

## *Questions for Discussion*

reasons do Liz and Phaniel give for their viewpoints? Ask the class if, based on their pre-reading activities, they believe the killings in Rwanda in 1994 qualify as either a “genocide” or a “civil war.” Ask them how they would describe the events.

8. Throughout the book Phaniel is continually confronted with racism, yet he refuses to focus his attention on race. Phaniel is also confronted with tribal divisions in his country, yet he refuses to make distinctions between Hutus and Tutsis. Ask the class to explain Phaniel’s mentality. Discuss the ways in which racism and tribal issues are different and the ways in which they are similar.
9. Liz refers to backbiting in several places in the book. Ask the class what they think it means to backbite. Discuss with the class how characters in the book were affected by backbiting and what impact backbiting had on

the Rwandan community and on the relationship between Phaniel and his family. Ask the class if they have ever participated in or listened to backbiting, and if so, how it affected the individuals who were the targets of the backbiting, as well as the perpetrators. Discuss how the results might have been different if the people involved in the backbiting had chosen not to backbite or not to listen to the backbiting.

10. Armel displayed the view that other races were inferior to the Black race. Ask the class why they think he felt this way and whether they see similarities between his behavior and the descriptions in the book of how some Rwandans favored one ethnic group over another. Ask the class whether they believe favoring one group over the other—whether Black/White or Hutu/Tutsi—is ever justified.

# Interdisciplinary Connections

## LANGUAGE ARTS

Have the class pretend that they are the president of Rwanda during the killing of 1994. Instruct them to write a paper to the Secretary-General of the UN requesting assistance to help stop the killing. Tell the students to give specific reasons why the UN should intervene.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Ask the students to use library books or Web sites to research the history of Rwanda. Have them construct a timeline of major events in Rwanda, from the Conference of Berlin in 1885 up through the present day.

## MATH

Ask the students to research the number of Rwandans who were murdered in 1994 when the wave of killings began. Specifically, ask them to name what event triggered the start of the killings, how the killings were documented, and how long the killings continued. What was the total number of people killed during this time? Statistically speaking, how many people were killed per month? Per day? Per hour? Per *minute*? Ask the students to speculate on why the killings occurred at such a rapid pace.

# Interdisciplinary Connections

## DRAMA

In chapter 31, Phanuel is interviewed by two reporters from *The Chicago Daily Herald*. The interview is discussed in the book, but the exact questions and answers are not given. Divide the class into groups of twos. Tell the groups that they will recreate this interview. Have them brainstorm as to what questions they think the reporter asked as well as what answers Phanuel gave. Have the students act out the interview in front of the class.

## VOCABULARY / USE OF LANGUAGE

Instruct the students to write down unfamiliar words and to try to define them from the context of the story. Examples of such words might include *Rwanda* (p. 1), *genocide* (p. 1), *Bahá'í Faith* (p. 1), *the Congo* (p. 13), *Bahá'í Temple* (p. 45), *Zaire* (p. 64), *Burundi* (p. 71), *circumcision* (p. 74), *amniocentesis* (p. 82), *placenta* (p. 82), *amniotic fluid* (p. 82), *Kenya* (p. 87), *Uganda* (p. 87), *Bahá'u'lláh*, (p. 91), *Niger* (p. 111), *ambassador* (p. 129), *Rwandan Patriotic Front* (p. 141), *Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (p. 150), *Arusha Accords* (p. 150), *hand, foot, and mouth disease* (p. 182).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Teachers may also find the following films helpful in providing background and context to the events described in this book: *Hotel Rwanda* (MGM, rated PG-13, 2004), *Beyond the Gates* (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, unrated or rated R, 2007), and the TV documentary *Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda* (PBS Paramount, not rated, 2005).