

Call for Papers

International Research in Children's Literature

Children at War: From Representation to Life Narrative

Editors:

Maciej Wróblewski (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

Kate Douglas (Flinders University, Australia)

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been characterized by war and military conflict, from the Great War, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, through to the War in Afghanistan, Somali Civil War, Yugoslav Wars, War in Rwanda, Iraq War, Syrian Civil War, Russia-Ukraine war—these events have resulted in an overwhelming loss of lives.

According to UNICEF, children are routinely affected more seriously than adults during wartime:

From widespread killing, maiming, abduction and sexual violence to recruitment into armed groups and strikes on schools and hospitals, as well as essential water facilities – children living in conflict zones around the world continue to come under attack at a shocking scale. Today, one in four children live in a country affected by conflict or disaster...¹

In the media, and in film and literature, the child has become a complex emblem for the futility of war and military conflict. The child is also the catalyst for intervention—for instance, as adults deploy cultural representations to draw attention to injustices affecting children.

There have been many fictional representations of children's experiences of war—particularly in film, children's book and in YA literatures. In such instances, adult authors come to speak, feel, and dream on behalf of young people. Here, we see a literary field created for young people by adult writers. The Western tradition of children's literature, directly linked to education and teaching systems and values, directs the patterns of children's literatures.

However, historically, children have been significant first-person witnesses during wartime. Non-fictional or life narrative genres such as diaries, letters, and more recently social media, have shown a plethora of child and youth-authored texts to show us something of young people's experiences of war and conflict across the globe. Prominent examples include: Anne Frank (and many other young diarists from World War IIs whose writing has been anthologized, for instance, see Zapruder, Wróblewski); child soldier memoirists of the 2000s; and most recently child activists Malala Yousafzai writing about conflict in Pakistan and Bana Al Abed whose frontline Twitter narrative offers eyewitness testimony on Syrian war (Douglas; Douglas and Poletti).

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/stories/children-under-attack-six-grave-violations-against-children-times-war>

Our understanding of, and increased attention to, child and youth-authored texts about war, reflects more general cultural shifts in the notion of childhood and the importance of children as social actors whose experiences and narratives must be heard and recorded in history (Douglas and Poletti; Gilmore and Marshall).

This special issue of *International Research in Children's Literature* invites papers that explore the diverse ways in which children and youth are represented, or represent their own experiences, of war and military conflict (broadly conceived). Possible topics for discussion include, but are not limited to,

- Discussions or case studies representing particular young authors or texts of war/military conflict.
- The life narrative forms and genres that young authors use in order to narrate their experiences of war.
- The role of social or digital media in creating new spaces for young authors to witness war and military conflict.
- How do children/youth negotiate or represent trauma in writing about war/military conflict?
- The role of controversy and hoax in the representation of war and military conflict.
- The representation of adults by young authors.
- Methods for reading life narrative texts of war/military conflict authored by children and youth.
- Representations of war/military conflict in children's literatures written by adults.
- Representations of war/military conflict in film and television texts about or for children.

Please send a 300 word abstract to Maciej Wróblewski (matej@umk.pl), Kate Douglas (kate.douglas@flinders.edu.au), and Roxanne Harde (rharde@ualberta.ca) by **1 April 2023**. Complete manuscripts (7000 words) will be due **1 August 2023**.

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