



# **Best Books Study Work Guide:**

## ***Cry, the Beloved Country***

### **for Grade 12 First Additional Language**

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>iv</b>	2.15 Book 3, Chapter 2	89
		2.16 Book 3, Chapter 3	93
		2.17 Book 3, Chapter 4	98
<b>Section A: Making meaning of the novel as a whole</b>	<b>1</b>	2.18 Book 3, Chapter 5	102
1. <b>Pre-reading activities</b>	1	2.19 Book 3, Chapter 6	106
1.1 Taking your first glance at the novel	1	2.20 Book 3, Chapter 7	111
1.2 Taking a closer look at the Author's Notes before reading the novel	4		
1.3 The purpose and format of the novel	6	<b>Section C: Writing about the meaning of the novel</b>	<b>116</b>
2. <b>Reading for plot and main ideas</b>	7	1. <b>Introduction</b>	116
2.1 Use plot to make sense of what happens in the story	7	2. <b>Prepare to write meaningful answers</b>	116
2.2 Five plot elements	8	2.1 Deepen your understanding	116
2.3 Reading for plot and main ideas in the story of the novel	8	2.2 Pace your preparation	116
3. <b>Post-reading activities</b>	<b>10</b>	3. <b>Write meaningful answers</b>	116
3.1 Thinking about theme	11	3.1 Before you answer the questions	116
3.2 Tracing themes in the novel	11	3.2 When you answer the questions	116
3.3 Motifs supporting the themes	15	3.3 After you have answered the questions	117
3.4 Setting	18	4. <b>Practise writing answers to examination questions</b>	117
3.5 Characterisation	19	a. Book One: Contextual questions	118
3.6 Conflict	22	b. Book Two: Contextual questions	122
3.7 Imagery	23	c. Book Three: Contextual questions	126
3.8 Style	24		
4. <b>Summary</b>	27	<b>Section D: Exploring enrichment activities</b>	<b>130</b>
		1. Introduction	130
<b>Section B: Delving deeper into the meaning of the message</b>	<b>28</b>	2. My communication checklist	130
1. <b>Introduction</b>	28	3. Dip into the enrichment pool	131
2. <b>A closer reading of chapters and key passages</b>	29	4. Activities	131
2.1 Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2	29	4.1 Read a poem	131
2.2 Book 1, Chapters 3, 4 and 5	33	4.2 View the film	131
2.3 Book 1, Chapters 6 and 7	37	4.3 Research	132
2.4 Book 1, Chapters 8, 9 and 10	41	4.4 Speak and act	132
2.5 Book 1, Chapters 11, 12 and 13	46	4.5 Write and publish	132
2.6 Book 1, Chapter 14	50		
2.7 Book 1, Chapters 15, 16 and 17	54	<b>Glossary of literary terms</b>	<b>133</b>
2.8 Book 2, Chapter 1	59	<b>List of acknowledgements and references</b>	<b>134</b>
2.9 Book 2, Chapters 2, 3 and 4	63	<b>Annexure A: Detailed plot summary linked to main ideas</b>	<b>135</b>
2.10 Book 2, Chapter 5	67	<b>Annexure B: Tracing motifs in the novel</b>	<b>163</b>
2.11 Book 2, Chapters 6-10	72	<b>Annexure C: Explanation and examples of questions</b>	<b>169</b>
2.12 Book 2, Chapter 11	76		
2.13 Book 2, Chapter 12	81		
2.14 Book 3, Chapter 1	85		



## Post-reading activities

A brief description of the literary elements in the key passage deepens your understanding of how the author uses these to communicate his message. You will be able to develop your own critical awareness of Paton's message and his language usage by considering the reflective questions following the description. These questions also guide your reflection on the relevance of the author's message to your own experiences.

## 2. A closer reading of chapters and key passages

### 2.1 Book 1, Chapters 1 and 2



## Pre-reading activities

### 2.1.1 Link to the plot structure

Refresh your background knowledge and understanding of how Chapters One and Two in Book One fit into the plot structure and main ideas of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The brief description below links the plot element to the detailed summary of plot and main ideas in each chapter. Read this summary and your own notes in Annexure A.

#### Plot element: Exposition

Introduction to the Umzimkulu River valley, Reverend Kumalo and his family. A letter from Theophilus Msimangu in Sophiatown introduces the problem of his sister's illness. Reverend Kumalo decides to travel to Johannesburg to help his sister and to look for his brother and his son.

### 2.1.2 Check your understanding of vocabulary and concepts in the chapters

Skim-read Chapters One and Two in Book One. Note words or concepts (ideas) that you do not understand, or that you need to understand more clearly. Use your dictionary, the explanatory notes in your copy of the novel and in your study work guide to develop your understanding. The table below explains the meaning of words that you may find difficult.

#### Difficult words

Chapter 1		Chapter 2	
kloofs ( <i>noun, plural</i> )	steep-sided valleys	delicately ( <i>adverb</i> )	cautiously; carefully
well-tended ( <i>adjective</i> )	well taken care of	laboriously ( <i>adverb</i> )	taking a lot of time and effort

Refer to Section A (1.3) of your study work guide to refresh your background knowledge about the *racial segregation* and *migrant labour laws* that were enforced by the government.

### 2.1.3 Check your understanding of the literary elements in the novel

Refer to the post-reading activities in Section A to refresh your background knowledge about the following literary elements: **theme; motif; setting; characterisation; conflict; imagery; style.**



## Reading activities

### 2.1.4 Practise answering contextual questions

Read Chapters One and Two in Book One closely. Pay attention to the main ideas of the message and Paton's use of literary elements to communicate his message in a powerful and striking way. Then, read the key passage in Book One, Chapter Two, pp. 6–7 to practise analysing the text.

Read the following extract from the novel and answer the set of questions. The level of the questions is indicated in [ ] brackets and the mark allocation in ( ) brackets. The number of marks allocated to each question serves as a guide to the expected length of your answer.

#### Reverend Kumalo and his wife are talking:

– Hurting myself? Hurting myself? I do not hurt myself, it is they who are hurting me. My own son, my own sister, my own brother. They go away and they do not write any more. Perhaps it does not seem to them that we suffer. Perhaps they do not care for it.

His voice rose into loud and angry words. Go up and ask the white man, he said. Perhaps there are letters. Perhaps they have fallen under the counter, or been hidden amongst the food. Look in the trees, perhaps they have been blown there by the wind.

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She cried out at him, [y]ou are hurting me also.

He came to himself and said humbly, That I may not do.

10

He held out the tin to her. Open it, he said.

With trembling hands she took the tin and opened it. She emptied it out over the table, some old and dirty notes, and a flood of silver and copper.

– Count it, he said.

She counted it laboriously, turning over the notes and the coins to make sure what they were.

15

– Twelve pounds, five shillings and seven pence.

(Extract from *Cry, the Beloved Country* used with permission of Penguin Random House.)

1. Name Reverend Kumalo's sister, brother and son. [1] (3)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. List the reasons why Reverend Kumalo's family went to Johannesburg. [1] (3)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Reverend Kumalo's wife opened the tin box and the letter. The reason why, and the way in which she opened them, are similar. Describe why and how she opened these two objects. [2] (2)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





4. Group the places where Reverend Kumalo's wife could look for letters from their family. [2] (3)

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5. Refer to lines 1–4: **"I do not hurt myself, it is they who are hurting me."** Explain how Reverend Kumalo's and his wife's hurt feelings link to the theme of suffering in the novel. [3] (4)

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6. Refer to lines 9–10: **"She cried out at him, [y]ou are hurting me also."** Explain the effect of Reverend Kumalo's wife's words on his attitude. [3] (3)

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7. Reverend Kumalo commands his wife to look for letters, to open the tin box and to count the money. Is his commanding attitude towards his wife acceptable to you? Give a reason for your answer. [4] (3)

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8. Refer to line 10: **"That I may not do."** What do these words of Reverend Kumalo to his wife tell you about his moral values? [4] (3)

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9. Refer to lines 6–7: **"Look in the trees, perhaps they have been blown there by the wind."** Name the figure of speech that Paton uses. Do you think he uses it effectively? Give a reason for your answer. [5] (4)

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10. Refer to lines 12–16. These lines describe how Reverend Kumalo's wife slowly counts their savings with trembling hands because she is upset. Do you empathise with her? What would you do if you were in her situation? [5] (4)

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## Post-reading activities

### 2.1.5 Thinking about the text

Study the brief description of literary elements in the key passage.

<b>Theme</b>	The theme of <b>suffering</b> appears in the key passage. Reverend Kumalo and his wife are hurt by the indifference of their family members, who have left for Johannesburg. The theme of <b>erosion</b> appears in their lack of care that shows their moral decay. The theme of <b>fear</b> is introduced because they are afraid to open the letter from Johannesburg. It is contrasted with the theme of <b>caring</b> . The parson and his wife take care of the little girl who brings the letter. The theme of <b>power relations</b> is introduced in the way in which Reverend Kumalo commands his wife. His decision to travel to Johannesburg introduces the theme of a <b>journey</b> .
<b>Setting</b>	The description of the tin box and the small amount of money that they have managed to save illustrate the poverty of the village and its people. In Chapter Two, the address on the letter to Reverend Kumalo indicates that he lives in Ndotsheni.
<b>Characters</b>	Paton introduces Reverend Stephen Kumalo and his wife from St. Mark's Church through their actions. They act kindly towards the little girl who delivers the letter. Reverend Kumalo is portrayed as an authoritative figure who commands his wife and who wants to do what is right. Reverend Kumalo has a title and a biblical name, whereas his wife does not have a name. She is mostly stereotyped as a black woman who suffers in silence, although she protests that her husband's angry words are hurting her.
<b>Conflict</b>	Reverend Kumalo experiences conflicting emotions between anger and his loyalty to his moral values. He humbly acknowledges his mistake. This pattern of behaviour repeats in the novel.
<b>Style</b>	The author's choice of words in the key passage reflects a simple style. The repetition of phrases is effective because it emphasises the theme of <b>suffering</b> . The author uses sarcasm to word Reverend Kumalo's anger.

### 2.1.6 Reflection and critical awareness



Add your own reflections about the author's usage of literary elements in the key passage.

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The author's choice of imagery and names in the novel stereotypes the image of black women. They have no voice to express their suffering. Reverend Kumalo's wife and Absalom's girlfriend have no names. He compares the suffering of black women "**with the suffering of oxen, with the suffering of any that are mute**" (p. 7). Why, do you think, does he use these techniques? If you were to rewrite the novel, would you have portrayed these women differently?

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