



Alice Walker

Why War Is Never a Good Idea
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On *Why War Is Never a Good Idea* By Alice Walker

When I wrote *Why War Is Never a Good Idea*, I was thinking about children who play "war" long before they have any understanding of its meaning. Their parents buy toys for them that are miniature rifles, tanks, and bombs. Small babies are dressed in military print. They lie in their cribs grinning up at the adults of the world, without a clue that they are being set up to fight other young people, in not so many years, who would more sensibly be their playmates. I wanted to write a book for small children that would begin to counter the entrenched belief that it is all right for them to think positively about war. It isn't all right, and the adults of the world must say so.

We've all heard of "the good war," presumably a war that is righteous and just. However, seen from the perspective of my children's book, there is no such thing as a "good" war, because war of any kind is immoral in its behavior. War lands heavily on the good and the not good with equal impact. It kills humans and other animals and destroys crops. It ignites and decimates forests and it pollutes rivers. It obliterates beauty, whether in landscape, species, or field. It leaves poison in its wake. Grief. Suffering. When war enters the scene, no clean water anywhere is safe. No fresh air can survive. War attacks not just people, "the other," or "enemy," it attacks Life itself: everything that humans and other species hold sacred and dear. A war on a people anywhere is a war on the Life of the planet everywhere. It doesn't matter what the politics are, because though politics might divide us, the air and the water do not. We are all equally connected to the life-support system of planet Earth, and war is notorious for destroying this fragile system.

Our only hope of maintaining a livable planet lies in teaching our children to honor nonviolence, especially when it comes to caring for Nature, which keeps us going with such grace and faithfulness. *Why War Is Never a Good Idea* doesn't take sides, because we are ultimately on the same side: the side of keeping our home, Earth, safe from attack. We cannot live healthy lives without a healthy Earth ever supporting and inspiring us, in all her unspoiled, radiant generosity.