

EXAMPLE

A child soldier is any person below 18 years of age who is used by an armed force or group in any way to support the armed forces. It does not only refer to a child who is taking a direct part in warfare. Many children are used as fighters. Others will be put to work supporting the troops in roles such as porters, messengers, or spies. Unfortunately, many others are exploited for sexual purposes. Most child soldiers are between the ages of 13 and 18, though many groups include children aged 12 and under. Some rebel groups in Sierra Leone are known to recruit children as young as five.

MAIN IDEA

Supporting details:

1. Child soldiers have various roles

- a. Fighters
- b. Support: porters, messengers, spies
- c. Exploited for sexual purposes

2. Ages

- a. Most 13-18yrs old
- b. Many 12 and under
- c. Some as young as 5

Directions:

- Read the paragraph below*
- Look up any words that you don't understand*
- Highlight/circle the main idea*
- Highlight (in a different colour)/underline the key words for supporting details*
- Fill in the attached graphic organizer with the main idea and supporting details (point form!)*

Female child soldiers do not only fight on the front lines, but are exploited by the army in other ways. They may be used to provide domestic labour, such as cooking, midwifery, or nursing. Girls are often also used as messengers, spies, or guards. Many end up having to serve as “wives.” From the age of 13, they may be given to boy soldiers or adult commanders. They have no choice: those who refuse are killed or raped. Of course, many of them soon become mothers who must take on the added responsibility of providing food for their children. It is a horrible existence and malnourishment, exhaustion and mistreatment take a high toll on these girls.

1a

Directions: below are the supporting details for a paragraph. It is missing a topic sentence with the main idea. Your job is to read through the supporting details and come up with a main idea that fits with them.

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1b

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Governments and armed groups use children for a variety of reasons. Children are easier to condition into fearless killing and unthinking obedience. Children are a cheap and plentiful resource for military commanders in need of a steady supply of troops. Children are less able to assess danger, so they are willing to take risks and do things that other adults or older teenagers will refuse. Children are also more impressionable than adults. Depending on their age and background, their value systems and ideas of right and wrong might not yet be developed.

2a

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Children become involved with armed groups in different ways. Some children volunteer to join rebel groups or armies. Most of these volunteers come from poor families, lack education, or suffer from starvation or separation from their families. They may also suffer from physical or sexual abuse, and decide to join because they feel they have no other choice. Some children are kidnapped from their homes or schools. Over the last ten years in Uganda, over 10,000 children have been kidnapped and used as child soldiers. Often, the children's parents are killed in front of them, and they are forced to march miles to another country. Those who can't carry their loads or keep pace with the others are killed. In some countries, like Afghanistan and Angola, warlords have demanded that villages hand over a certain number of youths. If the villages don't do as the warlord says, they are attacked.

3a

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Military commanders use proven strategies to make the children obey them and turn them into killers. New recruits are often forced to kill or commit acts of violence against others (including strangers, or even members of their own village or family). Forcing the children to harm or kill people they know makes them less likely to escape, because they know they will no longer be welcome back home. Drugs are also given to children to deaden their emotions and thoughts. Amphetamines, crack cocaine, marijuana, and tranquilizers help to disengage the child's actions from reality. Children who refuse to take the drugs are beaten or killed. Revenge is also used as a motivator. Commanders will tell children to see the enemy as the people who killed their friends and family, and who are responsible for all the bad things that have ever happened to them. These tactics are quite successful, but the violence will still affect these children deeply.

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Children who are rescued from combat face an enormous challenge trying to return to normal life. Child soldiers struggle to deal with the physical and mental effects of their experiences. They must go through drug withdrawal, adjust to “normal” living, and recover from PTSD. Many organizations have set up rehabilitation programs to help these former child soldiers. Rehabilitation programs include games and activities that build trust. They also use drawing, storytelling, music and drama as ways for children to communicate and process their experiences. The return to normal life is usually not easy or fast. It can take children as long as three years to be reintegrated into society.

5a

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