

Haiti #14

Being at home with your family is good, but things are so different. You are forced to enroll in the public school this year, but it is better than the alternative of no education at all. The public schools are free in Haiti, but they are of a poor quality. Less than 63% of those enrolled in school will finish primary school. Most families cannot afford to send their children to secondary school. You don't want to end up like half the population of your country – unable to read and write.

You wake early in the morning each day to sell newspapers before going to school. After school you help your mother sell sugar and soap and do people's laundry. However, soon your mother's HIV develops into full-blown AIDS, and she can no longer work or even get about the house. Because your mother can no longer work, your older brother quits school and takes on a full-time job to support the family. However, because his income from working at the petrol (gas) station is not enough, your family is forced to move out of the house.

You know that if you quit school you might be able to get a job that would help out the family more, but you also wonder if it wouldn't just be better if you were not around. Things are not great at home, with your mom being so sick and all of the pressures of finding food and money.

To quit school and try to find a full-time job along with your older brother, go to #25. To leave home in order to lighten the load on your brother and the rest of the family, go to #15.

Haiti #25

You are glad that you decided to stay at home and help your family, but it has been a real adjustment moving to a new place. This one is much smaller than you ever imagined. In your new 'house,' you now share one bedroom with all six of your siblings. Your brother was able to get you a part-time job at the petrol (gas) station where he works, and you are still selling newspapers every morning. However, with the two of you working and the younger ones helping out wherever they can, there is still not a lot of money coming in.

To make matters worse, your mom's health continues to decline rapidly. She is not eating much and doesn't recognize any of the children anymore. It doesn't look like she can live much longer in this condition. If only you could afford to get her a doctor, some medicine, or something that could help. There are very few hospitals or doctors in your city and you have to be able to pay for them anyway. There is no way that you can do that right now.

One morning, while selling your newspapers, a man approaches you looking for someone to 'do him a favor.' He tells you that he will pay you if you deliver a package to some friends. You aren't sure what to do. Even though the man doesn't seem trustworthy, you figure that the extra money will be a big help in buying food for your family. What should you do?

To deliver the package for the man and make some extra money, go to #19. To refuse to deliver the package, figuring that it is not worth taking the chance, go to #11.

Haiti #19

How hard could it be to deliver one small package? Besides, the man promised that once it was delivered the people that you gave it to would give you more money than you could earn in one month of newspapers and petrol stations. What you didn't figure on though was that you would be followed to your destination. You go to meet with the guys that you are to give the package to in the alley behind some burned out stores on La Saline. You figure you will give them the stuff, collect your money, and then be on your way back home. You are anxious to get out of this area of the city because you know that stealing, drug deals, and killings happen here on a regular basis.

Neither you, nor the guys you are meeting, expect the whistles, lights, and yelling that soon overtake you. Where was it coming from? Who are these other guys? These 'other guys' are the police authorities. They are yelling for you to drop the drugs and guns and get up against the wall. What is going to happen now? Are they going to arrest you? You have heard the stories of life in prison. There is no way that you want to become one more of their statistics. Maybe you should try to make a run for it before they get any closer. You are younger and can run pretty fast. There is no way that you want to be thrown in jail! But there are a lot of them out there – they seem to be coming from all sides. You are not sure that you will be able to get away if you run, and it might make things worse.

To run and try to escape the police, go to #13. To stay put, knowing that you will get arrested, go to #7.

Haiti #11

So, you just blew your chance to make more money in one shot than you make in one month. But there was something about that guy, and the way that he approached you, that made you feel uneasy. Sure, it would have been nice to have the money but you know it is better not to think about it.

The days turn into weeks and the weeks into months. Life goes on as before - some school work when you get the chance, selling newspapers, working at the petrol (gas) station, and helping to care for your mother and siblings. Life is not easy. There is a constant struggle to keep enough food on the table, to keep the younger children in clothes that are not falling apart, and to not lose hope that things will get better soon. Finally, the day that you all knew was approaching arrived much too soon. Your mother has no more strength and loses the will to keep on fighting her disease. Shortly before midnight on a warm evening a week later, your mother takes her last breath.

What will the family do now? Will you be able to stay together and support yourselves? Is there anyone out there that could help you? The decision facing your family in the weeks and months ahead is not an easy one. You are not sure if it is best to just try to remain together and continue the struggle to survive or perhaps there might be someone out there who could help you. You are afraid that if people find out that you are orphans, you might lose the little that you have.

To continue to try to care for your family by yourself, go to #27. To seek help from outsiders, go to #30.

Haiti #13

Before your mind can register the movement, your legs and feet are moving faster than they ever have before. Your mind only registers that they are yelling for you to stop before they shoot. You are half way down the alley and about to turn the corner when you feel the sharp pain in your back and legs. You don't hear the gunfire or see the blood, but you know that you have been shot. Your legs falter beneath you and you drop to the ground writhing in pain.

You are vaguely aware that two of the policemen are running towards you. You hear the heavy footfalls and are aware of the bright beam of their flashlights. As they lean over you, you feel their hot breath on your face, and again, the bright beams of light from their flashlights, and then, nothing. You die in a crime-infested alley of Port Au Prince.

Take a *Haiti Discussion Questions* handout. Go to your small group area and take some time to review the questions and write down some thoughts.

Haiti #7

Welcome to Fort National Prison! How did you end up here?

The police were not gentle, amid their yelling, they repeatedly hit each of you. Blood was streaming down the side of your face. You and the others were handcuffed and literally thrown into the back of a van which smells of blood and urine. You are scared - more scared than you have ever been in your entire life. You arrived here at Fort National Prison. You know this place, you have heard talk of it from guys on the street and your father. "The Fort" is infamous for its cruelty and ill-treatment of prisoners. The guards herded you inside and you were thrown into a cell too small for the 20 men it holds.

Months go by, and none of you have even been charged with any crime or been before a judge. Yet, here you sit in a cramped prison cell. You often wonder why you were so stupid to deliver that package in the first place. You knew it was trouble.

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Haiti #15

One night, when the rest of the family sleeps, you take a few of your possessions, your carving knife, and a few clothes and quietly slip out of the house. Not knowing where to go, you wander the streets of Port Au Prince for a few days looking for refuge and shelter. You finally stumble across a group of boys your own age. They, too, are runaways and are living in a small shack in Cité Soleil, a large slum near Port Au Prince. The boys invite you to stay with them. Even though it is crowded, you are glad to have found someplace to stay, with a roof over your head. The shack runs along the open sewer and smells pretty bad. There are 12 of you sharing the same space.

As it turns out, the group spends most of its time hanging out in the slums, stealing whatever they can get their hands on, and selling themselves on the street corners of Port Au Prince in order to make some money. Even though the lifestyle isn't exactly what you had in mind, you figure that it is better than putting your family through the extra hardship of having to feed you. At least here you are taking care of yourself.

One day, a few of the boys get in a fight with a local gang and two of them are killed. You see the whole thing happen. You are scared to death that the gang will come after the rest of the group too. A few of the other boys are scared as well. They decide to try and leave Haiti. One of the boys overheard a group of guys talking on the waterfront about a boat that is going to America. Maybe they can get on it. You would love to go to America because you have heard about the wealth and money that is there. On the other hand, if you were to leave, you would have to leave your family behind. You don't see your family all that often, but you know they are there if you need them.

To try to get on the boat to the United States, go to #29. To stay in the slums of Cité Soleil and try to make the best of it, go to #1.

Haiti #29

The boat leaves in the morning, while it is still dark out. Hopefully, the authorities will not see the boat slipping out of the harbor. The boat, an old fishing vessel, is made of wood, about forty feet long. If truth be told, it really doesn't look very sturdy. However, this might be your only chance for a better life in the United States. More than 100 people, mostly young boys and men and a few middle age women, are crammed into the boat. There is very little water and even less food. You begin to wonder if you will survive the journey.

By the fourth day on the boat, you run out of food and water, and the boat has sprung leaks everywhere it seems. There are constantly people dumping buckets of water back into the ocean. After more than five days on the open water, you are finally in sight of land again. Someone says that it is "the Keys" of Florida. Could it be? Is it really America? Have you finally made it?

You have made it – almost. The boat finally gives way under the weight of the people and all the leaks. As the boat breaks into pieces, people are scrambling for anything to grab on to. It turns out that there were no life jackets aboard the boat. You are lucky. You manage to grab a piece of wood from the ship. You are floating - but for how long can you last like this? Dusk is approaching and soon it will be dark.

You can see the land. How far away is it? Can you swim that far? What are your chances of making it if you do try swimming? Are your chances better than staying here and waiting to be rescued - or worse yet, having the sharks move in for an easy meal? You are not sure that you can swim that far and you would guess that another boat will see the wreckage and rescue everyone. On the other hand, if the boat never comes, you will die without even trying to save yourself. Maybe it is better to try to swim, then at least you will know that you gave it your best shot.

To stay and wait for rescue, go to #2. To swim for land, go to #18.

Haiti#1

A few of the boys decide to try their luck on the boat going to America. You decide that you are better off, for the time being, staying in Haiti. However, so far the only thing that has gotten any better is that there is now more room in the shack since 5 of the boys are no longer there. In order to survive, you begin to scavenge in the city dump to find food and discarded clothes. You know that you must be cautious though as the area is polluted and filled with disease. You certainly do not want to get sick. One day, while searching through a pile of trash, you find something that gives you a good idea and makes you excited about the possibility of making some money.

Please go to the garbage cans. In the garbage cans are some "hidden treasures". Your job is to find a "treasure" in and among the garbage.

Haiti #1 Part II

When you found the wood at the garbage dump, you remembered how much you enjoyed carving with the knife that your father had given you and you decided that the wood could be put to good use. You took the wood back to the shack and set out to carve figurines that you tried to sell on the street corners.

However, your carvings are not the selling item that you had hoped. In the course of three months, you have only sold two carvings. You begin to wonder if this is really worthwhile - especially when you see the other boys making money by stealing, delivering drugs, and engaging in prostitution. You know that you should not get involved in the activities of the rest of the gang, but the temptation to earn some money is a strong one.

To join the other boys, just for a little while, at least until you can make some money, go to #20. To continue trying to sell your woodcarvings for a little while longer (maybe your luck will change) go to #21.

Haiti #27

You are glad that your family decided to stay together. At least you will be together to support one another if things get any worse. You and your siblings know that the possibility of drastically improving your existence is almost too much to hope for. But right now, that is pretty much all that you have - Hope - and for now, it will have to be enough. Besides, there are worse things than a life of abject poverty. Aren't there?

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Haiti #30

You and your older brother just know that there must be someone out there that would be willing to help out. The only problem is finding out who, and where they are. One thing about this neighborhood is that everyone knows everyone else's business. It isn't long before word about the family's predicament spreads beyond the neighbors. You don't know what to make of the woman coming towards the house. She is dressed in an outfit that you have not seen before, wrapped it seems from head to toe in white and blue cloth. She is offering you a place to live - a place where you would be taken care of and fed, a place where you would receive an education. The only drawback is that there is not enough room for all seven of you at one place – your family would not be able to stay together.

Despite not being with all of your brothers and sisters, you figure that this is an opportunity that will not happen twice in one lifetime. You can't even begin to imagine the possibilities that this might have for your life in later years. You make the decision to enter the orphanage. The sisters provide you with a safe place, enough food, and a chance to continue with your education. You and your family will forever be grateful to the Missionaries of Charity for their willingness to care for you at a time when it seemed that you had no where else to turn.

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Haiti #20

It is a great feeling to finally have some money. Stealing and delivering the drugs isn't so bad. Besides, you'll just do it for a little while. The hardest part of this whole thing is having to do the 'sex stuff' with those older guys. You are not sure if you would ever get used to doing that. Some of the other boys say that they don't even feel it anymore. Besides, you don't have to worry because you are only doing it for a little while.

Life in the dump and slums of Cité Soleil somehow has become more bearable now that you are making money. Six months pass - you have some money, a few new clothes, and food to eat. You are still living in the shack with the other boys, and are doing pretty well in "the business." As a matter of fact, you are probably the only guy in the gang that everyone likes. Despite all this, you begin to wonder about your family. What would they think about the things that you have been doing? Would it be possible to go visit them? How about moving out of the slums and going back to them?

You know that going back to your brothers and sisters means having to give up the stuff you are doing now - and all of your new friends here as well. Maybe it is better to stay here for a few more months, make some more money and then go back to see them. On the other hand, you are really missing them and think of them often. It would be so good to see them, but how will you survive back there. You have gotten use to having some money and the ability to buy food.

To stay where you are, go to #9. To return to your family, go to #10.

Haiti #21

Your luck doesn't change immediately. Neither do your surroundings. Over the course of the coming months, you spend your time hawking the crude wooden carvings that no one buys. Unfortunately, much of your time is also spent stealing in order to survive.

One day, while trying to sell your carvings on a street corner in downtown Port Au Prince, you are approached by a young man. The man introduces himself as Michael, and asks you if you are familiar with Kay Espwa. Michael tells you that Kay Espwa is an orphanage that offers education and training courses where individuals learn a trade in order to help themselves earn a living. As a matter of fact, there is one course that teaches young boys woodworking skills. He wants to know if you might be interested

You are interested in his offer, but you are not convinced that you have any talent or that his offer is real. It might just be a waste of time. On the other hand, maybe this is a chance for something different.

To take Michael up on his offer and check out Kay Espwa, go to #6. To pocket the information and think about it some more, go to #4.

Haiti #2

Welcome to the Fort National Prison in Haiti! How did you end up here, you might ask? This is what happened...You spent hours in the water. Finally, a light was coming towards you. Just in time too, the sun had set and it was beginning to get dark. You never did like the dark. It frightens you when you can't see what is happening around you. The screams of those around you frighten you even more. As the light got closer, you saw that it was a large white boat – you don't recognize the words and pictures on the side of it, but it looked 'official.' They had ropes and lifeboats! You were going to be saved.

Unfortunately, however, you were "rescued" by the United States Coast Guard. No one ever told you that you might not be welcome in America. "Why are you sending us back to Haiti?" you wondered. "Don't you want to help us?" The survivors, less than 50, were taken back to Haiti by the Coast Guard and turned over to the Haitian Police. You found out later that this happens all the time. About 1,000 Haitians a year are intercepted by the Coast Guard and sent back to your country.

When you arrived back in Haiti, there were no questions asked and all of you were sent to Fort National Prison. Months go by, and none of you has even been charged with any crime or been before a judge. Yet, here you sit in a cramped prison cell. You are finally released after 9 months of crowded cells, meager rations, and regular beatings from the other prisoners. You no longer have the desire to make a new life, not in America or anywhere.

Upon your release, you need to figure out what to do. You wonder if your family is still living in the same place. Perhaps there would be room for you there. Or maybe it is just best to return to Cité Soleil - a place that is all too familiar to you and where you once called 'home'?

To go back to Cite Soleil, go to #24. To return to your family, go to #28.

Haiti #18

You didn't know that you had that much strength left in you. The swim went better than you figured. The hard part was concentrating on swimming away with the screams of the others behind you. Were they panicking and drowning? Or, had the sharks already figured out where they were. It is dark by the time you reach land, but at least you are safe.

Now you can begin a new life here in America - 'the land with a hundred dreams and promises.' First though, you need to figure out exactly where you are and find someone who might be able to help you get started in this new life. Miami is a place that you had heard about and you assume that there might be help for you there. Fortunately for you, the third person you speak with just happens to be headed in that direction and is happy to have your company. Once in Miami, your dilemma presents itself again. Where should you go, who can you trust?

There is a large Haitian community in south Miami where you have found some friends. You know that you can live there without becoming an "official American," but if you do that, you will not be able to get many jobs or other things that people need to live the good life in the U.S. Perhaps you should go to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) so that you can become an "official American."

To go to the INS, go to #12. To stay "illegal" in South Miami, go to #8.

Haiti #24

Not much has changed since you left here the last time. The shack is still there and inhabited by others whom you do not know. They have room for you and 'welcome' you into their group. Life in the dump and slums of Cité Soleil has a way of engulfing those who live there. Before long, you have fallen into the same routines that you sought to escape only months earlier. Over the course of the coming months and years, you spend your time stealing, and committing other crimes, in order to barely survive. Others have come, gone, and returned again. Faces and names may change, but the reality of living in abject poverty does not.

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Haiti #28

You are able to find your family because they are still living at the same place. They are all glad to see you again. Your brother, and now your younger brother are working at the petrol station, and the other siblings are doing what they can to help. They are still living from meal to meal and day to day, but there is a roof over their heads and they are happy to be together. You are able to find some part-time work as well as selling newspapers on the street corners every morning. You are content, for the time being.

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Haiti #12

Unfortunately, your desire and enthusiasm to become an American is not matched by the agents of the INS. In their opinion, it is best for you to be with your family. You are too young to be here on your own. It doesn't matter that you are scared to go back and that there is nothing waiting for you to go back to. Their decision is final. In less than two weeks, you are on a boat headed south for Haiti. Of course, things have not changed in Haiti in the time that you were gone, and before long you begin to forget that you ever left and almost had the chance of a new life. You return to Cité Soleil, where things are at least familiar if neither comfortable nor safe. Over the course of the coming months and years, you spend your time stealing, and committing other crimes, in order to barely survive.

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Haiti #8

You find that you have no trouble blending in with the established Haitian community in south Miami. In many ways, it is just like being 'home.' They speak the same language, share the same foods, and have many things in common. Before long, you find a group of boys your own age who are all members of a Haitian gang. Immediately you are accepted as one of their own. Unfortunately, this aspect of 'home' is very much the same as what you left back in Haiti. The group spends much of its time engaged in activities that will eventually land them in prison if caught. You are a quick learner, and have no problem adapting to this new life in America. Perhaps your luck will hold out and you can avoid prison here in the U.S. as you did at home.

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Haiti #9

You decide to stay because what is another few months anyway? If anything, it will mean that you will be able to earn money and maybe even buy some things for your family. However, what you didn't plan on was that the longer you stayed with the gang, the harder it becomes to give it up. Month leads to month, and one year later you were still living in the slums, delivering (and taking) drugs, having sex with anyone who might be able to pay you or buy you a meal, and stealing whenever you can. After a while, you begin to feel really tired. You remember vaguely that your mother had felt the same way before she got real sick. Eight months later, you die of AIDS alone, in the shack, in the middle of the city dump.

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Haiti #10

A week later, you go to your brothers and sisters. They are still living at the same place. They are all glad to see you again. Your older brother and now your younger brother are working at the petrol station, and the other siblings are doing what they can to help out. They are still living from meal to meal and day to day, but there is a roof over their heads and they are happy to be together. You are able to find a part-time job, as well as selling newspapers on the street corners every morning. This life is as hard as your other life, but you feel better about what you are doing. And besides, it is good to be surrounded by people who really care about you. You are content, for the time being.

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Haiti #4

Even though you thought about following up on the information that Michael gave you, you never get around to actually going to Kay Espwa, the orphanage. You figure you were too old to be in an orphanage. You know how to take care of yourself. The months and years go by and you spend your time hawking the crude wooden carvings that no one buys. Unfortunately, the rest of your time is spent stealing, and committing other crimes in order to barely survive. Before long, you forget all about the offer from Michael. For the rest of your life, you remain in Cité Soleil – surrounded by poverty, sickness, and death. You never see your family again.

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Haiti #6

You immediately are interested in what Kay Espwa has to offer. Anything is certainly better than what you have now. You accompany Michael to Kay Espwa where you meet many of the Staff, all of whom are very interested in you and what your aspirations are. Other than your own family, this is one of the few times that you have felt that other people really care about you. You are enrolled in the woodworking courses and not only learn how to make furniture, but are able to enhance your skills and technique sufficiently so that your own personal carvings improve greatly.

After completion of your training courses, you are given the opportunity to sell your woodcarvings through the *Work Of Human Hands*. This is a joint project between a fair trade organization, SERVV, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CRS helps to support Kay Espwa, so you already know that you can trust them. They have a whole catalogue of items that are bought by people in America and other places. Your carvings are in the catalogue with so many other craftspeople from throughout the world. You have sold so many pieces that you are not able to keep up with the demand at times. Life is good. You are able to support yourself and earn a decent living. In time you return to your family and are able to significantly to their overall well being.

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