

## **Study Guide for *Outcasts United***

**prepared in conjunction with *One Book, One San Diego***

### **About this Guide's Writer**

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### **About this Book**

*Outcasts United* is the story of a refugee soccer team, a remarkable woman coach and a small southern town turned upside down by the process of refugee resettlement.

In the 1990s, that town, Clarkston, Georgia, became a resettlement center for refugees and a modern-day Ellis Island for scores of families from war zones in Liberia, Congo, Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan. The town also became home to Luma Mufleh, an American-educated Jordanian woman who founded a youth soccer team to help keep Clarkston's boys off the streets. These boys named themselves the Fugees -- short for refugees.

*Outcasts United* follows a pivotal season in the life of the Fugees, their families and their charismatic coach as they struggle to build new lives in a fading town overwhelmed by change. There is a story about resilience in the face of extraordinary hardship, the power of one person to make a difference and the daunting challenge of creating community in a place where people seem to have so little in common.

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

### **About the Author**

Warren St. John has written for the New York Observer, The New Yorker, Wired and Slate, in addition to his work as a reporter for The New York Times. His first book, *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: A Journey into the Heart of Fan Mania* (2004), was named one of *Sports Illustrated's* best books of the year, and ranked number one on *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* list of the best books ever written about collegiate athletics. His new book, *Outcasts United: A Refugee Team, an American Town*, was published in the U.S. in April 2009, and in the U.K., The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Japan and China later that year. St. John was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He attended Columbia College in New York City, where he now lives with his wife Nicole.

<http://www.outcastsunited.com/content/about-warren-st-john>

### **Note to Teachers**

Although the book is written in classic journalistic style, St. John acknowledges that while he is reporting, he does not always exercise journalistic detachment. The story of the Fugees intrigues him not just from a journalistic standpoint as a disinterested observer, but rather, as he puts it, "...it was the surprising kinship of these kids from different cultures religions and backgrounds that drew me into the story and made me want to understand and tell it" (7).

As an expository text, *Outcasts United* can be used to teach the primary rhetorical elements of argument analysis and critique: patterns of organization, evidence and its relationship to assertions, and authorial use of persuasive appeals as these relate to genre,

audience and purpose. This text allows students to study the philosophical assumptions and beliefs of the author about his subject as well as the philosophical, political, religious, ethical, and social influences that shape the refugee experience and that of Americans. You will find that, in crafting the discussion questions, particular emphasis has been placed on this analytic aspect of underlying values and beliefs.

In the social studies or history classroom this book can serve as catalyst for discussion and research projects focusing on the past and current historical context in specific refugees' countries of origin, America's past and present Africa politics, mapping countries of origin and subsequent U.S. destinations for refugees, or inquiries into the existing institutional support networks for refugees at a national level and in local areas, to name just a few. In addition, the responses of Clarkston residents to the various waves of refugee resettlements in their town and St. John's use of the metaphor of a lifeboat being lowered from a sinking ship (10) can offer opportunities for analysis and thoughtful discussion. The narrative deals with other important social issues, including such topics as national and individual identity, adolescence, poverty, racism, prejudice, and discrimination, and raises questions of collective and individual responsibility. *Outcasts United* easily lends itself to multiple levels of examination and discussion in various grade levels from high school through college. However, although the text is clear and easily accessible for English-proficient readers (it is listed as accessible at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level on the author's web site), second-language learners may need additional assistance with the author's extensive vocabulary and his pervasive use of American idiomatic expressions such as "to do something on the fly, tit-for-tat, or to be in over

one's head," for example.

### **Teaching Ideas**

The themes and ideas addressed in this text are complex— cultural identity and practices, prejudice and stereotypical beliefs about others who are culturally different, political conflict, poverty, struggles of adolescence (of boys in particular), educational experiences of refugees, and other significant issues. Because of this complexity, this text lends itself well to the type of in-depth analysis and research required in high school language arts (as advocated by the National Council of Teachers of English) and social science courses as well as college courses in a number of disciplines, including first-year College Composition and Rhetoric, Sociology, Political Science or Cultural Studies.

The reading and analysis questions offered in this guide are tailored to the 11th and 12th grade textual analysis curriculum and are particularly well-suited to address the four strands of language arts instruction: reading, writing, communication, and research (Information on the NCTE standards is downloadable at:

<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>). Activities that engage students in the examination of language use, specifically St. John's word choice and use of examples, as well as structural choices, offer students opportunities to better understand how authors seek to influence readers.

The questions offered in this guide are predominantly higher order text-based questions. They require students to examine the text closely and to demonstrate comprehension through explanation, inference, and synthesis, rather than rely on mere recall and retelling. Most questions lend themselves well to in-class group work and discussion or

can be assigned as homework or as short in-class writing tasks. Others can be used as prompts for full-length essays.

And finally, *Outcasts United* is of significant instructional value as it offers insight into a perspective and an experience unfamiliar to many Americans. To gauge and document the impact of adopting this book into the curriculum, teachers can construct and administer a short survey before and after reading and discussing the book. For ease of scoring, this survey would ideally be presented as a small set of multiple choice and True/False questions that assesses students' level of knowledge about U.S. refugee acceptance and resettlement policies and the refugee experience generally and also specifically in the respective town or city where the school is located.

In the English classroom, various quotes excerpted from the book such as “No one person can do everything, but we can all do something” (299), can serve as a catalyst for writing assignments. They can also lead to extended assignments that can focus students on activism. For example, using a larger portion of the above quote:

Putting Luma on a pedestal is counterproductive. Luma is really a normal person doing what she can for people around her. If people can look at her and see that , that she's human, not a saint or super-hero, and that she doesn't—can't—do everything or effect miracles, then maybe they can say to themselves, “I need to look around myself and see my neighborhood and what is going on here and five streets over, and what I can do in terms of investing myself and my time, to be present for the people around me, and to do something positive for change in my community

students could engage in project-based learning, that is, brainstorm, design, implement,

and document various authentic projects to benefit the people and community around them.

### **Suggested Research Projects**

Warren St. John's web site makes available several research projects designed for Middle and High School use and published by Random House, the publisher of *Outcasts United*.

They can be accessed at <http://outcastsunited.com/> (once there, click on "Resources" and then on "For Teachers"). Below is a brief excerpted description:

Developed by educators Gillian Lee-Fong Farris and Christina Shunnarah, who have significant experience working within the diverse communities of Clarkston, the lessons are also designed for educators and students who have not read the book but are interested in the global themes of human rights, identity, and cultural pluralism. The cultural complexity of Clarkston and the story of the Fugees allow students the opportunity to discuss a range of issues facing the United States currently and in the coming decade.

#### **1. The Cross-Cultural Currents of Migration**

Students will examine maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to analyze global patterns of refugee migration and compare historical migration patterns with current refugee migration.

#### **2. Moving Beyond Stereotypes and Tapping the Cultural Iceberg**

Students will investigate the ideas of tolerance and acceptance of all cultures through the exploration and analysis of their own cultural identities. Through discussion of the metaphor of the cultural iceberg and the creation of an identity box, students will identify the external, superficial views of culture that often lead to stereotypes.

#### **3. Exploring Our Multidimensional Identities**

The students will embark on a journey of self-discovery in which they will explore their personal and group identities through the production of a cultural portrait in the form of an artistic or media representation of self, family, and community. This lesson will culminate in a class or community exhibit.

#### **4. Our Global Rights**

Students will explore the impact of human rights issues locally and globally, which will culminate in a plan-of-action project.

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## ***OUTCASTS UNITED* Chapter Summaries and Discussion Questions**

### ***Introduction* (1-11)**

#### **Summary:**

Warren St. John begins by narrating his initial observations of one of the Fugee's soccer matches and coach Luma Muffleh's interactions with her team, giving readers a strong anticipatory sense of the boys' soccer talent, their dedication, and also their traumatic experiences as refugees. We are introduced to Luma, her work ethic, discipline, and strength of character.

#### ***Introduction* Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. In the *Introduction* to this non-fiction book, the author, Warren St. John, relates the reactions of two different groups of boys to low flying planes over the soccer field. What do you think the author wants to communicate with this juxtaposition?
2. What is the purpose of the Introduction? What does Warren St. John hope to achieve by including it in the book?
3. From the *Introduction*, what do we learn about Luma's personality and character? To answer this question, make a list of character traits and discuss Luma based on this evidence. What words and or passages in the Introduction give evidence of her values and philosophy?
4. What do we learn about the refugees from the Introduction? About Clarkston?
5. On page six, he author gives information about his connection to the Fugees and his project in writing the book. Why do you think he waits so long? What would the effect have been had he begun the book with this part and omitted the description of the soccer game?
6. From reading the Introduction, what do we learn about the author, his character and his values? Which passages can be used as evidence to point to specific character traits and or values?
7. What evidence from the Introduction can be used to support the claim that the author is well-informed?
8. How does the example of Zubaid, the "tiny defender from Aghanistan" (7), function in the Introduction? What does it help the author do?

9. When the author says “I saw a great deal of soccer over the next few months, but the most moving moments for me—and the most instructive and insightful—came not on the sidelines but over hot cups of sugary tea, over meals of stewed cassava or beans and rice, or platters of steaming Afghan mantu, on the sofas and floors of the apartments of refugees in Clarkston” (8), what is he revealing about himself, his values, and the kind of person he is.
10. What three stories does the author say he will tell? Why doesn't he just tell the story of the Fugees?
11. When the author uses the metaphor of a lifeboat to describe Clarkston, referring to it as a “modest little boat that the locals thought they had claimed for themselves” (10), what is he suggesting? How does he want readers to understand this metaphor?

## **Chapter One: *Luma* (15-25)**

### **Summary:**

Provides background information on the Fugee's coach and central character, the young Jordanian Muslim woman, Luma Muffleh. We learn about her childhood and upbringing as the privileged daughter of a cosmopolitan family in Amman, Jordan. We meet Rhonda Brown, Luma's volleyball coach at the American Community School in Amman, from whom Luma learned coaching skills, discipline, and how to set and meet high expectations. And we learn about Luma's decision to stay permanently in the United States after graduating from Smith College, a move she made against the wishes of her family and estranged her from them.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. How is the example of Luma making her cousins and sister run while she trailed behind in a car an example of, as St. John calls it, “tough love in action” (17)? What did it teach and how?
2. How does what we learn about Luma's developing coaching philosophy foreshadow one of the main themes of the book? (1<sup>st</sup> full paragraph on p. 20.)
3. What competing pressures does Luma start to grapple with as she starts to grow older and begins coaching the junior varsity girls' soccer team at the American Community School?
4. What American qualities and or characteristics of life is Luma attracted to even though staying in America means making a serious break with her family?



5. What do readers learn about Warren St. John's professional work ethic when he says, "Brown—who soon moved to Damascus, and later to Israel with her husband and family—lost touch over the years with her star player, but she kept Luma's [baseball] glove from one move to the next . . . 'The webbing has rotted and come out,' Brown told me from Israel, where I tracked her down by phone" (23).
6. Why was Luma "shaken up" when a handyman who sought to impress her, showed her a robe and hood once worn by his grandfather" (24)?
7. Why were Luma's friends afraid that she, "a Muslim woman from Jordan, wouldn't fit in Down in Dixie" (24)?
8. What is the purpose of this chapter? What does it help the author achieve with readers?

## **Chapter Two: *Beatrice and Her Boys* (26-32)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter provides further background information on Beatrice Ziarty and her three sons who, along with Luma, were first introduced to readers in the Introduction of the book. In chapter Two, Warren St. John lays out Liberia's troubled past and historical circumstances that led to the political turmoil, brutality, and civil war that caused the imprisonment of Beatrice's husband and forced her to flee the country and spend five years in a refugee camp with her children before being selected for resettlement in Clarkston. As is the case with most refugees, Beatrice begins life in the U.S. in debt to the resettlement agency for the cost of the family's plane fare from Africa and gets a job which forces her to commute an hour each way, forcing her to leave her three young children alone for long periods of time. Shortly after arrival, Beatrice gets mugged, robbed of her new identification cards and all her money, leaving her disillusioned, mistrustful, and causing her to confine her boys to the apartment rather than letting them play outside.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Warren St. John, both in the introduction and in Chapter Two, discusses the
2. historical origins of current political and ethnic upheavals that disrupt the lives of people across the globe and cause them to become refugees. Why do you think he does this? How is a reader's understanding of refugees and their situation changed by this information?
3. Why do you suppose St. John quotes from the book, *The Fate of Africa*, to give details about cannibalism and the 'Butt Naked Brigade' rather than just retelling details as he did with the historical facts about Liberia?

4. What is Warren St. John alluding to when he says that Liberian leader Charles Taylor was “one of those rare examples of a Liberian leader who fell out of favor in Washington” (29). Within the context of this passage, what does it tell us about St. John’s feelings about Washington’s Africa politics?
5. What kind of impression of the Ziaty’s apartment in Clarkston does the author create through his use of the words *dingy*, *bare*, and *cold* (30)?
6. Were you surprised to learn that refugees have to repay the costs of their plane fare to the Office of Refugee Resettlement? Given the refugee’s circumstances, does this rule seem fair? To what extent might this idea have positive consequences, to what extent might it place an undue burden on refugees?
7. How does the fact that Beatrice’s children had no access to education during their five years in the refugee camp, foreshadow difficulties they might encounter when placed into the public school system in Clarkston?
8. When you learned that Beatrice’s mugger’s “accent was African” what was your reaction? Were you surprised? Relieved? Angry? Explain the reasons for your reaction.

### **Chapter Three: *Small Town, Big Heart* (33-45)**

#### **Summary:**

The title of this Chapter is a bit ironic as St. John relates the story of Clarkston, its transformation from sleepy, conservative little town whose social divide between middle and working class townfolk deepened in the 1970s, which experienced white flight in the 1980s, and, which at the end of that decade, became a resettlement hub for organizations like the International Rescue Committee and the World Relief, Lutheran Family Services, until, as the 2000 census revealed, “fully one-third of Clarkston’s population was foreign born. The face of the town changed, bringing a certain amount of upheaval and even an increase in violence which unsettled old-timers who did not protest the influx of foreigners, but instead retreated and kept to themselves. St. John presents the findings of a Harvard study that shows that this withdrawal is common rather than uncommon. The cost of diversity is that “diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life” (40). St. John presents snippets of interviews with Clarkston old-timers. They knew little, if anything about the violent political forces that drove the refugees to Clarkston and the refugee agencies exacerbated the situation by making next-door neighbors of the very people from whose persecution each had fled their homelands. In short, Clarkston residents felt invaded and overwhelmed by forces beyond their control and blamed it on the refugees.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. How does the chapter title work to foreshadow the content of the chapter and its meaning, or does it? What does it lead readers to expect and is that expectation fulfilled?
2. what image does St. John mean to create when he uses the word *suture* in the sentence: “Those tracks suture a grassy ride that bisects Clarkston and still carry a dozen freight trains a day, ... “ (33)?
3. How did Clarkston become such a center for refugees from the late 1980s to the early 1990s As t. John relates these events, how do you anticipate this demographic change will play out in terms of social relations and interactions with the old-time residents of Clarkston? Is your anticipation confirmed or disconfirmed by the details presented on pages 38-40?
4. According to this chapter’s account, what are some of the factors that make places such as Clarkston “ripe for refugee settlement” (35)? Is it possible that these factors be better anticipated and taken into account in resettling refugees?
5. Chapter Three describes a study led by Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam that states that inhabitants of hyperdiverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life and distrust their neighbors. Are you surprised by Putnam’s findings? Why or why not? How can communities best overcome this unfortunate tendency? **\*This question is taken directly from the *Questions and Topics for Discussion* in the back of the *Outcasts United* book (paperback edition).**

#### **Chapter Four: *Alone Down South* (46-52)**

##### **Summary:**

This chapter describes Luma’s move to Decatur, Georgia, a town a few miles west of Clarkston, and her initial work there coaching girl’s soccer for the Decatur DeKalb YMCA. We learn more about Luma’s demanding practice routines and strict discipline, which some of the team’s parents do not like. As they see the improvement in team performance, however, they recognize and appreciate her investment in their daughters. Luma, looking for a way to secure additional income, opens her own café with the help some of the team parents and a group of investors. One day, by chance, she finds herself in Clarkston, and discovers a Mid-Eastern grocery store that carries long-missed delicacies from her childhood. After shopping, she joins in pick-up soccer game in the grocery store parking lot. That first connection to a group of refugee boys intrigues her, causes her to return on multiple occasions, and leads her to the decision to start a free soccer program for them. The Decatur-DeKalb YMCA supports Luma’s efforts by offering to pay the rent for the field and to buy equipment.

##### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. St. John frequently incorporates direct quotes into his chapters. How does this represent him as a writer? What does it help him achieve with his audience?

2. The mother of one of the players on Luma's girls 14 and under team said about Luma, "She helped cultivate them and truly gave them more skills than soccer" (48). Discuss what skills the mother is referring to and what she means by "cultivate."
3. What characteristics and values did Luma notice in the refugee boys' pick-up soccer matches that attracted her to these players?
4. What does the chapter title, "Alone Down South," lead readers to believe the chapter will be about? Is that expectation fulfilled? What other, perhaps more informative, titles could be given to this chapter?

### **Chapter Five: *The Fugees are Born* (53-62)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter recounts the first soccer tryouts and practices for Luma's newly formed refugee boy's team; 8 year-old Jeremiah Ziaty's love for soccer; and Luma's promise to Beatrice Ziaty to keep Jeremiah safe before, during, and after practice so that Beatrice will allow him to join the team. We learn about Luma's worries about equipment – many of the boys lack even shoes – about her players' educational deficiencies, how she might help them by establishing a tutoring program, and the steps she takes to help them on and off the field.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. This chapter focuses on the first soccer tryouts. How does the fact that St. John wrote a chapter about Beatrice and her boys and a chapter about Paula and hers, help readers follow the developments in this chapter?
2. What does St. John do in this chapter to help readers remember details about the Ziaty family from chapter two?
3. Given what St. John has revealed about the refugees in Clarkston so far, are you surprised to read Emanuel Ransom's comment that from among the refugees, "Nobody wants to help—it's just give me, give me, give me" (55)? What might be the reasons the long-time residents of Clarkston get that impression?
4. What do you suppose Emanuel Ransom means when he refers to "real Americans" (55) as deserving of programs at the Clarkston Community Center?

## **Chapter Six: *Paula* (63-70)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter introduces Paula Belagamire and her six children, refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who fled civil war and genocide and had to make the painful decision to leave Paula's jailed husband behind. St. John briefly traces for readers the historical roots of the current chaos, conflict, and genocide including the U.S. involvement in the region's warfare.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. St. John begins the chapter by providing three pages of background information about the political history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Why does he do this? What does he want readers to know and realize?
2. From St. John's account of the political history in this chapter (59), but also from his comments on pages 10 and 29 of the book, how do you think he feels about America's involvement in African politics? What words or passages can you use as evidence for your claim?
3. What emotions do you think St. John seeks to elicit from readers with his account of the succession of dictators and the political turmoil they created?
4. In recounting Paula's story, St. John creates a certain mood that predominates in the chapter. Describe this mood. What words, phrases, or passages are particularly effective in creating this mood?

## **Chapter Seven: "*Coach Says It's Not Good*" (71-80)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter introduces the Ntwari family, who fled the Hutu and Tutsi civil war and genocide in Burundi. We learn more about 12 year-old Bienvenue Ntwari's passion for soccer and how he came to join Luma's team. We also learn more about Luma's efforts to create unity and avoid naturally emerging cliques and favoritism, not an easy task as some players move away and new ones arrive each year. One uniting force for the team seems to be the hostility they encounter from other teams, a hostility grounded in a combination of racism, resentment, and mistrust.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. In the previous chapter, St. John focused exclusively on the events that caused Paula and her children to become refugees. In this chapter, he includes some

details about the war and genocide that caused Bienvenue Ziaty's family to flee, but he but does not make it the focus of the chapter. Why do you think St. John chose to vary the structure of these chapters?

2. What is the meaning of the chapter title? What tendencies and values are communicated by the incident that it refers to?
3. When St. John says, in referring to the Fugees, "It was as if they were some sort of Rorschach test for the people they encountered on the field" (78), what does he mean? Does he assume readers know what a Rorschach test is? Why or why not?
4. What values are emphasized in this chapter? What passages highlight which attitudes and behaviors are valued and by whom?

### **Chapter Eight: *"They're in America Now, Not Africa"* (82-85)**

#### **Summary:**

This brief chapter illuminates the ethnic tensions that remain in Clarkston as it describes the harassment and physical mistreatment in 2006 of Chike Chime, a Nigerian immigrant – not refugee – who had relocated from New York to Clarkston because he believed it to be "more multiculturally advanced" (82). St. John asserts that Chime's unwarranted traffic stop, recorded on a video camera mounted in the police car, and his mistreatment without due cause, "underscores the degree to which tensions remained high in Clarkston some fifteen years or more after resettlement began" (85).

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What predictions can you make about the content of the chapter from its title? What cultural knowledge allows you to make this prediction?
2. Does the chapter title point to negative, positive, or more complicated attitudes and values?
3. What thought or idea motivates the hostility, scrutiny, and harassment from the local police toward a dark-skinned person driving a new car?
4. On pages 80, 85, and 86, how does St. John create continuity and thematic connections between chapter seven, eight, and nine?

### **Chapter Nine: *Get Lost* (86-98)**

This chapter is the last of three that focus on the tensions between the refugees and the locals. Here, the tensions emerge as not only Luma and her team, but also an adult refugee soccer team comprised of the Lost Boys of Sudan, try to secure permission to use a field in a city park for soccer practice. Clarkston's Mayor Swaney turns down their request, essentially giving the refugees the message to "get lost," and highlighting the resentment many townspeople feel at what seems like a refugee takeover of their town and public spaces. After some time the YMCA assists Luma in obtaining a practice field at Indian Creek Elementary School which, to Luma's dismay, turns out to be "a rutted, gravelly moonscape ... covered with glass and broken bottles, ... a rotten place to run a youth soccer program" (4). This chapter also introduces Tracy Ediger, who signs on as volunteer manager of the Fugees.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What details in the chapter does the title refer to? What point is the author seeking to make with the title?
2. To what extent is Nyok's statement "When I came to America I heard it was the land of opportunity, and indeed it was" (90), put into question by the city of Clarkston's refusal to let the Lost Boys' team play soccer on Armistead Field?
3. What kinds of power inequalities does the search for soccer fields –Luma's and the Lost Boys' – highlight? How visible are these inequalities of access to average Americans?
4. What character traits, beliefs, and values motivate Tracy Edinger to sign on as the Fugee's unpaid manager? How do these match up with Luma's?

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## **PART TWO: *A NEW SEASON* Chapters 10-21**

### **Chapter Ten: "*I Want To Be Part Of The Fugees*" (101-109)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter focuses on the Fugee's team tryouts on the substandard field. We learn more about Luma's aims and values as she sets strict rules and high standards for her soccer teams in hope of furthering unity, community, and self-discipline. In short, Luma seeks to be a force of good in the lives of boys who have experienced trauma far beyond what average Americans can imagine.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What qualities is Luma most interested in when selecting players? Why are these qualities important to her?

2. What is the significance of the chapter title? Why was it selected to represent the chapter?
3. To what extent does the fact that she has Eldin Suba and Mafoday Jawneh, two not-so-great athletes as goalkeepers, on her 13 and under team fit in with Luma's character and values?
4. What are the forces and conflicts of adolescence and identity discussed in this chapter, and how does Luma seek to counteract these?

### **Chapter Eleven: *Figure It Out So You Can Fix It* (110-126)**

#### **Summary:**

The focus of this chapter is on the details of preseason practice, the fallout from the “hair must be shorter than coach’s” rule, particularly with Prince and his Liberian friends, the miserable conditions of the new field and missing equipment, and Luma’s discipline and training regimen for her team, including mandatory tutoring for all the players. Several examples illustrate Luma’s sixth sense for detecting trouble, such as the players’ attempts at goofing off or defiance, and her swift response to being tested. While Luma’s reactions to her players infractions may seem harsh, she points to the challenges these refugees face with minimal or no education, traumatized and brutalized by killing and warfare, with few social skills or background to help them move on, and notes that they’re never going to be babied and need to be put into situations where they can figure out what is wrong with their actions so they can fix it.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. How reasonable is Luma’s short hair rule? Do you think she should have explained her rationale for this rule to her players? How might an explanation have helped her with the team?
2. What do you think causes newly arrived refugees from Africa to associate braids with African Americans and gangs? Why does St. John refer to these associations as adopting “the worst of America’s racial assumptions” (111)?
3. St. John claims that “the Fugees preseason practices took place amid miserable conditions” (113) and that Luma felt her teams were being “neglected and disrespected” (114). What details are offered as evidence in support of these claims?



4. This chapter presents examples of colliding cultural values and childrearing practices. For example, in Africa, corporal punishment is practiced as a means of instilling respect and obedience. In America, this constitutes child abuse and has serious legal consequences for parents and children. Discuss Beatrice's dilemma (124). What solutions are available to her, if any?

## **Chapter Twelve: *Meltdown* (127-133)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter gives an account of how the Under 15s lost not only their season opener but their entire season. Two players miss the bus, and even though Mandela prevails upon Warren St. John to drive out to Clarkston to collect them and bring them to the game, Luma has had enough. With her patience worn thin and deeply disappointed by some team members' habitual tardiness, disrespect, and general irresponsibility, she refuses to coach the team during the season opener and then announces her decision to cancel their season and forfeit the rest of the games.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. The chapter is titled *Meltdown*, which, given the chapter content, could refer to a number of things. Discuss what you think is the meaning of the title.
2. Why did Warren St. John hesitate when Mandela asked him to drive back to Clarkston to collect the missing players? What do you think he should have done?
3. Do you think Luma overreacted? Considering her character, her beliefs, and her plans for the refugee boys and their families, what actions might she have taken to achieve the results she desired?
4. During halftime, Fortunatee tells the Fugees "Coach is just a coach. She cannot show us how to play soccer. Is she playing? No – we are. The skills we got, we don't need her." (131) But after describing the second half and the game's outcome, Warren St. John concludes that "The Fugees were exhausted, and without their coach they were lost" (132). Discuss the reasons for these two seemingly contradictory points of view.

## **Chapter Thirteen: "*How Am I Going to Start All Over?*" (134-142)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter continues to relate the events of the previous one, in which Luma cancelled the Under 15 soccer season. We learn more about Kanue Biah, a refugee from Liberia who, after being separated from his parents, was raised by an uncle and a great-aunt in

refugee camps and ultimately was allowed to join his uncle in Clarkston. Kanue is instrumental in getting Luma to allow a reconstitution of the Under 15 team with new, more committed players who, through Kanue and Mandela's efforts, come to her for a new day of tryouts. We also learn about the success of Luma's Under 13 team as St. John offers a vivid and animated description of their third game of the season. One might think that their performance would garner effusive praise from Luma, but she stays in character, doling out her praise sparingly and telling them that, "It wasn't your best game, but a good game (142) ."

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Compare 15-year-old Kanue with Mandela Ziaty. Both are adolescent but their reactions and behaviors as refugees in Clarkston are quite different. What do you think accounts for those differences? What could they learn from each other?
2. Given the need and desire of refugees to integrate themselves into American culture, why do you think Luma's "psychological manipulation" of telling her team that they were "playing like them," meaning the mostly white American opponents, was successful in motivating the team to win?
3. In describing the Under 13 soccer game against the Triumph (141-2), what effect does St. John seek to create in readers by using words such as "clean, amazing, remarkable, and elegant"?
4. Why do you think Luma says after the Fugee's 5-1 win that, "It wasn't your best game, but a good game" and then tells them what they need to work on? Why didn't she just praise them for their win?

### **Chapter Fourteen: *Alex, Bien, and Ive* (143-148)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter tells the story of St. John's dinner as an honored guest with the Ntwari family, Generose, Bienvenue, Alex, Ive, and six-month-old Alya. And along the way, we gain much insight into their difficulties of adjusting to life in America: their poverty, their struggle to learn English, their difficulties with telemarketer scams, Generose's inability to find jobs given that she has to care for a 6-month-old daughter. Readers understand that these obstacles are not only specific to the Ntwari family but are true across the refugee population. They arrive with a naïve conception of America as the land of plenty, a belief which leaves them unprepared for the harsh realities of refugee life in America and open to disappointment and even desperation.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Explain what St. John means when he describes the separation between refugees and Americans as “two inaccessible but transparent worlds, separated by some invisible border, like birds from fish” (144).
2. What effect do the details about the effects of the telemarketing scams on refugees have on readers? How might refugee resettlement agencies anticipate and prevent these problems?
3. What additional insights have you gained about the conditions and obstacles refugee families face after reading this chapter?
4. How do refugees come to think of America as “the land of plenty” and “paradise”? What are the consequences of this belief for refugees? What steps might be taken by resettlement agencies to create a more accurate vision and expectation?

### **Chapter Fifteen: *Trying Again* (149-155)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter details Luma’s battles with YMCA officials in the wake of her cancellation of the Under 15’s season and Luma’s disappointment with the YMCA’s repeated failure to follow through on their word in terms of securing a field, goal posts, and other equipment. She volunteers her time in coaching for the YMCA, collecting no salary, and feels taken advantage of and generally exhausted. But because Kanue had single handedly put together a new team, vetted the players, and seen to it that they committed to respecting Luma’s rules, she takes on a new and inexperienced Under 15 team for the season.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What does the title of this chapter refer to? Who is trying again?
2. What do you think motivates Luma to take on this new Under 15 team even though she is exhausted?
3. How do you anticipate the new Under 15 team will perform? Explain why you think this.
4. How does what we learn about Luma’s worldview (151) fit with what you know so far about her beliefs and values?

## **Chapter Sixteen: *The Fifteens Fight* (156-162)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter offers an account of Luma's testing of the newly re-constituted Under 15 team with new players so eagerly recruited and vetted by Fornatee. Through a mixture of pride and adolescent confused decision-making, however, Fornatee decides he need not try out again since he already made the team the first time. He fails to show for the first two scheduled practices. He appears at a scrimmage Luma has arranged between the much superior Under 17s and the Under 15s, seeking to pick up where he left off, but Luma refuses to let him participate. Even though Luma promises him a chance to explain himself after the game, he hooks up with Prince and other Liberian friends at the playground next to the soccer field and disappears, this time for good, from the team. During their scrimmage, the Under 15s prove to Luma that they have what it takes to compete. Luma, frustrated by the field and practice conditions at the elementary school, meets with Mayor Swaney, who passes responsibility for permitting soccer on Armistead Field off to the Clarkston City Council.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss Fornatee's decisions and actions. What do you think happened? Were his actions predictable based on what St. John has told readers so far about his commitment, dedication, and self-discipline?
2. Discuss Mandela's behavior before and during the scrimmages and his seeming lack of interest in "getting to know the new players" (157). To what extent does his behavior surprise you and to what extent is it understandable?
3. Why do you think the author mentions that, "The YMCA still had not delivered soccer goals..." (159)? What reaction might he want to elicit from readers?
4. Mayor Swaney had formerly declared Armistead Field as a "soccer free" zone to keep the Lost Boys' and other refugee soccer teams from using it. He now tells Luma the decision will be up to the City Council, which, St. John tells readers, will "likely go along with whatever he recommends," and thus Mayor Swaney, "would have a fresh chance to let his constituents know what sort of town Clarkston was becoming" (162). Do you think Mayor Swaney will have a change of heart? Why or why not?

## **Chapter Seventeen: *Go Fugees* (163-168)**

### **Summary:**

In this chapter the reader is shown another side of the usually stern and calm Coach Luma as she agonizes over what lies ahead for the hastily and seemingly haphazardly reconstituted Under 15s. On game day, physically ill due to anxiety, Luma watches her smaller and much less experienced team prevail, under Kanue's able leadership, in a well-played, hard-fought match, over the AFC Lightning, a team from the mostly white suburb of Fayetteville, GA. The game and its outcome elicit from Luma, who is typically sparing in her praise, the comment: "...you played a beautiful game" (168).

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Throughout the text so far Luma has come across as rather stern and not given to enthusiastic praise. In light of this, discuss her reactions before, during, and after the Under 15s' first game.
2. What does Luma mean by "enabling their [the Under 15s'] blind optimism" (163)?
3. From the way St. John describes the match between the Fugees and the Lightning, what sense do readers get about his feelings? What specific words or passages can you point to that suggest his feelings?
4. Describe Kanue's influence on the team. What specific actions suggest the type of influence he has?

### **Chapter Eighteen: *Gunshots* (169-171)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter discusses the importance and urgency of Luma's upcoming petition to the City Council to allow her teams to play on Armistead Field. We also learn that Tito and Osman, both members of the Fugees Under 15s, were involved in a possibly gang-related altercation with an African American youth and two adults. Tito was shot in the face but his injuries are not life-threatening. Fearing even rumors of gang connections to her team as well as possible threats or acts of revenge toward the team, Luma throws Tito and Osman off of the team, cancels all further team practices, and hopes to prevail at the upcoming City Council meeting.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss Luma's ejection of Osman and Tito from the soccer team. Do you think the ejection was warranted? Why or why not?

2. Discuss St. John's argument that the tensions in the Clarkston apartment complex are caused by competition over limited resources (171) and that race is a secondary factor.
3. Do you anticipate that the events discussed in this chapter will help Luma make her case to the City Council for shifting practices and games to Armistead Field? Why or why not?
4. What do you think is the purpose of this chapter? Explain your reasons.

### **Chapter Nineteen: *Getting Over It* (172-186)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter profiles Bill Mehlinger, the owner of Thriftown, Clarkston's grocery store; the past and current pastors of the Clarkston Baptist Church, William Perrin and Phil Kitchen; and Tony J. Scipio, Clarkston's new police chief. All are seen as actors in a developing possibility of building community in Clarkston. St. John argues that we all have something at stake in the debate over diversity, and shows how community building serves the personal goals and interests of each of these individuals. He introduces the work of a British researcher, Steven Vertovec, who coined the term "super-diversity" and proposed a simple three-step process – decategorization, recategorization, and mutual differentiation – for building connections between members of different cultures within a "super-diverse" society.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Using the details presented in the chapter as evidence, describe Bill Mehlinger's character traits. What kind of person is he? What about Tony Scipio? Pastors Perrin and Kitchen? What qualities do they all share and how are those qualities connected to the chapter title?
2. Discuss the extent to which Mehlinger's statement, "If you don't change, you're gone" (175) applies broadly to shifts in demographics across the United States and other social situations.
3. Discuss Brenda White's comment "I don't think it's fair that we had to cater to the foreign people rather than them trying to change to our way of doing things" (177). What thoughts and attitudes does it reveal? To what extent can you see her point and to what extent is her view problematic?

4. To what extent does the idea of ignoring diversity because it is the norm (185), contrast with the efforts of many organizations to emphasize and celebrate diversity?

### **Chapter Twenty: *The “Soccer People”* (187-194)**

#### **Summary:**

St. John recounts his meeting with Mayor Swaney. The interview details show Swaney as a somewhat folksy old-guard mayor who, through his talents as a bureaucratic obstructionist, had managed so far to appease his constituency of old-time Clarkston residents opposed to resettlement. After showing the mayor entangled in his own lies about the use of Clarkston’s soccer fields, St. John moves on to reporting the details of the City Council meeting where the current petitions before the council show that in the past, “those who governed Clarkston had a tendency to overreach their authority, at least until called to account by the citizens” (193). Following this revelation, Luma presents her petition to use Armistead Field, which, to the surprise of the City Council members, the mayor supports. Luma’s petition is approved and she is granted the use of the lower half of Armistead Field for her teams’ practices.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is St. John’s purpose in quoting Mayor Swaney verbatim as saying “Refugees is like me and you—they’re people” (188) and “I don’t have no beef with nobody” (189)? What does this do to the reader’s image of the mayor?
2. What is the significance of the chapter title *The “Soccer People”*? What undercurrent of sentiments does it reveal?
3. Discuss what St. John refers to as “the common misperception that the refugees were a monolithic group of strangers from faraway lands”? What are the consequences of this misperception?
4. How does St. John’s account of the Ethiopian woman petitioning for permission to serve beer in her restaurant on Sundays and the man challenging the legality of the sign in Milgram Park forbidding even the presence of leashed dogs work in the chapter? What do these accounts emphasize? How do they prepare the stage for Luma’s petition?

### **Chapter Twenty-one: *Playing on Grass* (195-200)**

#### **Summary:**

Luma has a heart-to-heart discussion with her teams about gangs and how to avoid contact. She tells them, “if you keep getting beat up on the same road, take a different road,” (197) several times before announcing that from now on they would be walking to and playing on Armistead Field in Milgram Park. St. John reports Luma’s lecture to the boys about the responsibility they will have for good behavior while walking to and also while on the field and then offers a vivid description of the seemingly Eden-like qualities of the new field. An old man, a Clarkston old-timer, walks up to complain about their use of the field and comment on the changes in Clarkston, but St. John does not portray him unsympathetically.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the purpose of the repetition of “If you keep getting beat up on the same road, take a different road” (197)? Within the context of the chapter, could the sentence have more than one meaning?
2. How does St. John create an image in readers’ minds of the new field at Milgram Park? What words, phrases, and passages help him create this image?
3. Discuss the humor and also the significance of the “We’re not in Africa anymore” comment made by the lanky Sudanese midfielder in response to Hamdu’s suggestion the boys should chase after the herd of deer that appeared at the perimeter of the practice field at Milgram park.
4. How do you think St. John portrays the old man who appears late one afternoon to object to the Fugee’s practicing on the field? What words or passages can you use to support your interpretation? What type of response do you think St. John wants to elicit from readers with his portrayal?

## **PART THREE: *FULL CIRCLE***

### **Chapter Twenty-two: *Who Are the Kings?* (203-209)**

#### **Summary:**

The chapter opens with background information on the political and ethnic conflict in Kosovo and tells how Quendrim Bushi, a player on the Fugees Under 13s, and his family came to be refugees. We also learn about the bonding of the Fugees’ Under 13s, in the form of a call and response procedure they develop for warmups. The team warms up by running laps, they form a chorus line and players from Kosovo, the Congo, Afghanistan, Sudan, Liberia, and Burundi break into a chant of “Who are the kings?” as the call and “The Fugees” as the collective response. At the end of the chapter, St. John offers a bit of information about Luma’s relaxed approach to coaching, an approach based on the belief that “Creativity [is] essential in overcoming weaknesses in soccer, and beyond” (209).



### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the effects of a resettlement that distributes family members all over the world as happened with Quendrim's family. What, if anything, might agencies do to improve their procedures and policies?
2. What connections can be made between a the description of a refugee from a small town in southern Kosovo being introduced to Chinese and Mexican food and British researcher Steven Vertovec's "simple three-step process for building connections between members of different culture within a 'super-diverse' society" (184)?
3. Given Luma's rigid enforcement of her own rules of conduct, do you find it surprising that she lets her players figure out the best way to achieve a desired effect in soccer drills and games?
4. Discuss possible meanings of Quendrim's observation that he thought of the other players on his team as more than just teammates and that "It's like they're all from my own country" (207).

### **Chapter Twenty-three: *Showdown at Blue Springs* (210-214)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter describes the Under 13 Fugees' game against the Blue Springs Liberty Fire, a hard-fought game that the Fugees win, 3-2. Luma and the boys are elated and they even win praise from a fan of the opposing team, who tells them, "I'd have paid money to watch that game" (214).

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the significance for Mafoday of the fact that the Blue Springs team is all white? Why does he remark on it to Luma?
2. What character qualities does Quendrim display during the game?
3. How is the opposing team characterized in this chapter? Are readers left with a positive or negative impression?
4. What do you think is the main purpose of the chapter? How the title fit this purpose?

## **Chapter Twenty-four: *Coming Apart* (215-225)**

### **Summary:**

The chapter opens with an account of the Under 15s loss to the Santos, a strong team that is in contention for the division championships. The Under 15s lost 6-1 in a match that frustrated the players and unraveled the already dispirited and angry Mandela to the point where Luma has to kick him off the team for swearing and defiance. The chapter also introduces Jeremy Cole, a youth services coordinator at Refugee Family Services, through whom St. John sheds additional light on Mandela's troubles in terms of a double identity crisis many of the adolescent refugee boys are facing. That discussion also illuminates Luma's emotions of disappointment and loss at having to kick Mandela off the team. But while disappointment can sometimes be overwhelming for those working with refugees, the ultimate reward is communicated by Cole who says, "You have to remember that you're being given a lot more than you're giving. ... Because the refugees give you something in return – an understanding of international cultures, of generosity" (220-1).

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss Jeremy Cole's worldview. What does he value? What does he seek to distinguish himself from?
2. The pressures on adolescent refugees seem enormous. What can be done to help them navigate these difficulties?
3. What is the meaning of the chapter title, "Coming Apart"? How do the experiences of Jeremy Cole and his claim that, "You have to remember that you're being given a lot more than you're giving" (220) relate to the chapter title?
4. What does Jeremy Cole think is lacking in American society? What does he yearn for and wish to see more of?

## **Chapter Twenty-five: *Hanging On at Home* (226-234)**

### **Summary:**

This chapter is composed of a mix of stories, including information about how refugees like Generose end up working the night shift at Crider, a chicken processing plant, while her boys aged fifteen, thirteen, and seven take care of their baby sister, Alyah. The story of Alex forgetting the hot dogs cooking on the stove while he is feeding the baby, and nearly starting a kitchen fire, reminds readers of the difficulties and dangers literally forced upon the refugees. We learn that Beatrice Ziaty is dating a Liberian refugee who attempts to help with raising the boys and bemoans what he considers the excessive freedom of American teenagers and the hunger and poverty that lure refugee boys such as Mandela into troubled relationships with gangs. There are, however, promising signs that

Mandela Ziaty misses being on the Fugees, and he asks his brother Jeremiah to tell coach Luma he wants to talk to her.

**Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the chapter title?
2. Discuss the childrearing views of David Faryen, Beatrice's boyfriend. Do they differ from what you know about Beatrice's approach?
3. Why does St. John include the details about Alex burning the hot dogs? What does this story illustrate?
4. What seems to be the central focus of the chapter? What point do you think St. John wants to make in relating the details?

**Chapter Twenty-six: *The Dikoris* (235-244)**

**Summary:**

This chapter catches readers up how Luma's practices with the Under 13s are going and how Luma fixes the weaknesses she can. Certain skills such as crosses, corner kicks, and long shots remain impossible to practice because the YMCA still had not delivered the soccer goals. The remainder of the chapter focuses on profiling the Dikori family, their flight from Sudan and resettlement in America, and the tragic automobile accident that killed the mother and three daughters. All three surviving boys join Luma's Fugees: the oldest, Shamsoun, twelve-year-old Idwar, and Robin, who, at nine is by far the youngest player on Luma's Under 13 team. Soccer becomes their refuge and the team their family, the place where they find solace and the activity that, according to Shamsoun, keeps them sane.

**Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Shamsoun is most surprised by Americans' seeming shyness toward refugees and immigrants. Unlike Sudanese reaction to strangers, Americans "seemed to look through him, and no one seemed the least bit curious about how this stranger wound up in their midst" (242). What do you think makes Americans react in this way?
2. Why do you think St. John includes the details of the Dikoris' displacement from Sudan and persecution in Egypt in this chapter?
3. Discuss the role the Fugee's soccer team plays in the lives of the Dikori boys.

4. Shamsoun tells St. John: “Our father doesn’t show a lot of affection—that’s how it is with African parents” (244). Discuss this statement in light of what you’ve learned about the relationships in other refugee families whose stories are told in the book.

### **Chapter Twenty-seven: “*What Are You Doing Here?*” (245-256)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter introduces David Anderson, coach of the Athens Gold Valiants’ Under 13s, whose own struggles with self-esteem as a youngster led him to emphasize confidence-building and discipline in his coaching style. Readers are also introduced to his star player, Jonathan Scherzer, a fine young player from Austria whose father was studying at the university. On the way to the game, Luma gets pulled over by the police, who, suspicious of her middle name, Hassan, arrest her in full view of her players and jail her for driving with an expired license, causing her to miss the game. Playing without their coach, the Fugees go down 5-0 to the Valiants but their spirit and determination during the second half of the game earns them the respect of Dave Anderson

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the chapter title, “What are you doing here?” Why do you think St. John selected it as the chapter title?
2. The Fugees play a much stronger second half against the Valiants. Does St. John give an explanation for this shift?
3. What point might St. John want to make by concluding the chapter as he does? What comparison is offered to readers and for what purpose?
4. What parallels can be drawn between Joni Scherzer’s experience of joining his soccer team and that of the refugee boys joining Luma’s?

### **Chapter Twenty-eight: *Halloween* (257-262)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter opens with a news item about a riot in a prison in Kinshasa where Beatrice Belagemire’s husband is incarcerated, giving readers another opportunity to compare Luma’s experience with the American judiciary to refugees’ experience in their home countries. The remainder of the chapter recounts the Under 13s’ first American Halloween experience as Luma takes them trick-or-treating in an affluent suburb of Atlanta that seems to fit the refugees image of America as the land of plenty.

### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. St. John describes Luma's arrest and bail process in conjunction with what Beatrice Belegamire's husband Joseph is experiencing in the jail in Kinshasa. Discuss this comparison. What does St. John want readers to consider?
2. What sense do you get of the suburb where Luma takes her Under 13s to trick-or-treat? What specific words and phrases does St. John use as a tool to create for readers the image he wants them to see?
3. What is the meaning of the exclamation "Young man!" (261) and why is Mafoday's reply of "Thank you!" humorous?
4. What is the purpose of the last paragraph of the chapter?

### **Chapter Twenty-nine: *The Fifteen's Final Game* (263-267)**

#### **Summary:**

This chapter details the Under 15s last game of the season. Because Luma had initially disbanded the team before allowing Kanue and Natnael to reconstitute it with new players, several games had been forfeited and also, because of recent losses, the Fugees were now fighting to win their last game to not to finish dead last in their league. Despite trying hard, particularly in the second half, the Fugees get called for many fouls and make mistakes that result in a frustrating and disappointing loss. Luma tells them that this was an embarrassment, and could have been avoided had they played the game according to her instructions.

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. What is St. John's purpose in opening the chapter with Natnael and Joseph's conversation?
2. Why was the team's play unfocused and seemingly dazed?
3. What was the source of Luma's frustration with the Under 15s and what does she blame for the loss of the game?
4. Given the difficulties the Under 15s had encountered, does Luma's criticism seem harsh? Why or why not?

### **Chapter Thirty: *My Rules, My Way* (268-272)**

#### **Summary:**

The chapter describes the Under 13s improvement and their final regular-season game. Unlike the Under 15s, the Under 13 team has conscientiously abided by Luma's system of "my rules, my drills, my way" and has bonded in friendship. They win their final game 2-1 and Luma, not wanting the win to go to the boys' heads, sends them home with spare praise, saying "you played an okay game" (272).

**Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the meaning of the chapter title.
2. Discuss what you see as the significance of the boys' solution to shared prayer. How does St. John's word choice influence readers?
3. What relationship between success and self-confidence is suggested by the reference to Mafoday stopping the penalty kick in an earlier game (269)?
4. Why do you think the Under 13s bonded in a way so that they looked out for each other and the Under 15s didn't bond in that way?

**Chapter Thirty-one: *Tornado Cup* (273-290)**

**Summary:**

In preparation for the Under 13s participation in the Tornado Cup, Luma has them scrimmage with the Under 15s, a game that energizes both teams. In the tournament, the Under 13s win their first game but lose their second. Due to the outcomes of various other games, they get a chance to playoff against another team for a spot in the finals. They need a win to advance but, in a hard-fought game, the Fugees are only able to tie and the other team advances. Luma tells them, "You had'em at two to one, and you wouldn't finish it. You deserve to lose. "You didn't play your best" (287). Luma promises to enter the Under 13s in a big tournament in Savannah if they can raise the \$1,000.00 necessary for travel and lodging. The boys come up \$130.00 short but Jeremiah and Prince devise a team project of raking leaves and raise the needed \$130.00 in one day. The book concludes with an account of a deceitful action by the city of Clarkston, who send a fax to Luma to inform her that the permission to practice on Armistead Field has been revoked three months short of the six months use she had been granted unanimously at the last city Council meeting. It turns out Mayor Swaney had circumvented the City Council, retracting the permission on his own. So, once again, Luma finds herself with a tournament to prepare for but without a practice field.

**Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. When St. John makes the analogy between soccer tournaments and Woodstock, how does he safeguard against possible confusion among his younger readers who might not know about Woodstock?
2. Discuss Luma's comments to her Under 13 team after they tied their last game in the Tornado Cup tournament.
3. What does the word *[sic]* in the fax from the town of Clarkston indicate? What reaction from readers might the word elicit?
4. Comment on the book's ending. To what extent have your expectations been met or not met by this ending?

### *Epilogue* (291-300)

#### **Summary:**

The *Epilogue*, constructed much like the *Introduction* provides a summation and overview of what has happened to the Fugees and Luma since the season-ending Tornado Cup tournament. We learn that many of the refugees who had lived in Clarkston later moved to various other locations to join family or friends or to seek a better life. This tugs at Luma because of the friendships she has formed with the families, but she also understands. The appearance of three of St. John's articles about the Fugees in the *New York Times* had a number of consequences. For one, Mayor Swaney was inundated with angry letters and phone calls for banning the Fugees from Armistead Field. His lies were exposed and the Clarkston City Council reaffirmed Luma's right to use the field. The book and the articles have focused attention on Luma and the Fugees. They received a number of donations that allowed Luma to sever her ties with the YMCA and start realizing her plans for a tutoring center and soccer facility. An important point about Luma and about the meaning of the book is communicated when Tracy Ediger tells St. John that, "Luma is really a normal person doing what she can for the people around her," and that the point is that, "no one person can do everything, but we can all do something" (299).

#### **Analysis and Discussion Questions:**

1. Compare the *Epilogue* to the *Introduction* in terms of structure and content.
2. What *function* does the *Epilogue* serve? Do other genres, movies for example, make use of epilogues?
3. How does the *Epilogue* provide a more satisfying conclusion to the book than the final chapter?

4. What values are revealed in St. John's account of Luma refusing to let her father buy clothes and instead asking him to buy school supplies for the refugees?
5. Discuss the Jordanian saying, "Everything in the world starts small and then becomes bigger—except bad things. They start big, and then get smaller" (292). To what extent has this been true for Luma up to now?
6. Discuss reasons for Luma's anger over one of her young players receiving an A in English (293). Why do you think this happens? Why does Luma say that "local public schools continue to fail the refugee population and American students as well." What changes could be made to avoid this kind of failure?
7. Discuss Luma's insight that for refugees, moving by choice – as opposed to simply fleeing – could be an act of self-determination. In light of what you've learned about the situation of refugees, how do you see Generose's move to Indiana?
8. What was your reaction on learning that reader response to an article St. John wrote about the Fugee's and Mayor Swaney's soccer ban helped the Fugees get permission to use the field reinstated?