



***Accuracy in Africa: The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War as a Lens for Stereotypes of African Conflicts***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History, 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> English Language Arts

**Keywords:** Causes of Sierra Leone Civil War, Sierra Leone, Civil War, *A Long Way Gone*, Urbanization, Globalization, African Conflict, Stereotypes of Africa, Literacy

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** This cross-curricular unit is about the conflict that took place in the late 1990s in Sierra Leone. A large focus of this unit is literacy, as the students read a memoir by Ishmael Beah, *A Long Way Gone*. The book does not, however, address the true causes of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Therefore, the goal of the unit is to give teachers the background knowledge for the causes of the Sierra Leonean civil war and strategies to teach it to students. Another large part of this curriculum unit serves to challenge students' assumptions about Africa as a whole (geography, culture, urbanization, etc.) while they read the memoir (or as the text is read to them). The book transports students to a particular historical context within Africa, in a very relatable manner, and thus they are able to comprehend and draw connections to modern African people and the modern African landscape as well. Activities and suggestions for *A Long Way Gone* can be found in [Appendix IV](#). Those activities relate more to English Common Core standards, and would be great to implement in a Language Arts classroom. The strategies and goals outlined in the [Teaching Strategies](#) and [Content Objectives](#) will relate more to the Social Studies classroom and to causes of the civil war. For this reason, it is *highly* recommended that this unit is implemented in conjunction with a Language Arts and/or Social Studies teacher.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 300 students in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade World History at Eastway Middle School.*

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## **Accuracy in Africa: The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War as a Lens for Stereotypes of African Conflicts**

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### **Content Objectives**

“The search for a single factor or a single set of factors that explains everything is comparable to the search for the Holy Grail—noble but futile.” Christopher Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars*<sup>1</sup>

Africa is often viewed as one large geographical area in which only a few sets of factors have contributed to the so-called “degradation” of the second-largest continent on earth. Ironically and undoubtedly, this very outlook continues to be a central factor for the seemingly endless cycles of conflict within Africa that we hear about so often.

The ultimate goal behind this particular curriculum unit is to bring both clarity and complexity to an Africa generally understood through a lens of simplification and pop culture representation. This unit seeks to do this by providing a contextual lens through which students can see one country in Africa, Sierra Leone, in a more complex yet clear understanding. The students will be able to apply this knowledge to any future studies they have about Africa. There are also lesson plan resources in [Appendix II](#) to break down general stereotypes of Africa itself, and it is suggested to start with these in order to have a broader impact and introduce the goal of the unit in terms of debunking stereotypes.

Language arts teachers in middle or high school can use this unit, which focuses on a memoir by Ishmael Beal, *A Long Way Gone*. Currently, I am implementing this unit at Eastway Middle School by having language arts teachers read the book aloud across the grade level. The key goals of the unit have a social studies/21<sup>st</sup> century learner focus, but the “hidden agenda” of the unit is to increase literacy. See [Appendix IV](#) for brief teaching strategies and lesson ideas related to the reading of the memoir. It is also important to note that my school has a set aside time for [interactive read aloud](#) to all students in our grade level, so that makes it possible for students to cover the entire memoir despite a wide range of reading levels.

Lastly, before you begin deciding whether or not to use this unit in your classroom, keep in mind that is exactly what this is: a unit. This is not a resource just for tomorrow’s lesson. It provides you, the teacher, with an incredible depth of knowledge on the subject at hand. Then, it seeks to make that knowledge student-friendly in teaching strategies and classroom activities. Do not be intimidated by the length or amount of research. It is intentional, seeking to develop more background for you. The goal is for you to be an expert on a topic without having to put the time into researching, while simultaneously

teaching the research in student-centered ways. You will not be able to transfer everything here to your students—don't try to do so, either.

First, a primary goal is for students to see how crucial context is. In viewing just one country, Sierra Leone, you will be able to do easier comparisons to other African countries that have experienced similar conflicts. Conversely, we also will be able to develop contrasting stories to countries that did not experience events Sierra Leone has (such as extensive slave trading due to the geographical location of Sierra Leone) and how the issues facing those countries are different. This context is critical since students (and adults) have a tendency to reference Africa as a country, no doubt a trait that comes from how Africa is generalized and covered within the media and the public education system. One of the very things that will immediately debunk that stereotype is showing the class a picture of the true size of Africa. See [Appendix II](#) for a lesson plan centered around this picture, in which the United States, China, most of Western Europe and parts of South America are fit inside the African continent with its 54 distinct countries.

Second, another primary goal is for students to get a clearer picture of how Africa “looks,” particularly in reference to globalization and urbanization. Especially for students in a Title I context, these are extremely important concepts to grasp since they can be somewhat “invisible” forces in our world today. Students have little to no understanding of the vast urbanization within Africa (despite this being much more “visible”), or of the impact globalization has had upon African countries. From Egypt's Cairo to South Africa's Johannesburg and the Democratic Republic of Congo's Kinshasa, urbanization and globalization are important historical concepts and phenomena that can easily be taught through the lens of African countries. See [Appendix V](#) for detailed ideas and plans.

Third, a final primary goal is for students to be transported to Africa without relying on lectures and secondary sources. The hidden goal within that is for students to develop literacy skills by reading *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beal, a memoir about a child soldier in Sierra Leone's late 1990s civil war. The gripping account allows students to be taken to that place in history when modern globalization and urbanization are very tangible and concrete concepts in Africa.

The weakness of the memoir is that it does not teach the many factors leading to the civil war, so all of the research for this unit will be teaching the background for Sierra Leone's civil war. Why did the civil war happen? What is the historical precedent leading to this civil war? What global concepts is Ishmael faced with as he takes readers on an unexpected journey?

The memoir will serve as the backbone for this unit. The lesson plans ([Appendix II](#), [V](#) and [teaching strategies](#)) will revolve around the historical time period in which the novel takes place, and many of these strategies incorporate literacy. Since the content I teach within my classroom is 7<sup>th</sup> grade modern world history, it will naturally be easier for me

to weave in historical events and concepts from major historical eras because I already am required to cover such content.

For this reason, I provide [Appendix V](#) in which lesson ideas are developed for the historical time periods of the Age of Exploration, Imperialism, and Post-Colonialism, although the immediate focus of this unit is focused on current global issues within Sierra Leone and literacy. If you are a language arts teacher wanting to use this, it is *highly* recommended that you partner with a social studies teacher to pre-teach Sierra Leone's history. If you are teaching in North Carolina, it will be easiest to teach this unit in 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade because those are the years in which modern world history is covered.

Overall, rather than focus on many different countries in which a single set of explaining factors have been presented by the international community, the ultimate goal is to view Africa contextually. By using a memoir to bring students into a child's shoes, they get a first-person perspective of the invisible forces acting upon an individual in the modern African context.

### **Background of School and Students**

Eastway Middle School is an extremely diverse school and community. It is a Title I school with 97 percent of our population at or below the poverty line. There are 48 languages spoken at our school, so it is very representative of an international community. Many of our students are refugees from other countries, and some are newcomers to the United States within the last year. My students appreciate being challenged and being held to high standards in the end, and they are students who are in need of understanding what it looks like to interact with people of various cultures and societies.

As with most Title I schools, there is a large vocabulary deficit for many of my students so they struggle to retain vocabulary words, and have little stamina when reading. For this reason, I will suggest that some words in here be used as different words with similar meaning that the students can relate to. Again, this is another reason for the social studies teacher to work with a language arts teacher in order to help students build the stamina and confidence needed to work with this memoir (lexile level around 980).

### **Rationale for how content is significant to my classroom**

This curriculum unit is extremely significant to my classroom because it is very focused on building students' ability to comprehend the world around them. Despite middle and upper class whites being stereotyped for being "sheltered," I have often found that there is some grain of truth in my own students being sheltered. Many of them have had extremely little exposure to different cultures and ideas, as our society has segregated itself geographically and socioeconomically.

Due to the socioeconomic status of many of my students, most would be considered first generation college students if they make it to college, and for these reasons they are extremely prone to the stereotypes gleaned from popular culture and the media. They have hardly learned the skills needed to analyze the messages being sent at them. Thus, despite the glaringly obvious fact that this unit hits four major time periods covered by 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade world history curriculums and that it will positively impact literacy, it is also extremely significant because it has the capability to simultaneously impact my students' worldview of the world around them.

### **Content Background: Civil War in Sierra Leone**

#### The Importance of Africa's History

As stated earlier, this curriculum unit is focused on teaching the background for the recent civil war in Sierra Leone to support the student's reading of *A Long Way Gone*. In order to understand what leads to this civil war, there are three important time periods in Africa's history that need to be addressed in which Sierra Leone was greatly effected: the Age of Exploration/ Slave Trade, Colonialism/Imperialism, and Global Institutions/ International Organizations.

Without this prior knowledge as a teacher, it will be very difficult to comprehend why Sierra Leone's history of economic and social exclusion caused it to erupt into 11 years of civil war. For the students, [Appendix V](#) has been provided with some resources for them to learn from. For teacher background, please read [Appendix VI](#) as needed in order to understand these key time periods. This is why it is recommended to pair with a social studies teacher to focus on Sierra Leone when discussing historical topics that impacted Africa as a continent, particularly in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades, because the following content is covered in those grades and it will be fresh in students' working memories.

#### Stereotypes of African Conflict

The civil war in Sierra Leone was, per usual, presented with overarching generalizations from the media and international community. However, academic literature provides us with a few more nuances. My goal in this section is two-fold. First, to give the teacher background for truly understanding causes of the conflict and to understand how the conflict was perpetuated because of conflict diamonds and child soldiers. After this section of research, the last step will be to eventually break those parts down for students. You can find some lesson plans, activities, and resources for that in [Appendix III](#).

For multiple reasons, it is easy to see why the media has to be brief, concise and simple with interpretations for conflict abroad. As explained by Séverine Autesserre, the media has specific time constraints in reporting, can no longer afford embedding journalist in host countries for longer than a few weeks at a time, and faces a population of people increasingly driven by social media and "shortened" versions of stories. Thus, there is an increasing threat for "the danger of the single story."<sup>2</sup>

To understand the stereotype we will be dealing with when looking at Sierra Leone, Morten Bøås accurately sums up the media's interpretation of its early 1990's conflict:

Through the media, we are fed horror states of red-eyed, drugged monsters in the form of young men who seemingly kill without purpose or remorse. Their only objective seems to be their own survival and the 'pleasure' to be found in rape and looting. The reasons for this are seemingly greed and hate in their most basic forms.<sup>3</sup>

In reference to Sierra Leone, the news media overemphasized the role of "conflict diamonds" and child soldiers as the main causes for the Sierra Leone conflict.<sup>1</sup> They resorted to stereotypical implications of "Africans" as motivated by greed with child soldiers following close in their footsteps (see "[African Male Stereotypes](#)" in [Appendix II](#)). While conflict diamonds and child soldiers indeed played a role in the conflict—the former having a partial role in its cause and continuation—neither are the main causes for the conflict.

### **The Real Causes of Sierra Leone's Civil War: Neopatrimonialism and its Collapse**

First, in our discussion of the civil war in Sierra Leone, we must break down the philosophy of governance used in Sierra Leone, because it is cited as the main cause for the civil war. We can again note that this is where Sierra Leone is in many ways a lens for other Sub-Saharan African countries, especially that of neighboring Liberia, where conflict broke out due to similar philosophies of governing.<sup>4</sup> Bøås argues that the Sierra Leone civil war began due to one governing principal: "neopatrimonial rule."<sup>3</sup>

Neopatrimonial rule has a number of key characteristics. The first is that there are certain relationships between those in power and those not in power—that is, between the African elite (bourgeois), and the majority who are not in power.<sup>4</sup> Bøås refers to this relationship as patron-client relationships, or "clientelism." The patrons are defined as the minority of African elite who have power, and the clients are defined as the majority of Africans not in power. In this very specific relationship, there exists an acceptance of the inequality between the two as long as the clients are "paid off" with various resources from the elite.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the elite patrons give benefits to the clients in the ways of jobs, access to state resources, and other favors in exchange for their loyalty.

"Paid off" is in quotations because it is less like bribing and more like exchanging. They do not need to bribe, because in this system it is morally expected that something will be given back in exchange, especially if the clients are within the patron's social grouping.<sup>4</sup> When referring to "social grouping," I am referring to ethnic group, particularly in the case of Africa. However, with Sierra Leone, this was not as much the case. The groups were more divided based on loyalty to the ruler and less divided based on ethnicity.

A second key characteristic of neopatrimonialism that is a result of patron-client relationships is the natural, semi-permanent state of social exclusion within a country.<sup>4</sup> Much literature has been dedicated to this social exclusion and it is often referred to as a “grievance” experienced by the clients. Some cite these grievances committed against clients as the main causes for conflicts rather than the “greed” of elite African patrons. However, it will become clear that both greed and grievance played a major role in the collapse of Sierra Leone into civil war. For the elite patrons, greed for exclusive political power became desirable because it translated into exclusive, private access to state economic resources (that could be used to obtain client loyalty). And for the clients who were excluded from this exchange, the grievance of being denied resources eventually fueled what would become an 11-year civil war. Both greed and grievance worked together.

The accepted inequality between “big men” and “small men” is an important exchange between unequals in a neopatrimonial state. Sierra Leone’s economy collapsed to the point where the philosophy of clientelism could no longer support African clients, aggravated by economic reforms pushed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in the early 1990s.<sup>5</sup> These reforms were an attempt to promote an efficient Sierra Leone bureaucracy devoid of patron-client relationships as Sierra Leone simultaneously sought to secure better sources of revenue in a post cold-war era.<sup>5</sup>

The economic reforms imposed by the IMF and World Bank succeeded in undermining neopatrimonialism, but that became part of the problem. They also produced goals contrary to an efficient bureaucracy. Instead, clients and bureaucratic institutions (such as the army) once backed by patron support collapsed under the pressure of economic reform.<sup>5</sup> Without changing the true nature of the way Sierra Leone operated, the government laid off many of the “smaller” clients in the civil service sector of the economy who were given resources in exchange for their loyalty. If workers were not laid off or fired, then they simply ceased to gain the expected reward for their loyalty.<sup>3,5,6</sup> This is important because it gave the appearance of economic reform by slicing down on state-backed institutions.

However, clients who were formerly supported by neopatrimonialism joined the ranks of other Sierra Leonean clients who had already experienced intense socioeconomic exclusion.<sup>5</sup> The ranks of those who had undergone exclusion—both from the establishment of neopatrimonialism and from its collapse—grew to an apex in the early 1990s and eventually formed the Rebel United Front (RUF). The RUF was backed and funded by neighboring countries, and was the primary group fighting against the Sierra Leone government throughout the civil war.

At this point it is important to stop and to analyze a few questions: first, isn’t this simply a system of corruption? In one sense, it absolutely is. So the next logical question is why the relationship of clientelism is morally accepted as one of the underpinning characteristics of neopatrimonialism. The answer is complex, but important. First, *most*

Sub-Saharan African states do not conform to a Western concept of an institutionalized political system. In other words, institutions are not regulated in the same way, and do not have the same philosophical morals and underpinnings as they do in Western bureaucracy.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, neopatrimonial rule is very similar to the idea of the “two publics” which Peter Ekeh argues is of extreme relevance to sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> In his argument, African elites have a moral obligation to take from the civic public and give to the primordial public. The primordial public can simply be seen as one’s private social grouping, which I have previously mentioned is more often ethnic grouping than not. The civic public, on the other hand, is the public which most westerners feel morally obligated to protect and fund—the army, the educational system, etc. In Western forms of government, the civic public is seen as public institutions which people have moral duties and responsibilities to uphold. However, in much of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, there is no moral attachment to the true establishment, maintenance, and protection of the civic institutions from the primordial public. There is no push to “fix” the way the primordial public operates, because it is not “morally broken” to begin with.<sup>4</sup>

The second question then becomes why it is that this system is morally acceptable. Ekeh argues extensively that this system was established and imposed by European colonialism to begin with. Essentially, the structure of these two publics in Africa can be drawn from the European colonizers’ attempt to draw lines of division amongst Africans, the old “divide and rule” strategy.<sup>4</sup> They attempted to bring back traditional basis of power—previously defeated chiefs and kings—as a way to challenge the African bourgeois who had risen to power.<sup>4</sup> Here, it is vital to note that traditional kingship and chieftaincy in Africa has always been defined in moral terms.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it was always moral to be loyal to the traditional king and chief.

The effort to divide the African ruling class by traditional powers failed because the traditional kings and chiefs were too “enfeebled” from conflicts that had ensued due to the slave trade and the colonial machine.<sup>4</sup> However, it was successful by creating an ideology that legitimized and empowered what would become the primordial public by revitalizing the idea that loyalty to traditional chiefs and kings has always been defined in moral terms.<sup>4</sup> This was then translated into primordial/ethnic terms, and the colonizers were able to divide the African ruling elite by ethnic groups. Subsequently, Africans felt morally responsible to be loyal to their own ethnic group in the same way they felt morally responsible to be loyal to a traditional king of chief.<sup>4</sup>

The imposing of this neopatrimonial system had a number of negative impacts upon Sierra Leone (and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa), but for our purposes we will cite two. First, politics becomes reduced to economics, and second, the lines between the public realm and private realm blurred significantly since public political power translated directly into private economic gains for “in-group” patrons and clients.<sup>3,5,6</sup>



It is important to remember that this system naturally creates patrons and clients who are less excluded than others, and because of this, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have a strong sense of an “us versus them” mentality. This mentality is crucial because warlords, chiefs, and rulers create power images of “the other” as they take power themselves, and reinforce the identity of “the other” to solidify their own. Without “the other,” who needs security? Who needs to be protected by a strong leader? Who needs the power structure of the primordial public? Instead, the group in power creates alliances with other groups—some stronger than others—through clientelism.

In conclusion, the system of neopatrimonialism fits into the context of the “two publics” by creating an accepted, unequal power structure between those who have risen to power and those who have not. In doing so, groups in power naturally give more resources to those in their own group, and sometimes give enough for other clients in different groups to “survive.” Since neopatrimonialism creates an environment in which access to economic resources and mobility depends on access to political power, some groups are naturally excluded as the group in power delegates more resources to their own group as opposed to “the other.” This delegation of resources and favors in exchange for loyalty is not only expected of leaders but is also seen as morally righteous and socially normative. When the system collapsed, even more people suffered “grievances” and were politically mobilized to fight against their government.

### **Brief Historical Context to Neopatrimonialism**

To any reader, hopefully the next question is how this system developed. How did a system such as neopatrimonialism develop in an Africa ruled by Europeans for a number of decades?

This is an extremely important question because understanding how this system advances is crucial to understanding why the events in Sierra Leone unfolded as they did. It is also important to understanding the big picture, because this system was not just drafted out of the blue by African peoples in Sierra Leone. Rather, the historical roots of this system can be briefly summarized as a colonial effort to divide, exclude and rule during colonization. This time period of colonization lasted from the late 1780s to the 1960s for Sierra Leone, but for the majority of other African countries colonization was less than a century long, lasting from the 1890s to the 1960s. For more background on Colonialism, visit [Brief Historical Overviews](#). As this system was implemented, it was done with such effectiveness that it not only succeeded in ruling African peoples, but it also succeeded in creating roots for further conflict within the continent.

Beginning with colonization, European bourgeoisie had a disproportionate influence on the actions of the state to colonize Africa. They saw the massive opportunity for economic gains by setting up an exploitive system during the industrial revolution to funnel natural resources back to Europe. The state, while gaining raw materials for its industrial machine, set up multiple justifications to garner public support of such

colonization efforts. These included social Darwinism and the “backwardness” of the African peoples.<sup>4</sup>

As the European bourgeoisie developed ways to remain in Africa, they also developed ways to keep the African bourgeoisie at bay. In essence, they were able to break the African bourgeoisie to be pitted against each other, securing an easy way to divide them, exclude certain groups, and rule the land.<sup>4</sup> They kept their own rule easier and kept African elites from forming strong, united, revolutionary movements, and one lasting effect this had was that of keeping African elites pitted against one another as Africa gained independence. This is crucial to understand because it gives a context for how specific groups will develop their own elites, especially in Sierra Leone.

### **Connecting Neopatrimonialism to the Classroom and This Unit**

In connection to the classroom, the curriculum unit will delve into the exclusion created in African politics by neopatrimonialism. If the word is suitable for your classroom then please use it, particularly with high school students. However, this word might be overwhelming for middle school students, especially students like mine who are in a Title I context. Maybe it is an oversimplification, but discussing this word in terms of favoritism could be an easy connection for students. See [Appendix III](#) for a sample idea to “hook” students into this lesson and make a simple connection to the concept.

Second, the state of exclusion created by this system in Sierra Leone will be helpful for students to analyze and applicable to both their personal lives and the story of the United States. By connecting the economic exclusion apparent in the United States in its lack of social mobility and the ability of the “top 1%” to disproportionately influence general politics, students will be able to easily transfer the concepts presented by neopatrimonialism into long-term memory because of the wealth of relevant connections that can be made to their own lives.

This example can be seen in the recent New York Times article where it showed 158 families as the main contributors to the majority of early campaign money raised for the 2016 Presidential races. 138 families supported Republican candidates while 20 families supported Democrats. Donations covered a range from \$50,000 to millions of dollars, while the grand total was \$178 million raised from those 158 families. This shows the excessive capability of a small minority of elites to influence outcomes of publicly elected officials. The article argued that this disproportionate influence from the rich makes officials who become elected eligible to bias towards those donors, undermining the democratic values held in our country (see [Appendix III](#)).

Third, the ability of a socially exclusive state to create an “us versus them” mentality is also extremely applicable to student lives. Connecting the racial divide in our country to the economic separation and inequality between races will make it easier for students to see how people could frame an “us versus them” identify and conflict. This mentality

and sense of identity will be clearly seen in *A Long Way Gone*, stemming from the political (and thus economic and social) exclusion felt by many groups before the outbreak of the Sierra Leonean civil war.

## **Neopatrimonialism in Sierra Leone Itself**

### Post-Slave Trade and Colonialism

After a failed English experiment to create a free society in modern day Sierra Leone by freed blacks in 1787, philanthropists from the Sierra Leone Company aimed to establish a more formal colony.<sup>3</sup> The British government supported 1,200 freed black slaves from Nova Scotia to settle in Sierra Leone under the supervision of the Sierra Leone Company. The new black settlers wanted real political power and access to land, while the Sierra Leone Company did not want the blacks to have that power—thus, the blacks consistently rebelled.<sup>3</sup>

In 1808, the British crown was tired of the rebellions, and took over formal control of the colony. It used indirect rule, and between 1808 and 1864 the original group of black settlers merged with roughly 70,000 other rescued Africans from slave ships to form a strong social group known as the Creoles.<sup>3</sup>

The Creoles worked hand-in-hand with Europeans to administer the colonial government. The Creoles developed their own language, built Freetown up (its name comes from being founded by free slaves), and established themselves in the most important positions in society.<sup>3</sup> Already, a form of neopatrimonialism was established, since other Africans living in this area were excluded from access to these positions in society and to forms of the civil public, such as education.

To many Africans, the Creoles were to be resented and fought against. They were African decedents who developed their own unique culture through cultural diffusion, which set them apart from other native Africans in Sierra Leone. They had also ascertained political power and important political positions, and saw themselves as better than the native African communities present in Sierra Leone. Here we see the beginning of both “us versus them” mentalities and a precedent for neopatrimonialism through indirect rule.

Freetown and much of Sierra Leone were dominated by the Creoles. The rural “hinterland” was very diverse and populated with competing societies and political entities.<sup>3</sup> The major players in the rural areas were the Mende in the south and the Temne in the north, and the political competition between these groups and the Creoles was extensive. It must be noted, however, that there was much political competition between these groups dating back to before British Colonial rule, but that the Creoles were a new introduction by the British into this conflict.

We must stop and make an important observation in order to break a stereotype about European colonialism in Africa. Despite its reputation, colonialism was not an all-powerful, war creation machine disrupting a politically peaceful Africa. Like Sierra Leone, Africa has always been extremely diverse with incredible levels of conflict between different groups before colonialism set foot in the continent (see [Brief Historical Overview](#)). Colonialism did, however, create unique problems in specific areas of Africa depending on the ruling power's governance and their interaction with African groups. In some places, new conflicts were created, while in others, old conflicts were intensified. It must be studied contextually to define the way conflict was perpetuated.

The Creoles would lose their grip on power when the British government established a protectorate in 1896, but were still privileged over other Africans.<sup>3</sup> The country was split into 12 Districts, and each district was ruled by a District Commissioner. This might seem trivial, but what it did was undermine Creole rule. Now, chiefs and local rural leaders could interact directly with the British colonial administration to secure resources, since they had their own Commissioner.<sup>1</sup> This is the way indirect rule worked in terms of the hierarchy mentioned in [Brief Historical Overview](#).

The foundation for a neopatrimonial state was in place. Groups within the 12 districts created their own identities, and secured those identities through demonizing the “other”—most times the Creoles. This rural and usually conservative region was dependent on patron-client relationships with those in power, mainly the colonial administration, in order to secure resources.<sup>3</sup> It was especially important to secure resources through the district commissioner because the agricultural economy was volatile. The establishment of cash crops such as cocoa, palm oil and coffee made soil nutrients weak and crop harvesting unreliable. Without the establishment of these relationships, the district and community could suffer greatly.

The Creoles, on the other hand, also created patrimonial exchanges through patron-client relationships with those in power to secure resources. Simultaneously, the Creoles were cementing their own Creole identity. In some ways, it became an urban-rural divide, even though it is more complex. The complexity is that many groups were marginalized and excluded from this large-scale competition in patron-client relationships. Specifically, many groups in the south and southeast were excluded from the larger patron-client relationships and these excluded areas become crucial as they were eventually the regions where the civil war broke out.

Thus, the relationships between the Creoles and other groups in Sierra Leone is very important because it is the historical precedent for a neopatrimonial society in Sierra Leone. Even though the competition and relationship between these groups will subside from our conversation, the historical importance is that it establishes neopatrimonialism as a moral norm of systematic governance and social identities.

“Born from the womb of globalization and nursed to life by a transnationalized civil society, Sierra Leone was not a united nation that emerged to life when independence was granted in 1961; on the other hand, the foundation for a neopatrimonial state was definitely in place.”<sup>3</sup>

### Era of Independence, Diamonds and the Informal Economy

When Sierra Leone became independent, the economy had shifted from primarily exporting forest products to exporting minerals products. This was due to a shift in global markets and the removal of the colonial regime. With the establishment of more competition from South America’s immense forest products—particularly coffee and cocoa—it became increasingly more difficult to produce forest products at a lower cost.

Areas where the minerals were located were areas that had been extremely marginalized politically and economically. They did not have heavy economic importance since the colonial era had focused so heavily on cash crops and forest exports for their economic benefit. A trade union leader from the mining area, Siaka Stevens, established a new political party called the All People’s Congress (APC). It began as a movement appealing to those who had been marginalized, and appealing to those who had received “the short end of the stick.”<sup>7</sup>

Stevens was, however, the perfect neopatrimonial ruler. Claiming to be part of every major ethnic group, he used trickery and violence to consolidate and stay in power. By 1973, Sierra Leone was essentially a one-party state under the APC, and he set up a shadow government to control the diamond-rich Kono District. The diamonds and revenues from this district were used to give patronage to the groups that cooperated with the government and to exclude the groups that did not. Neopatrimonialism was Stevens’ main weapon of choice besides violence.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, the lines between “public funds” and “private funds” were destroyed, another key component of neopatrimonialism.<sup>8</sup> Since Stevens cleverly claimed to be of all ethnic groups, he could base his moral obligation to patron-client relationships less on his “own” social grouping and more on the social groups who complied with him and those who did not. Identities within groups began to change to reflect allegiance to “Father Stevens” or marginalization to “Father Stevens.”<sup>3</sup> We can rightly call him a neopatrimonial dictator.

Due to the “privatizing” of the mineral industry (particularly diamonds), established clientelism, and an iron grip on civil society through the creation of a one party state, the marginalized and excluded Sierra Leone developed even deeper rifts. Naturally, those rifts occurred between chiefs and peoples being rewarded and those who were excluded.

In part because of global markets and in part because of corruption, the mineral economy declined. Government spending outstripped revenues, and Stevens began to lose his grip on the neopatrimonial state.<sup>8</sup> In return, he became focused and dependent

upon foreign aid packages from the IMF and the World Bank to balance his budgets and finance neopatrimonial exchanges.<sup>4</sup> As noted by Reno, they IMF and World Bank had the goal of increasing bureaucratic efficiency and creating both bureaucratic and economic reform.<sup>5</sup>

However, the IMF and World Bank wanted to see more transparency in the state use of these resources. They refused to pay out the scheduled loan for the impending economic crisis. The result was twofold. First, rather than an elimination of neopatrimonialism, what resulted was the elimination of some of the “smaller men” in the neopatrimonial system.<sup>5</sup> By decreasing the number of players on the “payroll,” it hurt the less well-off individuals in the neopatrimonial state and further excluded them from the very exchange meant to counteract inequality. Second, the formal economy was further crushed while “big man players” blossomed.<sup>4,5</sup>

As the informal economy flourished, the economy depended even further on quiet deals and political relationships with “big men” in the system. A secretive diamond trade was set up to create “magic money” with which the political elite kept afloat to fend off political rivals and keep some form of clientelism alive to the needed players.<sup>3,5</sup>

Later, these diamonds would become increasingly important in funding private clients and the army for both Stevens and his successors, since the neopatrimonial state had essentially collapsed under reforms.<sup>3</sup> The diamonds are often called “conflict diamonds” or “blood diamonds” for their role in perpetuating conflict, but they were not the sole cause for the conflict. The RUF also used these diamonds to fund their own rebel operations and to dole out their own forms of private rewards for loyal clients.<sup>5,7</sup>

After a surprisingly smooth transition of power in 1986 from Stevens to his former army commander, Joseph Momoh, Momoh promised to end corruption and put the nation’s needs ahead of individuals in the patrimonial state, while refraining from neglecting the needs of individuals and groups.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, his goal was to smash the parallel market created by neopatrimonialism—the primordial public—in contrast to securing the crushed civic and public institutions.<sup>8</sup>

However, despite a new arrangement with the IMF and World Bank, Momoh’s regime was stuck between a rock and a hard place. As Reno points out, Momoh was indecisive and was not able to balance the needs of the neopatrimonial state or the needs of reform. On the one hand, he needed international credit to fund the neopatrimonial demands of the civic public (the army, police, and other state organizations) and on the other hand he needed the funds for state leaders in the primordial public to have a pool of jobs, opportunities and resources available for their loyal clients.<sup>3,5,8</sup>

Due to his indecisiveness to provide for either, ministers had free reign to be corrupt and the IMF stopped all loan payments to Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup> The IMF and World Bank, while making the neopatrimonial system collapse, simply turned rulers into characters

who resembled warlords. Momoh resorted to outside resources to fight the war (Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary group) since he could not pay the unruly and undisciplined army, and used violence to control vital diamond resources in order to reward some of his followers.<sup>5</sup> The next leader, Strasser, who disposed of Momoh in 1992 because he was an unpaid army Captain, is the perfectly ironic example of just how much the neopatrimonial state had fallen apart.<sup>5</sup>

The consequence was incredible economic hardship and even more intense rivalry over mineral resources. Strasser needed them to pay off followers while rebels needed them to continue to fund their operations.<sup>5</sup> This was the height of political and economic exclusion in Sierra Leone, as it drifted to the worst state in the world for economic well-being and social mobility.<sup>8</sup> It was in this moment of severe economic hardship and exclusion, in addition to the birth of a civil war in neighboring Liberia, that the formation of the Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was fueled and funded. “Strongmen,” as called by Reno, were able to find allies among the discontented and excluded, and public sector employees found common cause with armed youth from the capitals shantytowns.<sup>5</sup>

#### The RUF and Liberia

The excluded societies in Sierra Leone included an alienated Temne group from the northern and central areas, and Mende groups from the southern areas, accounting for 60 percent of all Sierra Leoneans.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, Strasser began violently crushing anyone who talked of a multi-party state.

Thus, the RUF had strong mobilizing objectives for the excluded: overthrow a one-party rule, restore multi-party democracy, and restore economic mobility to historically excluded groups.<sup>3</sup> The RUF incorporated many populist economic words into their cause in order to rally the economically and socially excluded groups, which worked heavily in their favor. It attracted many millennials, even though this is separate from the child soldiers both sides conscripted.<sup>8</sup>

As implied, the RUF was not made up of one homogenous ethnic group, and neither was the privileged elite. Rather, the RUF was a conglomeration of the various Sierra Leonean groups who had been economically and socially excluded from client-patron relationships in a neopatrimonial state.<sup>8</sup>

This is an excellent opportunity to show that not all African conflicts are directly related to ethnicity. It is also a great opportunity to make the point that much of the conflict in today’s world is more directly related to the development of complex political and socioeconomic issues rather than cultural differences between groups of people.

The RUF would have been defeated much quicker had it not been for the consistent support of the powerful Charles Taylor, a Liberian warlord and the eventual leader of the country. In short, Liberia had been through a nearly exact historical precedent of

neopatrimonialism, and the economically excluded executed a successful coup d'état. Taylor was the leader of one of the groups who rose to the coup d'état, and had been elected president.

Taylor had multiple reasons for funding and supporting the RUF in Sierra Leone. First, Momoh had funded and supported the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), a group fighting against Taylor in the Liberian civil war in addition to allowing them to operate from bases inside of Sierra Leone. Second, Momoh's government was involved in the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which also fought brutally against Taylor's uprising. Lastly, a destabilized border area made it possible for Taylor to incorporate parts of the secretive diamond trade into his own trading empire.<sup>3</sup>

Similar to Taylor's previous Liberian force, the RUF began with just 100 fighters. However, after various forms of youth conscription, the RUF was able to build a viable fighting force. It was so viable, in fact, that by the summer of 1991, the RUF already controlled 25 percent of southern and eastern Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup>

Momoh was unable to bring peace to the country, and by mid-1991 the economy turned to an all-time low, 10,000 had been killed by 1992, 300,000 displaced, 200,000 were in refugee camps in Guinea, and 400,000 were trapped behind RUF controlled territory.<sup>8</sup>

### Child Soldiers

Before a brief re-cap of the Sierra Leonean civil war, it is important to make some notes about child soldiers, since this is in fact the focus of Beah's book and will be the "hook" into this topic for students.

It is estimated that 5,000-7,000 child soldiers fought on each side of the Sierra Leonean civil war, and that half of all RUF fighters were between the ages of 8 and 14.<sup>9</sup> Williams argues that most children became involved through forced recruitment, which can be somewhat seen in Beah's account. The government followed suit.

UNICEF also reported that in Sierra Leone, due to the economic depravity of the country throughout its history, children had been frequently used as sources of labor as young as eight years old. Children of poorer families are obviously more closely tied to the areas of conflict, so they were subjected to losing parents and the destruction of their environment.<sup>9</sup> They were also subjected to much more exclusion from education and economic opportunities and were often located in "Shantytowns" within cities, marginalized by a neopatrimonial state.<sup>7</sup>

Williams notes that many children indeed volunteered in order to gain a sense of revenge and seek a surrogate family amongst a massive social void caused by the collapse of the state and loss of their families.<sup>9</sup> Many children also had become "street



children” as a way to cope with the impact of having no family, turning to infrequent labor jobs and crime to sustain themselves. Thus, when recruited, they saw conscription to the army as not only a promotion but also as a way to have a more secure sense of family.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, some children were forced to watch their families be slaughtered to make them tougher—or worse, were forced to kill their own family to become tougher.

A note that is not hit at all in Beah’s book is gender. See [Appendix II](#) for a few resources to teach about gender stereotypes in Africa and some videos to debunk them. Williams cites the Disarmament and Resettlement Unit to show that 605 of 1,000 fighters in one unit were girls.<sup>9</sup> Many of these girls were sex slaves, married off to commanders, or also fighters.

Lastly, the challenges of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers were extensive. The gun gave children an “illusion” of empowerment, turned them against the communities they came from, and some communities saw a return to violence in various forms of fighting after the war.<sup>9</sup> This is also seen in the book, since Beah is rehabilitated before one of the last coup d’états in the capital of Freetown. Had he not escaped post-rehabilitation, he wonders if he would have returned to the life of a child soldier.

#### The Tumultuous Civil War and its Drawn Out Ending

For a number of years, the RUF and government forces went back and forth in terms of gaining the upper hand. At one point in 1995/96, the RUF forces took nearly all of Sierra Leone except Freetown when they were thought to be pushed back beyond recovery. In reality, they had just gone “into the bush” to re-group and stockpile resources. Then, the Sierra Leonean Government hired mercenaries from South Africa—a private security group—and they were able to help push back the RUF forces.<sup>9</sup>

There were a number of government transitions, coup d’états, ceasefires and even a few peace treaties that were broken along the way between the years of 1997 and 1999 aimed at resolving the conflict. It wasn’t until July of 1999 that a new peace agreement was struck between the government (then the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, or AFRC) and the RUF, and it was another two years before the fighting came to a complete stop after 2001.<sup>8</sup> In short, it took until 2002 for the country to finally emerge from eleven years of civil war with a democratic transition as well as better governance. Much of this was due to the success of outsourced security forces (particularly Executive Outcomes) and the British Government’s intervention to help suppress the rebels.<sup>7</sup>

It also was not until 2004 for the Disarmament and Rehabilitation program to be completed, as reported by the International Crisis Group (ICG), disarming nearly 73,000 fighters and demobilizing 72,000. In total, 7,000 of those were child soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that nearly 7,000 child soldiers and 57,000 ex-combatants registered for “reintegration,” and were placed into numerous vocations.<sup>10</sup> Some 29,000 went for vocational training for specific trades and given small

allowances (US \$25 per month) with tools to help them find work. Another 13,000 opted for formal education and were placed in schools, colleges, and the local university. Their courses were paid for and they were given an allowance depending on when they registered. Some fighters also found jobs in farming and other activities. All of this was an attempt to re-create the social fabric of a society historically excluded by social groupings that also bottomed out into a civil war based on social exclusions. The program cost \$36.5 million and was paid for by a dozen overseas donors.<sup>10</sup>

### Teaching Strategies (see [Appendix IV](#) for more)

#### Corners

“Corners” is an excellent strategy for pre-reading engagement. Pick one to three engaging statements that you think will really hook students into what they are about to read. Try to pick statements that may not have a clear yes or no answer, but relate to the passage about to be read. For example, if you are about to read the chapter in *A Long Way Gone* when Ishmael first kills another human, you might want to ask, “If someone killed my family, it would be okay for me to kill in response.” Then, in each corner of the room (or on four different walls) you have one of the following: “Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree.” Students then walk to the corner of the room they feel most strongly about. Once there, they share with their classmates at that corner why they chose what they did. After this, a spokesperson from each corner shares general feelings from their corner about why they chose that corner.

In terms of procedures, the best procedure for corners is to give students two minutes to respond to a statement in their notebooks and have them **justify** their answer. This gives them a chance to formulate their own independent thoughts/opinions. Next, have them bring their notebook to that corner. This helps support your students less comfortable with sharing. Finally, as they are sharing, your job is to make sure they are actively writing down what their partner says. If you do not see that, have them sit down immediately and do it again. This is important because it involves all four domains of language: speaking, reading, writing and listening. The emphasis is obviously on the speaking and listening.

Helpful anchor charts would be “accountable talk” so your students can easily say “I agree with \_\_\_\_ because...” or “I disagree with \_\_\_\_ because...”. This is especially supportive of ELL students and EC students.

Finally, corners is even more effective when done twice: at the beginning of class and the end of class. For example, having students respond to the statement at the end of class is a great informal assessment/exit ticket to see if students’ opinions changed or became more complex. You can also change the statement to better relate to Ishmael. For example, “Ishmael is not responsible for the people he killed while being a child soldier.”

What is great about corners is its flexibility to get students out of their seats before they read to get the “jitters” out, after reading to get some movement in, and even during reading if you want to poll students’ reaction mid-text.

### [Information Gaps](#)

In “information gaps,” Partner A has answers which partner B needs and vice versa. The idea of this is for students to cover their papers and have to speak and listen to one another. Sometimes I have my students cover up their papers with a folder or binder, or sit back to back. Students are reading, writing, speaking and listening all at once while also reviewing. This is a best practice strategy, especially for ELL students, because it contains all four language domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening).

### [Socratic Seminar](#) (or [here](#) for video)

A socratic seminar is simply a setting in which students are able to debate each other or discuss a topic. It is really important to take a class period to prepare for a socratic seminar if it is in debate form—each side preparing arguments for the pros and cons, explaining norms and a grading rubric during seminars.

I usually pick a representative from each side to make opening statements, then we allow each side to present an argument with support, and give the other side a chance to refute. It works well in small groups, especially in middle school, since our students can be less prone to long debates in large groups.

With discussions, we could discuss questions such as “Would you do the same thing that Ishmael would have done if you were in his shoes?” Students are prompted to agree or disagree with each other, to ask questions to each other to clarify, and with *A Long Way Gone* this will actually be recommended as a culminating project in [Appendix III](#). It is highly recommended to use questions from the Teacher Guide for *A Long Way Gone*, as well as any questions which have stuck out to your particular class.

### [Gallery Walk](#)

Gallery walks are really common and can come in a variety of different shapes and sizes. There is no one way to do gallery walks, but again they involve movement, so you can incorporate it anywhere in your lesson where your students are fidgety.

Essentially, I use gallery walks to support my visual learners. My gallery walks usually involve vivid images with short captions posted on an anchor chart. Students silently circulate the room to each picture and respond to them, either on the anchor chart itself or by using sticky notes. In social studies, this is important in order to bring concepts alive that can be challenging to visualize. You could use quotes, questions, small reading passages, and could even set it up similar to [stations](#) where it is more structured and students “rotate” in groups. See [here](#) for an example.

For example, if I am going to teach on the exclusion and favoritism which neopatrimonialism naturally creates, I could have a series of anchor charts with a few pictures of the Kono District (the excluded and impoverished diamond-rich region of Sierra Leone) on one wall. Then, on a couple more anchor charts on a different wall, I might have some pictures of the luxury of leaders from Freetown such as Siaka Steven's or Mohmoh's rule.

They could be using higher level blooms questions to analyze the pictures. For example, "how do the Kono District pictures contrast to the ones on the Freetown wall?" Or, "evaluate why you think there is such a difference in this one country in Africa." While, on the other hand, you could have small text reading passages which are broken up and students spend time at each one answering the same set of questions at each station or filling in a graphic organizer.

What is important is that either during or afterwards, students have some way to respond to what they saw. This can be done in many different ways. Students can just walk by and respond to a question or two in their notebook, or they can have post-it notes and they can write which of the two words come to mind: "excluded or favorites" underneath the pictures. You can be creative with that part. This could be a great introduction to a reading passage, a video, or as the main way students gather information during class.

### [Graffiti Walls](#)

Graffiti walls are excellent for informal pre-assessment of your class, especially with respect to stereotypes. In a graffiti wall, you put a sentence starter on an anchor chart and give students a marker. They then write down the first word or phrase which comes to mind. For example, "Africa is..." some high fliers might write "A complex place," while those who have not been taught much might say "A poor country." Use post-it notes if it is a pre-assessment so you can get an idea of where your students are.

Give students a rubric or an expectation; for example, you must write one to five words or a whole sentence. Then, at the end of your lesson, have them use markers on the same anchor chart and hopefully you will see things such as "A complex place," "A big continent," "A place with lots of cities," depending on what you taught.

Another great idea is called "[graffiti text](#)." This is a fantastic previewing activity for a text you are about to analyze, especially for parts from *A Long Way Gone*. In this activity, students annotate and respond to the text that is on the desk in front of them. They predict what they think the text is going to be about, and then will switch tables/desks to respond to more text pieces. Students do not write their name, and that way they can say why they agree or disagree with a classmate's response. As they go on, they eventually learn more and more about what a text will be about, while also teaching annotation in a creative way.

### Stand-Up, Hand-Up, Pair-Up (SUHUPU)

While the example above is in a math classroom, you can see how this activity can be adapted. This is an easy way to get that last block of the day out of their seats and discussing some content. Sometimes, I even have a non-content question thrown in there if they are really active on a particular day (example: Use “SUHUPU” to find out someone’s favorite movie).

First, students stand up, put up their hands up in the air, and then once they have a partner they put their hands down. You could do this activity in many different ways: students could have a majority of different opinion questions after reading a text to ask one another, students could be doing a peer editing or peer grading assignment, or they could be sharing answers with each other.

If students are sharing answers, it is helpful to have them write down another student’s response to increase active listening. A lot of times, I love using this as a peer editing technique. For example, you could have students use close reading on some passages from *A Long Way Gone* and the students will grade each other on how well they annotate, underline key words, and summarize at the end of paragraphs.

### Learning Centers/Stations

This is a very popular form of teaching. Essentially, you set up a group of desks. Each group has a different activity, reading passage, video, or goal. This is a great way to give students a diversity of activities within your classroom. For example, you can have students be analyzing a map of the Sierra Leone Slave Trade and Slave Trade Routes in one station, while in another they are reading a first hand slave account of life on a slave ship which left from Sierra Leone. Your stations don’t always have to be exactly the same in terms of content. If you have technology, you could also do video learning at some stations depending on your access to video technology.

### Close Reading

Close reading is a reading strategy by which students interact with the text. For informational text and primary sources, I follow the “runners” pattern and make students interact with both their text set and questions. It is easy to make into an anchor chart and for students to remember what to do. I find the video to be “all over the place” and my students never remember the steps.

- R- Read the titles and subtitles, underline key words, predict what the passage will be about.
- U- Underline key words in the question.
- N- Number the paragraphs.
- N- Now, read the passage, and summarize each paragraph in your own words.

E- Enclose key words, phrases and sentences as you read. Summarize the main idea of each paragraph in one sentence.

R- Re-Read your questions.

S- Select the best answer and eliminate incorrect answers.

There are probably 100 ways to do close reading, and students will not like it at first. Begin with a small passage, and progress as time goes on. Or, use a large article, but complete a few steps of “runners” each day as a mini-lesson to teach it over the course of a few days. My students have had incredible success answering questions by using it.

### Endnotes

1. Christopher Zurcher, "Making Sense: Conflict Theory and the Caucasus," in *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict and Nationhood in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 42.
2. Séverine Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and Their Unintended Consequences," *African Affairs* 111, no. 443 (2012): 202-222.
3. Morten Bøås, "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 5 (2001): 697-723.
4. Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975): 91-112.
5. William Reno, "Ironies of Post-Cold War Structural Adjustment in Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 67 (1996): 7-18.
6. William Reno, "Markets, War, and the Reconfiguration of Political Authority in Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 29, no. 2 (1995): 203-21.
7. William Reno, "No Peace for Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 27, no. 84 (2000): 325-29.
8. Alfred Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991-98," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999): 143-62.
9. Alfred Zack-Williams, "Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 87 (2001): 73-82.
10. "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States." International Crisis Group. December 8, 2004.
11. Victor Davies, "Sierra Leone: Ironic Tragedy," *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 349-369.
12. Roy Maconachie, "Diamond Mining, Urbanisation and Social Transformation in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, no. 4 (2012): 705-23.
13. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, "The Politics of Humanitarian Intervention: A Critical Analogy of the British Response to End the Slave Trade and the Civil War in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Global Ethics* 6, no. 3 (2010): 273-85.

## Classroom Resources

Construction paper, Chromebooks or iPads (if applicable), Easel chart paper for anchor charts, *A Long Way Gone*, by Ishmael Beal (at least a class set)

## A Reading List for Students

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. New York, New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2007.  
This novel acts as the centerpiece for students to read a gripping, first-hand account of the civil war in Sierra-Leone. Students can easily identify concepts and themes important to the 21<sup>st</sup> century while also being able to put themselves in Beah's shoes.

## Bibliography for Teachers

Autesserre, Séverine. "Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and Their Unintended Consequences." *African Affairs* 111, no. 443 (2012): 202-222.  
This article provides excellent details on how stereotyping Africa's problems—or, better yet, over-generalizing them—can create even more unintended and tragic outcomes. It is specific to the Democratic Republic of the Congo but the idea can be applied across Africa.

Bøås, Morten. "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule." *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 5 (2001): 697-723.  
This article heavily details exactly what the philosophy of neopatrimonialism is, which was essential to the research. Also compares Sierra Leone to Liberia's collapse.

Davies, Victor. "Sierra Leone: Ironic Tragedy." *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 349–369.  
This was a helpful piece in understanding the irony of the IMF providing loans and undermining the neopatrimonial state, while strengthening private rule of elites.

Ekeh, Peter. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975): 91-112.  
A much referenced article essential to understanding why neopatrimonialism is an "accepted moral norm" and how it came to be that way.

"Home." Mama Hope. Accessed November 11, 2015. <http://www.mamahope.org>.  
This website is an excellent source which is intent on debunking stereotypes of Africans in general. Great videos, many referenced in [Appendix II](#).

Jang, Se Yung. "The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War." EInternational Relations. Accessed November 24, 2015. <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/25/the-causes-of-the-sierra-leone-civil-war-underlying-grievances-and-the-role-of-the-revolutionary-united-front/>.

The above article is an extremely well written source on the causes for the Sierra Leone civil war, and is highly suggested for use as back up to my own research.

"Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States." International Crisis Group. December 8, 2004.

The ICG provides great details with academic prudence on places currently in conflicts. They always try to look under the surface level to provide up-to-date academic research.

Maconachie, Roy. "Diamond Mining, Urbanisation and Social Transformation in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, no. 4 (2012): 705-23.

This article discusses the connections between diamond mining, urbanization and social transformation in Sierra Leone today in reference to the civil war. Great for understanding the dynamics of the country today and how the civil war caused it.

Reno, William. "Ironies of Post-Cold War Structural Adjustment in Sierra Leone."

*Review of African Political Economy* 23, no. 67 (1996): 7-18.

Reno really delves deeply into the connection between the IMF, World Bank, and other global institutions to look at their central role in the collapse of Sierra Leone into civil war.

Reno, William. "Markets, War, and the Reconfiguration of Political Authority in Sierra Leone." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 29, no. 2 (1995): 203-21.

Reno discusses how Sierra Leone's restricting of the neopatrimonial government during war impacted the economy and the undermining of the patronage system.

Reno, William. "No Peace for Sierra Leone." *Review of African Political Economy* 27, no. 84 (2000): 325-29.

Reno discusses the challenges facing Sierra Leone (as of 2000) in order for the country to reach peace. At this point, the country was in its ninth year of civil war (approximately).

Seaga Shaw, Ibrahim. "The Politics of Humanitarian Intervention: A Critical Analogy of the British Response to End the Slave Trade and the Civil War in Sierra Leone."

*Journal of Global Ethics* 6, no. 3 (2010): 273-85.

"Sierra Leone Profile - Timeline - BBC News." BBC News. Accessed November 24, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094419>.

This is a very helpful timeline of the conflict in Sierra Leone.



"Videos, Common Core Resources and Lesson Plans For Teachers: Teaching Channel."

Teaching Channel. Accessed November 11, 2015.

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/>.

The teaching channel has a number of resources and strategies that you can use in your own classroom with very helpful videos and teaching tips.

"Welcome to Discovery Education | Digital Textbooks and Standards-aligned

Educational Resources." Welcome to Discovery Education | Digital Textbooks

and Standards-aligned Educational Resources. Accessed November 24, 2015.

<http://www.discoveryeducation.com/>.

If you teach in CMS, you have access to Discovery Education as a science and social studies teacher and its techbook has an incredible wealth of resources for a blended classroom in many topics we have touched on: specifically the Age of Exploration, Colonialism, Global Institutions and Sierra Leone overviews.

Zack-Williams, Alfred. "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991-98."

*Third World Quarterly*, 20, no. 1 (1999): 143-62.

Zack-Williams offered a lot of historical background and takes things very much "event-by-event." If you are a chronological learner, read this article, but preferably after the Boas and Reno articles.

Zack-Williams, Alfred. "Child Soldiers in the Civil War in Sierra Leone." *Review of*

*African Political Economy* 28, no. 87 (2001): 73-82.

This article discusses the use of child soldiers in the Sierra Leone war and how widely they were used. Gruesome but necessary to read.

Zurcher, Christopher. "Making Sense." In *The Post-Soviet Wars*, 42. New York, New York:

New York University Press, 2007.

## Appendix I: Implementing Teaching Standards

7.H.1.2 Summarize the literal meaning of historical documents in order to establish context.

Students will read *A Long Way Gone* to establish a deeper understanding of what life as a child soldier was like in order to gain context for the Sierra Leone Civil War.

7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives. *A Long Way Gone* serves as a primary source document since it was a memoir. Students will be asked at various times to understand the historical perspective of Ishmael Beah and how it influenced his writing of the memoir.

7.H.2.1 Analyze the effects of social, economic, military and political conflict among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. war, genocide, imperialism and colonization). The 11-year conflict in Sierra Leone was a direct effect of neopatrimonial rule between groups in Sierra Leone, directly relating to this standard.

7.H.2.2 Evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative efforts and consensus building among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. Humanitarian efforts, United Nations, World Health Organization, Non Governmental Organizations, European Union and Organization of American States).

The collective efforts of the UN and the international community to stop the fighting in Sierra Leone needs to be analyzed, as it will be, but that includes the way the community ignored the fighting because of events such as “Black Hawk Down.”

7.H.2.4 Analyze the economic, political, and social impacts of disease (e.g. smallpox, malaria, bubonic plague, AIDS and avian flu) in modern societies.

Evaluating the impacts of Ebola on Sierra Leone today will directly relate to the discussion of how disease can have political impacts and create political instability.

7.E.1.1 Explain how competition for resources affects the economic relationship among nations (e.g. colonialism, imperialism, globalization and interdependence).

Even though we do not specifically discuss how the competition for resources created competition between countries, competition for privatized state resources along ethnic social groupings (neopatrimonialism) is a key factor in creating the grounds for the civil war. Thus, the relationships created between people in Sierra Leone because of its unique political economy is how this unit is relevant to our standards.

7.E.1.2 Explain the implications of economic decisions in national and international affairs (e.g. OPEC, NAFTA, G20, WTO, EU and economic alliances).

Increased global interaction and the decision making of international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank with Sierra Leone was a key cause to the collapse of Sierra Leone into civil war (in the context of its neopatrimonial system of governance).

## Appendix II: Unit Introduction: De-Bunking General Stereotypes About Africa; Activities and Ideas

Africa's Geography: Size and Diversity (1 Day to 1 Week long, depending on depth and time you have to cover the topic)

To introduce the unit, I think that a small graffiti write as an informal assessment is a great idea. Just putting the word "AFRICA" in big red letters in the middle of an anchor chart (use butcher paper for the best result because you can make it big enough for most of your class to stand at and write on) and having students come up by group and write down the first few things which come to mind about Africa will be powerful. This can be done again at the end of the lesson or unit to see how student's perceptions have changed.

Show students this picture of "A True Size of Africa." This can be done on a projected board in front of the whole class, or on individual technology, or printed out, or a combination of these things. This fits the standards of students being able to read and analyze charts, graphs, maps, and geographic data.

### The True Size of Africa

A small contribution in the fight against rampant *immappancy*, by Kai Krause  
Graphic layout for visualization only (some countries are cut and rotated)  
But the conclusions are very accurate: refer to table below for exact data

COUNTRY	AREA x 1000 km <sup>2</sup>
China	9.597
USA	9.629
India	3.287
Mexico	1.964
Peru	1.285
France	633
Spain	506
Papua New Guinea	462
Sweden	441
Japan	378
Germany	357
Norway	324
Italy	301
New Zealand	270
United Kingdom	243
Nepal	147
Bangladesh	144
Greece	132
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30.102</b>
<b>AFRICA</b>	<b>30.221</b>

In addition to the well known social issues of *illiteracy* and *innumercy*, there also should be such a concept as "*immappancy*", meaning *insufficient geographical knowledge*.

A survey with random American schoolkids let them guess the population and land area of their country. Not entirely unexpected, but still rather unsettling, the majority chose "1-2 billion" and "largest in the world", respectively.

Even with Asian and European college students, geographical estimates were often off by factors of 2-3. This is partly due to the highly distorted nature of the predominantly used mapping projections (such as *Mercator*).

A particularly extreme example is the worldwide misjudgement of the true size of *Africa*. This single image tries to embody the massive scale, which is larger than the *USA*, *China*, *India*, *Japan* and *all of Europe*..... combined!

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### Top 100 Countries

Area in square kilometers, Percentage of World Total  
Sources: Britannica, Wikipedia, Almanac 2010

	AREA	%	
1	Russia	17.098.242	11,50
2	Canada	9.984.470	6,70
3	China	9.596.961	6,40
4	United States	9.519.911	6,40
5	Brazil	8.511.877	5,70
6	Australia	7.682.024	5,20
7	India	3.287.263	2,20
8	Japan	378.000	0,25
9	Kazakhstan	2.323.800	1,60
10	Russia	2.264.600	1,50
11	Algeria	2.381.741	1,60
12	Congo	2.368.668	1,60
13	Greenland	2.166.080	1,50
14	Switzerland	2.160.000	1,40
15	Mexico	1.964.375	1,30
16	Indonesia	1.904.560	1,20
17	Libya	1.759.540	1,20
18	Iran	1.628.700	1,10
19	Peru	1.284.210	0,90
20	Spain	506.000	0,30
21	Chile	1.267.000	0,85
22	Niger	1.267.000	0,85
23	Angola	1.246.700	0,85
24	Mali	1.240.100	0,83
25	South Africa	1.213.100	0,82
26	Colombia	1.141.740	0,76
27	Singapore	1.100.000	0,74
28	Bolivia	1.098.581	0,74
29	Morocco	1.050.500	0,69
30	Egypt	1.002.000	0,67
31	Tanzania	945.000	0,63
32	Nigeria	923.768	0,62
33	Yemen	525.000	0,35
34	Namibia	824.116	0,55
35	Mozambique	802.500	0,54
36	Pakistan	796.200	0,53
37	Turkey	780.812	0,51
38	Chile	750.100	0,51
39	Zambia	750.812	0,51
40	Myanmar	676.378	0,45
41	Afghanistan	652.000	0,44
42	Somalia	637.600	0,43
43	France	633.824	0,43
44	C. African Rep	602.384	0,42
45	Ukraine	603.500	0,41
46	Madagascar	587.041	0,39
47	Burkina Faso	582.000	0,39
48	Kenya	580.367	0,39
49	Yemen	525.000	0,35
50	Thailand	510.100	0,34
51	Spain	503.992	0,34
52	Turkmenistan	486.100	0,33
53	Comoros	476.442	0,32
54	Papua New Guinea	465.842	0,31
55	Uzbekistan	447.600	0,30
56	Norway	448.800	0,30
57	Sweden	441.370	0,30
58	Iran	440.317	0,29
59	Papua New Guinea	440.752	0,29
60	Zimbabwe	390.700	0,26
61	Japan	377.800	0,25
62	Germany	357.114	0,24
63	Rep of Congo	342.000	0,23
64	Finland	308.418	0,20
65	Vietnam	331.212	0,22
66	Malaysia	328.600	0,22
67	Norway	383.800	0,25
68	Cote d'Ivoire	322.460	0,22
69	Poland	312.680	0,21
70	Oman	309.500	0,21
71	Italy	301.300	0,20
72	Philippines	300.000	0,20
73	Burkina Faso	274.222	0,18
74	New Zealand	270.000	0,18
75	Gabon	267.668	0,18
76	Western Sahara	266.000	0,18
77	Ecuador	284.360	0,19
78	Guinea	245.857	0,17
79	United Kingdom	243.000	0,16
80	Ghana	241.000	0,16
81	Sierra Leone	241.000	0,16
82	Romania	238.391	0,16
83	Lebanon	238.000	0,16
84	Guatemala	214.860	0,14
85	Bahrain	205.600	0,14
86	Kyrgyzstan	192.951	0,13
87	Singapore	180.720	0,12
88	Syria	180.180	0,12
89	Cambodia	180.000	0,12
90	Uganda	179.210	0,12
91	Maldives	160.800	0,11
92	Burkina Faso	160.810	0,11
93	Nepal	147.181	0,10
94	Bangladesh	143.398	0,10
95	Turkmenistan	143.100	0,10
96	Greece	131.997	0,09
97	Myanmar	130.370	0,09
98	North Korea	120.328	0,08
99	Mali	118.404	0,08
100	Eritrea	117.600	0,08
<b>TOP 100 TOTAL</b>	<b>132.633.824</b>	<b>88,34</b>	



The red-orange is all of China, the pale orange is India, the yellow is Japan, the brown color is the United States, the blue is all of Eastern Europe and the U.K., while the remaining countries are Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands. There are many different versions of this map online.

My recommendation would be a think-pair-share on the following question posed on the board in front of the class: “How big do you think Africa is?” If your students need support, give them some options. Example, “A. A little bigger than the United States, B. A lot bigger than the United States, C. Smaller than the United States, D. Much smaller than the United States, E. About the same size as the U.S.” Have them explain why they chose their answer. After students compose their thoughts, have them share with a shoulder partner (the person next to them). Then have them share out their thoughts as a class.

After this, show them the chart of how big Africa is and explain where the U.S. is on the map. Discuss why people don’t understand this, and discuss how this is one reason Africa is a continent (a large land mass). Also, discuss how Africa has 54 distinct countries on the continent. Below is a great picture to put on the board for students to react to in terms of Africa’s diversity in countries alone.



Have your students now analyze what they have learned or how their thoughts have changed. Summarize with your students that this shows Africa is a large CONTINENT that needs to be seen as a complex place.

After this, break your students up into groups. This is best done before the lesson, and hopefully in middle school your class is already somewhat divided into groups. Heterogeneous or homogeneous is up to you as the teacher.

Give each group a different country. Pick 5-7 distinct countries (for example, Ghana, South Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo). These are all very unique countries which have different major religious and culture, with extremely different economies and cities, some being much more rural than others. Each place has similarities and differences in terms of the natural resources available to each country and the current system of governing available to each country.

For each country, have students use the websites such as the [CIA World Factbook](#) to find out major information about each one.

Africa's Culture & People: Video Stations (2 or 3 Days depending on your class time & schedule)

Have the desks set up into five major stations. If you have technology, you will be able to complete this lesson. Post each video as its own group on Google Classroom, and have directions posted on the desks of each station to support students. I would take your normal time for direct instruction and guided practice as a chance to show them each station is and what is to be done at each one. Having an anticipation guide, gallery walk, or open-ended survey completed before and after each video is a fantastic way to gauge what the stereotypes are about that topic before watching the video and how the video helped them change their ideas and thoughts. Having students talk about how their thoughts changed for each one is also crucial.

If you do not have technology, consider how you can use the videos in a whole class setting. I would recommend using anticipation guides whole class or small group, think-pair-share within the group, then watch a video whole class. After the video, have them complete a gallery walk or the same anticipation guide after the video to gauge how they think differently about the topic. Following up with a short reading passage could be helpful as well to gather more details and nuances.

*Rural African Culture & Gender*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BZGCv3rcHw>

Four women using mobile banking and cell phones in a rural African community.

*Gender Issues: Women*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww9tksKKH-Y>

How only woman can play “netball” and how women in Africa are strong, powerful and able to be empowered.

*Gender Issues: African Male Stereotypes*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSElEmEjb4>

This video features four African men who poke a lot of fun at major stereotypes adapted from Hollywood movies and how a lot of Africa is not represented at all. It ends with the very successful things that these guys are doing (such as med school) and it is all done tactfully and with enough humor. This video would be great with a graffiti wall about “African men are...” or “In movies, African men are usually...”

*Occupations & Jobs*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzQfFcy3KJg>

Shows USA and African countries side by side as they sing the same song and do similar occupations or use similar technology

A Global Africa: Urbanization

<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-34-fall-2008/feature/i-didnt-know-there-were-cities-africa>

<http://magazine.good.is/articles/africans-post-positive-images-of-continent-combat-media-stereotypes>

<https://ethemes.missouri.edu/>

After these lessons, go ahead and transport students to [Appendix V](#) for student resources and activities on the [Age of Exploration, Slave Trade and Colonialism](#). For teacher background to these units, see [Appendix VI](#).

## **Appendix III: Sierra Leone Civil War Teaching Resources**

### Introducing Causes of the War

After a warm-up—maybe focused on Sierra Leone’s colonial history of exclusion with the Creoles and the rest of Sierra Leone—the direct instruction for your lesson can be focused on these two words: Favoritism and Exclusion.

How does it feel when a teacher shows favoritism to certain students? Give examples of ways teachers can show favoritism to certain students.

How does it feel when you are excluded from a teacher’s favoritism? Give examples of how you have been excluded before.

Direct instruction and connection to content: Similar to this, leaders in Sierra Leone played favorites with people in their country. The leaders said they were democratic, but they acted more like dictators. What they did is they played favorites with people in Sierra Leone’s society. If they pledged loyalty to the leader, they got certain rewards. However, if they did not, they refused to give rewards to the people.

What you will read now in your groups of five are different types of people or groups who were either favorites and rewarded, or who were excluded and not rewarded at all in Sierra Leone. Remember; think about what you would want to do if this was your daily life! Each group is then required to answer the questions in their notebook based on the reading passage and create a visual to represent which one they think they are—people who are favorites or people who are excluded.

(Create your own rubric for your own classroom based on what you want to see and what concepts you have already covered in class.)

### **Group 1 – Army captains and commanders**

As an army captain and commander, the leader sees your position as very important to reward. You give him your loyalty and commit to this leader, even though he is a dictator, because you know that he needs you. Thus, in return for your loyalty, you expect rewards and resources from this leader. The rewards he might give you could range from to the diamond trade to money to job stability. Regardless, you really need these rewards to be able to provide for your family at home. Because of your steadfast loyalty, the leader gives these resources to you.

### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.



2. If you are an army captain or commander, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

### **Group 2 – Army soldiers**

As an army soldier, the leader sees you as somewhat important. You are a regular soldier, though, so you aren't of extreme importance. If you give your loyalty to the leader and to the army commander, you can expect a small reward in return. This reward could be in the form of small payments of money, but you are not very likely to get a large reward. However, you know that if you don't give your loyalty you won't receive any payments and you will be out of a job because Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world. You need what little is rewarded to provide for yourself and your family.

#### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.
2. If you are an army soldier, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

### **Group 3 – Political Ally to the Leader**

As a political ally to the leader, you are extremely important. The leader knows how much he needs political allies, because as a dictator, he has a lot of enemies. He needs to keep his allies close to him and make sure his opponents are outright excluded. You know that if you are loyal to him, you will be greatly rewarded and you and your family will live a full life. Rewards could include access to many well paying jobs for all of your immediate and extended family members, access to the diamond trade to make even more money, and possibly even a really nice vacation home. You know that being loyal to this leader means you are getting a lot of goods.

#### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.
2. If you are a political ally to the leader, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.

3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

#### **Group 4 – Political Opponent to the Leader**

As an opponent to the leader, the leader obviously sees you as completely destructive. You do not like that this guy is a dictator, and in some ways you want what he has so people who follow you can be rewarded. He is scared that you will lead a revolution against his rule, and that you want to access Sierra Leone's resources for your own good. You try to organize a group to take down the leader, but he purposefully never gives you or anyone associated with you access to any good jobs or good trading networks. This makes it even harder to organize a revolution, and sometimes the leader even gives people who follow you enough access to resources to pay them off and convince them not to fight back.

#### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.
2. If you are a political opponent to the leader, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

#### **Group 5 – Average person in the Kono District**

As an average person in the Kono District, you are an important player because you live in a district where diamonds are mined and sold around the world for great profit. However, since colonial times, you have been ignored in society. Your family and the district is very poor, and Great Britain as well as your own leaders have taken advantage of this in order to take the mineral resources for themselves. They are also heavily armed, so they are able to attack you or your people without much fight back. You never pledge your loyalty to the ruler, and you never have access to other resources because of it.

#### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.
2. If you are an average person in the Kono District, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

## Group 6 – Average person in Freetown

As an average person in the capital of Freetown, you don't have too much of a problem with the leader and he doesn't see you as a threat—so long as you don't join people who dislike him. You see the importance of allying with those who give their loyalty to the leader, but you are a small player in a big game. Access to good jobs and good resources hardly ever go your way, so it is really difficult to provide for your family. Every now and then, the leader might pass out resources through one of your friends loyal to him. You would rather get some resources some times, though, than get nothing all of the time.

### Questions to Answer

1. Cite evidence to support which group you are in—the favorites or the excluded. Explain your answer.
2. If you are a political ally to the leader, do you think you would like this system of favorites and exclusion? Why or why not? Explain.
3. Create a poster to visualize what service you provide to the country and what you might get in return. See my example on the board for help.

As a group finishes (some will finish before others), have them do [SSR or DEAR](#) in order to keep a quiet classroom while groups finish.

If you have classes who work fast, you can have them present materials in front of their classmates that class period. However, that might have to wait until later.

I would suggest a gallery walk after the presentations with the following questions.

- What do you think will happen if the leader can no longer support those close to him?
- What do you think will happen if excluded peoples get funded by other countries upset at Sierra Leone?
- Compare and contrast the differences between the different groups of people.

NYT article on 158 families who supported candidates (see below)

The interactive feature of this online article is an awesome visual for students to understand how our society can be exclusive.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/11/us/politics/2016-presidential-election-super-pac-donors.html? r=0>

## **Appendix IV: *A Long Way Gone* Teaching Strategies**

### How to “Get Through” the Whole Novel

To begin, there are a couple different reading strategies you could use in your classroom to make sure there is at least a base line for what students read in *A Long Way Gone*.

[Interactive Read Aloud](#) ([click here](#) to watch it in action in front of the class)

This is an excellent strategy for lower level readers, and even for higher-level students. This strategy is being used at Eastway in the beginning of every Language Arts class across the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. It last for 5-10 minutes for them. Essentially, this is where you read out loud to the students but you take time to pause and reflect on your thoughts. You can have students keep a T-Chart with one side being vocabulary covered and the other side being summaries. You can pause and ask students to define a word using context clues, or after reading a paragraph with a lot of words students might not know, getting them to summarize what they are reading anyway to teach them how to get the main idea without knowing every word.

While the video shows students in 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade, you can adapt this to your classroom and your students easily. Notice how the teacher in the video starts with the cover, accessing prior knowledge, etc. This will be particularly effective with Ishmael Beah’s book. Notice how the teacher also uses turn and talk and sentence stems to help students have conversations about the text. It is important not to rush and also to not “get in the way of the story” with so many questions and reflections that students lose interest.

[Think-Pair-Share](#)

Think-Pair-Share is a very common teaching strategy. You give students a chance to think on their own, a chance to pair up with a partner and share with a shoulder partner, and then a final chance to share out with the class. You can do this in so many ways.

One way I use this in my classroom is if nobody raises a hand when I ask a question to the class. I will tell them to share their response with a “shoulder partner” (or the person next to them). I time them. When they do this, and I ask the question again, many more hands go up because they have that confidence of “Oh, we said the same thing,” or, “I didn’t understand that but now I do.” This is especially effective with high level thinking questions. It can give students time to independently attempt it, see how a classmate processed information, then hear some exemplar responses. You can vary this activity in many ways.

[Anticipation Guides](#)

Anticipation guides are excellent resources for pre-reading engagement. They can come in a variety of forms. For example, you can ask someone before reading about Sierra Leone: True or False, As a country in Africa, Sierra Leone’s civil war probably had to do

with blood diamonds. Then, students read an article or watch a video and discover that a form of favoritism and exclusion can explain why the war began, and how diamonds really only served to perpetuate the conflict. After reading, they answer the questions again, and can see where they were wrong previously.

This engages students and acts as a pre-assessment. I do prefer multiple-choice questions as anticipation guides simply because our students never have to answer True/False on an exam. Lastly, this could be adapted to include vocabulary words for your ELL students and EC students. You could have pictures for the words favorite and exclude, with a sentence describing each, then on the next page they fill in the blank for the definition, write it in their language and in English.

### Close Reading

Close reading is great for comprehension of difficult passages, not as much “getting through” passages, but you could use this as a way to help students understand a passage of great importance to your instruction. Refer to “Close Reading” in the teaching strategies.

### *Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) or Drop Everything And Read (DEAR)*

Of course, this classic strategy gives students 15-20 minutes of class time to do nothing except read. You could either tell students to get as far as they can, or you could assign reading up to a certain page and give them a tic-tac-toe board of activities to complete when done with their reading.

I prefer letting students get as far as they can. I was able to ascertain a class set where students were able to have their own copy, so then I would assign the rest of the chapter for homework for the next two days, or sometimes the week. Even though most SSR allows students to pick their own text, I think it is important for students to practice reading an assigned text because that will be their reality for much of their educational career. There are a number of [SSR reading logs](#) you can use to keep track of students reading.

I have implemented a combination of these strategies. For example, if students were required to have read chapter 13 for homework, I might do an interactive read aloud on a passage that I want students to be transported to and reminded of because it might be central to a class discussion that day. This way, you don't have to worry about students who don't have time the home structure or motivation to complete homework.

[See here](#) for a teachers guide and discussion questions from Beah's publishers.

[See here](#) for an entire unit based on *A Long Way Gone* from Teachers-Pay-Teachers. It comes with a unit pacing guide and calendar and other awesome resources complete with

quizzes, answers, literacy logs based on literacy strategies, and more. Note: it is well worth the \$6.50.

## **Appendix V: Student Activities for Age of Exploration/Slave Trade, Imperialism/Colonization**

Age of Exploration Overview (using [RUNNERS](#) to break down the passage and to emphasize summarizing each paragraph). This is from discovery education.

### **Reasons for Exploration**

#### **Why did Europeans first arrive in the Americas?**

In the 1400s and 1500s, there was a rebirth of [culture](#) and scientific discovery throughout [Europe](#) known as the [Renaissance](#). During this time, people used scientific inquiry and rational thought to explore how the natural world worked. This curiosity and spirit of discovery, which led to numerous inventions and scientific discoveries during the Renaissance, also led to a period of geographic exploration as individuals began to explore the seas and lands beyond Europe's borders.

Although the ideas of the Renaissance contributed to the exploration of new lands, more practical concerns were also at play. During this period, growing European nations were in constant conflict with each other as they struggled to increase in power and wealth. Many of these nations believed [trade](#) with other countries was the best way to increase wealth. However, many of the land routes that were used for trade with [Asia](#) were controlled by Muslim countries that blocked direct trade between European and Asian nations. As a result, European leaders began to seek new sea routes to Asia in hopes of opening new trade markets.

European leaders like [Spain's](#) King Ferdinand and the Portuguese prince known as Henry the Navigator financed explorers willing to journey across the seas. Along with the idea of looking for new trade routes, they also hoped to find new sources of gold, silver, and other valuables. Additionally, Europeans saw exploration as a way to bring [Christianity](#) to other cultures that lived in faraway lands.

While some explorers sailed around [Africa](#) to Asia, others thought they could find a quicker route by sailing west. These voyages led to the unexpected discovery of new lands, as sailors bound for Asia came to the Caribbean islands and the continents of North America and [South America](#).

[http://www.eduplace.com/kids/socsci/books/applications/imaps/maps/g5s\\_u3/](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/socsci/books/applications/imaps/maps/g5s_u3/)

This is an awesome resource for teaching the Triangle Trade! I highly recommend this interactive map (where you can click on the legend for things to happen on the map) as a station activity with the video below as well.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NXC4Q\\_4JVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NXC4Q_4JVg)

This video is excellent for teaching about the African Slave Trade and Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. It contains a great amount of details about how the slave trade impacted Africa. Below are questions which could follow the video.

Watch the following video and answer the following questions. In parenthesis, I have the time frame you can return to if you “miss” or “can’t find” the question.

1. What is slavery? (0:00-0:14)
2. How many Africans were brought to the Americas? **(0:20-0:31)**
3. What crops were grown in the new colonies? Why did Europeans need to use Africans? (0:56-1:18)
4. What kinds of slavery had existed in Africa before the Europeans arrived (1:25-1:39)
5. What motivated African Kings and Chiefs to sell other people groups into slavery? Why do you think they did not see each other as “fellow Africans”? (1:38-2:08)
6. Describe the life a slave would go through once captured and sold into slavery (2:30-3:58).
7. What were some of the effects of the slave trade on AFRICA? (3:53-5:10)
8. What did Europeans claim about Africans to justify the slave trade (in other words, what did they say about Africans to make the slave trade an “okay” thing to do)? (4:55-5:15)
9. **Create** a comic strip depicting the life of an African in any stage of enslavement.
  - a. Example: A comic strip of an African being sold into slavery and being traded for other materials
  - b. Example: A comic strip of African slaves being pushed into small spaces on a slave ship
  - c. Example: An overview of the whole process of buying and selling slaves



## **Colonialism: The Berlin Conference Game with review videos**

**Key Concepts: Berlin Conference, colonization.**

### **Sequence of Activities:**

1. Prior to the lesson, teachers should review the *Scramble for Africa Game* document. This document explains the organization of the game, scoring rules, and contains reproducible telegram cards. This activity was adapted from the activity found [here](#).
2. Begin by discussing the idea of colonization and why European countries would want to colonize Africa. A good overview video of the topic can be found [here](#).
3. Once you have established reasons for a European country wanting to colonize an African country, have students read *The Berlin Conference* document for an introduction to the purpose and background of the conference.
4. Next, place students in groups and tell them which European country they will represent. Distribute the country cards (found at the bottom of the bottom of the *Scramble for Africa Game* document) to students. Then, provide each group with a Telegram Card that details their country's needs from the Berlin Conference.
5. Students should access the [Africa Natural Resources Map](#) and determine which countries would be ideal for colonization based on their needs. Provide students with the *Scramble for Africa Note Sheet* to help them organize their findings.
6. Once students have completed their research, the game will begin. If possible, hang a large map of Africa on the wall to use to record countries that have been colonized. Complete rules for the game can be found in the *Scramble for Africa Game* document.

Instructional Resources:

Equipment/Manipulative

Computer lab or Internet access

Student Resources

*The Berlin Conference*

**Colonization Video**

[Africa Natural Resources Map](#)

*Scramble for Africa Note Sheet*

Teacher Resources

[Original](#) Scramble for Africa Game

*Scramble for Africa Game*

After these lessons, go ahead and begin your study of the causes for Sierra Leone's civil war in [Appendix II](#).

## **Appendix VI: Brief Historical Overview**

### *The Age of Exploration & Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century, Prince Henry of Portugal began exploring up and down the African coast. In doing so, the Portuguese set up trading posts along the coast of West Africa. These trading posts would be key in just a few years, because from these trading posts, Europeans would establish history's greatest explicit trade of slaves, known as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (also called the Middle Passage, Triangle Trade, and just Atlantic Slave Trade).

After the Spanish wanted a piece of the action against their rival Portugal, they funded Christopher Columbus to find a direct sea route west to Asia. The voyage revealed that the Americas were in the way of any direct trade route. But why were Europeans exploring at all? First, the Europeans were desperate to get into the Asian trade networks because at the time Asia (particularly China) was arguably one of the most economically stable countries in the world. But China needed silver and gold to keep their economy running, and was willing to trade Europeans the valuable commodity they were looking for to boost their mercantile capitalism: spices. However, rather than finding silver or gold, the Europeans began to discover how well their plants, crops and animals flourished in this "new world." One of the cash crops they began harvesting around the clock was sugar cane.

Since the landing of Columbus resulted in wiping out nearly 90 percent of Native American populations due to disease alone, the Europeans were forced to resort to a different source for their slave labor of sugar cane: Africans. Let it be known before we discuss African slavery and its impact on both the Americas and Africa that the Europeans attempted to enslave Native Americans. By many historians' accounts, Columbus is said to be responsible for the brutal enslavement and intentional genocide of the Arawak Indians in the Caribbean—10 million in total. More on that account can be found in Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.

Europeans thus began the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. It made sense for multiple reasons. First, Africans were already used to extremely hot working conditions, so slave labor on sugar cane plantations was no different. Second, Africans already had their own various systems of slavery established in Africa with pre-established trade routes. Many of these African empires had slave trade routes on the west coast of Africa, which was perfect for future Europeans, who would establish slave trading posts.

Slavery in Africa was very different than slavery in the Americas. In Africa, many slaves had terms between one to three years, and could even become a part of a master's family. Most slaves were captured during wars, and once they had finished their labor, could often return to their families. Sometimes slaves could even rise to positions of power within a community after they had earned their freedom.

We are mostly familiar with how slavery impacted the Americas, but what is more pertinent to our discussion here is how slavery impacted Africa. First, the slave trade greatly increased the amount of conflict that was brewing between different ethnic groups and political communities. This debunks a stereotype of Africa as an all-peaceful continent previous to colonialism—and long before the slave trade, Africans had much conflict between groups of people. Simply put, the slave trade increased those conflicts.

Second, the slave trade had a massive demographic impact. Historians estimate nearly 10-12 million slaves were transported for over a century to the Americas. Most of these slaves were working class men who were traded for rum, guns, and other iron products to bolster African empires against their rivals. In doing so, Africa became devoid of the working class it needed to sustain itself militaristically and economically when European empires with colonial desires set their eyes on Africa.

### *Colonialism*

African Colonialism can be broadly referred to as the time period in which Europeans desired to take over land in Africa. The Europeans had a few key reasons for doing so, but two are supremely important because they often come with stereotypes that are seen today.

First, the economic argument as a key cause for colonialism in Africa is one of the most frequently cited arguments for European colonization of Africa. The Europeans were on the dawn of the industrial revolution, but in order to fuel their industrial machine, the Europeans needed natural resources. Ekeh argues that the European bourgeoisie had a disproportionate influence on the ruling class in Europe since they were the owners of capital and the industries that would profit economically from monopolizing Africa's natural resources.<sup>3</sup>

The Europeans did not just stop there, but also succeeded in convincing the general public that colonization was part of a process referred to as “civilizing a backwards people.”<sup>3</sup> This is often considered another key reason for colonization, as European colonizers framed Africa as “backwards” and in “supreme need” of colonization to civilize an ancient place.<sup>3</sup> Of course, Africa was extremely complex; the Europeans simply did not understand how to interpret or view their complex culture and systems, nor did they wish to.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Europeans managed to do this without raising arms against each other in Africa. They met in 1884 in the capital of Berlin, home to Europe's newest country, Germany. This is referred to as the Berlin Conference and it is crucial for a few reasons. First, Europeans carved out territories in Africa based solely on the land or resources they wanted. They ignored regional and ethnic tensions as well as local conflicts. The drawing of international boundaries would have a profound impact on Africa for the generations to come, and Sierra Leone is no different. Second, it is

important because it launched what is now called “The Scramble for Africa.” It must be noted, however, that countries like Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa are in some ways exceptions to this because they experienced much more contact with Europeans during the Age of Exploration, and were colonized as early as the late 1770s (Sierra Leone was 1787, ironically colonized temporarily by freed British slaves<sup>1</sup>).

Even though there is much more to say about all of the aforementioned topics and events, what is crucial in our discussion of Sierra Leone in particular is how Sierra Leone was governed during colonialism. There were two main forms of governance in colonial Africa—direct and indirect rule—and it was the latter which was leveraged in Sierra Leone. Both were systems of governance, but indirect rule will be our focus for Sierra Leone.

Indirect rule was when an “African country” (in quotes because it was carved out by Europeans) would be given slightly more autonomy and power than in direct rule. In direct rule, the European country sent their own administration to establish, impose, and rule their colonial institutions with Africans as their subjects. Indirect rule, on the other hand, was used primarily by the British and it set Africans in positions of power within the colonial administration. Regardless, they still had to report to the colonial regime for ultimate legitimacy in rule and governing and there was still a hierarchy of positions in which Africans were in need of the colonial government.

### *The Cold War and Global Institutions*

The last general historical time period which is key to understand before we encounter reasons for Sierra Leone’s civil war is the Cold War and the rise of global institutions.

After World War II, many European countries began to realize that their colonies were no longer profitable to run. Soaring inflation and devastated infrastructure made running a colonial regime less economically feasible, and countries began to lose their zeal for running African lands. Simultaneously, Africans were becoming nationalistic in their language and beginning to form national identities.

As the Cold War emerged and many African countries declared independence, African countries were able to receive massive amounts of economic and military aid simply by siding with either the United States or the Soviet Union. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, the United States helped covertly uphold a brutal dictator (Mobutu) who eventually bankrupted the entire country over 30 years, which made it spiral into one of the least developed countries on earth. While in power, Mobutu amassed double the amount of the country’s debt into his personal account.

As the Cold War came to an end, however, African countries had a harder time securing money in the form of aid. Increasingly, African countries were forced to turn to two international organizations: the IMF and the World Bank. These two institutions, set up after World War II for a noble purpose, have often had unintended consequences in

their five-plus decades of existence. This ultimate purpose was to avoid countries declaring bankruptcy and defaulting on their loans. Their ultimate impact has been very politicized and debated in the international community, and I would argue is more of a grey territory than black and white.

The IMF and World Bank operate by giving loans to countries that are about to default or are in danger of declaring bankruptcy. To get this money, they must first impose economic reforms. These reforms are often referred to as neoliberal reforms, and as previously stated, have had mixed results. Basically, these reforms usually refer to the privatization of businesses, free and open trade on global markets, and other tenets of liberal capitalism. In the case of Sierra Leone, they had unintended consequences by undermining some of the very goals they set out to accomplish.