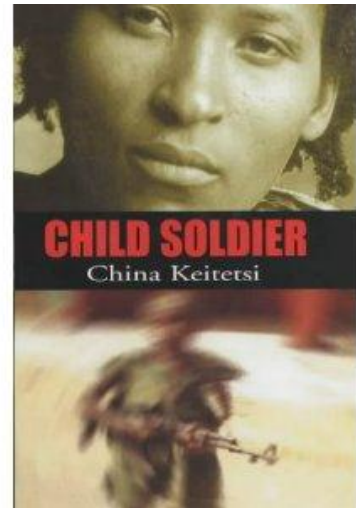


CHILD SOLDIER

by China Keitetsi

*They took away my mother
and gave me a gun...*



Pre-reading tasks

1. Can you guess?

Try to answer the following questions in your reading diary. Leave enough space for additional information or corrections when you have finished the book!

- What is a child soldier?
- In which countries all over the world are children fighting as soldiers?
- How many child soldiers are there in the world?

2. Read the following sentence from China Keitetsi, a child soldier. What could it mean?

“My childhood is long forgotten. Sometimes I feel as if I am six years old, and again it’s like I am 100 years old.”

3. Now in your group discuss your notes of task 1 and 2. Then ask your group members what they expect from the book.

Tasks while reading

- 4. Read the foreword of the book. Then find five adjectives or nouns which describe how China feels.**

Reading Project

5. Can you find Uganda? Label also the surrounding countries.



6. **Character portrait**

Start collecting information about China! Reserve a whole page for her in your reading diary.

Does she develop/change in the book? If yes, how? What/Who makes her someone different?

7. **After each part (1-4) of the book write (max.) 3 sentences of what has happened so that you have a summary of the book when you have finished reading. In addition to the 3 sentences, write down one or two questions you want to discuss in your group (e.g. things you did not understand etc.) Reserve a page for this summary in your reading diary.**

8. **After having read Part 1, try to answer the following questions:**
In what ways is China's childhood different to the childhood of children in Europe?
Think of your own childhood.

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Do you understand her reactions (to her father, stepmother, grandmother)? Or would you have reacted differently?

9. After having read Part 3, try to answer the questions below:

a) Why/How did China become a child soldier?

b) Describe the life as a child soldier. (Give 4-5 details, for example about the training, battles etc.)



c) China says that child soldiers “act like robots” (p.125). Why? Can you give examples?

d) What does the gun mean to these children? Can you understand it?

e) How does war change people?

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→ Compare your answers with those of your group members!

10. Find information about the abbreviations/names in the grid and explain:
(You can use the book or the internet)

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| NRA | |
| UPDF | |
| AK-47 | |
| Musevini | |
| Obote | |

→ Compare your notes with your group members!

11. How did China manage to escape this nightmare?

Write down some of the countries/places she crossed during her escape. (Look at your map of Africa)

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Post-reading tasks

12. After you have finished reading the last page, look at the woman on the book cover and write down either what you feel when looking at her or what she feels (inner monologue). Write about one A4 page.

13. Make sure you have revised your answers of task 1.

14. Watch the video on youtube, then answer the following question:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmK-Ddi2Mos>

→ What does democracy mean to China? What does it mean to you?

15. Listen to the interview with Ishmael Beah, another child soldier, and answer the questions. (Then compare with your group members)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K4yhPSQEzo>

a) How do the children see the commander?

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b) What makes the children stay in the army?

c) How are the children manipulated?

d) How do some young Americans see war and violence?

e) The organisation UNICEF managed to get Ishmael and many other soldiers out of the army. What exactly is UNICEF? (look it up in the internet!)

16. Ask your teacher for the report about child soldiers. It is numbered (1-5), each member of your group gets one number. Read your section and take notes! Then tell the others about the main facts/ideas of your text.

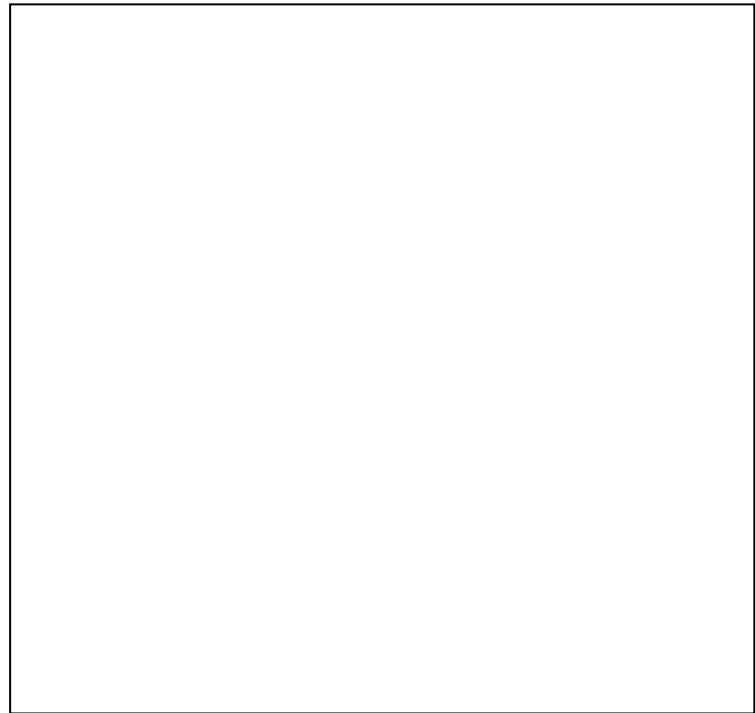
17. Together in your group read “Voices of child soldiers”.
Which one affects you most? Why?

18. China Keitetsi fights against the use of child soldiers. She has given many press conferences and has talked to famous people such as Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan.



Reading Project

→ In your group brainstorm arguments against the use of child soldiers.
(use your background information)



19. Imagine you have the chance to speak in front of politicians and other famous people. Prepare a convincing 3 minute speech in which you give facts about child soldiers (where, how many etc.) and try to illustrate the situation of child soldiers. Use also the arguments you have found together with your group!

Record your speech on your mobile phone and upload it on Moodle or give your speech to the class on ...

Reading Project

20. Write a review of the book for amazon.com.

To guide your review, consider the following questions!

Book Review Checklist

- What is the title of the book and the author's name?
- How did the book make you feel? What happened in the book to make you feel that way?
- Why did you like (or dislike) the main character?
- What would you change about this book? Why?
- What did the book teach you?
- Did this book remind you of any other books? Which ones, and why?
- Did the book leave you with something to think about? What?
- Would you recommend the book? Why/why not?

After receiving your teacher's feedback and corrections revise your review and publish it on Amazon. (optional)

Reading Project

Book Project for year 8:

Child Soldier by China Keitetsi

Information for the teacher

Child Soldier by China Keitetsi is an autobiography in which China describes her own story as a child soldier in Uganda, where she was born.

This is the link for amazon.com

http://www.amazon.com/Child-Soldier-China-Keitetsi/dp/0285636901/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1298558911&sr=8-1

Another book which deals with this topic is *A long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Beah. Boys might prefer to read the story of a boy.

Voices of Child Soldiers

Recruitment Practice

Myanmar (Burma)

Maung Zaw Oo: “They filled the forms and asked my age, and when I said 16, I was slapped and he said, ‘You are 18. Answer 18’ He asked me again and I said, ‘But that’s my true age’. The sergeant asked, ‘Then why did you enlist in the army?’ I said, ‘Against my will. I was captured.’ He said, ‘Okay, keep your mouth shut then,’ and he filled in the form. I just wanted to go back home and I told them, but they refused. I said, ‘Then please just let me make one phone call,’ but they refused that too.”

Chad : “Child soldiers are ideal because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and if you tell them to kill, they kill.”

Training and Treatment

Myanmar (Burma)

Htun Myint: “In the mornings we had to do long and short runs with backpacks. We had to run five miles a week, and do long marches of about 30 miles. I was 11, so I couldn’t keep up but had to do my best, otherwise they whipped me with the strings attached to their whistles... When we had to run and I couldn’t carry my gun anymore, the older ones tried to help by taking my gun and running along with me.”

Nepal

Ram: “They [the army] took us to the barracks. They beat us both with their guns and boots. After 15 days my friend died from the beatings. They beat me repeatedly. Once I was beaten unconscious and taken to the hospital. When I regained consciousness I was taken back to the barracks and beaten again. I nearly died. I don’t know why they beat me.”

Uganda

A boy (15): “Sometimes in the bush, the rebels would beat us without mercy whether you made a mistake or not. We would also be made to carry heavy loads on our heads for long distances and made to assemble out in the cold each day as early as 5am.”

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The long-term impact

Uganda

A girl (17): “I feel pain from the rape, as if I have wounds inside, and I am afraid to have a disease. I would like to get tested but there is nobody to help me. I was tested in the reception centre in Gulu, but I was never told the result. The doctor said that it is better not to know the result.”

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/voices-child-soldiers>

Facts and Figures on Child Soldiers

1) The number of child soldiers globally

Although it is impossible to accurately calculate the number of children involved in armed forces and groups, it is clear that there are many tens of thousands of child soldiers. Child soldiers exist in all regions of the world and, almost inevitably, wherever there is armed conflict.

It is likely that the number of child soldiers is fewer than in 2004 when the Coalition published its last Child Soldiers Global Report. Since then, tens of thousands of child soldiers have been released from fighting forces following peace agreements and demobilization programs in Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Southern Sudan and elsewhere. However, in the meantime, conflicts in countries such as Central African Republic, Chad, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan (Darfur) have broken out, reignited or intensified and child recruitment there increased.

Where child soldiers were involved in armed conflicts

Children were actively involved in armed conflict in government forces or non-state armed groups in 19 countries or territories between April 2004 and October 2007. These were: [Afghanistan](#), [Burundi](#), [Central African Republic](#), [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Côte d’Ivoire](#), the [DRC](#), [India](#), [Indonesia](#), [Iraq](#), [Israel](#) and the [Occupied Palestinian Territory](#), [Myanmar](#), [Nepal](#), [Philippines](#), [Somalia](#), [Sri Lanka](#), [Sudan](#), [Thailand](#) and [Uganda](#).

Peace agreements brought an end to internal conflicts in Aceh/Indonesia in 2005 and in Nepal in 2006. As a result the use of children in hostilities ended in both situations, although child soldiers with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) had not been formally discharged.

Government armed forces which used children in armed conflicts

The number of governments that used children in armed conflict only marginally declined – down from 10 in the period 2001-2004 to nine in 2004-2007.

In [Myanmar](#) boys below the age of 18 continued to be forcibly recruited into the army in large numbers and were used in active combat as well as other roles. Children also took direct part in hostilities in government armed forces in [Chad](#), the [DRC](#), [Somalia](#), [Sudan/Southern](#)

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[Sudan](#) and [Uganda](#). In addition, there were reports that the [Yemeni](#) armed forces used children in fighting against a militia in early 2007. The [Israeli](#) defence forces used Palestinian children as human shields on several occasions. A number of under-18s were deployed to Iraq by the [British](#) armed forces between 2003 and 2005, although most were removed from the theatre of war within a week of their arrival.

At least 14 governments also recruited, and in some cases used in hostilities, children in auxiliary forces, civilian defence groups or in illegal militias and armed groups acting as proxies for official armed forces. These included [Chad](#), [Colombia](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), the [DRC](#), [India](#), [Iran](#), [Libya](#), [Myanmar](#), [Peru](#), [Philippines](#), [Sri Lanka](#), [Sudan](#), [Uganda](#) and [Zimbabwe](#). In [Burundi](#), [Colombia](#), the [DRC](#), [India](#), [Indonesia](#), [Israel](#), [Nepal](#) and [Uganda](#) children – often captured, surrendered or escaped from armed groups - were also used as spies, informants or messengers.

2) The recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups

The vast majority of child soldiers are in the ranks of non-state armed groups. Dozens of armed groups in at least 24 countries have recruited under-18s and many have used them in hostilities.

Armed groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda are well known for having recruited and used children over many years. Others receive less international attention. In southern Thailand the separatist group National Revolution Front-Coordinate (BRN-C) recruits under-18s and uses them in various roles including propaganda and in support of military operations. In India, child recruitment by Maoist groups is reported to have increased since 2005 and there were persistent reports of child soldier use by groups in Jammu and Kashmir and northeastern states. In the Philippines and Myanmar children are associated with armed groups involved in protracted low-level conflicts with state forces.

In countries such as Central African Republic and Chad there are numerous irregular groups which are characterized by unclear, shifting alliances and activities that are often more criminal than political. In situations such as Kenya and Nigeria criminal groups involving children have been used for political purposes. In Afghanistan, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Pakistan, children were used by armed groups in suicide attacks.

3) The challenge of releasing and reintegrating child soldiers

Tens of thousands of children have left armed forces and groups since 2004 as long-running conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa drew to a close. Although many thousands were demobilized through official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs, many more child soldiers self-demobilized.

Lessons learned about the priorities and needs of children during official DDR processes were often ignored by planners and implementers. Fear of stigmatization and other obstacles prevented tens of thousands of children from registering for DDR programs. The long-term financial and political support needed to successfully reintegrate former child soldiers was frequently lacking and community programs – known to provide the best chance for recovery

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of war affected children including child soldiers – have not been well supported. Inadequate provision for long-term reintegration of former child soldiers was reported from [Afghanistan](#), [Burundi](#), [Côte d’Ivoire](#), the [DRC](#), [Guinea](#), [Liberia](#) and [Southern Sudan](#).

In some cases official DDR programs made no provision for children or otherwise discourage their participation. In [Indonesia](#) only adults associated with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) benefited from DDR packages that followed the 2005 peace agreement. In the [Central African Republic](#), out of the 7,500 combatants that went through the official DDR program following armed conflict in 2002-03, only 26 were children. In [Colombia](#), restrictive criteria for accessing the government-run DDR program effectively excluded many child soldiers. In other situations, such as [India](#), [Myanmar](#) and [Thailand](#), no arrangements existed to facilitate the release of children from armed groups or to assist their reintegration.

4) The fate of girl soldiers

Girls continued to be involved in fighting forces in combat and non-combat roles in countries including [Central African Republic](#), [Chad](#), [Nepal](#), [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#). Armed groups in [Colombia](#), [Côte d’Ivoire](#), the [DRC](#) and [Uganda](#) were among those known to have subjected girl soldiers to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Girls associated with armed forces or groups have been widely excluded from DDR programs. Figures from national DDR programs reflect extraordinarily low figures for girls’ participation. In [Liberia](#), 3,000 girls were officially demobilized through the formal DDR process that ended in November 2004. Around another 8,000 did not take part. In the [DRC](#), just 3,000 or just 15 per cent of the total number of girls estimated to have been involved in the conflict were officially demobilized by the end of 2006 when the national DDR program drew to a close.

Justice initiatives

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants against members of the LRA in [Uganda](#) in 2005 and subsequently against three members of Ituri-based armed groups in the [DRC](#). The warrants included charges relating to the enlistment, conscription and direct use in hostilities of children under the age of 15. The first ever ICC trial, that of former Congolese armed group leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo who is charged with child recruitment and use, is due to begin in June. In [Sierra Leone](#), the guilty verdicts in 2007 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone against three members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and one member of the government-backed Civilian Defence Forces (CDF) represented the first ever convictions by an international court on charges relating to the recruitment and use of children.

With the exception of two cases in the DRC, no one is known to have been prosecuted by national-level courts for recruiting and using children.

Truth commissions in [Sierra Leone](#), [Timor-Leste](#) and [Liberia](#) have addressed the issue of child soldiers and former child soldiers have participated in their proceedings.

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5) Child soldiers in detention

In a number of countries children suspected of involvement in armed groups have been arbitrarily detained and some were reported to have been subjected to ill-treatment or torture. In [Burundi](#), scores of children, some as young as nine years old have been detained for alleged links to the National Liberation Forces (FNL) for prolonged periods and some were severely beaten. In [India](#), there was evidence that in areas of armed conflict children were detained, often in violation of national legislation designed to protect children. In [Israel](#), hundreds of Palestinian children have been held under military provisions: incidents of ill-treatment and torture were reportedly common. In [Iraq](#) there were reports of abuse in facilities run by the Multi-National Force-Iraq where hundreds of children accused of security offences were detained. In the [Philippines](#), detailed policies on the treatment of children captured, surrendered or escaped from armed groups have been ignored by the military and children held beyond officially sanctioned time-limits and in some cases ill-treated. In the [USA](#), a detainee facing trial before a military commission, who was captured in Afghanistan in 2002 when he was 15-years old, alleged that he was ill-treated in US custody both in Afghanistan and in the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay.

In the [DRC](#) and [Myanmar](#) child soldiers have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment for desertion from the armed forces. In the DRC several children convicted of military offences remained in prison under sentence of death.

The trend towards a “straight-18” standard for military recruitment

Of the 120 states that have ratified the Optional Protocol, almost two thirds have committed themselves to setting a minimum voluntary recruitment age at 18 or higher. In the past four years, the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces has been raised to 18 in [Chile](#), [Italy](#), [Jordan](#), the [Maldives](#), [Sierra Leone](#), [Slovenia](#) and [South Korea](#).

Sixty-three countries permitted the voluntary recruitment of under-18s by their armed forces. In [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) calls to raise the minimum recruitment age to 18 have been resisted on the grounds of manpower requirements. In the [USA](#), following a dramatic number of under-18s joining the military, and general recruitment bonuses, increased enlistment bonuses were introduced and educational standards for recruits lowered.

<http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/facts-and-figures-child-soldiers>