



Circle of Fire

Evelyn Coleman , Laszlo Kubinyi (Illustrator) , Jean-Paul Tibbles (Illustrator)

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Mendy, a 12-year-old-girl in 1958 Tennessee, must find a way to warn officials about the KKK's plan to bomb the school during a speech.

Circle of Fire Details

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Author : Evelyn Coleman , Laszlo Kubinyi (Illustrator) , Jean-Paul Tibbles (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Circle of Fire for online ebook

Sarah Crawford says

This is the 14th book in the History Mysteries series and is based on a real event, a planned attempt by some KKK members to blow up a school that Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady, was going to make a speech at. This was the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee on June 17, 1958. She had been making speeches in various places against racism, and the KKK members decided they were going to bomb the school where she was speaking. It turned out there was an F.B.I. informant in their midst, though, and the Klan learned that the F.B.I. knew what was being planned so they apparently abandoned their attempt to kill the former First Lady.

Thus, there's a historical underpinning to the events in the story. The two main characters, those of Mendy, a young black girl, and Jeffrey, a young white boy, are fictional, but are used to tell the story of the type of hatred that existed at the time (and still does today, although in lesser numbers). Mendy learns that men are meeting in an area of the forest she has considered her own special area. They are violent men and when she sets a trap to try and make them leave they react by killing a tame rabbit she had taken care of for a time.

The situation gets worse as she spies on them and learns that they are planning to blow up the school. Her father is ill and away, and her mother has gone to be with him. The sheriff is in cahoots with the KKK members, so the only person she can turn to for help is Jeffrey who has been banned from ever having anything to do with Mendy again, this due to the fact that he is white and she is black.

The sheer evilness of the men is shown as well and carefully as it can be in a book for younger readers. The strength of the racial hatred is also shown, and how it can even reach into those in "official" positions, or even to one's own parents. It's a much, much darker type of story than the non-mystery American Girl stories, but it's also a very important story, especially since the type of hatred that is discussed in the book still occurs today, although the target of that hate may not always be blacks but can be people who are gay, lesbians, people of Arab descent, people who follow a different spiritual path, etc.

The book does show that it's up to individual people to do whatever they can to work against such hatred and that, in time, they will succeed.

Fayth Williams says

I just took a trip down memory lane today. You know the stories that stick with you forever but you don't remember what book they're from??

EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THESE.

Nostalgic flashbacks from every cover. I miss my childhood; I could read whenever I wanted. *sigh*

Anne Dart says

Interesting way of presenting activities of the KKK. I lived during those times. I like the way Coleman has fictionalized historical events. Since this was primarily a story of a 12-year-old black girl and a 14-year-old

white boy, this would be an excellent book for middle school (7th-9th grades) to learn about the destructive forces of the KKK 60 years ago. The author's explanation at the end of the book adds insight.

Your Common House Bat says

It's been a while since I've read any of the American Girl books. Kinda wanted to take a trip down memory lane. I enjoyed this one as much as I did as a kid. I really liked the dynamic between Mendy and Jeffery. They had a very touching friendship. I also liked the descriptions Coleman gave of the forest especially at night. The moral of the story was also really beautiful. I think people these days need to get back to that.

Eleventha says

It was all right. 9+.

Rebecca (whenallotherlightsgoout) says

It has been a few years since I have even read a History Mystery. This was the first one I read and it was definitely my favorite. I read it in two days and looked up information on the event afterwards. I remember I kept talking to all my friends about it. I read a lot of books when I was younger (still do) but this one really stands out in my mind.

Renee says

This was an excellent book in the American Girl History Mystery series! I really enjoyed this one! This one is perhaps another of my favorites in this series. The story was well-written and kept me guessing, and I was intrigued the whole time. This was a great read!

Jerzi McCormick says

Hey do you read the book

Kristine Hansen says

A story set in the South during the time of Civil Rights and the KKK. A girl finds evil in the clearing that had been her refuge, and takes on the challenge of stopping it all by herself. Enthralling and scary, with a very clever girl as the heroine. Really liked this one. :)

Sheila says

This is a great book for young readers who don't know much about growing up in the South in the 1950's. Adults, too, can learn about the Highlander Folk School - a school for organizers attended by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. The story is based on true events: the attempted assassination of Eleanor Roosevelt by the KKK and the author's traumatic childhood experience of being rejected by a white friend because of her race. Coleman creates a strong young protagonist who has the skills and determination of a guerrilla fighter!

Meadow Frisbie says

It's 1958. Mendy Thompson's secret hideaway is the most beautiful place she knows—a hidden forest clearing near her home in the Tennessee mountains. When Mendy discovers that trespassers are coming to clearing at night, trampling and littering it, she tries to scare them away. But the intruders are filled with hate. Instead of leaving the clearing, they turn on Mendy... and on those she loves. Even death hits the ones she loves. Mendy has never imagined such hatred—and now she must find a way to fight it.

Katrina says

4.5 stars
