

NOW IS THE TIME FOR RUNNING



curriculum connections

- ❖ Global Issues
- ❖ Sports
- ❖ Perseverance

Ages: 12 & up

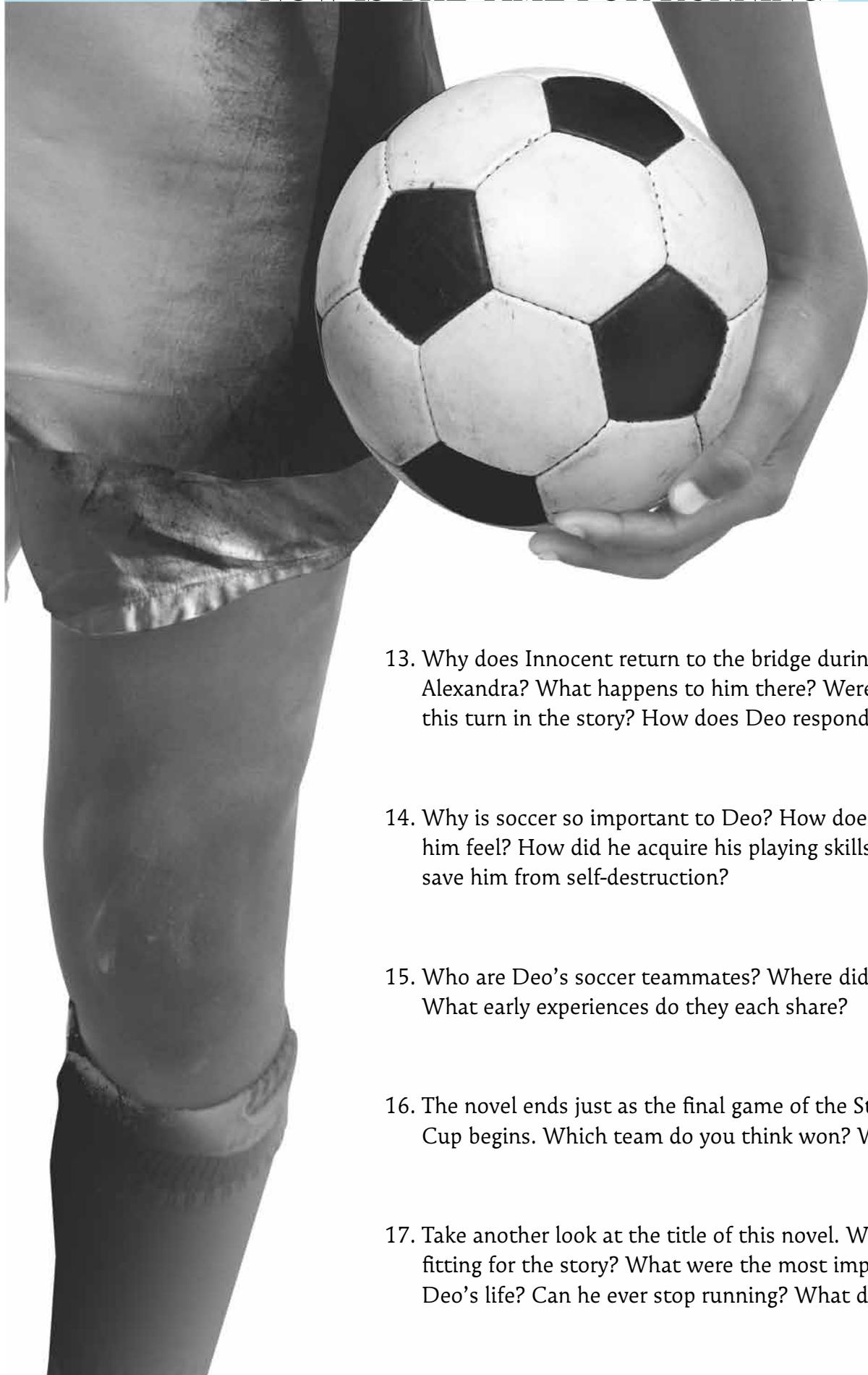
by Michael
Williams

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Discussion Questions

1. Innocent is the older brother, but Deo usually behaves like one. What happened to Innocent when he was born? When does Deo come to his brother's rescue? When does Innocent return the favor?
2. Take a closer look at the brothers' first names: Innocent and Deo. Research the meaning of Deo. Were the boys appropriately named? Is Innocent always innocent? Does Deo live up to his name? Why or why not?
3. How did Innocent acquire his Bix-Box? Why is it so precious to him? What does he keep in it? When does the Bix-Box save the brothers? What happens to Innocent when he is separated from the Bix-Box?
4. "Your grandfather is a survivor," says Deo's mother (page 12). "He survived his birth, the liberation war, running the white man's farm, and now old age—he can survive anything." Is she right about that? What is Grandpa Longdrop's final challenge? Who tries to save him?
5. Zimbabwe is the home country of Innocent and Deo. From what you've read in the novel, what are the rights of the average citizens there? What reason does Commander Jesus give for his assault on Gutu? How do the villagers respond? What other options do you think they had?
6. What motivates a man like Commander Jesus? Where do you think his cruelty comes from? How does he attract followers?
7. What is Captain Washington's relationship to Innocent and Deo? Why can't he protect the brothers?
8. Is Mai Maria a scoundrel or a savior? How does she help the boys get into South Africa? What does she demand as payment?
9. Neither Deo nor Innocent know their father, a truck driver from South Africa. Why is Innocent so determined to find him? What is Deo's attitude about meeting his father?
10. Why did the Flying Tomato farm seem like a paradise to Deo initially? When does he realize that it isn't? Why does he think Johannesburg will be a better place to live? What does Innocent believe?
11. How did Deo and Innocent come to live under a bridge in Johannesburg? Who lives there with them? How is each person expected to contribute to the community?
12. What is a *kwerekwere*? Why do many native South Africans dislike them? How are they treated? Are there *kwerekwere* in your town or city? How are they treated?

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13. Why does Innocent return to the bridge during the riot in Alexandra? What happens to him there? Were you surprised by this turn in the story? How does Deo respond?
14. Why is soccer so important to Deo? How does the game make him feel? How did he acquire his playing skills? How does soccer save him from self-destruction?
15. Who are Deo's soccer teammates? Where did they come from? What early experiences do they each share?
16. The novel ends just as the final game of the Street Soccer World Cup begins. Which team do you think won? Why?
17. Take another look at the title of this novel. What makes it so fitting for the story? What were the most important runs in Deo's life? Can he ever stop running? What do you think?

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about the book



It started out being a day like any other. Deo and his friends were playing soccer in the dusty fields of Zimbabwe, cheered on by Deo's brother, Innocent. Then the soldiers arrived . . . and soon the two brothers are running for their lives, fleeing the wreckage of their village for the distant promise of safe haven in South Africa. Full of heart-stopping action, this is a timely story about refugees battling poverty, prejudice, and violence at every step of their journey. Relevant and accesibly

written, *Now Is the Time For Running* is a staggering story of survival that follows Deo and his mentally handicapped older brother on a transformative journey that will stick with readers long after the last page.



about the author



Michael Williams is the author of the highly praised young adult novel *Crocodile Burning* as well as several other novels for adults. He is also a civil rights activist and the manager of the Cape Town Opera in South Africa.

