

Analysis of a long way gone, a memoir of ishmael beah



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A Long Way Gone is the memoir of a child soldier, 12-year-old Ishmael Beah, who is forced to go to war in Sierra Leone. His village is attacked while he and his brother, Junior, and friends are away at a talent show. After the attack they resort to going from village to village in search of food and shelter and thrive on stealing from others to survive. They seek refuge at a village called Mattru Jong and reside there until a rebel army comes in and raids the village. The boys flee, only to be struck by hunger and hopelessness. They decide to make the dangerous journey back into their village to collect their money and belongings, even though the rebel army is still in the village. The boys broke up into groups in order to stay hidden. On the way out of the village one of the boys get stuck behind and discovered by the rebels. This is when the group begins to break apart.

They eventually are taken into a village controlled by the government army. They manage to escape and go to a village called Kamator, where they stay for about a month. They are offered food and shelter if they acted as guards for the village. Soon enough, the rebels also attack Kamator. Ishmael loses his brother in the midst of all the confusion, but is reunited with his friend Kaloko. They try to find their family and friends but are unsuccessful. Ishmael decides to leave the village in search of somewhere safe. Kaloko decides to stay behind, and Ishmael goes on his journey alone.

Ishmael wanders through the forest, forced to drink stream water and live off of nearly nothing. He meets a group of boys after a month of solitude and decides to stay with them. On their journey, they are taken into a village controlled by the Sierra Leone army. There, they are forced to become soldiers for the army in exchange for food, water, and shelter. Once they

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become soldiers for the army, they are forced to commit crimes and take numerous, harmful drugs such as cocaine. Under control of Lieutenant Jabrati, he and the other children raid, loot, and murder. They are brainwashed into believing their actions are right, and are trained to stop at nothing.

Ishmael and the boys in his unit continue to fight until one day a UNICEF truck comes into the village and Lieutenant Jabrati turns the boys over. They are offered food and clothes but are uncooperative due to their natural fighting nature. They cause havoc and are extremely violent toward their teachers, nurses, and supervisors. They seek to be respected and feared, and get frustrated at the UNICEF workers' patience with them. Ishmael's nightmares and migraines become nearly unbearable, while memories of his childhood as a soldier consume his thoughts. In this time, he becomes close with his unit nurse, Esther. She helps him overcome the pain and depression he is going through.

Half a year at the center has gone by, and UNICEF workers begin to plan Ishmael's placement in a foster home. Ishmael mentions his uncle, Tommy. He has never met Tommy, but his father mentioned him before. Tommy is located and comes to the center to visit him and eventually Tommy goes home with him and starts a new life with his new family. After a while, Ishmael is visited by one of the workers at UNICEF. He is presented the opportunity to be interviewed to travel to New York to speak to the UN about his experience as a soldier. He meets with an interviewer who chooses Ishmael to be sent to the United States. He meets Laura Simms, a storyteller

that helps him in New York. When it is time for him to leave, Laura gives him her address and phone number to stay in touch.

He returns to live with Tommy and violence begins again. Supplies begin to run low and Tommy dies of a fever. At this point, Ishmael has no other option but to escape from Sierra Leone. He calls Laura, who agrees to let him stay with her in America. He is able to cross the border to Guinea and makes his way to New York to live in his new home with Laura.

A Long Way Gone brought the horrible brainwashing that children endured at their time as soldiers to light. “ Sometimes we were asked to leave for war in the middle of a movie. We would come back hours later after killing many people and continue the movie as if we had just returned from intermission. we were always either at the front lines, watching a war movie, or doing drugs. There was no time to be alone or to think.” (p. 124) This passage really stood out and described the severity of the child soldiers’ treatment.

This passage vividly described how children that were part of the civil war in Sierra Leone were brainwashed into believing war is supposed to be a normal part of everyday life. They were given drugs to numb their emotions and keep their feelings from preventing them from fighting. This passage really opened my eyes and made me realize just how lucky I am for everything I have. These children go through being drugged and brainwashed, which proves just how blessed I am to have food, shelter, water, and a family and friends that love me.

A Long Way Gone was one of the most influential books I have ever read. It really brought the struggle of the child soldiers in Sierra Leone to light. It <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-a-long-way-gone-a-memoir-of-ishmael-beah/>

helped me understand the severity of the situation, especially with the Kony 2012 campaign in effect. Kony 2012 is a campaign working against leaders in Africa who capture children and force them into becoming child soldiers. Reading A Long Way Gone has let me look into a child soldier's life and see just how much help these children need.

I would definitely recommend this book to others. It kept me interested and always wanting to keep reading. The memoir style also provided an up close and personal look into the lives of child soldiers. I believe that everybody should read this book since the problem of civil war and rebel soldiers still exists. Ishmael's haunting memories are extremely thought provoking, and they made me think about the extreme cultural differences between America and 3rd world countries where civil war is still an issue.