



BEYOND THE FIRE: Teen Experiences of War

Lesson 2 Child Soldiers

Subject areas addressed: Government, Sociology/Social Problems, World History, International Relations, Language Arts.

Grade Level: 9-12

Estimated time required for lesson: Four to five class periods (50-60 minutes per period).

Introduction:

In the United States today, the military is one hundred percent volunteer-based. Because of many factors, the military can require that recruits meet certain criteria, including physical stamina, education and having a high school diploma.

In other nations, however, military recruitment may be an entirely different story. Because of ongoing conflicts, some armies force children and teenagers to take up arms and fight. Other young teenagers do so willingly, because of conditions in their villages, such as hunger, or even because of a sense of patriotism. This lesson will investigate some of the issues and concerns around child soldiers in developing nations by asking students to write reports or give oral presentations on this topic.

Suggested Resources for the Lesson:

These are representative of the expansive number of related Web-based resources. Teachers and students should plan to supplement these resources with targeted searches for terms and concepts as they are developed. Several search engines may be used, or a comprehensive page from the University of California at Berkeley website with several search engines and meta-search engines can be found at (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/Help/search.html>).

Recommended resources:

BEYOND THE FIRE website (<http://www.beyondthefire.net>) includes various text and audio stories of teenage refugees, as well as a Resources section.



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Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers “About Child Soldiers” site (http://www.child-soldiers.org/cs/childsoldiers.nsf/displaysmessage/About_Child_Soldiers?OpenDocument)

“Save the Children” Child Soldiers Field Guide (in PDF format) (<http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/ChildSoldiersFieldGuide.pdf>) (Note: you will need the Adobe Acrobat reader to open and view this file. The reader can be downloaded from the Adobe site, <http://www.adobe.com>)

Center for Defense Information (U.S. Department of State), “State Department Required To Report on the Use of Child Soldiers” (<http://www.cdi.org/issues/childsoldiers/child-soldiers-global.cfm>)

World Map of Child Soldiers (<http://www.un.org/works/goingon/soldiers/childsoldiersmap.html>)

“Crimes of War” Web page (<http://www.crimesofwar.org/index-mag.html>)

Human Rights Watch Child Soldiers page (<http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>)

Amnesty International: “War: A Child’s Game?” (<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/childsoldiers-index-eng>)

BBC “Children of Conflict” (child soldiers) page (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrights/childrenofconflict/soldier.shtml>)

Official Site of Andrew Vachss Child Soldiers Resource page (http://www.vachss.com/help_text/child_soldiers.html)

American Friends Service Committee Child Soldiers page (<http://www.afsc.org/issues/index/childso.asp>)

Global March Against Child Labour Child Soldiers page (<http://www.globalmarch.org/childsoldier/>)

CDI’s “Children and Armed Conflict” Project (<http://www.cdi.org/atp/childsoldiers/>)



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Relevant Standards for the Lesson:

This lesson addresses national content standards established by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). (<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>)

World History:

- Understands political revolutionary movements of the past three centuries and their ideologies, organization and successes or failures
- Understands how ideals and institutions of freedom, equality, justice and citizenship have changed over time and from one society to another
- Understands the economic and social importance of slavery and other forms of coerced labor in various societies
- Understands the changing configuration of political boundaries in the world since 1900 and connections between nationalist ideology and the proliferation of sovereign states
- Understands the effectiveness of United Nations programs (e.g., improvements in health and welfare, whether U.N. programs have been cost-effective, whether programs fulfilled the purpose for which they were created, reasons for economic and arms embargoes sponsored by U.N. resolutions and the political and economic consequences for the sanctioned countries)

Civics:

- Knows the purposes and functions of major governmental international organizations (e.g., U.N., NATO, OAS, World Court) and nongovernmental international organizations (e.g., International Red Cross, World Council of Churches, Amnesty International)

Strategy for the Lesson:

The teacher may wish to begin this lesson by asking the class how many of them would enlist in the U.S. armed services if the U.S. were attacked today. The teacher may note to the class that after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, thousands of American men enlisted in the armed forces to protect American interests.

The teacher might also ask students to speculate on what popular opinion on re-instituting the draft might be, especially in light of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, as well as the ongoing security issues in the Middle East.



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Next, the teacher might refer to a story on the BEYOND THE FIRE SITE that deals with the issue of child soldiers, such as Chuku Mansaray in Sierra Leone, Lila Farah and Naima Margan in Somalia. Ask the class to speculate about why an army might enlist soldiers of a very young age in combat. Reasons might include a need to increase the size of the army, no matter what the cost; the fact that children are smaller and able to infiltrate enemy positions more easily, and the idea that enemies might not suspect a child fighter during combat. Next ask students to speculate about the costs of enlisting child soldiers. Examples could include the emotional and psychological toll on children and on their families, the cost of rehabilitating young people traumatized by war, and the loss of young people in the work place, since most child soldiers are denied an education.

The teacher should next introduce the assignment to the students. Based on this model, there are several outcomes that the teacher may consider as far as completed student work:

1. Students can submit written reports based on their research in the areas listed below.
2. Students may role-play “experts” in the areas listed (such as a historian, economist, former child soldier, or member of a child soldier’s family) in a round table discussion of the issue. The teacher may also wish to appoint another class member as the “moderator” or may wish to moderate the discussion personally.
3. Students may also submit multimedia reports (Power Point presentations) or develop posters based on their research.

(Note: it is recommended that the teacher also require students to provide some sort of bibliography or “portfolio” of completed research as part of their assignment.)

Once the teacher has determined how the students should present their research, the next step would be to divide the class according to the following key areas:

1. **History.** This group will investigate the use of child soldiers in past conflicts, to show that the use of child soldiers is not a new phenomenon. Possible conflicts that this group might investigate include the American Civil War and American Revolution, the use of German, Soviet and Japanese child soldiers in World War II, and use of child soldiers in ancient history.)
2. **Current Events.** This group will investigate what nations are currently using child soldiers, and what are their circumstances, including use of child soldiers in guerrilla armies, difficulty in addressing this issue through international protocol, etc.
3. **Economics.** This group will investigate the impact of child soldiers on a nation’s



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economy, for example, children who are in the army do not go to school, do not prepare to enter the workforce, etc.

- 4. Social/Psychological.** This group will investigate the effects of children as soldiers on the family as well as the child's mental and emotional state, including how these children re-integrate into the society once the conflict is over.

The teacher should allow sufficient time for students to research their particular topic, and collect evidence, as well as to finish the assignment, based on the teacher's preference. In addition to the online resources stated in this lesson, the teacher should also encourage the groups to look at more traditional forms of resources, such as books, magazines, and other forms of information.

Evaluation procedure:

Once the students have completed the assignment, the teacher will want to evaluate the work based on his or her own criteria. However, sample evaluation rubrics are included for an essay, multimedia presentation, and round table discussion. Teachers may wish to use one of these, or develop their own.



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Essay Rubric

Criteria (15 points maximum)	Excellent (15-11 points)	Good (10- 6 points)	Poor (5-0 points)
Spelling/grammar			
Did the student follow the “rules” of the assignment?			
Accuracy of research			
Creativity			
Organization			
Total			
(60 points total)			

Teacher comments about essay:



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Multimedia Project rubric

Group Name: _____

CATEGORY	20	15	10	0
Completed Portfolio	Not applicable.	The group submitted a completed portfolio with hard copy of resources used, completed notes sheets, story boards, and other required materials.	The group submitted a completed portfolio with most of the required materials but there were minor omissions.	The group did not submit a portfolio as part of the project
Length of Presentation	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	The group's presentation was at least three minutes in length.	The group's presentation was less than three minutes in length.
Creativity	The group created an outstanding unique project, with creative use of pictures, sound files, other forms of media.	The group created a fairly unique project, which included some basic use of media, but not to a outstanding level.	The group created a typical project, with limited use of multimedia.	There were serious deficiencies in the group's use of multimedia in the project.
Presentation Requirements	The group fulfilled all requirements set in the guidelines for the project, including creation of a title slide, use of at least four other sources, including a bibliography of sources, and so on.	The group fulfilled most of the requirements for the project, but there were some minor omissions.	The group fulfilled some of the requirements spelled out in the guidelines, but did a below average job of fulfilling the requirements in the guidelines.	The group was negligent in fulfilling the requirements for the project, and there were serious omissions in submission.
Group Presentation.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	The group acted together to present the project to the teacher and class on the date specified.	The group did not present the project in class.



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Discussion Rubric

- 1. Knowledge of the subject material (20 points):** How much research did the participant do toward the discussion? How effective was the research used? _____
_____ points total.
- 2. Participation (20 points):** How often did the participant speak? Was the participation worthwhile? _____ points
- 3. Development of logic skills (20 points):** How well did the participant utilize logic skills in making points and demonstrating viewpoints? _____ points.
- 4. Speaking ability (20 points):** Did the participant make points well? Use correct grammar? Were they able to be heard by the audience? _____ points.
- 5. Cooperation (20 points):** Did the participant act in a manner of cooperation toward the leader and other members of the group? Did the participant tend to monopolize the discussion, or did they contribute significantly to the final solution? _____
_____ points.