



When Morning Comes, by Arushi Raina

Study Guide

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This study guide is intended for use for Grade 9 English and above as a complement to *When Morning Comes*, a novel for teens that explores the events of the Soweto Youth Uprising in 1976.

This guide includes a number of higher difficulty/advanced questions suitable for higher grades. These questions are flagged by * where appropriate. This guide includes a comprehensive list of questions and teachers may select relevant questions as required for examination and homework purposes.

Historical Note and Glossary: Please note that there is a historical intro and glossary at the end of the book that serve as an additional resource to students and teachers

Background Information – Character Introduction

This novel is told through 4 first-person narratives. A brief snapshot of the characters are included below:

Character snapshot: Thabo

- Lives in Soweto, 18 years old
- Grew up with Zanele
- Makes his living as a “tsotsi” for the Black Berets

Character Snapshot: Zanele

- Lives in Soweto, 17 years old and Grade 12 student at Morris Isaacson school
- Grew up with Thabo and sings in the shebeen that Thabo runs. Her older sister, Mankwe, sings at the shebeen as well
- Mother, Lillian, works as a domestic worker in the white areas of Johannesburg

Character Snapshot: Meena

- South African Indian
- Works with her father in a downtown Johannesburg corner shop
- Grade 12 student, 17 years old – studying to get into medical school

Character Snapshot: Jack

- Lives in Houghton, Johannesburg with his parents
- Recently graduated matric from Jeppe’s Highschool, with his friends, Oliver and Ricky
- Planning to go to Oxford University in England, to study mathematics

Activity Questions:

Chapter 1

1. At the opening of the novel, what do you learn about Zanele’s perspective on race and her place in the community she lives in? Substantiate through in-text quotes.

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2. Why is there “murder in the singer eyes”? Why does Jack seem surprised/shocked by her reaction?

/3

3. Describe the significance of what Zanele and her friends, Billy and Phelele, are planning (p.1) at the Orlando Power Station. What do you think their objectives are?

/3

4. * Describe the relationship you observe between Jack and his friends, Oliver and Ricky. What role do each of them play in the friendship? What tension exists between these friends? Substantiate where relevant from the text.

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5. (Page. 3) Explain how the adjectives are being used in this passage to create an element of tension.

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Chapter 2-3

6. Describe Thabo's attitude towards stealing, and the activities of Billy and his friends. Why do think Thabo holds these attitudes?

/4

7. Describe the differences in the way that Meena views herself (first person) and the way that other characters view her. Substantiate from the text.

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8. Provide an example of an implicit reference to an apartheid policy in the text up to this point. Explain how this implicit reference is effective in conveying the reality of apartheid South Africa in 1976.

/4

9. Reference page 35. Describe how this background may help explain Meena's dad's and grandmother's perspectives

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10. Write a brief character sketch of Jack, Zanele, Meena or Thabo. Focus on specific character traits, and substantiate these character traits using evidence from the text.

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Chapter 4-5

11. Describe the change in Billy since Chapter 1. What do you think has resulted in this change in behavior?

/3

12.*What is Jack's dad trying to get from Van Roonen? What is the significance of selling alcohol to the Bantustans? Why does Megan object or seem critical of this?

13. Describe the shift in Zanele's behavior towards Jack in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4. What causes this shift in behavior?

14. *Reference page 50. Explain the narrative devices being employed in the following passage. What is the impact of these devices in deepening our understanding of tone and character? "I should have taken the money from the mlungu. The problem was that I was too proud for Soweto, too proud for Johannesburg. The whole of Africa. That's what Thabo said." (p.50)

15. *Explain how the deal being discussed between Van Roonen and Jack's father may seem ironic given the circumstances

Chapter 5-6

16. Describe the difference in attitude that Mankwe and Zanele have towards their absent father. Substantiate from the text.

17. Explain how differently Zanele and Jack view Soweto and the place that Zanele lives. Substantiate from the text, and feel free to use references from earlier chapters.

18. *Describe the attitude that Zanele and Thabo seem to have towards “Indians”. Cite from the text. Explain how their interactions with Meena and Dr. A appear to compare and contrast from these attitudes they seem to have towards Indians. Why do their attitudes differ from their interactions with Meena and Dr. A?

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19. Identify a motif within the text and explain how the motif is used within the text to express larger ideas in the story

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Chapter 7-8

20. Describe how Professor's character and fate has been affected by his circumstances in life.

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21. Explain why Zanele is against the new Bantu Education law. Explain the significance this law will have on her friends and her community.

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22. *Explain the “theory” that Jack puts forward to Joubert.

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Chapter 9-10

23. Explain the method of organizing Zanele and Vusi are using to plan against the Bantu Education Act. How are they communicating across Soweto? How

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24. Explain the shift in Jack and Zanele's attitudes towards each other may have shifted up to this point in the novel. What has caused this change? Substantiate from the text.

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25. Explain the figure of speech and the meaning of the figure of speech that Thabo uses when he says: “to the tsotsi, the train is a blood vessel, you can say.” (p.113)

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Chapter 11-12

26. Describe the main conflict between Mankwe and Zanele. Why does this conflict exist?

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27. Describe why the moment Jack enters Zanele’s home is uncomfortable.

/3

28. Describe the key characteristics about Jack that draw Zanele closer to him, despite their differences

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29. Describe the significance of the two dresses Jack buys and the motivations that guided both purchases

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Chapter 13-14

30. Re-read page 141-143 and describe the significance of the title of this novel in connection to this excerpt

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31. Explain the significance of the reference of the power stations at this point in the novel.

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32. Explain the figure of speech in the sentence “the noise and anger of the students was thick.” Explain the impact of this figure of speech to the reader.

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33. Explain the figure of speech in the following excerpt and the impact of this figure of speech on the reader. “That was when I saw what Thulani had been staring at: school blazers, maybe three hundred, headed this way. I got up on the car roof, getting my sleeves dirty.” (p.146)

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Chapter 15-16

34. Re-read page 152-156. Describe a symbol, metaphor or other figure of speech used in this section which creates a specific tone in the text.

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35. Describe Winston's character up to this point. Substantiate from the text

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36. Who is the boy in the "blue bathrobe?"

/1

37. Explain the multiple contexts and intents with which the term "Amandla" has been used by the characters in this novel up to this point. How does the meaning of the word impact the context and the impact of the word when said by the different characters? Substantiate from the text.

Chapter 17-18

38. Describe how Meena and Thabo's relationship has changed from the beginning of the novel. What has created this change? How has each character changed their perspective on the other?

39. Re-read page 164. How does the information Jack has available on June 16th differ from Zanele's experience earlier in the text? Describe the biases at play in both instances and substantiate from the text.

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40. Explain why the following phrase (p. 170) can be seen as ironic: “A mlungu was giving me shelter, an Indian girl was straightening my collar like she was my gogo, my Black Berets wanted me dead, and Zanele was gone.” Explain also how this statement reveals specific aspects of Thabo’s personality.

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Chapter 19-20

41. *Reference page 185. Name and describe the figure of speech in the following passage, given the context. “I looked at the shack again. The rusted walls were curved inward, bending but not cracking” (p.185)

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42. Describe an example of dramatic irony in Chapters 19-20.

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43. *Explain how the jacket with the stamp “729” serves as a symbol throughout the novel. Besides its literal significance, what does it symbolize?

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Chapter 21-23

44. Describe Jack’s character arc up to this point in the novel. How has Jack changed from the beginning of the novel, what specific

instances/circumstances have created this change? Substantiate from the text.

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45.*Describe why Meena says Jack and Zanele are “...an attractive couple, too attractive—shining a little too bright.” Substantiate from text and reference Meena’s character and point of view.

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Thematic Questions based on overall book

/8

3. Explain how dark and light imagery is used throughout the book. Cite and explain 2 or more examples from the book.

4. **Discussion/Research Project Question:** Explain how the events of the Soweto Uprising of 1976 contrasts and compares with contemporary movements (e.g. Fees Must Fall, Total Shutdown, Black Lives Matter). Explain the similarities and differences in the causes, intents and impacts of these protests, based on your fictional reading of *When Morning Comes*.
5. **Discussion/Research Project Question:** Explain how the events and characters of *When Morning Comes* enable you to better understand the contemporary context in South Africa today? Focus on 1-2 key themes.
6. **Research Project Question:** Interview someone who lived through the period of the Soweto Uprising in Johannesburg. Compare and contrast the attitude and perspective of your interviewee with those of the characters in *When Morning Comes*
7. **Research Project Question:** Research the morning events of the Soweto Uprising through a published account that is publicly available (some options are included under **References**). Compare and contrast this account with the account presented in *When Morning Comes*. Consider the potential differences in format/type of media, the specific biases at play, and how each source teaches you something different about these events.

References

Other references and image source links include:

- Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, “I saw a nightmare: Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976.” Project Gutenberg.
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;view=toc;idno=heb99016.0001.001>
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