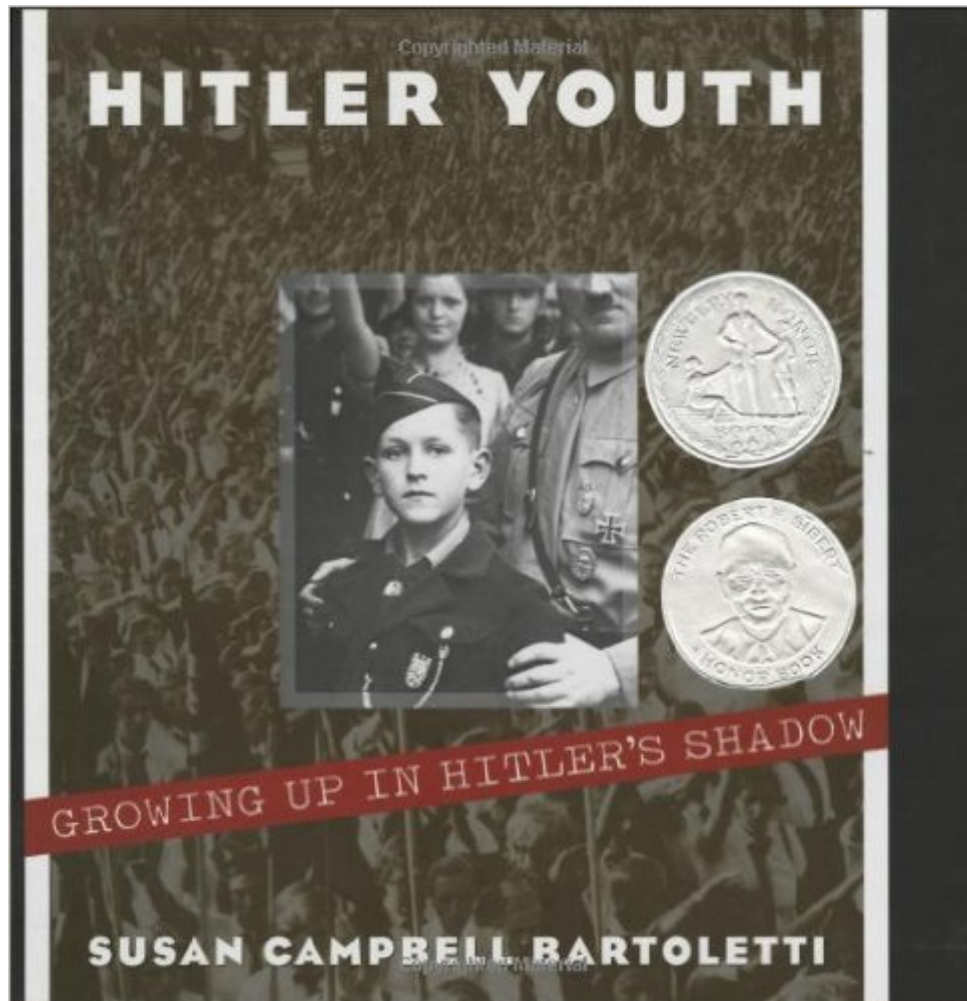


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Hitler Youth: Growing Up In Hitler's Shadow



Synopsis

In her first full-length nonfiction title since winning the Robert F. Sibert Award, Susan Campbell Bartoletti explores the riveting and often chilling story of Germany's powerful Hitler Youth groups. "I begin with the young. We older ones are used up . . . But my magnificent youngsters! Look at these men and boys! What material! With them, I can create a new world." --Adolf Hitler, Nuremberg 1933 By the time Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, 3.5 million children belonged to the Hitler Youth. It would become the largest youth group in history. Susan Campbell Bartoletti explores how Hitler gained the loyalty, trust, and passion of so many of Germany's young people. Her research includes telling interviews with surviving Hitler Youth members.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

The greatest strength of this book is laid out in the very first line, when author Susan Campbell Bartoletti says, "This is not a book about Adolf Hitler". Instead, she says in her introduction, it is a book about the young people "that followed Hitler", about the children who grew up in his zenith and who had to negotiate a childhood shaped by his life and death. The youth corps or simply Hitler Youth are examined in a clarifying detail that showcases their positive and attractive elements like camping and companionship as well as early troublesome activities like Nazi propaganda distribution and eventually munitions training. The book is exceptionally well rounded, including the

voices of those children who couldn't join, opposed, or were excluded from the Hitler Youth in addition to its most vigorous supporters. The stories interweave and co-exist, giving the reader a sense of the broad responses to Hitler's regime and the various roles of young people in that regime. Hitler Youth is outstandingly researched and makes excellent use of primary sources, such as photos, letters, diaries, books, and oral histories in attractive and informative ways without ever overwhelming the reader. She places everything in a context of German history post-World War I that allows the reader to understand the Hitler Youth as a product of particular historical circumstances and not just something that happened autonomously. Her use of German words gives the book cultural authenticity. Another great success of the book is the way that it slowly ratchets up the tension and terror as it explores the issues of war, terrorism, resistance, and authoritarianism. Stories and persons from the early chapters constantly reappear, and the changes over time are not simply a matter of grandiose historical events, but the reader can see these changes in the lives of people that they have come to know. And some of these children that we have come to sympathize with are clearly not innocent. They become soldiers and killers, they betray their parents, and at the end of the book, are complicated and traumatized individuals who must cope with the truth of Hitler's Final Solution, and their complicit or explicit role in it. But Bartoletti is not content to simply tell us a story about the past; she also calls into question its implications for the future. Her final sentence of the book calls upon children and adults to ask themselves "What are you willing to do?" and that message resonates with the reader long after the book itself has been closed.

I borrowed this book from the library and read it in TWO days! Not that I am a wonderful reader, but it truly is a gripping and fascinating book. I could not put it down. I am familiar with the events leading to WWII, the purpose of the deadly and unforgettable Holocaust, and a lot of the propaganda of the socialistic movement. I was not, however, familiar with the youth that Hitler motivated to do most of the work behind the war and the holocaust. It is a part of history that I never knew and was amazed to find out. This book is very well documented with excerpts from diaries and touching photos of a handful of youth that belonged to Hitler's regime, the jews, and some who's scales fell from their eyes and escaped the yoke of Nazi brain washing. The pictures are clean as far as not seeing some of the more atrocious pictures that you would probably see at the Holocaust museum. Like I said, the focus of this book is more on the youth of Hitler, and not of the war or the holocaust itself. There is absolutely no one-sided persuasion in this book. You do not get the feeling of hatred toward the German youth, you honestly feel sorry for these children. Almost to the point of understanding why

they did some of the things that they did. But still one must ask why they still did it. This book may be a little harder to read for a child. Perhaps, it is more high school level. It definitely deserves a place in your history section of your own personal library.

So many books have been written about the Holocaust and World War 2, and most of them have been either from the Jewish point of view or the Allied point of view. This one tackles the same subjects through the difficult eyes of those people who, as children, were inducted into the Hitler Youth. This book is very frank about the jubilation these youngsters felt as they beheld Hitler and his vision for Germany and how they were indoctrinated in the propaganda. It's very scary thinking of how Hitler targeted the young and innocent as vehicles for his schemes and how successful he was doing this. The author takes interviews and writings and shows clearly how the individuals were taken in by this machine; the youth themselves, now elderly, don't excuse themselves but do tell the tale so that it is easy to see how they became so enamored. This book should be required reading for those young adults studying World War 2 because it's important to remember that there were two sides to the story and how innocent youngsters were willing victims. Highly recommended.

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