

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

By Ishmael Beah

(Published in 2007)

Approved for use in English IV: Contemporary World Literature I

Summary of the Work:

This absorbing account by a young man who, as a boy of 12, gets swept up in Sierra Leone's civil war goes beyond even the best journalistic efforts in revealing the life and mind of a child abducted into the horrors of warfare. Beah's harrowing journey transforms him overnight from a child enthralled by American hip-hop music and dance to an internal refugee bereft of family, wandering from village to village in a country grown deeply divided by the indiscriminate atrocities of unruly, sociopathic rebel and army forces. Beah then finds himself in the army—in a drug-filled life of casual mass slaughter that lasts until he is 15, when he's brought to a rehabilitation center sponsored by UNICEF and partnering NGOs. The process marks out Beah as a gifted spokesman for the center's work after his "repatriation" to civilian life in the capital, where he lives with his family and a distant uncle. When the war finally engulfs the capital, it sends 17-year-old Beah fleeing again, this time to the U.S., where he now lives. (Beah graduated from Oberlin College in 2004.) Told in clear, accessible language by a young writer with a gifted literary voice, this memoir seems destined to become a classic firsthand account of war and the ongoing plight of child soldiers in conflicts worldwide. (Feb.) *Starred Review*

Rationale:

A Long Way Gone provides a first person, nonfiction account of war. The book is intended to compliment the Contemporary World literature, senior English IV option. Although this story is unsettling to read at times, students will benefit from better understanding the world outside the United States, and living conditions experienced by millions of children in war-torn countries.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Kirkus Review (January 15, 2007)

The survivor of a dirty war in starkest Africa recounts his transition from 12-year-old orphan to killing machine.

Library Journal (November 15, 2006)

In this real-life *Beasts of No Nation*, Beah details his experience as a 13-year-old compelled by government forces in his native Sierra Leone to pick up an AK-47.

Publishers Weekly (December 18, 2006)

This absorbing account by a young man who, as a boy of 12, gets swept up in Sierra Leone's civil war goes beyond even the best journalistic efforts in revealing the life and mind of a child abducted into the horrors of warfare.

Noted Distinction:

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Readability:

- Lexile Score: 920
- Readability Level:

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

Approval:

Submitted to Committee: 4/2008

Approved for Adoption: 5/2008

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This nonfiction account of a war torn African country can be graphic and is considered mature.

Connection to the Curriculum:

World Literature is devoted to the study of classical World and British Literature, exploring the hero and other archetypes through Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Contemporary periods. First semester stories will concentrate on myth and archetypal patterns in stories about Beginnings, Endings, Monsters, and Monster Slayers and Heroes. Students will be able to recognize, appreciate, and express the unity and diversity of the human experience as expressed through world mythology, literature, and culture. The focus of writing will be refining and expanding effective writing skills through critical and analytical writing, timed writing, and research.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)