Freshman Summer Reading Selection

In anticipation of the 2019-2020 school year, each grade level will be assigned a single selection as mandatory summer reading. This approach to the summer reading program is intended not only to encourage independent reading, but also to enrich the student’s experience in a specific discipline. As first term begins in the fall, the teachers will be incorporating the summer reading selection into their courses, where students can expect to further discuss and ultimately be assessed regarding their understanding of the work.

All incoming freshman are required to read A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah (2007). Students should expect an objective test on this work within the first two weeks of school, the grade for which will be recorded in the freshman social studies course, Global Studies.

Summary

This is an autobiographical work about a young man who lived in Sierra Leone in the early 1990s, as their civil war was beginning to gain momentum. He is forced to flee from his home to avoid the RUF rebels who, without mercy, burn towns and kill those who live there. After wandering by himself, and a few times with companions, the author is pressed into becoming a boy soldier, fighting for the Sierra Leone government. Toward the end of the book, the young man is recovered by UNICEF and must learn how to reintegrate into civilian. Today, he lives in New York City and speaks out against violence and regularly urges the international community to act to prevent/end violence.

Connection to the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns

The memoir reflects the importance of having a “climate of equality and respect” while conveying that violence is a physical, emotional, and mental phenomenon.

Connection to the freshman social studies curriculum

The Global Studies course includes a study of conflict, violence, genocide, and its effects. The situation in Sierra Leone in the 1990s provides an effective case study of these topics.