

## 10th Grade Summer Reading

### ***Outcasts United: An American Town, A Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference* by Warren St. John**

All sophomores are to have read *Outcast United* by the first day of school. Each student will submit **handwritten notes** to the study guide questions below, under each of the following themes, with their religion teacher on the first day of school in the fall. (The book will be discussed and addressed in varying ways throughout the semester in your Religion, Social Studies and English classes)

#### **Migration**

1. In the introduction of *Outcasts United*, the author compares the issue of migration to the game of soccer. What comparisons can you make between the fluidity of soccer and the life challenges of the refugees of Clarkston?
2. Coach Luma is also a Clarkston "outsider" in terms of her nationality. In what ways does her experience as an immigrant compare and contrast to those of her players?
3. Discuss the chain of events that created the migrations of refugees out of Liberia.
4. Chapter 3 describes a study led by Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam that states that inhabitants of hyper-diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, and distrust their neighbors. Discuss the conclusions made by the study. What could the people of Clarkston have done to better prepare themselves for the sudden influx of refugees into their community?
5. Discuss the experiences of the Dikor family in Cairo in the context of illegal immigration in the United States.
6. How has the history of migration altered the cultural landscape in your community? Use specific examples.

#### **Moving Beyond Stereotypes**

1. In the book, the U15's judged each other based upon outward characteristics. Have you ever been judged based on outward characteristics such as the color of your skin, ethnicity, or gender? Explain.
2. How did the experience of being judged make you feel?
3. Have you ever witnessed a friend being judged or discriminated against based on superficial characteristics? What was your response, if any?
4. The U13's developed a family like connection free of prejudice or judgment based on their differences. Why were the U13's able to create those connections? What prevented the U15's from doing the same? Give specific examples.
5. With the arrival of the Somali Bantu to Clarkston, the longtime Clarkston residents became alarmed about changes in their community even though refugees had been resettling in Clarkston since the 1980's. In what ways did stereotypes and xenophobia play into the politics of Clarkston?

6. The refugee community in Clarkston is composed of a conglomerate of religions, ethnicities, and languages. How do the contrasting experiences of the U13 and U15 players relate to the complexities that face the refugee community as a whole?

### **Multi-Dimensional Identity**

1. Assimilation is when you lose your own cultural identity to blend in with the dominant culture. David Faryen, Beatrice's boyfriend, spoke of the importance of Mandela and other Liberian children respecting their culture. In the context of the definition of assimilation and pluralism, discuss whether or not you agree with this statement.
2. In your opinion, do you feel that the refugee community should assimilate, or do you believe that the people of Clarkston should strive for a pluralistic society? Use examples from the book to support your answers.
3. Like many teenagers, Mandela Ziaty was wrestling with identity issues. What decisions did he make in negotiating both worlds? How did these decisions affect his integration in American society? Give examples of how his new life in America affected his sense of identity.
4. Mandela and other Liberian players experienced conflicts of identity in trying to adjust to their own world. What are some of the issues that a bicultural, bilingual student faces?

### **Global Rights**

1. Discuss examples of the human rights violations that some of the families experienced in the book.
2. Once a refugee is resettled in the United States, there are still human rights violations being committed: language rights, women's rights, economic rights, housing rights, etc. Discuss the new or continuing human rights issues that a refugee might face upon arrival into the United States.
3. Discuss the problems involved in the Fugees Family's search for a home field. Did the Clarkston government violate their human rights? What about the situation of the Lost Boys and the use of the soccer field? Discuss.
4. Human rights violations are most often perpetrated against people without power. In what ways were the refugees mentioned in the book powerless, and how did this cause them to be more vulnerable to human rights violations?

Developed by educators Gillian Lee-Fong Farris and Christina Shunnarah, who have significant experience working within the diverse communities of Clarkston for Random House Publishing.