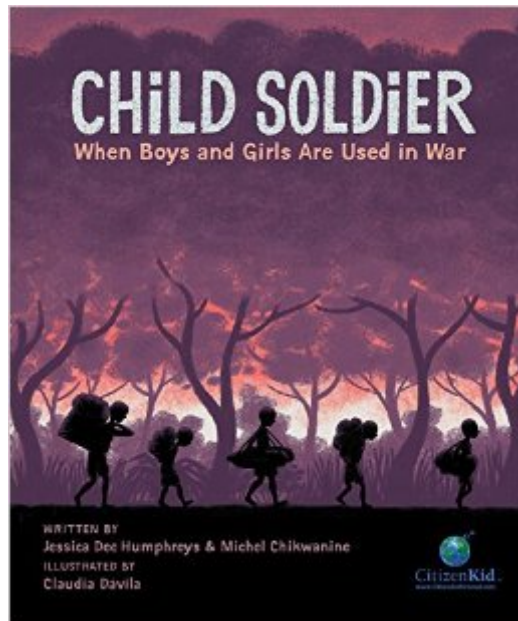


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# Child Soldier: When Boys And Girls Are Used In War (CitizenKid)



## Synopsis

Michel Chikwanine was five years old when he was abducted from his school-yard soccer game in the Democratic Republic of Congo and forced to become a soldier for a brutal rebel militia. Against the odds, Michel managed to escape and find his way back to his family, but he was never the same again. After immigrating to Canada, Michel was encouraged by a teacher to share what happened to him in order to raise awareness about child soldiers around the world, and this book is part of that effort. Told in the first person and presented in a graphic novel format, the gripping story of Michel's experience is moving and unsettling. But the humanity he exhibits in the telling, along with Claudia D'Ávila's illustrations, which evoke rather than depict the violent elements of the story, makes the book accessible for this age group and, ultimately, reassuring and hopeful. The back matter contains further information, as well as suggestions for ways children can help. This is a perfect resource for engaging youngsters in social studies lessons on global awareness and social justice issues, and would easily spark classroom discussions about conflict, children's rights and even bullying. Michel's actions took enormous courage, but he makes clear that he was and still is an ordinary person, no different from his readers. He believes everyone can do something to make the world a better place, and so he shares what his father told him: "If you ever think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with a mosquito."

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 680 (What's this?)

Series: CitizenKid

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Kids Can Press (September 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1771381264

ISBN-13: 978-1771381260

Product Dimensions: 7.8 x 0.4 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (21 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #108,308 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Africa](#) #13 in [Books > Children's Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > History](#) #49 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Social Activists](#)

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

## Customer Reviews

This book is part of the CitizenKid Series. This series is a collection of books to inform children about the world and inspire them to be better global citizens. This is the true story of Michel Chikwanine who lived in Democratic Republic of Congo in the 90s. When he was five years old, he was kidnapped and forced to become a child soldier. It is a heartbreaking tale that fortunately had a happy ending. While Michel did have to do some horrible things as a child soldier, including shooting his best friend, he was fortunate enough to escape before anything else terrible happened. He was reunited with his family unlike a lot of child soldiers. His father, mother, himself and a cousin were able to get to Uganda and live in a refugee camp. His father was a political activist who was imprisoned and tortured at one point and later poisoned by his enemies before he was able to emigrate to North America. Michael and his mother were able to leave Congo and emigrate to Canada. Michael worked three jobs after school until he earned enough money to bring one of his sisters to Canada, but unfortunately, one sister disappeared. A teacher of Michael's saw that he was very depressed and suggested that talking to other students about his ordeal might help him. This started him on a path to educate young people about Child Soldiers. The end of the book gives more information about the plight of child soldiers as well as what children in Canada can do to help. A great but sad story. I received a copy of this book from Netgalley to read in exchange for an honest review.

Summary: Michel Chikwanine had a pretty idyllic childhood with his parents and three sisters in the Democratic Republic of Congo until he was kidnapped one day at the age of five. He and his friends were taken in broad daylight while playing soccer and forced to become soldiers for a rebel army. For two weeks, they were given drugs and taught to shoot, including one nightmarish day when Michel was blindfolded and forced to shoot and kill his best friend, Kevin. Michel managed to escape and make his way back to his family, but it was impossible for him to resume his old life. Eventually, the political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo worsened; Michel's father was imprisoned and killed; and Michel, his mother, and two of his three sisters made their way to Canada. After a difficult transition, Michel has been able to tell his story and now travels the world inspiring others to make a difference. Grades 6-9. Pros: An incredibly powerful story told in graphic novel form. The page near the end in which Michel sits on the bus listening to his classmates complain about cold pizza, boring classes, and crummy cell phones should give anyone with

• pause. The last few pages, with more information about Michel, child soldiers, and what kids can do to help will inspire readers to take action. Cons: Read this book before giving it to a child. It's part of Kids Can Press's Citizen Kid series of inspiring picture book stories of Third World children, but this one is much darker and more intense than any of the others. There are a couple of pretty disturbing scenes that may not be appropriate for all young readers.

'Child Soldier: When Boys and Girls Are Used in War' is the true story of Michel Chikwanine. The book is also written by Jessica Dee Humphreys and illustrated beautifully by Claudia Davila. Michel grew up in the Democratic Republic of Congo. When he was only 5 years old, he was captured by rebels and forced to become a child soldier. He is forced to do some very bad things before he escapes. The rest of the book talks about his family and their attempts to find a new home because the one they lived in was too dangerous. Since the book is part of the Citizen Kid series, the book concludes with ways to find more information and ways that kids can become active against this sort of issue. I appreciated the way this rather brutal story was told in a way that kids could understand without being graphic. I also appreciate that Michel tells children that the events they are about to read won't suddenly happen to them. The book doesn't attempt to use scare tactics or graphic violence to get its point across. It's a brutal story, and a horrific and tragic one. That Michel came through this experience and wants to change things is incredible. A wonderfully told and illustrated story. Kudos to everyone. I received a review copy of this ebook from Kids Can Press and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this ebook.

Michel's story packs quite a punch. With the assistance of another writer and a talented illustrator, Michel shares his heart-wrenching story with young readers. He tells of being kidnapped at the age of five and being forced to help a rebel militia fight against both the national government and local villagers. He speaks of being forced to shoot a friend and being brainwashed into thinking that his family would never take him back. Thankfully, he never questions his families love for him and he finds the courage to flee when the opportunity comes. But he still has to live with the horrific memories and confusing emotions that he carries home with him and as his father's humanitarian work further endangers the family, he once again finds himself on the run. Eventually, Michel made it to the United States but not with his family intact. What is so admirable is that in learning to cope with the pain he's faced in his life, Michel has learned to speak out and in doing so help others. The story is told beautifully in the illustrations and text giving the reader a glimpse into a topic that should

not be ignored. However, while not overly graphic, there is violence and some horrible acts briefly mentioned and because of this the book may not be appropriate for all young readers. I highly recommend this book for more mature middle grade readers on up. A book I will never forget.

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