1) Purple Hibiscus

"We should go to Nsukka when Jaja comes out," I say to Mama as we walk out of the room. I can talk about the future now.

Mama shrugs and says nothing. She is walking slowly, her limp has become more noticeable, her body moving sideways with each step. We are close to the car when she turns to me and says, "Thank you, mne." It is one of the few times in the past three years that she has spoken without being first spoken to. I do not want to think about why she is thanking me or what it means. I only know that, all of a sudden, I no longer smell the damp and urine of the prison yard.

"We will take Jaja to Nsukka first, and then we'll go to America to visit Auntie Ifeoma," I say. "We'll plant new orange trees in Abba when we come back, and Jaja will plant purple hibiscus, too, and I'll plant ixora so we can suck the juices of the flowers." I am laughing. I reach out and place my arm around Mama's shoulder and she leans toward me and smiles.

Above, clouds like dyed cotton wool hang low, so low I feel I can reach out and squeeze the moisture from them. The new rains will come down soon.

Provide a detailed close reading of the above passage. In particular, point out the significance of the imagery used at this stage of the novel.
2) The Road

The boy’s growing agency, demonstrated through his capacity to articulate his own moral inclinations contrary to his father’s, culminates in his rejection of the hero stories he has long sought from his father. When his father asks why he no longer wants to hear the stories, the boy indicates his insistent pragmatic interpretation of literary morals: “In the stories we’re always helping people and we don’t help people,” he says. In his rejection of the comforting fictions his father has offered, the boy here seems to posit his own answer to his often-repeated questions earlier in the novel. Previously, the boy has asked if they are “still the good guys,” and has demanded affirmation that their actions are indeed the actions of “good guys,” when they venture into morally uncertain territory during their arduous trek. The boy’s ultimate rejection of hero stories suggests that he sees the necessity of a functional correlation between fictional ideals and real-world practical action. If the boy models the grail hero’s maturation from instinctive but unexpressed compassion to genuine, transformative healing, then this scene suggests that the right questions are those that lead not to the correct answers but to “correct” actions – to behaviour consistent with an internalised ethics.

Lydia Cooper

Analyse at least three key scenes where the boy is shown to be developing his own autonomous ethical code, and analyse the end of the novel in terms of the grail myth.

3) Whale Rider

What does it mean that it is the figure of the indigenous girl that is used to re-imagine national cinema and the nation as a whole? What are the political, cultural and aesthetic effects of “the girl” as the site in which the boundaries between tradition, history, memory and the contemporary are ruptured – and where hope is found?

Marina Gonick

Engage creatively with Gonick’s questions in relation to the film.
4) Welcome to Our Hillbrow

In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* we see both the recurrent pattern of cultural polarisation and xenophobia which replicates itself across different nations of the world, and the fact that the prejudice born out of the drawing up of the borders of identity and alterity is relative and shifting, depending upon which cultural/geographical perspective it is perceived from. The novel thus highlights the global recurrence of the polarisation of cultures as a ridiculous process, precisely because, ironically and paradoxically, all humanity is in fact united as one culture through its tendency to create inimical barriers between cultures. This is the crucial point which sheds light on the cultural position from which the narrator, and the novel itself, speaks.

* Hilary Dannenberg

In responding to this quotation analyse at least three episodes of cultural polarisation and xenophobia as represented in the novel. What values are endorsed by the text, and what techniques are used by Phaswane Mpe to convey his ethical stance?

5) Cereus Blooms at Night

"The cereus will bloom in just another few nights. Can you wait?" I whispered to him.

"Yes, yes. Just barely, but I will wait."

Mr Mohanty and Miss Ramchandin were still seated next to each other when we arrived back at the bench. He was staring at his surroundings, shaking his head in a gesture of approval and saying, "No time to waste, not a moment to be wasted."

Miss Ramchandin bounced on the bench. She pointed up into the sky and traced a distant flight pattern that she alone could see. She laughed as her eyes followed what her finger described, and waved to whatever it was she saw. She trembled with joy. In a tiny whispering voice, she uttered her first public words: "Poh. Pohpohpoh, Poh, Poh, Poh."

The cereus will surely bloom within days – an excitement diminished only by the fact that there is still no word from Asha Ramchandin. Judge Walter Bissey has contacted a colleague in Canada, who promises to use all legal means to determine if an Asha Ramchandin still resides in that cold country.
Asha, if these words have already found your eyes, for the sake of your sister who worships your memory please return and pay her a visit: Paradise Alms House, Paradise, Lantanacamara. If for some reason you are physically unable to come here, please write, send a message, a photograph. I will respond immediately with the same. And if you were indeed reunited with your mother, Sarah, and with Lavinia Thoroughly, in the Wetlands or in Canada, please tell us how they fared. Not a day passes that you are not foremost in our minds. We await a letter, and better yet, your arrival. She expects you any day soon. You are, to her, the promise of a cereus-scented breeze on a Paradise night.

Critically analyse the effects created in this passage.