot of controversial debates in recent years. Technically, there is nothing in the game that makes it obligatory to use the name “Hitler”. Is using the name of such a person in a board game seriously acceptable?

The ones who argue that Hitler as a name should not be used in a board game has two main arguments. The first one is that as I stated before, there is nothing in the game that makes it obligatory to use Hitler. The teams could easily have different names and the same game would still be played. For example, the game could easily be set up with two groups named “ghosts and humans”. It is easy to find different replacements.

The other argument is that Hitler is a person whose name should not be lived. The things that were done under his regime constitute perhaps the worst humanistic crisis in our history. Millions of people were traumatized, killed and families were shattered. These are all very serious issues. However, a board game is for entertainment. They argue that using the name “Hitler” in a form of entertainment, associating it with fun is not acceptable. The only thing that this name should be associated with is all the traumas it caused. They argue this board game makes Hitler more normal since it becomes a game that we see in our *everyday lives*.

I believe it is very hard to show only a game can alter people’s perception of Hitler and make him more innocent in their eyes. We have grown up with World War 2 movies and learn the tragedies that happened during that war. Just a name of a game is not enough to change all that perception.

I think the real problem lies in a more moral place, rather than a practical argument. Using the name of Hitler to gain money by selling a board game and using it for entertainment is definitely a disrespectful thing to the memories of all the people who suffered during World War 2. I believe if Anne Frank had known such a game with this name exists in 2021, she would not even be able to believe this.

The ones who argue that it is okay to use the name Hitler also has two main lines of argumentation. The first one is that they say Secret Hitler is *just a game* and thinking there is a problem with the name is being oversensitive. I believe there is not even a line of argumentation here, and a person who can defend this did not put enough thought into the issue. If using this name in the game makes a person who lost her grandfather during World War 2 in concentration camps feel uncomfortable, there is no place for us to argue if this person is right or wrong in feeling bad. The

second argument is about remembrance. They argue the game imitates how the fascist mindset can be deceptive and evil. It serves the purpose of reminding what Hitler has done in our everyday lives, instead of making it a part of academic textbooks. I think a person who thinks this way has a very different manner of playing Secret Hitler. When you are playing, you do not think about the nature of fascists and history, you just try to win by passing laws, and laugh with your friends.

To sum up, I believe it is problematic to use the name Hitler in a board game. The reason for this is not that people will see Hitler to be more innocent or more normal, just a board game does not have that much of a power on our perception of history and tragedies. The reason is about being disrespectful to the memories of people who lost their lives during the war, and also about making people who lost their relatives feel uncomfortable.