

Repetition is key:
style and meaning in
cry, the beloved
country



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Repetition is key to the dramatic effect in chapter 12 of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Three important things are repeated: the title of the novel, the laws, and separation. Repetition makes very clear the point that the author, Alan Paton, is conveying: the people of South Africa need help. The repetition of phrases, ideas, or themes in chapter 12 show how the people of South Africa need someone to take action, to create useful laws, and to unite the black and white inhabitants in peace.

In chapter 12, the repetition of the title, “*Cry the Beloved Country*”, is an obvious demonstration of the desperation of the citizens of South Africa. “*Cry, the beloved country. These things are not yet at an end,*” declares Stephen Kumalo on page 105, near the end of chapter 11. This is the first time the title of the book is mentioned in the text, but it is not the last. “*Cry, the beloved country*” is said often throughout all of chapter 12. Repetition is a powerful tool because it shows the strong desire to be heard. Many children, if they believe they have not been heard the first time, will repeat their question over and over again until someone grants their request. When these children grow up, they typically learn to be patient and only repeat their questions when absolutely necessary. The murder of an engineer, Mr. Arthur Jarvis, requires the natives of South Africa to revert back to their childlike state of repetition. Mr. Jarvis was president of the African Boys Club, a faithful layman to the church, and a fighter for justice. This shows the despair in the hearts of the natives. When they turn back to childlike tendencies, it shows their great need for help in the same way that children often need help. When Kumalo and the other Africans repeat that phrase “*cry, the beloved country,*” it is a demand for the natives to take action.

Despite the arguing and disagreeing of the vignettes in chapter 12, repetition shows the common want of the people of South Africa.

Many of the vignettes in chapter 12 feature both white men of Johannesburg proposing ideas of how to prevent the violence that led to Mr. Jarvis' death. Although Jarvis' death is not explicitly mentioned in the vignettes, the conversations suggest that his death is what prompted them. One common thing mentioned is the laws. On page 108, we see a conversation between one man, "Jackson", and another man who remains unnamed. The unnamed man says, "They should enforce the pass laws, Jackson," to which Jackson replies, "But I tell you the pass laws don't work." The recurring topic of laws and their inadequacy is noticeable. Without sufficient laws, the people are left to repeat a cry calling for action. Earlier in the chapter, a man is giving a speech and asks his audience, "Which do we prefer, a law-abiding, industrious and purposeful native people, or a lawless, idle, and purposeless people?" This line shows that Jackson is not the only South African that believes there is no real law governing the blacks. Again, repetition is key in this chapter, showing just how many people, despite their disagreements on how to achieve it, all deep-down want the same thing. In this case, it is a law that will keep both blacks and whites safe and purposeful.

The ignorance of some characters portrayed in chapter 12 shows the importance of peace between blacks and whites without need for segregation. When a vignette in chapter 12 describes a conversation of a rich, white man or woman they often consider segregation as a way for peace. One white, after taking her children to Zoo Lake asked, "I really don't see why they can't have separate days for natives." The ignorance of this <https://assignbuster.com/repetition-is-key-style-and-meaning-in-cry-the-beloved-country/>

woman, who declared it to be “ impossible” to take her children to Zoo Lake when natives are there, shows why the laws to protect natives, end violence, and protect whites are not effective. It takes an effort from both blacks and white to create and understanding between the two, and this woman is a clear demonstration of the lack of that. Throughout the rest of that paragraph and other paragraphs in that chapter, the whites refer to the natives as “ creatures”. By repeating the use of the word “ creatures” alongside the white’s desire for separation, Paton shows how ignorant the whites were of the blacks’ conditions. The woman was disgusted by the blacks in zoo lake, despite the fact that there was no where else for them to go. That ignorance is why the natives must cry for their beloved country to take action.

If one of the leaders like John Kumalo, Dubula, or Tomlinson would enact something to help those people, peace without segregation could be possible. Repetition, where such themes are concerned, is deployed in chapter 12 to create a dramatic effect. It shows the desire and despair in the hearts of the South Africans. Through the similar thoughts of the characters in chapter 12 the eyes of the reader are opened to the necessity of good leadership and laws for the natives and Europeans both.