

# *A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIRS OF A BOY SOLDIER*

## Summer Reading Project 2019

The English I Pre-AP summer reading book is *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. After you read the memoir, you need to choose ONE Category A activity, ONE Category B activity, and TWO Category C activities to complete for your summer reading project. Follow the directions specified below. Make sure to write using complete sentences. These activities are due the first day of school. Welcome to AHS, Eaglets!

### Category A - Illustration (Choose 1)

1. Illustrate one of the folk tales (a legend or story passed down through families and communities) found within the memoir. Add two quotes (with page numbers!) that correspond to specific details found within your illustration. Write a paragraph (5-8 sentences) explaining the purpose and importance of the selected folk tale in conjunction with Ishmael's story.
2. Creatively illustrate your favorite scene of *A Long Way Gone*. Write a paragraph (5-8 sentences), including at least two quotes from this scene, that explains why this moment is so significant.
3. Design a book jacket with the characters, setting, and theme of *A Long Way Gone*. You cannot just copy the cover art that already exists. On the inside of the cover, write a paragraph (5-8 sentences) that explains your artistic choices.
4. Create a *symbolic* "before" and "after" image of Ishmael that showcases his transformation throughout the memoir. Be sure to include at least three symbolic components for *each* side. Write a paragraph (5-8 sentences) explaining your artistic choices, as well as Ishmael's overall transformation.
5. Create a comic strip with at least 6 major events from *A Long Way Gone*. This needs to be colored and dialogue should be included. Write a paragraph (5-8 sentences) explaining the events you chose and why you chose them.

### Category B - Written Expression (Choose 1)

1. Create a timeline using events from the memoir. You must include at least 10 events on your list with page numbers for each event, as well as a short summary. Why are these moments in the book significant? Be sure to explain why you selected these scenes to highlight out of all the possible options.
2. Write 10 interview questions for an individual in the book, and write responses for those questions from that individual's point of view. Be sure to capture his/her personality as you respond to the questions. Think about how he/she would answer the response, not what you would say or do.

**\*\*Category B options continue on the back side of handout.\*\***

### Category B Continued – Written Expression

3. Create a playlist for the memoir. Choose 10 songs that represent different scenes, individuals, or themes from the book. Be sure to include in your list the song title (it goes in quotes!), the artist, and an explanation of how that song connects to the book's main ideas.
4. If you were presenting to the United Nations, what social issue would you present? Create a speech (at least 1 page) about your issue and be sure to include the following: what it is (specific details), possible solutions to the issue, why it is important to you, and what the UN can do to help. Look back at Ishmael's speech in chapter 20 for assistance.
5. Write your own song/rap (minimum 30 lines total; you can decide your own breakdown between chorus and verse) about enduring the hardships of being a child soldier. Write the song/rap in first person. Include at least three specific references to Ishmael's experiences in *A Long Way Gone* and your own commentary on the issue.

### Category C – Analytical (Choose 2)

1. Write a paragraph (minimum 8 sentences) analyzing how PTSD affects Ishmael throughout the course of the memoir. Discuss 2-3 instances of Ishmael struggling with PTSD symptoms. Include at least two embedded quotes from the book to support your answer.
2. What would you say is the main theme in *A Long Way Gone*? Write a paragraph (minimum 8 sentences) analyzing where that theme shows up throughout the book. (Note: Theme is NOT one word. Make sure to formulate your theme as a statement about the subject matter.) Include at least two embedded quotes from the memoir to support your answer.
3. Choose **one** of the following symbols: Beah's cassettes, African folk tales, or the moon. Write a paragraph (minimum 8 sentences) that analyzes the significance of this object/element. What does this object/element symbolize? What thematic idea connects to this symbol? Include at least two embedded quotes from the book to support your answer.
4. Write a paragraph (minimum 8 sentences) assessing Ishmael's level of *resilience* throughout his journey and provide at least 3 examples from the text (with embedded quotes). How did his experiences shape his character? Is he a "better" person for having gone through what he did?
5. Think about how some of the citizens treated Ishmael and the other boys. How do you think Americans today would respond to a similar crisis here? Would citizens just look out for themselves, or do we have an obligation to help our fellow man? Make at least two parallels (including two embedded quotes) to the memoir to support your claim in your paragraph (minimum 8 sentences).



# A LONG WAY GONE BACKGROUND NOTES

Due to the heavy historical context in *A Long Way Gone*, these notes have been provided to aid in your understanding of the book. The chronology included at the end of the book is also helpful for understanding the timeline of the war.

## Background to the Civil War in Sierra Leone and the role of child soldiers:

From 1991 to 2002, Sierra Leone was embroiled in a devastating civil war, fought primarily between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Sierra Leone Army (SLA). This civil war garnered international attention for its blatant use of child soldiers and for the skyrocketing of child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Child soldiers are children (defined under international law as individuals under the age of 18) who are used for any military purpose. In the Sierra Leonean civil war, children made up between 40 and 50 percent of the RUF's military force and approximately 20 percent of the government's military force. In total, approximately 10,000 children were exploited and forced to be child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Discussed below are the leading facts about child soldiers in Sierra Leone.

## 10 Facts about Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone:

1. **The term child soldier does not only include those who carry a gun and fight.** Children also served as messengers and porters, and young girls were conscripted into sexual slavery or forcibly married to generals.
2. **Children are chosen to be soldiers because they are easily manipulated.** They are more loyal and obedient than adults and they are far less likely to revolt. They also do not require wages, making them a cheap alternative to traditional soldiers.
3. **Children are more likely to become child soldiers if they are poor,** living in a combat zone, displaced from their homes, separated from their families or have limited access to education.
4. **The process of reintegrating child soldiers is called Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR).** Camps were created to reintegrate child soldiers in Sierra Leone by providing them with education, food, shelter, and psychiatric services.
5. **DDR is not necessarily 100 percent effective.** Children may relapse into violence in adolescence and adulthood. Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone, said: "One of my greatest fears in Sierra Leone now is, if you have a large number of disgruntled and idle young people who have nothing to do with themselves, you have the possibility of sparking anything."
6. **DDR camps were also not completely safe.** Rebel soldiers would hang around the camps and convince previously demobilized child soldiers to rejoin the army by promising to reunite them with their families or simply threatening to kill everyone else in the camp if they did not comply.
7. **Children were often forced to use drugs (typically marijuana or crack cocaine) to enable them to commit violence.** As a result, they had a reputation among civilians for extreme cruelty. Many boys belonged to the infamous Small Boys Unit.
8. **This reputation for violence was one of the key barriers to reintegration.** Child soldiers had lost their childhoods and been traumatized, but many could not return home because they were seen as murderers.
9. **In 2013, Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire founded a nonprofit called the Child Soldier Initiative (CSI).** It designed a mandatory training manual and seminar for police and local armed forces to inform them of children's rights and how to handle child soldiers in the field. This training has also been used in Sudan, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire, though it is not mandatory there.
10. **The second phase of CSI's project is to have former child soldiers run the program and train other children on their rights and the alternatives to joining the conflict.**

# A LONG WAY GONE GLOSSARY

- **ablution** (p. 182) – cleansing with liquid, religious ritual
- **brown brown** (p. 121) – cocaine and gun powder
- **carseloi** (p. 71) – spider
- **cassava** (p. 17) – tropical plant, starch from roots
- **CAW** (p. 188) – Children Associated with the War
- **Conakry** (p. 209) – capitol of Guinea
- **crapes** (p. 7) – sneakers
- **G3** (p. 207) – gun, weapon
- **gari** (p. 91) – a grated and dried food made from cassava
- **groundnut** (p. 188) – type of nut you boil and eat
- **imam** (p. 44) – priest
- **jerry cans** (p. 59) – water container
- **kalo kalo** (p. 150) – war tactics
- **kamor** (p. 8) – teacher
- **kule** (p. 177) – open-air showers
- **lappai** (p. 76) – a cotton cloth women wear around their waist
- **leweh** (p. 76) – rice paste
- **lorry** (p. 10) – motor truck
- **Mende** (p. 55) – the Mende people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone; account for slightly more than 30% of the total population
- **Nessie** (p. 51) – water used to wash slate with Arabic prayer on it
- **Ngor** (p. 91) – respectful term placed before first name of adults
- **NGOs** (p. 196) – Non-Governmental Organizations
- **palampo** (p. 23) – single
- **pestles** (p. 76) – tool used for pounding or grinding substances
- **poda podas** (p. 185) – peddlers; a person who goes from place to place selling small items
- **raggamorphy** (p. 183) – reggae music
- **repatriate** (p. 171) – the process of reuniting ex-child soldiers with their communities
- **RPGs** (p. 24) – Rocket-propelled grenades
- **RUF** (p. 21) – Revolutionary United Front
- **sackie thomboi** (p. 181) – special dinner to celebrate (cassava leaves with chicken)
- **Sherbro** (p. 63) – one of the many tribes in Sierra Leone
- **sleepers** (p. 27) – flip flops
- **SLPP** (p. 188) – Sierra Leone People's Party
- **“Sobels”** (p. 203) – AFRC/RUF
- **soukous** (p. 59) – style of central African popular dance music with electric guitars, Caribbean rhythms, and vocalists
- **spirogyra** (p. 73) – fresh water algae
- **sura** (p. 44) – prayer
- **tafe** (p. 137) – marijuana
- **Temne** (p. 55) – the Temne people are one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone; account for slightly more than 30% of the total population
- **UN ECOSOC** (p. 199) – United Nations Social and Economic Council
- **United Nations First International Children’s Parliament** (p. 195) – organization of 57 children from 23 countries
- **upline** (p. 184) – the backwardness of the inner country, its inhabitants and their mannerisms
- **wahlee** (p. 98) – place outside villages where people processed coffee and other crops
- **waleh** (p. 51) – slate

