

Institutional information	
Director:	Gavn Hood
Release:	17 March 2006 (UK)
Production company:	The UK Film & TV Production Company, Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa
Country of production:	South Africa, UK
Starring:	Presley Chweneyagae, Terry Pheto, Mothusi Magano, Zola,
Genres:	Crime; drama; teen drama; coming-of age.
Other information:	Won Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film of the Year. Adapted from a novel by Athol Fugard.

Characters	
Tsotsi:	Protagonist: The eponymous character and the one who, arguably, shows the most growth and reflects the themes the most clearly. Runs away from home after he is left with his abusive father due to his mother dying from an undefined disease (but heavily hinted at being AIDS). As a young child David lives with other homeless children in construction pipes. The film focuses on him years later as a young adult and a gang leader, now called Tsotsi. After being involved in a murder he accidentally kidnaps a 3 month year old baby.
Miriam:	Mother to a young child, she is spotted by Tsotsi collecting water from a public tap. She is initially followed and threatened by Tsotsi at gunpoint who demands that she feed the kidnapped child. Shows her kindness by offering to look after the child when Tsotsi visits for a second time. Is, in many ways, a surrogate mother for Tsotsi too, and reflective of the key theme of decency.
Boston:	Seen from the beginning of the film as somewhat of an outsider of the group. He appears to be an alcoholic and the reasons for his addiction seem to stem from his social situation and a way to cope with his life in the gang and life of crime. Is, from the beginning, referred to as 'Teacher Boy', though was never actually a teacher. Fights with Tsotsi over the murder of the man at the start of the film and is another catalyst for Tsotsi's change after his is beaten to near-death by the protagonist Often the voice of reason..
Butcher:	Antagonist: The closest the film has to a traditional antagonist, given his violent nature which often creates issues for the gang. He is the one who kills the man on the train and therefore shows how prone he is to violence. He seems to enjoy violence and killing-his first choice in any scene involving crime seems to be to choose violence and specifically, killing. In some ways he is the version of Tsotsi he could be if he were to not change his ways.

Key Elements of Film Form (Micro elements)

Mise-en-scene:	The township and the city are marked by notably different colour palettes-reds, oranges and browns and grey and blue respectively. Facial expressions during the murder scene give a clear indication of what each character is like and effectively setting up each personality, apart from Tsotsi who, at this point, is difficult to read. Tsotsi is often shown away from the group or isolated in some way. Production design of locations is quite broad but very useful; Tsotsi's shack shows poverty, Miriam's shows warmth, the Dube's shows wealth, the train station shows cold alienation and lack of personality. Each is created through colour, props and the overall atmosphere created through mise-en-scene. Costume also used as symbolism-leather jacket, white shirt, tie, all key in conveying ideas.
Cinematography (including Lighting):	Close ups of characters hands feature heavily early on to help establish theme of destiny through use of dice. Audience is often placed within the gang through use of camera angles, shot sizes and movement; the dolly movement is motivated by the gang's movement at the start of the film, a POV during KS1, OTS shots of Tsotsi etc. Lighting is key-indicating atmosphere as well as theme. Light conveys warmth in Miriam's shack, hope as the sun rises over the township and despair at night, especially when accompanied by rain. At one point, Tsotsi is 'half-lit', suggesting a duality to his character and personality.
Sound:	The 'Kwaito' music that begins as they leave provides energy and a contemporary feel as a hybrid between familiar black urban music and an indigenous South African sound. Later, the quiet diegetic sounds are accompanied by music which is the quiet calm of African wind instruments, contrasting with the 'Kwaito' in the opening sequence.
Editing	Flashbacks are used in the film as a narrative device but are skilfully edited into the film to provide detail. Cross-cutting is also used in a number of scenes to explore the idea of fate and duality, such as Tsotsi looking at baby David and flashing back to Tsotsi looking at his sick mother. Tension is often conveyed through the editing, with pace manipulated to develop reaction.

Context:

Won 17 awards including Academy Award. Nominated for BAFTA and Golden Globe awards.

Set in Johannesburg, South Africa. The title of the film comes from urban slang which, loosely translated, means "thug".

Adapted from novel by Athol Fugard, a South African author and playwright.

The novel, set in the 1950s, took place at the height of apartheid. The film features a contemporary setting.

The huge problem with the AIDS epidemic is also (briefly) explored.

Explores the disparity between wealth/poverty & how this links to crime.

The soundtrack features Kwaito music performed by popular South African artist Zola, who also stars in the film. Also features the voice of South African protest singer/poet Vusi Mahlasela.

Representation:	
Tsotsi	Gangster. Seen in his clothing and violence, especially in the first scenes. Gang leader. In positioning in frame and in body language.. Teenager. His naivety and his inability to drive, his clothing and through use of the Kwaito music, similar to that of hip-hop, synonymous with youth culture around the world. Impoverished majority. Mise-en-scene of his shack.
The gang / criminals	Gangsters. Clothing and body language, especially in their treatment and actions towards others. Use of Kwaito music at the beginning of the film; it's similarity to hip-hop draws parallels with generalisation of American gang culture. Teenagers. Again portrayed through use of mise-en-scene and sound. Lost/orphaned children. Without guardians other than perhaps Fela, the concrete tubes and the dramatic use of the AIDS poster suggest these people have no parents and/or role model other than the criminal leaders they cling to for help and support. Uneducated. They have no plans/future and every choice they make is criminal in intent.
The people of the township	Impoverished but resourceful. Soekie's bar, the water pump, the colourful shacks, Miriam's mobiles; all symbols of people who suffer with impoverished conditions but people still show their resourcefulness and creativity. In theory, the majority of people living in South Africa should now have a say in democracy and a chance to live a fuller life, but are institutionalised in the townships such as this one.
The Police	Incompetent. The police don't manage to solve the crime or find baby David, but their excuse is valid-the township is very large. Aggressive. Their treatment of everyone aside from the Dubes is very aggressive; they resort to intimidation and aggression instead of being able to solve the crime through competence. Post-Apartheid. In having policemen who are black and white, the idea of Post-Apartheid South Africa and a move towards equality is seen. However, Captain Smit still takes charge and orders Sergeant Zuma around.
Pumla and John Dube	"Nouveau riche". Meaning, newly rich. In the last 50 years black people would not be in the financial position that the Dubes are. For this reason, they represent a type of people and family who are able to be 'rich' for the first time. Affluent. Clearly the Dubes are well off, they live in a large, gated home and drive expensive, executive cars.
Miriam	Single mother. Whilst Miriam is the only single mother we see in the film, she is clearly one of many in the township. Resourceful. Her ability to make mobiles and other items to make money shows how she can take rubbish and turn it into money to help herself and her baby. Homemaker. In contrast to Tsotsi's home, Miriam shows her ability to create a warm and happy environment that is self for her baby.

Themes/issues.	
Decency:	Key theme throughout-someone having respect for themselves and others.
Crime:	Often seen as a way of life or potentially a way out of poverty; aspirational.
Family:	Seen as aspirational for many; only the Dubes are seen as a family-everyone else is searching for or longing for family.
Responsibility:	Many do not take responsibility for their actions; when Tsotsi does he changes and becomes more mature and responsible.
Redemption:	Tsotsi tries to redeem himself by putting right the things he has done wrong-there is a suggestion that others doing the same would be beneficial for them and others.
Apartheid:	Segregation still exists, especially between the impoverished and affluent-seen perhaps best in the Dube's gated house.

Key scenes:	
The opening scene: (bit.ly/Tsotsi1)	A very effective opening in establishing character, location, tone and representation. The first scene uses the mise-en-scene to establish that these characters are poor and that one of them lives in a shack. The props of the dice also helps to show how characters pass time, what they do to earn money and how some of the characters are more intelligent than others. The dice game also helps to establish that there is division and disagreement in the group, with some members either not playing or standing away from the game and those that are disagreeing. Dice of course, are symbolic or chance and tie-in with many of the themes of destiny and having no control over fate. We then see the slum or township and the dusky, evocative colours of the area and as the camera tracks the gang we get to see the poverty, the resilience and the resourcefulness of the people who live there. The next scene is key in establishing that Tsotsi is the central figure. In a long shot he is in the centre of the group and the frame, also walking slightly ahead of everyone. The slightly tighter shots of his face show that the others in the gang are out of focus behind him-indicating that they're not as important. We also see Tsotsi's clothing-a leather jacket and a 'hoody'-items synonymous with gang culture, crime and representation of teenage rebellion. Finally, Tsotsi wears red which is symbolic of danger, suggesting that Tsotsi is not someone to be crossed.
Visiting Miriam's shack: (bit.ly/Tsotsi2)	Key here is the contrast between the style and representation of Tsotsi's shack and Miriam's. Tsotsi's shack is representative of crime, poverty and squalor. It is dark, untidy and for baby David it is dangerous and not somewhere he should be. Miriam's shack however, is bright, clean and the children there are safe. The use of light is key; in Tsotsi's shack there is minimal natural ambient light, making the scene feel dark and unwelcoming. In Miriam's shack the light is bright, warm and much more even, with little in the way of dark areas of shadows. It represents light and positivity, perhaps most notably in the use of the mobile made of broken glass hanging from the ceiling, in contrast with the mobile made of rust which not only contrasts but is representative of Tsotsi's outlook and sadness.
The burglary at the house: (bit.ly/Tsotsi3)	An excellent scene for highlighting how each of the gang members are represented. Aap's naivety is represented through his friendly manner with John Dube and trying to have a conversation with him about wine. His lack of understanding about wine also demonstrates his ignorance and unfamiliarity with a world which doesn't drink to get drunk. Butcher's desire for violence can be seen in his aggressive nature towards John Dube, again highlighting the difference between the two. Finally, Tsotsi's change and path to redemption is seen in his quest to not find money or valuables but instead things for baby David. The mural of the African jungle is significant, as it highlights both an idealised representation of Africa and an idealised version of childhood. Tsotsi's upbringing was not like this and the contrast between where he grew up and this, is scene through the production design of the bedroom, especially in how clean, tidy and comforting it is to Tsotsi when he's in the room. It is symbolic that what takes him from this is the sound of the alarm, triggered by crime committed by the gang he is supposed to be in charge of.
The Ending (bit.ly/Tsotsi4)	The final scene makes clear how Tsotsi has changed and become someone who taken responsibility for his actions and who wants to atone. This is most notably seen in his clothing; his previous gangster clothing now replaced with a white shirt, which is symbolic of innocence, purity and also surrender which is what he does with baby David. The use of key lights places focus on characters rather than the surrounding scenes, emphasising that place and surroundings aren't necessarily important if your actions are morally correct.