



Westhill High School  
Summer Reading 2015  
Grade 9



Thematic Focus: The Journey

### Historical Context

*In 1991 a rebel organization called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) started what would become an eleven year civil war in the African Nation of Sierra Leone. With support from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels succeeded in a political coup that left the country in a state of chaos and unrest. Government forces and rebel factions fought to control Sierra Leone's most valuable economic assets – the diamond mines, gold mines, and farmable land. The rebels used these assets, particularly diamonds, to fund their activities; as a result, these gems became known as “blood” diamonds. Ordinary citizens were killed, imprisoned, tortured, and raped. Many, including children, were conscripted and forced to fight in the war.*

*Ishmael Beah is one of these former child soldiers. After RUF rebels attacked his village and separated him from his family, Ishmael and several other boys joined together in an effort to survive and reunite with their families. Tragically, Ishmael's family is massacred by RUF rebels just one day before he arrived in the village where they had taken shelter. Forced to choose between death at the hands of the rebels or service in the army, twelve year old Ishmael becomes a boy soldier.*

*A Long Way Gone is Ishmael Beah's story.*

### The Assignment

Read and enjoy *A Long Way Gone*! 😊



At the end of each chapter create a dialectical journal entry (21 total). Think of your dialectical journal as a series of conversations with the text. You simply write down passages that make you think, or interest you, and write about your thoughts. This process is an important way to understand a memoir or a piece of literary non-fiction.

As you read, look for quotes that seem significant, powerful, thought provoking or puzzling. Once you choose a passage that stands out to you record it in the left-hand column of a T-chart (ALWAYS include page numbers). Your entries can be typed or handwritten in a journal.

In the right column, write your response to the text. Your response should include context (what is happening in the scene) and you must indicate what type of response you are writing:

- (Q) Question – ask about something in the passage that is unclear
- (C) Connect - make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
- (P) Predict – anticipate what will occur based on what’s in the passage
- (R) Reflect – think deeply about what the passage means in a broad sense – not just to the characters in the story. What conclusions can you draw about the world, about human nature, or just the way things work?
- (E) Evaluate – make a judgment about the character(s), their actions, or what the author is trying to say

### Sample T-Chart

Quote	Response
<p>"After all the trouble and risk we undertook to get the money, it became useless. We would have been less hungry if we had stayed at the village instead of walking to Mattru Jong and back. I wanted to blame someone for this particular predicament, but there was no one to be blamed. We had made a logical decision and it had come to this. It was a typical aspect of being in the war" (29).</p> <div data-bbox="24 1375 779 1984" style="border: 2px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; background-color: #e0e0e0; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>If you have any questions or need help you can email Ms. Wheeler at <a href="mailto:cwheeler@StamfordCT.gov">cwheeler@StamfordCT.gov</a> or Ms. Tobin at <a href="mailto:ktobin@StamfordCT.gov">ktobin@StamfordCT.gov</a>.</p> </div>	<p>(R) This passage says a lot about the human capacity to survive. Ishmael and his friends are starving. They tried to do the right thing; instead of stealing food from the village market, they returned to their old village and risked their lives to get money from a hiding place in one of their homes. Yet, when they return to the market with money there is no food for sale and they are still starving. Rather than become upset or give up altogether, Ishmael and the boys just move on. This tells me they are committed to surviving.</p> <p>It is also interesting that Ishmael says that what happened was a common part of being in a war. This tells me how quickly our perception of normal can change.</p> <p>Your summer reading is DUE BY 9/4/15 (Friday). Please make sure that everything you hand in is your own original work; be aware, your teacher may ask you to submit portions of your summer reading to turnitin.com.</p>