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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: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (41 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #104,329 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in [Books > Teens > Social Issues > Prejudice](#) #18 in [Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 19th Century](#) #19 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Law & Crime](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

"Boys, let us get up a club." These words coined in May of 1866 by John Lester, one of six Confederate officers in Pulaski, Tennessee, marked the beginning of a secret society. Dedicated to "preserv[ing] a government and way of life that they considered superior and a covenant with God," the group came up with an alliterated name, the Ku Klux Klan (K.K.K), that means "simply and ridiculously 'circle circle.'" Yet what they practiced was far from ridiculous --- they terrorized the newly-freed Southern black slaves who were given rights to own land and to vote like the white man. There are a number of books written on the K.K.K, although very few are targeted for young

adult readers. To better understand why this group came into existence, multi-award winning author Susan Campbell Bartoletti draws from a plethora of primary resources to recreate the tumultuous atmosphere that occurred when Reconstruction was imposed upon the Southern states at the close of the Civil War. What began as a small assembly of men who "leaped astride their horses and swooped through the town streets, whopping and moaning and shrieking like ghosts" in the middle of the night, turned into an opportunity to incite fear among free blacks. This assembly then developed into "a secret empire powerful enough to overthrow Republican rule and battle Reconstruction policies." Growing in popularity, the Klan adhered to principles maintaining that "America was founded by the white race and for the white race only" and that it "considered any laws that granted citizenship and the rights and privileges of citizenship to nonwhites unconstitutional and against God's plan.

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