

Alan Paton
The Quarry
Easy questions to cut your teeth on!

Worksheet by:
Keith Tankard
Knowledge4Africa.com

These thoughts and speculations took him some minutes, so that the crowd below knew that he was facing some kind of crisis. He was nearly fifty feet up, about one-third of the height of the quarry face. There were now a hundred people watching him, talking to each other, but not loudly, because they were subdued by contemplation of the dangers that lay ahead. The boys were filled with admiration and awe, and the women were tender feeling and care. It was a white boy, it was true, but there in the danger and excitement of his journey up the quarry face he had become one of their own. The boys wished him luck and the women shook their heads, unable to be indifferent to either his naughtiness or his plight.

Johnny lifted his right foot to make the first step of the ascent, and this action put the big Indian man into a panic.

"Sonny," he cried, "true's God, don't go up any more. You'll die, sonny, and no one here wants you to die. Sonny, I ask you to come down." He went down on his knees on the quarry floor, and said, "I pray God to make you come down. I pray God not to be angry with you." The women there, both Indian and African, seeing him kneeling there, cried out, "Shame," but not because they thought his action was shameful, they were merely saying how sad the whole thing was.

-
1. Why was Johnny attempting to climb the quarry face? (4)
 2. What was the racial make-up of the crowd of onlookers? (2)
 3. "It was a white boy, it was true."
 - What point is the narrator attempting to make by this statement? (4)
 4. Comment on the role that "the big Indian man" plays in this story. (4)
 5. Is there a point to the story? If so, what is it? (4)
 6. Did Johnny succeed in climbing the quarry face? Explain. (3)
 7. In the final moments of this story, a certain Thomas Ndhlovu becomes a hero.
 - How does he become a hero? (2)
 - What is the point of the narrator making him the hero? (4)
 8. "The policeman cleared a way through the mob of congratulators, and there, under the eyes of authority, Johnny Day put out his hand and thanked Thomas Ndhlovu again for the act which, for all we know, saved his life."
 - Comment on these lines as a conclusion to this short story. (6)

<www.knowledge4africa.com>

This worksheet is copyrighted. No part of it may be copied or printed in any form whatever without the express permission in writing of the author. The sole exception is for non-profit educational purposes.