

Civic Education -12-14 years

Lesson and Unit Plans



Refugees are a painful living reminder of the failure of societies to exist in peace. People should be able to lead productive and independent lives in their home communities. Sadly, they are sometimes forced to flee because of abuse, violations of their rights and various forms of social breakdown, including war. These issues are linked to concepts such as justice, equality, tolerance, freedom, minority rights and the formation of community. Refugees can be the subject of work units on human rights, nationalism, racism, immigration, persecution and war.

UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 12-14 IN CIVIC EDUCATION: CHILD SOLDIERS

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

To understand that combatants in current wars and conflicts are not just adult, male soldiers, but increasingly include children

To understand the reasons for children's participation in war, the nature and the consequences of their experiences

To understand the concepts *human rights, rights of the child and non-combatant immunity*

To understand that UNHCR, the United Nations as a whole and all governments have a responsibility to protect children from becoming combatants in war and to assist them to escape war's terrible effects on their lives

Skills

To think critically about these problems

To express their feelings appropriately, verbally and in writing

Values

To empathise with children forced or induced to fight, kill and die

To feel outrage at this situation



LESSON 1

CONTENT	TEACHING STRATEGIES	METHODS/LEARNING
<p>Combatants in armed conflicts increasingly include child soldiers.</p> <p>Forced recruitment - why are children recruited?</p> <p>Social influences upon children</p> <p>The experiences of child soldiers</p> <p>The consequences suffered by child soldiers because of their involvement in armed conflict.</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>"Who fights in a war?" Students are lead through a brainstorming session on their preconceived ideas of the identities of the participants in wars.</p>	
<p>RESOURCES</p> <p>Activity Sheet: Child Soldiers, from Jill Rutter, Refugees: We Left Because We Had To (London, Refugee Council, 1996), p. 89</p> <p>Teacher Resource Sheet: selected passages from Guy Goodwin-Gill and Ilene Cohn, Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict (Oxford, OUP, 1994)</p> <p>Further readings for the teacher</p> <p>Peter Kessler, "Out of sight, out of mind", Refugees, no. 103 (Geneva, UNHCR, 1996)</p>	<p>Development</p> <p>Teacher and students work through the Activity Sheet: Child Soldiers together. Depending upon the age and maturity of the class, the teacher may choose to read/describe some of the more detailed information contained in the Teacher Resource Sheet for this lesson.</p>	

LESSONS 2 and 3

CONTENT	TEACHING STRATEGIES	METHODS/LEARNING
<p>Why is it wrong to force or induce children to fight in wars?</p> <p>It is immoral because children are non-combatants, who should be exempt from participation in war according to principles shaped by centuries-old moral, legal, philosophical, religious and political tradition.</p> <p>It is illegal because international law</p>	<p>Link to previous lesson and introduction</p> <p>Ask the students how they would feel being one of the child soldiers described in the previous lesson.</p> <p>Ask why they think it is wrong to force or induce children to fight in wars. Discuss their answers and feelings.</p> <p>Development</p> <p>Children's participation in war is</p>	

forbids it (Article 38 of The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989)

immoral. Have the class read through the Resource Sheet The Limits upon War, discussing the ideas as they go. Children's participation in war is illegal. Have the class read through and discuss Article 38 of The Convention on the Rights of the Child. Focus question: What can be done to increase compliance with Article 38?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a United Nations agreement that defines the range of rights that all children are entitled to. It sets basic standards for children's well-being at different stages of their development.

RESOURCES

Resource Sheet: The Limits upon War

Recommended reading for teachers

The Convention on the Rights of the Child. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly 20 November 1989. Entry into force 2 September 1990 (New York and Geneva, United Nations Centre for Human Rights and UNICEF, 1990)

LESSON PLANS FOR AGES 12-14 IN CIVIC EDUCATION: CHILD SOLDIERS

LESSON 1: Who fights in a War?

Purpose

During the 1990s, wars have increasingly become internal conflicts; there are far more civil wars than international wars today. A parallel development has been the recruitment of children into the armies of the world and into the forces of their armed opponents.

Frequently refugee camps are used as convenient recruitment grounds for child soldiers, and even, occasionally, and quite illegally, as training centres. In the former Rwandan camps in Eastern Zaire, between 1994 and 1996, this activity went on flagrantly. In other places, for instance the South Sudanese camp of Kakuma, in Kenya, teenage boys are rested from the fighting in Southern Sudan and prepared for return to the battle front. UNHCR is responsible for the protection and welfare of these potential young recruits. The organisation works hard, within the limits of its capacity, to stop the military uses of refugee camps, including the immoral and illegal recruitment of children. Regrettably, the resources and political influence of UNHCR are not always enough to ensure success.

In this lesson, the students will be introduced to these complex problems. They will learn about the scope and nature of the phenomenon of child soldiers.



Preparation

Run off a class set of Activity Sheet: Child Soldiers.

Have a large map of the world, and if possible, one of Africa, set up where the whole class can see them.

Procedure

To gain the maximum effect with the introductory activity, it would be better not to give as yet, the title of this unit, only the title of this lesson.

In the genre of war, there have been hundreds of films ranging in subject matter, history and film quality from *Alexander the Great* with Richard Burton, through *Casablanca* with Humphrey Bogart, to *Born on the Fourth of July* with Tom Cruise. The students are asked to name some war movies which they have seen. What was the film about? Which war was depicted in the film? Who starred in the film? Is there an even sharing of main roles between male and female stars in the various films cited by the students? Why do the films revolve around male characters?

Having considered war via Hollywood, ask the students to name several wars throughout history that they can think of. Name the sides fighting in each war? Who actually did the fighting?

The accompanying activity sheet can be read individually or together as a class.

The students should write their own answers to each question after discussion in class.

Extra information about child soldiers which may be too harrowing for students to read for themselves, but which could be imparted sensitively by the teacher to stimulate the students' thinking on the discussion questions, is provided in Resource Sheet: Selected Passages from *Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflicts*.

LESSONS 2 and 3: Why is it wrong to force or induce children to fight in wars?

Purpose

In this lesson you are introducing to the students notions of the morality and legality of the conduct of war. They have learned that children are increasingly combatants in modern wars. Now they will have a chance to explore the reasons why that participation is evil. By examining the laws of war and Article 38 of the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, they will understand how international law seeks to protect children from the effects of war.

Preparation

Copy a class set of the Resource Sheet: The Limits upon War.



Procedure

Begin by asking them how they would feel if they were one of the young soldiers described in the previous lesson. Pursue the children's ideas to draw out the reasons behind them. Be ready for some more "martial" spirits among the children to express interest in the excitement and glamour of war. This is also a possible response which needs to be treated with respect and tact by the teacher.

The discussion will almost certainly come to a point where the words "unfair", "unjust", or simply "wrong" arise. This is the entry point for the body of the lesson. Ask the students why they think it might be wrong to force or subtly induce children to fight in wars. Go deeply into the logic behind their reasons, by asking "Why?" to their propositions. If handled skilfully, and if the class atmosphere is positive, the children will begin to discuss among one another, allowing you to intervene only to bring the discussion back on track from time to time.

Once the discussion has brought out as many ideas as possible, have the class read the Resource Sheet *The Limits upon War*, which deals with the *morality* of war. The teacher should ensure that the fundamental concepts (the *limit of consent* and *non-combatant immunity*) are clearly understood.

Children's participation in war is also *illegal*. The laws of war and international humanitarian law have already been mentioned briefly in the first Resource Sheet.

Here are simple definitions of these two crucial terms:

The laws of war govern the conduct of hostilities and the choice and use of weapons in warfare.

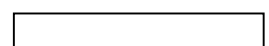
International humanitarian law is concerned with the protection and treatment of victims of war, in particular, the wounded, sick and shipwrecked, prisoners of war and civilians.

Many sources exist to inform teachers more fully on those topics. One very brief and readable book, suitable also for students, is Gretchen Kewley's *Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts*, listed in the Resources column of the unit plan.

An important item of international law is the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 38 of which prohibits children's participation in hostilities. Article 38 is reproduced at the end of the *Resource Sheet*.

Ask the class what can be done to increase compliance by governments with Article 38. What about armed opponents of governments?

It is crucial throughout these lessons to convey to students a sense of the importance of international law, which exists and can be and is, to some extent, enforced. Do not allow a cynical, negative attitude ("It's hopeless; there's nothing



we can do") to go unchallenged. There are many actions which can be and are taken by governments, the United Nations and its agencies (including UNHCR), international and local NGOs (most notably the International Committee of the Red Cross), the mass media and individuals of firm purpose and good will.

Evaluation

Any of the questions listed above, on the morality and legality of children's participation in war, would be suitable topics for a short essay.

The students could be asked to write a long letter to the editor of the local or even a national newspaper. The best letters could be combined into a single class letter, and sent for publication. Alternatively, a selection of the letters could be published in the school newspaper or magazine.

Depending on the interest of the class, they could write to their local Member of Parliament/Congress, to express their concern about child soldiers, urging him/her to contribute to the nation's efforts to end this abuse of children's rights and international law.

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