



# **Growing Up in Coal Country**

*Susan Campbell Bartoletti*

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## **Growing Up in Coal Country** Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Inspired by her in-laws' recollections of working in coal country, Susan Campbell Bartoletti has gathered the voices of men, women, and children who immigrated to and worked in northeastern Pennsylvania at the turn of the century. The story that emerges is not just a story of long hours, little pay, and hazardous working conditions; it is also the uniquely American story of immigrant families working together to make a new life for themselves. It is a story of hardship and sacrifice, yet also of triumph and the fulfillment of hopes and dreams.

## **Growing Up in Coal Country Details**

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Author : Susan Campbell Bartoletti

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## **From Reader Review Growing Up in Coal Country for online ebook**

### **Olivia Piotter says**

I enjoyed this book a lot! I love history, although I usually don't read informational or historical non-fiction books for pleasure. I liked learning about the history of child labor and all about the work in the coal mines. I was blown away by the intensity of the labor, the stress that it caused, and the accidents/fatalities that took place. I liked the format of this book and the way it was written, as well. Campbell Bartoletti did a fantastic job of piecing together the laborer's stories and memories. I actually listened to this book on tape and I thought it was more interesting to listen to the stories rather than to read them. It made it more realistic, as if you were listening to the person telling the story first-hand. The reader used different voices for different people which made the story more engaging to listen to. I would have liked to have seen pictures, but listening to it also gave me a unique experience. I would recommend listening to this book and other historical or informational texts and other genres on tape for a new and different experience. I would recommend this book for a good informational text for older students learning history. I believe one of the most inspiring and effective ways of learning about history is by listening to stories told from the people who lived it or were there to witness it. Great book and a fascinating part of history to read about!

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### **Rebecca says**

This photo essay informational book examines the social history of coal mining in Pennsylvania through the experiences of child laborers in the early 20th century. Bartoletti's text is engrossing and draws on interviews she conducted, archival transcripts, and other period resources. Each chapter begins with a quote from a mine worker and quotes throughout to add impact and credibility to the personal accounts. The black and white documentary photographs throughout the book are restored and is well printed, allowing for large scale images that support the oral histories and connect the reader to the miners' stories. Bartoletti organizes the book into eight chapters that explore the boys' work, the culture of the mine, accidents, company towns, recreational activities, and reformers. In her conclusion, Bartoletti tells the reader what happened to the boys whose stories she tells. There is also an extensive bibliography and a source for each photo. My only criticism, and this is really being picky, is that Bartoletti does not explain why coal was so important at that time in history.

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### **Theresa Zomick says**

I enjoyed this book since my maternal grandfather was a coal miner in Kentucky and West Virginia in his youth. Thus, I felt like the author gave me a glimpse of his life back in the early 1900's. The storyline chronicled several different families, rather than one, how the coal mining families lived, the hardships they endured, what coal mining entailed and how dangerous a job it was prior to the unions enacting laws to protect the worker's safety, thus it read a bit more factual/historical, as opposed to a story-line where you get to know the characters, thus I gave it a four star.

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### **Awallens says**

Inspired by her in-laws' recollections of working in coal country, Susan Campbell Bartoletti has gathered the voices of men, women, and children who immigrated to and worked in northeastern Pennsylvania at the turn of the century. The story that emerges is not just a story of long hours, little pay, and hazardous working conditions; it is also the uniquely American story of immigrant families working together to make a new life for themselves. It is a story of hardship and sacrifice, yet also of triumph and the fulfillment of hopes and dreams.

I have always been interested in coal mining, and wanted to learn more about it. When I saw this book had been scanned for bookshare at 3 A.M. this morning, I picked it up to give it a read. I often find that young adult books prepare me to read books for adults on the same topic and this book was no different. this book is a great introduction to the trials, tribulations, joys and victories the coal miners and their children faced. Now to read more adult books on the same topic.

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### **Annie Payne says**

The book itself was well written, but the subject matter is so SAD!!! Our country's history is just absolutely horrifying.

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### **Iskreads says**

Growing up in coal country, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, is a novel about coal mining in Pennsylvania, about men and boys working long and tiring hours in a dark, damp, silent working facility for insignificant amount of pay. This book is about the mischievous boys who play tricks on their bosses and playing sports during their breaks when they are not allowed, also about women collecting the leftover bits of coal and defying their owners. This story is full of sacrifice and hardship and also triumph and their fulfillment of hopes and dreams. my favorite part of the book was a quote in the chapter "high sprits" this quote was written by one of the boys named Joseph Milquasks. "we knew every hole in the breaker...we'd go over the machinery and around it...we'd get to know it like a bunch of rats" I relate to this book because in my childhoods I would do similar things such as hiding in places i knew of well. I rate this book five stars due to the way the author describes how the boys worked, and how they overcame their jobs. This book has reality in it, it has quotes from the boys and a few pictures form the facilities. My favorite quote of this book is "boys had to be at least 13 to work...youngest breaker boys, sometimes 5 or 6 years old.

Alykhan Popat

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### **Sarah Brutsch says**

As my elective non-fiction book, I enjoyed it a lot more than *Shipwrecked at the Bottom of the World*. Bartoletti's thorough research is presented in the most approachable format. The pictures and story all were

meaningful to me as a part of the United State's history (this may partly be why I didn't like Shipwrecked as much--I didn't relate). I found the writing good and the history meaningful. Bartoletti made the lives of coal miners interesting and significant, and I enjoyed learning about something I knew so little about. Non-fiction deserves more attention than it receives. I would recommend this book, though I see it as being especially useful on some specified unit of a history class. It struck me more as history than as literature, and I realized I couldn't read it searching for "literature" without losing the account of true lives.

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### **Luann says**

I really enjoyed Susan Campbell Bartoletti's Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow and have always planned to read more of her books. So I was very interested upon reading Gerald Lund's The Undaunted to see that he listed her Growing Up in Coal Country as one of the sources he used in research for his book. I immediately checked to see if it was available at my library and put it on hold. I wanted to read it while the storyline of The Undaunted was still fresh in my mind. I'm glad I did! I think they are two great books to read together. While one is historical fiction and the other is nonfiction, they both give you a great sense of the life of the coal miners during that time in history, and particularly the young children who grew up working in the mines. Bartoletti includes the harsh working conditions, but also the freedom that such a job could afford a family. She shares an amazing amount of detail in a relatively short book. I especially liked the first-hand stories and quotes she obtained through interviews - some with her own relatives who had grown up in the coal country of northeastern Pennsylvania. She also includes many amazing photographs that tell the story just as much as her words.

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### **Nicola Mansfield says**

Reason for Reading: Read aloud to my son as part of our history curriculum.

This book centres on Pennsylvanian coal country in the late 1800s to early 1900s. It also mainly focuses on the child workers though it doesn't exclude the men, nor the women back at home. The book is also profusely illustrated with contemporary photographs, some from the author's family as it was personal history that inspired her to write the book. During the author's research she listened to many interview tapes and read transcripts and has included many quotes from men who were once the boys described in the book. This makes for very interesting reading and brings the book closer to reality for the juvenile reader.

The book is incredibly thorough, going through all the different jobs involved in working at the mine. Then moving on to the company village and day-to-day life for the women and such things as scrounging for scraps of coal, the company store and school. Then the book moves on to recreation after working hours. A chapter on dangers and tragedies and common accidents prefaces a final chapter on the beginning of unionization and the big strike in Pennsylvania. A conclusion then follows up with the reasons coal mining ended as such a big industry.

While the book is centred on Pennsylvania, the majority of the information is general in nature and can be applied to anywhere coal mining took place in North America. The photographs are amazing and add volumes to the book's enjoyability. The text is narrative, interesting and while never written down to its audience does keep topics lively remembering who its audience is. My son loved this book so much. Often when I read to him he will sit in another chair than me and I will hold the book up for him to look at pictures,

or he likes to walk around the room but whenever I brought this book out he jumped up and ran right over to snuggle right next to me so he wouldn't miss the pictures. For myself, this is a topic I really knew little about and I enjoyed the book very much as well. A tremendously, enjoyable read about an industry once so important to everyday life and the terrible working conditions, child labour, and oppression workers had to face and in spite of it all they grew up to actually have fond memories and say it wasn't all bad. Highly recommended.

[back-to-books.blogspot.com](http://back-to-books.blogspot.com)

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### **Rodricucuz Vaughn says**

1. Contemporary or Historical– Picture Books

2. " growing up in Coal Country" is a photo picture book a generation when children was used as apart of the American workforce.

3. critique

a. list the area for comment (e.g., accuracy) This book tells us the story on a part of American history when children where used to work in America's coal mines. The book is compromised of real life black and white photos of children working in the coal mines that built the foundation of this nation. This picture book also goes in depth on the day to day lives of the children that worked in the coal mines and what life was like growing up in Appalachia .

b. The book is compromised of real life black and white photos of children working in the coal mines that built the foundation of this nation. This picture book also goes in depth on the day to day lives of the children that worked in the coal mines and what life was like growing up in Appalachia . This book would relate more to readers that are in grades 5-8 .

c. I love to expose children to real-life and this book doses the same . It takes you back to one of those dark places in American history , when children where used as workers in factories and mines. Working just as hard or if not harder than grown-ups. It also shows children that children their age had a hand in building this nation's history .

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4. I would recommend this book for middle school ages for I think younger readers could not relate to the book. You could tie this book in with the American History II curriculum which covers Industrialism in America.

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### **Danielle Vasquez says**

Growing Up in Coal Country was a book that I really enjoyed even though it is considered an informational

text that is purely true and has no made up plot line, people, or events. I surprised myself while reading this because I got further along into the story, I realized that I was actually into the story and wanted to find out more about what was going in the mines at that time.

Though I did enjoy Bartoletti's book that was interesting to read, I purely found it as that and nothing more. I would by no means state that this is a good book to read for entertainment simply because it was much too historical and factual for my taste, but it was very intriguing. I liked reading *Growing Up in Coal County* because I liked learning about the conditions and life then and there but would definitely say that it is not for entertainment. I would recommend this for those who are wanting to learn and find out more about the coal mines and life there but not for someone who is looking for a fun book to read while on vacation.

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### **Marcia says**

So many of the people who lived and worked in coal country were immigrants who faced prejudice and discrimination. Families lived according to their social classes in company housing. Secret societies such as the Molly Maquires were instrumental in uniting and fighting back against the deplorable living and working conditions. Many died for their heroic efforts. All brought with them their ethnic customs, religions, and languages. With the exception of one drawing, all illustrations in the book are photographs from personal collections, historical societies, museums, and academic library collections. Photographs are shown on every page in the book to give the reader a visual image of its corresponding text. The inspiration and authoritativeness of this book was the author's husband whose grandfather emigrated from Italy and worked in the Pennsylvania coal mines for forty-five years. The book concludes with a bibliography and acknowledgements. There is no index. The book is a 1997 Notable Book from the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC).

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### **Rachel says**

Bartoletti masterfully portrays the life and times of the coal industry and how it affected the young children who were employed in it.

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### **Daniel says**

Imagine working for fifteen hours a day, underground and in complete darkness at age thirteen, with only a pick, a cart, and a mule.... If a child lived from the early eighteen hundreds to the mid nineteen hundreds, this would likely be the life they would live. Susan Campbell Bartoletti's non-fiction book *Growing Up in Coal Country* teaches about coal mining in Pennsylvania.

This book is structured in a way that makes it very easy for the reader to learn about pre-industrialized mining. Each of the eight chapters and the conclusion describes a different aspect of the miners' lives. Many photographs with captions beautifully complement the text. A table of contents provides specific chapter titles and subheadings for easy reference. In addition, the book contains a bibliography, should the reader want to learn more than what is provided.

The author makes this book very interesting to read. She does this by embedding photos into the text to keep

from getting boring, writing in a style that is not overly descriptive, embedding photos into the text, and by providing quotes from former coal miners. Although the author is not an expert in mining history, she does provide source information in her bibliography for the topic she introduces.

The author presents interesting information in a format that is easy to follow. The author also uses photos to appropriately enhance the text. In addition, the author has a family member who was a Pennsylvania miner. She wanted to tell his story.

This book will be of interest to anyone who wants to learn about the fascinating history of coal mining. The reader can expect to learn about the harsh conditions of coal mining history, living conditions of the miners, and public views of the coal mining companies in this book. This book deserves five four-ton mine cars!

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Growing Up in Coal Country*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996. Print.

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### **Nancy Roach says**

This is the story of what it was like for children who grew up in coal country. These stories are from people who worked in northeastern Pennsylvania. Coal Country work started before dawn, and the fathers could get their sons at work at ages younger than fourteen by filling out an "age blank." This means there were children in the mines and not just teenagers. The conditions were terrible for the boys and the boss was super strict, they could not wear gloves even when it was cold. They also had bad backs because they were not allowed to have backrests. The boys who survived the breakers moved onto various jobs. A few of the various jobs were nippers which they would open the doors, spraggers control the speed of the mine, and mule drivers which is a job everyone wanted because they could move around freely. Mine workers were superstitious and had a routine and would not get out of it because they thought if they did something bad would happen. Children attended school usually only for a few years because they knew that they needed to support the family. This was a depressing book to see how these children lived and what they had to go through. One phrase in the book says, "The worst offense a worker could commit against the coal company was to be injured." This does not seem right at all and I cannot even imagine the things these men went through on a daily basis. This was a hard book to read, and I would think this would be used for older kids. I would say middle level, I do not think that it would fit in an elementary classroom.

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