

## **Children in the Boer War: Prisoners, Patriots, and a Protestor**

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Children figure prominently in two ways in histories of the Boer War. Boer children are prisoners, subject to the brutalities of internment camps. British children are patriots, epitomized in the Mafeking Cadet Corps, whose work in support of England's troops is immortalized in Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*. While these two narratives — of children as vulnerable to wartime trauma or as seemingly invincible, delivering messages by bicycle amid falling shells — are derived from the lives of real children, they nevertheless reduce young people's experiences of war to those recognizable and palatable to adults, denying young people reasoned and thoughtful responses to conflict.

Attention to child-authored texts challenges these totalizing narratives. In this paper, I take as a case study Allen Welsh Dulles' *The Boer War: A History*. Dulles, who would become the first civilian head of the CIA, wrote this privately printed account of British violence at eight years old to raise funds for the Boer Relief Committee; it is printed with an unsigned preface authored by an adult who characterizes Dulles as "an ardent admirer and partisan of the Boers, and this in spite of the fact that . . . his family favor the British cause." Situated amid other child-authored accounts of war, some similarly written as relief efforts, this document provides an opportunity to consider how we might recuperate children's activism in the face of histories of conflict that tend to cast them in roles as victim or citizen-in-training.