

Ideas to inspire you: child labour

Sandy can't see his hands in the darkness of his shack made from palm bark and zinc on a hillside in the Dominican Republic. But he feels them because of the pain from wounds on his left thumb caused by the knife he uses to trim garlic plants. It is dawn and he has to hurry if he is to get a place in the landowner's truck. He jumps from the worn mattress that he shares with three other brothers. He doesn't have breakfast because there isn't any. Nor does he wear working boots because he has none.

Sandy manages to climb into the back of the truck before the others, who are adults and other children like him, without a childhood. In the cold and fog, the icy wind cuts his unprotected face. Sandy doesn't look beyond his hands and forgets his discomfort. His hands are his most valuable working assets. They pick potatoes, extract onions, dig up lettuce, behead beets and cut and gather garlic bulbs. He knows that he can bring home between 80 and 120 pesos, or \$5 to \$7, to contribute to the low family income and to buy a pair of shoes. He works in the fields every day from dawn to the middle of the afternoon.

Sandy does not go to school. For a short time a few years ago, when the family lived in the mountains, he took a long and steep road to go to classes. "But, we were so far away that he never learned anything," says his mother, Viola Delgado. "How could he learn if with the sweating of the trek he forgot what he was taught in school?" A mother of eight children, the 40-year-old Mrs. Delgado is illiterate, like her husband.

In her hut, only a thin sheet separates the cramped "living room" from the beds. A wooden table and wobbly chairs make up the furnishings. Like other huts in El Chorro, there is no electricity or running water. There is no nearby faucet or toilet. El Chorro is on a hill above the Constanza valley, which is the most fertile in the country. The people living in these huts, about five minutes from town, are farm workers who have come here because there is plenty of agricultural work. But they remain poor because pay is so low.

As soon as they reach a certain height and age, the children go with their parents to the plantations. They are exposed to the excessive chemicals, or herbicides and pesticides, that are applied to the fields. They are often barefoot and underfed -- they drink bottled refreshment to keep them going during the workday. The children are often sick.

Sandy says he would like to study and continue to help his family. His mother also would like him to go to school. "It's more advantageous for me if they go to school, even if they don't earn anything, for they don't make much with a day's work anyway."

Questions to think about:

How would you tell Sandy's tale to a reader who has a comfortable existence? How would you make us like Sandy and feel sympathy for him? What trigger would you add to make Sandy need to complete his story arc? How can we convert Sandy into a hero in his own story?

Source:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_decl_fs_44_en.pdf

Ideas to inspire you: young carers (from The Carers Support Centre)

Ryan's story

Ryan is 11 years old. He cares for his mum who has long-term mental health conditions and his two brothers who both have autistic spectrum disorder. When we began working with Ryan he was feeling low and frustrated. He was missing out on activities and opportunities and feeling isolated. Ryan's mum told us that he would often 'bear the brunt' of her emotions due to the stresses of their family life.

Ryan came along to our Heroes Group. This is for 8-12 year olds to help raise self-esteem, learn coping strategies and build relationships through creative and fun activities.

However, Ryan was anxious and found it difficult to join in with the other children. With some extra support, he decided to 'try again'. His determination and courage meant that his summer has been one to remember.

Ryan has benefited from one-to-one support with our young carers family support worker and he has joined in with our activities. He has been to the Peoples Kitchen and learned how to cook a healthy meal, and enjoyed friendship and time away from his caring responsibilities on a residential trip to Magdalen Farm. Ryan told us he "loved the low ropes and when all the young carers had a water fight in the stream." His whole family came to our Family Fun Day, a rare event where they could all be supported to join in.

But, perhaps the most important change for Ryan is realising that he's not alone and that there are other children like him. He told us "Even when I was struggling you didn't give up on me."

Sam-Lea's story

Hi I'm Sam-Lea. I'm 13 years old and I'm a young carer. I live with and care for my dad who is a disabled ex-service man. I help him with the chores around the house including washing up, vacuuming, loading and unloading the washing machine and more. I help him get dressed. I also remind him of his medication.

We have a cat called Milly and an Old English Bull Mastiff cross with an Old English Bulldog called Winston. I feed them and clean Milly's litter tray.

Sometimes it is hard as it is just the two of us and I sometimes need to help my dad out of bed; but all in all we work it together and we are very very happy!

I've been at Young Carers since last summer and it has given me a huge break. I really enjoyed getting my face painted as a zombie and decorating cakes!

Questions to think about:

How would you tell a young carer's tale to a reader who has a comfortable existence? How would you make like them and feel sympathy for them? What trigger would you add to make your hero or heroine need to complete their story arc? How can we convert them into the hero of their story?

Source: from: <https://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/young-carers/about-young-carers/young-carer-stories/>