



SEGREGATION IN ACTION

KEEPING PEOPLE APART

- Segregation and early Johannesburg

SEGREGATION AS POLICY

- Segregating the city
- Residential segregation
- Influx control

SEGREGATING THE WORKPLACE

- The 'civilized labour' policy

SEGREGATING POLITICAL RIGHTS

RESISTANCE TO SEGREGATION

- The ANC
- Indian passive resistance
- The APO
- The AAC
- The ICU: A taste of freedom

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

- Zack Zampetakis remembers what it was like growing up as a young Greek boy during the Depression.
- Es'kia Mphahlele remembers what it was like to be a young African boy who lived during the Depression.

Activity 1:

Analysing a map

1. What do the names of certain areas tell us about the way that municipal authorities viewed blacks?
2. From an analysis of the map and the accompanying text, where do you think racial mixing was the greatest? Explain your answer.
3. The gold reef in Johannesburg ran from east to west. Bearing this in mind, explain why the railway line was built in the position it was. (★)
4. What does the phrase 'from the wrong side of the tracks' mean? (★)
5. Do you think north or south was 'the wrong side of the tracks' on this map? Explain your answer. (★)

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 2

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3

GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3 and 4

To begin with, however, segregation was not strictly applied and racial mixing amongst the poor was a common feature of early Johannesburg. For example, Burgersdorp was supposed to be an all-white suburb, and was inhabited largely by working class Afrikaners. Yet very soon, blacks also began to live in the area.

As more and more people flocked to the Rand in search of work, slums developed in the poorer areas. Because the **slums** were underserved and overcrowded, diseases often broke out in these areas. In 1904, there was an outbreak of **bubonic plague** in the 'Coolie' Location and the Brickfields. Instead of dealing with the causes of disease, the municipal authorities used this as an excuse to burn down the 'Coolie' Location.

The Africans who lived in the 'Coolie' Location were removed to Klipspruit. This was twenty kilometres outside of town and was to become the first suburb of Soweto many years later.

New words

municipal authorities

– the local town or city council responsible for the administration of the town or city, elected by white ratepayers

slums – areas of a town or a city where very poor people live in extremely overcrowded and neglected conditions

bubonic plague – a disease that swept through Europe in the fourteenth century and took the lives of millions of people. It eventually spread across the world through trade and was carried by rats in slums like the 'Coolie' Location.

'Coolie' – an offensive word for Indian



▲ The Apartheid Museum displays this photograph, which shows the burning down of the 'Coolie' Location.

GRADE 8

Content: Industrialization in South Africa: changing work and lives in South Africa on the mines, the land and in the cities.

GRADE 11

Content: How was segregation a foundation for apartheid?

TERRITORIAL SEGREGATION: Key legislation

Of South Africa's total population of 5 972 577 in 1911, 21% were white, 8.8% were coloured, 2.5% were Asian and 67.7% were African.

The Land Act (1913):

One of the first formal acts of segregation in the Union of South Africa, this Act forced Africans to live in **reserves**, which made up only 8.7% of the country's land. We call this **territorial segregation**. The 1913 Land Act undermined the independence of African farmers by making it illegal for them to work as share-croppers or to be rent-paying tenants. Africans living on white farms were now forced to work for wages, or to give 90 days' free labour in exchange for the use of a piece of land for a year.

The Natives' Trust and Land Act (1936):

This Act made more land available in the African reserves, increasing them to 13% of the land. It also created a Native Trust to control the reserves. The authorities hoped more Africans would be able to live and work in the reserves and would not need to move to the urban areas to look for work.

SEGREGATION AS POLICY

In 1910 South Africa was united for the first time into a single state known as the Union of South Africa. Racial segregation became official policy throughout the Union and laid the foundation for apartheid.



▲ The two key politicians at the time, General Jan Smuts and General J.B.M. Hertzog, were strongly in favour of segregating South African society. They introduced segregation into the city, the workplace and politics.

Sol Plaatje, an African writer and member of the South African Native National Congress, travelled all over the country finding out about the effects of the 1913 Land Act. Here, he describes the horrors facing an African family who had been evicted from a white-owned farm. The family was on the road, looking for somewhere to settle, when one of their children died.



The deceased child had to be buried, but where, when and how? Even criminals dropping straight from the gallows have an undisputed claim to six feet of ground on which to rest their criminal remains, but under the cruel operation of the Land Act little children, whose only crime is that God did not make them white, are sometimes denied that right in their ancestral home.

Adapted from Native Life in South Africa, by Sol T. Plaatje

Segregating the city

By 1923, about 126 000 Africans were living on the **Rand**, including 13 000 women and 25 000 children. The municipal authorities were worried about the number of Africans, and particularly women, who were moving into towns. Some white people feared that they would be 'swamped' by so many Africans moving to the towns.

Residential segregation

The prime minister of South Africa at the time was Jan Smuts. He strongly supported the idea of **residential segregation** between blacks and whites. Johannesburg was the largest urban centre in the country and the most racially-mixed.

In 1922 the Stallard Commission was appointed by the Transvaal Local Government to investigate the presence of Africans in towns. As a result of the recommendations of the Stallard Commission, the Native (Urban Areas) Act was passed by the Smuts government in 1923.

This Act called for the clearance of the slums and gave municipal authorities powers to establish separate **locations** for Africans throughout the country, usually at the edges of towns.



▲ Stallard investigated the presence of Africans in towns in 1922.

Natives – men, women and children – should only be allowed in urban areas when their presence is demanded by the wants of the white population.



▲ New locations, such as Nancefield, were established to the south west of Johannesburg beyond the municipal boundaries.

Influx control

An important aspect of urban segregation was **influx control**. The central government tried to limit the flow of Africans into towns by controlling who was allowed in the urban areas. They did this through the use of passes. Every African man had to carry a pass which gave him permission to be in an urban area. Only people who could find work were given a pass. As a result, people accepted whatever jobs they could find, often for very low wages. If an African male was unable to find work in the urban areas, he was forced to return to the rural areas.

Police conducted regular pass raids. If a person's pass was not in order, or if they did not have a pass in their possession, they were arrested, kicked out of the urban areas and sent back to the reserves.

These pass raids happened so often, that most Africans had, at one time or another, been arrested for a pass law offence. This had the effect of turning the majority of the African population into criminals.

New words

reserves – rural areas where it was legal for Africans to own or lease land.

territorial segregation – the division of South Africa's rural areas into separate portions. The majority of the land was set aside for whites, while Africans were only allowed to live in the reserves.

Rand – the area around Johannesburg

residential segregation – the creation of separate living areas in the towns and cities to ensure that people of different races lived apart

locations – residential areas or townships set aside for Africans. They were usually established just outside so-called white areas.

influx control – the policy of restricting the numbers of African people allowed to live and work in the towns and cities, through the use of passes

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION: Key segregationist legislation

The Urban Areas Native Pass Act (1909):

This Act was intended to control the movement of Africans into towns. It provided work seekers with a permit, which allowed them six days to find work. If they did not find work, they had to return to the rural areas.

The Natives (Urban Areas) Act (1923):

This Act established segregated locations where Africans had to live.

New words

dompas – an Afrikaans word, meaning dumb or stupid pass. Africans commonly referred to their pass as a dompas.

kwela-kwela – the name given to the yellow police vans that pass offenders were bundled into and taken to prison in. The word *kwela* means jump.

reference book – another word for a pass

endorse out – when the authorities sign or place a stamp in a pass which forces a person to leave the urban area



▲ The Apartheid Museum has on display a number of original passes and ID documents.

Below are two sources on the pass laws. The first is a poem and the second is an extract from an autobiography.

Kwela-Ride

A poem by Mafika Gwala

Dompas!

*I looked back
Dompas!
I went through my pockets
Not there.*

*They bit into my flesh
(handcuffs).*

Came the kwela-kwela

*We crawled in.
The young men sang.
In that dark moment*

It all became familiar.



Blame Me on History

An extract from Bloke Modisane's autobiography

*This is the essence of the Pass Law.
I cannot sell my labour to the highest bidder.
I cannot live in the residential area of my choice; I am committed by the colour of my skin to live in segregated ghettos or locations or slums.
Freedom of movement is restricted by the **Reference Book**.
The right to live in peace in my house is subject to the pleasure of any superintendent or Native Commissioner who is empowered to **endorse me out** of the municipal district if, in his opinion, my presence is a danger to public peace and good order.
This is the law.*

Activity 2: Analysing literary sources

Read the two sources on the pass laws again, and then answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think the speaker is being arrested in the poem *Kwela-Ride*?
2. Do you think this event has happened to him more than once? Give a reason.
3. Bloke Modisane says that his “freedom of movement is restricted by the Reference Book”. What do you think he means by this? Give some examples from the extract which show how his freedom of movement was restricted.
4. How do both pieces of writing show that the pass laws limited the freedom of movement of Africans? (★)
5. What is the attitude of both writers to the pass laws? Give an example from each piece of writing to explain your answer. (★)

GRADE 8: LO 3, AS 1 and 4
GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3; LO 3, AS 3
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3; LO 3, AS 3

Activity 3: Developing empathy in history

Imagine that you are an African man living in Johannesburg in 1924. You have just been arrested because you did not have a permit in your pass allowing you to be in an urban area. Write a letter to the *Sunday Times* in which you explain how the pass laws have affected your life. Your letter must be based on real evidence. You must gain your information from the following sources:

- information that you have gathered from the two pieces of writing on the pass laws on page 26.
- interviewing a person who had to carry a pass in Apartheid South Africa. Ask him/her to describe what it felt like to carry a pass and to be arrested for a pass offence. (Remember that, after 1956, African women also had to carry passes.)

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 5; LO 3, AS 4
GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 5; LO 3, AS 3
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3; LO 3, AS 2 and 4

SEGREGATING THE WORKPLACE

In 1922, white workers on the mines went on a general strike. They were protesting against the proposal by the Chamber of Mines to replace white workers with black workers. The slogan of some white miners was ‘Workers of the World Unite and Fight for a White S.A.’ as can be seen in this photograph in the Apartheid Museum.



GRADE 8

Content: Industrialization in South Africa: changing work and lives in South Africa on the mines, the land and in the cities.

GRADE 11

Content: How was segregation a foundation for apartheid?

The strike was brutally suppressed by the Smuts government. This was one reason why Smuts lost the 1924 general election, after which General Hertzog became prime minister of the Union of South Africa.

Hertzog formed the Pact Government – a political alliance between his Afrikaner-based National Party and the Labour Party led by Colonel F.H.P. Creswell. Although these two parties had some different beliefs, they both disliked Smuts. They believed that Smuts and his South African Party (SAP) was not doing enough to protect white workers from losing their jobs to African workers.



▲ Poor whites on the Rand in the 1930s.

SEGREGATING THE WORKPLACE: Key legislation

The Mines and Works Act (1911):

This Act reserved certain skilled work on the mines for whites.

The Industrial Conciliation Act (1924):

This Act set up industrial councils, where trade unions could negotiate with employers. It excluded Africans from membership of trade unions, and as a result, from industrial councils.

The Wages Act (1925):

This Act set compulsory minimum wages for white workers in unskilled jobs.

The Mines and Works Amendment Act (1926):

This was also known as the Colour Bar Act. It excluded Africans and Indians from skilled work. Certificates of competency for trades in the mines could be issued only to whites and to coloureds in certain occupations.

Hertzog was particularly concerned about protecting the Afrikaners, who were his main supporters. There had been an influx of **poor whites** (mainly Afrikaners) onto the Witwatersrand and it was important for Hertzog to provide them with work. The Pact Government also wanted to reduce South Africa's dependence on the mining industry. Hertzog believed that the development of **secondary industry** would solve both problems. It would provide work in factories for poor whites and reduce South Africa's economic dependence on mining.

The 'civilized labour' policy

Poor whites who moved to the towns and cities had little education and few skills. The only work that they were able to do was unskilled work, but Africans were usually used for unskilled work as their labour was cheaper. In order to ensure that white workers were protected from black competition, the 'civilized labour policy' was introduced from 1924 onwards.

This policy meant that whites would be paid a much higher wage – 'a civilized wage' – for doing the same work as Africans. Unskilled white workers were also favoured over unskilled Africans, particularly in the civil service and railways.

The 'civilized labour' policy was expensive, because employers had to pay white workers more than they would have had to pay African workers. It is clear that the government wanted segregation in the workplace even though it was much more expensive.

A biased source is one that supports only one side or shows only one point of view. It also shows the **prejudices** of the writer. Although biased sources may only show one side of events, they can be useful because they show us how different people thought and felt about things in the past.

How to identify bias in a source:

- The writer may use **emotive** words which arouse strong feelings in the readers. Look for certain words in the text which arouse strong emotions in you.
- Knowledge of the writer's background and world view/beliefs can help to reveal bias. Sometimes the person may support a particular cause or a group. Ask who wrote the source and what the person believed.
- Sometimes the source has been written with a specific purpose in mind. Ask why the person wrote or created the source.

New words

poor whites – usually Afrikaners, who had been forced off the land, either through drought or poor farming methods, and had moved to the towns and cities

secondary industry – industry which processes raw materials and makes them into something manufactured, usually in a factory

prejudices – strong beliefs or opinions either firmly in favour of or against a person or a thing

emotive – arousing strong feelings and emotions

Activity 4:

Analysing a variety of sources on segregation in the workplace



▲ This cartoon was used in the election campaign in 1924. 'Spoorwee' means railways.

1. Who does the person entering the railways in this cartoon represent?
2. Who does the person being kicked out of the railways represent?
3. What does the cartoon suggest about the nature of employment on the railways?
4. How does the cartoon help us to understand white workers' fears about African labour? (★)
5. Why did white workers have such fears? (★)
6. In what way is this cartoon critical of Smuts and his South African Party (SAP)? (★)
7. How did the 'civilized labour' policy hope to reassure white workers that there was no real basis for their fears? (★)

'Civilized labour' is work done by people whose standard of living conforms to the decent standard of white living, while 'uncivilized labour' is work done by persons whose goals or aim is restricted to basic necessities of underdeveloped and 'savage' people.

▲ Extract from Hertzog's circular to government departments, 31 October 1924.

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 2; LO 3, AS 2
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 4; LO 2, AS 1;
LO 3, AS 2

1. This source is a government circular. What does this tell you about the attitude and beliefs of the Pact Government?
2. In what way is this source a biased source? (★)
 - a. Has the writer used any words that arouse strong emotion in you? Which words do this and what feelings do they arouse?
 - b. Who do you think wrote this kind of source? What do you think his attitude and beliefs were?
 - c. What was the purpose of this source? What reasons would the writer have had for creating this source?
3. Would you expect to find such language in a government circular today? What does this tell you about the attitude and beliefs of the current government? (★)

SEGREGATING POLITICAL RIGHTS

Hertzog believed that political segregation was essential for the survival of whites as the dominant group in society. When the Union of South Africa was created in 1910, black people were formally denied the right to vote, with one exception. Some African and coloured men living in the Cape were allowed to vote if they had a certain level of education and owned some property. This was known as a **qualified franchise**.

In 1926 Hertzog introduced the 'Hertzog Native Bills' into parliament. These aimed to remove Cape Africans from the Cape **voters' roll**. At the same time, he supported giving coloureds the vote in all provinces, not just the Cape. It appears that Hertzog hoped to integrate coloureds into white society in order to strengthen his own political support.

The Hertzog Native Representation Bill was criticized, both inside and outside parliament and it was only ten years later, in 1936, that it eventually became law. Why did it take such a long time to become law? One of the reasons is that Smuts had opposed the bill in 1926 because he needed the Cape African vote to hold onto vital seats for his South Africa Party in parliament. As a result, Hertzog was unable to get enough support in parliament for it to be passed, but by 1936, Smuts and Hertzog had joined together in a new political party – the United Party. Hertzog now had enough support in parliament for the bill to be passed.

Throughout this period, the ANC opposed the Hertzog 'Native' Bills. They argued that Africans formed the majority of the population and should not be denied a say in government.

RESISTANCE TO SEGREGATION

The extension of segregation between 1910 and 1937, which is dealt with in the Segregation Hall of the Apartheid Museum, led to resistance from African, coloured and Indian communities across the country.

The ANC

The South African National Native Congress, as the ANC was first called, was established in 1912, largely as a response to the proposed Land Bill (which became the 1913 Land Act). In its early years, the ANC was a fairly small and **moderate** organization. It drew its membership largely from the educated African **elite**.

The leadership of the ANC believed that if they responded reasonably to injustices, white politicians would take them seriously. They therefore used petitions, **delegations** and resolutions as a form of protest. Unfortunately, white politicians tended to dismiss these measures completely.

SEGREGATING POLITICAL RIGHTS: Key legislation

The Native Representation Act (1936):

This Act removed Cape Africans from the common voters' roll and provided Africans with their own separate institution – the Native Representative Council (NRC). Through the NRC, Africans could make recommendations to parliament about issues that affected them.

The Native Trust and Land Act (1936):

This Act increased the land which Africans could own from 8.7% to 13% of all land in South Africa. But it placed more controls over labour tenancy on farms.

The Native Laws Amendment Act (1937):

This Act strengthened influx control. Local authorities could now refuse Africans entry to towns and force them into the reserves if they did not have jobs.



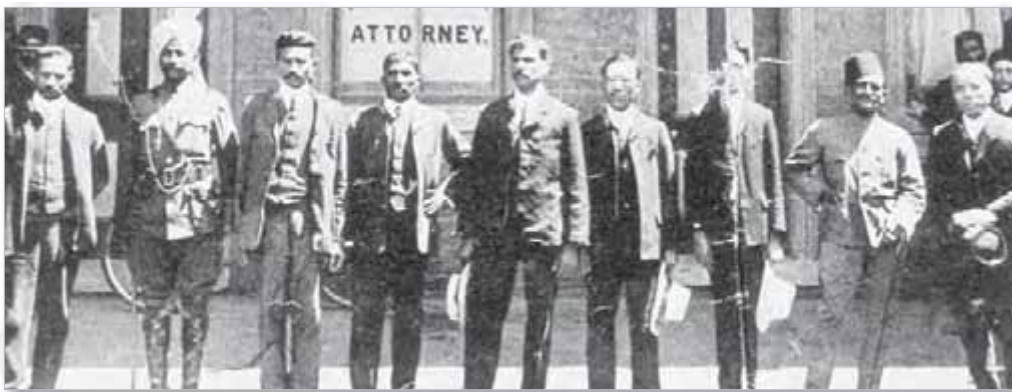
◀ A delegation of the SANNNC went to London to protest against the Land Act. It consisted of (l to r) Thomas Mapikela, Rev Walter Rubusana, Rev John Dube, Saul Msane and Sol Plaatje.

Indian passive resistance

The Indian community was inspired by the leadership of Mohandas Gandhi, a lawyer who had come from India to work with the Indian community in Natal in 1893. He used the principle of **satyagraha** as the basis of a non-violent protest strategy in which Indians aimed to be arrested by gathering in large numbers to protest against unjust laws.

In 1913 Indian workers went on strike to protest against the **discriminatory laws** against Indians, especially the £3 (three pounds) annual tax they were forced to pay and their poor working conditions. Thousands of people, including Gandhi, were jailed.

Gandhi believed that if the prisons were overflowing, the government would be forced to negotiate with the Indian community. Eventually, the government did enter into negotiations with Gandhi and the new laws were **repealed**.



▲ Gandhi, third from the left, leading a protest march in 1913.

The APO

The African People's Organization (APO) was founded in Cape Town in 1902. Dr Abdullah Abdurahman became the leader in 1905 and led it for 35 years. The APO fought for the rights of coloured people. Its membership consisted largely of the coloured elite, and it also used petitions and delegations as a form of protest. These tended to be ignored by white politicians. After 1910, the APO tried to link up with African organizations to oppose white domination.

The AAC

The All-African Convention (AAC) was formed in 1935 with the specific intention of opposing Hertzog's 'Native' Bills. It appealed to the British government for help and sent a deputation to meet with Hertzog, but all this had no effect.

Despite formal AAC protest meetings throughout the country, the Native Representation Act was passed in 1936. Having lost that battle, the AAC and the ANC had to decide how to respond to the Native Representative Council (NRC), which was set up by the government as an African advisory body. They could boycott the NRC or participate in it. They eventually agreed to participate, but the NRC had no real power. The AAC and ANC later called it a 'toy telephone', because nobody listened to them when they used it.

New words

qualified franchise – the restriction of a person's right to vote. To qualify to vote, a person had to have a certain level of education and own some property.

Bills – proposed laws, to which parliament must agree by voting in their favour, after which they become laws. Once they become laws, they are known as Acts.

voters' roll – a list of all registered voters. If a person's name does not appear on the list, they are not allowed to vote.

moderate – holding a political point of view which is reasonable and does not take extreme positions

elite – group considered to be superior because of its power, talent or wealth

delegations – groups of people sent as representatives to a conference or a meeting to put forward the view of their particular organization

satyagraha – refers to Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent protest and resistance. *Satyagraha* literally means 'soul force'.

discriminatory laws – laws which distinguished between people, usually on the basis of race

repealed – formally cancelled

New words

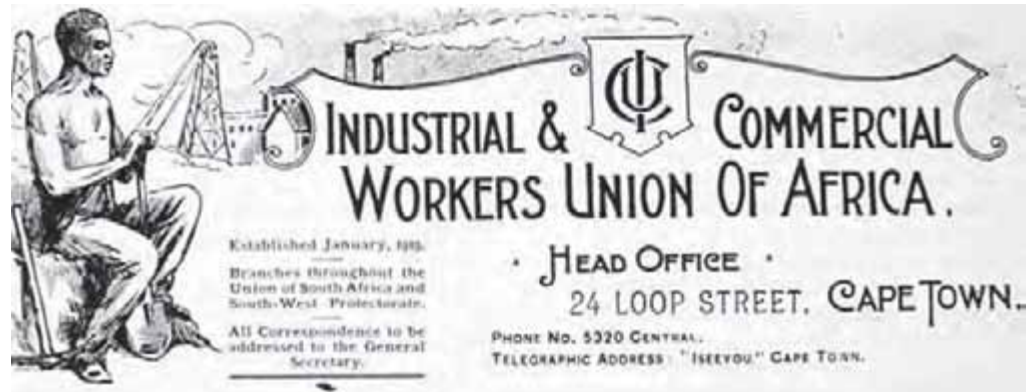
non-co-operation – failure or refusal to co-operate or work with someone

bywoners – an Afrikaans word meaning poor white farmers who rented land from other white farmers

The ICU: A taste of freedom

A more effective African protest in the 1920s came from the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, known as the ICU. What was remarkable about the ICU was both its rapid rise – by 1928, it had a membership of over 100 000 – and its rapid fall. By 1930, the ICU had lost its strength and had faded into insignificance.

Although the ICU began as a trade union of African dockworkers in Cape Town in 1918, it gradually transformed itself into a mass movement in the late 1920s. The reason for the brief success of the ICU in this period was its ability to respond to important issues on the ground which affected Africans directly. In particular, the ICU shifted its attention to the countryside, especially in Natal and the Orange Free State, where African farm workers were being evicted or facing wage cuts. The ICU organized **non-co-operation**, acts of violence on a number of farms and legal challenges in the courts.



Activity 5: Developing arguments

GRADE 8: LO 2, AS 1
GRADE 11: LO 3, AS 2

Copy and complete the following table to show the effectiveness of various forms of resistance to segregation.

	Methods used	Effectiveness: Mark out of 10	Evidence to support your mark
ANC			
Indian resistance			
APO			
AAC			
ICU			

▲ Adapted from C. Culpin, South Africa since 1948, John Murray, 2000.

SKILLS

Developing essay writing skills: one main idea per paragraph

When writing a history essay, it is important to structure your ideas in a clear and organized way. A good rule to remember is that you should only have one main or controlling idea in each paragraph.

A good paragraph will start with a clear sentence introducing the main idea of the paragraph. This should be followed by evidence or examples which illustrate the point made in this first sentence. The paragraph should end with a concluding sentence which links the point you have made to the overall topic or argument you are making.

...Developing essay writing skills: one main idea per paragraph (continued)

An example

Main sentence:

In its early years, the ANC did not resist segregation very effectively because it lacked the power to challenge the government.

Evidence or example to support main sentence:

For example, the ANC protested against the Land Act by sending delegations to meet the government. These delegations achieved little success.

Concluding sentence:

Because the ANC had no real power at this time, the government largely ignored their protests.

Activity 6: Writing paragraphs with only one main idea (*)

Here is a possible essay topic:

To what extent was early resistance to segregation effective?

- Use the guidelines in the skills box for writing a paragraph.
- Use the information from the table that you filled out in Activity 5 to write a few paragraphs which address this question.
- Each paragraph should deal with one of the organizations in the table.
- Each paragraph should answer the essay question by discussing one specific organization.

GRADE 11: LO 3, AS 2

GRADE 12: LO 3, AS 2

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In 1929, the Wall Street Stock Exchange in New York collapsed and this plunged the world into an economic depression. The period of history from 1929 to the mid-1930s is known as the Great Depression. All countries, including South Africa, faced economic and social crisis.



▲ *The world tightens its belt.*

People could no longer afford to buy anything, so mines and factories closed down. Thousands of people lost their jobs. African workers were usually the first to lose their jobs. People living in the countryside were particularly badly hit. Not only could farmers no longer sell their products, but a major drought destroyed their crops.

Africans were already experiencing hardship in the reserves. The Depression forced thousands to move to the cities in search of work. In particular, African women began to enter the cities in large numbers,

hoping to find work as domestic servants, washerwomen or beer brewers.

Many Afrikaners who had been living as **bywoners** on the land, flocked to the cities, joining the ranks of the poor whites.

As the poor moved into the cities, racial divisions blurred and blacks and whites lived together in slum areas. This worried the government and made them intensify their segregationist policies. The government also took many steps to improve conditions for poor whites. Although poor Africans experienced poverty just as intensely as poor whites, the government viewed Africans as a problem that they had to get rid of. As a result, they applied the pass laws much more strictly to try to prevent Africans from moving to the cities.

GRADE 8

Content: Industrialization in South Africa: changing work and lives in South Africa on the mines, the land and in the cities.

GRADE 11

Content: How was segregation a foundation for apartheid?



▲ A soup kitchen for poor whites in the 1930s.

Zack Zampetakis remembers what it was like growing up as a young Greek boy during the Depression.

“As far as I can remember we were the only whites living with blacks – with coloureds and blacks. We were sharing our rooms. In the front bedroom was a coloured woman living there. The lounge was our bedroom, and the dining room was occupied by an African man and his wife. We were all well integrated, we all had very few problems with each other. There was a sense of community, a sense of belonging too.

It was the time of the Depression ... Our meals consisted of beans, string beans. This was our staple food – we had that and nothing else, just the bread. The Transvaal Helping Hand Society used to hand us food parcels, which my mother used to sell in order to clothe me. At school, they put me apart in class because I was covered in sores, and because the other mothers protested that their kids were sitting next to this child who had vuilsiekte, which means filthy disease.”

▲ Adapted from *Working Life* by L. Callinicos, Ravan Press, 1987, pp. 234-236.



▲ The government gave African children no support during the Great Depression.

Es'kia Mphahlele remembers what it was like to be a young African boy who lived during the Depression.

*"I did most of the domestic work, because my sister and brother were still too small. I woke up at 4.30 in the morning to make a fire in a **brazier** made out of an old lavatory bucket. I washed and made breakfast for the family. Back from school I had to clean the house as Aunt Dora and grandmother did the white people's washing all day.*

*Because we were so many in the family, there was only one bedstead. The wooden floor of the room we slept in had two large holes. There was always a sharp **draught** coming up from underneath the floor. Coupled with this our heads were a playground for mice which also **created havoc** with our food and clothing.*

▲ Adapted from E. Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, pp. 23-24.

New words

brazier – pan or stand for holding burning coals

draught – a current of cold air in a confined space

created havoc – caused chaos and destruction

Activity 7: Using oral history to gain understanding of the Depression

1. What does the young Greek boy's experience tell us about racial mixing amongst the poor?
2. According to the young Greek boy, what kind of aid did poor whites receive?
3. Why do you think Es'kia Mphahlele did not receive such aid?
4. Why did Es'kia Mphahlele have to do so much housework?
5. Compare the experiences of these two children during the Great Depression. What is similar and what is different about their experiences?

GRADE 8: LO 3, AS 7
GRADE 11: LO 2, AS 3

Activity 8: Focusing on memory and oral history (★)

1. How do these memories help you to understand what life was like for children during the Depression?
2. How do the experiences of these children growing up in the Depression compare with your own experiences of growing up?
3. Keeping in mind that these are the memories of adults who are remembering events that took place a long time ago, do you think that these are reliable sources? How would you test their reliability?

GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 4; LO 2, AS 3

Activity 9: Finding out about your own history

1. Conduct an interview with an older person about a difficult time that they experienced and overcame a long time ago. This person may be a member of your family or a member of your community.
2. When you have finished the interview, try to find out some more information about this event from other sources, e.g. written sources or photographs. You should try to see how accurate the person's memory of the event is.

GRADE 8: LO 3, AS 7
GRADE 9: LO 3, AS 4
GRADE 11: LO 2, AS 3; LO 4, AS 3

