



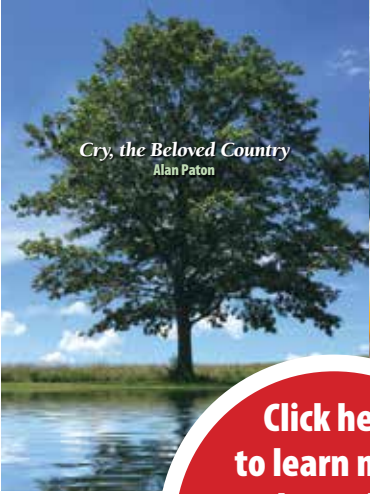
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*Cry, the Beloved Country*  
Alan Paton

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**Alan Paton**



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*Cry, the Beloved Country*

### To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.



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## *Cry, the Beloved Country*

All references are taken from the Scribner Edition of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

### **Notes on the 1987, 1959, 1948 Editions**

1. Some have said that one of the most important characters in the novel is the land of South Africa itself. Write about a place that has figured prominently in your life. It may be someplace you have lived, vacationed, visited, or only read about. Write an article for a travel brochure that describes the area's physical characteristics and the significance it has had in your life. You may choose to begin your description with a sentence similar to Paton's own first sentence of the novel: There is a...
2. Based on the information in the notes, what do you think the prevailing tone and atmosphere of the novel will be—hopeful, fearful, despairing, humorous, etc.? Write as though you are a weather forecaster describing the emotional tone, or “climate,” of the book. Create a five-day forecast in which you predict the overall emotional weather the characters will experience throughout the novel. Include smaller tones you sense as daily variations in the forecast (thunderstorms, drizzle, partial sun, clouds, fog, wind, heat lightning, solar or lunar eclipses, etc.)

You may begin with this sentence: And in your five-day forecast, it's going to be (overall weather, eg. “hot”) in the Beloved Country... Then, write a paragraph explaining your choices of weather to reflect the emotions and atmospheres you expect to see in the novel.

## **Introduction**

5. In the introduction, the author explains that the book took its title from Paton's poetic admonishment for the land to cry out against the social injustices in South Africa. From your own knowledge and experiences, what do you think are the most important or problematic social issues in the United States? Free write about social problems you see that affect large groups of people living in your country. Imagine what the land's response to these and to the people might be. Should it mock the people, weep for them, ignore them, chastise them, warn them, etc? If you were writing a book focusing on one of these issues and its affect on the people of the United States, what would the issue be and what would you title your book?

## **Book I**

### **Chapter 1**

6. In this opening chapter, the author describes two very different scenes, one lush and flourishing, and the other dry and barren. He says that the land is dying and can no longer provide what the people need to live and prosper. Reflect on a place in your own life that you have seen change drastically over time. It may be change for the better or for the worse. It may be natural change or industrial change. Describe it in two paragraphs, the first about its former state and the second about its condition now. You may begin the first paragraph, "There was a..." and the second paragraph, "But now it is..." Do you like the changes? Are you nostalgic for the old place? Which do you think is better? Do not directly express your feelings about the differences, but try to choose words that make clear which state you prefer.

## **Chapter 10**

21. Before Kumalo can even voice his request to go back and see the young girl again, Msimangu, looking intently into his face, says, "It is agreed." He knew what Kumalo desired without the old priest having to say it. Have you ever known exactly what someone was thinking or getting ready to say? Retell the story of your own experience, describing the situation and explaining how you knew what had not yet been spoken.
  
22. When he inquires at the house of the Hlatshwayos in Shanty Town, Kumalo receives the bad news that his son had lived there for a time but was taken away and sent to the boys' reformatory. At the reformatory, the report is encouraging: Absalom was released early because of good behavior and his desire to marry the mother of his child. When they arrive at Absalom's home, however, the young girl who is pregnant with his child says that she's not seen Absalom in several days. And when they ask his employer, they discover that he has not been at work, either. The range of news from bad to good to the worst yet in one day's search takes its toll on Kumalo.

Have you ever had a day like that? Write a journal entry about a day or short period of time in which you had to cope with news that moved you back and forth through a wide range of conflicting emotions.

## Chapter 15

28. With whom do you identify most at this point in the story? Consider the following characters, their roles and experiences in the story so far, and what the foreseeable future holds for them, and write a paragraph explaining which one you relate to the most and why:
- Stephen Kumalo
  - Stephen Kumalo's wife
  - Msimangu
  - John Kumalo
  - Absalom
  - John Kumalo's son
  - Father Vincent
  - Mrs. Lithebe
  - Gertrude
  - Absalom's "wife"
  - Absalom's unborn child
  - Another character of your choosing
29. At the end of chapter 15, Father Vincent expresses his concern to Kumalo about the old priest's worry and fatigue. He tells Kumalo to pray and rest and leave the work to him and to Msimangu for the night. He even gives Kumalo very specific instructions about what not to pray about and what to pray about.

What do you think of Father Vincent's advice? Imagine that you are a close friend of Kumalo's. What would you recommend that he do? Would it be different from what Father Vincent admonished him? Write Kumalo an email agreeing with Father Vincent or offering your own perspective on how the old priest should spend the evening.