

Pink

By Judith Thompson, 1986

Judith Thompson (1954 -) is a prominent Canadian playwright who in minimal space can convey a very complex personal and political situation. Thompson says, *I believe that the voice is a door to not only the soul of an individual, but the soul of a nation, and within that, the soul of a culture, a class, a community, a gender.* In 'Pink' we hear a child's voice through which the brutality of South Africa's apartheid system comes into focus alongside with a loving adult-child relationship.



resi'dential *adj* bebo-
elses-
over'turn *vb* omvælte,
omstyrte
un'rest *sb* uro
ANC the African National Congress
nurse *sb* her: barnepege
march *sb* demonstra-
tion
mealie *sb* 'majsmels-
dej'

Pre-reading

1. From 1948 to 1994, South Africa was under apartheid, which was a system of legal racial segregation (apartheid = separateness in Afrikaans). Thus, whites and blacks/coloureds were separated in all ways possible, e.g. education, medical care and they even lived in segregated residential areas. Also beaches and park benches were reserved for whites and blacks/coloureds respectively. This racist regime was maintained through fear, violence and strict control. It was finally overturned after many years of social and political unrest and marches led by Nelson Mandela and the ANC.
2. Comment on the picture.



- 1 **LUCY**, a 10-year-old white girl talking to her dead black nurse, Nellie, shot in a march, in her open coffin.

LUCY: NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE
NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE
5 NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE NELLIE I
want you to come back, to shampoo my hair and make a pink cake and
we can sit in the back and roll mealie pap in our hands see, I told you
not to go in those marches and I told you, I told you that what you guys
don't understand, what you didn't see, is apartheid's for YOU. IT'S FOR

Soweto *sb* område hvor sorte bor
Zulu *sb* stamme i Syd-afrika

YOUR GUYS' FEELINGS, see, like we got separate washrooms cause you like to spit, and if we said, 'Eww yuch, don't spit', it would hurt your feelings and we got separate movies, cause you like to talk back to movie stars and say 'amen' and 'that's the way' and stuff and that drives us crazy so we might tell you to shut up and then you might cry and we got separate bus stops cause you don't like deodorant cause you say it smells worse than people and we might tell you you stink and the only thing I don't get is how come you get paid less for the same job my Mummy says it's because you people don't like money anyway, you don't like TVs and stereos and all that stuff cause what you really like to do is sing and dance. And you don't need money to sing and dance I just ... I don't understand why you weren't happy with us, Mummy let you eat as much sugar as you wanted, and we never said anything to you, some days, Mummy says it was up to a quarter-pound, but we know blacks like sugar so we didn't mind, and we even let you take a silver spoon, I heard Mummy say to her friends, 'there goes another silver spoon to Soweto' but she never called the police ... and you had your own little room back there, and we even let your husband come once in a while, and that's against the law, Mummy and Daddy could have gone to jail for that, so how come you weren't grateful? How come you stopped singing those Zulu songs in the morning, those pretty songs like the one that was about love and kissing, you stopped singing, and you stopped shampooing my hair, you said I could do it myself, and and your eyes, your eyes used to look at me when I was little they would look at me like they were tickling me just tickling me all the time, like I was special, but they went out, they went out like a light does and you stopped making my cakes every Tuesday, every Tuesday morning I would ask you to make me a pink cake and you would always say, 'you ask your mummy' and then you'd make it, but you stopped making them, you told me I was too old for pink cakes, that the pink wasn't real, it was just food colour anyway and then, and then, you hardly ever came anymore, and when I saw you that day ... when I saw you downtown with your husband and four children all ... hanging off your arms, I just couldn't stand it! I wanted to yell at your children and tell them you were mine that you were more mine than theirs because you were with me more much more so you were mine and to let go of you to get off you and I hated the way you looked without your uniform, so brown and plain, not neat and nice anymore, you looked so pretty in your uniform, so pretty, but we didn't even mind when you didn't want to wear it.

We didn't mind, but you were still unhappy, and when I saw you in town looking so dusty and you didn't even introduce me to your kids and one of them, one of them did that rude thing that 'Amandilia' thing that means black power I saw you slap his hand but you didn't say anything, so you must have hated me too, I saw that you hated me too and I'd been so nice to you, I told you my nightmares and you changed

wet *vb* gøre våd; her: tisse i sengen

my bed when I wet it and now you didn't even like me and it wasn't my fault it wasn't my fault it just when I asked you why that day, you were cleaning the stove and I said Nellie why ... don't you like me anymore, and you said, 'you're not a child anymore, Lucy, you're a white person now' and it wasn't my fault I couldn't help it I couldn't help yelling
 SLAVE, SLAVE, DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD, SLAVE OR I SLAP YOUR BLACK FACE, I SLAP YOUR BLACK FACE AND I KICK YOUR BLACK BELLY I KICK YOUR BLACK BELLY AND KICK IT TILL IT CAVES RIGHT IN AND IT CAN'T HOLD MORE BABIES EVER AGAIN. NO MORE UGLY BLACK BABIES THAT YOU'LL ... that you'll like more than me. Even though I'm ten years old I made you die. I made you go in that march and I made you die. I know that forever. I said I was sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but you never looked at me again. You hated me. But I love you, Nellie, more than Mummy or Daddy and I want you to come back, and sing those songs, and roll mealie pap and be washing the floor in your nice uniform so I can come in and ask you to make a pink cake and your eyes will tickle me. And you will say 'yes'.

'Yes, I'll make a pink cake ...'

Comprehension

1. In this monologue, 10-year-old Lucy speaks her mind in a stream of consciousness to her dead nanny, Nellie. In pairs, take turns reading aloud in the following way: Person A reads aloud while person B listens for a change of themes, says *stop* and takes over the reading. Person B then goes on until he/she is stopped by person A and so on. Sum up in class: What themes crop up in Lucy's mind?
2. How and why does Lucy explain the logic of the apartheid system to Nellie?
3. How does Lucy react when she meets Nellie and her children? Can you explain this strong reaction?
4. *you're not a child anymore, Lucy, you're a white person now*, Nellie says. How does this finally bring the relationship between Lucy and her nanny to an end?

Analysis and interpretation

1. Explore Lucy's feelings. Where does Lucy become strongly emotional – and how can we see that?
2. Explore the title: PINK!
3. Discuss: Is Lucy...
 - a. a selfish, spoiled brat
 - b. an innocent victim of the apartheid system
 - c. a discriminating racist
 - d. a lonely child in the throngs of growing up?

stream of consciousness *sb* bevidsthedsstrøm
brat *sb* unge
throngs *sb plur* trængsler