

READER'S GUIDE

The Day the Klan Came to Town (PM Press)

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Learning history and its parallels to current events is crucial, and *The Day the Klan Came to Town* is a short but poignant conversation starter about several timely topics.

CREATORS: Bill Campbell and Bizhan Khodabandeh

ABOUT: The year is 1923. The Ku Klux Klan is at the height of its power in the US as membership swells into the millions and they expand beyond their original southern borders. Some thirty thousand members of the Klan gathered from as far as Kentucky for “Karnegie Day.” *The Day the Klan Came to Town* is a fictionalized retelling of the riot, focusing on a Sicilian immigrant, Primo Salerno. He is not a leader; he’s a man with a troubled past. He was pulled from the sulfur mines of Sicily as a teen to fight in the First World War. Afterward, he became the focus of a local fascist and was forced to emigrate to the United States. He doesn’t want to fight but feels that he may have no choice. The entire town needs him—and indeed everybody—to make a stand.

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“Strength in solidarity is the prevailing theme of this galvanizing graphic dramatization by Campbell (Baaaad Muthaz) of a real-life clash between residents of Carnegie, Penn., and the KKK in 1923... Now readers have this emotionally charged record of how hatred born in America forced a community of immigrants and marginalized people to rally and model the best version of their nation’s ideals.” —Publishers Weekly, Starred Review, 2021



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Campbell chose to highlight this particular event? What about it reflects modern events?
2. The story reflects community-building in the midst of a greater division. What lessons can be drawn from this collective action?
3. Does Khodabandeh’s artwork influence your understanding of this event and enhance your emotional connection to the characters depicted? Why or why not?
4. How does Campbell depict the struggles that different minority groups faced in the 20s, and how have their struggles changed in present times?

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