

Nothing's Changed-Tatamkhulu Afrika

POEM MATCHES:

Contrast: Limbo, Two Scavengers, Vultures

Past Present: Limbo, Island Man, What Were They Like?

TATUMKHULU AFRIKA (White Male Poet):

1. He was brought up in Cape Town as a white South African.
2. When he was a teenager he found out he was actually Egyptian born, the child of an Arab father and Turkish mother.
3. The South African government decided to **classify** its citizens according to colour; 'white', 'black' and 'coloured'.
4. Afrika joined the ANC (African National Congress), this party led the struggle against apartheid.
5. He was arrested in 1987 for 'terrorism'; he was banned from writing or speaking in public for five years.
6. He adopted the name Tatumkhulu Afrika which had been his ANC codename. This allowed him to continue writing despite the ban.

7. QUOTE:

"I am completely African. I am a citizen of Africa, I'm a son of Africa, that is my culture. I know I write poems that sound European, because I was brought up in school to do that, but if you look at my poems carefully you will find that all of them I think have an African flavour."

TATUMKHULU AFRIKA-CONTEXT OF POEM:

1. He lived in Cape Town's District Six which was a thriving mixed race inner-city community. People of all colours and beliefs lived together and Afrika says he felt 'at home' here.
2. Afrika wrote about the injustice of apartheid in South Africa in the 1960's.
3. As part of its policy of apartheid (separate development), the government declared District Six a 'whites only' area.
4. Over a period of years the entire area was wiped out and nothing actually built on it.
5. This poem was written just after the official end of apartheid (1990 approx.) It was a time of hope; Nelson Mandela had just been released and the ANC (African National Congress) was about to come into power in the government.
6. It is necessary to know something about this place and time in order to fully understand and appreciate the poem.

HISTORY OF DISTRICT SIX AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA:

1. South Africa is a country that has a wealth of fertile farmland and mineral resources.
2. South Africa has many mines that are famous for diamonds and gold.
3. South Africa was first colonised by the English and Dutch in the seventeenth century.
4. Power sharing of South Africa between the two countries existed until the 1940's.
5. Apartheid was invented as a means to cement the government's control over the economic and social affairs of South Africa.

6. The main aim of apartheid was to keep white domination/power on top as well as increasing the level of racial discrimination.
7. By 1948 the apartheid laws were a solid part of South African society and life.
8. **Whites only jobs** were created and **mixed marriages** were forbidden.
9. In 1950 the Population Registration Act required that all South Africans be classified by race. The categories were: White, Black (African) or Coloured (Mixed Descent). The coloured category included major sub groups of Indians and Asians.
10. Classification in these groups was based on appearance, social background and descent (what race your parents were).
11. A person could not be considered white if one of his/her parents were non-white.
12. If a citizen of South Africa did not agree to be classed by these categories there were harsh punishments which included fines, imprisonment and whippings.
13. Political protests, even peaceful protests were not allowed, with harsh penalties imposed on those involved.
14. Up until 1989, anyone could be detained without a hearing for up to six months. Thousands of individuals died in custody, often after gruesome torture. Those who were tried were sentenced to death, banished or imprisoned for life like Nelson Mandela.
15. The apartheid policy was highly effective in achieving its goal of preferential/special treatment for whites.
16. All blacks were required to carry pass books, containing fingerprints, a photo and general information on their identity.
17. In 1951, the South African government created reserves of land known as **homelands**. These were independent states in which each South African person was given a particular homeland to belong to based on their background of origin.
18. All political rights, including voting was restricted to their particular homeland.
19. The idea was that they would be citizens of their homeland losing their citizenship in South Africa.
20. All black/coloured people needed passports to enter South Africa, they were treated like aliens in their own country.

DISTRICT SIX:

21. District Six was established in the 1800's as a mixed community of freed slaves, labourers, immigrants and merchants.
22. The apartheid government swooped on District Six in the 1960's, forcibly removing its occupants, declaring it a **whites only zone**.
23. Over 60,000 people were forced out of their homes, livelihoods, community centres and social networks were destroyed.
24. They were forced to relocate to the bleak plains of the Cape Flats, several kilometres away.
25. 4,000 families were removed from their homes in 1967 and District Six was declared a slum and slated for demolition and redevelopment. By 1982, 100,000 people had been relocated to the Cape Flats, their former homes flattened by bulldozers with little if any development done to the area.
26. In 1978, 19million blacks lived on 13% of South African land and 4.5million whites lived on 87% of South Africa.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT:

1. Six Stanzas/Verse Paragraphs. Eight short lines-this regularity in the poem suggests a sense of control by the poet.
2. The poet is clear on his feelings, there is no sudden flight of rage.
3. The sentences vary from two words to full sentences.
4. Lines 9 and 48 are short-why do you think?
5. Lines 1-8 are one long sentence, bringing us straight into the action of the poem; we are in the poet's shoes.
6. Descriptive opening with use of **ALLITERATION** (repetition of consonants in two or more words) **s**mall...**s**tones and **ASSONANCE** (repetition or rhyming of vowel sounds) **h**eels...**s**eed**s**...**w**eed**s**.
7. Lines 1-8-the use of commas affects the rhythm and pace of the poem-they can slow the poem down.
8. Line 8 **amiable weeds**- friendly weeds-weeds are personified, i.e., given human qualities/characteristics.
9. Line 9 **District Six**-short abrupt snappy line. This provides impact for the reader, forcing them to recognise/acknowledge the topic discussed.
10. Lines 12-15 **and..and...and...and**-repetition of 'and' increases the pace of the poem as the poet begins to talk about his anger.
11. Lines 17-19 **Brash with glass**-rhyming. **..flaring like a flag**-use of alliteration. The poet is gradually becoming angrier.
12. Line 19 **it squats**-emphasis on ugliness or something illegal.
13. Line 21-**incipient Port Jackson trees**-incipient means newly planted. Port Jackson trees are native to Australia, they do not have a place in District Six and are seen as alien by the poet.
14. Line 22-**new, upmarket, haute cuisine**-this is how District Six is now. Haute cuisine refers to high class, French cooking, again an example of something that is not traditionally associated with District Six.
15. Line 24-**whites only inn**-what else would you associate an inn with?
16. Lines 25-26-**No sign says it is: but we know where we belong**-in the old South Africa there were signs saying 'Whites only', but now money rather than the law separates white and black.
17. Line 26-**we...we**-repetition of we-who are 'we'?
18. Line 27-**I press my nose**-first person singular 'I', also we are seeing things from the poet's point of view.
19. Lines 30-32-**crushed ice...single rose**-a list of the goods available to local black population.
20. Line 34-**working man's café sells**-contrast with the high class restaurant for the whites.
21. Line 35-**bunny chows**-poor man's hamburger.
22. Line 36-7-**eat it at a plastic table's top**-compared to the inn.
23. Line 42-**boy again**-return to childhood.
24. Line 45-**hands burn**-carefully chosen word, hands burn to take revenge. It is a physical image symbolising the heat of the speaker's emotions.
25. Line 48-**Nothing's changed**-link with the title. Short sentence for impact and to leave the reader with the main point of the poem. South Africa is still rife with racism.
26. The **title** of the poem is **ironic**. District Six has completely disappeared but the attitudes that destroyed it are still there.

FORM AND TECHNIQUE:

1. Free Verse. Six eight line verses but the fourth stanza is divided into two unequal parts (like South Africa?) Lines 25-26 are the key to the poem.
2. First two stanzas are descriptive with a flowing rhythm. This breaks up as the speaker gets angrier in stanza three.
3. There is **contrast** in the poem between hard and soft things in Stanza 1. Weeds are **personified, ...amiable weeds.**
4. The list in stanza 2 ends with anger.
5. **It squats** (Line 19) is one of the shortest line sin the poem but has a huge impact on the reader. '**Squats**' suggests ugliness as well as something illegal.
6. **Hands burn** symbolises the heat of the speaker's emotion.
7. Most lines are end stopped, but at times the feelings overflow onto the next line, e.g., Lines 15-16, 29-30 and 36-37.
8. Repetition of **and** with the parts of the speaker's body emphasise the wholeness of his feeling for the place.
9. Glass is used to symbolise separation. The speaker presses his nose against it (the window), leaves a small '**O**' in it and he longs to break the glass.
10. There is a sharp contrast between '**haute cuisine**' and '**bunny chows**' the food of the rich white people who have taken over District Six and the local food of the working classes.

SUBJECT MATTER:

1. The poet returns to the wasteland that was once his home and relives the anger he felt when the area, District Six, was first destroyed.
2. He sees a restaurant; expensive, stylish, exclusive with a guard at the gatepost.
3. He thinks about poverty and the working man's café, where people eat without plates from plastic worktops.
4. Afrika reflects that despite the supposed change in politics in South Africa, there are still huge **inequalities** between blacks and whites.
5. Even though South Africa is supposed to have changed, he knows the new restaurant is really '**whites only**' and so **nothing's changed.**
6. The deep anger he feels makes him want to destroy the restaurant-to smash the glass with a stone or bomb.
7. The images of the **wasteland**, the **expensive restaurant** and the **working man's café** are sharply contrasted. They show the huge inequalities that exist.
8. **ATTITUDE:** is a combination of the poet's tone of voice and the ideas he is trying to convey to the reader. This is how meaning is put across.
9. **TONE:** how the poet feels. Read it aloud to work it out. Is he **angry**, because nothing has changed **OR resigned/calm**-he knows it is too much to hope for, that things can change.

THEME AND INTERPRETATION:

1. The isolated lines in stanza 4 are a key section of the poem: **No sign says it is;/but we know where we belong.** In the old South Africa there were signs saying, *Whites only* but now money rather than the law separates whites from blacks.
2. The title of the poem *Nothing's Changed* is **IRONIC**. District Six has completely disappeared but the attitudes that destroyed it are still there.