

**"Nothing's Changed" by Tatamkhulu Afrika**

Small round hard stones click  
under my heels,  
seeding grasses thrust  
bearded seeds  
into trouser cuffs, cans,  
trodden on, crunch  
in tall, purple-flowering,  
amiable weeds.

District Six.

No board says it is:  
but my feet know,  
and my hands,  
and the skin about my bones,  
and the soft labouring of my lungs,  
and the hot, white, inwards turning  
anger of my eyes.

Brash with glass,  
name flaring like a flag,  
it squats  
in the grass and weeds,  
incipient Port Jackson trees:  
new, up-market, haute cuisine,  
guard at the gatepost,  
whites only inn.

No sign says it is:  
but we know where we belong.

I press my nose  
to the clear panes, know,  
before I see them, there will be  
crushed ice white glass,  
linen falls,  
the single rose.

Down the road,  
working man's cafe sells  
bunny chows.

Take it with you, eat  
it at a plastic table's top,  
wipe your fingers on your jeans,  
spit a little on the floor:  
it's in the bone.

I back from the  
glass,  
boy again,  
leaving small mean O  
of small mean mouth.  
Hands burn  
for a stone, a bomb,  
to shiver down the glass.  
Nothing's changed.



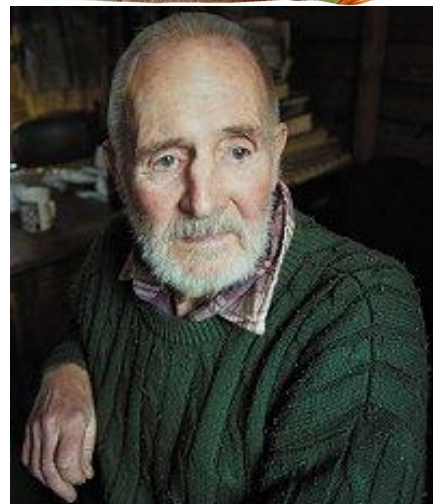
**District 6 in the  
early 1960s**



**A typical street on the outskirts  
of District 6 today**



**A bunny chow -  
curry in a loaf of  
bread**



**Afrika**

**Tatamkhulu Afrika** was brought up in Cape Town (South Africa), as a white Afrikaaner, before learning that he had in fact been born in Egypt in 1920, the child of an Arab father and a Turkish mother. When the South African government began to classify every citizen by colour, he refused to be classed as 'white', and chose instead to be classified as 'coloured'. He became a Muslim, and lived in Cape Town's District 6, then a thriving mixed-race inner-city community. In the 1960s, as part of its policy of apartheid, the government declared District 6 a 'whites only' area, and began to evacuate the population. Over a period of years the entire area was razed to the ground. Most of it has never been rebuilt.

## Questions

1. Which narrative point of view is the poem written in? (1st, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> person?)
2. Why do you think the poet chose this perspective?
3. Anaphora is when lines start with the same word or phrase. Identify an example of anaphora. What is the effect of it?
4. What do you think "clear panes" (glass) might represent?
5. How are the "whites' only inn" and the "working man's café" different? Think about the establishments themselves and the food served.
6. *"No sign says it is:  
but we know where we belong."*  
What is meant by these two lines?
7. *"Hands burn  
for a stone, a bomb,  
to shiver down the glass."*  
Keeping in mind your answer to Q.4. What do you think is the meaning of these 3 lines?
8. What does the poet mean by "nothing's changed?"