

Cry, the Beloved Country

by Alan Paton



ABOUT THE READING *Cry, The Beloved Country* has been popular since it was first published in 1948. It tells about a Zulu pastor who travels across South Africa to search for his son in the city of Johannesburg. In the excerpt below, the pastor is on a train, passing through the industrialized mining area of rural South Africa, heading toward Johannesburg.

VOCABULARY

procession parade

lorries large trucks



As you read the excerpt below, think about how different the rural and urban regions of South Africa are.

This is a new country, a strange country, rolling and rolling away as far as the eye can see. There are new names here, hard names for a Zulu who has been schooled in English. For they are in the language that was called Afrikaans, a language that he had never yet heard spoken.

—The mines, they cry, the mines. For many of them are going to work in the mines.

Are these the mines, those white flat hills in the distance? He can ask safely, for there is no one here who heard him yesterday.

—That is the rock out of the mines, umfundisi. The gold has been taken out of it.

—How does the rock come out?

—We go down and dig it out, umfundisi. And when it is hard to dig, we go away, and the white men blow it out with the fire-sticks. Then we come back and clear it away; we load it on to the trucks, and it goes up in a cage, up a long chimney so long that I cannot say it for you.

Afrikaans is the language of the original white settlers of South Africa.

Umfundisi means “pastor” in Zulu. It is a term of respect used for older men.

What are fire-sticks?

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—How does it go up?

—It is wound up by a great wheel. Wait, and I shall show you one.

He is silent, and his heart beats a little faster, with excitement.

—There is the wheel, umfundisi. There is the wheel.

A great iron structure rearing into the air, and a great wheel above it, going so fast that the spokes play tricks with the sight. Great buildings, and steam blowing out of pipes, and men hurrying about. A great white hill, and an endless **procession** of trucks climbing upon it, high up in the air. On the ground, motor-cars, **lorries**, buses, one great confusion.

—Is this Johannesburg, he asks.

But they laugh confidently. Old hands some of them are.

—That is nothing, they say. In Johannesburg there are buildings so high—but they cannot describe them . . .

And now the buildings are endless, the buildings, and the white hills, and the great wheels, and streets without number, and cars and lorries and buses.

—This surely is Johannesburg, he says.

But they laugh again. They are growing a little tired. This is nothing, they say.

Why is the pastor excited to see the wheel?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea How do workers remove the rock from the gold mines?

2. Critical Thinking: Making Inferences How might the Zulu pastor react when he sees Johannesburg for the first time?
