

Review: Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*

Note: the test contains **40 multiple choice** questions and **one reading passage**.

To prepare yourself, review the following after finishing the memoir:

Background

Review the background info in the Haikudeck presentation from Tuesday, April 18th. Link is here:

<https://haikudeck.com/a-long-way-gone-uncategorized-presentation-c54b7863ff>

1. When did Sierra Leone's civil war take place?
2. At what age did Ishmael Beah become a child soldier?
3. Who were the RUF?
4. Who was Foday Sankoh?
5. What were some of the brutal tactics and human rights abuses the RUF engaged in? How did the Sierra Leonean Army's tactics compare?
6. Who is Foday Sankoh and what role did he play in the war?
7. What's a "blood diamond"?
8. What are some of the problems surrounding the world's diamond industry as discussed in *Time's* article, "Blood Diamonds"?
9. What's the Kimberley Process?
10. According to *Time's* article on "Blood Diamonds," what should consumers do if they want to buy conflict-free diamonds?

A Long Way Gone

11. In the opening of his memoir, Ishmael recounts the first time he told his American high school about the violence he witnessed in Sierra Leone. How do they respond?
12. What was Ishmael's experience with war before he first encountered the RUF?
13. When the rebels come to Mattru Jong, why does Ishmael say that "as young boys, the risk of staying in town was greater for us than trying to escape" (Beah 24)?
14. One evening, Ishmael and his companions are so hungry that they chase down a five year old boy and steal his corn. How does Ishmael describe his attitude towards his actions?
15. What do the rebels do to the imam¹ in the village of Kamator?
16. How do *most* of the villagers behave towards Ishmael and his companions before they become soldiers?
17. Before Ishmael becomes a soldier and he's on his own, struggling to survive in the forest, he's reminded of one of his grandmother's folktales about...
18. What causes Ishmael to smile and take note of the idyllic beauty "even in the middle of the madness"?
19. How does Ishmael prove to the chief of the fishermen village that he's a child and not a soldier?
20. Musa, one of Ishmael's companions, tells a folk tale about Bra Spider, a Mende trickster character who...
21. One of the most tragic moments of the memoir comes when Ishmael finally reaches the village where he's expecting to reunite with his family, but he's instead faced with flames and bullet-riddled bodies: the remains of a rebel attack.
How does Ishmael react when he sees the charred house where his family should have been?
22. When Ishmael meets Lieutenant Jabati, he finds that they have a common interest in what famous author's works?
23. How does Lieutenant Jabati intimidate the villagers into staying rather than fleeing?
24. Describe the training Ishmael and the other child soldiers go through. What else do they do with their time? What brutality do they witness and take part in?
25. How does Ishmael escape his life as a soldier?
26. How do the workers at Benin Home attempt to rehabilitate the former child soldiers?
27. How does Ishmael initially respond to their approach?
28. Who's Esther, and what role does she play in Ishmael's transformation from soldier back to child?
29. What responsibility does Ishmael end up taking at Benin Home?

¹an Islamic religious leader

30. How does Ishmael end up coming to the United States?
31. Who is Laura Simms and what role does she play in Ishmael's life?
32. What happens to Ishmael when he returns to Sierra Leone? How does he manage to escape?
33. Explain the monkey's riddle. What happens in the anecdote Ishmael tells, and what is his intent in using it to close his memoir?
34. Identify some of the memories and activities Ishmael associates with the happier times of his childhood.
35. Identify some specific symptoms of Ishmael's Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from the experiences Ishmael describes in his memoir (**note**: not the events that *cause* it, but rather the evidence of it)

Reading Passage:

"Where was that shirt made? Do you care?"

By Elizabeth Cline August 26, 2013 *The New Yorker*

When a clothing factory in Bangladesh collapsed in April, killing more than a thousand workers, global apparel companies such as Walmart, J. C. Penney, H&M, and Gap were forced to admit—once again—that their supply chains are so long and twisted that they often can't trace their products back to the factories from whence they came.

It's unclear whether customers care. In surveys, people often claim that they'd spend more for clothing if they knew the people making it were laboring in good conditions. In 2006, researchers from the University of Michigan set out to test that claim. They visited a working-class Michigan town with a bunch of socks. On some of the pairs, they affixed the label "GWC." Then they put those socks on a rack with a sign labeled "Buy GWC ... Good Working Conditions," and detailing the working conditions under which the socks had supposedly been made. The other socks, on a nearby rack, got no special labels or sign.

The researchers found that half the customers bought the socks with the special label—as long as they were the same price as the unlabeled socks. But when the price of the labeled socks was five per cent higher, the proportion of takers dropped to thirty-seven per cent. When the special socks were thirty per cent more costly, only twenty-four per cent of customers chose them over the unlabeled socks.

The results of the study shouldn't come as a surprise. With the price of clothing plummeting in recent decades, U.S. shoppers have come to expect low prices and constant novelty from fashion chains. That puts pressure on garment factories to produce new products quickly and cheaply; that, in turn, leads to poor working conditions and low wages for the people who make the clothing.

On Tuesday, an online retailer called Zady will launch a Web site on which visitors can not only peruse clothes and accessories but also read detailed information about how those items were made—where the materials came from, where the factories are located, and who the designers are. Other sites, like Everlane and Honest By, have gotten traction over the past couple of years with similar approaches.

Food companies, of course, have already found success in telling us about the provenance of their products. People buy coffee after reading essays about farmers in Guatemala, and apples from co-ops whose Web sites show pigs rubbing noses with horses. People buy the thing, but they also buy the idea behind it.

Still, an apple grown under good working conditions is different from, say, an organic silk blouse sewn by well-treated workers. First of all, while some people are willing to pay more for a better-made product if they're ingesting it, they might care less about what they drape over their shoulders. Second, tracking down the source of food is relatively easy; with clothing, it's much more complicated. Knowing your apple's origins involves learning

Mr. Neff / English 4 CP
A Long Way Gone

the name of a farm. Knowing where your silk blouse came from involves learning about a designer, a silk-weaving factory, a dyeing factory, a cut-and-sew factory, and the silk-worm hatchery. To explain the clothing supply chain, Zady offers interactive maps showing how its materials are sourced and how its products are designed. Each item on its site is also accompanied by an icon that indicates if it is handmade, locally made, or crafted out of high-quality materials, such as long-grain cotton.

It's not easy to run a fashion start-up, particularly one built on the idea that people are ready to give up their cheap, quick fashion fixes from retailers like H&M. But Zady has promise. Its founders are Maxine Bédard, a Columbia Law School graduate, and Soraya Darabi, a former social-media manager for the *Times*, who also developed an app called Foodspotting that later sold for ten million dollars. In addition, Zady's products are very different from the Michigan researchers' generic socks; while an earlier group of companies asked consumers to pay more for garments simply because they were organic or sweatshop-free, Zady (like Everlane) argues that it's offering stylish and well-crafted clothing made of premium materials.

It seems unlikely that the presence of Zady and its ilk will spur retail giants like H&M and Gap to start telling customers every detail about where their own five-dollar tank tops and ten-dollar scarves come from. For those companies, with supply chains spread out over dozens of countries and countless factories, it might not be feasible (or heart-warming) to describe exactly how their products are made. But the industry is changing. H&M is one of forty retailers that have signed on to a legally binding accord to invest in factory safety in Bangladesh. And Gap and other American retailers are meeting on Tuesday in Chicago to finalize a new set of fire- and building-safety standards. The fate of Zady, meanwhile, may have less to do with whether its clothes were produced under good conditions than with a simpler concern on the part of consumers: Will they like the clothes?

Elizabeth Cline is a New York-based journalist and the author of "Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion."

36. What's the author's primary purpose in this article?
37. What does the University of Michigan study suggest?
38. What evidence in the article supports the answer to the previous question?
39. The author of the article compares consumers' interest in the ethics behind their clothing production to what other products?
40. What differences does the author note between the aforementioned products?