



2018

Soldier Boy

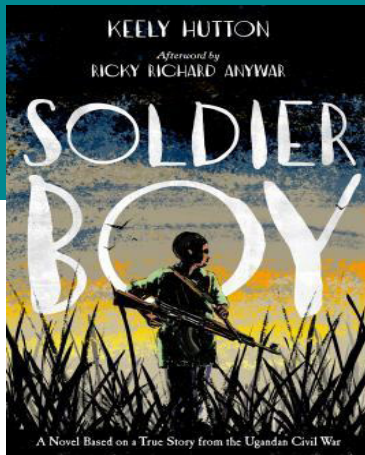
Jamie Greenwood

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Book Review

Soldier Boy

Author

Keely Hutton

Illustrator

Reviewer

Jamie Greenwood

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

325

Year

2017

Publisher

Macmillan Publishing

ISBN

9780374305635

Soldier Boy tells the true story of a boy named Ricky alongside the fictional story of a boy named Samuel. Ricky was abducted by the LRA during the Ugandan Civil War, and Samuel was recovered by the Friends of Orphans organization after fighting in the LRA as an abductee for two years. Ricky describes the appearance of the LRA in his small Ugandan village and how the rebels kidnapped him and his brother Patrick, in addition to many other children from the village. In the LRA, the children are forced to march for days without food and water and to fight in battle. Eventually, Ricky's brother manages to escape. Ricky follows about two months later, only to discover that his brother has taken his own life in their home village. Ricky is then recaptured by the LRA and again escapes, this time to pursue an education. In Samuel's story, a man takes Samuel under his care and helps him to adjust to his new life outside the LRA. It is later revealed that this man is Ricky, now an adult, seeking to help children in situations like his own.

Soldier Boy is a powerful and thought-provoking book and would be ideal for any social studies unit. Though the content is dark and sometimes difficult to read, an inspiring message of hope is invoked at the end of the story for readers who endure the pain of the stories. Ricky helps Samuel through a difficult healing process and identifies fear as the enemy of them both. He emphasizes the need to forgive those who have done wrong in order to be free of this fear. Only this way can they both obtain true freedom from the horrors of the LRA. Ricky helps Samuel to find hope for a better future and encourages him to create a new home for himself. Although most readers will not have experienced anything like Ricky and Samuel, the messages Ricky explains to Samuel are universally applicable and inspire incredible hope and forgiveness. The book provides the opportunity for deep discussion on these topics.

*Contains severe violence and severe sexual content.