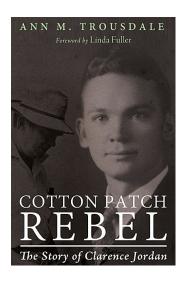


## Children and Young Adult Book Review Elementary to Middle School Cotton Patch Rebel: The Story of Clarence Jordan

Student Reviewer: Harper Ladd Educator Reviewer: Sharon Sanders



Trousdale, A. M. (2015). *Cotton patch rebel: The story of Clarence Jordan*. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications.

ISBN: 978-1498220156

Pages: 120

## **Student Review:**

The book, *Cotton Patch Rebel* took a subject that could have very easily been boring, and made it lively and interesting. Before, I never heard the story of Clarence Jordan, but the book grabbed my attention, when I started reading it. This book discussed a meaningful topic and would be a good book to read if a classroom was learning about the civil rights movement. I would suggest this book to anyone who wanted to learn an interesting story about a man who wanted to change unfair segregation.

Those who like to learn about American history or civil rights might enjoy this book. Clarence Jordan was an incredibly smart, and ambitious man. I liked how the book portrayed him, and showed the many struggles he had. My only problem was sometimes it was hard to remember who was who. There were so many visitors at Koinonia, it was hard to keep people straight, and it made some parts of the story unclear. Overall, *Cotton Patch Rebel* was an intriguing story about an amazing man.

Harper Ladd Creekland Middle School, Lawrenceville, GA 7th Grade

## **Educator Review:**

Cotton Patch Gospel, the musical, is a popular Broadway play based on the works of Clarence Jordan, who attempted to offer the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in a more accessible form based in rural Georgia. This same Clarence Jordan is also the inspiration for Habitat for Humanity and worked closely with Millard Fuller for formulate the ideas Fuller later expanded throughout the world. This book tells the story of Clarence, who always seemed to see things differently from everyone else and who questioned things other did not want questioned.

A true story and focuses on an incredible man at a very dark time of America's history in the deep South.

Clarence was a devout Christian and throughout his life tried to make
Biblical principles concrete to those around him. He was a sought after, very educated, speaker who liked to
read the Bible directly from its original languages of Hebrew and Greek. This book follows him throughout his
life and chronicles his path as he attempts to live out the Bible as he saw it, which was for all men to live
together in harmony helping each other as they had need. He was also founder of a social community, called
Koinonia, which was a farm where whites and blacks lived together and supported each other. Unfortunately,
his views were not popular in rural Georgia and the community experienced much hatred and violence.

The story presented in the book is a true story and focuses on an incredible man at a very dark time of America's history in the deep South. The topic is timely. As good children's literature, however, *Cotton Patch Rebel* is wanting. The handling of the complex issues presented is often done in a simplistic, over-generalized manner. The book says it is written for "ages 10 and up", presumably because of the difficult topic. The writing style is rather elementary, however, and might not entice older readers. For example, "White people who lived in towns liked to have black people clean their houses and cook for them and take care of their yards...They didn't want to have black people competing with them for their jobs or to be able to vote" (p 49). Those are certainly ideas worth discussing, but often the vocabulary and sentence structure is more simplistic than the concepts warrant.

The Christian theme would probably be more appropriate, however, in a Christian school or a homeschool or as an individual reading choice, and care should be taken to provide discussion afterward of the uglier parts of the book. Overall, the book is a unique view of a man who saw life differently in a time when that was not the norm. He was a man of accomplishment and left a large legacy behind when he died. The book would open

many thoughtful discussions of tolerance, hatred, bigotry, and how all that can be overcome through personal strength and beliefs.

Sharon Sanders Clemson University Faculty Alumni