BEYOND THE FIRE: Teen Experiences of War

BORDER CONTROL QUESTIONS

The following are questions posed to visitors at www.beyondthefire.net. Use these in your classroom to spark dialogue on war and its effects on children and teenagers.

Somalia – child soldiers/living through war
In the last decade, the number of children killed in wars around the world is closest to...

a) 200,000
b) 1,000,000
c) 2,000,000

Answer: More than two million children have been killed in wars in the last decade. In addition, six million have been wounded and one million orphaned. After the war in Rwanda, 67,000 children were reunited with their families by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR works with governments and agencies to protect and help refugees around the world.

Sierra Leone – child soldiers
Under international law, the minimum age for children to serve in a country's military is…

a) 10
b) 15
c) 18

Answer: The minimum age of recruitment under the UN Convention on Rights of a Child is 18. Yet, there are nearly 300,000 children who have been forced to fight in some of the most brutal wars. Many of these child soldiers are less than 10 years old. In Sierra Leone's civil war, child soldiers were forced to kill their parents or neighbors as part of their initiation ceremony. Girls were also forcibly recruited as sex slaves. The repeated exposure to these horrifying actions has created dangerous and deeply traumatized children, who even if they survive the war, will need specialized care.

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Iraq - refugee life
Across the world, nearly 50 million people (equal to the combined population of California and New York) have been uprooted from their homes primarily by war. How many of these do you think are children and teenagers?

a) 7 million
b) 25 million
c) 35 million

Answer: Nearly 50 percent or 25 million of these displaced persons in the world are children and teenagers. Of the fifty million displaced people, 20 million are classified as refugees or people who have had to flee their county. The remaining thirty million are internally displaced people (IDP) or those who have fled their homes to seek safety in another part of the country. Nearly seventy percent of the world's refugees live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Only thirty percent find refuge in North America, Europe and Australia.

Afghanistan – landmines
Landmines can remain active for almost 50 years, lying hidden in fields, roads and paths. They are a nightmare for civilians even after a war is over. Can you estimate how many landmines have to be cleared in Afghanistan alone?

a) 5 million
b) 10 million
c) 60 million

Answer: Ten million landmines remain active in Afghanistan. Around the world, children in 87 countries live among 60 million landmines. Each year, 10,000 children are maimed or killed by these landmines. In 1997, nearly 200 countries joined together to sign an international treaty banning the use of landmines. Today, 44 countries, including the United States, have not yet signed the treaty.

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Liberia – education
In a war, school buildings are considered no-fighting zones by all armies.

a) True
b) False

Answer: False. School buildings, like teachers and children, become deliberate targets in a war. During the Mozambique conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, 45 percent of schools were destroyed. Of the 25 million children who have fled their homes primarily due to war, many live in refugee camps or in war torn countries, where schools, teachers or textbooks are non-existent. Even in places where some education is available, there is little chance for refugee children to go to high school.

Bosnia, Kosovo – orphans/family loss
In a war, fighters from the battling armies or militias suffer the most casualties, while civilians face little danger of being killed or injured.

a) True
b) False

Answer: False. Ninety percent of people killed or injured in a war are civilians. Of the 50 million people around the world who have been forced to leave their homes, mainly due to war or persecution, nearly 40 million are women and children. They are particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of war. They are also targeted by the fighting armies for murder, kidnapping, forced military service, forced labor and sexual violence.

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Sudan – shelter
When refugees flee their homes for safety, they think their stay there will be for a…

a) Few weeks
b) Few months
c) Few years

Answer: When people flee their homes for safety in another region or country, they hope it only will be for a few weeks and they will be able to return home. However, the war that drove them out may last for months or even years. Their temporary shelters in refugee camps become permanent. These homes are often just sticks for walls and plastic sheeting for a roof. Some are tents or a tiny one-room hut to fit the entire family. Large refugee camps look like small cities. Food is difficult to find and children often go hungry. Access to health care, clean water and education are also big challenges for the refugee. Through all this the refugees hope to one day return to their homes.