

Free essay on a long way gone: memoirs of a boy soldier by ishmael beah.

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Introduction

The book; *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* is a true story by Ishmael Beah recording the accounts of more than a decade of civic conflict in Sierra Leone. The book is a report of how war is in the eyes of the eyes of a child who has been drugged and armed and then put send to fight in many conflicts across the world. although child soldiers have been covered by journalists and novelists have continuously tried to create stories out of the life of child soldiers, Ishmael Beah's memoir provides a first hand version and presents the facts as someone who went through the anguish but survived. In memoirs, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Bear, Beah uses the big gun, a rag clothed boy, and the rehab center as symbols to show violence, poverty and hope respectively. To begin with the cover of the book has a boy with a large AK 47 gun crossing his neck balanced properly on the shoulders. The second gun is hanging on a string on the shoulder across the chest. The boy is putting on a red T shirt which appears very old and dirty. He has a dirty black short which touches the knees and the only thing covering his shoes is a pair of old slippers which are worn out for over use with holes in the foot print. In fact the slipper in right leg has a cut string and one can see that the boy is struggling to maintain it in his already worn out leg. The boy is travelling on a dusty road and in the background is a grass field which looks like has not been taken care of because it has very tall grass. The cover is brown-red and light to dark green in the background. This is a picture that has been consciously painted by Ishmael to demonstrate poverty level and hopelessness that existed in Sierra Leone during that time, and maybe as we speak the situation has not

changed. The cover with a boy with old tattered clothing holding an AK 47 is evidence of poverty and violence. The author intentionally uses this background to make the reader who is meeting the book for the first time get the hint about the contents of the memoir. The dusty road represents the poor infrastructure that exists in the country that the book describes.

When the reader starts reading the book, he is introduced to Ishmael, Junior (Ishmael's brother) and Talloi going for a talent show where they were to present rap songs and dance. The three boys in the introduction are not a coincidence, they are used by the author to show that child soldiers are normal children with talents, dreams and ambition of a good life in future like any other child in a natural and peaceful society. The author uses the three boys to show the damage created by lack of peace (violence), poverty and ignorance does to a generation. These three problems i. e. violence, poverty and ignorance do not just lead to loss of life but also to destruction of dreams, talent and ambition of children. They kill the future hope of the society. The author does not give us the details about the talent show but we can predict that it never took place because the rebels attack their community and everyone flees away. The fact that the talent show did not take place demonstrates that that was the beginning of killing of hope, dream, ambition and talent (Beah, 2).

The events after the attack are many and surround Ishmael's desperate search for his parents as well as family. One family accommodates the three boys temporarily as they help them with farming but they are also attacked and Ishmael loses contact with his brother and friend. Any tings things happen before Ishmael gets information from a woman that his parents and

Junior are safe in another village but before he travels to see them, they village where they had taken refuge is attacked and Ishmael believes that his brother and parents might have died in the attack although their bodies are not among those found dead.

Ishmael's recruitment and life as a child soldier rubber stamps the theme of the memoir; violence and poverty. He proud himself as being the best throat cutter and they attack villages and robs food, rape women and kill people (Beah, 15).

Something happens in 1996, men putting on UNICEF shirts capture several child soldiers including Ishmael and are taken to rehab centers in Freetown for rehabilitation. At the rehab center, Ishmael meets a nurse whom they call Esther who become personally interested in Ishmael and even buys him few presents like cassette players and walk man. This becomes the turning point of Ishmael's life. Through counseling from Esther Ishmael's mental wounds heals. The rehab is a source of hope and reconstruction of Ishmael's life. The author communicates the message that using children as soldiers completely destroys their life, and if not given special help like Ishmael got, their life will be completely lost.

Work Cited

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. Sarah Crichton: New York, 2007. Print.