

JANJAWEEED



‘Janjaweed’ probably means ‘armed horsemen’ or ‘devils on horseback’ from the Arabic *‘jinn’*, meaning demon, and *‘jawad’*, meaning horse.

These mounted gunmen from Arabic-speaking tribes first emerged in 1988 and have since become infamous for looting, torture, massacre, burning villages to the ground and the destruction of everything in sight. The scale of the suffering caused is almost unimaginable and countless numbers of people have become refugees, terrorised and driven from their homelands.

TEAM SPIRIT

IDEAS TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

JANJAWEEED

In the film *Team Spirit*, when Sadiq is explaining why he feels sad, we see a flashback to his village in Darfur. The landscape is dry and dusty, and very different to the green grass on the football pitch in Dublin. A horseman appears – and he is slightly hunched, in a pose that suggests he is watching the village, and waiting.

DISCUSSION

Appearances can be deceptive:

The teacher might pause the video on the frame where the horseman appears and ask the children to study the frame carefully, then talk about what they see in the village, eg some small huts, the pylons that bring electricity to the village, the colour of the soil scorched by the heat of the sun, the hills.

The man on horseback may belong to the Janjaweed, which may be under the control of the Sudanese government.

Ask them what they think about the horseman –

- Why is he sitting on a motionless horse, looking across at the village?
- Is he there to protect the village or is he sitting there hoping to see teenage boys whom he could kidnap or take by force to serve in an army?
- Why is it so difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether his intentions are benign or otherwise? Is it because we do not see his face, and cannot read his facial expression?

The teacher might like to develop exploration of the importance of emotional expression by working with the resource sheets and adapting the lesson plans from Theme 1, Empathy, The Right Start (available from Amnesty Ireland, First Floor, Ballast House, 18-21 Westmoreland St., Dublin 2.

- If the children look carefully, they will see a stack of firewood piled beside the house outside which Sadiq's family is standing. Collecting firewood is extremely dangerous because so many women have been attacked while they search for firewood.

To coincide with International Human Rights Day on 10 December, Amnesty International groups across the world joined with activists in a Global Day for Darfur to raise the alarm over violence against women in western Sudan. The New York-based group, Human Rights Watch, says it has documented numerous incidents of such violence by Sudanese government soldiers, Janjaweed militias and others, based on interviews they conducted with victims. A joint UN and African Union peace-keeping mission has set up patrols to protect the women and girls who need protection while they collect increasingly scarce firewood miles away from the camps and villages.

See Avril Benoit's photograph in World News section, *The Irish Times*, 12 April 2008, and for further information copy the links below into your browser.

www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article2489206.ece

www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article2207

www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2007-05/28/content_881358.htm

For information on child soldiers in Sudan, see 'The secret child soldiers of Sudan's civil war', an article by Pieter Tesch in *The Irish Times* supplement, 19 July 2008: www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/newsfeatures/2008/0719/1216389362050.htm

Books to Read on This Topic

Chalkline by Jane Mitchell, tells the story of nine-year-old Rafiq, kidnapped from his school in rural Kashmir by soldiers of the Kashmir Freedom Fighters. Rafiq is the first boy to be taken for indoctrination into a life of fanatical belief, brutality and terrorism, and his transformation to boy soldier is at the core of the tale. His family do not forget him; when he can no longer recognise himself, they remember the boy he was, and reach out as he spirals towards a final act of atrocity. Walker Books, ISBN: 978-1-4063-1517-2

Little Soldier is Bernard Ashley's gripping book for young adults about Kaninda who survives a brutal attack on his village in East Africa and joins the rebel army where he's trained to carry weapons and to use them. When he is 'rescued', all he wants is to get back to the war in his own country and to take revenge on his enemies. But tribal conflicts are everywhere... Orchard Books, ISBN 1-86039-879-0