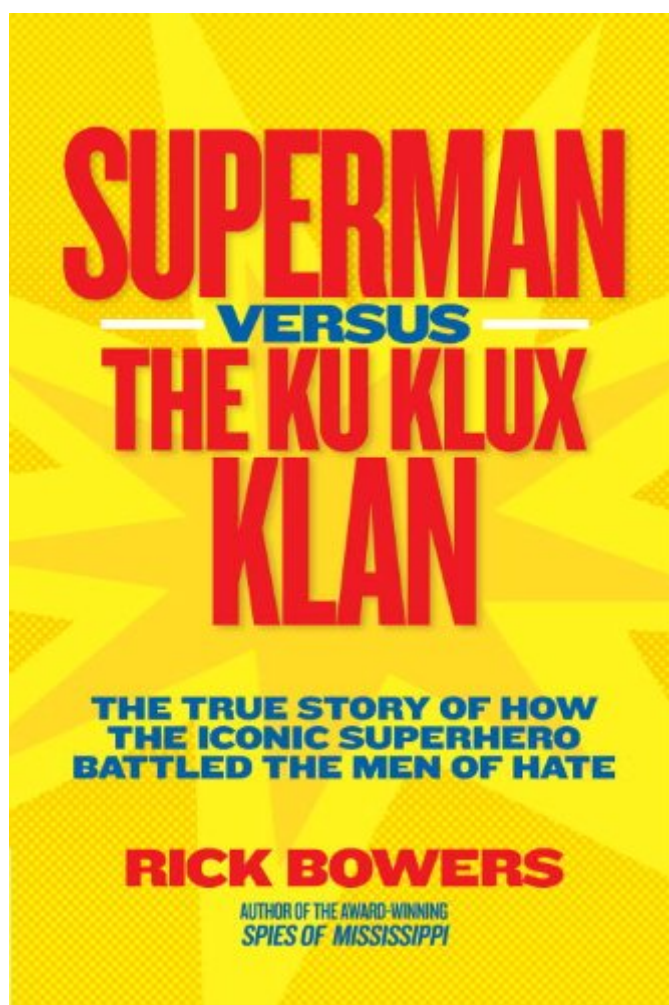


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Superman Versus The Ku Klux Klan: The True Story Of How The Iconic Superhero Battled The Men Of Hate



Synopsis

This book tells a group of intertwining stories that culminate in the historic 1947 collision of the Superman Radio Show and the Ku Klux Klan. It is the story of the two Cleveland teenagers who invented Superman as a defender of the little guy and the New York wheeler-dealers who made him a major media force. It is the story of the Ku Klux Klan's development from a club to a huge money-making machine powered by the powers of fear and hate and of the folklorist who--along with many other activists-- took on the Klan by wielding the power of words. Above all, it tells the story of Superman himself--a modern mythical hero and an embodiment of the cultural reality of his times--from the Great Depression to the present. National Geographic supports K-12 educators with ELA Common Core Resources. Visit www.natgeoed.org/commoncore for more information. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Note: This is a YA book aimed at 5th graders and above. This adult enjoyed the book also. From time to time the dual biography comes back into vogue. Dual biographies are a great way to

compare and contrast two people's lives and, in this case, this style is used to compare and contrast two different organizations: The Ku Klux Klan and Superman, Inc. and see how these two radically different groups interacted. There is, of course, no such thing as Superman, Inc. - I made that up. Superman is owned by D.C. Comics, but there are people who make all sorts of decisions on how to present Superman. What will he stand for and stand against? What will the next comic be like? How about the next movie? Superman Versus the Ku Klux Klan tells the story of the creation of Superman (and the two young Jewish boys from Ohio who created him) and how Superman quickly caught on once a publisher finally took him on in 1938. By 1946 Superman was an established fixture in American culture. His comics had been sent all over the world courtesy of American soldiers in World War II, the character was in newspapers, comic books and even had a daily radio show. The producers of the radio show decided, in the aftermath of World War II and Holocaust that Superman would take a stand against racism. This was a risk because racism was still a very popular concept, as demonstrated by the other part of the book in which Bowers details the history of the Ku Klux Klan and describes its many manifestations over the years. The producers of the Superman radio show decided to not have Superman take on the Klan directly. Instead, they create a new hate group called The Clan of the Fiery Cross.

I found this a very readable, fascinating account of the creation of Superman and how this fictional superhero was used to fight the Ku Klux Klan. I've heard the story of Superman's creation before but not in as complete a fashion as is explained here. It's an interesting story about two Jewish teenagers growing up during the Great Depression who desperately wanted to join the comics industry. But neither could ever imagine their creation becoming the phenomenon it did. Unfortunately for them, they turned the copyright over to DC Comics (normal procedure at the time) and as a result didn't receive the benefits they should have. But Superman has throughout his history provided not only entertainment but the idea that good can defeat evil, even the real thing. The Ku Klux Klan may not have started out as an organization of evil but it certainly became one. What I didn't know was that it petered out after their extreme acts of violence got out of control. Reading about the deliberate reincarnation of the organization was a bit sickening, but ironically it seems that the people responsible for its recreation were more interested in money than ideology. Unfortunately, many of those who joined the organization did fully buy into the hate and fear that the organization encouraged and often acted on it, violently. Seeing these two stories come full circle when the Superman radio show decided to have Superman face an organization that clearly represented the KKK. This book represents the impact that even a fictional character can have on

the history of a nation. The power of propaganda for good or evil can easily be seen in this story, a story that happens to be true. A great example of the kind of history book that children will want to pick up and read.

I liked this book a lot. The reading level is clearly at a youth level, but not childlike. I read it both for my own sake and as a grandparent. I learned a lot of history type information about the creators of Superman as well as the history of the KKK. It dawned on me I did not really know a lot about the actual history of the KKK. In regard to resisting the KKK, I had heard of Stetson Kennedy. It now seems my knowledge of him was slightly inaccurate and exaggerated. However I am quite sure he did a lot of good. I feel discussing a matter like the KKK without any racial terminology would be difficult. It is possible that certain terminology SHOULD be used so the issues can be clearly understood. Nonetheless I personally would not want a child to read this without parental input. My own children are now grown. I can still vividly recall one of my children watching a major network news show when a discussion of the "N - word" came on and the actual word was used. My child was in early grade school. She turned to me and asked me about the specific word. It was clear to me she had NEVER heard the word anywhere and that made me happy. That contrasted with my own experience as a child in the 1950's. Clearly the word was not being used at school or on the playground. But it was still a sobering experience for me and I was glad I was there to try to answer questions. I remember President Obama saying he thinks every generation gets better about this subject and I agree with him about that. Additionally there is a brief passage about a sub group in the KKK that engaged in a specific and gruesome type of physical torture. Parents should be aware of that. I refer to a brief narrative about corkscrews.

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