

# Example by StudyDriver

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## What is Ku Klux Klan? Example

The 19th century Klan was originally organized as a social club by Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866. They apparently derived the name from the Greek word *kyklos*, from which comes the English circle. Klan was added for the sake of alteration when the KKK emerged. The organization quickly became a vehicle for Southern white underground resistance to Radical Reconstruction. The Klan members (the altered klan) looked for restoration of white supremacy thorough intimidation and violence aimed at black free men. What did the members of the Ku Klux Klan stand for? Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former Confederate cavalry general and slave trader, who was born in 1821, served as the KKK's first grand wizard, or leader-in-chief. At first, the group focused as much on intimidating Northern carpetbaggers as on putting down the newly freed slaves. Members made their own costumes, usually featuring white robes, masks and conical hats. They were designed to induce terror and to hide their identities. By 1869, the KKK regularly engaged in wanton destruction of property, assaults and murder, prompting Forrest, a moderate, to seek in vain to disband the organization. Masked men shot into houses and burned them, sometimes with the occupants still inside. They drove successful black farmers off their land. Where the Ku Klux Klan stands today

But perhaps most significantly, the Klan helped redefine what it meant to be patriotic. Supporting unions made you a shill for socialism. Defending the rights of immigrants or black people made you a sell-out. Meanwhile, fairly common symbols of patriotism, like honoring veterans and respecting the flag, took on unmistakably racist overtones. You could not critique the government's military policy or refuse to sing the national anthem without being seen as un-American. It would be foolish to claim that the Klan entirely succeeded. Too many other Americans have fought too hard to make sure that patriotism could be embodied by another set of actions not least the right to protest. But understanding the second Klan's success at combining racism with the symbols of democracy helps explain why, when the Star Spangled Banner blares before kick-off and the military jets fly overhead, so many Americans today would rather take a knee.