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English 112B

*How Dare the Sun Rise* by Sandra Uwiringiyimana and Abigail Pesta



<http://www.hooverlibrary.org/sites/default/files/styles/blog_image/public/howdarethesunrise.png?itok=uNVqapdq>

**About the Author:**

Sandra Uwiringiyimana was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where she knew no peace and lived accustomed to war’s chaos until she lost her youngest sister, friends, and other relatives in the Gatumba Massacre in August of 2004. Uwiringiyimana and her family migrated as refuges to the United States when she was twelve years old, according to her memoir. She is currently an activist advocating for human rights and lives in New York.

**Synopsis**

*How Dare the Sun Rise* is a memoir of Sandra Uwiringiyimana’s experience with war as a child who survived the Gatumba Massacre at the age of 10. The memoir begins in the night of the massacre and pulls the reader right into the atrocious, inhumane, and heart wrenching facts of the unforgettable night in which she lost many childhood friends, neighbors, and beloved Deborah, her youngest sister. She narrates about her brother Heritage’s kidnapping and forced to fight in the military at a very young age. In her memoir, she mentions how she drifts from the norms of her tribe’s tradition. The childhood she lived was the ideal childhood any child could’ve wished for, without the chaos of war in the distance or the massacre at a refugee camp. Her life in Africa was very different from the life she had to assimilate to in the U.S. There was no race difference in Africa, but the conflict against her tribe was an ongoing dispute. Uwiringiyimana resettled with her family in Rochester, New York. Her battle in American soil was that she couldn’t fit in with anyone. Her black friends claimed she sounded white, but her skin tone differentiated her from her white friends. She had to act in a certain way to fit with one group and act differently to be accepted by the others. Her college days were difficult as her mind drifted back to the night of the massacre and mourned her young sister’s unmarked grave. The memory of her young sister’s unpredicted death is what intervened in her emotions which caused her to drop out of college but completed her degree in another, more diverse college. Her book does not call for sympathy, but rather to lecture people that there are people out there in the world whose voices are unheard, and their stories swept underneath the trending celebrity gossips which seems to be known worldwide. She advocates for a better life for every refugee child, hold the perpetrators accountable, and empower the victims.

**Quotes**

“We were scattered, an unsettling feeling in such an uncertain time” (Chapter 1).

Uwiringiyimana’s family have been scattered all over the region during the weeks of the massacre. Her older siblings were with her grandparents in the mountains and the younger ones were crammed in the refugee camp along with their parents.

“Those people were gunned down, one by one, as they fled into the night. This isn’t real, I thought” (Chapter 1).

She sees her friends, mother, and young sister being gunned down in front of her and she could not accept that reality. She describes this night as an impossible nightmare that is unfortunately too real to wake up from.

“They were singing Christian songs…The men seemed to think they were on a mission from God to massacre us. Why were we being targeted by people who were praising God?” “We’ve come to rescue you” (Chapter 1).

Her mother is deceived by their “godly” singing and shot her as she walked out of the tent with her child Deborah clung behind her. The men were murdering innocent civilians under God’s name which paved Uwiringiyimana’s future relationship with god and often questioned her faith.

“Suddenly, I saw sparks—bright blasts of gunfire—hitting my mother” (Chapter 1).

The most dreadful scene in all the book; seeing her mother shot and her six-year-old sister killed scarred her for life.

“A future as an orphan flashed before my eyes” (Chpter 1).

She believed her mother had been killed in the conflict, but she survived the gunshot wounds in her abdomen.

“I felt I was in a movie scene—a ten-year-old girl sitting in the center of the frame while war raged around her,” (Chapter 1).

The unrealistic and traumatic event that is happening around her was too much for her young brain to process, though it did instill terror in her.

“Their fate was to marry young and produce children” (Chapter 2).

She speaks about her parents how in their culture, people married their sons and daughters through an arranged marriage, giving dowries to the bride’s family for her hand.

“War was part of our everyday life” (Chapter 2).

She grew accustomed to the sound of war; the blasts of bombs bullets ripping through the air. She states that it was rare for them to finish a school year without some sort of violence taking place in her town Uvira.

“‘You must do what you can do to help people. What you do comes back around to you’” (Chapter 3).

Uwiringiyimana’s mother taught her to be kind to less fortunate people and that by doing good things for other people will bring good fortunes to her and her family. This principle made her family open their doors during Christmas to share their food with anyone who was welcomed into their house.

“It was important to my dad that both the girls and boys get a good education, which was very forward thinking of him in a community where the traditional role for girls was to marry and produce children” (Chapter 4).

“The rape is committed so that the girl is too ashamed to go home, or so that her family won’t ask for her back” (Chapter 4)

Uwiringiyimana talks about the unfortunate part of her culture how men feel superior to women and treat them unkindly as to kidnap them, rape them, and force them into an unwanted marriage.

“I knew the sounds of war before I knew how to do a cartwheel” (Chapter 4).

She lived the first ten years of her life in Africa surrounded by war on all sides, but never imagined she was to become a target one day in a cowardly manner.

“It was meant to be an insult, making me into a foreigner, but I didn’t know what it meant” (Chapter 4).

She could not understand the belittling of other tribes even among African tribes by their appearances at a young age. She later addresses that this kind of division is what creates tension against one another. Instead of embracing each other’s similarities, people focus on their differences and anger one another to the point where one tribe feels superior and violates every human right.

“When my mother finally emerged from her room the next day, it was as if all the joy had been drained from her body” (Chapter five).

Her mother was heartbroken and her spirit crushed when her youngest daughter was killed in the massacre.

“She thought I looked good on the outside, so everything must be fine on the inside” (Chapter 29).

Uwiringiyimana is frustrated her college professor assumed she was getting distracted with “superficial things.” She felt betrayed because she thought her professor wouldn’t jump to conclusions without knowing of the flashbacks that tore her inner peace.

**How I Would Teach this Memoir**

First, I do not know it’s appropriate to teach Uwiringiyimana’s memoir knowing its graphic contents. I would first inquire the parents’ permissions and the students’ consent to teach it to them. If it is approved, I would introduce the students similar and current events happening around the world such as the Syrian Refugees fleeing the war from their country. Then I would have them annotate as they read along and write questions they may have that will be used in an activity later which will be answered by other classmates. I will give them handouts that will help them picture themselves in the life of Uwiringiyimana. In the handout, I would include a question that asks them if they experienced any of the hardships Uwiringiyimana went through, and if so, does Uwiringiyimana’s story helps them overcome that obstacle? I believe it is important for students to compare their lives to Uwiringiyimana’s and this will help them appreciate their own lives and the privileges they have living in a place where they do not have to fear about their safety. By learning the hardships of Uwiringiyimana’s life, they will be aware of the human violations around the world. They need to be conscious of these atrocities against people around the world and need to be inspired to try and make the world a better place for future generations.

**Text Complexity**

I do believe it is important for teens to read about Uwiringiyimana’s experiences and learn from her life that life is not to be taken for granted and complain about the latest gadgets they lack. It will teach them that children around the world are massacred simply because of how they look, they belong in different tribes, and do not share the same political or religious beliefs. I do not think this book is aimed at teens and young adults only. I believe that anyone who reads it will be moved to want to do something to help the kids going through hell. Her story inspires people and it is possible to unite as one classroom and donate anything they can to an organization that will help children currently facing a similar situation as the one Uwiringiyimana lived through. The Students are welcomed to talk to their parents about Uwiringiyimana’s memoir.

**Why Teens Should Read This Memoir**

**-**It focuses on events worth talking about

-Shows lack of justice for the victims

-It makes people aware of their surroundings and should not trust people when they’re by themselves.

-It shows a teenager overcoming violence, poverty, discrimination, and learned the American culture to be accepted.

-It empowers women and all minorities.

-Addresses and challenges traditional norms.