Possible Topics for UK 101 Common Reading Paper or Project Assignment

1. **Academic Investigation Paper:** Students MUST complete the libraries assignment prior to assigning this paper topic.

Write a two-page paper using two articles from Academic Search Complete ([http://go.uky.edu/U1](http://go.uky.edu/U1)) to research a topic from *A Long Way Gone*. Select one of the paper topics provided below. Describe connections between the topic you are investigating and *A Long Way Gone*.

Use evidence from the articles and *A Long Way Gone* to support your conclusions. Create a works cited page and provide the following information about the article: Article Title: Author or authors: Journal Title: Volume: Issue: Year: Pages (*As you progress through your courses you will learn how to construct these elements into citations, using standardized rules or citation styles, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago.*)

Choose one of the 2 topics below.
- Sierra Leone and civil war
- Sierra Leone and family

Contact the libraries at [http://libanswers.uky.edu/](http://libanswers.uky.edu/) if you need additional research assistance or have questions on how to use Academic Search Complete.

2. **Ancestry Reflection Paper:** Write a three-page paper overviewing the theme of family in *A Long Way Gone*, and relate it to your family history. *A Long Way Gone* is a book with much to say on the subject of family: family life, family relationships, and family environment. Write a short paper that catalogs and characterizes the many different families that Ishmael has belonged to over the course of his young life. Compare and contrast your family history with themes you drew from Ishmael’s family life. Use the following questions to help guide your writing: What is your ancestral history? Where does your family come from (i.e., country of origin)? How do the origins of your family and cultural heritage impact you? What traditions does your family celebrate related to your ancestry?

3. **Lifelines:** Please note that this activity corresponds with CRE lesson plan one and is recommended for two class periods. More information on how to incorporate the book within this assignment is overviewed in the lesson plan. You will need to assign this project prior to when you decide to hold the lesson. Additionally, an assignment rubric can be found on the UK 101 website. (Note: If you choose this assignment, it is recommended that you not choose the “Self-Portrait” as an optional assignment due to several similarities.)

   - **Assignment Overview:** This activity/assignment allows students to introduce themselves and their life stories leading them to the University of Kentucky. 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. If the class has 27 students, each student will have approximately 3 minutes to present if two class periods are utilized.

4. **Reflective writing:** Choose to assign the reflective writing assignment as a series of short papers, a blog, or discussion thread on Blackboard. Write a minimum of three one-page double-spaced papers or five 250 word blog or Blackboard discussion thread posts that answer the following questions:
   - Write about your experience prior to coming to University of Kentucky and what brought you to the Big Blue Nation. Compare and contrast your transition to the University with Ishmael’s journey throughout *A Long Way Gone*.
   - Describe a learning experience you have had a UK so far (e.g., about classes, studying, time management, involvement, etc.), and state what you learned from it. State a learning experience Ishmael had during his journey in *A Long Way Gone*. Draw comparisons from your experiences.
   - What have you learned about others (classmates, peers, faculty, staff, etc.) during your time as a Wildcat? What did Ishmael learn about others (family, people he met, UNICEF, etc.) during his journey? Draw comparisons between your experience and Ishmael’s.
   - What did you learn from reading *A Long Way Gone*? What did you think of the book? Why did UK assign this book as the Common Reading Experience?
   - At the end of the book, Ishmael had a unique opportunity to “start over.” Briefly describe his experience after UNICEF. What did he do and where did he go? Draw comparisons to your own experience as you are essentially beginning anew at the University of Kentucky. How will you make the most of your experience as a new student?

5. **Creation of a folk tale:** Review the tale of the “wild pigs” (p. 53) that Ishmael learned about from his grandmother, and the “Bra Spider” story (p. 75) that Musa tells Ishmael and the other boys. Create your own folk tale based on the history of your ancestry, culture, and where you come from. Additionally, address which *A Long Way Gone* folk tale spoke to you and why. The paper must be two-page double-spaced and will be presented to the class. Your presentation of your folk tale can be in the form of a visual, dance, art, poem, painting, storytelling, or other method as approved by the course instructor.

6. **Service-learning:** Volunteer with one or two other UK 101 classmates at a local organization in Lexington for a minimum suggested amount of 3 hours. Write a two-page double-spaced reflection on your
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experience. Contact the Center for Community Outreach at volunteer@ukcco.org for getting connected with volunteer opportunities. Use the following questions to assist in your written reflection:

- What group or organization did you work with?
- What impact did you make by volunteering?
- What impact did the volunteer experience have on you?
- What parallels did you draw from your service-learning experience to Ishmael Beah’s experience as he now works to raise awareness and advocates for children affected by war.
- Cite specific examples, quotes, and information in your reflection from the book to draw your comparisons.

7. **Group project:** Divide the class into four students per group and have each group pick a different African country to research. Sierra Leone may not be selected. Have the groups research the topics provided below and compare and contrast their selected African country with Sierra Leone and information found in *A Long Way Gone*. Have the groups present their findings to the class through a five minute PowerPoint, Prezi, poster, video, or other method of choice as approved by the course instructor.

- **Suggestions for topics to be covered in the presentation:**
  - Demographics
  - History
  - Culture and origin
  - Family life
  - Gender roles
  - Education system
  - Political and economic status
  - Government structure
  - Geography and climate

Please visit the CRE website for additional information and resources:
http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/NewStudentPrograms/CRE4/.

You can also visit www.uky.edu/UK101 for CRE UK 101 lesson plan options.

*Some prompts, assignments, & projects are adapted from A Long Way Gone’s website. Please visit for further ideas and information:  http://www.alongwaygone.com/long_way_gone.html.*