

THE WEAVER'S SCAR: FOR OUR RWANDA



Teacher Manual

BRIAN CRAWFORD



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The Weaver's Scar has a website containing background material for the book, as well as information about the Rwandan charity that Brian Crawford is supporting: <http://theweaversscar.weebly.com/index.html>

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Royal Fireworks Press
PO Box 399
41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rfwp.com
website: rfwp.com



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Table of Contents

Why <i>The Weaver's Scar</i> ?	3
How to Use This Guide	5
Historical Background	6
Pre-Reading	9
Preparing for the Story	9
Preparing for the History and Geography	10
Chapter-by-Chapter Activities	12
<i>Prologue</i>	12
<i>Chapter 1. A New Scar</i>	14
<i>Chapter 2. Who's Who</i>	15
<i>Chapter 3. A Family Story</i>	17
<i>Chapter 4. The Same Team</i>	18
<i>Chapter 5. Radio that Sets Fire</i>	21
<i>Chapter 6. Important Lessons</i>	22
<i>Chapter 7. Chez Espérance</i>	23
<i>Chapter 8. A Stranger in the Night</i>	24
<i>Chapter 9. Fresh Wounds</i>	25
<i>Chapter 10. The Coming Storm</i>	28
<i>Chapter 11. Cut Down the Tall Trees</i>	29
<i>Chapter 12. The Marsh</i>	31
<i>Chapter 13. The Beginning of the End</i>	33

Chapter 14. <i>The Muddy Nyabarongo</i>	35
Chapter 15. <i>Running</i>	36
Chapter 16. <i>Saviors Among Us</i>	38
Chapter 17. <i>Sounds in the Night</i>	39
Chapter 18. <i>Ingagi</i>	40
Chapter 19. <i>The Depths of Hell</i>	42
Chapter 20. <i>My Brother's Keeper</i>	43
Chapter 21. <i>Crushing Dreams</i>	45
Chapter 22. <i>A Family Secret</i>	46
Chapter 23. <i>The Drowned and the Saved</i>	48
Chapter 24. <i>Displaced</i>	49
Chapter 25. <i>Igisoro</i>	50
Chapter 26. <i>The Weaver's Scar</i>	51
Chapter 27. <i>Another Chance</i>	52
Chapter 28. <i>Over Our Thousand Hills</i>	54
Extension Activities	55
Bibliography	57
Glossary	59
Getting Involved	62

Why *The Weaver's Scar*?

Nearly four years ago, I was teaching Anne Frank's diary to my eighth-grade language arts class at an independent school in Seattle when, in the middle of a lesson, it occurred to me that students should also learn about Rwanda. If anything, I wanted them to know that a genocide had in fact happened again, despite international promises to the contrary after the Holocaust.

When I looked for age-appropriate books to teach, however, I was disappointed to find none that had been written in English; all that I could find were either in translation or included material that was, in my opinion, not suited to a 13- to 16-year-old audience. I was thus faced with three choices: not teach about Rwanda, teach a book in translation but that did not target an American teen audience, or try to fill this literary and curricular void with my own attempt.

I chose the third option.

When I was in college, I had begun a young adult historical novel set during the Holocaust about a teenage Jewish boy fleeing into hiding, but I did not get far. This topic was in line with my academic interests at the time—interests that culminated in a graduate thesis on the impact of the Holocaust on German authors' depictions of Jewish characters in fiction. In 2010, I considered this past academic research and revived my original idea for a young adult historical novel, but this time set during the Rwandan genocide. My goal was to create an engaging story—not a story about the genocide *per se*, but rather one that would inform readers about some of the main aspects of the genocide, all the while planting a seed of compassion for characters caught up in that horror. My hope was—and is—that readers will be inspired to learn more and to act with empathy and kindness in their day-to-day interactions. I also hope that they, like Faustin, will choose to persevere in spite of all obstacles.

Knowing that I had to plant the story squarely within history, I dove into research, which I rigorously conducted over the next three years. During that time I read more than forty books on Rwanda and Africa, excerpts from countless others, Internet articles and blogs, transcripts from the genocide-inciting R.T.L.M. radio station, articles and cartoons from the incendiary *Kangura* magazine, and portions of the online files of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. I also watched as many videos and films as I could readily find on the topic, including amateur videos on YouTube; I listened to filmed survivor testimonies; I learned basic Kinyarwanda; I delved into Rwandan music; I met and spoke with some genocide survivors; and I met with Americans who have spent significant amounts of time in Rwanda—both recently and during the genocide—whose knowledge proved invaluable to my research and revisions. Beyond my research and writing, I became involved in supporting girls' education in Rwanda through the local nonprofit organization Richard's Rwanda IMPUHWE (www.richardsrwanda.org), creating a chapter of the organization at my school that in two years raised approximately \$1,500 to pay for Rwandan girls' school fees. Now that *The Weaver's Scar* is complete, I will donate a portion of all proceeds of the

sale of the book to Richard's Rwanda IMPUHWE to support girls' education in Rwanda, for I believe that literature should be more than just words; it should lead to action.

As a book, *The Weaver's Scar* should be seen for what it is: historical fiction. It is not a history or a nonfiction book, nor was it ever intended to be. As such, all of the characters are fictional, as are certain locales, which are amalgamations of details from real villages, refugee camps, and schools. As much as possible, the historical backdrop and wider political and societal events leading up to and during the genocide are based on history. I deliberately infused the story with a great deal of literary devices (symbolism, allegory, metaphor, consonance, etc.), which are designed to add multiple layers of meaning to Faustin's journey. The book is, therefore, intended primarily as a work of literature to be read and analyzed, yet it is also intended to provide a developmentally appropriate springboard for discussion about the Rwandan genocide in language arts, history, and social studies classes.

In other words, I hope that the novel will be a beginning of understanding, not an end. Or, as Roland Barthes observed in regard to literature, *The Weaver's Scar* is "the question minus the answer." Readers must now figure out the answer. And in doing so, they just might help end genocide and intolerance around the world.

How to Use This Guide

This teacher’s guide provides the tools for a language arts or social studies teacher to build a multi-dimensional learning experience from *The Weaver’s Scar*. In writing the novel, I strove to present the relevant history as the narration unfolds; the book does not, therefore, assume any prior knowledge of Rwandan culture, geography, or history. I want readers to learn as they read and not feel lost in the history.

A teacher’s approach to the novel can, therefore, be literary, historical, or both. The Historical Background section of this guide summarizes the main points of history that affect the novel. Of necessity, such a brief introduction is an oversimplification, as it omits many details and nuances of twentieth-century Rwandan history; teachers wanting a more thorough understanding should consult such excellent books as Linda Melvern’s *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* or Alison des Forges’s *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. The chapter-by-chapter activities include brief historical notes and references whenever a significant part of Rwandan history surfaces in the story.

Prior to a reading of *The Weaver’s Scar*, teachers should prepare their students with one of the preview activities, or they should offer their own. Each set of chapter activities includes pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities. It is vital that every reading be followed by some sort of collective or individual processing exercise, wherein the students can apply what they have read to their lives or to larger societal notions.

At the end of the guide, there is a glossary of key historical and cultural terms that play a role in *The Weaver’s Scar*. This is followed by steps for teachers and students to get involved in supporting Rwandan students and education about Rwanda. As much as possible, teachers should apply knowledge gained from study and discussion of *The Weaver’s Scar* to their own lives, ideally working to make the world a better place.

Historical Background

In Chapter 2, Monsieur Kugambana tells his class that much of the twentieth-century in Rwanda has been defined by Tutsi-Hutu antagonisms. Although this is an oversimplification of a complicated history, *The Weaver's Scar* begins at the culmination of tensions that had indeed been brewing for decades, starting with the Belgian colonists' interference with Rwandan identities.

Having obtained control of Rwanda from the Germans after World War I, Belgium instituted a system of "racial" classification whereby they identified who—in their view—was Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. Measuring eyes, noses, and other physical features as part of their "scientific" classifications, the Belgian colonists implemented the ID cards mentioned by Faustin in the Prologue. These cards, which remained in effect through 1994, marked the bearer as Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, or Naturalized. The validity of these identifications has long been questioned, however, with some positing that the "ethnicities" are less racial and more social or political.¹

Under Belgian rule, the Belgian colonizers favored the Tutsis, whom they saw as superior and more in line with their ideas of what a ruling class should be. Even though Rwanda was a colony, it still maintained its own monarchy, the kings of which were Tutsi (*mwami*). Under Tutsi/Belgian rule, Hutus often felt marginalized by the ruling class, and many felt that the Tutsis lorded their power over the Hutus. Tutsis (often pastoralists) became more and more associated with wealth and prestige, and Hutus (often agriculturalists) were more and more associated with poverty and menial labor. These building tensions created a social powder keg that was waiting to explode.

In 1959, tensions came to a head as Hutus revolted against the Tutsis in a series of protests and attacks that over the next two years left thousands of Tutsis dead and many other thousands in exile in neighboring countries. Almost overnight, Belgium also switched allegiances, suddenly favoring the Hutus over the Tutsis. Very quickly the oppressed and the oppressor switched places, and many Tutsis adopted a secondary and semi-obsequious role *vis-à-vis* the Hutus. Anti-Tutsi discrimination became widespread, even appearing in schools and quotas for government positions that were posited as mirroring the ethnic makeup of the country (~85% Hutu, ~14% Tutsi, ~1% Twa). Although the quotas were meant to better represent these proportions, many Tutsis found themselves shut out from higher education and important government jobs. Over the following decades, Hutu-Tutsi violence sporadically and brutally erupted; occasionally Tutsi refugees attacked from across Rwanda's borders, and within the country Tutsis were targeted by Hutus.

In 1973, Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, led a *coup d'état* against president Grégoire Kayibanda's government and himself became president, remaining in power until his assassination on April 6, 1994. Not long after his ascendancy to president, he instituted his political party, the M.R.N.D. (*Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement*); Rwanda was soon under single-party rule. Tutsis continued to face

¹ See Mahmood Mamdani's book *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* for a highly detailed study of how these identities have been defined over the years.

discrimination, and Habyarimana was faced with the issue of the Tutsi refugee diaspora who wished to return home. He was resistant to their repatriation, however, citing overpopulation as a reason why they could not be allowed in. His refusal to accommodate the refugees led to mounting frustration among exiled Tutsis and ultimately, in 1987, to the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (R.P.F.) in Uganda, to Rwanda's north.

Mostly comprised of exiled Tutsis (though there were also Hutu members), the R.P.F. invaded Rwanda in 1990, triggering the Rwandan Civil War. However, the R.P.F.'s campaign to overthrow the Habyarimana regime and repatriate Tutsi exiles was unsuccessful; with the military support of the French, Habyarimana quickly repelled the invasion, and the R.P.F. was held in the north behind a demilitarized zone. Over the next four years, the rebel army regrouped and retrained under the leadership of Paul Kagame, himself a refugee of the 1959 pogroms.²

Some have claimed that the 1994 genocide would not have happened without the 1990 invasion. This is because the invasion triggered and exacerbated anti-R.P.F. paranoia within the country—paranoia that was transplanted to ordinary Tutsis, who were often painted as “accomplices” to the *inkotanyi*, or R.P.F. The anti-Tutsi/*inkotanyi* paranoia appeared in the pages of the magazine *Kangura* and in the radio broadcasts of R.T.L.M.; Rwandans were urged to “watch their neighbors” and “remain alert” for “traitors” and “accomplices.” Hutu-Tutsi tensions within Rwanda were also enflamed by the assassination of Burundi's Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, by his Tutsi soldiers in October 1993. Ultimately fueling the Burundi Civil War, the assassination triggered bloody Hutu-Tutsi violence in Burundi.

Facing mounting international pressure to share power with the R.P.F., Habyarimana ultimately agreed to sign the Arusha Peace Accords in August 1993, so named after Arusha, Tanzania, where the Accords were signed. The Accords met with great opposition among Hutu extremists within the Habyarimana government, who abhorred the R.P.F. and any dialogue with the rebel organization. This opposition notwithstanding, Habyarimana signed the Accords, and on April 6, 1994, as his plane was returning to Kigali from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, it was shot down at around 8:30 p.m. local time by two surface-to-air missiles upon its approach to Kigali's international airport. Burundi's new president, Cyprien Ntaryarima, was also on board, along with the pilots and crew. Everyone on board perished.

That evening, Habyarimana's Presidential Guard began killing witnesses to the crash at and near the Kanombe military barracks just to the east of the airport.³ As the night progressed, killings of moderate Hutus intensified, with Tutsis quickly being targeted by the Presidential Guard, the Interahamwe, and soon by ordinary Hutus being called upon to “do their work,” “clear the bush,” and “cut down the tall trees.” The killings spread from Kigali to the rest of the country, with countless numbers of Tutsis fleeing or going into hiding. Over the next one hundred days, nearly one million Tutsis, moderate Hutus, and Twa perished in the most efficient genocide in recorded history. In the face of international

² For a detailed history of Kagame and the R.P.F., refer to Stephen Kinzer's book, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It*.

³ For a more detailed analysis of the assassination and subsequent killings, see the following video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bRJbPL1d3Y.

reluctance to stop the massacres (the Clinton Administration initially avoided the word *genocide* in describing the massacres), the R.P.F. invaded Rwanda on April 9. The rebel army quickly swept across the east and the north of the country, ultimately taking Kigali, chasing away the extremist government, and stopping the genocide. Fearing the R.P.F. and reprisal killings, nearly two million Hutus—including many members of the Interahamwe and the former extremist government—fled into neighboring Zaïre and Tanzania, destabilizing the entire region and ultimately setting the stage for the First Congo War.⁴ Even today, in 2013, the political and military remnants of the 1994 genocide can be felt in the unstable eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where rebel factions—including remnants of the Interahamwe—occasionally threaten the security of Rwanda’s northwestern border.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the impact of the Rwandan genocide on the region, see Jason Stearns’s book *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

Pre-Reading

Preparing for the Story

Brainstorming 1. In groups of two to three, make lists of answers to the following questions:

- Why do friendships form?
- How do they form?
- Why do they fall apart?
- What makes friendships stronger?
- Why do parents get into arguments with their children?
- Why do children get angry with their parents?
- How do children and parents make up after an argument?
- How do friends make up after an argument?

Journaling 1. Think about your best friend (or someone whom you would consider to be a good friend):

- How did you meet?
- How did your friendship form?
- Did you become friends because of a shared interest?
- Did you meet by accident?
- What do you have in common?
- Do you ever get into any arguments? How do you resolve these?

Spend 20-30 minutes writing a private story about how you met, how your friendship got started, and how it evolved.

Journaling 2. Now think about your parents or guardians:

- Have they ever really liked or really disliked one of your friends?
- How did they show their like/dislike?
- Have your parents or guardians ever wanted you to be friends with someone? With whom? Why?
- Did your parents or guardians ever try to influence your friendships? How?
- Have you ever gotten into disagreements with your parents or guardians about one (or more) of your friends? Why did you disagree? What did your parents or guardians want? What did you want? How did the disagreement resolve?

Spend 20-30 minutes writing a private story about your parents or guardians and their reactions to one of your friends. Did their opinion ever change? Why or why not?

Pair Work/Short Story Prompt

Imagine that a war breaks out in your country, and you have to flee for your safety. You cannot use the roads because they are being watched. You cannot walk out in the open because you might be caught. Write a short story in which you:

- Present the main sides in the war
- Have your character(s) develop an escape plan
- Show your character(s) trying to escape
- You may also choose to illustrate your story.

Preparing for the History and Geography

Africa

1. In groups, identify:
 - a. Africa on a world map
 - b. As many countries in Africa as you can
2. Make two columns on a piece of paper. In one, write everything you know about Africa and its people. In the other, list where you obtained your information. Then rate the list on how accurate you think your knowledge is. How do you know if your knowledge is accurate or not?
3. Writing prompt: If you were to travel to Africa, which country would you want to see? Why? What would you want to do there? Would you have any worries? Where do your worries come from? What would you be most excited about? Why?

Travel Journal

1. Using the Internet, research pictures of an African country of your choice. Print out 10-15 pictures.
2. Then make a “scrapbook” that includes the pictures you found and your day-to-day impressions of an imaginary journey. You may use the Internet to research more details about your country of choice.
3. Alternatively, you could make “postcards” from your African country of choice. You could exchange the postcards with other students as if you are all on a trip and are writing back and forth.

Rwanda

WARNING: As websites keep changing, I suggest that teachers consult my online resources at <http://theweaversscar.weebly.com/index.html> for the latest links to website addresses. If you search the Internet yourself, please be aware that graphic images from the 1994 genocide may appear. It is strongly recommended that teachers first preview and select sources.

1. Look at maps of Rwanda that the teacher has provided from the Internet or from other sources.
2. You can obtain statistics about Rwanda by searching the latest CIA website.
3. Using the maps and the CIA statistics, write a brief “journal entry” of a day in Rwanda. It’s best if different students in the class can choose different districts. In your entry, you should comment on you imaginary experiences with:
 - a. The geography
 - b. The climate
 - c. The people
 - d. The language
 - e. The culture (schools, museums, dance, music, cuisine, etc.)

Chapter-by-Chapter Activities

Teachers are encouraged to use these questions and prompts as guides for activities before, during, and after reading. Feel free to modify as necessary.

Prologue

Pre-Reading:

1. Have you ever met someone from a different country? Whom? What do you know about him or her? Did you ask him or her about his or her story?
2. Interview an immigrant from a different country. You may check with your local refugee support center. Always obtain permission before asking any questions. You may ask the person:
 - a. Where is he or she from?
 - b. Why is he or she in America?
 - c. How did he or she get here?
 - d. Did he or she have any adjustment difficulties upon arrival?
 - e. Does he or she wish to return home? Why or why not?
3. Role play: Research a country in Africa, and imagine that you are an immigrant from that country trying to make it to the United States. Create a PowerPoint slideshow of images of your imaginary journey. Write journal entries of your imaginary journey. You may even choose music to accompany your presentation. Present your journey to your class in character. You might also choose to dress as someone from your chosen country.

Reading:

1. Faustin assumes that the other immigrants at his school have uninteresting stories. Would you agree with him? Why or why not?
2. Faustin says that he is Tutsi. In this chapter, what does Faustin associate with “Tutsi”? What role do you think this identity has played in his life story? Why? Why does Faustin say, “For those Tutsis I knew back in my thousand hills, it is only a grave”?
3. Why do you think Faustin had to run?
4. Predict: What do you think the connection is between Faustin and his father? Why do you think this?

Post-Reading/Discussion:

1. Do you think that Faustin is comfortable with his past? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that Faustin is happy not to be “one of the million who died”? Why or why not?
3. Historical context: **Rwandan ID cards.** Go to www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php/Category:Identity_Documents, and print a copy of the pre-1994 Rwandan ID card. What do you notice about it? Pay attention to the fact that ethnicity (“Ubwoko”) appears on the first line, *before* birthplace, birthdate, profession, and address. Why do you think ethnicity is placed more prominently than other identifying details? Compare the ID to an American driver’s licence or passport. Create a Venn diagram comparing the two. Note that after the genocide, the ethnicities were removed from the IDs; in fact, it is now considered taboo in Rwanda to inquire about a person’s ethnicity. Do you think that this is a good change? Why or why not? Should it be taboo to inquire about a person’s ethnic background? Why or why not?

Chapter 1. A New Scar

Pre-Reading:

1. What is your favorite activity during recess or free periods? Why? How important is free time for friends while at school? Why?
2. Have you ever had any accidents at school? When? What happened? What did your classmates and teachers do?
3. Have you ever felt bullied at school, or have you ever known someone who may have bullied others? Describe the bully (but use no names). What did he or she do? What did you do in reaction to the bullying? Did the bully ever stop? Did anything ever encourage the bully to continue?

Reading:

1. How are Déo and Amdou different? Describe them physically. Describe their personalities. Could you make a drawing of them, based only on information in this chapter? Answer these same questions for Monsieur Kugambana and Monsieur Inkoramutima.
2. Sound plays a big role in *The Weaver's Scar*—for example: “their chatter clapping off of the concrete walls.” Can you find other examples of interesting sounds in this chapter and in others? What effect do the sounds have on the images in your mind as you read? What else does the author do to create a vivid image of sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and sensations? Give specific examples.
3. Can you describe the relationships between the different teachers and the different students? Explain your answer.

Post-Reading/Discussion:

1. Imagine that Monsieur Kugambana and Monsieur Inkoramutima are writing letters home to Déo's and Faustin's parents explaining the day's events. What would they write? Why? Would their letters be similar? Different? Why?
2. Most characters' names in *The Weaver's Scar* have symbolism associated with them. Can you tell what is behind the names Déo, Faustin, Kugambana, and Inkoramutima? What about names in the other chapters? Why would the author choose names that have symbolic associations?