

"A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier"  
by Ishmael Beah  
Summer Reading Project  
AP Human Geography  
Mrs. Rojas- 2009

Complete the following project while reading, "A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier," by Ishmael Beah.

- A. All your responses must be typed, double-spaced, Times-Roman, 12-point font. You may bind the report in any way you see fit- a report folder, single staple, etc.
- B. For every two chapters you read, create a half-page diary entry of something the author probably would have written about his life in the pages you read. You will have TEN half page entries. You may combine the last three chapters (19, 20 and 21) for entry #10. Please, title each entry with the two chapters you are writing about. The entry CANNOT be longer than half-page. If it is longer, points will be deducted.
- C. Below each half-page entry from the book, you must also create a half-page diary entry of what happened in your own life the days you read those chapters. Please, title those entries with the date you are writing your entry about. Again, each entry CANNOT be longer than half-page. If it is longer, points will be deducted.
- D. You must choose FIVE of the following questions to answer. Make sure to answer all parts of the question. Your answers must be at least a paragraph, no longer than a page.

**Choices:**

1. Commenting on how a rebel soldier had interrogated an old man, Ishmael writes: "Before the war a young man wouldn't have dared to talk to anyone older in such a rude manner. We grew up in a culture that demanded good behavior from everyone, and especially from the young" (p. 33). Where else in *A Long Way Gone* did you encounter the brutal, thuggish, or even sadistic behavior of young rebels—or of other young people?
2. Who is the anonymous man with the fishing hut near the ocean, and how does he help to soothe and heal the severely scalded feet of Ishmael and the others? And later, how are the lives of all seven boys saved by rap music—specifically the music of LL Cool J?
3. At the village of Yele, a pivotal shift in this memoir begins when Ishmael goes from being an observer and victim of savage, war-triggered violence to being both of these things as well as a perpetrator of such violence. How does this shift happen? Do Ishmael and his companions have any choice in making it?
4. How does Ishmael's experience of New York City differ from what he had pictured beforehand? What does he like most about New York? What doesn't he like? And why is he visiting New York in the first place?

**OVER**

**OVER**

**OVER**

5. This memoir ends with a striking image, as Ishmael sees a mother telling her two children a story that he had also heard as a child. It's a memorable fable that touches on several of the key themes of this book, including violence, family, storytelling, childhood, and African village life. But it also carries a message of sacrifice. Explain how this last message is found throughout *A Long Way Gone*.

6. Violence is, of course, a major theme in these pages—physical, psychological, social, and otherwise. Indeed, some of the more violent passages in this book make for very difficult if not unsettling reading. What did Ishmael's many violent experiences teach you about the consequences or aftereffects, both intended and unintended, of violence?

7. What kinds of music does Ishmael like, and why? What is it about music that matters to Ishmael, or that moves him so? Why is it important to him, especially during his rehabilitation at Benin Home?

8. *A Long Way Gone* is a book with much to say on the subject of family: family life, family relationships, and family environment. Discuss a few of the many different families that Ishmael has belonged to over the course of his young life.

E. Grading:

1. Each book diary entry= 5 points each (total 50 points)
2. Each personal diary entry= 5 points each (total 50 points)
3. Discussion questions= 5 points each (total 25 points)
4. Format= 5 points

Project total: 130 points

F. Due Date:

The project is due the first day your period meets. If you do not turn it in the first day of class, your project will go down a letter grade each class meeting you do not have it.

Questions???? You may e-mail me at any time during the summer with questions. I do check my e-mail often over summer, but, please beware that I will be going on a few trips and may not respond back to you right away. I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Have fun reading. This is a great book and I really hope you enjoy it as much as I did. We will refer to it many times during the school year, so don't lose it once you are done with the project!

I look forward to meeting you in the fall and beginning our journey in AP Human Geography.

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