

Pre-Reading Questions

**Pre-Reading Video Response**

**A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah**

<http://www.alongwaygone.com/media.html>

**Directions:** Go to the website above. Click on and watch the videos. Answer the questions below.

**About My Book**

1. Where is Sierra Leone? What surrounds (borders) Sierra Leone?

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2. What does Ishmael Beah mean by his quote, “everyone is capable of going beyond their own humanity and doing certain things that are not humane”?

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3. Do you believe this quote to be true? Why or why not? Explain.

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**Realities of the War**

4. How does Ishmael describe the war? What was the reason for the war?

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5. What was the difference between the Army and the Rebel Group (RUF)?

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**Sharing My Experience**

6. How does Ishmael feel in regards to talking about the war?

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7. When is he comfortable sharing his experience?

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**Writing Process**

8. How and when did Ishmael start writing his book?

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**Today's Child Soldiers**

9. Why did Ishmael want to tell his story? How is he making a difference?

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**To American Readers**

10. What does Ishmael want American readers to know?

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Pre-Reading Questions



Dominated for centuries by coastal tribes, the region of present-day Sierra Leone has been occupied continuously for nearly 2,500 years.

European explorers reached the African coast during the 15th century. Pedro de Sintra from Portugal arrived in 1462 and began mapping out the hills surrounding Freetown Harbour, and Portuguese traders, as well as the Dutch and French, quickly followed.

During the late 18th century a settlement was founded called the "Province of Freedom," and a number of recently freed slaves began arriving off the coast of Sierra Leone seeking refuge.

Sierra Leone served as the residence of the British governor during the early 20th century, much to the dismay of the indigenous peoples, and several unsuccessful revolts against the British were carried out, including the notable Hut Tax war of 1898 led by Bai Bureh.

Sierra Leone was divided into a Protectorate and Colony in 1924, with each side having their own political system, and in 1947 conflict between both sides sparked a move to provide for a single political system, and in 1951 Sir Milton Margai oversaw the drafting of a new constitution.

Sierra Leone finally achieved independence from Great Britain in 1961, and Sir Milton Margai was elected the country's first Prime Minister. After Sir Milton's unexpected death in 1964, the parliament appointed his half-brother, Sir Albert Margai as Prime Minister, and the country shifted to an increasingly authoritarian era of ruling.

Riots erupted in Freetown against Sir Milton's policies, and in 1967 Siaka Stevens was sworn in as Prime Minister. After an eighteen year reign, Stevens retired from politics in 1985, and Major General Momoh was appointed to the position. In March 1991, after a failed attempt to overthrow Momoh's government, a civil war enveloped the country, lasting a decade and resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (about one-third of the population).

These days, the government is slowly reestablishing its authority after the civil war. The last UN peacekeepers withdrew in December 2005, leaving full responsibility for security with domestic forces, but a new civilian UN office remains to support the government. Presidential elections were held in August of 2007, however, no presidential candidate won a majority of the votes, causing a runoff election to be held in September. Ernest Bai Koroma was elected president.

Sierra Leone is one of the 10 top diamond producing countries in the world, and as such, diamonds and other mineral exports are the country's main source of income. Although Sierra Leone has seen economic success the past several years, there are still significant economic challenges – particularly high unemployment.

Colombian drug cartels are moving into Sierra Leon, using it as a base to ship drugs to Europe.