

A long way gone by ishmael beah essay example

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



Introduction and main theme – death and civil war in the context of child soldiers

Sierra Leone in the 1990's was a country torn by terrible civil war and great internal strife with the result that several hundreds of thousands of its people were killed and over a million displaced. Beah's excellent book recounts one of the great horrors of this war, that of child soldiers who formed practically all the contingent of fighters during the conflict, in a sense these were initiated into war at a very early age and became familiar with weapons of murder such AK-47 guns and suchlike. Beah's moving story recounts his experience as a boy soldier and the obviously traumatic effect that all this had on him as a child without any family and without any support but the brutal tones of his commanders.

The main theme: experiences in child soldiery

The theme which struck me most and which recurs constantly throughout the book is the fact that child soldiers are still being used in conflicts in Africa with the consequential and terrible effects. Beah's detailed narrative recounts these horrific experiences and he sheds light on the proceedings accordingly, in fact he does not hold back much where all this is concerned. The fact that 300, 000 child soldiers are still serving in today's Africa is a more than worrying statement and Beah's books certainly reveals a lot about it.

Ishmael Beah is very circumspect and non dramatic about his experiences and he describes them in a matter of fact manner which is rather shocking in its simplicity. Beah turns to other aspects of the conflict, explaining his experiences as a child soldier, his first encounter with death and murder and

the continuation of this orgy of violence which seemed to be a nightmare which could not stop.

The matter of fact way in which Beah recounts his terrifying experience demonstrates that death was something which was taken for granted in this civil war. The young soldier aged 13 was already hugely experienced in the art of killing by that time and he carried out some rather despicable acts which even he did not think he was capable of.

Opinion:

Personally I found the book very interesting as apart from being well written it provides some harrowing details on what went on in the Sierra Leone Civil War. Beah's narrative is also extremely factual, believable and rather disturbing, in a sense it provides an intriguing window on an aspect which is often overlooked, that of the use of children in warfare. Sometimes I do feel that Beah's narrative could come to the point quicker but otherwise it is a gripping read which should be disseminated much more widely. Although Beah is talking in the first person, the amount of graphic detail which he provides is also crucial to the success of the book and the manner in which he crafts his narrative is very satisfying to say the least. The book should serve as an eye opener for all those who are not conscious of the problem of using children as warfare tools and as such is more than highly recommended.

Works Cited:

Beah Ishmael; A Long way Gone; New York; Sarah Crichton Books 2007, Print