

Outcasts United Study Guide

Introduction

***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?

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

2. What is the purpose of the Introduction? What does Warren St. John hope to achieve by including it in the book?

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

3. From the *Introduction*, what do we learn about Luma's personality and character? What words and/or passages in the Introduction give information about her values and philosophy?

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

4. What do we learn about the refugees from the Introduction? About the town of Clarkston?

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

5. What evidence from the Introduction suggests that the author is a credible reporter?

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

Chapter 1: “*Luma*” (11-17)

Analysis and Discussion Questions:

1. How does what we learn about Luma’s developing coaching philosophy foreshadow one of the main themes of the book?

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Chapter 1: “*Luma*” (11-17)

2. 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?

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Chapter 1: “*Luma*” (11-17)

3. Why were Luma’s friends afraid that she, “a Muslim woman from Jordan, wouldn’t fit in in the Deep South” (17)?

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Chapter 1: “*Luma*” (11-17)

4. What is the purpose of this chapter? What does it help the author achieve with readers?

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Chapter 2: “Beatrice and her Boys”

1. Warren St. John, both in the introduction and in Chapter Two, discusses the 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?
2. What impression of the Ziaty’s apartment in Clarkston does the author create through his use of the words *dingy* and *bare* (22)?
3. 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 policy have positive consequences? To what extent might it place an undue burden on refugees?
3. How does the fact that Beatrice’s children had no access to education during their five years in the refugee camp foreshadow difficulties they encounter when placed into the public school system in Clarkston?
4. 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.

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Chapter 3: “Small town . . . Big Heart”

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. How did Clarkston become such a center for refugees from the late 1980s to the early 1990s? As St. John relates these events, how do you anticipate this demographic change will play out in terms of social relations and interactions with the long-time residents of Clarkston? Is your anticipation confirmed or disconfirmed by the details presented on page 34?
3. According to this chapter, what are some of the factors that make places such as Clarkston “a perfect community in which to place refugees were just arriving in the United States” (27)? Can these factors be better taken into account in resettling refugees?
4. What does Warren St. John’s tone in the description of Lee Swaney tell you about the attitude of him?

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Answer on separate piece of paper in complete sentences.

Chapter 4

1. The mother of one of the players on Luma's girls 14 and under team said about Luma, "I don't usually use this word. But it was magical... She helped them thrive" (36). Discuss what she meant by "thrive."
2. What characteristics and values did Luma notice in the refugee boys' pick-up soccer matches that attracted her to these players?
3. What does the chapter title, "Alone Down South," lead readers to believe the chapter will be about? Is that what happens? What would be a better title for this chapter?

Chapter 5

1. This chapter focuses on the first soccer tryouts. St. John wrote a chapter about Beatrice and her boys and a chapter about Paula and hers, How do the characters development 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. What do you think the Clarkson residents think of the refugees when it said, "clearly said they didn't like all these newcomers here ... This is the old Clarkson High school(of the community center). This is a Clarkston building. This belongs to the old Clarkstons—the real Clarkstos. Not to these newcomers." ?
4. What are some of the issues the refugees face in American schools? In America? How did Luma help with this?

Chapter 6

1. 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?
2. What purpose does this chapter serve?

3. What were some of the challenges the Fugees faced?

Chapter 7

1. In the previous chapter, St. John focused 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 values does the title communicate by the event that it refers to?

3. What values are highlighted in this chapter? Which attitudes and behaviors are valued and by whom are they valued by?