

This short, yet powerful poem, implies a plea for violent revolution/turn against apartheid laws.

In the Shadow of Signal Hill

Essop Patel

(1930-2007)

Strikingly shaped hill or small peak overlooking the harbour of Cape Town. Has been used as a lookout post since the early days of the Cape colony. From it, the viewer can see Robben Island. The Noon Day Gun (a cannon) is situated on Signal Hill and symbolizes the passing of time.

The capital 's' implies that the word is more than a denotation 'to provide shade'. It connotes a dark place, could be Robben Island, which can be seen from Signal Hill.

The images in stanza 1 suggest darkness, because of the words "howling winds", "murky waters" & "dungeon of death". The atmosphere is horrible, dark & lonely in prison.

in the ^{Onomatopoeia} howling wind
by the ^{Dark and dirty; unclear} murky waters
of the sea

Lines 1-3 & 9-11: Anaphoric: The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several consecutive verses, clauses, or paragraphs.

Tone in stanza 1: pleading, melancholic & sympathetic.

Lines 6-8: Image of children from different racial backgrounds playing on the beach of Cape Town, picking up shells & listening to the sound coming from the shells – usually sounds like waves.

^{Children of different race} children of colour

gather shells

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and hold them to their ears

Lines 7-8: Image of "slaves" suffering, weeping & mourning in the "dungeon of death", which is a metaphor for the prison cells.

and ^{"l" alliteration} listen to the ^{Songs expressing mourning, grief} lamentations of slaves
in the ^{Prison cells} dungeon of death ^{"d" alliteration} ^{Metaphor}

Allusion: Book of Lamentations is a poetic book of the Hebrew Bible. It mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple in the 6th century BC.

Tone in stanza 2: determined & strong-willed/minded.

in the ^{Onomatopoeia} howling wind
by the ^{Dark and dirty; unclear} murky waters

Two-fold meaning: example of lexical polysemy: 1) Black township on the outskirts of suburban Cape Town established in 1927. 2) A tribute to a man called Langalibalele - a chief and renowned rainmaker - who in 1873 was imprisoned on Robben Island.

of the sea

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sons of langa

Lines 12-13: Image of young people from Langa gathering at what is left of district six after its occupants were evicted and buildings demolished under the Group Areas Act.

gather at the ruins of district six

Two-fold meaning: example of lexical polysemy: 1) The implements/tools that would have been used by the Xhosa warriors. 2) The bodies of the fighters against the apartheid regime. It is a battle against darkness in darkness.

and sharpen the spears of the night

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Lines 15-16: Implies that the "heroes" (prisoners) from Robben Island have a burning, strong desire for a new beginning, the end of Apartheid.

and the ^{Prisoners} heroes from the island urge
^{Burning strongly & brightly} go towards the fiery dawn ... ^{Ellipsis}

Denotes a bright coloured sunrise. Connotes the beginning of a phenomenon or a period of time.

Stanza 2: The prisoners are rising as "heroes" because they are fighting for their freedom and the end of Apartheid.

Allusion: Reference to a statement, person, place, event or thing that is known from literature, history, religion, mythology, politics, sports, science, or popular culture.

Anaphoric: The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several consecutive verses, clauses, or paragraphs.

Ellypsis: The omission of a word or phrase necessary for a complete syntactical construction but not necessary for understanding.

Enjambment: The running on of the thought from one line, couplet, or stanza to the next without a syntactical break/punctuated pause.

Lexical polysemy: The coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase.

Onomatopoeia: Words that sound like their meanings.

“langa”:

- Black township on the outskirts of suburban Cape Town established in 1927.
- It was the place where police brutality ended in a blood bath (21 March 1960).
- It was also a place associated with great resistance to Apartheid.
- Langa literally means “sun” in Xhosa.
- The word Langa is a tribute to a man called Langalibalele - a chief and renowned rainmaker - who in 1873 was imprisoned on Robben Island for rebelling against the Natal government.

“district six”:

- Name of a former racially mixed inner-city residential area in Cape Town where over 60 000 of its inhabitants were forced to move during the 1960's by the apartheid regime.

What is the poem about?

What is the subject of the poem?

🍏 The short, yet powerful poem, implies a plea (a serious or urgent request) for violent revolution/turn against Apartheid laws.

Who is speaking?

🍏 3rd person narrative.

What is the location/setting of the poem?

🍏 Both stanza 1 and 2 open with the image of the sea with its "murky waters" and the "howling wind".

Themes and messages of the poem:

🍏 The short, yet powerful poem, implies a plea (a serious or urgent request) for violent revolution/turn against Apartheid laws.

Attitudes and feelings in the poem:

Emotions and feelings of the speaker:

🍏 In the first stanza the speaker is melancholic, pleading and sympathetic.

🍏 In the second stanza the speaker is determined and strong-willed/minded.

Tone of the poem:

🍏 Pleading, melancholic and sympathetic (stanza 1), determined and strong-willed/minded (stanza 2).

Form and structure of the poem (rhyme, rhythm, line length, stanza length, etc.):

🍏 Free verse (lines with no prescribed pattern or structure).

🍏 The poem consists of two stanzas, 8 lines each (octave).

🍏 **Stanza 1:** The atmosphere in prison is horrible, dark and lonely.

🍏 **Stanza 2:** The prisoners are rising as "heroes" because they are fighting for their freedom and the end of Apartheid. They are longing for change.

🍏 Lacks punctuation and capitalisation that suggests a feeling of freedom from being oppressed by his country and government.

Type of poem:

🍏 Lyrical poem – expresses the poet's emotions.

Poetic devices (e.g. metaphors, similes, enjambment, alliteration, personification, etc.):

🍏 Explained in the following questions and in the poem above.

🍏 The **enjambment** (the running on of the thought from one line, couplet, or stanza to the next without a syntactical break/punctuated pause) makes the poem seem lyrical, like a song that should be sung.

🍏 **Ellipsis** in line 16: Allows the readers' imagination to fill in the detail for themselves. The reader imagines the prisoners fighting with their spears for the end of Apartheid.

Personal response to the poem (how do I feel, what impact does the poem have on me):

🍏 YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSE!