



RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID



MAYIBUYE! iAFRIKA!

- The ANC Youth League

NON-VIOLENT PROTEST IN THE 1950s

- “Open the jail doors, we want to enter!”:
The Defiance Campaign
 - Repressive government legislation and actions
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- The death of Steve Biko

THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976

GRADE 9

Content: Repression and resistance to apartheid

GRADE 11

Content: What was the nature of resistance to apartheid?

MAYIBUYE! ¡AFRIKA!

From the 1940s to the 1970s, resistance to apartheid took many different forms. In the 1940s, the resistance movement was still **moderate**, but in the 1950s, it turned to open, but non-violent, confrontation. In the early 1960s it took up arms in the struggle. The state met every attempt at resistance by increasing its repression.

Despite the South African government's harsh policies and the growing poverty and hardship of the African people, there was little organized black resistance against the state until things began to change in the 1940s. There were many popular struggles during this time, including housing protests and bus boycotts. Many of these struggles were inspired by the activities of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which was formed in 1921. A large number of the leaders of the CPSA were white.



▲ Members of the Communist Party of South Africa helped organize lifts for the residents of Alexandra during the bus boycotts of 1943.

The ANC Youth League

The African National Congress (ANC) remained out of touch with the mood and needs of most Africans. It was only when the ANC Youth League was formed in 1944 that the ANC began to adopt a more mass-based approach.

Youth Leaguers such as Anton Lembede, its first president, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu called for a **militant** programme of action, based on mass protests, boycotts and passive resistance. The Programme of Action was only adopted by the ANC in 1949 when the Youth Leaguers began to play a prominent role and the movement dedicated itself to mass action.

► Anton Lembede, the first president of the ANC Youth League.



Source A

Interview with Joe Matthews of the ANC Youth League

We no longer want to go on deputations to the government. The Xuma idea of going off to Cape Town to see a minister every time there was a crisis must come to an end. And we must have strikes, and mass action.*

Carter and Karis, Reel 12A

** Dr Xuma became the president of the ANC in 1940. He was most concerned with the organization of the ANC and did much to make its running more efficient.*

Source B

David Bopape, a Youth Leaguer, criticized the ANC

The ANC recruited the top-level type of people so that our conferences were mainly attended by what we regarded as intellectuals. The ANC didn't go down enough, to the masses.

Activity 1: Analysing different sources to gain understanding

1. What is Joe Matthews' main criticism of the ANC in Source A?
2. In Source B, what is David Bopape's view of the ANC leadership in the 1940s?
3. What is similar in these two criticisms of the ANC? (★)
4. Using these two sources and your own knowledge, explain why the Youth League was critical of the ANC in the 1940s. (★)

New words

moderate – in this case, forms of protest such as deputations or petitions, which involved relatively small numbers of educated people

militant – using strong pressure to achieve one's aims

groundswell – a gradual strengthening of popular opinion which is as unstoppable as the powerful, but slow-moving waves caused by a recent storm far out to sea

civil disobedience – when people deliberately break the law as part of a political campaign

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3

NON-VIOLENT PROTEST IN THE 1950s

Throughout the 1950s, there were many campaigns and protests against apartheid and the apartheid laws. There was a **groundswell** of resistance as people responded in overwhelming numbers to calls for **civil disobedience** and defiance throughout the country.

In this section, we will look at some of the most important campaigns. Most acts of resistance during this time were intended to be non-violent, though they did become violent from time to time, usually as a result of brutal police action.



GRADE 9

Content: Repression and resistance to apartheid in the 1950s

GRADE 11

Content: What was the nature of resistance to apartheid?

◀ A group of Indians, whites, coloureds and Africans defy the creation of separate facilities in the 1950s during the Defiance Campaign.

New words

abolish – put an end to or get rid of

curfew – time at night after which black people were not allowed outside their houses and had to remain indoors until the next day

“Open the jail doors, we want to enter!”: The Defiance Campaign

In 1952 the African National Congress launched the Defiance Campaign. A programme of civil disobedience was planned. This meant that large groups of Africans would peacefully but deliberately break the law. They aimed to get arrested and flood the country’s prisons. They hoped that this would draw public attention to the apartheid laws and force the government to **abolish** them.

Mass rallies were held throughout the country and groups of volunteers were sent to break the law. They walked through ‘whites only’ entrances, sat in parks set aside for whites only, broke the **curfew**, and refused to carry their passes. As a result, over 8 000 people were arrested. The campaign had an enormous impact on people and ANC membership swelled from 7 000 to 100 000. However, the police responded with extreme violence, especially in the Eastern Cape. The state imposed heavy fines and even jail sentences, and the ANC was forced to call off the campaign.

Songs of resistance

As people were jailed, songs of struggle and resistance like Somlandela were sung.

Somlandela

Somlandela Luthuli

Luthuli

Yonke indawo

Lapo ayakona somlandela

Lelijele licwele uyalandelwa

We shall follow Luthuli

Luthuli

We shall follow him everywhere

he goes

The jails are full, they show that we struggle for our freedom



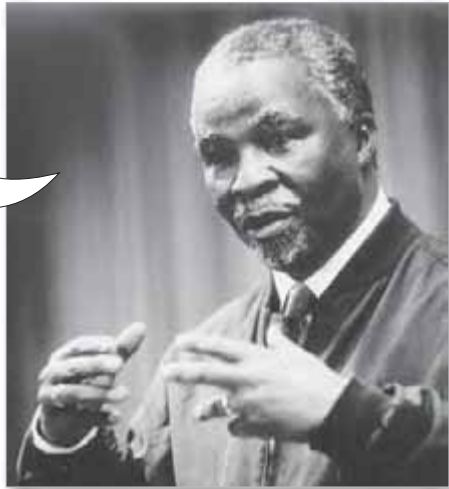
◀ Albert Luthuli was the president of the ANC in 1952. He was the first South African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Here he accepts the award in Oslo, Norway, in 1961.



Music has played such a role that I just don't see how one would have pulled through the many years of struggle at home, in exile, in camps, all over the world, without being sustained by song.

◀ Baleka Mbete, speaker of parliament.

At no time has the liberation movement not been singing. At no time has the liberation movement not been dancing. Everywhere, culture becomes a very central and a very important element in this act of rebellion, in this act of assertion that we are human.



▲ From the CD cover Notes of SA Freedom Songs, Mayibuye Centre.

▶ Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa.

Activity 2: Understanding the role of music in the struggle

1. In the context of the Defiance Campaign, what do you think the song *Somlandela* is trying to show?
2. How do you think a song like this would have helped people who were jailed during the Defiance Campaign?
3. Using the comments by Baleka Mbete and President Thabo Mbeki, as well as your own feelings, explain why music was an important part of the struggle.
4. Once you have finished working through this book, choose one of the resistance campaigns and write your own freedom song for it.

Repressive government legislation and actions

The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 made the Communist Party illegal and gave the government the power to declare any similar organization illegal as well. The Communist Party **disbanded** itself just before this legislation became law.

The Public Safety Act of 1953 enabled the government to declare a **state of emergency** if it believed that public order was threatened.

The government also placed **banning orders** on political activists. A banned person was restricted to his/her district, had to report to the police twice a day, could not be in the company of more than one person, and could not be quoted. This effectively silenced many activists. Organizations could also be banned, which meant they ceased to exist.

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

New words

disbanded – closed itself down, discontinued as a political party

state of emergency – a period during which the government suspended the rule of law and took special powers to rule the country. The police and army could arrest anyone they believed to be a threat to the state

banning orders – a government order or decree which led to a person being banned. This was usually imposed on a person for a period of five years.

“The People shall govern”: The Freedom Charter

In the 1950s, different groups within the liberation movement came together to form the Congress Alliance. The Alliance included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats (an organization of whites opposed to apartheid), the Coloured People’s Organization and the South African Council of Trade Unions.

The Alliance started the Congress of the People Campaign. Volunteers travelled throughout South Africa to collect the demands of ordinary South Africans for a just and free society. These demands were listed in the Freedom Charter, which was presented to the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955. You can see video footage of this event in the Apartheid Museum.

The Congress of the People Campaign was important because it mobilized people over a lengthy period and so helped to revive the ANC. The ANC formulated a programme for the Congress Alliance which would guide it for the next forty years.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER

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 the people.

The people shall govern.

All national groups shall have equal rights.

The people shall share in the nation’s wealth.

The land shall be shared by those who work it.

All shall be equal before the law.

All shall enjoy equal human rights.

There shall be work and security for all.

The doors of learning and culture shall be opened.

There shall be houses, security and comfort.

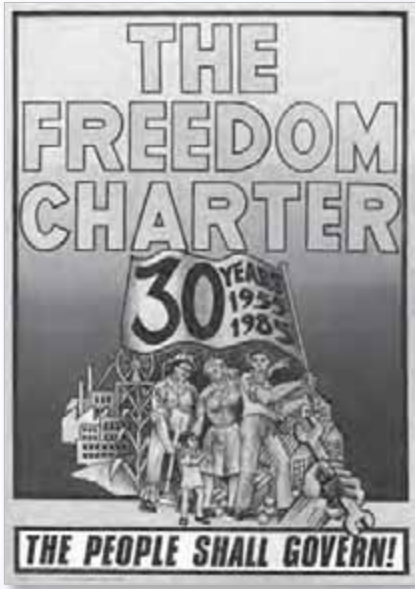
There shall be peace and friendship.

▲ *The opening words and main clauses of the Freedom Charter.*

Activity 3: Analysing the Freedom Charter

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

1. Find and write down the different demands from the Freedom Charter which show what the people wanted: democracy; redistribution of land and wealth; an end to apartheid; freedom; a just society.
2. Which of the Freedom Charter’s demands do you think is the most important? Explain why you think so.
3. Which of the Freedom Charter’s demands do you think have been met today in the new South Africa? Provide evidence to support your answer. (*)
4. Choose one of the demands of the Freedom Charter, and design your own poster for it.



◀ Posters were an important form of protest, particularly in the 1980s. They often provided a unifying symbol for a particular struggle or movement. The Apartheid Museum has dedicated a whole wall to struggle posters.

This poster was produced by the democratic movement in 1985 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter. It shows that in the 1980s the Freedom Charter was still a powerful liberation symbol. Many of the principles of our South African Constitution were inspired by the demands of the Freedom Charter.

The Treason Trial

The South African government regarded the Freedom Charter as a **treasonable** document and it claimed that the Congress Alliance was plotting to overthrow the state. As a result, 156 members of the Congress Alliance were arrested and charged with **treason**. The treason trial lasted from 1956 to 1961, but the government failed to prove that treason had been intended and so everyone was eventually **acquitted**.

You can see this very famous and interesting photograph in the Apartheid Museum. It is interesting because it has been constructed. The photographer, Eli Weinberg, had received permission to photograph all 156 trialists in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. However, when the park superintendent found out that most of the people were black, he withdrew permission. So Weinberg set up benches outside the park and photographed the people in different groups. He then put the groups together in a single photograph.



New words

treasonable/treason – an act that is considered by the government to be disloyal to the country. It is often punishable by execution.

acquitted – declared not guilty

Activity 4: Analysing a photograph

1. Does the fact that you know that this photograph was constructed affect its meaning in any way? Explain.
2. Does the fact that it was constructed affect your appreciation of it in any way? Explain.
3. In what way does this photograph help us to understand this period of history? (★)

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 2
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 4

“Strijdom, you have struck a rock!”: Women’s resistance

Partly because African women experienced fewer restrictions than men, they were at the forefront of resistance in the 1940s and the early 1950s.

In the 1950s the government tried to extend its control over the African women who were moving to the cities and to restrict their freedom when they got there. To achieve this, it planned to extend the pass system to include women. For several years women resisted this attempt.

By 1956 their resistance had grown into a national movement. It reached its climax on 9 August 1956 when 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria and handed over letters of protest against the proposed pass laws to Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom.

The women’s resistance failed to achieve its objectives and the pass laws were extended to apply to African women in the late 1950s. Today, 9 August is a public holiday on which we celebrate National Women’s Day, remembering the role played by women in defying the unjust pass laws, as well as the strength and courage of women in South Africa as a whole.



▲ Raheema Moosa, Lilian Ngoyi, the president of the ANC Women’s League and the non-racial Federation of South African Women, together with Helen Joseph and Sophie Williams, led the women’s march to Pretoria in 1956.

GRADE 9

Content: Repression and the armed struggle in the 1960s

GRADE 11

Content: What was the nature of resistance to apartheid?

THE 1960s – THE ROAD TO ARMED STRUGGLE

The formation of the PAC

In 1959 a group within the ANC, led by Robert Sobukwe, P.K. Leballo and Zeph Mothopeng, broke away and formed a new organization called the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). As Africanists, they were opposed to working with organizations that were not African. They were particularly opposed to the Congress Alliance, which also included the white-based Congress of Democrats.



◀ *Robert Sobukwe, the leader of the PAC, who was later imprisoned for six years on Robben Island and died in Kimberley as a banned person in 1978.*

New word

European – in this context, it means a white person. As the original white settlers came from Europe, whites in South Africa called themselves Europeans. By using the term, they may also have meant that they thought Europe was more civilized and advanced than Africa.

Interview with Robert Sobukwe, leader of the PAC, January 1959:

Question: *What are your differences with the ANC?*

Sobukwe: *We differ radically in our conception of the struggle. We firmly hold that we are oppressed as an African nation. To us, therefore, the struggle is a national struggle. There are those in the ANC who maintain, in the face of the hard facts of the SA situation, that ours is a class struggle ... We, however, stand for the complete overthrow of white domination.*

Question: *What is your answer to the accusation that you are anti-white?*

Sobukwe: *In South Africa then, once the white domination has been overthrown and the white man is no longer 'white-man boss' but an individual member of society, there will be no reason to hate him and he will not be hated by the masses. We are not anti-white, therefore. We do not hate the **European** because he is white! We hate him because he is an oppressor.*

▲ *Quoted in Making History, Grade 12 by J. Pape et al., p. 327.*

Activity 5: Analysing an oral source

1. What does Robert Sobukwe mean by “a national struggle”?
2. What do you understand by the term “class struggle”? Refer to Chapter 1 pages 12 and 13 on the Radical Approach to explaining apartheid to help you answer this. (★)
3. Why did Sobukwe break away from the ANC?
4. Do you think that Sobukwe’s views are racist? Justify your answer. (★)

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3

Activity 6: Debating a controversial issue (★)

Throughout this book there are a number of examples of whites, such as Helen Joseph and several of the Treason Trialists, who played an important role in the struggle against apartheid. Was Sobukwe’s view that whites should not be part of the struggle correct? Debate this issue in class.

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 4
GRADE 11: LO 3, AS 2

The Sharpeville Massacre

On 21 March 1960, the Pan Africanist Congress organized a protest against the pass laws. Still using the methods of non-violent protest, they planned to march to the local police station, hand in their passes and give themselves up for arrest. A large crowd gathered outside the police station at Sharpeville (near Vereeniging). The police fired on the crowd, killing 69 people and wounding 180 people.

What really happened at Sharpeville? Dealing with conflicting sources

When you analyse the following sources describing the events at Sharpeville, you will see that they do not agree with each other. In fact, they present conflicting views of what happened.

Source A

An historian's account

*At 1.15 p.m., with nearly 300 police facing a crowd of 5 000, a **scuffle** broke out at the gate leading into the police station. A police officer, accidentally or deliberately, was pushed over. The attention of the front rows was focused on the gate and they surged forward, pushed by people behind them who wanted to see what was happening. At this stage, according to police witnesses, stones were thrown at them. The more inexperienced constables began firing their guns **spontaneously**. The majority of those killed or wounded were shot in the back. Altogether 69 people died, including eight women and ten children. 180 people were wounded.*

▲ From T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 210.

Source B



▲ The police fire on a retreating crowd at Sharpeville.

New words

scuffle – a confused or disorderly fight at close quarters

spontaneously – not planned or caused or suggested by outside influences or as a result of an order given by a superior

ferocious – fierce or savage

South African High Commissioner – the chief representative of the South African government in Britain

Source C

An eyewitness account by journalist Humphrey Tyler

When the shooting started it did not stop until there was no living thing in the huge compound in front of the police station. The police have claimed they were in desperate danger because the crowd was stoning them. Yet only three policemen were reported to have been hit by stones – and more than 200 Africans were shot down. The police also have said that the crowd was armed with ‘ferocious weapons’, which littered the compound after they fled. I saw no weapons, although I looked very carefully, and afterwards studied the photographs of the death scene. While I was there I saw only shoes, hats and a few bicycles left among the bodies.

Source D

Statement by the **South African High Commissioner** in London in 1960

According to the factual information now available, the disturbances at Sharpeville on Monday resulted from a planned demonstration of about 20 000 natives in which demonstrators attacked the police with assorted weapons including firearms. The demonstrators shot first, and the police were forced to fire in self-defence and avoid even more tragic results.

▲ Sources C and D: Quoted in: R. Sieborger et al., *What is Evidence?*, Francolin Publishers, 1996, p. 19.

Activity 7: Trying to establish the facts

Since these sources present conflicting or different points of view about what happened at Sharpeville, try to establish the facts by copying out and completing the following table:

Establishing the facts	Source A	Source B	Source C	Source D
What was the size of the crowd?				
Was the crowd armed and dangerous?				
Was the action planned?				
Were the police acting in self-defence?				

▲ Adapted from *What is Evidence?* by R. Sieborger and G. Weldon, Francolin Publishers, 1996, p. 19.

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 2

Reliability is as easy as ABC

Use the ABC method to work out whether or not a source is reliable.

A is for Author: Who is the author or creator of the source? Would this make the source trustworthy? For example, an eyewitness account may be trustworthy because the person witnessed the actual events. On the other hand, an eyewitness may be too involved in the events to give a balanced view. A secondary source produced by an historian may be reliable because the historian has worked with a wide range of sources. On the other hand, the historian may be biased and present sources that reflect only one point of view.

A is for Audience: For what audience did the writer intend the source? In other words, what was the writer's intention in producing the source?

B is for Bias: Is the source biased in any way? Does it give only one side of events? Does it use emotive language or make exaggerated comments to persuade you to react in a certain way? Or does it try to present a balanced point of view?

C is for Consistency: Do all the facts in the source support each other?

C is for Comparison: Is the information in the source backed up by similar information presented in other sources?

Activity 8: Determining the reliability of sources

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 2; LO 3, AS 1

GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 4

1. Explain what you see happening in Source B – the photograph on page 64.
2. How important is it that Source C on page 65 was written by an eyewitness? (★)
3. What do you think the intention of the writers of Source A (page 64) and Source D (page 65) are? How do their intentions differ? (★)
4. Using the ABC for reliability provided above, work out whether Source A and Source D are reliable accounts of what happened at Sharpeville. (★)
5. Using all the sources about Sharpeville and your own knowledge about it, do you think that the crowd at Sharpeville was armed and dangerous?
6. Imagine that you were a reporter at the time of the events at Sharpeville. Write a newspaper report, based on the knowledge you have gained from analysing the above sources and stating what you believe happened at Sharpeville.

Moving towards the armed struggle

Sharpeville marked a turning point in the anti-apartheid struggle. There was a massive outcry, both nationally and internationally, about police actions there. The government responded by declaring a state of emergency and banning the ANC and the PAC.

Both the ANC and the PAC had to rethink their strategies. They decided to embark on a policy of armed resistance. The ANC set up a military wing called *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, 'the Spear of the Nation', also known as MK. The PAC established its military wing called Poqo, which means 'standing alone'. Both groups were prepared to use **sabotage** and violence to overthrow the government.



▲ Ruth Mompoti represented the ANC during the first round of negotiations that led to democracy in South Africa.

Ruth Mompoti, a long-standing ANC member, explains why the ANC turned to armed resistance.

“All the time that the African National Congress was using peaceful means to try to bring change in South Africa, the reaction from the regime was violent. People were shot at peaceful meetings. Thousands upon thousands of South Africans have died at the hands of the police ... There’s also the violence of conditions of living in South Africa ... We decided that, if the gun is what the South African regime has used to rule us, it will have to be the gun that breaks that rule.”

▲ Quoted in *Lives of Courage: Women for a new South Africa* by D. Russell.



◀ This cartoon was published in *Punch*, a British magazine, in 1960. It portrays the ANC’s decision to move towards armed struggle.

Activity 9: Analysing a cartoon and an oral source (*)

1. Study the above cartoon carefully. Explain what the following symbols in the cartoon stand for: the planting machine, the crop that is growing.
2. What does the cartoonist see as the major cause of the armed struggle?
3. What do you think the cartoonist’s attitude is towards the armed struggle?
4. Why does Ruth Mompoti believe that the ANC had no choice but to start using violence?
5. Using this cartoon, Ruth Mompoti’s evidence and your own knowledge, explain why the ANC decided to embark on an armed struggle.

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

New words

sabotage – illegal destruction of property or equipment by people who are opposed to the state

guerrilla warfare – small and often secret groups which fight the enemy by using unconventional methods, rather than through direct confrontation in a battle

The Rivonia Trial

Between 1961 and 1963, 200 acts of sabotage took place in South Africa, mostly organized by the ANC. In 1963 the headquarters of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), at Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, was raided and the entire leadership of MK was arrested. They were charged with “recruiting people for training in sabotage and **guerrilla warfare** for the purpose of violent revolution”.

Repressive government legislation

The government introduced even harsher legislation to suppress any violent resistance.

The Sabotage Act (1962)

– Sabotage was made a treasonable offence, with a minimum of five years' imprisonment and a maximum penalty of death. A 'communist agitator' could be placed under house arrest. This meant that a person was not allowed to leave his/her house for all or part of the day.

The General Laws Amendment Act (1963)

– This Act gave the police the power to detain a person for 90 days without trial. During this 90-day period, the suspect had no access to legal advice or visitors. In the next 18 months, more than 1 000 people were detained under this law.

Eight of the trialists (Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni) were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Photographs of these men hang prominently in the Apartheid Museum. They show several of them in disguise because they were on the run. The Rivonia Trial and the imprisonment of the ANC leaders broke the power of MK and the ANC inside South Africa.

During the Rivonia Trial, Mandela made a four-hour address to the court, ending with these famous lines:



During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony, and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

THE 1970s – THE YOUTH TAKE CHARGE

GRADE 9

Content: Repression and the growth of mass democratic movements in the 1970s

GRADE 11

Content: What was the nature of resistance to apartheid?

GRADE 12

Content: The 1970s: The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa

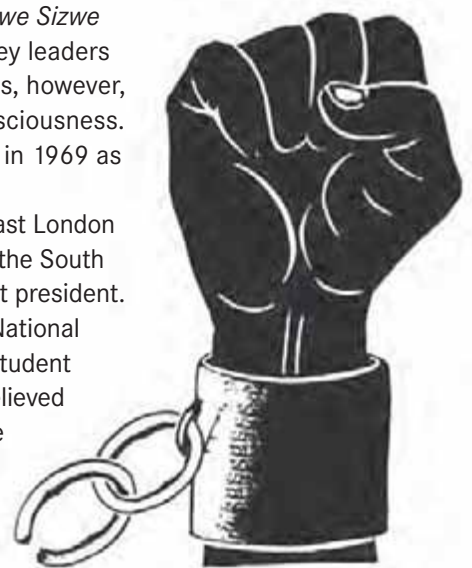
Steve Biko and the Rise of Black Consciousness

The early 1960s saw the end of effective opposition from the ANC and PAC within South Africa. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and *Poqo* had been effectively crushed and the key leaders were either banned, jailed or in exile. In the 1970s, however, black resistance took on a new form – black consciousness. Black consciousness (BC) started in South Africa in 1969 as a university student movement led by Steve Biko.

Biko was a medical student who was born in East London in 1946. While he was studying, he formed SASO, the South African Students Organization, and became its first president. SASO was a breakaway movement from NUSAS (National Union of South African Students), a mainly white student movement that was opposed to apartheid. Biko believed that a white-led organization could not fight for the interests of black students.

The main ideas of black consciousness were:

- pride in being black
- a determination that blacks should end their dependence on whites.



▲ The symbol of the Black Consciousness Movement.

Blacks think that everything good is white. This attitude comes from childhood. When we go to school, our school is not the same as the white school ... This is part of the roots of the feeling of being inferior that our kids get as they grow up. Our homes are different, the streets are different. So you begin to feel that there is something incomplete about being black, and that completeness goes with being white.

When you say 'Black is beautiful' ... you are saying, man, you are OK as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being.

Adapted from I Write What I Like by Steve Biko.



▲ Steve Biko, the father of the Black Consciousness Movement.

The death of Steve Biko

The tragic story of Steve Biko is told in the Apartheid Museum's Hall of Political Executions. As Steve Biko became more popular, the government increasingly saw him as a threat. He was banned in 1973 and detained without trial for a few months in 1976. In 1977 he was arrested again. He was kept in a cell, naked and in chains. He was severely tortured by the security police. Within 18 days of his arrest, he was dead. He was only 30 years old.

The Apartheid Museum has a video recording of the **callous** reaction of the Minister of Justice at the time, Mr Jimmy Kruger, to the death of Steve Biko.



▲ The Hall of Political Executions in the Apartheid Museum.

New word

callous – showing a lack of feeling for somebody else's pain or hardship



On the night of 12 September 1977, Mr Biko was found dead in his cell. I never at any stage said what Mr Biko died of. I don't know what he died of ... his death leaves me cold!

◀ Jimmy Kruger, Minister of Justice.

The ideas of BC caught on particularly among the youth and they formed many organizations in support of BC. In 1972 the Black People's Convention (BPC) was formed to co-ordinate all BC activities. Some historians believe that the ideas of black consciousness influenced the actions of the students in the Soweto Uprising in 1976 which is described on page 71. Others disagree.



I do not remember any liberation movement, such as the Black Consciousness Movement or the South African Student Movement (SASM) contributing to our daily meetings and discussions. In short, as students we faced our own destiny and problems.

▲ Sifiso Ndlovu, a historian who was a student in Soweto in 1976.

SKILLS

Developing essay writing skills: writing introductions

The introduction is a very important part of an essay. It provides your reader with their first impression of your writing, and it is possible that it will influence their judgement of your essay.

The purpose of the introduction is to:

- identify the problem posed by the essay question
- outline how you are going to structure your argument in the essay.

Some useful phrases to use in an introduction:

- This essay will include ...
- The purpose of this essay is to ...
- I will argue that ...

Below is an example of an introduction to the following essay question:

To what extent was the rise of black consciousness an important cause of the Soweto Uprising of 1976?

This essay will explore the role played by the ideas of black consciousness in influencing the actions of some student leaders in 1976. It will argue that, while the ideas of black consciousness were important, there were other more immediate causes of frustration which led to the uprising.

This essay would then go on to examine some of the issues that led to frustration, such as:

- The harsh conditions in the townships which the youth experienced every day
- The situation in schools, including the language policy of teaching half the subjects in Afrikaans
- The lack of employment opportunities for school leavers and the feelings of hopelessness that this caused.

Activity 10: Writing an introduction for an essay (*)

Write an introduction to the following essay topic, using the guidelines outlined above:

“Steve Biko had been harassed by police for years. They suspected he was a dangerous agitator trying to inspire the people to violent resistance.”

Discuss the extent of Steve Biko’s involvement in resistance during the 1970s.

GRADE 11: LO 2, AS 1 and 2
GRADE 12: LO 2, AS 1 and 2;
LO 3, AS 3

THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976

In 1975 the Minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha, ordered that African schools must teach half of the subjects in Standards Five and Six (now Grades 7 and 8) in Afrikaans. People opposed this because they believed that the children's education would suffer. They also opposed it because they saw Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor.

On 16 June 1976, 20 000 students marched through Soweto in protest against the use of Afrikaans in schools. The police fired on the crowd. Hector Pieterse was the first child to die. He was 13 years old. The students responded violently and unrest swept throughout the country.

Although the uprising was eventually crushed by the police, it had important results. It was the single biggest challenge to the government and the apartheid system. The government could no longer ignore resistance. In many ways, the Soweto Uprising was a major turning point and marked the beginning of the end of apartheid.

SKILLS

Causation – long-term, short-term and immediate causes

History is concerned with causation, i.e. explaining why things happened in the past. All historical events have causes. It is often possible to classify them into long-term, short-term and immediate causes.

- Long-term causes are the underlying conditions that create tension and build up over a period of time.
- A short-term cause is an event or issue that takes place shortly before the event takes place
- An immediate cause is an event or action that sparks off a series of events.

Read the following sources to help you understand why the Soweto Uprising took place.

Source A

Statistics for Soweto 1976

<i>Population:</i>	<i>1.5 million</i>
<i>Area:</i>	<i>87 square kilometres</i>
<i>Location:</i>	<i>±10km south west of Johannesburg's city centre</i>
<i>Administration:</i>	<i>West Rand Administration Board</i>
<i>Electricity:</i>	<i>20 % of homes</i>
<i>Hot water:</i>	<i>5% of homes</i>
<i>Hospitals:</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Schools:</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Number of pupils per class:</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Average rent per month:</i>	<i>R40 for a two-roomed house</i>
<i>Average income per month:</i>	<i>R100</i>
<i>Average cost of living per month:</i>	<i>R140</i>
<i>Number of homeless:</i>	<i>400 000</i>
<i>Employment:</i>	<i>very little in Soweto – most people commute daily to work elsewhere in the Greater Johannesburg region</i>

▲ What is History? Skotaville Educational Division, p. 45.

Activity 11: Analysing statistics

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3
GRADE 11 and 12: LO 3, AS 1

1. If only 20% of homes had electricity, 5% of homes had hot water and there was only one hospital for 1.5 million people, what do these statistics tell us about the general living conditions in Soweto in 1976?
2. Look at the average income of people living in Soweto and compare it with their monthly expenses. What does this tell us about the living standards of the general population of Soweto?
3. Was there adequate schooling in Soweto? Use the statistics to prove your answer. (★)
4. Based on these statistics, if you lived in Soweto in 1976 what would your major **grievance** have been? (★)
5. How do these statistics help you to understand why there was such anger in the townships in 1976? (★)

Source B

Given black grievances ranging from low pay and poor housing to the pass laws and political repression, virtually any issue could have set off a generalised upheaval. The one that finally did was the regime's decision to implement a policy of teaching half the courses in African secondary schools in the southern Transvaal through the medium of Afrikaans.

▲ E. Harsch, *White Rule – Black Revolt*, p. 35.

Source C



◀ Students marching in Soweto on 16 June 1976.

Source D

No new secondary schools were built in Soweto between 1962 and 1971 because it was government policy that all new schools should be built exclusively in the homelands. As a result, secondary school classes were severely overcrowded and many teachers resorted to increasingly harsh methods to maintain control. Pupils bitterly resented this.

▲ Adapted from *Soweto: A History* by P. Bonner and L. Segal, p. 78.

Source E

People who were trying to promote political awareness were encouraged when, early in 1973, SASO students staged walkouts from black universities. Many of these 'drop-outs' became teachers in Soweto schools. Armed with BC ideology, SASO activists inspired a new spirit of **radicalism**. Many students tell of the impact these teachers had on their lives.

▲ Adapted from *Soweto: A History* by P. Bonner and L. Segal, p. 80.

Source F

There was 'an atmosphere of revolt' in the 1970s. There were the liberation struggles in Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia. There were the black workers' strikes in the 1970s.

▲ Quoted in *The Right to Learn* by P. Christie, p. 243.

Source G

It affected us both positively and negatively. A lot of us missed out on normal school. But it assisted us to know that the struggle for freedom needed the commitment and support of the liberation movements who were then banned, as well as leaders who were imprisoned. It set in our lives the role of full-time activism. The Soweto uprising changed the history and landscape of the politics of the country permanently. Young people swelled the ranks of the liberation movements abroad, especially the ANC.

▲ Baby Tyawa was a student who was involved in the Soweto Uprising. In the above interview in 2003, she explains the significance of the uprising.

New words

grievance – feeling of dissatisfaction or frustration, in this case, because of hopelessly inadequate facilities

radicalism – supporting fundamental change in society to improve the lives of the majority of the people

Activity 12: Identifying short-term, long-term and immediate causes

1. Sources A to F each emphasize a particular cause of the Soweto Uprising. Copy out and complete this table. Identify what each source states as the major cause of the Soweto Uprising. Then decide whether the cause is a long-term, short-term or immediate cause. Refer to the skills section on causation earlier in this chapter on page 71.

	Major cause of the Soweto Uprising	Long-term/short-term/immediate causes and reason for your choice
Source A		
Source B		
Source C etc.		

2. Which source do you believe provides the most convincing explanation for the outbreak of the Soweto Uprising? Provide a clear reason for your answer. (★)

GRADE 9: LO 2, AS 2
GRADE 11 and 12: LO 1,
AS 2 and 3

