



## ***War Dance***

### **Film Study Guide**

**Director: Sean Fine, Andrea Nix Fine**

**2007 | Documentary | 105 Minutes | USA | Acholi, English | PG-13**

<https://www.wardancethemovie.com/>

**Synopsis:** Since 1985, the children of the Acholi tribe in northern Uganda have been victimized both by civil war and by a rebel force, the Lord's Resistance Army. Millions have been displaced into camps where life is harsh. But when one camp's primary school won the right to compete in Uganda's national music and dance festival, its children dared to dream again. Nominated for an Academy Award, WAR DANCE follows three of these children - Dominic, Rose and Nancy – as they faced their past and imagined their future.

### **Post-Screening Discussion Questions**

1. What human rights issues are illustrated in the film? What international laws are in place to stop or prevent those abuses?
2. What is the role of music in this film? What does the film have to say about the power of music, as it seems to endure even when the community is in conflict?

3. What changes did you notice in the children's demeanor and outlook on life when they are practicing and performing as opposed to telling their personal stories?

4. Throughout the film, the directors contrast the individual interviews with footage of rehearsal shows. What is the purpose of these contrasts? Is it effective? Why or why not?

5. Why do you think it is important that Patongo Primary School is among one the first schools from the northern part of Uganda to make it to the finals of the National Music and Dance Competition?

6. In *A Farewell to Arms* Ernest Hemingway wrote, "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places." What does this quote mean within the context of *War Dance* and the children's personal stories?

7. Think about the scene in which Dominic is talking to a captured rebel officer, hoping to learn if his brother is still alive. As they talk, the soldier explains almost offhandedly that the brother is most likely dead (Clip 8).

- a. How does this scene depict the current conflict?
- b. What does the casualness of this conversation say about how violence has penetrated these children's daily lives?
- c. What do you make of Dominic's reaction to this conversation?

8. "We wanted to win the dance competition. We wanted to make our ancestors proud." What is the meaning and significance of ancestry and tradition in the lives of the Acholi children? In your life? How is tradition linked to a physical place, and why is this notion important?

9. How did all of the components of the competition help the children cope with their difficult and haunting personal pasts? How does music help you express yourself and your emotions?