



Goodbye Bafana

Un film de
Bille August

Au cinéma le 11 avril

dossier d'accompagnement pédagogique

Anglais

Collège, Lycée

Réalisé par Sarah Bisson professeur d'Anglais
Proposé par le site Zeroconduite.net
En association avec Paramount Pictures France

Introduction

Goodbye Bafana raconte la relation qui se noue entre un gardien de prison et Nelson Mandela et à travers ces 27 années d'incarcération, ce sont 3 décennies de l'histoire de l'Afrique du Sud que l'on découvre. Aussi il semble particulièrement intéressant d'utiliser ce film comme introduction à une étude civilisationnelle très générale de l'Afrique du Sud qui mènerait à une réflexion sur la nouvelle Afrique du Sud et la question de la mémoire collective ou qui pourrait éventuellement servir de point de départ pour l'analyse d'une autre œuvre, cinématographique ou littéraire.

Synopsis

South Africa, 1968

Twenty-five million blacks are ruled by a minority of four million whites under the brutal Apartheid regime of the Nationalist Party Government. Black people have no vote, no land rights, no rights to freedom of movement, to own a business, to housing or education. Determined to retain power, whites ban all black opposition organisations, forcing their leaders into exile or imprisoning them for life on Robben Island.

James Gregory, a typical white Afrikaner, regards blacks as sub-human. Having grown up on a farm in the Transkei, he learned to speak Xhosa at an early age. This makes him an ideal choice to become the warder in charge of Mandela and his comrades on Robben Island. After all, Gregory speaks their language and can spy on them. However, the plan backfires. Through Mandela's influence, Gregory's allegiance gradually shifts from the racist government to the struggle for a free South Africa...

Cast and Crew

James GREGORY
Nelson MANDELA
Gloria GREGORY
Brent GREGORY

Natasha GREGORY

Winnie MANDELA
Zindzi MANDELA
Walter SISULU
Raymond MHLABA
Jonas MOTSADI
Maj Pieter JORDAAN
Vann NIEKERK
Brigadier MORKEL
Vosloo
Dannie BOSMAN

DIRECTED BY
Producers

Adaptation
Screenplay and Dialogue
Casting

Director of Photography
Production Designer
Film Editor
Music by
Original Song

Joseph FIENNES
Dennis HAYSBERT
Diane KRUGER
Shiloh HENDERSON
Tyron KEOGH
Megan SMITH
Jessica MANUEL
Faith NDUKWANA
Terry PHETO
Lesley MONGEZI
Zingi MTUZULA
Khaya SITYO
Patrick LYSTER
Warrick GRIER
Andre JACOBS
Mark ELDERKIN
Marko VAN DER COLFF

BILLE AUGUST
Jean-Luc VAN DAMME
Ilann GIRARD
Andro STEINBORN
Greg LATTER
Greg LATTER and Bille
AUGUST
Billy HOPKINS
Paul SCHNEE
Moonyeenn LEE
Robert FRAISSE
Tom HANNAM
Hervé SCHNEID, A.C.E.
Dario MARIANELLI
Johnny CLEGG

PART 1 : Landmarks

I. Timeline

South African history: milestones

1652-1700 :	Dutch, French and German Protestants settle in the Cape of Good Hope.
1795 :	The British conquer the colony.
1880-1881 :	Boers (settlers of Dutch descent) rebel against the British, sparking the first Anglo-Boer War. Conflict ends with a negotiated peace.
1899-1902 :	Second Anglo-Boer War, lost by the Boers.
1912 :	The ANC is founded.
1913 :	The National Party is founded.
1948 :	Policy of apartheid adopted when the National Party takes power.
1950 :	The population is classified by race. The Communist Party is banned. The ANC responds with a campaign of civil disobedience, led by Nelson Mandela.
1960 :	Seventy black demonstrators killed at Sharpeville. The ANC is banned.
1961 :	South Africa is declared a republic and is forced to leave the Commonwealth.
1960s :	International pressure against the government begins; South Africa is excluded from Olympic Games.
1962-1983 :	The United Nations pass several resolutions condemning apartheid policies and isolating South Africa internationally.
1964 :	Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life in prison and sent to Robben Island.
1970s :	More than three million black people are resettled by force in black homelands or Bantustans.
1976 :	More than 600 killed in clashes between black protesters and security forces during an uprising that starts in Soweto (South West Township), Johannesburg's largest township.
1984-1989 :	Township revolts. State of emergency is declared by the government led by President Botha (National Party). At the same time, the government tries to negotiate a conditional release with Mandela who rejects the conditions.
1985 :	The governments of the United States and Great Britain as well as 23 other nations impose strict selective economic sanctions on South Africa in protest of its racial policy.
1989 :	Frederick de Klerk replaces Botha as president and meets Mandela. Public facilities are desegregated. Many ANC activists are freed.
1990 :	The ANC is unbanned and Mandela released after 27 years in prison.
1992 :	Official end of apartheid.
April 26, 1994 :	Blacks and Whites vote for the first time in a national election
May 1994 :	Nelson Mandela becomes South Africa's first black President.

The African National Congress and the National Party

African National Congress : It was founded in January 1912 in Bloemfontein as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), whose aim was to abolish racial discrimination. It became the ANC (African National Congress) in 1923 and is today the oldest national political organisation in the country. In 1956 it committed itself to a South Africa that "belongs to all". Banned in 1960, it was forced for three decades underground and into exile. From exile, it conducted an armed struggle for liberation. Unbanned in 1990, it entered formal negotiations with the government which eventually produced the compromise settlement which allowed the ANC to take power as a result of the election of April 1994.

National Party : It was founded in Bloemfontein in 1914 by Afrikaner nationalists whose aim was to remove any black or coloured influence from South African politics. Various National Party governments passed segregation laws which made up the South African apartheid system. The National Party government also implemented a program of social conservatism: certain movies, gambling and other vices were banned. Television was not introduced before 1975 because it was viewed as immoral by the authorities. After the state of emergency instituted by Botha's government which gave the military and the police increasing powers, the National Party led by President de Klerk started formal negotiations with the ANC in 1990.

1. Get some further information about the ANC and the South African repression: go browse the websites to answer the questions.

- What did the ANC's campaign of civil disobedience led by Mandela in 1950 consist in?

<http://www.anc.org.za/people/mandela.html>

<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/progact.html>

- What happened in Sharpeville in 1960?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/21/newsid_2653000/2653405.stm

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/specialprojects/sharpevill/menu.htm>

- What were the 1976 Soweto riots about? How were they repressed?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/16/newsid_2514000/2514467.stm

http://www.aidc.org.za/files/Alts%20June%20Pull%201_0.pdf



Student carrying the body of Hector Pieterse, one of the first casualties of the repression of the Soweto uprising

- What were the measures taken during the state of emergency that was declared in 1984-1989? What was the role of the South African Broadcasting Corporation?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid#State_of_emergency

- How did ANC activists respond to such measures? What was their aim?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_National_Congress#Violent_political_resistance

2. Goodbye Bafana and South African history:

- Which of the events above are mentioned in the film?

- How are they mentioned?

- What is the effect on the viewer?

II The Freedom Charter

1. What do we learn about the ANC's political ideas in the film ? What is the main source of those ideas ?

2. Read the following extract from a dialogue between James Gregory and his censorship assistant at Robben Island :

	GREGORY :	That Freedom Charter, you've read it ?
	VOOSLOO :	No
	GREGORY :	Do you know what it's about ?
	VOOSLOO :	It's about... extermination of the Whites, stuff like it, isn't it ?
	GREGORY :	How must I know ?

How does Gregory get to know what is written in the Freedom Charter ?

- What does this show about the South African system concerning information and the media ?

- Why do you think no white person could get access to the Freedom Charter ?

- Describe the scene when Gregory is on the train with a copy of the Freedom Charter in his pocket. How does he feel ? Why ?

3. Read the following extracts from the Freedom Charter:

Is the Freedom Charter really "about extermination of the Whites" then ?

Why do you think it was convenient to think so among Afrikaners ?

What were those who knew what the Freedom Charter was really about afraid of ?

What are the objections that Gregory makes to the Freedom Charter ?

What does the Freedom Charter show about the condition of black South Africans ?

The Freedom Charter

Adopted at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, on 26 June 1955

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know :

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people ;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality ;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities ;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief ;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter ;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The People Shall Govern !

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws ;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country ;

All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights !

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races ;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs ;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride ;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime ;

The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth !

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people ;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole ;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It !

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger ;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land ;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose ;

All Shall be Equal Before the Law !

No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official ;

All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights !

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad ;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

There Shall be Work and Security !

The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened !

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit ;

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort !

There Shall be Peace and Friendship !

THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY

4. The Passive :

Study the following sentence taken from the Freedom Charter:

"our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality"

What would be the sentence like in the active form?

.....

Why do you think the verb is in the passive form here?

.....

Study this other sentence taken from the Freedom Charter:

"The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened"

What would be the sentence like in the active form?

.....

What is the problem?

.....

What can you conclude about the passive form?

We use the passive when:

-

-

5. Using elements from the following extracts from the Freedom Charter below, and the passive form, describe the condition of black people in South Africa during the years of apartheid rule.

E.g. - *"No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial. No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official"*

> Black people were imprisoned without a fair trial.

- *"People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished."*

>

- *"The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people"*

>

- *"Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land"*

>

- *"All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad"* (use: allow to)

>

III. The Apartheid system

1. The Freedom Charter is clearly a response to the apartheid system. When was it created ? How did it work ?

2. What is apartheid ?

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English : the former South African political and social system in which only white people had full political rights and people of other races, especially black people, were forced to go to separate schools, live in separate areas, etc.

Concise Oxford Dictionary : (esp. in South Africa) a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race.

Etymology : Afrikaans : APART +-HOOD

apart : separately, not together -hood : suffix forming nouns

From these definitions, can you pick out one element that is fundamental in apartheid ?

3. What is specific to South African apartheid is the systematic way in which the National Party formalised segregation and racial hatred through the law. Here are the main laws :

Apartheid Legislation in South Africa

Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No 55 of 1949

Prohibited marriages between white people and people of other races. Between 1946 and the enactment of this law, only 75 mixed marriages had been recorded, compared with some 28,000 white marriages.

Population Registration Act, Act No 30 of 1950

Led to the creation of a national register in which every person's race was recorded. A Race Classification Board took the final decision on what a person's race was in disputed cases.

Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950

Forced physical separation between races by creating different residential areas for different races. Led to forced removals of people living in "wrong" areas, for example Coloureds living in District Six in Cape Town.

Separate Representation of Voters Act, Act No 46 of 1951

Together with the 1956 amendment, this act led to the removal of Coloureds from the common voters' roll.

Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act, Act No 52 of 1951

Gave the Minister of Native Affairs the power to remove blacks from public or privately owned land and to establishment resettlement camps to house these displaced people.

Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act, Act No 67 of 1952

Commonly known as the Pass Laws, this ironically named act forced black people to carry identification with them at all times. A pass included a photograph, details of place of origin, employment record, tax payments, and encounters with the police. It was a criminal offence to be unable to produce a pass when required to do so by the police. No black person could leave a rural area for an urban one without a permit from the local authorities. On arrival in an urban area a permit to seek work had to be obtained within 72 hours.

Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953

Prohibited strike action by blacks.

Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953

Established a Black Education Department in the Department of Native Affairs which would compile a curriculum that suited the "nature and requirements of the black people". The author of the legislation, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd (then Minister of Native Affairs, later Prime Minister), stated that its aim was to prevent Africans receiving an education that would lead them to aspire to positions they wouldn't be allowed to hold in society. Instead Africans were to receive an education designed to provide them with skills to serve their own people in the homelands or to work in labouring jobs under whites.

Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act No 49 of 1953

Forced segregation in all public amenities, public buildings, and public transport with the aim of eliminating contact between whites and other races. "Europeans Only" and "Non-Europeans Only" signs were put up. The act stated that facilities provided for different races need not be equal.

Bantu Investment Corporation Act, Act No 34 of 1959

Provided for the creation of financial, commercial, and industrial schemes in areas designated for black people.

Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959

Put an end to black students attending white universities (mainly the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand). Created separate tertiary institutions for whites, Coloured, blacks, and Asians.

Terrorism Act of 1967

Allowed for indefinite detention without trial and established BOSS, the Bureau of State Security, which was responsible for the internal security of South Africa.

Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970

Compelled all black people to become a citizen of the homeland that responded to their ethnic group, regardless of whether they'd ever lived there or not, and removed their South African citizenship.

The consequences of apartheid: disproportionate treatment circa 1978 :

	Blacks	Whites
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13%	87%
Share of National Income	<20%	75%
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income	360 rands	750 rands
Doctors/population	1/44,000	1/400
Infant mortality rate	20% (urban) 40% (rural)	2.7%
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$45	\$696
Teacher/pupil ratio	1/60	1/22

4. Connecting facts with the film :

- Do we often see what everyday life was like for black people in South Africa in the film ? -
- Which scene shows how apartheid worked ?
- What is the effect on the viewer ?
- Which act is referred to in this scene ?
- Who do we identify with ? Why ?
- What do you think of Gloria's explanation (quoted below) ? What does it reveal about South African society ?



NATASHA : But why don't WE need a pass ?

JAMES : 'cause we're white.

NATASHA : But it's not fair, Pa !

JAMES : It's apartheid. It's just the way we live, Natasha. Whites on one side, Blacks on the other.

GLORIA : It's God's way, darling. Just like you don't mix the sparrows with the swallows, the geese with the ducks or a cow with a buck. It's just not natural. And we don't question God.

5. Which acts are referred to in Zinzi Mandela's speech we see on television ?



ZINZI (On TV) : What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned ? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence ? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort ? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area ? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work ? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected ?

> **Grammar:** Underline all the verbs in the passive in the quotation above and for each occurrence explain why it is in the passive and not in the active form.

6. The Freedom Charter versus the apartheid laws :

Match each of the following Freedom Charter sections (see above) with an act (or several acts) :

Freedom Charter	Apartheid Acts
The People Shall Govern!	
All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!	
The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!	
The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!	
All Shall be Equal Before the Law!	
All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!	
The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!	

Note : The Rome Statute defined Apartheid as one of eleven crimes against humanity. Citizens of the majority of states, including South Africa, which have ratified the statute can be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court for committing or abetting the crime of apartheid.

PART 2 : The Long Walk to Freedom

I. Robben Island: The Dark Years

1. Robben Island :

What are the characteristics of this prison?

Read the following extract from *The Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela's autobiography :

Robben Island had changed since I had been there for a fortnight in 1962. In 1962 there were few prisoners; the place seemed more like an experiment than a full-fledged prison. Two years later, Robben Island was without question the harshest, most iron-fisted outpost of the South African penal system. It was a hardship situation not only for the prisoners but for the prison staff. Gone were the Coloured warders who had supplied cigarettes and sympathy. The warders, now white and overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking, demanded a master-servant relationship. They ordered us to call them baas, which we refused to do. The racial divide on Robben Island was absolute: there were no black warders, and no white prisoners. Moving from one prison to another always requires a period of adjustment. But journeying to Robben Island was like going to another country. Its isolation made it not simply another prison, but a world of its own, far removed from the one we had come from. The high spirits with which we left Pretoria had been snuffed out by its stern atmosphere; we were face to face with the realization that our life would be unredeemably grim. In Pretoria we felt connected to our supporters and our families ; on the island we felt cut off, and indeed we were

Nelson MANDELA, *The Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus books, 1994) pp.459-60.

- What shows that Robben Island is cut off from the rest of the world in the film? What is the effect of the first images?
- Why was life on the island also harsh for the staff? Do we perceive it in the film? How?

2. First contact:

How does Gregory try to establish a master-slave relationship with the prisoners as his colleagues do?

Here is the script of his first-contact speech with the prisoners :



GREGORY : I'm your new censorship officer. You wanna post a letter, you do it through me. One letter every six months, no longer than five hundred words, no reference to other prisoners, no mention of prison conditions, and no bloody politics. If you fail to conform to these regulations, your letters will not be posted.

You receive a letter, it comes through me. Same story. One every six months. Any mention of politics, and that letter will be censored. Is that clear ?

You fuck with me, and I'll make your life a lot more miserable than it already is.

And I'll enjoy doing so !

- Who does Gregory want to impress with this speech ?
- Is his intended audience present ?
- What is the effect on the viewer ? Does Gregory appear as a really impressive character ?



The prison yard at Robben Island, *The Long Walk to Freedom*, p.354.

3. Rules and regulations: radical modality.

Fill in the following grid with the modals and expressions of modality you know.

How do you say that...	
...something is compulsory	
...something is forbidden	
...something is necessary	
...something is not compulsory	
...something is allowed	

Tip (for those who have trouble doing the exercise) : use the following elements to fill in the grid: CAN, NEED, NOT TO BE ALLOWED TO, MUST, NOT TO HAVE TO, MUSTN'T, BE ALLOWED TO, HAVE TO, NEEDN'T.

Now make five sentences describing the rules and regulations concerning correspondence in Robben Island using some of the modals or expressions of modality taken from the grid.

4. Rules and regulations: what they aimed at.

- How do you think such rules were perceived and experienced by the prisoners?

Read the following extract from Nelson Mandela's autobiography and see if your guess was right :

As a D group prisoner, I was entitled to have only one visitor, and write and receive only one letter every six months. I found this one of the most inhumane restrictions of the prison system. Communication with one's family is a human right; it should not be restricted by the artificial gradations of a prison system. [...]

Visits and letters were restricted to 'first degree' relatives. This was a restriction we not only found irksome but racist. The African sense of immediate family is very different from that of the European or Westerner. Our family structures are larger and more inclusive; anyone who claims descent from a common ancestor is deemed part of the same family.

The Long Walk to Freedom, p.474.

- Are the restrictions on visits and letters the only means to punish the prisoners?

- What happens when Gregory goes fishing with his children?

Read the following extract from Mandela's autobiography to get a better understanding of the prison system at Robben Island :

Prison is designed to break one's spirit and destroy one's resolve. To do this, the authorities attempt to exploit every weakness, demolish every initiative, negate all signs of individuality – all with the idea of stamping out that spark that make each of us human and each of us who we are.

The Long Walk to Freedom, p.463.

II. From prison to prison

1.- After 18 years spent in Robben Island, Mandela is abruptly transferred to Pollsmoor Prison. Why?

- Was each change for the better or for the worse?

- What does this reveal about the South African government and its policy?

2. Fill in the following grid with the elements you observed in the film :

	Robben Island 1964-1982	Pollsmoor Prison 1982-1988	Victor Verster Prison 1988-1990
General conditions (food, accommodation)			
Activities			
Rules and regulations			
Relationships with prison staff			

3. Make comparisons between Robben Island and Victor Verster Prison, using the comparative forms of adjectives taken from the following list:

strict – bad – comfortable – friendly – depressing – good – grim – ugly – mean – agreeable – large – small

Note : Comparatives

- Short adjectives : characteristics :

Comparative: ADJ + (than)

- Long adjectives : characteristics:

Comparative: + ADJ (than)

Irregular forms :

Adjective / adverb	Comparative form
good / well	
bad / badly / ill	
far	

III. Changes

Mandela's physical removal from prison to prison not only reflects changes in the policies of the South African government, but also changes in the characters of the film who themselves become a symbol of South African society.

The evolution of James Gregory :

- Which of the following adjectives would best describe him as he appears at the beginning of the movie?

friendly ambitious casual

- Describe his first meeting with Nelson Mandela.

- This is also our first viewing of Mandela in the film. How do we perceive this character ?

Who do we tend to identify with

- So how would you define Gregory's relationship with Mandela at the very beginning of the film?

- Which of the following words would best describe Gregory's relationship with Mandela at the end of the film?

respect hatred misunderstanding friendship distrust indifference

- What about Gloria ? How does she perceive Nelson Mandela at the beginning of the film? And how does she perceive him at the end ?

- Who do you think is probably more representative of the white South African population, James Gregory or his wife ? Why ?

- What makes James Gregory's radical change possible? How is he marked out as different from the other whites from the very beginning of the film ? What do the other whites call him ?

Note : kaffir: SAfrE taboo an offensive word for a black African, used only by white people.
(Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English).

- What does Gregory's experience show? Can you explain why such a title was chosen for his story?

- What makes the emergence of friendship between supposed enemies possible?

Read the following extract from Mandela's autobiography (This is just before Mandela gets officially released after more than 27 years in prison) :

"Warrant Officer James Gregory was also there in the house, and I embraced him warmly. In the years that he had looked after me from Pollsmoor to Victor Verster, we had never discussed politics, but our bond was an unspoken one and I would miss his soothing presence. Men like [...] Gregory [...] reinforced my belief in the essential humanity even of those who had kept me behind bars for the previous twenty-seven and a half years."

The Long Walk to Freedom, p.672

PART 3 : Beyond the film...

I. South Africa today (easy) :

1. The South african flag :



Here is a picture of the "rainbow flag", which was adopted as South Africa's flag in April 1994. Go to the following websites and explain what the different components of this flag symbolize :

<http://worldatlas.com/webimage/flags/countrys/africa/soafri-ca.htm>

<http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/flag.htm>

2. Observe the picture on the right :

This picture was taken just before the 1999 election of Thabo Mbeki, who succeeded Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa.

- What is the atmosphere conveyed in this picture?
- Why couldn't this have happened two decades before?



3. What has Robben Island become?

Go to the following website to get the answer:

<http://www.robben-island.org.za/>

<http://www.robben-island.org.za/departments/heritage/heritage.asp>

Now go have a look at the following websites:

<http://www.mandela-museum.org.za/>

http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/history/apartmuseum.htm

<http://www.sa-venues.com/attractions/aapartheid-museum.htm>

<http://www.joburg.org.za/november/apartheid.stm>

Why did South Africans feel the need to create museums?

- What do they want to remember?
- What is the use of remembrance for a nation?

II. Reading (more difficult)

1. One of Mandela's sources of encouragement during his prison years was the poem *Invictus*, (=unconquerable) written by a Victorian English poet, William Ernest Henley (1849-1903).

Decade after decade, the unforgettable lines were on Mandela's lips :

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

At Robben Island, Mandela recited this poem and taught other prisoners these defiant lines; reading such words "puts life in you", Mandela said.

- Which elements can you relate to Mandela's situation during the "Dark Years" in Robben Island?
- Pick out all the terms that convey the idea of strength, defiance and courage. Do they eventually outnumber the negative terms?

2. The prisoners were also heartened by the existence of contemporary South African authors like Nadine Gordimer, a devoted supporter. Here is an extract from one of her short stories :

When I saw him in the court he looked beautiful in a blue suit with a striped shirt and brown tie. All the accused – his comrades, he said – were well-dressed. The union bought the clothes so that the judge and the prosecutors would know they weren't dealing with stupid yes-baas black men who didn't know their rights. These things and everything else about the court and trial he explained to me when I was allowed to visit him in jail. Our little girl was born while the trial went on and when I brought the baby to court the first time to show him, his comrades hugged him and then hugged me across the barrier of the prisoners' dock and they had clubbed together to give me some money as a present for the baby. He chose the name for her, Inkululeko.

Then the trial was over and he got six years. He was sent to the Island. We all knew about the Island. Our leaders had been there so long. But I have never seen the sea except to colour it in blue at school, and I couldn't imagine a piece of earth surrounded by it. I could only think of a cake of dung, dropped by the cattle, floating in a pool of rain-water they'd crossed, the water showing the sky like a looking-glass, blue. I was ashamed to think that. He had told me how the glass walls show the pavement trees and the other buildings in the street and the colours of the cars and the clouds as the crane lifted him on a platform higher and higher through the sky to work at the top of a building.

He was allowed one letter a month. It was my letter because his parents didn't know how to write. I used to go to them where they worked on another farm to ask what message they wanted to send. The mother always cried and put her hands on her head and said nothing, and the old man, who preached to us in the veld every Sunday, said tell my son we are praying, God will make everything all right for him. Once he wrote back, That's the trouble – our people on the farms, they're told God will decide what's good for them so that they won't find the force to do anything to change their lives.

After two years had passed, we – his parents and I – had saved up enough money to go to Cape Town to visit him. We went by train and slept on the floor at the station and asked the way, next day, to the ferry. People were kind ; they all knew that if you wanted the ferry it was because you had somebody of yours on the Island.

And there it was – there was the sea. It was green and blue, climbing and falling, bursting white, all the way to the sky. A terrible wind was slapping this way and that ; it hid the Island, but people like us, also waiting for the ferry, pointed where the Island must be, far out in the sea that I never thought would be like it really was.

There were other boats, and ships as big as buildings that go to other places, all over the world, but the ferry is only for the Island, it doesn't go anywhere else in the world, only to the Island. So everybody waiting there was waiting for the

Island, there could be no mistake we were not in the right place. We had sweets and biscuits, trousers and a warm coat for him (a woman standing with us said we weren't allowed to give him the clothes) and I wasn't wearing, any more, the old beret pulled down over my head that farm girls wear, I had bought relaxer cream from the man who comes round the farms selling things out of a box on his bicycle, and my hair was combed up thick under a flowered scarf that didn't cover the gold-coloured rings in my ears. His mother had her blanket tied round her waist over her dress, a farm woman, but I looked just as good as any of the other girls there. When the ferry was ready to take us, we stood all pressed together and quiet like the cattle waiting to be let through a gate. One man kept looking round with his chin moving up and down, he was counting, he must have been afraid there were too many to get on and he didn't want to be left behind. We all moved up to the policeman in charge and everyone ahead of us went onto the boat. But when our turn came and he put out his hand for something, I didn't know what.

We didn't have a permit. We didn't know that before you come to Cape Town, before you come to the ferry for the Island, you have to have a police permit to visit a prisoner on the Island. I tried to ask him nicely. The wind blew the voice out of my mouth.

We were turned away. We saw the ferry rock, bumping the landing where we stood, moving, lifted and dropped by all that water, getting smaller and smaller until we didn't know if we were really seeing it or one of the birds that looked black, dipping up and down, out there.

The only good thing was one of the other people took the sweets and biscuits for him. He wrote and said he got them. But it wasn't a good letter. Of course not. He was cross with me ; I should have found out, I should have known about the permit. He was right – I bought the train tickets, I asked where to go for the ferry, I should have known about the permit. I have passed Standard 81. There was an advice office to go to in town, the churches ran it, he wrote. But the farm is so far from town, we on the farm don't know about these things. It was as he said ; our ignorance is the way we are kept down, this ignorance must go.

We took the train back and we never went to the Island – never saw him in the three more years he was there. Not once. We couldn't find the money for the train. His father died and I had to help his mother from my pay. For our people the worry is always money, I wrote. When will we ever have money ? Then he sent such a good letter. That's what I'm on the Island for, far away from you, I'm here so that one day our people will have the things they need, land, food, the end of ignorance. There was something else – I could just read the word 'power' the prison had blacked out. All his letters were not just for me ; the prison officer read them before I could.

1: Standard 8: a school exam.

Nadine GORDIMER, 'Amnesty' in *Jump and Other Stories* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991) pp.248-25

Questions:

1. Who are the main characters and how are they related to each other ? Who is the narrator ?
2. What happened to the man ?
3. What was his job ?
4. Where does the narrator live ?
5. What shows that going to Cape Town is a real expedition for the family ?
6. What clothes did the narrator decide to wear before going to the Island? Why ?
7. What mistake did the family realise they have made ?
8. How does the narrator feel about this ? What clearly shows it in the text ? How does the reader feel about this ?
9. How does the narrator show how frustrating and insulting the censorship of correspondence was ?
10. Which word(s) do you think the man could have written beside 'power' ?
11. What is the effect of the first-person narrative ?

III. Now write!

1. Imagine the letter the narrator wrote just after missing the ferry to the Island. (easy)
2. Imagine what happens once the man is released. (more difficult)
3. Imagine how Inkululeko tells the story of her parents nowadays, now that she is a grown woman in the new South Africa. (more difficult)

Credits

Dossier réalisé par **Sarah BISSON, professeur d'Anglais au lycée Eugène Delacroix (Drancy, 93)**