Kaffir Boy

Chapter Questions

Chapters 1 – 3

1. Why do you think the author titles the book “Kaffir Boy”?

2. What is the setting of the book (specifically, the name of the country and the town that he lives in)? How does the author describe what his surroundings looked like growing up?

3. What is the cast system or the class hierarchy that the author talks about in Chapter 1? (which race is on top, which race is the worst off, etc.)

4. Where do the author’s parents come from? Based on what we’ve studied, why might this be a potential problem?

5. Who is the Peri-Urban? Why does Johannes’ mother leave in the middle of the night and what happens to her? What assumptions can we make about the Peri-Urban considering how the community reacted to them?

6. Johannes is left in charge of his brother and sister; he’s only five. What does this say about his mother’s decision to leave?

7. When the Peri-Urban come back the following evening, what happens?

8. Why is Johannes’s mother unable to get the correct papers from the superintendent’s office? Where does she have to go? How much impact does this form of racism have? What comment on education is the author making early on in this memoir?

9. When Johannes’s mother gets to the Alexandra Health Center and University Clinic, what happens?

10. When Johannes’s mother sees a white woman at the clinic, what does she do? How does this change Johannes’s mother’s opinion about white people? Does it change his?

11. Since Johannes receives a birth certificate, what is he able to do? Why is this so important?