

2010 Summer Reading Guide for *Outcasts United*

Welcome to your first college assignment! Your learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, are sure to challenge you to think critically and make connections among seemingly disparate information. This is your first step on that journey of learning, and we have provided you a map to guide your first venture into college reading.

Because this book chronicles the lives of Luma Mufleh, the Fugees players, and the people of Clarkston, Georgia, we highly recommended that you print a world map and as you read, label the countries of origins of the several characters described. This will give you an idea of both the diverse locations from which the characters came and the great distances they had to travel to get to Clarkston.

Enjoy!

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To begin!

We expect you to read with an analytical eye. This means that you cannot just read this book for the story and feel-good moments. Rather, we expect that you will look for the themes, big ideas, and how this book relates to your experience as you transition from high school or another phase of your life to your life as a college student.

- Make connections.
- Keep a list of characters.
- Think about how you can relate to these characters and events.
- Do some research about the places, events, or ideas with which you are unfamiliar.
- This is called active reading.

Resources

Possible World Map Links

- <http://kyleabaker.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/wallpaper-world-map-2006-large.gif>
- <http://fhswolesden.wikispaces.com/file/view/1-world-map-political.gif/81329845/1-world-map-political.gif>

Websites for More Information

- <http://www.fugeesfamily.org/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/user/lumamufleh>
- http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2007/01/20/us/20070121_FUGEES_FEATURE.html
- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103516824>
- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7761970>

These questions provide a guide as you read. Take note of your thoughts, reactions, and questions.

Part One

1. As you begin reading, what are some of your initial impressions of Luma Mufleh, the Fugees, and Clarkston, Georgia?
2. How did Luma's mentor, Rhonda Brown, influence the way Luma coaches? What was Brown's coaching philosophy? Reflect on an important mentor in your life. Who is that person and why is she or he important in your life?
3. What difficult decisions did Luma have to make as she entered adulthood? What were some of the benefits and consequences she experienced?
4. If you are unfamiliar with the history and civil war in Liberia, do some research. Please use websites that are viable to find information (websites that end in .gov, .edu, or are respected news sources such as CNN or BBC).
5. What made the transition from the refugee camp to the United States difficult for Beatrice Ziaty and her children? What has been your experience with going to a new and unfamiliar place? How did you feel and how did you act initially?
6. What was Clarkston, Georgia, like before the refugee resettlement started? What is it like now? Why did resettlement agencies pick Clarkston as a resettlement site?
7. Warren St. John describes Clarkston as "a microcosm of the world itself..." (p. 37). What does he mean by that? How do you think Western New England College will be similar to Clarkston in that sense?
8. How do our life experiences shape our perceptions? Use the examples of older Clarkston residents moving away as refugees move in, refugees' experience with the police force, and Karen Feltz's research.
9. Luma's first girls' soccer team and their parents were surprised at Luma's strict coaching style. How would you handle having Luma as a coach? Would you like a professor like Luma? Why or why not?
10. Why did Luma offer to coach the refugee boys?
11. Luma faced many challenges in beginning the soccer team. What obstacles did she encounter? How did she work to overcome those?

12. Luma's business Ashton's was failing. How did she take one of her failures and create a new opportunity for which she was passionate? Have you ever failed at something? How did you overcome that?
13. Paula Balegmire and her children moved all the way from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Clarkston. Map the larger political and historical events that led to Paula's need to flee the country. Describe her personal journey and difficult decisions in her trek from the DR of Congo to the United States. Some research on the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo will be helpful in understanding the reason for the violence in that country. What role did the United States play in those events?
14. Due to ethnic violence between the Hutus and Tutsis, Generose Ntwari and her children had to flee Burundi. Why were the Hutus and Tutsis fighting? Why did Generose have to flee her own country?
15. How were the Fugees players strangers in a strange land? What were some of their experiences? How did their mutual experiences bring them together as a team? How might you experience being a stranger in a strange land as a first-year student at Western New England College?
16. Why did Warren St. John highlight Chike Chime's experience with the Clarkston police officer? How does this one event exemplify the political, social, and ethnic tensions apparent in Clarkston?
17. Soccer for Clarkston was much more than a sport—it was a point on contention between the old Clarkston residents and the refugees. What did soccer represent for both sides?
18. What sort of issues did Nathaniel Nyok encounter when his team tried to use Armistead Field? Why did Mayor Swaney prohibit the use of soccer on Armistead Field? How did this affect the Fugees?
19. Warren St. John introduces Tracy Ediger, a woman who earned her Ph.D.-M.D. and then decided to take an entirely different direction in life. Why did she give up medicine? What did she pursue instead and why? What is your intended direction in college? How might that change during your college career?

Part Two

1. Luma's hair rule seems odd taken out of context. Why did Luma create this rule? What were the effects?
2. Luma created a contract for her players that said:
I will have good behavior on and off the field.

I will not smoke.
I will not do drugs.
I will not drink alcohol.
I will not get anyone pregnant.
I will not use bad language.
My hair will be shorter than Coach's.
I will be on time.
I will listen to Coach.
I will try hard.
I will ask for help.
I want to be part of the Fugees! (p. 109)

In the context of your first-year in college and of the goals you have set for yourself, what would your contract with yourself entail?

3. The refugees not only had to adapt to a new language and a new place, they had to learn an entirely new culture. What were some of the cultural differences between especially for the African mothers and their children? How did language and parenting styles complicate the shift in cultural expectations?
4. At one game for the Under 15s, Luma refuses to coach the team. She then cancels the season. What led Luma to make this decision? What do some of the players do to continue the season?
5. What is the typical refugee image of America? What do Generose and her boys (Alex, Bien, and Ive) find out about life in America? What sacrifices does the Ntwari family make in order to just survive?
6. Luma was having continued disagreements with the YMCA. When she announced she was ending the Under 15s season, the YMCA administrators asked why she did not just kick off the offending players. What did she counter argue? Do you think Luma made the right decision? Why or why not?
7. When Luma reinstated the Under 15s, she asked them if they were willing to play and still lose all of their games. Do you like her blunt approach with the team members? How would you have handled the situation?
8. Why did Luma have the Under 15s scrimmage against the Under 17s? What was she looking for during the scrimmage?
9. What helped the Under 15s team persevere during their game in Chapter 17? In what situations have you persevered and why? What helped you get through?

10. What did the shooting of Tito prompt? What did it represent in the larger scheme of Clarkston's complex social make-up?
11. Warren St. John cites four examples of change that happened in Clarkston. What prompted change in each case? What challenges did each person or group face? What were the lasting effects of adapting to the changes in Clarkston?
12. What are the stages of Steven Vertovec's theory of "super-diversity"? Do you think Vertovec's theory is true?
13. What impressions of small time politics do Mayor Swaney and the City Council give you? What seem to be the determining factors in the Mayor and City Council's decision making?
14. With the Under 13s and Under 15s, Luma addresses the issues of gang affiliation. What similarities and differences does she draw between gangs and the Fugees?

Part Three

1. Do some research on the history of conflict surrounding Kosovo. How far back in time does the conflict start?
2. Warren St. John writes, "As rigid as she [Luma] could seem about team rules and the like, she favored a flexible, unregimented approach to the game itself...Where some soccer coaches might have emphasized, say, striking the ball on a particular part of the foot to achieve a specific effect, Luma instead focused on the end result, and graded her players on their ability to find their own personal ways of achieving the end. Creativity was essential in overcoming weaknesses in soccer, and beyond" (p. 209). How might this approach to coaching soccer relate to living your life? Are you rigid and follow strict rules or do you find flexibility more useful? Why?
3. In Chapter 23, what challenges did the Under 13s Fugees face and what helped them overcome a difficult opponent?
4. In contrast, what challenges did the Under 15s Fugees face and what caused them to lose 6-1?
5. Warren St. John references the term "liminality" when referring to the experiences of the refugees, especially the teenagers. What does the term mean? How might you experience liminality as you enter college?
6. Jeremy Cole, a man from an upper-middleclass Christian family, worked with the refugees in Stone Mountain. As a result of his experiences in working with refugees, he converted to

Islam. It is possible that college might serve as a catalyst for a significant change in you or a friend's life. How did Jeremy change? What attributes did he retain? What changes do you anticipate in yourself as you move to a new phase in your life?

7. Warren St. John highlights the practices of some companies in hiring and/or recruiting illegal immigrant and refugee workers. Do you think this is a good practice? What are the pros and cons of such practices?
8. Do some research on Sudan and the recent genocide in Darfur. Who are the Lost Boys?
9. How did Luma's traffic stop and subsequent arrest look to the Fugees players? How do their experiences with police differ from that of most Americans? What assumptions do Americans make about police that is not true in other parts of the world?
10. How did the Halloween excursion into suburban America provide a different experience of America for the Fugees players? How was their daily experience of America different from that of the suburban neighborhood?
11. When the Under 15s Fugees lost the last game of their season, what did they or what didn't they do that caused them to lose? How might this relate to overcoming adversity in your own life?
12. In contrast, the Under 13s Fugees won their last game of the season and came in third place in their division. What did they do to overcome adversity? What lessons can be learned from their teamwork?
13. When playing the Blue Springs Liberty Fire in the Tornado Cup, how did the Under 13s attitude change from the first time they played the team? How did you perform academically in high school? How will you approach academics in college? What do you expect to be different?
14. Do you think Luma had high expectations for her players? Did her players meet her high expectations? Why or why not?
15. When Luma's players and their families first began moving away, she was hurt by it. She then learned to turn her focus to other refugees who needed her help. How has your transition from high school (or another phase of your life) been similar or different from the transition of refugee families away from Clarkston?
16. Warren St. John writes, "Luma always resisted [giving advice], perhaps because there was no great secret to what made the Fugees work, just as there was not great secret to the success of those other clusters of hope and connection within Clarkston. They were powered by simple but enduring ideas: a sense of fairness, love, forgiveness, and, most of

all, a willingness to work—to engage in the process of turning those simple notions into actions that could affect others” (p. 298-299). What advice have you received about how to succeed in college? Do you think this will work? What do you think it will take to succeed?

After reading *Outcasts United*, consider these questions:

- What did you find out about different ethnic-based conflicts around the world?
- How has your perspective changed regarding refugees?
- If you were to write a follow-up book to *Outcasts United*, who or what would you focus on?
- What connections did you find between your life experiences and the experiences of the characters? What differences were most apparent?
- What did you learn from reading this book? Why is that important?