**Chapter 16 Backwards Summary**

**Directions: Read the summary and write questions that arise in the extra spaces between lines**

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|  Ishmael struggles internally with his need for drugs and violence in order to feel "normal" again. Ishmael and the other boy soldiers in the rehabilitation center behave like caged animals. They attack the cook, throw bowls and silverware at the nurses and counselors, break into the medical supplies for drugs, and drag their mattresses out into courtyard in the rain so that they can sleep outside where they are more comfortable. For entertainment, they attack local villagers at the water pump and fight each other bloody in the boredom of the afternoons. Even with the acts of violence they commit against civilians, the need can't be satiated. Anger and resentment continue to build inside him. One afternoon the boys break windows. Ishmael uses his bare hands. He cuts himself and bleeds uncontrollably. He goes to the hospital thinking he'll steal a First Aid kit and treat himself, but a kind nurse convinces him to let her clean and bandage his wounds. He becomes more ill from the drug withdrawal in the hospital and stays in bed for days being cared for by the nurse. Time and the staff's kindness and forgiveness wear the boys down. They begin to realize the extent of their trauma as their war memories begin unfolding. Ishmael writes that he has to fight through the war memories to remember anything from his childhood. After each violent outburst, the boys are told it isn't their fault. When they destroy their things, they are replaced without incident. Ishmael, Mambu, and Alhaji sell their school supplies and use the money to ride the bus into the city. The staff begins planning weekend trips into the city to discourage the boys from stealing, but they require the boys to attend school for a few hours each afternoon in order to earn the city trips. Ishmael and the others relent to the schooling, but they find it frustrating because of how little they know. Each time they become angry, they are met with patience and kindness and reminded that their lack of schooling isn't their fault either. The patience, kindness, and forgiveness from the staff overwhelm Ishmael, and the boy from the beginning of the memoir fights to emerge. While in the rehabilitation hospital, Ishmael recalls a particularly bloody battle in which he and his friend Altai slaughtered an entire village by themselves. For their success, they were given nicknames. Ishmael's name was "Green Snake" because of his ability to hide beneath bushes in an advantageous position and be sneaky. He's pleased with the nickname, but his approval shows just how distorted his sense of morality has become. A snake symbolizes something evil and dangerous, like the snake in the Garden of Eden that tempted Adam and Eve to sin. Ishmael considers his treachery a compliment and strives to live up to all that being a snake implies.The safety of his new freedom doesn't make any sense in his soldiering minds.  |  |
| **Now read the chapter in your group to locate and discuss the answers to the questions you created.** |