

# Long way gone essay sample

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



War is a devastating event which tears nations apart, and causes death and pain in the hearts of the inhabitants. Whether it is the countries strong males being sent off into the battle zones, or the young children, war scars people. Soldiers are dehumanized, and lose all morals and sense of right and wrong. In the book Long Way Gone, Ishmael and his friends are dehumanized through the war because of the traumatic events they endure, and their time spent in solitude away from civilization; luckily, they were able to regain humanity through the love and hope provided from others.

Throughout the novel, Ishmael and his friends begin to lose their humanity and become completely different individuals because of their exposure to the war. The children slowly begin to make unethical decisions, and lose all morals and sense of natural right; they were transformed into ruthless killing machines. " Our innocence had been replaced by fear and we had become monsters" (Beah 55). During their time as child soldiers, instead of being educated on how to grow up as a normal, civilized adolescents, Ishmael and his friends were taught how to kill and steal. They were brainwashed into becoming trained assassins, wanting nothing more than to kill the enemy, the people who had destroyed their lives and murdered their families. The boys were told the same would happen to them, if they did not take on the rebels. Army commanders instilled fear into children of the war, they were given a choice, fight to stay alive at whatever means necessary, or die. I didn't feel a thing for him, didn't think that much about what I was doing. I just waited for the corporal's order. The prisoner was simply another rebel who was responsible for the death of my family, as I had come to truly believe. The corporal gave the signal with a pistol shot and I grabbed the

man's head and slit his throat in one fluid motion. His Adam's apple made way for the sharp knife, and I turned the bayonet on its zigzag edge as I brought it out...We celebrated that days achievement..."(Beah 124).

Before the war, Ishmael was an innocent, caring little boy, filled with love and compassion for others. As seen on page 124, the nice little boy that once was no longer exists. All of Ishmael's positive, joyful thoughts had been overtaken by thoughts of killing and murder, which are now pleasurable activities for him. Ishmael and his friend's lost their childhoods to war, they were forced to become savage men, soldiers, fighting to live another day.

The (dissociation from reality) dehumanization of Ishmael and his friends began at the very start of the war, when people began to lose their positive morals, trust, and liveliness towards one another. For young adults, childhood is suppose to be a time filled with happiness and good times, because of the war, all of Ishmael's thoughts and memories of a joyful childhood had been replaced and or blocked with thoughts of sadness and disbelief. While in hiding from the rebels, Ishmael was unable to think about the possibility of his families' survival. " I decided to just ignore every thought that came to my head, because it brought too much sadness" (Beah 52). All thoughts and recollections of his past would instantaneously rekindle his memories from the war, bringing to mind questions about the vitality of his village. He would remember images of dead bodies and blood covered fields, providing him with severe migraines, and nights filled with tears.

Before the war, people in Sierra Leone were very friendly and welcoming to travelers. People were overjoyed when they were provided with the chance

to meet new people, however that all changed. "...the war had destroyed the enjoyment of the very experience of meeting new people" (Beah 48). All trust was lost between citizens. Ishmael could not be seen as anything but a soldier, he became very lonely. The war took away the happiness and overall family like atmosphere of Ishmael along with his country of Sierra Leone.

Although war took away most of Ishmael and his friends' childhoods, turning them into savage murderers with no regard for anything but their own survival, they were provided with a rare chance to regain their humanity. Once out of the war, the young children were transported to a rehabilitation center run by UNICEF. There, they were surrounded with complete strangers who for some reason unapparent to them, cared deeply for the children, presenting them with an endless supply of love and understanding of their situation. They were constantly reminded of their innocence, being told "This isn't your fault, you know. It really isn't. You'll get through this" (Beah 151). Even through all the hardships Ishmael and his friends caused at the center, they were not blamed for any of their actions, and each time were cared for with more compassion than the last.

The workers at the facility understood their losses and tried to fill in for them. They tried to be the children's new family. "Think of me as your family, your sister" (Beah 167) as said by a nurse to Ishmael. Ishmael was provided with a support system to help him get through his hard times, and be reshaped into civilized humans. With the help of the employees and volunteers, they were able to be transformed into new people. They were able to believe that they could be ordinary boys again. "We can be

rehabilitated” (Beah 169) said Ishmael in many interviews with rehabilitation officials. Ishmael and his friends were lucky. They were put into an environment where people bestowed a sense of hope onto them, making them believe, and eventually succeed in the belief that they could be normal kids once more, completing their rehabilitation back to humanity.