

kagiso lesego  
**MOLOPE**

**DANCING**

**IN  
THE  
DUST**

**IBBY  
Honours  
List  
2006**

**STUDY NOTES**

Keren Hoy

**OXFORD** literature for southern africa

# Contents

Introduction.....	2
Contents test.....	12
Notes and short questions for each chapter .....	13
Essay questions.....	26
Suggested answers .....	27

# STUDY NOTES

Keren Hoy

**OXFORD**

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Southern Africa

## **Dancing in the Dust Study Notes**

ISBN 978 0 19 598479 8

© Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd 2008

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

Database right Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd (maker)

First published 2008

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd, or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate designated reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd, at the address above.

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Assistant Commissioning Editor: Helga Schaberg

Editor: Kathleen Sutton

Designer: Judith Swigelaar

Set in Minion pro 10pt on 12pt by Anthea Steyn @ RHT Desktop Publishing

## **Further reference**

All dictionary definitions are from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, London: 1976)

*Understanding Apartheid*, copyright Apartheid Museum (Oxford University Press, Cape Town: 2006)

[www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za)

[www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)

# INTRODUCTION

---

## **To the learner**

This book is about a South African girl and her experiences as she grows into adulthood or “comes of age”. Like all teenagers, she has hopes and dreams; she asks questions about her identity; she finds that friendships change; she faces fears; she changes her ideas about some issues. However, she does all this in the South Africa of the 1980s. This context is important for the author, and one of her aims for this novel was “to explain where the children of that time were coming from” (tonight.co.za). Another of the author’s aims in writing this novel was to write the kind of story she would have liked to read when she was growing up, “about being young, African and female” (ukzn.co.za, Time of the Writer 2006). Young women should find themselves affirmed and strengthened by this young woman’s story. Young men should also be able to identify with Tihelo’s journey into adulthood.

## **To the teacher**

*Dancing in the Dust* has strong links to all the Assessment Standards (ASs) for Learning Outcome 2: Reading and Viewing (*National Curriculum Statement* 2003). This allows for a wide choice of ways in which to approach the novel in the classroom. The ASs that are directly addressed in this guide are listed below.

## **LO2 Reading and Viewing**

*The learner is able to read and view for understanding and to evaluate critically and respond to a wide range of texts.*

AS1: demonstrate various reading and viewing strategies for comprehension and appreciation:

- 1.1 ask questions to make predictions;
- 1.5 summarise main and supporting ideas in point form, sentences and paragraphs.

AS2: evaluate the meaning of a wide range of written, visual, audio and audio-visual texts:

- 2.3 distinguish between fact and opinion, and motivate own response;
- 2.5 explain the writer’s/narrator’s/character’s viewpoint and give supporting evidence from the text;
- 2.6 recognise the socio-political and cultural background of texts;
- 2.8 explain the writer’s conclusions and compare with own;
- 2.10 give and motivate personal responses to texts.

Here is a suggested work schedule that you can adapt to suit your needs. (Lessons need not follow day by day.)

Time	Activity	Resources/tasks
School holidays	Learners read novel	Copies of novel and Study Notes (SN)
Lesson 1	Discuss novel: look at cover and blurb, ask learners' opinions of story. Set test date. If lesson 3 will be a <i>formal</i> discussion, learners should prepare.	
Lesson 2	Contents test: 30 min. Begin peer-marking if time.	Copies of test from SN
Lesson 3	Peer-mark test; read and discuss opening pages	Formal/informal oral
Lessons 4, 5	Note: The book is short enough to read most of it aloud in class. Learners usually prefer to read several short chapters at once, then discuss them – this gives continuity. Encourage learners to make their own notes and underline key words or quotes in pencil in the novel and the SN. Read Ch. 1 and 2 aloud in class (teacher and/or learners), then read the chapters in this guide and answer/discuss the questions.	Diary entry
Lessons 6, 7	Read Ch. 3; discussion and notes	
Lessons 8, 9	Read Ch. 4 and 5; discussion and notes; begin Ch. 6	Class discussion
Lessons 10, 11	Read Ch. 6 and 7; discussion and notes Note: From here on one can skip parts of the chapters. This depends on time, and the abilities of the learners. The teacher should summarise the parts that are skipped, while reading.	
Lesson 12	Read Ch. 8; discussion and notes	
Lessons 13, 14	Read Ch. 9 (long chapter – omit parts); discussion and notes	
Lesson 15	Read Ch. 10 – focus on the key paragraphs (see notes)	
Lesson 16	Summarise Ch. 11 to 13 using notes (learners should read the full chapters at home)	
Lesson 17	Read Ch. 14; discussion and notes	
Lesson 18	Summarise Ch. 15 and 16 using notes	
Lesson 19	Read Ch. 17; discussion and notes	
Lesson 20	Read parts of Ch. 18; discussion and notes	
Lessons 21, 22	Read parts of Ch. 19; discussion and notes	Formal oral assessment: response to text (class conversation); essays

## The author

Kagiso Lesego Molope was born in Atteridgeville, South Africa, in 1976, and grew up in Mabopane, Pretoria. She is currently writing full time. She speaks five languages, including French, and has worked in Canada as a Human Rights Project Officer. She is also a counsellor and documentary film-maker.

*Dancing in the Dust* is her first novel and it was chosen as the South African English representative for the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honours List. Her second novel, *The Mending Season*, set in South Africa in the early 1990s, was published in August 2005.

## Political context

This section aims to sketch briefly the socio-political background to events of the 1980s, mostly by referring to events actually mentioned in the novel. This background is by no means comprehensive, and learners may find it necessary to do further research. The website [sahistory.org.za](http://sahistory.org.za) is a good starting point to find out more.

Learners need only *recognise* that the text has a specific background – the facts given here should not form a significant part of formal assessment.

The author herself provides most of the necessary socio-political background and context for events in the novel. This background can be divided roughly into two sections: general living conditions and specific political events.

Note: The author uses the terms Black, White and Coloured to refer to different racial groups. This guide has used the same terms.

## General living conditions

Apartheid – separation of people according to race – has affected every area of life in South Africa. First legislated (put into law) in 1910, it was entrenched by the Nationalist government in the late 1940s and 1950s. The laws met continued resistance in various forms within the country and they drew international protest. The apartheid laws were finally repealed (cancelled) in the 1990s and the system of “one person, one vote” was introduced. But as the proverb says, “Old sins cast long shadows”, and all South Africans today are still affected in some way by the history of apartheid.

From as early as 1910, Black people were not allowed to own land in urban (city) areas. They could live only in designated areas (areas set aside by the government) – as Tihelo tells us, she lived in a Sesotho-speaking township (p. 21).

These “townships” or “locations” (*lekeishene*, p. 20) were on the edges of cities, while rural areas were known as reserves and later “homelands”. The government forcibly removed people to these new areas, beginning in the early 20th century (1900s) and continuing well into the 1980s. We hear the broom-seller’s story of the storyteller who was moved to make way for the ironically-named White

area of Triomf or “Triumph” (p. 50 onwards). The area was originally called Sophiatown, and much has been written and sung about it (*Understanding Apartheid*, p. 47).

Not only were people forcibly moved, they were also given inferior homes at unaffordably high rents (R40 of their R100 income). Tihelo refers to the different sizes of the houses – “four-rooms” and “six-rooms” – and the fact that they did not have baths, unless the tenants installed them themselves (p. 19). In addition, people had to make long journeys to reach their workplaces in the White areas or even to reach hospital “an hour away” (p. 99). Tihelo tells us how, for most of her childhood, she saw her mother only before dawn and after dark (p. 179), because she not only worked long hours but had to spend time travelling to work by train.

Under apartheid, inequality was legally enforced and it affected every area of life, from housing to working conditions. Tihelo’s mother Kgomotso earns a living as a domestic worker in a White area, where she is not even known by her Sotho name but by an “easier”, English one (pp. 57–58). Tihelo relates how her mother gets beaten and detained in a routine police check, where police closed off the station to check for tickets and “passes” (pp. 62–63). These passes had to be carried by all Black men and, from the 1950s, women as well. These documents showed they had a job and so could travel into White areas and people were often detained and roughly treated if found without their passes. “They were all illegal immigrants in their own country” (p. 63).

In addition to residential areas being separate, there was separation in public places such as beaches, post offices and restaurants. Thato tells of a holiday in Durban where she is ordered off a section of beach because it is for “Whites only” (p. 26). Tihelo, too, has an early childhood memory of segregation, where she cannot eat in a restaurant in town on her fifth birthday (pp. 60–61). Along with separate amenities came separate schools for different racial categories and a completely separate education policy for Black South Africans. They were seen as fit only for manual labour, and an inferior education system, with far less money per child, was put in place in 1953. Twenty years later, the same inferior education was made even less effective by the decision to teach half the subjects in Afrikaans and half in English. This was only to be enforced in Black schools – there was only one language of instruction in the others. This language policy was a direct cause of a specific day of protest – 16 June 1976 – that came to be known as the Soweto Uprising (*Understanding Apartheid*, p. 47).

## **Specific political events**

### **Sharpeville, 21 March 1960**

When political organisations led peaceful protests against the pass laws, police responded with a violence that left many dead and caused an outcry both internally in South Africa and abroad. A direct result of this day of protest was the banning of the ANC and PAC. Tihelo mentions that the adults around her in the 1980s “were still feeling shock at, and had not recovered from, the 1976 massacre of students or the Sharpville bloodbath of 1960” (p. 146).

### **Soweto Uprising, 16 June 1976**

The 1976 massacre that Tihelo refers to was the reaction of students, teachers and parents to the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools. More broadly, the protests were also about the whole inferior education system. What began as one day of marches grew into an uprising throughout the country and throughout the year, a widespread protest against all areas of life under apartheid such as the pass laws, overcrowding and other inequalities and repression. In the novel, 16 June 1976 forms one of Tihelo’s earliest memories (p. 105).

### **Steve Biko**

Steve Biko was the founder of the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) and of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. On 12 September 1977 he died in detention. News of his death is one of Tihelo’s memories (pp. 95–96) and SASO is the group for which she writes posters and pamphlets and which eventually organises the fatal march.

### **Vaal triangle, 1984**

In 1984 protests and mass stay-aways began in the Vaal triangle area and spread countrywide. These events are less well known, but they are still commemorated each year. The novel is set amid these events – it was a time of boycotts of White business (p. 36), rent boycotts, school boycotts, and of violent suppression by the police and armed forces. Unable to completely suppress the protests, the government declared a partial state of emergency in 1985 and a full, countrywide state of emergency between June 1986 and 1990.

### **State of emergency**

“The streets were deserted because a state of emergency had been declared. Up and down the street, hippos . . . moved at a snail’s pace. There were people in them but you could only see their dark blue helmets and the barrels of large guns sticking out the windows” (p. 106). In this description we see police in large armoured vehicles with protective clothing and guns. In many places the army was in control.

“We had to make sure that none of us were on the streets after the sun set, and our lights had to be out by nine o’clock at night. The government intended to keep an eye on us, and we had to be contained in places where they could do that to the best of their ability. While the police had the government’s permission to violate our rights daily, any disobedience of their commands could lead to detention and a million other things that we would not wish on our worst enemies. All of us, no matter how old, were living like children under the watchful eye of a vengeful adult” (p. 112). Meetings or gatherings were strictly controlled in all areas, White or Black. Many were detained and tortured, like Tihelo; many died either in detention or elsewhere at the hands of the police and army. “We trod lightly on our own streets and spoke in hushed tones in our own homes. Nothing felt safe ...” (p. 125).

## Plot

The back cover of the book carries a quote, a blurb, and part of two reviews of the book. Together these provide a comprehensive summary of the story. Key events will be discussed chapter by chapter.

	EXPOSITION	CONFLICT: COMPLICATION	CLIMAX	DENOUEMENT
1–5	Background; rising tensions			
6	Black Christmas; Tihelo joins SASO			
7–8		Kgomotso’s arrest and depression		
9		Keitumetse’s pregnancy; continued boycotts		
10			Keitumetse’s abortion	
11–13	State of emergency; the work at SASO			
14			Protest march	
15–17	Escaping after the march; parents’ march			
18		The worst happens: all three are arrested and detained	The worst happens: all three are arrested and detained	
19				Tihelo’s real mother

## Characters

### Tihelo

(Pronounced Tee-**he**-lo; means “delayed”)

The story is told by Tihelo – she is the first-person narrator and the main protagonist (character). The story is all about her, so we will discuss her in each chapter.

### Tshepo and Mohau

(Pronounced Tse-po; means “hope”; pronounced Mo-**ha**-wu; means “mercy”)

Tshepo is the same age as Tihelo and he and his older brother Mohau are her neighbours.

In Chapter 1 Tihelo tells how the two brothers come home with milk from a hijacked truck, and in Chapter 3 Tshepo tells with pride how he and Mohau helped burn down the post office using petrol bombs. Tihelo is not too impressed with Tshepo’s “my brother the hero stories” as she calls them and she is distressed at Tshepo’s loss of innocence. However, her opinion of Mohau gradually changes during the novel, as she comes to understand what motivates the two brothers. Tshepo’s drawing involves him in making posters for SASO.

It is through the character of Tshepo that Tihelo first discusses the question of loss of innocence. Mohau is also important to the story, as a student leader and as Keitumetse’s boyfriend. Early on in the story Mohau is detained, released and goes into hiding (pp. 43–46); then both brothers go into hiding (p. 110, p. 122). They are constantly referred to, but remain out of the country, their whereabouts unknown.

### Keitumetse

(Pronounced Kee-**too**-met-se; means “I am happy”)

Tihelo has no time for the teenage Keitumetse, who has become aware of her appearance and cares more about looking in the mirror than playing with her younger sister (p. 22).

Keitumetse’s pregnancy allows the author, through Tihelo, to discuss issues of gender and empowerment, sex education or lack of it, and the roles of men and women in society. As Tihelo tries to find ways to help her sister, the issue of abortion is also addressed in a matter-of-fact, undetailed way. Keitumetse changes during the novel from being a fairly demanding person who easily asks for comfort and help, to someone more mature (p. 118).

## **Kgomotso**

(Pronounced **Kgho**-mot-so; means “comforter”)

One of the many strong women characters, Tihelo’s mother Kgomotso – or simply “Mama” – is shown as a strong individual who does her best for her children. Chapter 2 introduces her as a tall woman who doesn’t waste time on her looks. Tihelo describes how she watches her mother, hoping she will one day look just like her (p. 13). We hear how Mama gave up her goal of becoming a nurse, having to work to support her children. Her positive attitude towards life is reflected by the name given her first child, Keitumetse (“I am happy”) – as Tihelo comments, “Most people usually give their unplanned children names that are apologetic” (p. 14). In just a few pages, Tihelo has given us a picture of a strong, hardworking woman who is strict but not always conventional in her actions and attitudes.

## **Thato**

Thato is Tihelo’s closest friend. Her mother is a nurse and her father is a shop owner, making them well-off in comparison to most township residents (p. 20). Shortly after the novel begins, Thato’s parents decide to send her to a White Catholic school the following year, when the girls begin high school. This is a church-run school that will, they hear, be allowed to admit Black learners too. Government schools were racially segregated (see *General living conditions* on page 5). This loss of her childhood friend to a White, upper-class world is one of the many changes Tihelo must deal with in the course of the novel.

## **Mma Kleintjie**

This woman is also known as Lekhalate, the Coloured person, and she is rather different from all her neighbours (pp. 16–17). She is important in the novel for several reasons: she provides some suspense (Tihelo is rather afraid of her at first); she is a living example of the apartheid laws and their divisive consequences; and she provides the final piece of the puzzle when, at the end of the novel, she tells Tihelo who her real mother is (p. 176).

## **Lebo**

A new friend at high school, Tihelo finds her “very funny and smart” (p. 46). Kgomotso does not really approve of Lebo and Tihelo thinks of her as “*sekhebereshe*”, something of a “loose woman”. Later she finds that Lebo’s home life is unhappy, with a bitter, disabled father. Lebo seems to have money and is a good dancer (p. 49), yet Tihelo realises she is wrong to envy her without knowing her true circumstances. Later Lebo reveals that she has had both a miscarriage and an abortion (p. 79) and helps get “medicine” to end Keitumetse’s pregnancy.

**Note:** Other pronunciations

- Ausi – possibly from “Ou Sis”; pronounced Ow-see; usually means sister
- *thuntsha lerole* (get into the groove – dancing in the dust) – pronounced T-oon-ts-a le-ro-le

## Themes

Themes are main ideas. As you read the novel, look out for these key ideas. Sometimes the idea is discussed by the main character; sometimes the author simply tells the story and expects you, the reader, to recognise the idea being discussed.

It is important to think about and explain the title of any novel, as the author often uses this to express the main theme. The title of this book is explained on the back cover in a quote that comes from p. 88 of the novel. This explanation gives the literal meaning of the phrase “dancing in the dust”. There is a *figurative* meaning too: the image of people dancing in the dust reflects the values of township dwellers, who have **hope despite their circumstances**. In all the instances in the story where there is dancing, the figurative meaning of hope is also expressed. There is the wedding, where everyone dances just to enjoy themselves and to forget about their circumstances for a while (pp. 87–88). There is the dance competition for which everyone, including Tihelo’s group of friends, practises, hoping they will be the lucky winners: “Every day we imagine and dream, imagine and dream. Our legs are covered in dust...” (pp. 82–83). Their friend Peter wins: “He is a star. ... he has potential” (p. 83). But potential is all it remains – we hear no more about this win. When the teenagers begin the protest march, they dance around the township, gathering people to join them. “We sang and danced, as we would have done at any march, because it kept our spirits up and strengthened our will. It also alleviated the dread and made the journey seem short and more bearable. ... We were masses moving as one, covered in the dust we were dancing in” (pp. 128–129). Here again, though, despite their hopes of having their demands met (they have “just come to demand the release of our comrades” (p. 129)), hope and power turn to anger and defeat, as marchers are fired on, injured and killed. Yet by the end of the novel there is still hope. Tihelo is still imagining and dreaming, still hoping to become a journalist and travel, still “dancing in the dust”.

Tihelo often speaks of these **hopes and dreams** in the course of the novel. The novel’s opening lines (p. 8) paint a picture of children dreaming and imagining, under the threat of apartheid. The novel shows how dreams are threatened by violence and hardships; but it also shows how dreams keep people going, sustaining them through difficult times. In contrast to the idea of hopes and dreams is **loss of innocence** (see notes on Tshepo, above).

The novel is filled with references to how women are treated in society and how men and women relate to one another. One of the ways in which the author explores gender issues and deals with **attitudes towards gender** is through Tihelo's all-female family. Very early in the novel we learn that her father "was swallowed by the City of Gold, or Gauteng" right after she was born, leaving her mother to care for two children. He is supposed to have died of heart failure, but she says this is a story, created "to maintain our respect for him" (p. 14). Most of the community believes that "a house with no men is missing something essential"; Tihelo, on the other hand, "never missed" her father and does not feel a need for him (pp. 14–15). When her friend Tshepo tells her about his older brother, she comments that he "made it seem like the single most important person to have in one's life was an older male sibling" – an attitude reflected by the broader society. Her response is that she feels "annoyed and ... defensive" (p. 24) because she "only" has an older sister.

Neither Tihelo nor the author is "anti men" – Tihelo simply voices her views and feelings, from the context of her life. In chapter 7, as Tihelo gossips with Ausi Martha, we hear the stories of several families where the father figure is either absent or in some way abusive. However, there are positive male figures too, such as Tshepo and his brother Mohau, their grandfather and Thabang the student leader.

### **Note:**

Learners should not rely on this guide as a substitute for actually reading the novel. The blurb on the back of the book sets the scene, so read this first before reading the book.

As you read, make a note of any questions you have about unfamiliar words or terms, history, culture and so on. You will then be able to make better use of this guide.

In addition, you should think about how to "give and motivate [your] personal response" to the novel. This may occur in class discussion or an essay question.

Once you have read the book, test yourself with the following short contents test. You could do the test in class and then swap with a friend, marking one another's tests.

## CONTENTS TEST

### *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Molope

20 marks, 20 minutes

#### Question 1: Multiple choice

Write out each statement below, completing it with the answer of your choice. (Writing down the full question and answer is one way of learning key facts about the story.)

1. The main character is called: *Thandi/Tina/Tihelo/Thabiso*.
2. The story is told by: *a first-person narrator/a third-person narrator/an observer/a close family member*.
3. The name of the main character's elder sister is: *Kate/Keitumetse/Sisi/Sibongile*.
4. Thato is the protagonist's best friend. During the course of the novel she: *moves away/goes into exile/goes to university/changes schools*.
5. The protagonist notices she is different from those around her – she: *has a different accent/has a lighter skin/is much taller/has darker eyes*.
6. The main character discovers her real mother's name was: *Diana/Debbie/Kleintjie/Anne*.
7. While in detention the main character: *is given good food/does not see daylight/does not see anyone else/is allowed to bath*.
8. During the course of the novel, the writer uses italics to indicate: *the character's hopes/someone else's point of view/part of a police report/the character's memories*.
9. "Mama" can best be described as: *a domestic worker/a liar/a strong character/a fearful character*.
10. When hiding from police, after the march, the protagonist is helped by: *a prostitute/a pastor/an old lady/one of her friends*. [10]

#### Question 2: Paragraph

"Written by a woman, mainly about women, this story really speaks only to other women and not to men."

Discuss the above statement from your own perspective. Try to provide at least one argument FOR (agreeing with) and one AGAINST (disagreeing with) the statement and then conclude with your own view.

Plan your ideas and then write one logical, well-formulated paragraph. [10]

**Note:** The answers are given on page 27.

# NOTES AND SHORT QUESTIONS FOR EACH CHAPTER

---

The notes for each chapter include a brief summary of the plot, a discussion of the chapter's significance, relevant quotes (in italics), and questions. The mark allocations given in brackets are a guide as to how much to write in the answers to questions. Unless otherwise indicated, questions should be answered individually and then either formally assessed or discussed and marked in class.

## Opening pages

There are two important pieces that precede Chapter 1. The first is a quote from *A Burst of Light* by Audre Lorde, which speaks of using one's rage "to fuel actions ... to alter the very circumstances of oppression ...". We see Tihelo learning to take such action as the novel progresses, and so this quote sets the scene for a very important aspect of the main character's development.

On the following page is a description of children playing: "... all they ever do [is] imagine, dream, imagine, dream". However, these children have no choices about their future. Indeed, the street they live on "will turn and swallow them whole one day. That is what it was designed for." It is these children that the author writes about; Tihelo is such a child.

Discuss the following questions with your classmates. You could have an informal discussion or it could also be turned into a forum discussion where you first find information (from other learners, community members, NGOs and others) and then discuss the circumstances of children in different communities in your area.

Note to teacher: It might not be an easy discussion, raising questions about social inequality and the pace of economic and social change. In terms of this novel, it would then be important to refocus on the central theme of coming of age and its challenges, which remains common to all of us.

1. Share one of your hopes and dreams with a classmate.
2. Are there parts of your life where you feel you have no choices?
3. Are there children in South Africa today like the ones described in the opening pages?

## Memories

Most chapters from 2 to 10 contain sections in italics in which Tihelo tells us a memory of her childhood. These are usually in the past tense, but some are present tense.

1. Skim through these sections and find which one is in the present, then try to say why. [2]

## Chapter 1

Tihelo describes the mood of the township as she sits in the sun. The quiet is broken by screams and cheers as people – including Tshepo and Mohau – raid a hijacked milk truck. Tihelo doesn't join in, knowing her mother would disapprove.

**Significance:** Tihelo seldom feels “serene” or peaceful – she will comment on these feelings constantly in the novel. The theme of race is also introduced. Conflict between the community and the police is evident. Incidents like the hijacking are documented but not judged. Tihelo imagines that she had been the leader: “Everyone had followed . . ., going where I had gone first.” This foreshadows her later involvement in the protest marches.

**Setting and mood:** The story opens with a description of the peach trees in the backyard (the setting). Their fruit is almost finished and what is left is “rotting in the heat”. This heat, “one of those lazy, overheated afternoons,” also sets the mood: Tihelo feels lazy and almost relaxed. However, “the quiet . . . was making me nervous”, as usually “the place was always noisy”. This description of the sounds and mood of the place helps set the scene, not only for this chapter, but for the novel.

Note: Look out for the peach trees later in the novel. Look for how the changes in weather and nature reflect the mood of the characters.

1. Write down the two adjectives used to describe the police vans (p. 9) and look up their meaning in a dictionary. [2]
2. How and why do you think the police “make us feel uncomfortable in our own territory”? [3]
3. “I was trying to get darker, having grown weary of my light skin, which stuck out like a sore thumb in my township” (p. 10). Give two reasons why Tihelo wants to look darker. [2]
4. What reason do the comrades give for having hijacked the milk truck? Do you think this is a justifiable reason? [2]

## Chapter 2

This chapter fills in some background about Tihelo's family. Her mother Kgomotso went out to work when she had her first child, Keitumetse. She has since raised the two girls on her own and Tihelo's father is either dead or has simply abandoned them. Some members of the community are also introduced: Mohau's grandfather, Mma Kleintjie, Ausi Martha.

**Significance:** Tihelo “marvels” over her changing body, seeing womanhood as exciting. Her mother is portrayed as a very strong character, whereas her father is absent. This introduces the theme of gender, and the author’s emphasis on strong female characters. All the characters introduced here will play important roles in Tihelo’s life.

The background of apartheid is constantly referred to and provides continuous conflict: “... *there isn’t a place in this country that was designed for your survival*” (p. 18).

1. People assume Tihelo’s life is “really sad and inadequate” because she has no father. Are you guilty of the same assumptions about people who are different from you? Do Tihelo’s comments help you see things differently? Discuss this question with a partner.
2. What did Kgomotso give up when Keitumetse was born? Put yourself in her shoes and write the diary entry of Kgomotso as a young woman, discovering she is pregnant. Make sure you use facts from the story and add appropriate feelings. Length: 150–200 words. [30]
3. Write down a quote that gives a reason why Tihelo was told her father had died, rather than that he had left them. [1]
4. Why is Mma Kleintjie’s status seen as better than that of her Black neighbours? To what extent is this a fact, or Tihelo’s opinion? [2]

### Chapter 3

Tihelo describes the houses and how her friend Thato Moroka belongs to a wealthier family than hers. She talks about television and how all the children watched at Thato’s house. Keitumetse is becoming a teenager; the children create a garden on their street. Tshepo shows Tihelo how to make a petrol bomb and talks “like an ANC comrade” (p. 27). Thato tells of her experience of segregation on a Durban beach. Keitumetse seems proud rather than shocked that Mohau has been involved in the rioting. Mma Kleintjie speaks to Tihelo, who is so scared she doesn’t even take a good look at this “witch” – and then feels guilty for appearing so afraid. The memory section describes Tihelo’s dream of becoming a journalist. They laugh about Mama’s long train journeys to and from work.

**Significance:** Even the TV programmes are affected by apartheid, with different languages having different channels.

*“I still maintain that a child’s innocence ... is often their best protection”* (p. 22) – but the childhood games and friendships shown here will not last long. Already Tshepo has grown up, become a comrade.

1. Write down all the “feeling” words used by Tihelo in this chapter. Wherever you can, link them to one of the themes of the novel. [4]
2. “Living in the townships involved the blindest and most fierce kind of faith” (p. 23). How does their garden project show faith? How does this comment compare to Kgomotso’s comment in the previous chapter (p. 18), quoted in the notes above? [3]

## Chapter 4

Tihelo and Thato discuss the changes they see in Tshepo, and Tihelo tells her friend about Mma Kleintjie. Thato says she might go to a White Catholic (church-run) school in town. Tihelo is “devastated” but tries not to show it. They try to talk to Tshepo about their fears for him. He in turn tells them about the proposed boycotts of White-owned shops in town, making it a “Black Christmas” (p. 36).

**Significance:** Once again, apartheid affects every aspect of life. Thato’s parents can afford to send her to school in town if it is desegregated, but Tihelo’s mother cannot.

1. Discuss what is meant by a boycott (you may need to use a dictionary) and why White-owned shops were being targeted. [3]
2. Make sure you understand what segregation means – if necessary, refer to General living conditions on page 5 of these notes. [2]
3. Discuss in class whether segregation in schools is still an issue in your area.

## Chapter 5

The hot weather sends children to the local tuck shops for ice. Mama decides the sisters must be occupied and organises for them to sell ice-lollies from home (p. 41). She warns them not to spend too much time around boys – “Boys will make you dirty, they’ll get you in the worst kind of trouble.” (p. 39).

**Significance:** “*The temperatures were rising higher and the days getting longer.*” The political “temperature” is also rising, in the run-up to Christmas and the planned boycotts.

The author raises the issue of sex-education – or lack of it. Mama warns her daughters, but in a vague, generalised way that instils fear but does not educate. Note that Mama’s views are not the same as the author’s.

“*None of us were planning our lives in the township.*” (p. 38) – hopes and dreams.

1. What is Mama hoping to achieve by her warning about boys? This warning is clearly her *opinion* – what is missing? [4]

## Chapter 6

Christmas “was the least festive I had ever had”. Mohau is one of many arrested while Tshepo “was growing up and becoming a very bitter man”. The New Year is no better, as Thato goes to her new school and the friendship fades. Tihelo’s school days are often disrupted by boycotts and tear gas. Lonely and bored, she joins Tshepo at the local SASO headquarters where they make T-shirts and fliers, and agrees to help for six months. Tihelo is always nervous when there. She makes friends with Lebo at school but finds herself unwelcome at Lebo’s home. Worried about school work and getting good enough marks, Tihelo asks Mama’s advice. In the memory section, the broom-seller tells a story about evictions under the Group Areas Act. The broom-seller’s story is in the present tense, because her visits are an action that is repeated.

**Significance:** At this stage Tihelo does not fully understand the reasons for the riots and boycotts. She worries that she won’t do well enough to study journalism, her dream. Mama says of the boycotts that, “At least this way, you’re saying you want it to be better than this.” (p. 48). Later, as Tihelo works with SASO, she begins to understand, and we as readers take the same journey.

Gender issues are discussed as Tihelo reflects on how differently she and Lebo relate to men (p. 46). She also comments on how little information she and her peers had “about our bodies, sex, or pregnancy” (p. 47). The issue of reproductive rights, including abortion, is mentioned but, like the issue of violent protest, not judged by the author. She simply offers different points of view (p. 47).

A visit to Lebo’s house reveals a disabled father and gloomy atmosphere. Tihelo comments, “Sometimes it is hard to know what people are living through because they mask it so well ...” (p. 49).

**Setting and mood:** “I would sit for hours by myself, watching the leaves turn in autumn and the sun set earlier, all the while wishing I was spending time with the only best friend I had ever had.” (p. 48)

“*Our years of childhood innocence were coming to an abrupt end that year*” (p. 42); “*adulthood was taxing*” (p. 44); “*It was as if we were jumping up and down at the edge of a cliff*” (p. 45).

1. Describe the SASO headquarters. Make a point-form list. [6 x ½ = 3]
2. Find one sentence on p. 45 that reminds us of the theme of gender. [1]
3. What does Tihelo like about Lebo? Why does she not tell her mother about her new friend? [2]
4. What important lesson does Tihelo learn from her uninvited visit to Lebo? [2]
5. How does the season reflect Tihelo’s mood in the above quote from p. 48? [2]

## Chapter 7

Tihelo finds out more about Lebo's father from Ausi Martha, who also gossips about several other families. Tihelo reveals to the reader that Ausi Martha is ashamed that her husband left her, so she pretends he works far away. Keitumetse has received a letter from Mohau, who is still in hiding. When their mother does not return from work, they phone her "missies" but get no sympathy or help. Tihelo remembers, at the age of five, being told she cannot eat in a restaurant in town.

Later neighbours take them to the police station, as their mother has been arrested along with many others in a pass raid at the train station. Beaten up, Kgomotso stays at home in a state of depression. Tihelo's role is that of caregiver, while Keitumetse seeks comfort.

**Significance:** The gossip reveals various socio-cultural values and attitudes towards relationships, work and age. The issue of shame is one that is mentioned several times in the novel and here Tihelo makes it clear that Ausi Martha should not feel ashamed (LO2 AS2.5). Several incidents give details of life under apartheid: racist attitudes (pp. 57–60), segregation (pp. 60–61), pass laws and police brutality (pp. 63–64).

*"They were all illegal immigrants in their own country."* (p. 63)

Note the roles played by the two sisters, and how these are later swapped around.

The final paragraph explains how Tihelo gained strength from her mother: *"It is only when our mothers can handle what we fear that it is possible for us to face it head on"* (p. 66). However, she does admit that she can't face seeing her mother depressed.

1. What was your first encounter with racism? Write a short diary entry and share it with a classmate.
2. What different names do you have? Is it ever acceptable for someone to call you by a different name if they find yours difficult to pronounce? Give good reasons for your viewpoint – give facts, not just an opinion.
3. "Vultures" and "dogs" are two words used to describe the police (p. 61). How does this language show the community's attitude towards the police, and how does it affect you as the reader? [4]
4. Explain the reason for the station raid; the people's reactions; the police's reactions; and the underlying reasons for the police's actions. [4]
5. *"They looked humiliated and afraid"* (p. 64). Check that you understand the meaning of *humiliated*. Then explain why people felt like this. [2]

## Chapter 8

In May, Mohau returns from hiding. He is admired by everyone except Tihelo. Tired and depressed, she announces she is leaving the work at SASO and is thanked by Dikeledi, one of the women leaders. Returning home, she finds her mother outside for the first time in weeks. The next day Kgomotso finds a new job where she works a little less and also has other Black people around her.

The memory section tells of Mma Modise's regular visits and her faithful church-going. However, when her brother makes his fortune and promises her a house, it is the ancestors she thanks. As with many incidents, the author offers no comment on the seeming hypocrisy of Mma Modise, worshipping both the Christian God and ancestors. She just documents a common practice, without judging it.

**Significance:** Tihelo is still trying to understand the motivations of the comrades. Her questions and doubts often reflect those of the reader – we are not asked simply to accept the protests and riots, but to think the issue through with her.

**Setting and mood:** Mama is sitting watching the blossoming *mupudu* tree – she too is “blossoming”, coming out of her depression.

1. Notice Tihelo's feelings – find as many words as you can, on pages 67 to 70, that describe the emotions of the characters. [5 x ½ = 2½]
2. Find and quote a sentence from p. 69 that best describes the situation in the schools at this time. [2]

## Chapter 9

Keitumetse discovers she is pregnant and Tihelo, typically trying to help and “fix things”, seeks Lebo's advice. The school boycotts continue and there is a local wedding. Mohau, Tshepo, their aunts and others are detained and Keitumetse doesn't want to have the baby if Mohau is not there to help raise it.

In the memory sections Tihelo tells about a dance competition and the year when Keitumetse's birthday coincided with the death of Steve Biko.

**Significance:** Keitumetse's pregnancy allows the author to address a number of issues. Lack of sex education is discussed on pp. 74–75, together with the community's view of abortion. The comment is also made that keeping girls ignorant and fearful about abortion is a “survival tactic – if we were going to leave and make our lives better we had to fear the things that could force us to stay”. This is an example of where, even when the author does not agree with something, she tries to understand – and help us understand – the motivation behind it. See also p. 76 “Mothers valued the wide gap between generations ...”.

Mama is firm about the father, Mohau, taking responsibility: “No one told us this when we were young, that we did not have to give up on our own hopes and watch men walk away from responsibility” (p. 85). Mohau has in fact already said he will help raise the baby (p. 81) – a positive change in gender relations.

More details are given about the conditions in school and the frustrations of both learners and teachers. Tihelo offers insights into the students’ anger, violence and hopelessness, adding that “in fact we were terrified” (p. 78). (Compare this to “a cry for help” on p. 26). Tihelo explains how going to school kept alive her dream of studying journalism (pp. 80–81), a constant theme in the novel.

Tihelo describes a local wedding and the build up to it, with details of how the whole community helps prepare and then dresses up and celebrates. This is an occasion for “dancing in the dust” (p. 88). The bride is Peter’s aunt, and it is Peter who has earlier won a dance competition (pp. 82–83). The theme of hopes and dreams is evident in both these occasions, and both foreshadow the student protest march where they also “dance in the dust”.

When Mohau, Tshepo and others are detained, Mama goes with Mohau’s grandmother to find out more. Typically, the police offer no information – “The dogs did not operate on reason” (p. 94).

Perhaps because of the detention of her friends, Tihelo remembers hearing the news of Steve Biko’s death in detention.

**Setting and mood:** The mood of the season, spring, reflects the excitement of Keitumetse’s birthday, but is in stark contrast with the community’s mourning (pp. 95–96).

1. Explain why falling pregnant could mean “letting go of everything you had hoped for ... [and] ... imagined for as long as you could remember” (p. 76). [3]
2. There are a few White guests at the wedding, who “didn’t have the same look of terror you saw in White people in town ... They did not look ... as if they wished they had not laid their eyes on us” (p. 89). What is the author’s purpose in including these comments? [3]  
Have you ever looked at people this way – or been looked at this way?
3. Make notes on the themes (see page 10) as they are dealt with in this chapter.

## Chapter 10

Tihelo obtains a green liquid from Lebo, which Keitumetse takes. The abortion works, but Keitumetse has to be rushed to hospital. Tihelo feels scared and guilty.

**Significance:** Two paragraphs on p. 104 sum up all that's happened so far, and form a turning-point in the novel. All sorts of negative things have happened, or seem about to happen, and Tihelo realises, "*Here I was living my worst fears and I was still afraid ... What was there to be afraid of? What was left for me to see?*" (p. 104).

She cries, "*mourning our childhood – mine, my sister's, Tshepo's, and Mohau's*" (p. 105).

The memory section – the last until chapter 19 – is of the Soweto Riots, a foreshadowing of what Tihelo herself will soon experience.

1. Once again, Tihelo describes herself as "incredibly worn out" (p. 103). List some of the emotions she has experienced in this chapter, that leave her feeling this way. [4]
2. In class, discuss reasons why the memory sections end here.

## Chapter 11

A state of emergency is declared, students give up going to school; Keitumetse remains in hospital; Tihelo goes to the SASO headquarters to find some answers. She finds Dikeledi there and agrees to help her. From her she learns that Tshepo and Mohau are in hiding overseas, while others are in detention. In hospital, Keitumetse is questioned about Mohau.

**Significance:** Tihelo decides to be active in the struggle once more, in order to help others and also realise her own dreams. Her decision is a more positive, active one than when she previously started helping – she is slowly changing her view of SASO and protest in general. Details of life under a state of emergency are included: "All of us ... were living like children under the watchful eye of a vengeful adult" (p. 112). Mma Kleintjie materialises to warn Tihelo that Keitumetse will be questioned – she remains a shadowy, secretive figure, introducing an element of tension and keeping the reader curious.

1. Imagine a state of emergency has just been declared here in South Africa. Write a diary entry in which you describe the effects this law has on your life – for instance, how does your social life change? Length: 150–200 words. [30]

## Chapter 12

Tihelo remains intrigued by Mma Kleintjie. She works with Dikeledi on writing newsletters and transcribing tapes, all the while missing Tshepo. When Keitumetse comes home she is obviously depressed, but says she doesn't feel guilty about her pregnancy.

**Significance:** Tihelo’s work at SASO makes her feel not only “like I was doing something towards getting my friends back home”, it also meant that, “I felt that I was fully involved in deciding what shape my life would take” (p. 115). “I was not free of the fear, it had just ceased to be paralyzing” (p. 116).

Tihelo wonders less often about her lighter skin, because she is now an adult like her mother and sister, and feels closer to them.

Keitumetse too has changed: “It was obvious to me that my sister was feeling heavy and exhausted, but she stayed calm and pretended to feel nothing ... She did not seek comfort as easily as she had done before” (p. 118). She remains “so far away that most days it was impossible to reach her” (p. 119).

1. Ask your Life Orientation teacher to remind you of the signs of depression and what to do.

### Chapter 13

Released from detention, Tshepo’s aunts remain depressed and traumatised. Tihelo describes the work she and others do at the SASO office. She explains why she returns to school. Thabang tells her that the reason he and the others were arrested the night of the wedding was because the police thought they might try to harm the White guests.

**Significance:** The author continues to build a picture of life under apartheid in the 1980s. Tihelo is more and more involved in SASO, even learning to drive illegally. However, she still holds onto her dream of a further education, and so returns to school – as she explains, “I really had no other way of making myself believe I would get out of there alive” (p. 121). This section is important in understanding the motivation of Tihelo and others like her. On the one hand, “People thought I was a hypocrite, pursuing the education that was forced on me by the very people I was writing and marching against on a weekly basis” (p. 121). On the other, she needs an education to achieve her dream. She comments on the misinformation in their textbooks, and also on how it is often men’s stories that are told, even if women achieved similar things (pp. 121–122).

*“I guess you could say they forgot why they had locked us up.” (p. 124)*

1. Rewrite Tihelo’s explanation of why she goes back to school, in your own words. Include what other people say about her (p. 121). [6]

### Chapter 14

In response to numerous arrests, suicides in detention and lack of answers from police, SASO plan a peaceful march to voice their demands. Dancing around the township, they gather support. They are met with rudeness; shots are fired, then tear gas; when police vehicles drive at the crowd, they respond by throwing stones and the police open fire. Everyone tries to flee.

**Significance:** As in the previous chapter, there are details about how the comrades work together, sing and support each other. Tihelo explains how they feel, why they take the actions they do, how they try to plan it all well. The march will be peaceful, because “being peaceful and calm would appease the police – they liked being obeyed ...” (p. 128).

There is an increasing feeling of oppression: “We trod lightly on our own streets and spoke in hushed tones in our own homes. Nothing felt safe ...” (p. 125). Tihelo explains her realisation that she has no choice but to protest: “*This is what I had been born into and there was no escape – I could either sit at home and be afraid alone, or I could be on the front lines and afraid with everyone else*” (p. 127).

In the course of the march, they dance, “crying out our hopes and wishes” (p. 128). Their dancing makes their fear subside, “so that all we really felt was power, power, and more power” (p. 128). The reader is given a strong sense of the feelings of this group and the power that comes from unity.

When the police vehicle starts, people are “terrified ... and ... infuriated by that terror, because we had been so peaceful ...” (p. 131). Tihelo is one of many who throw a stone in response and she explains: “It was a moment fuelled by sheer terror, compounded with the passion of the sprit of resistance” (p. 131).

1. List Tihelo’s explanations for why “We sang and danced ...” (p. 128). [5]
2. Are stones *effective* weapons against an armoured vehicle? Why then do people throw stones? Why in this case did the police open fire? [3]

## Chapter 15

Desperate to get off the streets, Tihelo climbs through a bathroom window. The elderly woman whose house she has entered looks after her and lends her clothes as a disguise. First phoning Keitumetse to say she is safe, she makes her way to the SASO headquarters where she destroys as much as she can, keeping only a few tapes and books.

**Significance:** There is some detail about the physical effects of the tear gas, and running from police; about how difficult it is to choose what to keep and what to destroy, how important all the material at SASO is. The author is putting us in the picture in a personal, direct way that is very different from reading a history textbook about the same events.

As Tihelo works through the material, she distracts herself from thinking about “the comrades and the massacre” – foreshadowing a technique she will soon use again in detention.

1. Look up the word “massacre” in your dictionary. In a thesaurus, look up synonyms for the word. Decide whether you agree with Tihelo’s use of the word “massacre” or if it seems too emotive or biased. [4]

## Chapter 16

Tihelo pretends she is a commuter returning home. That night, she has nightmare memories of the march and her dead friends – Thabang and Peter among them – and she asks her mother to tell her stories to keep the nightmares at bay.

**Significance:** Again, the reader is asked to consider the people and emotions behind the events – the mothers and fathers and friends – and their reactions to death ...

Tihelo's mother tells her about her grandmother, giving her "a sense of stability" at this difficult time.

*"I allowed myself to ask for comfort."* (p. 144)

*"It would be my last quiet moment with my mother for a very long time."*  
(p. 145)

1. When her mother tells her about her grandmother, what, in particular, does Tihelo find reassuring? [2]

## Chapter 17

The day after the march, Saturday, all the parents stay home and make their own protest "against police brutality" (p. 146). Like their children, they return home with no answers. While they wait for the parents to return, the sisters receive an awkward visit from Thato. Kgomotso has hidden the SASO tapes and books. The march is reported on the front page of *The Sowetan* newspaper and page ten of the White papers.

**Significance:** This is a bleak picture of just how powerless Black citizens were in the face of the apartheid system. Nevertheless there is a sense of solidarity in the community, which holds out some hope for the future.

1. Which important historical events are mentioned at the end of this chapter? Why are these events in particular relevant to the march in this novel? [4]
2. List at least three differences between the parents' march and that of the students the previous day. [3]
3. How does the weather reflect the mood (p. 147)? [2]
4. Read p. 148 carefully and then explain in your own words why the soldiers are there. How is their goal similar to that of the people in the township? Quote to support your answer. In what way is this *ironic* (where people say or do one thing but the opposite is true)? [4]

## Chapter 18

All three women are arrested in the middle of the night. This chapter documents the period of arrest, searches, separation and Tihelo's torture. The author has said that she talked with many women to write this novel – there is no question that what she relates here is the real experience of many South African women.

**Significance:** The very things Tihelo has always feared, for herself and others, now happen to her. She uses every tactic she knows to survive – and she does indeed survive, without betraying her comrades.

Note: This is probably not a chapter to read aloud in class as the events are distressing. There is a sense in which reading them aloud repeats the humiliation of this character with whom we have come to sympathise. The questions will lead learners through the chapter individually, and the teacher can decide how many or few of these events to discuss in class.

1. Scan the chapter and write down how long Tihelo spends (or thinks she spends) in detention, and the various ways in which she measures this time, ending with how long she actually does spend there. [6]
2. Explain what Tihelo does to stop the policemen from raping her, and why it succeeds. [4]
3. What is the consequence of her refusing the policemen? [2]

## Chapter 19

The chapter opens with Tihelo recovering in hospital. While there, she has a visit from Mma Kleintjie, who tells her that her real mother is someone called Diana. At home, when she asks about Diana, her mother gives her a phone number but offers no further discussion. After phoning Diana's mother, she visits Ausi Martha to hear the full story. Martha also tells Mma Kleintjie's story. Finally, Tihelo writes a letter to Diana, telling her of her life. She signs off, "Tihelo Masimo, Revolutionary".

**Significance:** Tihelo at last knows where she comes from. After Mma Kleintjie's visit she falls asleep and dreams of beautiful, hopeful places. This indicates that the visit has been a positive, powerful one. Chapter 19 is written in the present tense, bringing the reader into Tihelo's life as it unfolds. Some readers may be dissatisfied – "What happens next?" – but Tihelo has reached the end of one part of her life's journey: she has survived, and she knows who she is. She allows herself to remember her fallen comrades – "There is a lot of power in some of the memories" (p. 185).

This chapter explores the theme of gender when Tihelo comments on the shame felt by women, in particular, after their experiences in detention.

1. Have a class discussion about the novel. Learners can be formally assessed on their response to the novel. All the themes of the book are mentioned in Chapter 19, and several loose ends tied up.

# ESSAY QUESTIONS

---

## Topic 1

“You must have heard about all of this before, and the only reason I am telling you is because it is what I live, and I want to share with you who I am, because you never knew me.” (p. 186)

Using the quote as a starting point, explore the reasons why the protagonist tells her story and, more broadly, why this story is on the list of prescribed works for South African schools in 2007. As part of your research for this essay, find out about another South African woman writer and mention what sort of stories she tells, in comparison with this one. [300–350 words]

## Topic 2

“There is a reason dancing is known as *thuntsha lerole*, or shooting the dust. When you are really feeling the music ... you have to hit your foot really hard on the ground ... . By the time you are done ... your clothes look like you have just been frolicking in a tub full of dust.” (p. 88)

This is an explanation of the phrase “dancing in the dust”, the title of the book. This phrase has literal links to various events in the novel where dancing takes place. It is also, however, used figuratively. Discuss the literal and figurative associations of the title. [300–350 words]

## Topic 3

“‘I want to make one thing clear. Womanhood is not for girls with dreams. It is for those of us who forget what we dream of.’ Sometimes older women said ‘womanhood’ as if it was synonymous with ‘struggle’, like it was one of life’s greatest challenges ...” (p. 84)

Is womanhood, as portrayed in the novel, a struggle and challenge? If so, is it only negative?

Beginning with Kgomotso, whose speech is quoted above, discuss the events surrounding several of the women in this novel (*excluding* the narrator Tihelo). As you discuss each character and her struggles and challenges, comment on whether her story is also positive in any way.

As part of your research, find out about one woman who was a hero of the anti-apartheid struggle (e.g. Winnie Mandela, Helen Suzman, Albertina Sisulu). Try to find links between her real-life experience and that of the characters in the novel. [300–350 words]

## Learning Outcomes addressed in these tasks

LO2 AS2.6, 3.1, 4.1; LO3 AS3.1.6, 3.1.8, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.3

# SUGGESTED ANSWERS

---

## Contents test

### Question 1: Multiple choice

1. The main character is called: *Tihelo*.
2. The story is told by: *a first-person narrator*.
3. The name of the main character's elder sister is: *Keitumetse*.
4. Thato is the protagonist's best friend. During the course of the novel she: *changes schools*.
5. The protagonist notices she is different from those around her – she: *has a lighter skin*.
6. The main character discovers her real mother's name was: *Diana*.
7. While in detention the main character: *does not see daylight*.
8. During the course of the novel, the writer uses italics to indicate: *the character's memories*.
9. "Mama" can best be described as: *a strong character*.
10. When hiding from police, after the march, the protagonist is helped by: *an old lady*. [10]

### Question 2: Paragraph

An argument FOR (agreeing with): *Because there is a strong female character telling the story, some men might find it harder to identify with this novel or sympathise with Tihelo.*

Now LINK the first idea to the next using a suitable word or phrase such as "On the other hand" or "In contrast" or "However".

An argument AGAINST (disagreeing with): *HOWEVER, most of her experiences are not unique to women. Men too can understand and sympathise with her.*

Then give your own view: *I believe that ... anyone can read and enjoy this novel.*

OR ... *Many men won't read the book because they think they won't be able to relate to it.*

OR *[another point]*

Make sure you have combined the points you make into one well-formulated paragraph. [10]

### Memories

The broom-seller's story is in the present tense – see notes on Chapter 6. [2]

## Chapter 1

1. “obnoxious”: offensive, objectionable, disliked; “invasive”: making hostile inroad into, encroaching on rights. [2]
2. The police are “invasive” – they come into the townships in a hostile way and limit people’s rights. People are supposed to feel at home, but instead, with the police around, they feel uncomfortable. “Invasive” and “territory” make it sound like a war; elsewhere they are compared to “hunters” (p. 12). [3]
3. Tihelo wants to look more like her family; and more like the people around her in the township. [2]
4. They have hijacked the truck “in the name of freedom fighting” (p. 11) – They were yelling “Take back what belongs to the people” (p. 12). [2]

## Chapter 2

1. Discussion.
2. Kgomotso gave up her dream of studying to become a nurse. She had to go to work to support herself and her child.  
Feelings: regret; anger; resolve to be positive (she names her baby “I am happy”). [30]
3. “... the story about him dying from heart disease was a fabrication meant to sustain our respect for him” (p. 14). [1]
4. “... she held a slightly different and better status in the country because of her lighter skin colour, her green eyes, and the texture of her hair” (p. 16).  
There might be circumstances in which a Coloured person receives better treatment than a Black person. However, Mma Kleintjie would be affected by all the same apartheid laws as Black people. The question of her status is a perception rather than a fact. [2]

## Chapter 3

1. attitudes towards gender: annoyed and defensive (p. 24, about Mohau); loss of innocence: “I played and laughed and loved carelessly in those years” (p. 22); afraid for Tshepo as he gets involved in political activities; saddened; anxious [4]
2. By creating a garden the children have faith that their township can be a pleasant place to live in – a place comparable to the White areas with their parks and gardens. But Kgomotso has said, “... *there isn't a place in this country that was designed for your survival*” (p. 18). The children have a degree of hope that she does not have. [3]

## Chapter 4

1. A boycott is when one group of people refuses to have “social or commercial relations” with another group, thereby punishing that group or forcing them to change. In this case, Black people refused to buy from White-owned shops, as they were seen as supporters of apartheid. [3]

2. Segregation here means keeping people apart for reasons of race – keeping people in separate groups and areas. [2]
3. This will vary according to your community.

## Chapter 5

1. Mama is hoping her girls will stay away from boys and avoid unwanted pregnancy. She hopes to scare them enough to make them keep to themselves. Her warning, however, lacks any factual information about how to deal with sexual feelings or relationships; or indeed how pregnancy actually occurs. [4]

## Chapter 6

1. an ordinary “four-room” house; it has a garden and no obvious security; someone always stands guard inside; there is always bread and coffee available; people are planning; people talk quietly. [3]
2. “I looked up to the women, who seemed to command a lot of respect from the men, and who were equally busy planning events and meetings.” [1]
3. She finds Lebo “funny and smart” (p. 46) – she made her laugh. However, Lebo lets boys visit when her father is not home, and Tihelo knows her mother wouldn’t approve of this. [2]
4. Tihelo learns that people are not always as happy or contented as they seem – “Sometimes it is hard to know what people are living through because they mask it so well ...” (p. 49) [2]
5. Just as summer is ending and autumn is coming, so too Tihelo’s friendship with Thato is coming to an end and with it a part of her childhood. [2]

## Chapter 7

1. No formal assessment – discussion.
2. Class discussion.
3. Vultures are birds that prey on other animals. They are generally seen as dirty, thieving, ugly, and so on. The community sees the police as preying on them in a way, attacking them when given the opportunity. “Dogs” is also used in a negative sense. Your response as reader will depend partly on how *you* see the police. [4]
4. Station raid: police checking people’s passes – their permission to go into a White area to work.  
 The people’s reactions: they thought that if they left fast, the police would be satisfied; that the police wanted them out of the White area.  
 The police’s reactions: they chased and beat people simply because they were running away – “they hated seeing people run and get away” (p. 63).  
 The underlying reasons for the police’s actions: “they needed to torture and harass people into fearing them” (p. 63). [4]

5. Humiliated: Their dignity and self-respect injured; made to feel ashamed. People had been chased and beaten for no good reason. They were made to feel afraid, to run away. No explanations were given to them, as if they were not worthy of explanations or respect – they were treated like children in some ways. [2]

## Chapter 8

1. resentment; despair; pride; hope; honesty; terror; melancholy; listlessness; anger. [2½]  
(When you list words, keep them in the same form, e.g. nouns, as is done here.)
2. “Teachers would sit in their staffrooms ... rarely taking the time to teach.” [2]

## Chapter 9

1. If a woman had to take care of a baby on her own, she would have to give up dreams of studying and would have to find a job instead. Caring for a child brings many responsibilities and can mean sacrificing one’s own dreams in order to provide for one’s child. [3]
2. The author is describing the effects of racism – how it feels to be seen as different, feared and unwanted. As with many other incidents and descriptions, she is putting us in the shoes of someone living under apartheid. [3]  
Own response for rest of answer.
3. • hope despite circumstances: Tihelo keeps going to school; the wedding is a joyous celebration; Peter won a dance competition in the past, which promised fame – although we don’t hear that anything came of it.  
• hopes and dreams: Kgomotso had to give up her dreams when Keitumetse was born; she does not want Keitumetse in turn to give up hers; Tihelo dreams of studying journalism.  
• attitudes towards gender: ignorance about sex; deliberate ignorance to induce fear; Mohau agrees to help care for the baby, a change from male attitudes of the past.

## Chapter 10

1. When Keitumetse has taken the medicine and ends up barely conscious, Tihelo is shaking. She endures a long wait while Keitumetse is looked after; the nurses are horrified at what she’s done and she feels ashamed and guilty – “a heavy feeling inside my chest” (p. 102); “I hated myself ...”. [4]
2. Tihelo says she mourns her childhood. In other words, her childhood has ended. The memory sections all deal with childhood memories, building a picture of Tihelo’s background and character. Now, her childhood has ended, so the memories end, too.

## Chapter 11

1. You should mention issues such as having to be home by a certain time and then staying in at night; not being allowed to gather in large groups; high levels of tension in the community ... Perhaps an older person you know has lived through such a time – ask them what they remember. A diary entry should always include feelings. [30]

## Chapter 12

1. The following list includes some of the most common signs of depression. Your Life Orientation teacher, or a local clinic or support group, will be able to give advice and support about what to do to help a person who is depressed.  
Common signs of depression: feelings of hopelessness; loss of interest in daily activities; appetite or weight changes; sleep changes; feeling agitated or sluggish; loss of energy; strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt; difficulty focusing; easily annoyed or frustrated; aches and pains.

## Chapter 13

1. She hopes she can still finish the year; finishing school is part of her dream of leaving the township one day; she can only fight as a comrade if she also studies to reach her dream. Others say she is a hypocrite – she marches against the government but accepts their education; or they say that she puts on a mask, wanting to look like a good girl going to school.  
[5 marks for facts; 1 mark for own words = 6]

## Chapter 14

1. singing and dancing “kept our spirits up”; it “strengthened our will”; helped them feel less fearful (“alleviated the dread”); passed the time; made them feel powerful. [5]
2. No, stones aren’t effective – “not really making a difference”. A stone can shatter a windscreen and injure someone; if a vehicle is moving and a rock hits it, it can kill someone. But in this case the vehicles are standing still. Tihelo explains that the stone she threw “carried all the force I had within me. ... sheer terror [and] the passion of the spirit of resistance.” One stone hits the windshield of a van, and then the police open fire. [3]

## Chapter 15

1. massacre: noun: general slaughter (cruel killing); verb: to murder a number of people cruelly or violently.  
synonyms: slaughter; carnage; bloodbath; butchering.  
The word is an emotive one; yet Tihelo’s experience of the event was that it was cruel and violent. Having your friends killed around you must seem like a massacre. [4]

## Chapter 16

1. Tihelo finds it reassuring that her grandmother too was light-skinned. It helps her to feel that she belongs in her family. [2]

## Chapter 17

1. “Sharpeville, June 1976, and Biko’s death” are mentioned. As at Sharpeville, police respond to this march with force, leaving many dead. This march is similar to the June 1976 protest in that it is also a students’ march. [4]

2.

Parents	Students
Quiet	Noisy, singing
Meeting point	Gather people as they march
A sense of mourning, sadness	Dancing, powerful

[3]

3. It is “dark and eerie” – so too is the mood, as people mourn the deaths of the students. Tihelo says it’s like winter. [2]
4. The soldiers are there to keep things calm and to stop any violence by the “natives” against the Whites. They were “defending themselves from us, from these places we lived in”, yet Tihelo says they too were “struggling to protect” themselves from these same places. The soldiers see the townships as a threat – yet so do the people living in them. [4]

## Chapter 18

1. p. 162: night and day; several days – still with others. pp. 165–166: abuse and attempted rape – solitary confinement. In the dark, day and night seem the same, dreaming or waking; she imagines the peach trees and whether the fruit is green or ripe; she has her period twice. Then she is tortured with electric shock and thrown into a different cell, where, she is told, she spends a month. Her total time in detention (during which she turns 15) is six months. [6]
2. She yells out, using their names and shouting what they want to do. She also shouts that it’s illegal, and says her age. All these things have the effect of scaring the policemen off. [4]
3. She is put in solitary confinement, alone in a cell with no light and no human contact. [2]

## Chapter 19

1. Each learner’s contribution to the class conversation can be formally assessed to form part of the oral assessment mark. Learners can also write an essay about or discuss the essay topics on page 28.