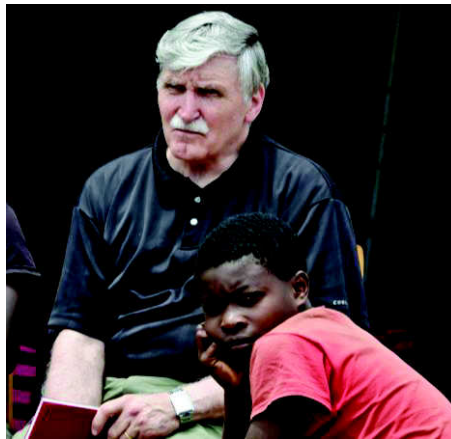




Global Voices Information Sheet

Child Soldiers



Roméo Dallaire with Bwira Kapoto, a former child soldier in the DRC. (Photo: Peter Bregg/White Pine Pictures)

Background Info

- According to Roméo Dallaire's Child Soldiers Initiative, there are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world right now. Child soldiers are being used in 17 conflicts, and recruited in as many as 31 different countries.
- Approximately 40 per cent of child soldiers are girls.
- Armed groups use child soldiers because they are easier to control, and are much cheaper because they eat less food and don't have to be paid.
- Under international law, recruiting a child under 15 years old into a military group is considered a war crime. However there is still no law prohibiting the recruitment of youth 15-18.
- There are cases of children as young as five years old being recruited as soldiers.
- The term child soldier does not just refer to children who are forced to carry guns and fight. Children are also used by military groups as spies, messengers, porters for carrying equipment and ammunition, and girls are used as servants and sex slaves. These are also considered child soldiers.
- Child soldiers have often been kidnapped by the armed groups that recruited them.
- Many armed groups that use child soldiers put the children through brutal initiation rituals that include things like physical beatings, and forcing the children to kill someone — sometimes their own family or friends.
- The armed groups that use child soldiers often force the children to take drugs and become addicted. This makes them more obedient to their commanders and more aggressive in battle.

Key terms

- **Child soldier** — Any person under 18 who is recruited by an armed group.
- **Militia** — An unofficial military force that is not a recognized national military organization. A militia can also be a military group made up of ordinary citizens, not professional soldiers.
- **Bush Wife** — Girls and women who have been kidnapped by a militia or rebel army and forced to be a servant and/or sexual slave to the male soldiers.

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: Child soldiers, war, children's rights, humanitarian
- Course Connections: Language, Social Studies, Arts

Materials

- Global Voices column
- Computers

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
 - b. Pre-reading steps:
 - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
 - ii. Introduce vocabulary from the column.
 - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.
 - c. Reading steps:
 - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class, so that everyone gets a turn to read.
 - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
 - d. Post reading steps:

- i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
 - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension
 2. Discussing the Global Voices Column (estimated time: 10 minutes)
 - a. Ask students the following suggested questions about the column, encourage them to use evidence from the Global Voices column to support their answers:
 - i. What is the message in this column?
 - ii. What perspectives are presented in this column? Which ones are left out?
 - iii. What problem is presented in this column?
 - iv. What is a soldier?
 - v. What is a child soldier?
 3. Media Literacy (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. On a piece of paper ask each student to write the title of the column at the top of the page. Underneath the heading, have them create a chart with two columns across and five rows down.
 - b. In the first column, have them write the following questions:
 - i. What is the title of this column?
 - ii. Who is the author?
 - iii. What is the purpose of the column?
 - iv. What statistics or facts are listed in the column?
 - v. Are there biases or obvious points of view?
 - c. Have the students revisit the Global Voices column and fill in the chart answering the above questions.
 - d. Discuss the students' charts as a class. Address the reasons why it is important to understand the source and potential bias of a website or print resource offering news information. Explain that just because a source has a bias doesn't mean it has no value. One of the traditional purposes of publications is to express opinions and attempt to convince readers of their validity. Explain that this is why it's important for each of them to form their own opinion while reading publications instead of agreeing with everything.

Thinking

1. Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire's Story (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. In the Global Voices column, we are introduced to Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, humanitarian and children's rights activist. Ask students to explain what they have learned.
 - b. Next, ask students to write down any questions they might have about child soldiers or the work that Roméo Dallaire is doing.
 - c. Once students have a list of questions, have them share one or two questions with the class.
 - d. Then, ask students to write a reflection log based on this list of questions and what they have learned about Lt. Gen. Dallaire and child soldiers.

Communication

2. Discussion (estimated time: 60 minutes)
 - a. Divide the class into pairs. Assign each pair to a computer in the lab and have them browse through Roméo Dallaire's Child Soldiers Initiative website (www.childsoldiers.org).
 - b. Ask students to pay particular attention to what the initiative's objectives are and how it plans to achieve them.
 - c. Back in class, hold a discussion around the Child Soldiers Initiative. Ask students:
 - i. Why did Roméo Dallaire start the Child Soldiers Initiative?
 - ii. What does it do?
 - iii. How can Canada or your country participate in this initiative?

Application

1. We are Silent (estimated time: continuous project)
 - a. Ask students to reflect on all they have learned from this Global Voices lesson. Explain to them that it is easy to feel helpless when learning about issues such as child soldiers and children's rights because it is difficult to determine how you can help.
 - b. Inform students that there is a tangible way that they can stand in solidarity with their peers around the world who have not been granted their rights. They can do this through Free The Children's We are Silent campaign.
 - c. Introduce the campaign by viewing the following video:
 - i. An introduction to the campaign by Free The Children
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Lbow418LwuQ
 - d. Distribute the We are Silent How-To Guide and ask students to review the guide quietly together.
 - i. We are Silent How-To Guide - <http://cdn5.freethechildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/WAS-HowtoGuide.pdf>
 - e. Discuss the logistics of the campaign by asking the following suggested questions:
 - i. What does it mean to take a vow to be silent on April 18?
 - ii. What are the steps you can take to participate in this campaign?
 - iii. What are the goals of the campaign?
 - iv. Why is this campaign important?
 - v. What steps need to be taken to participate in this campaign?
 - vi. What are some ways we can show that we're silent?
 - vii. How can we spread the silence?
 - viii. How can we make it count and receive the best fundraising results for this campaign?
 - ix. How can we break the silence when the campaign is over?
 - f. Sign your group up for the campaign by emailing youth@freethechildren.com and begin your planning!

Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, share these resources with your students:

Free The Children www.freethechildren.com

Weday.com www.weday.com

Child Soldiers Initiative www.childsoldiers.org