

Rosen, David M. (2005) *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

This book looks at the continuing occurrence of children being used as soldiers in wars across the globe. Although some may see this as a new phenomenon happening in third world countries, the book shows that children have been used as soldiers as far back as the revolutionary war and beyond. The book tracks the progression of using children as soldiers from the past into the modern day.

The book talks about the use of children in the Revolutionary War in America where graduates of the Royal Hibernian Military School in England were used to quell the American Revolutionists. It also talks about the use of children in the American Civil War where at least 100,000 of the 2.7 million troops were under 15 years old. Children were even used as soldiers in World War I and II. The use of children as soldiers was a widespread occurrence and not at all uncommon in the past. Why is it that we look with such disgust on the practice today? The book answers this question by looking at the almost universal beliefs, in our modern American society, that children are special and should be protected from the harshness of life. Additionally, the American culture has the notion that war is evil and should be stopped at all costs. The book shows that these two concepts together would definitely influence our view of children as soldiers, making us feel the inherent wrongness of it.

The book discusses the widespread belief that adults corrupt the children and force them to fight. We want to believe that an innocent child would never choose to act this way. However, field research and interviews with children, especially in Palestine and Sierra Leone, shows that many of these children choose to fight. Either they are left without other options, or they feel that fighting is better than choosing not to fight. Many of these child soldiers have had family members or friends killed by the people they are fighting against, wanting to revenge their deaths.

Rosen does not condone the use of child soldiers but does not oppose either. Instead, she asks us to question the reasons why it occurs. She wants us to look at the long history of the phenomenon, and the individual circumstances, to decide what to do or how to think along broader terms. This book analyzes the difference between adults and children, whether they should be treated the same or specially.