Study Guide

for

My Children! My Africa!
By Athol Fugard
Directed by Gary Yates

Produced by Theatrical Outfit
2014

Staged in conjunction with the Africa-Atlanta Project, which fosters art, business and educational collaborations between Georgia’s capitol city and the African continent.
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Georgia Performance Standards

Common Core English/ Language Arts
Research To Build and Present Knowledge

**L6-8WHST7**
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**L6-8WHST8**
Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and other reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

**L6-8WHST9**
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Synopsis of Play

It is the fall of 1985 and a debate is taking place in Number One Classroom at Zolile High School, an all-male black school in the township of Cadeboo, South Africa. Zolile student Thami Mbikwana engages in a lively argument with Isabel Dyson, a student from an all-white girl’s school who is the visiting competitor in an inter-school debating competition. Both Thami and Isabel present their cases with great intelligence and zest, arousing a spirited response from their classroom audience. Thami’s teacher, Mr. M, picks up on the intellectual spark between his favorite student and Isabel, and decides to team them up for a statewide English literature competition.

In the mid-1980’s, in apartheid South Africa, meaningful friendships between black and white teenagers were unusual. But as their study sessions progress, that is what develops between Isabel and Thami - a true friendship, rooted in mutual respect for each other. Isabel also gains tremendous admiration for Mr. M, who is a brilliant and dedicated teacher, and a follower of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. But while these three individuals are united by their zealous love of knowledge inside the classroom, outside the schoolhouse, a political unrest is brewing that will take each of them in different directions, challenging their relationships with one another.

Pressure is building to topple the South African system of apartheid, and while Mr. M clings to what Thami believes is an old-fashioned and ineffective strategy of working within the system to overcome the system’s ills, Thami takes a more radical approach by joining a student movement that plans to boycott the school.
until blacks are given an education equivalent to that of whites. Isabel, whose white, middle-class home is literally and figuratively miles away from the tin shacks of “the location” (or ghetto) where the blacks live, has an incredibly difficult time understanding the divide that has occurred between her beloved Mr. M and her dear friend Thami. The students’ entry into the literature competition is withdrawn, and Isabel and Thami go many weeks without seeing each other as the violence in their community builds.

Mr. M feels betrayed by his prize pupil Thami and believes that his actions are destructive, both to himself and to their country. He cooperates with the white police by giving them the names of boycotting students which results in those students’ arrests. Thami’s comrades retaliate and a mob approaches Zolile High School, intending to kill Mr. M for his actions. Thami returns to the school to help his mentor, promising to vouch for his innocence. But Mr. M refuses Thami’s offer, and the mob kills him.

Isabel learns of Mr. M’s murder, and confronts Thami about it. She struggles to understand the revolution in her country and her friend’s participation in it. Thami informs her that he must flee the country for his own safety, and so that he may continue the fight against apartheid. In the end, Isabel finds a small amount of peace by delivering a personal tribute to Mr. M, a man who influenced her tremendously in the short time that she knew him.

_Synopsis Written By Mira Hirsch, Director of Education_
_Theatrical Outfit_
Harold Athol Lanigan Fugard was born in South Africa in 1932. He grew up in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and describes himself as an Afrikaner (descendant of the Dutch & Huguenot settlers from the 17th century). Athol Fugard dropped out of the University of Cape Town to hitchhike and sail the world on a cargo steamship. After a brief experience with acting in South Africa, Athol Fugard began to write. His works have almost always been situated in South Africa, during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid period. Athol Fugard has been likened to Tennessee Williams for featuring complex characters, especially women, who are struggling to exist in their social context.

Athol Fugard was a delegated voice to the voiceless, as he recalls how one night four black men and a woman came knocking at his door. They wanted to open a drama group. They wanted their silence to have a chance to be heard, even if it was a whisper during this oppressive period. Some of the Black actors Athol Fugard worked with would be arrested, often unwarranted, which was frequent during Athol Fugard’s attempt to creatively defy the government. Athol Fugard’s incessant collaboration with Blacks during the political strife led to many documented experiences and stories, which made their way into Athol Fugard’s works like *Master Harold and the Boys*, and *Entrances and Exits*.

In the 1950s Athol Fugard wrote *No Good Friday* and *The Blood Knot*, which led to the revoking of his passport. This was the government’s attempt to corner Athol Fugard into leaving South Africa on a permanent exit-visa. He chose to stay. Athol Fugard has worked with various local theater groups in South Africa, and his works have been produced all over the world. Athol Fugard’s inspiration comes from the admired South African stage actor Andre Hueguenet. Athol Fugard states Hueguenet’s Manichaean ideals creatively challenged him to find and invent himself.

Athol Fugard has written 29 plays, short stories, and novels giving voice to the oppressed Blacks of the South African Apartheid. Fugard is an adjunct professor of playwriting, acting and directing in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of California, San Diego. For the academic year 2000–2001, he was the IU Class of 1963 Wells Scholar Professor at Indiana University, in Bloomington, Indiana. The recipient of many awards, honors, and honorary degrees, including the 2005 Order of Ikhamanga in Silver "for his excellent contribution and achievements in the theatre" from the government of South Africa, he is also an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. His novel, *Tsotsi*, was made into an Oscar-winning movie. In 2007, he was awarded the Tony’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Although the Apartheid has ended de facto, Athol Fugard’s works serve as a historical capsule, recording the emotional and social turmoil poisoning his native South Africa.
After the National Party gained power in South Africa in 1948, its all-white government immediately began enforcing existing policies of racial segregation under a system of legislation that it called apartheid. Under apartheid, nonwhite South Africans (a majority of the population) would be forced to live in separate areas from whites and use separate public facilities, and contact between the two groups would be limited. Despite strong and consistent opposition to apartheid within and outside of South Africa, its laws remained in effect for the better part of 50 years. In 1991, the government of President F.W. de Klerk began to repeal most of the legislation that provided the basis for apartheid.

Birth of Apartheid

Racial segregation and white supremacy had become central aspects of South African policy long before apartheid began. The controversial 1913 Land Act, passed three years after South Africa gained its independence, marked the beginning of territorial segregation by forcing black Africans to live in reserves and making it illegal for them to work as sharecroppers. Opponents of the Land Act formed the South African National Native Congress, which would become the African National Congress (ANC).

Did You Know?

ANC leader Nelson Mandela, released from prison in February 1990, worked closely with President F.W. de Klerk's government to draw up a new constitution for South Africa. After both sides made concessions, they reached agreement in 1993, and would share the Nobel Peace Prize that year for their efforts.

The Great Depression and World War II brought increasing economic woes to South Africa, and convinced the government to strengthen its policies of racial segregation. In 1948, the Afrikaner National Party won the general election under the slogan “apartheid” (literally “separateness”). Their goal was not only to separate South Africa’s white minority from its non-white majority, but also to separate non-whites from each other, and to divide black South Africans along tribal lines in order to decrease their political power.

Apartheid Becomes Law

By 1950, the government had banned marriages between whites and people of other races, and prohibited sexual relations between black and white South Africans. The Population Registration Act of 1950 provided the basic framework for apartheid by classifying all South Africans by race, including Bantu (black Africans), Coloured (mixed race) and white. A fourth category, Asian (meaning Indian and Pakistani) was later added. In some cases, the legislation split families; parents could be classified as white, while their children were classified as colored.
A series of Land Acts set aside more than 80 percent of the country’s land for the white minority, and “pass laws” required non-whites to carry documents authorizing their presence in restricted areas. In order to limit contact between the races, the government established separate public facilities for whites and non-whites, limited the activity of nonwhite labor unions and denied non-white participation in national government.

**Apartheid and Separate Development**

Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, who became prime minister in 1958, would refine apartheid policy further into a system he referred to as “separate development.” The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 created 10 Bantu homelands known as Bantustans. Separating black South Africans from each other enabled the government to claim there was no black majority, and reduced the possibility that blacks would unify into one nationalist organization. Every black South African was designated as a citizen as one of the Bantustans, a system that supposedly gave them full political rights, but effectively removed them from the nation’s political body.

In one of the most devastating aspects of apartheid, the government forcibly removed black South Africans from rural areas designated as “white” to the homelands, and sold their land at low prices to white farmers. From 1961 to 1994, more than 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and deposited in the Bantustans, where they were plunged into poverty and hopelessness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apartheid and the People of South Africa</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Whites</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>19 million</td>
<td>4.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Allocation</td>
<td>13 percent</td>
<td>87 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of National Income</td>
<td>&lt; 20 percent</td>
<td>75 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of average earnings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum taxable income</td>
<td>360 rands</td>
<td>750 rands</td>
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<td>Doctors/population</td>
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<td>1/400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>20% (urban), 40% (rural)</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual expenditure on education per pupil</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>$696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/pupil ratio</td>
<td>1/60</td>
<td>1/22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Disproportionate Treatment circa 1978. Source: [Leo80]*
THE CREATION OF THE BANTUSTANS

Dr H.F. Verwoerd was the prime minister of South Africa from 1958 until 1966, when he was assassinated. Verwoerd was responsible for further refining the policy of apartheid into what he called ‘separate development’.

In 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act was passed. According to this law, the reserves which had been created through the 1913 Land Act, would become separate ‘countries’ known as homelands or Bantustans. Every African in South Africa would become a ‘citizen’ of one of these homelands.

Each homeland would have its own government, which supposedly gave Africans full political rights. In the homelands, Africans would be able to develop separately and independently from whites. Ten separate homelands were established, each based on the African language spoken in the area.

Why did the government introduce Separate Development?

At the heart of the issue were the political rights of Africans and the question of democracy. The white government wanted to convince the world that South Africa was a democracy in which everyone had the right to vote. They explained that Africans would have the right to vote for their own political leaders in their homelands, but would have no political rights in South Africa.

By dividing Africans into ten different cultural, political and ethnic groups, the Nationalist government could claim that there was no African majority living in South Africa. Moreover, by highlighting the ethnic identities of Africans, the government hoped to create divisions among them and prevent the growth of a united African nationalism that could threaten the apartheid state.

The homelands were meant to become politically and economically independent. In truth, they never were. The former reserves were underdeveloped, with mostly infertile soil and no industries. People were unable to make a living in the homelands, and many had to work as migrant labourers in the cities of South Africa.

Influx control

An important aspect of urban segregation was influx control. The central government tried to limit the flow of Africans into towns by controlling who was allowed in the urban areas. They did this through the use of passes. Every African man had to carry a pass which gave him permission to be in an urban area. Only people who could find work were given a pass. As a result, people accepted whatever jobs they could find, often for very low wages. If an African male was unable to find work in the urban areas, he was forced to return to the rural areas.

Police conducted regular pass raids. If a person’s pass was not in order, or if they did not have a pass in their possession, they were arrested, kicked out of the urban areas and sent back to the reserves.

These pass raids happened so often, that most Africans had, at one time or another, been arrested for a pass law offence. This had the effect of turning the majority of the African population into criminals.
Opposition to Apartheid

*MAYIBUYE! ¡AFRIKA!*

From the 1940s to the 1970s, resistance to apartheid took many different forms. In the 1940s, the resistance movement was still moderate, but in the 1950s, it turned to open, but non-violent, confrontation. In the early 1960s it took up arms in the struggle. The state met every attempt at resistance by increasing its repression.

Despite the South African government’s harsh policies and the growing poverty and hardship of the African people, there was little organized black resistance against the state until things began to change in the 1940s. There were many popular struggles during this time, including housing protests and bus boycotts. Many of these struggles were inspired by the activities of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which was formed in 1921. A large number of the leaders of the CPSA were white.

**The ANC Youth League**

The African National Congress (ANC) remained out of touch with the mood and needs of most Africans. It was only when the ANC Youth League was formed in 1944 that the ANC began to adopt a more mass-based approach.

Youth Leaguers such as Anton Lembede, its first president, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu called for a *militant* programme of action, based on mass protests, boycotts and passive resistance. The Programme of Action was only adopted by the ANC in 1949 when the Youth Leaguers began to play a prominent role and the movement dedicated itself to mass action.

> Anton Lembede, the first president of the ANC Youth League.
Throughout the 1950s, there were many campaigns and protests against apartheid and the apartheid laws. There was a groundswell of resistance as people responded in overwhelming numbers to calls for civil disobedience and defiance throughout the country.

In this section, we will look at some of the most important campaigns. Most acts of resistance during this time were intended to be non-violent, though they did become violent from time to time, usually as a result of brutal police action.

“Open the jail doors, we want to enter!”: The Defiance Campaign

In 1952 the African National Congress launched the Defiance Campaign. A programme of civil disobedience was planned. This meant that large groups of Africans would peacefully but deliberately break the law. They aimed to get arrested and flood the country’s prisons. They hoped that this would draw public attention to the apartheid laws and force the government to abolish them.

Mass rallies were held throughout the country and groups of volunteers were sent to break the law. They walked through ‘whites only’ entrances, sat in parks set aside for whites only, broke the curfew, and refused to carry their passes. As a result, over 8 000 people were arrested. The campaign had an enormous impact on people and ANC membership swelled from 7 000 to 100 000. However, the police responded with extreme violence, especially in the Eastern Cape. The state imposed heavy fines and even jail sentences, and the ANC was forced to call off the campaign.
Repressive government legislation and actions
The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 made the Communist Party illegal and
gave the government the power to declare any similar organization illegal as well. The
Communist Party disbanded itself just before this legislation became law.

The Public Safety Act of 1953 enabled the government to declare a state of emergency
if it believed that public order was threatened.

The government also placed banning orders on political activists. A banned person
was restricted to his/her district, had to report to the police twice a day, could not be in
the company of more than one person, and could not be quoted. This effectively silenced
many activists. Organizations could also be banned, which meant they ceased to exist.

“The People shall govern”: The Freedom Charter

In the 1950s, different groups within the liberation movement came together to form the
Congress Alliance. The Alliance included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the
South African Congress of Democrats (an organization of whites opposed to apartheid),
the Coloured People’s Organization and the South African Council of Trade Unions.

The Alliance started the Congress of the People Campaign. Volunteers travelled
throughout South Africa to collect the demands of ordinary South Africans for a just and
free society. These demands were listed in the Freedom Charter, which was presented to
the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955. You can see video footage of this event in
the Apartheid Museum.

The Congress of the People Campaign was important because it mobilized people over
a lengthy period and so helped to revive the ANC. The ANC formulated a programme for
the Congress Alliance which would guide it for the next forty years.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER
We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and
the world to know:

That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white,
and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is
based on the will of the people.

The people shall govern.
All national groups shall have equal rights.
The people shall share in the nation’s wealth.
The land shall be shared by those who work it.
All shall be equal before the law.
All shall enjoy equal human rights.
There shall be work and security for all.
The doors of learning and culture shall be opened.
There shall be houses, security and comfort.
There shall be peace and friendship.
The Treason Trial

The South African government regarded the Freedom Charter as a treasonable document and it claimed that the Congress Alliance was plotting to overthrow the state. As a result, 156 members of the Congress Alliance were arrested and charged with treason. The treason trial lasted from 1956 to 1961, but the government failed to prove that treason had been intended and so everyone was eventually acquitted.

You can see this very famous and interesting photograph in the Apartheid Museum. It is interesting because it has been constructed. The photographer, Eli Weinberg, had received permission to photograph all 156 trialists in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. However, when the park superintendent found out that most of the people were black, he withdrew permission. So Weinberg set up benches outside the park and photographed the people in different groups. He then put the groups together in a single photograph.

“Strijdom, you have struck a rock!”: Women’s resistance

Partly because African women experienced fewer restrictions than men, they were at the forefront of resistance in the 1940s and the early 1950s.

In the 1950s the government tried to extend its control over the African women who were moving to the cities and to restrict their freedom when they got there. To achieve this, it planned to extend the pass system to include women. For several years women resisted this attempt.

By 1956 their resistance had grown into a national movement. It reached its climax on 9 August 1956 when 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria and handed over letters of protest against the proposed pass laws to Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom.

The women’s resistance failed to achieve its objectives and the pass laws were extended to apply to African women in the late 1950s. Today, 9 August is a public holiday on which we celebrate National Women’s Day, remembering the role played by women in defying the unjust pass laws, as well as the strength and courage of women in South Africa as a whole.
THE 1960s — THE ROAD TO ARMED STRUGGLE

The formation of the PAC

In 1959 a group within the ANC, led by Robert Sobukwe, P.K. Leballo and Zeph Mothopeng, broke away and formed a new organization called the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). As Africanists, they were opposed to working with organizations that were not African. They were particularly opposed to the Congress Alliance, which also included the white-based Congress of Democrats.

The Sharpeville Massacre

On 21 March 1960, the Pan Africanist Congress organized a protest against the pass laws. Still using the methods of non-violent protest, they planned to march to the local police station, hand in their passes and give themselves up for arrest. A large crowd gathered outside the police station at Sharpeville (near Vereeniging). The police fired on the crowd, killing 69 people and wounding 180 people.

Moving towards the armed struggle

Sharpeville marked a turning point in the anti-apartheid struggle. There was a massive outcry, both nationally and internationally, about police actions there. The government responded by declaring a state of emergency and banning the ANC and the PAC.

Both the ANC and the PAC had to rethink their strategies. They decided to embark on a policy of armed resistance. The ANC set up a military wing called Umkhonto we Sizwe, ‘the Spear of the Nation’, also known as MK. The PAC established its military wing called Poqo, which means ‘standing alone’. Both groups were prepared to use sabotage and violence to overthrow the government.
THE 1970s —
THE YOUTH TAKE CHARGE

Steve Biko and the Rise of Black Consciousness

The early 1960s saw the end of effective opposition from the ANC and PAC within South Africa. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and *Pogo* had been effectively crushed and the key leaders were either banned, jailed or in exile. In the 1970s, however, black resistance took on a new form – black consciousness. Black consciousness (BC) started in South Africa in 1969 as a university student movement led by Steve Biko.

Biko was a medical student who was born in East London in 1946. While he was studying, he formed SASO, the South African Students Organization, and became its first president. SASO was a breakaway movement from NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), a mainly white student movement that was opposed to apartheid. Biko believed that a white-led organization could not fight for the interests of black students.

The main ideas of black consciousness were:
• pride in being black
• a determination that blacks should end their dependence on whites.

▲ The symbol of the Black Consciousness Movement.
THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976

In 1975 the Minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha, ordered that African schools must teach half of the subjects in Standards Five and Six (now Grades 7 and 8) in Afrikaans. People opposed this because they believed that the children’s education would suffer. They also opposed it because they saw Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor.

On 16 June 1976, 20 000 students marched through Soweto in protest against the use of Afrikaans in schools. The police fired on the crowd. Hector Pieterson was the first child to die. He was 13 years old. The students responded violently and unrest swept throughout the country.

Although the uprising was eventually crushed by the police, it had important results. It was the single biggest challenge to the government and the apartheid system. The government could no longer ignore resistance. In many ways, the Soweto Uprising was a major turning point and marked the beginning of the end of apartheid.

TOTAL STRATEGY

The Soweto Uprising of 1976 changed the political landscape of South Africa forever. Resistance intensified, international pressure against the government increased and the economy went into serious decline. The South African government began to feel increasingly threatened.

Did You Know...

In Theatrical Outfit’s production of “My Children! My Africa!” Thami’s opening costume is modeled after these famous photographs taken in 1976 just after the Soweto Uprising. Mbuyisa Makhubo is carrying Hector Pieterson, who was shot in the uprising. Hector’s sister walks beside them.
'TOTAL STRATEGY' – REFORM

As part of Botha’s policy of reform, he made **concessions** in a number of different areas. He hoped that by doing this, many blacks would be **bought off** and would be satisfied with these so-called reforms. In this way, resistance would die down and whites would be able to hold on to power.

In this section, we look at some of the different reforms Botha’s government introduced. These included the recognition of African trade unions, the granting of independence to some homelands, the recognition of a permanent urban African population, the attempt to create an African middle class and the creation of the **Tricameral Parliament**.

**Labour – Workers Unite!**

Under the umbrella of reform, the government recognized African trade unions in 1979. Until then, African trade unions had been legal but were not allowed to negotiate with employers over wages and working conditions.

Why did the government recognize African trade unions at this time? On the one hand, it was part of P.W. Botha’s strategy of reform. But the government was also forced to respond to the growing **militancy** among workers. In 1973 nearly 60 000 workers embarked on a wave of strikes in Durban as a response to a sharp increase in food prices. The Durban strikes were a major turning point in the history of African trade unions. Inspired by the strikes, more and more African trade unions began to spring up and organize workers.

The recognition of African trade unions in 1979 made it easier for them to operate. They realized that they would have more power if they worked together. This led to the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and other umbrella bodies. FOSATU supported the principle of non-racialism and believed that all workers should unite and fight for better conditions.
The push for unity continued and in 1985, FOSATU merged with other unions to form a new federation – the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU, with nearly half a million members, was the largest trade union organization ever formed in South Africa.

Under COSATU’s banner, workers organized countless strikes and protests in the factories and on the mines to improve wages and working conditions. However, as repression intensified, COSATU was drawn more and more into the struggle for broad political change and became one of the most important anti-apartheid forces.

May Day – 1 May – is traditionally celebrated as Workers’ Day throughout the world. COSATU often used May Day as a call to action for workers. After the 1994 elections, 1 May was recognized as Worker’s Day in the new South Africa. Today we celebrate it as a public holiday and remember the struggles of working class people for their rights.

Making homelands ‘independent’

The government decided to grant limited independence to four homelands. This would entitle them to their own president and give them some administrative powers. However, the homelands remained financially dependent on South Africa and did not have the right to make their own policies.

In this way, P.W. Botha and his cabinet hoped to create a group of African leaders in the homelands who depended on the South African government’s support. In 1976, the Transkei became the first homeland to gain its ‘independence’, followed by Bophuthatswana and Venda in 1977 and the Ciskei in 1981.

Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi refused to accept ‘independence’ for KwaZulu and massive resistance by the people in the remaining Bantustans eventually led the government to scrap its plans to extend ‘independence’ to them.

A permanent urban African population

African people living in the urban areas remained a huge problem for the government, but it was eventually forced to recognize that there was a permanent urban African population outside of the Bantustans. From the late 1970s, plans were launched to develop African townships, in the hope that electricity, improved services and new housing would reduce militancy among residents.
Creating a new African middle class

At the same time the state tried to create an African middle class which would have an economic stake in the system and so be loyal to the government. Many measures were introduced, both economic and cultural, to encourage better-off urban Africans to adopt a middle class lifestyle. Separate amenities legislation was relaxed to allow middle class blacks access to hotels, cinemas and restaurants in white areas.

The film about the 1980s in the Apartheid Museum begins by showing the government’s drive to create better housing for some residents in Soweto.

The Tricameral Parliament

In 1983, P.W. Botha introduced a new constitution for South Africa, which gave limited parliamentary representation to coloureds and Indians. There was to be a new parliament, the Tricameral Parliament. The new constitution allowed coloureds and Indians to vote for their own representatives who would sit in their own chambers of parliament. Africans were still denied the right to vote. Their interests would be represented by black, local or community councils.

The white, coloured and Indian chambers each handled laws that related to their ‘own affairs’. This meant that issues relating to education, health and community affairs were dealt with separately by each chamber. For example, the House of Representatives – the coloured chamber of parliament – would make decisions about coloured education.

All matters that related to the wider issues of governing the country, such as defence, taxation, and industry were called ‘general affairs’. The cabinet, which included representatives of all three chambers, made decisions on these. Under this new constitution, P.W. Botha became state president. He had far greater powers than any previous head of state, and could decide which matters were ‘general’ and which were ‘own affairs’.

People saw the 1983 Constitution for the sham democracy that it was. Not only was the Tricameral Parliament racially segregated, but it excluded Africans altogether.

The formation of the United Democratic Front

Two umbrella bodies were formed in 1983 to oppose the new constitution – the National Forum, which took a black consciousness position, and the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was aligned to the ANC and supported the principle of non-racialism. A contest developed between the two groups and the UDF emerged as the stronger. The UDF eventually consisted of over 500 anti-apartheid organizations, which came together to oppose the Tricameral Parliament and the whole system of apartheid.

The UDF called for all coloureds and Indians to boycott the elections for the new parliament and for Africans to boycott elections for the local community councils. In 1984, only one in five black voters actually voted in the elections. The UDF campaign had successfully denied the new parliament any kind of legitimacy.
Resistance to the government and apartheid grew quickly in the 1980s. On 3 September 1983, the day the Tricameral Parliament was inaugurated, African townships in the Vaal Triangle, south of Johannesburg, erupted in violence as a result of rent boycotts.

The ANC in exile inspired the people to take action through its broadcasts from Lusaka on Radio Freedom. During his New Year’s Day broadcast in 1985, Oliver Tambo, the president-general of the ANC, called on those in the struggle to ‘render South Africa ungovernable’.

The youth took to the streets. Shouts of “Heyta! Ta! Heyta! Ta Ta!” that accompany the toyi-toyi resounded through the townships. The targets of these protests were often the local community councils, which were seen as puppets of the apartheid state.

In a film about the 1980s in the Apartheid Museum, Motsamai Kobi, 14 years old when he joined the ranks of the comrades, explains the power of the toyi-toyi:

“The toyi-toyi happened everywhere, it happened anywhere ... It kept the morale very high. It brought us hope and joy. When we raised our knees, they came as high as our chests. Then we realized that we are tomorrow’s leaders.”
The protests and government crackdowns that followed, combined with a national economic recession, drew more international attention to South Africa and shattered all illusions that apartheid had brought peace or prosperity to the nation. The United Nations General Assembly had denounced apartheid in 1973, and in 1976 the UN Security Council voted to impose a mandatory embargo on the sale of arms to South Africa. In 1985, the United Kingdom and United States imposed economic sanctions on the country.

Resistance spread rapidly, and by 1985, many townships in South Africa had become ‘ungovernable’. At this point, trade unions, particularly COSATU, spearheaded the resistance and were helped by church organizations.

The government fought back. It declared a state of emergency in some areas in 1985 and a full emergency over the whole country between June 1986 and 1990. The police were given wide powers and, in effect, South Africa became a police state. The army occupied the townships, which only intensified the people’s anger.

By 1986 between 16,000 to 20,000 people had been detained and thousands had died at the hands of the police and the army. Violence also broke out between ANC supporters and members of Chief Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party. Political funerals became a regular occurrence.

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Under pressure from the international community, the National Party government of Pieter Botha sought to institute some reforms, including abolition of the pass laws and the ban on interracial sex and marriage. The reforms fell short of any substantive change, however, and by 1989 Botha was pressured to step aside in favor of F.W. de Klerk. De Klerk’s government subsequently repealed the Population Registration Act, as well as most of the other legislation that formed the legal basis for apartheid. A new constitution, which enfranchised blacks and other racial groups, took effect in 1994, and elections that year led to a coalition government with a nonwhite majority, marking the official end of the apartheid system.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Unbanning of political organizations (ANC, PAC, SACP) Release of Mandelae</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>(27 people killed at Sebokeng)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groote Schuur Accord – the terms of negotiations are set out</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>(3 600 people killed in political violence in 1990)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Separate Amenities Act repealed</td>
<td>June</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pretoria Minute – Mandela announces the end of the armed struggle</td>
<td>July</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Repeal of Group Areas Act, Population Registration Act, Land Act</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Violence escalates in the Johannesburg area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CODESA I meets – it was agreed that an interim government would rule until a new constitution had been drawn up</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Suspicions that government is aiding Inkatha in the township violence (Third Force activity)</td>
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<td>(2 700 people killed in political violence in 1991)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Whites-only referendum is held. 68% of the white population vote in favour of continuing negotiations for democracy</td>
<td>March</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CODESA II talks break down – the ANC and the NP government cannot agree on how power should be shared</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>ANC suspicious of the NP’s role in the ongoing violence</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>200 members of Inkatha attack a squatter camp near Boipatong, killing 49 people 28 unarmed ANC demonstrators are killed and 200 wounded by Ciskei security forces at Bisho (3 550 people killed in political violence in 1992)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Talks resume</td>
<td>March</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>SACP leader Chris Hani assassinated by right-wing fanatics 72 people die in the violence that follows</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging (AWB) force their way into the negotiating chamber after driving an armoured vehicle through the windows of the World Trade Centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The IFP and Conservative Party walk out of the talks Agreement is reached on a new constitution for South Africa</td>
<td>July</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>(4 450 people killed in political violence in 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The IFP decides to participate in the election at the last minute</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>The governments of Ciskei and Bophuthatswana collapse and are incorporated into South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The first democratic elections are held in South Africa</td>
<td>27 April</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Apartheid Vocabulary—From the Oxford English Dictionary...

Abolish
Verb
Formally put an end to (a system, practice, or institution):

Acquit
Verb (acquits, acquitting, acquitted)
1[WITH OBJECT] (usually be acquitted) Free (someone) from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty:

Apartheid
Noun historical
(In South Africa) a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race.
History
Adopted by the successful Afrikaner National Party as a slogan in the 1948 election, apartheid extended and institutionalized existing racial segregation. Despite rioting and terrorism at home and isolation abroad from the 1960s onward, the white regime maintained the apartheid system with only minor relaxation until February 1991
Origin
1940s: Afrikaans, literally 'separateness', from Dutch apart 'separate' + -heid (equivalent of -hood)

Afrikaans
Noun
A language of southern Africa, derived from the form of Dutch brought to the Cape by Protestant settlers in the 17th century, and an official language of South Africa.
Adjective
Relating to the Afrikaner people, their way of life, or their language.
Origin
the name in Afrikaans, from Dutch, literally 'African'.

Afrikaner
Noun
An Afrikaans-speaking person in South Africa, especially one descended from the Dutch and Huguenot settlers of the 17th century.
Origin
Afrikaans, from South African Dutch Africander, from Dutch Afrikaan 'an African' + the personal suffix -der, on the pattern of Hollander 'Dutchman'.

Bantu
Adjective
Relating to or denoting a group of Niger-Congo languages spoken in central and southern Africa, including Swahili, Xhosa, and Zulu.
Noun (plural same or Bantus)
1A group of Niger-Congo languages spoken in central and southern Africa, including Swahili, Xhosa, and Zulu.
2 offensive A member of an indigenous people of central and southern Africa that speaks a Bantu language.
Origin
mid 19th century: plural (in certain Bantu languages) of -ntu 'person'.
Usage
The word Bantu became a strongly offensive term under the apartheid regime in South Africa, especially when used to refer to a single individual. In standard current use in South Africa the term black or African is used as a
collective or non-specific term for African peoples. The term **Bantu** has, however, continued to be accepted as a neutral ‘scientific’ term outside South Africa used to refer to the group of languages and their speakers collectively.

**Bantustan**

**Noun**
*South African, historical, derogatory*
A partially self-governing area set aside during the period of apartheid for a particular indigenous African people; a so-called homeland.

**Boer**

*chiefly historical*

**Noun**
A member of the Dutch and Huguenot population that settled in southern Africa in the late 17th century. The Boers were Calvinist in religion and fiercely self-sufficient. Conflict with the British administration of Cape Colony after 1806 led to the Great Trek of 1835–37 and the Boer Wars, after which the Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State became part of the Republic of South Africa. The Boers' present-day descendants are the Afrikaners

**adjective**
Of or relating to the Boers.

**Origin**
from Dutch boer 'farmer'. Compare with boor.

**Boycott**

**Verb**
Withdraw from commercial or social relations with (a country, organization, or person) as a punishment or protest.

**Cabinet**

**Noun**
(In the US) a body of advisers to the president, composed of the heads of the executive departments of the government:

**Civil Disobedience**

**Noun**
The refusal to comply with certain laws or to pay taxes and fines, as a peaceful form of political protest.

**Colonialism**

**Noun**
The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

**Concession**

**Noun**
1A thing that is granted, especially in response to demands; a thing conceded.

**Curfew**

**Noun**
A regulation requiring people to remain indoors between specified hours, typically at night.

**Disband**

**Verb**
(Of an organized group) break up or cause to break up and stop functioning.
Groundswell
Noun
A buildup of opinion or feeling in a large section of the population:

Inaugurate
Verb
1Begin or introduce (a system, policy, or period):
1.1 Admit (someone) formally to public office:
1.2 Mark the beginning or first public use of (an organization or project):

Influx Control
Noun
(In South Africa during the apartheid era) the rigid limitation and control imposed upon the movement of black people into urban areas.

Legitimate
Adjective
Conforming to the law or to rules

Militant
Adjective
Combative and aggressive in support of a political or social cause, and typically favoring extreme, violent, or confrontational methods:

Parliament
Noun
1 (In the UK) the highest legislature, consisting of the sovereign, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons: the Secretary of State will lay proposals before Parliament
1.1 The members of parliament for a particular period, especially between one dissolution and the next: the act was passed by the last parliament of the reign
1.2 A legislature similar to parliament in other nations and states:

Sabotage
Verb
Deliberately destroy, damage, or obstruct (something), especially for political or military advantage

Township
Noun
(In South Africa) a suburb or city of predominantly black occupation, formerly officially designated for black occupation by apartheid legislation.

Treason
Noun
The crime of betraying one’s country, especially by attempting to kill the sovereign or overthrow the government
Study Questions and Activities:

Study Questions and Activities provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the play and its historical context, related to specific educational standards or elements.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What was apartheid, and why was it initiated?
2. Describe the differences in quality of life experienced during apartheid for whites and blacks.
3. Explore one of the protests against the apartheid policies and how Afrikaners responded to the protests. Explore its effectiveness and ways it could have been more so.
4. Athol Fugard is described as being a delegated “voice to the voiceless.” How do “My Children! My Africa!” and other artistic expressions function as weapons against injustice in times of oppression? How effective do you think they are?

POST SHOW DISCUSSIONS

1. What were the differences between Thami and Isabel’s lifestyles?
2. How did they overcome their differences to work together?
3. Why did Mr. M and Thami disagree on the system of education?
4. Describe what lessons Thami and Isabel learned from Mr. M at the end of the play. Consider what their futures have in store for them.
5. Athol Fugard is described as being a delegated “voice to the voiceless.” How does “My Children! My Africa!” function as a weapon against oppression?
ACTIVITIES

1. Research and Compare

Compare and contrast the American Civil Rights Movement with South Africa’s movement toward equality. What similarities are there? What differences? Are there other people in the world still fighting political structures similar to apartheid?

Activity: Create a Poster to Display your Comparisons

Step One: Research the American Civil Rights Movement, The South African move to democracy and destruction of apartheid and a third country’s, of your choosing, fight for equality for all people.

Step Two: Create a poster comparing and contrasting the movements. Use Images and Facts to compare conditions and effectiveness of struggles.

Step Three: Present your research to the class.

2. Writing a Speech

“As fascinated as I was by words on paper, it was matched by my fascination with words in people’s mouths. The spoken word. And that is the world of theatre.”

-Athol Fugard

Not only can the spoken word be used through theater for education and entertainment but it can also be a powerful political tool for social change. In “My Children! My Africa!” we see Isabel, Thami and Mr. M all petitioning and debating for different things throughout the show. They inspire us through their personal stories, through facts and through their ideas of how to make the world a better place.

For examples of effective speeches, consider looking at one of the most famous public speakers of all time - apartheid hero, Nelson Mandela.

Step 1: Research and Develop Criteria for Great Speeches

Listen to famous speeches and start asking yourself questions.

What inspired you while listening to the speech? Was there anything that made you feel more invested? How did the speaker connect with YOU? Is there any sort of formula to a good speech (ex. empathy + evidence + plan= inspiration?) Work together to develop your own criteria.

Step 2: Pick a topic for your persuasive speech. Pick something you are passionate about changing.

Step 3: Outside Class Preparation

Research and draft your speech for presentation. Be sure to use facts to support your opinions.

Step 4: Present and Critique
Present your speech in class. Your audience of classmates will then rate your speech on a scale of 1-5 for each criterion chosen earlier in class.

5. Imagine and Write

Step One: Creatively Imagine
Think about if you were in Thami and Isabel’s shoes, being taught by Mr. M in South Africa amidst a time of education, change and uprising. In whose footsteps would you follow?

Step 2: Research
Research the effectiveness of uprisings, protests and boycotts (both violent and non-violent). Then research the effectiveness of educated people raising awareness about injustices. Look for examples outside of South Africa and within.

Step 3: Construct a Thesis and Write
Take a side as to the best approach to liberation. As you write your paper, explore the pros and cons of the different methods. Be sure to provide ample historical evidence to support your thesis.

Recommended Further Learning Resources:

Apartheid Museum
http://www.apartheidmuseum.org

BBC Archives
http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/apartheid/
Sources:
Apartheid Museum Resources
http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/resources

Athol Fugard
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athol_Fugard

BBC Archives
http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/apartheid/

History.com/Topics
http://www.history.com/topics/apartheid
http://www.history.com/topics/apartheid/speeches
http://www.history.com/topics/apartheid/videos

Playwright Biographies
http://www.jbactors.com/actingreading/playwrightbiographies/atholfugard.html

Stanford University
http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html

Terms and Definitions:
Oxford English Dictionary Online