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# They Called Themselves The K.K.K.: The Birth Of An American Terrorist Group



## Synopsis

Boys, let us get up a club. With those words, six restless young men raided the linens at a friend's mansion, pulled pillowcases over their heads, hopped on horses, and cavorted through the streets of Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866. The six friends named their club the Ku Klux Klan, and, all too quickly, their club grew into the self-proclaimed Invisible Empire with secret dens spread across the South. This is the story of how a secret terrorist group took root in America's democracy. Filled with chilling and vivid personal accounts unearthed from oral histories, congressional documents, and diaries, this account from Newbery Honor-winning author Susan Campbell Bartoletti is a book to read and remember. A YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Finalist.

## Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (June 10, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544225821

ISBN-13: 978-0544225824

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.5 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 46 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #270,744 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #43 in Books > Teens >

Education & Reference > History > United States > 19th Century #44 in Books > Teens >

Social Issues > Prejudice #65 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 20th Century

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7-10 This richly documented, historically contextualized account traces the origin and evolution of the Ku Klux Klan from a small mischievous social club into a powerful, destructive organization. With compelling clarity, anecdotal detail, and insight, Bartoletti presents the complex era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877, that gave rise to the KKK. After the Civil War, the defeated South was a simmering cauldron of political, economic, and social instability. As the federal government struggled to provide law and order and to protect the rights of freed slaves, secret groups of

Southern whites banded together to vent their anger over lost property, prosperity, and power. From six men in a law office in Pulaski, TN, KKK dens spread across the South targeting freed blacks and their supporters. Although the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 was meant to end violence, KKK activity persisted through the 20th century, diminishing in the last 30 years as civil rights became a reality for all Americans. Bartoletti includes excerpts from slave narratives, archival illustrations, and historical quotes to convey the human drama of KKK terrorism. An annotated bibliography and source notes illuminate the variety and significance of reference works. Additional secondary titles include Chester L. Quarles's scholarly *The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racist and Antisemitic Organizations* (McFarland, 2008). Bartoletti effectively targets teens with her engaging and informative account that presents a well-structured inside look at the KKK, societal forces that spawn hate/terrorist groups, and the research process. Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC

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**\*Starred Review\*** Bartoletti follows multi-award-winning titles such as *Hitler Youth* (2005) with another standout contribution to youth history shelves. Here, she examines how the Ku Klux Klan formed and grew out of the ashes of the Civil War. Bartoletti, who taught eighth-graders for 18 years, writes in admirably clear, accessible language about one of the most complex periods in U.S. history, and she deftly places the powerfully unsettling events into cultural and political context without oversimplifying. It's the numerous first-person quotes, though, that give the book its beating heart, and her searing, expertly selected stories of people on all sides of the violent conflicts will give readers a larger understanding of the conditions that incubated the Klan's terrorism; how profoundly the freed people and their sympathizers suffered; and how the legacy of that fear, racism, and brutality runs through our own time. In an author's note, Bartoletti describes visiting a contemporary Klan rally as part of her research, and that bold, immersive approach to her subject is evident in every chapter of this thoroughly researched volume. Like the individual stories, the powerful archival images on every page will leave an indelible impression on young readers, who will want to move on to the extensive annotated resources. The adjacent Story behind the Story feature fills in more details about this lucid, important title, which should be required reading for young people as well as the adults in their lives. Grades 7-12. --Gillian Engberg

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Scary!!! Purchased for Middle School assignment and easy to read and understand.

Enjoyed it! Listened to it twice, Well written, and insightful.

This was an eye opening book for my 11 year old. He was very surprised at the cruelty of the members of the KKK

Good read lacks depth of the Klan's history and its decline.

very interesting read

Such a great book

Great book.

Fascinating account of the Ku Klux Klan's rise and fall?. Began as a supposed social club, supposedly innocent, the "club" developed into a widespread terrorist organization largely sanctioned by local and state governments if not the federal government. And the Federal government worked to shut it down mainly because it was seen as a form of insurrection of the Southern states, which it also was. The photographs, newspaper clippings and drawings help illustrate how influential and fearsome the Klan was.

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