

Amnesty International – Child Soldiers

Lesson Title: Child Soldiers	Grade: 6-7	Subject: Social Studies	Time: 1 hour	Unit: Interactions and Interdependence of Nations; Resources and Wealth; Power and Authority	Topic: Human Rights, Citizenship	Cross-Curricular Components: English, Art
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URL: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11625>

Lesson Description:

This lesson plan uses Ishmael Beah’s first-hand account of life as a child soldier to encourage students to expand their understanding beyond themselves: to think globally and to think about human rights. It is designed for use with film clips from Ishmael Beah’s session at the Human Rights Action centre. www.amnesty.org.uk/childsoldier

The lesson plan is for use with young people aged between 11 and 14, but it may be possible to adapt some activities to an older age group. The activities can be used in a stand-alone lesson in citizenship or in an interdisciplinary project in English or Art to encourage students to make connections between different areas of learning. The activities enable young people to learn independently and as part of a group, and to apply their learning in new contexts.

Extension activities can be used as homework or in additional lessons to allow students to develop independent study skills and their knowledge of the subject.

Curriculum Outcomes:

- Outcome: PA6.1 (a-f)
Examine the relationship between an individual’s power and authority and the power and authority of others.
- Outcome: RW6.1 (e)
Examine and analyze factors that contribute to quality of life, including material and non-material factors.
- Outcome: IN7.2 (e)
Examine the effects of globalization on the lives of people in Canada and in circumpolar and Pacific Rim countries.
- Outcome: PA7.1 (a-b)
Compare the sources of power for individuals, nations, and regions in a selection of Pacific Rim and circumpolar countries.

Materials:

- a world map
- Film clips of Ishmael Beah: Ishmael’s story, Child soldiers in war and Pictures of his past.

For Extension Activity 1 you will need copies of Activity sheet 1 and 2 – one of each for each student or group of students.

For Extension Activity 2 you will need copies of Activity sheet 3 – one for each student or group of students

Assessment:

Evaluate their exit slip or journal entry for quality of response to the lesson.

Resources:

- www.child-soldiers.org coalition to stop the use of child soldiers website with up-to-date information, statistics and actions
- www.alongwaygone.com/ Website promoting Ishmael Beah’s book, A Long Way Gone
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K4yhPSQEzo An interview with Ishmael Beah

Procedure: Activity 1 (5 minutes)

WAR AND CHILDREN

Aim: To introduce the existence of child soldiers and its extent worldwide

- Ask the class what they think about when they hear the word WAR. Write their suggestions on the board. They may say: guns, violence, death, soldiers, armies, tanks, bombs, killing. If they do not contribute the words 'child soldiers', prompt them to do so.
- Emphasize that we may not think of child soldiers, because they are not part of the usual imagery we receive about war through films or the media. Explain that an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 child soldiers are engaged in conflict at present, in 19 countries worldwide. These children live in very difficult and disturbing conditions, and are often trained to kill and maim from the age of 12.
- Using a world map and the information given in the Facts and Figures sheet, identify the countries where children are engaged as soldiers.
- Tell the class that in this lesson they will be looking at what being a child soldier means from the perspective of one former child soldier. Ishmael Beah was a child soldier in Sierra Leone and he has written a book about his experiences. Warn them that because of the nature of his experiences, they may find some of the facts disturbing or upsetting.

Activity 2 (10 minutes)

ISHMAEL'S STORY: EXPERIENCES OF WAR

Aim: To gain an understanding of the real experiences of being a child soldier.

Tell the class they will be watching Ishmael Beah talking about his early experiences of being a child soldier.

Play clip 1: Ishmael's story. <http://vimeo.com/52997926>

- Check with the class for initial reactions, and clear any initial questions.
- Ask students, in small groups, to come up with a list of words that explain what Ishmael Beah has 'lost' through the war. The groups pool their suggestions.
- Record their words on the board. Ask how these experiences might have affected him and other child soldiers.
- Ask the students if they think it is fair that children are used in war. Tell them that there are international laws and conventions that should protect children in war, but that in many instances these are ignored by governments.

Amnesty International Human Rights in the Curriculum Resource (teacher notes)

Activity 3 (15 minutes)

CHILD SOLDIERS

Aim: To gain an insight into the reasons why children are used in war

- Ask the students, working in pairs, to think about why children are so commonly used in war, and to record their ideas on a piece of paper. After five minutes tell them they will be watching another clip of Ishmael Beah where he answers this question.
- Play clip 2: Child soldiers in war. <http://vimeo.com/52999080>
- After listening to the clip, check and clear any questions.

- Ask the students to look at their list of words. Did Ishmael Beah mention any of these reasons?
- Remind the students that child soldiers are often recruited to fight in wars because they can easily be manipulated may be vulnerable and have few choices.

Activity 4 (10 minutes)

CONSEQUENCES OF WAR: FLEEING

Aim: To explore the impact of being a refugee child soldier

- Tell the students they will be watching one final clip, which shows Ishmael Beah talking about one of the consequences of being a refugee and victim of war.
- Play clip 3: Pictures of his past. <http://vimeo.com/52997927>
- Check the emotions of the students and clear any questions.
- Ask the students if they can imagine what it must be like leaving all their belongings behind them as they flee their home. Ask them how they might feel having nothing that reminds them of their family or community.
- Ask the students to imagine that they had to flee their home. Give them a few moments to think about this. Ask them to think of one thing they would like to take with them. Invite them to draw a picture of this item, and if they wish, to write a description of it below the picture.
- Invite the students to display their pictures, and look at each other's work.

Activity 5 (5 minutes)

Aim: To draw the lesson to a close

Ask students for their reactions to the lesson as a journal entry or exit slip. Review the main learning points.