

## Terror in South Africa drives film success

Level 2 | Intermediate

### 1 Key words

Match the words with the definitions:

1. carjacking \_\_\_\_\_
2. to ambush \_\_\_\_\_
3. a thug \_\_\_\_\_
4. apartheid \_\_\_\_\_
5. hysteria \_\_\_\_\_
6. to claim \_\_\_\_\_
7. corrupt \_\_\_\_\_
8. despair \_\_\_\_\_

- a) The political system that existed in South Africa where only white people had political rights and power.
- b) A feeling that a situation is so bad that nothing you can do will change it.
- c) A state of uncontrolled excitement or extreme fear.
- d) A violent man, usually a criminal.
- e) A crime in which someone attacks the driver of a car and steals the car.
- f) To attack someone after hiding and waiting for them.
- g) To say that something is true even though there is no definite proof.
- h) Someone that does dishonest, illegal or immoral things to gain money or power.

### 2 Find the information

Look in the text and find the information as quickly as possible.

1. What is the name of the film that won this year's Oscar for best foreign language film?
2. When did apartheid end in South Africa?
3. How many carjackings were there in 1998?
4. How many carjackings were reported last year?
5. What is the largest city in South Africa?
6. What percentage of stolen vehicles are broken up?

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### Everyday terror in South Africa drives film success

On a rainy Johannesburg night a woman stops her car outside a suburban house, steps out of the car, leaving the engine running, and rings the bell. A man runs across the street, jumps into the vehicle and begins to reverse. The woman turns around and screams - her baby is in the back seat. She tries to grab the driver's door. The thief points his gun and fires. A bullet enters the mother's stomach and she collapses on to the ground. Her car and baby vanish into the night. This is a scene from *Tsotsi* - a South African film that last Sunday won the Oscar for best foreign language film - a film that shows the typical South African crime, the carjack.

The film's success has brought international attention to a form of armed robbery that fills many South Africans with fear. Thousands of motorists are ambushed at gunpoint each year in South Africa. The lucky ones are left by the roadside, shaken and without their cars. The unlucky ones are kidnapped, raped and murdered.

*Tsotsi* is the story of a young thug from the Johannesburg township of Soweto who changes his life after kidnapping his carjack victim's baby. It is the latest in a new wave of South African films that explore crime and other modern issues rather than apartheid, said Guy Willoughby, a cultural commentator and writer. 'Car hijacking is an especially rich subject. It is the meeting point between the rich and poor worlds.'

Carjackings peaked at more than 16,000 cases in 1998. The annual rate has fallen, with 12,434 reported last year, and commentators say it shows South Africa is changing and adapting to the realities of the post-apartheid era. The middle class was badly shaken by the rapid increase in violent crime that accompanied democracy and the end of apartheid in 1994. 'In the late 1990s there was so much hysteria, almost a national panic. Hijacking was seen as a specific threat to the middle class,' said Antony Altbeker, a carjacking specialist. 'But now people have come to terms with it more.'

South Africa's largest city, Johannesburg, was once the crime capital of the country but it has experienced a dramatic fall in crime of 35% in the past two years. But for a few days last week hysteria returned when a gunman shot a pregnant woman twice in the stomach while she was sitting in a car, killing her unborn child. Then it was claimed that it was not a real carjacking but a murder. The woman's husband was charged with murder for organizing the attack. There is evidence that many carjackings are fronts for other crimes such as murder or insurance fraud. In the latter, owners sell their cars to criminals and then claim they were robbed. When BMW introduced a lie-

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detector test with its own insurance scheme, the number of claims fell, said Mr Altbeker.

But no one denies that *Tsotsi* shows a real problem. Last Saturday three armed men ambushed the film's director of photography, Lance Gewer, outside his Johannesburg home and stole his car. The vehicle and Mr Gewer's plane ticket to LA for last Sunday's Academy Awards were found hours later. It is thought that 40% of the vehicles stolen end up in 'chop shops', where cars are broken up and the parts sold, said Mr Altbeker. Another 30% are re-registered, often with the help of corrupt police or transport ministry officials, and sold in South Africa. The rest, particularly luxury 4x4s, are exported and often end up in eastern Europe.

There are usually more carjackings on Fridays, when motorists are more relaxed. Some carjackers work alone, others work for a network of syndicates headed by senior gangsters. A syndicate broken up last year had 22 members, including three junior police officers, who specialized in targeting women drivers for their jewellery. About a fifth of carjacking cases involve physical harm, including rape.

The film's writer and director, Gavin Hood, said that being the first South African film to win an Oscar 'tells me and all of us at home that we can do it. What we want, like everybody else, is just to tell our stories,' said the white South African, insisting that his aim had been not only to show the despair and violence of post-apartheid South Africa but to tell a universal morality tale. 'This will hopefully encourage more South African filmmakers to just keep telling their stories.'

### 3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text:

#### 1 The film *Tsotsi*

- a) is simply a universal morality tale
- b) only shows the despair and violence of post-apartheid South Africa
- c) shows the despair and violence of post-apartheid South Africa and is a universal morality tale

#### 2 Why are there more carjackings on Fridays?

- a) because there is more traffic on Fridays
- b) because drivers feel more relaxed
- c) because carjackers work alone

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**3 How do the middle classes react to violent crime in South Africa now?**

- a) there is a national panic
- b) they react hysterically
- c) they have begun to learn to accept it as part of everyday life

**4 What does the film's director hope will happen?**

- a) that other South African filmmakers will tell their stories
- b) that carjacking will decrease
- c) that he will win another Oscar

### 4 Vocabulary 1: collocations

Match these verbs from the text with the nouns they collocate with:

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. ring    | a a story   |
| 2. point   | b a vehicle |
| 3. explore | c an Oscar  |
| 4. steal   | d the bell  |
| 5. tell    | e an issue  |
| 6. win     | f a gun     |

### 5 Vocabulary 2: prepositions

These words and phrases are followed by prepositions. Fill the gaps with an appropriate preposition. Check your answers in the text.

- 1. come to terms \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. bring attention \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. adapt \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. threat \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. with the help \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. specialize \_\_\_\_\_

### 6 Vocabulary 3: word building

Complete the table:

	Verb	Noun
1	rob	_____
2	murder	_____

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- |   |          |       |
|---|----------|-------|
| 3 | succeed  | _____ |
| 4 | increase | _____ |
| 5 | threaten | _____ |
| 6 | claim    | _____ |

### 7 Discussion

Do you agree that violent films should be shown if they depict reality?