***A Long Way Gone* – Poem Analysis**

(50 summative points)

Objective

To analyze and compare two different types of literary works for common themes and techniques.

Procedure

1 - Locate a modern or classic poem that connects with a theme from the *ALWG* novel

*🡪 ex. compassion, resilience, nature, hope, family, loss of innocence, survival, etc…*

2 - Copy or type this poem into your paper, citing the source where you found the poem

3 - Annotate this poem with comments, connections or questions (5-note minimum!)

4 - In 300 words or more, compare and contrast the elements of this poem to Ishmael’s memoir

*🡪 Please write legibly and in complete sentences and paragraphs!!!*

5 - Turn this assignment in on time:

*🡪* ***DUE DATE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

Scoring

* 10 pts – copy of the poem to analyze
* 10 pts –theme, title & source listed
* 10 pts – annotations/connections (5-note minimum)
* 20 pts – essay comparing elements of the poem and *ALWG* (300-word minimum)

**Couplet-style end rhyme, symbolic of Shakespeare; also mirrors the two sides to Ishmael’s childhood.**

Example

* *Theme:*Loneliness (ALWG , Chap. 8)
* *Title:* “**Alone”** by Edgar Alan Poe
* *Source:* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46477>
* *Text:* From childhood's hour I have not been  
   As others were; I have not seen  
   As others saw; I could not bring  
   My passions from a common spring. **Symbol for Humanity?**  
   From the **same source** I have not taken  
   My **sorrow**; I could not awaken  
   My heart to joy at the same tone;  
   And all I loved, I loved alone.  
   Then—in my childhood, in the dawn  
   Of a most stormy life—was drawn  
   From every depth of good and ill  
   The mystery which binds me still:  
   From the torrent, or the fountain,  
   From the **red** cliff of the mountain,  
   From the sun that **round** me **rolled**  
   In its autumn tint of gold,  
   From the lightning in the sky  
   As it passed me flying by,   
   From the thunder and the storm,  
   And the cloud that took the form **Did Poe think other lives were heavenly?**  
   (When the rest of Heaven was blue)   
   Of a demon in my view.

**Ishmael has committed both good (speaking against war) and bad (killed people) acts.**

**Ishmael loved rap music, family connections, Shakespeare plays, and nature.**

**“I have not” repeated because Poe didn’t have (nor Ishmael) a normal childhood.**

**Ishmael lost loved ones, then found new family = joy; Poe lost loved ones but never found replacements (joy) again.**

**alliteration**

**METAPHOR: Ishmael and Poe both battled physically and psychologically with their losses in life; yet, Beah survives while Poe succumbs to his “demons.”**

**IMAGERY: Poe’s reference to violent natural acts (earth/weather) contrast with the man-made destruction and death (human armies) in Sierra Leone during the 1990’s.**

**more alliteration**

* *Essay:*

In the 1875 poem, “Alone,” Edgar A. Poe presents a vivid picture of an emotion that is familiar to all people at one point or another: loneliness. Similarly, Ishmael Beah wrestles with this condition in Chapter 8 of his very frank 2007 memoir, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, about his early days in Sierra Leone: “The most difficult part of being in the forest was the loneliness… One thing about being lonesome is that you think too much” (p.52). In reading the Poe’s reflection on loneliness, it is easy to see how long a shadow it cast on his life (“from childhood’s hour”) and how turbulent an effect it had on his mind with words like “torrent,” “stormy,” and “demon” lashing out at the reader.

Strangely, Poe hints in lines 3-4 that he found these feelings were uncommon when he stated, “I could not bring/My passions from a common spring.” It is understandable that through the death of his parents at a young age, and his wife only years into their marriage, that he would feel cursed, perhaps; but did he feel that this situation was unique? Did he feel alone in sharing his loneliness with others? Or maybe he simply got used to this solitary way of life as Ishmael Beah suggested: “After I finished familiarizing myself with the area, I sat down and tried to think about how I was going to get out of the forest. But that didn’t go well, since I was afraid of thinking. I eventually decided that maybe it was better to be where I was. Even though I was lost and lonely, it was safe for the time being” (p.67).

We can assume then, that Poe (as was true for Ishmael throughout much of his memoir) must have adapted in some respect to this private way of living. And it is further possible to imagine that there was some quality of “love” in his life; whether it be writing and editing or carousing and drinking. And certainly the strongest proclamation of this educated guess appears in line 8: “And all I loved, I loved alone.” In a diminished way he must have loved… something… someone. As we witness in Ishmael’s case, it took two years for him to live through and outlast the hell of children engaging in warfare, but he survives (and later rehabilitates himself) with the knowledge and interests that fed him pre-war: music, nature, Shakespeare and stories of his family.

With a sharp eye and skillful pen, both writers take us to a place that we have already likely been. Experiencing being alone in life may differ in scope and duration, but it is a common human occurrence. Through imagery, emotion and crafty word choice, they both uniquely capture the incidence of loneliness, leaving us to ponder our own descriptions and perspectives of this sentiment.