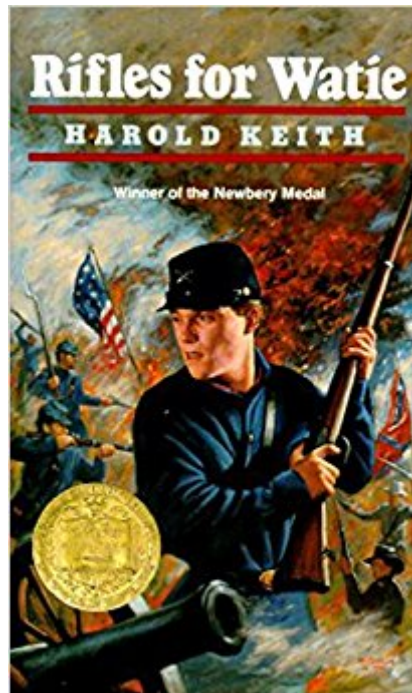




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# Rifles For Watie



## Synopsis

Jeff Bussey walked briskly up the rutted wagon road toward Fort Leavenworth on his way to join the Union volunteers. It was 1861 in Linn County, Kansas, and Jeff was elated at the prospect of fighting for the North at last. In the Indian country south of Kansas there was dread in the air; and the name, Stand Watie, was on every tongue. A hero to the rebel, a devil to the Union man, Stand Watie led the Cherokee Indian Nation fearlessly and successfully on savage raids behind the Union lines. Jeff came to know the Watie men only too well. He was probably the only soldier in the West to see the Civil War from both sides and live to tell about it. Amid the roar of cannon and the swish of flying grape, Jeff learned what it meant to fight in battle. He learned how it felt never to have enough to eat, to forage for his food or starve. He saw the green fields of Kansas and Oklahoma laid waste by Watie's raiding parties, homes gutted, precious corn deliberately uprooted. He marched endlessly across parched, hot land, through mud and slashing rain, always hungry, always dirty and dog-tired. And, Jeff, plain-spoken and honest, made friends and enemies. The friends were strong men like Noah Babbitt, the itinerant printer who once walked from Topeka to Galveston to see the magnolias in bloom; boys like Jimmy Lear, too young to carry a gun but old enough to give up his life at Cane Hill; ugly, big-eared Heifer, who made the best sourdough biscuits in the Choctaw country; and beautiful Lucy Washbourne, rebel to the marrow and proud of it. The enemies were men of another breed - hard-bitten Captain Clardy for one, a cruel officer with hatred for Jeff in his eyes and a dark secret on his soul. This is a rich and sweeping novel - rich in its panorama of history; in its details so clear that the reader never doubts for a moment that he is there; in its dozens of different people, each one fully realized and wholly recognizable. It is a story of a lesser -- known part of the Civil War, the Western campaign, a part different in its issues and its problems, and fought with a different savagery. Inexorably it moves to a dramatic climax, evoking a brilliant picture of a war and the men of both sides who fought in it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This full-length junior novel should hold a place with the best Civil War fiction for young people. The fighting takes place in the West. . . . A young farm boy joins the Union forces, becomes a scout, and thus temporarily part of Stand Watie's Cherokee Rebels. There is suspense in the telling and many a colorful character." -- "H."

Harold Keith grew up near the Cherokee country he describes in *Rifles for Watie*. A native Oklahoman, he was educated at Northwestern State Teachers College at Alva and at the University of Oklahoma. While traveling in eastern Oklahoma doing research on his master's thesis in history, Mr. Keith found a great deal of fresh material about the Civil War in the Indian country. Deciding he might someday write a historical novel, he interviewed twenty-two Civil War veterans then living in Oklahoma and Arkansas; much of the background of *Rifles for Watie* came from the note-books he filled at that time. The actual writing of this book took five years. Since 1930, the author has been sports publicity director at the University of Oklahoma. He is married and has a son and daughter.

A boy becomes a man, in four long years. He learns that the issues that divide us are never as clearly defined as we might wish. Fighting and dying can mean everything, and nothing. Loyalty and love bring joy and pain. It's what we all do, as we grow, everywhere we are. And that is the real beauty of this tale. Action, drama, comedy, battle, saints and sinners... It's all here, well told. You can't help but care about them all. Yankees and Rebels. Natives and Settlers. Blacks and Whites. You hate to see either side lose. We could use some of that now. To have it served up in a fine story of adventure and danger, love and intrigue, is icing on a mighty fine cake. Enjoy!

*Rifles for Watie* is a book about the Civil War that is written for school age readers. Despite the intended audience, this book is every bit as interesting for an adult reader. The author, Harold Keith interviewed many Civil War veterans living in Oklahoma and found that he had enough information to write a historical novel. As a result, his battle stories pack in the absurd incidents of war

intermixed with its horror. In one case, a new recruit rides into battle wearing his wedding suit-he'd joined right after his marriage. The groom is killed in the suit in that same battle.Oklahoma (then called Indian Territory) and Missouri was packed with adherents of both sides of the war. Consequently the war is very cruel and personal. Keith takes this fact in full. The reader very much gets the cruelty of the war in the descriptive passages.In researching the book, Keith was able to meet with veterans of both sides. To get that info out-to tell the whole tale of the Missouri/Oklahoma theater of war-Keith uses an interesting literary tactic. He tells the tale through the eyes of Jeff Bussey, a cornpone eating teenage Kansas Pioneer who joins up for the Union. Bussey then becomes a spy, serving in the Confederate Army with the purpose of keeping an eye out for a shipment of rifles for Confederate General Stand Watie and his men.

In 1958 I had a librarian give me this book to read. I used to walk up to the public high school from my elementary school. There I could find adventures of all kinds to take home to our farm house. There I would crouch next to the window in my bedroom until I couldn't read the pages anymore. This was one of the books I couldn't put down. Later as a teenager I bought the book for myself.Now at 72, I buy it about the 4th This time for another grandson.

I was in grade school when our teacher read this wonderful work of art to us. Being a young man raised in Southwestern Arkansas in the 1950's I was taken by this story of the War of Northern Aggression in the area that I lived. I was destined to walk those battlegrounds and think of this story most of my life. I forgot the romance of war during a tour in Viet Nam but I never forgot this wonderful book. This story was a driving force in my life that guided me to Duty, Honor, and Country.

This review is for the Kindle version. The novel deserves its reputation (for young readers) as a well-researched imaginative slice across the Civil War, particularly given its publication date. But the Kindle version is marred by sloppy production, with obvious OCR errors throughout the text. Go for a print version instead.

I remember reading this when I was a youngster many years ago, but reading it again after all this time it's like reading it for the first time.One thing about the Kindle version... I've read about 16% of it and it has a number of typographical errors. Some of the other Kindle books I've read have had a few, but Rifles For Waite seems to have a considerably higher number than any of the others.

Seems that Kindle books need to have better proof reading.

I taught a homeschool co-op Civil War history/literature class for 8th-10th graders. The kids and I all enjoyed this book.

My son's favorite book was My Brother Sam is Dead....until he read this one. He asked me to read it too so we can discuss it.

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