2014-15 Common Reading Experience Lesson Plan Option #1

All new students are expected to have read this year’s book, Ishmael Beah’s *A Long Way Gone*, prior to coming to campus this fall. In addition to being incorporated into campus curricular and co-curricular programming throughout the year, this book is considered **required** reading for UK101. Below you will find a lesson plan option for engaging students in reflection and discussion on their own coming of age story as it relates to Ishmael’s memoir.

This lesson plan is a good option for instructors who wish to devote **two** class sessions to the common reading book.

If you would like to discuss the book throughout the class or for more information on the CRE, visit [www.uky.edu/UK101](http://www.uky.edu/UK101) for discussion questions, assignments, and project ideas. These can also be used for the required paper or project assignment.

**Materials:**
- *A Long Way Gone* book
- Lifelong assignment activity
  - **Facilitator Note:** It is highly encouraged that instructors and peer instructors share their own lifelines when the lifeline assignment is given as a way to set project expectations.

**Assignment**
*Prior to this lesson, you should have students complete their lifeline assignment activity, as it will be shared with the class. Details on the assignment are below.*

**By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:**
- Articulate the purpose of the Common Reading Experience program.
- Express and articulate their opinions and reflections on *A Long Way Gone*.
- Develop a sense of self-awareness and understanding of one’s own story and how it relates to themes in *A Long Way Gone*.

**Overview (two class periods):**
**Day One:**
- Class Attendance & Announcements - 2 min. - Peer Instructor
- Introduction - 5 min.
- Student presentations on lifelines - 40 min.
- End for the day and wrap-up - 3 min. - Instructor

**Day Two:**
- Class Attendance & Announcements - 2 min. - Peer Instructor
- Student presentations on lifelines - 40 min.
- Reflection and wrap-up - 8 min. - Instructor
Introduction (5 min) - Instructor

Briefly review the purpose of the Common Reading Experience and why the students were expected to read this book. Ask the students “So what? Who cares?,” and “Why do you think UK assigned a common reading book?.”

Research shows that the more common academic experiences students have, the more likely they will be successful and stay at a university. The Common Reading Experience was designed to introduce new students to many academic expectations for their collegiate careers, including but not limited to:

- You are responsible for your own learning.
- Not every assignment (i.e., summer reading) will be graded.
- Reading is very important to collegiate learning; you will be assigned many readings, and you will be expected to complete them on your own, usually with no grade attached.
- You will be expected to reflect on your personal experiences and values and relate both to what you read for your classes (verbally and/or in writing).

Ask the students their reactions to reading *A Long Way Gone*. Ask what part of Ishmael Beah’s story they most connected to. What major themes did they pick out from the book? Possible answers and themes that could be discussed include:

- The book focuses on the power of humanity and forgiveness.
- *A Long Way Gone* is Ishmael’s memoir and personal story. Themes include (but are not limited to) storytelling, trauma, violence, family, forgiving oneself, and going through a transformational experience.
- The book introduces us to multicultural and global issues. We are part of a multicultural and global community at UK.
- The book gives us an inside perspective into the lives of child soldiers, the civil wars in Sierra Leone, and Ishmael’s journey to the United States.
- Ishmael went through a violent and traumatic journey during his experience as a child soldier, but he also learned about the power of humanity and forgiving oneself. New students may relate and reflect on Ishmael’s resilience, overcoming immense challenges, and gain an understanding that every person has a story and background.
- The book focuses on the UK Core component of Global Dynamics.

Lifeline Activity Assignment *(the assignment can also be found in the “CRE Topics for Paper and Project Assignments” document, as well as a Lifeline assignment rubric, on the UK 101 website)*:

- **Assignment Overview:** Explain to students that this activity/assignment allows students to introduce themselves and their life stories leading them to the University of Kentucky using a visual representation. They can disclose as much personal information as they are comfortable sharing and may reveal things about themselves that allow for connections to be made with other classmates. They also may reflect upon their lives, good and bad, and assess where they are now in terms of their transition to the University. In addition, students will be asked to develop and insert three tangible goals they will complete leading
up to graduation, as well as three significant events in which they plan to partake (e.g., Dance Blue, Education Abroad, etc.), into their lifeline. The latter will allow for the new students to visualize their personal goals and events while also setting the expectation of graduation. Essentially, the lifeline will begin from the time they were born until the time they graduate from University of Kentucky.

- **Presentation Format:** Instruct students they may choose to present their lifeline in the form of a timeline, a PowerPoint presentation, Prezi, create a photo collage, or however else they choose that best reflects their personalities as approved by course instructor. Typically, students choose to prepare a poster board to present to the class with this activity. In the first part of the lifeline students should include their names, as well as monumental events that took place, like the birth of a sibling, a car accident, graduating from middle/high school, coming to college, etc. A visual representation including drawings, photos, and other visuals is expected.

- **Presentation Expectations:** Presenting the lifeline is a key component of this activity. Students should each have a turn speaking in front of the class, should be given ample time to present and elaborate as much or as little as they wish, and should receive validation for their lifeline via clapping and questions from the rest of the class.

**Lifeline Presentations (Approximately 40 minutes per two class periods)**

- Each student will have the opportunity to present his or her lifeline to the class. If the class has 27 students, each student will have approximately 3 minutes to present if two class periods are utilized.

- **Facilitator Tips:**
  - It is often helpful for the instructor and/or peer instructor to demonstrate his or her own lifeline when assigning the lifeline activity. This allows students to have a visual understanding of what the activity entails and reminds the students that the instructor would never assign something that he or she doesn’t think is important. If the instructor and/or peer instructor does go first, keep in mind that he or she is setting the tone for the rest of the lifeline presentations. They set an example of how quickly students should present, how much detail should be shared, and a standard of quality in the work. It will also be important to give students the lifeline assignment rubric when the project is given to further set expectations.
  - If students share their presentation via a PowerPoint, it is helpful if students send their PowerPoint to the instructor or peer instructor before the class so the PowerPoints can be merged together allowing for ease of transition between presentations. All peer instructors receive a UK 101 jump drive for this very reason.

**Reflection and Wrap-Up (8 minutes during the second class period)**

At the end of this activity and class, it will be important for the instructor and peer instructor to once again ask the students how this activity relates to Ishmael’s story. What connections did they form between their stories and Ishmael’s? How is his story different than theirs? What similarities are there?
Ask your students to write 1 new thing they learned about themselves and 1 new thing they learned about someone else in the class from this activity.

Remind students of Ishmael Beah’s author lecture (if you facilitate this lesson before the date), which will be held on Tuesday, October 28, at 7 p.m. in Singletary Center for the Arts Concert Hall. More details will be announced via e-mail.

*Lifeline Activity adapted from University of South Carolina Faculty Resource Manual*