

Off to War: Voices of Soldiers' Children

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Author Deborah Ellis has built a reputation on writing stories that bring attention to the plight of the world's marginalized children. She produces award-winning books while maintaining a strong commitment to humanitarianism: her royalties are donated to organizations working for women and children in developing or war-torn countries, places she has visited, sometimes at great risk to herself, to gain first-hand knowledge of the desperate situations and people she writes about.

In *Off to War: Voices of Soldiers' Children*, Ellis steps back and lets the children of American and Canadian soldiers talk about the realities of life when parents go to a job that entails long separations and the real possibility of never coming home. This is a timely book, and one that kids and adults will learn from. Each chapter begins with a brief discussion of some of the issues that face many military families: frequent moves, lack of communication, possible mental health problems, as well as the benefits of being an "army brat." These introductions offer valuable insight and serve as a starting point for the voices that follow.

Once the preface is done, Ellis steps back so that only the children are heard, and they are truly the heart and soul of this book. Articulate, funny, fiercely loyal and sometimes fearful, many offer a strong message of acceptance of their parents' and their country's choices – and the need to get on with the important job of being a kid. Some share a sense of confusion and even resistance, and occasional anger as well. Almost all express the feeling that people outside the military don't understand what it's like: no doubt the impetus for this revealing book.

Off to War is thought-provoking and informative with a glossary and list of resources to provide an opportunity for further discussion. Ellis offers readers of all ages, no matter what political views they may hold, a chance to better appreciate the challenges faced by the youngest members of the military family.