



Biko – Peter Gabriel – Notes



- **Activity types:** Discussion, Internet search, listening to interviews, vocabulary (opposites), listening for specific words, gap fill, writing, watching films.
- **Level:** Intermediate/Post-Intermediate
- **Notes:** Stephen Biko was a black South African anti-apartheid activist in the 1960s and 1970s. He played a significant role in organising the protests which culminated in the Soweto Uprising on 16th June 1976. Biko was arrested at Port Elizabeth in August 1977 and interrogated in Police Room 619. While he was in police custody he was beaten and tortured. As a result of his massive head injuries, he died in Pretoria prison on 12th September 1977.
In 1980 the British rock musician Peter Gabriel released the protest song *Biko* on his third album *Peter Gabriel*. A live version of the song was used to promote the 1987 Biko film biography *Cry Freedom*, despite not actually appearing in the film. (if you use the live version, note that he sings "when I try TO sleep at night" in the second verse, rather than "AND sleep...")
Note that although the track is seven minutes long, the lyrics are sung from 55" to 4' 35".

1. To introduce the song you can ask students questions like the following:
 - What do you know about South Africa?
 - What is Apartheid?
 - What do you think about racial discrimination?
 - What do you know about Nelson Mandela?
 - Do you know who Steve Biko was?
2. Explain to students they are going to listen to a song about Biko. Introduce the South African anti-apartheid activist. If a LIM is available in the classroom you can show them photos of Biko and related websites. At the links <http://youtu.be/JNmAcqdO2Ck> and <http://youtu.be/6ZHDPTe4TXk> you can also listen to interviews with Stephen Biko.
3. Write the following words on the board. Ask students to find their opposites alone or in pairs.
end – black – light – alive – lower (adjective) – woman – day – inside – wake (verb) – unusual
KEY: (at this stage any correct opposite is acceptable):
begin – white – blow out (extinguish) – dead – higher – man – night – outside – sleep – usual
4. Play the song. Ask students to listen for the opposites from the previous activity, correcting if necessary, and numbering them in the order they hear them in any form. If they appear more than once, refer to the first time. Point out they will also hear one word from the original list you gave them (**black**).
KEY: 1. usual - 2. man - 3. dead - 4. sleep - 5. night - 6. outside - 7. black - 8. white - 9. blow out - 10. begin - 11. higher
5. Feedback, then give each student a copy of the worksheet and ask them to fill in the gaps with the missing words, based on their answers to the previous activity and context.
Note: "Yihla Moja" is a Xhosa phrase which means "Come Spirit", included in the South African national anthem. Xhosa is one of the 11 official languages in South Africa. Biko was a Xhosa native speaker but he also spoke English and Afrikaans fluently.
6. Play the song again. Students check their answers in pairs or in groups, then correct in open class and sing together!

Follow up:

- A. Students write a short essay (max 150 words) commenting on a famous quote by Biko: "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."
- B. Show students the 1987 film "Cry Freedom," directed by Richard Attenborough and starring Denzel Washington and Kevin Kline. The movie is based on the book "Biko," written by Woods, a white newspaper publisher and Biko's personal friend, who fled the country with his family after Biko's death.
- C. Students in groups search for more information about South Africa, its recent history and popular South African people, then report their findings to the class.



Biko – Peter Gabriel



September '77
 Port Elizabeth weather fine
 It was business as _____
 In police room 619
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
 The _____ is _____
 The _____ is _____

When I try and _____ at _____
 I can only dream in red
 The _____ world is _____ and _____
 With only one colour dead
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
 The _____ is _____
 The _____ is _____

You can _____ a candle
 But you can't _____ a fire
 Once the flames _____ to catch
 The wind will blow it _____
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
 Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
 The _____ is _____
 The _____ is _____

And the eyes of the world are
 watching now, watching now

Biko – Peter Gabriel - Complete



September '77
Port Elizabeth weather fine
It was business as **usual**
In police room 619
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
The **man is dead**
The **man is dead**

When I try and **sleep at night**
I can only dream in red
The **outside** world is **black** and **white**
With only one colour dead
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
The **man is dead**
The **man is dead**

You can **blow out** a candle
But you can't **blow out** a fire
Once the flames **begin** to catch
The wind will blow it **higher**
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Oh Biko, Biko, because Biko
Yihla Moja, Yihla Moja
The **man is dead**
The **man is dead**

And the eyes of the world are
watching now, watching now