

My Children! My Africa!

TITLE:

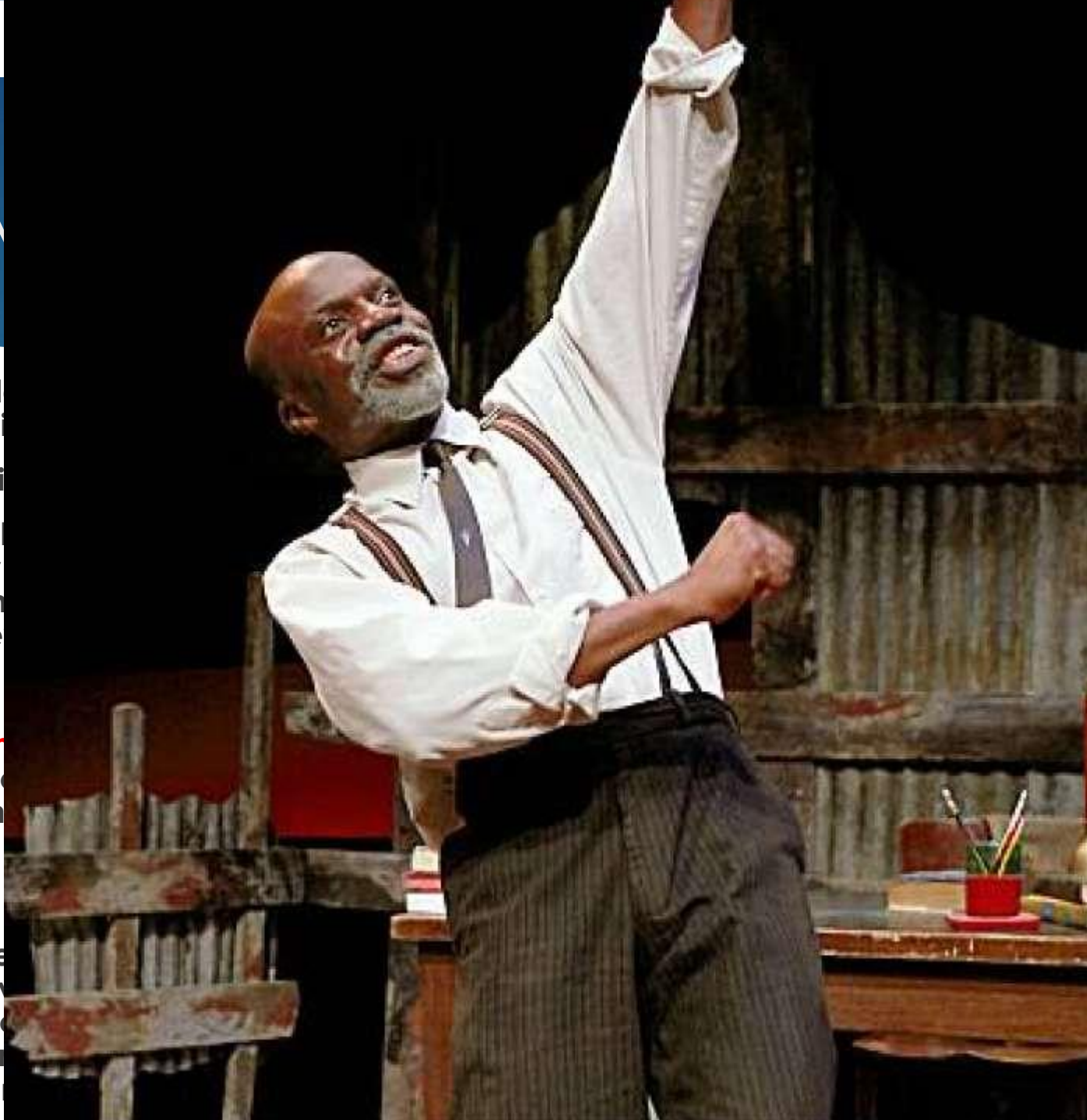
- THE USE OF **EXCLAMATION MARKS** IN THE TITLE ILLUSTRATE THE AUTHOR'S SENSE OF URGENCY (A PASSIONATE EXPRESSION OF GRIEF AND SORROW). IT SHOWS EMOTIONS OF MR MYALATYA (**MR M**) ABOUT THE WASTED FUTURE OF THE CHILDREN IN THE WHOLE OF AFRICA. IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF GRIEF AND SORROW ESPECIALLY AT THE WASTE OF HUMAN LIFE AND POTENTIAL.
- HIS **CHILDREN ARE HIS STUDENTS.**
- THE SETTING OF THE PLAY IS IN **SOUTH AFRICA**

BACKGROUND

- ▶ **1984-1990** was a period when freedom fighters such as **Nelson Mandela and other leaders were still in prison**. However, there were ongoing negotiations to end apartheid. The resistance to apartheid was starting to become violent.
- ▶ **Township schools** were at the forefront of **violent** resistance.
- ▶ **Apartheid was about to end** in South Africa and Fugard attacks the ANC's decision to boycott schools.
- ▶ The story of the friendship of two people - Isabel Dyson, a girl of 18 years from a white school (Camdeboo Girls High) and Thami Mbikwana, a 19 year old black boy from a black school (Zolile High). The third main character is Mr M, a teacher from Zolile High school.
- ▶ The meeting between Isabel and Thami occurs when Mr M organizes an inter-school debate between Camdeboo and Zolile high schools. It is through Thami and Isabel's relation that we come to understand the cruelty of apartheid and the violence of the struggle against Apartheid.
- ▶ The play is also about Mr M's ideology that education cannot be sacrificed for political gains. He believes education is the most powerful tool in the struggle for freedom and equality.
- ▶ By the end of the play, Mr M is killed, Thami goes into exile and Isabel makes a promise to the spirit of Mr. M that she will make her life useful.

Mr M A

- ▶ Mr M is a **57 year- old** black man who lives in **Mbopa's** house. He decides to start a school in his house. Important aspects to his character are:
 - ▶ He loves education: He wants to keep his students at their desks. He regularly punishes them for being ambitious, respected and independent. He believes in the power of words.
 - ▶ Mr M is also a **Confucian** - he believes in the philosophy of Confucius which he builds his classroom motto. Confucius emphasises the power of words.
 - ▶ Mr M is **authoritative** - he is very strict and authoritarian, which is ironic because he believes in respect for authority. He says respect the bell and calling out to run away from the classroom.



blackroom of reverend's
ringing a school trip (p 94-95).

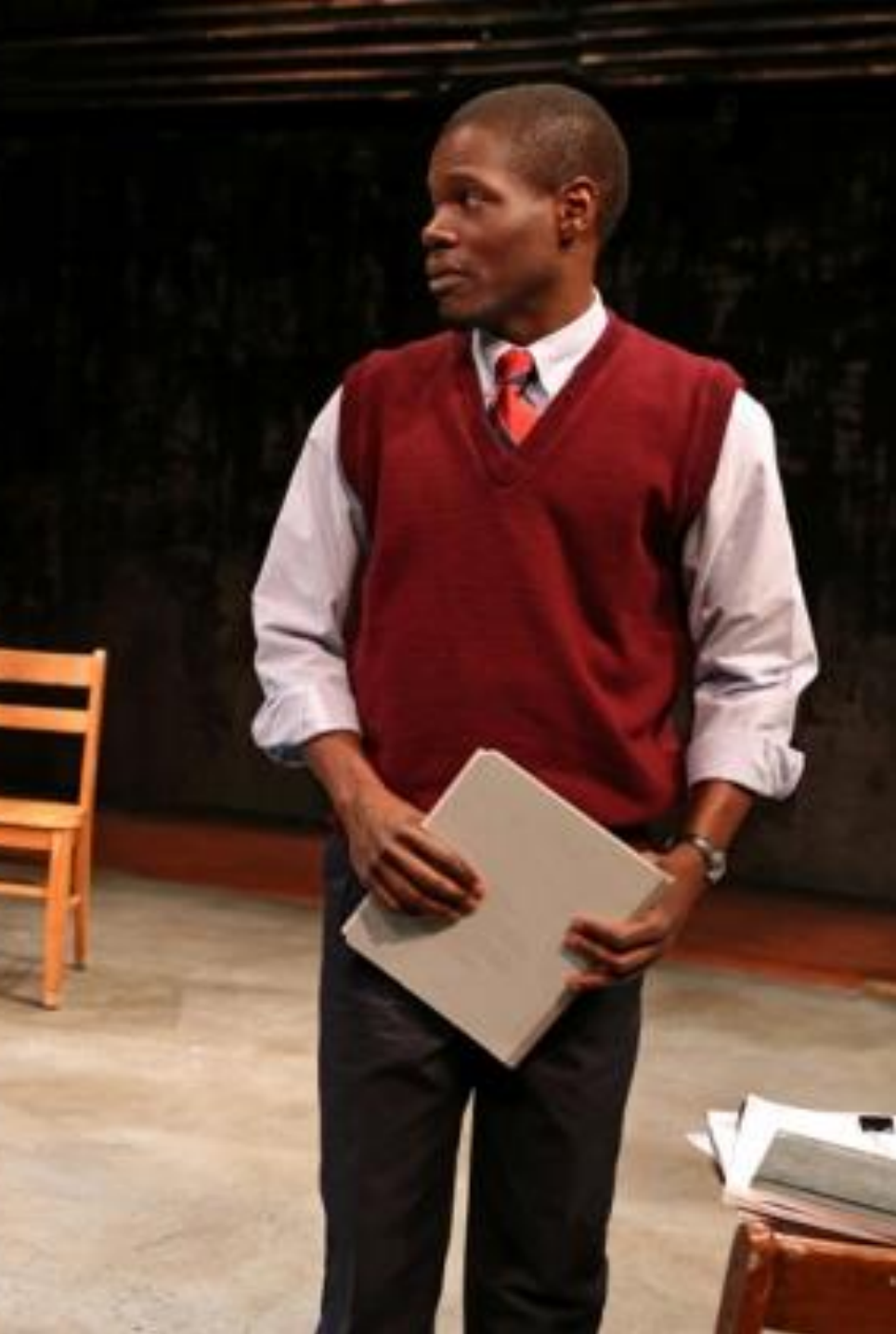
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who attends **Zolile High** School. He has been a student of her, **Lillian** Mbikwana, is a **domestic** worker and his father, **ay** environment. His parents live in **Cape Town** while he lives **admother and a married sister**. He shows extraordinary nt.

to be aware of are:

and he **speaks his mind**. As the story progresses he is defiant. Mr. M has old-fashioned ideas and has no authority over him. 'all out rebellion' **against apartheid** and an immediate **thinks is right**.

ural leader. He is naturally respectful of authority, but is also ten to Mr. M's ideas about slowly defeating Apartheid suffering. He does not believe that education can free the system of apartheid.

artheid in South Africa, Thami contemplates and debates

**Remember these
characters are just
mentioned in the
play and are never
on stage!**

- ▶ **Rev Mbopa** is a **pastor** at the Anglican Church of Saint Mark. He owns a house where Mr. M rents a backroom.
- ▶ **Miss Brockway** is the school **principal of G**. She wants to go compete in Brakwater Location with the school's debating team.
- ▶ **Renee Vermas** and her husband's debating team that goes with Is.
- ▶ **Mr and Mrs Dys** own a pharmacy.
- ▶ **Lucille D**
- ▶ **Samuel**
- ▶ **Auntie** is a domestic helper or normally a domestic helper or city. She
- ▶ **Mr David** is called "Davie". He is a shareholder in the exciting business to call him "Oom
- ▶ **Mr Pienaar** is a shareholder in the exciting business.
- ▶ **Mrs Magada** is a teacher.
- ▶ **Sipho Fondini** is a standard 6 learner at Zolile. During the boycott he writes "**Liberation first, education later**" and asks Mr. M if the spelling is correct.
- ▶ **Captain Lategan** is a **police officer** who receives the names of the political action committee from Mr M.

Fugard explores the devastating impact of apartheid on human potential

• ISABEL	• THAMI
• Hugely intelligent	• Hugely intelligent
• Lives with her parents • Has a domestic and a gardener.	• Parents are working in Cape Town. Lives with grandmother and sister.
• Dad owns a chemist. Mom works there.	• Dad works for the railways • Mom - domestic worker
• Lives in the centre of town	• Brakwater location.
• Clear about her future - writer; journalism; Rhodes	• Not sure

COMPARISON

BRAKWATER

CAMDEBOO

- ▶ It is an Afrikaans word which means **brackish water**. Leaves a bitter taste in the mouth
- ▶ It also refers to **water that has high-salt content** thus has a **bad taste**. This water cannot be used for crops and human consumption.

Figurative meaning:

- ▶ **The place is a terrible mess not conducive for healthy human dwelling. It is not nurturing or giving life to the people. It is an eye-sore, a place with no electricity, small pondoks to live in.**

- ▶ Khoena (Khoi) word for **green hollow**.

Pleasant connotation, beautiful place to live in with restored house where only the white people live.

METAPHOR

Mr M compares his emotions and his heart to a “ZOO OF WILD ANIMALS” He feels intense emotions. He is the keeper of the Zoo and it frightens him.



HOPE



DESPAIR



HATE

HOPE is the most intense emotion.

It is let loose and fed and kept alive

By Mr M's learners.

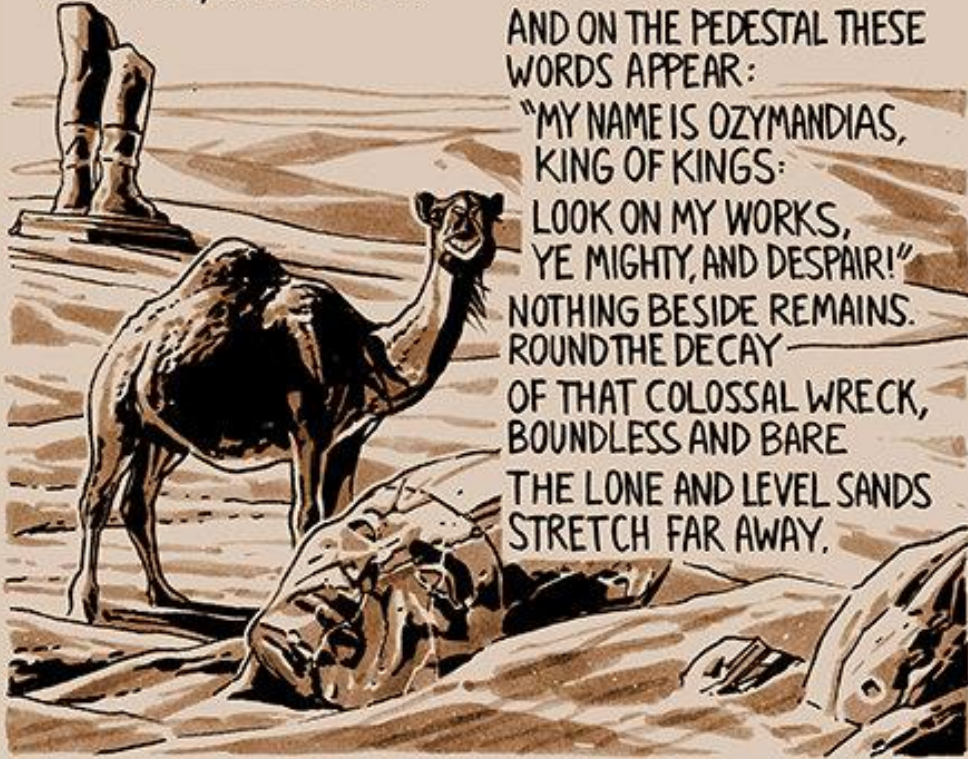
'OZYMANDIAS'

I MET A TRAVELLER FROM AN
ANTIQUE LAND
WHO SAID: TWO VAST AND
TRUNKLESS LEGS OF STONE
STAND IN THE DESERT, NEAR
THEM, ON THE SAND
HALF SUNK, A SHATTERED
VISAGE LIES, WHOSE FROWN

AND WRINKLED LIP, AND
SNEER OF COLD COMMAND,
TELL THAT ITS SCULPTOR
WELL THOSE PASSIONS READ
WHICH YET SURVIVE, STAMPED
ON THESE LIFELESS THINGS,
THE HAND THAT MOCKED THEM
AND THE HEART THAT FED:
AND ON THE PEDESTAL THESE
WORDS APPEAR:

"MY NAME IS OZYMANDIAS,
KING OF KINGS:
LOOK ON MY WORKS,
YE MIGHTY, AND DESPAIR!"
NOTHING BESIDE REMAINS.
ROUND THE DECAY
OF THAT COLOSSAL WRECK,
BOUNDLESS AND BARE
THE LONE AND LEVEL SANDS
STRETCH FAR AWAY.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



- ▶ **Thami's** response to the image of the mighty king's statue lying forgotten and half-buried in the sand awakens within him the belief that **it is possible to topple the leaders of the apartheid regime as well. (the statues can be toppled)**
- ▶ **Mr M's** response is that they must **not** **vandalise** and must put up statues of their own.
- ▶ Thami says that statues of people like **Nelson Mandela** will be broken down very fast.
IRONY
- ▶ **Ironic because we know that Nelson Mandela became a hero and statues were erected in his honour , but during this time he was still in jail.**

Metaphor

“Armoured cars like dung beetles
Looking for sh@t to eat.”

They are like giant inhuman
insects eating the children.
Calling children ‘sh@t’ (feces) shows that
the people in the armoured cars
(police/apartheid government) have
a very low regard for them.

IRONY

Sipho asking Mr M if the spelling of his graffiti on the wall is right.

Sipho wrote that liberation comes before education, **BUT** by asking Mr M if he spelled correctly he is placing education first (the opposite of what he is writing)

SARCASM

“Oh, ja, I can just see my Mom and Dad cracking up at that one. “ Her parents wouldn’t find it funny or take the issue about riots lightly if she was really involved in a township riot because it would be very dangerous. They come from a very conservative background. She was just adding to Thami’s joke about the police acting against anyone using the word

IRONY

Thami's parents thought they could keep him safe from the political turmoil in the country by sending him to a rural area, but it isn't really safe there in the platteland, because they will also protest there, (becomes involved with the 'troubles'), it is dangerous.

Mr M holds the dictionary in the one hand and the stone in the other. Thami orders Mr M to stop ringing the bell...

Mr M gave Thami his dictionary but Thami refused to take it. WHY??

Dictionary vs Stone

To Thami the dictionary represented everything Mr M stood for and Thami didn't want to accept that.

The dictionary symbolises words, logic negotiation, debate and reason while the stone symbolises action, violence, destruction and force.



Symbolism

THE SCHOOL BELL

The bell symbolises authority and order. It symbolises education and this is what Mr M lived for.

Mr M rang the school bell even when the comrades were at school to kill him. It also shows his defiance to the boycotts and how he stood for what he believed in up to the end. He was willing to die for it.

“Matchboxes”

Literal Meaning

“Matchboxes” refers to the size of the classroom at Zolile High Scholl as well as the size of the Mr M’s room at Rev Mbopa’s house. These rooms are small.

Figurative Meaning

“Matchboxes” symbolise the suffering and the misery black people are subjected to.

It symbolises poverty, oppression, racial segregation and limited opportunities for black people.

AMANDLA!:



The lessons they want to learn now is about their own history and heroes. Bold capital letters and exclamation mark show it is being **shouted**. They are not going to be too scared to vent their anger anymore - whispering - they are prepared to fight for their beliefs. Revolutionary cry - **POWER**. The audience realizes Thami is going to join the school boycott.

Mr. M: ...It's swimming
around everywhere, Isabel.
In the classroom, out on
the streets.



Metaphor/Personification - trouble is like
a swimmer, swimming around
everywhere, it emphasises that trouble is
everywhere in the townships because of
the political conditions at the time.

Metaphor: compares personal discipline to a donkey and its cart THAT does not have a harness.

The harness ensures the donkey is under control. Personal discipline is about control. You can have a good donkey and cart but if you have no harness, you have no control. You can have no discipline if you have no control.

THEMES

JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE

- This play is about racial injustice and how the characters respond to it.
- Mr M believes that words allow for peaceful negotiations whereas violence leads to destruction and heartbreak. He says, “Be careful, Thami...don’t scorn words, they are sacred! Magical!... Man thinks, and he thinks with words....”.(Act 2: Scene 1).
- As a strong believer in the Confucian ideology he thinks with words, and believes that justice can be achieved through words. As the events in the play unfolds we see a contradiction of this theory, that words by themselves are not enough; and the same goes for the fact that action that is not backed by words leads to violence and injustice.
- In Mr M’s view, justice is keeping up with the law. The students have a different view to his and their argument is that the apartheid law is in itself unjust.

GENERATIONAL GAP /CONFLICT/ CLASH

- This refers to the differences between generations - from one generation to the next. The conflict occurs when the younger people do not see issues the same way as the older people.
- Thami is frustrated by the fact that Mr M does not consult with him with regard to his own ideas and goals. Thami believes that Mr M's ideas are old fashioned.
- Mr M believes that dialogue is the solution while Thami thinks violence and boycott is the best way to fight apartheid and Bantu education.

LIVING A MEANINGFUL LIFE

- Mr M expresses frustration that Apartheid and the Bantu education system were designed so that black children did not have the same opportunities that white children had. He calls this ‘wasted potential’ and ‘wasted lives’. He is passionate about education and wants Thami to further his studies at a university so that Thami will have a meaningful life and will be a good, educated leader.
- As a white teenager during Apartheid, Isabel has spent most of her life in the company of white people. The debate at Zolile high school is a totally new experience for her as she learns to interact with people of colour who are not shaken by her presence. On the other hand she is very excited about the experience and is ready to learn more. This gives her a sense of meaning and purpose. She is also the one that promises Mr M that she will stand up and not waste her life “ the future is ours Mr M”.

FRIENDSHIP

In the play Thami and Isabel become friends and their friendship grows as the story progresses. It is an important friendship because Isabel is a white female and Thami is a black male. In Act 1 Scene 5, Isabel talks about the importance of being open to each other as friends.

LOYALTY

- Mr M is loyal to Thami-wants him to have a future, his favourite student
- Thami is not loyal to Mr M, feel that Mr M has old fashioned ideas, but in the end shows loyalty when he goes to warn Mr M of the mob that wants to kill him.
- Mr M and Isabel is loyal to each other as they support the idea of the quiz to help Thami and she makes a promise to Mr M that she will not waste her life.
- Isabel is loyal to Thami and their friendship and doesn't want to lose it but Thami is not loyal and quits the competition.

TRADITIONS VERSUS CULTURE

African traditions - behaving in accordance with one's ethnic or tribal culture. Isabel believes we cannot be chained to the past. Thami believes that women know their place. Mr. M argues for traditional values of trust and respecting your elders the choice to follow western vs traditional African culture or combining the two sets of values.

GENDER INEQUALITY

Differences between men and women (look at the topic of the debate) traditional cultures: women seen as subservient (lower) to men. The debate offers both Thami and Isabel the opportunity to be equals. Both see that gender differences can be an asset not a liability.

EDUCATION

“Education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world” (Dr. Nelson Mandela) Words and dialogue are more powerful than throwing stones or resorting to violence.

Debate opens people's minds.

Negative effects of bantu Education / Unequal Education

- The youth feels it is necessary to boycott classes in order to bring an end to apartheid.
- Black people are given inferior, poor education.
- Other races' education is better than black people's education. The bantu education prepares them for a life of servitude in the outside world. (You can work as a domestic etc , but you can't go to University)
- White schools, such as Camdeboo, are well-resourced while black schools, such as Zolile High, have poor infrastructure (bleak, depressing).

PRIVILEGE VERSUS POVERTY INEQUALITY/APARTHEID

South Africa has huge difference between wealthy vs poor. Very visible when looking at education given to each racial group and the township and the look of the town. Her breakfast being made by Auntie shows her privilege.

The difference in living conditions/education/rights between blacks and whites in South Africa during Apartheid.

ORDER VS DISORDER

- Mr M reading the definition of a debate from the dictionary shows order.
- The bell that Mr M rings to restore calm amongst the Zolile High learners, shows order.
- The unruly learners and Thami and Isabel interrupting each other are symbols of disorder.
- The students starting the riot to stand against bantu education is a symbol to disorder.

HOW TO ANSWER LEVEL 5 QUESTIONS.

Remember to refer to the TEXT!!

Consider the play as a whole. Thami is responsible for Mr M's death. Do you agree? Discuss.

- Agree.
If Thami had noted Mr M's advice, Mr M's attitude would not have been so reactionary / intolerant towards the school boycotts. Mr M was treated in an unreasonable way by the comrades in the absence of sufficient evidence. Thami shares the same views as the comrades and does not speak openly about it to Mr M. Thami knew what the plans were but he does not warn Mr M until it is too late.
- Disagree. The system of Apartheid was responsible for the tragedy of the killing of Mr M. Mr M had a dogmatic attitude and so brought about his own downfall. He had given the names of certain members belonging to the action committee, to the police. These members were arrested and detained, because of Mr M's treacherous action. The comrades, with their mob mentality, were responsible.

Do you agree with Mr M that pulling down statues is not the solution to freedom in THIS drama?

YES He believes the Comrades should be orderly and think rationally – to destroy statues is irrational and will not bring them freedom.

- * Mr M rejects violence because it leads to suffering and pain (children in the police vehicle later).
- * He feels debating and discussing can bring about change without people dying (Later he reads the register and doesn't know how many have died).
- * He believes education is the key to success (Later he goes to school even during the boycotts).

OR NO

- * Words alone are not enough, drastic action is sometimes needed (like the school boycotts.)
- * People run out of patience and feel violence is the only way (riots in Brakwater).
- * The political system is unfair and people take the law into their own hands (they destroy Zolile High School).

Do you think Mr. M is fair when he later asks Thami to convince the 'comrades' to come back to school? Discuss your view.

Yes. Mr. M is being unfair and unreasonable. He knows that Thami is engaged in a political struggle and is respected by the people as a leader and comrade, but deliberately asks him to act against his own comrades by asking them to come back to school. School was regarded as a terrain of political struggle, and school boycotts advanced the struggle effort; asking learners to come back to school will be counter-productive.

No. Mr. M is fair in his request. Thami, as an influential activist and leader, can convince learners to come back to school. He is as intelligent student and commands a lot of respect from his peers and could make them see the value of engaging in a non-violent political struggle while pursuing their academic goals.