

Lesson 20
Examining the Lives of Apartheid Victims

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Brandon Frederick, Decatur High School
Daniel Docter, Hamilton International Middle School

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Introduction: Too often in history we only examine the lives of world leaders and influential persons, but “common people” live interesting and important lives too. In this lesson students examine the lives of two common people in South African townships: a black man living in Soweto and a colored woman living in the Cape Flats.

Objective: At the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to describe the effects of Apartheid on victims in black and colored townships.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-12

Time: One 50-minute class period

Suggested Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts, and Global Studies

Materials: Overhead transparencies depicting the lives of apartheid victims (Photos by Brandon Frederick)

Instructional Procedures:

1. Explain to students that too often in history we only examine the lives of world leaders and influential persons. Point out how “common people” live interesting and important lives too. Next, explain that they are about to examine the lives of two common people in South African townships—a black man living in Soweto and a colored girl living in the Cape Flats.
2. Project “Transparency A”. Have students read Piri’s and Anna’s biographies. Next, instruct students to write down what they think will happen to each person between 1965-1970. Lead a brief discussion after comparing the students’ ideas with what actually happened during these years.
3. Project “Transparency B” which explains the actual stories. After reading the actual accounts, ask the students to once again predict what will happen to Piri and Anna this time between 1975-1980.
4. Repeat this process before projecting and discussing “Transparency D” which explains what Piri and Anna are doing today.

Assessment: Evaluate students’ written responses. They should be clearly written and demonstrate an awareness of the particular time periods that are examined.

Transparency A



Name: Piri Bagani

Date of Birth: June 2, 1961

Place of Birth: Soweto, S.A.

Raised in a neat two-room house with a small backyard, located in the center of Soweto, a black township located outside of Johannesburg, Piri was the oldest of five children, born to Mr. and Mrs. Steve Bagani. Like other children in Soweto, Piri spent much of his childhood doing odd jobs to make ends meet for the Bagani family. Much of his free time involved inventing games with friends that were played in the streets.

From 1965 – 1970 predict what life was like for Piri.



Name: Anna Abrahams

Date of Birth: November 23, 1960

Place of Birth: Cape Town, S.A.

Anna was the youngest of three daughters born to Malaysian parents living in the outskirts of Cape Town. Her father worked as a teacher and her mother was a homemaker and seamstress. The Abrahams family were strict followers of the Islamic faith and attended the local Mosque on Hanover Street. Anna and her sisters attended a private colored school but were never racially isolated from other activities and often went into the city for shopping and entertainment.

From 1965 – 1970 predict what life was like for Anna.

Transparency B

1965 – 1970

Piri started school that lacked all of the materials, books, and qualified teachers that “white schools” had. He was anxious to learn, but because of apartheid, Piri was not afforded the opportunities that other children had. Outside of school, Piri worked hard to make extra money for the family by selling vegetables on the streets of Soweto. At home he helped cook and did many chores, such as cleaning the floors and taking care of his four younger siblings.

From 1975 – 1980 predict what life was like for Piri.

1965 -1970

In 1966, the area where Anna and her family lived was designated as a “whites only area.” In 1967, Anna, her family and neighbors were all given 2 weeks to pack up all the belongings they could carry on a truck and were moved from Hanover Street in the area known as District 6, to a new colored township called Hanover Park. Anna remembers her father and mother crying and saying goodbye to many of the neighbors they did not know if they would ever see again. The government provided minimal housing for the Abrahams, but no electricity was hooked up until 1970.

From 1975 – 1980 predict what life was like for Anna.

Transparency C

1975 – 1980

On June 16, 1976, the Soweto uprising began, protesting the South African apartheid government. Piri was involved in organizing students not to attend school, and around his neighborhood he encouraged his peers to march and demonstrate against the use of Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. Mass arrests took place in Soweto. Fortunately, Piri avoided being arrested or hurt, but many of his friends were not so lucky. He lost two good childhood friends to police bullets and saw countless numbers get arrested along with being brutalized.

1975 – 1980

Anna, now a teenager, finished high school but was unable to find a job in Hanover Park. Unemployment rates stood at about 50%. Anna's father was killed in an incident involving black students from Nyanga and colored students from Manenburg (nearby local townships). Anna's sisters both married and moved out of the Cape Flats region, yet Anna and her mother opened their own backyard business making and selling clothes. In 1979, Anna was gang raped in the township and nearly died.

Transparency D

After 1980

Today, Piri is involved in the local tourist industry around Soweto. In his minivan, Piri takes tourists through the street of Soweto, telling them stories from the days of apartheid and information about present day living conditions in the townships. Tourists visit the same house that Piri grew up in, and still lives in today. They have the opportunity to enjoy a home-cooked South African meal prepared by the Bagani family, while experiencing the everyday culture and lifestyle of the people of Soweto.

After 1980

Anna still lives in Hanover Park, and although the apartheid era is over, Anna is still economically separated from white South Africans. In 1980, Anna had a son and never did marry. Her son now is grown and runs his own restaurant business in Hanover Park.