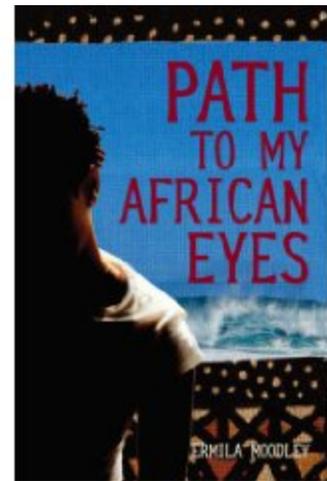


# Teacher's Guide

*Path to My African Eyes*

By Ermila Moodley

Published by Just Us Books



## Book Description

Being a teenager is tough enough. But imagine starting freshman year at a new high school that's not just in a new city, but a new country. That's life for 14-year-old Thandi Sobukwe.

When her father is transferred from his position as a professor at the University of Cape Town in South Africa to Buena Vista, California, Thandi says goodbye to friends, family and favorite places and hello to self-doubt, rejection and cultural confusion. Everything from the way she looks to the way she speaks, and even the way she thinks is questioned, mocked or simply misunderstood. Thandi's stuck between a rock and a hard place. She's struggling to be comfortable in her skin. But between her "California girl" dreams, ambivalent feelings about Black American culture, and sensitivity about the ethnic background that she thinks makes her stand out too much, she doesn't seem to fit in anywhere. Thandi's facing a real dilemma: How can you be true to yourself when you're trying to discover who you are?

**Target age:** 13 and up

**Themes:** parent-teen relationships, cultural identification, assimilation, peer pressure

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## Pre-Reading Questions

What images does the cover convey?

Do any elements in the book cover relate to the book title?

Do you think the term "African eyes" is a symbolic or literal reference? Explain your answer.

## Discussion Questions

Describe what Thandi's life was like when she lived in Cape Town.

List Thandi's character traits and provide examples that demonstrate each trait.

What character attributes are evidenced by Thandi's varied choice of friends?

Do you think Thandi's parents are "control freaks"? Explain your answer.

Why does Thandi describe her grandmother's village as "the other world"?

How would you describe Thandi and Peter's relationship?

How would you describe Thandi at the beginning of the book? How is she different from who she is at the end of the book?

Thandi is initially averse to keeping a diary, but by the end of the book, she embraces the idea. Why do you think she has a change of heart?

Is there a difference between race and ethnicity? Explain.

Why do Thandi and Chrystal remain friends, while Thandi and Jennifer do not?

**Define these words/phrases**

impression

scrutinize

fixation

adamant

defensive

achievement

independence

transformation

confidence

sarcastic

hypocritical

embarrassment

progress

pride

culture

**WRITING/LANGUAGE ARTS**

A. Keep a diary for at least one week, and be sure to record your thoughts at least once a day.

B. Interview a classmate who is of a different ethnic background than you, then write a feature article on that person.

C. Thandi has a strong relationship with her dad. She respects his professional work, enjoys his company, and admires his intellect. Write an essay about someone you admire.

D. Thandi has an assignment to write an essay about an invention that would solve a problem. Brainstorm an invention that would solve a problem or make something easier, then write an essay to explain why the invention is important.

E. Salif is critical of Thandi's heroes. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

F. What would be your advice to Thandi after she read the hate note? Write your response advice column style.

G. Discuss the concept of 'African Eyes' and its relevance to Thandi's main conflict.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

A. Do the same ancestors project that Thandi and her class are assigned in the book. Research your ethnic heritage, and do an oral presentation that highlights where your ancestors are from, that country's or region's history and culture.

B. Thandi's parents are Xhosa and Sotho. Write down everything you learned about the Xhosa from the book. Use the Internet to learn more about both ethnic groups.

C. What are some of the characters' ill-conceived notions about Africa and South Africa? List three, then do research to show why each stereotype or generalization is incorrect.

D. In *Path to My African Eyes*, Thandi learns about Steve Biko, who led the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. Research Biko and his movement. Who were some of his contemporaries? What were some of his political and social beliefs? Who were his followers? What did the movement accomplish? If you had to name a counterpart in Black America's history, who would that person be?

E. Some of the characters in *Path to My African Eyes* refer to Africa as a country, although it is a continent. How many countries does Africa comprise? Without consulting a map, write down as many African countries you can think of.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

A. Are there any misconceptions people have about you? In a group setting, share at least one thing you've heard about yourself that is a generalization, misconception or rumor. Then publicly share one thing that you wish people knew about you.

B. Thandi decided to enter the school talent show by showcasing Thandi's Telepen, which she tries to create with her friend Peter's help. Host a class talent show to give students an opportunity to hone and showcase their talents.

## About the Author

Born in Ladysmith, South Africa, the descendant of sugar cane plantation slave laborers, author **Ermila Moodley** grew up under the system of apartheid. Heavily influenced by South African civil rights leader Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness movement, she became involved in student protests and anti-apartheid political groups during high school and college. After earning a B.S. at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa, she moved to California, and has been an elementary school teacher in the Santa Barbara, CA area for the past fifteen years.



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