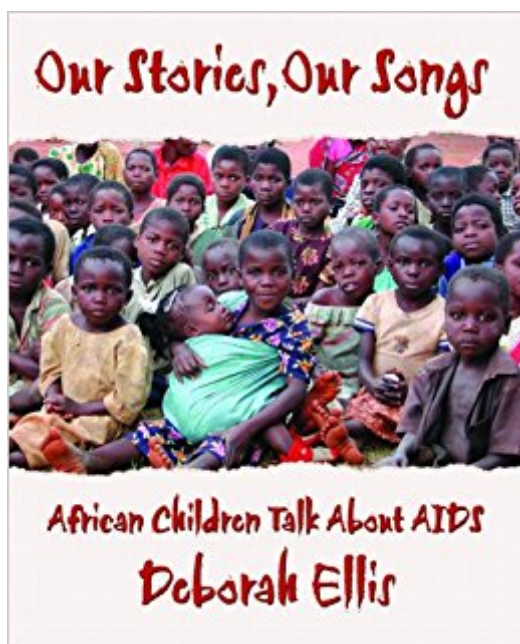


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# Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk About AIDS



## Synopsis

Stories of survival. Songs of hope. Children you'll never forget. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are more than 11.5 million orphans. The AIDS pandemic has claimed their parents, their aunts, and their uncles. What is life like for these children? Who do they care for, and who cares for them? Come and meet them. They might surprise you. Royalties from this book will be donated to UNICEF Awards and Nominations: Winner, Book Link Best Book for the Classroom, 2005 Winner, School Library Journal Best Book of 2005 Finalist, 2006 Information Book Award Runner-up, National Chapter of Canada IODE Violet Downey Book Award for 2005 2006 Children's Literature Roundtables of Canada Information Book Award short list 2006 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction finalist Red Maple Award for Non-fiction shortlist, 2007 Garden State Teen Book Awards nominee 2008

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 6 Up  
In the summer of 2003, Ellis traveled to Malawi and Zambia and met with children and teens whose lives have been touched by AIDS. In short, autobiographical vignettes, the young people, many of whom are orphans or living on the street, discuss their families, their favorite pastimes, their fears, and their dreams. Poignant and often bleak, the stories paint a portrait of life in Africa and the epidemic that goes far beyond impersonal news headlines. Photographs, printed in sepia tones, give a face to each story. Facts about AIDS are interspersed throughout the text and quotes from writers and public figures set the tone for each chapter. Ellis

presents the stories in a matter-of-fact and compassionate manner that maintains the children's dignity. Despite the tragedies, hardships, and grief expressed, many of the young people face their day-to-day lives with courage and manage to maintain hope for the future. Several describe efforts to help others and to bring about change in their society. An impressive offering whose chilling accounts remain with readers long after the book is finished. --Melissa Christy Buron, Epps Island Elementary, Houston, TX Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

*\*Starred Review\** Gr. 6-9. The statistics about children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa are overwhelming: 11.5 million cases and rising. Ellis brings the numbers close, relating the facts of poverty, child labor, sexual exploitation, the signs and symptoms of the disease. But more than that, she tells the personal stories of young people whom she interviewed and photographed in Malawi and Zambia. She spoke to them in their homes, at clinics, schools, hospitals, counseling centers, and on the streets, in English and through interpreters. Many voices sound the same (perhaps because of translation), but the short, simple sentences and the small photographs capture a wide variety of individual experience. The authentic details speak of loss, fear, and grief; incredible kindness; and courage as well as hope for the future ("I would wear clean clothes every day and be paid every week"). The readable design includes informative boxed insets ("How not to catch AIDS," "Poverty,") and quotes, side-by-side with each child's immediate experience. Readers older than the target audience will want this, too, for both the basic information and the heartrending stories. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have traveled several times to a town in southern Malawi which is mentioned in *Our Stories, Our Songs*. Throughout this entire book, I was able to picture children I actually know. The reality of life for children in Malawi and Zambia comes crashing through the pages. Can be read straight through or in pieces. But in either case, your heart will be involved! Thank you, Deborah Ellis.

I bought this book to share with my 6th grade students who come from middle income North American families. This book has a great deal of information about life for children in Africa, especially those who have lost family members to AIDS. Ellis does a great job of selecting kids from a wide range of experiences, and she includes statistics about AIDS in Africa and in the world. Because this book is filled with stories about real kids, told by those kids, it is not preachy or

burdensome to read. Most of the kids in the book share their stories in a few paragraphs. My students find it hard to comprehend how difficult life is for many people around the world. This book is a step in the direction of global awareness for them.

This book is so thoughtful. I feel so touched reading them. It makes us feel lucky. These children tell a heartbreaking story. There were some tears... Over all thumbs up!!

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to Cape Town in a Camper Van (Travel Africa: Our African Road Trip from Tunis to Cape Town)

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