

# *A Long Way Gone* (Ishmael Beah): **Reading Response Journal**

**DIRECTIONS:** Write a separate journal response to each of the following. Length for each journal response is minimum 200 words, but you are encouraged to go deeper and to write more.

Plan to complete the four journal responses in the order given, and to write them during the course of your reading (rather than completing the book first and then returning to the writing). **(5 marks each = 20 marks)**

Note that each of these journal writings is a personal response. Be engaged. Own your feelings and opinions. Show your reasoning.

1. At the end of chapter one Ishmael recalls his grandmother's words about an old adage, "We must strive to be like the moon." Reflect on what the adage looks like, or might look like, when adopted into your own life. In other words, what does/would *striving to be like the moon* look like for you in your daily life?
2. Think back to when you were 12 years old. Identify and describe two significant ways that you were similar to Ishmael as he was before the soldiers attacked his village and separated him from his parents.
3. In reading this true story, there will undoubtedly be times when you are shocked or appalled or horrified. Pay attention when this happens, and make a note of the very disturbing passages (fold the page corners or jot down the page numbers) so that you can easily locate them later. This particular journal assignment is to reflect upon and to describe your thoughts and feelings in response to one of these scenes or situations. It does not matter which scene/situation you choose, so long as it evokes a visceral (gut) response within you.
4. The mantra that the child soldiers hear from the staff at Ishmael's rehabilitation camp is, "It's not your fault." Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with what the staff tell the children.

## **DUE DATE:**

The four reading response writings are due on the first day of classes in September.

**BONUS MARKS:** You may choose to also create a drawing or a painting or a 3-Dimensional model of a significant scene from anywhere in the book. The quality of the art work is secondary to the content and detail captured in the scene. The drawing/painting must be accompanied by quotations (with page references) that convey the details that you incorporate into the piece.

For example, one element of your drawing might be a frightened child with downcast eyes, and another element might be children with slingshots shooting at birds, and yet another element might be a stone bouncing off a metal roof. The supporting quotations for these particular details would be

"The children of these families wouldn't look at us" p.5

"...they jumped as stones landed on the tin roofs flung by children hunting birds with slingshots." p.5

(\*Up to 5 bonus marks will be awarded, based on your attention to detail.)