



The Boy Who Dared

By Susan Campbell Bartoletti

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A Newbery Honor Book author has written a powerful and gripping novel about a youth in Nazi Germany who tells the truth about Hitler

Bartoletti has taken one episode from her Newbery Honor Book, HITLER YOUTH, and fleshed it out into thought-provoking novel. When 16-year-old Helmut Hubner listens to the BBC news on an illegal short-wave radio, he quickly discovers Germany is lying to the people. But when he tries to expose the truth with leaflets, he's tried for treason. Sentenced to death and waiting in a jail cell, Helmut's story emerges in a series of flashbacks that show his growth from a naive child caught up in the patriotism of the times , to a sensitive and mature young man who thinks for himself.

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The Boy Who Dared By Susan Campbell Bartoletti Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 6–9—In the newly formed Third Reich, Hitler's initial political doctrine is filled with hopeful solutions for a country plagued with unemployment, poverty, and a post-World War I feeling of defeat. Propaganda and promises quickly turn to oppressive new laws including the required participation in the Hitler Youth. Helmuth Hübener enters the program and is at once impressed with the bravado, shiny uniforms, boots, and patriotic fever sweeping the country. But his Mormon-based teachings trigger questions in his mind about the reality behind the regime's invasions of neighboring countries, mistreatment of Jewish citizens, and closely controlled media. He creates an underground newsletter with information gathered from BBC reports using an illegal shortwave radio. As he secretly distributes the flyers throughout the town, his boldness encourages him to gather several accomplices resulting in his arrest, trial, and execution. The novel opens as he is on death row, and the story is told as a series of flashbacks. Helmuth is portrayed as a brave, outspoken voice amid a family of acquiescing brothers, mother, and new SS stepfather. Based on a real person, the novel includes black-and-white photos of Hübener and his family. Bartoletti offers another perspective on the Holocaust, demonstrating that even if the effort proves unsuccessful, the courage and convictions of a minority should be motivation to speak the truth rather than remain silent. It's a message that must be continually emphasized as a lasting legacy of the Holocaust.—*Rita Soltan, Youth Services Consultant, West Bloomfield, MI*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review In Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow, Booklist's 2005 Top of the List for youth nonfiction, 2005, Bartoletti included a portrait of Helmuth Hübener, a German teenager executed for his resistance to the Nazis. In this fictionalized biography, she imagines his story as he sits in prison awaiting execution in 1942 and remembers his childhood in Hamburg during Hitler's rise to power. Beaten and tortured to name his friends, he remembers how he started off an ardent Nazi follower and then began to question his patriotism, secretly listened to BBC radio broadcasts, and finally dared to write and distribute pamphlets calling for resistance. The teen's perspective makes this a particularly gripping way to personalize the history, and even those unfamiliar with the background Bartoletti weaves in—the German bitterness after World War I, the burning of the books, the raging anti-Semitism—will be enthralled by the story of one boy's heroic resistance in the worst of times. A lengthy author's note distinguishes fact from fiction, and Bartoletti provides a detailed chronology, a bibliography, and many black-and-white photos of Helmuth with friends, family, and members of his Mormon church. This is an important title for the Holocaust curriculum. See the Booklist interview with Bartoletti, in which she discusses how this teen's story moved her. Grades 6–12. --Hazel Rochman

Review

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— Hazel Rochman, Booklist, February 15, 2008

Returning to material she uncovered while researching Hitler Youth, Bartoletti offers a fictionalized biography of Helmuth Hübener, a Hamburg teenager who, in February 1942, was arrested for writing and distributing leaflets that denounced Hitler. Almost nine months later, on October 27, at the age of 17, Hübener was executed for treason. Opening her story on Hübener's last day, Bartoletti frames the work as third-person flashbacks, casting over the narrative a terrible sense of doom even as she escalates the tension. She does an excellent job of conveying the political climate surrounding Hitler's ascent to power, seamlessly integrating a complex range of socioeconomic conditions into her absorbing drama of Helmuth and his fatherless family. The author also convincingly shows how Helmuth originally embraces Hitler. His disillusionment seems to come a little too easily; American readers may wonder why Helmuth's reactions were not more common. But that question resolves itself as the author exposes the chilling gap between her own admiration for her subject and reflections, discussed in an afterword, from those who knew Helmuth, as in this comment from his older brother: "He should have known better than that.... A sixteen-year-old boy cannot change the government." Ages 11-up. (Feb.)

— Publishers Weekly, February 11, 2008

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Milton Jones:

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