Boesman and Lena

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ATHOL FUGARD

Fugard was born in South Africa in 1932 to English and Afrikaner parents. In 1935, his family moved to Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He studied philosophy and social anthropology at the University of Cape Town, but dropped out before his final examinations. He then spent two years working in East Asia on a steamer ship, where he began writing. In 1956, he married and had a daughter. He moved to Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1958, where he worked as a clerk in a Native Commissioners' Court, which made him very aware of the injustices of apartheid. He began writing plays to expose those injustices, and also created a multiracial theater. He debuted many plays, including *Boesman and Lena*, and also performed the works of other major playwrights with a group called the Serpent Players, a group that consisted largely of black men. He continued to perform with them through the 1970s and early 1980s. Following the dismantling of apartheid in 1990-1991, Fugard focus turned increasingly to his personal history in his writing. Fugard has written over 30 plays, and in 2011 was awarded a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre. In 2012 he relocated to South Africa, where he now lives permanently.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Boesman and Lena is set in South Africa during a period known as apartheid. Apartheid consisted of a system of institutional segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s. The population was classified into four groups: Bantu (black Africans), White, and Coloured (a term which denoted a person was of mixed-race descent). A fourth category, Indian, was later added. A series of racist legislation established places where members of each group could live and work. This resulted in the white minority (who comprised 13 percent of the population) holding 80 percent of the land. Some laws forbade marriage and social contacts between the races, segregated public facilities, established separate educational standards, and restricted each race to certain types of jobs. It also denied nonwhite participation in the national government. *Boesman and Lena* explores the social impact of these policies on individuals. Although much of the legislation upholding apartheid was repealed in 1990-1991, the lingering effects of this system are still felt in the country today.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Fugard has written many other plays that shed light on the toll of apartheid and how this system affects individuals and their relationships. *Blood Knot*, *Hello and Goodbye*, and *Boesman and Lena* comprise a triad called the Port Elizabeth Plays. Other famous works by Fugard include *The Island*, *"Master Harold" ... and the Boys*, and *The Road to Mecca*—just a few of the 30 plays that Fugard has written on the subject of apartheid. Other books on the topic include Alan Paton's historical fiction novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which offers a portrait of South Africa in the midst of apartheid, and Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*, which also focuses on a couple and takes place after the apartheid system has been dismantled. Beyond plays and works of fiction, Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* are memoirs that give first-hand accounts of living under South African apartheid. *Boesman and Lena* has also been compared to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, as both plays are circular and somewhat repetitive accounts of the hopelessness of life.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Boesman and Lena
- **When Written:** 1965-1969
- **Where Written:** South Africa
- **When Published:** Performed 1969, published 1971
- **Literary Period:** Postmodernism, realism
- **Genre:** Dramatic play
- **Setting:** 1960s Swartkops and Port Elizabeth, South Africa
- **Climax:** The old man dies and Boesman beats his body.
- **Antagonist:** Boesman, apartheid, racism
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Leading Man. Athol Fugard himself performed as the original Boesman when the play was performed at the Rhodes University Little Theatre in Grahamstown, South Africa, in 1969.

Protest Theater. All of Fugard's early plays are in protest of apartheid, and after his first major work, *The Blood Knot*, appeared, the South African government passed harsh censorship laws that forbade racially mixed casts and audiences in theaters.

PLOT SUMMARY

Boesman and Lena, a Coloured couple, arrive in Swartkops (a town consisting mostly of muddy swamps) carrying all of their

possessions on their backs and heads. They live in 1960s South Africa, during apartheid. That morning, white men told them to vacate their land in Korsten and bulldozed it, and they spent all day walking to Swartkops. Lena is upset with Boesman for walking so quickly, only to wind up in the mudflats. This triggers an argument between them: Lena is distressed that Boesman laughed at the poor people collecting their things that morning and thanked the white people for bulldozing their land. She blames him for being lost, and is frustrated that she feels like her life is being wasted every time they have to pick up their belongings and walk to a new place. Boesman largely ignores her while she voices her concerns in a monologue, only responding to torment and laugh at her.

Lena then wonders when the last time they came to Swartkops was, and Boesman refuses to answer her, instead building their **pondok**, or shanty, from materials he found along their walk. Lena tries to reconstruct the path that they took to various towns, but when Boesman questions the order of the towns she comes up with, she is frustrated and confused. Boesman then leaves to find more materials to build the pondok. Lena thinks to herself about her path, remembering that they had come from Redhouse (where a farmer chased them off his land with a gun), then they went to Swartkops, Veeplaas, Korsten, and back to Swartkops. She is happy to have figured this out herself, and starts humming to herself as she makes a fire.

When Boesman returns, he is skeptical of Lena's good mood, and when she tells him the path she remembered, he immediately makes her question what she figured out. Boesman torments and mocks her as he finishes the pondok. Lena is disgusted by the shelter, longing for a time when they had stayed in a room with a door. Boesman tells Lena to forget the past, because "now is the only time in [her] life." Lena becomes upset and is determined to walk away from the camp for good.

Before Lena is able to go, she and Boesman spot an old man approaching their camp. Despite Boesman's protests and threats to beat her, Lena calls the man over. The man comes to sit by their fire, exciting Lena. She is disappointed, however, when she realizes the man is Xhosa and doesn't speak English or Afrikaans. She begs Boesman for wine, but he refuses and threatens to beat her if she goes near the bottles before storming off.

Lena shows the old man the bruises she received that morning from Boesman for dropping and breaking three empty bottles that they could have exchanged for money. She describes how he had beaten her until the white men watching laughed at him. Lena teaches the old man to say her name, and when he repeats it back to her, she is excited and offers him water.

Lena then starts to tell the old man stories from her and Boesman's journeys. In Korsten (the town they had been in before Swartkops), she fed scraps to a **dog** who then followed her and watched her cooking and making fire in the camp. Boesman beat the dog, so it would wait until Boesman was asleep to approach Lena. Lena confesses to the old man that she loved the dog because it was "another pair of eyes" that could see her. Lena also describes how she and Boesman haven't been able to have children: one died at six months old, and the others were stillborn. Once, she gave birth under a donkey cart with no one around her to help.

The old man tries to leave several times over the course of Lena's stories, but each time she makes him sit back down and listen to her. Boesman then returns with more firewood, and is surprised and agitated to see that the old man is still there. Lena begs Boesman to let the old man stay, bribing Boesman with her bottle of wine. Boesman relents, but refuses to let the old man sleep in their pondok. He gives her a choice: to sleep inside with him, or to sit outside by the fire with the old man. Lena chooses the old man. Boesman is furious, but when he sees Lena's ferocious desire to keep the old man there he backs down. Lena prepares dinner, giving Boesman half a loaf of bread and a mug of tea. She takes the other mug and the other half loaf and splits it with the old man. Lena and the old man sit together under the blanket, warming themselves by the fire. Boesman, watching from the pondok, leaves his dinner untouched and drinks only wine instead.

An hour later, Boesman is drunk and violent, demanding that Lena reenact the scene that morning in which she had begged the white men to let them pack up their things. She disdains Boesman for laughing at his own people and helping the white men burn their things once the bulldozer cleared them. Boesman confesses that when the pondok was destroyed, he felt completely free—but that when Lena suggested going back to the "old rubbish dumps" they always went to, he felt weighed down once more. He has another revelation: that he and Lena are "whiteman's rubbish"— everything white people throw away, they pick up and use. They are made completely of rubbish, he realizes.

Boesman then mocks the old man and Lena, while Lena asks him to leave them alone. Lena sees that the old man is closing his eyes and shakes him awake, asking Boesman to pass his bread and tea to them if he doesn't want his. He pours out the tea and hurls the bread into the darkness, then returns to the pondok with his wine. Lena and the old man huddle together close to the fire, until Lena decides to do a dance to warm herself up. She dances and sings, making up words to cheer herself up. She sits once more, warm and happy, while Boesman watches from the pondok.

Boesman then reveals that he was actually the one who dropped the bag with the empty bottles that morning, then convinced Lena that she did it and beat her for it. Lena is livid, and asks the old man if he heard what Boesman said. Realizing that he doesn't understand, Lena begs Boesman to hit her again so the old man can see that Boesman beats her for nothing. Boesman refuses, realizing as he looks at Lena in disgust that

they'll never be able to have freedom or meaningful lives.

Lena realizes in that moment that the old man has died, saying that he was holding her hand and then let go of it. She mourns over him, upset that she never learned his real name. Boesman grows nervous that there's a dead body in their camp, telling her to get rid of it. He grows more and more agitated as Lena doesn't respond, and tells her that she needs to be a witness if someone asks who killed the old man. They go through hypothetical questions of what the police might ask, and when Lena gives unhelpful and sarcastic answers, Boesman becomes angry and moves to beat her with a bottle. He stops himself, however, when he sees that she hasn't moved away. She tells him he needs to be careful because there's one body already.

Boesman becomes very afraid, but then Lena suggests that the old man might not be dead. Spurred by this possibility, Boesman nudges the body, then kicks it with escalating violence. When it becomes clear the old man is really dead, Boesman beats the body severely. When he has finished, Lena tells him he shouldn't have done that—the bruises on the body will make Boesman look even more guilty. Boesman, panicked, starts to pack their things frantically, instructing Lena that they're going to leave. Lena refuses, saying she's had enough. She insists that she's done running and loading all of their possessions onto her back. She tells him that he couldn't have freedom that morning because he didn't have room on his back next to all of their other things.

When Boesman has finished packing, he is almost comically weighed down. She tells him to go without her, saying goodbye. Boesman cannot move. Lena then looks at the old man's body, noting, "Can't throw yourself away before your time." She has a change of heart, and tells Boesman to hand over the bucket on his head. She says they need to walk far away, to Coegakop. Boesman then tells her the correct order of the towns they've visited. When he's finished, Lena concludes, "it doesn't explain anything."

Lena is content, at least, that a "dog and a dead man" saw a little bit of their lives. Lena affirms once more that she is still alive, and that she has time left to live. She instructs Boesman to walk, "but not so fast." They walk off together into the darkness once more.

CHARACTERS

Boesman – One of the two main characters of the play, alongside Lena. Boesman and Lena are a Coloured couple living in 1960s South Africa, during apartheid, where they are greatly oppressed by its racist policies and constant forced removals. Boesman is short-tempered and violent; he cruelly beats and manipulates Lena in order to exert his power over her, because he feels powerless in all other aspects of his life. This includes making her question herself and manipulating her sense of reality. For example, he tells Lena that she dropped and broke three empty bottles that they could have exchanged for money, for which he then beat her. Later, however, Boesman reveals that he was the one who dropped the bottles. Boesman's cruelty makes Lena want to connect with other people, but this inflames Boesman's jealousy and hatred. When the old man arrives and Lena chooses to sit outside the **pondok** with the old man rather than sleep with Boesman, he is also cruel to the old man and tries to cut off their connection. Boesman desperately wishes for a sense of freedom and worth, which he describes having found on the morning that the play begins. Boesman laughed and said thank you when white men bulldozed their pondok and chased them off their land, because this made the world seem much more open to him and he was no longer forced to live among trash. This ironic sense of freedom is short-lived, however, because he quickly realizes that there is nowhere they can walk to that would allow them to escape apartheid's harsh oppression. Over the course of the play, Boesman and Lena develop a greater sense of equality in their relationship, but they are no closer to escaping their racist society. The play ends as it starts, with Boesman and Lena walking to a new location with all of their things, and this cycle of poverty and resetting of their lives ultimately becomes a real-world call to action for the audience to try to aid individuals like Boesman and Lena.

Lena – One of the two main characters of the play, alongside Boesman. Boesman and Lena are a Coloured couple living in 1960s South Africa, during apartheid. Despite their oppression, Lena still maintains an optimistic outlook and hopes that one day she might be able to find joy and meaning in her life. Lena yearns for connection, first with a **dog** that followed her in Korsten, and then with the old man who wanders into their camp. She values both the old man and the dog because they watch and listen to her, unlike Boesman. This makes her feel cared for and like someone is witnessing her life. This causes Boesman to become jealous, because their relationship has deteriorated so significantly, as evidenced by the way Boesman often beats and manipulates Lena. Lena is easily influenced by this manipulation, as she has a difficult time remembering what has happened in the past. This greatly upsets her, as it makes her feel as though she hasn't truly lived her life. Boesman often makes her question her reality, and even lies to her about events that have happened, such as when he tells her that she dropped and broke the empty bottles and then beat her for it. But gradually, over the course of the play, Lena shifts the power dynamic from Boesman to herself. After the old man dies peacefully in their camp, she torments Boesman with the idea that white men will come to lock Boesman up for killing him, and then makes him believe that the old man isn't dead. By the end of the play, Lena, like Boesman, believes that she might be able to feel a sense of freedom by ridding herself of the "rubbish" that they have been forced to build their lives upon. But also, like Boesman, she recognizes

that attempting to escape apartheid's oppression is futile. Only through this system's dismantling do they have any hope of finding a better life.

Old Man – An old Xhosa man who wanders into Boesman and Lena's camp. The old man highlights two important themes in the play: first, how Boesman and Lena, too, help to uphold the same racist system that is oppressing them. They treat him as lower status because he is black, while they are Coloured, and because he speaks neither English nor Afrikaans. They call him derogatory terms and are often severe and abusive toward him, even as Lena gradually treats him with more humanity and respect. The old man also helps to illuminate Lena's desperate need for human connection. Although she initially mistreats him, Lena is thrilled when she can teach him to say her name and is excited when he listens to the stories of her life, even though he cannot really understand them. Thus, the old man reveals the importance of being witnessed and listened to as a part of making Lena feel that her life is worthwhile and that others can care about her. She chooses to sit with the old man by the fire rather than sleep inside the **pondok** with Boesman, demonstrating her need to have contact with someone who does not abuse her and is willing to connect with her, if only passively. Towards the end of the play, the old man dies peacefully in their camp, and Lena points out the irony of the fact that white people might come around asking questions and trying to determine whether Boesman killed the man, but they would never have cared about the man while he was alive. This fact, and Boesman and Lena's overall treatment of the man, demonstrates why apartheid was so difficult to dismantle: it made people prejudiced against and suspicious of each other, rather than uniting to overcome an oppressive system.

TERMS

Apartheid – A system of segregation and institutionalized racism in South Africa, which was put in place in 1948. The system was enacted by a white minority (primarily comprised of people of Dutch descent, known as Afrikaners) for their own benefit and which led to the political oppression of the Coloured and black majority in South Africa. It led to the segregation of these various groups in terms of neighborhoods, public facilities, educational opportunities, and social gatherings. Facilities and neighborhoods for Afrikaners were often far superior to those dedicated to Coloured and black South Africans. During the 1960s, the government implemented a policy of "resettlement," which led to forced removals like the ones that **Boesman** and **Lena** experience. These removals required people to relocate to their designated neighborhoods.

Coloured – A racial categorization under apartheid that is equivalent to mixed-race. Under apartheid, Coloured people were often given more privileges and slightly superior status compared to black South Africans, but both groups were given vastly inferior conditions to white South Africans. This difference in status turned the two groups against one another, a dynamic that is explored in *Boesman and Lena*. **Boesman** and **Lena** are both Coloured, while the **old man** is black and of Xhosa descent, which is why they often use derogatory slurs to describe him and treat him as having a lower status than themselves.

Xhosa – The second-largest ethnic group in South Africa (after Zulu), and the language belonging to that group. Under apartheid, Xhosa people were classified as Bantu (or black). In *Boesman and Lena*, the **old man** is a member of the Xhosa people and the speaks the Xhosa language.

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.

OPPRESSION, FREEDOM, AND SELF-WORTH

Boesman and Lena centers on a night in the life of its two title characters, a Coloured couple living in 1960s South Africa. Facing the brutal policies of apartheid, Boesman and Lena have been forced out of their **pondok** (shanty) by a white man bulldozing the land. The play begins in a visceral way: the two overburdened characters enter the stage carrying everything they own to a new location, exhausted from their journey and with little prospects for the future. This cycle of wandering and the burden of carrying one's entire life is in and of itself a form of oppression, and one that Fugard highlights as a centerpiece of his play. As Boesman and Lena grapple with the questions of whether they are truly free people and whether their lives are worth anything, Boesman (and Fugard) comes to the horrifying conclusion that they are not free—that they are not even people, because the oppression they face has rendered them into "rubbish," constantly picked up, thrown away, with no way to escape the society that minimizes them.

Fugard highlights the insurmountable oppression with which Lena and Boesman are faced as he demonstrates how the couple is unable to escape the cycle of destitution that South African society pushes onto them. This hardship is relentless even though they are technically able to go to any town that is accessible to Coloured people. Boesman and Lena are constantly forced out of their homes by white South Africans, who seize the land on which they are living and clear it with bulldozers. Lena describes how their forced removal and

journey to the Swartkops (and all of the previous times they have been forced to walk away from a home they've built) burdens them: "That last *skof* [spell] was hard. Against the wind. I thought you were never going to stop. Heavier and heavier. Every step. This afternoon heavier than this morning. This time heavier than last time. And there's other times coming." Lena viscerally feels the oppression she and Boesman are up against, and knows that it only becomes worse and worse each time she is forced to pack, because their lives are reset each time. The sheer number of times that they have had to start over becomes apparent at the end of the play, as Boesman names 14 other similar "walks" that they have experienced leading up to this one—each time carrying all of their possessions to a new location.

Because of this constant cycle, Boesman and Lena are also forced to continuously rebuild their lives from anything they can find. As a result, they feel like they have become trash and, that their lives don't actually have any worth. When Boesman and Lena arrive in the Swartkops, Boesman starts to build a shelter from anything he can find: a piece of corrugated iron, an old sack, a few pieces of wood, an old motor-car door. Lena relays that she is sick of being stuck in the *pondok* because it is a home made of trash, and it gives her the sense that she has no worth. Boesman explains more explicitly how they themselves have become trash: "We're whiteman's rubbish. That's why he's so *beneukt* [fed up] with us. He can't get rid of his rubbish. He throws it away, we pick it up. Wear it. Sleep in it. Eat it. We're made of it now. His rubbish is people." The fact that they have become so steeped in trash as a result of their oppression makes them feel worthless. This feeling of being rendered worthless prompts Lena to wonder what her life has meant, since she has done so little with it. She says, "I wasn't born today. I want my life. Where's it?" Boesman expresses the same idea about his own life: "Show it to me! Where is it? This thing that happens to me. Where? Is it the *pondok*? Whiteman pushed it over this morning. Wind will do it to this one. The road I walked today? Behind us! Swartkops? Next week it's somewhere else. The wine? Bottles are empty. Where is it?!!" Boesman and Lena are unable to make sense of their lives and identities or establish a lasting sense of self-worth, because they are always ultimately left with nothing to show for their struggles.

Boesman ultimately reveals that he was able to find a sense of freedom when the "whiteman" pushed over the *pondok* that morning, because he was able to "stand straight" and the world was "wide open." The irony of this is, of course, that the very system that is oppressing him had left him feeling free because it untied him from the waste that he had come to rely on. Fugard quickly reveals this to be a false sense of freedom, however. Boesman and Lena picked up their things and continued to walk after this incident, but Boesman felt weighed down by the fact that Lena kept suggesting the "rubbish dumps" where they had been before. Even though the world felt new to him, they have no realistic way to escape the oppression of apartheid.

By the end of the play, both Boesman and Lena have tried to walk away from each other and find a new way of life, but they are unable to do so. They cannot find a way to escape their society, nor their dependence on each other. The play ultimately implies a call for change, particularly because Fugard originally performed the play at a university for white audiences. It is a demand for the people with power to recognize the humanity and worth in the people without power, and help them escape that oppression.

VIOLENCE, CRUELTY, AND POWER

Although Boesman and Lena, the titular main characters of the play, are a couple, Fugard makes it immediately clear that the characters have become largely devoid of affection for each other. As they feel powerless to fight their arduous circumstances in apartheid-era South Africa, they bicker, taunt, and abuse each other, as well as the old man who wanders into their camp in the middle of the night. Over the course of the play, the dynamics shift between them in terms of who has the upper hand. Thus, Fugard depicts cruelty and violent abuse as tools for the characters to feel powerful and have a degree of control over their lives.

Initially, Boesman has the upper hand, which he adopts by beating and berating Lena. Fugard quickly establishes this the norm for how Boesman treats Lena, even from the characters' entrance: Boesman walks in front of Lena, ignoring her pleas to stop because she is exhausted, and refuses to tell her where they are walking. He also delivers constant threats of beatings and other aggressive language. That morning, when Boesman and Lena were forced to evacuate their **pondok**, Boesman dropped three empty bottles (which they would have exchanged for money) and blamed Lena, beating her and leaving countless bruises on her body. It quickly becomes clear that this is a pattern of Boesman's. When Lena sees the old man wandering in the dark, she invites him over, which angers Boesman and he moves violently towards her as she cowers. Later, when Lena tries to open a bottle of wine without Boesman's permission, he grabs a stick and moves to beat her with it. Lena hides behind the old man, yelling "Watch! He's going to kill me." Lena ultimately understands where this violence comes from, as she remarks towards the end of the play, "When Boesman doesn't understand something, he hits it." This is representative of the apartheid system as a whole. When Boesman feels powerless and struggles to understand why his life is so miserable, he gets angry and reacts with violence. The violence is a way of allowing Boesman to feel like he has control—both over Lena, and over his life.

Physical violence is not the only way that Boesman gains power

over Lena—he is also manipulative and cruel to her, making her question her reality over and over again. At the beginning of the play, Boesman refuses to even talk to Lena. She prattles on with no response from him. She begs him to talk to her, saying, "Don't be like that tonight, man. This is a lonely place. Just us two. Talk to me [...] I'll go mad." He is purposefully driving her to feel like she is losing her mind as another means of manipulation. Boesman again makes Lena feel that she is going insane when she tries to reconstruct the paths they have taken and the order of the various towns they have visited. Boesman purposefully makes her misremember the order that she comes up with to completely unmoor her from her past journey. He laughs at her, performing vulgar pantomimes of her confusion. Laughter is a key part of Boesman's manipulation, as he laughs not out of joy, but in order to torment Lena. This violence and cruelty culminates when Boesman reveals to Lena that he, in fact broke the empty bottles, not Lena—and he had beaten her for it. Thus, he claims power over her not only through physical violence, but also in completely reshaping her reality and changing her memory of various events.

Although Boesman has the upper hand throughout most of the book, in the end, Lena flips the dynamic on him by manipulating Boesman's sense of reality. After the old man dies (peacefully) in their camp, Lena convinces Boesman that the white men will come to lock Boesman up for the old man's death. Fugard writes, "*Boesman moves uncertainly towards the body, unable to ignore the possibility with which she is tormenting him.*" Her ideas have become just as insidious as his. Lena also then convinces Boesman that the old man is not, in fact, dead, causing him to beat the dead body and make it look even more like Boesman originally killed him. When Boesman frantically packs their things, trying to get away from the body, Lena laughs at him—again, flipping their dynamic and fulfilling the idea that she has taken the power over him.

By the conclusion of the play, Boesman and Lena settle on a plane of equality. They stop laughing at each other, and Boesman seems unable to beat Lena. He confesses the true path that they took to get to Swartkops, giving her some peace of mind. Lena also instructs Boesman to begin their journey away from Swartkops, "but not so fast," demonstrating that she now has some control over their pace. As the play ends, Boesman and Lena walk together into the darkness, in contrast to the way they walked in. Ultimately, the characters understand that their powerlessness cannot be remedied by violence and cruelty towards each other: it is an arbitrary power that actually gains them nothing but additional hardship at each other's hands.

RACISM AND STATUS

Boesman and Lena are living in apartheid-era South Africa, in which people were classified and segregated based on their race, with white South Africans (mostly of Dutch descent, known as Afrikaners) holding a vast majority of the land and wealth, despite being a very small minority of the population. Apartheid is a prime example of institutionalized racism, with extensive laws supporting the oppression of Coloured people (mixed-race South Africans) and Bantus (black South Africans). Fugard goes to deep lengths to depict the destitution of Coloured and black South Africans, but in *Boesman and Lena* he also demonstrates why apartheid is so difficult to overthrow. By giving Coloured people a greater status over the Bantus, white South Africans were able to divide the people they oppressed into conflicting groups and thereby maintain rigid and racist social structures. *Boesman and Lena* is a clear illustration of this: despite the fact that both Coloured people and black people face discrimination, Boesman and Lena, who are Coloured, abuse the old man, who is Xhosa (a group that is classified as Bantu), based solely on the fact that he is black, which gives them relative power over him. The hierarchical racism of apartheid thus essentially maintains itself, as the oppressed turn on those of even lower status.

Apartheid is built on the idea of white supremacy. Even though there are no white characters, the shadow of these characters, and how they abuse Boesman and Lena, infiltrates the narrative. But in each case, Boesman and Lena view their inferiority to the white South Africans as normal, never questioning the political status quo. The imbalance of power between white people and Coloured people provides the impetus for the story. Boesman and Lena are forced out of their **pondok** at the beginning of the story when a "whiteman" bulldozes the area, forcing them to load all of their things onto their backs and walk to Korsten. But Boesman talks about how the whiteman "did [him] a favor" by pushing over the shanty, demonstrating how his ideas have been corrupted by ideas of white supremacy. There are other references to the injustices that Boesman and Lena suffer at the hands of white South Africans. Lena tells Boesman that she'll leave him in order to go work for a white woman and take care of her children, telling two white children that had watched her as she counted her bruises after Boesman beat her to "Go ask [their] mother if she wants a girl," meaning a girl to work in their house. Despite the fact that this is a position of servitude, she views it as an opportunity to escape from Boesman instead. Lena refers to a time in which a *boer* (farmer) had a gun and chased Boesman and Lena off of his land. Lena remembers this incident fondly, choosing to focus on Boesman's comic running rather than the terror of the gun. All of these references demonstrate how the given political power of white South Africans has been normalized, to the point where Boesman and Lena don't even question their social standing.

Boesman and Lena also actively reinforce this power structure. They themselves bear the same racism as their white counterparts when they interact with the old man, because

they know they have political power over him. When the old man wanders into their camp for the first time, Boesman's first word when he realizes that the man is Xhosa is "*kaffer*," a very derogatory racial slur that refers to black South Africans. The dynamic between the two groups is immediately reinforced when the old man is deferent to Lena's aggressive speech towards him. As Boesman and Lena yell at the old man, he continues to sit at their camp as Lena instructed him, and accepts their abuse. As the night goes on, Boesman and Lena continue to make distinctions between them and the old man. Boesman says, that in contrast to himself and Lena, "He's not brown people, he's black people." Lena calls Xhosa a "baboon language," calling up a racist stereotype that equates black people with monkeys. Boesman and Lena's abuse extends past their language. Boesman threatens the old man several times, and when the old man tries to leave while Lena is telling him a story, she "throws herself at him violently" and forces him to sit back down. After the old man passes away peacefully towards the end of the play, Boesman beats his body to be sure that he is dead.

All of these instances serve to demonstrate how Boesman and Lena do not question the existing power structure, despite the fact that it harms them more than it helps them. Instead, they take advantage of what little status they can over the old man because of the stratified social structure implemented by the Afrikaners. Over the course of the night, Lena starts to find more and more humanity in the old man, but the difficulty she has in overcoming her own racial prejudice demonstrates that treating people outside of one's racial group with civility is far from the norm under the apartheid system. Through these dynamics, Fugard proves why apartheid was so difficult to dismantle: it gave even Coloured people an arbitrary sense of power, so that they would not feel the need to revolt against the exceptionally oppressive and racist system that harmed them.

CONNECTION VS. ISOLATION

Boesman and Lena's circumstances have left them with very little connection and intimacy, as they constantly argue over their present circumstances. As a result, both of them, but Lena in particular, search for a sense of connection in order to remedy their feelings of isolation. Fugard demonstrates that connection is vital to the characters because it is a way of being witnessed, and a means of acknowledging that they have lived—a concept that is crucial for people who are often transient and rendered nearly invisible by the world.

Early on in the play, Lena discusses her frustration with Boesman's lack of connection to her. Boesman treats her so poorly and ignores her so much that she often feels like she lives alone. At the beginning of the play, Boesman demonstrates how disconnected he is from Lena as he refuses to respond to anything she says. She goes on a long monologue about the difficulty of their journey and Boesman's current anger, but he ignores her. This disheartens Lena; she longs to go to a place like Veeplaas because "there's other people there" who she can talk to. Lena confesses to Boesman, as he makes the shelter, how his neglect affects her. She tells him, "You make it worse. When I call you, and I know you hear me, but you say nothing. Sometimes loneliness is two…you and the other person who doesn't want to know you're there." Thus, the relationship between them is even worse than if she were alone, because she expects some kind of connection and receives none. He deliberately treats her like she isn't there. Lena becomes so desperate that she begins to rely on a stray **dog** that had followed her in Korsten, the town in which they lived before being forced to walk to Swartkops. She describes how the dog "came and watched [her]" every night while Boesman was asleep. She admits that she misses the dog, which did not follow them to Swartkops, because it was "another pair of eyes. Something to see [her]." The dog was a witness to her life, giving her a sense of being understood and even loved.

When the old man arrives, he fills this same gap for Lena. He serves as a human connection that she feels has been lacking with Boesman, even though they do not speak the same language. When the old man first wanders into Boesman and Lena's camp, she immediately calls him over. When Boesman tries to argue with her, she protests: "Sit in the dark and talk to myself because you don't hear me anymore? No, Boesman! I want him!" Despite the fact that he is of lower status, the old man provides her with the attention and connection that she is not getting from Boesman. Later, when Boesman is about to beat Lena, she tells the old man to watch and "be witness" for her. This recurring desire, for someone to watch her and be a witness to her life, makes her feel like someone cares enough to look at her. It also provides her with a degree of security, as Boesman chooses not to beat Lena as she cowers behind the old man. Over the course of the night, Lena even starts to choose the old man over Boesman. When Boesman gives her the choice, to sleep inside the **pondok** with Boesman or to keep the old man company by the fire, she chooses the old man. His presence provides her with comfort and protection—what she feels she should be getting from Boesman.

After Lena chooses to stay with the old man rather than sleeping with Boesman, her choice drives Boesman's own fear of isolation. Boesman taunts Lena for staying outside with the old man, asking if they're "up to something under that blanket?" and if they're doing "*Vuilgoed* [dirty things]?" Boesman understands that this is preposterous, but he says these things out of jealousy because he, like Lena, fears being left alone. Yet Boesman refuses to reach out to Lena for connection. Instead, he aims to cut off the connection between the old man and Lena instead, in the hopes that she will return to him. He says, "He must close his eyes. That's what I'll say for you in the

kaffertaal ["kaffer" language]. *Musa khangela*! Don't look! That's what you must tell him. *Musa khangela*!" He tells the old man not to look at Lena, thus cutting her off from the connection she so desperately needs.

Towards the end of the play, Boesman speaks about how he and Lena had once had a child, but it was still-born. The very thing that was supposed to be their legacy, then—a way to continue their lives—becomes a reason that their connection with each other dissipates. Without that connection and the desire to live for each other, the feeling that their lives have become meaningless only deepens and grows, despite the fact that the play ends ambiguously with Boesman and Lena walking together into the darkness.

SYMBOLS

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

DOG

The dog represents Lena's deep longing for connection and her desire for someone to bear witness to her life. Lena describes to the old man how there was a dog when she and Boesman lived in Korsten who followed her around because she threw food to it. Boesman, by contrast, threw stones at the dog instead. The dog had thus waited until Boesman was asleep, then came into their camp to watch Lena cook or make the fire. She explains that she had loved the dog because it represented "another pair of eyes," and something that could see her. In lieu of Boesman's affection, the dog is able to witness her life and make her feel that she is worth caring for.

Fugard also makes a connection between the dog and the old man: despite the fact that they are unable to communicate, the old man similarly serves as a witness to Lena's life. Lena also shares food and water with the old man, proving how her desire for connection with both the dog and the old man outweighs even her own need for sustenance. Additionally, Boesman attempts to cut off Lena from both the dog and the old man, demonstrating his own jealousy in each case as he wants to make her more reliant on him, rather than allowing her to form her own connections with others.

PONDOK

The pondok serves as a symbol of Boesman and Lena's inability to have a home, and consequently, a meaningful life. The pondok, literally, is a type of shanty that Boesman is often forced to build out of whatever materials he can find: a piece of iron, scraps of wood, an old sack. Even though this is very resourceful, the makeshift nature of the pondok only makes Boesman and Lena more vulnerable. The morning before the play begins, the pondok they built in Korsten is easily destroyed by a "whiteman" with a bulldozer, forcing them off of the land. Lena realizes during the play that the pondok is actually a "coffin" for her, because she wastes her life trying to build homes in every new town they are forced to walk to. Boesman, too, recognizes how the pondok really makes his life feel devoid of meaning, because he surrounds himself and lives inside the trash of white people, making him feel worthless. Thus, the thing that is supposed to serve as a home for them—a source of protection and comfort, and a sense of ownership and personhood—becomes the very source of their oppression.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Theatre Communications Group edition of *Blood Knot and Other Plays* published in 1993.

Act One Quotes

❝ *A Coloured man*—Boesman—*walks on. Heavily burdened. On his back an old mattress and blanket, a blackened paraffin tin, an apple box…these contain a few simple cooking utensils, items of clothing etc., etc.*

[…]

After a few seconds a Coloured woman—Lena—*appears. She is similarly burdened—no mattress though—and carries her load on her head.*

Related Characters: Lena, Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

The opening scene of the play introduces many of the its themes, as well as the setting and dynamic between the two title characters. By applying the description of "Coloured" (meaning mixed-raced) to Boesman and Lena, Fugard immediately places his characters in apartheid South Africa, assigning them a social position that is institutionally oppressed. In giving this description even before the characters' names, Fugard demonstrates how being Coloured both defines and dehumanizes them to the white government and officials that take part in that oppression.

Additionally, in describing the many things that weigh Boesman and Lena down, and in having the actors take on this brutal weight, it ensures that the audience viscerally

experiences the taxing effect of the apartheid system. The forced removals that have led Boesman and Lena to their current destination have had the effect of resetting their lives, making them feel as though they have no means to progress. Lastly, having Boesman enter a few paces ahead of Lena foreshadows his abuse, as he refuses to tell Lena where they are going and walks her to exhaustion. This will ultimately contrast with the end of the play, in which Lena, finding a sense of equality with Boesman, walks side by side with him from the Swartkops.

LENA: […] You're the hell-in. Don't look at me, *ou ding*. Blame the whiteman. Bulldozer!
[*Another laugh.*]
Ja! You were happy this morning. 'Push it over, my *baas*! '*Dankie, baas*!' '*Weg is ons*!'

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Boesman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

After Boesman and Lena arrive at Swartkops, Lena realizes that Boesman is seething with anger, giving only a hard stare. He refuses to answer Lena as she speaks to him, leading her to believe that he is angry with her. Lena recognizes the irony of Boesman being angry with her, as their forced removal had been due to white men who came and bulldozed their *pondoks*. Lena emphasizes here that Boesman even asked for them to push it over, thanking them when they did so. Later in the play, Boesman reveals why he acted in that way: he felt much freer after the *pondok* was demolished. However, when Lena started to suggest old places where they had traveled to before, he once again felt like their oppression was inescapable.

The irony of these exchanges is that neither Boesman nor Lena can truly articulate the full extent of who and what has made their lives miserable. They are unable to see how apartheid as a system has caused this discrimination and cycle of poverty. Their oppression is so normalized that Boesman doesn't even truly blame the white people at the heart of it. Instead, he blames Lena for weighing him down, despite the fact that she is just as powerless as he is.

LENA: […] My life. It felt old today. Sitting there on the pavement when you went inside with the empties. Not just *moeg*. It's been that for a long time. Something else. Something that's been used too long. The old pot that leaks, the blanket that can't even keep the fleas warm. Time to throw it away. How do you do that when it's yourself?

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

As Boesman and Lena continue to discuss the events of the morning and being thrown out of their homes, Lena gives this short monologue describing the hardship of her life in terms of the objects with which she surrounds herself. They are potent metaphors: she is broken and thrown away in the same way that an old blanket or leaky pot might be thrown away. This quote demonstrates an assertion that Boesman makes later in the play: Boesman and Lena have very little sense of self-worth or meaning because they have been forced to construct their lives from the garbage that they can acquire—like the pieces of iron and other trash that Boesman finds over the course of the play and uses to build their shelter.

This quote also connects to one of Lena's final statements: that she cannot "throw [herself] away before [her] time." At the beginning of the play, she recognizes that she can't throw herself away, but by the end of it, she affirms that her life does, in fact, have meaning, and that she doesn't want to throw herself away. Instead, she wants to be able to find the meaning that has eluded her.

LENA: Wasn't it after Redhouse? Out last time here. Remember, that *boer* chased us off his land. Then we came here. Is that right?
[*Boesman ignores her.*]
Then we went to Korsten.
BOESMAN: After here we went to Korsten?
LENA: *Ja*. [*Boesman laughs at her derisively.*] How was it then? [*Pause.*] You won't tell me.

Related Characters: Boesman, Lena (speaker), Old Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 150-151

Explanation and Analysis

As Boesman and Lena discuss the various other towns they have visited, Lena tries to reconstruct their previous path to Swartkops. Boesman ignores and questions her, making her doubt her own memories. This exchange encapsulates the insidiousness of Boesman's cruelty and mental manipulation. He makes Lena doubt her sense of the past while she tries to search her memories. He also laughs "derisively" at her, providing even more torment. Yet at the same time, he refuses to tell her what he believes the order is. This only makes her angrier and more insecure, but it also shows how Boesman uses this mental manipulation to gain a sense of power over Lena in lieu of feeling empowered over his own situation, as Lena feels completely helpless under his control. She is powerless to Boesman's suggestions, and gives over completely to his sense of reality. This will become even more evident when he tells her that she dropped the bag of empty bottles, even though it was actually him who did so. The more he ignores her, however, the more isolated Lena feels—a dynamic that will eventually backfire on Boesman when the old man arrives and Lena starts to assume her own sense of power.

BOESMAN: *Yessus*, Lena! You're lost.
LENA: Do you really know, Boesman? Where and how?
BOESMAN: Yes!
LENA: Tell me.
[He laughs.]
Help me, Boesman!
BOESMAN. What? Find yourself?
[*Boesman launches into a grotesque pantomime of a search. Lena watches him with hatred.*]
[*Calling.*] Lena! Lena!

Related Characters: Lena, Boesman (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

After Lena reconstructs her path, concluding that they had gone to Redhouse, then Swartkops, then Veeplaas, then Korsten, and then returned to Swartkops. But when Boesman once again questions and confuses her, Lena feels completely helpless, to the point where she barely understands where she is in relation to the surrounding towns. Boesman once again exhibits his immense cruelty, tormenting and making fun of her with pantomimes and mock-searches. All of this adds to the portrait of Boesman as a cruel abuser, not only literally (through his beatings) but also emotionally and mentally. He verbally attacks her and continues to laugh at her. Fugard uses laughter in the play (especially as it relates to Boesman) not as an expression of happiness, but rather as a means of feeling superior to the other person. Again, because Boesman refuses to give her the correct answer, he shows that he is actively enjoying the power that he gets from mocking her (since he is unable to feel this sense of control in any other realm of his life) and has no intention of actually helping her. This is particularly hurtful to Lena because she has no one else in the world that she can rely on, but the man who is supposed to be her partner in life has nothing but malice towards her.

BOESMAN: Forget it. Now is the only time in your life.
LENA: No! 'Now.' What's that? I wasn't born today. I want my life. Where's it?

Related Characters: Lena, Boesman (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 158

Explanation and Analysis

As Boesman finishes the *pondok*, Lena longs for a time when they worked for a man and lived in a room in his backyard—a real room, with a door, she explains. Boesman scolds her, telling her to forget the past because now is the only time that matters in her life. This statement demonstrates how the system of apartheid has not only stalled their lives, but erased much of it as well. This also adds to the tragedy of Lena's inability to correctly remember the past and Boesman's cruel decision not to help her reconstruct it, because this represents another way in which her past has been erased and rendered essentially meaningless. She feels unable to make sense of her life or identity, as she describes here, because she has nothing to show for it—not even memories. Over the course of the play, Lena continues to wonder what her life has meant, but this moment represents the first time in which she recognizes and articulates the importance of acknowledging the past.

LENA: [...] Even when you're also awake. You make it worse. When I call you, and I know you hear me, but you say nothing. Sometimes loneliness is two . . . you and the other person who doesn't want to know you're there.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

Once Boesman finishes building the *pondok*, Lena reveals that the prospect of sleeping in the *pondok* with him is upsetting to her, particularly because Boesman refuses to speak to her. In this quote, Fugard illustrates just how much their relationship has deteriorated, and how little connection and intimacy they share if Lena cannot even bring herself to sleep with Boesman. This shows Lena's deep desperation to connect with Boesman, even as he refuses to grant her that connection, because it means that her life is being witnessed and it has some meaning outside her own experience. For Lena, Boesman's lack of response towards her is almost worse than having no one else at all, because there is a potential for her to have connection, but instead he intentionally cuts himself off from her. This is why the old man's appearance, which comes soon after this exchange, is so exciting for Lena, because it provides her with another potential source of connection outside of Boesman.

LENA. Come over!
BOESMAN. *Jou verdomde....*
LENA: [*sees the violence coming and moves away quickly*] To hell with you! I want him.
[*Calling.*] Hey, darling! *Kom die kant*!
[*To Boesman.*] Sit in the dark and talk to myself because you don't hear me anymore? No, Boesman! I want him! Hey! He's coming.

Related Characters: Boesman, Lena (speaker), Old Man

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

Just as Boesman is daring Lena to leave their camp, they spot an old man walking in the darkness. Despite Boesman's protests, Lena calls the old man over to the camp.

Boesman's skepticism is overpowered by Lena's intense desire for human connection, which Lena is not receiving from Boesman. This is particularly evident in Lena's statement that she is sick of talking to herself, because Boesman refuses to speak to her. It is a direct repudiation of Boesman's cruelty, particularly as she simultaneously refuses to allow him to beat her.

The old man's arrival, and the effect it has on Lena, represents the beginning of a shifting power dynamic between herself and Boesman. Boesman finds that he can assert less and less power over Lena now that she has someone else to relate to. By forming a relationship (no matter how minor) with someone other than Boesman, Lena is able to feel that she has identity and personhood in her ability to relate to another human being. Over the course of the act, Lena will grow closer and closer to the old man, giving her more of a sense of worth as he pays attention to her, and more of a sense of control as she rebels against Boesman.

BOESMAN: He's not brown people, he's black people.
LENA: They got feelings too. Not so, *Outa*?
BOESMAN: You'll get some feelings if you don't watch that fire.
[*Lena is waiting for a word from the old man with growing desperation and irritation.*]
LENA: What's the matter? You sick? Where's it hurt?
[*Nothing.*]
Hey! I'm speaking to you.
[*The old man murmurs in Xhosa.*]
Stop that baboon language! *Waar kryjy seer?*

Related Characters: Lena, Boesman (speaker), Old Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

When the old man arrives at Boesman and Lena's camp, Lena invites him to sit with them despite her disappointment that he is a black South African and does not speak any English. This exchange shows her need for the human connection she seeks from the old man, but it also shows both her and Boesman's ingrained racism. When Lena off-handedly comments that it's a hard life for "brown people" like them, Boesman corrects her to say that the old man is actually black, not brown like them. He says it in such a derogatory manner as to imply that he views himself and Lena as having more status and worth than the old man

simply because they are mixed-race rather than black.

Even though Lena tries to combat Boesman's prejudice—a bias inherently borne from apartheid laws—she also shows her own prejudice. She speaks threateningly towards the old man and criticizes him for his "baboon language," perpetuating a harmful stereotype that compares black people to monkeys. Ultimately, the way in which Boesman and Lena treat the old man over much of the play helps to illustrate why apartheid was so difficult to overturn, because it pitted several oppressed groups of people against each other, rather than uniting them in order to gain true democracy and freedom.

LENA: […] Look, *Outa*. I want you to look.
[*Showing him the bruises on her arms and face.*]
No, not that one. That's a old one. This one. And here. Just because I dropped the sack with the empties. I would have been dead if they hadn't laughed. When other people laugh he gets ashamed.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

After the old man arrives and Lena invites him to sit in their camp, Boesman is enraged that Lena is insistent on being kind to the old man even though he is black. Boesman storms off, threatening violence to Lena. Lena shows the old man the bruises that Boesman had given her that morning after she had dropped the bag with the empty bottles. This exchange underscores the role that the old man plays in Lena's eyes. He is someone who can witness Lena's life, and provide her with the sense that she is living because someone else acknowledges her presence. Additionally, Lena's description of the white *baases* here emphasizes again how laughter can be used for cruelty and as a demonstration of power. Just as Boesman laughs at Lena to torment and shame her, so too do the white men laugh at him as a means of proving their status over him.

LENA: […] We waited for Boesman to sleep, then he came and watched me. All the things I did—making the fire, cooking, counting bottles or bruises, even just sitting, you know, when it's too much . . . he saw it. *Hond*! I called him *Hond*. But any name, he'd wag his tail if you said it nice.
I'll tell you what it is. Eyes, *Outa*. Another pair of eyes. Some thing to see you.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 166

Explanation and Analysis

After Boesman storms off, leaving Lena and the old man alone, Lena starts to recount some of the tales from their previous journey. She describes how, in the last town they had been in, a dog followed her everywhere and grew close to her, joining her after Boesman was asleep because he often threw stones at the dog. The dog represents Lena's wish for connection, particularly as it served as something that both cared about her and thought she was worthy enough to be watched and followed. Lena's conclusion at the end of this monologue also illustrates that the dog served as a much-needed witness of her life—something that made her feel understood and loved. Fugard also makes subtle connections here (and more explicit connections later) between the dog and the old man. Both the old man and the dog cannot communicate with Lena, but they serve as witnesses to Lena's life that make her feel as though she is less alone.

LENA: […] And even when they're down, when you've made your place and the fire is burning and you rest your legs, something stays heavy. Hey! Once you've put your life on your head and walked you never get light again.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

As Lena continues to tell the old man stories about her life, she explains the arduous nature of the walks that she and Boesman have had to make. Lena's poetic description here

illustrates how the system of apartheid has been so oppressive: each time they are forcibly removed from where they have built a home, they are forced to load up all of their things and build a new life somewhere else. Thus, they are constantly undergoing a process of restarting and rebuilding their lives. As Lena describes earlier in the play, each new reset feels heavier and heavier, because they know that it is likely only temporary.

Even though their lives are technically progressing, Boesman and Lena feel stagnant and weighed down by the knowledge that they have no way of escaping the cycle of poverty and oppression. What is important, however, is that each monologue with which Fugard endows Lena serves to humanize her and call the audience to action to stand against apartheid and other oppressive systems.

Act Two Quotes

BOESMAN: […] I could stand there! There was room for me to stand straight. You know what that is? Listen now. I'm going to use a word. Freedom! *Ja*, I've heard them talk it. Freedom! That's what the whiteman gave us. I've got my feelings too, sister. It was a big one I had when I stood there. That's why I laughed, why I was happy. When we picked up our things and started to walk I wanted to sing. It was Freedom!

Related Characters: Boesman (speaker), Lena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

As the second act begins, Boesman once more recounts the scene from that morning in which they were kicked off of their land by white people with bulldozers who were clearing the *pondoks*. Boesman recounts here why he was happy in that moment—because in destroying the *pondok*, he had been able to "stand straight" and feel free. This is deeply ironic, because it suggests that the very system that is oppressing him, and the process of forced removal which causes their stagnation, is conversely what endows him with a sense of freedom. This perhaps is due to the fact that the bulldozing of the *pondok* is really a destruction of the garbage with which Boesman and Lena had been forced to rely upon, and out of which they had built their lives. Boesman and Lena are trapped between having to carry all of their possessions in the open world, or having to live trapped in a world of garbage. While the open world might feel more liberating to Boesman, neither of these options allows them to be truly free.

BOESMAN: I had it!
It was you with your big mouth and stupid questions. 'Where we going?' Every corner! 'Hey, Boesman, where we going?' 'Let's try Veeplaas.' 'How about Coega?'All you could think of was those old rubbish dumps.
'Bethelsdorp…Missionvale….'
Don't listen to her, Boesman! Walk!
'Redhouse…Kleinskool….'
They were like fleas on my life. I scratched until I was raw.

Related Characters: Boesman (speaker), Lena

Related Themes:

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

As Boesman explains why he was so pleased that morning when they were forced out of Korsten, he describes that the world felt very open then. Yet when they tried to walk, Boesman recounts that Lena's suggestions once again made him feel trapped. Boesman's feelings of freedom are short-lived, as he quickly realizes that there is no viable alternative to the "rubbish dumps" that they have always lived in, an idea that adds to Boesman's feelings of oppression and his lack of self-worth. His description of the places they've visited as being like fleas that he cannot get rid of only adds to the overall sense of being steeped in garbage.

Even though Boesman wants to walk, to take advantage of this feeling that the world is wide open, there is no feasible means of escape for himself and Lena. And because they are facing systemic oppression, there is little that can be done on an individual level to help them. As Boesman grows more and more desperate over the course of the second act, the audience (particularly those watching the original production of *Boesman and Lena*, which was performed in South Africa well before the end of apartheid) understands this desperation as Fugard's call to action against racism and segregation.

BOESMAN: […] One push. That's all we need. Into gaol, out of your job . . . one push and it's pieces.

Must I tell you why? Listen! I'm thinking deep tonight. We're whiteman's rubbish. That's why he's so *beneukt* with us. He can't get rid of his rubbish. He throws it away, we pick it up. Wear it. Sleep in it. Eat it. We're made of it now. His rubbish is people.

Related Characters: Boesman (speaker), Lena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 181

Explanation and Analysis

As Boesman explains to Lena that he felt like he had gained and lost his freedom that morning, he has one more revelation: that he feels like they are all "whiteman's rubbish." This comparison is literal, in that they have literally been forced to build their lives from anything they can pick up that white people don't want. This ranges from the *pondok*, which Boesman had made from what he could find along their path, to the clothes they wear, which are torn and tattered. But it is also a metaphorical phrase, in that they themselves have become trash because they feel they have no worth to the white people who dominate South Africa's society.

Boesman also links this sense of feeling like "rubbish" to the fragility of their lives and the constant stagnation that they face. Because he and Lena have been forced to build their lives out of trash, they have no structural integrity, either literally or metaphorically. The *pondok* is easily pushed over and destroyed by a bulldozer; so, too, their lives are easily pushed over and destroyed in one fell swoop. Thus, their lack of self-worth and lack of freedom are linked.

LENA: […] That's not a *pondok*, Boesman. [*Pointing to the shelter.*] It's a coffin. All of them. You bury my life in your *pondoks*. Not tonight. Crawl into darkness and silence before I'm dead. No! I'm on this earth, not in it.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

After Boesman's drunken outburst and his accusations that Lena and the old man are "up to something" under the blanket, Lena surmises that he's being so cruel because she's decided not to sleep in the *pondok* with Boesman. In this quote, she explains the reason for this decision. This demonstrates a key difference between Boesman and Lena at this point in the play, and indeed, a key difference between them throughout the play. Boesman has been constantly beaten down by the life that he has been forced into, and so he simmers in anger and misery. But Lena is constantly searching and striving for meaning in her life. She affirms that she is not yet dead, and refuses to be tied to this structure that so often consumes her life. She comes to the same realization that Boesman does: even though the *pondok* is meant to be a home, and to provide a sense of protection, all it does is reinforce their lack of worth because they waste their lives trying to build something that they know could be pushed over at any moment.

LENA: […] Why must you hurt me so much? What have I really done? Why didn't you hit yourself this morning? You broke the bottles. Or the whiteman that kicked us out? Why did you hit me?

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

After Boesman reveals that he was the one who dropped the empty bottles that morning, not Lena, Lena is bewildered why Boesman is so cruel to her. He not only told Lena that she was the one who broke the bottles, but he then beat her for it. Lena's series of questions serve to probe at Boesman's motivations and Fugard's ongoing critique of exerting control and violence over others in order to feel empowered. It ultimately becomes clear that Boesman hurts Lena because he has no other means for control over his life; he hits her in order to feel powerful.

Lena's reference to the "whiteman" that kicked them out that morning also reveals another point of Fugard's: how powerless Boesman is to the apartheid system, and how inescapable their oppression is. In fact, the superiority of the white South Africans and their elevated status has been so normalized for the mixed-race and black South Africans that Boesman cannot even think of retaliating against them. He understands that any attempt to overcome this abuse is

truly futile, and so instead he looks to what he can control: Lena.

BOESMAN [*equally desperate, looking around dumbly*]: Show it to me! Where is it? This thing that happens to me. Where? Is it the *pondok*? Whiteman pushed it over this morning. Wind will do it to this one. The road I walked today? Behind us! Swartkops? Next week it's somewhere else. The wine? Bottles are empty. Where is it?!!

Related Characters: Boesman (speaker), Lena

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 186

Explanation and Analysis

After Lena discovers that Boesman is the one who dropped the empty bottles despite blaming her for the mistake, Boesman surveys his life in the same way that Lena pondered her own in the first act. He realizes that he cannot find a single remnant of his life. Everything he has ever made or done has been essentially erased. With this monologue, Fugard demonstrates how Boesman and Lena's oppression destroys any sense of meaning in their lives. The *pondok*, which represents their only semblance of home and stability, has been destroyed, and any attempts to rebuild it are equally fragile. Though they might have trekked a path to Swartkops, they won't be there for long enough to leave any trace there. Even the bottles of wine they bought have already been consumed, and they will return the empty bottles to the deposit for what little money they can get. They have no way of making a tangible mark on the world, particularly after the death of their six-month-old child. This is deeply disturbing to Boesman, who feels that this leaves him devoid of meaning.

BOESMAN: […] That's all it is, tonight or any other night. Two dead *Hotnots* living together.
And you want him to look? To see? He must close his eyes. That's what I'll say for you in the *kaffertaal*.
Musa khangela! Don't look! That's what you must tell him. *Musa khangela*!

Related Characters: Boesman (speaker), Old Man , Lena

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

Lena begs Boesman to hit her so that the old man can witness how Boesman abuses her for no reason. Boesman is disgusted by her begging, and launches into another monologue about the meaninglessness of their lives. He emphasizes this in the paradox, "two dead *Hotnots* living together" (*Hotnot* being a derogatory term for Coloured people, referring to Boesman and Lena themselves). Even though they are clearly still alive, Boesman refers to himself and Lena as dead because he feels that their lives have no worth and they might as well already be dead.

Boesman's words to the old man also reveal his jealousy of the relationship that Lena and the old man have built over the past several hours. Boesman realizes how desperate Lena is for a witness to her life, and how the old man is filling that role for her. But instead of facilitating this sense of connection and self-worth, Boesman actively tries to cut them off from each other. While Lena does not speak Xhosa, the old man's language, Boesman does. Instead of telling him to look at her, as she wants, he tells the old man *not* to look at her, attempting to prevent the human connection that is so crucial to her in their interactions.

BOESMAN: Well, I'm just warning you, you better have answers ready. Dead man! There's going to be questions.
LENA: About him? About rubbish? […] Hot stuff, hey. 'What's his name?' 'Where's he come from?'
BOESMAN: Never saw him before in my life!
LENA: 'Who did it?'
BOESMAN: [*sharply*] Did what? He died by himself.
LENA: Too bad you can't tell them, Outa.
BOESMAN: I did nothing.
LENA: Why don't they ask some questions when we're alive?

Related Characters: Lena, Boesman (speaker), Old Man

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191

Explanation and Analysis

Following the old man's death, Boesman warns Lena that she'll need to be a legal witness for him when white people discover the body and start asking them questions. The old

man's death throws into stark relief for Lena the fact that the old man is truly being treated like "rubbish" now—as a thing that must simply be thrown away. Like Boesman and Lena, he has been forced into destitution and treated as though he has no worth. Lena recognizes the irony of the white South Africans not caring about the old man until after he is dead.

This is also a point at which Lena begins to actively manipulate Boesman, just as he had done to her throughout the first act. Instead of answering his questions sincerely, Lena assumes her newfound power over Boesman. She starts to imply that the white people will immediately jump to the conclusion that Boesman killed the old man, taking advantage of his fear of being punished for the old man's death. The exchange ultimately serves to indicate this power shift, but also shows how much all of their fates are determined by the white South Africans, who care little about them beyond using them to assert their own superiority.

LENA: […] That's the worst. When you didn't do it. Like the hiding you gave me for dropping the empties. Now you'll know what it feels like. You were clever to tell me. It hurt more than your fists. You know where you feel that one? Inside. Where your fists can't reach. A bruise there!

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 193-194

Explanation and Analysis

After the old man dies peacefully in Boesman and Lena's camp, Lena tricks Boesman into believing that he might not actually be dead. Boesman tries to nudge and then kick the body. Upon realizing that the old man is, in fact, dead, he beats the body violently in rage. Afterwards, Lena rebukes him for doing so, because the body will now have bruises that can implicate him. Lena once again torments him with the thought that anyone coming to their camp won't even ask questions about what happened, they will simply assume that Boesman had done it. Here, Lena makes it explicitly clear to Boesman that she wants revenge for his own mental torment. She makes a direct link between his own manipulation, where he had beaten her for something that she didn't actually do, and the power that the white people have over Boesman. But in making these statements, Lena also shows that she now has the power to be cruel to him as well, because the possibility of what she is describing terrifies him. Lena gives this monologue to remind Boesman of his malice, and to demonstrate that she can take on the same malice towards him. This rapid reversal of the power dynamic between Boesman and Lena shows just how fragile and fluid the sense of control that they each have over themselves (and each other) is.

LENA: […] What's your big word? Freedom! Tonight it's Freedom for Lena. Whiteman gave you yours this morning, but you lost it. Must I tell you how? When you put all that on your back. There wasn't room for it as well.

Related Characters: Lena (speaker), Old Man , Boesman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

Once Boesman starts to pack up his and Lena's things, he demands that she pack as well, and walk to another town to put distance between themselves and the old man's body. For the first time, Lena refuses his orders. She recognizes in her words here that the mere act of loading up all of their things and walking to a new place is actually what prevents them from achieving freedom. The stagnation of being constantly reset, and forced over and over again to restart their lives, means that they can never focus on anything but the present moment—how they can survive the next few days, or even hours.

Instead, Lena wants to believe, or attempts to pursue, the idea that having nothing will actually make her freer. Alongside her refusal to go with Boesman, she aggressively throws all of their possessions at him so that she will be left with nothing. But in doing so, Lena recognizes the inescapable dilemma of her situation. She cannot continue to live carrying all her possessions on her back and head, but at the same time she cannot live without those possessions. This conundrum is Fugard's primary achievement, as he effectively illustrates the inescapable paradox of their lives.

LENA [*pause….she is loaded*]: Is that the way it was? How I got here?
BOESMAN: Yes.
LENA: Truly?
BOESMAN: Yes.
[*Pause.*]
LENA: It doesn't explain anything.
BOESMAN: I know.
LENA: Anyway, somebody saw a little bit. Dog and a dead man.

Related Characters: Boesman, Lena (speaker), Old Man

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 196-197

Explanation and Analysis

Ultimately, Lena decides to walk to another town with Boesman, despite her initial refusal to go with him. When she is loading up their possessions onto her back, Boesman finally tells her the correct order of the towns that they had visited, naming 14 separate walks they took. This exchange touches on several important themes that have been explored throughout the play. First, Boesman seems to have finally given up on his attempts to manipulate Lena, since before he had refused to tell her the correct order of the towns in order to maintain control. Now that they have realized that their torment does nothing to help each other, they have landed on a plane of equality. Yet there is a tragic aspect to the exchange, as well. Lena had been so desperate for this information, hoping that it would make some sense out of her past. But because it affords her no clarity on her life, it only emphasizes how meaningless those walks were.

Lastly, Lena reiterates her longing for someone to have witnessed her life, once again connecting the dog that followed her in Korsten and the old man, even though he has passed. Yet perhaps some inkling of hope lies in the fact that the audience has also been witness to their lives. Armed with that, they presumably have empathy for the characters, and are may be spurred to try and prevent or counteract the injustices that plague Boesman and Lena.

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.

ACT ONE

Boesman, a Coloured man, enters the empty stage. He is overburdened with old household items (a mattress, an apple box, some cooking utensils) and is dragging a piece of corrugated iron. He is barefoot and has old, faded clothing. Boesman chooses a spot and starts to set down his load. A few seconds later, Lena appears, following him. She is "similarly burdened" and carries a load on her head. She is wearing "one of those sad dresses that reduce the body to an angular, gaunt cipher of poverty."

Despite the lack of scenery, Fugard immediately situates the audience within the world of the two title characters. By establishing them as Coloured, or mixed-race, he places them within the racist system of apartheid. Additionally, he shows the oppression they face in a very visceral way, by depicting Boesman and Lena carrying all of their possessions as they enter.

Lena looks at Boesman and asks, "Here?" He spits. She sets down her bundle with "almost painful" relief and sits in exhaustion. Lena notices then that they are sitting in mud, and deduces that they must be in Swartkops. She sees a bird overhead and shakes her fist at it, yelling, "*Jou moer*! [You cunt!]"

By revealing that Lena doesn't know where she is, Fugard establishes Boesman's mental manipulation. By not telling Lena where they are going, she is forced to yield to his direction and walk idly behind him, wondering how much longer and how much farther.

Lena asks Boesman why he walked so quickly, monologuing about the difficult journey and the "rotten" state of the Swartkops mud. She acknowledges that each time they are forced to walk, it feels heavier and heavier. She recalls the morning, when "whiteman" had told them "*Vat jou goed en trek*! [Take your things and go!]"

The instigating scene of Boesman and Lena's walk is described here: because of apartheid, forced removals became common as Coloured people were "relocated" in order for white people to develop the land on which they had been living. These recurring forced removals force Boesman and Lena to continuously seek out an entirely new life in different towns.

Lena asks to have a *dop* (bit of wine). When she notes that Boesman has not responded and his hard stare, she tells him not to be angry at her—to blame the whiteman and his bulldozer. She recalls how happy Boesman was in the morning, asking the whiteman to destroy the **pondok** (shanty) and thanking him when he had done so. At the same time, the Coloured people were running around trying to save their things. Boesman had laughed at them all.

Later, Fugard reveals that Boesman's laughter is due to the fact that Boesman actually felt free once the bulldozer cleared the pondoks. *Yet, both here and when Boesman makes this confession, it demonstrates that apartheid's policies and the segregated status quo has been completely normalized for them. Instead of blaming white people for their circumstance, Boesman becomes complicit in the system by thanking them.*

Boesman finally responds, telling Lena that the next time they are forced to walk, he will keep walking until she's too tired to talk. She counters that that almost happened on this walk. He notes that as soon as she put down her bundle, she started her "rubbish" and "nonsense." Lena protests, saying that she hasn't said anything untrue. All she has said is that she's tired, and that Boesman was happy this morning.

Boesman's lack of response up until this point (only Lena has spoken in a monologue spanning several pages) becomes another form of manipulation, as she later says that if he continues to refuse to talk to her, she will go mad. She is desperate for connection, and Boesman establishes that he has no desire to provide that connection.

Boesman says "aggressively" that he's "always happy," which prompts Lena to say that when she wants to cry, he always wants to laugh instead. Boesman asks her why she was crying this morning, because "the whiteman pushed over a rotten old **pondok**?" He says that the whiteman did them a favor by pushing it over, and so he laughed. He adds that he can still laugh at her, because she's "a big joke."

Laughter becomes another key aspect of Boesman's torment. He doesn't laugh out of pleasure or joy; instead, he laughs in order to make Lena feel even worse about her misfortune and sadness. Additionally, by saying that the "whiteman" did them a favor by destroying their home, Boesman once again reveals how he has been completely conditioned by the system of apartheid.

Lena again protests, wondering whether crying makes her a "big joke." She argues that it was too early in the morning to have to load up her entire life and walk—and that she wasted an entire day of her life walking. Boesman tells Lena that if her legs worked as hard as her tongue, they would have arrived a long time ago.

Boesman and Lena's "walks" (an understatement for the day-long trek to a new town) become the basis for their intense feelings of oppression and dehumanization. As they constantly have to load up their things onto their backs and waste their lives finding a new place to exist, Lena reveals later that she feels like she has very little to show for it.

Lena argues that she was tired and wanted to rest, but Boesman reminds her that she was looking for a **dog** that had grown fond of her, and was constantly looking backwards.

The dog becomes a crucial way in which Fugard reveals Lena's desire for connection. Later, when speaking to the old man, she tells him how nice it was to have someone watching her and caring about her.

Lena tells Boesman that he couldn't have been in much of a hurry because he was lost, going in circles several times and dragging her along with him. She confesses that her life feels old today, like "something that's been used too long. The old pot that leaks, the blanket that can't even keep the fleas warm."

Lena's description of her life here becomes an early bit of foreshadowing for Boesman's later observation that he and Lena are merely "whiteman's rubbish." Because of the forced removals, they can only build their lives from garbage that they pick up along the way—and, therefore, they start to feel like garbage as well.

Lena also tells Boesman that she was still sore where he hit her for breaking three empty bottles, for which they could have gotten 10 cents in exchange. Two white children came and watched her count the bruises, and she asked if their mother needed a "girl" to work in the house. Boesman laughs at her. Lena, wounded, tells him that the children also laughed and said that they didn't want her.

In this story, Lena establishes both Boesman's violence towards her, and her inability to escape that violence. What is also ironic is that she views the position of servitude as a way of being saved, even though the job perpetuates the system of oppression that she faces.

Boesman laughs again and asks, sarcastically, "You think I want you?" Lena answers earnestly that he had loaded up his bundle, said "Come!" and continued to walk. She recalls that he didn't even look at her, and so she felt she had to follow him, not even knowing where they were going. But once she felt the mud between her toes, she knew it was Swartkops—they would be digging for "mudprawns and worms."

Being seen becomes an important desire for Lena and a key way in which she feels connected to others. It is important, then, that Boesman refuses to give her that vital connection and instead simply expects her to follow him wherever he goes.


Lena wonders why Boesman brought her to Swartkops, recalling that the Swartkops has never been a good place for them. She asks if he remembers when the river's water came up so high that they woke up with all their things floating down to a nearby bridge. She laughs at him, saying that he had been so afraid that he ran the wrong way.

Lena's tone is generally joyful as she remembers this funny memory fondly, but her humor is what makes the actual details of the story all the more tragic. They are so destitute that sometimes they are forced to set up camp in a place where the camp could wash away at any moment.

Lena asks Boesman when the last time they were at the Swartkops was. He deliberately ignores her question. She asks him to answer her, saying that it's a "lonely place" and if she has no one to talk to, she'll go mad. Boesman says that she's been talking to herself since the first time they had to trek from Coega to Veeplaas. She had cried, and then she had talked the rest of the way—so he stopped listening to her "noise."

Boesman continues to torment Lena by not responding to her. This, again, serves as a way of disorienting her and making her more reliant on him so that he can maintain has some kind of control over her, and therefore feel empowered amidst their downtrodden circumstances. He also continues to make her feel more and more lonely with his silence.


Lena continues to ask Boesman questions: when they came to Swartkops last, why didn't they go to Veeplaas so they could be around other people, and what's the matter with him? Boesman continues to ignore her, starting to build a shelter from the various materials he has picked up along their walk.

Lena reveals her deep desire for human connection again, as she would have preferred to find a place in which she could have spoken to other people, rather than continuing to talk to nonresponsive Boesman.

Lena tries to reconstruct their path to and from the Swartkops the previous time they had been there, believing they came from Redhouse to the Swartkops, and then went to Korsten. Boesman questions whether this was the correct order but refuses to tell her the real answer. He walks away in search of more materials with which to build the shelter.

Boesman manipulates Lena by making her question her reality, and refusing to grant her with something to ground her life. Without knowing the order of their journey, Lena feels that her memories mix and jumble, unable to make sense of the past.

Lena starts to build a fire. She chatters to herself, saying that the Swartkops is "a thin slice" with no jam or condensed milk on it. She then wonders if they could buy some condensed milk if they dig for lots of prawns.

Lena's statement that her life is a thin slice with no jam or condensed milk is metaphorical, but it is also literal as she reveals the depravity in which they live. They are forced to dig for worms and sell them in order to buy even a simple piece of bread.

Lena remembers that they came to Swartkops after Redhouse, as she had thought. A farmer found their camp and chased them away with a gun, and Boesman "went down that road like a rabbit." She laughs, recalling Boesman saying, "*Moenie skiet, baas*! [Don't shoot, master!]" And when she found him, he was angry they had lost all of their things again.

Lena's laughter at this incident suggests how normalized the apartheid system has become, and how Boesman and Lena do not question their place in that system. Instead of being angry at the white farmer that chased them away, Boesman is merely angry that they have to restart their lives once more. They have no recourse against this system because it purposefully disenfranchises them.

Lena starts to look around her, reconstructing her path from her memory of sun's positions. It takes concerted effort, but she concludes that her path took her from Redhouse, to Swartkops, to Veeplaas, to Korsten (where she met the **dog**), and then, finally, back to Swartkops. She is thrilled with herself for figuring it out, and starts to hum happily to herself while stoking the fire.

Lena is proud of her ability to reconstruct her past because it proves to herself that she can overcome Boesman's mental manipulation. It also helps her to recognize that she has an account of her life. In contrast to Boesman's later statement, "Now is the only time in your life," she feels that her life has depth and worth beyond the present moment.

When Boesman returns, he is suspicious of Lena's good humor. She continues to hum, and he asks her to show him the wine to assure him she hasn't been drinking. He takes out the bottles and sees that they are full. Lena starts to dance and makes up a song about condensed milk. Boesman warns her that she's going to get "a bloody good *klap*."

Boesman's quick temper reveals itself again here. Boesman doesn't want Lena to be happy, and uses both threats of violence and mental torment to try to rein in her happiness. What Boesman doesn't realize is that his own anger and powerlessness cannot be remedied by asserting control over Lena.

Lena doesn't let these threats phase her. She tells Boesman that she figured out their path and rattles off the towns for him. Boesman shakes his head and laughs at her. Lena grows uncertain, asking if it's wrong. Boesman refuses to answer her, but as she begs he gives her a different sequence of towns. She grows even more confused when Boesman brings up towns they've been that she hasn't named, like Bethelsdorp, Missionvale, and Kleinskool. Lena "moves around helplessly, trying to orientate herself."

Boesman continues to purposefully disorient Lena, both in her current physical location and in her memory. She becomes, as Fugard notes, completely helpless to his mind games as he makes her question her own reality.

Lena asks Boesman to help her. Instead, he performs "a grotesque pantomime of a search," calling out for Lena as though she is lost somewhere else. Lena looks at him "with hatred" as he laughs, calling him a "pig." Boesman tells her that one day, she's going to be so confused she'll ask him who she is.

Boesman's cruelty is on full display here, as he taunts Lena and humiliates her by pointing out the confusion that he caused. Laughter becomes a key part of their mutual cruelty, as they often laugh maliciously in order to torment each other.

Lena tells Boesman that she wants to be someone else. She wants to be called Mary; that way she can leave and live another life. Boesman tells her she'd get a "bloody good hiding." When Lena protests that she'd go to the police, Boesman reminds her that she tried that once and the police did nothing. Lena tells Boesman that one day he'll beat her too much and get the death penalty as a result. Boesman informs Lena that he would never get the death penalty for killing her.

Boesman and Lena's exchange reveals how apartheid oppresses Lena not only because of her race, but also because of her gender. Because she is a Coloured woman, it is implied that the white police are completely indifferent to her abuse at the hands of Boesman. Thus, Lena is even more disenfranchised than Boesman, because she has no feasible way out of (or even legal recourse for) Boesman's abuse.

Boesman finishes the **pondok** and looks at it, calling it "useless" and "another *vrot ou huisie vir die vrot mens* [rotten old house for the rotten people]." He tells Lena that it's all she'll ever know. Lena longs for the time when they worked in Veeplaas for a man who had a room in his backyard for them, a "real room, with a door and all that."

The "rotten" nature of the pondok *(the fact that it is made up entirely of trash)—takes on a metaphorical meaning as Boesman and Lena lose their own feelings of self-worth over the course of the play. This culminates in Boesman's conclusion towards the end that they are "whiteman's rubbish."*

Boesman tells Lena to forget the past, saying, "Now is the only time in your life." Lena grows frustrated, replying, "I wasn't born today. I want my life. Where's it?" Boesman responds that her life is in the mud. Lena is disgusted by the prospect of sleeping in the **pondok**, especially with Boesman, because he never speaks to her. She says, "sometimes loneliness is two," and that she's sick of Boesman.

Lena recognizes the many ways in which her life has stalled: she is unable to realistically understand the past, nor is she able to plan for the future. She is perpetually caught in the most immediate moment. Her relationship with Boesman has also stalled, if not deteriorated, and she suffers without a connection to him.

Boesman dares her to leave and walk somewhere else. They bicker back and forth, until Lena decides to go. She takes a few steps away from the fire, and Boesman points out the different paths she could take—finally giving her the correct directions for the towns around them, proving that he knows his way.

Boesman asserts his power over Lena by proving that he has knowledge she doesn't. As Lena considers whether to leave, she understands that she is caught between two desires: the desire to progress, and her reliance on Boesman to stay alive.

Lena stands still, pointing that there's an old man out there in the darkness. Boesman is suspicious, but Lena waves and tries to call him over. Boesman moves toward her violently to get her to stop, but she moves away quickly and continues to call. She tells Boesman, "Sit in the dark and talk to myself because you don't hear me anymore? No, Boesman! I want him!"

Lena feels so desperate for other human connection that she is willing to risk more abuse from Boesman in order to call him over. It is also important to note that she is perhaps even more excited to talk to a stranger than to talk to Boesman, which is one of the reasons that he becomes jealous of the old man.

An old man arrives out of the dark, whom Boesman and Lena immediately realize is a "*kaffer*." The old man greets them in Xhosa, and Lena returns a greeting, introducing herself. Boesman makes fun of her for being so formal: "Shake his hand! Fancy *Hotnot* like you." The old man starts to murmur in Xhosa, but Lena doesn't understand him. She asks if he knows any English or Afrikaans. Lena asks Boesman how to say "sit and rest" in his language. "*Hamba*! [Go!]" Boesman replies.

*Boesman torments Lena for her desire to connect with the old man, particularly when Boesman realizes that he is Xhosa ("*kaffer*" is an extremely vulgar racial slur for black South Africans). As Boesman and Lena interact with the old man, Fugard introduces another aspect of apartheid. Not only was it a racist system in which white people were given much greater status over the Coloured South Africans and black South Africans, but Coloured South Africans were given enough status over black South Africans in order to pit these two subjugated groups against each other.*

Lena scolds Boesman and invites the old man to sit. When he doesn't understand, she gets angry and says, "You deaf? Sit!" He does so. Lena starts to get water for him, but Boesman prevents her from giving any to the old man. Lena tries to tell the old man about her and Boesman, and how they got kicked out of Korsten that morning. She tries to commiserate with him, saying, "it's a hard life for us brown people." Boesman counters that the old man isn't "brown people, he's black people."

Boesman and Lena continue to display their racism in speaking aggressively toward the old man and calling him "black people." Thus, Fugard demonstrates why it was so hard for Coloured and black South Africans to unite under the cause of getting rid of apartheid: the Coloured South Africans felt superior to the black South Africans.

Lena asks if the old man is sick. He starts to murmur in Xhosa, but she berates him, saying "Stop that baboon language!" She turns away from him in frustration. Boesman makes fun of her, asking why she's given up so quickly. Then he warns her that if she brings another "*kaffer*" into their camp and she'll do the rest of her talking with a "thick mouth."

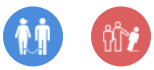
Even though Lena eventually achieves some connection with the old man, here she invokes a racist stereotype of comparing black people to monkeys. This initial reaction to and treatment of him demonstrates that Lena still bears the same racism that upholds apartheid and oppresses her as a mixed-race woman, and connecting with the old man (who has a lower social status than her) is certainly not the norm.

Lena sits on the ground and asks Boesman desperately for a *dop*. He continues to taunt her, and she begs him angrily. When he doesn't react, she says that she's going to take the wine for herself. When she moves toward where the bottles are hidden, Boesman grabs a stick to beat her. Lena hides behind the old man, telling him, "Watch now, *Outa*. You be witness for me. Watch! He's going to kill me."

Lena demonstrates part of the reason that her life is so stagnant and her memories are so muddled: she uses wine to anesthetize some of the pain of the life she leads. Boesman uses this coping mechanism to control her, dictating when she gets to drink and when she doesn't. This serves as another means for him to retain power over her.

Boesman continues to threaten Lena, saying that if she touches the wine he'll beat her again. He storms off. As he goes, Lena dares him to beat her, saying that there's no white *baases* (masters) there to laugh at him. Lena shows the old man her bruises, where Boesman had beaten her that morning for dropping the empty bottles. But, she explains, when the white *baases* started laughing at him, he stopped, because "when other people laugh he gets ashamed."

Lena's explanation demonstrates another way in which laughter is used as power. The white masters watching Boesman beat Lena laugh at him, which humiliates him. He thus loses the artificial sense of power that he gained in beating Lena, because he recognizes that he is still on a very low rung in society despite his domination of her.



Lena looks at the old man for a reaction, but he is only looking down. She instructs him to look at her; when he does so, she says, "My name is Lena." He repeats her name back to her. Lena is thrilled. Lena immediately grabs a bottle of water and offers some to him. The old man continues to murmur in Xhosa as he drinks. Lena repeats some of his language as if she understands it.

Fugard starts to develop Lena's growing attachment to the old man. She becomes particularly excited when he says her name, because this is a way of acknowledging someone's existence and validating their personhood. Lena is moved to realize that she is not fully invisible: someone else, besides Boesman, can see her and alleviate her loneliness, even superficially.

Lena then stops the old man and launches into the story of the **dog**: one evening when she and Boesman were counting their bottles, the dog had come and watched Boesman and Lena in their camp. She left some bread the dog, and he followed her all the way to Korsten. She continued to throw him food when Boesman wasn't looking.

The dog serves as a symbol for the connection that Lena desperately needs. The dog is something she cares for, and which cares for her in return. While this kind of relationship is something that perhaps she and Boesman once had, it has deteriorated to the point where she now settles for that kind of connection from a dog rather than a person.

Lena was happy with the **dog**, whereas Boesman threw stones every time he saw it. However, then the dog would come in every night when Boesman was asleep, watching Lena make the fire, cook, or count bottles. She tells the old man that she called the dog "*Hond*." She confesses, "I'll tell you what it is. Eyes, *Outa*. Another pair of eyes. Something to see you." But then, that morning, she lost the dog when they had to pack up their things.

The idea of being witnessed and heard is vital to Lena, and her story also indicates how jealous Boesman becomes when she is able to find a connection with someone or something else. This foreshadows Boesman's eventual treatment of the old man when Lena starts to prefer him.

Lena continues to chatter on, offering the old man more water. She explains about the empty bottles, and how they could sell them at the bottle exchange. But this morning, they had no time to pack, and she dropped the bag and broke three bottles. Lena tells the old man how nice he is, and says that he is "one of the good ones" for listening to her. She stops herself from calling him a "*kaffer*" out of habit.

The old man starts to take the place of Lena's dog—a connection that she makes more explicit at the end of the first act. But here, Lena also shows that treating black South Africans with respect is far from the norm, as she distinguishes him from other presumably "bad" South Africans and has a hard time stopping herself from calling him a racial slur.

The old man starts to murmur in Xhosa again. He makes a move to stand up, but Lena forces him to stay seated. Lena continues talking while preparing supper (which consists of bread and tea), telling the old man that her eyes have gotten worse over time—she can no longer see the mountains in the distance as she walks. But now, she says, Boesman's back gets in the way of looking at them. She describes how they used to walk side by side together, and he would let her sing.

Lena is so desperate to keep the old man beside her that she starts to mistreat him—perhaps a parallel to her own relationship with Boesman, where he is the abuser trying to maintain ownership over her. She highlights how her and Boesman's relationship has changed: where once they used to be on equal footing, he has become completely controlling of her.

Lena continues, explaining that she and Boesman haven't joked or sung in a long time. She tells the old man that it feels like she is "crooked" from carrying so much weight when she walks, even though it's only a few things. She says, "Once you've put your life on your head and walked you never get light again." She also confesses that she's constantly having a hard time remembering where she's been and when.

Lena explains the feelings of stagnation she faces as an oppressed person—the burden of having to take her entire life with her when they are forcibly removed from a town grows heavier and heavier each time. This prevents Boesman and Lena not only from making a home for themselves, but also from acquiring anything more than what they can carry.

The old man murmurs, and Lena pretends that he's asked her a question. She tells him that she and Boesman had one child who lived for six months, while the others were born dead. She explains that during one of her pregnancies, she felt a lot of pain and crawled under a cart to give birth. Boesman was too far away to call, and she didn't have any rags. She only had a donkey there, watching her. That, she explains, is pain.

Lena explains the additional hardship that she has faced in her life. Though Fugard doesn't express this explicitly, it is implied that Boesman and Lena's inability to have a child together may be a result of the oppressive system in which they live, as they are denied the home, possessions, and sufficient access to food necessary to sustain a healthy pregnancy. This is also part of the reason that they feel both isolated and stagnant: they are further distanced by this loss, and they have very little hope of leaving a lasting legacy without a child.

Lena moves on, telling the old man, "My life is here tonight." The old man rises once more. Lena throws herself at him and forces him back onto his box, commanding him to "sit and look!" She promises him that she'll ask Boesman to give him a *dop*. She says to him, as she sees Boesman returning from the distance, that they shouldn't look happy, and should pretend they still don't like each other. She suggests that he should tell Boesman that he's going to buy wine for them the next day.

Lena's actions continue to demonstrate that her instinct is to abuse the old man as she violently forces him back onto the box, demanding connection from him. It again emphasizes that even though she is greatly discriminated against by the apartheid system, she (and the old man) both understand that she has greater status over him.

Boesman returns with a few more pieces of firewood and another piece for the **pondok**. Lena makes herself busy at the fire. Boesman sees the old man is still there and tells Lena to tell him to go. She says that he's a "good *kaffer*," and that he told her he's going to buy wine for them the next day—he has a garden job in Swartkops. Boesman says he doesn't have enough energy to "dig his own grave." Lena laughs too hard at his joke.

Lena continues to show her own racism, as even though she describes the old man as good, she can't help but use a racial slur when describing him. This exchange between her and Boesman also demonstrates how laughter has become so tainted with cruelty that he becomes immediately suspicious of it. Fugard demonstrates how rare genuine moments of joy between them are.

Boesman starts to become suspicious. When Lena asks to break the bread into three pieces, he says only two pieces. Lena starts to hum as she works at the fire, but then abruptly stops herself. Boesman demands that the old man leave. Lena begs Boesman to let the old man stay as a favor to her, and tells him that he can have her bottle of wine. Boesman is shocked that she wants "to sit sober in this world." Lena is adamant that she wants the old man to stay.

As Lena becomes more desperate for connection, Boesman torments her more and more by trying to remove that connection as he grows jealous of it. Boesman also hints at another reason their lives have become stagnant: Lena's attempts to anesthetize herself from the world with alcohol have contributed to her inability to remember the past clearly.

Boesman tells Lena that she's gone crazy. He opens a bottle of wine and passes it under her nose, then starts to drink. The old man once again tries to leave, but Lena restrains him, telling him that they can all lie together in the **pondok** for warmth. Boesman, overhearing this, is furious, and says that he won't allow the old man's fleas into the pondok.

Boesman's torment grows more and more deliberate, as he entices Lena with the wine and continues to threaten to take away her connection to the old man, thus maintaining the sense of power and control that he holds over her.

Boesman gives Lena a choice: sleep inside the **pondok** with him, or sit by the fire with the old man. Lena doesn't answer, but takes one of the blankets and spreads it over the old man, saying "we'll need it." Boesman immediately changes his mind and says that the old man must go. Lena turns to Boesman with "unexpected ferocity" and yells at him, "Be careful!" Boesman backs down, saying she can sleep outside and "die of cold with a *kaffer*." Lena responds, "I'd sit out there with a **dog** tonight!"

This constitutes a turning point for Lena's dynamic with Boesman. In threatening him to "be careful," she shifts the dynamics of power, knowing that in choosing the old man she is making Boesman both jealous and insecure. She also makes the connection between the old man and the dog that watched her in Korsten more explicit, by saying that she would rather sit outside with a dog (or with the old man) than sleep inside with Boesman.

Lena leaves briefly to find more firewood. While she is gone, Boesman walks over to the old man, calls him "*Hond*" and grabs the blanket from him. He shoves the old man onto the ground. When he hears Lena returning, however, he says, "If you tell her, I'll kill you" and returns the blanket to the old man as the old man crawls back to his seat.

Fugard reveals yet another shift of power here. Boesman is violent toward the old man and calls him a dog, but he starts to reveal his insecurities as he doesn't want Lena to know that he has been violent towards the man. Whereas before, he would be openly violent with her, now he cares deeply about what she might think because his sense of control over her is slipping.

Lena returns, having found nothing. She takes the bread and splits it in two, giving half to Boesman. She gives Boesman one mug of tea and returns to the fire with her own mug and bread. She tells the old man to sit close to the fire and passes him the tea and bread. Boesman watches and drinks wine in the **pondok**, his bread and tea "untouched."

At the end of the first act, Fugard foreshadows how Boesman will grow more and more tormented by Lena as she connects with the old man. In the second act, Boesman's drinking will propel him to a kind of mental deterioration that begins here.

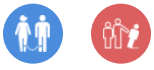
ACT TWO

An hour later, Lena and the old man are still sitting by the fire together under the blanket. Boesman is drinking his second bottle of wine, but his bread and tea are still untouched. Boesman's "characteristic violence is now heightened by a wild excitability."

Throughout this scene, Boesman grows both more violent in disposition and also becomes crueler, as the alcohol makes him even less inhibited than he was already.

Boesman demands that Lena reenact what she had said that morning: "Please, my *baasie*," begging the white men to let them pack their things. She refuses at first, but at his insistence she begs. He demands she repeat it again and again, saying that "whiteman won't feel sorry" for her. He instructs her how to beg properly, getting on the ground and acting like a **dog**. He extends the pantomime to a "crude imitation of the scene that morning" in which Lena had been begging and trying to pack.

Boesman's insistence on making fun of Lena and the other Coloured people they had been living with demonstrates how much the system of apartheid has been normalized for him. Rather than making fun of or trying to implicate the white people in the story for their tyranny, Boesman turns instead to cruelty towards Lena and his own people—perhaps because it gives him a sense of power and superiority over the others.



Lena is disgusted by his actions, and says that no one felt sorry for them. Boesman describes what he saw: all of the people, "crawling out of [their] holes. Like worms." He laughs hideously at Lena, then continues his story. The bulldozers smashed everything in one sweep: "slum clearance." Boesman laughs again, recalling how they all just stood and watched.

Boesman continues to display his own racism and hatred for his own people as he calls them "worms." He even laughed as all of their things were destroyed by the white men—even though this destruction is so closely linked to his own oppression and suffering.

Lena turns to the old man, telling him that Boesman then helped the white men build a bonfire to burn what was left of the **pondoks**. Boesman tells Lena that she should have helped as well: they were burning their sad stories. When the fire burned out, he went back to the place where they "had crawled in and out like baboons, where [they] used to sit with them and eat, [their] head[s] between [their] knees."

Lena explains that Boesman directly aided in their oppression by helping the white men burn what was left of their homes. This becomes a metaphor for the broader idea of apartheid because the Coloured people are more likely to side with and play into the racism of apartheid than to try and work with the black South Africans to overturn it.

When Boesman went back, he explains, there was room to "stand straight." This, he says, was freedom. That is why he had laughed and was happy—he had found freedom. When they picked up their things, he didn't want to go to any of their old places: "the world was open this morning." Lena sarcastically comments that that's why they were lost that morning: they were looking for Boesman's freedom.

Boesman is able to find his freedom when an oppressive system unties him from the possessions (made up of garbage) that he came to rely upon. But this is a false sense of freedom, as eventually he recognizes that not being weighed down by the burden of one's possessions is not the same as being free.

Boesman yells at Lena that he'd had his freedom, but when Lena suggested all the "old rubbish dumps" he felt more and more trapped. He didn't know where else he could go. He says that when he saw the piece of iron on the side of the road, he should have passed it and kept walking. But, he says, "the sun was low. Our days are too short." He shouts violently, saying that it's no use to build another **pondok**—the *baas* will simply push this one over tomorrow.

Boesman realizes very quickly that his sense of freedom was false. Even though the world was open, as he describes, he has no actual way of escaping the apartheid system that had caused his oppression in the first place. His comment that their days are too short is another reference to how they feel like so many days of their lives have been wasted in being forced out of their homes again and again.

Boesman has one more revelation: that they are "whiteman's rubbish." Boesman says, "He throws it away, we pick it up. Wear it. Sleep in it. Eat it. We're made of it now." He tells Lena that the old man is rubbish, too—and yet Lena picked him up and gave him a blanket and food.

Boesman reveals the toll of building one's life out of garbage. As Boesman articulates here, it makes him and Lena feel as though they themselves are "rubbish"—that their lives aren't worth anything.

Boesman turns on them, wondering what Lena's use for the old man is, considering that she paid a bottle of wine to keep him there. He asks if the old man is "keeping [her] warm" and if they're "up to something under that blanket." Lena says no. Boesman continues to wonder why she wants him there, saying she's gone mad and laughing with "violent bewilderment."

Boesman's bewilderment underscores several things: both his jealousy at the connection Lena has with the old man, and his racism in calling the old man "rubbish." Boesman uses this connection between them as a tool for cruelty, as his implication that they might have a sexual relationship is both ridiculous and spiteful.

Lena lets Boesman laugh, then slowly asks him why he can't leave them alone. She surmises that he's jealous that she turned down his **pondok** and the bottle of wine. She explains that the pondok really represents a coffin: her life is buried in the pondoks, and she refuses to get into them anymore.

Lena makes the connection between the trash in which they are forced to live and how this makes their lives feel wasted. Without anything around them to truly call their own, or any feeling of permanence, they are left feeling as though they are useless.

Lena sees that the old man has started to close his eyes, and she shakes him and tells him not to go to sleep yet. She turns to Boesman and that says if he doesn't want his bread and tea, to pass it to them. Boesman turns over the mug of tea onto the ground and hurls the bread into the darkness. He disappears into the **pondok** with his bottle of wine, saying that he's kicking her out, and even if she changes her mind she can't come in.

Boesman again exhibits cruelty by preventing Lena and the old man from getting additional nourishment simply because he has the power to deprive them of it. But, in choosing not to sleep with Boesman, Lena has started to flip the power dynamic between them.

Lena moves closer to the old man for warmth, saying "*Hotnot* and a *Kaffer* got no time for apartheid on a night like this." She thinks about the next day, when they'll have to dig for worms to sell—that will make them nice and warm, she says. She adds that a good dance can make them warm as well.

Lena demonstrates once more how treating the old man with respect (even simply getting near him) is not the norm, and she attributes this racism quite explicitly to apartheid, as there were many policies in place that dictated that Coloured and black South Africans were meant to be segregated.

Lena starts to sing and clap, doing a dance to a song in Afrikaans before making up lyrics like "Kleinskool got prickly pears / Missionvale's got salt / Lena's got a Boesman / So it's always Lena's fault." Lena sits next to the old man once more, giddy that she's now feeling much warmer. They huddle under the blanket again as Boesman watches them.

Lena's happiness is driven not only by her ability to get warm, but also by the fact that someone will listen to her singing. But, as she notes earlier, whenever she is happy, Boesman immediately tries to quash that happiness in order to maintain his control over her.


At that moment, Boesman explains very deliberately that he was the one who dropped the bag with the empty bottles, then blamed Lena and hit her for it. Lena, stunned, continues the story: Boesman hit her until the white men laughed. He then took off his hat and smiled, saying "Jus' a *ou meid* [old maid], *baas*." Lena looks at her body, covered in bruises. She asks him why he's told her, before realizing that he just wants to hurt her.

This revelation constitutes the culmination of Boesman's cruelty towards Lena. He is so manipulative that he completely altered her sense of reality, making her think that she made a mistake and then beating her for the mistake that he had made instead. This is the ultimate exercise of power and a way for him to exert that power over her in revealing what he had done.

Lena asks Boesman why he hits her. He tries to understand why, looking at his hands, smashing one into the palm of the other. She guesses, "Maybe you just want to touch me, to know I'm here." She tells him to hit himself instead: that this is her life, and he should hit his own. Boesman asks Lena to show him any indication of his life. The **pondok** has been pushed over, the road has no trace of them, the wine bottles are empty. He grows desperate, wondering where his life has gone.

Just as Lena questioned earlier in the play how one would document her life, Boesman here asks the same questions. As he is desperately looking for evidence of his life, he finds that they have made no tangible mark on the world because of the oppression that they have faced and the tragic losses of their children.

Lena looks at the old man, asking if he's heard what Boesman has said, that he hits her just because he can. She sees his eyes closed, and shakes him violently, pleading with him to listen to what Boesman is saying. Boesman tells her that she's gone crazy, because the old man can't understand her—she's only been talking to herself. She begs him to say in Xhosa that Boesman hit her for nothing. When he refuses, she asks Boesman to show the old man by hitting her.

Lena again demonstrates just how desperate she is for acknowledgement and for someone to be sympathetic to her situation, even as Boesman reveals the fallacy of her connection with the old man. He cannot understand what Lena and Boesman have been saying, and so Lena goes to such extremes as to want to be beaten in order to have the old man understand her abuse.

Boesman calls Lena "*Sies* [shit]" in disgust. Lena is taken aback and sits beside the old man. Boesman explains why he calls her this: all she's done tonight is cried for wine and begged him to hit her. Boesman then concludes that they can never have freedom, and that their life has no meaning, particularly after Boesman had to bury their dead child. He says that when they are dead, they will have left no trace. Boesman insists that the old man *not* see them, telling him, "Don't look!"

Boesman here sums up the hardship that he and Lena have had to face, oppressed by a system that deprives them of possessions and provides them only with degradation, humiliation, and loss. Boesman's insistence that the old man look away from them is because he wants to continue to cut off the old man and Lena's connection, but Fugard also implies that Boesman is ashamed of his own social standing and degradation, despite the fact that he has no way of changing it.

Lena realizes that the old man has died, saying that he was holding her hand and then let go of it. Boesman gets nervous, sitting down in front of the **pondok** and away from the body. Lena sets the body down on the ground, upset that she never learned the old man's real name. She mourns over the body, speaking about the importance of holding onto the things in one's life.

The old man's death cuts off Lena from the connection she gained, but his presence still allows her to maintain a shifted power dynamic. While Boesman grows increasingly nervous about the dead body, Lena becomes more and more assured of wanting her life to have meaning. Perhaps this is in response to the old man's death as well, because there is no one who can truly acknowledge the life he led.

Boesman tells Lena that she needs to get rid of the old man's body because dead men are dangerous. Lena comments that the old man is a "real piece of rubbish now," and asks how to get rid of it. Boesman tells her that it's her problem—the body has nothing to do with him. Boesman grows more and more agitated as she doesn't respond, saying that there's going to be trouble when people start asking questions about the body. Lena wonders why white people don't ask questions when black people alive.

This is one of the first instances in which Lena starts to deliberately take control of the power dynamic between them. Just as Boesman didn't respond to her at the beginning of the play, here Lena's disregard for what Boesman is saying starts to make him more and more disconcerted. Lena's statement also raises questions about the apartheid system, as she suggests that white people only care about black South Africans when they are dead.

Boesman tells Lena that she has to be a witness for him: to tell anyone who asks that Boesman didn't kill the old man. Lena toys with Boesman: when he starts telling the story of what happens, she gives sarcastic and unhelpful answers to the police's hypothetical questions, enraging him. He grabs a bottle and moves toward her, but stops himself when he sees that Lena has not made any move away from him. Lena tells him that he has to be careful now, because there's already one body.

Lena takes the power completely in this moment. Now that Boesman needs something from her (a witness statement), Lena is able to control her situation in a way that upsets Boesman. Prompting the thought that killing her will make him look even more guilty for the old man's murder, Boesman even seems unable to beat her.

Boesman is very frightened. Lena tells him that he is "whiteman's dog, his tail between his legs because the *baas* is going to be cross." Then Lena suggests that maybe the old man is not dead. Boesman grows more and more uncertain, "tormented" by the possibility that he might still be alive.

Just as Boesman used mental manipulation to gain control over Lena, Lena now does the same to Boesman. By suggesting that the old man might not be dead (even though she knows that he is) she is providing him with false hope that she will only use to hurt him later.

Egged on by Lena, Boesman nudges the body with his foot to try to wake him up. The nudge becomes a kick, his violence building up. When it becomes clear that the old man is really dead, Boesman is so "rigid with anger and hatred" that he pounces on the body and beats it violently. Lena coolly comments that she always knew what his beating felt like, but now she knows what it looks like.

Lena is able to manipulate Boesman completely now, causing him to beat the body violently. This will have even greater implications when Lena argues that the bruises will make Boesman look even more guilty, but it also shows how Boesman's instincts are simply to be violent because it is the only means he has to control those around him.

Lena tells Boesman that he shouldn't have hit the old man, since now anyone who comes will see that the old man and Lena both have bruises, and Boesman is sitting nearby with raw knuckles. She says that they won't even ask questions—just take him away for something he didn't do. "That's the worst," she says, "when you didn't do it."

Lena continues to flip the torment on its head here. Just as Boesman beat Lena for something that she didn't do in order to prove his power, so too will the white people punish Boesman for something he didn't do, simply because they have the power to do so.

Boesman starts to panic, collecting their things as fast as he can. He tells Lena that they are leaving. Lena refuses to go. She says she's had enough. Boesman pauses in shock. She notes that his hands are balled into fists again—that when Boesman doesn't understand something, he hits it, like he hit the old man.

Lena's statement that when Boesman doesn't understand something, he hits it, can be seen as a metaphor for how he understands his life under apartheid. He doesn't understand why he doesn't have control over his life, and so he reacts in the only way he can to regain some of that control: with violence.

Boesman continues to pack urgently. Lena refuses to join him again, saying that she's done running, and that when he leaves she'll crawl into the **pondok** and sleep. He smashes the pondok in response. Lena starts to laugh, and passes him everything she can find. She tells him that he couldn't have freedom because he couldn't fit it on his back alongside all of their possessions.

Lena now also uses laughter as a form of mental torment: while Boesman is terrified of what is happening around him, Lena is mocking him derisively. She also makes an incisive comment about why it is impossible for them to truly find freedom: they are so weighed down by the oppression of constantly having to reset their lives that they have no means to gain freedom.

When Lena sees Boesman awkwardly loaded with all of their belongings, she laughs at him. She tells him which way to walk to Veeplaas. She yells at him, saying goodbye and telling him to go. Boesman stands motionless.

Just as Lena threatened to walk away from Boesman earlier but could not, here Boesman tries to walk away from Lena. But the sense of stagnation hinders them each time, as they both recognize that they could not survive without the other. For all of the venom in their relationship, they need each other to feel like their lives have meaning.

Lena turns to the old man's body, asking why he had to die so soon—there were things that she didn't get to tell him. "Can't throw yourself away before your time," she says. Lena looks back up at Boesman slowly and tells him to give her the bucket on his head. She says, "might be whiteman's rubbish, but I can still use it."

Lena acknowledges here that even though they live lives that might seem meaningless, and surround themselves by things that other people consider trash, life is still worth living. It is a form of rebellion—perhaps even a hope for the future that someday they will be able to build a truly new life from the things they have.

Lena tells Boesman that they'd better be going far—to Coegakop, where they began their walks. Boesman then finally tells her the order of the towns they've been to since Coegakop, naming 14 separate walks they've done. He notes where their child died. Lena says, "it doesn't explain anything."

Lena's statement here is perhaps the most tragic of the play. For all the time she spent trying to reconstruct her past, being able to name the order of the towns doesn't actually amount to anything. Even while she might have a new sense of determination to live, it doesn't change the fact that so much of her past has been wasted. But, it does demonstrate how Boesman no longer feels the need to manipulate her, potentially signifying an end to the ongoing power struggle between them.

Lena acknowledges that at least "somebody saw a little bit. **Dog** and a dead man." Lena then declares that she's alive, and that there are still "daylights" left in her. She tells Boesman that the next time he wants to kill her, he should really do it. She is then ready to go, and as they start to walk, she says, "But not so fast." They turn and walk off into the darkness, leaving the old man's body there on the ground.

In the play's final moments, Fugard ties in a few of its key themes: Lena once again demonstrates her desire for connection, and to have her life witnessed. Fugard also illustrates how their relationship has changed: even if Boesman might still be violent, she puts his violence on her own terms and is now the one in control of their pace. And as they walk off into the darkness, Fugard implies a call to action, asking the white South Africans in his intended audience to address how the system of apartheid strips people of the ability to live a meaningful life, even if it doesn't strip them of their determination and hope to do so.

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