

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"?

4. "There are voices crying what must be done, a hundred, a thousand voices." Chapter 12 gives several examples of what these "voices" say. What do they say?
5. What news of Absalom does Mrs. Ndlela give Msimangu?
6. To what decisions did Kumalo come in Ezenzeleni?
7. Where does Kumalo finally meet Absalom? Describe their meeting.
8. How does John decide to handle his son's defense?

Chapters 15 - 17

1. What is Father Vincent's gift to Kumalo?
2. Why does Father Vincent say sorrow is better than fear?
3. In what way was Kumalo cruel to the girl?
4. To what arrangement do Kumalo and the girl finally agree?
5. Describe the content of the conversation between Mrs. Lithebe and the girl.
6. Identify Mr. Carmichael.

Chapters 18 - 21

1. Book II begins with the same sentence as Book I did. Compare and contrast the beginning passages of Book I and Book II.
2. Contrast Jarvis' arrival in Johannesburg with Kumalo's.
3. What was ironic about Arthur Jarvis' death?
4. Why did Arthur Jarvis read about Lincoln?
5. What were Arthur Jarvis' last written words?

Chapters 22 - 25

1. Explain the difference between "justice" and "just."
2. "No second Johannesburg is needed upon the earth. One is enough." Explain why not.
3. Why was Jarvis "sick at heart" as he read some of his son's papers?
4. Why did Kumalo appear to be ill when Jarvis opened the door?
5. What was Jarvis' reaction after Kumalo identified himself as the father of his son's murderer?

Chapters 26 - 29

1. "There is no applause in prison." Explain the inference regarding John Kumalo.
2. "Nothing is ever quiet except for fools." Explain.
3. Why was the headline about another housebreak-murder "bad news"?
4. What is the verdict for Absalom?
5. Why did Absalom marry the girl even though he was sentenced to death?
6. Explain the significance of the name of Peter for Absalom's son.
7. Why did Gertrude leave?

Chapters 30 - 32

1. Describe Kumalo's return home.
2. Why did Kumalo visit the chief? What did he want?
3. Who was the small boy who rode to Kumalo's place?
4. What is the significance of the boy's trying to learn Zulu?
5. What was Mr. Jarvis' first gift to the natives of Kumalo's village?

Chapters 33 - 36

1. What was Jarvis' second gift to the natives?
2. Who died?
3. What did Kumalo do for Jarvis? What did the natives do for him?
4. When the Bishop came for the confirmations, what did he suggest for Kumalo?
5. Why was Kumalo not transferred?
6. What happened to Absalom?
7. Why did Kumalo go to the mountain?
8. Explain the significance of the fact that the book ends at sunrise.
9. The last paragraph of the novel speaks of "the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear." Explain the relevance of this phrase