

STUDY GUIDE

GRADE 12 HOME LANGUAGE

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SECTION A: HELPFUL INFORMATION

Overview

The Swim Team is a South African young-adult coming-of-age novel. Khethiwe, a 16-year-old girl from a poor background, wins a swimming scholarship to attend an elite private boarding school, and is suddenly thrust into a foreign world of extreme wealth and white privilege. This could be the key to unlocking her talent, reaching her Olympic ambitions, and pulling herself out of poverty. But she is immediately confronted by hostility from the swim team captain, Farrah, which escalates when Farrah's ex-boyfriend Aidan takes an interest in Khethiwe.

Khethiwe is faced with interpersonal and institutional prejudice, pressure to perform and conform, as well as her own insecurity and impulsiveness. Her feud with Farrah lands Khethiwe repeatedly in trouble with the school authorities, and she must ultimately decide whether standing up for herself is worth sacrificing her Olympic dream.

The *Swim Team* won Gold in the 2021 Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature. One of the judges described the book as “*an extremely topical story that deftly explores issues of race and privilege, sketching out well-rounded and believable characters and convincing scenarios*”.

Author

Catherine Jarvis studied English Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, and has been a high school English teacher for over ten years. *The Swim Team* is her debut novel. Catherine lives in Johannesburg, with her husband and two young children.

Setting

Time

The Swim Team is set in 2019, before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and before the murder of George Floyd by police in the United States, which sent shockwaves throughout the world and gave global impetus to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. #BLM had a profound impact on mostly-white schools in South Africa, many of which were confronted with student demonstrations and petitions for management and staff to be more diverse and more aware of the prejudice black learners face.

Place

The novel is set mainly in Johannesburg, with one excursion to Pretoria. Joburg is a large city of very deep contrasts – between opulent wealth and desperate poverty; from lush, secure, quiet suburbs, and the glittering skyscrapers of Sandton, to cramped, crumbling, crime-ridden blocks of flats, and sprawling, ramshackle townships.

These contrasts are still overwhelmingly divided along the racial inequalities created by colonialism and apartheid. The rich are mostly white (i.e. people of European ethnic origin), whereas the poor are predominantly black (i.e. people of African, Asian or combined ethnic origins).

Louis Botha Avenue is a long, busy road that snakes from the old centre of Johannesburg, Hillbrow, to the top of Alexandra township in the north. At one point, it is the only thing separating two vastly different worlds: Yeoville and Houghton.



Yeoville

Apart from two bustling commercial high streets (Rockey and Raleigh), Yeoville is made up almost exclusively of apartment blocks, mostly constructed in the 1930s (many in the curvy Art Deco style popular at the time). Reserved for white people under the apartheid Group Areas Act, Yeoville was home to many working-class and middle-class migrants from Europe. In the 1980s, Yeoville became the city's main cultural hub, teeming with restaurants, social clubs and bookstores. It was a popular place for artists, musicians and political activists to gather, even across racial divides.

After the abolition of the Group Areas Act in 1991, the area attracted more black residents, leading to 'white flight' (the global phenomenon of white people preferring to move to suburbs where they are a racial majority). By 1998, 90% of Yeoville's residents were black. Today, it is still a magnet for migrants, but now from other parts of Africa, making it one of the most cosmopolitan locales in the Continent. But years of government neglect have caused the roads, buildings and facilities to decay, and Yeoville has become increasingly comfortable for criminal elements to operate. The apartments are also extremely overcrowded, having been subdivided unsustainably by rent-seeking landlords. The long wall behind the Yeoville Shoprite is famous for its hundreds of advertisements, in various languages, for small rooms (even enclosed balconies) to sublet in the area.

Despite its challenges, Yeoville's residents are renowned for their optimism, ambition and initiative. Yeoville is a pulsing commercial and cultural centre, and it has a sense of community that has helped it to withstand xenophobic sentiments that have led to violence in other areas.

Houghton

In real life, Houghton is home to three of the oldest and most prestigious boarding schools in South Africa. It also hosts dozens of luxurious residences, featuring large free-standing houses, expansive lawns, swimming pools, and tennis courts. Some of the properties are valued at R25 million (2023).

The school Khethiwe attends in *The Swim Team – St Anne’s Academy for Girls* – is not based on any particular school in Johannesburg or South Africa, but is a fictional representation of an expensive private boarding school. In 2023, the top ten boarding schools in South Africa charged fees of over R300,000 per year.

The St Anne’s Academy for Girls in the novel is similarly attended by the ultra-privileged, who are overwhelmingly white. It has state-of-the-art sporting facilities and large, lush open spaces, as well as a forest. It is everything that Yeoville is not. It has three boarding houses: Libertas (Freedom), Veritas (Truth) and Aequitas (Justice). Khethiwe shares a dormitory in Libertas with five other girls.

Houghton is also home to The Wilds, a beautiful public nature reserve with forested koppies, small waterfalls, and colourfully-painted steel sculptures of various animals.

Characters

Khethiwe

The protagonist is Khethiwe Sibiya, a 16-year-old girl from Yeoville, who has an extraordinary talent for swimming, which earns her a scholarship to St Anne’s Academy for Girls, where she becomes a boarding student. Her ambition is to become an Olympic swimmer. Her mother is a single parent, who labours long hours as a domestic worker. Her father is unknown.

Like many teenagers, Khethiwe struggles with insecurities, especially about being socially excluded, but also about her ability to perform in competitive swimming. Khethiwe’s insecurity often sways her to make poor choices, and to allow others to make choices for her, but ultimately she resolves to take control of her own destiny. ‘Khethiwe’ means ‘the chosen one’ in isiZulu.

Farrah

The chief antagonist is Farrah, also a 16-year-old girl attending St Anne’s and boarding in the same dormitory as Khethiwe. The captain of the swim team, Farrah feels threatened by Khethiwe’s talent, and later becomes jealous when her ex-boyfriend Aidan takes a romantic interest in Khethiwe. She is wealthy and vain, and she bullies Khethiwe, displaying classist and even racist prejudice. The name ‘Farrah’ is derived from the Arabic word for ‘happiness’ or ‘joy’, which could be considered ironic.

Pierre

Khethiwe’s closest friends are 16-year-old Pierre and 17-year-old Elodie, siblings who live in the same block of flats as Khethiwe in Yeoville. They are immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Khethiwe becomes distant from them once she goes to live at St Anne’s, as she is afraid to admit to them that it is not the dream-come-true she expected it to be.

Pierre helps Khethiwe and offers her advice when she needs it. This shows him to be an empathetic character. He advises her on how to deal with her conflict with Farrah, and reassures her before the disciplinary hearing. Khethiwe admires his cool confidence, often wishing she could be like him, yet he also has insecurities. Pierre confides in Khethiwe about his experience of xenophobia. ‘Pierre’ is the French version of ‘Peter’, meaning ‘rock’ (reflecting his dependable nature).

Aidan

Aidan is a 17-year-old boy from St Anne's Academy's nearby brother school, James Hall College, a similarly privileged institution. Aidan is wealthy, handsome, and carefree. He enjoys breaking rules, and manipulates Khethiwe into doing the same. He is kind and affectionate to Khethiwe, but reveals a dark side with his cruelty to Farrah. 'Aidan' is an Irish name meaning 'little fire'.

Rey

Reitumetse, nicknamed Rey, is the only other black girl in Khethiwe's dorm. Her parents are wealthy professionals. Initially aloof, she develops a strong friendship with Khethiwe, standing up for her on several occasions. When Khethiwe faces expulsion, Rey enlists the aid of her hotshot lawyer father, who despises injustice and sacrifices a great deal of time to help Khethiwe. 'Reitumetse' means 'we are happy/pleased' in Sepedi. At the beginning of the novel, Rey appears 'pleased' or content with life at St Anne's, but she becomes radicalised when she sees the prejudice experienced by Khethiwe.

Lexie

Lexie is one of Farrah's close friends. She is more conscientious about her school work than any of the other characters. At first, she seems to be a loyal follower of Farrah, but later it is revealed that she repeatedly tried to persuade Farrah to stop bullying Khethiwe, and cleaned the graffiti from the bathroom stall to try to prevent Khethiwe from getting into trouble. The name 'Lexie' is derived from the Greek name 'Alexia', meaning 'defender' or 'helper' (which has a double meaning, as Lexie appears to be Farrah's helper for most of the novel, but has in fact been trying to defend Khethiwe, in her own way, all along).

Miss Wilson

The swimming coach at St Anne's is Miss Wilson, a former Olympian, who is initially supportive of Khethiwe and wants her to succeed, but is blind and unsympathetic to the struggles Khethiwe is really facing, and does not stand up for her when it matters most. Miss Wilson appears to be caught up in her own troubles, as shown when she is on the phone fighting with her boyfriend while Khethiwe is being bullied on the bus.

Ms Richmond

The principal of St Anne's is Ms Richmond, a stern woman who exemplifies the view that Khethiwe should be more grateful for the scholarship, and who sides with Farrah in the conflicts. Indifferent to the pressure and exclusion weighing on Khethiwe, Miss Richmond typifies institutional prejudice.

Narrator and tone

Like many novels in the YA genre, *The Swim Team* is narrated from the **first-person** perspective of Khethiwe. The writer adopts a **conversational** tone, using a colloquial register and occasional slang. This helps to make the text accessible to the readers, and allows them to experience the story and events as companions to Khethiwe. It also reminds the readers that the main character is a young, impressionable teenager, and helps them to understand the choices she makes.

Conflict

Conflict refers to rising tension and action. **Outer conflict** relates to verbal or physical action. *The Swim Team* opens with a verbal and slightly physical altercation between Khethiwe and Farrah. They have many arguments in the novel, which reaches its climax with a serious physical fight. Khethiwe's conflict with Farrah also brings her into conflict with the school authorities.

Inner conflict arises from competing desires or choices a character faces. In Khethiwe's case, she is torn between her Olympic ambitions and her instinct to defend and stand up for herself, as well as her romantic attraction to Aidan. Khethiwe faces many dilemmas and often makes bad choices.

Symbolism

The swimming pool

The swimming pool is a symbol of Khethiwe's Olympic dreams. It is the vehicle she needs to use to achieve her ambitions:

Even though it's a regular Olympic sized pool, to me it is infinite. It's the hope and dream of the Yeoville girl who won't give up.

More significantly, it is also a symbol of **freedom**. Initially, the Yeoville public pool is where Khethiwe escapes from her underprivileged circumstances:

When you're in the water, it's just you. Before St Anne's, I used to think about how being in the water gave me so much space to move around freely, and it would feel like I'd escaped the cramped flat I lived in with my mother and the Sudanese couple with their screeching infant. I could ignore my life and listen instead to the roaring of the water with every stroke I made, and concentrate on nothing but the rhythmic movement of freestyle.

Later, the St Anne's pool is where Khethiwe finds solace from the oppressive environment of the school, and where she finds joy and fulfilment after Farrah forces her to stop seeing Aidan. Finally, it is where she turns to reclaim mastery over her destiny, as the disciplinary hearing looms:

I'm motionless, torn between the path towards the reception and the one to the pool... But the pull of the pool is too strong. If I swim, it will help me decide whether to go through with this farce of a hearing.

The Libertas statue

I'm in Libertas and our statue is of a woman with broken to shackles, her arms lifted high in the air. Her eyes are haunting, almost as though the fight for freedom has come at a terrible cost. I walk past the statue every day and I can't help but pause when I see her.

The statue resonates deeply with Khethiwe. Initially, she identifies with the woman as a symbol of her own struggle to break free from poverty. St Anne's is supposed to be the place where Khethiwe achieves that, and she sees the bullying as the "terrible cost" of this. Later, Khethiwe sees St Anne's itself is a prison, and stages a daring escape to meet Aidan. In the end, Khethiwe realises that, much like the woman in the statue, she must be her own liberator.

The woods

On the way from the swimming pool to Libertas House is a stone pathway through thick woods. For Khethiwe, the woods are a symbol of **danger** and **foreboding**. In the first chapter, she describes the woods as follows:

Once we pass the swimming pool gates, a stone pathway unfolds before us, covered with big outstretched trees and silence. It really feels like someone could get away with a murder in this lonely faraway spot.

Intermittently throughout the novel, Khethiwe is unsettled whenever walking through the woods, for example in Chapter 7:

I walk down the winding path towards Libertas. The trees are thick and tall around here and the leaves are whispering as the wind brushes them... This place has always given me the creeps. It is so secluded, so quiet, so much darker compared to the rest of the school. My phone vibrates in my hand but I won't look at it until I'm out in the open. I don't want to stop and read the message while I'm walking because then I'll be distracted, and everyone knows that's when you become the next victim of a serial killer.

Passages like these foreshadow the climactic confrontation between Farrah and Khethiwe, in which Farrah finally 'murders' Khethiwe's chances of staying at St Anne's. It is ironic that Khethiwe enters the woods that evening precisely to avoid seeing Farrah at Libertas, only to find her in the woods:

In the dim light, the plane trees that crowd the way have a menacing air. A dark tunnel. I hesitate. Maybe this isn't such a good idea, after all. But when I turn towards Libertas, the fear of Farrah is too great... My feet crunch over leaves and twigs and the sound is amplified because of how quiet it is in here. They sound like gunshots to me...

While the earlier depictions of the woods in the novel seem to suggest paranoia on Khethiwe's part (perhaps on account of her general insecurity being at St Anne's), but the fateful fight with Farrah shows that the woods did in fact hold danger for Khethiwe all along.

Themes

Prejudice (racism and classism)

Since the advent of European colonial settlement in 1652, until its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa was the scene of a crime against humanity – systematic white supremacy in every facet of life. The black majority were dispossessed of their land, deprived of personal, political and economic rights, and stripped of human dignity. White people were psychologically conditioned to disrespect and despise black people, and only very few families unlearned these prejudices and openly opposed apartheid.

Despite legal desegregation and reconciliation efforts after 1994, the legacy of apartheid persists in economic, spatial and social spheres of life.



- **Economically**, while some black families have joined the ranks of the middle and upper classes, they are still disproportionately white. Black-owned businesses are in the minority of those that dominate the Sandton skyline and the stock market.
- As a result, residential areas are still **spatially** segregated to a large extent, with underprivileged areas (like Yeoville) almost exclusively inhabited by black people, and ultra-privileged suburbs (like Houghton) having only a minority of black residents.
- **Socially**, for complex and varied reasons, many white people have not unlearned the supremacist psychology inculcated before 1994, and some even pass this on, consciously or unconsciously, to their children. Racist incidents in universities, schools and social spaces are reported in the press from time to time, involving aggressors raised or even born after 1994.

In addition to this, **classist prejudice** (a global phenomenon where privileged people tend to look down on and marginalise the less privileged, often based on unwarranted assumptions about their intelligence and competence) **intersects** with racist prejudice, because, in South Africa, most poor people are black and most black people are poor.

The Swim Team aims to explore both **interpersonal prejudice** (bigotry from one person to another) and **institutional prejudice** (which sees historically-white institutions, like companies, universities and schools, failing to accommodate people of diverse backgrounds). An example of institutional racism in modern South Africa is when it was discovered that several historically-white schools had banned black children from speaking African languages on campus or wearing their hair in a natural style.

In the novel, **interpersonal prejudice** is manifested in Farrah, who openly insults Khethiwe in racist and classist terms, as well as in the swim team Farrah leads, who collectively marginalise Khethiwe.

This is seen vividly in the opening scene in the changeroom, where Farrah humiliates Khethiwe for being poor, while the other girls laugh. At the first swim meet, Khethiwe is excluded from the team huddle (until Lexie intervenes) and is also excluded from the group's social plans.

Farrah's racism is typically **coded** as classism. On the surface, her words refer to class, but they have a clear racist sting. One example is when Farrah tells Khethiwe: "You're the poor township girl who landed at St Anne's Academy. I don't need to tell you that you don't belong here because you know that already." During Farrah's outburst at the Libertas dinner table, she calls Khethiwe a "poor girl from the ghetto trying to make it with us". When Rey calls her out about the racist undertone of the word "ghetto", Farrah inadvertently reveals herself:

Yeah, well obviously you've no idea how unfair it is when certain people get special treatment, and the rest of us who work harder and perform better, still get zero recognition in this country.

When Khethiwe and Farrah have their final confrontation in the woods, Farrah's racism is no longer coded but explicit: "When people see you on the swimming block, they are only thinking one thing: this is a quota. And they aren't wrong."



2016 learner protest against racist hair policies at Pretoria Girls High School
© Unknown

Meanwhile, **institutional prejudice** is displayed by the school authorities, who tend to take Farrah's side and are generally ignorant and indifferent to the pressure and exclusion Khethiwe experiences. The school's bias towards Farrah stems from the status enjoyed by her family, as laid bare by Lexie before the disciplinary hearing:

*Let's just say, her parents are incredibly influential here. Her mom, her grandmother and practically all her female relatives have been educated here. They **are** the school.*

Even leaving history aside, a private school is institutionally geared to be more loyal to families that pay fees and make donations, than to scholarship learners who cost the school money.

Bullying

Bullying is the use of force, threats or teasing, to abuse, dominate or intimidate another, exploiting an **imbalance** of physical or social **power**. This imbalance distinguishes bullying from conflict.

Bullying can be done individually or by a **group**, in which the primary bully has one or more followers who support or empower them through active affirmation (e.g. laughing) or passive tolerance (e.g. failing to intervene). This may be because they fear that, if they don't, they will be bullied next.

In the novel, both forms of bullying are present, as Farrah abuses her social and economic privilege over Khethiwe, and is supported (passively and actively) by the swim team and even by the school as an institution. This is shown in the opening scene in the changeroom, where the other girls laugh at Farrah's insults, and later on during the bus trip back from Pretoria:

A pre-occupied coach made it easy for them. They spoke in loud voices about me being a "slut", "skank" and "easy"... Farrah didn't say anything, but a storm was brewing around her, and even the others were frightened – that's probably why they were making those comments about me.

Apart from Khethiwe, Rey is the only other learner who stands up to Farrah. Lexie does not agree with what Farrah is doing to Khethiwe, but is too timid to defy her openly, leading Khethiwe to ask herself: "Why do people keep quiet when their friend is saying something wrong?" This further reveals Lexie's apparent nature as a follower, although we later discover that she did defy Farrah privately.

The school authorities do nothing to stop Farrah's bullying. Miss Wilson should have given Farrah a firm punishment for the humiliating episode in the changeroom. If she had, Khethiwe may have had a very different experience at St Anne's.

Ambition and pressure

Khethiwe's ambition is huge. Only a handful of swimmers get the chance to represent their country, and nobody of African race has ever represented South Africa in swimming at the Olympic Games. The magnitude of this Olympic dream places a tremendous amount of pressure on Khethiwe, which is compounded by the pressure to justify being awarded the scholarship. Like many black people in white-dominated environments, Khethiwe feels that she is seen as an ambassador for her race, as shown at the first swim meet at Ellis Park:

I need to show the school, and the rest of the swim team, that their charity case is talented. Like everyone else, I am worried about what my time and ranking will be at the end of the day... But on top of that, I also have to worry about how people will perceive me after my races. I have to prove myself to Miss Wilson, Farrah, everyone here. And I must embody #blackexcellence and #blackgirlmagic, because the mostly white spectators here will look at me on the starting block and immediately assume that I will come last.

At the Pretoria swim meet, Khethiwe is overcome by the combination of Ms Richmond's presence and Farrah's undercutting comments. We see that Khethiwe has become preoccupied with the fear of failure rather than the hunger for success. Her ambition has become drowned by pressure.

But at the second Ellis Park swim meet, when Khethiwe focuses on her dream rather than pressure, she excels. She ignores Farrah's taunting and visualises success:

I imagine that the atmosphere at an Olympic swimming event would be a lot like this one. I allow myself to fantasise about walking out into an Olympic stadium, my green swimming cap, with the South African flag on it, in my hand, and hearing the crowd roaring as my name is called out when I step onto the block. One day it will happen.

Ultimately, in the face of the most high-pressure situation – the disciplinary hearing where she faces expulsion and the end of her Olympic dream – Khethiwe reconnects with her love of swimming and decides to liberate herself, and to stop letting the school stand in the way of her ambitions:

I feel freer now, as though all my troubles and stress dissolved the moment I hit the water. I can imagine myself sauntering into the hearing, not giving a damn what those people have to say about my fate and slouching in the chair while they list my charges.

Privilege vs poverty

One of the main themes in the novel is the contrast between **privilege** and **poverty** – a contrast that is extreme in a country like South Africa. There is a strong physical contrast between Yeoville and St Anne's:

The school has everything. Sports fields that stretch far and wide, one after the other, lawns greener than any Instagram filter could ever fake... There are two rose gardens and a meditation garden with statues and fountains, and you can hardly believe it's in the same city as Yeoville...

In a later chapter, Khethiwe describes Yeoville in the following way: “buildings are dilapidated and should have been condemned years ago. Pavements have been dug up and then refilled with cement. Broken-down cars in varying shades of rust are abandoned on the streets”. These descriptions of both St Anne's and Yeoville convey the vast difference in lived experience between those with wealth and those without.

In addition, there are characters who have power because of their privilege. Aidan does not realise that he views the world through a lens of privilege. He doesn't understand why Khethiwe is worried about losing her scholarship and he immediately dismisses her fears that she will be expelled from school because of Farrah's vendetta. He tells her that the school doesn't operate “like the mafia”. He does not realise the power people with privilege have.

Farrah is also able to use her privileged position to manipulate situations for her own advantage. This is seen most vividly when she is believed about the incident in the woods. Her version of events is taken as the truth by the school, yet Khethiwe isn't even asked to provide a statement, showing that they automatically believe Farrah over Khethiwe.

Khethiwe is also embarrassed by her poverty. This is shown when she doesn't want anyone, even Rey, to know that her mother is a domestic worker. She tells the reader that she will never show Rey her home in Yeoville after visiting Rey's opulent family home. She also doesn't want Aidan to know where she lives when he asks if he can order her an Uber.

Poverty and privilege are also connected to the theme of belonging and acceptance. Khethiwe does not feel she will be accepted by others because of her poverty. It is a source of shame for her in the novel.

Rivalry vs friendship

Khethiwe's conflicts with Farrah stem from **rivalry**. Farrah sees Khethiwe as competition for being the star of the swim team, and also for Aidan's affection. This jealousy drives Farrah to do everything in her power to destroy Khethiwe, by undermining her confidence in the swimming pool, and trying to ruin her relationship with Aidan. Farrah delights in seeing Khethiwe fail or get into trouble, and is furious when Khethiwe does not get kicked off the team after abandoning them at the Pretoria swim meet. Farrah "*looks both murderous and crushed*" when she finishes second behind Khethiwe at the second Ellis Park swim meet. Khethiwe, surprisingly, does not relish seeing Farrah defeated, and is disgusted when Aidan humiliates her after the meet.

Contrasted with rivalry is **friendship**. Khethiwe displays social anxiety and seems to be an introvert. This means it harder for her to make new friends, but the friendships she forms are not superficial. Khethiwe's friendship with Pierre and Elodie is a source of strength and encouragement, but this is lacking when she goes to live at St Anne's. Once she forms a friendship with Rey, she finds herself able to deflect Farrah's insults, to refocus on her reason for being at St Anne's and to start winning races. Rey's friendship appears to be the impetus for the change in Khethiwe's mindset after the first two disastrous swim meets.

Belonging vs exclusion

Khethiwe experiences a painful sense of **exclusion** at St Anne's from the outset. Owing to Farrah's animosity towards her, she is treated as an outsider not only in the swim team but in the dormitory. She craves the sense of **belonging** she felt in Yeoville with her friends Pierre and Elodie.

In Chapter 1, Farrah tells Khethiwe "*you don't belong here*", implying that it is because of Khethiwe's disadvantaged background that she should not be at St Anne's. Throughout the novel, the swim team actively exclude Khethiwe: they do not invite her to their social events; they do not celebrate her wins; and they spend most of their time ignoring her.

Once Khethiwe begins to win her races, she does start to believe that she belongs at the school and in the swim team. This suggests that Khethiwe feels her belonging and acceptance at St Anne's is tied to her winning and excelling at swimming. This is a false sense of belonging as it is conditional on her success at the school.

At the end of the novel, the choice that Khethiwe makes between fighting to stay at St Anne's or leaving it, is underscored by the need to belong. Indeed, in the epilogue, Khethiwe does find her place. Of her new team and school, she says: "*I blend in, seamlessly fitting in with my team*". This newfound belonging makes Khethiwe feel comfortable inviting her friends and mother to watch her perform. She no longer feels like an outsider or imposter at Ellis Park, as she did in the beginning of the book. She has as much right to be competing, and to be supported, as anyone else.

SECTION B: EXPLORING THE CHAPTERS

Levels of questions (Barrett's Taxonomy)

Type of question	Examples and keywords
<p>Level 1: Recognition and Recall (literal comprehension)</p> <p>Give information that appears in the text, without discussing or commenting on it.</p> <p>Read the text very carefully and find the exact words that answer the question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name or identify the things / people / places / reasons / ways ... (What? Who? Where? Why? How?) • Describe the place / person ... • List the people / features / events / reasons ... • Relate the incident / experience ...
<p>Level 2: Reorganisation</p> <p>Bring together information or ideas that appear in the text.</p> <p>Analyse, synthesise or organise the information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise the main points / ideas / problems ... • Outline the events / features ... • State the differences / similarities between ... • How long / far / many ...?
<p>Level 3: Interpretation (inferential comprehension)</p> <p>Work out the meaning of what appears in the text using your knowledge of the novel and your personal experience.</p> <p>Draw conclusions from clues that are given in the text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the main idea / cause / effect ... • Compare the actions / attitudes ... • What does this action / comment reveal about the narrator / character? • What do you think will be the effect / outcome of ...? • How does this metaphor / image affect your understanding?
<p>Level 4: Evaluation</p> <p>Make judgments related to worth, accuracy, acceptability, desirability or probability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that what happens in this scene is realistic / credible / likely? • In your view, is the character's attitude / action / choice morally right or justifiable? Give a reason for your answer. • Critically discuss / comment on the value judgments made in the text.
<p>Level 5: Appreciation</p> <p>Discuss the impact or effect of the text (e.g. word choice and imagery) on you as the reader.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your emotional response to the scene / dialogue. • Do you empathise / identify with the character? What choice / action would you have taken in the same situation? • Discuss / comment on the effectiveness of the writer's style / imagery / figurative language / literary devices?

Outline of the novel

- Chapter 1: The Changeroom** – Khethiwe is humiliated by Farrah and has an altercation with her
- Chapter 2: Libertas Means Freedom** – Rey warns Khethiwe that Farrah is jealous and dangerous
- Chapter 3: #Blackexcellence** – Khethiwe competes in an inter-school swim meet for the first time
- Chapter 4: Piggy** – The girls exclude Khethiwe from their social plans, and Khethiwe meets Aidan
- Chapter 5: Hot Gossip** – Rey tells Khethiwe a scandalous rumour about Aidan and Farrah
- Chapter 6: Dreaming** – Khethiwe reminisces about home and her best friends Pierre and Elodie
- Chapter 7: Text Message** – Khethiwe unexpectedly receives a text message from Aidan
- Chapter 8: Conspiracy Theories** – Rey and Rufaro help Khethiwe verify that the message is authentic
- Chapter 9: Emojis** – Khethiwe and Aidan exchange texts and he asks when he can see her again
- Chapter 10: Ms Richmond** – Miss Wilson tells Khethiwe Ms Richmond will watch the next swim meet
- Chapter 11: Leaving Hillcrest** – At the Pretoria swim meet, Khethiwe performs poorly in her first race
- Chapter 12: A Good Cry** – Khethiwe goes to the parking lot and cries, while the meet is still underway
- Chapter 13: Ice Cream** – Aidan finds Khethiwe and convinces her to go to an ice cream parlour
- Chapter 14: A Helping Hand** – Miss Wilson and the team are furious with Khethiwe when she returns
- Chapter 15: Winners Never Quit** – Khethiwe is given a warning, and Farrah has an outburst at dinner
- Chapter 16: Getting Away With It All** – Khethiwe thanks Rey for standing up for her against Farrah
- Chapter 17: Breaking the Rules** – Khethiwe sneaks out of Libertas to have a secret picnic with Aidan
- Chapter 18: The Deal** – Farrah catches Khethiwe sneaking in and blackmails her to stop seeing Aidan
- Chapter 19: A Reprieve** – Khethiwe starts winning races and is scouted by another school's coach
- Chapter 20: The Invite** – Aidan invites Khethiwe to a party at his house, but she has to decline
- Chapter 21: Sleepover** – Khethiwe visits Rey's house and receives a video of Aidan kissing Farrah
- Chapter 22: Aftershock** – Khethiwe feels betrayed by Aidan and decides to focus on her swimming
- Chapter 23: School Spirit** – At the all-important Inter-High Premier Gala, Khethiwe wins her race
- Chapter 24: Mob Justice** – Aidan tries to explain himself to Khethiwe, and publicly humiliates Farrah
- Chapter 25: Give Me a Reason** – Aidan begs Khethiwe to forgive him, but she is unsure if she can
- Chapter 26: Homecoming** – Khethiwe returns to Yeoville and decides to visit Pierre and Elodie
- Chapter 27: The Outsiders** – Khethiwe confides in Pierre about her struggles at St Anne's
- Chapter 28: The Writing's on the Stall** – Rey finds insulting graffiti about Khethiwe in the bathroom
- Chapter 29: Google Search** – Khethiwe tells Rey she replaced it with offensive graffiti about Farrah
- Chapter 30: Serious Offence** – Khethiwe is called into a meeting with Ms Richmond and is punished
- Chapter 31: Into the Woods** – An intoxicated Farrah confronts Khethiwe, and a violent fight ensues
- Chapter 32: The Letter** – Khethiwe is suspended and faces a hearing over Farrah's false allegations
- Chapter 33: Into the Wilds** – Khethiwe meets Aidan at a park and decides to end their relationship
- Chapter 34: The Hearing** – Waiting for the hearing to start, Khethiwe goes for a spontaneous swim
- Epilogue: Nine Months Later** – Khethiwe is content, swimming for a new school and dating Pierre

Chapter 1: The Changeroom

Plot development

The protagonist, Khethiwe, and the main antagonist, Farrah, are introduced and immediately placed in contrast and conflict. The setting is the swimming changeroom, where Khethiwe is embarrassed to change in front of the other girls as they have expensive underwear and perfume, while she does not. Farrah humiliates Khethiwe over this, and the coach, Miss Wilson, overhears it, which worsens Khethiwe's embarrassment. Khethiwe and Farrah later exchange bitter words, and Khethiwe hurts Farrah's injured shoulder.

Glossary

- **embalm** (*transitive verb*): to give a sweet fragrance to (in this context)
- **nonchalant** (*adjective*): casually unconcerned or indifferent
- **infatuation** (*abstract noun*): foolish or extravagant adoration
- **feud** (*noun*): a bitter dispute or rivalry

Themes

The opening theme of the chapter is **privilege vs poverty**. Khethiwe feels like an outsider: *“I don't belong with these girls. I can tell by the liberal spurts of perfume they're embalming themselves with and how even their white school socks are Nike.”* She is self-conscious about her old, unfashionable underwear, and this is immediately seized on by Farrah, who remarks that it is *“not quite as shiny and new as your uniform”*, and points at her crotch.

Here, the theme of **bullying** is introduced. Farrah abuses her position of privilege and as the leader of a group, to alienate and degrade Khethiwe, while some other girls snigger.

We also see an example of **institutional prejudice**, as Miss Wilson overhears Khethiwe's humiliation, but does not punish Farrah, presumably owing to her economic privilege (a presumption confirmed at the end of the novel). **Interpersonal prejudice** also rears its head in the form of Farrah's classist and racist comment that: *“You're the poor township girl who landed at St Anne's Academy. I don't need to tell you that you don't belong here because you know that already.”*

This also relates to **belonging vs exclusion**. It is not only Farrah's spiteful opinion that *“you don't belong here”*. It is also Khethiwe's own insecurity that *“I don't belong with these girls”*, owing to her lack of material wealth compared to theirs.

Finally, **rivalry** is introduced as Khethiwe and Farrah walk back to the boarding house and each claim to be the better swimmer. When Khethiwe bumps Farrah's injured shoulder, she realises that the rivalry is sealed: *“I have ensured that this feud is not over; we've only just dived into the pool”*.



London 2012 Olympic Games swimming pool
© Tim Wimborne / Reuters

Questions

1. Why is Khethiwe embarrassed to change in front of the other girls?
2. Identify the differences between Khethiwe and the other girls.
3. What does the scene in the changeroom reveal about Khethiwe's character?
4. Comment on Khethiwe's reaction to Farrah's bullying when they are walking back to their boarding house and how it reveals her character.
5. Consider the extract "*this place too is full of crazy, violent thugs but here they're sixteen-year-old girls masked in Chanel and clothed in Puma*". Comment on the effectiveness of this image, with reference to the chapter as a whole.

Chapter 2: Libertas Means Freedom

Plot development

Khethiwe takes in her surroundings at the dormitory she shares with Farrah and four other girls in Libertas house, where she has been for two weeks. Khethiwe recalls how she became a swimmer and won the scholarship to attend St Anne's. Rey warns Khethiwe that Farrah is jealous of her, and is a dangerous enemy to have.

Glossary

- **manicured** (*adjective*): neatly trimmed; well cared for
- **affluent** (*adjective*): rich; wealthy
- **monotonous** (*adjective*): dull and tedious, especially because of repetition
- **vernac** (*abbr.*) (*noun*): vernacular; an indigenous language of a country or region



Themes

The main theme of the chapter is **privilege vs poverty**. Khethiwe contrasts St Anne's with Yeoville. The school is quiet, spacious and green: *“Sports fields that stretch far and wide, one after the other, lawns greener than any Instagram filter could ever fake.”* Yeoville is loud, crowded and gritty: *“Back home, the word ‘silence’ does not exist. Outside the flats, there’s usually some drunk guy, angry at the world, swearing loudly at the unfairness of the universe, and a homeless lunatic cackling at nothing...”*

Against this backdrop, we are introduced to Khethiwe's **ambition**. She does not hate Yeoville, *“but dreams die there”*. And St Anne's is her *“way out of poverty. Well, their sparkling Olympic-sized pool is.”* We learn that Khethiwe has a prodigious talent for swimming.

The theme of **friendship** emerges, as Khethiwe introduces us to Pierre and Elodie, her neighbours in Yeoville and her closest friends. Khethiwe is lonely and isolated in the dorm, where the other girls *“know each other's habits so well that everything moves with simple ease; they sidestep each other while getting ready as though it is a choreographed dance. I'm clearly the odd one out.”* This also ties in with the theme of **belonging v exclusion**. Khethiwe is hopeful that she might be able to form a friendship with Rey, who is not a member of Farrah's gang.

Finally, we gain insight into the source of the **rivalry** between Farrah and Khethiwe, as Rey reveals: *“She sees you as competition. Miss Wilson used to think the world of Farrah. Used to. Past tense.”*

Questions

1. Name the other five girls in Khethiwe's dorm? Which two are Farrah's close friends?
2. How does the Libertas dorm differ from Khethiwe's home in Yeoville?
3. Why do you think Rey responds in English when Khethiwe thanks her in Sepedi?
4. Critically comment on the appropriateness of the title of the chapter.
5. In the context of the novel as a whole, comment on the effectiveness of the names of the three boarding houses at St Anne's.

Chapter 3: #Blackexcellence

Plot development

Khethiwe is at Ellis Park for her first inter-school swim meet, and feels extreme pressure to perform well. Farrah undermines Khethiwe's confidence and focus, and she finishes last in her first race.

Glossary

- **apprehension** (*abstract noun*): fear or anxiety that something bad might happen
- **venomous** (*adjective*): spiteful or malicious (in this context)
- **enunciate** (*verb*): to pronounce words clearly and distinctly
- **patronising** (*adjective*): seeming friendly but displaying superiority or condescension

Themes

We see how Khethiwe's **ambition** to succeed translates into extreme **pressure** to perform, burdened by the expectations that come with a scholarship: *"I need to show the school, and the rest of the swim team, that their charity case is talented."*

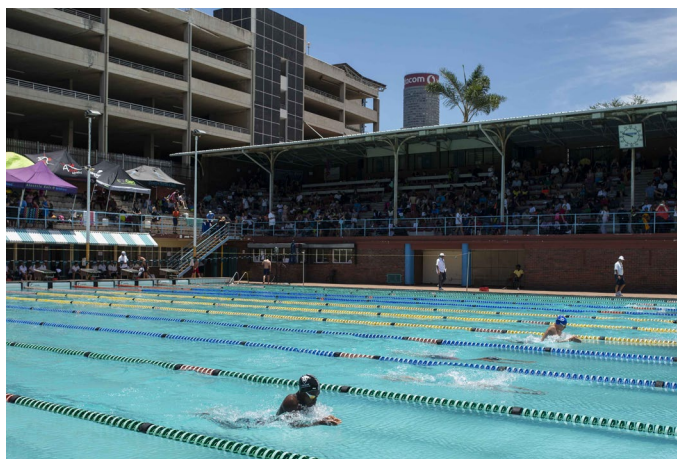
This pressure is compounded by Khethiwe's feeling that she has to shatter the **prejudiced stereotype** that black people cannot swim well: *"I must embody #blackexcellence and #blackgirlmagic, because the mostly white spectators here will look at me on the starting block and immediately assume that I will come last."*

Farrah's **bullying** of Khethiwe continues, and we see that Farrah is prepared to let the team suffer for the sake of her personal **rivalry** with Khethiwe. After telling the team that they need to *"make Miss Wilson proud"* and *"make the first swim meet of the year count"*, Farrah deliberately unsettles Khethiwe: *"Whatever you do, don't false start. That would literally be the most embarrassing thing ever"*.

Khethiwe again contrasts **privilege and poverty**, as she explains that her mother cannot attend the swim meet like other parents, as she has to work multiple jobs to make a meagre living.

Questions

1. How does the racial divide at the swim meet affect Khethiwe's experience?
2. Discuss the significance of Khethiwe's mother's absence and their financial struggles.
3. How does Khethiwe's desire to prove herself reflect the pressures of being on a scholarship?
4. Analyse the interaction between Khethiwe and Farrah. How does it contribute to the tension within the swim team?
5. What does the swim meet reveal about Khethiwe's insecurities and fear of failure?



Ellis Park Swimming Pool, with the Ponte in the background
© New Frame

Chapter 4: Piggy

Plot development

Still at Ellis Park, Khethiwe feels dejected after losing all of her races, and is excluded from the rest of the team as they make plans to go to a nightclub without her. She likens herself to the outcast nicknamed Piggy in the novel *Lord of the Flies*, who is relentlessly bullied and ultimately killed by the other schoolboys stranded on a desert island, as they gradually descend into savagery. A handsome boy named Aidan introduces himself and takes an interest in Khethiwe, while Farrah glares at her.

Glossary

- **conciliatory** (*adjective*): willing to repair a relationship
- **imposter** (*noun*): a person pretending to be someone or something they are not
- **incoherent** (*adjective*): unclear or disordered
- **adrenalin** (*noun*): a substance a person's body produces when they are angry, afraid or excited, which makes the heart beat faster and generates energy

Themes

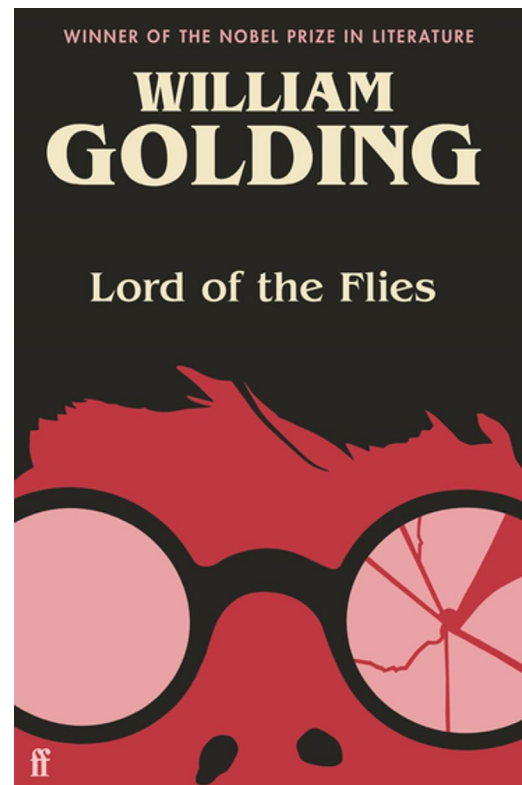
Khethiwe's **exclusion** from the swim team is pronounced in this chapter: *"I'm the only one not invited to Mihouse and they're busy discussing it right in front of me like I'm some kind of outcast"*. Her sense of non-belonging is worsened by her failure to perform well in the meet: *"I feel even more like an imposter in this team than I have felt before"*.

She fears that she is Piggy from *Lord of the Flies*, who never succeeds in fitting in with the group. This adds to the theme of **bullying**, as Piggy was victimised so viciously that he was ultimately killed by the ringleader, Jack, whom Khethiwe compares to Farrah. For the second time in the novel, Khethiwe compares the team to a savage mob (*"crazy, violent thugs"* in Chapter 1).

We gain further insight into Farrah's bullying character, as she reprimands her own friend Celine for expressing interest in a boy whom Farrah apparently likes. This explains that she maintains control over the group through fear, and the others participate in the **group bullying** of Khethiwe for fear of being targeted by Farrah themselves.

Questions

1. How does Khethiwe's disappointing performance in the swim meet affect her self-esteem and sense of belonging within the swim team?
2. What role does the comparison to Piggy from *Lord of the Flies* play in Khethiwe's thoughts and feelings about herself and her place on the team?
3. Comment on Farrah's treatment of her friends during their discussion of their evening plans.
4. How does the introduction of Aidan influence the mood of the girls?
5. Critically comment on the last sentence of the chapter: *"... maybe I'm not Piggy after all."*



Chapter 5: Hot Gossip

Plot development

Khethiwe goes to the Libertas common room and speaks to Rey about the swim meet. Rey tells her that Aidan and Farrah once dated, and that he is rumoured to have taken her virginity on the school stage. Khethiwe is disgusted, and hopes the rumour is not true, but feels glad that she appears to be forming a friendship with Rey.

Glossary

- **divulge** (*verb*): to reveal something secret or private
- **grotesque** (*adjective*): unnaturally and unpleasantly distorted in appearance or character
- **surreal** (*adjective*): dreamlike; having the disorienting quality of a dream
- **patronising** (*adjective*): showing a condescending or superior attitude



Themes

We gain another glimpse into Khethiwe's strong **ambition** to be an Olympian: *"I just think about how wonderful it must be to sit on a plane and watch the clouds skimming past. Would I feel invincible or terrified? One day I will find out."*

Khethiwe confides in Rey about the **pressure** she feels: *"You see the thing is, it's too much pressure. You know? Being the girl who got the swimming scholarship. That means I need to perform, every damn time... And being the only black girl in the team just makes me feel like I need to prove myself even more."*

Rey appears uncomfortable about the mention of race, giving the impression that **racial prejudice** is a taboo topic at St Anne's, which is not discussed openly or at all. Despite this awkwardness, Rey and Khethiwe begin to form a **friendship**: *"We walk out of the common room together, hand in hand, and I savour this moment because right now I have a friend, an ally. I'd almost forgotten what it is like to have one."*

Questions

1. Explain why Libertas is usually empty on a weekend.
2. How does the rumour about Aidan and Farrah's past relationship affect Khethiwe's perception of Aidan?
3. Why does Rey brush aside Khethiwe's comment about race?
4. What comment is being made about gossip?
5. Comment on the significance of Khethiwe's moment of connection with Rey at the end of the chapter. Why is this moment important to her?

Chapter 6: Dreaming

Plot development

Khethiwe thinks about Pierre, Elodie and their parents, and about her own father, whom she knows nothing about apart from what she can see in one old photograph of him with her mother in their early 20s. Rey offers Khethiwe a spare bedspread, but this makes her uncomfortable and she says she will think about it. Khethiwe has a dream about getting ice-cream with Pierre and Elodie, and wakes up longing for her old, simpler life.

Glossary

- **solitude** (*noun*): the state of being alone
- **paranoid** (*adjective*): having extreme or unjustified suspicions or fears
- **Corolla** (*proper noun*): a model of motor vehicle produced by Toyota

© Dany Atmojo



Themes

This chapter is about **longing** and **belonging**.

Khethiwe envies the close-knit wholeness of Pierre and Elodie’s family, and yearns for her father to be present in her life, imagining him to be kind and good-humoured. Nevertheless, she feels a sense of belonging when she is with Pierre and Elodie’s family (“*I was always over at their place because it made me feel like a part of their noisy, bickering household*”). Now that she is at St Anne’s, she finds herself “*longing for my old, simpler life*”.

This comes after Rey offers her a bedspread – something she has been “*yearning for*”, because the school-issued plain white sheets make her stand out as a scholarship student. But Khethiwe fears that Rey is doing this because she doesn’t want to be seen as friends with someone who is poorer. Khethiwe recognises that this fear is irrational, and Rey’s gesture surely has no ulterior motive, but it highlights the complexities of **privilege vs poverty**, and contributes to Khethiwe’s sense of unease and non-belonging at St Anne’s.

Establishing a **friendship** with Rey is important to Khethiwe, as she deeply misses Pierre and Elodie, and friendship is how she finds belonging.

Questions

1. Describe the qualities that Khethiwe longs for in a father.
2. What impact does the absence of a father in Khethiwe’s life have on her?
3. Comment on the mood that is evoked at the end of this chapter.
4. How does Pierre’s family shape her perception of the ideal home?
5. Comment critically on Khethiwe’s reluctance to accept Rey’s offer of a bedspread.

Chapter 7: Text Message

Plot development

After a gruelling swimming practice, where Khethiwe impresses Miss Wilson with her improvement, she overhears Farrah and Celine talking about boys. Khethiwe had been feeling sympathy for Farrah after hearing the rumour about Aidan, but this evaporates when Farrah glares directly at her while telling Celine that Aidan is pathetic and she pities anyone who likes him. Khethiwe has secretly been thinking about Aidan since they met. On her way back to Libertas, Khethiwe receives an unexpected text message from Aidan, saying: *“It was good to meet you on Saturday”*.

Glossary

- **endorphin** (*noun*): a chemical occurring naturally in the brain that has a pain-relieving effect
- **dude-bro** (*noun*): slang term for a stereotypical young man (usually white) who enjoys partying and is unaware of his own privilege

Themes

Khethiwe’s **ambition** is reflected in her willingness to put her body through *“torture”* during swim practice. She no longer swims for fun but *“to be an Olympian”*. And, although she finds the training physically painful, she experiences an endorphin ‘high’ once it is finished and she receives approval from Miss Wilson.

The **rivalry** between Farrah and Khethiwe continues to develop. Initially, Khethiwe is prepared to forgive Farrah after hearing the rumour about Aidan, seeing her as *“an injured bear lashing out because she’s hurt”*. But after Farrah sends her a coded warning that Aidan is off-limits, Khethiwe’s sympathy *“disappears fast”*.

Khethiwe goes back to seeing Farrah as evil: *“I’m sure Farrah is watching me as I leave, casting a curse on me or something”*.



Questions

1. Suggest why Khethiwe says that swimming practice has ‘dampened’ her love for the sport.
2. What does Khethiwe’s sympathy for Farrah suggest about her character?
3. What is the purpose of the comment Farrah makes about Aidan?
4. Discuss what impression the reader gets of Aidan with the details of his Instagram page.
5. Consider the description of the wooded path from the swimming pool to Libertas. Critically discuss how the atmosphere of the place is conveyed.

Chapter 8: Conspiracy Theories, & Chapter 9: Emojis

Plot development

Khethiwe shows Aidan’s message to Rey and Rufaro. As they investigate whether the message is authentic, Khethiwe begins questioning everyone around her, including her new friends. Eventually, she decides to respond to Aidan with a simple smiley face emoji. Rey and Rufaro confirm that the message is genuine.

Aidan and Khethiwe engage in brief banter over WhatsApp. Aidan asks Khethiwe when he can see her again, and she replies in an ambivalent manner. Finally, she confirms that she will be competing in Pretoria in a couple of weeks’ time, and Aidan says “*it’s a date*”.

Glossary

- **instinctively** (*adverb*): acting on a natural or intuitive impulse
- **giddy** (*adjective*): feeling excited, joyful or lightheaded
- **conspiratorially** (*adverb*): behaving in a secretive or confidential manner, often while planning or discussing something
- **insipid** (*adjective*): lacking flavour or interest; dull or bland

Themes

Khethiwe’s **friendship** with Rey is flourishing, but Khethiwe misses Elodie and Pierre, and begins to feel paranoid when Rey and Rufaro are talking to Lexie: “*Paranoia licks at my mind and I wonder what they are really talking about. They could also be in on this.*” This paranoia is prompted by her distrust of the school and its learners due to the bullying she has been subjected to which has made her feel unwelcome and excluded. Her experience at the school has been so negative that she has a difficult time trusting others – even when it isn’t warranted.

This hesitancy to trust Rey and Rufaro may also have something to do with Khethiwe again contrasting her **poverty** with their **privilege**: “*My cheeks burn when I think about how Rufaro and Rey have the latest iPhone – like almost every other person in my class – and my phone is ancient and broken*”. This is similar to Rey’s offer of a bedspread in earlier chapters.



Questions

1. Why is Khethiwe hesitant to trust Rey and Rufaro? Do you think her doubts are justified?
2. How does Khethiwe’s insecurity contribute to the tension and character development in the story?
3. What impression does the reader get of Aidan in these chapters?
4. Why is Khethiwe hesitant to agree to see Aidan again?
5. What influence do emojis have on the conversation between Aidan and Khethiwe?

Chapter 10: Ms Richmond

Plot development

Khethiwe is called into Miss Wilson’s office, where she praises Khethiwe’s recent success during training but expressed concern about Khethiwe’s underperformance at swim meets. She informs Khethiwe that Ms Richmond, the principal, will be attending the upcoming swim meet. This causes Khethiwe a great deal of anxiety, as she worries that Ms Richmond is coming to scrutinise whether she is worthy of the scholarship.

Glossary

- **claustrophobic** (*adjective*): causing discomfort or anxiety in a confined space
- **dominant** (*adjective*): having a commanding or controlling influence
- **hysterical** (*adjective*): feeling or showing extreme and uncontrollable emotion
- **eternity** (*noun*): an infinite or unending period of time
- **revoke** (*verb*): to officially cancel or withdraw something
- **ulterior motive** (*noun*): a hidden or secret reason for doing something
- **pep talk** (*noun*): an uplifting and motivational speech to boost someone’s confidence



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Themes

A dominant theme in Chapter 10 is **pressure**. Khethiwe finds herself in Miss Wilson’s cramped office, essentially being told that she needs to improve her performance in the meets. She interprets the news about Ms Richmond attending the next meet as a warning that she needs to justify her scholarship.

Ironically, the poster declaring that “WINNERS NEVER QUIT; QUITTERS NEVER WIN” does not have a motivational effect on Khethiwe, but the opposite. It compounds the pressure and her sense of self-doubt. The poster also foreshadows the events of the next chapter, where Khethiwe is overcome by the pressure and quits the Pretoria swim meet.

The theme of **belonging** is also prominent. Khethiwe reflects on her new life at the school, far from her home in Yeoville, and the absence of her mentor Miranda, who was a pillar of support. Khethiwe’s feelings of alienation are heightened as she observes her peers, who do not experience the pressure that she does.

The chapter also explores the theme of **privilege vs poverty**. While most St Anne’s pupils take their place in the school for granted, Khethiwe feels the heavy weight of her scholarship, which demands excellence and performance in her swimming endeavours.

The power of **friendship** is another central theme in this chapter. Khethiwe recalls the motivating influence of Pierre, who provided her with encouragement and belief in her abilities. Despite her doubts and pressures, Khethiwe finds solace in these positive influences, fuelling her determination to succeed.

Questions

1. How does Khethiwe feel about Miss Wilson's office, and why does it make her uncomfortable?
2. What is the content of the motivational poster in Miss Wilson's office, and how does it affect Khethiwe's thoughts?
3. How does Khethiwe's confidence differ during training and swim meets, and what do you think contributes to this difference?
4. What is Khethiwe's initial assumption about Ms Richmond's visit to the swim meet?
5. How does Khethiwe's online relationship with Aidan provide a temporary escape from her real-life challenges?

Chapter 11: Leaving Hillcrest

Plot development

Khethiwe attends a swim meet at Hillcrest Swimming Pool in Pretoria, where the presence of Ms Richmond fills her with dread and paranoia. Farrah emphasises the importance of performing well in front of Ms Richmond, causing Khethiwe to feel targeted and to struggle with self-doubt. As the races begin, Khethiwe feels mentally unprepared. She finishes last in her first race, and decides to abandon the swim meet.

Glossary

- **sabotage** (*verb*): to deliberately undermine or interfere with something, especially with the aim of causing damage or failure
- **trance** (*noun*): a half-conscious state of mind, characterised by an altered level of awareness or detachment from one's surroundings
- **hypnotic** (*adjective*): tending to induce a state of hypnosis or deep relaxation
- **disqualified** (*verb*): to be declared ineligible or removed from competition due to a rule violation or failure to meet requirements

Themes

The primary theme in this chapter is **pressure**. Khethiwe, already burdened with the weight of her insecurities, becomes overwhelmed by the “formidable” presence of Ms Richmond. It makes Khethiwe highly paranoid: “*I begin to convince myself that they [Ms Richmond and Miss Wilson] must be speaking about me.*” And when Khethiwe is on the starting block, she imagines that the grey blobs of missing tiles at the bottom of the pool “*transform into eyes, the severe beady eyes of Ms Richmond. Before I know it, I’m picturing her face staring up at me, blue-tinged with disappointment.*”



Hillcrest Swimming Pool, Pretoria
© Catherine Jarvis

By contrast, “[t]he other girls are barely aware that the principal is here” and are “chatting inanely”. As we know, the pressure Khethiwe feels is heavier than that of her peers because her place at the school is not secure – her scholarship can be taken away if she does not perform. This shows that the pressure on Khethiwe stems partly from her lack of **privilege** compared to the other girls.

Farrah exacerbates the pressure on Khethiwe by looking straight at her when she says: “*I don’t want any of you to come last today. Do you hear? We are winners, and winners don’t finish at the bottom.*” This is another act of **bullying**, and an aspect of the **rivalry** between the two girls. It also contributes further to Khethiwe’s sense of **exclusion** from the team, as she then chooses not to join in with the “*stupid hand gestures*”, and “[t]he circle melts away until I am the only one still standing there”.

The **bullying** hurts Khethiwe profoundly: “*Why does she hate me so much? I don’t understand what I did to make her treat me this way. Pinpricks of tears threaten to blur my vision but I blink them back. Normally I try not to let this kind of thing get to me, but it’s starting to weigh me down.*” It also makes

Khethiwe resent Farrah, and thus intensify their **rivalry**: “*There are whoops somewhere in the middle lanes but I don’t turn to see who it is. I won’t be able to face it if Farrah is the whooper, the winner.*”

Khethiwe’s sense of **exclusion** is not helped by the fact that all of the signage is in Afrikaans, which she finds reminiscent of the apartheid era: “*It’s unsettling. That unwelcome feeling invades my bones, almost as though I’m waiting for someone to tell me ‘Net blankes!’ [Whites only!]*” Khethiwe also can’t help noticing that “*there are only like five-other brown-skinned swimmers around today*”, reflecting that she is constantly conscious of her status as part of an under-represented and under-estimated minority in the sport of swimming.

Questions

1. How does the presence of Ms Richmond affect the Khethiwe?
2. Why do you think Farrah targets Khethiwe and how does it impact Khethiwe’s self-esteem?
3. Discuss the significance of Khethiwe’s decision to leave the swimming meet. What does it reveal about her emotional state and coping mechanisms?
4. How does the author use the swimming environment and Khethiwe’s observations of other swimmers to convey her emotions and state of mind?
5. Explore the themes of pressure, self-doubt, and competition in this chapter. How do these themes contribute to the overall development of the story?

Chapter 12: A Good Cry

Plot development

Khethiwe finds solace on a deteriorating bench after leaving the swimming meet. Overwhelmed by feelings of pressure and disappointment, she allows herself to cry. As she contemplates returning to the meet, Aidan unexpectedly appears, diverting her attention from the races.

Glossary

- **gangly** (*adjective*): tall, thin, and awkwardly built
- **gawk** (*verb*): to stare openly and foolishly.
- **cathartic** (*adjective*): providing relief or release of strong emotions
- **despondent** (*adjective*): in low spirits from loss of hope or courage

Themes



© M Dhanawade

Khethiwe's desire to succeed and shine in the swim meet is evident as she yearns to prove herself worthy of being on the team and to impress influential figures such as Ms Richmond and Miss Wilson. Her **ambition** fuels her drive and pushes her to set high expectations for herself. It represents her aspirations, her hunger for success, and her determination to achieve her goals. However, as the chapter progresses, the protagonist's ambition becomes tainted by **external pressures, leading to emotional turmoil and self-doubt**.

This chapter illuminates the theme of pressure and its impact on self-worth and self-destruction. Khethiwe faces immense pressure to perform well, fearing humiliation and disappointment. This pressure manifests in her perception of herself and her swimming abilities. The fear of failure and the weight of external expectations threaten her self-worth and contribute to self-destructive thoughts. She questions her abilities, feeling inadequate and isolated. The chapter explores the delicate balance between maintaining a **healthy sense of self-worth and succumbing to self-destruction** under the weight of pressure and self-doubt.

As Khethiwe sits on the deteriorating bench, she confronts her emotions, allowing herself to cry and releasing the accumulated emotional burden. This act of vulnerability becomes a pivotal moment in her journey, challenging the destructive patterns she had adopted. Through this cathartic experience, she begins to **rebuild her self-worth**, embracing her authentic emotions and acknowledging the importance of self-care and personal growth.

Questions

1. Why is Khethiwe crying in this chapter?
2. Discuss the significance of Khethiwe's decision to confront her vulnerability and express her emotions.
3. What impression does the reader get of Khethiwe's mother in this chapter?
4. Discuss the past incident from the protagonist's childhood that made her reluctant to cry. How does it shape her approach to emotions and vulnerability?

5. Comment on Khethiwe's contemplation to return to the meet.

Chapter 13: Ice Cream

Plot development

Khethiwe is still recovering from her emotional breakdown at the swim meet when she encounters Aidan. Aidan offers her company and suggests they go and get ice cream as a distraction. Khethiwe initially declines the invitation, and contemplates going back to the meet to face the consequences, but Aidan ultimately persuades Khethiwe to go with him.

Glossary

- **blubbing** (*verb*): crying noisily or uncontrollably
- **cajoling** (*verb*): persuading someone to do something by coaxing or flattery
- **demeanour** (*noun*): outward behaviour, appearance or manner of a person, which often reflects their attitude, emotions or personality
- **indecipherable** (*adjective*): unable to be understood or interpreted clearly

Themes

In this chapter, Khethiwe is torn between two sources of **pressure**. On the one hand, the pressure to keep her place at St Anne’s urges her to return to the swim meet to finish any races she hasn’t already missed. This is also fuelled by her natural **ambition**. On the other hand, Khethiwe wants to escape from the swim meet, pretend her failure never happened, and also spend time with Aidan:

I bite my lip, full of indecision. I want to pretend that this day, and that race, didn’t happen. I want to be with Aidan. But I also want to keep my place in the team. I want to win races.



© N Marcos

Aidan does not help the situation, as he puts further **pressure** on Khethiwe to leave the swim meet and spend time with him, instead of accepting her initial decision not to join him for ice cream:

His friendly cajoling demeanour changes and he furrows his eyebrows... “Oh, come on Khethiwe. I want to do something that will cheer you up. Won’t you let me do that for you?” he asks, and puts an arm around my shoulders...

This is an early indication that Aidan will be a bad influence on Khethiwe, as seen in later chapters. He is dismissive of Khethiwe’s anxiety about leaving the swim meet, and manipulates her into going for ice cream, despite the devastating impact this could have on her career. Aidan’s actions do not, however, appear to be malicious, but rather informed by his own **privileged** ignorance (“*Maybe for him, with wealthy fee-paying parents, bunking is not a big deal.*”)

Aidan is also revealed to be somewhat self-interested. If he truly cared about Khethiwe, he would ask why she was so conflicted, and build up her confidence to compete, rather than impose his own preferred outcome on her.

Questions

1. What event has led Khethiwe to cry on the bench?

2. Why does Khethiwe find it easier to communicate via text messages?
3. What internal conflict is highlighted by Khethiwe in this chapter, and what are the potential consequences of her choice?
4. Discuss Aidan's attitude towards skipping the rest of the swim meet.
5. Comment on Aidan's reaction when Khethiwe initially declines his offer to go for ice-cream.

Chapter 14: A Helping Hand

Plot development

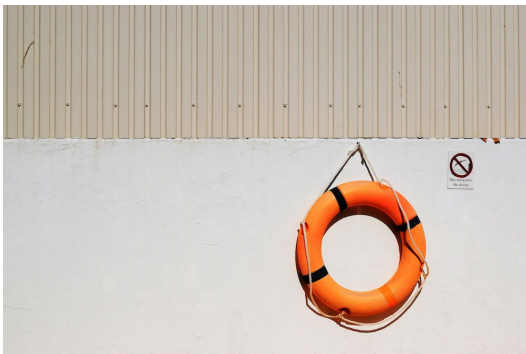
Khethiwe and Aidan go to the ice cream parlour and enjoy a long, easy, light-hearted conversation. Khethiwe's romantic interest in Aidan grows. She tells him that she is at St Anne's on a scholarship, and he tells her that he feels pressure to conform to his father's expectations.

They return to Hillcrest when the swim meet has just ended, and they enter the gates holding hands. Khethiwe finds herself unable to enjoy this, as she is too wracked with guilt and dread. The St Anne's swim team is shocked to see Khethiwe holding hands with Aidan. Miss Wilson is furious, reprimands Khethiwe in front of the team, and tells her to come to her office first thing on Monday morning.

Glossary

- **velvety** (*adjective*): having a smooth and soft texture, like velvet
- **camaraderie** (*noun*): mutual trust and friendship among a group of people
- **coaxing** (*verb*): persuading or gently encouraging someone to do something
- **terabyte** (*noun*): a unit of digital information storage equal to one trillion bytes

Themes



© M Waring

This chapter further explores the **pressure** Khethiwe feels as a scholarship student, which in turn stems from her lack of economic **privilege**. When she tells Aidan she is worried about losing her scholarship, he is flippant about it:

I don't respond to what he says because I can see that he truly does not appreciate the seriousness of the situation. He will never have to be the scholarship kid who cannot mess up without the threat of having it taken away from him. It's not his fault he doesn't get it. He has a gold bank card that he hands over to the cashier, he taps an icon on his phone and a taxi magically appears before him.

The chapter also alludes to the **rivalry** between Farrah and Khethiwe, as Farrah glares menacingly after seeing Khethiwe and Aidan holding hands: “She stands still watching every move Aidan makes, her eyes narrow and hooded. There is something dangerous about her. Something calculating.”

Finally, the chapter deals subtly with **bullying** and **exclusion**. Celine mutters insults about Khethiwe and sniggers while she is being reprimanded. Nobody tries to defend or comfort Khethiwe, who is yet again depicted as an outsider from the rest of the team. This is underscored by the fact that she is instructed not to come to practice on Monday but to go to Miss Wilson's office instead.

Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Khethiwe's hesitation to reveal her scholarship to Aidan.
2. In what ways does Aidan's perspective on missing races differ from Khethiwe's? How does this highlight their contrasting backgrounds and experiences?
3. How does Aidan and Khethiwe's relationship change by the end of this chapter?

4. What are the reactions of Miss Wilson and Khethiwe's teammates to her absence? How does it make Khethiwe feel?
5. What are the potential consequences that face Khethiwe?

Chapter 15: Winners Never Quit

Plot development

On the bus ride back from Hillcrest, Khethiwe sits as far from the other girls as possible, but she can still hear them calling her degrading names, while Farrah sits in silence, seething. Miss Wilson is on the phone, so she does not intervene.

On Monday morning in Miss Wilson's office, Miss Wilson reprimands Khethiwe again and issues her with a warning that if she transgresses again, she will be suspended or even expelled from the team. Miss Wilson tells Khethiwe that Ms Richmond is furious and wants the board to consider revoking her scholarship. Farrah taunts Khethiwe as she leaves Miss Wilson's office.

That evening at dinner, Farrah loudly asks Khethiwe how she convinced Miss Wilson to keep her on the team. While Khethiwe tries not to engage, Farrah suggests that it is because Miss Wilson's feels sorry for her because she is poor and "from the ghetto". Rey immediately confronts Farrah, who responds with another racially-loaded comment, provoking Rey to swear at her, and both girls are ordered to go to the housemistress's office. After dinner, Lexie tells Khethiwe that she thinks Farrah was out of line.

Glossary

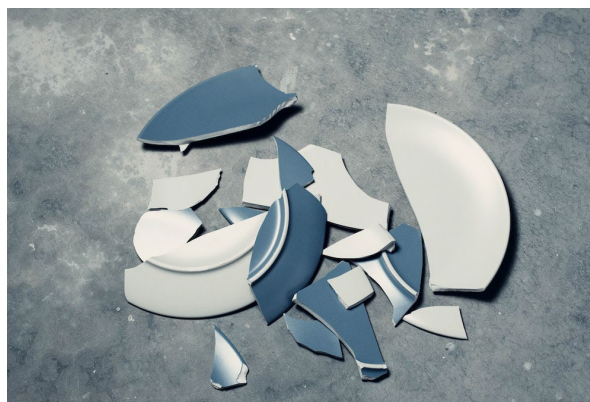
- **teetering** (verb): move unsteadily or wobble, especially in an unsteady way
- **enunciated** (verb): articulate or pronounce (words), clearly and distinctly
- **misdemeanour** (noun): a criminal offence less serious than a felony
- **sombre** (adjective): serious and sad
- **ghetto** (noun): a densely populated slum area in a city, inhabited predominantly by members of a marginalised ethnic group, often as a result of social or economic restrictions or hardships
- **expletive** (noun): a rude word or expression, especially one used in anger or for emphasis

Themes

This chapter is pivotal for the development of several major themes in the novel.

Khethiwe experiences intense **group bullying** on the bus, as several girls try to please Farrah by degrading Khethiwe. Tellingly, the insults are all about Khethiwe having spent time with Aidan, rather than her having let the team down.

In the office on Monday, Miss Wilson makes no effort to ask about or empathise with Khethiwe's reasons for leaving the swim meet. Instead, she heaps further **pressure** on Khethiwe, making her repeat the slogan "Winners Never Quit", without realising that this is counterproductive for Khethiwe (as explored in Chapter 10). The pressure is exacerbated by Miss Wilson repeatedly referring to the scholarship and the possibility that it could be taken away. She tells Khethiwe that, originally, she "was the one who convinced Ms Richmond that you were worthy of the scholarship", and that Ms Richmond "has never come across a scholarship girl who has so wilfully let down a team". The implication is that Khethiwe should show more gratitude, an example of **institutional prejudice**.



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Khethiwe reveals privately to the reader that the conditions stipulated in the scholarship contract (that it may be revoked for unsatisfactory performance) are what *“I often repeat to myself at night, especially after a poor performance at a gala. They live inside my terror. They are the weight that I carry every time I stand on the starting block.”* This is extraordinary **pressure** for a child.

The **rivalry** between Farrah and Khethiwe intensifies, as Farrah becomes personally invested in seeing that Khethiwe is severely punished. She enjoys Khethiwe’s exclusion from the Monday morning practice and she shouts *“bitch, bye”* at her to rub salt in the wound.

Farrah steps up the **bullying** at dinner that evening, targeting Khethiwe in front of the whole house, with increasingly **prejudiced** remarks. It is an unprovoked and premeditated attack, as Farrah picks the seat opposite Khethiwe, which is out of the ordinary. First, Farrah suggests that Miss Wilson is lenient on Khethiwe as *“she feels sorry for because you’re so poor”*. This is a deeply **classist** comment, which makes Khethiwe feel humiliated and ashamed of her **poverty**: *“I can ... feel the heat of shame spreading up my neck as I think of my mom’s flat in Yeoville and her broken sandals.”*

Khethiwe does not retaliate but simply says: *“Maybe she just thinks I’m talented”*. But Farrah only escalates the attack, saying *“you lose literally all your races”*, and calls Khethiwe a *“[p]oor girl from the ghetto trying to make it with us”*. In South Africa (much like in the United States), a reference to *“the ghetto”* is not only **classist** but **racist**, given that areas referred to pejoratively as *“ghettoes”* are populated mostly by people of colour (due to historical discrimination and segregation). Farrah reinforces her prejudice with the reference to *“us”*, placing Khethiwe as a racial and social *“other”*. This also furthers the theme of **exclusion**.

When Rey calls out Farrah’s racism, Farrah doubles down with even more **racism**, saying *“obviously you’ve no idea how unfair it is when certain people get special treatment, and the rest of us who work harder and perform better, still get zero recognition in this country”*. Here Farrah channels a common complaint among **privileged** and **prejudiced** white South Africans that they are being unfairly held back and denied opportunities by ‘reverse discrimination’. She also alludes to the racist trope that white people generally *“work harder and perform better”* than black people. Farrah’s opening – *“obviously you”* – is also a racist attack on Rey.

The incident at the dinner table solidifies the **friendship** between Khethiwe and Rey. It is a turning point, where Rey (rather than just supporting Khethiwe privately as before) feels compelled to take a stand and make herself an enemy of Farrah (who she has previously described as a *“dangerous enemy to have”*). This is thus a very brave act. The combination of Khethiwe’s influence and Farrah’s blatant racism has caused Rey to become radicalised on racial issues, whereas in previous chapters she tried to downplay the significance of race whenever Khethiwe raised it.

Rey’s courage is contrasted with Lexie’s cowardice, and the complexity of **friendship** is explored in the fact that Lexie knows and feels that Farrah was *“totally out of line”*, but does nothing about it, because she is friends with Farrah. This reveals how **bullying** can actually be sustained by friendship with the bully, as the bully’s friends are likely to be passive (like Lexie) or active (like Celine), and in this way contribute to the social power that the bully commands over the target.

Questions

1. How does Khethiwe feel about being in Miss Wilson’s office at the beginning of the chapter, and why is she there?
2. What lesson does Khethiwe learn from Miss Wilson’s advice, and how does it shape her future actions?

3. Discuss the implications of the terms and conditions of the scholarship for Khethiwe.
4. How does Farrah provoke Khethiwe in the dinner hall?
5. What is the difference between Lexie's and Rey's reaction to Farrah's outburst at the dinner table?

Chapter 16: Getting Away With It All

Plot development

Khethiwe learns that the punishment imposed on Farrah and Rey is that they have to eat dinner in the kitchen for a week and write an essay on etiquette. Khethiwe apologises to Rey for getting her into trouble, but Rey responds that friends stand up for each other. They discuss the likelihood that Farrah’s parents will use their influence to get her out of the punishment.

Khethiwe is treated coldly by the rest of the swim team, some of whom feel she was not punished severely enough for abandoning the Hillcrest meet. Celine and Farrah bully her in the changeroom.

Aidan asks Khethiwe to go on a date with him and tells her how she can sneak out of Libertas after hours. Khethiwe rejects the invitation twice, as she is on a final warning and cannot afford to break any rules. But Aidan is insistent, and eventually Khethiwe agrees to meet with him outside Libertas the following night.

Glossary

- **meekly** (*adverb*): in a quiet, gentle and submissive manner
- **indignant** (*adjective*): feeling or showing anger and annoyance due to unfair treatment
- **vengeance** (*noun*): punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense
- **tirade** (*noun*): a long, angry speech expressing strong disapproval or criticism
- **cloy** (*verb*): to become overly sweet or excessive
- **disparaging** (*adjective*): expressing a negative opinion or belittling someone

Themes



© Polina Zimmerman

While Khethiwe worries that the incident in the dining hall would ruin her **friendship** with Rey, in fact it only strengthens it. Rey says: “Khethiwe, let’s get this straight, right? We’re friends and Farrah took it too far. I called her out because someone damn well had to.” The girls laugh and Khethiwe feels that they “are closer than ever”.

However, Rey’s **privilege** means that she still does not fully understand Khethiwe’s world. Rey says “You really need your own laptop”, not realising how farfetched this suggestion is to someone coming from **poverty**.

But Rey understands the power of **privilege** when it comes to Farrah:

“Do you think [Farrah’s] parents will be able to protect their little darling?” I ask.

“They do have considerable influence on the school. Mostly because they are forever ‘donating’ money. You know how it goes. I wouldn’t be surprised if I’m the only one eating in the kitchen tonight,” Rey replies.

“That’s unfair.”

“That’s St Anne’s.”

This highlights the role of the **institution** in rewarding privilege, as well as condoning **prejudice** and **bullying**. Schools are legally required to apply a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying and racism. But St Anne's repeatedly shows that it will do nothing to protect Khethiwe from Farrah's behaviour.

Despite Farrah's racist and classist remarks, her friends and the swim team close ranks around her, and continue to **exclude** Khethiwe. Miss Wilson is apparently too busy to notice or too meek to do anything about it. Highlighting how ineffective Farrah's punishment was, she again viciously **bullies** Khethiwe in the changeroom with a **classist** comment. After Khethiwe forgets to put on deodorant in her rush to escape the changeroom, Farrah says: "Oh, that explains why she always smells so bad. Guess she's too poor to even buy deodorant." Most of the team giggles at this, reinforcing the **group** dimension of the bullying.

Finally, Aidan exerts intense **pressure** on Khethiwe to sneak out of Libertas at night to go on a date with him, even after she says 'no' twice. This again exposes Aidan's selfish and manipulative nature. But because Khethiwe has strong romantic feelings for Aidan, and he is one of the only things that brings her joy amid the misery of her life at St Anne's, she gives in to the pressure:

The truth is, I know that if I said no again to him then it will probably be the last time he speaks to me. I remember that steely look he gave me when I was reluctant to leave the meet in Pretoria with him. And I really don't want to lose him. He is pretty much the only thing that is keeping me sane in this place. I can't let him go.

Questions

1. How does Khethiwe's relationship with Rey evolve in this chapter, and what factors contribute to their growing closeness?
2. How is the class divide shown in this chapter between Rey and Khethiwe?
3. What comment is being made about racism at the school? Use Farrah's actions regarding her punishment and the school's response as your starting point.
4. Khethiwe is further excluded from the team in this chapter. Discuss how this revealed in this chapter. How do you think this affects Khethiwe?
5. Critically comment on Khethiwe's lack of agency at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 17: Breaking the Rules

Plot development

Khethiwe sneaks out of Libertas through the kitchen, and meets Aidan at the statue. He has planned a picnic beside the St Anne’s swimming pool. Khethiwe asks Aidan about his relationship with Farrah and he explains that he never really liked her and ultimately “ghosted” her, which he acknowledges was not the right thing to do. Khethiwe tells Aidan that Farrah has been bullying her, but does not give him details, as she is unsure whether she can confide in him yet about the racism she is facing. Aidan and Khethiwe express how much they like each other, and when they return to Libertas after midnight, Aidan asks Khethiwe if he can kiss her.

Glossary

- **coherent** (*adjective*): well planned, clear and sensible
- **adrenalin** (*noun*): a substance which your body produces when you are angry, scared or excited
- **micro-aggression** (*noun*): indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group
- **placate** (*verb*): make (someone) less angry or hostile

Themes

The reader gains insight into Khethiwe’s **ambition**, as she reveals that for the last five years “my whole life has been about swimming”. She tells Aidan that her goal is to compete in the Olympics, and is upset when Aidan expresses surprise at this.

The intensity of the **pressure** Khethiwe feels to see Aidan is highlighted by the fact that she is willing to jeopardise her friendship with Rey, who advises her strongly against going on the date. Their **friendship** is strong enough to withstand this, though, as Rey says she will be on standby to help if anything goes wrong.



© Erik Mclean

It emerges that it is Khethiwe’s craving for **belonging** that drives her to spend time with Aidan. His affected makes her feel **accepted**: “His hand is warm and soft and covers my cold fingers and it feels like they belong together.”

Ironically, Aidan says that he only “hooked up” with Farrah because of **peer pressure**, as he did not want to be rumoured to be gay. This highlights the prevalence of homophobic **prejudice** in schools, especially all boys’ schools (which “are all about worshipping hyper-masculinity”). The irony is in the fact that Aidan expresses resentment about being pressured into a relationship with Farrah, when he has been pressuring Khethiwe into breaking the rules to go on dates with him. This again reveals that Aidan is more self-interested than Khethiwe would like to admit.

Questions

1. What evidence is there in this chapter that Rey is a good friend to Khethiwe?

2. How does Khethiwe feel about Rey's advice and concern? Do you think she should have listened to Rey?
3. Discuss what comment is being made about boys' schools in this chapter.
4. Aidan shows a vulnerable side in this chapter. How does this shape the reader's perception of him?
5. Discuss why Khethiwe decides to give vague reasons for Farrah's rivalry with her. Is she justified in thinking this way about Aidan?

Chapter 18: The Deal

Plot development

Khethiwe is elated after her first kiss with Aidan, and reflects on a magical unexpected kiss she had with Pierre shortly before she started at St Anne's. Khethiwe had strong feelings for him, and was disappointed to discover recently that he was apparently dating someone else.

Khethiwe gets back into the Libertas kitchen, but finds Farrah there, who saw Khethiwe sneaking out and meeting Aidan, and threatens to report her. Rey enters the kitchen, and tries to persuade Farrah to leave Khethiwe alone. Farrah loses her temper, and Khethiwe tells her she will do anything Farrah wants, to avoid being reported. Farrah proposes a deal: she will not report Khethiwe, only if Khethiwe stops seeing Aidan. Khethiwe reluctantly agrees.

Glossary

- **delirious** (*adjective*): in a state of wild excitement or emotion
- **nostalgia** (*noun*): longing or wistful affection for the past
- **stan** (*verb*): to be an enthusiastic and devoted fan (*slang*)
- **vendetta** (*noun*): a prolonged feud characterised by a desire for revenge
- **despondent** (*adjective*): feeling hopeless or in low spirits
- **mesmerising** (*adjective*): captivating or fascinating in an entrancing way



© Anna Shvets

Themes

The **rivalry** between Khethiwe and Farrah is central to the chapter's tension. Despite claiming that she has no interest in Aidan ("I don't give a damn about that loser, Aidan. He's so last year."), Farrah is clearly resentful that he has moved on to her rival, Khethiwe. Her jealousy of Khethiwe makes her hysterical, leading Rey to remark that she is "losing it".

Farrah claims that Khethiwe "gets away with everything" and "gets everything she wants", which is ironic, as Farrah got away with sneaking out of Libertas for a pool party the previous year, and has been getting away with victimising Khethiwe all year. Also, Khethiwe does not have any of the socio-economic **privilege** that Farrah enjoys.

Farrah says that the only reason she wants Khethiwe to stop seeing Aidan is to make her "suffer", showing that the deal is yet another instrument of **bullying**, designed to make Khethiwe miserable.

Once again, this rivalry is contrasted with the strengthening **friendship** between Khethiwe and Rey. Rey comes to the kitchen after midnight as she was concerned about her, causing Khethiwe to feel "a rush of warmth towards her". Rey again stands up to Farrah, calling her "pathetic" for persisting with her vendetta against Khethiwe. Rey's loyalty to Khethiwe, her concern, and her willingness to stand up for her friend, reflect the positive impact of true friendship. The contrast between Rey's and Farrah's behaviour highlights the importance of choosing friends who will uplift and empower rather than belittle and manipulate.

The complex interplay of **ambition** and **pressure** leads Khethiwe to offer Farrah whatever she wants in order to avoid being reported. Her Olympic dream makes her want to stay at St Anne's, while her

scholarship and lack of privileged influence mean that she cannot afford to get into trouble. This gives Farrah the leverage she needs to pressure Khethiwe to stop seeing Aidan.

Questions

1. Khethiwe reveals that she kissed Pierre prior to coming to St Anne's. How does this shift the reader's perception of their relationship?
2. How does the writer heighten the tension in the chapter as Khethiwe enters the kitchen?
3. Comment on Rey's role in this chapter.
4. Why do you think Farrah wants Khethiwe to stop seeing Aidan?
5. Comment on the decision that Khethiwe makes at the end of the chapter. How is the reader positioned to view her?

Chapter 19: A Reprieve

Plot development

Khethiwe wins her first race at a swim meet, despite Farrah and her threats. A coach named Deena from Parkview Girls' High approaches Khethiwe and hints at recruiting her. Khethiwe contemplates the offer but acknowledges the sacrifices she's making to pursue her swimming dreams. She also struggles with her feelings for Aidan, realising she must end her relationship to appease Farrah's threats. The chapter ends with Aidan unexpectedly appearing, leaving Khethiwe surprised and conflicted.

Glossary

- **euphoric** (*adjective*): intensely happy or joyful
- **volatile** (*adjective*): easily changeable; liable to change suddenly
- **isolating** (*adjective*): causing to feel alone or separated from others
- **empathetic** (*adjective*): understanding and sharing the feelings of another
- **presumptuous** (*adjective*): overstepping proper bounds; too forward or bold
- **looming** (*adjective*): threateningly hanging over; approaching in a menacing way
- **disoriented** (*adjective*): confused or lost due to a lack of direction



© S Gnatiuk

Themes

Despite Farrah undermining her, Khethiwe's performance in the meet marks a significant turning point for her and her self-worth, realizing she genuinely belongs in the pool despite the **exclusion** and **bullying** she faces. She says of the win: *“Finally, I've proven myself. I know it's only one race, but right now it feels momentous”*. This newfound confidence contrasts with her past self-doubt brought on by the very same hardships. However, her teammates do not show much enthusiasm for her win, which further reinforces a sense of **exclusion** and allows self-doubt to creep in. This suggests that Khethiwe might never **belong** in the group, despite proving her worth to them. In contrast to the team's lack of warmth for Khethiwe, one of the other swimmers in the race gives her hearty congratulations.

Deena's offer to Khethiwe to join a more diverse team at Parkview Girls' High raises questions about Khethiwe's racial identity and the desire to belong to a community where she might be accepted. Deena accurately portrays Khethiwe's

situation by telling her that *“it can be pretty isolating”* being the only swimmer of colour in her team. It highlights the importance of **inclusivity** and **diversity** in sports and society. The offer does provide Khethiwe with another option to obtain her **ambition** of one day swimming in the Olympic Games.

Questions

1. Why is Khethiwe able to win her race at the swim meet?

2. Discuss how Khethiwe's performance in the swim meet impacts her self-worth.
3. Comment on the swim team's reaction to her win.
4. Discuss Khethiwe's internal struggle between staying at her current school and potentially joining Parkview Girls' team.
5. How do you think Khethiwe feels at the end of the chapter when she bumps into Aidan?

Chapter 20: The Invite

Plot development

Khethiwe and Aidan have a stilted and awkward conversation at the end of the swim meet. She has been ignoring his texts due to her agreement with Farrah that she would stop seeing him. Aidan is uncertain about where they stand and questions why she hasn't responded to his texts, for which she makes excuses. Khethiwe conveys that she still has feelings for him and so he invites her to a get-together at his place. She considers going but worries that Farrah will find out about it. Farrah appears while Khethiwe is speaking with Aidan, and that is when Khethiwe declines his invitation. Farrah pressures Aidan to invite her to the get-together, which he does.

Glossary

- **ghosting** (*verb*): ending a personal relationship by suddenly and without explanation withdrawing from all communication with the other person
- **hectic** (*adjective*): very busy, chaotic or frenzied
- **resolve** (*noun*): determination or strong decision-making ability
- **reckless** (*adjective*): acting without thinking about the consequences, often associated with taking risks
- **obligatory** (*adjective*): required or expected as a duty or obligation
- **squirm** (*verb*): to wriggle or twist one's body in discomfort or embarrassment
- **menacing** (*adjective*): threatening or intimidating in appearance or behaviour

Themes

Khethiwe grapples with her own desire to continue to date Aidan and the deal she made with Farrah. She understands that her scholarship is at stake and that she has to forego her desire to be with Aidan because of this. However, she realises “with a jolt” how much she likes him and that she doesn't want to “call it off with him”, even suggesting to herself that she should be “reckless”.

In this chapter, Farrah's presence and behaviour is intimidating, and she exerts a form of psychological **pressure** on the protagonist. Her comments and actions are meant to make Khethiwe feel uncomfortable and controlled. Farrah's manipulation of the situation, including her intrusive questions and remarks, can be seen as a form of **bullying**.

Finally, **friendship** plays an important role in this chapter because despite the lack of communication from Khethiwe, and her initial hesitation, Aidan extends an invitation to her. This gesture reflects his desire to maintain or rekindle their relationship.

Questions

1. Why does Khethiwe lie about why she hasn't responded to Aidan's messages?
2. Explain why Khethiwe feels so conflicted about the situation with Aidan.
3. How is the reader positioned to view Aidan in this chapter?



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4. Comment on Farrah's behaviour towards Khethiwe during the conversation with Aidan.
5. Consider the last line of the chapter: "I just know [Farrah's] mind is running like a conveyor belt, working out her next move on me and that makes me shiver." Comment on the effectiveness of this sentence.

Chapter 21: Sleepover

Plot development

Khethiwe describes her visit to her friend Rey's upscale house. She is amazed by the luxurious surroundings, from the manicured garden to the beautiful pool, which she can't help but admire. Khethiwe then reflects on the stark contrast between Rey's affluent lifestyle and her own modest living conditions. She fears that Rey would pity her if she ever saw her home, which is far less impressive. The chapter also touches on Khethiwe's feelings for Aidan, Farrah's continued bullying, and her growing friendship with Rey. The chapter ends with Khethiwe receiving a video message from Farrah showing Aidan getting close to her at a party, causing her great distress and confusion.

Glossary

- **apprehensive** (*adjective*): anxious or fearful about the future; uneasy
- **intel** (*noun*): intelligence; secret or classified information
- **rendezvous** (*noun*): a meeting at an agreed time and place, typically between two people
- **matron** (*noun*): a woman in charge of domestic and medical arrangements at a boarding school, college or other institution.
- **opulence** (*noun*): great wealth or luxuriousness; lavishness
- **unyielding** (*adjective*): being unlikely to be swayed; resolute
- **drench** (*verb*): wet thoroughly; soak

Themes



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There is a stark contrast between Khethiwe's flat and Rey's luxurious home. Khethiwe thinks of her home and imagines "what [Rey] would think of the room I share with my mother in a flat with another random family". This touches on issues related to **privilege** and social inequality. The disparities described affect the characters' interactions and perceptions of each other, as well as the broader societal implications. Khethiwe is deeply ashamed of her background ("my shame burns my cheeks"), revealing how inadequate she feels in contrast to her friend Rey.

Despite their differences, the growing **friendship** between Khethiwe and Rey is made apparent, as Rey continues to support Khethiwe's challenges with Farrah. The chapter helps to establish the idea that friendship can transcend socioeconomic boundaries, highlighting the importance of having allies when facing **prejudice** of any kind. In their conversation, Khethiwe raises the idea that Farrah's bullying stems from racism. She feels safe to talk to Rey about this as they are both people of colour. Although Rey has always seemed reluctant to talk about race, she acknowledges that Khethiwe has point: she brings up the time Farrah caught Khethiwe sneaking back into Libertas, and how Farrah believed that Khethiwe is treated differently and Rey says that the conversation "did feel a lot like she was implying that it was because of your skin colour".

Farrah sending the video of her and Aidan kissing is another attempt to **bully** and degrade Khethiwe. It was a calculated move on Farrah's part to hurt Khethiwe which further emphasises to the reader that Farrah is intent on destroying Khethiwe's self-worth and confidence.

Questions

1. How does the author use imagery to convey the opulence of Rey's home?
2. Khethiwe immediately compares her home to Rey's. Discuss the effect it has on her.
3. Describe Rey's father as portrayed in this chapter. How does Khethiwe feel about him?
4. Discuss the ways in which Rey is a supportive friend to Khethiwe.
5. Critically discuss Farrah's motives for sending the video to Khethiwe.

Chapter 22: Aftershock

Plot development

Khethiwe grapples with the emotional aftermath of watching a video showing Aidan kissing Farrah. She is overwhelmed by confusion, hurt, and a desire to understand what she witnessed. Khethiwe receives a message from Farrah, taunting her with a provocative caption related to the video. She confides in Rey, who tries to console her. Despite Rey's efforts, Khethiwe is consumed by thoughts of Aidan's actions and struggles to come to terms with them. She contemplates confronting Farrah but ultimately decides to avoid further conflict. The chapter ends with Khethiwe scrolling through Farrah's Instagram and receiving a surprising message from Aidan, who wants to meet in person to explain everything, leaving Khethiwe torn between her feelings and her scholarship.

Glossary

- **desperate** (*adjective*): feeling or showing a hopeless sense that a situation is so bad as to be impossible to deal with
- **groan** (*verb*): make a deep inarticulate sound conveying pain, despair, pleasure, etc
- **intimacy** (*noun*): close familiarity or friendship
- **etched** (*adjective*): deeply marked or engraved, often suggesting a strong or lasting impact
- **snoop** (*verb*): investigate or spy on someone's private information or activities

Themes

Khethiwe's response to Aidan's messages and her internal struggle reflect issues of **self-worth** and identity. While she feels hurt and betrayed by him, she still harbours strong feelings: *“I'm still clinging to the hope that he'll send me a message explaining the whole thing”*. During her desperate need to rewatch the video to make sense of it, she questions her own value, and contemplates whether she should risk her scholarship and future for a romantic relationship. It highlights the fragility of a person's self-worth, that it is vulnerable on many fronts, when you consider that only recently Khethiwe's newfound source of self-worth was her swimming ability only for it to be jeopardized by this latest revelation.



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The other major theme within this chapter is the dichotomy between **friendship** and **rivalry**, demonstrated by the dynamics between Khethiwe, Farrah, and Rey. Rey's attempts to console Khethiwe by telling her that *“it's obvious that Farrah engineered this whole thing”*. Farrah uses the kiss with Aidan as an opportunity to taunt and bully Khethiwe by asking her if she received the *“little video”* she sent her and suggesting she watch the *“Insta stories”* she posted *“from last night”*. This taunting is made worse by Celine giggling and enjoying Khethiwe's humiliation. Khethiwe tries not to let it get to her by responding in a nonchalant manner, telling her that she is *“happy”* for her and Aidan. This shows that Khethiwe has the ability to fight against the bullying. Lexie is quiet during the whole interaction, suggesting she does not agree with Farrah's behaviour. However, her silence

shows a lack of courage to stand up to her friend. The chapter raises questions about the boundaries of friendship and the consequences of betrayal within social circles.

Questions

1. How does the Khethiwe feel when she first watches the video, and why does she want to watch it repeatedly?
2. Comment on Rey's attempts to comfort Khethiwe.
3. Discuss Khethiwe's feelings towards Aidan at this point in the book.
4. Discuss Farrah's behaviour towards Khethiwe when she returns to the dorm.
5. Aidan tells Khethiwe he can "explain everything". Do you think Aidan deserves a chance to explain himself?

Chapter 23: School Spirit

Plot development

At the annual Inter-high Premier Gala, the atmosphere is electric as the participating schools chant war cries and the spectators cheer. As the races begin, Khethiwe's confidence grows, and she visualises herself swimming with determination. In her own race, she gives her all, ultimately winning first place. The chapter ends with Khethiwe hoping that Aidan witnessed her victory.

Glossary

- **gala** (noun): a sporting occasion involving competitions in several events
- **emblazoned** (verb): Displayed or decorated prominently
- **jitters** (noun): nervousness or uneasiness
- **adjudicator** (noun): an official or judge responsible for making decisions and rulings

Themes



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This chapter highlights Khethiwe's **ambition** and growing self-belief in her swimming ability. Instead of being anxious and apprehensive before the swim, she says *"there's a bubble of excitement as I start thinking about competing"* and that *"last week's win has given me the belief that I can finish first"*. This positive mindset allows her to win her race.

However, the theme of **rivalry** is conveyed when Farrah deliberately tries to unsettle Khethiwe by telling her that *"Aidan is here to watch us. Well, to watch me"* before the race begins. This kind of comment by Farrah would usually derail Khethiwe, but this time she doesn't allow it to. In fact, Khethiwe

acknowledges that she *"can't let it get"* to her and instead focuses on the race ahead. In contrast to last week's race, Khethiwe is congratulated by students from St Anne's: *"cheering girls from the stands run up to congratulate me, patting me on the back and cheering loudly"*. The joy from the girls at St Anne's allows Khethiwe to finally have a feeling of **belonging** at the school for the first time.

At the end of the chapter, the reader sees Khethiwe still has an interest in Aidan, despite the shocking revelations she received earlier. She says that she hopes *"desperately that he will work up the courage to come over and speak"* to her. This could suggest self-destructive behaviour from Khethiwe as Aidan has betrayed her (and lied by omission to her), and she should not consider rekindling their relationship.

Questions

1. Describe the atmosphere at the swimming gala.
2. Consider this sentence: “*The stadium is alive and breathing fire, and we, the swimmers, are the chosen ones to conquer the day.*” How does this sentence contribute to the mood of the chapter.
3. This chapter reveals Khethiwe’s personal growth. Discuss the validity of this statement.
4. Comment on Farrah’s attempt to jeopardize Khethiwe’s race and the effect it has.
5. Comment on Khethiwe’s longing for Aidan to speak to her.

Chapter 24: Mob Justice

Plot development

Khethiwe's team wins decisively, securing their top position in the competition. Excitement fills the air as the trophy is awarded, and plans are made for a celebratory dinner. Amidst the celebrations, Khethiwe notices Aidan, with a group of obnoxious boys. Aidan approaches her and asks for a chance to explain himself, but before they can talk, Farrah interrupts the conversation. Tensions rise, and Aidan publicly rejects Farrah, causing her to be humiliated and shamed. Khethiwe feels conflicted and uncertain about Aidan after witnessing his treatment of Farrah. As the chapter ends, Aidan and Khethiwe are left alone to discuss what happened the night he kissed Farrah.

Glossary

- **monotonous** (*adjective*): lacking in variety or interest; tedious
- **unbridled** (*adjective*): not restrained or controlled
- **pom-poms** (*noun*): decorative, fluffy balls made of coloured yarn or plastic strips used for cheering or decoration
- **avalanche** (*noun*): a sudden and overwhelming occurrence of something, often used metaphorically

Themes

The chapter opens with St Anne's winning the gala's trophy. Khethiwe comments that she really feels "*a part of something amazing*", and she imagines showing her mother the "*photo in the newspaper*" that they pose for after the gala and thinks about how how "*proud*" her mother will be. This alludes to Khethiwe's **ambition**, and also suggests Khethiwe's growing **confidence** and sense of **belonging** at St Anne's. Her sense of belonging at the school is tied to her ability to swim competitively. This suggests her sense of belonging and acceptance is tenuous and that it is wholly dependent on her winning, rather than feeling accepted for who she is. This relationship between swimming and acceptance is most likely due to the scholarship and the pressures and conditions that come with it.



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Khethiwe sees Aidan with a group of boys who are described as "*loud*" and "*obnoxious*". She notes that the boys are the type who make "*comments intended to make girls uncomfortable*". The boys are able to behave this way because of the group mentality, and their behaviour is another form of **bullying** in the novel. Although Aidan isn't doing anything wrong, Khethiwe worries because "*he is part of the group. Doesn't that say something about him?*". The group of boys symbolise the typical way some boys behave when they are out in public: intimidating and harassing others, particularly girls. Aidan associating himself with them should be a warning flag for Khethiwe.

Aidan tries to speak to Khethiwe but is interrupted by his friends and then the appearance of Farrah. Farrah deliberately tries to imply that Aidan likes her in front of Khethiwe, which is another **bullying** tactic. However, this time it does not have the intended effect as Aidan uses this as an opportunity to humiliate Farrah. He tells her that he has no interest in her: “*Can you get it in your head that I don’t want anything to do with you?*” He also says: “*I’m not interested in you and I’ve never been*”. This public rejection of Farrah is humiliating and shaming, especially as his friends were watching, and even comment that they “*should have filmed this*”. The reader is positioned to feel sympathetic to Farrah. Khethiwe, too, feels pity and empathy for Farrah – arguably something Farrah would never feel for Khethiwe. Aidan’s behaviour towards Farrah is problematic and should be an indicator to Khethiwe to stay away from him. This is an example of **group bullying**.

Questions

1. How does the win at the gala change Khethiwe’s attitude towards the school?
2. What is the reader’s impression of the boys Aidan is with in this chapter?
3. Does Khethiwe’s perception of Aidan change when seeing him with the boys?
4. Comment on Khethiwe’s reaction to Farrah’s humiliation.
5. Are Aidan’s comments towards Farrah justified? Explain your answer.

Chapter 25: Give Me a Reason

Plot development

Aidan and Khethiwe speak about what has happened between them. Despite Khethiwe's attraction to Aidan, she is disappointed with his behaviour towards Farrah. Aidan defends his actions, believing that Farrah deserved his harsh words because of the way she treated Khethiwe. Khethiwe questions whether she can forgive him for this as well as when he kissed Farrah. Aidan explains that he got so drunk because he was disappointed that Khethiwe did not come to his party, and he felt that she had been keeping him at a distance since their midnight date. Aidan presses Khethiwe for an answer as to whether she wants to continue dating him, but she says she needs to think about it. As they part ways, Khethiwe realises the bus has left her behind and so she plans to walk home to Yeoville instead of going back to St Anne's. Aidan offers to call an Uber or get a lift from his parents, but Khethiwe insists on walking alone.

Glossary

- **sauntered** (verb): walked in a slow, relaxed manner
- **misogyny** (noun): hatred or prejudice against women
- **dude-bros** (noun): a slang term for young men typically associated with frat culture and displaying sexist or macho attitudes
- **absolve** (verb): to forgive or free someone from guilt
- **altered state** (noun): a condition where someone's mental or physical state changes, often due to drugs or alcohol

Themes

The theme of **friendship** is explored when Khethiwe questions Aidan over the choice of his friends. He admits that they are his friends because they “*play cricket together*” and he’s “*known them since grade one*”. This suggests that his friendship with them is superficial. His friendship with them also reveals that he condones their bad behaviour, especially as he tells her that they “*not really bad people once you get to know them*”.



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Aidan's lack of remorse regarding his humiliation of Farrah concerns Khethiwe. He tries to justify his behaviour by telling her that “*she only told us that the only reason she kissed me was to get at you*”. Here Aidan is using the **rivalry** and **bullying** by Farrah as a justification for treating her the way he did. **Rivalry** is further seen when Farrah deliberately tells the bus driver to leave without Khethiwe, leaving her with no means of getting back to St Anne's.

The reader also sees how Aidan tries to **pressure** Khethiwe into giving him an answer as to whether she will forgive him

and continue with their relationship. It is understandable that Khethiwe would like more time to process his explanation about the kiss, and also his behaviour towards Farrah, yet his is “*impatient*”

and “*begrudging*” with her and “*groans in frustration*”. Aidan again applies **pressure** to Khethiwe when he is persistent about arranging a lift home for her, to the point where she has to tell him “*I don’t want this*”.

When Khethiwe decides that she will go home, she is happy to go there: “*I have one thought that turns into longing: I should walk home. Home home: the smell of spicy food, my mother’s smile and her arms around me. Layah gurgling while her mom sings to her. Pierre.*” This positions the reader to view Khethiwe’s home as a place that she truly feels a sense of **belonging**.

However, home – Yeoville – also makes her embarrassed. She says of the suburb: “*buildings are dilapidated and should have been condemned years ago. Pavements have been dug up and then refilled with cement. Broken-down cars in carrying shades of rust are abandoned on the streets*”. When Aidan asks for her address to order her an Uber, she refuses to give it as she doesn’t want him to know where she lives. In addition, he is uncomfortable with Khethiwe walking home, which shows the theme of **privilege versus poverty**. He has not had to walk in Johannesburg because of his socio-economic status, whereas Khethiwe has. He fears that it is too dangerous, as he has not experienced it before and yet most people use walking as a way of getting around the city.

Questions

1. Why is Khethiwe disappointed with Aidan when he defends his behaviour towards Farrah?
2. Comment on Khethiwe’s feelings towards Aidan at this point in the novel.
3. Explain what is problematic with Aidan’s behaviour towards her when she asks for more time to make a decision.
4. Discuss Khethiwe’s reasons for going home.
5. Compare and contrast Khethiwe’s feelings of Yeoville to other people’s perceptions of the suburb.

Chapter 26: Homecoming

Plot development

Khethiwe returns home to Yeoville for the first time since she started at St Anne's. She feels nostalgic about being home and reflects on the changes in herself. Khethiwe contemplates how her mother will react to her unannounced arrival. However, her mother is still working when Khethiwe arrives home. She goes to see her friends Pierre and Elodie who are both happy to see her. At the end of the chapter, Pierre suggests they sit at their usual spot on the stairs at the entrance of the apartment building.

Glossary

- **spaza shop** (*informal; noun*): also known as a tuck shop, is an informal convenience shop business in South Africa, usually run from a home
- **berbere** (*noun*): a spicy Ethiopian spice blend commonly used in cooking
- **dingier** (*adjective*): darker, gloomier, or more run-down in appearance

Themes

Khethiwe is filled with a “*heavy nostalgia*” upon her return home. She reflects on her childhood and says: “*A part of me longs for those carefree days, oblivious of poverty, when I used to roam the streets with my friends*”. This shows the reader that Khethiwe has a deep connection with her community and that she feels like **belongs** there – in stark contrast to her sense of **exclusion** at St Anne's. It also reveals that her life before St Anne's was not encumbered by the **pressure** she currently feels.



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In this chapter, Yeoville is described in vivid detail. These images highlight the presence of **poverty**, with makeshift shops and broken infrastructure, which underscores the **socioeconomic disparities** in the area. Crime must be prevalent in the area as buildings are protected with “*layers of jagged barbed wire*” while some have “*bits of broken beer bottles on the top of their walls which jut out like shark teeth*”.

Although struggling financially, Sumiya, who shares the flat with Khethiwe's mother, offers Khethiwe food while she waits for her mother. Khethiwe remarks that she knows “*they have so little*”. This generosity, despite hardship, reveals the strong sense of community in Yeoville. The theme of **poverty vs privilege** is also evident when Khethiwe is told that her mother is working late on a Saturday. The reader knows that she is a domestic worker, and these long hours for small pay shows how poor people are exploited.

At first, Khethiwe is reluctant to knock on Elodie and Pierre's door, afraid that the dynamics between them will be different now that they have spent so much time apart, are not in constant contact, and are occupying different worlds. When Khethiwe does speak to Elodie, she reflects on the changes that time apart has brought on her **friendship** with her: “*I don't think we'll be close again. The realisation is like a punch to the gut*”. Although they are no longer close, Elodie is happy and excited to see Khethiwe and promises to spend time with her the next day. When Khethiwe

sees Pierre, he is also pleased to see her, and his confidence in Khethiwe's swimming ability and genuine joy when she tells him she won her race, shows that this friendship is an uplifting and empowering one. This friendship contributes to her sense of **belonging**.

Questions

1. What does Sumiya opening the door "a crack" and looking with a "guarded face" when Khethiwe knocks on the door suggest about the environment in which she lives?
2. Describe Khethiwe's relationship with Sumiya and her family.
3. Comment on Sumiya's offer of food to Khethiwe.
4. Comment on Khethiwe's initial reluctance to talk to Pierre and Elodie.
5. Discuss how Khethiwe and Pierre's friendship is portrayed at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 27: The Outsiders

Plot development

Khethiwe opens up to Pierre about her experiences at St Anne's, including the challenges she faces as an outsider and the bullying from Farrah. Pierre shares his own experiences as an outsider by telling her about the xenophobia he has encountered. He also gives her advice on how to deal with Farrah. Océanne, Pierre's new girlfriend, unexpectedly arrives, interrupting their conversation and time together. Khethiwe spends quality time with her mother who is at first suspicious about why she has come home. That night, she is unable to sleep and thinks about what decision she should make regarding Aidan. Although she has doubts, she decides to give him another chance and sends him a text message telling him this.

Glossary

- **xenophobic** (*adjective*): showing or expressing a dislike or prejudice against people from other countries
- **gaunt** (*adjective*): thin and bony, often due to illness or suffering
- **sneered** (*verb*): smiled or spoke in a contemptuous or mocking manner
- **lingers** (*verb*): remains or persists in one's mind or thoughts

Themes

Khethiwe tells Pierre how she has struggled to **belong** at St Anne's, and Pierre speaks about his own struggles to feel like he belongs in South Africa as a foreigner. Pierre describes how he is “*too dark*”, his “*accent is too French*” and he lives in a country that “*despises foreigners*”.

This brings into sharp focus the **prejudice** and **xenophobia** that many people in South Africa face. Pierre's experience of a classmate telling him that he has stolen South African jobs is a common misconception that is used to spread the fear and hatred of foreigners. Pierre speaks of when there were xenophobic attacks on foreigners that the people of Yeoville “*rallied around us foreigners*”, revealing the support of community members despite the hate shown by others. Later in the chapter, Khethiwe feels like perhaps she no longer belongs in Yeoville, feeling a disconnect from the place where she always felt a strong sense of **belonging**: “*I thought coming home might make me feel better, seeing my old friends and my mom, but I can't stop feeling like I don't quite belong here either.*” Khethiwe has changed, and her life at St Anne's is so different that she is struggling to find her place in the world.



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This chapter also explores the value of **friendship** and support as Khethiwe finds solace and strength in her relationship with Pierre. He is concerned about the bullying from Farrah and wants to protect her from it. He also gives her advice on how to approach the situation with Farrah, telling her she must “*anticipate her next move*”.

Questions

1. Why is the chapter entitled 'The Outsiders'?
2. Why does Khethiwe not mention Aidan to Pierre at all?
3. Discuss how Pierre's experience of xenophobia illustrates the theme of prejudice.
4. Discuss what motivates Khethiwe to give Aidan another chance despite her reservations.
5. Discuss how this chapter focuses on Khethiwe's search for belonging and inclusion.

Chapter 28: The Writing's on the Stall

Plot development

Gossip about the incident at the gala between Farrah and Aidan has been spreading throughout the school. Farrah's friends support her while she tries to maintain a nonchalant facade. Rey tells Khethiwe that a disgusting message about Khethiwe has been written in permanent marker on a bathroom stall door. They both assume the message was written by Farrah. Khethiwe decides to go to the bathroom to black out the graffiti, but she is so enraged when she sees it, that she then also writes a message about Farrah (repeating the rumour she had heard from Rey earlier in the novel). She immediately regrets it and wants to black it out, but she drops the permanent marker and it rolls out of reach.

Glossary

- **graffiti** (noun): words or images written or drawn in public places, often unlawfully
- **vandalise** (verb): to destroy or damage property deliberately
- **murmuring** (verb): speaking softly or in hushed tones
- **retaliate** (verb): to respond or react in return, often with aggression or revenge
- **indulging** (verb): allowing oneself to enjoy or experience something pleasurable
- **culprit** (noun): a person responsible for a wrongdoing or crime

Themes

In this chapter, Farrah is a victim of **bullying**, as rumours and gossip about Aidan's public rejection of her are spread around the school. The enjoyment of someone else's misfortune is evident here. Khethiwe refrains from this kind of bullying and gossip. She refuses to answer questions matric girls ask her about the event, showing her integrity: *"I pretend I have no idea what they are talking about and ease myself away from them"*.



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Later, a disturbing and vile message about Khethiwe has been graffitied on a bathroom stall. This is another form of **bullying**. Rey discovers the message and tells Khethiwe about it. Rey shows how much she cares about Khethiwe and values their **friendship** by advising her on what to do about the situation. She tells Khethiwe that they must *"tell Ms Simons now. She will report it to Mr Peterson – he's the head of discipline"*. Khethiwe disagrees, saying that Farrah will not be punished for the incident as she has **privilege** on her side: *"People like her, people with power and privilege, get away with things."* This shows that

Khethiwe has no confidence in the school system, suspecting that it will protect those with wealth.

Rey's concern for Khethiwe is revealed when she tries to discourage Khethiwe from going to the bathroom, afraid of how much it will hurt Khethiwe to see the graffiti. However, Khethiwe is determined to blacken out the message. Khethiwe's **impulsive** nature causes her to write her own

message on the bathroom stall about Farrah. Her immediate regret shows that she often acts before thinking and rationalising.

Questions

1. How does the gossip contribute to the escalating tension between Farrah and Khethiwe?
2. In what ways does Rey prove herself to be a good friend to Khethiwe?
3. Why does Khethiwe want to blacken out the message on the bathroom stall?
4. Comment on the diction used to convey Khethiwe's state of mind when she reads the message on the bathroom stall.
5. Discuss what is revealed about Khethiwe's character when she decides to write her own message on the wall.

Chapter 29: Google Search

Plot development

Khethiwe confesses to Rey that she was so angry about the graffiti that she also impulsively wrote something on the back of the door. Rey is shocked and realises the seriousness of the situation. They search for ways to remove the graffiti and turn to Google for advice. Rey suggests using nail polish remover, and they head to their dorm room to retrieve it. They rush to the bathroom, hoping to clean off the graffiti before anyone notices. However, when they reach the stall, they discover that the graffiti is already gone. Rey advises her to act normally and keep quiet about the incident. After swimming practice, Miss Wilson calls Khethiwe into her office and informs her that they must go to Ms Richmond's office immediately.

Glossary

- **contaminate** (*verb*): make (something) impure by exposure to or addition of a poisonous or polluting substance
- **hissing** (*verb*): making a sharp sibilant sound like that of a snake or steam escaping through a small aperture
- **petty** (*adjective*): of little importance; trivial
- **cistern** (*noun*): a container for holding water, especially one that supplies taps or flushes toilets

Themes

The chapter highlights the strong **friendship** bond between Khethiwe and Rey. Rey goes out of her way to help Khethiwe in a difficult situation. When Khethiwe confesses to Rey what she has done, Rey at once starts to think of how to fix the situation. Khethiwe says: *“I feel a rush of love for her as I realise that she’s doing all this for me”*. This shows how much she appreciates the help offered to her by Rey. If they were discovered, Rey too could be implicated in the vandalism of the bathroom stall. This highlights how much Rey is willing to risk for her friend.



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Rey also shows her understanding of the **pressure** Khethiwe has been under and the reasons for her actions. She tells Khethiwe that *“there’s only so much bullying a person can take, isn’t there?”* Rey recognises that Khethiwe’s anger and retaliation stem from the **bullying** she has been subjected to for months. This highlights the negative effects bullying has on individuals, sometimes causing them to act out in the same manner as the bully. Rey tells Khethiwe that she was *“fierce”*, showing that she admires Khethiwe for fighting back against the bullying.

Questions

1. Why does Khethiwe turn to Rey for help?
2. Explain Rey’s reaction when Khethiwe tells her the exact wording of the message.
3. Do you think Rey’s solution to erase the graffiti is a good idea?

4. Consider the following sentence voiced by Khethiwe: “I don’t know whether to be relieved or worried that it’s no longer here”. What is implied in this line?
5. What comment is being made about the psychological effects of bullying on an individual?

Chapter 30: Serious Offence

Plot development

In the meeting with Ms Richmond, her personal assistant Lwando, and Miss Wilson, Ms Richmond asks Khethiwe if she wrote the graffiti about Farrah. Ms Richmond reveals that somebody removed the graffiti before the School could take evidence of it, but that Farrah told them what was written and accused Khethiwe of writing it. Khethiwe says she would like to report another incident where obscene graffiti was written about her, and that Farrah has been bullying her since she arrived at St Anne's. Khethiwe then confesses that she was so upset, she wrote the graffiti about Farrah.

Ms Richmond says that Farrah didn't go to that bathroom that day, and so she couldn't have written anything about Khethiwe. Miss Wilson claims she did not know about the bullying and Ms Richmond tells Khethiwe she should have reported it sooner. Ms Richmond tells Khethiwe that they “*can't do much about this now*”, as Farrah is traumatised and will need counselling.

Ms Richmond decides to punish Khethiwe for the vandalism by excluding her from the swim team dinner. Khethiwe is crushed by this. Miss Wilson pleads with Ms Richmond to consider a less severe punishment, but she says her decision is final.

Glossary

- **obscene** (*adjective*): offensive or outrageous to accepted standards of decency or modesty
- **imbibe** (*verb*): to take in or assimilate (ideas, facts, etc) as if by drinking
- **mutiny** (*noun*): refusal, usually by soldiers or sailors, to continue obeying a person in authority
- **incensed** (*adjective*): greatly enraged
- **impeccably** (*adverb*): faultlessly; perfectly; without fault or error
- **shackles** (*noun*): two metal rings joined by a chain which are fastened around someone's wrists or ankles in order to prevent them from moving or escaping



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Themes

This chapter reveals St Anne's institutional failure to protect Khethiwe from Farrah's **bullying**. *First*, Ms Richmond asks Khethiwe to produce proof of the graffiti written about her, before she will take it seriously (even though there is no proof of the graffiti about Farrah). *Second*, Miss Wilson claims that she didn't know about the bullying, which is not true (as she witnessed it in the changeroom).

Third, Ms Richmond says that they can't do anything about Farrah bullying Khethiwe now, because Farrah is traumatised by the graffiti and will need counselling. She makes no mention of counselling for Khethiwe, who also had a humiliating comment written about her. Ms Richmond also makes no mention of investigating the original graffiti about Khethiwe. *Finally*, Ms Richmond keeps referring to Khethiwe's complaint as “*alleged*” bullying (thus not accepting it as true), and give no indication that she will ever investigate or address it. She also asks Miss Wilson about “*bullying between the two girls*”, suggesting that it is a two-way street, rather than committed by one against the other.

The double standards reflect the School's **institutional prejudice** against Khethiwe (and most likely scholarship learners generally). Her suffering is not taken as seriously as Farrah's – the only possible

explanation is that Farrah is wealthy (and a source of fees) while Khethiwe is not. More than once, Ms Richmond reminds Khethiwe that she is on a scholarship, which is a “*privilege*” (a veiled warning that it can be taken away). A fee-paying learner would obviously not be threatened or manipulated in this way. This only compounds the **pressure** on Khethiwe: *“I can’t help but think its unfair that I’m expected to be better than others because their parents have paid school fees or have influence in the school. These strings attached to the scholarship are shackles.”*

The chapter also touches on the theme of **belonging vs exclusion**. When trying to get Khethiwe to confess, Ms Richmond tells her that obscenity and vandalism are “*not welcome at our school*”, and that they want Khethiwe to “*imbibe the values and ethics of our school*”, particularly “*truthfulness*”. This remark has two sharp edges to it. The first is the prejudiced suggestion that honesty is a foreign concept to Khethiwe, because of her poverty. The second is that Khethiwe has work to do before she will **belong** at St Anne’s. The theme of **exclusion** is manifested quite literally when Ms Richmond decides to exclude Khethiwe from the swim team dinner (as opposed to making her write an essay, or perform community service). This particular punishment sends a clear message that Khethiwe is not truly a part of the swim team like the others. She is an ‘other’ and an outsider.

The punishment is so severe for Khethiwe because it strikes at her **ambition**. She had been looking forward to being recognised for her achievements in front of her peers. For Khethiwe, it is not good enough to perform well; her sense of self-worth also depends on her performance being validated: *“No dinner. After all that effort. After winning those races for the school’s glory... I won’t be awarded a trophy. The injustice cuts me deeply.”*

Questions

1. How are Ms Richmond’s comments about Khethiwe’s scholarship intended to affect Khethiwe?
2. Comment on the apparent contradiction when Ms Richmond is reluctant to investigate Khethiwe’s claims of vandalism and graffiti.
3. In what ways does Ms Wilson let Khethiwe down?
4. Khethiwe confesses to writing the graffiti. How does this action shape the reader’s perception of her?
5. Comment on the fairness of the punishment given to Khethiwe.

Chapter 31: Into the Woods

Plot development

Khethiwe deeply regrets writing the graffiti about Farrah dreads seeing her at Libertas shortly, as it is almost dinner time. Rey reassures Khethiwe that she will be with her and will stand up for her.

Khethiwe realises that she left her phone in the changeroom and decides to fetch it now, partly to delay the confrontation with Farrah. Ironically, on the way to the changeroom Khethiwe encounters Farrah in the woods. Farrah is drunk, and angrily tells Khethiwe that a photo of the graffiti has been circulating around St Anne’s and other schools. Khethiwe tries to apologise, but Farrah is enraged when Khethiwe confirms that she hasn’t been suspended, and Farrah smashes an alcohol bottle on the ground.

Farrah says Khethiwe received her scholarship only as a racial quota, not because she is a talented swimmer. When Khethiwe retorts that she is a better swimmer than Farrah, Farrah starts punching her in the stomach. Khethiwe then punches Farrah in the jaw, causing her to fall onto the shattered glass. As Farrah bleeds profusely, Khethiwe screams for help.

Glossary

- **façade** (noun): the face of a building, especially the main front
- **twerp** (noun): a silly or contemptible person
- **inevitable** (adjective): unavoidable; sure to happen
- **cackle** (noun): shrill laughter
- **brittle** (adjective): hard but easily broken
- **feral** (adjective): wild, fierce, and uncontrolled
- **diaphragm** (noun): a muscle between the lungs and stomach, used to assist breathing

Themes

Khethiwe’s **friendship** with Rey remains strong as ever. When Khethiwe says she is terrified of being confronted by Farrah, Rey reassures her: *“Don’t worry, I’ll be there with you. I’ll stick up for you. And unlike you, I’m not scared of that little twerp.”* Rey is courageous to be willing to stand up to a powerful bully for her friend.

The bitter **rivalry** between Farrah and Khethiwe reaches its climax in this chapter, with each girl claiming to be the better swimmer, escalating the confrontation into a serious physical fight.



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The chapter confirms, more clearly than ever, that Farrah’s attitude and actions towards Khethiwe are fuelled by **prejudice**. She resents having her position as the star swimmer being challenged, but especially because the challenger is black and poor. Farrah’s attitude appears to be that poor people and black people should ‘know their place’. We learn that Farrah has inherited a perception held by some white South Africans that black people tend to receive undeserved preferential treatment at the expense of white people (e.g. through affirmative action). Farrah says:

“... Everyone has to be nice to you because you are poor. If you are thrown out of the school, I can imagine what the press will say: the school’s racist; poor blacks are unwelcome at privileged white school. Everything is about race in this country. How about the fact that you should be expelled because you broke the rules?”

Farrah’s comments are **ironic**, as she is the one who has just been drinking and smoking on school grounds, and she in fact broke the rules first (by bullying Khethiwe). But Farrah has never faced punishment, despite Miss Wilson directly witnessing the incident in the changeroom and despite Khethiwe complaining to Ms Richmond. Farrah is protected from punishment by her **privilege**.

Farrah’s remark that “everyone has to be nice to you because you are poor” is also **ironic**, as almost nobody has been “nice” to Khethiwe at St Anne’s (especially in the swim team). Even Ms Richmond and Miss Wilson have shown no empathy for Khethiwe’s struggles with pressure and bullying, and instead remind her that she is lucky to be at St Anne’s and should be grateful, both being “nice” to Farrah when confronted with the reality that she is a bully.

Farrah’s reference to “this country”, for the second time in the novel, confirms that her animosity against Khethiwe stems from **prejudice** against black people generally. This is underscored by her use of the word “blacks” (it is divisive and derogatory to use race or colour as a noun, rather than an adjective). Finally, Farrah deploys the deep insult that Khethiwe is a “quota”, which is designed to destroy Khethiwe’s sense of self-worth and achievement.

Questions

1. How does the description of the wooded path heighten the tension?
2. Are Farrah’s remarks about the unfair punishment given to Khethiwe justified?
3. Critically discuss how Farrah's accusation regarding Khethiwe's scholarship and swimming ability touch upon racial prejudice and stereotypes.
4. How does Farrah try to assert her power over Khethiwe?
5. Critically discuss how bullying and the impact it has on victims and perpetrators is explored in this chapter.

Chapter 32: The Letter

Plot development

The day after the fight with Farrah (which resulted in Farrah’s arm needing six stitches), Khethiwe is called into Ms Wilson’s office and told that she has been suspended from School and will shortly face a disciplinary hearing. Farrah has alleged that Khethiwe attacked her with a broken bottle.

Khethiwe spends the next week at home in Yeoville, and she receives a letter from the School giving notice of her disciplinary hearing. The letter accuses her of assaulting Farrah with a dangerous weapon, consuming alcohol on School property, leaving the dormitory at night without permission, vandalism of the restroom door, and “*not upholding the conditions of the scholarship*”.

Khethiwe shares the letter with Rey, who insists that her father, a very successful lawyer, represents Khethiwe at the hearing. Khethiwe is embarrassed for Rey’s father to find out about the allegations, but Rey is adamant, so they agree to meet at his office later that day. Rey’s father sympathises with Khethiwe and offers to represent her, but warns that the hearing is probably rigged and the School has already decided to expel Khethiwe.

Glossary

- **recuperate** (*verb*): to recover health or strength
- **sermon** (*noun*): a serious speech, especially one administering disapproval
- **refute** (*verb*): to prove (a statement or charge) to be false or incorrect
- **rigged** (*noun*): dishonestly arranged by a person to get the result they want or to give someone an unfair advantage
- **farce** (*noun*): something absurd or ridiculous, as an obvious pretence



Sandton skyline
© A Peterson (iStock)

Themes

St Anne’s displays its **institutional prejudice** by accepting Farrah’s accusations against Khethiwe as the truth without first hearing her side of the story: “*I know she [my mom] believes me, but she also knows the game is rigged. The school will believe the rich white girl. Simple as that.*” The School’s bias is confirmed by Rey’s father, Mr Modise, who delivers the sobering advice that “*hearings are often rigged before they’ve even started. The school, no doubt, has already made a decision to expel you.*”

The charges against Khethiwe are the culmination of her **rivalry** with Farrah (“*another chess move in her little game with me*”). Since the beginning, when Farrah bullied Khethiwe in the changeroom, Farrah has been deliberately provoking Khethiwe into retaliating in self-destructive ways, gradually building a case for Khethiwe to be expelled. Khethiwe realises that this was Farrah’s plan all along.

The bitterness of this rivalry is contrasted with Khethiwe’s increasingly strong **friendship** with Rey: “*Through it all, Rey has been my support system... She’s outraged on my behalf and has been rallying support from other girls in Libertas. She wants to stage a protest, even.*” While the wealth of Sandton is spotlighted in this chapter, Rey deploys her **privilege** to help her friend, by enlisting her successful lawyer father to represent Khethiwe. Mr Modise does not hesitate to offer his assistance, despite how busy or important he might be. Good people use their privilege to help others.

Questions

1. Explain how Khethiwe's suspension and the disciplinary hearing exemplifies social injustice within the school system.
2. How does Farrah manipulate the situation to her advantage?
3. Describe how Rey's friendship has helped Khethiwe.
4. Comment on the significance of Khethiwe having legal representation at her hearing.
5. Consider the last line of the chapter: "I realise I have people in my corner". Comment on the significance of this line.

Chapter 33: Into the Wilds

Plot development

Aidan invites Khethiwe to meet him at The Wilds, a nature reserve near St Anne’s. Rey and Khethiwe take an Uber to the school. On the way, Khethiwe reflects on the past few days of her suspension. She had told Pierre about it immediately, and they have spent every afternoon hanging out, as they did before she started at St Anne’s. This has helped to keep her mind off the disciplinary hearing, at least for a few hours a day. Rey finds it curious that Khethiwe has told Pierre about her suspension but not her boyfriend.

Aidan greets Khethiwe with a kiss and they walk hand-in-hand through The Wilds to his favourite spot, a forest with steel owl sculptures in the trees. Khethiwe tells Aidan about her suspension and disciplinary hearing, but he doesn’t regard it as serious and doesn’t ask her how she feels about it. They move to an area with a view of the inner city and Hillbrow skyline. Aidan remarks that it looks beautiful from here, rather than “*the shithole that it really is*”. Khethiwe is horrified by his comment, and decides that she cannot be in a relationship with someone who degrades people like this.

Glossary

- **incredulous** (*adjective*): not prepared or willing to believe (something)
- **eerie** (*adjective*): mysteriously or uncannily frightening or disturbing (esp. a place)
- **beckoning** (*verb*): summoning a person with a gesture of the hand or head
- **henchman** (*noun*): a trusted helper or follower (especially of a gang leader)
- **stencil** (*noun*): a thin sheet, of paper or metal for example, with holes cut through in the shape of letters or designs



Kudu Sculpture at The Wilds Nature Reserve
© James Delaney

Themes

Khethiwe’s deep and easy **friendship** with Pierre is contrasted against her superficial relationship with Aidan, as seen in the fact that Khethiwe told Pierre about her suspension before Aidan. Pierre is concerned and comforting, but Aidan is casual and even dismissive about the struggle Khethiwe is going through: “*Does he not care about what I am going through or does he simply not get it?*”

Aidan’s **privilege** informs his lack of concern for the seriousness of Khethiwe’s predicament, and his **prejudice** against people less fortunate than him. Khethiwe now realises that they do not truly know one another, and that she can never trust Aidan to know and understand her real life: “*I’m not going to be ashamed of who I am anymore, and sadly, I know that if I stay with him I will be. I will be questioning my value the whole time.*”

Khethiwe had in fact been ignoring a series of red flags about Aidan: “*I forgave him for kissing Farrah. I’ve ignored the uncomfortable truth that he doesn’t regret humiliating Farrah.*” Looking back on the earlier chapters, we see that Aidan is entitled, selfish and even cruel. He pressured Khethiwe into

self-destructive behaviour (leaving the Pretoria swim meet and sneaking out of Libertas) for his own preference and against her best interests. And he had no concern for the consequences Khethiwe suffered as a result. Khethiwe overlooked the red flags because she enjoyed the escape from her struggles at St Anne's, but his behaviour at The Wilds makes her realise Aidan's true character.

Aidan's words about Yeoville and its surrounds are reflective of an attitude among some privileged people that overlooks the many positive features of under-serviced areas, especially that they are generally occupied by vibrant and dynamic communities of hard-working and ambitious individuals.

Questions

1. What does Khethiwe keeping her suspension from Aidan tell the reader about their relationship?
2. Comment on the relationship Khethiwe has with Pierre.
3. Discuss Aidan's lack of concern over Khethiwe's disciplinary hearing. What does this suggest about him?
4. Comment on the impact on the reader of Aidan's opinion that Hillbrow (and surrounding areas) is a "shithole".
5. Do you think Khethiwe ending her relationship with Aidan is justified? Explain your answer.

Chapter 34: The Hearing

Plot development

As Khethiwe waits anxiously to go to her hearing, Pierre skips school to visit her and wish her luck. When Khethiwe and her mother arrive for the hearing, they are told that it has been delayed by an hour. Rey's father arrives and tries to calm Khethiwe's and her mother's nerves. Khethiwe decides to use the extra time to collect her belongings from Libertas, in case she gets expelled. There, she unexpectedly encounters Lexie, who apologises for not doing enough to stop Farrah from bullying Khethiwe. Lexie expresses hope that Khethiwe will succeed at the hearing, but says that Farrah's family is extremely influential and that Farrah claims Khethiwe's expulsion is a "done deal".

On her way back to the hearing, Khethiwe passes the pool and is overcome by the urge to take one final swim in it, even though it will make her late for the hearing. She swims one lap and instantly feels freed from her anxiety. When getting dressed, Khethiwe finds the business card of the coach from Parkview Girls, who spoke to her at Ellis Park. As Khethiwe heads towards the hearing venue, she feels defiant and triumphant.

Glossary

- **tatters** (*noun*): torn or ragged pieces, typically of fabric
- **sabotage** (*verb*): deliberately disrupt or destroy someone's efforts or progress
- **rhythmic** (*adjective*): repeated at regular intervals, forming a pattern or beat
- **dissolved** (*verb*): disintegrated or dispersed (in this context)



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Themes

The chapter opens with Khethiwe feeling uncomfortable in her St Anne's uniform, symbolising her lack of a sense of **belonging** at the school: "The uniform's stiff fabric scratches at my skin. It has that first-use feeling, where it sits uncomfortably and you need to wear it a few times before it moulds to your body. How can this be when I last wore it less than two weeks ago? It's as if my body is repelling it." This last sentence is significant: while St Anne's is trying to expel Khethiwe, it is her body that is repelling the school. This foreshadows her resolution to leave St Anne's at the end of the chapter.

Pierre's visit to Khethiwe demonstrates the depth of their **friendship**. He has always been her chief supporter and gives freely of himself to encourage her, symbolised by him giving her his lucky charm finger skateboard. Pierre's friendship is so vital as he understands Khethiwe's struggles against the system, which is rigged in favour of the privileged. This deep friendship is contrasted with Farrah's superficial friendship with Lexie, who reveals that she does not much like Farrah and is only friends with her "by default" because they have known each other since infancy.

The themes of **institutional prejudice** and **privilege vs poverty** are exposed in the school secretary's differing treatment of Khethiwe and her mother, whom she greets discourteously, and Mr Modise, whom she greets with respect, as one would expect a parent of the school to be treated.

Most importantly, the theme of **ambition and pressure** comes to a climax. Faced with the immense pressure of the looming hearing, Khethiwe initially feels like her Olympic dream is coming to an end. She tells Pierre: *“It feels like I’m up against so much and that it’s inevitable that I’ll fail.”* Pierre urges her not to give up, but the feelings of dread and despondency persist. When she goes to Libertas, Khethiwe throws away her picture of Olympic champion Katie Ledecky, suggesting that she is giving up on her ambition. But after she takes her defiant swim, and finds the business card, her ambition is rekindled and she realises that she can pursue her dreams without St Anne’s. Khethiwe places the business card alongside Pierre’s finger skateboard and the photo of her, Pierre and Elodie. This is a signal that Khethiwe is going to pursue a future in which she can have both success and belonging:

I do have options. I do not need to beg St Anne’s to keep me. I do not need to sit through a charade. I will do this on my own terms, and I will succeed. Without this school and their privilege and prejudice.

Questions

1. Comment on the significance of Khethiwe feeling uncomfortable in her school uniform.
2. Khethiwe’s perception of St Anne’s has changed. How is this shown in her conversation with Pierre before the hearing?
3. Lexie confesses that she erased the message on the bathroom stall. How is the reader positioned to view this action from her?
4. Comment on Khethiwe’s decision to swim before the hearing.
5. Critically comment on the realisation Khethiwe makes at the end of the chapter.

Epilogue: Nine Months Later

Plot development

Khethiwe is attending the first swim meet of the following year, at Ellis Park. She is now a pupil at Parkview Girls, where she feels welcome and supported by the diverse team and the coach, Deena. Pierre (who is now Khethiwe's boyfriend) arrives to support her, along with her mother. Rey is on her way. Khethiwe sees Farrah but does not let this unsettle her. Khethiwe is excited for her races, and the future that lies ahead of her.

Glossary

- **aquamarine** (*adjective*): a shade of blue-green colour resembling the gemstone aquamarine
- **scepticism** (*abstract noun*): doubt or disbelief
- **parkour** (*noun*): a sport of moving quickly through obstacles by running, jumping and climbing
- **mesmerise** (*noun*): to captivate or fascinate someone



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Themes

Khethiwe is finally freed from her bitter **rivalry** with Farrah: *“I turn to focus on the stands to my left and think about all the people who have come to cheer me on. I am not alone in this. She has no power over me anymore.”*

The **competitiveness** Khethiwe experienced in the St Anne's team is contrasted with the amity in her new team: *“We laugh at each other's jokes in a good-natured way; there's a complete absence of that bitter competitive undertone that I've always associated with swim meets. These jokes aren't laced with subtle attacks, sneers and smug looks.”*

As a result, Khethiwe finally feels a sense of **belonging**: *“Here I blend in, seamlessly fitting in with my team”*. This newfound belonging makes Khethiwe feel comfortable inviting her friends and mother to watch her perform. She no longer feels like an outsider or imposter at Ellis Park, as she did in the beginning of the book. She has as much right to be competing, and to be supported, as anyone else.

As it has throughout the novel, **friendship** plays a major role in Khethiwe's wellbeing. We learn that she is still good friends with Rey, and that Rey has also become friends with Pierre. This shows that Khethiwe has allowed her two worlds to come together, and is no longer ashamed to share her real life with Rey. Khethiwe and Lexie greet each other warmly and wish each other luck, despite being on opposing teams. We see that Lexie supports the Black Lives Matter movement. The impression is created that Khethiwe may have even found friendship and belonging in the St Anne's swim team if not for Farrah's prejudice and bullying.

Earlier in the novel, Khethiwe was reluctant to let her friends watch her compete, as she was afraid she would fail and disappoint them. But now she finds the presence of her friends and her mother a source of encouragement and comfort.

All of this, as well as Deena's more gentle coaching style, has helped Khethiwe to cope better with **pressure**: *"I don't feel the weight of expectation burdening me. The aquamarine pool that once taunted me, is now tamed."* This alleviation of pressure allows Khethiwe to refocus on her **ambition**:

Even though it's a regular Olympic-sized pool, to me it is infinite. It's the hope and the dream of the Yeoville girl who won't give up.

Questions

1. In what ways is this chapter similar to the first swim meet of the year (as seen Chapter 3)?
2. Describe Khethiwe's state of mind in this chapter. How is this a contrast to previous chapters?
3. Comment on Khethiwe's description of the swimming pool as "infinite".
4. How do you feel about learning that Pierre and Khethiwe are dating?
5. What have you learned from the themes of this book?

SECTION C: ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES

A Note on Literature Essays

The purpose of a literary analysis essay is to carefully examine a work of literature or an aspect of a work of literature. As with any analysis, this requires you to break the subject down into its component parts. Examining the different elements of a piece of literature is not an end in itself, but rather a process to help you better appreciate and understand the work of literature as a whole.

A literature essay is NOT a retelling of the plot of the novel or play. It is an analysis of the work. The essay topic will guide you on what aspect of the novel you need to examine and analyse. The best way to write the BODY of the essay is to follow the **PEEL** method (Point, Evidence, Evaluation and Link to argument).

Below is a helpful guide on the LANGUAGE used in literature essays to help guide you and keep your essay focused on the elements of a literature essay.

PPOINT

The writer ...

argues	evokes	builds	exaggerates	persuades	signifies	gives a sense	indicates
recognises	conveys	highlights	represents	depicts	implies	reveals	emphasises

EEVIDENCE

This idea is supported by...	The idea is illustrated by...
Some evidence of this...	The character / writer states...
When the character... the reader witnesses...	This is shown when...

EEVALUATION / EXPLANATION OF EVIDENCE

Ask yourself: What is the writer trying to tell us? What emotions are conveyed? How does it tell us about the character or theme? How does the writer use language?

The word/phrase/quote...implies...	The reader is positioned to...
The use of... conveys...	The writer uses... to emphasise...
An interpretation of this is...	This could imply...

LLINK TO ARGUMENT

At the end of the paragraph, you must link all the points made in the paragraph to your thesis statement. Words/phrases to use here: *Thus, the writer is conveying...; Therefore, the reader understands that...*

Question 1: Essay

Topic 1

“The Swim Team” explores the ways in which institutions uphold classism and racism. Discuss to what extent you agree with the statement in a well-structured essay of 400-450 words.

NOTE: A model essay example for this question is given in Section D.

Question 2: Contextual

[Suggested answers are found in Section D]

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow:

As we wait in single file to go to the starting blocks, Farrah leans in close to me. So close her cheek brushes against my ear. So close that when she whispers in my ear, I can hear every venomous word clearly enunciated even though the noise from the spectators and the music blaring from the speakers are deafening. I hear the sinister edge cutting through her sing song tone.

“Whatever you do, don’t false start. That would be literally the most embarrassing thing ever.”

It’s like she crept into my brain and listened to my fear, watched the images of me making a false start that have been looping in my mind ever since the first girl was disqualified.

False starts happen mostly to the inexperienced. Even Miss Wilson told me earlier in the week, not to be too hard on myself if I did get disqualified, it being my first time. Then she launched into a sad story about when she had a false start, but by then I had stopped listening, all I could think about was the humiliation I would have to endure if it happened to me at the first meet.

The other thing Miss Wilson said was that I need to focus on the race, above all else. Focus on the opposite end of the pool, listen for the beeper, don’t let fear govern. Now, all I can do is think about the false start that I’m about to commit.

The beeper signals for us to get onto our starting blocks. My bare feet touch the wet rough pavement and I can’t believe that this is actually happening. The starting block looks like a huge white tower in front of me. Will I even be able to get up to it? Everyone else around me is already on the starting blocks and I scramble to get to it before I’m disqualified for being late. My foot curls over the edge and I try to block out the pounding in my head that keeps chanting the same thing: “Don’t false start, Khethiwe. Don’t false start.”

[Chapter 3]

- 2.1 Place this extract in context. (3)
- 2.2 Explain the effect Farrah’s words have on Khethiwe. (2)
- 2.3 Does Miss Wilson play a supportive role towards Khethiwe in the novel as a whole? Critically discuss your answer by referring to this extract and the novel as a whole. (3)
- 2.4 Using this extract as a starting point, critically discuss how Farrah sets out to sabotage Khethiwe’s success. (3)
- 2.5 Comment on the role pressure plays in impeding Khethiwe’s success. (4)

[15 marks]

Question 3: Essay

Topic 2

In “The Swim Team”, Khethiwe struggles to feel a sense of belonging. However, by the end of the novel, she finds her place in the world. In an essay of 400-450 words, discuss the validity of this statement.

NOTE: Suggested answers for this question are given in Section D.

Question 4: Contextual

[Suggested answers are found in Section D]

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow:

“Why did you speak to Farrah like that? It was horrible.” I can’t seem to get the image of her devastated face out of my mind, and the unnecessary cruelty that caused it. I felt those words like they were hurled at me.

“Are you kidding me? Didn’t you hear what she said? She just told us that the only reason she kissed me was to get at you. She deserved all of it and I meant every word I said.” His face is a picture of defiance and a hardness settles into his eyes. There was no burning regret or shame eating away at him. He believes he has done nothing wrong.

“Would you ever speak to me like that?” I challenge him. My arms are folded across my chest.

“Of course not. You would never do what she did.” He looks genuinely confused as to why I would think this or feel any sympathy for her. “Anyway, I wanted to tell you properly, without all those people, about what happened that night. Can you at least give me a chance to explain it all?”

There’s a battle between my emotions, and they’re tugging me in different directions. Should I ignore his abhorrent behaviour towards Farrah? Is there any excuse for it? Can I forgive him for what he did to me? I feel torn, yet I lean towards the thoughts that say: Give me a good enough reason to absolve you.

So, I nod.

“I was stupid and totally off my face. You can see how drunk I am in that video. I was barely conscious. And the whole night she wouldn’t leave me alone. Afterwards, I kept thinking to myself that it seemed like she was on a mission and I was her target – and now I know I am right. The next morning when I woke up, besides having a killer hangover, I felt so sick at the thought of what I had done.”

“But why did you do it?” My voice is small, distant, and I hate how desperate I sound. “And more than that: why didn’t you simply confess it?”

[...]

Aidan runs his hands through the tangles of his blonde hair and shuffles uncomfortably, then he says, “For some reason, and maybe you can tell me why, things went all weird between us after our midnight date. You stopped messaging me. You started ignoring my texts. I didn’t know what I did wrong.”

[Chapter 25]

- 4.1 Place this extract in context. (3)
- 4.2 Comment on Khethiwe's reaction to what Aidan had said to Farrah. (3)
- 4.3 Comment on Aidan's lack of remorse for his treatment towards Farrah. (3)
- 4.4 Discuss Khethiwe's complex and contradictory emotions towards Aidan in this extract. (3)
- 4.5 Refer to the following line: "it seemed like she [Farrah] was on a mission and I was her target." Critically assess the validity of this statement by referring to the novel as a whole. (3)

[15 marks]

Question 5: Essay

Topic 3

Khethiwe experiences extreme pressure to succeed and that often negatively impacts her performance. Discuss the validity of the statement in a well-structured essay of 400-450 words.

NOTE: Suggested answers for this question are given in Section D.

Question 6: Contextual

[Suggested answers are found in Section D]

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow:

"Are you ready?" Pierre asks.

I take a deep breath. "Honestly, I don't know."

"You've been practising with your friend's dad for days now. You've got this."

It's true. I have been at Rey's dad's office for the last four days now. Before this, I'd only been to Sandton like once or twice (to the mall, obv's). Now it's like I'm a regular commuter. Mr Modise has been amazing and I am so grateful to him for everything he's done to help. Every little detail he picks up on and presses me further. He's picked so many holes through Farrah's statement it's in tatters now.

"I know, and he's really good. I googled him the other day and you have no idea how many well-known and important cases he's worked on. He's basically the rock star of lawyers. Having him in my corner will help. But, I don't know, I just have a bad feeling about this."

"Bad feeling? How?"

"Since I've been home, I've been thinking a lot about everything that's happened at St Anne's. The moment I signed those papers, Ms Richmond warned me that the scholarship can be taken away from me. Every swim meet I'm told – in not so many words – that I need to perform. From the time I met Farrah, she has done everything in her power to sabotage me. It feels like I'm up against so much and that it's inevitable that I'll fail. People say that all you need is to work hard and then you'll make a success with your life. But that's not true. Sometimes, no matter how hard you work, there are things – and people – who are pulling you down and not letting you succeed."

Pierre nods and is silent for a moment. “True that. It’s just so much harder – if not impossible – for someone from our background to make it in life. The system won’t let us succeed.”

“Exactly, and I’m tired of fighting the system.”

“Khethiwe, you can’t give up now. I’m serious. You have to fight this.” There’s an urgency in his voice, and I’m surprised at how strongly he feels about this. It matters to him that I win this battle.

[Chapter 34]

- 6.1 Account for Pierre’s question at the beginning of the extract. (3)
- 6.2 By referring to this extract, explain how Khethiwe’s friendship with Rey has been invaluable to her. (3)
- 6.3 Comment on Pierre’s role in Khethiwe’s life at this point in the novel. (3)
- 6.4 Consider Khethiwe’s speech about how hard it is for her to succeed. How does this observation from Khethiwe reveal the failure of society and those in power? (3)
- 6.5 Critically discuss Pierre’s urge to Khethiwe to ‘fight’ and not give up. (3)

[15 marks]

SECTION D: MODEL ANSWERS

Answers to chapter questions

Chapter 1

1. She is uncomfortable changing around people she doesn't know and worries that they might judge her body.
2. Khethiwe is poor; she is on a scholarship unlike the girls whose parents are wealthy. The girls' clothes and perfume are branded. Their accents and perfect teeth reveal their status and privilege too.
3. Khethiwe feels insecure about her background, however, she tries to outwardly show that she does not care/is immune to their taunts.
4. Khethiwe reveals her strength of character as well as her impulsivity. She shows Farrah that she is unafraid when she challenges her about her swimming ability and also calls her a 'mediocre white girl'. Her impulsivity/rashness is conveyed when she bumps Farrah's injured shoulder. Immediately we are told she feels 'remorse' for her actions which does suggest she attacked in the heat of the moment, but later regrets her actions. This foreshadows the fight in a much later chapter.
5. Here Khethiwe is comparing her teammates to 'crazy violent thugs' because of the way they intimidate her. The difference between inmates and the girls is that they are disguised through the expensive clothes they wear, making one unaware of how intimidating and dangerous they can be.

Chapter 2

1. Celine, Farrah, Rey, Lexie and Camilla. Lexie and Celine are Farrah's close friends.
2. The biggest difference is that it is quiet once the lights go off, whereas in Yeoville there are noises from the flats and the streets outside.
3. Perhaps Rey is trying to imply to Rey that they are not friends/ she doesn't want to appear different (like Khethiwe is) from the rest of her roommates and thus assimilates by speaking only English.
4. The chapter title 'freedom' suggests Libertas – and St Anne's – is supposed to be a place where she is 'free' from the constraints of her poverty. It has green fields, every sporting facility imaginable, beautiful rose gardens, all of which free her from the grime of the area in which she lives. St Anne's is where she has the potential to become an Olympic swimmer which will free her from poverty. However, she realises she feels trapped in a place she does not feel welcome – in other words, she does not feel free here at all. It could be considered ironic.
5. Truth – it suggests that the truth is an important value at the school. Yet lies are believed over the truth later in the novel. Freedom – Khethiwe finds real freedom once she leaves the school. She feels trapped at the school and is not able to fulfil her potential. Justice – in the novel, there is a lot of injustice shown by the institution. Khethiwe is vilified by the school, and forced to go through with a farcical disciplinary hearing.

Chapter 3

1. There are very few people of colour at the school meet. She describes the scene being 'suffocated by a sea of white', suggesting that she feels the racial divide. This makes her feel pressure to perform as one of the few people of colour – as though she is a representative of her race. In addition, there is the harmful racial stereotype which she must overturn.
2. Khethiwe's mother's absence highlights her difference from her teammates whose parents are there to support them. Her mother is unable to attend because she is working on the weekend in order to make enough money to survive while wealthy parents are able to take time off on the weekend. In addition, Khethiwe does not ask her mother to come out of embarrassment. This idea is supported by Khethiwe's memory of how out of place (and 'poor') her mother looked at the principal's office when signing the scholarship contract.
3. Her scholarship sets her apart from her teammates as she needs to perform in order to fulfil the obligations of the contract she signed. It adds another layer of pressure because if she does not perform, she may lose her scholarship and, in her eyes, her dreams of becoming an Olympic swimmer.

4. Farrah intentionally leaves her out of the team ring before the swim meet. It is Lexie who encourages Khethiwe to join them, which creates tension between the friends.
5. The swim meet reveals that Khethiwe is highly conscious of the class and race difference between herself and the other swimmers. She also puts a lot of pressure on herself as one of the few black swimmers as well as being on a scholarship.

Chapter 4

1. She feels like an 'imposter' in the team and decides against speaking up during the debriefing because of this.
2. She is made to feel like an outsider/outcast, much like Piggy is in the novel, *Lord of the Flies*. She is ignored by the others as they discuss their plans for the evening in front of her which suggests that leaving her out is intentional and targeted. To Khethiwe, the bullying by Farrah and the others could even mean something dangerous, considering Piggy's demise in the book.
3. Farrah bullies the other girls too. One girl implied she might not be able to come out with them and Farrah's comment ('But you're still going.') coerces the girl into going out with them. Also, Celine expresses an interest in Thomas, and Farrah's tone of voice implies that he is 'off limits', leaving Celine feeling embarrassed. This shows the control Farrah wields over them.
4. The girls change their demeanour immediately in his presence. The writer says: "No longer glaring at each other, a mask slips on and they're sweet, glittering girls with open smiling faces". The word "mask" implies they are hiding their true feelings and they are pretending to be happy.
5. The last sentence ends on an optimistic note for Khethiwe. Aidan's interest in her is flattering and it boosts her self-confidence. Seeing the others' astounded faces at his interest amuses and delights Khethiwe. He does not know Khethiwe's background so his interest in her is purely on what he has seen which for her is liberating as most of her peers see her through the lens of the scholarship girl.

Chapter 5

1. Most boarders are weekly boarders. The few who are left are those whose parents live in another country.
2. The rumour taints her perception of Aidan. She finds what he did inappropriate and is repulsed by it. Although attracted to him, she now has reservations about his character. He also treated Farrah poorly which suggests that he does not treat his love interests well/appropriately.
3. It could perhaps be that race is a taboo subject at the school – something that you don't mention or speak about. Rey seems to be uncomfortable addressing the topic, perhaps from her own insecurities.
4. In the chapter the writer conveys how gossip is often passed on, changed or adjusted by whoever tells the story and could be completely untrue. The comment being made is that perhaps one should not believe everything they are told. Gossip can be harmful and damaging – in this case it damages both Farrah and Aidan's reputation.
5. At the end of the chapter, Khethiwe and Rey walk out "hand in hand" and Khethiwe comments that she has finally found a "friend" and an "ally". This is significant as Khethiwe has been feeling isolated and excluded, particularly in the swim team, so this moment with Rey signifies a sense of belonging for her.

Chapter 6

1. Her ideal father is kind and gentle. She pictures a father who would give advice and help guide her through life. Also someone who has a sense of humour. Overall, it is a father who is approachable and wise. She doesn't mention wealth or success (besides a 'nice house'), which shows it's emotional support she seeks in a father.
2. Perhaps if she had this idealised version of a father in her life, she might feel less insecure about herself and her ability. She would seek his advice instead of making unwise decisions.
3. There is a nostalgic mood at the end of the chapter. This is conveyed in the longing for her simpler older life with her friends Elodie and Pierre. The image of buying ice-cream connotes childhood innocence which contrasts with the pressure she is under to succeed.

4. Having witnessed his family life, she longs for a family that is noisy, chaotic but full of love. This is seen in the snippets Khethiwe shares with the reader of Elodie and Pierre's home: the mother lovingly cooking, the friendly banter between siblings. It creates a perception of a happy, loving home.
5. Khethiwe is paranoid that Rey is offering the bedspread for ulterior motives – that she is ashamed to be friends with a 'scholarship girl'. The reader might find this absurd, however, Khethiwe's previous encounters with other girls at the school has left her feeling vulnerable and mistrustful. Khethiwe is also someone who doesn't like to be pitied and she might perceive this kindness as Rey feeling sorry for Khethiwe. Khethiwe's white bedspread is a stark contrast to the others and Rey's generosity is probably to make Khethiwe feel less of an outsider (which ironically is what she wants).

Chapter 7

1. Swimming is now associated with winning and fulfilling her scholarship requirements, and the endless repetitive training sessions have made swimming less fun for her and more of a job or commitment.
2. Khethiwe is empathetic. She feels deeply for mistreatment of others and believes that Farrah was treated badly by Aidan.
3. It is a 'not so subtle warning' to stay away from Aidan. Farrah makes the comment about Aidan and then stares intently at Khethiwe with a 'hard' look in her eyes.
4. He seems to be a private person as he doesn't post very many pictures of himself. Although the pictures that are posted are with 'jock' type boys who are hypermasculine and this creates a negative impression of him.
5. There is a sinister, ominous atmosphere with the description of the wooded path. Khethiwe describes it as creepy. It is 'quiet' and 'secluded' which makes her uncomfortable. She releases a sigh of relief when she is out of the path and the noise and chatter contrast the silence of the woods. This foreshadows a later event.

Chapters 8 & 9

1. Rey and Rufaro whisper to one another and then go to speak to Lexie without Khethiwe, so naturally she is unsure whether to trust them. She has only begun her friendship with Rey so she doesn't know if she can truly trust her. She is paranoid but it seems justified to be unsure in this instance.
2. Her insecurity stops her from trusting anyone, and for always suspecting ulterior motives from others. Her paranoia is clear in this chapter when she suspects that Rey and Rufaro are in a plot to humiliate her with Farrah which is absurd. It makes her incredibly insecure.
3. He seems to be interested in Khethiwe. His light-hearted joking is shown in the text messages.
4. She is still reticent due to the gossip Rey told her about Aidan and his behaviour towards Farrah. She doesn't know he very well either, so she probably wants to get to know him better before meeting up with him.
5. The emojis are part of their flirting. It emphasises they are joking with each other. When Aidan first sends her a message, she worries about it because there is no emoji which she finds unusual. However, as they text with each other further, he does use emojis.

Chapter 10

1. The office is very cramped with a lot of clutter, and it makes her feel claustrophobic.
2. She calls her in to tell her Ms Richmond will be at the next swim meet. The underlying message which Khethiwe senses is that she needs to perform well at the meet because the person who awarded her the scholarship will be assessing her performance.
3. Khethiwe performs well in training but struggles under the pressure to win during swim meets when the stakes are high. Her confidence and sense of self is low thus, she crumbles under the pressure and weight of expectation. Sport is also a mental game, and one needs to have confidence which Khethiwe lacks at this point.
4. Khethiwe starts to spiral and her anxiety takes hold of her. She is unable to think clearly as she has so many intrusive thoughts bombarding her. She does not even hear everything Ms Wilson says, and she walks through the wooded path in a complete daze. It is only when she texts Aidan that she is able to calm herself down.

5. With Aidan, she doesn't have to worry about being perceived as 'the scholarship girl' and he doesn't know about how she is falling short of expectations when it comes to swimming. It provides a fantasy world for her to escape to where there are no expectations, preconceived ideas about her, or pressure put on her.

Chapter 11

1. It makes her anxious and apprehensive.
2. This is yet another instance of Farrah bullying Khethiwe. She does so to unsettle Khethiwe in the hope that she will perform badly in the race.
3. Khethiwe leaves because she is devastated that she lost her race, and she feels like she cannot cope with the rest of the swim meet. This shows that Khethiwe doesn't want to deal with the problem head-on, instead she wants to forget all about it. It suggests she does not have the right coping mechanisms in place.
4. Hill Crest swimming pool is an old building, built during apartheid-era and has not been updated or modernised. All the signs are old and in Afrikaans. The apartheid-era building and signs make Khethiwe, a black swimmer, feel unwelcome. It has a negative impact on her sense of belonging and the hostile environment probably contributes to her dismal performance.
5. The pressure to succeed, particularly because of Mrs Richmond's presence, creates self-doubt in Khethiwe which is why she is unable to do well in the race. This reveals how detrimental and unhealthy it can be to have so much pressure placed on a young person. This contributes to the overall development of the novel's theme of ambition and pressure. The book places criticism on the scholarship system as it puts unnecessary pressure on students to perform which often has a damaging effect on the mental health of the student.

Chapter 12

1. She has lost yet another race and Ms Richmond was present. She is completely overwhelmed by feelings of failure.
2. Khethiwe has seen crying as a weakness. She comments that when your life is hard, you cry less as you become 'numb' to life's blows. – this shows us that she sees crying as a luxury. She hasn't allowed herself to be vulnerable in a long time. Now, she is showing this vulnerability and it makes her realise that crying is not necessarily a weakness and can have a positive effect on your mental health.
3. Khethiwe's mother may come across as unfeeling towards young Khethiwe's anguish and anxiety, especially as she scolded her and did not give her any reassurance. However, one can view this as Khethiwe's mother being forced into a position where she had to stay late at work and she probably felt that she needed to 'teach' Khethiwe to be tough because there might be other times when she comes home late. However, her love for her daughter is shown when Khethiwe notes that her mother held her a little tighter that night. Her mother perhaps is not one who often shows affection.
4. The past incident hardened Khethiwe and made her see crying as something that only small children were allowed to do. Crying showed weakness and vulnerability and it made Khethiwe think those are traits that need to be hidden from everyone.
5. Khethiwe's contemplation to go back to the swim meet reveals that crying had a positive effect on her mindset. In fact, she said it was cathartic – a release of emotions. The crying made her breathe deeply which had a calming effect on her. It changed her perspective about the swim meet – instead of giving up, she decides to try again after her failure.

Chapter 13

1. Losing the swimming race.
2. She thinks there is less pressure when texting as you get more time to compose a response, and you can use emojis to express your emotions. In real life there are awkward silences, and you need to be able to read the other person's body language.
3. Khethiwe wants to spend time with Aidan, and his disapproving and upset attitude when she says no at first, pressures her into saying yes. However, she is conflicted because she knows that she will be in trouble for leaving the swim meet and not competing in the rest of her races and that she needs to face her troubles head-on rather than hiding away.

4. Aidan does not seem to understand the consequences of ditching the swim meet. This could partly be because he isn't aware that she is on a scholarship and it could jeopardise her place in the school. He suggests that there are many more swim meets so skipping one will not matter. Although he himself plays school cricket, he doesn't seem to comprehend how important it is that Khethiwe stays and competes in the rest of the races and that she might face the coach's wrath.
5. Aidan's demeanour is described as having changed from a 'friendly, cajoling' manner to one that is a lot colder and harder. He pressures her to go with him. On the one hand, he does want to make her feel better – he did see she had been crying – and he thinks this might 'cheer' her up. However, it could also be perceived as a selfish act on his part because he ignores her anxiety at the implications of leaving the swim meet and it seems to the reader that he wants to go to get ice-cream so he can spend time with her.

Chapter 14

1. She is worried that Aidan will see her differently, that he'll treat her differently. The reader is positioned to view this reluctance as Khethiwe's insecurity at her class and position in school.
2. Aidan is not on a scholarship and therefore does not understand that choosing to skip the swim meet could mean that her scholarship is rescinded. This shows his privilege – he doesn't quite understand the implications.
3. They are closer. Khethiwe has told him she is on a scholarship and Aidan has spoken about the parental pressure he faces at home with his father wanting him to play cricket. Aidan also is supportive when Khethiwe is worried about facing her coach. He holds her hand and is willing to go with her to the coach.
4. Her teammates are outwardly hostile to her and the coach expresses her great disappointment that she prioritised seeing a boy over swimming in the meet. Khethiwe thinks she hears Celine make a comment about her being a 'slag' which is a sexist term and used to make Khethiwe feel ashamed of herself.
5. Khethiwe could possibly be kicked off the swim team or suspended. The fact that the coach says she has to speak to her on Monday and not wear her 'swimsuit' suggest that she will not be allowed to swim during practise.

Chapter 15

1. She is dreading speaking to Ms Wilson and very anxious about the possibility that she will be kicked off the swim team. She is in Ms Wilson's office as she skipped her swim meet races and instead went out with Aidan.
2. Ms Wilson emphasises that one mustn't give up if one fails and that she is on a scholarship which could be taken away from her. She makes Khethiwe repeat the saying on the poster in her office: 'Winners never quit and quitters never win'. This makes Khethiwe realise that she cannot let down the coach again and adds enormous pressure on her. She regrets her decision to leave the swim meet and wishes she hadn't done it.
3. The contract clearly states that the scholarship may be terminated at the discretion of the school if she is not performing to the required standard. This must place a lot of pressure on Khethiwe to perform well. Khethiwe repeats sentences from the contract to herself after a poor performance which clearly indicates the burden she has to carry and the overwhelming pressure she faces to succeed.
4. Farrah suggests that the only reason Ms Wilson did not kick Khethiwe off the swim team is because she is poor and she felt sorry for her. This jibe at Khethiwe's class is what causes the conflict as well as the racist undertones of the word "ghetto".
5. Rey is courageous enough to stand up against Farrah's bullying of Khethiwe and her coded racism. She calls Farrah out for her comments which leads to her getting in trouble with the teacher. Lexie, on the other hand, is silent during the incident. It is only afterwards that she gives Khethiwe support which is ineffectual and cowardly of her. Lexie is friends with Farrah, so Khethiwe is doubtful of the sincerity of the support.

Chapter 16

1. Khethiwe sees Rey as a true friend because she defended her against Farrah's attack the previous night. When Khethiwe tries to apologise for getting her in trouble, Rey dismisses her fears by telling her that they are 'friends'. Farrah's confrontation causes Rey and Khethiwe to become closer.

2. Khethiwe has to use the computer labs to type out her essays for school while Rey (and everyone else) has their own laptop. In addition, Rey seems oblivious to this and asks Khethiwe why she would want to go to the 'creepy' computer lab while Khethiwe is grateful for access to it.
3. Farrah is able to avoid punishment for her racist outburst because her parents are influential at the school. This shows how wealthy people, those with privilege, are often able to use their power (and money) to avoid accountability. It is not even clear if the school investigated the racist remarks made by Farrah which is what should have happened. The school props up privilege and suggests equality and justice are not values the school adheres to.
4. The team seems to side with Farrah, crowding around her while they purposefully exclude Khethiwe. A comment is even made about Khethiwe having body odour. This must impact Khethiwe's sense of self, sense of belonging, and her identity.
5. Aidan pressures Khethiwe to go on a midnight 'date' with her, which includes sneaking out of the boarding house at night. Khethiwe feels 'dread' and knows that she has made a 'mistake', yet she doesn't decline the offer from Aidan. Khethiwe being unable to say no to Aidan shows her lack of agency and more importantly, a lack of self-esteem. As she explains in the chapter, she feels like Aidan, and her relationship with him, is 'the only thing keeping' her 'sane and she will do anything to hold onto it – including agreeing to do something as risky as sneaking out at night which could jeopardise her spot at the school.

Chapter 17

1. Rey tries to dissuade Khethiwe from going, knowing that it is an unwise decision which could land her in a lot of trouble. When that doesn't work, she tells Khethiwe to call her if anything goes wrong. This shows that she cares for Khethiwe and wants her to be safe.
2. Khethiwe is grateful for Rey's friendship. She also feels guilty that she doesn't follow Rey's advice not to sneak out of Libertas because Khethiwe is conscious of the fact that Rey is right – it is an unwise idea.
3. Aidan tells Khethiwe that the reason he continued to see Farrah even though he wasn't keen on her was because he worried that the boys at his school would question his sexuality. Thus the reader is positioned to view boys' schools as generally intolerant to homosexuality and that there is a strong emphasis on masculinity, which is revealed by the fact that the rugby captain is always the head boy.
4. Aidan explains to Khethiwe how guilty he felt for 'ghosting' Farrah after he ended it with her, and that the reason he did anything with Farrah was because he was pressured into it by his friends. This would change the reader's view of Aidan who might have seen him as cruel in his behaviour towards Farrah. Here he is seen as 'flawed' and the fact that he acknowledges his bad behaviour makes the reader see him in a less judgemental light.
5. Khethiwe thinks that Aidan might not understand the racial undertones and the subtle racism displayed by Farrah because he is white too. She fears that he would dismiss her perception of the rivalry between her and Farrah. Perhaps she is correct in thinking this way as racism claims are often dismissed by white people, or perhaps she is wrong and has judged Aidan too quickly, as he hasn't given her any reason to believe that he would dismiss her concerns.

Chapter 18

1. The reader has been under the impression that Khethiwe and Pierre have a platonic relationship and are very good friends. However, with the news that Pierre and Khethiwe have kissed, the reader now sees that their relationship has the potential to become a romantic one.
2. Farrah's tapping on the metallic surface of the kitchen table, and Khethiwe at first being too 'terrified' to turn around, heightens the tension. The word 'sinister' to describe the tapping further gives this scene an ominous atmosphere.
3. This chapter yet again reveals that Rey is a good friend. Rey is worried when she is unable to contact Khethiwe so she goes downstairs to look for her, and that is when she sees Farrah in the kitchen with Khethiwe. She is immediately supportive of Khethiwe and tries to get Farrah to back down, although unsuccessfully. She is the voice of reason in the conversation, however, Farrah refuses to listen to her.
4. Farrah wanting Khethiwe to stop seeing Aidan could be her way of exerting power over Khethiwe and a way of making her life miserable. She is under the wrong impression that Khethiwe would be in trouble for sneaking out, and thus wants to punish Khethiwe by another means. She probably knows that Khethiwe wants to be with Aidan so this deal would make her 'suffer'. Alternatively, perhaps she is still hurting over Aidan's treatment of her and this is her way of getting revenge on him.

5. Khethiwe agrees that she will stop seeing Aidan in exchange for Farrah not exposing her sneaking out. She does this because she is on a final warning (although Farrah is not aware of this), and if Ms Wilson found out about this, she would be kicked off the team. Khethiwe is in a difficult position, so the reader should view this decision as Khethiwe's only way out – especially as Farrah is not listening to reason and is so determined to ruin Khethiwe's happiness. Some readers may think that Khethiwe is weak, however this might be a bit harsh.

Chapter 19

1. She wasn't filled with doubt as she stood on the starting block. Instead, she was focused and in control. She was able to visualise herself winning. She didn't allow negative thoughts control her mind for the first time at a swim meet.
2. The win boosts her self-esteem. She mentions that she 'finally' feels like she 'belongs' and that she has 'proven' herself. This suggests that she has been measuring her self-worth against her performance at the swim meets. Khethiwe also thinks about how Ms Wilson will react, which suggests that she wants her approval and is looking forward to receiving it. This could convey to the reader that Khethiwe is basing her self-worth on others' perception of her.
3. There is muted celebration for her win. No-one comes up to congratulate her, and although she does receive some recognition by her team, it comes across as insincere. This lack of warmth reinforces a sense of exclusion and the confidence gained by the win begins to fade quickly. It makes one question what Khethiwe has to do in order to be welcomed by the team.
4. Khethiwe is conflicted as she knows that the St Anne's is a prestigious school which has state of the art equipment and facilities while Parkview is a public school and therefore will have less to offer. However, Parkview's swim team is diverse, and Khethiwe feels she might feel more comfortable there and that she might feel a sense of belonging there. She is not just in a minority at St Anne's, she is the only person of colour in her team.
5. She is probably surprised to see him and a little bit embarrassed as she has been 'ghosting' him. It must be an awkward situation.

Chapter 20

1. She doesn't want to hurt Aidan's feelings. She is ghosting him because she needs to end their relationship but doesn't know how to do it. She never expected to see him at the swim meet and is unprepared to answer his questions. Thus, she lies to him.
2. Khethiwe does like Aidan. They had an enjoyable date which ended in a kiss, and she wants to continue their relationship. She is tempted to break the deal with Farrah because she likes him so much. However, the threat to her scholarship is real and the risk of Farrah speaking out is too great.
3. The reader would feel sympathy for Aidan, as he seems to genuinely like her and is hurt by her lack of response to his messages. She has not been forthright with him and this makes him feel uncertain about what is happening between them. The reader would feel that Aidan deserves to know where he stands with her.
4. Farrah is goading and taunting Khethiwe, knowing that Khethiwe cannot go to the get-together because of the deal they made. She purposefully implies that Khethiwe is making excuses not to come to the get-together to further damage her relationship with Aidan. She manipulates Aidan into inviting her, in front of Khethiwe, exerting her control and power in the situation.
5. This line conveys Farrah as a cunning and scheming person. It suggests that Farrah will continue to bully and harm Khethiwe in any way that she can. Khethiwe 'shivers' at the thought, which gives the reader an ominous and foreboding feeling.

Chapter 21

1. The 'long winding' driveway, the 'manicured shrubs', the 'sparkling aqua-blue pool' all suggest a home that is well-maintained, spacious and beautiful.
2. Khethiwe comparing her home to Rey's has a negative impact on her mindset. It makes her feel insecure, even with a friend. She states that she would 'never, never' bring Rey to her house, which shows that she is embarrassed by her poverty.
3. Rey's father is very warm and welcoming to Khethiwe. He shows interest in her by asking her questions and he helps her carry her bags. He typifies the kind of father she longs for.

4. Although Rey does not approve of Aidan, she knows that Khethiwe likes him and so she helps her come up with a plan so that Khethiwe can continue her relationship with him. When Farrah sends Khethiwe a message, it is Rey who opens the message as she is too scared to do it.
5. Farrah wants to upset and derail Khethiwe, especially after she won her race that day. It is clearly a calculated move by Farrah to kiss Aidan as she made someone film it for her. Her sending the video is clearly to destroy any relationship Aidan and Khethiwe have. The reader is positioned to view Farrah as cruel and scheming.

Chapter 22

1. She feels mostly betrayed and hurt by Aidan's actions. She doesn't spend a lot of emotional energy on Farrah's involvement as this behaviour is expected from her but not from Aidan whom she has an emotional connection. Khethiwe watching the video repeatedly is harmful and an unhealthy coping mechanism.
2. Rey shows that she is a good friend. She asks Khethiwe how she is feeling, tries to distract and make her feel better by having some ice-cream.
3. Khethiwe is upset with Aidan and does not see a future with him. He did not confess to her what he did, and she is the one who had to confront him. She is betrayed and feels that he is not the person she thought he was.
4. Yet again, Farrah uses this as an opportunity to taunt and bully Khethiwe. She purposefully speaks about Aidan in front of Khethiwe and even suggests that she watch her stories on Instagram. She is enjoying causing Khethiwe pain and discomfort.
5. He did not immediately tell her about the kiss with Farrah. Instead he omits this truth from her when asking her to give him a chance. This dishonesty suggests that he does not deserve a chance.

Chapter 23

1. It is full of frenetic energy, and excited anticipation. There is cheering from the stands, it is loud and there is a lot of chanting and singing.
2. The sentence suggests the gala is a momentous occasion and heightens the anticipation and excitement of the day. The words 'chosen ones' suggest the swimmers are seen as heroes going into battle. It also conveys the swimmers are special and extraordinary. In addition, the stadium is compared to a dragon (possibly) that is "alive" and "breathing fire", further heightening the tension of the day.
3. Usually before a race, Khethiwe is full of self-doubt and negative thoughts. This time, due to her win in her last swim meet, she is looking forward to racing. She seems to be far more focused, even imagining the event as an Olympic event. She shrugs off Farrah's comments rather than allowing them to unsettle her. This all reveals her self-belief is strong, and her mindset is positive.
4. Farrah often tries to make comments before Khethiwe swims in an attempt to destabilize her. This time is no different. It is her usual bullying tactic which has always succeeded in the past. This shows the reader that Farrah is intimidated by Khethiwe which is why she resorts to making nasty comments towards Khethiwe in an attempt to win her race.
5. Despite Aidan's behaviour, Khethiwe still harbours romantic feelings for him. He is one of the few people who has shown her attention and kindness so that is why she still longs to be with him. However, it is unwise, as he has hurt her – betrayed her trust – and she would be wise not to think of him romantically again.

Chapter 24

1. Khethiwe winning the race and the celebration from the school, allows Khethiwe to feel accepted and to feel as though she belongs. It is the first real positive experience she has had with the school.
2. They are described in very negative terms: loud, uncouth, intimidating, and repulsive (physically too). They make rude comments to girls and harass them. The impression is that they are unpleasant boys to be around.
3. Yes, she wonders why he is friends with them and whether that suggests that he shares the same values as they do. His association with them taints him. Even though he isn't behaving in the same way, he is socialising with them which suggests he condones their behaviour.
4. Khethiwe immediately finds Aidan's comments unjustified and hurtful towards Farrah. She is shocked at Aidan's cruelty and immediately is sympathetic towards Farrah. However, Khethiwe is ready to forgive him though because

she already thinks that he ‘didn’t intentionally humiliate her. He just snapped.’ This shows how Khethiwe is making excuses for him, not able to believe he would truly be capable of such cruelty.

5. No. He should be firm with Farrah, but he also needs to speak to her with respect. He was rude to her, and it was not appropriate that he spoke in front of everyone, including his friends who enjoyed the dressing down that he gave her.

Chapter 25

1. He is unable to perceive how his behaviour is hurtful and cruel towards Farrah. In fact, he finds what he says justifiable and that Farrah’s deserves the treatment because she is mean and cruel to Khethiwe. It makes Khethiwe question whether she will be treated in the same way by him.
2. Her feelings are complicated. She finds him very attractive, and they get along well. Aidan clearly likes her. However, he treated Farrah badly and he kissed Farrah when he was drunk. His reaction to her asking for more time (frustration, anger) also complicates her feelings for him.
3. Instead of being understanding, he is frustrated that she won’t give him an answer. She needs time to digest everything that has happened and what he has said. However, he is unnecessarily impatient, almost as though he is used to always getting his way with her.
4. Yeoville is a short walk away from Ellis Park. The thought of home makes her happy. She talks about everything she misses while she’s at St. Anne’s and this creates a “longing” in her. This is a place where she has always been accepted and feels like she belongs.
5. Khethiwe sees the love of her mother, her friends, familiar smells and sounds. These are all positive associations that make her feel like she belongs. In contrast, most people view Yeoville as a dilapidated and run-down area. They see the physical imperfections – the dirt, the decay etc.

Chapter 26

1. Sumiya not opening the door fully suggests she is wary about who is behind the door. Her guarded appearance could suggest she is worried about being a victim of crime. It portrays the environment as unsafe and people have to be careful who they open the door to.
2. They are friendly towards one another but not close and wouldn’t consider each other friends. Sumiya is a bit of a mother figure when interacting with Khethiwe, offering her food and telling her that working hard at school is important. Sumiya’s young child is happy to see Khethiwe and Khethiwe plays with her for a little bit, showing the affection shared between the two.
3. Sumiya is busy making food when Khethiwe arrives, and she knows that Khethiwe’s mother will only be home later. She generously offers Khethiwe food, even though they do not have a close relationship. Khethiwe also remarks that Sumiya doesn’t have much money and so this offer of food is a selfless and considerate gesture. It shows how people in the community are willing to help one another out when they are in need.
4. Khethiwe is reluctant because of the time they have spent apart which has affected their once close relationship. She acknowledges that they don’t speak much. They used to be so close that they knew everything about each other, but now they don’t even know about her struggles at St Anne’s – she hasn’t confided in them. She fears a changed relationship where they have drifted apart and won’t have much to say to one another and that’s why she doesn’t know if she should speak to them.
5. Despite Khethiwe’s worries, Pierre is overjoyed to see her again. He immediately asks her how her races went at Ellis Park and shows confidence in her ability by telling her she must have won all her races. He high fives her when she confirms she won. His warmth and support are things Khethiwe has not really experienced at St. Anne’s. This shows the invaluable role friendship can have on a person’s sense of self.

Chapter 27

1. To be an outsider is to be someone who does not belong to a group / someone who has been excluded. This is an appropriate title for the chapter as it explores how both Khethiwe and Pierre feel they do not belong – Khethiwe at St. Anne’s and even now in Yeoville, and Pierre as a foreigner in South Africa.
2. Khethiwe’s feelings towards Pierre are complicated and she has some romantic interest in him. She doesn’t want to tell him about Aidan, because she is confused about her feelings towards him.

3. Pierre has been told by his classmates that foreigners are stealing jobs from South Africans, and even accused Pierre of doing so when he is only a child and not old enough to even have a job. This points to how irrational prejudice is, and how it stems from fear and even hatred of the 'other'. This contributes to the theme of prejudice as it shows a different form that is no less serious and no less harmful.
4. Khethiwe's reason for giving Aidan another chance is that he treats her well. He is kind to her; he didn't look down on her when she told him she was on a scholarship; and he makes her happy. These reasons completely ignore Aidan's behaviour to others, which should be concerning for her as it reveals a worrying side of his personality. Her position to "take a leap of faith" shows a lack of careful consideration.
5. Khethiwe is feeling disillusioned about where she belongs. She doesn't feel like she belongs in St. Anne's and although in the previous chapter she had a strong sense of nostalgia and felt happiness at being home, she doesn't quite feel like she belongs in Yeoville either. She is changing as a person, she is no longer used to the familiar sounds of the neighbourhood, and Pierre and Elodie have changed too (they have other friends, romantic relationships) which contributes to her feeling like she no longer belongs. She is struggling to find her place in the world.

Chapter 28

1. Khethiwe is convinced that Farrah will blame her for the gossip and accuse her of starting the rumours. This causes Khethiwe to feel very anxious and worried that Farrah will retaliate or attack her.
2. Once Rey discovers the graffiti, she warns Khethiwe about it. She comes up with the reasonable suggestion that they speak to the head of discipline. She also knows Khethiwe and therefore warns her not to do anything silly when she insists on going to blacken out the message herself. She is supportive and concerned for her friend.
3. Her concern is that people will see the message, take a picture of it and spread it on social media. She does not want to be humiliated and mocked and thinks the best solution is to deal with it quietly and quickly before it attracts any attention.
4. Khethiwe is visibly shaken by the message on the wall. The words "vision blurs", "black dots appear", and "shaky legs", all suggest that she is feeling dizzy and nauseous at the message. These words indicate that she is in shock and her body is reacting to the shock. The reader is positioned to view the message as a vile, cruel attack on Khethiwe and to sympathise with her.
5. This is a rash and immature response from Khethiwe. It reveals that Khethiwe did not think carefully before acting – this is particularly clear when she immediately regrets her actions. It is also an immature response as she retaliates in the same way the perpetrator did, trying to attack and hurt the person in the same way she was hurt.

Chapter 29

1. Khethiwe knows that Rey is practical and rational. She knows that she will be able to come up with a workable solution, and that Rey would help her without hesitation.
2. Rey "claps her hand over her mouth." This reaction indicates that she is shocked by the message Khethiwe had written. She did not expect Khethiwe to write something so scandalous.
3. Yes. If the Graffiti remained on the wall, there would be an investigation, and the risk of getting caught is high. It is a good idea to get rid of the 'evidence'.
4. Khethiwe doesn't know if she should be worried that the message is erased because it means someone has seen the message and this could have serious consequences if that person reported it. On the other hand, the fact that it is erased could suggest that someone cleaned it off before it was reported or seen by the authorities, which would mean that she should be relieved that she has avoided getting into trouble for it.
5. Bullying can cause the victim to act out in the same manner as the bully. The pressure on the individual becomes so unbearable that the victim will act out. This is clearly seen in this chapter, as Khethiwe is so angry at the horrific message on the wall that she retaliates by writing her own message.

Chapter 30

1. The comments made by Ms Richmond are to strongly imply to Khethiwe that she does not belong to the school. The words 'our school' and 'you are privileged to attend this school' are intended to make Khethiwe feel that she is not truly part of the school and that she should be grateful for the opportunity. In addition, Ms Richmond heavily implies

that the message on the bathroom stall is not something that a wealthy person would do. This falls to the stereotype that the upper classes of society have manners and are polite while the lower classes are vulgar.

2. Ms Richmond's reason for not investigating Khethiwe's claim of graffiti is that she doesn't have any proof. Yet she is currently investigating Farrah's claim of graffiti despite the lack of evidence. This reflects the double standards: Farrah's word is trusted and believed while Khethiwe's is not.
3. Ms Wilson denies that she is aware of bullying between the girls when she witnessed Farrah's humiliation of Khethiwe in the change-room. She deliberately plays it down by saying it was 'animosity' between the two. She also says it wasn't reported, but as the coach she should be more aware of the dynamics between the girls.
4. Khethiwe shows her moral code and integrity. She realises that the right thing to do is to tell the truth. She also explains why she does it, which is when she reveals the extent of the bullying. This shows the reader how much pressure the bullying has exerted on her mental health and the negative effect it has had on her. Her telling the truth should exonerate her, as she could have continued to feign ignorance as Ms Richmond did not have any proof. This shows the reader that Khethiwe is an honest person.
5. The punishment is out of proportion to the crime. She could have been given community service or something similar, yet she is punished harshly by not being allowed to attend the celebration of her achievements where she was sure she would win a trophy. It will have a detrimental effect on Khethiwe's self-belief and confidence as she is will not be recognised by the school and it further excludes her. This shows a lack of compassion from Ms Richmond.

Chapter 31

1. The wooded path is described in a menacing tone, which creates a sense of foreboding that something is about to happen. It is evening and the pathway is described as a 'dark tunnel' and there are 'long shadows'. These words emphasise the darkness of the woods, making Khethiwe vulnerable. As she walks, she thinks she hears sounds like someone is 'sharpening a blade' and she hears 'vengeful whispers'. These images are associated with danger and peril.
2. No. Farrah wants Khethiwe kicked off the swim team and her belief that she has immunity is unwarranted. Khethiwe only wrote on the bathroom stall in retaliation of what Farrah's friend had written, it would therefore be unfair to punish Khethiwe so harshly. In addition, Khethiwe was given a harsh punishment as she is not allowed to attend the celebration where her hard work would have been rewarded.
3. Farrah perpetuates common racist perceptions with regard to Khethiwe. She believes that Khethiwe is a 'quota' and does not deserve to be in the swim team, despite her wins. This erases Khethiwe's ability and her worth, in a bid to make herself feel better. She compares Khethiwe to 'corrupt politicians' who 'loot' the country as though Khethiwe has any commonality with them (besides her skin colour). Before, Farrah's racism has been coded and subtle, now here it is blatant and vicious (most likely as there is no one else to hear her speak to Khethiwe in this way).
4. Farrah attempts to assert her superiority over Khethiwe and belittle her. She does this by accusing her of being a 'quota' and undeserving of the scholarship. She then attempts to assert her authority by fighting with her. She to physically attacks Khethiwe, punching her three times and she does not expect Khethiwe to fight back.
5. Farrah has become so obsessed with destroying Khethiwe that this has impacted her mental state. She embarks on self-destructive behaviour such as drinking and smoking due to this. In her drunken state she smashes the bottle on the ground which is what she later falls onto and then hurts herself. Khethiwe has been bullied by Farrah since she arrived at St Anne's. This attacking has had detrimental effect on Khethiwe's sense of self. Finally, Khethiwe fights back against the bullying which causes Farrah to hurt herself when she falls on the shattered glass. This shows how bullying is destructive.

Chapter 32

1. An investigation into the matter has clearly not taken place, instead the school has chosen to believe Farrah's version of events. Khethiwe has been suspended from school while Farrah has not. Khethiwe has not even been given a chance to give her own statement about the matter and instead the principal tells her to that she can give her version of events at the disciplinary hearing.
2. Farrah's physical injury gives the impression that she is the victim when she in fact initiated the fight, and she was the one who smashed the glass onto the ground which is what caused her injury. She uses this to her advantage by giving an untruthful statement which wholly blames Khethiwe for the entire incident. She is also from an influential family, and thus is immediately believed.

3. Rey has been incredibly supportive. She has been ‘rallying’ support from other students and even wanted to ‘stage a protest’. She is also the one who insists on getting her father to represent Khethiwe at the hearing.
4. A legal representative will be able to ensure that a fair hearing is given to Khethiwe. Also, with his experience and expertise he could persuade the committee that she is innocent and does not deserve to be expelled. He will make sure there are no intimidation tactics used during Khethiwe’s questioning.
5. Khethiwe knowing that she has the support of others is significant in that it allows her to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. She has struggled incredibly at St Anne’s because, in the swim team, she was isolated and excluded so heavily that she felt like an outsider. Having people fighting for her cause and showing their love and support for her makes her finally feel as though she is not alone.

Chapter 33

1. It suggests their relationship is superficial. Khethiwe admits that they spend the day texting memes and gifs to each other, showing that they do not have any meaningful conversations which makes the reader question the depth of their relationship.
2. Pierre and Khethiwe have a close relationship, and she feels safe confiding in him about the suspension. He provides her with support while she is suspended and at home by spending time with her, playing video games and distracting her from her problems. He also comforts her when she tells him what happened and started to cry – he was gentle with her.
3. Aidan doesn’t fully comprehend the consequences Khethiwe could face during the disciplinary hearing. He does not realise the power dynamics at play as he comes from a position of privilege. He also dismisses Khethiwe’s fears instead of trying to understand them. He comes across as uncaring.
4. The reader would be shocked to hear the comment made by Aidan, as the reader is fully aware that Yeoville is her home. As Khethiwe says, it is dehumanising and blames the people who live there for the state of the area. Aidan comes across as ignorant and privileged.
5. Yes. Khethiwe will never be comfortable sharing with Aidan where she lives. She believes he will judge her and treat her differently. He has shown himself to be dismissive of her feelings, and he doesn’t try to understand her point of view.

Chapter 34

1. After having worn her school uniform for many months, one would expect it to fit comfortably on her. However, it is stiff and scratches her skin. This is symbolic of her lack of belonging at the school. It suggests that she will never feel comfortable at St Anne’s.
2. Khethiwe always believed that St Anne’s would be the right path to her success – that the scholarship and school was the only way she would be able to become an Olympic swimmer. However, with all the challenges she has faced, she realises that it is contributing to her failure instead. These are systemic barriers which stop her from achieving her ambition.
3. Lexie has always seemed to be a follower of Farrah, and rather weak too. However, this action (removing the graffiti) will draw the reader’s admiration and see that perhaps Lexie has the potential to be an ally for Khethiwe. It makes the reader think that without Farrah’s influence, Lexie could have been friends with Khethiwe and provided her with much needed support.
4. This seems like a reckless decision, considering the time constraints. However, it is in the pool that Khethiwe feels most at home and where she is able to think clearly. It is in the pool that she realises that she has other options. She doesn’t need St Anne’s to succeed, particularly when it feels like it is intent on destroying her. She finds the Deena’s business card due to the swim, which makes her realise she can leave St Anne’s.
5. Khethiwe decides that she doesn’t want to be at St Anne’s. She heavily implies that she won’t be attending the hearing as it is a ‘charade’. Her decision not to go through with the disciplinary hearing is Khethiwe showing agency. She has decided to take control of her own future and reject the St Anne’s and its systemic prejudice and institutional racism.

Epilogue

1. The description of the heat and the crowds watching the swimming meet and the excited atmosphere of the place are similar to the descriptions in Chapter 3. It marks a year has passed, and while this is the same, Khethiwe has changed enormously.
2. Khethiwe is optimistic and content here. She has her support system watching her compete, which she did not have the previous year. She is also very close to her swim team, who all support each other. She finally has a strong sense of belonging here.
3. The pool is symbolic of Khethiwe's Olympic dreams. Here her description of it as 'infinite' reveals her optimism about the endless possibilities that will be opened for her through her swimming. She no longer is bowed down by the pressure of her scholarship that she can now see the swimming pool not as an obstacle but rather as an opportunity. The reader gets the sense that Khethiwe will achieve her dreams.
4. It might surprise the reader, however, it is clear from previous chapters that Khethiwe had a romantic interest in him. The reader should be happy because Pierre has always supported Khethiwe and been encouraging her. It suggests a healthy and happy relationship.
5. Own response.

Section C Memoranda

Question 1: Suggested Essay Answer

Below is an example of how a student might answer the question:

The novel, "The Swim Team" by Catherine Jarvis, is set in modern day South Africa and explores the hardships the main character, Khethiwe, faces as a scholarship student. The novel explores how the school, St Anne's, lets Khethiwe down and instead of breaking down the barriers of class and races, it enforces them. This essay will explore how Khethiwe experiences racism and classism at the school and how the school fails to enact on the prejudice but instead upholds it.

Khethiwe's first experience of prejudice at the school occurs soon after she arrives. The writer depicts the classist attitude of Farrah when she humiliates Khethiwe in front of the swim team in the changeroom. This is shown when Farrah remarks on the state of Khethiwe's underwear, revealing that she is poor. The reader is positioned to view Farrah as targeting Khethiwe because of her class and purposefully implying that Khethiwe does not belong because she is not wealthy. Miss Wilson does not give Farrah any punishment for this behaviour, instead talking generally to all the girls about welcoming Khethiwe into the school. Miss Wilson's can be seen as a representation of the school and thus, shows how although she was given an opportunity to correct Farrah's prejudice, essentially ignores it.

Another experience of classism and racism is when Farrah confronts Khethiwe about not being punished for leaving the swim meet and makes comments that can be interpreted as racist and classist. In the school dining hall, in front of all the teachers, Farrah is angry that Khethiwe has not been excluded from the swim team and suggests it is because she is poor and that people 'like her' get away with misbehaviour without consequence. The reader can interpret her comments as thinly veiled racism and classism, believing that people of colour are given preferential treatment. When Rey stands up to Farrah, both girls are given punishment. The reader later learns that Farrah's punishment is rescinded after her parents got involved. Yet again, the reader sees how Farrah escapes responsibility for her actions. The lack of punishment for her prejudicial attitudes can only then be interpreted as being condoned by the school.

Arguably the most egregious offence the school commits is the disciplinary hearing instituted against Khethiwe. The writer conveys the school's acceptance of prejudice at the school when Khethiwe is suspended from school due to the fight between Farrah and herself, choosing to believe Farrah's side of the story. The reader knows that Farrah had initiated the fight, had been drinking alcohol, and had smashed the bottle on which she fell. Farrah is given the opportunity to write a statement and her version completely contradicts the truth, painting Khethiwe as the perpetrator. The school does not give Khethiwe a chance to write her own statement, telling her she can speak at the hearing. This shows how the school has chosen to believe a fee-paying student over the scholarship student. Furthermore, when Khethiwe speaks to Lexie, Lexie tells her that the hearing is a 'done deal', and that Farrah's parents have a lot of power at the school which will ensure that Khethiwe will get expelled. Khethiwe realises that the hearing is 'rigged' and that she will not be given a fair disciplinary hearing. This highlights to the reader that the school does not have the best interests of Khethiwe at heart, and instead is concerned about keeping parents with wealth and power happy at the school.

From the evidence given, it is clear that the school has failed Khethiwe. Instead of condemning the racism and classism Khethiwe experiences, it condones it. Khethiwe is left to feel unsupported and othered by the school. The school is given many opportunities to make a stand against racism and classism, yet it fails to do so. The reader is left to believe that it suits the school to uphold these beliefs.

Question 2: Contextual Questions

- 2.1 Khethiwe is new to St Anne's school ✓, having received a scholarship ✓ for her swimming ability. She is about to race at her first swim meet for the team ✓.
- 2.2 Farrah's comments are designed to make Khethiwe doubt herself and her ability ✓. Because of the comment made, Khethiwe is unable to focus, instead is worrying about false starting which causes her to lose her race. ✓
- 2.3 In this extract, Khethiwe remembers the advice given to her by Miss Wilson ✓, suggesting she does play a supportive role. However, in the novel as a whole, it can be argued that she lets Khethiwe down. She does not decisively deal with the first incidence of bullying by Farrah, which must make Farrah believe that she can continue to do so ✓. She also is not perceptive enough to see that Khethiwe is excluded by the others ✓. She does try to stop Ms Richmond from disallowing Khethiwe from attending the award ceremony/celebration, which does show some support for Khethiwe ✓. [3 points well explained – one from extract, two from novel as a whole]
- 2.4 In this extract, Farrah makes a comment right before Khethiwe's first race in order to unsettle her ✓. This is something she does consistently: before the Hillcrest race she tells everyone not to let the school down while Ms Richmond is watching the race; and at the swim gala she tells Khethiwe that Aidan is in the crowd and has come to see her and not Khethiwe ✓. She also tries to break up Khethiwe and Aidan by sending Khethiwe a video of her kissing Aidan as well as making a deal with Khethiwe to stop seeing him ✓. In addition, she purposely lies about what happens in the woods so that Khethiwe will be expelled ✓. All these events show that Farrah targeted Khethiwe and did all she could to get Khethiwe expelled as she felt threatened by Khethiwe's talent ✓. [one point from the extract and two from novel as a whole. Critical discussion needed in order to award full marks]
- 2.5 Khethiwe is aware that she is at the school on a scholarship which stipulates that she must perform well otherwise the scholarship could be rescinded ✓. This causes a lot of pressure on Khethiwe, which results in her poor performance at first. When Ms Richmond is present at the gala, Ms Wilson took her aside to tell her how important it is for her to perform ✓. This pressure has a negative effect on her mentally and she loses her races. The pressure to perform at all costs is what makes Khethiwe feel unhappy at the school ✓. Once Khethiwe has a support system (her friendship with Rey), does she start winning her races ✓.

Question 3: Essay Question

Below is the basis for answering this essay. Use the following as a guideline only. However, also allow for answers that are different, original and show evidence of critical thought and interpretation.

Suggested points to use in essay:

- Khethiwe is from a poor area, Yeoville and lived in a one-bedroom flat with her mother and another family. She is then given a scholarship to a prestigious school.
- Khethiwe immediately feels as though she does not belong because her lived experience is so vastly different to everyone else around her.
- She is treated as an outsider by the swim team which exacerbates her feelings of exclusion.
- She is not part of the swim team circle before the swim meet, until Lexie pulls her in, showing her lack of belonging.
- The swim team do not invite her out to parties, and openly talk about their plans while she is present.
- When she wins her race, she is not congratulated properly by her team, making her feel excluded/othered.
- When she goes home to Yeoville, her initial feeling is one of happiness as the familiarity of the place makes her feel like she belongs.
- However, later, when she sees how people who were once close to her have changed, she feels like she doesn't belong there. Her bed is uncomfortable, and she cannot sleep, symbolising her lack of belonging in a place she once called home.
- Before her hearing, she feels uncomfortable in her uniform which symbolises that she has never truly felt like she belonged to the school.
- At the end of the book, she is happy and content at her new school. She is included by her swim team and she finally feels as though she belongs.

- She invites her mom and Pierre to the swim meet (having never done before) and here both worlds come together, emphasising how she has found somewhere she fits in and is accepted.

Question 4: Contextual Questions

- 4.1 Aidan kissed Farrah at his party✓. He goes to the swim meet to speak to Khethiwe and explain his behaviour to her✓. However, Farrah comes over to them and Aidan, in a fit of temper, publicly tells Farrah he has no interest in her. She is left humiliated. ✓.
- 4.2 Khethiwe is upset with Aidan, and shocked that he would speak to a person so cruelly ✓. Although Farrah has been bullying and nasty towards her, Khethiwe is a compassionate person and sees Farrah's humanity ✓. She speaks out against the bullying of Farrah as a person who has experienced the effects of humiliation and bullying✓.
- 4.3 Aidan believes that Farrah deserved to be spoken to in that way ✓. He feels that the attack on Farrah is justified as Farrah has relentlessly bullied Khethiwe✓. This shows a lack of self-reflection and makes the reader question his morals and integrity✓.
- 4.4 On one hand, Khethiwe has strong feelings of affection towards Aidan. He is one of the few people who has been warm, generous and kind to her while she has been at St Anne's✓. Thus, the reader can see why she is so willing to forgive Aidan despite the harm he has caused✓. On the other hand, Khethiwe has a strong moral code and she doesn't condone Aidan's behaviour, particularly towards Farrah, and this is why she is struggling so much to accept Aidan and forgive him✓.
- 4.5 The comment made by Aidan is valid as Farrah has targeted Khethiwe from the beginning of the novel. In the very first chapter, Farrah mocks Khethiwe for being poor and her worn out underwear✓. From that moment, the reader is positioned to view Farrah as threatened by Khethiwe and has set out to destroy her✓. In this extract, Aidan is telling Khethiwe how he believed that Farrah only kissed him because she wanted to hurt Khethiwe✓. This is true, as Farrah sent a video of the kiss to Khethiwe so that Khethiwe would know what happened, deliberately trying to hurt her✓. [must discuss one point from novel as a whole, and one point from the extract.]

Question 5: Essay Question

Below is the basis for answering this essay. Use the following as a guideline only. However, also allow for answers that are different, original and show evidence of critical thought and interpretation.

Suggested points to use in essay:

- Her scholarship contract stipulates that she has to perform well or the scholarship could be taken away from her. This creates pressure on her to succeed.
- Khethiwe says she sometimes can't sleep at night thinking about the conditions attached.
- Ms Richmond deciding to attend a swim team puts a lot of pressure on her to do well. This has a negative impact on her as she overthinks and loses the race.
- Her decision to leave the swim meet and go on a date with Aidan is due to the extreme pressure she feels.
- Farrah often makes comments before Khethiwe's race, which sabotages her.
- Miss Wilson often reminds her that she is on a scholarship.
- When she is given a final warning after leaving the swim meet, this puts added pressure on her to succeed.
- Ms Richmond reminds her when she is called into the office that to attend this school is a privilege, suggesting that it can be taken away from her.
- Once Khethiwe has a close friend and supporter in Rey, she begins to believe in herself and this helps her win her races.
- When she is in a new school with a coach who takes a gentler approach, she no longer feels the strain of succeeding.
- The pool is symbolic of her ambition. At one point it feels constraining but in the epilogue she describes it as 'infinite' and having 'tamed' it, showing how her ambition has remained the same but the pressure to succeed has been removed.

Question 6: Contextual Questions

- 6.1 Pierre is asking Khethiwe how she is feeling because she is about to face a disciplinary hearing ✓ where she has mostly falsely accused of fighting with Farrah✓. She faces expulsion if she is found guilty of the charges✓.

- 6.2 Rey has supported Khethiwe throughout her time in St Anne's. It was Rey's suggestion that Khethiwe get help from her father for the hearing ✓. In this extract the reader is told that her father is an excellent lawyer ✓ which suggests that Khethiwe has a good chance of fighting the charges because of her father's involvement. ✓
- 6.3 Pierre has been a supportive and friend and confidant ✓. While Khethiwe has been suspended from school, Pierre has spent time with her, playing video games to help distract her ✓. When she told him about the suspension, he comforted her and made her feel better. ✓
- 6.4 Khethiwe's observation is about how society and institutions need to be better at supporting those who are disadvantaged ✓. Khethiwe, some from a disadvantaged background, the being at prestigious St Anne's does not even the playing field – she is at the school with little to no support and is expected to perform ✓. The school ignores the bullying and does not try to make her feel like she belongs there ✓. The pressure she is under is immense as the scholarship can be taken away from her ✓. She has not been given the care needed to aid her in succeeding at the school ✓. [3 points well discussed]
- 6.5 Khethiwe getting into a prestigious school and being able to follow her dreams is a symbol of hope to someone like him who is disadvantaged too ✓. He wants Khethiwe to succeed because it will give him hope that people are able to change their lives if they are given the right opportunities ✓. As her friend, he wants her to accomplish her ambitions – it is something that will make him happy ✓.