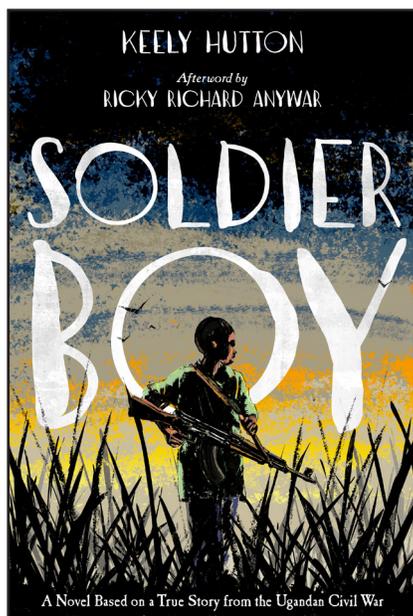


A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO SOLDIER BOY

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS



Ages 13 and up • 978-0-374-30563-5
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Soldier Boy tells the story of Ricky Richard Anywar, who was abducted in 1989 at age fourteen to fight with Joseph Kony's rebel army in Uganda's decades-long civil war. Ricky is trained, armed, and forced to fight government soldiers alongside his brutal kidnapers, but he never stops dreaming of escape.

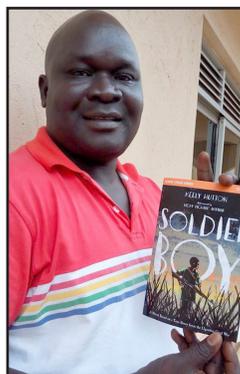
The book begins seventeen years after his abduction with the story of a fictionalized character named Samuel, an eleven-year-old boy representative of the thousands of former child soldiers Ricky has helped rehabilitate as founder of the internationally acclaimed charity Friends of Orphans.

Working closely with Ricky himself, debut author Keely Hutton has written an eye-opening book about a boy's unbreakable spirit and indomitable courage in the face of unimaginable horror.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KEELY HUTTON is an educational journalist and former teacher. She is the recipient of the Highlights Foundation Writers' Workshop scholarship at Chautauqua, New York. Since 2012, she has been working closely with Ricky Richard Anywar to tell his story. *Soldier Boy* is her first novel.



RICKY RICHARD ANYWAR is the founder of the internationally acclaimed charity Friends of Orphans and a former child soldier in Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Since escaping the LRA, Anywar has dedicated his life to rehabilitating other survivors and advocating for peace in their communities.

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards and the Common Core History / Social Studies Standards for grades 6–8, but can be applied to grades 9–12 as well. To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

BEFORE READING

FACT GATHERING

Soldier Boy is based on real events. Before beginning the reading, help students understand the conflict that erupted in Uganda in the late 1980s. The Author's Note briefly explains the political climate of Uganda and the ideas that drove Joseph Kony's crusade. After reading the Author's Note, students can view the videos below. These videos will transport them to the landscape of Uganda and help them visualize the setting while they read the book.

❖ *Tracking Joseph Kony—Africa's Most Elusive War Criminal*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Q93a7OOMA *

Some disturbing content

❖ A brief overview of the LRA

<http://invisiblechildren.com/challenge> *

Some disturbing content

Prepare your students for a think-pair-share exercise. While they're watching the videos, ask them to think about how to explain the situation in Uganda, why it has been so difficult to catch Kony, and why some people never want to give up the search. Then have students get into pairs and share the information that is most important.

CCSS.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

STRUGGLES ARE REAL—PART 1

In her book, Hutton vividly describes the experiences of a real and an imagined character and cleverly brings both struggles together at the end of the book. Have students write an essay about the most significant struggle that they or someone they know has had in their life. The essay should include details about the struggle, strategies they have employed to deal with the struggle, and ideas about how or if the struggle will end. At the end of the book, this essay can be used for text-to-self connections. This is a powerful activity about perspective.

CCSS.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe Ricky's life at the beginning of the story. Who are the members of his family and what roles do they play in his life? Cite the evidence in the text that illustrates this information.
2. This book is told from two different perspectives. Who are the two main characters? How are their points of view alike? How are they different?
3. Analyze the dream that Ricky had on page 37. Why do you think the author uses this imagery? Think of a vivid dream you had. What do you think prompted the dream?

4. Describe what Samuel is thinking about his current situation at the beginning of the book. Why is he suspicious and planning his escape? Do you think his concerns are valid? Why or why not?
5. Who is the smiling man on the bicycle? Why is this character important? How are we reminded of this man at the end of the story?
6. One of the most heartbreaking parts of this story is the description of the violence that Ricky and Patrick's family endured during the attack. Discuss each character's experience and point of view during this attack. What might each person have been thinking and feeling? How might their family roles have affected their feelings? What are the differences between the mother's perspective and the child's perspective?
7. How did Joseph Kony command his army? What were the abductees told? How did this make a strong army? Find evidence in the text to support your answers.
8. How did Ricky survive, physically and mentally, throughout the two and a half years he was forced to fight for the LRA? What things kept him alive?
9. Read the following passage from pages 237–238:

“Sometimes,” the man said, “the harsh realities of life can blind us to the beauty and promise in our world.” He motioned to Amina and her baby. “When we see a child mother, we see only shame. We must look closer and see courage.” Amina rocked her baby and spoke to a mother whose toddler sat at her feet, patting on a drum. The man pointed to an older boy, who was speaking with the elderly villager with the milky eyes. A jagged scar carved a line from the boy's forehead to his chin, and a gaping hole occupied the spot where his right eye should have been. “When we look at a face scarred by war, we see only pain. We must look deeper and see strength.” The elderly villager reached out and took the boy's hand in his. “And when the world looks at the former abductees and child soldiers of the LRA,” the man said, “they must look past the crimes they were forced to commit and see them for who they truly are.”

After closely reading the passage above, discuss the issues related to the rehabilitation and acceptance of the abductees when they return to their villages. What factors need to be considered when a former soldier begins a new life? How does the author bring a positive message to this horrific story?

10. This book has a unique structure. Why do you think the author chose to switch back and forth between Ricky's and Samuel's perspectives? Do you think the structure helped or hurt the flow of the story? Find evidence in the text that leads the reader to discover how the stories are going to connect.
11. Mango trees are mentioned several times throughout the book. Discuss possible reasons the author might have included the trees at different points of the story. Research the symbolism of mango trees and find specific references to them in the text (i.e., they are described as an important part of the family's homestead; the boys planted a tree that served as a meeting place for them; it is a source of sweet, thirst-quenching fruit; a tree was damaged by lightning; the tree the boys had planted was where Patrick took his own life). Discuss how these references may all be tied together and how this image affects the movement and mood of the story.

CCSS.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

AFTER READING

STRUGGLES ARE REAL—PART 2

Now that students have read *Soldier Boy*, they have another perspective on a person's agonizing struggle. Compare and contrast the struggles that students wrote about before reading the book and the struggles that Ricky and Samuel had. This is not intended to minimize struggles that the students are experiencing, but rather to help them draw parallels between ways that people cope with challenges, whether small or immense. Consider the following discussion points:

- ❖ How does a growth mind-set serve as a survival tool for children and teens?
- ❖ What advice do you think Ricky would offer if he were counseling you through a struggle?

CCSS.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

How does reading this book help young people? How does telling this story help the children who were abducted? Find out how sharing this story has helped the people of Uganda. Ask students to explore the following websites for examples of organizations that focus on helping the children of Uganda.

- ❖ <http://frouganda.org>
- ❖ <http://invisiblechildren.com>
- ❖ <http://invisiblechildren.com/our-story>
- ❖ www.enoughproject.org/category/topic/child-soldiers

Once they have completed their exploration, have students discuss the author's purpose in writing this book. Talk about how the websites, the organizations, and the book are useful ways of sharing the story of the Ugandan children. How have other authors, historians, artists, activists, musicians, and others shared stories about important issues in our world today or in history? What was their purpose in doing so? What strategies are most effective in getting one's message across? After exploring various true-life shared stories, have the class choose one of these stories, identify your purpose in selecting it and strategies to promote it, and spread the word! How can students help inform people in the local community about this important issue that needs to be discussed?

CCSS.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

STRESS AND STRENGTH

This story depicts people who continually find strength in extremely stressful situations. In general, children of war have proven to be resilient and even to use their experiences to inspire others. Encourage students to learn about others' stories of pain followed by determination and positivity.

CCSS.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

EMTITHAL MAHMOUD

Emtithal “Emi” Mahmoud writes poetry of resilience, using verse to confront the experience of genocide in Darfur. In a TED talk, she shares two stirring original poems about refugees, family, joy, and sorrow, asking, “Will you witness me?”

❖ www.ted.com/talks/emtithal_mahmoud_a_young_poet_tells_the_story_of_darfur

Invite students to write an essay describing the similarities between Emi, Ricky, and Samuel. How does Emi’s poem connect to *Soldier Boy*? Discuss the common vocabulary and tone in Emi’s poem and Ricky’s and Samuel’s stories. Encourage students to consider the thoughts, images, and feelings expressed in both texts. What do the authors want the reader to witness, and how do we know that?

CCSS.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

ART THERAPY

The rehabilitation of the children abducted by the LRA has been very important for the population of Uganda. Art, in a variety of forms, has proven to be extraordinarily effective in aiding the healing process. Samuel experiences firsthand how former abductees use drawing, music, and theater to explore the feelings they have been left to deal with and process. The link below offers an example of such art therapy and how it has helped a former child soldier.

❖ www.indiegogo.com/projects/painting-a-future-of-peace-with-former-child-soldiers#

Have students create their own work of art to share a struggle they or someone they know has experienced. They may choose the form of art that is most comfortable and appropriate for what they are trying to express. Be sure to have them reflect on the effectiveness of this type of expression.

CCSS.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

UGANDA TODAY

What is happening in Uganda today? Where is Joseph Kony now? Research the current status of the country. World news often evolves quickly. Here are some links to begin the search.

- ❖ www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39643914
- ❖ www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews
- ❖ <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/uganda.html>

Challenge students to write and deliver a newscast with an update on the current events in Uganda.

CCSS.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

THE KING OF THE SNAKES

As a class, read the Ugandan folktale *The King of the Snakes*. Have students draw conclusions about how this folktale relates to Ricky's story. How does Hutton's choice to add this to the book enhance the story? What are the common themes? Create a side-by-side chart to compare the folktale and the reality of what Ricky experienced. Discuss how folktales are important to the culture in Uganda.

- ❖ <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/baskerville/king/king.html>

CCSS.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

This educator's guide was written by Erica Rand Silverman and Sharon Kennedy, former high school English teachers and co-founders of Room 228 Educational Consulting (www.rm228.com), along with Shannon Rheault, a teacher from Londonderry, New Hampshire.