The Lemon Orchard

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ALEX LA GUMA

Born in Cape Town, South Africa, La Guma was the son of James La Guma, who held leadership positions in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union and the South African Communist Party. After graduating technical school in 1945, La Guma belonged to the Plant Workers Union of the Metal Box Company before being fired for leading a strike. This experience led him to become involved in politics, joining the Young Communists League in 1947 and the South African Communist Party in 1948. In 1956, during South African apartheid, La Guma aided in organizing the Freedom Charter, a statement that advocated for equal rights for all races, a democratic voting process, and wealth redistribution, among other policies. This led to him, along with 156 others, being arrested and tried for treason (though they were eventually found not guilty). La Guma published his first short story, "Nocturn," in 1957. A few years later he began writing for a progressive newspaper, which was also considered a subversive act—in 1962, he and his wife, Blanche, were imprisoned in solitary confinement and then placed under house arrest. That same year, La Guma published *A Walk in the Night*, the collection in which "The Lemon Orchard" first appeared. La Guma and his family moved to the U.K. in 1966, and La Guma spent the rest of his life living in exile. He continued writing short stories and novels throughout the 1960s and 70s, winning the Lotus Prize for Literature in 1969. La Guma eventually became chief representative of the African National Congress in the Caribbean, a role he held until his death from a heart attack in 1985.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

"The Lemon Orchard" takes place during South African apartheid, a period from 1948 until the early 1990s when the country's government enforced racial segregation. Under this white supremacist regime, non-white people suffered both systemic oppression and more personalized instances of discrimination and violence in their daily lives. White people were afforded an disproportionate amount of wealth, territory, political power, and social influence, while the other three recognized racial categories—Black, "coloured" (multiracial), and Indian—were treated as inherently inferior and subhuman. This ideology plays out clearly in the white men's dialogue and behavior toward the coloured man in "The Lemon Orchard," as they outrightly characterize all non-white people as barbarians and inflict horrific violence on the coloured man for merely challenging a white authority figure. The story effectively shows how South Africa's racial hierarchy plays out on a small scale between individuals, bringing to light the cruelty and brutality that such a fundamentally unequal system condones.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

"The Lemon Orchard" is part of a rich tradition of South African apartheid literature, stories and novels that portray the often-harrowing experience of living under legally enforced racial segregation. Other works set in apartheid South Africa include Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Athol Fugard's play *Boesman and Lena*, and Nadine Gordimer's short story "Once Upon a Time." In addition to "The Lemon Orchard" and his other short stories, La Guma also published novels such as *And a Threefold Cord*, *In the Fog of the Season's End*, and *The Stone-Country* which chronicle characters resisting apartheid, much like La Guma himself did throughout the 1950s and 1960s. For nonfiction accounts of what it was like to live in apartheid South Africa, Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy* provide a first-hand look at how non-white individuals and families struggled amid the systemic violence, discrimination, and poverty caused by the regime.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Lemon Orchard
- **Where Written:** South Africa
- **When Published:** 1962 in *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories*; 2018 in *Stories of Ourselves: Volume 1*
- **Literary Period:** Postmodern
- **Genre:** Short Story
- **Setting:** Apartheid-era South Africa
- **Climax:** The white men stop walking and prepare to whip the coloured man, while the moonlight illuminates the sharp edges of the lemon trees.
- **Antagonist:** The Leader; The Man with the Lantern; Andries; Apartheid
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Back in the U.S.S.R. After seeking exile from South Africa, La Guma attended the Fourth Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in Moscow and frequently visited Russia in the years following. In 1975, he published a travelogue entitled *A Soviet Journey* about his experiences there.

PLOT SUMMARY

On a cold night, a group of men walks between two rows of trees in a **lemon** orchard. Overhead, the **moon** is hidden behind grey clouds; nothing can be heard except the distant sounds of crickets chirping and a dog briefly barking. The tart smell of lemons hangs in the air. A man holding a lantern walks ahead of the others, and another man carrying a loaded shotgun calls to him to slow down because it's dark at the back of the group. Though this man walks at the rear of the party, he's the leader.

Another of the men comments about the chilly weather, and the leader asks if this man is as cold as the "coloured" (multiracial) man walking ahead of them, using a racial slur to refer to him. The coloured man, whose hands are bound behind his back, shivers—he isn't dressed in warm clothing like the others are. The men had only allowed him to put on pants and a raincoat over his pajamas when they woke him up and took him captive. The coloured man is both too afraid and too stubborn to respond when the man with the lantern mockingly asks if he's cold.

Andries, the fifth man in the group, says that the coloured man is shivering with fear rather than cold. Both he and the man who commented about the cold are carrying whips. Andries then says that the coloured man is dumb, which makes the leader demand that they all stop and wait. He says that the coloured man isn't dumb—rather, he's a well-educated savage. The leader shoves his shotgun against the coloured man's back and cocks back the hammer, demanding that the coloured man respond when a *baas* ("master") speaks to him.

The man with the lantern nervously warns the leader not to shoot, since they don't want to be liable for a murder. The leader questions what the man with the lantern means. Under the lanternlight, the leader's face is dark red and so visibly pockmarked that it resembles a map covered with markings and topography. His blue eyes look like frozen water. He calls the coloured man a racial slur again and says that the man is a teacher at a school that the he and the others pay for. The leader reminds everyone that the coloured man disrespected a white minister at their church, which he won't stand for.

The man with the lantern agrees with the leader, but he again cautions against murder. The leader retorts that he'll shoot any non-white person (again using a racial slur) he wants in order to get respect. The leader shoves his gun into the coloured man's back and demands to know if the coloured man heard him; Andries steps up, punches the coloured man, in the face and echoes the leader. The coloured man, stumbling to his feet, is afraid for his life. He answers "Yes, baas," in a dignified yet derisive way, though the others don't pick up on his tone.

After this, the group continues walking through the orchard. The leader says that the coloured man should have gone to court to dispute the whipping that the principal and the church leader gave him. Andries says that they'll give him a whipping bad enough to teach him a lesson. The leader agrees—they'll drive the coloured man away to the city where less dignified people live. They don't want educated non-white people in their town. The sound of the dog barking in the distance interrupts the men, and the man with the lantern comments that it's a good watchdog—he unsuccessfully tried to buy it from the farmer who owns it. He says that he'd take great care of it.

As the group keeps walking, the lemon trees rustle in the wind, a harsh sound that doesn't seem to fit with how nice the fruit smells—the smell is stronger now, as though the lemons were being juiced. The air has gotten chillier, the crickets louder; the moon has appeared from behind the clouds to cast silvery light on the leaves. Finally, the man with the lantern points out a place to stop: a gap in the orchard, surrounded by trees, that resembles an amphitheater. The moonlight shines onto the sharp edges of the leaves and branches, lighting up the dew so that it looks like quicksilver.

CHARACTERS

The Coloured Man – The "coloured" man (a South African term meaning multiracial) is woken up in the middle of the night, bound, and taken captive by four white men. He's a well-educated teacher at a school in the white men's community who allegedly disrespected a white minister at their church and was whipped as punishment. In the story, the men are leading him through a **lemon** orchard to give him a second whipping in secret. They view the coloured man (and likely all non-white people) as savages and hope to drive him out of town by intimidating him through violence. But the coloured man is notably dignified and level-headed through all of this: although the leader of the four white men berates him with racial slurs and threatens to shoot him with his shotgun as they walk through the orchard, the coloured man keeps his composure in spite of his fear. The coloured man only gives into the leader's demands to refer to him as *baas* ("master") when Andries, another man in the group, punches him in the face and knocks him to the ground. "The Lemon Orchard" ends just as the white men stop in a clearing to whip the coloured man, and it's implied that they're going to carry out the punishment as planned. Not much is known about the coloured man other than his job as a teacher; he only speaks once, and the narrative only ever refers to him by his racial category. His character could thus be interpreted as an allegory for the broader experience of all non-white people under South African apartheid (a period of legally enforced racial segregation), as so many like him were dehumanized and brutalized during this time.

The Leader – The leader of the group of four white men (himself, the man with the lantern, Andries, and a fourth

unnamed man) take the "coloured" (multiracial) man captive in the middle of the night march him through a **lemon** orchard. The white men plan to whip the coloured man in secret as punishment for disrespecting a white minister at their church. The leader walks at the back of the party despite being in charge, and he carries a loaded shotgun. He has a heavily pockmarked face and cold blue eyes that give him a menacing appearance. Though all four of the white men are cruel toward the coloured man, the leader is the most vicious of all: he continuously shoves his gun against the coloured man's back, all the while hurling racial slurs at him and threatening to shoot and kill him. The leader is also the most overtly racist of the bunch: he characterizes Black and multiracial people as barbarians, makes it clear that he won't tolerate any disrespect from non-white people, and demands that the coloured man address him as *baas* (a South African term for "master"). The leader's behavior thus exposes the illogic and baselessness of apartheid South Africa's racial hierarchy, since he is clearly far more barbaric toward the coloured man than the coloured man has been toward white people, yet the leader still views himself as inherently superior to non-white people purely on the basis of skin color.

The Man with the Lantern – The man with the **lantern** walks at the front of the group of four white men (himself, the leader, Andries, and a fourth unnamed man) and the "coloured" (multiracial) man, guiding them through a **lemon** orchard at night. The white men plan to whip the coloured man in secret as punishment for disrespecting a white minister at their church. The man with the lantern is the only one of the white men who openly expresses anxiety about hurting the coloured man, urging the leader not to shoot the man with his shotgun. But despite this, the man with the lantern is just as complicit in the group's violent abuse as the rest. At one point as they walk through the orchard, he hears a watchdog barking in the distance and comments that he would take good care of a pet like that. Clearly, then, the man with the lantern has the capacity to empathize and care for others—he simply choose not to extend that courtesy toward the coloured man. His character thus demonstrates how discriminatory beliefs are often rooted in hypocrisy and a denial of one's moral conscience.

Andries – Andries is part of a group of white men (along with the leader, the man with the lantern, and another unnamed man) who take the "coloured" (multiracial) man captive in the night and march him through a **lemon** orchard. The white men plan to whip the coloured man in secret as punishment for disrespecting a white minister at their church. Andries and one of the other men both carry whips, while their leader carries a loaded shotgun. Andries commits the most severe act of violence in the story, punching the coloured man in the face when he refuses to respond to the leader's racist provocations. His character quickly escalates from a passive member of the group to an enactor of violence, demonstrating how a mob mentality like that of the white men can reinforce and heighten abusive behavior.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

APARTHEID AND RACIAL HIERARCHY

"The Lemon Orchard" is set in South Africa during apartheid, a period when the country's government enforced racial segregation. This system was based on the ideology of white supremacy and the racist belief that non-white people are inherently savage, barbaric, and violent. In the story, four white men take a "coloured" (multiracial) man captive in the middle of the night and prepare to whip him as punishment for disrespecting a white person in their community. But the ways in which the white men speak and behave toward the coloured man reveal the baselessness of their hatred toward him, since the man's alleged slight does not warrant how he's treated in return. "The Lemon Orchard" thus serves as an allegory for the broader injustice of apartheid, as the story implicitly condemns South Africa's racial hierarchy as despicably cruel, unwarranted, and dehumanizing for everyone in society.

The white men's treatment of the coloured man is rooted in the social norms of apartheid, reinforcing the racist notion that non-white people are inherently inferior. As the four white men march the coloured man through the titular **lemon** orchard with the intent to whip him under cover of night, it's clear that they view him as fundamentally different from and indeed inferior to them. They wake him up and force him out in the cold with only a thin raincoat, not even allowing him to tie his shoes. The reader immediately sympathizes with the coloured man, who shivers violently while the white men are bundled up in warm clothes. The coloured man is dehumanized, deemed undeserving of even a basic need like appropriate clothing, simply because the white men view him as inferior.

The white men also use language that draws a clear line between white people and Black or multiracial people. The coloured man's name is never used: the narrative only refers to him by his racial category, and the white characters only call him Afrikaans racial slurs that essentially translate to "barbarian." The leader of the group forces the coloured man to call him *baas*, meaning "boss" or "master," creating a kind of master/slave dynamic between the white captors and their multiracial captive. The casual way in which the men use these

slurs and enforce a racial hierarchy through language implies that such divisiveness and cruelty is commonplace and acceptable in apartheid South Africa. The white men continuously harass and belittle the coloured man with this offensive language in spite of the fact that he has not personally hurt or insulted these men in any way; they hurl abuse at him for no reason other than his race and his perceived slight toward another white man. Given the unreciprocated nature of this cruelty, the story implies that this treatment is wholly undeserved, implicitly condemning the racial hierarchy underpinning the white men's behavior as baseless and unjust.

As the white men's behavior toward the coloured man grows increasingly cruel, it becomes even clearer that their attitudes are embedded in a system that is entirely arbitrary—there's no justifiable basis for South Africa's racial hierarchy. The "crime" for which the coloured man is being punished was simply having "the audacity to be cheeky and uncivilised towards a minister" at the white men's church. The coloured man did not actually harm anyone, nor does he retaliate against (or even respond to) the white men's provocations as they walk through the orchard. The man is clearly not a barbarian or a criminal, yet he is automatically categorized as such under the racial hierarchy of apartheid and will be brutally whipped as a result. Indeed, the white men prove themselves to be the true savages, as they beat and continuously threaten to kill the coloured man (the leader of the group is carrying a loaded shotgun) for not answering them when they address him using racial slurs. Under apartheid, people like the coloured man are judged purely on the color of their skin rather than their moral character—an attitude that the story implicitly condemns through its sympathetic portrayal of the coloured man alongside the barbaric cruelty of the white men.

Racial hierarchy, then, is shown to be an entirely arbitrary and unfair way of organizing society. When simply being non-white is treated as a criminal offense, innocent people like the coloured man in the story end up being brutalized, and those at all levels of apartheid's hierarchy—both the oppressors and the oppressed—are stripped of their humanity.

POWER, FEAR, AND VIOLENCE

"The Lemon Orchard" is largely a story of how an imbalance of power harms the underclass in society—but also how it corrupts the upper classes. The four white men who take a "coloured" (multiracial) man captive in the story clearly benefit from their privileged position relative to him, as they're able to move through society without being judged by or punished for the color of their skin the way that non-white people are. But it becomes clear that they're also possessed by a deep-seated fear of losing that social status, and as a result, they inflict senseless violence upon oppressed people like the coloured man. The story makes the case that such an imbalance of power is often unearned—and that the fear of this losing privilege that's so arbitrarily given can lead those in the higher tiers of society to violently suppress others in order to secure their social standing.

The story takes place during South African apartheid (a period of legally enforced racial segregation), and it's clear that white South Africans have immense power and privilege while non-white South Africans are treated as an underclass—regardless of whether or not white people have actually earned that power. The white men in the story steal away the coloured man in the night to whip him as punishment for a perceived crime: being rude to a white minister at the men's church. The fact that something as benign as talking back to a white person of authority is treated an offense that's punishable with violence suggests that white people hold an immense amount of social and legal influence over non-white people.

This imbalance of power along racial lines exists in spite of the fact that many non-white South Africans, like the coloured man in the story, are well-educated and have important roles in society. As the four white men march the coloured man through the titular **lemon** orchard to whip him, the leader of the group points out that the coloured man is "one of those educated bushmen" and "a teacher in a school for which we pay." The white men, by contrast, are implied to be less educated and perhaps of a lower socioeconomic status given their use of crude language and racial slurs, their mockery of educated people, and their complaints about funding the school. The power that white people hold over non-white people in apartheid South Africa, then, is seemingly unearned: it's based solely on skin color rather than on individuals' achievements, competence, or earning power. That the white men feel justified in enacting vigilante justice against the coloured man also suggests that they don't fear legal repercussions in the same way that non-white people do. The coloured man was already whipped once for his supposed transgression against the white minister, yet he didn't seek legal repercussions for this abuse—likely because he knew he'd lose the case given the court's bias in favor of white people. The white men, however, are confident that they can get away with "teach[ing] him [the coloured man] a lesson" by whipping him. It's clear that under apartheid, white people enjoy undue privilege and are able to exert violent control over non-white people simply because the system is built to enable such an imbalance of power.

Though this vast inequality between white and non-white people under apartheid is socially advantageous for white people, it also creates a constant sense of fear and insecurity for them, leading them to violently suppress those they perceive as a threat to their privileged position. One of the white men in the group accuses the coloured man of "shivering with fear" as they walk through the orchard, yet the white men are clearly the ones who are afraid (and the coloured man is

clearly shivering because the white men only allowed him to wear a thin jacket on a cold night). The impending whipping is an extreme overreaction to the coloured man's perceived slight, suggesting that the white men are actually terrified of the coloured man and feel the need to suppress him at all costs. The fact that the men's privileged position in society is unearned and based on something as arbitrary their skin color means that they'll always feel a sense of insecurity over their status, as evidenced by the leader's insistence that the coloured man refer to him as *baas* ("master") to reaffirm his sense of power over the situation. Within this tenuous dynamic, any challenge to a white person's authority is seen as a threat to their power that must be met with violence.

This deep-seated insecurity and fear is further highlighted by the white men's need to threaten and belittle the coloured man and inflict smaller acts of violence upon him. As they walk through the orchard, the leader hurls racial slurs at the coloured man and threatens to kill him with his shotgun; one of the other white men, Andries, punches the coloured man in the face when he refuses to respond to their provocations. Despite their claims that the coloured man is pathetic and inferior to them, it logically follows that they wouldn't treat him with this level of brutality if they didn't see him as a formidable threat. In their eyes, the coloured man's willingness to challenge the minister was perhaps a symbolic act of challenging white authority in general—a terrifying prospect for the white men that leads them to violently suppress the coloured man.

The four white men in "The Lemon Orchard" have seemingly done nothing to earn the social status they've been given; they were simply lucky to have been born white under an oppressive regime that happens to privilege their race over others. Yet the secret way in which they carry out the late-night whipping suggests that, on some level, they know that the power they hold is undeserved and that the violence they're committing is unjustified. The story thus implies that even those who benefit from apartheid know that the system is unfairly tipped to favor them—and that eradicating this power imbalance altogether is the only way to do away with the fear and violence that it perpetuates.

DISCRIMINATION AND HYPOCRISY

"The Lemon Orchard," which takes place in South Africa during apartheid (a period of legally enforced racial segregation), is a stark portrayal of how large-scale, institutionalized racism affects people of color. But by focusing on a specific instance of racism—four white men taking a "coloured" (multiracial) man captive and whipping him as punishment for disrespecting a white person—the story also digs deep into the logical fallacies and hypocrisy underpinning the discriminatory beliefs of ordinary white civilians. Through the white men's dialogue, the story exposes the underlying inconsistencies beneath racial discrimination, arguing that people have to deceive themselves and hold hypocritical double standards in order to justify treating people of other races like second-class citizens.

The white men in the story clearly judge the coloured man differently than they judge themselves, suggesting that discriminating against others is inherently illogical and unfair since it requires holding inconsistent double standards. As the white men lead the coloured man through a **lemon** orchard to whip him under cover of night, they berate him with racial slurs that are meant to dehumanize Black and multiracial people and characterize them as savages. Yet the group's leader also points out that the coloured man is "one of those educated bushmen," and that he's a teacher at a local school. The white men's crude manner of speech and mockery of education suggests that they are actually less educated and less civilized than this well-educated teacher is—clearly, then, the standards by which they judge non-white people are entirely separate from those by which they judge themselves. Even more nefarious is how the white men treat the coloured man like a criminal despite the fact that *they're* the ones about to commit a horrible act of violence against him. The coloured man's only offense is that he "had the audacity to be cheeky and uncivilised towards a minister" at the white men's church—he hasn't committed an actual crime, yet they're going to violently punish him. Again, the white men are deeply hypocritical in their treatment of the coloured man: they decry him as "uncivilised" yet march him off to be whipped, seemingly in denial of the fact that they're the barbaric criminals in this situation.

Indeed, the story suggests that those who discriminate against others often *know* that this is wrong but do it anyway, further condemning this behavior as hypocritical. The fact that the white men kidnap the coloured man at night and take him to a secret place to be whipped suggests that, on some level, they feel guilty about what they're doing—yet they feel righteous in going through with it anyway. In this way, the story implies that racist people like the white men in the story have to engage in mental gymnastics to uphold their beliefs. They must lie to themselves and validate one another through a kind of mob mentality in order to justify their discriminatory and violent treatment of those who are different from them. In particular, the man with the lantern (who guides the others through the orchard) is notably less overt in his cruelty and seemingly more aware of his actions than the other white men are. Although he's certainly complicit in their plan to whip the coloured man, he's the only one who isn't armed with a weapon (the leader wields a loaded shotgun while Andries and another man carry whips). He expresses anxiety over the leader's threats about shooting the white men, not wanting to "be involved in any murder." Clearly, the man with the **lantern** knows that what they're doing is wrong—yet he goes along with the others in the group, allowing his misguided beliefs about non-white people to usurp his nagging sense of moral responsibility. At one point,

the man with the lantern hears a farm dog barking in the distance and says, "I would like to have a dog like that. I would take great care of such a dog." Though this is a seemingly unrelated comment made in passing, it's actually very telling: the man with the lantern is clearly capable of empathy and care for beings who are different than him, yet he hypocritically chooses to go along with treating the coloured man worse than how he'd treat an animal. Again, he seems to be compartmentalizing his underlying moral conscience in order to conform to apartheid, reinforce his discriminatory beliefs, and absolve himself of guilt.

"The Lemon Orchard" demonstrates how apartheid's systemic segregation plays out on a small scale, personalizing the issue by showing how misguided and hypocritical individual racists are in their behavior toward marginalized people. And ultimately, the story shows that by enshrining discrimination within the legal system, people feel justified in denying and undermining their consciences in order to act out this discrimination in their personal lives.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Throughout the story, varying degrees of light and darkness symbolize how racism is hidden in plain sight in apartheid-era South Africa. In particular, the moon represents institutionalized racism and how, like beams of moonlight tend to distort and highlight the sharp edges of things, the government's white supremacist regime radiates outward to influence civilians and bring out their harshest and most violent qualities. At the beginning of the story, the moon is hidden behind clouds that look like "streamers of dirty cotton-wool" in the sky, mirroring the way in which the inner workings of South Africa's racist institutions are shrouded beneath layers of corruption and secrecy.

Yet just because the moon is hidden doesn't mean there is no light to guide the four white men who take a "coloured" (multiracial) man captive at night and march him through a **lemon** orchard to be whipped. One of the men carries a lantern, using this light to lead the way and to illuminate the other white men whenever they're hurling verbal or physical abuse at the coloured man. The lantern light, then, is a smaller-scale but even more intense form of light than the moon, just as the white men's individual acts of discrimination and violence against the coloured man are smaller-scale but more tangible and personalized forms of racism. Significantly, though, the white men's leader walks at the back of the party, the farthest away from the lantern light. Shrouded in literal and figurative darkness, he represents how those in positions of authority are able to carry out injustice covertly and with fewer consequences.

By the end of the story, the moon has resurfaced from behind the clouds, and it shines brightly onto the lemon trees, "[clinging] for a while to the leaves and the angled branches, so that along their tips and edges the moisture gleamed with the quivering shine of scattered quicksilver." This reappearance suggests that just as the moon was present yet hidden throughout the entire story, so too is institutionalized racism intangible yet glaringly present in the ideologies and lived experiences of South African citizens. And as the white men stop in a clearing and prepare to whip the coloured man, the moonlight illuminates the sharp angles of trees so that they appear bladelike and dangerous, symbolizing how the South Africa's legally enforced segregation heightens and enables the hate-fueled violence of ordinary civilians.

LEMONS

Lemons represent the idea that morality is undeniable in spite of people's attempts to justify or deny their wrongdoings. As its title suggests, the story takes place in a lemon orchard through which four white men lead a "coloured" (multiracial) man to be whipped under cover of night. Near the beginning of the story, the narration notes the citrusy smell of the lemons lingering in the air. This stands out against the suppression of the setting's other sensorial elements: the men speak in hushed tones, the night is dark enough to obscure their vision, the moon is hidden, and the surrounding crickets are quiet. The **darkness** and quiet parallels the way in which the men (and, by extension, all of white South African society) are suppressing their moral consciences by reinforcing their racist narratives about non-white people and hiding their actions by whipping the coloured men in secret. Yet, like the ever-present smell of the lemons cutting through the otherwise gloomy night, they cannot fully deny the reality of what they're doing.

Indeed, the white man carrying the lantern is visibly nervous and expresses his anxieties about being caught up in a murder if the group's leader shoots the coloured man. He also tells the others that he would take great care of a watchdog like the one they hear barking in the distance as they walk through the orchard. Just as the "pleasant scent of the lemons" is "inconsistent" with the harsh winds and bitter cold of the night, then, the man with the lantern's underlying conscience and compassion for beings different from himself stands out against the brutality with which the white men treat the coloured man. At the end of the story, the aroma of the fruit becomes more potent alongside the mounting tension between the white men and the coloured man. As they stop in a clearing and prepare to whip him, "the perfume of lemons seemed to

grow stronger, as if the juice was being crushed from them." This suggests that just as the smell of the lemons is inescapable (and indeed even stronger) as the men flee far from the town to commit their act of violence, so too is an individual's—or an entire society's—conscience inescapable in spite of their attempts to deny and distance themselves from what they know is morally right.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Cambridge University Press edition of *Stories of Ourselves: Volume 1* published in 2018.

The Lemon Orchard Quotes

'Do not go so fast,' the man who brought up the rear of the party called to the man with the lantern. 'It's as dark as a kaffir's soul here at the back.' He called softly, as if the darkness demanded silence.

Related Characters: The Leader (speaker), The Coloured Man, The Man with the Lantern

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

"The Lemon Orchard" follows four white men as they lead a "coloured" (multiracial) man through a lemon orchard to whip him for a perceived crime. Here, near the beginning of the story, the leader of the party (though he walks behind the other men) calls to the man with the lantern at the front of the group to slow down. His comment that it's "dark as a kaffir's soul here at the back" is important, as "kaffir" is an Afrikaans racial slur used to demean Black and multiracial South African people like the coloured man. This quote thus situates the reader in the setting of South African apartheid, a period of legally enforced racial segregation. The fact that the leader uses this term so casually clues the reader into the social climate of South Africa at this time—the idea that non-white people are inherently inferior is clearly pervasive enough that white people feel comfortable openly expressing racist notions.

The leader's emphasis on darkness, along with the line in the narration that "the darkness demanded silence," are also significant. Throughout the story, different forms of light and darkness in the orchard represent the varying degrees to which racism is expressed or hidden in South African society. Given that light is an ongoing symbol for overt acts of discrimination or violence, the leader's position relative to the lantern suggests that due to his social privilege as a white man and his authority as the leader of the group, he is able to carry out racially motivated violence in relative secrecy and without consequences.

'Cold?' the man with the shotgun asked, speaking with sarcasm. 'Are you colder than this verdomte hotnot, here?' And he gestured in the dark with the muzzle of the gun at the man who stumbled along in their midst and who was the only one not warmly dressed.

This man wore trousers and a raincoat which they had allowed him to pull on over his pyjamas when they had taken him from his lodgings, and he shivered now with chill, clenching his teeth to prevent them from chattering. He had not been given time to tie his shoes and the metal-covered ends of the laces clicked as he moved.

Related Characters: The Leader (speaker), The Coloured Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

When one of the white men in the group comments that it's cold outside, the group's leader mockingly asks him if he's as cold as the "coloured" (multiracial) man whom they're leading through a lemon orchard at gunpoint. Right away, the leader's use of the racial slur "hotnot" to refer to the coloured man reinforces the reality that non-white people are viewed as inferior under South African apartheid. The fact that the coloured man was only allowed to put on a raincoat and pants when the white men are bundled up in warm clothing further emphasizes this: in the other men's eyes, the coloured man is subhuman and undeserving of something as basic as warmth. The white men are well aware of how cold it is outside, yet they don't extend the same courtesy to the coloured man that they extend to themselves. This passage is therefore an early indicator that the white men are fully aware that their behavior toward the coloured man is immoral and based upon shallow prejudice—yet they deny their consciences and mistreat him anyway.

❝ 'Wag'n oomblikkie. Wait a moment,' the leader said, speaking with forced casualness. 'He is not dumb. He is a slim hotnot; one of those educated bushmen. Listen, hotnot,' he addressed the coloured man, speaking angrily now. 'When a baas speaks to you, you answer him. Do you hear?' The coloured man's wrists were tied behind him with a riem and the leader brought the muzzle of the shotgun down, pressing it hard into the small of the man's back above where the wrists met. 'Do you hear, hotnot? Answer me or I will shoot a hole through your spine.'

Related Characters: The Leader (speaker), Andries, The Coloured Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 189

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the leader of the white men responds to Andries, another man in the group, who accused the "coloured" (multiracial) man of being dumb. The leader is adamant that the coloured man is not stupid—he's actually educated, likely more so than the group of white men given their use of crude language and slang and the ignorant notions they hold about non-white people. Yet despite the leader's acknowledgement of the coloured man's intellect, the white men also believe that Black and multiracial people are inherently inferior to white people. This exposes their prejudice as arbitrary rather than based upon any substantive difference between white and non-white people in intellect or moral character. The men's illogical attitudes thus implicitly indict South African apartheid's white supremacist ideology as senselessly cruel.

The leader's use of the phrase "educated bushmen" is particularly noteworthy, as this is an oxymoron: "bushmen" is meant as a pejorative term to imply that the coloured man (and, by extension, all non-white people) are barbarians. Yet, of course, one cannot simultaneously be a savage and a well-educated member of society. With this in mind, the leader's discriminatory beliefs are clearly based in his own insecurity—he knows that the coloured man is better educated than he is, and so he sees the coloured man as a formidable threat to the privileged social standing he enjoys as a white man under apartheid. By demeaning the coloured man using racial slurs and dehumanizing insults, the leader exposes the personal shortcomings and insecurities that drive him to embrace racist ideals.

❝ 'For God's sake, don't shoot him,' the man with the light said, laughing a little nervously. 'We don't want to be involved in any murder.'

'What are you saying, man?' the leader asked. Now with the beam of the battery-lamp on his face the shadows in it were washed away to reveal the mass of tiny wrinkled and deep creases which covered the red-clay complexion of his face like the myriad lines which indicate rivers, streams, roads and railways on a map. They wound around the ridges of his chin and climbed the sharp range of his nose and the peaks of his chin and cheekbones, and his eyes were hard and blue like two frozen lakes.

Related Characters: The Leader, The Man with the Lantern (speaker), The Coloured Man

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 189

Explanation and Analysis

The leader of the white men has just threatened to kill the "coloured" (multiracial) man with his shotgun. When the man with the lantern cautions the leader not to shoot the coloured man, the leader questions what he's implying. The man with the lantern's warning and nervous laugh indicate that he knows (at least on some level) that what he and the others are doing is wrong—it's later revealed that the coloured man, whom the white men are taking out into the lemon orchard to whip under cover of night, hasn't committed any crime. Clearly, then, racism isn't always a product of ignorance; sometimes, as in this case, discrimination is based in a conscious denial of what a person knows is morally right. The white men are the ones harassing and brutalizing the coloured men, yet they justify this behavior by hypocritically holding the coloured man to different standards than those to which they hold themselves.

Additionally, the symbolism of light in this passage is significant: prior to this, the leader has been shrouded in darkness at the back of the group, the farthest away from the man with the lantern walking in front. Now, though, as the leader has outrightly threatened the coloured man's life, he is illuminated by the lantern. This shift from dark to light symbolizes the leader's shift from covert to overt racism: while he has perhaps only privately held racist beliefs up until this point, now he's toeing the line of putting his ideology into practice by physically harming the coloured man. The reveal of the leader's face is also significant, as the

topographical similes used to describe his features connote an area that's become ugly and convoluted in its geopolitical divisions—much like apartheid South Africa (where the story is set) has become a mess of geographical and ideological factions.

"This is mos a slim hotnot,' he said again. 'A teacher in a school for which we pay. He lives off our sweat, and he had the audacity to be cheeky and uncivilised towards a minister of our church and no hotnot will be cheeky to a white man while I live.'

'Ja, man,' the lantern-bearer agreed. 'But we are going to deal with him. There is no necessity to shoot him. We don't want that kind of trouble.'

'I will shoot whatever hotnot or kaffir I desire, and see me get into trouble over it. I demand respect from these donders. Let them answer when they're spoken to.'

Related Characters: The Man with the Lantern, The Leader (speaker), The Coloured Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 189

Explanation and Analysis

Here, it's revealed that the "coloured" (multiracial) man whom the four white men in the story have taken captive is a teacher at a local school and that his alleged crime was merely speaking in a "cheeky" manner to a white minister. The leader's statement that "no hotnot will be cheeky to a white man where I live" is evidence of how insecure he feels about his privileged position in society as a white man. His use of "hotnot," an Afrikaans racial slur, sends the message that he views non-white people as inferior, yet his adamance that people like the coloured man show him respect indicates that he fears what could happen if Black and multiracial people were to collectively rise up against white authority figures. It seems, then, the leader is so cruel and violent toward the coloured man because he knows that there is nothing inherently inferior, barbaric, or criminal about the non-white people—and the man with the lantern's anxiety about shooting the coloured man reinforces this. Yet white people must perpetuate this false narrative and use violent suppression if they want to retain the power they're afforded in apartheid South Africa.

"The man who had jeered about the prisoner's fear stepped up then, and hit him in the face, striking him on a cheekbone with the clenched fist which still held the sjambok. He was angry over the delay and wanted the man to submit so that they could proceed. 'Listen you hotnot bastard,' he said loudly. 'Why don't you answer?'

The man stumbled, caught himself and stood in the rambling shadow of one of the lemon trees. The lantern-light swung on him and he looked away from the centre of the beam. He was afraid the leader would shoot him in anger and he had no wish to die. He straightened up and looked away from them.

'Well?' demanded the man who had struck him.

'Yes, baas,' the bound man said, speaking with a mixture of dignity and contempt which was missed by those who surrounded him.

Related Characters: The Coloured Man, Andries (speaker), The Leader

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 189–190

Explanation and Analysis

After the leader of the white men demands that the "coloured" (multiracial) man answer his racist provocations, one of the other white men, Andries, punches the coloured man in the face. This moment is telling in that it highlights the white men's insecurity: instead of being confident in their authority over non-white people, they resort to violently forcing the coloured man to validate them by calling them *baas* (Afrikaans for "master"). Ironically, then, the men's domination of the coloured man is what proves that they *aren't* inherently superior to him—if they were, they wouldn't need to forcibly subdue him the way they do. The lantern light shining onto the coloured man during this incident parallels the way in which the white men's racism is ramping up into something harsher, escalating from an ideology to overt violence as they let their fear of losing power consume them.

The "mixture of dignity and contempt" in the coloured man's response is important, as even though he gives into the white men's demands to call them *baas*, he retains his humanity and composure. This stands in stark contrast to the white men, who have become completely possessed by their emotions and resorted to brutalizing the coloured man. Again, the story implies that the white men's racism is hypocritical: they believe that non-white people are

inherently barbaric, yet they are the ones behaving barbarically while the coloured man remains measured and dignified.

'And afterwards he won't be seen around here again. He will pack his things and go and live in the city where they're not so particular about the dignity of the volk. Do you hear, hotnot?' This time they were not concerned about receiving a reply but the leader went on, saying, 'We don't want any educated hottentots in our town.'

'Neither black Englishmen,' added one of the others.

Related Characters: The Leader (speaker), The Coloured Man

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

The leader of the white men speculates on what will happen after he and the others whip the "coloured" (multiracial) man as punishment for disrespecting a white minister at their church. His comment about the coloured man moving to the city, "where they're not so particular about the dignity" of those who live there, reveals the deep hypocrisy beneath his own racist ideology. After all, the leader and the other three white men have proven themselves to be much less dignified than the coloured man: they've hurled continuous verbal and physical abuse at the coloured man for no reason, and they're preparing to brutally whip him merely for talking back to a white person of authority. The men's anxieties about educated non-white people in their town exposes the root of their hatred: they fear having their social privilege challenged by Black or multiracial people who are more intelligent or competent than they are. This passage thus shows how insecurity over one's class position, particularly in a fundamentally unequal society like apartheid South Africa (where the story takes place), can drive people to violently suppress anyone they see as a threat to their privilege.

The dog started barking again at the farm house which was invisible on the dark hillside at the other end of the little valley. 'It's that Jagter,' the man with the lantern said. 'I wonder what bothers him. He is a good watchdog. I offered Meneer Marais five pounds for that dog, but he won't sell. I would like to have a dog like that. I would take great care of such a dog.'

Related Characters: The Man with the Lantern (speaker), Andries, The Leader, The Coloured Man

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

As the four white men march the "coloured" (multiracial) man through the lemon orchard to whip him, the man with the lantern hears a watchdog barking in the distance. His concern over what's bothering the animal and his comment that he "would take great care of such a dog" is one of the clearest examples of hypocrisy in the story. Thus far, the man with the lantern has been the only one in the group to express hesitance about hurting the coloured man. Nevertheless, he's been passive while the party's leader and Andries have berated and beaten the coloured man and is therefore complicit in their violence. And now, the man with the lantern admits that he is fully capable of feeling extending empathy and care toward a being that's different from himself—he's simply chosen not to extend his concerns to the coloured man. With this, the story suggests that the man with the lantern is well aware that how they're treating the coloured man is wrong, implicitly arguing that such behavior requires people to compartmentalize their actions and actively deny their underlying moral conscience.

The blackness of the night crouched over the orchard and the leaves rustled with a harsh whispering that was inconsistent with the pleasant scent of the lemons. The chill in the air had increased, and far-off the creek-creek-creek of the crickets blended into solid strips of high-pitched sound. Then the moon came from behind the banks of cloud and its white light touched the leaves with wet silver, and the perfume of lemons seemed to grow stronger, as if the juice was being crushed from them.

Related Characters: The Man with the Lantern, The Coloured Man

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

This passage, which appears near the end of "The Lemon Orchard," is highly symbolic: at the beginning of the story, the moon was obscured behind grey clouds, representing how the inner workings of institutionalized racism in apartheid South African (where the story is set) is kept hidden. South African society's racial hierarchy, like the moon, hasn't been in plain sight yet has been clearly felt throughout the story, underpinning the white men's cruelty toward the "coloured" (multiracial) man. And now, the bright moonlight washing over the trees in the orchard parallels how the racist system's influence radiates outward to impact ordinary civilians, validating and ramping up their discriminatory beliefs just as it makes the angles of the leaves appear knifelike.

The "pleasant scent of the lemons" is also symbolically significant, as it represents the undeniability of what's morally right. At several points in the story, the man with the lantern has hinted that, on some level, he feels guilty over his and the other white men's treatment of the colored man. Much like the persistent aroma of the fruit, then, the story hints that one's moral conscience cannot be denied or stifled. The lemons smell stronger the farther the men stray from civilization to whip the coloured men in secret, suggesting that the more a person tries to suppress what they know is right, the more pronounced that moral transgression and the ensuing guilt become.

> They walked a little way further in the moonlight and the man with the lantern said, 'This is as good a place as any, Oom.'
>
> They had come into a wide gap in the orchard, a small amphitheatre surrounded by fragrant growth, and they all stopped within it. The moonlight clung for a while to the leaves and the angled branches, so that along their tips and edges the moisture gleamed with the quivering shine of scattered quicksilver.

Related Characters: The Man with the Lantern (speaker), The Coloured Man

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

After taking the "coloured" (multiracial) man hostage and marching him through a lemon orchard in the middle of the night, the four white men come to a clearing in the trees at which the man with the lantern suggests they stop. It's here that the white men intend to whip the coloured man as punishment for disrespecting a white minister at their church. Likening this area to an "amphiteatre" implies that although the white men are committing this violence in secret, the act isn't without scrutiny—they will have to bear witness to their own cruelty and reckon with the guilt they experience afterward. Up until this point, varying degrees of light and darkness have symbolized the way in which racism hides in plain sight in apartheid South Africa (where the story is set). Now, the moonlight illuminates the trees in a way that makes the sharp edges look sharp and weaponized, representing how the white men's racism is about to cross the line from private sentiments to highly visible and irrevocable violence. The story ends here, implying that the men go through with the whipping as planned and thereby sending the message that the South African government's racist regime isn't merely an ideology—it's an agitator of violence.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE LEMON ORCHARD

On a chilly night, a group of men walk between two rows of trees. All of them but one are bundled in thick clothing. High above, the **moon** is hidden behind clouds that look like strands of "dirty cotton-wool." The men's shoes sink into the damp ground as they walk, leaving footprints that can't be seen in the dark. A man holding a lantern walks ahead and leads the others in the group. The crickets nearby are silent, though some that do not yet sense the men's presence can still be heard in the distance. Far away, a dog barks but then abruptly stops.

The beginning of "The Lemon Orchard" is intentionally vague, creating an atmosphere of mystery and suspense for the reader. It's unclear who this group of men is or what they're doing, though the fact that they're walking under cover of night, combined with the eerie silence of their surroundings, hints that they're up to something nefarious that must be kept secret. This is supported by the detail that one of the men isn't wearing warm clothing, as this subtly implies that he was forced out into the cold night rather than bundling up and joining the other men willingly. Finally, the moon hidden behind "dirty" grey clouds represents something hidden beneath layers of corruption, further implying that the men's intentions are insidious and perhaps even violent.

In the **lemon** orchard that the men are walking through, the bittersweet smell of the fruit lingers in the night air. From the back of the group, a man carrying a loaded shotgun calls to the man holding the lantern to slow down. The man with the shotgun says that "it's as **dark** as a kaffir's soul" from where he's walking, speaking softly as though the darkness demands quiet. The man's face is heavily pockmarked, though it's mostly obscured in the dark. Although he walks behind the other men, he's the leader of the party.

The leader's use of the word "kaffir," an Afrikaans racial slur that demeans non-white people, indicates that the story is set during South African apartheid, a period of legally enforced segregation when racist sentiments like this were commonplace. The leader has thus revealed himself to be a bigoted white man who likely benefits from his country's white supremacist system—and his loaded shotgun characterizes him as a potentially violent person. It's symbolically significant, then, that he walks at the back of the party rather than the front, the farthest away from the lantern light. This implies that the leader's racial privilege enables him to remain shrouded in darkness (secrecy) as he discriminates and even carries out violence against non-white people. It's also important that aroma of the lemons stands out while other sensorial elements of the men's surroundings are imperceptible. The persistent smell represents the idea that although the group is clearly trying to hide whatever they're doing from society, the moral implications of their actions cannot be suppressed.

Another man in the party complains that it's cold out, and the leader sarcastically asks if he's as cold as "this verdomte hotnot," gesturing the gun toward the "coloured" man walking ahead of them. The coloured man is shivering, as he's the only one who isn't dressed in warm clothes; the other men had only allowed him to put on pants and a raincoat over his pajamas when they'd taken him from where he was sleeping. They hadn't even given him time to tie his shoes. The man with the lantern tauntingly asks the coloured man if he's cold, but the coloured man refuses to reply—partially out of fear but mostly out of stubbornness. The fifth man in the group, Andries, says that the coloured man isn't cold: he's shivering with fear.

Here, the identity of the aforementioned man in the group who isn't dressed in warm clothing is revealed: he's the captive of the other men, having been woken up from where he was sleeping and forced out into the cold. The term "coloured" is a South African racial category that encompasses all multiracial people, and the fact that the narrative singles this man out as such indicates that all of the other men in the party are white and that the coloured man's race has something to do with why he's been taken prisoner. Indeed, the leader uses another Afrikaans slur, "hotnot," to insult the coloured man based on his race. That the white men bundled themselves up in warm clothing yet forbade the coloured man from putting on sufficient layers indicates that they view him as fundamentally different from them, undeserving of a basic human necessity like warmth. Further, Andries's mockery of the coloured man's fear is the first indicator that he and the other white men are deeply hypocritical, as the fact that they waited until nightfall to capture the coloured man exposes their *cowardice.*

Again, the coloured man stays silent and looks ahead at the silhouette of the man with the lantern. He doesn't want to look at the two men on either side of him, as they're both carrying whips. Andries laughs that the coloured man is dumb as well, but the leader protests and asks the men to wait a moment. They all stop, and the man with the **lantern** shines the light on the group.

Andries's insult about the coloured man's intelligence again sends the message that the white men (and, by extension, South Africa's white supremacist society as a whole) view non-white people as inherently inferior to them. The whips that Andries and the other man are carrying are ominous; along with the leader's shotgun, these weapons are likely to be used against the coloured man as a means of punishing or suppressing him.

The leader tells the others that the coloured man isn't dumb—rather, he's "one of those educated bushmen." The leader then grows angry and demands that the coloured man answer when a *baas* speaks to him. He presses the muzzle of the shotgun into the coloured man's back and calls him a racial slur again, threatening to shoot him if he doesn't respond. The coloured man, whose hands are bound behind his back, tries not to shiver in case the others mistake it as cowardice. He hears the hammer of the gun being cocked back and feels sweat droplets form on his upper lip despite the cold.

The leader's characterization of the coloured man as "one of those educated bushmen" is oxymoronic—calling the coloured man a "bushman" is meant to suggest that he's uncivilized, yet this doesn't match up with him being a well-educated member of society. This contradiction, coupled with the leader's violent threat, begins to suggest that the white men view the coloured man as a potential challenge to their authority. The emphasis on his education implies that the white men are not as intelligent or competent in comparison, and they're lashing out violently at him in order to protect their unearned societal privilege as white men. Further, the leader's suggestion that the coloured man is a savage is deeply hypocritical, given that the leader is the one acting barbarically in this passage. Clearly, he holds white and non-white people to entirely different standards.

With a nervous laugh, the man with the lantern tells the leader not to shoot the coloured man—after all, they don't want to be involved in a murder. But the leader questions what the man with the **lantern** is implying. The leader's face, now illuminated by the lantern, is dark red and so covered in lines and wrinkles that it resembles a map full of roads and waterways. His features stand out like mountains and valleys, and his blue eyes are like icy lakes.

The man with the lantern's anxiety about killing the coloured man suggests that he knows what they're doing is wrong—yet as the one guiding the other men through the orchard, he's complicit in the abuse that's occurring. With this, the story implies that those who discriminate against others often delude themselves or adopt hypocritical double standards to justify their wrongdoings. Meanwhile, the illumination of the leader's face is symbolically significant. The ongoing shifts between light and darkness as the men walk through the orchard represent the varying degrees to which racism is hidden or exposed in apartheid South African society. That the leader, previously shrouded in darkness, is now bathed in light suggests that his racist ideology is about to cross over into overt violence. And the comparison of the man's scarred face with a convoluted map is a metaphor for how South Africa has been separated and marred—both geographically and ideologically—by its divisive politics.

The leader then calls the coloured man "a slim hotnot" and points out that he's a teacher at a school that the men in the group pay for, which means that he lives off of their labor. The leader reminds the others that the coloured man was rude to a minister at their church and says that he won't allow any "hotnot" to disrespect a white man. The man with the lantern agrees but says that they're going to deal with the coloured man without the trouble the would arise from killing him. The leader, however, is adamant that he'll "shoot whatever hotnot or kaffir" he wants—he "demand[s] respect" from them.

Once again, the leader's use of racial slurs like "hotnot" and "kaffir" are meant to dehumanize the coloured man as something fundamentally different from white people. But the white men's hatred of the coloured man is revealed to be entirely unwarranted: the coloured man did not commit any crime but merely talked back to a white authority figure. This further characterizes the white men as hypocritical, as they decry the coloured man as disrespectful and uncivilized, yet they are the ones acting cruel and barbaric in a way that's entirely disproportionate to the coloured man's perceived slight. Again, the men seem to be motivated by a fear of white people losing their privileged position under apartheid—they "demand respect" and are willing to resort to violence as a means of securing their authority over non-white people.

Suddenly, the leader shoves the barrel of the shotgun into the coloured man's back and demands to know if the coloured man heard him speak. Then, Andries hits the coloured man in the face, his fist still clenched around his whip. Angry over being delayed, he calls the coloured man a racial slur and echoes the leader's demand for him to answer. The coloured man stumbles and catches himself in the shadow of one of the **lemon** trees, looking away from the **lantern light** shining onto him. Afraid that the enraged leader will shoot him, the coloured man averts his eyes and replies, "Yes, baas." The other men are oblivious to the mixture of composure and contempt in his voice.

The white men's hypocrisy is further evidenced by the contradiction of their demands for respect alongside Andries's brutal violence—clearly, they have no respect for non-white people in return. The coloured man admirably remains level-headed and dignified in spite of this abuse, only giving in to the white men's demands of being called baas *("master") when he begins to fear for his life. The light shining on him in this moment symbolizes his realization that the white men's threats toward him are no longer vague or empty—their capacity for violence has been brought to light.*

The rest of the group, satisfied with the coloured man's response, continue on; the leader again shoves the coloured man forward with the muzzle of the shotgun. As they walk, the leader points out that the coloured man should have taken the principal and the church leader to court over the whipping they gave him. Andries assures the leader that they'll give the man a better whipping, teaching him a lesson so that he'll never seek damages from anyone. The leader agrees—afterward, he says, the coloured man will flee to the city, where undignified people live. He says that they don't want any "educated hottentots" in their town, and another one of the men adds that they don't want Black Englishmen either.

The revelation that the coloured man was already whipped once for talking back to the white minister indicates that such treatment of non-white people is commonplace under apartheid. That the coloured man did not press charges for this act of violence further supports the idea that such atrocities are socially accepted and even legally condoned—the coloured man likely wouldn't have had a chance at winning if he'd taken his case to court. The white men's determination to whip the coloured men a second time reveals just how terrified they are of non-white people rising up to challenge the rigged system of white supremacy in any way. The leader's scorn for "educated hottentots" (again using a racial slur to demean non-white people) further highlights his fear that Black and multiracial people achieving upward mobility and success will somehow rob him of the privilege he enjoys as a white person under apartheid. Yet his belief that non-white people are somehow undignified is clearly illogical and hypocritical, as the coloured man's composure throughout the story has proven him to be much more dignified than the white men.

Just then, the dog at the farmhouse across the valley starts barking again, and the man with the lantern wonders what's bothering the watchdog. He shares that he once offered to buy the dog, but the owner wouldn't sell it. The man says that he'd take excellent care of a dog like that. As the men continue walking, the leaves on the **lemon** trees rustle violently in the wind, a sound that contrasts with the pleasant smell of the fruit. By now, the air has gotten even colder, and the crickets louder. The **moon** appears from behind the clouds and bathes the leaves in silvery light, and the fragrance of the lemons seems stronger—as though they were being juiced.

This is perhaps the clearest example of the white men's hypocrisy. The man with the lantern's comments about the watchdog indicate that he's fully capable of extending concern and care to beings who are different from him—his complicity in the violence toward the coloured man, then, is a conscience choice. The story thus shows that people who discriminate against others often compartmentalize their behavior and use double standards in order to justify themselves. With this in mind, the pronounced smell of the lemons in this passage is symbolically significant: just as the aroma of the fruit stands out against the otherwise ominous scene, the men's moral transgressions are obvious and undeniable regardless of their attempts to hide and justify their violence. It's also significant that the moon has appeared, given that light is an ongoing symbol of overt racism. The moon's resurfacing (and the way it shines light onto the trees) suggests that just as the moon has been hidden yet present throughout the story, so too is the South African government's racist regime a distant yet undeniable influence on the white men's actions.

Under the **moonlight**, the group walks a bit farther until the man with the lantern points out a place to stop. The spot is a wide clearing in the orchard, a sort of amphitheater surrounded by **lemon** trees. The moonlight shines onto the leaves and branches, illuminating the dew along the sharp angles and edges of the trees like shiny quicksilver.

That the clearing is compared to an amphitheater, where audiences watch performances or events, suggests that the men's attempts at secrecy are in vain—they cannot fully deny the moral implications of the violence they're about to commit. That they're surrounded by lemon trees, an ongoing symbol for the undeniably of morality, reinforces this idea. And again, the moonlight serves as a metaphor for the ways in which the South African government's white supremacist regime radiates outward to influence its citizens behavior, enabling and condoning their most violent impulses just as the moonlight highlights and distorts the harsh angles of the trees. "The Lemon Orchard" ends without any clear resolution, but it's implied that the white men will go through with whipping the coloured man as planned. With this, the story leaves readers with the message that apartheid South Africa's racial hierarchy is fundamentally cruel and unfair, affording unearned privilege to a select group who then deny their moral instincts and inflict violence to maintain their social standing.



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