

English Literature Coursework.

Reply to a letter from an old friend.

Dear Robert,

I appreciate your sympathy, Robert, at such a hard moment for my wife and me. I was pleased to read something from you at such a difficult time. My son's death was such a shock for my wife that she is feeling ill. I was shocked as well, but I tried to busy myself with sorting out Arthur's problems. At the moment I am in Johannesburg alone, because I sent my wife and the young widow with her children back to my farm. I decided to do this because it is too much stress for them to stay here.

You know, Robert, I thought before that I knew my son quite well, but when I visited his house I found that he was a totally different person from what I thought. In Arthur's study I found books by liberal politicians, like Abraham Lincoln, and I saw some papers with my son's hand-writing. I was so amazed by my son's writings that I want to quote one of them to you: "The truth is that our Christian civilization is riddled through and through with dilemma. We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we don't want it in South Africa. We believe that God endows men with diverse gifts, and that human life depends for its fullness on their employment and enjoyment, but we are afraid to explore this belief too deeply. We believe in help for the underdog, but we want him to stay under." This just a little part of what my son was thinking. Before my son's death I thought that South Africa was country without any major problems, but after visiting his study I realized what Arthur tried to achieve during his life. He tried to solve the problem of apartheid, and he had some success, because many people in this country started to listen him. He was a busy person and a lot of people wanted to see him as a guest at a wedding or a meeting at a club. Both white and black people of Johannesburg respected my son. Of course he had opponents, but I'm sure the murder wasn't done on purpose.

The day when he died, Arthur and his family should have visited some of their friends and nobody, except the servant, should have been in the house. But my son felt ill on that day and he decided to stay at home. When it was dark, three young natives came to the house, and knocked out and tied up the servant. My son heard some noise from downstairs and went to check what was going on. Those natives didn't know that the white man was at home and one of them fired, because, he said, he was afraid. Tomorrow I will go to the court to hear the judgment about those natives, who were involved in the death of my Arthur.

Robert, I'm so interested in the life of the fellow who killed my son, because his father is the priest in Ndotsheni, the native settlement next to village where I

live. I met him accidentally at my niece's house, where I stayed in Johannesburg. And he recognized that I was the father of the white man who was killed by his son. This priest, called Stephen Kumalo, was so surprised at meeting me that he wasn't able to say anything and just stared at me. When he recovered a little bit, he apologized to me about the crime which his son had done. At the moment when he saw me he nearly fell down and I didn't know what to do, because a white man shouldn't help a black man. I saw how hard was for Stephen to recover and I understood his feelings. I realized that this man had lived all his life next to me and I didn't even bother to greet him. I met him a few times in Ndotsheni, but I never thought before how horrible are the living conditions for people like Steven.

I never thought before about native crime and difficulties in native life. But after meeting with the priest from Ndotsheni and reading my son's writings, I have started to think more about the country where I live. I am South African and have lived in South Africa all my life. I love this country and I want this country to be the best place for living on the Planet. But now I realized that this country belongs not just to white people, who moved to South Africa just 400 years ago, it belongs also to black people, who have lived here for thousands of years. And we, white people, shouldn't treat them as slaves just because we have progressed more in certain ways compared to them. In the past, a lot of awful things were done to native South Africans, but nowadays in the 20th century, something has to be changed.

Before my son's death I thought about South African problems as a rich white man, but now I look at the country from the point of view of natives and I understood how unfairly we treat them. So, I have decided to improve the lives of natives in Ndotsheni at first, and possibly continue the work which my son was doing.

Finally I want to thank you, Robert, for the letter and hopefully I will hear from you soon again.

With love,
James Jarvis