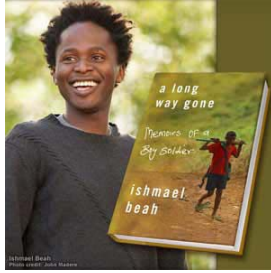


Mandatory Honors English 12 Summer Reading Assignment

Assignment: This summer, you will have a reading assignment designed to help you maintain the critical thinking and analysis skills you have developed during your high school career. ***** ALL work MUST be typed. *****

- Read the novel, *A Long Way Gone*, by Ishmael Beah.



A Long Way Gone is a memoir about a young boy who was separated from his family at the age of 12 due to rebels attacking and constant violence and conflict in his country, Sierra Leone. At 13, Beah was picked up by the government army where he committed the most heinous acts. Ishmael has to fight for his own survival, kill hundreds of innocent people, and break many difficult habits in order to survive a childhood of drugs, violence, and war.

- Complete **10** Cornell Notes that highlight and support the main character’s journey of self-discovery and on the other side of the chart, explain how the main character from *A Long Way Gone* compares to a different character’s journey of self- discovery. Consider some of the characters from texts explored in school: Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in the Rye*, Odysseus from *The Odyssey*, Ralph from *Lord of the Flies*, the Creature from *Frankenstein*, Macbeth, etc. It is important for you to understand that the purpose of Cornell Notes is to analyze and extend the meaning of texts, not to simply explain or summarize them. Be sure to include citations for each entry from *A Long Way Gone*.

Example:

Character’s Action showing his journey of self-discovery	Character From Fiction whose actions show his/ her journey of self-discovery	Similarity of the two characters’ journeys and how they show self-discovery.
<p>“We always walked to school slowly. I liked it because I was able to think about where my life was going. I was confident that nothing could get any worse than it had been, and that thought made me smile a lot” (202).</p>	<p>Odysseus, from Homer’s <i>The Odyssey</i>, craved to return home after 19 years away from Ithaca. Before he reached home, he landed on the island of the Phaeacians, the people to whom he told his entire story. While there, King Alcinous offered Odysseus his daughter’s, Nausicaa, hand in marriage. Odysseus, though he wanted to remain respectful of the king’s hospitality, graciously declined because he still loved and longed for his wife and home. Odysseus could have stayed and married the princess, but he had been through so many years of obstacles that he wanted to return to his family regardless of the fact that there were suitors there trying to take over.</p>	<p>Both Odysseus and Ishmael longed for their families and mourned over a past that was quite haunting. While Odysseus’ journey took 19 years to complete- and in those years, he had to battle monsters, creatures, the wrath of Poseidon, and the seduction of the goddesses- he still maintained a focus and desire to return home. On the other hand, Ishmael’s tragic story of losing his family and surviving a war-torn Sierra Leone proves that people can overcome hardships and lead happy, successful lives. Along both Odysseus’ and Ishmael’s journeys, both characters learned that there are many obstacles in the road, but with motivation and strong desire, anyone can overcome even the worst situations.</p>

- You must choose **five** of the ten questions and write thorough responses. The assignment must be **five** pages in total. Please include the question/ prompt which corresponds with the response and double space your responses.

1. Beah stated that, "The only times that I found peace with myself was when I began writing song lyrics about the good times before the war. Through these writings, as well as the help of the staff in my psycho-social therapy home, I was able to successfully overcome my trauma. I once again rediscovered my childhood that was almost lost." Beah began working on his book in a college creative writing class. In what ways can writing be helpful in understanding problems and working through them? Why is writing such an effective tool in healing and gaining understanding? In what situations has personal writing benefited you?

2. Beah once commented, "I think that every human being should be aware of the possibility of change. . . . Everyone can make a difference. You don't have to be rich or famous to do so. If one person can change the way they interact with other people, no matter who they are or where they are from, that makes a big difference. It seems to me, one of the main problems of our last century was the inability of individuals to get along with each other." Do you agree with Beah? Why or why not? Beah was rescued because of people who have dedicated their lives to helping those in need. As a senior in college, what is your responsibility to help those less fortunate than you? Do you think the actions of one person can make a significant difference in solving conflicts between people or nations?

3. Some have questioned the accuracy of *A Long Way Gone*, asserting that the detailed descriptions of past events would be beyond what an adult could remember about life as a twelve-year-old. Although there is no question that Beah's horrific experience happened, we may not be sure that all the detail is accurate. Should we regard memoir as truth? How much can we trust what we read? How should you as a student approach the information you encounter in readings and research? What does critical thinking require of you as a student?

4. *A Long Way Gone* describes the human toll of war, the suffering of innocents and man's inhumanity to man. How did the book change your perceptions of war? What is the human toll of the wars our country is presently involved in? If you were forced to fight in those conflicts against your will and take human lives, what do you perceive your reaction would be? How might your future be affected?

5. Many of the shared narratives of society (both fiction and non-fiction) are epic in nature: *The Lord of the Rings*, George Washington crossing the Delaware, the bombing of the Twin Towers. Beah's story is in many ways just as unimaginable as these kinds of stories. Yet the best stories also have a way of connecting to individuals in their everyday lives. In what ways did Beah's harrowing tale connect with you in your everyday life? How does reading a story like Beah's make the challenges you face more manageable? What actions or personality traits do you find in his story that you would attribute to his ability to overcome the challenges he faced? How might you develop similar traits or skills to help you through difficult times you face?

6. In the short "New York City, 1998" prologue that begins the memoir, Ishmael's friend finds some things about his past to be "cool." If they had read this book, do you think they would still feel that way? Why or why not? How much does what has happened in our pasts affect the here and now? What are you bringing with you to college? What will you leave behind? Based on Ishmael's experience, what is our capacity to make changes in who we are and what direction we will take?

7. Beah's harrowing account of civil war and childhood can also be seen as a meditation on finding one's ultimate purpose. How does Ishmael, at a relatively early age, arrive at what seems to be his calling in life? How will you go about deciding your "calling" in life? What factors will influence your decision? How will you know when you have found that "calling"?

8. How are the issues raised in *A Long Way Gone* relevant to a high school or college students living in Maryland? Sierra Leone is thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean, with unique political, social, and economic problems. How do wars in Africa or other places in the world affect you? What have you learned from reading *A Long Way Gone* that will make a difference in the way you view the world?

***We will be working on this text during the first week of school. The Cornell Notes and the Short Answer questions will be due on the 2nd day of school. No exceptions. Additionally, you will be asked to complete an in-school timed writing assignment on the aforementioned text.**

****If you cannot obtain a copy of the text, copies are available at Einstein in the English office (room 121). You must make an appointment with Mr. Garrick in order to sign out a book.**