

142 Fascinating Summer Reading for English

Somehow procure a copy of *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah (2007) for summer reading. The book is a non-fiction account of Ishmael's experiences as a child soldier in Sierra Leone in the 1990's and his eventual rehabilitation and move to the United States. It is a story both of physical and emotional survival. The questions that follow are designed to help you think about Ishmael's story and should be submitted on the first day we all meet together on Wednesday, August 18. Keep an electronic copy to be submitted to turnitin.com. Include short quotes for support and cite parenthetically. Page limitations listed are approximates.

1. Investigate the history of the civil war in Sierra Leone explaining the goals of the varied parties. (1/2 page)
2. What sustains Ishmael emotionally and spiritually throughout his journey? (1/2 page)
3. What did Ishmael's parents teach him about being a man? How did he define manhood once he began the long walk west? What general life lessons were his parents able to teach him that sustained him during his brutal passage from boyhood and that remain with him even today? (1/2 page)
4. When Ishmael arrives at the fortified village of Yele in chapter twelve, what do you discover about the way he began his military career? Was his service, and that of his equally young friends, necessary? What made his conscription different from that of drafted American soldiers serving in previous wars? (1/2 page)
5. Chapters twelve through fourteen describe Ishmael's indoctrination into a "soldier's life." Explain in what ways this is a very purposeful process. (1/2 page)
6. How does Ishmael's concept of family change throughout the memoir, from his early life in Mattru Jong to life with his uncle and on to life with his American family with Laura? (1/2 page)

7. What universal truths does Ishmael teach us about surviving loss and overcoming isolation? (1/2 page)
8. The book concludes with the riddle of the monkey. How do you interpret his answer to the riddle? Explain your choice. (1/2 page)
9. Watch the movie *Blood Diamond* after having completed the book. How does Ishmael's account compare to the perspective taken by the filmmaker? (1/2 page)

Email me if you have questions along the way at reynoldsm@saintxfac.com.
Enjoy the book ☺