

Suppose the Wolf Were an Octopus

Grades 7 to 8

**A Guide to Creative Questioning
for Middle School Literature**

Revised Edition

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The Weaver's Scar

by Brian Crawford, 2013

Life is difficult for the Tutsis in Rwanda, and Faustin's father does not make it easier, with his inexplicable rules and dark secrets. Schoolteachers begin to emphasize the difference between the Tutsis and Hutus, and the division makes its way onto the soccer field. As the terrible events of the genocide of 1994 unfold, Faustin discovers the secrets of the past, the cruelty of his schoolteachers, the full horror of neighbor against neighbor, and how the courage of one friend can save him.

Level 1 (Remembering)

- What does *inyenzi* mean?
- How does Faustin get the scar on his face?
- What river do the boys take to escape?
- Where are Faustin and Déo headed in their escape?

Level 2 (Understanding)

- How do Faustin and Déo become friends?
- Why does Déo wait for Faustin to escape with him?
- How does Mathieu show Déo that he knows he is Hutu?
- How does the shirt Déo wears identify him?

Level 3 (Applying)

- How far would you question your parent to learn the reason for telling you emphatically not to be friendly with someone whom your parent had never met?
- How would you deal with being identified and classified as dangerous to your friends and neighbors?
- Is there any part of the river escape in which you would have acted differently than Faustin did?
- Why do you think the author included the scene with the gorilla?

Level 4 (Analyzing)

- Compare the violent reactions Déo's father and Faustin's father have when they find out about their sons becoming friends.
- Why does Jean-Baptiste listen to the radio station that promotes violence against the Tutsis?
- Compare the physical torment of the flying and biting creatures of the muck on the boys' bodies with the boys' mental and emotional torment as they wait.
- Compare and contrast Faustin and Déo with Jim and Huck from *Huckleberry Finn*.

Level 5 (Evaluating)

- Do you believe that Déo was saving Faustin out of friendship or because of guilt? Explain.
- Do all of the adults in their lives fail Faustin and Déo? Explain.
- What is the most important thing Faustin learns from the old man in the camp for displaced Tutsis?
- Interpret the Rwandan proverb, "You can outdistance that which is running after you but not that which is running inside you."

Level 6 (Creating)

- How would the story be different if the boys' fathers had never had contact with one another?
- If Jean-Baptiste had not been killed, how would the story change?
- Suppose that Faustin and Déo were not good runners. How would that change the story?
- Research and draw a map of the area in the story through which the boys traveled.