

A Long Way Gone
Ishmael Beah

Sarah Crichton Books; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 16-17, 2007

Preparing for the Lesson (for teachers)

Read the text silently.

1. Underline any vocabulary that you think should be pre-taught to students.
2. Circle any words that you do not think are important for students to learn but useful to understand in the context of this story.
3. Consider these two vocabulary strategies - pros and cons
 - a. Pre-teaching and defining words before reading
 - b. Reading first then defining within the context of the story

BEFORE YOU READ

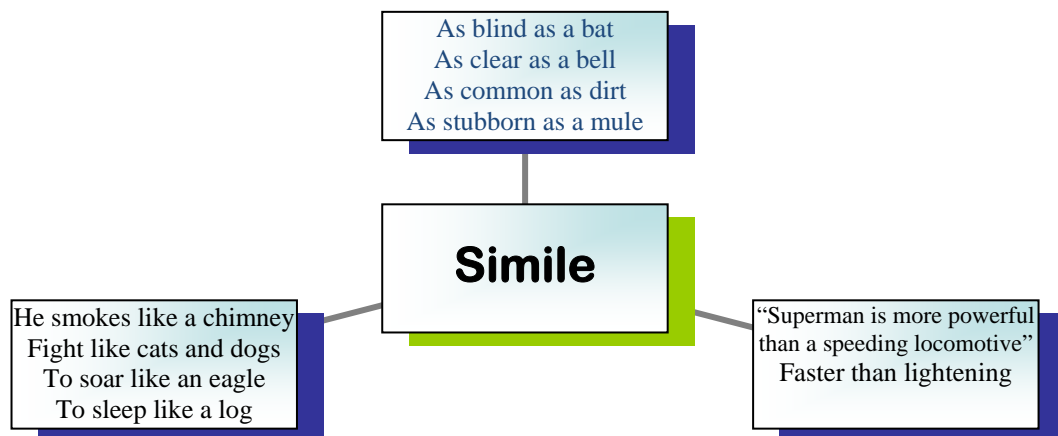
What are similes?

A simile is a comparison between two different things. It is designed to create an unusual, interesting, emotional effect in literature. Sentences or phrases that use the words *like*, *than* or *as*. To help us remember this figure of speech, we often say "a simile is similar or alike."

Look at the title of this story, what two things are similar or alike?

Following are some classic similes. Can you explain what each means?

Do you know other common similes?



Watch for additional similes in the story. (Underline them as you read.)

Background

Some stories are passed on among families and members of the community. They are used as stories to “impart wisdom” or tell us the best way to do something. Have you ever listened to or read a story like that? What was the “wisdom” that the story was sharing with its audience? Try to figure out what “wisdom” this folktale idealizes.

“You Must Be Like the Moon”

There was a thick forest on one side of the village where my grandmother lived and coffee farms on the other. A river flowed from the forest to the edge of the village, passing through palm kernels into a swamp. Above the swamp banana farms stretched into the horizon. The main dirt road that passed through Kabati was rutted with holes and puddles where ducks liked to bathe during the day, and in the backyards of the houses birds nested in mango trees.

In the morning, the sun would rise from behind the forest. First, its rays penetrated through the leaves, and gradually, with cockcrows and sparrows that vigorously proclaimed daylight, the golden sun sat at the top of the forest. In the evening, monkeys could be seen in the forest jumping from tree to tree, returning to their sleeping places. On the coffee farms, chickens were always busy hiding their young from hawks. Beyond the farms, palm trees waved their fronds with the moving wind. Sometimes a palm wine tapper could be seen climbing in the early evening.

The evening ended with the cracking of branches in the forest and the pounding of rice in mortars. The echoes resonated in the village, causing birds to fly off and return curiously chattering. Crickets, frogs, toads, and owls followed them, all calling for night while leaving their hiding places. Smoke rose from thatched-roof kitchens, and people would start arriving from farms carrying lamps and sometimes lit firewood.



"We must strive to be like the moon." An old man in Kabati repeated this sentence often to people who walked past his house on their way to the river to fetch water, to hunt, to tap palm wine; and to their farms. I remember asking my grandmother what the old man meant. She explained that the adage served to remind people to always be on their best behavior and to be good to others. She said that people complain when there is too much sun and it gets unbearably hot, and also when it rains too much or when it is cold. But, she said, no one grumbles when the moon shines. Everyone becomes happy and appreciates the moon in their own special way. Children watch their shadows

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and play in its light, people gather at the square to tell stories, and dance through the night. A lot of happy things happen when the moon shines. These are some of the reasons why we should want to be like the moon.

"You look hungry. I will fix you some cassava." She ended the discussion.



After my grandmother told me why we should strive to be like the moon, I took it upon myself to closely observe it. Each night when the moon appeared in the sky, I would lie on the ground outside and quietly watch it. I wanted to find out why it was so appealing and likable. I became fascinated with the different shapes that I saw inside the moon. Some nights I saw the head of a man. He had a medium beard and wore a

sailor's hat. Other times I saw a man with an ax chopping wood, and sometimes a woman cradling a baby at her breast. Whenever I get a chance to observe the moon now, I still see those same images I saw when I was six, and it pleases me to know that that part of my childhood is still embedded in me.

AFTER YOU READ

Reading Comprehension - **Writing your own Questions**

Directions: Think of some questions that could be answered from reading the text. This can be done in pairs. Write at least one question under each Question Answer Response (QAR) heading.

In the Book---Right There <input type="checkbox"/> reread <input type="checkbox"/> scan <input type="checkbox"/> look for key words	In My Head - On My Own The answer is in several places in the text. <input type="checkbox"/> skim or reread <input type="checkbox"/> look for important information <input type="checkbox"/> summarize
In the Book - Think and Search The answer is not in the text. Think about what you know and what is in the text and how they fit together. <input type="checkbox"/> reread <input type="checkbox"/> think about what you already know and what the author says <input type="checkbox"/> predict	In My Head - Author and Me The answer is not in the text. <input type="checkbox"/> think about what you already know <input type="checkbox"/> think about what you've read before <input type="checkbox"/> make connections

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After each question write the answer in parenthesis or for more advanced students, write three possible answers to make a multiple choice question. Only one answer should be correct.

WRITING

Just like Ishmael, many of you have heard stories or narratives told by your grandparents or parents, some of you may have read these stories also. Since many of you know the similar stories you can join together to retell a them.

Get into groups of 4 or 5 based on your knowledge of a favorite story. As a group, outline the story or narrative then each will take one section or event and write it. Merge the sections when you do the final edit.

Write what you all know	Outline of the Plot
Plot summary Characters name and brief description Setting – describe where it takes place	What happened first? List Essential events in the plot Conclusion Morale – what does the story teach us?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ishmael Baeh speaks at the UN in 2002.

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Ishmael Beah was born in Sierra Leone in 1980. When he was eleven a brutal civil war broke out in his country. After his parents and two brothers were killed, Ishmael was recruited to fight as a child soldier. He was thirteen. He fought for almost three years before he was removed from the army by UNICEF and placed in a rehabilitation home. In 1998, Ishmael came to live with an American family in New York City. He completed high school and later was accepted to attend Oberlin College. Soon after his graduation, he published his memoir of his youth in Sierra Leone, it is called *A Long Time Gone*.