

FILM POSTER REVIEW

Have a look at the film poster of the movie SKIN (2008) and give an educated guess about the following features and questions. This task is not about “getting it right”, but about opening your minds to the film we are going to watch in class.



- Where could the story be set?
- Who might be the main characters?
- Say something about the film’s general mood / atmosphere that you expect.
- What associations come to your mind?
- Which questions arise when looking at the poster?
- Imagine you see this poster at the entrance of your favourite cinema. Would you like to go to see the film? Why (not)?
- What else would you like to add?

The film poster(s) can be found on the following websites:

- <http://www.impawards.com/2009/skin.html>
- <http://www.elysianfilms.com/film.php>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skin_\(2008_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skin_(2008_film))

CINEMATOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

After watching the opening scenes of the movie **Skin** (2008), try to find answers to the following essential questions:

- Which cinematographic devices are used? (Analysis)
- To which effect are these devices used? (Interpretation)



TASK ORGANISATION

1. In your task group, focus on your individual observation task A, B, C or D.
2. Take notes while and after watching the opening scene(s) of the movie.
3. In your task group, discuss your observations and ideas regarding the essential questions.
4. Join a new group (mixed expert group), consisting of one member of the individual task groups each (i.e. four participants in total, one of former groups A, B, C and D each).
5. Present your findings and briefly discuss your ideas with the other members of the new group. Proceed like this – taking turns – until all observation topics are covered. Take notes on your worksheet to complete all sections (A, B, C and D).
6. Be prepared to present your results in class and/or to ask questions.



SEQUENCES IN FOCUS

Sequence 1 (00:00:16-00:02:16): Credits and opening, first free elections in South Africa on 27. April 1994, people celebrating, queuing up for the election, Sandra and her children arriving in a van.

Sequence 2 (00:02:17-00:03:14): Sandra Laing present time in the factory, TV interview, newspaper article and talk to colleagues, short flashbacks.

Sequence 3 (00:03:15-00:04:48): Sandra as a young girl, preparing for the beginning of the school year, family trip to school in their VW beetle.



TABLE OF ANALYSIS

The following worksheets will help you to structure your observations. The first table gives you some focal points to concentrate on while watching the sequences with reference to your observation task (A, B, C or D).



The second (blank) table is designated for your notes. Feel free to use an extra sheet if you need more space.

<p>A. composition/setting/mise en scène</p> <p><u>image composition:</u> long shot, medium long shot, close up, detail shot, bright, dark, natural or artificial lighting, colour, black-and-white, focus, foreground/background action</p> <p><u>camera angle:</u> aerial perspective, low angle shot, eye level</p> <p><u>camera work:</u> fixed position, moving, camera panning and camera tilting</p> <p><u>camera tracking shot:</u> fast, slow, hand camera shot</p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>	<p>B. characters/agents</p> <p><u>characters:</u> protagonists, supporting characters, minor characters, individual, group, crowd</p> <p><u>setting:</u> alone, together with others, in the centre of attention, marginal position, seen from far, close up</p> <p><u>outer appearance:</u> clothes, movement, relation to others, acting, particularities</p> <p><u>other agents:</u> animals, fictional beings, items, objects</p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>
<p>C. sound/spoken words</p> <p><u>sound:</u> loud, soft, natural, artificial, special effects, exaggerated, real, surreal, on-sounds (in the picture), off-sounds, etc.</p> <p><u>music:</u> loud, soft, real music (part of the action), off-music, film music, effect of the music, (un) obvious use of music (spectator aware/unaware of music)</p> <p><u>dialogues / voices / language:</u> real dialogues, inner monologues, spoken words, thoughts, language, part of the action, off speaker, voice over, subtitles</p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>	<p>D. editing/timing</p> <p><u>editing of the movie:</u> slow or fast editing (cuts), soft/hard, hectic, dramatic, continuous flow, rising or falling speed, cross-fade, fade out, cutting out, etc.</p> <p><u>timing:</u> duration of individual scenes, real time vs. movie time, normal time, slow-motion, expanded time, omissions, time leap, etc.</p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>

<p>A. composition/setting/mise en scène</p> <p><u>image composition:</u></p> <p><u>camera angle:</u></p> <p><u>camera work:</u></p> <p><u>camera tracking shot:</u></p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>	<p>B. characters/agents</p> <p><u>characters:</u></p> <p><u>setting:</u></p> <p><u>outer appearance:</u></p> <p><u>other agents:</u></p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>
<p>C. sound/spoken words</p> <p><u>sound:</u></p> <p><u>music:</u></p> <p><u>dialogues / voices / language:</u></p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>	<p>D. editing/timing</p> <p><u>editing of the movie:</u></p> <p><u>timing:</u></p> <p><u>effects / impressions / interpretation:</u></p>

A. composition/setting/mise en scène

image composition:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (long shot, natural lighting, foreground and background shows natural elements / landscape)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (black, white typeface, credits)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (mostly mediums shots)

00:01:13 – 00:01:18 (title of the movie, same scenery fills the individual letters)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (mostly mediums shots)

00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (medium long shot, medium shot, close up)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (medium shot)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (medium long shot, camera movement, opening up to a wider scene)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (long shot)

camera angle:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (aerial perspective)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (none)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (mostly eye level)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (mostly eye level)

00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (eye level)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (eye level)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (camera movement to aerial perspective)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (low angle shot)

camera work:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (fixed position, zoom)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (none)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (moving, shaking, blurring)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (again: moving, shaking, blurring)

00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (coming closer, close up of protagonist)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (fixed camera)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (camera movement to aerial perspective, opening up to the full scenery)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (fixed camera)

A. composition/setting/mise en scène

camera tracking shot:

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (fast, moving, hand camera shot)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (again: fast, moving, hand camera shot)

00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (steady, showing motion, close up in a moving van)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (steady)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (camera movement to aerial perspective)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (steady)

effects / impressions / interpretation:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (calm, soothing)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (rising suspense through black out and music)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (lively atmosphere, action, contrast to calm picture before)

00:01:13 – 00:01:18 (title of the movie, same scenery fills the individual letters, direct connection between the film title and the opening scene)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (the lively atmosphere continues, we see even more individual voters, almost party atmosphere, people are happy and busy, the election as an event)

00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (close up of Sandra in a moving van within the action outside shows us an introvert, silent character in contrast to the lively scene outside the van)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (calmness inside the van in contrast to the action outside)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (Sandra and her children are leaving the van and thereby entering the scenery / they are becoming a part of it – after being separate from the action)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (balloons flying/rising in a bundle into the sky, serves as a symbol for „a colourful future“, „freedom“, „no more limits“, etc.)

B. characters/agents

characters:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (no persons visible)
00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (none)
00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (many black South Africans)
00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (the scenery continuous: even more individual voters)
00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (Sandra Laing)
00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (Sandra Laing , son and daughter)
00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (Sandra and her children merging into the crowd)

setting:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (natural, landscape)
00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (none)
00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (people queuing up for the election)
00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (the scenery continuous: even more individual voters)
00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (the protagonist gets introduced)
00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (inside the van)

effects / impressions / interpretation:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (beautiful nature itself, no people depicted)
00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (rising suspense for what is coming)
00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (contrast to the landscape scene before, very lively atmosphere, many people, colourful scenery)
00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (see above)
00:01:40 – 00:01:55 (the protagonist gets introduced: an introvert, silent character in contrast to the lively scene outside the van)
00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (silence is broken, the words emphasise „the will to do it“: finally voting)
00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (Sandra and her children are leaving the van and thereby entering the scenery / they are becoming a part of it – after being separate from the action)

C. sound/ spoken words

sound:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (birds twittering, female voice singing)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (rhythm, music, rising)

00:00:57 – 00:02:16 (traditional music)

music:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (female voice singing, traditional song)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (rhythm, music, rising)

00:00:57 – 00:02:16 (traditional music, very lively).

dialogues / voices / language:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (none)

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (none)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (none)

00:01:13 – 00:01:18 (none)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (none)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (son and daughter talk to their mother Sandra Laing: „Come on, mum“ / „Let's do it“)

effects / impressions / interpretation:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 Impression of South African landscape, sounds and traditional singing, evocation of exotic and familiar/warm feelings

00:00:37 – 00:00:56 (rising suspense for what is coming)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (traditional music, very lively, supports the lively pictures and camera work)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (see above)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (finally someone speaks, this contrast emphasises the words and action: son and daughter talk to their mother Sandra Laing: „Come on, mum“ / „Let's do it“)

00:02:02 – 00:02:16 (traditional music, very lively, supports the lively pictures and camera work)

D. editing/ timing

editing of the movie:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (slow editing, no cuts, landscape as background for scripture, text giving information about „Apartheid“ and the „Population Registration Act (1950)“)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (several cuts, fast moving pictures, continuous flow)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (see above)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (steady, a contrast to the former action)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (change of camera angle, slow but wide camera movement, one shot, no cut)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (short but powerful image)

timing:

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (almost slow motion, interesting contrast to movement and liveliness)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (see above)

effects / impressions / interpretation:

00:00:16 – 00:00:36 (contrast between calm scenery without people and the given information about injustice and segregation of human beings)

00:00:57 – 00:01:12 (opening scene with a surprise, in medias res, joyful and lively setting)

00:01:19 – 00:01:39 (see above)

00:01:57 – 00:02:01 (calmness, but a firm will to act (i.e. vote) in the middle of the action outside)

00:02:02 – 00:02:14 (change of camera angle, slow but wide camera movement, one shot, no cut => this shows that something is going to change, the main characters have arrived and are merging into the crowd, contrast to the next symbolic picture: the bundle of balloons rising into the sky)

00:02:15 – 00:02:16 (short, but powerful image)

GUIDELINES FOR NOTE TAKING

The following table identifies 13 sequences from the film **Skin** for our analytical work that focuses on the socio-historical aspects and political background of the plot, i.e. film scenes that illustrate elements of apartheid and its influence on the people in South Africa at the time.



While-viewing Task

During the screening of the film pay special attention to any features that appear symptomatic to you regarding the apartheid ideology of pre-1994 South Africa. You are asked to take notes on prominent and pivotal aspects that have a significant influence on either the characters depicted or the plot.

Examples

One example could be the first free elections in South Africa in 1994 (as dealt with in the opening scene). Other examples could be the implementation of a new law (for example the 1967 Parliamentary Amendment to the Population Registration Act), events with serious consequences (for example 1976 student demonstrations in Soweto), or specific cultural features (for example consequences of apartheid laws in everyday life).

Proceeding

Try to identify the socio-historical relevance of the scene and find a suitable term for it (for example the 1950s Immorality Act, the destruction of homes, “Throwback Theory”, Pencil Test). The correct terminology is not relevant at this point. Nevertheless, your notes and observations will serve as a basis for the ensuing discussion and sharing in class after the screening. If you can't identify or name a given scene, feel free to formulate an adequate question instead.

Objectives

After the close viewing of the opening scenes, your senses are sharpened as to identify aesthetic and structural elements. Bearing all this in mind, we are going to concentrate on content elements now. This while-viewing task and the accompanying time-line worksheet is designed to structure your perceptions and help you jot down relevant pieces of information. Your notes will serve as a foundation for the presentation and discussion of your results in class.

No	Running time (film scene)	Short description, explanatory notes, or questions	Historical and political background (keywords)
1	00:00:55 - 00:02:18 Opening scenes Election 1994	people celebrating, queuing up to cast their votes people anticipating the election of Nel- son Mandela to become South Africa's first black president Mandela's political party is called Afri- can National Congress (ANC) Question: Who were the other candi- dates?	First free elections in South Africa on 27 April 1994 (Johannesburg)
2	00:04:40 - 00:04:45 Family trip to school location, state ?		
3	00:07:25 - 00:07:52 and 00:08:20 - 00:08:36 Elise and Sandra in the dormitory and at school		
4	00:08:37 - 00:09.37 lesson at school (on SA history)		

5	00:14:05 - 00:15:12 Sandra is brought home by the Headmaster and police		
6	00:17:28 - 00:18:35 journalists outside the family's home 00:18:36 - 00:19:10 parents argue in the kitchen		
7	00:21:10 - 00:23:30 Sandra's examination: white or non-white?		
8	00:26:14 - 00:27:42 court scene, Pretoria Dr Sparks' contribution		
9	00:29:20 - 00:30:00 radio announcement		

10	00:32:29 - 00:32:54 Sandra stands in front of a clothes shop and communicates with her mother through the shopping window		
11	01:04:55 - 01:05:15 Sandra and Petrus witness a clash between anti-apartheid demonstrators and the police		
12	01:10:00 - 01:12:16 Sandra's and Petrus's township Komkrans was declared a whites-only area		
13	01:30:17 - 01:31:12 Sandra tries to get hold of her personal file 01:32:45 - 01:38:15 Sandra visits her mother		

Please note: The intended solutions / pieces of information for the columns „short description“ and „historical background“ can be found at the top of the following task sheets that correspond to the specific film scenes

Time-line reference:	No.1
Running time (film scene):	00:00:55 - 00:02:18 (opening scenes, elections 1994)
Historical/political background:	First free elections in South Africa on 27 April, 1994 (Johannesburg)
Short synopsis of events:	Nelson Mandela has become South Africa's first black president after more than three centuries of white rule. Mr Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) party won 252 of the 400 seats in the first democratic elections of South Africa's history.
Task design:	Reading comprehension, guiding questions, writing a newspaper article, watching a footage video, speech analysis, rhetoric devices

A STATEMENT

Read the statement by Nelson Mandela after his own voting on 27 April 1994 and answer the following questions in form of a short newspaper article:



- How does Mandela describe the old era as opposed to the new era?
- How does he see the future of the white minority after the election?
- What are his message and his vision as the future President of South Africa?

Write approximately **250 words** and pay attention to the specific style and form of a newspaper article. Statement by Mandela after his own voting: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/nelson-mandelas-statement-after-voting-south-africas-first-democratic-elections-inanda-kwazu>

A SPEECH

Read the speech of Nelson Mandela at his inauguration as President (May 1994) and analyse the speech with regard to content and style (rhetoric devices). In addition, you can watch the video recording to get a more lively impression.



Statement of the President of the ANC Nelson R. Mandela at his inauguration as President (Pretoria, 10 May, 1994): <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/statement-president-anc-nelson-r-mandela-his-inauguration-president-democratic-republic-sout>

Footage Video: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/nelson-rolihlahla-mandela-video-clips>

Time-line reference:	No.2
Running time (film scene):	00:04:40 – 00:04:45 (family trip to school, location)
Historical/political background:	The Transvaal is one of the four states of South Africa at the time.
Short synopsis of events:	After the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for the Boers, the British government realised that it was necessary to forge an alliance with the white Afrikaner to retain control of South Africa's black majority. The two British colonies (Cape Colony and Natal) together with the two Boer republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State) formed the Union of South Africa in 1910.
Task design:	Reading comprehension, reading for gist, extracting relevant information, visualisation, theses summary, creative writing, change of perspectives, interpreting and processing facts

SOUTH AFRICA'S PAST

Read the following text on South Africa's colonial past and draw a time-line on a separate sheet indicating the most important events and milestones of the historical development.



Material: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/pre-mandela-period-colonial-history-south-africa-1652-1917>

Read the following text on „The History of Slavery“ and...

- a) formulate 10 theses / statements that reflect the content of the source (theses summary)
- OR
- b) write three diary entries of three different fictional characters at three different points in time that illustrate the content of the source (creative writing).

Material: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-slavery-and-early-colonisation-south-africa>

Time-line reference:	No.3
Running time (film scene):	00:07:25 - 00:07:52 and 00:08:20 - 00:08:36 (Elise and Sandra at school)
Historical/political background:	Swaziland, the particularities of the state
Short synopsis of events:	Swaziland was a British protectorate from 1903 till 1967. Swaziland had no apartheid laws. In 1961 any form of school segregation was officially ended. Therefore, many white families decided to send their children to white-only schools in South Africa.
Task design:	Analysis of characters, communication, creative writing, dialogue, guiding questions, filling a gap in the movie, writing a letter home to Swaziland, change of perspectives

BEDTIME TALK

One night in the dormitory Elise talks to Sandra at bedtime and introduces herself. She tells Sandra that she comes from Swaziland and that all her friends used to be black there. Think about the following questions and exchange your ideas with a partner:



- Why does Elise approach Sandra? What are her intentions?
- Why does Sandra react so reluctantly at first?

The next day Elise and Sandra meet again. Elise reports that she has been hit by Annie after she told her that Sandra was not black. The scene ends at this point.

CREATIVE WRITING

Write the ensuing dialogue between Elise and Sandra. You may want to invent an encounter with Annie as well. Try to deal with the following questions in your scene:



- Will Elise change her friendly behaviour towards Sandra?
- Will the two girls become friends? What would Sandra tell Annie if they met?
- How does Sandra feel when she learns that somebody else was attacked because of her (i.e. the colour of her skin)?

Write a letter from the perspective of Elise. Elise writes to her mother in Swaziland, telling her all about the latest events at school (involving Sandra and Annie) and asking her advice.

Further Reading: The History of Swaziland <http://www.sahistory.org.za/places/swaziland>

Time-line reference:	No.4
Running time (film scene):	00:08:37 - 00:09:37 (lesson at school about SA history)
Historical/political background:	apartheid ideology
Short synopsis of events:	<p>Definition of the term apartheid: "Literally "apartness" in Afrikaans. A policy of racial segregation introduced by the National Party after its electoral victory in 1948. It created a highly stratified society in which whites dominated politically, economically, and socially at the expense of blacks." source: http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/terms.php</p> <p>After the British took over the Cape colony from the Dutch / influx of British people and culture / British abolition of slavery in 1834 / "former slaves being put on equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion" / Boers withdrew to preserve their purity / Trekking northeast into South Africa's interior (Great Trek of 30,000 people in 1830s) / land appeared uninhabited to the Boers because the area had been cleared by Zulu conquest before / Boers think that they arrived first / Afrikaners' myth of the empty land / can't live together with black Africans, because „they are different"</p>
Task design:	Close viewing, analysis of classroom scene, behaviour and reaction of individual characters, interpretation, facial expressions, apartheid as mindset, essay writing, discussing a quote, writing a personal statement, describing and analysing a cartoon.

CHOOSE AN ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of the following assignments:

1. Analyse the classroom scene (00:08:37-00:09:37) in detail:

- Pay attention to the individual characters' roles, behaviour and reactions (the teacher, the contributing students, Annie, Sandra).
- Consider also the facial expressions of the characters.
- Why is apartheid considered an ideology?
- How is this ideology reflected in the classroom scene?

Exchange your ideas with a partner and then write an analytical essay dealing with the questions above.

2. Essay writing: Analyse and discuss the following quote by Prime Minister John Vorster, an apartheid politician:

"The cardinal principle of the National party is the retention, maintenance and immortalisation of Afrikaner identity within a white sovereign state. Apartheid and separate development is merely a method of bringing this about and making it permanent. If there are other better methods of achieving this end, then we must find those methods and get on with it."

(Source: Welsh, David (2009), *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Ball, page 83.)

3. Choose one of the cartoons depicted on the following website and write an analysis:

http://www.rfksafilm.org/html/apartheid_cartoons.php



Time-line reference:	No.5
Running time (film scene):	00:14:05 - 00:15:12 (Sandra is brought home by the Headmaster and police)
Historical/political background:	Population Registration Act of 1950
Short synopsis of events:	This law required that everyone in South Africa was assigned to one of the three racial categories: European/White, Coloured for people of mixed race and Native/Bantu. On her birth certificate, Sandra was classified as white. Because of her appearance, the Headmaster of her school wants her to be reclassified as coloured and writes to the Inspector of Education
Task design:	Brainstorming, formulating first responses, analysis of language register and style, creative writing, change of perspective, writing competency, application of language register, argumentation

A SPECIAL LETTER

Read the letter of Headmaster J.P. Schwartz to the Inspector of Education and jot down your very first thoughts and emotional responses to this reading experience. Consider not only the content of the letter, but also the language register (style), the described circumstances and the composition (line of argumentation).



Material: The Headmaster's letter to the Inspector of Education

Source: Stone, Judith (2007), *When She Was White*. New York: Miramax books, page 10-12.

A PARENTAL STATEMENT

Imagine, you were a member of the Parents' Board of the all-white Boarding School and the letter would have come to your attention before it had been sent. Formulate an address to the Headmaster either in form of a formal letter or an oral statement.



Thereby express your personal opinion and emotional reaction to the Headmaster's inquiry. Pay attention to your own line of argumentation as well as to language register and style. You may want to include background knowledge (cultural studies) that you have already acquired.

THE HEADMASTER'S LETTER

Confidential Letter to the Inspector of Education from
the Principal of Piet Retief Primary, 30 January 1962

Source: Stone, Judith (2007), *When She Was White*. New York: Miramax books, page 10-12.



RE: ADMITTANCE OF PUPIL: SUSANNA MAGRIETHA LAING

Dear Sir:

I hereby wish to inform you that I admitted the above-mentioned pupil to my school on the grounds that I received a birth certificate (No. 55957 – entry 52/55 – issued by the District Registrar at Amersfoort on 12/6/61) from the pupil's parents. This birth certificate indicates that said child has been registered and classified as being of the White race.

... I saw the child for the first time when her mother brought her to the school.

The impression that I and several teachers got, as well as parents of some of the other children who saw the child, is that this child could possibly be of mixed blood or race (colored). The above-mentioned teachers and parents have discussed the case with me. I explained that because the birth certificate, which was submitted to me, indicates that the child is of the white race, I had no choice but to admit the child to my school.

For your information, I wish to provide you with the following description of the child:

1. The little eyes are dark brown, almost black.
2. The general impression one gets from the complexion and the form of the face is that this child is of mixed blood.
3. The lips stand out somewhat (are thick) as in the case of a person with mixed blood.
4. The color of the skin also correlates with that of a person with mixed blood – i.e., yellow brown.
5. In my opinion, anyone who saw the child would without a doubt classify this child as a non-White.
6. On the very first day that this child was admitted to the hostel it was brought to my attention that the native servants working in the hostel were very surprised to see this child in a white hostel and they have already started talking about the situation among one another.
7. Personnel members at the hostel have also informed me that the hostel children noticed the child's appearance and complexion from the very first day and have been talking about it since.

Furthermore, I would like to inform you that the child does not speak Afrikaans, although she seems to understand it. The language she speaks is Zulu.

It is my personal opinion that this child should not be admitted to a white school or a white hostel in the Republic of South Africa.

It will be highly appreciated if you could bring this matter to the attention of the Director of Education since I am expecting that some of the parents who have children attending my school will rebel. Therefore, it will also be appreciated if you could treat this case as an exceptionally urgent matter. Thanking you in advance,

Dutifully Yours,
J.P. Schwartz, Principal

Time-line reference:	No.6
Running time (film scene):	00:17:28 – 00:18:35 / 00:18:36 – 00:19:10 (journalists outside the family's home / the parents argue over the reclassification of Sandra as white)
Historical/political background:	Immorality Act of 1950
Short synopsis of events:	To stop the growth of mixed-race population, the government prohibited all marriages and every sexual contact between people of different races.
Task design:	Close viewing, character analysis, interpreting mimicry and gestures, writing a personal comment, interpreting a character's statement, creative writing, inner monologue, change of perspective, bring a historical fact into line with a movie scene, writing task

CINEMATOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Sandra's father, Abraham, has invited journalists for an interview in front of the family's home. His wife is obviously surprised by her husband's decision and reacts accordingly (00:17:28-00:18:35). She retreats to the kitchen of the house where she meets Abraham after a short while (00:18:36-00:19:10).



Close viewing: Watch the two scenes again and pay special attention to acting, i.e. facial expressions and gestures of the main characters (Sandra, her mother, her father). Interpret your observations regarding the individual characters' emotions and states of mind.

Abraham tells his wife "I am doing it for her. I am doing it for all of us." (00:19:01).

1. Comment on this statement from your personal point of view.
2. Write an inner monologue of the mother in that scene.
What does she think about her husband and about the situation in general?

WRITING TASK

Explain this part of the movie to somebody who hasn't watched it, taking the following background information into account:

Brief information on the Immorality Act of 1950:

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/commencement-immorality-act>



Time-line reference:	No.7
Running time (film scene):	00:21:10 - 00:23:30 min (Sandra's examination: white or non-white, pencil test)
Historical/political background:	Pencil test to prove that somebody is non-white
Short synopsis of events:	Focus of race classification was on appearance (hair, skin colour, shape of head and lips, etc.) and general acceptance / DNA tests were not yet available / descent was not yet considered a criterion for race classification: "A white person is any person who in appearance obviously is or who is generally accepted as a white person." (http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/naming-people-grade-12)
Task design:	Writing task, group discussion, connecting a film scene and a research statement, finding arguments, formulating a personal statement

THE PENCIL TEST

Watch the scene (00:21:10-00:23:30) of the movie, in which Sandra is examined by a commission in order to officially decide whether she will be reclassified as white or not.



RACE AS A CONCEPT

Discuss the following quote in connection to the film scene (00:21:10-00:23:30), either in form of an essay/personal statement or orally in a group of three to five students. Take notes and formulate some arguments and theses/thoughts before you start writing/discussing.



“Race is an exceedingly slippery concept. Although it appears in social life as ubiquitous, omnipresent and real, it is hard to pin down the concept in any objective sense, this is because the idea of race is riddled with apparent contradictions. While it is a dynamic phenomena rooted in political struggle, it is commonly observed as a fixed characteristic of human populations; while it does not exist in terms of human biology, people routinely look to the human body for evidence about racial identity; while it is a biological fiction, it is nonetheless a social fact.”

Source: James, Angela (2008), *Making Sense of Race and Racial Classification*. In: Zuberi, Tukufu & BonillaSilva, Eduardo (eds.) (2008), *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Rowman & Littlefield, p. 32.

Time-line reference:	No.8
Running time (film scene):	00:26:14 – 00:27:42 (court scene, Pretoria)
Historical/political background:	Polygenetic inheritance: The „Throwback Theory“
Short synopsis of events:	In the course of 300 years of coexistence of white and black people in South Africa, the colour line was crossed many times: “All human beings are hybrids.” Most of genetically determined human characteristics as skin colour are the result of polygenetic inheritance. Polygenic traits are expressed as gradation of small differences, a continuous variation. Children of parents who each have a mixed array of genes could show a range of skin colours between very light and very dark.” The genes responsible of maximum pigmentation could remain unexpressed for several generations until by chance two people, both coming from a long-line of white-looking ancestors, each contribute enough melanin-producing genes to create a child darker than they are.” (Stone, Judith (2007), <i>When She Was White</i> . New York: Miramax, page 66)
Task design:	Mediation task, background information, application of knowledge to explain a complex situation: the Laing family and polygenetic inheritance

MEDIATION TASK

Write a synopsis of the texts “Die Hautfarbe – ein Beispiel für Polygenie” and “Modell zur Vererbung durch Polygenie” in English:

http://f.sbzo.de/onlineanhaenge/files/150639_106_107.pdf



WRITING TASK

Try to apply the information from the two texts to describe and explain the situation of the Laing family: one child with a „white appearance“ and two children with a „non-white appearance“.



Time-line reference:	No.9
Running time (film scene):	00:29:20 – 00:30:00 (radio announcement, Sandra's situation has changed: She is officially white again)
Historical/political background:	Parliamentary Amendment to the Population Registration Act 1967
Short synopsis of events:	The Amendment to the Population Registration Act (1967) gave more weight on descent than appearance in determining race. From then on children had to be classified the same race as their parents.
Task design:	Creative writing, analysis of emotions and thoughts of various characters, dramatic reading, discussion, guiding questions, contemplation

AMENDMENT TO THE POLULATION REGISTRATION ACT 1967

Watch the film scene (00:29:20-00:30:00 min) and pay special attention to the reactions of the characters depicted: Abraham Laing, the maid, Sannie Laing and Sandra.



CREATIVE WRITING

In a group of four, choose one of the four characters each and write a fictitious diary entry or inner monologue expressing the emotions and thoughts of the character.

Read out your texts, trying to act out the states of mind and the emotions of the individual characters.



DISCUSSION

Discuss the following points:

- Did the four performances match your interpretation or has there been a discrepancy? Discuss.
- Was the contribution / performance convincing? Explain.
- Would there be alternatives for thoughts and feelings of the character? Which?
- What did you find most interesting about this group experience?
- Do you have a better insight into the chosen character after this task? Why (not)?



Time-line reference:	No.10
Running time (film scene):	00:32:29 – 00:32:54 (Sandra is not allowed to enter a clothes shop and communicates with her mother and the shop assistant through the shopping window)
Historical/political background:	Apartheid laws
Short synopsis of events:	Apartheid laws – separating blacks and whites in every aspect of their everyday life (restaurants, shops, living areas, schools, etc.)
Task design:	Close viewing, contemplation, listing examples from the movie, internet research on images, preparation of a short picture exhibition, gathering background information

APARTHEID

Watch the film scene (00:32:29-00:32:54), in which Sandra – due to apartheid laws – is not allowed to enter a clothes shop and thus communicates with her mother and the shop assistant through the shopping window while bystanders frown upon and laugh at her.



Contemplation: List other examples from the movie that illustrate how apartheid laws have limited access to „normal life“ for members of the black community in everyday situations:

- Sandra is on a date with an Afrikaner (white man) in a restaurant and some of the guests start silently complaining about her presence.
- ...

INTERNET RESEARCH ON IMAGES

Illustrating the separation of black and white people under the apartheid laws in South Africa:

Have a look at the following six photographs depicting life in South Africa during Apartheid:

<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/apartheid/ig/Apartheid-Signs-Image-Gallery/>

Find other images that illustrate these circumstances and collect them for a short presentation in class. Be prepared to explain or comment on the depicted situations (background information).



Time-line reference:	No.11
Running time (film scene):	01:04:55 – 01:05:15 (Sandra and Petrus witness a clash between anti-apartheid demonstrators and the police)
Historical/political background:	Anti-Apartheid demonstrations
Short synopsis of events:	Reference to Soweto riots on June 16th, 1976: Police shot down and killed an unarmed 13-year-old boy Hector Pieteron at a peaceful demonstration in Soweto (vast township outside Johannesburg). After the shooting, riots erupted in townships all over South Africa. Government reaction: banning of all public gatherings, passing of the "Internal Security Law" which allowed the arrest and unlimited detention without trial of anyone suspected of "threatening public order"
Task design:	Research on the internet, contemplation on anti-apartheid demonstrations in news and art alike, discussion

SOWETO RIOTS

Do some research on the Soweto riots in 1976.



ANTI-APARTHEID IN ART

Taking the following pictures and websites as a starting point ponder on the following questions:

How are the anti-apartheid demonstrations reflected in news and art alike, today?

What is more powerful in your opinion? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

Exhibition "Rise and Fall of Apartheid – Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life" at the International Centre of Photography (New York):

<http://www.icp.org/exhibitions/rise-and-fall-of-apartheid>

Reviews of the Exhibition:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/arts/design/rise-and-fall-of-apartheid-at-center-of-photography.html?_r=1

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/10/images-apartheid>



Time-line reference:	No.12
Running time (film scene):	01:10:00 – 01:12:16 (Sandra’s and Petrus’ township Komkrans is declared a whites-only area, forceful eviction)
Historical/political background:	Declaration of whites-only areas 1976-1979 / 7,600 people were evicted from the township Komkrans / Relocation to newly created homeland Tjakastad
Short synopsis of events:	Creation of Homeland – Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) / Government’s plan: creation of 10 homelands (Bantustans) for self-government with the goal to promote African ethnic nations, which might at the end claim independence from South Africa. / But homelands never evolved into vital new states, they were fragmented, poor, dependent and served as huge labour dormitories for White South Africa / People assigned to the different homelands did not have a shared tribal identity / Black South Africans were forcibly removed (on two weeks’ notice) to rural areas / Between mid 1950s and mid 1980s about 3.5 million black South Africans were relocated to homelands.
Task design:	Film analysis, outer and inner struggle, discussion, research on South African homeland politics

FILM ANALYSIS

Apart from the aggression coming from the outside, the couple encounters an inner struggle as well. Analyse the film scene (01:10:00-01:12:16) in which Sandra and Petrus are forcefully evicted from their home in Komkrans.



DISCUSSION

Discuss the following quote revealing the political rationale behind the creation of homelands:



“It is accepted government policy that the Bantu are only temporarily resident in the European areas of the Republic, for as long as they offer their labour there. As soon as they become, for some reason or other, no longer fit for work or superfluous in the labour market they are expected to return to their country of origin or the territory of the national unit [Bantustan] where they fit in ethnically if they were not born or bred in the Homeland ... It must be stressed here that no stone is to be left unturned to achieve the settlement in the homelands of non-productive Bantu presently residing in the European areas.”

Source: Official circular issued in 1967, published in Welsh, David (2009), *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Ball, p. 61.

Background information for your research on homelands: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands>

Time-line reference:	No.13
Running time (film scene):	01:30:17 – 01:31:12 (Sandra tries to get hold of her personal file) 01:32:45 - 01:38:15 (Sandra visits her mother seeking for reconciliation)
Historical/political background:	Freedom Information Act // Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
Short synopsis of events:	The Freedom of Information Act allows all citizens access to all kinds of information about them stored by governmental institutions Mr Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice, on the founding of the TRC: „... a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation.“
Task design:	Close viewing, research

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Sandra is using her new rights – guaranteed by the Freedom of Information Act – to gather information on her case. In the present film scene (01:30:17-01:31:12) she tries to get the current address of her mother, Sannie Laing. Sandra is longing for reconciliation on a very personal level.



In the following film sequence Sandra tries to explain to her daughter why it is so important for her to get re-united with her parents (her mother). She aims for reconciliation and maybe also forgiveness and visits her mother at a nursing home (01:32:45-01:38:15). Indirectly, the movie addresses a very important issue of post-apartheid South Africa: The question of how to deal with the past and the longing for justice and reconciliation.

INTERNET RESEARCH ON THE TRC

Do some research on South Africa's attempt to come to terms with its apartheid past by initiating a Truth and Reconciliation commission (TRC). The pros and cons have been widely discussed, nevertheless it is worthwhile to explore yourselves... Here are some websites to begin your research with:



Freedom of Information Act: <http://www.dfa.gov.za/department/paia.pdf>
 Official Website of the TRC: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>
 Background information on the TRC: <http://truth.wwl.wits.ac.za/about.php>
 Cartoon about the TRC: <http://truth.wwl.wits.ac.za/>
 TRC – yes or no? - Pros and Cons: http://debatepedia.idebate.org/en/index.php/Debate:_Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commissions
 Documentary “Long Night’s Journey into Day” on post-apartheid South Africa: <http://www.irisfilms.org/films/long-nights-journey-into-day/>

THE HEADMASTER'S LETTER

Abridged Interview with Director Anthony Fabian of Skin

By William S. Gooch

Posted on May 16, 2010 By Ricky <http://www.soundonsight.org/bonus-material/interviews/> on <http://www.soundonsight.org/interview-with-director-anthony-fabian-of-skin/>



A couple of days before the New York premiere of Skin, Anthony Fabian spoke with me about the movie, his challenges, and what the making of Skin taught him about humanity.

You were born in San Francisco, but grew up in Mexico and London, later going to film school at UCLA. Before you started making documentaries and films, you produced opera in Europe. Why did you transition from producing opera to making movies?

Anthony Fabian: After film school and six years in Los Angeles, I felt I didn't have anything significant to say. In LA everything is about the film industry. I moved back to England and I needed to get more directing experience, but because the film industry is quite small in the UK I found working in opera more interesting. And I could also use my music training. I directed operas for about five years. It was always my goal to go back to filmmaking. In my late 20s I made my first short film, which opened up some doors for me. I started making promotional short films for a classical record company, kind of MTV for classical music. I heard about Sandra Laing's story and knew pretty quickly that I wanted her story to be my first feature film.

How did you come to know about Sandra's story?

Anthony Fabian: I was listening to BBC radio and there was an interview with Sandra. I was very moved by the interview. I knew straight away that her story had the potential to become a very powerful film.

What was it about Sandra's story that piqued your interest?

Anthony Fabian: The dynamic between Sandra and her parents. The need to be accepted and loved by one's parents is very strong in all of us. I was very drawn by the acceptance, rejection and reconciliation in Sandra's story. I was also drawn to the science fiction aspect of the apartheid system. The rules that were based on not very real things just seemed so ludicrous, yet, government policy and people's freedom was dictated by these outlandish rules. Also, from a genetic point of view, Sandra's story was fascinating.

Did working on this project answer any questions you may have had about race?

Anthony Fabian: Definitely. I've learned about how tribal we are as human beings. The need to find your people and where you belong is very strong in all of us. When you read Barack Obama's memoir, "Dreams of my Father," it is all about finding his people and identifying himself. That is a universal question that we all contemplate. We have to find our group and identify with people whether by race, gender, sexuality or culture. The downside to that instinct is excluding people that are different from the group. I am coming to terms with those wider meanings and they lead to things like war and issues over immigration. All these things relate to the story of Sandra Laing.

Who came up with the title of the movie?

Anthony Fabian: My first title for the movie was Sandra's Skin because I think it does all boil down to that. But for some reason that title didn't catch fire, so to speak. Susannah York, an actress I have worked with on occasion, was having dinner with me and came up with the idea to call the movie Skin. My sales agent didn't like the title and worked hard to try to get me to change it. He felt the title was pornographic. I do get slightly annoyed when people call the film Skins, which I believe is the title of a movie about Native Americans; however, I believe the title is very powerful and gets the point across.

Why your choice of Sophie Okonedo for the title role?

Anthony Fabian: First, she is a spectacular actress. She understood this role from the inside out because she was born to a Nigerian father and British mother. She grew up in England without her father and felt at odds with the white community, feeling that she didn't quite belong. In primary school her classmates would pull her uniform skirt down to see if she was completely black. So, she could relate to Sandra's story from a deep personal level.

We were also very lucky that when she accepted the role she had just been nominated for an Academy Award for her role in *Hotel Rwanda*, which gave her some currency and really helped us get some financing. There are only 3 or 4 black actresses that can bring investor money to a film. It is so unfortunate, but that is the way it is.

How familiar were you with apartheid in South Africa before starting this project?

Anthony Fabian: I really didn't know very much about the apartheid system except that it was wrong and that we should boycott banks that were invested in South Africa. I didn't know how complicated the system was and that there are 11 different cultures and languages in South Africa. I didn't know that European colonization in South Africa goes back over 300 years. So, I had a lot of catching up to do. That is one of the reasons it took me five years to develop the script from Judith Stone's book *When She Was White*. I had to immerse myself in the culture of South Africa to do Sandra's story justice. I didn't want to just skim over the surface.

I first saw this movie at the Latino Film Festival, and you talked about some distribution issues in the US, have you worked that out?

Anthony Fabian: Our release plans are to go to 15 markets. This film has had no support within the industry. I raised money for the release of *Skin* because I believe there is an audience for it. I really hope and pray that we have the last laugh on the industry with this film. The press has given us very favorable reviews.

We had a screening at the United Nations and we have been presented with the United Nations Time for Peace Award. Sophie has been nominated for a BIFA Award. So, we are sitting on this incredible product that every single distributor rejected. In some way we are like Obama, who was not considered a political frontrunner. Nobody wanted Obama but the public. I have to believe the public is going to want to see *Skin*. And I am backing that horse.

What do you hope audiences get from this film?

Anthony Fabian: The message of this film is very much the message that is encapsulated by the African concept that we are all bond together by our common humanity. The skin is just an organ, and under that organ we are all human. I hope audiences get that from this movie, the oneness of humanity.

Source: <http://www.soundonsight.org/interview-with-director-anthony-fabian-of-skin/>

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Answer the following questions



- 1) What motivated Anthony Fabian to make a film about Sandra's life story?
- 2) What is his view on the underlying reasons of racial segregation and apartheid?
- 3) Do you agree with Anthony Fabian that Skin is a very powerful title "and gets the point across"?
- 4) Why do you think did the film have difficulties to gain support from the film industry?
- 5) Anthony Fabian hopes to show with his film the "oneness of humanity"? Did this message come across? What is your personal message you take from the film?