



Cry, the Beloved Country

Alan Paton

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Cry, the Beloved Country, the most famous and important novel in South Africa's history, was an immediate worldwide bestseller in 1948. Alan Paton's impassioned novel about a black man's country under white man's law is a work of searing beauty.

Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much.

The eminent literary critic Lewis Gannett wrote, "We have had many novels from statesmen and reformers, almost all bad; many novels from poets, almost all thin. In Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* the statesman, the poet and the novelist meet in a unique harmony."

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice. Remarkable for its lyricism, unforgettable for character and incident, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a classic work of love and hope, courage and endurance, born of the dignity of man.

Cry, the Beloved Country Details

Date : Published November 1st 2003 by Scribner (first published 1948)

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Author : Alan Paton

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From Reader Review Cry, the Beloved Country for online ebook

Denise says

This book is one of those classics that I'm glad I read, but will probably never read again. The themes are important (racial equality, morality, forgiveness) and the writing is lyrical, but it's still hard to read. Alan Paton doesn't use any quotation marks. He chooses, instead, to preface each line of dialogue with a dash. I could get used to this technique, if he were consistent with it, but he's not. Sometimes the dialogue is in the middle of a paragraph, with no indication it's spoken aloud. It drove me crazy, having to re-read everything to figure out if someone was talking, or just thinking, or if it was just the writer giving us information.

The story is set in South Africa, and it helped me understand why that country has been such a mess for so long. There are so many different races, languages, belief systems, and classes, it's a wonder anything gets done there at all. It's interesting to see the effects of apartheid, the growing pains of a country trying to find equality for all races. It was written in the 40s, so things have changed enormously since it was first published, but it still functions as a cautionary tale. It is infuriating, inspiring, slow-moving but worth the time.

Saman Kashi says

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Ahmad Sharabiani says

Cry, The Beloved Country, Alan Paton

Cry, the Beloved Country is a novel by Alan Paton, published in 1948.

In the remote village of Ndotsheni, in the Natal province of eastern South Africa, the Reverend Stephen Kumalo receives a letter from a fellow minister summoning him to Johannesburg. He is needed there, the letter says, to help his sister, Gertrude, who the letter says has fallen ill. Kumalo undertakes the difficult and expensive journey to the city in the hopes of aiding Gertrude and of finding his son, Absalom, who traveled to Johannesburg from Ndotsheni and never returned. In Johannesburg, Kumalo is warmly welcomed by Msimangu, the priest who sent him the letter, and given comfortable lodging by Mrs. Lithebe, a Christian woman who feels that helping others is her duty. ...

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Ashley says

What the..?!?!

Why is this rating so high?

This book was tortuous to read. Every page, DESPITE the wordings was worse than getting my eyelashes pulled.

Oprah.

Seriously? Seriously Oprah?

Here's my summary of it:

Man goes to find son who dies because he killed some guy, man goes back home.

The end.

Chrissie says

Beautiful writing, that is why this book gets four stars. But what do I mean by beautiful writing? That can mean so much. Here every sentence is simple. Every thought is simple. It is writing where all words that can be removed are removed. What remains is clear and concise and beautiful. The core is left, and that core says exactly what has to be said.

The book is about Africa, South Africa in particular and racial injustice in this country. It is about right and wrong and men's strengths and weaknesses. It is about Christian beliefs, but again whittled down to the most elementary concepts. It is not necessary to be religious to appreciate this book.

You will be moved to tears.

You will think: yes, this IS how life is, but dam we must go on fighting because along with sadness and injustice and wrong, there is beauty and kindness. Alan Paton says it all so honestly and so simply. I repeat: gorgeous writing.

I can only judge from my own reading experience. I listened to an audio book, narrated by Michael York. The narration couldn't have been better. Perhaps if I had read it I would have appreciated the words less. Here, every word was spoken with depth and a calm measured strength. You are forced to think and ponder and savor. Would I have appreciated the cadence of the lines or the message imparted had I read the book with my eyes rather than my ears? I am not sure. Some books demand that they be read slowly.

I haven't said one word about what happens. You must read the book to find out.

Beth says

I was supposed to read *Cry, the Beloved Country* my senior year of high school. But you know how senior year is. Well, I wasn't like that — promise. I wasn't one who started slacking because I had my acceptance letter to college in hand. But I did decide that I didn't really care for English, and that I found my European History class much more fascinating, and thus I spent all my study time pouring over my history textbook instead of my English novels (especially since the in-class discussions were detailed enough to ace the tests by).

It was my loss, I guess, because this book is excellent. More than a story of racial inequality, social problems, and injustice (which is what I remember about the plot from high school), this is first and foremost a story of forgiveness and hope.

There are many reasons for South Africa, the country commanded to “cry” in the title, to do just that: poverty and famine drive many to choose paths that are less than admirable, sometimes immoral. And there are many reasons for the main character, a humble priest from a rural Zulu tribe, to give up his faith in both God and humanity — and yet throughout the story there is a calm sense of hope for the future. Stephen Kumalo meets good men along his tragic journey that give hope to him and to the country as a whole: friends, family, and even one who should be his deepest enemy. And Kumalo himself is one to be emulated: for his meekness and gratitude, for his acceptance of trials, for his charity, and even for his occasional human-ness but then sincerely repentant nature. To enjoy a book, I have to have a main character to at the least empathize with — Kumalo is one that I not only appreciate but admire.

And the writing is downright lyrical in some places. It's easy to see why it's a modern classic.

Being awakened to the injustices of prejudice and poverty is all right, but this book does more than that — it inspires hope in the midst of hard times. A book to add to my long list of favorites. ;-)

Mohammed says

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crime, all the immoral behavior, the fast-paced city life, and the constant quest for more gold, more development, more, more, more) and the native life was represented by Kumalo's village (few possessions, close family and community ties, and the prevalent church). But I should've known real life doesn't come in neat and tidy little boxes. And this situation was much more complicated than that. At any rate, this story taught me a lot about South Africa and the westernized "help" that white people are so anxious to provide. And the loose ends leave me searching for more South African literature!

Brook says

I can't say enough about this book. It is lyrically written, reads almost like an epic out of Ireland. The dialog between characters is straightforward, and the book manages to give you a glimpse of Apartheid S. Africa, from the richest people, to the poor urban laborers, to the criminals, to the peaceful rural farmers trying to maintain their land after many years of neglect. This is a classic that I have read probably 3 or 4 times.

My copy is beat to hell, but readable.

John Wiswell says

This isn't an infinitely quotable book, but occasionally it produces a line that is devastatingly clear and true. Lines like, "It was not his habit to dwell on what could have been, but what could never be." and, "It is the duty of a judge to do justice, but it is only the people who can be just." made me put the book down and stare dumbfounded at the wall. But mostly this isn't a highly quotable book; it's a beautifully written, riveting book where passages or entire halves of scenes are compelling streams of words, readily understandable for actions and conversations, and profound for their insights and suggestions into human life in adversity and prosperity.

If you're going to write a borderline hopeless story, do it like this. Paton's prose is mostly readable and occasionally beautiful, especially in his monologues, letters and prayers. For example: "The truth is that our Christian civilization is riddled through and through with dilemma. We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we do not want it in South Africa. We believe that God endows men with diverse gifts, and that human life depends for its fullness on their employment and enjoyment, but we are afraid to explore this belief too deeply. We believe in help for the underdog, but we want him to stay under. And we are therefore compelled, in order to preserve our belief that we are Christian, to ascribe to Almighty God, creator of Heaven and Earth, our own human intentions, and to say that because He created white and black, He gives the Divine Approval to any human action that is designed to keep black men from advancement." It goes on, but this should give you a sense of Paton's insight and rhetorical ability.

Paton touches on almost every level of trouble in post-colonial South Africa: racism, classism, elitism, residual imperial feelings, how wealth corrupts natives, arbitrary segregation, the loss of family values, the loss of social pride, the abandonment of positive religious teachings, the inability of government and the misunderstanding of the new laws. It doesn't blame white people or black people; it creates individuals who embody multiple faults, and when such people make up a new nation, it shows how such a system could collapse and increase human suffering. Paton does not rub this in your face; even his foreword explains that several of these people are real or are based on real people, and he praises those who are working towards a better world. This novel is every ounce about trying to do something. This isn't literary bleakness or

contemptable anti-humanitarianism (a strange view for any author to have, given that all our authors are humans). There are good people stuck in all of this, and from the very first chapter you get a sense that this is, if not a good place, then a place that could be truly great. The difference between Alan Paton here and Edith Wharton or Nathanael West in much of their writing is that the disappointment does not permeate the tone and the myopic view does not bias the story. Paton is a far more sympathetic writer, able to capture the most dangerous elements of humanity in a way that is uniquely his own, though we'd be better off if it became more common.

Amal Bedhyefi says

Finished reading another amazing classic !

Cry, the Beloved Country is the deeply moving story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son, Absalom, set against the background of a land and a people riven by racial injustice.

This was a deeply moving/ eye-opener book that will stay with me for a long time.

Paton touches on almost every level of trouble in post-colonial South Africa: racism, classism, elitism, residual imperial feelings, how wealth corrupts natives, arbitrary segregation, the loss of family values , social pride and other serious matters .

the book is lyrically written (If you're a beginner , you won't find it easy to read) , the characters almost seem realistic and you get all sorts of feelings while reading it !

It will forever be stuck in your head even though the story is fairly simply told , the message behind it is much bigger than what you actually get to read . It makes you think outside of thebox , open your eyes on a lot of things .

I had to stop reading several times to think , i just sit there , stare to the wall and think , about people , life , god and principles .

There is so much here to learn about hope, love ,forgiveness, and perseverance .

Loved this book , highly recommend it !

Book Concierge says

Audiobook narrated by Frederick Davidson.

And old man, a Zulu pastor in a small impoverished South African town, has lost three dear relatives to the big city. His brother, John, has gone to Johannesburg and opened a business. He no longer writes. His much younger sister, Gertrude, took her son to Johannesburg to look for her husband who had gone previously to find work; the husband never wrote, and Gertrude has not written. And finally his son, Absalom, went to Johannesburg to look for his aunt, and he too has been swallowed up by the big city and no longer writes. So when he receives a letter from a priest in J-burg giving news of Gertrude, Stephen Kumalo travels to the city to find his family members and bring them home.

First published in 1948, ***Cry the Beloved Country*** has remained an international bestseller. It tells of a personal tragedy, but also of a national tragedy – apartheid. The writing is lyrical and evocative of time and place. Stephen is a gentle hero, who derives his strength from faith, hope and charity. His capacity for love and forgiveness is admirable. I was surprised, and touched, by the compassion and forgiveness shown by Jarvis (the white farmer in the village).

Their personal tragedy is the focus on the novel, but it is framed by the larger issues facing South Africa – the loss of tribal culture, poverty, flight to the already overcrowded city slums – and issues facing all humankind – justice, good governance, retribution, compassion, and forgiveness.

Frederick Davidson does a good job narrating, but I did find his narration very slow. His very slow delivery made it hard for me to get engaged in the story, but grew on me, as the character of Stephen Kumalo is revealed – he is a man who takes his time pondering and deliberating over issues, a man who never acts in haste.

Nandakishore Varma says

This was my first introduction to apartheid South Africa, and oh did it blow me away! Fantastic narrative concentrating on the human dimensions of a political tragedy. Thank God this abominable system is no more.
