Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder

Educational Notes prepared by David Hirsch,
Deerfield High School

For the One Book, One Zip Code program
www.onebookonezipcode

These notes were prepared for use by teachers, discussion leaders, and readers. They are intended to help focus reading, discussion and classroom activities. They could be used in the classroom, book club or by an individual reader.

Teachers and discussion leaders are invited to make these questions their own. If you would like to add your ideas to this document, please send additions, suggestions and other comments to David Hirsch, dhirsch@dist113.org.

These notes are neither exhaustive nor error-free. While it is impossible to write without bias, they were written to explore multiple points of view in an open manner.

Notes on each chapter are divided into three sections:

The section on vocabulary identifies words and concepts that novice readers may want to look up. Rather than easily providing definitions or a glossary, students may benefit from the process of going to the dictionary or computer to explore the meanings of words. The educational resource page on the One Book, One Zip Code webpage does have a link to a good glossary, if you want one.

The questions for writing and discussion could be used as opening writing prompts, discussion points, or even quiz questions. Many reference specific quotes from the book. This is intended to encourage readers to return to the text to support their interpretations and observations.

The possible learning activities are suggestions for going beyond a regular discussion or written assignment.

All of the questions and suggestions should be tailored to fit your specific group of readers.

A special thanks to the members of the 2007-2008 Fifth Period Power Reading Class, who helped me explore the book and write these plans. Thank you to Laura, Anna, Ellie, Igor, Loren, Shari, Samantha, Meghan and Lisa!
Pre-reading:

Looking at the two quotes following the title page:
What do they mean?
Why are there two of them?
How are they similar? Different?
Read T.S. Eliot’s poem, “The Dry Savages”

Part I: Dokte Paul

Chapter One:

Vocabulary:

Tap-tap  “nation-building”  rectory
Junta  circuitous  luminescent

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What do we learn about Farmer and Kidder from the way their relationship started?

How does Kidder’s view of Farmer change in this chapter?

Describe Farmer: physically, emotionally, politically etc. What do we know about his background, past, etc.

Do you think that Nerva Juste should be locked up? Why or why not?

Compare the different people we meet in this chapter: Farmer, Kidder, Captain Carroll.

Examine Farmer’s response to Kidder’s question about voodoo on page six: what does this say about both of them? What do we learn about Farmer?

Kidder says that Farmer, “disturbed me.” (7) How does Farmer inspire and disturb? Why?

Compare the ideas in this chapter that are optimistic with those that are pessimistic. Which is stronger? Which people are more optimistic and which are more pessimistic?

The chapter ends with Kidder discussing, “another way of thinking about a place like Haiti.” What is that way of thinking? Describe it. Do you agree?

Possible Learning Activities:

Research the history, culture, language and geography of Haiti

Use the One Book, One Zip Code page to look at pictures of Farmer, Haiti, and Partners in Health

Research healthcare in the United States, Haiti, and other countries

How do people get help the poor and sick? Brainstorm things we could or can do
Chapter Two:

Vocabulary:

Urban  Daguerreotype  Intravenously  Dubiously
Wall Street  Austere  Sputum  Maldistribution
Deranged  August  Infiltrate  Oeuvre
Obstetrics  Hydrocephalic  Intermittent  Parasitologist
Tertiary  Antiretroviral

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Compare Harvard and Haiti: Farmer moves between the two places. What do we learn about them?

Why does Farmer refer to his department as “ID” and say things like “ID says treat. Love, ID” (10). What effect does this have?

How does Farmer’s approach to treating Joe reflect on his approach to medicine in general and to his work in Haiti in particular?

Why does Joe open up to Dr. Farmer more than other doctors? What does he do?

Should Dr. Farmer give Joe beer? Why does he do this?

Farmer’s treatment of Joe goes beyond drugs for his disease. How does he take care of other parts of Joe and why?

What do we learn about Farmer from his behavior on Christmas? Of whom does he remind you? Why?

Farmer is referred to as a “saint” in this chapter? Do you think he is saintly? Why or why not?

On the last two pages of this chapter, Kidder describes one of Farmer’s books. What do we learn about Farmer from this description? What new side of Farmer is revealed here?

Possible Learning Activities:

What are different medical specialties? What do they do?

Compare Dr. Farmer to the doctors we see on television. How is he similar and different? What do we learn by the comparison?

Research HIV and Tuberculosis. How do these diseases work?

Why do we feel more comfortable with some doctors (or people) than others? What is it about their manner that makes us comfortable?

What is the relationship of poverty to disease? How do places where there are many poor people handle heath issues?

Find religious allusions, metaphors, and references in this chapter. Why does Kidder include these? What message do they give us?

In treating people, Farmer addresses more than their medical needs but other needs as well. Research Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and see how this relates to Farmer’s approach.
Chapter Three:

Vocabulary:

Gwo wout la  Encomiums  Trepidation
Ambulatory  Ti Kay  Purpura fulminans
Citadel  Proselytized  Pleural effusion
Catchment  Cosmology

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Why does Kidder call Farmer’s work in Haiti his “oeuvre?”

Analyze the Parnter’s In Health logo. Look at it on their website. What does it represent? How do you know? How does it relate to what we have learned about Dr. Farmer so far?

Look at the first paragraph on page 20. Do you think Kidder is making a religious allusion intentionally here? Why or why not?

“Everyone had to pay, that is, except for almost everyone. And no one – Farmer’s rule - could be turned away.” (21) What does this quote tell you about the economic conditions in Haiti and about Farmer’s approach to them?

How does Farmer treat the community as well as the individual?

The PIH bookkeeper calls Farmer, “the hardest workin’ broke man I know.” What does she mean? Why does she say this?

Although Farmer’s wife and daughter are in Paris, when urged to spend more time there, he replies, “But I don’t have any patients in Paris...” (23). What does he mean by this?

Where does Farmer feel most at home? Where is his “home?” Why?

What are Farmer’s feelings about money in general? What are his attitudes toward his own wealth?

What do you make of his use of “comma?” What does his sarcasm and humor reveal about him?

Compare Farmer’s bedside manner in Haiti with his treatment of Joe in Boston in Chapter Two.

What is a “sorcery consult” (27). How does Farmer’s attitude toward voodoo reflect his approach to Haiti and medicine?

Farmer believes in the power of words. How does the use of words connect to his role as a doctor?

What does Farmer mean when he tells an AIDS organization in Cambridge that they don’t care “nearly enough.” (30)?

What does Farmer’s interest in “horti-torture” (32) tell us about him? How is this consistent or inconsistent with his approach to medicine?

Look at the last paragraph in this chapter. What does Farmer mean by his last line?
Possible Learning Activities:

Research the Creole language. How does it relate to other languages? Who speaks it? What is its history?

Get a map of Haiti and follow Kidder’s route.

Research “the journals of Christopher Columbus” (p 19)

Create a logo for yourself or an important part of your life.

Why are some countries poor and others wealthy? Research the economics of third world nations like Haiti. Why do the same products and services cost different amounts in different places?

Why does curing TB in the United States cost so much more than in Haiti? (22) Find out. Call a doctor!

Debate the question: Is Farmer’s approach to Haiti practical?

Research the new and old testament references in this chapter.

Research life spans in different parts of the world? Why do people in some places live longer?

Research voodoo.

How do different drugs treat AIDS? Why are some more effective? Why are some more expensive? How do people in different parts of the world get access to these drugs?

What is a spinal tap and why would one need it?
Chapter Four:

Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virgil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impediments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncompliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stentorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laconic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desultoriness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

On page 33, we hear that the Haitian staff told Farmer that a patient would have survived if he had been there. Why does this disturb him so much? What does it tell us about Farmer’s goals and philosophy?

Collect the Haitian proverbs that are mentioned in the book. What does each mean? How does it related to Farmer and his activities. Start with the proverbs at the top of page 34 and 36.

What is “structural violence?” (34) How does it apply to Haiti?

What are Farmer’s beliefs about voodoo and sorcery? How is that consistent or inconsistent with other information we have about him?

What does the woman mean when she says to Farmer, “Honey, are you incapable of complexity?”(35) What lesson does Farmer learn from this exchange?

What do you think of Farmer’s decision to go find the patient who has not shown up for his visits? Is that the right thing to do? Why or why not?

Farmer puts the responsibility for the welfare of the patients entirely on the doctors. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Blan doesn’t just mean white. How would you define this term and why do you think that the Haitians even identify black Americans as “blan?”

Describe the different ways one can look at the dam. How do each of these points of view represent different interests? Which one is the “best” or “most complete?”

What is Farmer’s view of Haiti’s economic relationship to the United States?


Farmer has had his share of illness too. How does this affect him? How is it ironic on their journey?

Kidder comments that the discussion of politics, “was one means by which Haitian peasants avoided hopelessness.” (40). What does this mean? Where do you see hope or hopelessness in Haiti and in Farmer?

Why is the use of the name “Kennedy” ironic? What does it say about the Haitians’ view of the US?

When Kidder and Farmer finally arrive in Morne Michel, what do we learn about the patient? How does this connect to Farmer’s view of who is responsible for the patient’s well being?

Why is Farmer so upset by Kidder’s question at the top of page 42? Why does he respond so strongly? Are his two responses the same? Why?

Discuss what we learn about gender roles in Haiti at the cock fight.
“Education wasn’t what he wanted to perform on the world, me included. He was after transformation.” (44) What does Kidder mean by this? What is the difference between education and transformation for Farmer?

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Find other Haitian proverbs. Find proverbs from other cultures. Go home and ask grandparents and older friends what proverbs they remember. What do these proverbs mean and how might they connect to this book?

How do dams work? Why does a community build a dam? What are the problems and benefits of damming a river?

Why would a country like the United States have factories in Haiti? Research international business and find out why companies often have factories or other branches of business in poorer countries.

How do diseases spread in livestock? Why would the US be concerned about diseases in livestock in other countries? How does illness in livestock affect humans?

How does the United States government help poor countries? What is our current relationship with Haiti?

How do different cultures assign roles to men and women? How does this work in Haiti?

Before reading chapter five: What kind of childhood do you think Paul Farmer had? What would you guess about his family and childhood?

**Part I: The Tin Roofs of Cange**

**Chapter Five:**

**Vocabulary:**
Herpetology  
Jury-rigged  
Bayou  
Discrepant  
GI System

**Questions for Writing and Discussion:**

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Now that we know about Farmer’s past, how does it change the way we see him? How did his past shape him? Select pieces of his childhood experience and connect them to areas discussed in Part I.

What does Farmer’s choice of reading material tell us about him?

Farmer’s family was very modest, sometimes very poor. However, he states that, “he never really felt deprived throughout his childhood.” (50). Contrast this with his comments on page 40 about the happy poor.

How did Farmer’s family fit the stereotype of a poor family? How did it break that stereotype?

How did Farmer’s first encounter with Haitians affect him? Is it a turning point moment? Why or why not?
How is Farmer similar and different from his parents?

Look at Farmer’s summary of his childhood on page 54. What does he mean that, “the story is a little too neat” and it is, “a perfectly discrepant version of the same ending.” (54)? How is the way he views his childhood different from how Kidder might view it. How is your view different or similar to either of these?

Why does Farmer refer to Cange as his “hometown”?

When Farmer got to college, he was “soaking up high culture” and “discovering wealth.” (55)What does this mean? What new areas opened up to Farmer in college? How do you think this changed his view of the world?

How do Farmer’s sister and father’s stories at the to of page 56 demonstrate their views of Farmer’s college experience and the contrast between college and home for the Farmer family?

What lesson does Farmer learn from his contact with wealthy students in college?

Possible Learning Activities:

What are the connections between herpetology and Farmer’s medical focus?

What kind of poverty is there in the United States? Compare poverty here to poverty in Haiti and other parts of the world.

Which made Farmer more: his genetics or his experiences growing up. Research and debate it!

How do people afford college? What kinds of scholarships are available? What percentage of students like Paul Farmer attend college?

Write about your childhood in the manner that Kidder describes Farmer’s.

Make a map of the movement of the Farmer family during Farmer’s youth.

Chapter Six:

Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legions</th>
<th>Vector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polymath</td>
<td>Prophylaxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetid</td>
<td>Palliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sty</td>
<td>Aphorism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Proclivity | Tontons macoutes |

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

How did Farmer’s experiences in Paris set the stage for his work in Haiti? How did they reflect his attitudes toward money, medicine, and politics?

Find examples that demonstrate that Farmer is more about people than anything else in this chapter.
Compare Virchow and Farmer. How are they similar and different? How are the places in which they worked similar and different?

How do politics and medicine intersect? How do Farmer and Virchow think they are related? How are they related today?

Compare Virchow’s aphorisms with the Haitian proverbs. How do you think Farmer thinks about these?

How is morality connected to public health? How does Farmer see the connection?

What does the statement, “preferential option for the poor” (62) mean?

What does Farmer find attractive about Sister Julianna’s work? How does it connect to his other interests?

What is ironic about the way that Farmer reconnects with Haitians?

Why is Farmer surprised by Schweitzer Hospital in Haiti? Why would he be more attracted to Eve Care Haiti?

Possible Learning Activities:

Research Claude Levi-Strauss: who was he and how do his ideas connect to Farmer’s?

We get a good description of Rudolf Virchow from Kidder. Does he give us the whole story? Research the missing pieces about this man.

Kidder lists many medical pioneers. Select one of the names and find a biographical sketch. Compare these people to Farmer and Virchow.

Research the changes in the Catholic Church in the 1960s including “liberation theology” (62). Why were these changes radical and ground breaking? Why would they be considered dangerous and revolutionary? Why did Farmer find them so attractive?

Research the movement to unionize migrant farm workers in the United States. Compare this to Farmer’s work. How are they similar and different?

Verify and expand Kidder’s brief history of Haiti on page 63. What does he leave out? What needs more explanation?

What is anthropology? What is medical anthropology? Find out!

Read The Comedians by Graham Greene – or go to Master Plots and find out what happens in this novel.
Chapter Seven:

Vocabulary:

Potent
Regaling
Bier
Cryptic
Reticent
Reticulated
Ethnography
Morbidity
Trollop
Aphrodisiacs
Lavoris

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Why does Ophelia refuse Farmer’s proposal? Would you want someone like Farmer for a spouse? Why or why not?

How does Farmer change Ophelia? How does she change him?

When Farmer asks Ophelia to tell him about her family, Kidder comments that “his interest was mixed with other motives, but…was sincere.” (68). What does he mean by this? What are the “other motives?”

The death of the woman by the mango truck clearly had a very strong effect on Farmer. Why? What did he see in that event that Ophelia did not? Look at his poem on the top of 72 about this event.

How did Farmer “translate Haiti” for Ophelia? How does he do this for Kidder and us? How does this translation reflect his view of how the world functions and should function?

“Poverty was his subject” (73) Kidder creates Ophelia with this thought. Do you agree?

Farmer says he wants to “lend a voice to the voiceless.” (74) What is he talking about? Who are the voiceless and how will he “lend” them a “voice?”

Ophelia notes that “there is a point where you realize the world has just been revealed to you…things will never be quite the same again.” (74) What does she mean? How has she changed? How does this relate to her refusal to marry Farmer?

Why does Kidder include the story of Ophelia calling the warden at the bottom of 74 and top of 75? Why is this anecdote in this chapter?

Do you think that Ophelia knows “the real Haiti?” Why or why not?

Possible Learning Activities:

Both Ophelia and Farmer have lots of questions about Haiti. Look at Ophelia’s at the bottom of page 69 and Farmer’s in the middle of page 70. What other questions about Haiti do you have? Find some answers!

Find definitions of Anthropology and Ethnography. Compare them to Kidder’s and Farmer’s descriptions.

Research the famous figures named in this chapter: Max Adolphe, Patricia Neal, Roald Dahl, Baby Doc, Graham Greene, Dante, Joyce, Homer, Proust, Genet
Chapter Eight:

Vocabulary:

Remediation  Morbidity  Move san, let gate
Coalesced  Houngan  Lurid
Epiphany  Chloroquine  Efficacy

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

The first pages are again a series of contrasts. Reread pages 76 and 77. How do these contrasts affect Farmer? Why are they important to his later work in Haiti?

Kidder notes that Farmer, “found his life’s work not in books or in theories but mainly through experiencing Haiti.” (78) How does Farmer use theory and traditional academic resources in this chapter? How does he also employ a more action oriented approach?

How does “Liberation Theology” support both Farmer’s work and his religious faith? Why is it so attractive to him?

What does the proverb, “God gives but doesn’t share” (79) mean? How does Farmer interpret it? Are there other possible interpretations?

Compare Farmer to the doctor leaving Haiti described on the bottom of 79 and the top of 80. What critical differences between them does Farmer realize. Why is this an “epiphany” moment for him?

What does the story about the woman trying to get her sister a blood transfusion (80) teach Farmer? What does it teach us about him?

When Farmer sees the pregnant woman die and is very upset, others believe it is because he is “green” and “naïve” (81). Is this the case? What is the real reason? Why weren’t others as upset? Should Farmer be that upset?

What does Farmer mean when he says that, “the hospital is not for the poor?” (81). Who is it for? Why was this an important realization?

What does it mean to “provide a preferential option for the poor?”

How does Farmer discover the elements of a public health system? What are those elements?

How does Farmer’s view of anthropology and ethnography change in this chapter?

How is “move san, let gate” a “metaphor” for “the abuse of women” (84)?

Go back and look at how old Farmer was during the event described in this chapter. Does this change your view of him in any way?

Possible Learning Activities:

Find out more about Catholic Liberation Theology. How does it differ from more conventional Catholic and Christen doctrine?
Why can people just walk away from difficult situations, as the doctor did in this chapter? Farmer can’t do that. When is that a good thing? When is that a problem?

What does being “an American” mean to the doctor who left Haiti, to Farmer, to you. Interview some people on what that part of their identity means to them. What kind of action does it require them to take? What kind of action is not included in that piece of their identities?

Evaluate the public health system in your community. What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? Look at a developing country and ask the same questions.

Research “move san, let gate.” What really causes this ailment? What is the treatment?

Chapter Nine:

Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opiate</th>
<th>Lesions</th>
<th>Hypercalcemia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penicillin</td>
<td>Homer’s Syndrome</td>
<td>Metastatic calcification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifampin</td>
<td>Oculomotor</td>
<td>Stagnant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isoniazid</td>
<td>Paralysis</td>
<td>Reservoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluoroquinolones</td>
<td>Argyll Robertson</td>
<td>Bon Sauveur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gout</td>
<td>Dystrophic calcification</td>
<td>Kwashiorkor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lysomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Once again, compare Farmer’s experiences in Harvard with those in Haiti. How are they different? How do they help to shape Farmer’s medical approach?

What does Farmer see as the role of religion in public health? How does he approach the issue?

How is Farmer similar to a priest? How is he different?

In what way is Farmer a conventional religious person? In what ways is he unconventional?

Why do you think that one of Farmer’s study index cards must be sung (87)?

What do we learn about Ophelia and Farmer from “the fifth food group” incident described at the bottom of page 87?

How is Ophelia competitive with Farmer? Why do you think she feels that way? Do you think that Farmer is aware of this?

What is “the Luddite trap?” (89)

What does the experience of the running the water pipe into Cange show Farmer? What does it teach him?

Why does the term “appropriate technology” make Father Lafontant so angry with Farmer? What conclusion does Farmer reach after this discussion (89-90).

Compare and contrast “appropriate technology” (89) with “Redistributive justice” (90).
“The great burdens of disease in Cange were just a symptom of general deprivation…” (91). What does this statement mean? How does it shape Farmer’s approach to medicine in Haiti?

Why would a school seem to be a luxury in a place like Cange? What made Farmer see it as a critical necessity?

What is ironic about Tom White?

Why is Farmer surprised that White “voted against [his] own interests?” (92) Why does Farmer warm up to White after the answer?

How do the two men see guilt differently? How do you see guilt?

How are Farmer and White similar and different? Compare and contrast the two men?

What does the story on pages 94 and 95, when Farmer has signed over his check to a patient tell us about him? What effect does it have on Farmer’s relationship with White?

Is Farmer practical? How would he answer that question?

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Find out what all the medical terms on pages 86 and 87 mean. Why do you think Kidder chose to use these terms and not others.

How is water a critical element in a public health system. Research the history of public water and sewer systems and see how this advancement connects to disease and public health.

How do charities like Project Bread and Partners in Health get money? What do they have to do to get donors?

Research great philanthropists in America and the world.

Read the short story “All the King’s Horses” by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. How does it connect to White’s experience?
Chapter Ten:

Vocabulary:

Keor
Babouket la tonbe
Bibulous
AMCs

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Why does it give Ophelia pleasure to find Farmer’s flaws?

How do the political changes in Haiti affect public health? Where do we see connections between the government and the issues that Farmer addresses?

Why does Kidder refer to PIH as a way of creating, “a new communion” and Todd McCormack calls it “Paul’s Catholic Church?” (99) How is PIH a religious endeavor?

We meet Jim Kim in this chapter: what do we know about him? Compare him to Farmer.

How would you characterize the early goals of PIH described in this chapter, especially on pages 100 and 101?

Why does Ophelia find “it hard to say no but impossible to say yes” to Farmer’s proposal? What do you learn about her and them in this chapter? How does their relationship change in this chapter?

Possible Learning Activities:

How do charitable organizations work? What makes one organization a “charity” and another a business?

What is political correctness? Debate Jim Kim’s critique of political correctness on page 100.

Find your own “area of moral clarity.” (101) Where are they for you?
Chapter Eleven:

Vocabulary:
Dechoukaj
Ti legliz
Coups
Personae non gratae
Pwen
Attaches
Mnemonic

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What does it mean that “Haiti was 90 percent Catholic and 100 percent Voodoo?” (103)

Compare Jean Paul Aristide and Paul Farmer. How are they similar and different?

How did the AIDS epidemic become a symbol for Farmer? What about this disease made it different than other medical issues in Haiti?

How does this chapter show that Farmer’s work is succeeding and yet, at the same time, demonstrate how far he has to go? Find the successes and the challenges in this chapter.

Farmer manages to start PIH, work in Haiti and excel in medical school at the same time. What allows him to do this?

Why is Farmer surprised that his office is bugged (109)? Should it surprise him? Why or why not?

Why would Farmer be so certain that Aristide would not become involved in politics? Why did he change his mind and support him so strongly?

Another Haitian proverb: “the rocks in the water don’t know how the rocks in the sun feel.” (110). What does this mean? What does Arstide’s rewording of it imply? Why would this be dangerous?

What does the story of Chouchou teach us about Haiti? Why is it so painful to Farmer?

“I date everything to patients” (113) is the way that Farmer remembers things so well. What does this tell us about him? How is this consistent with what we have learned about him in previous chapters?

Possible Learning Activities:

What other democracies are there in the world? How did they come to be democratic? What is the path to democracy for countries in transition? How does Haiti compare to other countries making similar changes?

Find out more about Jean Paul Aristide

What is AIDS? How did it get to Haiti? Find out about AIDS and Haiti.

What is the typical medical school experience? How was Farmer’s experience different?

What is Amnesty International? What do they do? How are they involved in Haiti?
Chapter Twelve:

Vocabulary:
Kok kalite
Martyr
Gunboat diplomacy
Fraternite
Lassitude

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

How do Farmer’s medical and political goals affect each other in this chapter? How are they intertwined?

Farmer seems to be at a loss for options of how to deal with the Haitian political situation. What are some alternatives he did not consider?

What does Farmer mean by “morally acceptable” (115)? How does he define this term? How do you?

Compare Farmer’s social savvy with people and the way he deals with political confrontation in this chapter? To what do you attribute the difference?

How can clinics become an arm of political forces? How is Zanmi Lasante used by the junta?

Possible Learning Activities:

Find Farmer’s book The Uses of Haiti.

What are the causes and effects of political upheavals like the one described in this chapter? Find some other examples and compare them to Haiti.

What do you think of Farmer’s account of “American policy toward Haiti”(116) and his accusations about some heroic people in American history (117)? Do you think it is accurate? Do some research and check to see if Farmer’s statements are true.

Part III: Medicos Aventureros

Chapter Thirteen:

Vocabulary:
Epidemiological
Noxious
Synergy

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What conclusions would you draw from the “epidemiological map?” (125). What are the obvious conclusions? What are the hidden messages?

What does Kidder mean by “tuberculosis made its own preferential option for the poor?” (126)
What factors make multiple drug resistant tuberculosis a poor person’s problem? How does this affect the wealthier?

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Research how diseases are spread.

Research tuberculosis.

Could you make maps of other things related to this book? What kind of things? Do such maps exist? Find out!

**Chapter Fourteen:**

**Vocabulary:**
Bayakou
Periurban
Palliative

**Questions for Writing and Discussion:**

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Describe Father Jack. How is he similar and different from other people we have met?

How does Jim Kim change in this chapter? What causes this change?

How is the situation in Peru similar to and different from Haiti?

Look at Farmer’s advice to Jim on page 131. What does he mean? How is Jim’s ego involved?

How does Father Jack’s death change Farmer’s view of the project in Peru? What if Father Jack had not become sick?

We meet Jaime Bayona in this chapter. Describe him and compare him to the other PIH staff members.

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Go to the World Heath Organization’s website: www.who.int

What does it mean that “you can’t fight city hall?” Discuss what happens when individuals or small groups try to bring up a problem to governmental agencies. What are some of the results? What are ways to do this well? What are problems that these individuals encounter?
Chapter Fifteen:

Vocabulary:
Viscerally
Shining Path
Allocation

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Compare the descriptions of Peru to early descriptions of Haiti; how are they similar and different?

How are the medical problems in Peru connected to the economic and social issues?

How is MDR different in Peru than it was in Haiti?

Connect the MDR problem and the assumption of that patients are noncompliant to Farmer’s philosophy stated early on that “The only noncompliant people are physicians.” (36)

On the last page of this chapter, 141, Kidder recounts WHO statements about TB in poor counties and then contrasts these with how a TB outbreak was handled in the United States. What conclusion do you draw from this description? How do you think Farmer and Kim would think of this?

Possible Learning Activities:

Research the history and politics of Peru, including the civil war.

How does a disease become resistant to drugs? Why does that happen? What creates resistance?

Sometimes, an innovation that is an improvement 99% of the time has some negative side effects. Think of some advances that were mostly good but had came at a price. How are these similar to the problem of DOTS in Peru?

Chapter Sixteen:

Vocabulary:
Intramuscular
Hypothyroidism
Psychosis
excruciating

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What is ironic about the DOTS program in Peru? There is more than one or two ironies. How many can you identify?

Contrast Kim’s view of the problem to Farmer’s on page 143. What does that tell you about each person? With which do you agree? Why?
Compare the term “gringo” to the term “blan.” How are they used and for what purposes?

Why are the Peruvian authorities so resistant to Farmer and his team? Do they have cause?

What does the death of David Carbajal teach us about how things work (or don’t work) in Peru? What lesson does the PIH staff take from his death?

Addressing the problem of MDR might come at a high price for Peru. What are the downsides openly addressing the issues related to MDR? How do the PIH people address these?

Kidder points out that, “many members of “TB” would view [Farmer] as a mere clinician, too interested in patients to see the big picture…” (146) What does this statement mean? Is it correct? What is the difference between the clinician and the researcher? How is Farmer both?

Farmer outlines “myths and mystifications about MDR- TB” (146) at the conference and in so doing, alienates many experts. Why did this happen? What alternatives might Farmer have pursued?

Possible Learning Activities:

There is discussion among the PIH staff about “whether or not they should take on this problem.”(143) What kind of debate do you think occurred? What might have been the arguments?

What views are present at the TB conference? Identify them and evaluate each one. With which does Farmer agree? With which do you agree? Why?

Chapter Seventeen:

Vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metastasizing</th>
<th>Prostatitis</th>
<th>Solidarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMC</td>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>Fluoroquinolone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dosh</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>Pathophysiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostician</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Kidder quickly introduces Farmer’s wife, Didi and their marriage and then moves back to his focus on Peru. Why doesn’t he spend more time discussing this relationship and telling us about Didi? What questions do you have?

Go through this chapter and the past few chapters and find all the areas that describe the issue of costs and money. How is financing a central issue in this book and in this problem?

Who is Howard Hiatt? Describe him. What role does he play?

“Better to ask forgiveness than permission.”is described as “Farmer’s rule of thumb.” (149). How does this serve him well? How is it problematic? Do you agree with him?

What does the problem with the Bingham pharmacy point out about how Farmer and PIH are financing their work? What solutions do they pursue?
When Farmer himself gets sick, he treats himself differently than he would other patients. What conclusions do you draw from those differences? What do his choices tell you about him?

Kidder notes that he’d “become inclined to hold Farmer to a higher standard than I did most people.” (153) Is this fair? Why do you think Kidder does this? Would you?

Compare Christian to the Peruvian doctor’s daughter. What do the contrasts tell us? Why does Kidder put their stories side by side?

How is the way Farmer handles the Peruvian doctor different than his performance at the TB conference? Why is this?

What does Farmer and his team learn from treating children with MDR TB? How do they learn this lesson?

Possible Learning Activities:

Research Hepatitis A. How is it related to the other diseases in this book? How is it transmitted? How do you think Farmer got it?

If a child is dying but his or her cure might cost his or her family everything, thus endangering other children and the parents, what do you do?

Chapter Eighteen:

Vocabulary:
Refusenik

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

How has Farmer’s approach to the “TB” establishment changed in this chapter?

Why does the “TB” establishment want to work with Farmer? What are their motives?

What does the proverb “Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good” (160) mean? How does it apply to this chapter?

Describe Alex Goldfarb. What new issues does he bring to the table?

Goldfarb presents the group with a dilemma on page 162. How would you answer him?

Kidder says that Farmer and his group would, “glared at Goldfarb. But he’d made an argument that they’d have to answer, sooner or later.” (163) What is Goldfarb’s argument and why is it so problematic for the PIH staff? How do you think they will “answer” it?

When money is limited, the PIH staff and others must choose to help one group and not use that money for other needs. What do you think of their choices? What do you think about how they make these choices? Do you agree with their decisions and they way they reached them?

Jim Kim states, “And the only time that I hear talk of shrinking resources among people like us, among academics, is when we talk about things that have to do with poor people.” (164) What does he mean? Why does he make this statement?
Kim ends his presentation with a famous quote from Margaret Mead (164). Do you agree with this quote? Can you find examples that show that this quote is right or wrong?

Possible Learning Activities:

How do agencies decide where to use their money when there are so many worthy competing interests? Call a few and find out on what criteria they decide to spend their funds. If you had a million dollars to give away, where would you give it and why?

Who was Margaret Mead? Why would she be someone whom Kim would quote? How was her work similar or different from that of Farmer and Kim?

Chapter Nineteen:

Vocabulary:

- Utilitarian
- Paradigm
- Periodontist
- Evasion
- Differential
- Capreomycin
- Disassembly

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What are the arguments for and against using “cost effectiveness analysis” (165) as a means of allocating resources?

How do the PIH staff attack the basic assumptions about MDR TB treatment?

What was the key element in changing the WHO’s view of treating MDR TB in poor countries?

How does Jim Kim’s background shed light on his work with PIH? Compare his background with Farmer’s.

Kidder tells us that Kim is, “fond of overstatement…” (169). Find some examples that prove this true or false.

When Farmer and Kim discover a drug selling for less in Paris, but can’t purchase it because there is an “emergency…in Peru.” (170), what does this show us about the drug market and how drugs are priced and distributed? Why does this “differential pricing” exist? Is it allowed or even sometimes encouraged?

Describe Guido Bakker. Who is he and what organization does he work for? What role does he play in solving the drug pricing problem?

Lowering the price of TB drugs puts the PIH staff in a double bind: “To lower the price of the drugs, he had to show that a lot of TB projects would use them. For a lot of projects to use them, the prices would have to be lower. For the prices to be lower, the generic manufacturers would have to get involved. They’d be more inclined to get involved if WHO would put the second-line antibiotics on its official list of essential drugs. But rarely used drugs are by definition not essential.” (171) How does Kim solve this problem? Does this problem remind you of other situations?

Why could Kim’s solution become a problem in itself? Evaluate the concerns about making second-line MDR TB drugs more available. Do you agree with them? How does Kim address these concerns?
Compare Kim and Farmer’s approach to the politicking that is needed to reduce drug costs. How do they differ in their interest, approach and taste for working with the international TB community?

Jim questions his own motives when he asks, “didn’t we always say that people who go into policy make a preferential option for their own ideas?” (174) What does he mean? Why is he concerned? Does Farmer’s response to his question truly address the concern?

Farmer and Kim attack the excuse that “resources are always limited” (175). What is their reasoning? Do you agree with it?

This chapter ends with a gambit to fund PIH on a new scale. How does this connect to the issues that have been raised throughout the chapter?

Possible Learning Activities:

Find out about Utilitarian philosophy. What makes it so controversial?

How are medical supplies and pharmaceuticals distributed throughout the world? Why do some supplies and drugs cost a great deal and others cost far less? Why do some cost more or less in different places?

How should drugs be priced? Who should determine this? Take roles and have a forum: Governments, Drug Companies, Retailers, Doctors, PIH, Third World Nations, and other voices could be represented at your forum.

What are generic drugs? What are patents? How does one get a patent on a medicine? Should patents work the same way with medicines as they do with other inventions?

Part IV: A Light Month For Travel

Chapter Twenty:

Vocabulary:

Malaria                  Gendarmes                  Alkalized
Pandemic                Abrade                     Kwazman
Corvee                  Desultory                  Manifestly

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Should Farmer give up patients and focus on the larger global issues exclusively? What would you advise? What would Farmer’s answer be and why?

Kidder tells us that, when trying to get everything done, Farmer, “just had his own ideas on how to go about it.” Farmer is accused of having “no priorities” and he then lists that, “Patients come first, prisoners second, and students third.” (182). From his choices, what do you think are Farmer’s priorities? Does his list accurately reflect his actions? Do you agree with his list? What is missing from it?

Look at Farmer’s email reply to a medical student on page 183. What does this reply communicate beyond the information? Read between the lines; what additional messages is Farmer giving the student? What do we learn about Farmer from this reply?

Why would the staff in Haiti miss Farmer, “as the dry, cracked earth misses the rain” (183) when he has only been gone for a day and a half?
We get a long and interesting reason why the roads in Haiti are so bad. What does that answer tell us?

After discussing a reference to Matthew 25, Farmer says, “Inasmuch as you did it not, you’re screwed.” (185). What does he mean by this? How does this statement connect to the earlier discussion of priorities?

Farmer does not stop and help the person on the side of the road with the stuck car. He asks, ”Am I sinning?” (187) Is he? Where does he draw the line about whom to help and whom not to help? How does he make that distinction?

Farmer feels guilty about the child that died (188). What does that tell us about him? How does this connect to the earlier discussion of religion and priorities?

Why does Kidder include the description of the first time Haitian flyers confronting the escalators? What is this doing in this chapter?

Ophelia describes Farmer as, “built of oppositions.” (189) List these oppositions. How does he reconcile them? Do you have any opposing traits?

Why do you think Farmer will not permit anyone to be fired?

How does Farmer view his trip to Cuba? How does he approach and prepare for the trip? Why?

Possible Learning Activities:

What are your priorities? Farmer has his list. What is yours?

Kidder claims that the US basically re instituted a kind of brutal slavery in Haiti. Is it true? Do the research and check to see if Kidder and Farmer are accurate.

There are many religious and New Testament references throughout this book and especially in this chapter. Track down the allusions and connect them to Farmer and his work.

Make two T-charts, one for you and one for Farmer. On the left side of each, list traits that describe Farmer and you. On the right side, place the opposite of these traits. Does Farmer demonstrate the opposites in anything you have read? Do you?

Chapter Twenty One:

Vocabulary:

Socialism  Psittaciformes  Sycophantic
Orthodoxy  Psittacosis  Cybernetic
Campesinos  Cornices  Mojitos
Compulsory  Porticoes
Depo-Provera  Malecon

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Compare Cuba to Haiti. How are they similar and different? What accounts for these similarities and differences? How does Farmer see these? How do you?

How is Jorge Perez? How is he like and unlike Farmer?
Compare the medical systems in the United States, Cuba and Haiti. Why are they different? What can we learn from this comparison? What are the trade offs?

When Farmer says that others “were talking about managing wealth. He was talking about managing poverty” (194) what does he mean? What is the difference?

When Farmer says, “And all ologies fail us at some point.” (195) To which “ologies” is he referring? How do these ologies fail?

What are Farmer’s purposes in coming to Cuba? How does he feel there? Why?

When Farmer asks the Secretary of the Council of State if he could send two students to a Cuban medical school, he gets an interesting reply. Look at this exchange on page 197. What does the Secretary’s answer suggest to you?

Farmer discusses the “coinfection” of “Poverty and inequality” (198). Explain this statement and place it in context of both Farmer’s work and the Cuban conference at which he is speaking.

We learn a great deal about women’s health and AIDs. Summarize the information that Farmer gathers. What conclusions can you draw?

We visit a quarantine camp for people with AIDs. Farmer gets angry when this camp is compared with one at Guantanamo Bay. What do you think of the comparison? Is Farmer being objective here? Why or why not?

Compare how Cuba and the United States address the AIDs epidemic. What accounts for these differences?

Farmer asks Kidder why “attentions” are “lavished on him.” (205) Kidder’s answer does not satisfy Farmer. What is Farmer’s answer? Do you think it is right? What is your answer?

Why is Farmer concerned about the way that Kidder will portray him and “especially about him in Cuba?” (206)? What are Farmer’s stated concerns? What would be your concerns if you were Farmer?

When discussing a sign that reads “the only real nation is humanity,” Kidder chides himself saying, “Among a coward’s weapons, cynicism is the nastiest of all.” (209). Why does he have a change of heart about this? What additional message does this passage provide?

Connect the statement, “He said patients came first, prisoners second, and students third, but this didn’t leave out much of humanity” (210) with a similar sounding statement on page 21. What conclusions can you draw from these two statements?

The chapter closes with a discussion of how Farmer makes people uncomfortable. However, Kidder notes that there is one group of people whom he makes very comfortable. Contrast these two groups and these two sides of Farmer.

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Research the history of Cuba and other countries mentioned in this chapter: Guatemala, El Salvador, etc.

Watch the parts of the movie *Sicko* that deal with Cuba.

What is the difference between socialism and capitalism?

What is “Triangular trade” (197). Look up the history of this term.

Debate it: which is more important, “freedom from illness and premature death” or “political freedom” (208)?
Chapter Twenty Two:

Vocabulary:
Kwashiorkor
Hermeneutic of generosity (H of G)
Identity politics
Falciparum

Pate, confit d’oie, grand cru
Hyperconnectivity
Continuity

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Compare how Farmer’s view of Paris changed when he got Didi’s perspective to how Kidder’s view of the dam changed when he heard Farmer’s perspective back on page 37.

What does Farmer mean when he notes, “how much could be done in Haiti if only he could get his hands on the money that the first world spent on pet grooming.” (211)

Describe Didi. Compare her with Farmer. Is she the wife you would expect for him? Why or why not?

How does Didi react to Farmer’s statement that he is leaving Paris the next morning. How does he react to her response? What does this tell you about their relationship?

What is the, “chink in his[Farmer’s] moral armor?” (212)

When referring to loving his own child more than other children, Farmer says that, “everybody understands that, encourages that, praises you for it. But the hard thing is the other.” (213) What is “the other?” Why is it “hard?” Later in that page, Farmer answers this question. What is his answer? What do you think of it?

What do the pictures in Farmer’s wallet tell you about him. How do they relate to the issue of “the other” in the prior question?

Why does Didi think that it is a good thing that Farmer calls his mother for a wake up call?

In your own words, define what Farmer means by “a hermeneutic of generosity.” (215)

The PIH slang is not merely shorthand. It is commentary and criticism. Look at some of the terms on 215 through 217 and analyze the message behind the term.

This special use of language creates a special bond among Farmer’s group. However, Kidder points out that, “the inner circle of PIH seemed like a club or even like a family, which was deeply opposed to the concept of insiders and outsiders…” (217) How is this ironic? Why is this? Why do you think Kidder pointed this out?

Farmer tells Kidder he is, “wrong” about his statement that the Paris airport is, “another world.” Why does he think this? Do you agree with him/? How does Kidder relate this answer to a discussion of ‘hyperconnectivity?” (218)

Look at the last paragraph of the chapter. How does Farmer’s frame of mind make life more difficult for him? How does it make life easier?

Possible Learning Activities:

Discussion: Is it okay to love your own children (or parents or friends) more than other people’s children (or parents or friends)? Why is this good? Why is this bad? Why is this a problem for Farmer?

Kidder spends some time explaining PIH slang. Examine your own slang. How does slang work? What is its purpose?
Chapter Twenty Three:

Vocabulary:

Oblast  Prevalence  Bureaucrats
Gulag  Chaliapin  Deranged
Crenellated  Consensus  Sentimentality
Penology  Apparatchik  Peripatetic
Deplored  Izvestia

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Compare the situation in Russia with the other two PIH locations, Haiti and Peru. How are they similar and different?

Farmer and Alex Goldfarb’s relationship does not get off on the best note. Why do they become friends anyway?

Describe Alex Goldfarb. What are his strengths? What are his liabilities?

Why is the situation in Russia dire and problematic? What makes taking on this project so compelling for Farmer?

What does Farmer mean by “erasing history”? (224) Where in the book have we seen this? Can you think of other examples of this?

Why do you think the man with AIDS got a worse sentence than the real criminal?

What are the characteristics of the Russian prison system that make it a TB incubator? What do these characteristics tell you about the state of the country?

The TB epidemic is a precursor of other problems. Why does Farmer say that the Russian system is going to be a ‘disaster.” (228)

Farmer and the chief of the Russian doctors compare Russia and America on pages 228 and 229. What do you think of their comparisons? Can you create some more?

What does Farmer mean when he says, “that’s called privilege, not democracy.” (229) How does he define democracy?

Why does farmer say that he will, “have to keep Alex in check.” (230)

Compare the issues of getting the loan from the World Bank and the problems between the ministries in Russia to the political issues in Peru. How are they similar and different?

Goldfarb calls the prisons, “an epidemiological pump” (232). How are the prisons pumping out TB? What might be the eventual effect of this?

Farmer has a clear reason why the prisoners should get first shot at TB treatment. What is it and do you agree with his logic?

Goldfarb has a “plan B” (232). What is it? Why does he like it?

Farmer sneaks the “food into the budget by calling it vitamins.” (234) How does this relate to the work he has done in other parts of the world? Why would he have to “sneak food” at all?
Goldfarb calls Farmer sentimental (235). Is he right?

At the end of the chapter, Kidder notes that Farmer is totally forgiving (236). He then connects this to Farmer’s “clinical practice.” (237). What do the last two pages of this chapter reveal about both Farmer and Kidder?

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Research the World Bank. What does it do? How does it function? Who runs it?

Compare the Russian prison system to the one in Victor Hugo’s “Les Miserable.” What other historical examples can you find of justice systems like this?

Farmer says, “I think of myself more as a physician than as an American.” (229) What does this say about him? What do you call yourself? Make a list of words that describe you and put them in order of importance.

On pages 235 and 236, Goldfarb and Farmer debate about who should be in jail. Who is right? Extend each of their arguments and render a judgment.

**Part V: O for the P**

**Chapter Twenty Four:**

**Vocabulary:**

Ancillary  
Frugality  
Oligarch  
Dressage  
Quell  
Gulagmeisters  
Cowrie shells

**Questions for Writing and Discussion:**

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

Why doesn’t the Gates Foundation grant solve all the problems at PIH? Why isn’t this huge influx of money a cure-all?

How does this chapter discuss the issue of “sustainability?” (242) and “replicability (256). What are the double binds involved in making a program “sustainable?” How does Farmer’s view about this issue change? Why does it change?

How has the culture of Partners In Health changed with the Gates grant and their move to a university building? What is the result of that change? To what degree is it a good or bad change?

What do you learn about from the story on the bottom of 243 and top of 244 concerning the two endings to the statement, “If Paul is the model, we’re….” (243-244). What conclusion does Jim reach about this issue? Do you agree?

Jim fills in for Farmer at a Russian banquet. Why does his karaoke stunt work?

Should Farmer and Kim wait for lower cost drugs and save money or pay higher prices and save fewer lives? What do you think about the discussion of drug costs on 252 and 253? How does this connect to the opening of this chapter and the financial state of PIH?
Kidder gives us an outline of Farmer’s projects and travel schedule. Why do you think this is included?

How is Farmer different at the Brigham than in other locations?

What does the repetition of “He’s going to walk out of here” (254 and 255) tell you? Does it remind you of anything else?

What do you think of Farmer’s statement, “It’s embarrassing that piddly little projects like ours should serve as exemplars.” (257) Is this modesty? Why would Farmer be upset about the desire to replicate his work in Haiti?

This chapter opens and closes with a discussion of large grants. How is money the central issue of this chapter?

**Possible Learning Activities:**

Enact the dinner with Paul, Ophelia, and Jim on pages 247 and 248. Assign someone to read the “Kidder” lines too. What do you learn about the relationships between the people? What is unsaid? What can you infer about these three people?

Kidder provides us with three views on treating AIDS in poor countries (256). Articulate the three views and then debate which you think is the most practical, the most moral and the most appropriate.

Research the United State’s relationship with Haiti in 2002. Why was the US blocking aid to the Haitian government? What is our relationship with Haiti today?

“Farmer told Ophelia that he heard two sets of voices. At one ear he heard friends and allies saying he should concentrate on the big issues of world health and, at the other ear, the groans of his Haitian patients…” (260) Debate it: which one is more important. Before you decide that Farmer needs to honor both, battle out the relative importance of both sides.

**Chapter Twenty Five:**

**Vocabulary:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congenital</th>
<th>Eschewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scrofula</td>
<td>Imminent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cervical lymphadenitis</td>
<td>Camions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymph nodes</td>
<td>Emaciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrapulmonary</td>
<td>Tracheotomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oncologist</td>
<td>Anarchic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasopharyngeal carcinoma</td>
<td>Excruciating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shebunkins</td>
<td>Insuperable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicarious</td>
<td>Zenglendo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions for Writing and Discussion:**

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What is the moral of John’s story? What lesson do you take from it?

Look at the opening two paragraphs of the chapter. How do they frame the main story of the chapter?

What is Farmer’s role in this chapter? How does Kidder include him in the story? What do you think is his place in this story?
Why was Serena so invested in John’s case? Does this make her more similar or different from Farmer?

Initially, John’s mother does not accompany him on the trip to Boston. Why do you think she did not go until he was near death?

When Serena arrives in Haiti, every “first sight” (264) shocks her, whether it is the country itself or the child she is treating. How does Serena change during her short time in Haiti? Does she change? Why or why not?

Kidder notes that most of the PIH staff are female and most are “rather good-looking.” (264) Why does Kidder include this? What can you guess from the generalities about the PIH-ers.

What role does money play in this story? The statement about money can you make from its role?

This story is full of ironies, for example the sign announcing highway improvement to (265). Find several other ironic examples. When you look at all these ironies, what pattern do you see?

Ti Fifi is frequently asking for Farmer’s approval. Why is this? What do you think of Farmer’s consultant role?

There was concern that flying John by medevac would set a precedent and other patients would expect to be flown to Boston. What do you think of this concern? If it was correct, should that have stopped them from taking John to Boston?

When dealing with the ambulance service, Kidder notes that, “It is so easy…to mistake a person’s material resources for his interior ones.” What does he mean by this? How might we see this in several parts of this chapter?

What lesson does Serena learn on the road to the airport?

The customs’ agent makes a derogatory comment when inspecting the plane. What does that comment mean to the agent, to Serena, to you? Why might that comment be particularly problematic for the folks from PIH?

When Serena calls the hospital “Man’s Greatest Hospital,”(276), Dr. Ezekowitz gives her an interesting reply. What does he say and what does it suggest about the way that he practices medicine?

When Serena discovers that John will die, what goes through her mind? How does she answer her doubts? What do you think of her answers? What would you do in her place?

What do the PIH-ers mean when they say, “Thank you for not letting him die there.”?

Since John died, should Serena and Carole have taken him to Boston in the first place?

Serena says, “Poverty in a place like Haiti is difficult to personalize. If it’s in front of you, it has a reality.” (279) What does she mean by this? How does this chapter demonstrate this for her? To what degree is this a good or bad thing? What view on this does Kidder take in the second to last paragraph of the chapter?

Kidder leaves us with a very mixed last paragraph. He says that this story, “was like an object lesson in the difficulty of Farmer’s enterprise, perhaps in its ultimate futility.” (279). He goes on to say that he was going to present this view to Farmer. How would Farmer respond to Kidder’s conclusion? How do you?
Possible Learning Activities:

The struggle to get John out of Haiti or even just to get him to the airport was significant. Flow chart this process. What happened? What roles did different people play? What problems did they encounter? How did they solve them?

Under what circumstances should PIH staff members go to the extraordinary efforts that are described in these chapters? Can they do this all the time? If not? When should they?

Chapter Twenty Six:

Vocabulary:

- Kwazmans
- Animus
- Distal
- Philosophe
- Rhyber Pass
- Scut
- Bourgeoisie
- Ruby Ridge
- Ambivalence
- Erudite
- Campeche
- Rebuking
- Conical
- Wattle
- Job pa-l
- Antihypertensives
daub
- Zafe bounda-l
- Deficit
- Las normas
- Triage
- Epiphany

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

What does “Lord, a word on all this.” (280) mean? How would you say the same message?

Farmer interprets Ti Jean’s “philosophe” as “a giant morality play, a commentary on social inequality.” (281). What does this mean? Is he correct?

What does Ti Jean’s comment about the cost of Farmer’s pond tell us about his relationship with Farmer? What does it show about Farmer’s view of money?

Kidder notes that his journey to see Alcante is similar to his first hike in Haiti. How is this hike different?

This chapter has a review quality to it. Can you see connections to other parts of this book in this chapter?

What religious allusion does Kidder make when he notes that Farmer often uses a “fishing metaphor?” (286) Where else does he make references like this?

Kidder finally asks Farmer about John’s case from the prior chapter. Farmer’s answer is, “why do we intervene as aggressively as we can with that kid and not with another? Because his mother brought him to us and that’s where he was, in our clinic.” (287). Explain this answer. Does it satisfy Kidder?

What does Farmer mean by the, “long defeat.”? How does he use the terms, “defeat,” “victory, and “losers?” (288)

When discussing humility, Farmer asks, “about all the money that could have been spent on other things, what about a doctor’s salary?” He goes on to ask, “what is it that makes people not think that?” He then compares asking about alternative uses of funds to this line of reasoning saying, “If you say that stuff out loud, you sound like an asshole. Whereas if you say the other stuff, you just sound thoughtful.” (289). Do you agree? If we question funds in the general sense (could the money spent on John be spent better), we sound thoughtful but when we question specific economic conditions (doctor’s salaries could be used in other ways), we do not?
Farmer says, “I don’t care if we lose, I’m gonna try to do the right thing.” (289). What is the right thing? What is losing? How does this statement embody Farmer’s philosophy? Connect this statement to those that Farmer makes on the next page about being, “an O for the P doc…” (290).

How is it ironic that, as they talk and walk, Kidder basically keeps asking Farmer, ‘are we there yet?’

Farmer connects the earlier incident where a woman asked him, “Are you incapable of complexity?” with a “guy who said he would help with a water project in a town here, but only if the people really showed they wanted it.” (293) What is the connection between these two things? What conclusion does Farmer draw from them?

Do you agree with the critics that Kidder cites on the top of page 294 that Farmer should not be using his time on these long journeys for a handful of patients? What is Farmer’s answer to these critics?

Why is it, according to Jim Kim, that, “If you focus on individual patients…you can’t get sloppy.” (294)

Farmer states that “…you’re saying that their lives matter less than some others’, and the idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that’s wrong with the world.” (294) Do you agree that all lives are worth the same? Is that what Farmer is saying?

What does Ophelia mean when she says, “You have to believe that small gestures matter, that they do add up.” (295)? What gestures is she talking about? Why does she make this statement?

What general lesson do we learn when It Ti Jean confirms that a vast majority of Voodoo ceremonies are “attempts to drive away illness?” (298)

Possible Learning Activities:

When resources are limited, how should get them? Who should decide how these resources are allocated? Look at various situation like this: school funding, energy, medicine. What does it mean to “fairly” divide our resources?

Look through this chapter for statements of philosophy, belief and purpose. Find as many as you can.

What is the “guilt of the rich?” How do people handle their own good fortune in the face of the misfortune of others? How do we do this?

Afterword:

Vocabulary:
Cangeois

Questions for Writing and Discussion:

Title this chapter: What would you call it and why?

This chapter lists many of the successes of Partners in Health. List the things they still need to do.

There are many ironic notations in this afterword: find a few of them.

Possible Learning Activities:

Rewrite the afterword. What would you like to see. What would you put in a sequel book?
**General Learning Activities:**

If you were to interview Paul Farmer, what questions would you ask him? Script this interview and guess at the responses he would give.

Is Paul Farmer a “hero?” What characteristics qualify someone to be a hero? Are there characteristics that disqualify someone from hero status?

Debate: which is better realism or idealism?

Look through the chapters for religious references, either explicitly indicated or implied. What kind of religious symbols are being used? What message do you get from them?