

## Comprehension and Discussion Activities for the Movie

# Hotel Rwanda

This module has been designed to accompany the film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004).

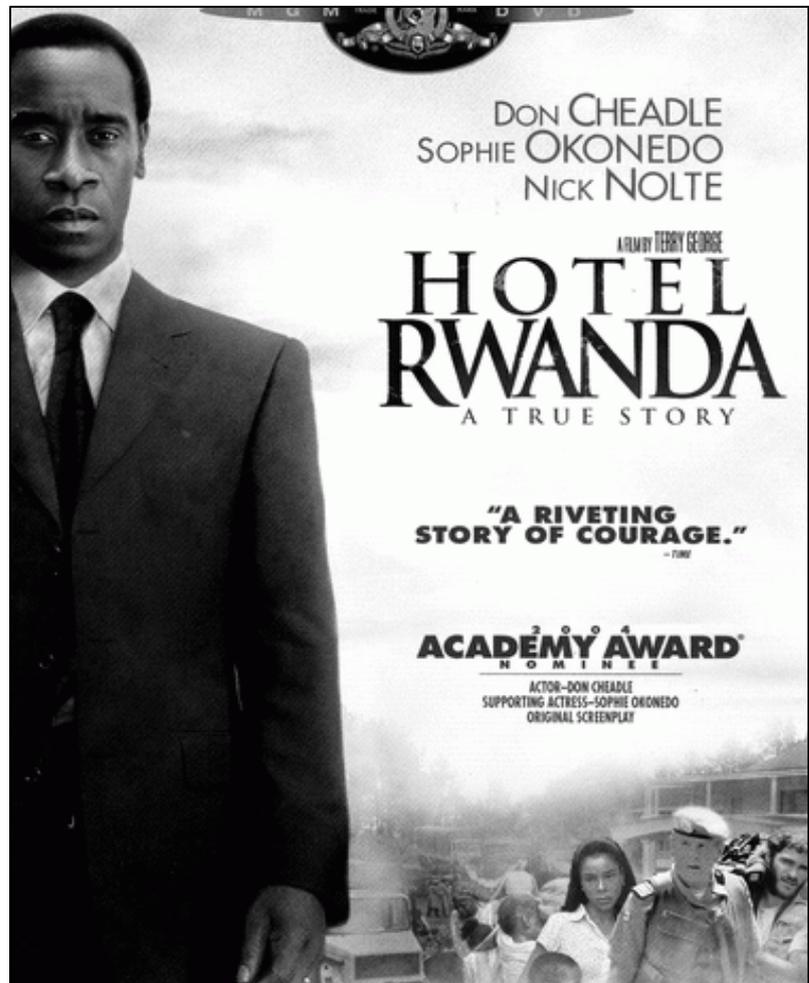
*Hotel Rwanda* is based on real characters and events that took place in Rwanda in 1994.

Tension between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups reached a crisis point in that year, when Rwandan radio announced that May 5 was to be the 'cleanup day'. On that day the capital, Kigali, must be cleansed of Tutsis. Nearly one million people were killed by Hutu militia shortly after this announcement. *Hotel Rwanda* is a film about this event.

*Hotel Rwanda* is also about Paul Rusesabagina, who made the hotel he managed into a refugee camp. This single daring act allowed thousands to survive.

The module consists of teacher's notes and two handouts that you can copy and give to your students. If you don't have access to a copier, you can write these on the board.

You might like to do many of these activities in students' first language. It is important that they understand the ideas behind the story, and this is easier in their own language.



# 1. Before You Watch

## 1.1: Rwanda

Ask students what they know about Rwanda. Write their ideas on the board.

## 1.2: Background

Give copies of **Worksheet 1: Background Information** to your students, or explain this information to them. Here are some exercises you can do with the worksheet if you like. Write them on the board while students are reading the worksheet.

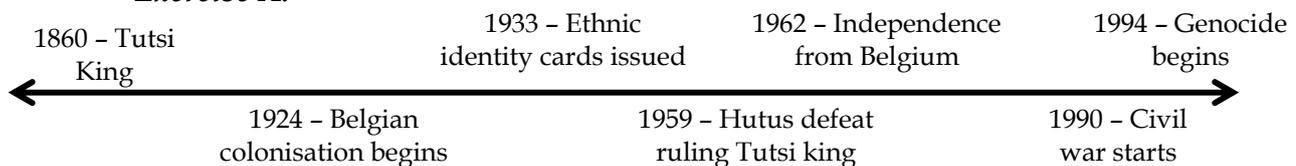
**Exercise A:** Draw a timeline of the history of Rwanda, starting with the first Tutsi king.

**Exercise B:** True or false? If false, write a correct sentence.

1. The Tutsi ruled over the Hutu for more than 100 years.
2. There are more Hutus than Tutsis in Rwanda.
3. Belgium was given control of Rwanda after World War II.
4. Identity cards made it easier to know whether someone was Hutu or Tutsi.
5. The Belgians treated the Hutu and the Tutsi the same.
6. Fighting between the Hutu and the Tutsi began after Rwanda was given independence from Belgium in 1962.

### Answers to 1.2

#### Exercise A:



#### Exercise B:

1. T
2. T
3. F - They were given control over Rwanda after World War One.
4. T
5. F - They used the Hutu as forced labour, and the Tutsi as supervisors.
6. F - They overthrew the Tutsi king three years before independence.

## 1.3: Useful Vocabulary

Here are some useful words and phrases to help students understand the movie. Write these on the board and get students to look them up in their dictionaries, or explain the meanings.

peacekeeper    convoy    militia    rebel    ethnic tensions    genocide  
rules of engagement    massacre    favour (v)    favour (n)    evacuation  
machete    visa    peace agreement    cockroach    intervene

## 2. While You Watch

### 2.1: Hutu and Tutsi 00.00 – 23.35

Give copies of **Worksheet 2: While You Watch** to your students, or write the questions for 2.1 on the board. Play the film to 23.35.

#### Answers to 2.1

*Exercise A: 1. 1994, Kigali 2. manager, Milles Collines 3. Colonel Oliver*

*4. George Rutaganda, Paul, radio announcer, Hutu Power Radio*

*5. business, fools, powerful 6. Interhamwe, Hutu 7. Rwandan Armed Forces*

*Exercise B: 1 a. Cigars to George Rutaganda, and whisky to General Bizimungu*

*b. Students discuss whether only family matters in crises. Should we give equal priority to helping friends, neighbours and strangers, or do we have a duty to look after our relatives first?*

*2 a and b. There are no right or wrong answers. Break into small groups to discuss these questions and then come back together and discuss as a class.*

*c. Many historians say the British treated ethnic and religious groups differently in India, Sudan and Nigeria. There are more examples.*

### 2.2: The President is Killed 23.35 – 37.30

Play the film to 37.30. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

#### Answers to 2.2

##### Exercise A:

*Tatiana's sister and brother-in-law visit Paul at the Milles Collines. Because of the danger, they want to leave Rwanda and take Tatiana and the children with them. They feel Paul is in no danger because he is a Hutu, while they, Tatiana, and the children are Tutsi. Paul says there is no danger as the United Nations and the world press are watching.*

*Later, Paul is driving home and hears gunfire, shouting, and glass breaking.*

*Buildings are burning. When he arrives, his family and neighbours are hiding in the dark. There are no lights on. They say there is a rumour that President Habyarimana has been murdered, and Tutsi rebels have killed him. He says this is "nonsense".*

##### Exercise B:

*1 a. The announcer on Hutu Power Radio (George Rutaganda, the Hutu businessman and Interhamwe militia leader).*

*b. The Interhamwe militia.*

*c. We cannot know for sure. Some extra information you can give your students: Responsibility for the death has never been confirmed, but the speed with which the genocide was launched strongly suggests planning. Within 24 hours of the president's assassination, the Interhamwe set up road blocks around Kigali. Tutsis were immediately separated from Hutus and hacked to death with machetes. At the same time, death squads worked from prepared lists and went from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in Kigali finding victims. They murdered not only Tutsis but moderate Hutus.*

*2 a. American President Bill Clinton*

*b. The American public listening to the radio, in the US and Rwanda.*

*c. Possible answer: That the US government only cares about Americans, not Rwandans.*

## 2.3: Evacuation 37.30 – 56.50

Play the film to 1.22.10. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

### Answers to 2.3

#### Exercise A:

When a journalist asks Colonel Oliver whether the U.N. will act to stop the massacres, he answers: "We're here as peacekeepers, not as peacemakers. My orders are not to intervene." Later, when the Interhamwe have surrounded the whole town, Colonel Oliver has to protect the hotel while having orders to not shoot, even when a bloody U.N. helmet is thrown at him. Other Interhamwe in the truck have U.N. helmets. Colonel Oliver later says, "They murdered my men. I lost ten Belgian U.N. soldiers."

Paul says to Colonel Oliver, "I have no way to protect these people. And I have more refugees than I have room for as it is. I was given 20 orphans today by the Red Cross. This is not a refugee camp. Can you not take them with you to your facilities?" Colonel Oliver responds, "No, I can't do that, Paul. I'm sorry. I'm overwhelmed at my refugee camp. I'm under attack, constant attack. As soon as we can stabilise this situation, then I'll take them."

#### Exercise B:

1. T
2. T
3. F – He is very angry about this decision.
4. F – The situation is very dangerous, and the UN is not very effective.

#### Exercise C:

1. Yes.
2. Get students ideas. Would they help in this situation? As a class or in groups, brainstorm ways to get involved.

## 2.4: Genocide 56.50 – 1.16.25

Play the film to 1.16.25. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

### Answers to 2.4

#### Exercise A:

When the Hutu army arrives at the Milles Collines, Paul again calls Mr. Tillens, the president of the company that owns the hotel. He explains the situation is worse, and he doesn't have much time before he is killed. He says, "I want to thank you for everything that you have done for me and my family. Please thank all of my friends at Sabena." This politeness encourages Mr. Tillens to call the French who support the Rwandan army.

Paul suggests a similar plan to hotel guests and staff: "We can only save ourselves. Many of you know influential people abroad. You must call these people. You must tell them what will happen to us. Say goodbye. But when you say goodbye, say it as if you are reaching through the phone and holding their hand. Let them know that if they let go of that hand, you will die. We must shame them into sending help."

#### Exercise B:

- |                                   |                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr Tillens                     | 4. Paul Rusebagina  |
| 2. U.S. State Department official | 5. George Rutaganda |
| 3. General Bizimungu              |                     |

## 2.5: Visas 1.16.25 – 1.34.35

Play the film to 1.34.35. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

### Answers to 2.5

#### Exercise A:

1. When Dube asks Paul why people are so cruel, Paul answers: "Hatred. Insanity. I don't know."
2. Paul's plan to telephone friends in other countries worked. Many people got exit visas to leave for another country. Paul and his family got an exit visa for Belgium.
3. When Tatiana and the children are lifted into the truck, Paul decides not to go with them. Paul tells Tatiana: "I cannot leave these people to die."
4. Paul learns from the radio that the truck convoy is driving into an ambush. Hutu Radio urges Hutus to "fill the graves that are not yet full."
5. When the U.N. and the trucks are surrounded, Colonel Oliver protects them and says to the Interhamwe, "They are not cockroaches, they are political refugees under U.N. sanction."

**Exercise B:** 3, 2, 5, 4, 1

## 2.6: Escape 1.34.35 – end

Play the film to the end. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

### Answers to 2.6

#### Exercise A:

Once again, Paul needs to persuade General Bizimungu to control the Interhamwe until the Tutsi rebel army arrive. Along with bribes of money, jewellery and alcohol, Paul uses threats. The first threat was the Americans are watching everything happening in Rwanda with their satellites. The second time is when Paul says the General will be considered a war criminal and goes on to say: "You are a marked man, sir. You are on a list. The Americans have you on their list as a war criminal. How do you think these people operate? You sit here with five stars on your chest. Who do you think they are coming after? You need me to tell them how you helped at the hotel. They say you led the massacres. Do you think they are going to believe you?"

#### Exercise B:

1. Paul doesn't have any supplies to bribe him with.
2. He thinks they might have jumped off the roof (previously, he had asked his wife to take the children and jump off the roof if the Interhamwe came).
3. The Tutsi rebel army are shooting at the Interhamwe.
4. She has found Tatiana's nieces.

# Worksheet 1: Background Information

## Rwanda

Rwanda is a country in Central Africa with a population of 10 million people. Historical records begin with a Tutsi king who took power in 1860. During this time, the Tutsi were the aristocracy and the Hutu were their servants. After World War I the League of Nations (an early version of the United Nations) gave Belgium power to administer Rwanda.



The Belgians used the already existing Tutsi and Hutu differences and made these differences part of their colonial system.

The Hutu were used as forced labour for the colonial administration, and the Tutsi supervised them. In 1933, Rwandans were given an ethnic identity card showing if they were Hutu or Tutsi. At that time, 85% were Hutu and 15% were Tutsi. This ID card and Belgium's policy of favoring the Tutsi over the Hutu prepared Rwanda for future violence.

In 1959, three years before independence from Belgium in 1962, the Hutus overthrew the ruling Tutsi king. Over the next several years, thousands of Tutsis were killed. About 150,000 went into exile in neighboring countries. The children of these Tutsi exiles later formed a rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and began a civil war in 1990. This war, along with political and economic problems, made ethnic tensions worse and led to the April 1994 genocide shown in the film *Hotel Rwanda*.

## The Film

*Hotel Rwanda* is based on real characters and events that happened in Rwanda in 1994. It focuses on the efforts of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager, to hide hundreds of Tutsi refugees from the Interahamwe militia.



**The real Paul Rusesabagina with Don Cheadle, the actor who played him in *Hotel Rwanda*.**

## Characters in the Film

**Paul Rusesabagina** is the manager of Milles Collines Hotel. He is Hutu.



**Tatiana** is Paul's wife. She is Tutsi. They have three children.



**Colonel Oliver** is commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Rwanda.



**General Bizimungu** is head of the Rwandan Armed Forces.



**George Rutaganda** is a businessman and leader of an Interhamwe militia group.



**Jack Daglish** is a journalist and photographer who documents the Rwandan genocide.



**Dube** works at Milles Collines.



**Gregoire** works at Milles Collines.

**Madame Archer** is a Red Cross Worker.

**Thomas** and **Fedens** are Tatiana's brother and sister-in-law.

## Worksheet 2: While You Watch

### 2.1: Hutu and Tutsi 00.00 – 17.10

**Exercise A:** Complete the following sentences with words from the box.

*George Rutaganda manager Paul radio announcer Rwandan Armed Forces  
business Milles Collines Interhamwe powerful Kigali 1994 Colonel Oliver  
Hutu Power Radio fools Hutu*

1. The story is set in \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, Rwanda.
2. Paul Rusesabagina is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ hotel.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ leads the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the businessman who sells supplies to \_\_\_\_\_. He is also the \_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of the film urging Hutus to “squash the cockroaches.” The radio station you hear is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Paul feels working with George is just \_\_\_\_\_. He feels George and his followers are \_\_\_\_\_ and won't be \_\_\_\_\_ for much longer.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ are a \_\_\_\_\_ militia group. They are not the same as the Rwandan army. They have control of Hutu Power Radio.
7. General Bizimungu is the head of the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Exercise B:** Discuss:

1. Paul tells Tatiana he cannot ask one of his contacts in the army to help his neighbor Victor, who was beaten and then taken prisoner by soldiers. He says he cannot help because Victor is not family:

“Family is all that matters. All day long I work to please this officer, that diplomat, some tourist, to store up favors so if there is a time when we need help, I have powerful people I can call upon.”

- a. What favors has Paul done so far, and who did he do them for?
- b. Do you agree that “family is all that matters” in dangerous situations?

2. The Rwandan journalist explained the history of Tutsi-Hutu relations:

“According to the Belgian colonists, the Tutsis are taller and more elegant. It was the Belgians that created the division. They picked people, those with thinner noses, lighter skin. They used to measure the width of people's noses. The Belgians used the Tutsis to run the country. Then when they left, they left the power to the Hutus, and of course the Hutus took revenge on the elite Tutsis for years of repression.”

- a. If you were Hutu, would you be angry with the Belgians who made physical differences important?
- b. What if you were a Tutsi? Would you believe the Belgians and treat the Hutu like they were not as good as you?
- c. Can you think of any other examples of countries where ethnic or religious groups were treated differently by colonial powers?

## 2.2: The President is Killed 23.35 – 37.30

**Exercise A:** Complete the following paragraphs with words from the box.

*Rwanda world press rumour President Habyarimana Paul Tutsi rebels  
Tutsi United Nations Tatiana Hutu neighbours lights murdered*

Tatiana's sister and brother-in-law visit \_\_\_\_\_ at the Milles Collines. Because of the danger, they want to leave \_\_\_\_\_ and take \_\_\_\_\_ and the children with them. They feel Paul is in no danger because he is a \_\_\_\_\_, while they, Tatiana, and the children are \_\_\_\_\_. Paul says there is no danger as the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ are watching. Later, Paul is driving home and hears gunfire, shouting and glass breaking. Buildings are burning. When he arrives, his family and \_\_\_\_\_ are hiding in the dark. There are no \_\_\_\_\_ on. They say there is a \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ has been \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ have killed him. Paul says this is "nonsense".

**Exercise B:** Read the quotes, and discuss the questions in groups or as a class.

1. "Our great president is murdered by the Tutsi cockroaches. They tricked him to sign their phony peace agreement. Then they shot his plane from the sky. It is time to clear the brush. Good Hutus of Rwanda. We must cut the tall trees. Cut the tall trees now! Let us go to work, loyal Hutus."

- a. Who said this?
- b. Who was against the peace agreement?
- c. Who do you think shot down President Habyarimana's plane?

2. "It is a very tense situation. And I just want to assure the families of those who are there that we are doing everything we possibly can to try to ensure the safety of our citizens there."

- a. Who said this?
- b. Who is the speaker talking to?
- c. What do you think Rwandans thought when they heard this message?

## 2.3: Evacuation 37.30 – 56.50

**Exercise A:** Complete the following paragraphs with words from the box.

*Interhamwe overwhelmed peacemakers Belgian U.N. soldiers  
U.N. helmet orphans U.N. Red Cross peacekeepers intervene  
Colonel Oliver refugees murdered stabilise massacres*

When a journalist asks Colonel Oliver whether the \_\_\_\_\_ will act to stop the \_\_\_\_\_, he answers: "We're here as \_\_\_\_\_, not as \_\_\_\_\_. My orders are not to \_\_\_\_\_." Later, when the \_\_\_\_\_ have surrounded the whole town, Colonel Oliver has to protect the hotel while having orders to not shoot, even when a bloody \_\_\_\_\_ is thrown at him. Other Interhamwe in the truck have U.N. helmets. Colonel Oliver later says, "They \_\_\_\_\_ my men. I lost ten \_\_\_\_\_."

Paul says to \_\_\_\_\_, "I have no way to protect these people. And I have more \_\_\_\_\_ than I have room for as it is. I was given 20 \_\_\_\_\_ today by the \_\_\_\_\_. This is not a refugee camp. Can you not take them with you to your facilities?" Colonel Oliver responds, "No, I can't do that, Paul. I'm sorry. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ at my refugee camp. I'm under attack, constant attack. As soon as we can \_\_\_\_\_ this situation, then I'll take them."

**Exercise B:** True or false?

1. Paul calls Mr. Tillens, the owner of the Milles Collines, because he is afraid Mr. Tillens will close the hotel. If the Milles Collines is closed, there will be no safe shelter for the refugees.
2. The European Intervention force is not going to stay and is sent to evacuate only foreign guests.
3. Colonel Oliver agrees with the decision to evacuate the foreign guests only.
4. Paul is correct when he tells Mr. Tillens everything is calm and the United Nations has everything under control.

**Exercise C:** Discuss in groups or as a class.

Paul thanks Jack for risking his life and filming the killing. Paul hopes Jack's bravery will bring help. Jack replies:

"If people see this footage, they'll say 'Oh, my God, that's horrible,' and then they'll go on eating their dinners."

1. Was Jack right?
2. If Jack was right, would you try to get people to help? How?

## 2.4: Genocide 56.50 – 1.16.25

**Exercise A:** Complete the following paragraph with words from the box.

*Rwandan army influential shame Mr. Tillens thank friends  
killed holding their hand die goodbye French ourselves call*

When the Hutu army arrives at the Milles Collines, Paul again calls \_\_\_\_\_, the president of the company that owns the hotel. He explains the situation is worse, and he doesn't have much time before he is \_\_\_\_\_. He says, "I want to \_\_\_\_\_ for everything that you have done for me and my family. Please thank all of my \_\_\_\_\_ at Sabena." This politeness encourages Mr. Tillens to call the \_\_\_\_\_ who support the \_\_\_\_\_.

Paul suggests a similar plan to hotel guests and staff: "We can only save \_\_\_\_\_. Many of you know \_\_\_\_\_ people abroad. You must \_\_\_\_\_ these people. You must tell them what will happen to us. Say \_\_\_\_\_. But when you say goodbye, say it as if you are reaching through the phone and \_\_\_\_\_. Let them know that if they let go of that hand, you will \_\_\_\_\_. We must \_\_\_\_\_ them into sending help."

**Exercise B:** Match the quote with the person who said it.

*Paul Rusesabagina George Rutaganda Mr. Tillens, President of Sabena  
U.S. State Department official General Bizimungu*

1. "I pleaded with the French and the Belgians to go back and get you all. I am afraid this is not going to happen. They're cowards, Paul."
2. "We have every reason to believe that acts of genocide have occurred."
3. "Your white friends have abandoned you. I will take care of you."
4. "When I last spoke to the president of Sabena, he assured me that any who helped protect Belgian property would be well rewarded."
5. "Your rich cockroaches at the hotel, their money is no good to them anymore. Soon all the Tutsis will be dead."

## 2.5: Visas 1.16.25 – 1.34.35

**Exercise A:** Complete the following sentences with words from the box.

*leave cockroaches fill the graves political refugees  
insanity exit visas radio die hatred ambush*

1. When Dube asks Paul why people are so cruel, Paul answers: \_\_\_\_\_ .  
\_\_\_\_\_. I don't know."
2. Paul's plan to telephone friends in other countries worked. Many people got \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ for another country. Paul and his family got an exit visa for Belgium.
3. When Tatiana and the children are lifted into the truck, Paul decides not to go with them. Paul tells Tatiana: "I cannot leave these people to \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Paul learns from the \_\_\_\_\_ that the truck convoy is driving into an \_\_\_\_\_. Hutu Radio urges Hutus to " \_\_\_\_\_ that are not yet full."
5. When the U.N. and the trucks are surrounded, Colonel Oliver protects them and says to the Interhamwe, "They are not \_\_\_\_\_, they \_\_\_\_\_ are under U.N. sanction."

**Exercise B:** Put these events in order:

1. The Rwandan Army rescues the convoy.
2. Paul decides not to leave with his family.
3. The UN brings exit visas for some families.
4. Paul calls General Bizimungu and asks him to stop the ambush.
5. The hotel staff hear on the radio Interhamwe is planning to ambush the convoy.

## 2.6: Escape 1.34.35 – end

**Exercise A:** Complete the following paragraph with words from the box.

<i>Americans</i>	<i>war criminal</i>	<i>General Bizimungu</i>	<i>five stars</i>
<i>massacres</i>	<i>Interhamwe</i>	<i>marked man</i>	<i>list satellites</i>

Once again, Paul needs to persuade \_\_\_\_\_ to control the \_\_\_\_\_ until the Tutsi rebel army arrives. Along with bribes of money, jewellery and alcohol, Paul uses threats. The first threat was the \_\_\_\_\_ are watching everything happening in Rwanda with their \_\_\_\_\_. The second time is when Paul says the General will be considered a \_\_\_\_\_ and goes on to say: "You are a \_\_\_\_\_, sir. You are on a \_\_\_\_\_. The Americans have you on their list as a war criminal. How do you think these people operate? You sit here with \_\_\_\_\_ on your chest. Who do you think they are coming after? You need me to tell them how you helped at the hotel. They say you led the \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think they are going to believe you?"

**Exercise B:** Answer the questions.

1. Why doesn't General Bizimungu want to help Paul?
2. When Paul gets back to the hotel, what is he afraid has happened to his family?
3. When the people from Milles Collines are in the bus, they drive through a gunfight. Who is shooting at who?
4. In the refugee camp, why does Madam Archer stop the bus?

## Plot Summary

The film *Hotel Rwanda*, set in 1994, is based on the Rwandan genocide. Over 800,000 people, mainly Tutsi, were killed by extremist Hutu militias. In the film, tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples lead to a civil war in which the Tutsis are massacred. Paul Rusesabagina, the manager of the Milles Collines Hotel, is Hutu but his wife, Tatiana, is Tutsi. His marriage makes him a traitor to Hutu extremists, but he has high-level contacts in the army and Interhamwe.

As the genocide starts, Paul's neighbors and family look to him for leadership. He manages to rescue them from the armed Hutu mobs who are determined to kill all Tutsi. After bargaining with a Rwandan Army officer for the safety of his friends and family, Paul brings them to his hotel. More refugees flood into the hotel as the United Nations' refugee camp becomes too dangerous and crowded. As more and more refugees arrive at the hotel, Paul must divert the Hutu soldiers, care for the refugees, and maintain the appearance of a functioning high-class hotel.

The UN Peacekeeping forces, led by Colonel Oliver, are unable to take action against the Interhamwe, as they are forbidden to intervene in the genocide. This indifference from the UN continues despite Oliver's attempts to protect the Tutsi refugees, and his anger with the Western powers who do not care about Rwanda.

As the Interhamwe surround the hotel, the terrible stress takes its toll on Paul and his family. The UN forces attempt to evacuate a group of refugees, including Paul's



family, but are turned back after being stopped by rioting Hutu mobs and the Interhamwe. To try to save the refugees, Paul speaks to the Rwandan Army General, Augustin Bizimungu, and attempts to blackmail him with threats of being tried as a war criminal. Bizimungu reluctantly agrees to help and they return to the hotel, only to find it under attack.

Bizimungu's troops finally bring an end to the chaos as Paul frantically looks for his wife and family, thinking they had killed themselves. Paul eventually finds them hiding in the bathroom. The family and the refugees finally leave the hotel in a UN convoy, and they travel through retreating masses of homeless Hutu refugees and Interhamwe militia to reach safety behind Tutsi rebel lines. In the final scene, Paul finds his two young nieces in a refugee camp.