



War Child Teacher Resource

A great deal of thanks and appreciation goes out to the members of our Teacher Advisory Committee, who volunteer their time to assist in the development of Sprockets teacher resources.

This teacher resource was written by Renee Saviour.

TITLE: *War Child*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: USA

RELEASE YEAR: 2008

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: English

DIRECTOR: C. Karim Chrobog

RUNTIME: 92 Minutes

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Senior Social Science courses:

- Challenge and Change in a Diverse Society
- Canadian and World Issues

FOCUSING QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be a child soldier?
2. What are the effects of such an experience?
3. Is it possible to survive and contribute to society after such an experience?
4. What role does entertainment, namely music, play in shaping society? What responsibility does it carry?
5. How can individuals use their talents to create positive change?

SYNOPSIS:

"I believe I survived for a reason, to tell my story, to touch lives," sings hip-hop artist and former child soldier Emmanuel Jal, who shares his powerful experiences in the documentary *War Child*.



Born in southern Sudan in the midst of a twenty-year civil war fought against northern Sudan, Jal recounts fleeing his village, surviving a tragic boat accident and making his way to a refugee camp in Ethiopia. There he trained as a child soldier, joining the fight in Sudan, where he experienced and participated in the horrors of war. Jal tells of how he managed to escape the army and how, nearing starvation, he was rescued and smuggled into Kenya by aid worker Emma McCunne. Finally able to attend school, Jal went on to graduate and launch a musical career in which he uses song to speak about what he experienced and survived.

War Child interweaves interviews with musical performances, and features amazing footage of Jal when he was a child living in a refugee camp discussing his hopes and dreams. The result is an inspiring and hopeful portrait of a young man who, having overcome extreme hardships, is using his voice and talent to raise awareness of the effects of war and poverty and to champion education for children and youth as crucial to the pursuit of peace.

N.B. Potentially disturbing scenes of war.

Recommended for grades 10 through 12

AN EDUCATOR'S COMMENTS ON THE FILM:

"The war in Darfur has been described as genocide 'in slow motion.' What many don't know is that the war in southern Sudan twenty years ago set the stage for Darfur and 'perfected' the current atrocities being committed in that region. Emmanuel Jal is one of many child soldiers who fell victim to that war, but unlike so many of his peers, he came out of the conflict as a positive and inspirational force. *War Child* is a moving film that is sure to open students' eyes, not only to the plight of child soldiers, but to the strength of the human spirit and the power of music in creating positive change.

"In a multicultural city like Toronto, there may be some students for whom the subject of war hits close to home. Teachers should approach this subject with great sensitivity."



PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

Materials:

- Classroom audiovisual equipment to view/listen to the following songs on YouTube or CD/MP3:
 - a) "Got Money" from the album *Tha Carter III* (2008) by Lil Wayne, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKtZF-Mxv2I (note: this is the radio edit version of the song, hence explicit language has been removed)
 - b) "What's Hardcore?" from the album *The Dusty Foot Philosopher* (2005) by K'naan, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0luUXHBkaw
 - c) "Warchild" from the album *Warchild* (2008) by Emmanuel Jal, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekigsvTDJXo
- Copies or a projection of the lyrics to "What's Hardcore?" (appendix 1)

Part 1:

In groups or as a class, have students discuss the role of music in their lives by asking the following questions:

1. Personal taste
 - a) What is your favourite genre of music? Why? How does it make you feel?
 - b) What is your favourite song? What is it about?
 - c) What song do you like to listen to when you are feeling down or are in a bad mood? What is it about? What, if anything, do the lyrics mean to you?
 - d) How important are lyrics in terms of hooking you into a song?
2. Hip hop music
 - a) When you think of hip hop music, what images come to mind? (Possible answers: bling, flashy cars and other luxury items, drugs, gangs, guns, sexualization of women, etc.)

- b) If music can be seen as social commentary, what do hip hop artists have to say about North American society? Where do the ideals and values expressed in the lyrics and videos come from? (Possible answers: Many artists come from humble, impoverished and desperate beginnings. The excesses of hip hop culture may be a reflection of what one may fantasize about when in that situation. Luxury items may be seen as symbols of success and how far an artist has come. With respect to drugs and violence, some artists simply write what they know about and have experienced first-hand.)

Part 2:

1. Play the songs "Got Money" and "What's Hardcore?" by Lil Wayne and K'naan. After each song, discuss the imagery, mood and values it promotes.
2. Distribute or project the lyrics to "What's Hardcore?" (appendix 1). Replay the song and have students follow along with the lyrics. Students unfamiliar with the artist should know that K'naan is a Toronto artist who is originally from Somalia. As a child he was a witness to the civil war there. Have the students discuss the similarities and differences between the two videos/songs.
 - a) Which do you like better? Why?
 - b) What is K'naan's commentary about the popular hip hop artists of 2005?
 - c) What might K'naan have to say about Lil Wayne?
3. Introduce Emmanuel Jal as a U.K. hip hop artist and former child soldier from Sudan. After listening to "Warchild," discuss how it compares to the other songs, particularly how it has a different tone or character from that of K'naan's. Why does Jal combine the words "war" and "child" into one?
4. Finally, ask students to speculate on how K'naan and Jal's childhoods may have differed from Lil Wayne's (Wayne grew up in New Orleans and was in the gifted programme in his elementary school).
 - a) What basic necessities and rights did Lil Wayne grow up with?



- b) What basic needs and rights do you think Jal as a child soldier was denied?
- c) How might their different childhood experiences have affected their music and their understanding of the purpose of music?

Part 3:

Explain to students that they will be seeing Jal's film entitled *War Child*. Before watching the film, ask students to pay particular attention to (a) various aspects of childhood that Jal lost; and (b) the role that music has played at various points in his life.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

Materials:

- Copies of the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNCRC) www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm (appendix 2)

Part 1:

Facilitate a class discussion based on the student's reaction to the film.

- a) What is your immediate reaction to the film?
- b) What surprised you?
- c) When you saw the footage of seven-year-old Emmanuel Jal, could you imagine him with a gun in his hand and participating in combat?
- d) Can you imagine yourself at that age, doing the same? Explain.

Part 2:

Distribute copies of the UNCRC and appendix 2, and have students complete the questions either alone or in groups. When they have finished, take up the answers as a class.

Some answers to appendix 2:

1. Articles 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38.
3. Children are physically, psychologically and emotionally easy to control. They are vulnerable to manipulation and are more likely to



follow orders. Without knowledge of their rights, they are not likely to challenge authority figures, and unlike adult soldiers, they will not make demands for money or other items. On top of this, many governments do not have the infrastructure or stability to protect them.

Part 3:

Using feedback from question 6(c) in the handout, discuss ways in which the students can use their own talents toward a similar goal. Develop a class action plan to raise awareness about child soldiers by setting up a talent show featuring students' own rap songs, skits, art displays, etc. Students can raise funds by selling tickets, holding an art auction or trying to bring in local celebrities such as K'naan.

Students can use the list of additional resources to research various organizations, including War Child Canada or Jal's own GUA Africa.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP:

Students should walk away from the experience with a greater sensitivity and awareness of the issues surrounding child soldiers. They should also look upon entertainment as a powerful force that goes far beyond the superficial values that lie on the surface. Finally, students should leave with a greater appreciation of the rights they have and be empowered, as Mahatma Gandhi said, to "be the change you want to see in the world."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Information on child soldiers, music therapy and the film:

1. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
www.child-soldiers.org/childsoldiers/child-soldiers
2. World Bank. "Child Soldiers: Lessons Learned on Prevention, Demobilization and Reintegration." *Findings 207* (May 2002).
www.worldbank.org/afr/findings/english/find207.pdf
3. GUA Africa
www.gua-africa.org/

4. Heidenreich, Verena. "Music Therapy in War-Effectuated (*sic*) Areas." *Intervention Journal* 3, no. 2 (2005): 129–134.
www.interventionjournal.com/downloads/32pdf/129_134_Verena.pdf
5. SOS Children's Villages. "SOS Child Soldiers," February 2006.
www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/charity-news/child-soldiers.htm
6. War Child Canada. "Get Involved: Global Citizenship in the Classroom."
www.warchild.ca/index.php/globalclassrooms
7. *War Child* (film)
www.warchildmovie.com/

Additional lesson plans on child soldiers:

8. Human Rights Education Associates. "*Crimes of War* – Educator's Guide: Child Soldiers."
www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=128
9. Child Soldier Relief. "Lesson Plans for Teachers on Child Soldier Issues," April 2008.
<http://childsoldierrelief.com/2008/04/23/lesson-plans-for-educators-on-child-soldier-issues/>

Appendix 1: K'naan's "What's Hardcore?" Lyrics

Artist: K'naan

Album: *The Dusty Foot Philosopher*

Year: 2006

Title: "What's Hardcore?"

I put a pen to the paper,
this time as visual as possible,
guns blast at the hospital,
the walls are white washed with tin rooftops,
to show love you lick two shots,
it's dangerous man,

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journalists hire gunmen there's violent women,
kids trust no one cause fire burnt them,
refugees die in boats, headed for peace,
is anyone scared of death here? Not in the least,
I walk by the old lady selling coconuts under the tree,
life is cheap here but wisdom is free,
the beach boys hang on the side, leaning with pride,
scam artists and gangsters fiendin' to fight,
I walk with three kids that can't wait to meet God
lately, that's Bucktooth, Mohamed and Crybaby,
what they do everyday just to eat, lord have mercy,
strapped with an AK and they blood thirsty...

So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.
So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.

We begin our day by the way of the gun,
rocket-propelled grenades blow you away if you front,
we got no police ambulance or firefighters,
we start riots by burning car tires,
they looting, and everybody start shooting,
bullshit politicians talking 'bout solutions, but it's all talk,
you can't go half a block with a road block,
you don't pay at the road block, you get your throat shot,
and each road block is set up by these gangsters,
and different gangsters go by different standards,
for example, the evening is a no go,
unless you wanna wear a bullet like a logo,
in the day you should never take the alleyway,
the only thing that validates you is the AK,
they chew on Jad, it's sorta like coco leafs,
and there ain't no police...

So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.
So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.

I'm a spit these verses 'cause I feel annoyed,
and I'm not gonna quit till I fill the void,
if I rhyme about home and got descriptive,
I'd make Fifty Cent look like Limp Biskit,



it's true, and don't make me rhyme about you,
I'm from where the kids is addicted to glue,
get ready, he got a good grip on the machete,
make rappers say they do it for love like R-Kelly,
it's HARD, harder than Harlem and Compton intertwined,
harder than harboring Bin Laden and rewind,
"to that earlier part when I was kinda like"
we begin our day by the way of the gun,
rocket-propelled grenades blow you away if you front,
we got no police ambulances or firefighters,
we start riots by burning car tires,
they looting, and everybody starting shooting...

So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.
So what's hardcore? Really, are you hardcore? Hmm.

("What's Hardcore?" lyrics available online at www.bebo.com/BlogView.jsp?MemberId=5309736522&BlogId=5309779518)

Appendix 2: *War Child* Student Handout

Sudan is one of 36 countries that use over 300 000 child soldiers in armed conflict.

UNICEF and the Cape Town Principles (1997) describe a child soldier in this way:

A "child soldier" is defined as any child – boy or girl – under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. It includes girls and boys recruited for sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried weapons.

Reflecting on the film *War Child*, read over the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNCRC) and answer the following questions:

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1. According to the definition above and what you witnessed in the film, which articles under the UNCRC are violated when child soldiers are used in conflict?
2. According to Emmanuel Jal, the children were asked if they wanted to participate in armed training. Do you think this was appropriate? Explain.
3. Why might armed forces be inclined to “recruit” child soldiers?
4. Jal’s story is quite rare in that he has come out of his ordeal with a sense of purpose in creating peace. As seen in the film, some of his friends and family members were not so fortunate. Discuss the implications that the use of child soldiers could have on an individual, a community and the world at large.
5.
 - a) Describe the role that music has played during various stages of Jal’s life.
 - b) Has music or any other art done the same for you?
6.
 - a) How has Jal used his talent in creating awareness to give back to his community?
 - b) Give examples of other artists (musicians, writers, actors, etc.) who have used their talents toward similar goals.
 - c) How do these artists inspire you? How can you use your talents and creativity to increase awareness and promote change?