

# Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

## Cry the Beloved Country by Alan Paton

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- How did Stephen Kumalo change during the book? What other characters changed?
- Father Vincent says “but sorrow is better than fear. For fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich.” What does he mean?
- What other emotions are woven throughout the book?
- How does John Kumalo address racial injustice? How does Msimangu address racial injustice?
- How did the book portray rural life vs. city life?
- What does Stephen Kumalo mean when he says “for I have lived my life in destruction”?
- How does the book convey the difference between words vs. deeds?
- Are the characters of Stephen, James Jarvis and Msimangu symbolic? If so, what do they symbolize? How did the author reveal their personalities?
- Was the visit to Ezenzeleni symbolic?
- Was Absalom’s trial just? Did the newspaper article have an impact?
- What role did Arthur Jarvis’ son play in the novel?
- There are many paradoxes in the novel: A parson’s son commits murder; a white man who fights for the dignity of blacks is killed; some whites help blacks during the bus boycott. How do these contribute to the story? What other paradoxes can you think of?
- What role does faith play in the novel? Stephen Kumalo goes out into the world as an innocent, his simplicity and honesty wins respect and help from many, worries over the sins of others but never judges, even with his suffering he retains his belief. Does faith impede any character (Stephen before journey)?
- Why did Stephen go to the mountain?
- Did the novel (published in 1948) seem dated?



**Skokie Public Library**

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