Novel Study Unit: The Bite of the Mango
As a child in a small rural village in Sierra Leone, Mariatu Kamara lived peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Rumors of rebel attacks were no more than a distant worry.

But when 12-year-old Mariatu set out for a neighboring village, she never arrived. Heavily armed rebel soldiers, many no older than children themselves, attacked and tortured Mariatu. During this brutal act of senseless violence they cut off both her hands.

Stumbling through the countryside, Mariatu miraculously survived. The sweet taste of a mango, her first food after the attack, reaffirmed her desire to live, but the challenge of clutching the fruit in her bloodied arms reinforced the grim new reality that stood before her. With no parents or living adult to support her and living in a refugee camp, she turned to begging in the streets of Freetown.

As told to her by Mariatu, journalist Susan McClelland has written the heartbreaking true story of the brutal attack, its aftermath and Mariatu’s eventual arrival in Toronto where she began to pull together the pieces of her broken life with courage, astonishing resilience and hope.

Her memoir chronicles her remarkable journey from peasant girl to international speaker and illustrates how the power of love can heal even the deepest physical and emotional scars.

Now 22 years old, Mariatu Kamara has been named a UNICEF Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict; a Voices of Courage Honoree by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children; and has established The Mariatu Foundation, which aims to offer much needed refuge to the ongoing victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone. A documentary about child victims of war, featuring Mariatu, is in the works.
The Bite of the Mango

Multimedia Research Presentation

You will work in a group of four (4) on one of the following projects listed below. Always consider the six journalistic questions when researching a topic: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Choose your partners wisely. This assignment will be presented as a 10 minute PowerPoint, Photo Story, or video to the class, incorporating audio, visuals, and text. N.B., minimum size font for presentations is 24 point. This is an opportunity for you to amaze me with your media skills and creativity. You must include a Works Cited page with your rubric when submitting the final product.

Heritage – Sometimes people find strength and meaning in life by making connections to their heritage, tradition, and faith. Assign each member of your group one or more of the following aspects of heritage: faith, hope, superstition, and the power of dreams. Research each of these aspects, consider their meaning to Mariatu, then create a form of multimedia to be viewed by me (and class, if you wish).

Resilience – The seeds of resilience lie in the belief that life can make sense, that one’s actions can have value, and that it is possible for an individual to have some control over what befalls him or her. In African society, these lessons are taught by example through acts of kindness and generosity every day, and together they contribute to a strong sense of community. Examine how values help a person overcome an ordeal, and the effect resilience can have on one’s self-esteem. Identify internal and external resources a person can draw upon to help avoid despair. Think of some other people who showed resilience after experiencing a traumatic event. These can be famous people or family members. Portray a short biography of one of them, highlighting how he/she exhibited resilience in the face of adversity.

Physical Disabilities – Mariatu has lived without hands since she was 12 years old. Initially, and over the years, this has affected her self-esteem, her feelings about her captors, and her ability to do things for herself. Choose a disability that affects the population, and report on the stigma attached to it and why the stereotypes attached to it are invalid. How does the disability affect their ability to do things for themselves? How might that stigma affect their self-esteem, and their ability to interact well with others?

Injustice and Betrayal – Investigate the history of the conflict in Sierra Leone. To what extent did adults fail the children of Sierra Leone? What is the situation today for the child victims of the war? Where else in the world have children been recruited as soldiers? Why do you think children are forced into rebel armies? Once the war is over, what do you think happens to these children as they return to civilian life? Although Mariatu, at times, despaired and almost gave up, why is she ultimately a role model for young people around the world?

Importance of Social and Political Responsibility – With reference to The Bite of the Mango, trace the extent to which characters—both adults and children—demonstrate integrity and/or social and political responsibility. Do people in other parts of the world bear any responsibility for what happened to the victims of the war in Sierra Leone? What can or should people in countries such as Canada or the United States do to help? What are the differences between civil wars and wars fought between countries? Give examples of each.

Immigration – Mariatu had thoughts about coming to Canada, and faced some challenges when she finally arrived in Canada. Although she missed certain things about Sierra Leone, she made efforts to integrate into Canadian society. Pick a country anywhere in the world where you neither speak the language nor know much about its customs, history, geography, etc. Now imagine that you are going to immigrate there. What would you do to prepare yourself? How would you feel about making such a move? What would you miss most about your home here?

Other – by permission.

Some content taken from Annick Press and The Mariatu Foundation websites.
Presentations

Guidelines

1. Your presentation should last **10 minutes** in length. **NO SHORTER or LONGER!**

2. Do **NOT** use a script. Use point-form notes only, preferably on cue cards. If creating a PowerPoint presentation, that negates the need for cue cards. **N.B., minimum size font for presentations is 24 point.**

3. To get a mark above 70% you need to add some extra interest, such as props, a costume, sound effects, etc.

4. It is strongly suggested that audiovisual (A/V) materials are included to enhance the presentation. **Students are responsible for A/V equipment arrangements,** NOT the teacher.

**Do’s of Oral Presentations**

1. **DO** rehearse your presentation in front of someone or by using a tape recorder; take notice of the time limits and stay within them.
2. **DO** memorize your presentation if you can.
3. **DO** prepare small cue cards if you can’t memorize it.
4. **DO** give a copy of your presentation to someone close to the front so that he/she can give you a cue when needed.
5. **DO** raise your voice a little so that people at the back can hear.
6. **DO** modulate your voice: emphasize important words.
7. **DO** stand in full view of the audience.
8. **DO** present yourself as confident and in control of the situation.
9. **DO** feel free to move as you speak.
10. **DO** make eye-contact with members of the audience.
11. **DO** look around as you speak, involving your audience in your presentation.
12. **DO** use audiovisual material whenever appropriate, but make sure that you have arranged for it in advance.
13. **DO** make sure that you know and understand the evaluation criteria.
14. **DO** write on the chalkboard/dry-erase board any names or places or technical terms which your audience is unfamiliar with.
15. **DO** find out how to pronounce names, places, technical terms, etc.
16. **DO** keep all of your written work in case it is required in the evaluation.

**Don’t’s of Oral Presentations**

1. **DON’T** fidget at the front.
2. **DON’T** make excuses for not being properly prepared.
3. **DON’T** read your presentation without looking at the audience.
4. **DON’T** hide behind a desk.
5. **DON’T** hold paper in front of you, especially if you are nervous, because paper quivers with your quivering hand.
6. **DON’T** turn your back on your audience unless writing something on the board.
7. **DON’T** use slang or informal language in a formal presentation: avoid words such as “guys,” “goes,” “like,” “O.K.,” “right,” etc.
8. **DON’T** speak too quickly; your audience is trying to process a lot of new information.
9. **DON’T** pace back and forth.

**Take a deep breath, relax, and begin with confidence!**
Overall Expectations: **Reading for Meaning:** read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, informational, and graphic texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning; **Developing and Organizing Content:** generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience; **Using Knowledge of Form and Style:** draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience; **Applying Knowledge of Conventions:** use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively; **Understanding Media Texts:** demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts; **Creating Media Texts:** create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.

Comments:
You are expected to create a mind map of the novel, The Bite of the Mango. A mind map is a visual presentation of your understanding and not an art assignment. Your job will be to interpret and explore the connections between elements of the novel and not to simply retell the events of the story.

You will present your understanding of four key areas of the novel:
- Theme
- Conflict
- Character(s)
- Other (setting, language, imagery, symbolism, etc.)

We will be working on the mind map throughout the unit, and you will be given class time and some assistance on both the content of the play and the structure of a mind map. However, you will be required to work on this independently also.

Use the brainstorming sheet provided as a rough draft to brainstorm each element individually. To do so, you will need to print additional copies of this sheet. Afterward, you will create the good copy on a sheet of Bristol board. It is expected that the entire mind map be hand-drawn. Be creative! Your name will go on the front of the mind map, in the bottom-right corner.

Your mind map will be submitted the end of the week that we complete the reading of the novel.

**Graphic Organizer Rubric**

**Submit this sheet with your assignment.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The mind map includes limited content.</td>
<td>The mind map includes some assigned topics.</td>
<td>The mind map includes all assigned topics.</td>
<td>The mind map creatively includes all assigned topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The mind map demonstrates a limited understanding of the various elements of the text.</td>
<td>The mind map demonstrates some understanding of the various elements of the text.</td>
<td>The mind map demonstrates a good understanding of the various elements of the text.</td>
<td>The mind map demonstrates a thorough understanding of the various elements of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>The mind map is not coloured.</td>
<td>The mind map does not use different colours on the various branches to aid understanding.</td>
<td>The mind map uses different colours for some branches.</td>
<td>The mind map uses different colours for each branch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The map is partially coloured.</td>
<td>The map is coloured.</td>
<td>The map is creatively coloured and uses colour to connect ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbosity</td>
<td>The mind map presents multiple words or names on the branches.</td>
<td>The mind map presents only one word or name per branch that does not enhance understanding.</td>
<td>The mind map presents only one significant word or name per branch that enhances understanding.</td>
<td>The mind map presents only one significant word or name per branch that thoroughly enhances understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>The mind map includes at least 2 relevant illustrations that enhance the overall understanding of the topic to a limited extent.</td>
<td>The mind map includes at least 3 relevant illustrations that enhance the overall understanding of the topic to some extent.</td>
<td>The mind map includes at least 4 relevant illustrations that enhance the overall understanding of the topic.</td>
<td>The mind map includes at least 6 relevant illustrations that thoroughly enhance the overall understanding of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>The mind map follows the branch format radiating from a central idea in a limited manner.</td>
<td>The mind map follows the branch format radiating from a central idea to some degree.</td>
<td>The mind map follows the branch format radiating from a central idea.</td>
<td>The mind map creatively follows the branch format radiating from a central idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructions: Brainstorm each element individually; you will need to print additional sheets of this page. Jot down ideas of symbols and pictures you can use to illustrate this. Consider this sheet your rough draft. Afterward, you will create the good copy on a sheet of Bristol board.
RESILIENCE
1. Examine Chapter 1 to identify how the values she learned from her family and from African society in general helped her survive her ordeal.

2. What internal and external resources did Mariatu draw upon to help her avoid total despair?

HERITAGE: FAITH, HOPE, SUPERSTITION, AND THE POWER OF DREAMS
3. To what extent has Mariatu’s life been influenced by religion and prayer?

4. What role do folk wisdom, superstition, and dreams play in Mariatu’s life?

5. How did Mariatu’s dreams change over time? How do you think the changes reflected what she was feeling and thinking?

6. Why did the memory of the little weaver bird (Chapter 6) hold so much meaning for Mariatu?

7. Why did she feel “really alive” while she was dancing (Chapter 12)?

INJUSTICE, BETRAYAL, & THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY
8. To what extent do characters, both adults and children, in the book demonstrate integrity and/or social and political responsibility?

9. To what extent did adults fail the children of Sierra Leone?

10. Do people in other parts of the world bear any responsibility for what happened to the victims of the war in Sierra Leone? What can or should people in countries such as Canada or the United States do to help?

11. What is the difference between civil wars and wars fought between countries?

12. Why do you think children are forced into rebel armies?

13. Although Mariatu at times despaired and almost gave up, why is she ultimately a role model for young people around the world?

DISABILITIES
14. Mariatu has lived without hands since she was 12 years old. How do you think this has affected
   a) her ability to do things for herself?
   b) her self-esteem?
   c) her feelings about her captors?
Find examples from the book to support your thoughts.

IMMIGRATION
15. What were Mariatu’s thoughts about coming to Canada?

16. What challenges did she have to face when she arrived?
17. What does Mariatu miss most about Sierra Leone?

18. Do you think that Mariatu has integrated well into Canadian society? Explain your answer.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A GENRE**

19. From your reading of Mariatu’s memoir, give examples of how the story is:
   a) an account of the events of her life
   b) an account of the history of Sierra Leone
   c) a condemnation of war
   d) a condemnation of, or an apology for, the perpetrators of the crimes committed
   e) a message that the human spirit is strong enough to overcome any trial.