



Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims (Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies)

David M Rosen

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When we hear the term “child soldiers,” most Americans imagine innocent victims roped into bloody conflicts in distant war-torn lands like Sudan and Sierra Leone. Yet our own history is filled with examples of children involved in warfare—from adolescent prisoner of war Andrew Jackson to Civil War drummer boys—who were once viewed as symbols of national pride rather than signs of human degradation.

In this daring new study, anthropologist David M. Rosen investigates why our cultural perception of the child soldier has changed so radically over the past two centuries. *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination* reveals how Western conceptions of childhood as a uniquely vulnerable and innocent state are a relatively recent invention. Furthermore, Rosen offers an illuminating history of how human rights organizations drew upon these sentiments to create the very term “child soldier,” which they presented as the embodiment of war’s human cost.

Filled with shocking historical accounts and facts—and revealing the reasons why one cannot spell “infantry” without “infant”—*Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination* seeks to shake us out of our pervasive historical amnesia. It challenges us to stop looking at child soldiers through a biased set of idealized assumptions about childhood, so that we can better address the realities of adolescents and pre-adolescents in combat. Presenting informative facts while examining fictional representations of the child soldier in popular culture, this book is both eye-opening and thought-provoking.

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