

***Cry, the Beloved Country* Ch. 30-36 Summary and Close Reading Analysis**

Summary — Chapter 30

Kumalo, Absalom's wife, and Gertrude's son return to Ndotsheni. They are greeted warmly because the people miss their umfundisi. Ndotsheni is suffering from a terrible drought and they fear their crops have all died. Jarvis has returned earlier and everyone knows about Absalom's son.

At his church Kumalo's prays. Read the account of Kumalo's prayer:

He prays, Tixo, we give thanks to Thee for Thy unending mercy. We give thanks to Thee for this safe return. We give thanks to Thee for the love of our friends and our families. We give thanks to Thee for all Thy mercies. Tixo, give us rain, we beseech Thee—

And here they say Amen, so many of them that he must wait till they are finished.

Tixo, give us rain, we beseech Thee, that we may plough and sow our seed. And if there is no rain, protect us against hunger and starvation, we pray Thee.

And here they say Amen, so that he must wait again till they are finished. His heart is warmed that they have so welcomed him, so warm that he casts out his fear, and prays that which is deep within him.

Tixo, let this small boy be welcome in Ndotsheni, let him grow tall in this place. And his mother—

His voice stops as though he cannot say it but he humbles himself, and lowers his voice.

And his mother—forgive her trespasses.

A woman moans, and Kumalo knows her, she is one of the great gossips of this place. So he adds quickly —

Forgive us all, for we all have trespasses. And Tixo, let this girl be welcome in Ndotsheni, and deliver her child safely in this place.

He pauses, then says gently—Let her find what she seeks, and have what she desires.

And this is the hardest that must be prayed, but he humbles himself.

And Tixo, my son—

They do not moan, they are silent. Even the woman who gossips does not moan. His voice drops to a whisper—

Forgive him his trespasses.

It is done, it is out, the hard thing that was so feared. He knows it is not he, it is these people who have done it.

Answer the following questions on your own paper:

1. If the people already know about Absalom, why is praying for his son so difficult?
2. What does the final line mean: He knows it is not he, it is these people who have done it.

After the service, he tells a friend that Sibeko's daughter could not be found and that Gertrude disappeared before they were to leave for home. That night, he speaks with his wife about Reverend Msimangu, "the best man of all [his] days" and tells her about the money.

Summary Ch. 31

Kumalo prays that his village will be restored. He tries to visit the village chief to ask for help but the white men have left the chiefs powerless. They are only figureheads. Both men are concerned that all the young people are leaving Johannesburg, but the chief doesn't have any new ideas about how to change things. He says he will bring up the issues with the local magistrate, but both men know this will probably bring no change.

While Kumalo is pondering his disappointments, Arthur's son rides by on horseback. He is staying with his grandfather for a time. He speaks with Kumalo with much politeness and asks to see his home. The boy asks for some milk, but Kumalo must tell him there is no milk in Ndotsheni. Without the milk, the children die. The small boy practices his Zulu with Kumalo and then rides back home, promising he will come back soon.

Read Reverend Kumalo's explanation about the milk:

--*Why is there no milk in Ndotsheni? Is it because the people are poor?*

--*Yes, inkosana.*

--*And what do the children do?*

Kumalo looked at him. They die, my child, he said. Some of them are dying now.

Answer the following questions on your own paper.

3. What characteristics does the boy display by politely walking up to Reverend Kumalo, asking to see his home, and asking for a glass of milk?
4. How can the milk be interpreted figuratively? What is the "milk" that the children of Johannesburg are not getting? What is it causing to happen?

That evening, a worker from Jarvis's farm delivers milk to be given to all the small children in Ndotsheni. Reverend Kumalo is overwhelmed by the generosity and can do nothing but laugh.

Answer the following questions on your own paper:

5. Who sent the milk?

6. Why is this act so significant?

Summary — Chapter 32

Four letters are delivered to Kumalo's household. One, from Mr. Carmichael, explains that Absalom will not be given mercy and will be hanged that month. Another is from Absalom. Kumalo and his wife read this letter together. Absalom writes that he is comfortable in the Pretoria prison and is being ministered to by a priest, but he knows now that he must die. He writes simply and directly about his life in prison and states that he now understands that he belongs in Ndotsheni. The third letter is from Absalom for his wife. The fourth letter is from Msimangu, and when Kumalo reads Msimangu's descriptions of Johannesburg, he is surprised to find himself missing the city.

Meanwhile, the long-awaited storm that will break the drought rolls in. Kumalo sees Jarvis and the local magistrate drive into Ndotsheni and plant some sticks with flags. The chief is charged with making sure that no one tampers with the flags. After commenting that Jarvis is rumored to be both mad and bankrupt, the magistrate leaves, while Jarvis stays behind to measure the land. Meanwhile, a large storm comes rolling in.

Read the following passage about the storm.

Indeed it was true what Jarvis has said, that this would be no ordinary storm. For it was now dark and threatening over the valley. There were no more shadows sailing over the fields, for all was shadow. On the other side of the Umzikulu the thunder was rolling without pause, and now and then the lightning would strike down among the far-off hills. But it was this for which all men were waiting, the rain at last. Women were hurrying along the paths, and with a sudden babel of sound the children poured out of the school, and the headmaster and his teachers were urging them. Hurry, hurry, do not loiter along the road.

It was something to see, a storm like this. A great bank of black and heavy cloud was moving over the Umzikulu, and Kumalo stood for a long time and watched it. Out of it the thunder came and lightning shot out of it to the earth below. Wind sprang up in the valley of Ndotsheni, and the dust whirled over the fields and along the roads.

Answer the following questions on your own paper:

7. Describe the imagery that Paton uses to describe the storm. What particular phrases stand out to you?

8. What do you think the men with sticks are doing? How do you think the sticks and the storm may be connected? How do they represent a change coming in to the valley?

When the storm comes, he seeks shelter in Kumalo's church. The two sit together under Kumalo's leaky roof, and Jarvis asks whether Absalom has received mercy. Kumalo shows him the letter from Mr. Carmichael, and Jarvis says that he understands Kumalo's grief.

When the storm passes, the residents of Ndotsheni examine the sticks with great curiosity. When a child uproots one, there is much commotion, and the whole village conspires to put the stick back in its place and conceal all evidence of its removal.

Summary — Chapter 33

It is rumored that the sticks mark the place where a dam will be built in Ndotsheni. Absalom's wife and Gertrude's son settle rapidly into their new home. Arthur's son comes to visit Kumalo again and practice his Zulu. He tells Kumalo that he will return to Johannesburg when his grandfather comes back from Pietermaritzburg, and Kumalo comments that Ndotsheni will lose something bright when the boy leaves. Kumalo teaches Arthur's son some new Zulu words and explains their origins. When Kumalo's wife joins them, the boy surprises her with his command of the language.

Arthur's son sees Jarvis's car climbing the hill and gallops eagerly after it to welcome his grandfather home. A young black man comes to Kumalo's church and introduces himself to Kumalo. His name is Napoleon Letsitsi, and he is an agricultural expert hired by Jarvis to teach better farming techniques. He agrees to stay with the Kumalos while he helps to recover the valley. It will be difficult, Letsitsi says, because he will have to teach the people that their land must be farmed for the common good, not for each individual's best interests. Hardest of all, he says, will be convincing people to stop measuring their wealth in cattle, as cattle damage the land and do not allow it to recover. Letsitsi confirms that a dam is being built. Arthur's son returns to say good-bye to Kumalo. He promises to continue his Zulu lessons during his holidays.

Answer the following question on your own paper:

9. Why is Jarvis doing these things for Kumalo's people?
10. How does James Jarvis differ from his grandson? Why is it important that the grandson learn Zulu?
11. Despite his son's fate, how does Kumalo receive hope? Cite specific examples.

Summary — Chapter 34

As Kumalo and his congregation prepare for a confirmation ceremony at the church, one of Jarvis's workers brings word that Jarvis's wife, Margaret, has died. As the women lament, Kumalo writes a letter of condolence to Jarvis in which he mentions that he suspects that Margaret is partly responsible for the great contributions Jarvis is making to the village. He questions whether to send it, wondering whether Arthur's murder is somehow the cause of the sickness that killed her. He decides, however, that Jarvis is a man who stays by the path he has chosen, and sends the letter.

At the confirmation, rain leaks through the roof of the church and onto the congregation. Afterward, Kumalo and the Bishop meet privately. The Bishop thinks that Kumalo should leave Ndotsheni because his son killed Jarvis's son, and because Absalom's wife became pregnant out of wedlock. He has found a position for Kumalo where no one will know of these things. Kumalo is crushed but swallows the Bishop's arguments and obeys. As he and the Bishop are talking, however, a timely letter arrives. Jarvis has written back, thanking Kumalo for his sympathy and assuring him that Arthur's murder had nothing to do with his wife's illness. He wants to build a new church for Ndotsheni.

Read the letter that Mr. Jarvis sends to Mr. Kumalo.

Umfundisi:

I thank you for your message of sympathy, and the promise of the prayers of your church. You are right, my wife knew of the things that are being done, and had the greatest part in it. These things we did in

memory of our beloved son. It was one of her last wishes that a new church should be built at Ndotsheni, and I shall come to discuss it with you.

Yours truly,

James Jarvis

PS You should know that my wife was suffering before we went to Johannesburg.

Answer the following questions on your own paper:

12. Why does Jarvis add the “PS”? What might this simple phrase reveal about James Jarvis?

Elated, Kumalo shows the letter to the Bishop, and the Bishop agrees that it is God’s will for Kumalo to stay in Ndotsheni. Kumalo comes home to find his wife and other church members hard at work on a sympathy wreath for the Jarvis family. He sends a local man to gather the appropriate flowers for a white man’s wreath.

Summary — Chapter 35

Napoleon Letsitsi, the agricultural expert, teaches the people new ways to plow. He plans to build a kraal, where the cattle will be kept. The villagers work with new spirit, but the ones who have had to give up their land are sullen. The future, Letsitsi tells Kumalo, will hold even bigger changes, and he hopes that the people will see the need for these changes themselves and not have to be convinced.

Kumalo praises Letsitsi, but Letsitsi is worried that it will take time for great improvements to happen. Letsitsi also speaks eagerly of the time when the people will not need to take the white man’s milk but will instead be able to provide milk of their own. Kumalo is disturbed by this sentiment, but Letsitsi is insistent. He is grateful to Jarvis, he says, and to other good white men, but though they pay his salary, he works for Africa and not for them. It is the white man’s policies that have made such improvements necessary, he says, and these efforts are only repayment for a debt long overdue. Letsitsi assures Kumalo, however, that he is not there to make trouble. Kumalo gives Letsitsi a final warning about hatred and power and is glad to see that the young man is interested in neither. Kumalo stands for a minute gazing at the stars and reflecting that these new, radical politics have come too late for him. There are some who might call him a white man’s dog, Kumalo thinks, but it is the way he has lived, and he has done with it what he can.

Answer the following questions on your own paper.

Think about the following direct quotes from Letsitsi. What do they mean? Why are they significant?

13. “What this good white man does is only a repayment.”

14. “We work for Africa. Not for this man or that man. Not for a white man or a black man, but for Africa.”

Consider this quote from Reverend Kumalo. What do you think it means? Why is it significant?

15. "It is good that a young man has such deep thoughts. But hate no man, and desire power over no man. For I have a friend who taught me that power corrupts."

Summary — Chapter 36

Kumalo has a place he goes to contemplate the weightier things in life, and on the night before Absalom is to die, he travels to this mountaintop to keep vigil. On the way, he meets Jarvis, who informs him that plans for the new church will arrive shortly. Jarvis thanks Kumalo for the sympathy wreath. They speak of Arthur's son, then reminisce about Arthur himself. Jarvis asks where Kumalo is going, and when Kumalo replies, he says that he understands. Kumalo thanks Jarvis for all he has done for the village and tells Jarvis that he has been touched by God.

In his place of solitude, Kumalo goes over Absalom's letters from prison, in which Absalom assures him that if he could return to Ndotsheni, he would. Kumalo repents for his own sins and gives thanks for the many blessings he has received during his time of trouble. He wakes up and turns his mind to the suffering of others—the missing Gertrude, the people of Shanty Town, his own wife, and above all, Absalom. Kumalo reflects on the plight of Africa and on Msimangu's whispered fear that by the time the white man learns to love, the black man will have learned to hate. He sleeps and wakes up just before dawn, wondering what his son, who will be hanged when the sun rises, is doing at that moment. The light rises, and the narrator wonders when the light of emancipation will come to the forsaken land of South Africa.

Answer the following questions on your own paper:

16. Why is it ironic that Absalom will be hanged as the sun rises?

Read this final passage from the book:

Yes, it is the dawn that has come. The titihoya wakes from sleep, and goes about its work of forlorn crying. The sun tips with light the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand. The great valley of the Umzikulu is still in darkness, but the light will come there. Ndotsheni is still in darkness, but the light will come there also. For it is the dawn that has come, it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing. But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why that is a secret.

17. What does the word "emancipation" mean?

18. What does it mean that the Umzikulu is still in darkness and that Ndotsheni is still in darkness? What do these final words suggest about the future of South Africa?

19. How have Jarvis and Kumalo helped to bring this change? What does the country currently look like? How will it look when the dawn finally comes?

20. How is fear a form of "bondage"?