

A Long Way Gone

Instructions:

Pre-reading activity: Below are words that relate to our upcoming novel *A Long Way Gone*. Sort the words into groups. You determine the “rule for sorting”. If you don’t know the meaning of a word, you must do your best to use your knowledge to figure it out or make your best guess.

Each word must be placed in a group and used only once.

After you group the words, give each group a title. Write a sentence next to the given title that summarizes why you think those words belong together.

Active reading: Keep a log of any words that you do not know the meaning of and the definitions.

The above assignments are due September 7, 2023.

Africa	drugs	power
army	family	rebels
“brown brown”	fear	rehabilitation
civilized	Guinea	rifles
compassion	gunfight	separation
control	helpless	Sierra Leone
corruption	innocence	understanding
diamonds	politics	war

A Long Way Gone
Ishmael Beah

Introduction

From: Reading Group Gold

An estimated 300,000 child soldiers now fight in the more than fifty violent conflicts raging around the globe. Far removed from the world of pundits and journalists, policymakers and diplomats, a thirteen-year-old boy named Ishmael Beah became one of these young warriors in Sierra Leone. Now in his mid-twenties, he courageously tells of the horrific road that led him to wield an AK-47 and, fueled by trauma and drugs, commit terrible acts. *A Long Way Gone* brings a rare voice of frontline realism to a widely publicized (and widely misunderstood) human-rights crisis.

In poignantly clear and dauntless storytelling, Ishmael describes how he fled brutal rebel soldiers, traveling miles from home on foot and gradually being reduced to a life of raw survival instincts. Yet, unlike so many of his peers, Ishmael lived to reclaim his true self, emerging from Sierra Leone as the gentle, hopeful young man he was at heart. His memoir is at once crucial testimony for understanding the tragedy of contemporary war zones, and a testament to the power of peacemakers.

A Long Way Gone is a plea for understanding of a political and social climate, which allows innocent children to become killers. More than that, it is an attempt to move readers to action, essentially asking them to find ways to end the abhorrent tragedies occurring not just on the African continent, but also all over the world.

Overview of the Sierra Leone Civil War

The Sierra Leone civil war began in 1991 with the attacks of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by former army corporal Foday Sankoh, on government military and civilian targets. While allegedly begun as a response to the corrupt government of President Joseph Saidu Momoh, the RUF quickly turned to acts of terror and violence with little regard to its ostensible political agenda. The RUF captured towns on the Liberian border, killing and torturing numerous citizens. The President is ousted in 1992, setting up a cycle of military coups for the next five years. In 1996, after the first multi-party election in nearly thirty years, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah is elected President. He signs a peace accord with the RUF. Kabbah is ousted by yet another military coup, led by Johnny Paul Koroma and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) - a force consisting of both army and RUF soldiers who previously fought against one another.

Atrocities were committed on both sides of the conflict, which resulted in over 50,000 killed and one million people displaced. Despite the level of violence, national attention was not drawn to Sierra Leone until 1999, when the United Nations intervened to establish the Lome Peace Accord. This treaty made the RUF commander vice-president of the country with control over Sierra Leone's valuable diamond mines.

Despite the accord, RUF forces continued their attacks and seemingly random acts of violence against government and civilian targets. The UN sought disarmament, but response on both sides was slow. Eventually, Great Britain intervened, sending in troops to capture RUF forces and restore full power to then-president Kabbah. In 2000, RUF leader Sankoh was captured. Over the next year, UN forces complete disarmament and the war is declared over in 2002. Newly re-elected President Kabbah declared the conflict ended in 2002.

Biographies of Individuals Included in the Novel *A Long Way Gone*



Ishmael Beah

The narrator and author of the book. When Beah is a teenager, he spends a year wandering Sierra Leone on the run from the civil war that claims his family. His childhood ended, Beah resorts to survivalist tactics to stay alive; he steals when he needs to, roams in packs of boys his own age who have been orphaned, and he spends long stretches of time alone in the forest. At 13, he is forced to become a soldier for the government's army and is ordered to kill rebels - many of whom are boys his own age. Beah witnesses and perpetrates numerous atrocities before he is rescued and rehabilitated by UNICEF. He speaks at several international conferences on children and war, including one at the United Nations. He currently lives in New York.

Junior



Ishmael Beah's elder brother. Junior is protective of Beah, as he has been for all of the younger boy's life. It is to Junior that Beah looks for reassurance during their trials. Beah is separated from Junior during a rebel attack on Kamator and never sees his older brother again.

Musa

Musa is a Mende boy who was in Mattru Jong when the rebels attacked. Musa and his father were separated from his mother during the attack. Musa's father ordered him to stay where he was until he could return with his wife; as soon as Musa's father returned to the village, the attack grew in intensity and Musa was forced to run. He is among the six boys Beah finds in the forest after his month of isolation. Musa is the storyteller of the group.

Alhaji

Alhaji is a Temne boy who was at the river fetching water when the rebels attacked his village. He returned home to find his family, but all he was able to find was an empty house. Alhaji is among the six boys Beah encounters after his month of isolation in the forest. He remains a close friend of Beah's even as they are rescued together by UNICEF.

Kanei

Kanei is a Mende boy who escaped the rebels' attack on his village with his parents, but lost his two sisters and three brothers in the chaos. He and his parents escape in a boat, but the boat capsized when rebels threw the passengers into panic by shooting at them. Kanei swam to the other side of the river and witnessed many people drowning in the river while the rebels laughed at their suffering. He follows the other survivors in the hope of locating his parents, whom others tell him have passed through the area. Kanei is among the six boys Beah encounters after his month of isolation in the forest.

Jumah

Jumah is a Mende boy whose house was destroyed by an RPG during the RUF attack on his village. He runs toward the wharf to find his parents, but cannot locate them. Along with Moriba, Jumah flees into the forest to find their hiding families, but cannot discover their whereabouts. Jumah is among the six boys Beah encounters after his month of isolation in the forest.

Moriba

Moriba is a Mende boy whose house was destroyed by an RPG during the RUF attack on his village. He runs toward the wharf to find his parents, but cannot locate them. Along with Jumah, Moriba flees into the forest to find their hiding families, but cannot discover their whereabouts. Moriba is among the six boys Beah encounters after his month of isolation in the forest.

Gibrilla

Gibrilla is one of the boys who accompanies Beah and Junior after they are forced to leave Mattru Jong.

Talloi

Talloi is with Junior and Beah when they initially go to Mattru Jong to practice with their dance group. After the rebel attacks, Talloi is among the group of six boys that travel together until the siege of Kamator.

A Long Way Gone continued

Saidu

Saidu is a Temne boy whose family was unable to leave the village during the rebel attack. He and his family hide under their beds during the night of the attack. The next morning, rebels broke into the house and raped his three sisters. Because he is in the attic retrieving rice for his family at the time, Saidu is safe but is forced to hear the sounds of their suffering as the rebels assault them. The rebels then forced Saidu's parents to pack up and carry their belongings for the rebels depart, taking the sisters with them. Saidu is among the six boys whom Beah encounters following his month of isolation in the forest. Later, Saidu "faints" when three white-clothed figures--whom the boys believe to be ghosts--pass them in the forest one night. Saidu is catatonic for a long time, but recovers. Unfortunately, he once again slips into this coma when the boys find a welcoming village. That night, Saidu dies.

Kaloko

Kaloko travels among the group of six boys from Mattru Jong through Kamator.

Khalilou

Beah, Junior, Talloi, Kaloko, and Gibrilla stay with Khalilou's family in Mattru Jong after the attack on their village. Khalilou's family leaves them to watch the house when the rebels are rumored to have targeted Mattru Jong. These six boys stay together until Kamator is raided.

Mohamed

Beah's best friend before the war. He is unable to travel with his friends to Mattru Jong for the dance group practice, so he is present when the rebels attack Mogbwemo. Amazingly, Beah is reunited with Mohamed years later at the UNICEF rehabilitation camp.

Lieutenant Jabati

Jabati is Ishmael Beah's commanding officer during his service in the Sierra Leone military. Jabati is known for reading and quoting Shakespeare, particularly Julius Caesar; he is also known as an orator who would lecture and exhort his troops for hours in preparation for future combat. Jabati has a flair for the dramatic, once displaying the bodies of a man and his son to the villagers as a deterrent to their fleeing into the forest where the rebels are hidden. Beah comes to trust Jabati as he does no other adult, primarily due to his position of authority and the necessity of such trust to survival. Jabati seemingly betrays Beah by selecting him to be among the children taken by UNICEF to be offered a second chance at normal lives.

Corporal Gadafi

Gadafi is the officer in charge of training the boy soldiers under Lieutenant Jabati. He is tough on the boys, but seems motivated to harshness by a desire to see them survive the armed conflict. He does not hesitate to push the boys beyond their sense of humanity, particularly in the instance where he holds a competition to see which boy can kill a prisoner by cutting his throat the most effectively and quickly.

Uncle Tommy

A relative of Beah's father, Tommy is mentioned almost in passing by Beah when the UNICEF worker Leslie tells him he will be placed in a foster home. Tommy is located and immediately comes to begin developing a relationship with Beah. Although Beah is skeptical of any possible connection at first, Tommy's patience and good humor win Beah over to accepting him as his benefactor. Uncle Tommy and his wife have no children of their own, but have adopted several children from family members who are unable to care for their own. Beah is the next to last child taken in (Beah's childhood friend Mohamed is the last) by the family. Uncle Tommy provides a safe environment for Beah to recoup from his trauma; this safety is shattered with a resurgence of violence in Freetown and the eventual death by disease of Uncle Tommy.

Esther

Esther is the nurse at the UNICEF compound where Beah convalesces following his escape from the life as a child soldier. She attempts to win Beah's trust by patiently showing an interest in him without pushing him. She even uses reverse psychology by challenging Beah to win her trust before she will talk with him at length. She learns of Beah's interests through the school questionnaires and uses this

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knowledge to break down Beah's emotional barriers. She considers Beah a brother and consoles him in his most dismal emotional troubles.

Laura Simms

Laura Simms is a facilitator for the United Nations First Children's Parliament; her workshop is intended to help the children learn more effective ways of communicating their harrowing experiences to their audience. Beah connects with her immediately because she is a storyteller and he comes from a culture strong in storytelling roots. Laura eventually adopts Beah as her son when he escapes the resurgence of violence in Sierra Leone.

Father

Before the war, Beah has a complicated relationship with his father. He is a carefree man, invested in the futures of his sons. However, a relationship with a new woman has soured the relationship with his Ishmael and Junior. Still, Beah has fond memories of his father that he comforts him during his ordeal. He is presumed dead.

Mother

Beah's mother loves her sons despite the divorce that has torn their family apart. Beah recalls visits with his mother and brother Ibrahim, trips to the market, and her teaching him how to cook during his ordeal. She is presumed dead.

Mamie Kpana

Ishmael's grandmother. Mamie Kpana is a calm presence in Beah's pre-war life.

Ibrahim

Beah's younger brother. He lives with their mother following their parents' divorce. Ibrahim attends school unlike his brothers, as his mother is solely devoted to his upbringing. After the attack on Mogbwemo, Beah never sees Ibrahim again.

Sheku

Sheku is a tent-mate of Beah's at the army-occupied village. They become soldiers together.

Josiah

Josiah is a tent-mate of Beah's when he becomes a soldier. Josiah dies of a broken back during one of their first raids.

Gasemu

Gasemu recognizes Beah from Mattru Jong. When they arrive to the outskirts of the village where it is rumored his parents have taken refuge in, Gasemu greets the boys. Instead of letting Beah run on to the village, he makes them help him carry bananas. While they are walking on to the village, rebels attack and all are killed. Beah blames Gasemu for keeping him from his family, though he comes to realize that it is not his fault and he is alive, once again, because of a twist of fate.

Mr. Kamara

The head of Benin Home who encourages Beah to speak publicly about his experiences.

Leslie

A kind worker at Benin Home.

Aunt Sallay

Uncle Tommy's wife. She treats Beah like her own son.

Allie

Uncle Tommy's son. Beah and Allie share a room after Beah leaves Benin Home. Allie takes Beah to a dance and gives him city clothes as a way to introduce him to his new, post-war life.

Dr. Tamba

The sponsor from Sierra Leone who accompanies Beah and Bah to New York City.

Bah

A Sierra Leonean boy who travels with Beah to represent their country at the UN.

Summer Reading Assignment

A Long Way Gone continued

Define each of the following words prior to reading the novel.

____ / 15 points

1. abduct _____
2. recruitment _____
3. war crimes _____
4. ethics _____
5. rebel _____
6. atrocities _____
7. mutilation _____
8. genocide _____
9. refugee _____
10. countenance _____
11. aura _____
12. respite _____
13. garrison _____
14. akimbo _____
15. RPG _____
16. repatriate _____
17. upline _____
18. ablution _____
19. pestles _____
20. UN ECOSOC _____

Summer Reading Assignment

A Long Way Gone continued
____ / 15 points

Major Themes

As you read through the novel *A Long Way Gone*, be sure to log examples of each of the following key themes. (Include page #s)

Survival	Memory
Loss of Innocence	Nature
Life and Hope	Family
The Damages of War	

Summer Reading Assignment

A Long Way Gone Continued

Reading Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTES:

English IV AP Literature and Composition Course requirements:

- 👤 A black or blue pen.
- 👤 A 3-ring binder (1" – 1 ½") with dividers for class. It would be advisable to get one and label a section for vocabulary words and literary terms. You must look up all unknown words and record the definitions in your binder.
- 👤 Active participation in class discussions is part of your marking period grade.

Writing Do's and Don'ts

Essays and class assignments for the 2023 – 2024 school year:

Do:

- 👤 Pay attention to details
- 👤 Proofread your work - aloud
- 👤 Edit your work
- 👤 Add a MLA heading to all your work that includes
Your name, my name, course name/period, and the date (see below)
- 👤 Put an assignment name on all work

Do not:

- 👤 Use contractions or dashes
- 👤 Refer to authors by their first name
- 👤 Use the words "a lot"
- 👤 Kids = goats; use children, teens, young adults, etc.
- 👤 Underline titles of personal work
- 👤 Use "but", "and", "so" to begin sentences

Research Papers:

- 👤 Clear and discernible thesis statement *at end of introduction.*
- 👤 Student last name/ page #s in upper right hand corner
- 👤 Works Cited in MLA format
- 👤 In-text citations in MLA format (all of which clearly match up to sources on Works Cited page)

MLA Heading:

First Name Last Name
Mrs. Hem
English IV AP Lit and Comp/1
Day Month Year