

Cry The Beloved Country Study Guide Answers

Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Chapters 1 - 5

1. Paragraphs two and three in Chapter 1 sharply contrast. Explain the significance of these two paragraphs in terms of the novel's central theme. (Come back to this later if you can't answer it at first.)
2. Identify Stephen, John, and Gertrude.
3. "Once such a thing is opened, it cannot be shut again." Explain.
4. Why did Stephen Kumalo go to Johannesburg?
5. "The lights . . . fall . . . on the grass and stones of a country that sleeps." Explain the symbolic significance of this statement.
6. What does "Umfundisi" mean?
7. "The journey had begun. And now the fear back again . . ." What fears did Kumalo have?
8. What happened to Kumalo when he first arrived in Johannesburg?
9. Identify Msimangu and Mrs. Lithebe.
10. Describe Gertrude's sickness.
11. Why is Gertrude's sickness upsetting to Kumalo?
12. What is Kumalo's brother John doing in Johannesburg?
13. "The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again." Explain what Msimangu meant.
14. "It is fear that rules this land." Who fears whom?

Chapters 6 & 7

1. Describe Kumalo's meeting with his sister (when he finds her in Johannesburg).
2. Kumalo bought Gertrude and the child new clothes. Why is that symbolically important?
3. Describe Kumalo's first meeting with his brother John in Johannesburg.
4. What is Msimangu's one hope for his country?

Chapters 8 - 10

1. Why did Dubauwoodnt Kumalo ask Msimangu to walk instead of taking a bus?
2. Why is the government more afraid of Dubula than Tomlinson or John Kumalo?
3. What did Mrs. Mkize tell them about Absalom?
4. What is the point of Chapter 9 in relationship to the novel's themes?
5. When Kumalo finally reached Pimville, where Absalom was supposed to be living, what did he find?

Chapters 11 - 14

1. A certain news headline and article grabbed the attention of the priests at the Mission House. What was the article about?
2. Identify James and Arthur Jarvis.
3. "Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end." What "things"?

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Introduction

Alan Paton's novel "Cry, the Beloved Country" is a poignant exploration of the social and racial injustices in South Africa during the years leading up to apartheid. It tells the story of Stephen Kumalo, a Zulu pastor, who embarks on a journey to Johannesburg to find his son, Absalom. The narrative not

only addresses the personal tragedies faced by the characters but also reflects the broader societal issues of the time. This study guide aims to provide comprehensive answers to common questions and themes found in the novel, serving as a valuable resource for students and educators alike.

Summary of the Novel

The novel opens with a description of the land of South Africa, highlighting its beauty and the deep connection the people have with it. Stephen Kumalo, who lives in the village of Ndotsheni, receives a letter urging him to travel to Johannesburg. His journey is fraught with anxiety as he searches for his son, Absalom, who has fallen into a life of crime.

Upon arriving in Johannesburg, Kumalo encounters the harsh realities of urban life, including poverty, crime, and the disintegration of the family unit. His search leads him to discover not only the fate of his son but also the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of a white man, Arthur Jarvis, whose father, James Jarvis, becomes a significant character in the narrative.

Main Themes

Racial Injustice

One of the central themes of "Cry, the Beloved Country" is racial injustice. The novel portrays a society divided along racial lines, where the black population faces systemic oppression. The injustices faced by characters like Kumalo and Absalom reflect the broader societal issues of apartheid South Africa.

Family and Community

Family ties and the importance of community are also vital themes. Kumalo's journey illustrates the disintegration of familial relationships due to urbanization and economic hardship. The novel emphasizes the need for connection and understanding within families and communities to combat the societal breakdown caused by apartheid.

Hope and Redemption

Despite the novel's bleak portrayal of society, it ultimately conveys a message of hope and redemption. Characters like James Jarvis undergo transformations that suggest the possibility of reconciliation and understanding across racial divides. The narrative advocates for compassion and empathy as essential components for healing a divided nation.

Character Analysis

Stephen Kumalo

Stephen Kumalo is the protagonist of the novel. As a humble pastor, he embodies the virtues of compassion, faith, and perseverance. His journey to Johannesburg is both a physical and spiritual quest, as he seeks to reconnect with his son and confront the realities of his family's disintegration. Throughout the story, Kumalo's character evolves from a man steeped in despair to one who embraces hope and reconciliation.

Absalom Kumalo

Absalom, Stephen's son, represents the lost generation of young black men who turn to crime and violence as a means of survival. His actions lead to the tragic death of Arthur Jarvis, which serves as a catalyst for the story's exploration of guilt and responsibility. Absalom's fate reflects the consequences of societal neglect and systemic injustice.

James Jarvis

James Jarvis, the father of Arthur Jarvis, is a complex character who undergoes significant development. Initially portrayed as a wealthy landowner disconnected from the struggles of black South Africans, he experiences a profound transformation after his son's death. Jarvis's eventual understanding of the injustices faced by black people leads him to seek ways to contribute positively to society.

Important Symbols

The Land

The land in "Cry, the Beloved Country" symbolizes both beauty and suffering. Paton often contrasts the lush, fertile landscapes of Ndotsheni with the harsh realities of Johannesburg. The land serves as a reminder of the deep-rooted connection between the people and their homeland, as well as the consequences of its exploitation.

The Church

The church represents hope and moral guidance in the novel. Kumalo's role as a pastor underscores the importance of faith and community support. The church is a place of refuge for those seeking solace from the struggles of life, and it highlights the need for spiritual and moral leadership in a fractured society.

Study Questions and Answers

1. What is the significance of the title "Cry, the Beloved Country"?

- The title reflects the deep sorrow and longing for a just and harmonious South Africa. It encapsulates the novel's themes of loss, injustice, and the hope for a better future.

2. How does Paton portray the relationship between fathers and sons?

- The novel explores various father-son relationships, particularly between Stephen and Absalom, and James and Arthur. These relationships are characterized by misunderstanding and a quest for connection, ultimately emphasizing the need for communication and empathy.

3. What role does setting play in the novel?

- The contrasting settings of Ndotsheni and Johannesburg highlight the disparities in lifestyle and values. Ndotsheni represents tradition and community, while Johannesburg embodies urban chaos and moral decay.

4. How does the theme of forgiveness manifest in the novel?

- Forgiveness is a recurring theme, particularly in the relationships between Kumalo and Absalom, as well as between Kumalo and Jarvis. The novel suggests that forgiveness is essential for healing and moving forward in a divided society.

5. What is the impact of urbanization depicted in the story?

- Urbanization is shown to have devastating effects on families and communities, leading to disconnection and loss of cultural identity. The novel critiques the societal changes that contribute to moral decline and despair.

Conclusion

"Cry, the Beloved Country" is a powerful narrative that addresses the complex issues of race, family, and hope in the face of adversity. Alan Paton's work remains relevant today as it challenges readers to reflect on the importance of empathy, understanding, and justice in a divided world. This study guide aims to assist in the analysis and comprehension of the novel, fostering meaningful discussions about its themes and characters. By engaging with the material thoughtfully, readers can appreciate the depth of Paton's insights into the human condition and the societal challenges of his time.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'Cry, the Beloved Country'?

The main themes include racial injustice, social disintegration, and the importance of community and forgiveness.

How does Alan Paton use symbolism in 'Cry, the Beloved Country'?

Paton employs symbolism extensively, such as the land representing both beauty and suffering, and the character of Stephen Kumalo symbolizing hope and redemption.

What is the significance of the character Stephen Kumalo in the novel?

Stephen Kumalo serves as a representation of the struggle for personal and social redemption, embodying the moral and spiritual journey amidst the turmoil of apartheid.

How does the setting impact the narrative of 'Cry, the Beloved Country'?

The setting in South Africa highlights the stark contrasts between rural and urban life, and the deep-seated racial tensions that shape the characters' lives and experiences.

What role does the concept of forgiveness play in 'Cry, the Beloved Country'?

Forgiveness is a central motif, illustrating the potential for healing and reconciliation in a divided society, as characters confront their pain and seek to understand one another.

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