Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project Study Materials

Module 5:
Children's literature

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Module 5:
Children's Literature

The purpose of this module

The purpose of this module is twofold: In the first four units of this module we take a closer look at the fairly modern phenomenon of book-based children's literature, how it originated and developed over the centuries and we examine its various benefits for children. In the final unit of this module we look at the notion of emergent literacy and its role in early reading and writing development.

The first purpose of this module is to help student teachers acquire a deeper knowledge of children's literature. The field of children's literature is dealt with in Units 1-4, which examine the various factors that affected the development of children's literature over the centuries, the different genres within the field of children's literature and their features, the effect that exposure to children's literature can have on children's linguistic, cognitive and socio-affective development, and the role of children's literature in teaching early literacy.

The second purpose of this module is to introduce student teachers to the notion of emergent literacy in order to better understand the knowledge, skills and attitudes to written text and books the children acquire in the preschool years and how these impact later literacy development.

Outcomes

After studying this module, student teachers should be able to:

- describe the origins of children's literature and identify the factors that influenced its development over the centuries;
- identify and discuss the language, cognitive, social and emotional benefits of children's literature;
- show familiarity with the different organisations in South Africa that promote the publication, access to and distribution of children's book across all South African languages, especially African languages;
- identify and describe the various genres within children's literature and their main characteristics;
- describe the various narrative elements in picture storybooks as well as the role of illustrations in children's literature to enhance interest, engagement and understanding;
- describe emergent literacy and explain its role in literacy development;
- articulate how teachers can incorporate children's literature into their daily classrooms and activities.

Which literacy teacher standards are covered?

The list of literacy teacher standards that are applicable to reading teachers in South Africa can be downloaded from: *https://www.jet.org.za/clearinghouse/projects/primted/standards/literacy-teacher-standards/literacy-teacher-standards-2020-1.pdf*

These knowledge and practice standards relate to the knowledge of literacy teaching and decoding that graduate teachers need to have to teach learners to read and write. There are 21 standards in all. This module covers four of the standards (or portions of them). (The numbering of these standards below is not sequential, as only those standards applicable to this module have been selected from the list.)

8.   Demonstrate knowledge of theoretical and research-based components of reading and writing teaching through the phases and grades (including its cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural foundations and the processes and concepts involved).

8.1   What learners need to be able to read and write, and why, within and across the relevant grades and subjects, can be described.

8.2   A broad understanding of the concepts, curriculum, and pedagogy of literacy teaching can be articulated.

8.3   A coherent evidence-based understanding of the teaching of reading and writing that guides their approach and practice can be articulated.

8.4   The broad continuum of reading and writing development can be described.

8.5   A variety of strategies to teach, assess and support learners' development across the continuum can be identified.

17.   Demonstrate knowledge of phase appropriate features of page or screen-based visual texts, of how the relationship of verbal and visual features of texts affects meaning and of strategies to teach learners to become, firstly, visually literate and, subsequently, critically visually literate.

17.1   Features of page or screen-based visual texts in relation to the meaning they are communicating or expressing (e.g. through layout, colour, image choice) can be explained.

17.3   Strategies for teaching learners how to read and view visual texts or texts that combine words and images for particular effects can be described.

20.   Display knowledge about writing genres and text types.

20.1   Knowledge is demonstrated about appropriate literacy education texts in multiple genres, formats and degrees of complexity within various settings and cultural contexts, for various audiences considering learners' background knowledge, stage of reading development and any reading difficulties.

20.2 The purposes, functions and structure of various kinds and genres of texts (such as messages, stories, poems, and informational texts) are explained.

20.3 The ability to talk with learners meaningfully about the different genres is demonstrated.

20.4 Means of creating a classroom environment in which learners can communicate in writing using a range of genres, including creative writing, are described.

21. Display knowledge of literature for children, e.g. knowing a range of suitable literature and authors for particular children, having some understanding of quality in children's literature (fiction and non-fiction), and of how to enhance children's responses to literature.

21.1 The need to provide opportunities for learners to listen to and read and respond with enjoyment to a variety of interesting, engaging, social justice informing, and conceptually rich texts is understood.

21.2 Ways of using different genres and text types with children are described.

21.3 Engaging ways of using information texts for mathematics and life skills in the Foundation Phase and various subjects in the Intermediate Phase are described.

Unit 1: What is children's literature and how did it develop?

Introduction

Go into any bookstore or library in today's world and you will see a special section of books, magazines, games and puzzles that are specially produced for children or young adults. In today's world we take it for granted that there are rhymes, storybooks, information books and other print products for children, but this was not the case a few centuries ago. In earlier times children were exposed to songs, rhymes and stories through oral traditions. In the modern world, these are increasingly being replaced by written language in print and digital formats, although oral storytelling traditions are still enacted in some homes and classrooms. In this unit we briefly examine the origins of children's literature and how it developed over the ages. We also identify and discuss the language, cognitive, social and emotional benefits of exposure to children's literature.

What is children's literature and how did it develop?

Children's literature refers to stories, poems, songs, rhymes, books or magazines intended for children or young adults. Although in modern times children's literature tends to refer broadly to a body of written texts and pictures or illustrations that are produced for children, to be read to by an older reader (parent, sibling or caregiver) or for children to read on their own, the roots of many children's stories or traditional tales go back to ancient times and the art of oral storytelling.

The development of children's literature over the centuries was affected by several factors, including the emergence of the printing press, which provided easier access to stories and information via the written word and books, changing social attitudes towards children, and the emergence of mass education and state schools. Understanding the development of children's literature over the centuries also shows how stories reflect both universal features across different groups of people as well as attitudes and values associated with a specific historical period or culture.

It is through exposure to stories and early picture books that children learn about the world around – and beyond – them. They acquire the norms of behaviour, values and attitudes of the society and culture reflected in the stories and books. However, through books they also acquire knowledge of the world beyond their own physical and sociocultural setting. Two metaphors have been used to explain this dual role that exposure to books serves: books can serve as a **mirror** that reflects our image back to ourselves and allows us to get to know ourselves and our known world more deeply. However, books can also serve as a **window** on the outside world, whereby we get to know about the world beyond our immediate physical and sociocultural

context. The mirror/window term was first coined by the American teacher and activist Emily Style in 1988.

We will keep the mirror/window metaphor in mind throughout our discussion of children's literature in this module.

A brief history of the development of children's literature

Humans are storytellers, and storytelling is an integral part of every world culture. Ancient people told stories to entertain each other, to comfort each other, to pass on their knowledge of the world, to instruct the young in the lessons of living, and to pass on their religious and cultural heritage. Children's literature originated from a wider oral tradition across cultures worldwide that existed long before printing was invented. This tradition consisted of stories, fables, songs, riddles and rhymes that adults shared with children to instruct, educate or entertain them.

Modern children's literature can be classified according to the intended age of the reader: for example, literature for the *very young* (or preschool child), literature for *children* (e.g. children of primary school age) and literature for older children (e.g. teenagers), also referred to as *youth literature* or *young adult fiction*. (The different genres of children's literature within and across these age groups will be discussed in Unit 2.) However, in earlier times, people did not distinguish between adult and children's stories. Children heard the same stories as adults. Throughout the world, stories were told of the adventurous tales of heroes or the wondrous tales of gods and demons or evil spirits, magic spells and talking animals.

Oral children's literature refers to an art form that was used before people had written language. It includes folktales, songs, riddles and proverbs. In contrast, in the modern world children's literature usually takes the form of written language in books that are typically accompanied by illustrations.

Many of the stories that occur in children's books in today's world date back many hundreds of years. Much of children's written literature initially developed in the Western world. Western civilization has its roots in the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, which flourished between about 500 BCE and 400 CE[1], over 2,000 years ago. At that time, Aesop was a freed slave in ancient Greece who earned money by telling stories, which came to be known as *Aesop's Fables*. Fables are stories involving talking animals with an underlying moral lesson that is easy to understand. These fables were told to educate children in ethical and moral behaviour. When written language came about, the stories credited to Aesop were

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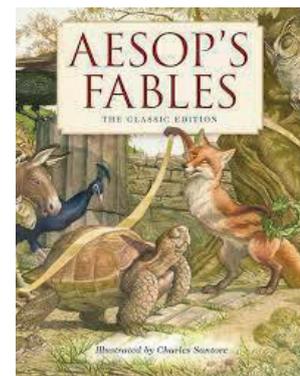
[1] The numbering system for counting years and centuries was introduced by a Christian monk named Dionysius Exiguus in the 6th century. The year count starts with year 1 in the Gregorian calendar, the year thought to be the birth of Jesus – which in Latin is anno domini 'the year of our Lord' (AD). CE stands for Common Era and means the same as Anno Domini (AD). BCE stands for Before Common Era.

preserved in written form and translated across the centuries into various languages. In the ancient world, and also during the Middle Ages (between 500 – 1400 CE), very few people were literate. Children were regarded as young adults and were expected to do work around the home or on a farm to help the family, assuming responsibilities from an early age. Many children were apprenticed to work when they were still young to become carpenters, stone masons, wagon makers, bakers, weavers, etc. Medieval literature consisted of biblical and religious stories as well as legends and romantic tales. It was instructive rather than entertaining, and also provided tuition in subjects like mathematics, astronomy, Latin and Greek. Only the sons (and sometimes the daughters) of wealthy parents were taught to read and write, so most children grew up illiterate. Some monks and priests could read and write, and books and scrolls were transcribed and illustrated by hand, usually by monks. This was a very slow and tedious process, so books were rare, and were owned mainly by the church and by wealthy people. Oral stories, songs, rhymes and poems were used to educate children and to set an example for them on how to lead a good and worthy life.

Figure 1: Picture of a monk transcribing a book by hand (left) and an ancient text written and illustrated by hand (right).

The advent of the printing press in Europe brought about major changes in the production of books and manuscripts. While woodblock printing in China dates back to the 9th century, the first printing press in Europe is credited to the German Johannes Gutenberg, around 1436. He printed the first edition of the Bible in 1456. The printing press made it possible to make many copies of a book; however, literature still remained didactic and moral in nature.
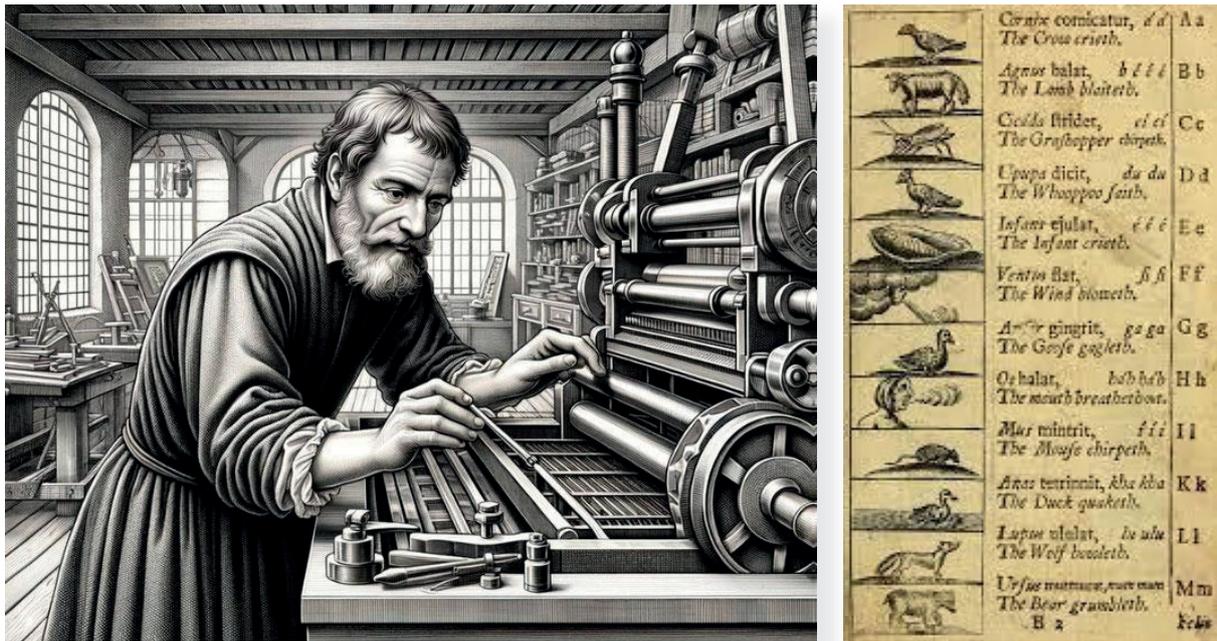
Figure 2: Image of early printing presses and (left) and the first textbook for children in 1658 (right)

The Renaissance (1400-1700), which means 'rebirth', is a period in European history covering the 15th and 16th centuries. It marked the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity. Before the invention of printing, when hand-copied books cost much more than most people could afford to pay, there were no books specifically for children. The concept of children as a special customer market for books and the idea that children should enjoy them originated during this period. In 1658 the Czech educator John Comenius wrote *Orbis Sensualium Pictus (Visible World in Pictures)* for children. It was the first widely used children's textbook with pictures, published first in Latin and German and later republished in many European languages.
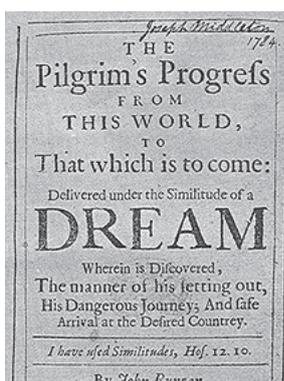
The Puritan movement that emerged during these times stressed the importance of spiritual development and individual salvation, and there was a growth in the publication of 'godly books' aimed at both children and adults, such as *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, published in 1678. Today this book is considered quite difficult and 'advanced', with complex linguistic structures and big words, compared to texts geared for children in the modern world. However, it became a book that children were expected to read and learn how to live a godly life.

The printing press made books more accessible and affordable to a wider range of people and led to the emergence of chapbooks. These were small, cheaply made books containing fairy tales, nursery rhymes, ballads, poems and folktales. They were sold from door to door and at markets and fairs and became a popular medium for street literature throughout early

modern Europe. More children started learning to read and write in small, private schools, so the explicit teaching of literacy also emerged, with books showing the letters of the alphabet, accompanied by illustrations.

During the late 17th and 18th centuries (Early Modern Europe), the concept of childhood began to emerge in Europe. Previously, children were not regarded as significantly different from adults or treated all that differently, but new ideas and concepts about childhood and children's development to adulthood started emerging. Increasingly, children were regarded as innocent and in need of protection and training by the adults around them. Around 1690 John Locke emphasised children's intellectual development. He believed that the minds of young children were similar to blank slates waiting to be filled up. All children had equal capabilities to learn, and adults had the responsibility to provide the proper learning environment. In 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasised the importance of moral development in children's upbringing, which should be characterised by freedom, possibilities to follow their curiosity and opportunities to explore and have their own experiences, so that they gain confidence and become self-reliant. Rousseau believed children could and should develop naturally with gentle guidance from wise adults.

This period saw the revival of folktales collected throughout Europe and written up in books, such as *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault in France (containing well-known stories such as Cinderella, Puss in Boots, Little Red Riding Hood), *Brothers Grimms' Nursery and Household Tales* (Including Hansel and Gretal, Sleeping Beauty, Tom Thumb) in Germany, *Hans Christian Anderson's Fairy Tales* in Denmark (including *The Ugly Duckling, The Emperor's New Clothes*). These books were quickly translated into many different languages.
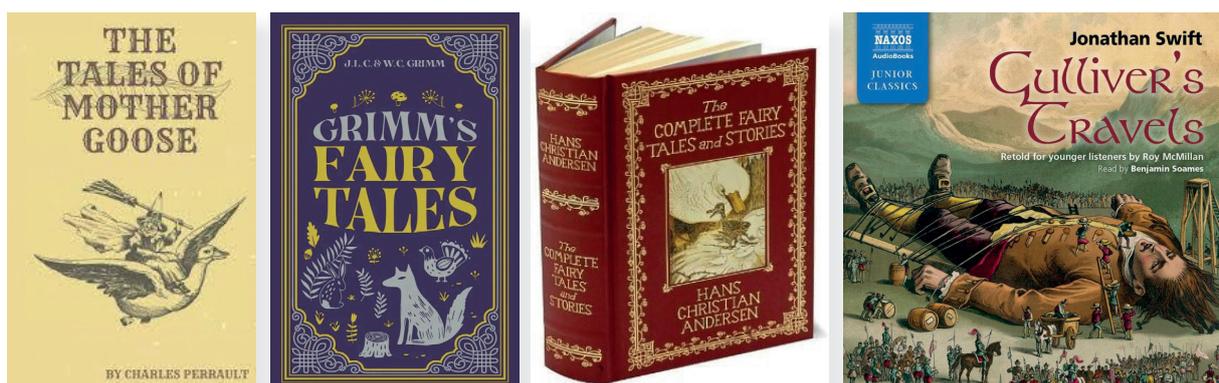
In 1726 Jonathan Swift published his book *Gulliver's Travels*. He is regarded as the foremost satirist in the English language. In this book Swift criticises European colonialism and human failings like arrogance, religious warfare and fights over small things. The book was intended for adults but was later considered children's literature.

Module 5:
Children's Literature

It was only in the eighteenth century that children's literature in Europe and America emerged as a genre of written works distinct from adult books. The emergence of books geared for a younger audience had simpler language, more accessible words and illustrations to accompany the text and support meaning. The period between 1830 and 1910 is regarded by some scholars as the Golden Age in the history of children's literature. The publishing industry recognised the economic viability of publishing books aimed specifically at younger readers and there was a growing market for children's books. Increases in state schools opened up new markets for schoolbooks and books aimed at children. Up until this time children's books were about what adults believed was good for them, not necessarily what children themselves enjoyed. During the 19th century the strong didactic and moralistic nature of children's books changed, and authors focused more on writing entertaining stories for children and increasing the literary quality of children's books. This gave rise to the emergence of more realistic stories (*Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott) and adventure stories (*Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann Wyss, *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson) as well as the rise of modern Fantasy stories such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L Frank Baum. These changes are attributed to several factors, such as improved printing technology, more women becoming literate and the slow but steady rise of the status of women, the growth of the middle class who started buying books for their children, and increases in the number of state schools, with many more children becoming literate.

The early 20th century saw many studies in child development and child psychology emerge and scholars such as the Swiss Jean Piaget and Italian physician and educator Maria Montessori promoted advances in early childhood education and the development of the child as an individual, while the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that children's language and cognitive development is influenced by cultural and social factors. He emphasised the role of social interaction in the development of speech and reasoning in children. Further changes in attitude toward children occurred shortly after the Second World War. The collapse of Nazi and fascist regimes in 1945 spelled the end of old views. Socialism was on the rise and education was seen as the means of overcoming the ignorance and prejudice that had contributed to the previous wars.

In 1946 the American paediatrician Dr Benjamin Spock published *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, which changed how society looked at children. Spock advocated for the personal needs of the child over the requirements of society, and promoted the empowerment of children in the classroom, the advocacy of children's legal rights and indeed, the entire 'youth culture' that has dominated Western society for the past 80 years. In this atmosphere, children's literature began to flourish. The theme running through all the literature of this period is the focus on children themselves, their likes, dislikes, triumphs and challenges.

In today's world, children's literature has come into its own as a well-recognised and independent genre of its own that has proven to be rich and exciting. Today, there is an abundance of literature for children that never existed before in the history of the world. The publishing industry has
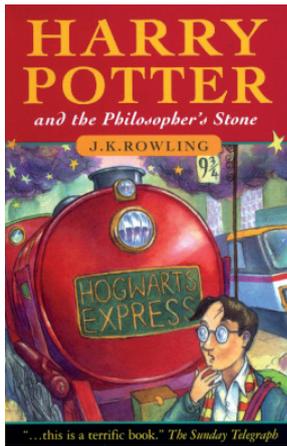
been an integral aspect of the broader social, economic and educational context of literacy and has played an important role in the emergence of children's literature, making it a commercially successful enterprise. The vastly increased production and translation of books through publishing houses and widespread distribution techniques make thousands of books available to children. Prestigious literacy prizes in countries around the world are awarded to outstanding children's fiction and nonfiction books, as well as authors and illustrators of children's books. The publication of children's books is a multibillion-dollar publishing industry in many countries. For example, in 1998 British author JK Rowling published the first book in the Harry Potter series (beginning with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*), which has become a publishing phenomenon worldwide.

The series of seven novels falls into the genre of fantasy literature and tell the extended story of a young boy, Harry Potter, and his friends, all of whom are students at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The books combine adventure, humour and fantasy with themes that revolve around the battle between good and evil, prejudice, corruption and madness. The books demonstrate values such as courage, friendship, bereavement, tolerance and bravery. The books have been immensely popular around the world and appeal to adults, youth and children alike. They have been translated into 87 languages, and by 2023 more than 600 million copies had been sold worldwide, making them the best-selling book series in history.

In sum, from oral storytelling origins, children's literature has slowly evolved over the centuries with its development strongly tied to the publishing industry, technical advances in printing, changing social attitudes to children and mass schooling. In the modern world, children's literature is an established field in its own right.

There are several differences between adult and children's literature:

- Language complexity: Children's literature typically uses simpler language and storytelling techniques suitable for young readers, while adult literature may feature more complex language and a much wider range of vocabulary.

- Themes and content: Children's literature often focuses on themes of growth, learning and moral development, while adult literature explores a wider range of topics, including more mature and nuanced themes.

- Narrative perspective: Children's literature may employ simpler narrative structures and often features a child protagonist or animal characters, while adult literature may use more sophisticated storytelling techniques and diverse perspectives.

- Illustrations: Children's literature incorporates illustrations as a central storytelling element, whereas adult literature relies primarily on text to convey the narrative or information.

However, just because language and content in children's stories are easier than adult literature, this does not mean it is easier to write children's stories. The quality of children's literature can differ quite considerably; good authors of children's books have a talent for capturing children's imagination in a clear and concise style.

A brief history of children's literature in African languages

In the past, African children experienced the rich oral culture of storytelling. Storytelling was a form of entertainment and teaching. Traditional stories (izinganekwane) were generally narrated by the grandmother in the evening with the children seated around her at the fire. The stories were generally not told during daytime. Children's poetry, which included lullabies, folk songs and folk poetry (imilozelo), is one of the oldest forms of children's oral literature. Riddling (iziphicaphicwano) was a favourite past time activity in the olden days. Apart from providing amusement, riddles also served to sharpen the children's minds and develop their cognition.

Over the years, the culture of transmitting knowledge orally from one generation to the next changed, and all the information was recorded and stored in books. Although traditional stories in African languages were the first to be written up and published, contemporary children's literature in the African languages of South Africa is a relatively new and emerging field, but an exciting and vibrant one. Factors such as colonialism, modernisation and dynamics in the publishing industry have affected the development of children's literature in African languages.

Colonial legacy: The use of colonial languages and literature in education across Africa marginalised indigenous languages, delaying the recognition and promotion of literature in African languages and cultural representation in publishing. Although traditional African stories were among the first genre of children's literature to be published, much of it was aimed at the education market. More modern children's storybooks in African languages were initially translations of storybooks from English and other European languages. Translation makes books available across languages and cultures, enabling people to read and enjoy literature in a culture whose language they do not know. Although the translation of children's books has been a useful strategy for increasing the amount of reading material in African languages in South Africa, it is important for original stories for children to be written in their own languages and about issues that resonate with their own culture and context. As Machet (2002:7-8) argues

> *To encourage literacy, children need to have books available that affirm their language and culture… If there are limited numbers of books published in the indigenous languages which are culturally relevant then it becomes much more difficult for children to develop and retain literacy.*

Economic and infrastructural challenges: These challenges have hindered the development and distribution of literature in African languages. Publishers, like all businesses, need a market for their products, and a book market relies on readers, people who have an inclination to read and the means to buy books. In Africa, where poverty levels are high, books are often regarded

as a luxury as many ordinary people struggle with daily necessities. When the majority of the population cannot or do not buy books, then there is a heavy dependence on the school market for the purchase and distribution of books. Many publishers who publish in African languages argue that a book market is unlikely to develop without state support, such as government guarantees or incentives, or public library services (Zell 2018). In addition, VAT is charged on books in South Africa, which pushes up the price of books.

Data on book publishing and the distribution of books show trends in reading and can provide important information on the availability, growth and vitality of written resources in a language. According to a recent publishing survey, the publishing industry in South Africa generated around R3.5 billion in revenue in 2022-2023 (Le Roux, Harvett & Edgar 2024). While the education market constitutes a significant portion of the South African publishing industry (about 66%), children's books play a role within this context. Because of the high costs associated with the printing and distribution of books, alternative digital and open-licence models have emerged to meet the challenges of production and distribution in the publishing industry.

In a few countries in Africa, notably in South Africa (and also in a number of francophone African countries), commercial publishers are increasingly committed to publishing in African languages. However, the lack of a reading culture and the limited purchasing power of many households means that publishing in indigenous languages is still largely driven by educational incentives. Nevertheless, recent efforts to preserve and promote indigenous languages and cultures have led to a renewed interest in publishing children's literature in African languages. Globalisation has also increased awareness of the importance of diverse representation in literature, which has provided an additional impetus to publishing children's books in African languages. Foundation Phase teachers can play an important role in promoting a culture of reading and making books accessible to young children in their classrooms, particularly if they have knowledge of children's literature and are familiar with its development and the profound impact it can have on children's lives.

Children's books in Sesotho and isiZulu

The colonial history of South Africa impacted the production of children's literature in African languages, leading to a mixture of indigenous narratives and Western literary forms. The introduction of early missionary activities and formal education played a crucial role in documenting and publishing these stories. When African languages started being codified by missionaries and books published, a literary tradition dating from the 1800s started developing in Sesotho and isiZulu. Part of this literacy tradition included translations of the Bible into African languages as well as the writing up the traditional African stories, songs and poems that were shared with children. Oral folktales narrated before the influence of written language qualify as children's literature. The oral performance of these folktales as well as songs and/or chants interspersed with rhythmical movements to relay their message then transitioned to the reading of written children's storybooks.

The first books to be written in the African languages were translations of the Bible during the 19th century, primarily through the efforts of early missionaries. The translation of the Bible into Sesotho began as early as 1836 and the Gospels of Mark and John were published in 1839. The complete New Testament was published in Sesotho in 1855, while the complete Bible in Sesotho was published in 1881, and made accessible to the people in 1883.

The first book of the Bible translated into isiZulu was the Gospel of Matthew, completed in 1848, while the New Testament was published in 1865. The first complete Bible in isiZulu was published by the American Bible Society in 1883. These biblical translations laid the foundation of the development of written forms and orthographies of these languages and the spread of literacy, with later changes and revisions made to the text and orthographies over time.

Traditionally, children's stories in Sesotho and isiZulu were passed down orally, with elders narrating tales that included myths, legends, and moral lessons. This oral literature was dynamic, adapting with each retelling and forming a rich cultural heritage. These stories served not only to entertain but also to impart moral lessons and cultural values to children. The oral tradition was crucial in shaping the early narratives that would later influence written literature.

Children's literature in Sesotho derives from both Lesotho and South Africa. Notable works like *Litsomo tsa Basotho* (Legends of the Basotho), published by Rev. E. Jacottet in the early 20th century, marked the transition from oral to written literature in the Sesotho language. Halieo Motanyane's book *Sekolong sa Mpho* illustrates the importance of ancestral traditions through the adventures of children on Moshoeshoe's Day, highlighting respect for cultural practices and communal identity. The contemporary Sesotho storybook *How Many Ways Can You Say Hello?* by Refiloe Moahloli is part of a series that encourages children to celebrate diversity and connection through greetings in various languages. Moahloli is known for her engaging storytelling that resonates with young readers.

The modern era of isiZulu literature began around 1930 with the publication of works like *Insila kaShaka*, marking a shift towards written forms. This period saw the establishment of moral stories aimed at children, which became a popular genre within isiZulu literature. Many traditional stories have been recorded and published, such as *Around the Nguni fire* and *The magic porridge pot*. According to Ntuli (2011) isiZulu boasts the highest number of authors of all indigenous languages in South Africa. Despite this, the writing of children's literature has not been given the attention it deserves, and production and publication efforts have concentrated mainly on traditional stories and school textbooks meant for study purposes. Ntuli (2011) argues that in the past, school children were served mainly a staple diet of folktales from school readers, some of which were recorded by the missionaries and date back to the 1900s. More recently, an isiZulu lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, D. Phindile Dlamini, has written 37 children's books, with 15 published in the *UGwajo Graded Reader Series*. This series is designed for Grades 1-3 and is widely used in South African primary schools, aimed at encouraging reading among primary school learners by integrating familiar cultural characters and themes. In 2008, one of Dlamini's books titled *USnuphunuphu kade elapha* won a national

award. The book is about two boys who lose their dog and how they find it again. This story teaches children about different strategies to use when something valuable is lost, warning that in the process devious people may be encountered. She also wrote a nonfiction book about the 2010 World Cup, titled: *2010 Kwakunje!* In sum, in South Africa, the development of children's literature in African languages has undergone significant changes, particularly from the mid-20th century to the present. Since the 1970s, there has been a significant increase in the production of children's literature in African languages. This included not only original works but also translations of popular international storybooks into African languages, making children's literature more accessible to young readers. In the past 15 years in particular there has been a notable increase in the publication of children's books in both traditional and contemporary children's literature in African languages. This includes folktales, picture books, stories set in modern times, information books and educational materials aimed at promoting literacy among young readers. All these genres demonstrate the growing landscape of children's literature in African languages, reflecting both cultural heritage and contemporary themes that resonate with young children. Organisations like Nal'ibali have contributed to this growth by providing resources and stories across all African languages.

Some of the themes commonly found across this literature include the following:

- Several children's books emphasise the importance of cultural traditions and values. Themes of identity and heritage help children connect with their cultural heritage and impart cultural knowledge, moral values and life lessons to young readers.

- Moral teachings are also a central theme. Many stories convey lessons about honesty, kindness, respect, and the consequences of one's actions. Folktales often feature characters who embody virtues or vices, serving as examples for young readers. The use of animal characters in stories frequently symbolises wisdom and moral lessons, as seen in traditional tales where animals teach important life values. In these stories good typically triumphs over evil, encouraging children to adopt virtues such as honesty, kindness, and respect.

- Themes of personal growth, self-discovery and resilience are also prevalent. There are stories that depict characters overcoming obstacles, learning about themselves, and developing a sense of agency that encourage children to embrace their identities and navigate challenges with courage, and determination.

- Stories that deal with community and family relationships is another common theme. Many children's books explore the roles of family members and interactions within families and communities, emphasising cooperation, support, respect and the importance of social bonds. This theme fosters a sense of belonging among young readers and reinforces communal values.

- Some children's literature explores themes related to witchcraft, magic and the supernatural. These stories often reflect cultural beliefs surrounding witchcraft and its implications in society. They can serve as cautionary tales or explore the dynamics

between good and evil forces within a community.

- More recently several storybooks also address social issues such as diversity, gender equality, racism, bullying, migration, urban life, and the impact of modernisation on traditional values. Such stories feature characters navigating the complexities of modern society while still grappling with fundamental moral and cultural issues and dilemmas.

- Some contemporary stories also address themes related to nature, pollution, environmental awareness and climate change. These stories aim to instil a sense of responsibility towards the environment in children, encouraging them to appreciate and protect their natural surroundings now and for the future.

The increasingly diverse range of genres and themes not only promote literacy in African languages but also serve both mirror and window functions, reflecting cultural identity as well as challenges of the modern world. The field continues to evolve as more authors emerge and education institutions and libraries support this literary form. The future of children's literature in African languages looks promising indeed and will no doubt foster a love for reading in new generations of learners. In his address at the opening of the South African Book Fair in September 2017, the award-winning author Zakes Mda said: "A reading culture once cultivated produces more readers and more readers produce more writers, who then in turn produce more readers. It all begins with a seed" (Mda 2017).

Organisations that promote children's books in African languages

The past 20 years has seen increases in the number of children's books in African languages as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that promote children's literature in South Africa.

The **African Storybook Project** (ASb) started in 2014 as an initiative of Saide to address the dire shortage of children's storybooks in African languages across the continent. It uses an open licence digital publishing model to make books available to teachers and learners in African languages across the continent. By 2024, it had just over 5,000 storybooks in 259 different languages. Saide's headquarters are in Johannesburg, although it has teams working across the continent. The African Storybook website (*http://africanstorybook.org/*) includes a comprehensive data bank for all the project's storybooks, which can be explored by language and by reading level. There are five levels – the first level starts with first words or a short, simple sentence. The levels become progressively longer with more varied vocabulary and language – levels 4 and 5 contain texts of two or more paragraphs per page and fewer pictures. Nearly all the stories are written by African authors, with genres ranging from traditional tales to poems, songs and contemporary stories. Only some of the stories have been 'Asb-approved', which means that they have been checked for content and accurate and appropriate language use by mother-tongue speakers of the language. The Asb-approved stories are indicated as such on the website.

Each storybook can be viewed on-line or downloaded for viewing off-line and for printing in different formats. The site also contains guides for using the storybooks as well as for authors, illustrators, or translators who want to create their own stories and submit them to the site. (Click on "Help and Notes" in the upper right-hand corner of the site to access the guidelines.) Clicking on the "Use" button at the top of the page will bring up links to case studies of using the storybooks. It also provides tools and resources to create, translate, and adapt stories. As of 2024, there were 259 storybooks in Sesotho and isiZulu on the website, designed for early readers and covering a variety of themes and levels of complexity.

Biblionef South Africa (*http://www.biblionefsa.org.za/*) also has as its mission to make books available for all children in all the official languages**.** Established in 1998 by a former Dutch ambassador, Biblionef forms part of an international network of book organisations in the Netherlands, France, Ghana, Tunisia and South Africa. It works with local publishers and booksellers, commissions the publishing of new storybooks as well as the reprinting of existing children's storybooks in all eleven South African languages, and donates children's books to schools and children's organisations throughout South Africa. When sourcing storybooks, they make sure that the settings and characters in the stories are relatable to South African children. They target disadvantaged communities who have little access to books, including preschools, ECD centres, primary and high schools, children's homes, street children centres, refugee camps and hospitals. Since 2019 they also began offering additional literacy support to Foundation Phase teachers, providing teachers with practical tools and guidance on how to incorporate storybooks into the CAPS curriculum. The titles below reflect some of the well- known books that they have contributed to publishing, reprinting and distributing across all South African languages.
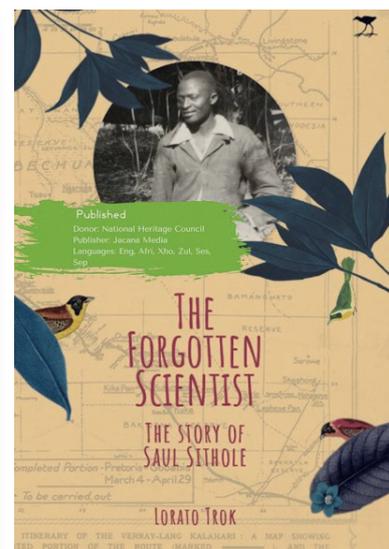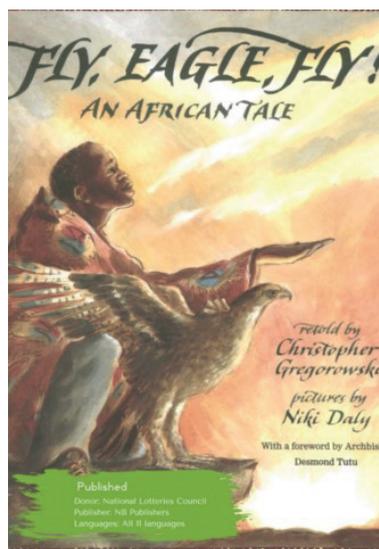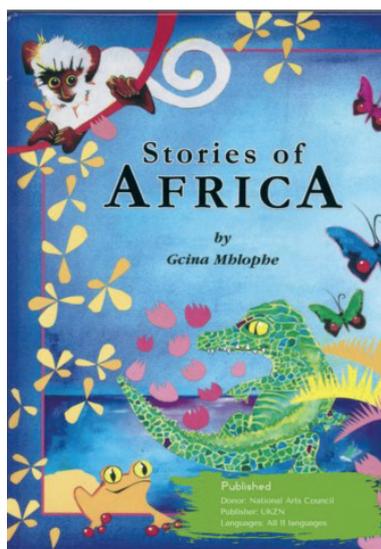
Book Dash (*https://bookdash.org*) Book Dash started in 2014 to support the vision that every child should own 100 books by the age of five. It is an organisation that creates, translates and prints high-quality open-licence African children's books. Books are shared online under a CC-BY open licence so anyone can use, share and re-mix them. They partner with literacy, early learning and health centres and funders to print and distribute local language books to children and families in South Africa. They host and facilitate Book Dash days twice a year, where interested volunteers work in teams supported by creative professionals to create and produce a collection of books for South African children, within a 12-hour period. Each time they come together with a particular age group in mind. You can visit their website and view and read all their books, see in which African languages they are available and download whatever books you want at no cost. Since its inception Book Dash has received recognition for its work through various awards for innovations in early education.

The Centre for the Book (CFB) is the outreach unit of the National Library of South Africa that promotes a culture of reading, writing, and publishing in local languages (*https://www.nlsa.ac.za/outreach/*) since 1990. It is housed in a beautiful building in Cape Town that has been proclaimed a national monument. The CFB provides information and advice on book

publishing, advocates for the importance of reading and writing, and organises events and activities to promote these activities. It also hosts workshops, conferences, training courses and exhibitions pertaining to literacy, reading, writing and publishing. Although its focus is on books generally and not just children's books, by supporting the publication of books in local languages the CFB helps to make books more accessible to everyone and nurture a culture of reading.

Nal'ibali (*http://nalibali.org/*), (isiXhosa for 'Here's the story') is a reading-for-enjoyment campaign that promotes reading and writing in mother tongue languages. It seeks to 'spark' and embed a culture of reading in children from birth to 12 years of age, across South Africa. It was launched in 2012, initiated by the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA). It establishes reading clubs around the country where children can engage with books and stories in their home languages. It also produces stories across the languages and distributes books, bilingual newspaper supplements and digital resources, and offers training courses for volunteers or teachers. It emphasises reading for enjoyment, operating on the assumption that children are more likely to develop a love for reading when they can choose stories that interest them. Nal'ibali stories have helped address the scarcity of reading materials in South African homes and schools.

O monyane haholo/ Umncane kakhulu

Ngwanana ya ileng a ya sepakapakeng ka phoso/ Intombazane eyaya emkhathini ngengozi

Puku Children's Literature Foundation (*https://www.puku.co.za/en/what-is-puku/*) is a non-governmental organisation established in 2009. It promotes and develops books to address the shortage of children's literature in all South African languages, and to ensure that all children have access to such literature, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. It also

conducts workshops for storytellers, writers, teachers and cultural activists to enhance their skills in promoting indigenous children's literature. Elinor Sisulu, founder and Executive Director of Puku, is herself an author of children's books and a literacy activist. She was awarded the Nick Perren Lifetime Achievement Award in 2024, in recognition of her work in promoting freedom of expression through raising the profile of children's literature in African languages and increasing children's access to books. She also received the South African Literary Awards Chairperson's Achievement Certificate and Trophy for outstanding work in the Children's Literature space over many years as an author, advocate for indigenous languages and as an activist for inclusion in early literacy. Puku has collaborated with partners to compile a catalogue of 100 recommended books in isiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana. Catalogues in all the indigenous languages will be added. Puku has also recently facilitated book review workshops for student teachers in BEd programmes.

"Inspiring and moving." — NELSON MANDELA

The Day Gogo Went to Vote

by Elinor Batezat Sisulu
Illustrated by Sharon Wilson
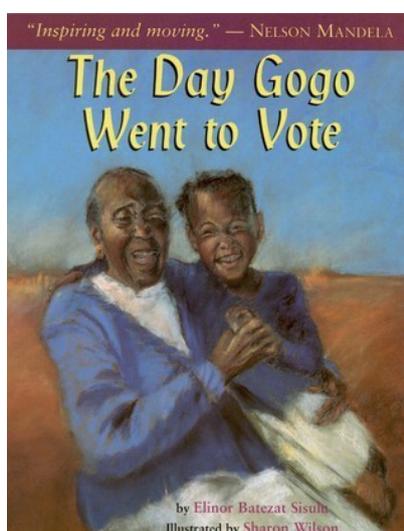
Sisulu's well-loved book *The day gogo went to vote* commemorates the momentous day when black South Africans were allowed to vote for the first time in 1994. The story is portrayed through the eyes of Thembi, who accompanies her beloved great-grandmother to vote. It has been translated into several South African languages, including isiZulu (*Mhla ugogo eya kovota)* and Sesotho (*Mohla Gogo a neng a ilo vouta*).

Zenex Foundation's *African Languages Literacy Project,* known as *Ulwazi Lwethu (https://www.ulwazilwethu.org,za*), launched a range of graded readers in all 9 African languages, fiction and nonfiction storybooks in all 11 official languages, as well as anthologies, Big Books and worksheets in 2024.

Bilingual Teacher Guides are also available, providing comprehensive guidance and instruction on the usage and benefits of each resource.

Unfortunately, due to the socioeconomic realities across the continent of Africa, with its low purchasing power and relatively low demand for storybooks beyond the education market, it is costly to produce and distribute storybooks in African languages, so conventional publishing produces relatively few titles. Organisations such as those described above have been creative and found alternative strategies for promoting children's literature and making books available in African languages. Digital platforms and the open licence digital publishing model of the African Storybook initiative, for example, make it possible for people to publish their own storybooks, to translate storybooks from one language to another, to download and print storybooks, and to read them on mobile devices. These initiatives have helped to promote children's literature in African languages and made many more storybooks available than was the case even a decade ago.

Conclusion

In this unit the development of children's literature from oral traditions to a written, print-based and now digital literary tradition in its own right, was discussed, both at a broader international level and in relation to the development of children's literature in African languages. The development of children's literature must be seen in light of larger societal factors such as the creation of the printing press, changes in literacy levels in the wider population, changing attitudes to children and the changed nature of childhood, and the emergence of a new market for children's books that arose together with the emergence of mass education and state-run schools that created a high demand for textbooks and storybooks for children. In South Africa, colonialism also had an influence on the development of children's literature in African languages.

The introduction of storybooks in African languages into the school curriculum played a pivotal role in promoting literacy among children. The development of children's literature in African languages is characterised by a blend of rich oral traditions and contemporary written works, displaying a variety of written forms of children's literature and reflecting literature both as a mirror and a window. Although traditional genres emphasise cultural themes and values that foster a sense of belonging and cultural pride, contemporary authors are increasingly exploring narratives that reflect the experiences and identities of modern African children in different urban and rural contexts. Knowledge of children's literature and its development, worldwide and locally, should be an integral part of a reading teacher's professional training and development. Foundation Phase teachers who lack this knowledge run the risk of underestimating the importance of storybooks in children's lives and not developing children to their full potential.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word/words)**. (5)

    a) The field of children's literature worldwide had its origins in _____ _____. (1)

    b) The invention of _____ had an influence on the emergence of children's books. (1)

    c) The presence of a _____ class across countries means that more families have the financial means to purchase books for their children.

    d) When storybooks involve characters and events that are familiar to a reader, then they serve a _____ function by reflecting an image back to the reader. (1)

    e) It could be argued that the written literary tradition in African languages was spearheaded by translations of _____ . (1)

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

    a) In the ancient world and Middle Ages very few people were literate.

    b) High poverty levels in a country can inhibit the growth of the publishering industry and the distribution of children's books.

    c) The emergence of children's books as a genre separate from adult books is a fairly recent development that happened in the twentieth century.

    d) Themes in children's books relating to nature, pollution, environmental awareness and climate change can serve both mirror and window functions.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the **correct** one. (1)

    a) Oral storytelling and children's songs do not form part of children's literature in the modern world.

    b) When monks transcribed books by hand, they were able to reproduce books quickly.

c) Economic and infrastructural challenges have hindered the development and distribution of children's books in Africa.

d) The sale of over 600 million books from the *Harry Potter* series worldwide indicates that the publication of children's literature is not economically viable.

4. Teachers' comments are often a reflection of their knowledge about and attitude to children's literature. Consider the scenario below and then select **the option** which is likely to be an **inaccurate** reflection of a teacher's understanding of the role of books in the early school years. (1)

Some Foundation Phase teachers are attending a workshop on children's literature and its application in primary school classrooms. The teachers are in small breakaway sessions to discuss with each their daily activities. Teacher Phindi explains that her Grade 2 learners are poor readers so she is skipping Read Alouds this term to do more phonics practice with them. Teacher Fikile says she does not have a budget to buy new books for her Book Corner, so she takes out books from the local library to read to her learners. She has recently taken out two new isiZulu/Sesotho books on deforestation and pollution which she is excited to share with her Grade 3 learners: "Just think of the nice discussions we can have and the new words they can learn!". Teacher Busi says that although she only has a few 'proper' books in her Book Corner, she downloads books from various local websites and prints a few copies in black and white for classroom use: "After they've read the story, I'll ask learners to help colour in the pictures. But they must first read me the story aloud so that they can connect the pictures to the story. They like that!" Teacher Azwi says that she has 48 learners in her class so there is little time for book reading, although she encourages them to read books at home.

From the scenario above it seems that option … is unlikely.

a) Teacher Phindi seems to think that books are 'nice-to-have' but not 'must-haves' in the classroom.

b) Teacher Fikile has chosen two books that can be used to encourage problem solving among learners.

c) Despite limited book resources, Teacher Busi has found ways to encourage visual literacy in her learners.

d) Despite having a large class, Teacher Azwi actively promotes a book culture in her class.

Unit 2: The value and benefits of children's literature

Introduction

Many teachers dutifully teach reading without exposing their learners to a range of children's books or discussing the stories with them in engaging ways. Some teachers think that there is too much of a fuss made about reading books for entertainment, that reading books is a luxury, best done after class, after all the important curriculum things have been dealt with. Such teachers usually know very little about children's literature and are unaware of all the benefits that it confers on learners.

The benefits of exposure to children's literature are tremendous. Research shows that children who are regularly exposed to books before school learn to read and write more easily, perform better across school subjects, are happier and healthier, complete more years of education, and have access to better jobs in adulthood.

Literature reflects people and society just as a mirror reflects an image. When learners read books about places, cultural values and people similar to themselves they can identify with the characters and events and feel a sense of belonging. The story reflects a mirror image back on the reader, enabling the reader to reflect on their own lives, to develop a sense of identity and affirm their values and cultural beliefs.

When readers read stories about other places and people, it opens a window on the wider world. Through books we can travel through time and space to anywhere in the world or beyond without leaving our home or classroom. Through reading we develop an understanding about the wider world and how people from other parts of the world live.

In this unit we discuss several linguistic, cognitive, social and emotional benefits that have been associated with exposure to children's literature. We also identify some events and awards worldwide and locally that are related to children's literature and which highlight the importance of children's books and the authors, illustrators and publishers who produce them.

Linguistic benefits

Module 2 discusses the importance of exposure to books for children's early oral language development in the preschool years, and from Grade 1 onwards for their more formal academic language development. We revisit these aspects briefly here too. To recap, language development comprises three essential aspects of communication, namely **form, content** and **use of language** (Brandone et al. 2008:499).

Form includes aspects such as the phonological, morphological and syntactic features of a language. Through exposure to songs, rhymes and the simple language of early books, children receive additional rich exposure to linguistic forms and structures that support their language development.

Content refers to the communicative intentions and meanings we convey when we speak, listen, read or write. It involves vocabulary and the semantics of language. Research consistently shows that children who are exposed to storybooks from an early age acquire much larger vocabularies and have broader general knowledge about the world than children who grow up without books.

The use of language refers to how we use language in different contexts and with different people. Characters in stories provide role models for conversational practices, how to speak and behave in different situations.

Children who are exposed to books on a regular daily basis in homes and/or preschools get more language input (from the books and from the adults who read and discuss the content and pictures with them) than children who don't get book exposure. And more language input always equates with richer language and conceptual development. This can be seen in the early years already. For example, in their longitudinal study, the American researchers Hart and Risley (2003) estimated that by the age of 3 years, children who were regularly exposed to picture books and storybooks were exposed to around 30 million words whereas children with little to no book exposure received an input of only 9 million words (Hart & Risley 2003). The vocabulary of 3-year-olds was predictive of their progress in school: 3-year-olds who were exposed to books and had larger vocabularies turned out to have better language and reading skills when they were 10 years old than children with smaller vocabularies and no or little exposure to books.

The pace of language development may vary across children. Because children's literature is sensitive to age, there are books that are suitable for children across all ages. For example, through exposure to wordless picture books, 2-3 year-old children learn to identify and label objects and actions, and can follow a basic story sequence. They acquire words for objects and things that they encounter in their everyday lives (*house, window, door, dress, socks, family, food* ...) but, importantly, also things that occur in books beyond their everyday world, for example the names of animals (*giraffe, zebra, whale, bear, tiger* ...), thereby extending their world and their background knowledge. Children between 3-5 years learn more about the world through picture book stories, they acquire more concepts and accompanying vocabulary, they enjoy playing with sounds and words, and their language becomes morphologically more complex. They learn to use the past and future tenses, start understanding spatial orientation through prepositions or relevant expressions relating to concepts such as above, below, under, over, on top, in front, behind, etc. and they ask many *why* and *how* questions. They are also starting to learn about logical relations such as time sequence (*then, afterwards*) and causal relations (*because)* (see Module 4)*, they often connect events through more simple words such as *and, then, and so.* By the time they start school around the age of 6 years, the picture books to which they are exposed

have longer text with more complex language and less familiar vocabulary, expanding both their linguistic and conceptual horizons. Children also start learning about written language, the relationships between oral and spoken language, how letters represent sounds and groups of letters represent words. Around this age children begin to speak in grammatically correct sentences, they can talk about routines and events such as what they did over the weekend or when they went to the zoo, etc. They also learn to engage in the give-and-take of conversations, taking turns to listen and speak. Many children at this age become early readers who can already read simple picture books on their own. Between the ages of 7-10 years language development incorporates more complex linguistic structures, vocabulary develops beyond high frequency words to include words from the mid-frequency ranges, connective words (*thereafter, because, if, consequently*) are used more accurately, and contrastive relations signalled by words like *although, however, unless, nevertheless* are increasingly used. By now, children are exposed to a range of genres in children's literature, and although picture storybooks are still common, they contain longer text, increasingly complex language and advanced vocabulary, and fewer illustrations. The tight relationship between text and illustrations in the early picture storybooks shifts to a stronger written language focus, occasionally supported by illustrations. In sum, exposure to books has a significant impact on children's language development!

Cognitive benefits

Cognitive development is the process of understanding the world and the ability to process information, comprehend concepts, and develop perceptual skills perspective (Metz-Lutz et al. 1999:182). Cognitive development involves the accumulation of knowledge including language, thoughts, reasoning, problem-solving and memory. Mussen et al. (1989:44) describe cognitive development as including five important processes, namely:

- Perception - the discovery, organisation, and interpretation of information from both the internal and external world of the learner;

- Memory - the storage and retrieval of information;

- Reasoning - the use of knowledge to see how things are related, to make comparisons, inferences, deductions and solve problems;

- Insights - the recognition of new relationships between two or more segments of knowledge, seeing things in a new light;

- Reflection - the ability to step back from details and think about things and events, to evaluate and ponder. This is an abstract metacognitive ability.

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) and other developmental psychologists point out that although the order in which learners' cognitive abilities develop remains the same, the rate at which different stages are reached may vary considerably amongst children. The development of children who grow up without certain experiences – for example, not having books in the home and not being exposed to storybooks – can be up to five years behind that of children who have been continuously exposed to books and read to from birth. Aspects of cognitive development such

as memory, attention and imagination have been found to benefit from exposure to children's books.

Children who are 2-3 years old and who are exposed to books not only learn new words and concepts, they also learn how to handle and page through books, interacting with pictures and events. Through picture books they also learn ways of perceiving, organising and classifying things. They learn whole-part relations and learn to group similar-looking things together. They begin to remember two or three items in sequence. By the time they are four years old they learn how different elements are related and how different parts form a whole. They begin to understand relationships and can classify objects based on perceptual similarities, for example how different objects are related in terms of quantity and/or numbers. They also begin to compare objects in terms of bigger and smaller, longer and shorter.

If they are regularly exposed to storybook reading sessions with an adult, by the time they are 4-5 years old children can remember up to three instructions given to them, they can sit still and concentrate on a story for up to 10 or more minutes at a stretch, and they can also retell stories in their correct sequence in a coherent way. They develop the ability to classify objects according to their attributes, such as colour, size, shape, and usage, they can identify colours and develop a sense of more and less, many or few.

Children also pretend to read stories on their own, or even time on a watch, even if they cannot yet decode written language properly or understand the concept of time from a watch. Exposure to both information and narrative books enriches cognitive development in the preschool years tremendously; through books they encounter and learn about objects and events beyond their everyday lives in ways that children who are not exposed to books seldom experience.

In the early school years (6-7 years), children formally learn how to read and write. Those who have been exposed to books from an early age learn to read and write more easily, they have a positive attitude to books, enjoy reading on their own and writing their own stories, illustrating it with their drawings. The picture books that are read to them and which they start reading on their own contain longer text, more complex language, more advanced vocabulary that further stimulates cognitive development. Once they can read independently, their exposure to storybooks can increase as they do not have to wait for an adult to read a book to them but can explore books in the classroom reading corner, in a school or local library and at home (if books are provided in the home).

Conceptual development through children's books continues throughout Foundation Phase and the rest of primary school. Children's literature can help to expand and develop learners' imagination. Learners' imagination allows them to immerse themselves in the world of a book, which can contribute to the learner's appreciation of illustrations because illustrations stimulate learners' imagination. When their imagination is stimulated, learners can develop their own ability to write and thus learn to create their own artworks. Imagination can help learners to handle situations in their own lives and it gives learners the confidence to be learners (Heath, 2004:341).

Visual literacy benefits

Through exposure to storybooks, children acquire visual literacy skills. They learn how text and visuals go hand-in-hand and how visuals support information in text. Regular exposure to picture storybooks enhances their ability to interpret and integrate visual and text information.

Storybooks that are well illustrated are visually engaging, which increases children's interest in reading. In the early years, visual attention to picture books enhances vocabulary development, indicating a relationship between visual literacy and language skills. The illustrations in a story prompt interactions between the adult reading the story and the children listening to it and looking at the pictures during storybook reading, encouraging joint attention, better processing of visual information and its relationship to the story, leading to improved comprehension and memory.

Regular exposure to visuals in storybook reading promotes reasoning skills, helping children see causal connections between events – for example, a child seeing a picture of an ostrich looking over the long grass and seeing the fruit in the basket (on one page) and then picking some fruit off it (on the next page). In their study of the effects of exposure to storybook reading on rural Grade 1 isiZulu children, Pretorius and Machet (2004) found that young children exposed to regular storybook reading could interpret and re-arrange four separate pictures into a sequence that reflected a coherent time and causal sequence and tell the story from the pictures. In contrast, children not exposed to storybooks put the pictures in random order and described each picture separately without seeing how they were connected (*Here's a plant. Here's a girl watering the soil. Here's a boy digging*). Similarly, in a study of rural preschool isiZulu children, Ntuli and Pretorius (2005) found that when retelling a story that had been read to a class of preschool children, learners who had been exposed to regular picture storybook readings would page through the book and tell the story from the pictures. In contrast, those not used to picture storybooks would describe the picture on each page as a separate entity (*This boy wants porridge; Here are some sweets; A grandfather is with this boy)* and not integrate the pictures into a story. Attending to and comprehending visuals in narrative texts provides a basis for attending to and interpreting more complex and abstract visuals in information texts.
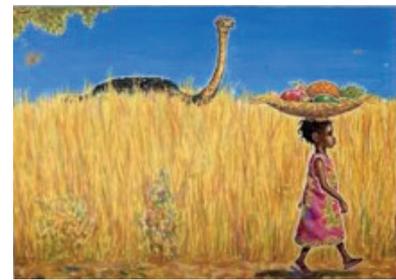
Social and emotional benefits

A child's personality consists of all the character traits that give each child a unique response style towards different people, places, things, and opportunities (Maxim, 1997:81). There are six basic emotions that are hardwired in children from birth. These are feelings of joy, fear, anger, disgust, sadness and surprise. All other emotions are taught or learned through socialisation.

These include moral qualities such as co-operation, patience, kindness, empathy (the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes), respect, gratitude and forgiveness. Children need to overcome their fears, develop confidence, and learn the appropriate way to behave and communicate with others. They need to learn to control their aggression and hostile behaviour, learn to co-operate with others in a group and share things in order to maintain acceptable relationships with their family and the community. Acceptable relationships require learners to understand and consider the feelings and actions of others. When learners are supported in their emotions, they learn how to handle emotions in a productive manner. Personalities are not formed overnight but gradually develop over time through interaction with other people in the child's environment. Children gradually learn to display appropriate emotions in specific situations, learn to have empathy for others' circumstances, and develop feelings of self-identity and self-worth. Exposure to books seems to amplify social and emotional development in children (Mar & Oatley 2008; Mar, Oatley & Peterson 2009; Johnson 2012; Silva 2013; Koopman & Hakemulder 2015).

The ability to recognise and label expressions of emotion at age 5 is a long-term predictor of social behaviour and academic performance (Izard, Fine, Schultz, Mostow, Ackerman & Youngstrom 2001). It is this emotional knowledge that is linked to social competence and academic achievement in young children and it develops early in children regularly exposed to storybooks from an early age and who develop emergent literacy skills in the preschool years (Ursache, Gouley, Dawson-McClure, Barajas-Gonzalez, Calzada, Goldfeld & Brotman 2020; Waiden & Field 1990).

Socialisation is the process through which learners learn the values and behaviours considered valuable and acceptable by the older individuals in the community (Shaffer 1989:560). Children's initial social relationships develop within the immediate and larger family circles. Relationships are extended to friends in the community, school, and eventually to the world beyond their immediate environment. The moral values that children learn from their family, community and friends form part of their social development.

What is it about storybooks that has such an impact on children's social and emotional development? The dual mirror/window function of literature can have a particularly crucial impact on the social and emotional development of children. Many researchers see storybooks as a form of role taking and simulation. In much the same way that pilots learn to fly aeroplanes on flight simulators, so too do children learn about life and the world through constant exposure to storybooks.

Because storybooks reflect social and community values and behaviours, they serve a mirror function, so children who are exposed to books get more and richer mirror input about these aspects of life than children not exposed to books. However, growing up can be confusing. Children first learn about life through their home life, family dynamics, local world and local experiences and they assume that that is how the world is. But as they get older, they come to realise that their 'normal' is not the same for everybody and that people, places, human

experiences and conduct can differ. Children encounter diversity and complexity in a wider world, especially through exposure to books that serve a window function. Children who are exposed to books get more and richer 'window' input, thereby enriching their social and emotional development (Silva 2013; Nikolajeva 2014; Koopman & Hakemulder 2015).

Narratives include characters in specific historical and sociocultural settings who have emotions, intentions and plans and who encounter problems or conflicts and deal with and resolve them in different ways. Some stories tell us this explicitly and in some stories we need to guess what is going on (make predictions and inferences), with clues from the author. Reading/listening to stories helps children make inferences about the feelings and attitudes of characters in a story, their aims and intentions, what makes them do certain things or behave in certain ways, especially if their parents or teachers explicitly draw attention to this and discuss things in the story with the child.

As they grow up, children have to figure out what is going on in the minds of other people, what they think, believe, know. This kind of 'mentalising' is referred to as the development of a 'theory of mind' or perspective taking, which helps us understand people better and helps us understand human intentionality – why people behave the way they do (*Buli is crying. Is she sad? Is she hurt? Is she afraid? Is she feeling sick?*). It enables us to see things from someone else's perspective.

Developing a theory of mind increases with maturity – it starts in preschool, develops through primary school and adolescence and into adulthood. Children start developing a theory of mind by ages 4-5. Before then, they may recognise some mental states in other people in some contexts but not in others. From the age of 4 onwards they start recognising intentions, desires, beliefs or emotions in themselves and others, they start realising that others may have different feelings or beliefs from their own, that others may know something that they don't, or that they know something that others don't, or that people may have false beliefs (e.g., Sipho *thinks* that his book is in his bag but we can see it lying on the floor under his desk). They also start understanding that people can hide their emotions (Mama pretends to be happy but she cries a lot and is sad).

Reading research in social psychology shows that children and youth who read regularly have stronger social networks and suffer less from loneliness and depression than children who cannot read or who do not read, especially if they read narrative fiction. Some studies have even found that children who regularly read storybooks resolve conflicts with friends and family more satisfactorily (Mar, Oatley & Peterson 2009; Nikolajeva 2014).

Constant exposure to the simulation of social experiences in stories that serve mirror/window functions enables children and adolescents to develop greater social understanding, acquire knowledge about human nature, intentionality and emotions, and learn social skills, in ways that their small, context-bound daily lives do not permit.

In sum, although it has long been known that exposure to books enhances and enriches children's

linguistic and cognitive development, research in social psychology is increasingly showing how important exposure to books, especially fiction, is for children's social and emotional development (Maxim 1997; Nikolajeva 2014). Children's literature, especially storybooks, plays an important socialising role and contributes to the social and emotional growth of a learner in many different ways:

- Storybooks promote social understanding and encourage prosocial behaviour. Through storybooks children become more aware of other people, their emotions, feelings and motives for their behaviour.

- Storybooks can show children that many of the feelings they experience are also experienced by others.

- Because storybooks portray feelings and behaviours from different perspectives, children come to understand that people can have different views or perspectives, providing readers with a broader picture of human nature and behaviour. Exposure to storybooks can reduce racial conflicts, enhance individual self-worth, shape learners' cultural identity, and develop social skills and responsibility.

- Storybooks can develop perspective taking. Storybooks portray different ways of knowing about things or experiencing things. For example, in the popular children's storybook *Handa's surprise* (a book discussed in more detail in Unit 3), the listener/reader sees different animals taking fruit out of the basket on Handa's head, but the main character Handa is unaware of them. The children see things that Handa doesn't see, and this increases their engagement with and enjoyment of the story. This perspective device is often used in children's stories adding to the delight and humour in such stories.

- Storybooks can also portray different ways of expressing and coping with particular feelings or challenging situations. The characters in books often face moral dilemmas where they have to make a decision, and learners explore the reasons behind those decisions. In this way children develop a deeper understanding of the range of human emotions, and they develop empathy and tolerance for people who are different.

- Storybooks can demonstrate the complexity of social and emotional feelings. They can show that one emotion does not define a person and that emotions can sometimes be complex and in conflict with each other, within and across sociocultural and socioeconomic groups.

- Reading fiction stimulates the imagination by transporting us to physical, cultural or temporal contexts different from our own. It opens up vistas that we could not imagine ourselves, it also opens us to emotional vistas that we might never have envisaged ourselves.

Some teachers think that storybook reading is something to do when all the important work has been done. Yet research shows that reading storybooks can help children better understand others, and help develop empathy and prosocial behaviour. Norton and Norton (2011:2) argue that children's literature opens doors for children of all ages and can provide them with endless hours of adventure and enjoyment. It is important for teachers to support exposure to books in the classroom, especially children who come from homes where there are few or no books.

According to Cunningham and Allington (2003:2), a successful classroom is one in which reading regularly takes place. In such a classroom, teachers recognise the importance of books, and create classroom libraries or book corners where learners become familiar with books, can page through them and choose which books they would like to read. When regular time is allocated to books, it becomes as natural as eating or sleeping. Teachers who have knowledge about children's literature and its benefits are more likely to ensure that books form part of each learner's life, enriching their language, cognitive, and socio-emotional development.

Awards for children's literature

There are several events around the world that focus specifically on children's literature. There are also prestigious literary awards conferred on books, authors and illustrators internationally and within many countries of the world. These international and local literacy events and awards create awareness of the benefits of exposure to children's books, draw attention to the rich and immense range of children's books available, give recognition to the creativity and stimulation provided by authors, illustrators, translators and publishers, and promote good reading habits.

The **Bologna Children's Book Fair** in Italy is the world's largest international 4-day trade fair for children's literature and its publishing industry. It is a hub for professionals in the field for publishing and translation rights regarding children's books. It first started in 1963 and has been held in March-April every year since then. Four prestigious awards are also given at the fair, called the BolgnaRagazzi awards, for fiction, nonfiction, first works and New Horizons - works from the non-Western world. There are also awards for illustrators of children's books. During the fair – but separate from it – the Hans Christian awards and Astrid Lingren Memorial Awards are also announced.

In some countries, such as the USA, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, China and India among others, there are many different awards in the field of children's literature, too many to mention here. Below just a few well-known awards from around the world are mentioned as examples.

- **Hans Christian Andersen Award**: Often referred to as the 'Nobel Prize' for children's literature, are two literary awards given every other year to authors and illustrators for their lifetime contributions to children's literature.
- **The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award** (ALMA) was created in 2002 by the Swedish government to promote every child's right to access great stories. Astrid Lindgren was

prominent in the development of children's literature as an art form.[2] This global award highlights the importance of books for children and is given annually to a person or organisation for their outstanding contribution to children's and young adult literature. With a prize of five million Swedish kronor (about R6 million rands), it is the largest award of its kind.

In 2015, the ALMA was received by PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), co-founders of the Nal'ibali campaign. In 2024 Bookdash was nominated for the prestigious international Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (ALMA) in 2024. Even though the award was not conferred, the nomination serves as a testament to their service in the field of children's literature.

- The United States has many different awards for children's books. The oldest and most prestigious award for children's books is the **Newberry** award, first established in 1922. The award is named after John Newberry, an American publisher in the 18th century who vigorously promoted the publishing of books specifically for children.

- In the USA there is also the **Coretta Scott King Award,** presented annually since 1970. It honours African American authors and illustrators for their contributions that promote a deeper understanding of the African American experience through children's books.

- In the United Kingdom, the **Carnegie Medal** is awarded by the library and information association for an outstanding book written in English for children and young people. The **Kate Greenaway Medal** is awarded for an outstanding book in terms of illustration for children and young people.

- The **International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)** produces an Honours List, published biennially since 1956. It is comprised of outstanding children's books internationally, honouring authors, illustrators and translators.

- In India, there are numerous awards for books, authors, illustrators and publishers in the field of children's literature, for example, the **Big Little Book Award** given by the Tata Trust, and the **National Jarul book awards**.

- The **Sankei** Award that has been awarded annually since 1954 is the oldest and most prestigious award for children's literature in Japan.

- The **Chen Bochui Children's Literature Award** is a major award issued in China, with the aim of promoting excellence in children's publishing and cultural diversity. The first awards were allocated in 1981. It is named after Chen Bochui (1906-1997) who was an author, translator, journalist and educator. He translated Pushkin's *Children's Tales, The Wizard of Oz* and *Don Quixote* into Chinese for the first time in the 1940s, and donated his life savings to establish this award.

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[2] The impact of this Swedish author on children's literature is mentioned in Unit 3

Module 5:
Children's Literature

Awards in Africa and South Africa include the following:

- Established in 1991, the **Children's Africana Book Awards (CABA)** honour authors and illustrators of outstanding children's and young adult books about Africa.

- **Golden Baobab Prize,** established in 2008, aims to encourage the production of children's literature in three categories ages 8-11; 12-15 and 16-18. It promotes new African literary talent and the production of stories that resonate with children globally. Although based in Ghana, it is eligible for authors and illustrators from all over Africa, with the aim of addressing the scarcity of African storybooks for children and young adults.

- The **Wakini Kuria** prize for children's literature, an annual award started in Kenya in 2019. Writers of African descent are eligible for the prize, which focuses on children's literature for ages 6-12. Kuria was a Kenyan author who contributed to children's literature and promoted African writing.

South Africa hosts several prestigious awards that recognise contributors to children's literature in South Africa.

- The **South African Book Awards (SABA**) was established in 2000 and recognises books popular with booksellers and the public. They have a category for children's literature.

- Established in 2007, the **Exclusive Books IBBY SA Award** is awarded biennially (every two years). It aims to promote local authors and illustrators in children's literature. The winning books are displayed prominently in Exclusive Books stores across South Africa, providing visibility for the authors and illustrators. In 2019 the award went to the picture book *Iinkonde eMnyango* by Xolisa Guzula, children's author and literacy activist at the University of Cape Town.

- In October 2023 the University of South Africa inaugurated the **UNISA's Children's Awards** to encourage emerging authors and illustrators to write more original South African children's fiction and nonfiction, especially in the indigenous languages. The awards are also meant to appreciate and recognise contributions made by South Africans to children's literature and literacy.

- The latest award within this field is the **Otto Foundation Children's Book Award**, established in 2024. It aims to support local publishers and to promote new authors and illustrators of children's books within two categories – picture book for ages 5-9 and a chapter book or graphic novel for ages 10-13. Each winner receives a prize of R25,000.

All these awards reflect the continent's rich history of storytelling and storybook writing, support for authors, illustrators and publishers of children's literature, help to elevate the status of children's literature within the broader literary landscape, and play an important role in fostering a vibrant literary and reading culture for children in Africa.

Conclusion

This unit describes the various linguistic, cognitive and social and emotional benefits that children derive from exposure to children's literature. Books can teach as well as entertain. Even when the purpose of a book is focused on entertainment, children learn about themselves and the world while being entertained. In today's world, children benefit from books that serve both mirror and window functions. We all need both mirrors and windows in our lives as we cannot really understand ourselves unless we also learn about others. It is therefore important for children to be exposed to a wide range of books that will serve both mirror and window functions.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) Children's books reflect people and society just as a _____ reflects an image. (1)

   b) The image depicted in this visual represents the _____ function of children's literature. (1)

   c) The ability to interpret and integrate information from illustrations with information from text is referred to as _____ literacy. (1)

   d) Storybooks portray different ways of seeing or experiencing things. This helps children develop _____, also referred to as a 'theory of mind'. (1)

   e) Research has shown that children exposed to storybooks in the early years tend to show much greater _____ development than children not exposed to storybooks, thereby enhancing their linguistic development. (1)

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

a) Children who are 2-3 years old who are exposed to books learn how to handle books, interact with pictures and learn new words and concepts.

b) If children are regularly exposed to storybook reading sessions with adults at age 4-5 years, they can remember up to three instructions given to them and sit still and listen to a story for up to 10 minutes or more.

c) Children's imagination and conceptual development is enhanced through children's books.

d) Exposure to information texts enriches cognitive development far more than exposure to narrative texts.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the **correct** one. (1)

a) There are five basic emotions that are hardwired in children from birth.

b) Even though language use in children's literature is simpler than that in adult books, children still acquire knowledge of complex morphological and syntactic structures through exposure to storybook reading.

c) The view that storybooks play a simulation role in a child's development comes from the field of cognitive psychology.

d) When children reach the Intermediate Phase they develop a 'theory of mind' or perspective taking, which helps them understand people better and helps them understand human intentionality - why people behave the way they do.

4. The opinions that teachers express can reflect their knowledge about a topic. Consider the following scenario and then select only **the option** which is likely to be **an accurate reflection** of the teachers' understanding of the role of children's literature on children's development. (1)

A group of teachers are attending a one-day workshop on children's books, based on Module 5. They are sitting together at a table during the afternoon tea break and discussing what they have heard about children's book and child development during the workshop. Teacher Selena is at a preschool for children from 3-5 years old. She has 3–4-year-old children in her care. She says that they haven't learned to sit still for long, their attention wanders so they don't pay attention to the story. She feels that her children are still too young for storybooks. Teacher Xoli is a Grade R teacher with a

class of 42 learners. "The workshop says we must read storybooks regularly to our learners, so I'll continue reading a story once a week on a Friday to my class." Teacher Phindi's Grade 1 learners come from a very disadvantaged background where parents have low literacy levels and there are no books in the homes: "The statistics that we heard this morning that two-thirds of homes in South Africa do not have a single storybook, gave me a wake-up call. I used to blame the parents but I see that it's up to me as a Foundation Phase teacher to expose my learners to storybook reading in the classroom every day!" Teacher Zanele only reads traditional stories in isiZulu/Sesotho to her Grade 2 learners as she feels that modern isiZulu/Sesotho children do not know much about their cultural heritage: "Books in isiZulu/Sesotho should be about isiZulu/Sesotho culture. Books in English can be about other things".

a) From the above scenario it seems that Teacher Selena has good knowledge of the effect of children's storybooks on the cognitive development of young children in terms of memory and attention.

b) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Xoli has good knowledge of the role of children's literature in literacy development because she reads a storybook once a week to her learners.

c) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Phindi has good knowledge of the role that teachers play in exposing learners to children's literature in their classrooms.

d) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Zanele has good knowledge of the role of children's literature in literacy development because she believes that books in the learners' home language should only serve a mirror function.

Unit 3: Different genres in children's literature

Introduction

The term **genre** refers to a literary category of oral discourse or written text that can be defined according to the aims, features, patterns or structures shared by the discourses or texts representing the genre. Although adult literature has no age categories, genre in children's literature is often grouped according to age groups: books for pre-readers aged 0-5 that include picture books; books for early readers aged 5-7; increasingly longer books and chapter books for ages 7-12. Youth literature or young adult fiction is for children 13-16 years or older.

Within and across these age genre, children's literature can also be categorised into two large genres, **fiction and non-fiction**. Fiction basically 'tells a story' and is characterised by sub-genres such as traditional tales, picture books and fantasy stories. Non-fiction basically 'informs' a reader about a specific topic. Non-fiction can also tell a story, but then it is a true story, based on someone's life or real events. Non-fiction consists of information texts, biographies, autobiographies, and some poetry (although some poetry can also 'tell a story' and hence fall under fiction).

Another factor to consider in discussions of genre in children's literature is the role of **illustrations**. Most texts in children's books are illustrated, especially those for younger children, but these visuals do not all serve the same function. Nikolajeva and Scott (2000:226) distinguish between **picture books** in which both the text and illustrations are essential to conveying the story, and **illustrated books** or texts where the written text is the *primary* mode for conveying information to the reader and the visuals illustrate or support a particular aspect of the information. In other words, illustrated books are books with some pictures. Sometimes types of books may fall under both fiction or nonfiction genres, for example picture books can be fictional stories or deal with non-fiction topics, such as alphabet or number counting picture books, or picture books that focus on different topics such as animals, buildings or transport.

Knowing about the different genres in children's literature draws attention to the different functions that books can serve, deepens teachers' knowledge and makes them better reading teachers. In this unit we describe the different types of children's literature within the two broad genres of fiction and nonfiction. Although texts may belong to different genres, they can share characteristics, patterns, or structures regarding events, tone, mood, setting, characters, and themes with other genres.

Fiction in children's literature

In this section we describe the different types of children's literature that fall under the broad genre of fiction, identify their main features and their value for children's development. Fiction

basically tells a story that is not 'real' or 'true', although it can reflect life in an authentic and realistic way. Its aim can be didactic (i.e. to teach an important life lesson) or to entertain and to transport the listener or reader into a make-believe world that may share many similarities to the real world. Fiction can serve both mirror and window functions.

Traditional literature

Every culture has its own set of traditional stories. Traditional literature includes folktales, fables, myths, and legends as well as songs or poems intended for children. Unusual characters and events such as talking animals, princes and princesses, or an unknown world with giants, witches and magical creatures come to life in traditional literature. Traditional literature usually appeals to all children's interests, whether a child enjoys humorous stories, magical tales, or even adventures – traditional literature has a bit of everything!

Traditional stories were told orally long before written language and the printing press were invented. The original creator of a traditional story is usually unknown and cannot be traced as they were passed down orally from one generation to another. Traditional stories were told and retold as the storyteller heard them, which is why there are often different versions of the same tale. Many traditional tales share similar themes, which is why similar stories often occur across different cultures. Traditional literature is considered important for every child's cultural heritage. This type of literature sometimes reflects historical information because the stories contain fundamental human principles and values according to which people lived centuries ago. When children are familiar with characters and situations from traditional literature, they learn about their own cultural heritage.

In South Africa, African folktales were passed down orally from one generation to another through stories that were told, especially around a fire at night.

African traditional stories/Folklore (Izinganekwane)

The izinganekwane are sometimes subcategorised into different types of stories such as myths, animal stories, magic, etc. However, for the purposes of the present discussion, they are all included under the heading of izinganekwane.

Traditional stories (izinganekwane) were generally narrated by the grandmother in the evening with the children seated around her at the fire. The stories were generally not told during daytime. (On very rare occasions when ugogo agreed to tell a story during daytime the children had to pick small branches from a tree and stick them into their hair to prevent them from growing horns. It was believed that if children listened to stories during the day they would grow horns.) The children would look forward to the story that grandmother would tell each evening and would have to react enthusiastically to her opening formula otherwise she may not tell them a story that night. There are opening and closing formulas for storytelling in the African languages (which differ from language to language). In isiZulu the opening formula that the

grandmother uses will be the phrase *Kwesukasukela* 'It started'. She then says: *Inganekwane* 'A story'. The children then respond with *Sizoyipheka ngogozwana* 'We will cook it in a small pot'. (In Zulu culture food that is cooked in a small pot is considered more delicious than food cooked in a big pot. By saying *Sizoyipheka ngogozwana* the children thus indicate that they will thoroughly enjoy and appreciate the story.)

The grandmother would then start the story with an introduction such as: *Endulo, abantu besaphila ngokudla ukudla kwasendle* … 'Long ago, when people lived by eating food from the veld …' or *Endulo, ngenkathi uma uncweba itshe likhale* … 'Long ago, at the time when if you pinched a rock it would cry …'. She would then continue telling the story, sometimes describing characters with features similar to those of a child or children in the audience to catch and hold their attention.

At the end of her narration the grandmother would say *Coyi, cosu cosu, yaphela*! These onomatopoeic words mean 'I take a bit and strew it there and there'. The word *coyi* expresses the action of picking up sand grains (from a heap of sand) with the tips of your fingers, while the words *cosu cosu* conveys the image of sprinkling the sand here and there – towards the listeners. This closing formula also signals that the storytelling is now over and the children should not ask the grandmother further questions. These stories were captured in written language and published separately or in anthologies. An example of a typical folktale is given in Appendix A.

Riddles (Iziphicaphicwano)

Riddling was a favourite activity in earlier times. Apart from amusement, riddles also served to sharpen the children's minds and develop their cognition. Riddles also developed the children's thinking and problem-solving skills. There are basically three types of riddles, namely short riddles, long riddles and riddles that stimulate the seeking of a solution to a problem.

Like the narration of a traditional story, riddling has an opening formula. The person who wants to riddle the others will start by saying *Ngiyaniphichaphica* 'I riddle you.' The willing participants will then respond saying *Ngani?* 'With what?' Thereafter the riddler starts the riddle with *Nginiphichaphicha ng* … 'I riddle you with …'

Consider the examples of riddles below.

1. *Nginiphichaphicha ngomalusi olusa ikhaya.*
   'I riddle you with the herdsman who herds the homestead.'

   Answer: Inja 'A dog.'

2. *Nginiphichaphicha ngezinsizwa zami ezimbili eziwela umfula ugcwele.*
   'I riddle you with my two young men who cross the river while it is in flood.'

   Answer: Amehlo 'Eyes.'

3. *Nginiphichaphicha ngembali yami ebomvu engahlalwa mpukane.*

'I riddle you with my red flower that is not sat upon by any fly.'

Answer: Umlilo 'A fire.'

4. *Nginiphichaphicha ngensizwa yami edla inyama ingasuthi.*
   'I riddle you with my young man who eats meat but never gets filled.'

   Answer: *Ummese* 'A knife.'

5. *Nginiphichaphicha ngomuntu wami ozidla isisu.*
   'I riddle you with my person who eats his own stomach.'

   Answer: Ikhandlela 'A candle.'

Below is an example of a longer riddle.

6. *Nginiphichaphicha ngenkomo yami; ekuseni ihamba ngezinyawo ezine, emini ihamba ngezinyawo ezimbili, ntambama ihamba ngezintathu.* 'I riddle you with my cow; in the morning it walks on four legs, in the day it walks on two legs and in the evening, it walks on three legs.'

   Answer: *Impilo yomuntu. (Uma esengumntwana ukhasa ngezinyawo nangezandla; uma ekhulile uhamba ngezinyawo; uma esegugile uhamba ngezinyawo nangodondolo.)*

   'A human's life cycle. (When he is young, he crawls on his hands and feet; when he is grown-up he walks on his two feet; when he is old, he walks on his feet with the help of a walking stick.'

A longer problem-solving riddle occurs in example 7 below.

7. *Nginiphichaphicha ngendoda ehamba nempisi, imbuzi nesaka lommbila. Uma ifuna ukuwela umfula ifica isikhebe esincane kabi. Kangangokuthi kufanele iweze lezi zimpahla zayo ngayinye. Izozeqisa kanjani ukuze zingadlani?* 'I riddle you with a man who is travelling with his hyena, goat and bag of corn. When he wants to cross the river, he finds a very small boat. So much so that he can take only one of his possessions across the river at a time. How can he take his possessions across the river preventing them from eating one another?'

   Answer: *Iqala ngokweqisa imbuzi ishiye impisi nesaka lamabele, bese ibuyela emuva ithathe isaka lommbila. Uma ifika ngale komfula yehlisa isaka lommbila kodwa ikhweze imbuzi, ibuyele ngaphesheya komfula ukuyolanda impisi. Uma ifika yehlisa imbuzi ikhweze impisi iphindele emuva. Uma ifika ngale komfula yehlisa impisi iphindele emuva okokugcina ukuyolanda imbuzi. Uma isidilize imbuzi, izimpahla zayo ziphelele, isingaqhubeka ngohambo lwayo.*

   'He starts by taking the goat over and leaving the bag of corn and hyena on the entry side of the river. He then returns and fetches the bag of corn and takes that over. He offloads

the bag of corn but loads the goat back onto the boat and takes the goat back to the other side. When he off-loads the goat, he loads the hyena onto the boat and takes that over. He off-loads the hyena leaving it with the bag of corn and returns for the final time to fetch the goat. When he has off-loaded the goat, he has all his possessions safely with him and he can then continue his journey.'

The series of illustrations on the left depict the order of taking these possessions across the river safely without the danger of the hyena eating the goat or the goat eating the corn while transporting the possessions one by one across the river.

Sayings and proverbs (Izisho)

A saying is a short, pithy, generally understood expression in a particular language offering advice or wisdom on human life and experience. While some sayings are similar across languages, others are language specific. Consider the examples of sayings below with their applied meanings.

1. *Ukwaliwa ukudla* 'to be refused by food'
    Ukudakwa 'to be/get drunk'

2. *Ukushaya ubuthongo* 'to hit the drowsiness'
    Ukulala 'to sleep'

3. *Ukuhlangana kwamazwi abo* 'the coming together of their voices.'
    Ukuvumelana kwabo 'they are agreeing.'

4. *Ukuba nenhliziyo emhlophe* 'to have a white heart'
    Ukuba mnene 'to be kind/gentle'

5. *Ukushaya esentwala* 'to hit like the louse'
    Ukusutha 'to be satisfied/filled (food)'.

Proverbs (Izaga)

A proverb is a short, wise sentence that people often quote to give advice or tell us a truth about life.

Isaga yindlela yokusho into eshaya ngamafuphi ngesinono iveze iqiniso nobuhlakani mayelana nento ethize empileni yethu.

Below are some examples of proverbs with their applied meanings.

1. Isaga: *Ubogawula ubheka* 'Be on the lookout when you chop a tree.'

   Ingcazelo: *Ubohlala uqaphela uma wenza okuthize* 'You must always be on the lookout when you undertake a risky task.'

2. Isaga: *Ingane engakhali ifelwa embelekweni* 'The baby that does not cry, dies in the carry blanket.'

   Ingcazelo: *Uma ungazibikeli ingxaki yakho ngeke yaziwe muntu futhi nosizo ngeke uluthole.* 'If you do not state your problems, no one will know about it, and you will receive no help.'

3. Isaga: *Igula lendlebe kaligcwali* 'The eardrum never gets filled.'
   Ingcazelo: *Umuntu ufunda aze afe* 'A person keeps on learning until he/she dies.'

4. Isaga: *Inja ize iwaqede amanzi ngolimi* 'A dog eventually finishes the water with its tongue.'

   Ingcazelo: *Kufanele ube nesineke kulokho okwenzayo, kancane kancane uyoze uphumelele* 'You should have dedication and patience with what you do, bit by bit you will make progress until you succeed.'

5. Isaga: *Ukuguga akumemezi* 'Getting older does not call you'
   Ingcazelo: *Ukuguga akukutsheli ukuthi kuyeza. Sonke siyaguga.* 'Getting older does not forewarn you that it is coming. We all get older.'

6. Isaga: *Uyoze ubambe utalagu* 'You will eventually hold the shimmering of a heat wave in your hand.'

   Ingcazelo: *Ngeke kwenzeke lokho (noma ngabe wenzani)* 'That will never happen (regardless of what you do).'

7. Isaga: *Amathe nolimi* 'Saliva and the tongue'
   Ingcazelo: *Abehlukani. Bangabangani abakhulu* 'They are inseparable. They are great friends.'

8. Isaga: *Kuhlonishwana kabili* 'To respect each other is done twice/Respect is mutual.'

   Ingcazelo: *Kumele abantu bahloniphane* 'People should respect one another.'

Children's oral poetry/lullabies (Imilolozelo)

Children's poetry, which included lullabies, folk songs and folk poetry (*imilozelo*), is one of the oldest forms of children's oral literature. This art form was characterised by repetition at different levels and was meant to be performed. And when performed it was often accompanied by physical actions and gestures.

The poem below is about kinship terms.

Ubuhlobo

Uyamazi ubabamkhulu?
Yebo ngiyamazi.
Umazi ngani?
Uhlala nogogo.
Gogo muphi?
Ozale ubaba.

Uyamazi ubabekazi?
Yebo ngiyamazi.
Umazi ngani?
Ngudadewabo kababa.

Umamekazi yena?
Yebo ngiyamazi.
Umazi ngani?
Ngudadewabo kamama.

Umalume yena?
Yebo ngiyamazi.
Umazi ngani?
Umfowabo kamama.

We Dadewethu!
Yebo mfowethu!
Mina nawe sizalwa ngubaba
Ozalwe nobabomncane eMayezeni!

(JM Xulu)

Ubani lo?

Ubani lo?	*Uyeye.*
Uhamba noba'?	*Noyise.*
Umphatheleni?	*Amasi.*
Ngendlebe enjani?	*Ebomvu.*
Wayibekaphi?	*Esizibeni.*

Esizibeni esinjani?   *Esikhulu.*
Hi! Mayiphuze iziziba zonke!
Hi! Mayiphuze iziziba zonke!

Iminwe emihlanu

Ngineminwe emihlanu.
Ngineminwe emihlanu,
Engiyibiza ngamagama.
Uthuphazana lo,
Isidudla sami lesi.
Ukhombisa lo,
Umthethi wamacala.
Umdanyana lo,
Indoda enhle kakhulu.
Uthembisile lo,
Umngani wendandatho
Ucikicane lo,
Ithemba lami lelo!
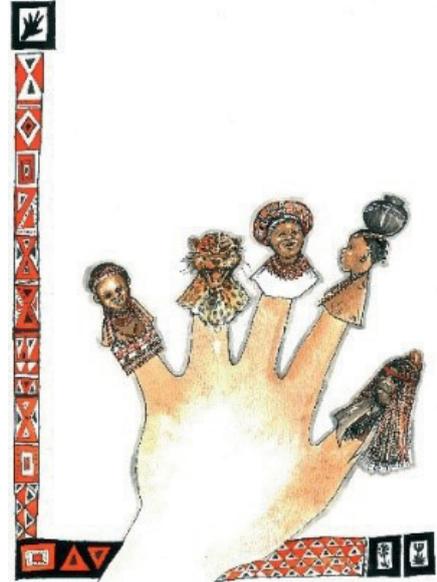
Traditional stories all over the world can be an intrinsic part of every child's growing years. They are often told or written in a simple and direct style, with repetition of words or phrases that add to the enjoyment of the story. These stories usually progress quickly, involve dramatic events, and use characters with whom the children can identify, so they are very enjoyable and popular among children. Not only do these stories provide enjoyment for children, but they can also contain important life lessons that can influence children's outlook on life (Norton & Norton 2011; Steenberg 1987).

Other subgenres within the domain of traditional tales

Traditional tales are common across all languages and cultures. Having discussed the genres within traditional African tales, we now look at other subgenres within the larger field. The boundaries between them are not always clear and many genres overlap.

Fairy tales and wonder tales: Although a distinction is sometimes made between fairy tales and wonder tales, they are discussed together here as they share many common features. These tales usually contain strange and magical creatures (fairies, large dragons, man-eating ogres or giants, wicked witches), magical motifs (magic spells, wonders), and common themes such as quests, rewards for doing good and punishment for wickedness. They take place at any time or in any location (often vague and generic – *once upon a time*) so the stories can be considered timeless and placeless, usually telling the adventures of animals or humans. The story involves magical objects, such as a giant beanstalk, a magic mirror, a magic lamp, or even an unusual

event, like falling asleep for a long time and waking up only when kissed by true love. Wonder tales in particular depict magical wonders and the conflict between good and evil, with a triumphant victory over evil and often involving a marriage afterwards, with a 'happy-ever-after' ending. These are timeless stories that are beloved by children all over the world. Classic examples of these fairy tales from children's literature in Europe include *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Jack and the Beanstalk.* A well-loved favourite wonder tale from Africa is *The magic porridge pot*.

Although some elements in traditional tales may derive from events in a distant past, they cannot be considered historically accurate, as they may or may not have happened and are not interpreted literally. Although these tales are unreal, their themes are real and reflect the essential nature and challenges of human existence.

Fables or animal tales: Fables are short, simple stories in which animal characters speak and behave like humans. These are certainly the oldest type of traditional tales and are found universally, across all languages and cultures. At the end of the story, a lesson, moral value, or universal truth is conveyed to the young reader. In these stories, the cleverness of one animal is often portrayed against the foolishness of another, as in *The Tortoise and the Hare*, which teaches children the value of perseverance and determination in life. Both adults and children enjoy fables, although fables sometimes require abstract thinking, and adults assist children in understanding the story. The use of animal characters rather than humans makes fables safe and less offensive for conveying moral values to children. Animal tales play a significant role in early stories told or read to children. There are several beloved characters that come from this type of fairy tale, such as a wily jackal, or a scheming hare. Classic animal tales that have survived across the centuries and have been published in various versions and languages include *The Little Red Hen, The Three Little Pigs, Little Red.*

Cumulative tales are stories where action, characters, and phrases are added and repeated until the climax of the story is reached. These stories are usually simple and short because something is added to the cumulative refrain each time, for example in *Isaqathe esikhulukazi* more and more characters are called to help the old man pull up the enormous carrot, and the same words and sentence structure is used. The main character is usually the one who is built up and repeated the most. Cumulative tales are excellent for storytelling because they encourage children listening to the narrative to participate by saying the repeated sections aloud. The most well-known of this type of fairy tale is *Isaqathe esikhulukazi* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

Pourquoi tales (*pourquoi* means "why" in French) are stories that aim to explain natural phenomena, such as why or how animals, plants or humans were created. They provide primitive explanations for many *Why?* questions that young children ask. These types of stories are found throughout the world but are particularly popular in African cultures. Classic examples include *Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky, Where Stories Come From, How the Hippo Lost Its Tail* and *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*.

Humorous tales are stories that are light-hearted and involve animals (or invented creatures) or people doing amazing or silly things. These stories are usually well-known because they play with language and the imagination and are great fun. Even so, they can also teach children important life lessons. Classic examples of this genre are the Dr Seuss stories like *Yertle the Turtle* and *There's a wocket in my pocket*.

Myths are stories that aim to explain the origin of the world, natural phenomena such as lightning, and big themes such as emotions, desires, love and death. The characters in myths are usually gods and goddesses, and to a lesser extent, sometimes humans (Bascom, 1965:4). Myths usually take place in a realm above the earth, in the domain of the gods that the particular story is about. Bascom (1965:4) describes myths as

> *… prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted as faith; … they are usually sacred; they are often associated with theology and ritual.*

All cultures have their myths. Famous myths are those from Greek and Roman mythology, the Indian myths and the stories of the creation of the earth and the relationship between nature and humans in First Nation American Indian mythology.

Myths provide children with the opportunity to explore and marvel at the wonders of the universe and life (Norton & Norton, 2011:238). They reflect a social order in humanity from a particular cultural perspective, and they have pedagogical value by teaching children how to live and navigate life (Norton & Norton, 2011:238). Myths create a framework through which children can explore the ways in which people from older centuries lived and thought. They provide children with knowledge about the culture of their ancestors and enable them to look at other cultures.

Legends are stories based on true or semi-true individuals and their deeds. The stories in legends are usually exaggerated accounts of the actions of specific individuals, whether or not the person actually existed. Legends usually do not contain moral lessons and are usually adventurous and entertaining. The most famous legends include those of King Arthur, Robin Hood, and Joan of Arc. From Africa, we have a legend of the prophet Amakosa, who saved the Juba people of South Sudan from extinction. In South Africa, we have the legend of Shaka Zulu, who united the Zulu nation, and Wolraad Woltemade, who rode his horse into the sea to rescue people from a ship wrecked in a storm. He rescued 14 men before he and his horse succumbed in the waves due to exhaustion.

According to Johnson (2009:125), traditional literature, regardless of its origin, satisfies certain needs in both adults and children, such as the need to explain the natural world (in the absence of scientific explanations); the need to articulate fears and dreams; the need to create order in a disorderly, chaotic life; and finally, to entertain oneself and others. The conciseness, immediate action, easily understandable characters, repetitive features, imaginative elements, and happy

endings are especially entertaining for children between the ages of three and eight. Traditional literature can also provide children with an understanding of moral values. It helps children identify the good and the bad in the world and respond to this dichotomy.

In sum, the value of traditional literature for children is significant. Through these (ancient) symbolic stories and illustrations, children can develop culturally, linguistically, socially, morally and cognitively. Traditional stories provide children with the opportunity to make sense of the world, to identify universal human themes. Through traditional stories, children are also taught moral values that help them navigate difficult circumstances and emerge as winners.

Children's understanding of the world is enhanced as they learn more about their culture and traditions through reading. When traditional stories are read or told, children develop an appreciation for their own culture as well as the cultures of other countries. These stories convey to children the idea that people all around the world have similar needs, problems, and emotions.

All these different genres of traditional tales usually teach a lesson to the reader. These tales can depict family conflicts, identity crises, and the entire process of growing up that children undergo. Through such tales, children can be warned of evil and be shown examples of how evil can be overcome, which can serve as a moral compass in their daily lives. Traditional tales often contain specific details, such as a village or castle, a forest or a cave. The village or castle can represent a place of safety and stability, a forest can symbolise a state of uncertainty and search, while a cave can represent the unknown or a place of fear.

Traditional literature uses both good and bad characters, allowing children to understand that life involve choices between desirable and undesirable attitudes and behaviour. The simple characters in traditional stories provide children with the opportunity to identify with the good characters and reject the bad characters. From these stories, children learn that life can present difficult circumstances, and that perseverance, courage and wisdom are needed to overcome them.

The characters in these types of stories usually represent archetypes with fixed meanings that speak to the subconscious, for example, the witch as an archetype of evil, the prince as a brave hero, the princess as a virtuous and innocent young lady, to name a few. A prince and princess have nothing to do with actual royalty, but they represent desirable characteristics such as courage or kindness. There is also often a good magic figure, in the form of a woman or fairy godmother, who often helps the main character, often by using magic spells or sharing a magic ingredient that will protect them. Only the main characters in fairy tales have names. The characters in traditional tales tend to be rather flat and one-dimensional since the purpose of the story is to convey a life lesson rather than to explore the complexities of human nature.

Controversial topics are also present in traditional literature. These stories may reflect attitudes and values that are at variance with modern day norms, such as violence, sexism, racism and intolerance for diversity in general. Violence is sometimes part of traditional literature, for example where little pigs are eaten up or wolves fall into boiling water (*The Three Little Pigs*).

However, violence is not foregrounded or detailed, it forms part of the background action that drives the story forward, and there is no sense of fear or distress in the reader. These are stories where good triumphs over evil, and although the stories may be sad at times, they are not without hope or justice. Traditional literature provides children with the opportunity to process their own hostility, frustration, anger, and fears.

Traditional stories attempted to teach children the traditional social order in a specific historical context. Some critics argue that traditional stories show gender or racial biases and convey anti-feminist and racist attitudes. Traditional stories often portray women as passive, submissive and fragile. They are often depicted as helpless and beautiful characters relying on the goodness of a strong or capable man such as a prince or warrior to 'save' them. They can also be portrayed as an evil figure, such as a wicked stepmother or witch. People from different cultures or races can also be stereotyped and portrayed in discriminatory ways in children's stories.

In recent years, efforts have been made to remove gender and racial stereotyping from children's literature. Many modern stories portray women and girls as stronger characters in literature, where female characters are empowered and solve their own problems. Some traditional stories have been reframed and rewritten in a modern idiom that give female characters greater agency, for example, in Sleeping Beauty the girl doesn't wait for a prince to kiss her awake and give meaning to her life but takes charge of her own destiny. Racial stereotyping is also removed, and in South Africa, children's stories written by African writers reflect African lives and realities in more authentic ways.

Picture books

A genre that cuts across children's literature is that of picture books. The term 'picture books' describes a wide variety of books, ranging from toy books for very young children to more advanced books for older children that are richly illustrated and where words and illustrations contribute to the meaning of the given information. Although many texts in children's literature have illustrations (pictures, visuals, photos), not all texts with illustrations are picture books. Nikolajeva and Scott (2000:226) point out that picture books refer to children's books in which the illustrations are just as important as the text in conveying meaning and 'telling the story'. The pictures and the story complement one another. As a literary art form, the enjoyment of a picture book derives from the interdependence of pictures and words, and from the anticipation of turning the pages to find out what happens next. A picture book must be read in its entirety; the cover, text, and illustrations are all essential for picture books to successfully convey a story.

While picture books are usually created for preschool children (ages 4 to 6) there are also picture books designed for older children that feature more complex narrative structures.

Picture books for younger children are intended to be read aloud by adults and shared and enjoyed with children. Through these shared picture book readings, children can acquire new words, linguistic structures and concepts about print (e.g. what is the front and back of a book,

how to turn pages, that print represents spoken language, that it starts at the top left side of the page in our alphabetic script, etc.). Later when learners can read picture books themselves, they help foster language development and encourage children to explore their world through stories. Besides their entertainment value, the illustrations in picture books can help stimulate sensitivity towards art, creativity and the way in which art can convey a story.

The first interaction a young child has with a picture book is largely physical. Children explore size, shape, texture, and moving parts of the book. In the baby stage, children may put the books in their mouths and learn to turn pages, even if the book is upside down. If an adult assists the child, they will learn the specific purpose of the book and later discover the joy of reading them. As children grow older, they understand that pictures tell a story, and as their language develops, they also understand the purpose of the text.

The value of picture books lies in, among other things, the accuracy of the illustrations in relation to the story told by the text. In good quality picture books, illustrations align with the text, support the text and add meaning to it. Cianciolo (1990:2) describes good picture books as follows:

> *In these picture books, the illustrations are superbly accomplished works of visual and graphic art, and the text is written in beautifully expressive language ... In addition to bringing out and emphasising the text, they convey other meanings and impressions that readers would not have envisioned from the verbal information on its own. They encourage higher-level thinking and imaginative thinking. Readers can and do grasp their meaning and significance and can go well beyond what the illustrator and author suggested.*

Within the fiction genre of picture books, there are various subgenres that include wordless picture books, interactive books, and picture storybooks. The purpose of these different types of picture books is to make it easier for adults and children to choose the book that will be valuable for their specific purpose.

Wordless picture books: These are picture books for very young children and typically contain illustrations but minimal or no text. These books rely on sequential illustrations to tell the story, so the illustrations need to be highly descriptive. Wordless picture books provide learners with the opportunity to search for objects in the pictures, they learn to names the objects or events depicted in the pictures and they can create their own stories from the pictures. They thus support young children's linguistic and cognitive development.

Wordless picture books are sometimes not considered literature by educators, but some picture books can contain narrative elements such as settings, characters, events and themes. The fact that wordless picture books require a response from the reader plays an important role in developing positive reading attitudes and habits.
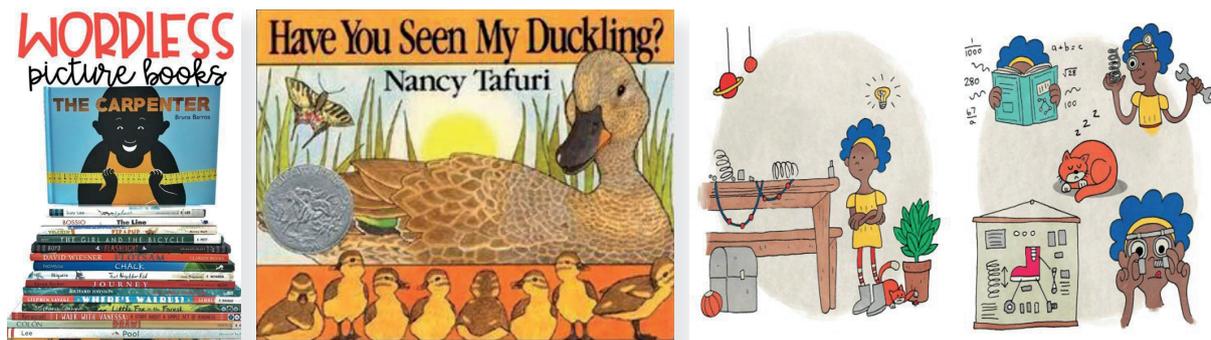
Interactive books, such as board books, cloth books or pop-up books are usually recommended for very young children. Books made of cardboard or fabric are usually very sturdy and washable, which is valuable when dealing with younger children who have not yet learned to handle books properly. Children can lift up a flap on a page and see a picture underneath. A classic example is *The very hungry caterpillar* by Eric Carle about a caterpillar's journey from egg to butterfly. As a caterpillar he munches his way through various fruit, and the holes in the fruit are real holes depicted in each page.
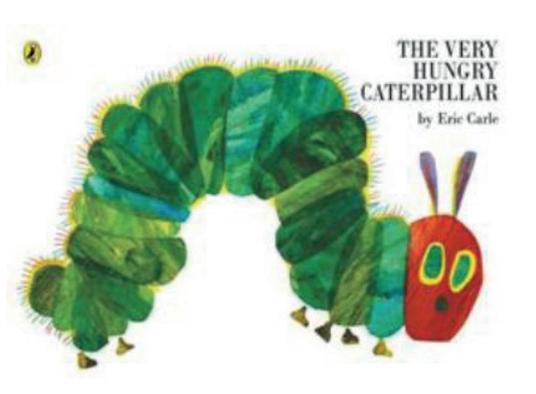
Pop-up books: These are books with one or more pages that have a three-dimensional structure that pops up when the pages are opened. Pop-up books originated in Victorian times during the late 1800s. Today these books are very creative and enable the child to interact with the book in an involved way. With different moving parts, it gives the child a sense of three-dimensionality.

Picture storybooks combine the art of narrative texts with the art of illustrations. Good picture storybooks contain complex stories that involve two distinct art forms – the story and the

pictures. Picture storybooks are further divided into three types: easy readers, books for older readers, and graphic novels.

Both traditional tales and more modern stories are presented in the picture book format. Easy readers are written for readers between the ages of four and seven. The purpose is for the books to be read aloud to children who cannot yet read on their own but who can start learning to read. These books are designed to guide beginner readers towards independent reading. They have relatively little text on each page and are printed in large font. Double spacing and short sentences are usually used. The language in these books tends to focus on common words that will be familiar to young children.

Picture books support learners' linguistic and cognitive development as well as their visual literacy. They develop learners' observational skills and their ability to make comparisons and categorise objects. Learners can describe what happens in each illustration, discuss the details of the illustration and compare objects in pictures.

There are also picture books or comics for older children and adolescents. Some well-known ones are the Asterix series and Tintin. Picture books for older children are usually more challenging, with multiple storylines that form a cohesive whole. They typically address more than one theme, allowing readers to discover deeper meanings in the story. The narrative elements are presented in a more complex manner and in a longer format compared to picture books for younger children. The book can be part of a series, allowing readers to follow the events over a longer period of time.

Graphic novels are a longer form of comic books. These books are usually lengthy and feature complex storylines, primarily targeting more advanced readers. Spoken language is typically presented through speech bubbles. Graphic novels have become very popular among readers between the ages of 13 and 18. Readers who do not enjoy reading thick books often enjoy this type of book because it is engaging to read. The notion that picture books are intended only for younger children is not valid, as these books can be used throughout the school curriculum to engage learners in reading.

Even though some adults do not consider comics and graphic novels good literature, they are still books that adolescents enjoy and want to read and the genre is very much part of the modern world. Research shows that the reading of comic books and graphic novels can support linguistic, cognitive and social development in older readers.

In sum, picture books for all ages of children play an important role in children's literacy development. Through exposure to picture books that an adult shares with them, very young children learn how to handle books, how to interact with their content by pointing to objects or events and labelling things, making comments or asking questions. They use oral language to create a story about the pictures and thus start their journey to make meaning from books and interact with them – the first important step in developing critical literacy! Picture books should be an intrinsic part of preschool, Grade R and Foundation Phase classrooms across language and literacy, numeracy and life skills, stimulating learners and making learning enjoyable and fun. Teachers can support this journey by making sure they have book corners in their classrooms, by sharing books with learners every day and asking questions related to the pictures or story for discussion with their learners.

Fantasy

Fantasy literature is set in an imaginary world or universe, but often the characters, places and events in the fantasy world are very similar to the real world. Magic, the supernatural or strange places and characters are common in many fantasy stories. Although many traditional stories deal with fantastical creatures such as talking animals, monsters, giants and fairies, the genre of fantasy books is a more recent development in the publishing industry and in children's literature. According to Johnson (2009:154), fantasy originated in traditional literature where storytellers orally passed down stories to the next generation, while modern fantasy literature is transmitted through the written word and publishers.
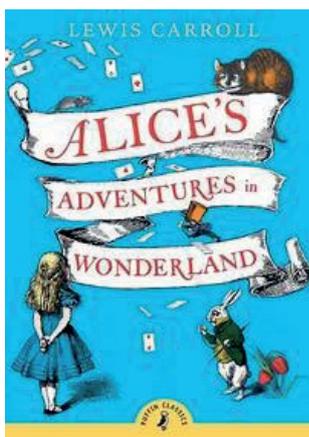
The book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is one of the original and classic fantasy stories written for children. It was written and published in 1865 by a mathematician, Lewis Carroll, at Oxford University. In the story, a young girl Alice follows a white rabbit wearing a waistcoat and looking at a watch, muttering that he is very late. She follows him down a rabbit role and falls into a fantasy world of talking animals, people and strange events. There is a lot of clever play on logic and language and creative humorous nonsense in the book. It became very popular and is one of the best-known works of 19th century children's literature, representing a move away from didacticism in children's books to writing to delight or entertain children. It had a strong influence on popular culture at the time, has been translated into over 174 languages and has influenced the development of fantasy literature for older children who could read independently and who became a new target market for publishers.

Fantasy has become particularly popular in the modern world and the number of good fantasy books being published has grown steadily. Many books for older children and youth such as *The Lord of the Rings* (JRR Tolkien), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (CS Lewis) and modern-day favourites like the *Harry Potter* books (JK Rowling) and *Twilight* (S Meyer) have been translated into many languages, made into movies (e.g. *Twilight Saga*) and developed massive fan bases.

Fantasy refers to stories in which the impossible is presented as if it were possible. It can include elements such as magic, talking animals, time travel, and magical adventures in alternative dimensions or universes. Fantasy is a vast imaginative world of characters, places, and events that become credible to the reader. It is grounded in the reality of human nature and contains truths that help readers understand the modern world.

Although some parents and teachers oppose fantasy because they believe it is harmful or unnatural, fantasy has always been a part of literature, both traditional and modern, and can be of great value to learners. In fantasy books, readers enter a new world and are taken on a journey of imagination that allows learners to explore the unknown, escape from reality; a common theme in fantasy books is that of good overcoming evil. Teachers need to understand that fantasy stories help develop children's curiosity, make them observers of life, teach them to be sensitive to variations in life and to norms and rules of behaviour, whether in real or fantasy worlds. Fantasy stories also open children's minds to new possibilities and the knowledge that the imagination is not limited.

Both traditional stories and fantasy stories contain elements of fantasy. Although unusual things can happen in traditional stories (talking animals, magical events), the stories are set against the backdrop of a familiar space, conventional events, and traditional motives and themes. In contrast, fantasy creates a new world with something unusual within it, which in turn creates new possibilities. For this reason, the space, characters, events, motif, and theme in fantasy stories are usually much more complex than those in traditional stories (Steenberg 1987:42; Johnson 2009:132). The different (and sometimes similar) characteristics pointed out by these researchers are shown in the following table.

Table 1: Similarities and differences between traditional literature and fantasy stories

Traditional literature	Fantasy
The author of traditional literature is usually anonymous.	The author of the story is known.
Traditional literature was originally transmitted orally, before being written down.	It originates in written form and is then published.

Traditional literature usually dates back to long before the 1800s.	Fantasy literature emerged in the mid-1800s and very much part of modern literature.
Traditional stories are created with the intention of conveying a message or lesson.	In fantasy the main purpose is to entertain, provide enjoyment, stimulate the imagination. Although fantasy can also include life lessons, that is not its main purpose.
Traditional stories are usually short and simple.	Fantasy books are usually much longer than traditional stories and, in many cases, much more complex.
Traditional stories are often a compilation of different stories, and there are various versions of one story.	There is only one version of a fantasy story, attached to a specific author and a specific date of publication.
Traditionally, it conveys a lesson to the reader, and it ends positively.	The ending is usually positive and conveys a message to the child.
Only the main characters in traditional tales may have names. Characters tend to be flat and one-dimensional.	Often all the characters can have names. Characters can be portrayed in great depth and often undergo some life changes.
Folk tales usually occur in vague spaces that transition to the magical dimension (the existing environment becomes magical). Traditional tales may include common details, like a castle, a forest or a deep cave. The forest can symbolise a state of uncertainty and search, and a cave can symbolise fear or danger.	In fantasy, there are clear spaces, which can be both earthly and magical. Writers sometimes build languages and other detailed cultural aspects around the story to make it more credible.
Traditional tales usually have only one magical (fantasy) character, for example, a man-eating giant or a brave young girl who is given magic powers to overcome danger or evil.	In fantasy, more than one character can have magical powers, such as in the Harry Potter books.
The characters in fairy tales usually represent archetypes with fixed meanings that speak to the subconscious, for example, an ogre or a witch may represent evil, a prince or warrior represents the brave hero, a jackal may represent a cunning character.	There is often an array of characters in a fantasy novel who can represent many different things. Often a character may be portrayed realistically as having both strong and weak features and learns to overcome his/her weaknesses.

Besides the common theme of a journey to an alternative world, fantasy can include a wide variety of subjects such as talking animals, toys coming to life, extraordinary characters and situations, unusual worlds, little people, friendly and unfriendly spirits, time jumps, and science

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fiction. These subjects can serve as categories by which fantasy stories can be classified.

Fantasy stories about animals: These are stories in which animals behave like humans, such as in the Narnia series. The animals have emotions, speak, and have the ability to reason about a situation. Apart from the human characteristics that the animals have, they still retain various of their animal qualities. The animal characters symbolise human behaviour. Fantasy about animals is a way to explore human emotions, values, and relationships. These stories often express universal themes such as friendship, loyalty, courage, growing up, and dealing with the challenges of life, making them relatable and impactful for readers of all ages. Classic examples of these are *Charlotte's Web* by EB White about a lively pig Wilbur who is friends with a spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur is in danger of being slaughtered by the farmer Charlotte writes messages of praise about Wilbur with her web to persuade the farmer to let him live. *Redwall* by Brian Jacques is about a community of mice and other animals who band together to defend their home from evil predators. It explores themes of friendship, loyalty and bravery.
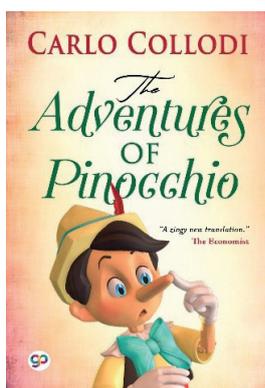
Fantasy stories about toys: When children play with their dolls, teddy bears, and other toys or have conversations with them, they demonstrate that they believe their toys have human qualities. When an author tells a story from the toy's point of view, it encourages children to use their imagination and believe that their toys are their companions. These are stories where beloved toys come to life and are transformed into animated creatures that can speak, think, live, breathe, and love like humans. One of the classics in this genre is the Italian story of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* written by Carlo Collodi in 1883. Pinocchio is a wooden puppet who dreams of becoming a real boy. His nose grows long whenever he tells a lie. The story has been translated from Italian into many languages and several films have been made of it.

Fantasy stories about magic: Magic, whether an object or a character with magical powers,

becomes the subject of the fantasy story. Magic is not just a means used to achieve something; it is the essence of the entire story. Classic stories in this genre include the Swedish story of *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren (1945), about a playful, red-haired girl with superhuman strength who can lift up her horse with one hand. She makes fun of adults who are condescending and pompous and gets angry when animals are mistreated. It has been translated into over 76 languages and several TV series and films have been made based on this story. Because of her influential involvement in children's literature, the Swedish government established a prestigious literary award for children's literature in 2002, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (discussed earlier in Unit 2). Another classic in this genre is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl (1964). The story is about the adventures of a young boy Charlie inside the chocolate factory of an eccentric chocolate maker Willy Wonka. It, too, has been translated into many languages (68 as of 2023) and a film made of it.
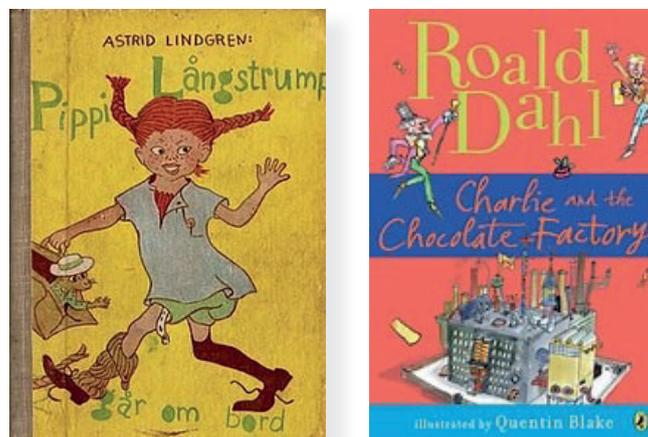
Heroic or quest fantasy: These types of fantasy stories are adventurous fantasy stories with a quest or task to be accomplished, like slaying a wicked dragon. The adventure is usually for a good cause such as justice, love, or a rich reward like magic or hidden wealth. The conflict that arises in fantasy stories is usually a struggle between good and evil. The main character fights extraordinary evil forces and inner desires and weaknesses. Many of the themes, events, characters, and spaces are derived from ancient myths, legends, and traditional stories. These fantasy stories captivate both the young and old.

Science fiction: Science fiction has become very popular in the modern world and can be regarded as a genre on its own, but it is a form of imaginative fantasy literature based on science, so it is classified here under fantasy literature. It creates a picture of something that could happen based on real scientific facts and principles or on futuristic technology. In many cases, it presents a futuristic world in which characters could possibly live. Science fiction is also sometimes referred to as future-oriented literature.

Science fiction often presents a dramatised portrayal of technology and what can be achieved

through it. Science fiction shares many similarities with heroic fantasy stories. The magic in the story is replaced by science and technology. Just as in heroic fantasy stories, the events focus on the struggle between good and evil. For example, *Cinder* by Marissa Meyer (2012) is a science fiction version of the fairytale of *Cinderella*, where Cinderella is cast a young cyborg girl several hundred years in the future who owns an android robot with humanlike characteristics, thanks to its personality chip! Science fiction blends a wide variety of myths and traditional literature with science and technology as the foundation. However, the worlds created through the use of science and technology in most cases are imaginative and do not exist and will likely never exist.

Several science fiction books address ethical issues resulting from technology and science and how they can impact human existence. The French writer Jules Verne is regarded as the father of science fiction and his novels *Journey to the centre of the Earth* (1864) and *Twenty thousand leagues under the sea* (1870), based on technological knowledge at that time, are still regarded as classic youth science fiction. Science fiction books for children are not as common as other fantasy stories, but they are very popular in youth and young adult literature.

Various fantasy stories are enjoyed by teenagers, especially fantasy stories involving journeys, heroic deeds, and science fiction. These stories share characteristics with legends, myths, and often involve epic battles between good and evil. They give adolescent readers the opportunity to discover new places and solve problems in their own lives.

The power of fantasy stories can be used in teaching by giving learners the opportunity to explore narrative elements such as events, characters, and space of the fantasy story and explain their contribution to the overall story. According to Baghban (2000), fantasy stories should

be shared with children and adolescents because readers are empowered through fantasy and convinced that they can be successful and overcome obstacles in their own lives. Fantasy stories give readers hope to continue living.

Themes should play an important role in the use of fantasy stories during teaching. The themes are usually subtle, and learners need to be guided to understand the deeper meaning of the story. When learners understand the deeper meaning, they will not only enjoy the story but also use the thematic aspects to understand and overcome situations in their own lives. Fantasy stories, especially science fiction, can be used to engage a class in discussions about ethical questions such as friendship, loyalty, and the responsible use of science and technology. Teachers should involve learners in discussions about ethical questions that arise in the stories.

Reality stories

Reality stories (or realistic fiction) are stories that aim to portray the real world. There are no elements of fantasy or magic in these stories, and they typically focus on characters living their daily lives and facing real-world problems. The characters experience happiness, sadness, success, and failures just like any person in real life. They cover a variety of themes and topics, some of which may be sensitive or controversial.

There has been a gradual shift over the past 150 years from stories with a romantic outlook (beautiful stories where everyone is happy) to stories that depict aspects of reality that are dark and harsh. These stories can sometimes be controversial because they touch on subjects that were previously not considered appropriate for children's and youth literature. Teachers and parents may differ in their opinions about what is suitable for learners, and they may have concerns when topics such as sexism, promiscuity, abuse, violence, godlessness, the breakdown of community and racism are addressed.

Although reality stories are sometimes about controversial issues, they hold value for learners as they provide children with the opportunity to identify with characters who are their age and who may have similar interests or who may be facing similar problems. Reality stories also allow children to experience different perspectives and to see life from someone else's view, thereby helping them develop empathy for others and tolerance for diversity.

Through reading reality stories, learners discover that their problems are not unique and that their feelings about situations are normal because others also have those feelings. Realistic stories also provide children with the opportunity to broaden their frames of reference and develop new interests. Children can experience new adventures and thus learn new ways to manage conflict in their own lives.

According to Bernstein (1989), by reading about other children who have social, emotional or physical problems, learners can learn to handle their own emotions, fears, anger and sadness. If a learner who has experienced the trauma of illness, injury, abuse, neglect, civil war, migration, separation from loved ones, parental divorce or racism reads a story about a similar situation,

it can help that child to process the circumstances and see that they are not the only ones experiencing such adversity. Even if children have not been in such situations, reading about them makes them aware of the plight of others and helps them develop empathy.

The purpose of reality stories is to give learners the freedom to share their feelings and problems so that they can be resolved. Teachers must facilitate discussion of sensitive topics in a way that helps children see other perspectives that may be different from the norms and values of their own community or culture.

Reality stories reflect what is happening in the real world. If violence is part of a particular story, the author must treat the subject with sensitivity. This means that the author must provide accurate information, portray the situation honestly and fully, and handle the emotions surrounding it with respect. Furthermore, the author should help learners gain perspective on the particular situation. Reality stories can serve as both mirrors and windows; they can provide learners with insight into their situations, and also provide role models of how characters in the stories deal with these situations. They can be inspirational and, despite their dark themes, also provide enjoyment to learners about the ups and downs of life.

Just like other types of children's stories, reality stories can be grouped into various categories based on the subject around which the story is built, including family stories, stories that provide social commentary, animal stories, and many others. Often the themes may overlap.

Reality family stories: Reality stories that revolve around the family depict the daily tasks and activities of the family. If there is conflict within the family, attempts are made to resolve it. Reality stories that involve the family provide each learner, young and old, with the opportunity to see how their own problems relate to the lives of others. Originally, family stories were quite sentimental and focused on harmony, security and kindness. Although these features are still valued, more modern reality family stories have moved away from the traditional 'good and happy' household. Modern family stories portray more realistic family situations that include both parents working, divorced parents, single-parent families, neglected children, ungrateful children, sibling rivalry, the general breakdown of communication within a family and even domestic violence or abuse.

Stories that provide social commentary: Stories that provide social commentary can overlap with family stories but extend beyond it to cover topics such as friendship, self-identity, racial conflict, child abuse, sexual abuse, homosexuality, violence, and stories related to the physical development of individuals. Authors who write these kinds of stories believe that it is better for children and adolescents to receive information about these topics from good writers, so that correct facts about specific subjects can be provided to children.

For example, *Rain Rising* (2022) by Courtne Comrie is a coming-of-age story about Rain whose father has left the family and whose mother is aways away at work. She feels insecure and sad. She loves her older brother

Xander who takes good care of her, but after he is brutally attacked, he withdraws and stops speaking and Rain struggles to keep going. In an after-school group she makes new friends and slowly finds a way to cope with life, building up courage and self-esteem and finding a way to help herself and her family heal. The story deals with depression, racism, family, friendship and finding oneself, and although it is intense and heartbreaking, it is equally uplifting and inspiring.

Reality adventure stories: Reality adventure stories are favourites among learners. Children and adolescents enjoy reading stories that revolve around the survival of characters, where a protagonist, for example, must survive against the elements of nature, social problems (e.g., drugs in the neighbourhood) or challenging circumstances. The characters in these stories usually have to overcome something seemingly insurmountable, and through the process of overcoming problems and adventures, the character grows and gets to know themselves. Investigative stories in which the main character must solve a crime that leads them on an adventurous journey are also classified here.

The key to adventure stories and survival is the content about the process of survival in a challenging world. There are also choose-your-own-adventure books. A choose-your-own-adventure book does not have a main character; instead, the reader becomes the main character while reading the book. The first author to write such a story was Edward Packard. These books are written in the second person, and everything that happens in the book happens to the reader themselves. Throughout the book, the reader must make choices about how they would handle a specific situation. After choosing an option, they must go to a designated page in the book. However, if they choose a different option, they must flip to a different page. Learners enjoy these types of adventure books because they can make choices, and there are different endings. They can reread the book and reach a different ending each time.

Reality animal stories: Stories classified as realistic animal stories are those where the characters are animals but share certain human characteristics. Animals can love, be sad, afraid, loyal and display various other emotions. These reality stories differ from traditional and fantasy stories about animals in that the animals in these stories are not anthropomorphised (i.e. portrayed with human-like qualities). They cannot speak or behave like humans; they only share certain traits with humans. They live as animals, act like animals, and cannot talk; they are simply animals.
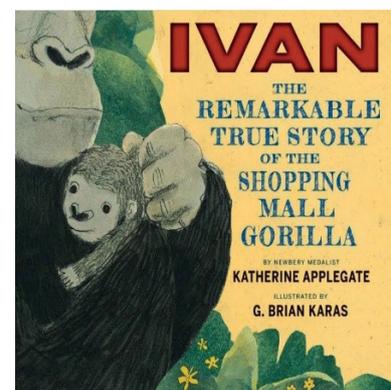
Realistic animal stories have been enjoyed by children for a long time. One of the early classics in this genre that has been reprinted several times is *Black Beauty* (from 1887) about a beautiful black horse that is cruelly mistreated by various people but eventually finds a kind owner. A more recent story that has won several book awards is *The one and only Ivan* (2012), about a silverback gorilla named Ivan who lived in a cage in a large shopping mall. Eventually he is released into a much larger and more natural enclosure in a zoo with a new gorilla family.

Although fictional, it was inspired by a true event. It was made into a film released on the Disney channel.

Sports stories: Reality stories about sports originated in boys' magazines in the nineteenth century and developed into full-fledged books in the twentieth century and also started including sports stories about girls.
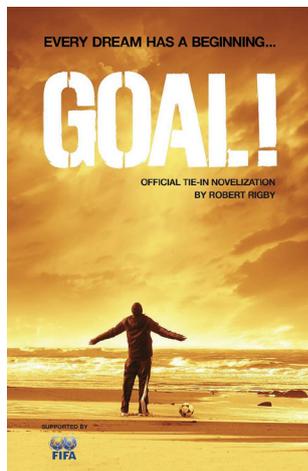
The success of sport reality stories is usually determined by how the tension and excitement surrounding the game can be built. Stories about sport encourage high moral character, discipline, perseverance and good sportsmanship. They are often coming-of-age stories, especially when the main characters learn something about themselves through participating in sport. The importance of teamwork and fair sportsmanship is conveyed to young readers. The personal problems that develop between players and are resolved by the end of the story help learners deal with personal problems in their own world. These stories are usually very popular because children, especially boys, enjoy sports.

Reality stories can help learners identify with others, broaden their horizons, and make personal discoveries. Although realistic stories can reflect a dark side to life, they make children aware of important issues in life and are usually portrayed in a sympathetic and sensitive way to help children deal with challenges and present role models who are resilient and inspirational. Besides being used during language and literacy instruction, realistic stories can also be used across the curriculum and connect with other subjects such as Life Skills, Technology, the natural and social sciences, etc.

Historical literature

The revival of forgotten characters and forgotten events is conveyed to young readers through historical literature. Young readers rediscover what happened centuries before and the effect it has on our present lives. Historical literature makes an earlier time known to readers. A story can be considered historical if it deals with something that occurred at least 20 or more years ago, and as far back as 2,000 or more years ago.

Historical fiction originated from the romantic movement in the 19th century when there was an attempt to escape from the modern world. It takes the reader to unusual places, colourful adventures, and heroes who lived long ago. Such works are not historical nonfiction books or factual biographies; it is not claimed that the story is a factual account of the event, but rather that a specific event inspired the story. Facts and imagination are combined in historical fiction.

Today's learners cannot live in a South Africa of the past. They can become part of a past South Africa years ago only through the content they read or documentaries they watch on television and imagine these events in their thoughts. History can come alive for learners through historical

literature. Through reading they obtain information about past people, values, principles, beliefs, the physical environment and hardships that people had to overcome. Through reading learners discover their own heritage and that of others by reading historical fiction.

Historical fiction also gives learners the opportunity to overcome their own fears. They see what other people have overcome in earlier times. Learners can discover universal truths and identify similar feelings and challenges that they also face. Historical literature can broaden children's horizons and give them a deeper understanding of the past. Learners can develop a love and respect for the past when they come into contact with it through literature. When learners are surrounded by books filled with historical adventures and pictures depicting the past, it can show them how people lived in the past. Historical fiction for young readers can show that it is not just about specific events that follow one another, but that it also involves people who lived through those events. Historical fiction can be brought to life in the classroom by telling the stories dramatically, so that learners can feel the emotions of the characters and share their experiences.

Historical fiction can also be used across the curriculum. For example, economics can be taught through stories about the discovery of gold and diamonds and how it influenced the development of South Africa. Geography can be taught by referring to stories in which voyages of discovery of other continents were undertaken. The same applies to stories in which, for example, wars, colonialism, racial conflict and xenophobia serve as themes and how they still have a significant impact on our lives today.

Drama

Drama can be defined as a direct presentation of human events using action, dialogue, facial expressions, and gestures. Theatre or the performance of a drama provides learners with the opportunity to explore literature, art, music, politics, economics, philosophy, science, and the creation of something new. The purpose of a drama is to have two or more performers who read a text and then convey their interpretation of the story to the audience through dramatic action. The actors performing the text guide the audience in visualising the text.

Dramatic texts differ fundamentally from poetry or narrative texts. There is usually dialogue (primary text) for each character in the text, and the background, such as the setting, is depicted through secondary text, the stage directions. A drama is written to be performed, so the space, characters, theme, events, and style are limited to a stage or a space where the drama is enacted. In a classroom, this can be the front of a classroom.

There are not many dramas written specifically for children. However, any story that is read to children can be turned into a drama and enacted by them afterwards.

Dramas can be used continuously during instruction. A drama is written to be performed, so learners can be encouraged to stage the drama themselves or even just read it aloud in class, taking on the voices and personalities of the characters. When learners read, perform, or watch

the performance of a drama, they learn how a drama works and how to dramatise it. The process of dramatisation allows learners to develop self-confidence and better understand the text.

Nonfiction: Information literature

Nonfiction literature focuses on topics such as history, space, animals, plants – actually, any topic one can think of. These are books from which learners learn more about scientific, social or human topics that interest them, in a way that is accessible to their age group. Pictures and illustrations play an important role in informational literature.

There are various books in this genre with different levels of difficulty and detail for different age groups.

Wordless nonfiction picture books for very young children can be about everyday objects, animals, vehicles, etc. Wordless picture books encourage children to name and observe the object shown and to associate actions or sounds with it.

Alphabet books have long been used to help young children recognise familiar shapes, letters, and sounds. Picture books that introduce the alphabet provide learners with the opportunity to learn letters in an easy and enjoyable way and contribute to expanding learners' vocabulary. Children should be able to easily identify the letters, which should not be hidden within the illustrations. When sharing alphabet books with older children, they should contain plenty of detail that can be used to engage the child in conversation and practise their letter and sound recognition skills. Alphabet books can also help children associate the shape of the letter with the sound it makes, thus assisting with phonics and spelling.

Just like alphabet books, **counting books** are designed to teach children about counting and help them recognise numbers. Most counting books have little to no text but feature numbers and objects that can be counted and identified. Therefore, the most important aspect of counting books is that they depict clear, identifiable objects. Counting books can also include stories, cultural information, and rhymes, along with counting concepts. Illustrations are becoming more prominent in counting books, and learners are increasingly drawn to them.

Conceptual books convey facts to children through illustrations and text. Conceptual books can cover almost any topic, including opposites, sounds, shapes, colours and any other conceptual aspects. Conceptual books can be used for instruction, as they are usually clearly presented and enjoyable. There are also conceptual books that deal with social concepts such as marriage, the birth of a new child in a family, different kinds of families, loss of a loved one, visiting a sick person in a hospital, avoiding cruelty to animals, etc. These books often use imaginary characters to convey factual information about sensitive topics such as various forms of addiction, domestic violence or abuse. Conceptual books are particularly valuable for learners' cognitive development because they can explain difficult or sensitive concepts to learners through thoughtful explanations and illustrations.

A **biography** is a description of a specific person's life told by someone else, while an autobiography is a description of a person's life told by the person himself/herself. Learners enjoy biographies and autobiographies and feel as if they are personally acquainted with the person the story is about. However, learners can also easily get bored if the biography or autobiography is not well-written. The Learning African History Freedom Fighters series 1, 2, and 3 are examples of biographies specifically written for learners.

Biographies are important for learners because they can give them an idea of who and what they want to become one day. It develops learners' idea of a profession they want to pursue and what they need to do to achieve it. The most important narrative element in biographies is characterisation. The author must be able to capture the essence, personality and dignity of the particular character that the biography is about. Although biographies are a popular adult genre, some of them have been adapted for younger readers.
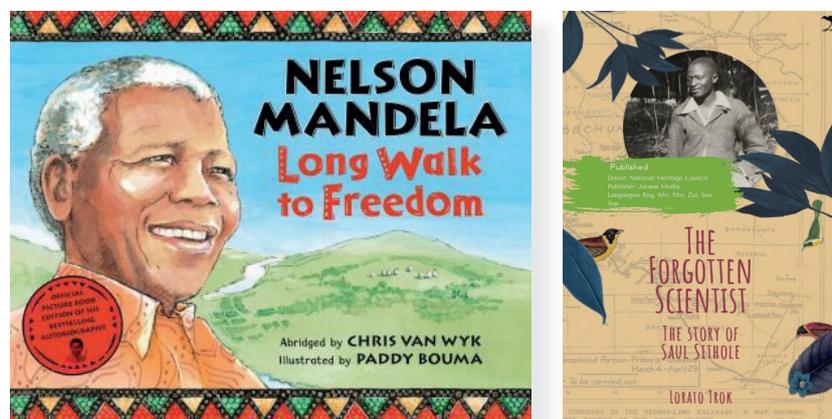
Biographies can be more exciting for learners than plain textbooks containing information. The dialogue, conflicts between people, perspectives, and the joys and sorrows that are a significant part of various biographies are of great value to learners and can be role models for them. Biographies empower learners as they feel that they too can achieve what the people in the books have achieved. Biographies and autobiographies can also be used as valuable reference sources when learners want to read more about a particular person or when they need to complete assignments about specific individuals. It is therefore important for teachers to introduce learners to the genre of biographies/autobiographies.

Biographies can be used in various ways in the classroom. For example, biographies can be read aloud to the class. Teachers can assign learners to conduct interviews with each other after reading the story where the learners take on the roles of various people – for example, an interview between a journalist and the author, or between a journalist and the person the biography is about. Learners must have sufficient knowledge about the person to ask the right questions and provide answers.

Learners can also be encouraged to create a timeline of a person's life after reading a biography.

This helps learners organise the events in the correct sequence and determine what is significant and what is not. Learners can also be asked to describe the values, beliefs and actions of the person. This will develop learners' language skills and also benefit their moral values as they may be inspired to emulate the person in the book after reading such a biography (Norton & Norton, 2011:485).

Poetry

Poetry is the language of images, emotions, and artistic self-expression. Poetry is musical and plays with words organised in patterns of sound and song. According to Johnson (2009:9), poetry is the first genre of children's literature that children encounter through the use of lullabies and nursery rhymes. As they grow older, children learn riddles and action verses like skipping or jump rope rhymes.

Poetry is of great value to learners as they can share their feelings, experiences, and visions through it. Poetry also provides learners with an opportunity to understand the world and human emotions and motivates them to play with words and create images through carefully chosen words. It develops learners' sensitivity to universal feelings and needs. Learners feel that their emotions matter because poets have drawn attention to them through their poems. In school, poetry can be used to convey knowledge to learners. The knowledge conveyed in poetry can include concepts in the world around them, such as size, numbers, colour, and time. It also enables learners to appreciate language. The fact that poetry plays with sound allows learners to realise the value and emotion that certain words can have when arranged in the right sequence.

Children can be taught to enjoy and appreciate poetry, especially if they have an enthusiastic teacher or caregiver who enjoys reading poems aloud to children and encourages them to read poems.

Reading poetry can expose learners to new vocabulary, and learners can discover sound or rhythm through a good poem. Teachers should also ensure that the imagery conveyed through the poem allows learners to use their imagination and understand the images.

Figurative language and sound patterns such as rhythm, rhyme and alliteration are typical characteristics of poetry. *Figurative language* refers to the words used to create an image in the reader's imagination, often using only a few well-chosen words to evoke an image. It can speak to more than one of the five senses. Visual elements are images that the reader can see, such as the rising moon. Tactile elements are elements that the reader can feel, like the feeling of hands over wet grass. Auditory elements are popular in poetry, such as onomatopoeia or sound imitation to evoke certain sounds from everyday life. The words used then imitate the sound that is heard, for example, the poem can refer to the click-clack of the train. The reader hears in their imagination the passing train. Smell can also be an important element in evoking images – for example, the smell of wet soil after a thunderstorm. Descriptions of movement or how something tastes can evoke further images in the reader. When sensory elements are combined,

the reader can smell, feel, taste, and hear something through the words used by the poet.

Figurative images are images created by the words used to describe or compare something. The poet uses figurative language to reveal new experiences, new visions, and new ways of looking at the world. Although there are various figurative elements, comparisons, metaphors, and personification are the most important in children's literature. Personification occurs when human attributes are given to objects, abstract ideas, or nature – for example, *the wind howled around the corners*. The wind cannot actually howl, but the sound is compared to a person or animal howling.

Poems, ideally, should be read aloud, and **sound** is as important as the meaning conveyed in the poems. Children's verses usually have predictable rhythms that make it easy for children to memorise the verses. When poems are read to children, the person reading it should be mindful of the rhythmic patterns used in the poem so that the necessary rhythm can be conveyed in the oral recitation.

In languages such as English and Afrikaans there are many words that rhyme so rhyme plays an important role in poetry in these languages and there are different kinds of rhyme patterns that can be used. However, rhyme does not occur naturally in agglutinating languages, so poets use other sound devices such as alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds), assonance (playing with vowel sounds) and onomatopoeia or rhythm. The function of these different poetic devices is primarily to enhance sound patterns in the verses to create a particular atmosphere and mood.

Humour can also be an important component of children's poetry. Humorous poetry should be a part of every child's experience of children's and youth literature. It gives children the freedom to laugh and play with words, which positively influences both their imagination and reading abilities.

Children and learners should be encouraged to write poetry themselves and experiment with different types of poetry. To understand poetry and eventually be able to write it, children and learners need to be exposed to different types of poetry.

Conclusion

This unit focused on the various fiction and nonfiction genres that occur in children literature. Although there are many genres in children's literature, picture storybooks for children from ages 3-10 are probably the most popular. All children's books connect learners with life. Across all the genres, books can serve both mirror and window functions that help learners understand the world around and beyond them. Knowing about these different genres deepens teachers' content knowledge about books and literature and helps them become better reading teachers.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) The term _____ refers to a category of oral discourse or written text that can be defined according to the aims, features, patterns or structures shared by the discourses or texts representing the genre. (1)

   b) A _____ is a story or book written by an author about another person's life. (1)

   c) The larger genre of _____ basically tells a story that is not 'real' or 'true', although it can reflect life in an authentic and realistic way. (1)

   d) Stories set in an imaginary world that is different from the known world belongs to the genre of _____ literature. (1)

   e) Traditional literature includes traditional stories, fables, myths, and legends as well as songs or _____ intended for children. (1)

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) Traditional stories (izinganekwane) were generally narrated by the grandmother in the evening with the children seated around her at the fire.

   b) The phrase *Sizoyipheka ngogozwana* uttered by the children at the beginning of a storytelling event was to indicate that they had completed all the work they were supposed to have done that day and were thus ready for a story.

   c) Apart from amusement, riddles also serve to sharpen the children's minds and develop them cognitively.

   d) Although reality stories depict real life challenges, they belong to the genre of fiction.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the **correct** one. (1)

   a) Children's poetry, which includes lullabies, folk songs and folk poetry (*imilolozelo*), is one of the oldest forms of children's oral literature in Sesotho/isiZulu.

   b) Traditional tales are unique to a particular language or culture and display few commonalities with tales in other cultures.

   c) Characters in traditional tales are usually portrayed in great depth and often undergo major life changes.

   d) Wordless picture books are intended for Grade 1 and 2 learners who cannot yet read fluently.

4. Consider the following scenario and then select only **the option** which is likely to be **an inaccurate reflection** of the situation. (1)

Four Foundation Phase teachers Kedibone, Naledi, Karabo and Nthabiseng are meeting at a coffee shop at the end of the year to discuss how they can utilise aspects of the LTSM budget to increase the collection of books in their Book Corners for the following year. They are keen to work as a team to improve the reading abilities of the learners in their school.

Teacher Kedibone, the Grade R teacher, says she's not sure what to order for her learners as they are from poor homes and can't read yet. Teacher Naledi suggests that she includes some wordless storybooks but Teacher Kedibone reminds her colleague that she has Grade R learners, not preschool learners, and she wants books that will help Grade Rs to read.

Teacher Naledi, the Grade 1 teacher, loves poetry and jaw breakers and has collected Sesotho/isiZulu jaw breakers and intends to let the learners read and recite them when the specific sounds they contain are taught in the phonics programme.

The Grade 2 teacher, Teacher Karabo, wants to explore the possibility of acquiring interactive narrative texts: "My kids are not really interested in books. It will be a challenge to find such Sesotho/isiZulu books. Even if I have to paste the Sesotho/isiZulu text over the English text, these books will help my learners to really engage with the text."

Teacher Nthabiseng is a Grade 3 teacher and loves books. She has already built up a large collection of books in her Reading Corner in her classroom and wants to extend

it, especially books in the HL. She is keen to obtain more information texts that will meet the varied interests of her learners, especially for the boys.

a) From the above scenario it seems that Teacher Kedibone understands the role that wordless texts play in literacy development.

b) From the above scenario it seems that Teacher Naledi's idea of using poetry and jawbreakers is an innovative way to integrate children's literature with phonics.

c) From the above scenario it seems that while Teacher Karabo's idea of exposing learners to interactive texts and stimulating engagement is laudable, interactive texts are appropriate for preschool children.

d) From the above scenario it seems that Teacher Nthabiseng will find the local Ulwazi Lwethu series of books on the Zenex Foundation Website useful to find what she is looking for.

Unit 4: Narrative elements and illustrations in children's books

Introduction

Because stories are an integral part of children's literature, in this unit we focus on the narrative (story) genre and examine the various narrative elements in children's literature. And because illustrations are an integral part of children's literature, we also look at this aspect of children's books more closely. Finally, we discuss how teachers can teach their learners about narrative features and engage learners in discussions about narrative elements and illustrations, focusing on how these components work together to convey the underlying meaning and themes in the story, with the aim of enhancing their understanding of the story and appreciating the artistic value of the illustrations.

Narratives

The terms 'narrative' and 'narratology' derive from the Latin word *narrare*, which means 'to tell (a story)'. A narrative text can include both fictional and non-fictional texts, although it is of greater importance in fictional texts. Narratology can be described as the theory and study of narrative texts, the form, and the function of stories (Du Plooy 1992; Meister 2009).

Narrative texts include written texts, oral stories, visual texts of a narrative nature, or any text that tells a story. This includes fictional and non-fictional written texts that are narrative in nature. It can include newspaper articles, news reports, other reports, magazine articles, historical writings, television dramas, films, documentaries, and educational television programmes and films that are narrative in nature. Even comics, paintings, dance, and music can be examined from a narratological perspective.

A story cannot be told without something happening (Hühn 2009:80–83). A story takes place in a certain time and space, involves characters, consists of specific events and the consequences of those events, and conveys some kind of theme or overall 'message' about life and the world in which we live. The basic elements of narratives, also referred to as story structure, include setting (space, place and time), characters, the main narrative events (usually some kind of problem and its resolution), and the theme or 'big idea', as depicted in the story glove in Figure 1. These elements are all interrelated. For example, the events can influence the characters and the way in which a story unfolds, but characters can also influence events from the choices or decisions they make.

Figure 1: Story glove showing story elements

Setting (space, place and time)

A story typically happens somewhere and at some point in time. Characters occupy space – they must always be somewhere in a story at some time. Space can be described as where and when something happens. No character can exist, even within the boundaries of a page, without being somewhere, at some time (Brink, 1989:107). Both the 'somewhere' (place/space) and the 'some time' can be vague and indefinite, or precise.

According to Du Plooy (1992:28), the following aspects help to unlock the meaning of space in the story:

- **Spatial indicators** identify the place or where the story takes place (a country, town, village, farm, etc), as well as other spatial indicators such as high and low (mountains or valleys), open and closed (open countryside or a forest), and inside (a building, room, cave) and outside. Spatial indicators can be direct or indirect, vague or specific. The reader should pay attention to the spatial placement and description in the story. When a story is set on a farm, it immediately evokes the openness of a farm for the reader, but also possible agricultural activities, dangers and problems. Each reader will evoke a different image of a farm, based on their experiences.

- **Sensory perception**. Place can be perceived, heard, smelled, and felt. The space can be described from a visual perspective involving colour, shape, and size. Visual description can be important. For example, a small house or a thick forest can evoke different images, such as poverty or a feeling of being safe and cosy, feelings of restriction, limited visibility or oppression. Atmosphere in a story is conveyed to the reader not only through events or the character's feelings but also through depiction of the space in which the characters find themselves. Auditory experiences may also be evoked in the story through sounds. Sounds may be loud or soft, far or near, normal or strange, foreshadowing trouble in the story. The tactile experience of space can also play a role – for example, whether it is warm or cold, whether things are hard or soft.

- **Time.** Anything that happens in a story takes place at a certain time. It can be a vague and indefinite time in the past (*long ago*), a specific historical time (e.g., a story set in World War II (1939–1945), an indefinite present (*Sipho lives near the sea*), or even a future time (two hundred years in the future). This time frame immediately situates the readers in the relevant space and time, helping them to better interpret the story.

Many traditional stories are set in a vague and indefinite past time (*many years ago, once upon a time*). In children's stories, the sequence usually unfolds in chronological order; events are rarely told non-chronologically, as young children may struggle to understand the story if events in the storyline are shifted around. The beginning of the story usually includes the time and place and introduces the characters, to set the scene. The middle of the story involves some or other problem and the events that follow are attempts to solve the problem. The end of the story involves the resolution to the problem.

Characters

Things happen to someone or something in a narrative text; without that, there can't really be a story. Characters in a story can be people or animals that have human qualities. In longer, more complex stories, it is often the characters that motivate readers to finish reading a book because they can identify with the characters and want to know what happens to them in the end.

In some stories the characters and their traits are described explicitly by an author (*Janus was a strong, brave warrior*), whereas in other stories readers need to pay attention to indirect cues in the text from which inferences can be made about a character, often in relation to how they solve a problem or interact with and treat other characters in the story.

- Direct/explicit character portrayal: Direct portrayal is certainly easier for the reader because the writer directly tells the reader how the character looks, how they will act, who and what the character is, and why they do what they do in certain situations in the story. Information about the character can be obtained through explicit description of their actions, behaviour and personality (*Camilla laughed happily*).

- Indirect/implicit portrayal: Here the reader must read more carefully to grasp the indirect/implicit portrayal of a character because the information is not directly given to the reader. The reader makes inferences from situations and actions and from the visuals to form a picture of the characters, their feelings and motives (*The tears rolled down Camilla's checks. She hadn't laughed so much for a long time.*)

In picture books, illustrations are often used to support learners' concepts and understanding of the characters.

Problem and resolution

Stories are usually about some problem that the main character faces, and the various events in the story show how the character resolves the problem. In some stories it is easy to identify the problem and its resolution. For example, in *Isaqathe esikhulukazi* (Molteno Institute 2012), an old man tries to pull up a very large carrot that he has grown in his vegetable garden but it doesn't come out (problem), so various characters are called to help him (first his wife, then his grandson, a pig, a cat and a mouse) and together they finally pull out the very large carrot (resolution). The humour lies in the fact that the carrot is finally pulled out of the ground when the small little mouse joins the effort!

In other stories, the problem can be a bit more complex. For example, in the very popular and humorous picture story *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne (2010)*,* Handa decides to visit her friend Akeyo in a neighbouring village, so she arranges seven different fruits in a basket as a surprise gift for Akeyo. On the way Handa wonders which fruit her friend will like the best, but various animals take the fruit out of the basket to eat, without Handa being aware, and soon the basket is empty (problem). The problem is resolved when a goat bumps into a tangerine tree and all the tangerines fall into Handa's empty basket just before she gets to her friend's village. Her friend is delighted with the basket of tangerines but now it is Handa also who gets a surprise!
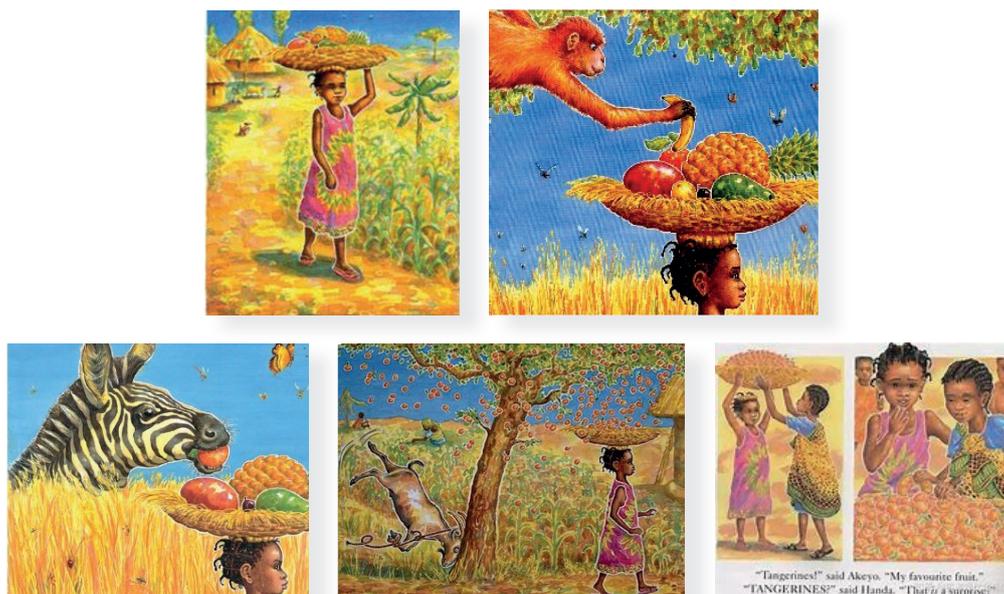
(There are numerous sites on the Internet that provide excellent suggestions for questions and activities that can be used with this book. There are also several videos on YouTube showing various teachers reading this story to their class. Kids Book Read Aloud *HANDA'S SURPRISE* I By Eileen Browne I StoryTime with Miss Randall. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhWMcGpBTMA*).

The frequency or repetition of events can be used to emphasise their importance and also convey humour in the story. The same event is often repeated (the genre of cumulative stories), involving different characters, as in *Isaqathe esikhulukazi*, where different people or animals all try to pull out the carrot, and where the author wants to emphasise something through repetition — the size of the carrot and the effort and strength required to pull it out of the ground. Words and linguistic structures are also repeated, which help children remember the events in the story:

> *The grandson pulled the old woman*
> *The old woman pulled the old man, and the old man pulled the carrot.*
> *They pulled and pulled again, but they could not pull it up.*
> *The grandson called the big pig ...*

The big idea

In every book, there are ideas that go beyond the events in the book, themes that are subtly conveyed to the reader. The fifth element in the narrative structure is the theme or 'big idea' that can be derived from the story. The deeper meaning is usually not spelled out for the reader; it is a more abstract idea that we infer from the events of the story. This is a part that teachers unfortunately sometimes omit, but it is a very important aspect of a story. In many cases, learners may not even be aware that there is a deeper meaning to a story and they need teachers to show them and guide them in how to read stories at a deeper level, so it must be included in any discussion that accompanies a story reading.

Talking about the big idea helps learners to step back from the details and think about what 'message' the author wanted to share with readers, what the story reflects about life. Asking about the big idea of a story is an open-ended, philosophical question that seldom has only one 'right' answer. Perceiving the big idea from a story is an act of meaning making and interpretation. In some stories it is easy to infer the big idea while other stories may yield different answers to the question. Sometimes there may be more than one idea. For example, in *Isaqathe esikhulukazi* the big idea in this story is that problems can be solved when people work together. Another related big idea is that diversity can be a strength – in the story people and animals work together to solve the carrot problem, suggesting that groups that are different can work together to solve problems. However, when one considers that the carrot is finally pulled out of the ground when the small little mouse is called to help, one could also argue that another big idea is that one does not have to be big and strong to solve a problem – even the small little mouse contributed to solving the problem! Readers may often agree about what the big idea is, but teachers must be flexible when considering their answers and allow for different views, provided that learners can justify their views with reference to events in the story.

As can be seen, there are interesting and quite deeply philosophical questions underlying this simple little story. If teachers only ask questions about who did what and in what order (*What vegetable did the old man plant? Who did he first call to him pull up the carrot? Which animals helped pull up the carrot*?), they miss opportunities to help learners engage with stories at a deeper level and think about how stories connect to life.

Illustrations

Although illustrations are not necessarily used in all children's literature (especially books for older readers), illustrations are so integral to children's books that one without illustrations does not feel like a children's book. In picture books especially, illustrations are part of the story, and the two cannot be separated. Often illustrations tell as much of the story as the text itself. In the following section we examine illustrations more closely, looking at visual elements, medium and style, and the use of illustrations. It is important for teachers to have sufficient knowledge in this regard to help them become better reading teachers and to help their learners develop visual literacy skills.

Visual elements in books

Information and messages are conveyed through illustrations. There is always a close relationship between an author and an illustrator. Illustrations create a visual world that expands, develops, strengthens, and clarifies the author's story told in words. Illustrations can contribute to the emotions, drama and tensions in a story as well as bring out the humorous elements. Visual literacy can be defined as the ability to construct meaning from visual elements such as line, colour, shape, texture, space, composition and perspective. Children do not automatically know how to interpret visual elements in books, especially if they were not exposed to books or did not have adults reading storybooks to them from a young age.

The term 'visual elements' refers to line, colour, shape, mass, light, space, texture, perspective, composition, and movement used in the creation of an illustration. They all have a bearing on the purpose and impact of illustrations and the way in which children develop visual literacy. The styles that different illustrators use can also be clearly recognisable.

Medium: The medium in illustration refers to the materials and technical aspects used by the illustrator to create their illustration. Media used in children's books include the following:

- **Drawing techniques:** Drawings can be done with pencils, pen and ink, coloured pencils, charcoal, and crayons.

- **Painting techniques:** Painting can be done with watercolours, oil paint, acrylic, pastels and other mediums.

- **Graphic techniques:** Graphic techniques include woodblocks, woodcuts, linocuts, and lithography. Graphic techniques are one of the oldest ways illustrations have been presented. Today modern, computer-generated graphics are used.

Pen and ink drawings are sometimes used in children's books. In the humorous and much-loved English picture book *We're going on a bear hunt* by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, colour illustrations alternate with pen and ink drawings on subsequent pages. The story is about a family that goes on a pretend bear hunt but then they encounter a bear in a cave and run back home to safety. We refer to the illustrations in this book because of their excellence. This high-quality picture book blends reality and fantasy and has won several literary awards, including various awards for the creative and humorous illustrations (such as the Kate Greenaway Medal) which bring the story to life visually.

Lines: Lines give an illustration its appearance. Lines can be light or dark, thick or thin, wavy or uneven, straight or curved. Line is the most basic element of any illustration. When lines are used in picture books, they can serve different purposes. Lines can define objects but can also depict movement, such as drawing short dashes to represent the movement of a hare. Lines can also be used to indicate distance or convey a certain feeling in the illustration.

When an illustrator uses wavy lines, it can convey a sense of warmth and security to the reader, while diagonal or zigzag lines depict action, excitement, or fast movement. Horizontal lines can represent the horizon, or calmness, sleep, and stability, while vertical lines indicate height or distance, but they can also indicate other qualities. For example, vertical lines may resemble trees standing in a windless landscape or people standing in a line, which can give the reader an idea of no movement or inaction. See how the vertical lines of the trees in the forest in *We're going on a bear hunt* create a feeling of difficulty and obstacles for the family, while the vertical and horizontal lines of the window above the door create a feeling of safety from the bear, and the wavy lines of the duvet on the parents' bed create a feeling of warmth and comfort at the end of the story.

Figure 4: Use of vertical, horizontal and wavy lines in illustrations

Colour: Colour plays an important role in creating illustrations in children's books. Colour and shades of colour are the most common way that artists convey emotions and moods. Contrasts in colour and shades can also be used to complement and convey tension in the story.

Certain emotions are associated with different colours. For example, red and yellow are regarded as 'warm' colours that can evoke warmth, happiness, or excitement in a reader. However, red can also indicate danger, and yellow sickness or fear. Blue and green are classified as 'cool' colours, representing calmness, serenity, or renewal. However, blue can also refer to depression and green to jealousy or nausea. Colours can evoke different feelings and meanings across cutures, as shown in Table 2 below.

The distinction of different colours and the meanings associated with them may differ from culture to culture and teachers should be aware of this. The African languages do not distinguish between green and blue as far as distinct colour terms are concerned. On the other hand, the

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colour terminology in the African languages makes far more distinctions between different shades of brown as distinct colours. The significance of the colours and combinations of colours in beadwork has been well documented and make for interesting reading.

Some of the main cultural difference with regard to colour are as depicted in table 2 below.

Table 2: Meanings associated with colour in different cultures

Colour	Cultural Meaning
White	In African culture white is associated with purity, victory, spirituality and hope for a new beginning. In Western cultures, white signifies purity and virtue, which is why wedding dresses tend to be white. However, in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean cultures, white refers to death and sadness.
Red	In African culture red signifies life force, vitality, strength, power, courage and ancestral blood. Red signifies danger in Western and Japanese cultures. In Chinese culture, it represents luck and festivity. In Vietnam, wedding dresses are often red.
Yellow	In African culture yellow is associated with royalty, spirituality, fertility and hope. In Western cultures, yellow can refer to cowardice. However, in China, it was reserved for the emperor and considered the colour of royalty.
Green	In African culture green is associated with nature, the land and renewal. In Western cultures, green is associated with youth and life. It can also signify jealousy.
Blue	In African culture blue is associated with spirituality, healing and protection. In Western culture blue is associated with coolness and water.
Purple	In African culture purple is associated with spirituality, royalty, wisdom and creativity. In Western cultures, purple is often associated with royalty.
Black	Black is associated with maturity, wisdom and funeral rites in African culture. In Western culture black is associated with power, death, elegance and mourning. In Egypt black signified fertility and rebirth due to the rich black silt left by the Nile River floods.

In picture storybooks, colour can complement the emotions and mood conveyed in the story.

Shape: When lines or different colours come into contact with each other, it leads to the formation of shapes. Organic forms, irregular shapes, and round shapes occur naturally in illustrations. Shapes can also carry meaning and develop learners' imagination, such as when looking at clouds and seeing objects or characters in them. The larger the object in the illustration, the greater role it plays in the story. However, it is important to encourage learners not only to notice the larger shapes but also the smaller details, as they may contain important information for exploring a deeper meaning. Notice for example how rounded shapes create different moods in *We're going on a bear hunt*. On the left the round shape of the hill creates feelings of being carefree and having fun, while the round shape of the cave on the right creates a feeling of fear, uncertainty and being closed in.
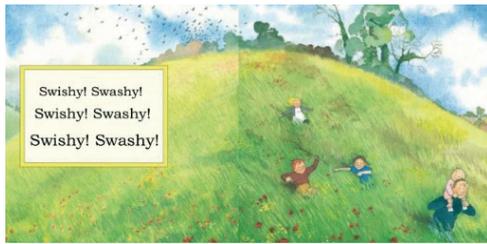
Texture: Texture refers to the touch or feeling of something (hard, soft, smooth, rough). Texture can also be achieved visually, by evoking feelings in a reader when looking at a picture. Texture adds reality to a picture and can be used to expand the reader's visual experience and enrich their imagination. For example, the different textures of the blanket, carpet and dog's fur are clearly evoked in *The herd boy* by Niki Daly, a well-known South African illustrator of children's books.

Space: The space used or not used on a page is what truly draws attention to objects on the paper. When there are minimal open spaces on the paper, it can give the reader a feeling of claustrophobia or discomfort or contribute to a sense of confusion and chaos. If there are many open spaces, it gives the reader a sense of calmness but can also indicate emptiness, loneliness, and isolation. Notice how space is used in *We're going on a bear hunt* in the frame on the left; the family encounters a bear in the narrow, dark cave and it starts to chase them, creating a feeling of fear and urgency. Compare this to the relatively empty and open space at the end of the story *w*ith only the sea, a few rocks and the moon sharing the space with the bear, depicting a sense of sadness and loneliness.
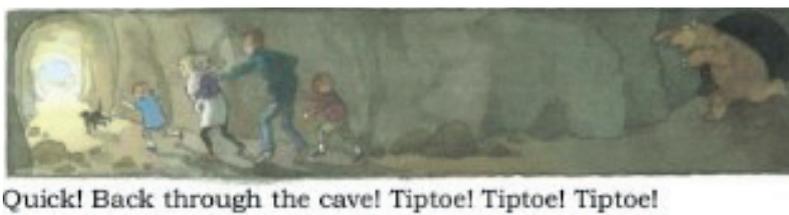
Quick! Back through the cave! Tiptoe! Tiptoe! Tiptoe!
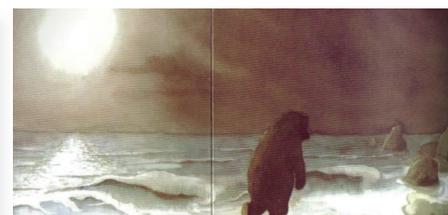
Perspective: Perspective refers to the point from which an object is seen. It is the angle from which the illustration is viewed, which can be a close-up or a more distant view. Through the perspective given, the illustrator can make the reader think about things in a specific way. For example, throughout the story of *We're going on a bear hunt,* the family and their dog are the focus of the illustrations. At the end of the story, the perspective shifts to the bear and different visual elements are used to evoke a feeling of sadness – maybe the bear did not chase the family to hurt them, but because he was feeling lonely and also wanted to be part of a happy family and share a feeling of togetherness?

Composition: The composition of the illustration refers to the overall organisation of the visual elements in the illustration. The illustrator decides on the proportion, balance, and harmony between the different elements. The composition of the illustration is important in conveying the quality of the narrative and the emotions that arise in the story. Illustrators can use their composition to focus attention on certain characters or thoughts and provide background information to the reader. Notice the balance between open skies and action 'on the ground' as well as the excitement and exuberance conveyed in *Fly Eagle, fly!* also illustrated by Niki Daly.

Implications for teaching narrative and visual elements in stories

An important question that arises from the discussion is how these narrative and visual elements in illustrations can be integrated into the teacher's instruction in the classroom. Children's stories can be used for many things — to enhance learners' language, literacy and visual skills, to expose them to new concepts, ideas and experiences, to provide moral guidance, to develop their imagination and help them identify and understand different human motives and emotions. But not all children naturally learn these things from stories, especially not children who seldom get exposed to books. To learn from and through stories, learners must be engaged with the story being read, and this is where the teacher plays a vital role. Through their words and actions and discussions with learners about stories, teachers model, show and guide learners in how to engage with stories and how to read them at a deeper level.

First of all, teaching children to read books is not only about developing basic decoding and comprehension skills, important as these foundational skills are. In order to develop competent readers who like to read, teachers need to use stories effectively in the classroom, and for that they need content knowledge about children's literature. In other words, they need to know about children's books and be familiar with many different children's books. Having knowledge of how children's literature originated, the different genres, their different purposes, their linguistic, textual and visual features, and how they reflect the knowledge, attitudes and values of their time, deeply enriches teachers' professional knowledge and makes them better reading teachers. The more language and literacy teachers know about children's literature in general and the more children's books they know about and read in Sesotho/isiZulu or any other South African language, the more knowledgeable, confident and effective they will be as reading teachers.

Secondly, teachers should know how to read stories and books in an interesting and engaging way that will provide enjoyment to their learners, impart knowledge and support learning. Books and stories should be shared with learners in the classroom on a daily basis, which is why it is

important for teachers to be familiar with as many children's books as possible. Teachers should be mindful of the atmosphere they create with their book reading. The way the teacher reads a story will greatly influence the atmosphere and have an impact on whether the learners listen to the story or not, how they engage with it and what they learn from it.

Although it is important for learners to initially read decodable texts and later graded texts suitable for their reading and grade level in order to practise their decoding skills, it is also vitally important for them to be exposed to picture storybooks or information books on a daily basis. Bear the following points in mind when reading a book aloud to learners:

- Find a place in the classroom where all learners can see and hear.
- Stand in front of the learners or have them sit on the mat and where you can sit among them.
- Choose an appropriate introduction. Tell the learners something interesting about the author, discuss the cover, talk about an event related to the story, and ask the learners questions about what they see and what they think the story will be about. Draw their attention to visual elements on the cover – and on subsequent pages.
- Don't just look at a few learners – maintain eye contact with all the learners to ensure their engagement.
- Use appropriate gestures, voices and volume for effect when reading the story to make it come alive.
- After the book is finished, ask learners questions about all the story elements if it's a narrative text; don't forget to discuss the 'big idea' with them, as that is what really connects books to life.

As was shown in Unit 2, reading storybooks has many values beyond enjoyment, including:

- providing positive role models for learners;
- creating a natural and positive form of communication between teachers and learners when they discuss stories;
- enhancing learners' language skills, listening skills, and their ability to express opinions in a group, based on what they have heard/read;
- stimulating learners' imagination; and
- through the mirror/window function of books, familiarising learners with their own cultural life experiences but also exposing them to other worlds, cultures and time frames.

Teachers can use a **story glove** with younger learners (Grade R and 1) to teach them about the different elements of a story. (You can make a few of these for your class!) It is a tactile and interactive device to support learning as young children love to put their hands inside the glove and wiggle their fingers to identify the different parts of the story. After reading a story

and discussing it with the children, the teacher can ask them to draw an aspect of the story, for example its setting, one of the characters or one of the main events that involved the problem or its resolution.

From Grade 2 onwards children can be taught to draw a **story web** of the narrative elements (Figure 5) and fill in the relevant details. This helps them to remember important details in the

Figure 5: Story web showing different story elements

story and to keep track of the main events starting from the problem to its resolution. It also helps them to think about the big idea related to the story. A story web is a useful tool to help learners to summarise a story as it captures all the important elements in a story. The use of story gloves or story webs should become an integral part of learners' literary experiences from an early age, as this enables them to engage with and read stories at a deeper and more sophisticated level even when they are in Foundation Phase.

Once learners have learned that there are different elements in a story, various group activities can be planned after a teacher has read and discussed a story with the class. Different groups can report on the different story elements and describe how they are depicted in the story, whether directly or indirectly.

- For example, one group can discuss how explicitly the setting is described in the text and explain how the illustrations provide additional information about the time and geographical space in the setting.

- A group of learners can also be encouraged to discuss the characters, examine the way in which the characters are portrayed and discuss it in their groups and share their ideas with other groups. This can provide insight into their own feelings and their understanding of the story. They can also see how the illustrations support characterisation, and what emotions are portrayed in the illustrations.

- Another group of learners can identify the problem in the story and its resolution and show how the sequence of events in the story relate to the problem and its resolution. They can also show how the characters are involved in the problem and its resolution.

- Since the theme or big idea of a story is not usually explicitly stated in a book, learners in one group can share their ideas of what they think is the big idea(s) in a story. They cannot just pluck this from the air, so to speak – they must justify their views with reference to the story itself.

- One group of learners can discuss the way in which illustrations have been used in a picture story to support the story and to create a particular atmosphere or mood in the story, how lines, shapes and colour have been used, and how perspective is used to shift the reader's attention from one thing to another.

When learners are encouraged to retell the stories and discuss their elements in this way, it helps develop their language skills, expand their vocabulary, improve self-image and their ability to speak in groups and to listen to other people's views in a group. Knowing about the different story elements also helps learners develop their narrative memory and their ability to summarise stories; knowing about the elements helps them to see which parts of the story are important and which are secondary details. By developing a range of skills, their self-confidence grows, which in turn helps to nurture a love for reading. Children are unlikely to develop a love of reading if the teacher does not help them to develop the requisite skills, and create opportunities to practise using these skills to engage with stories, explore them at a deeper level, help them appreciate the humour in stories, see the artistic value of the illustrations and develop their imagination.

In the classroom, role-playing can be used during the reading of realistic stories. Through role-playing, learners can be encouraged to respond to a problem and explore ways to solve it as if it were happening to them. This helps learners engage more deeply with topics and come to better understand the world around them and think about different ways to deal with certain situations.

If dramatic play takes place in the classroom, learners can be asked to describe the characters: how they look, how they behave, and where they are. In this way, the teacher and learners use their knowledge of narrative elements and their own background knowledge about people to examine the characters. Learners should practise their dialogues and perform them aloud. This helps solidify the story in their memory and helps their language development.

Guidelines for evaluating children's books for classroom use

It's important for books to be suitable for the particular groups of children for whom they are

intended. In order to effectively evaluate books for classroom use, teachers need to draw on three kinds of knowledge: knowledge of reading (e.g. the different components that make up skilled reading, how they develop and what instructional methods best support their development); knowledge of children's literature (e.g. the different genres of children's books, the functions they serve and the role of illustrations in children's literature, familiarity with a range of children's books in the HL and AL); and linguistic knowledge of the language in which they teach reading (e.g. vocabulary, spelling, grammatical norms related to the standard version of the language in which reading is taught).

When evaluating a children's book for classroom use, it is important to distinguish between books that will be read to the learners (e.g. in Read Alouds) or with the learners (e.g. in Shared Reading) by the teacher, as opposed to books that the learners will themselves be expected to read on their own, both in the early stages when practising decoding and fluency skills is important, and later when they can read and understand longer and more complex texts on their own.

Texts that learners read on their own in the early stages of reading: Learners can become frustrated and discouraged if they are given books to read that are too advanced for their current reading levels. In the early stages, the text may contain letter sounds that they have not yet been taught, making it difficult for them to recognise or decode unfamiliar words, or the sentences may be too long, or contain too many difficult words or grammatical constructions for them to read on their own. In the early stages of reading, decodable texts and graded readers that align with the learners' current reading levels are suitable for learners when they read on their own to practise their reading skills.

Books that teachers read to learners: When teachers read stories read to learners, it is important to provide learners with as many opportunities as possible to listen to good literature. Here, the selection of books plays an important role, and teachers can select books for Read Alouds that are beyond the learners' own reading levels in terms of complexity and/or text length. Learners' interests and background knowledge can vary greatly, so teachers must be familiar with a wide variety of books so as to choose ones that are suitable for the different groups of learners in their class, ensuring that the learner will enjoy the book during Read Alouds or Shared Reading. They may also enjoy paging through the book in the Book Corner afterwards and pretend to read by 'telling the story' or even try to read it on their own. The evaluation factors that teacher should consider when selecting books for Read Alouds should also be applied when reading and discussing the books with learners.

Books that developing and independent readers can read on their own: Once learners have developed basic decoding and fluency skills, their reading comprehension skills improve, and they can read and understand books on their own. They may now be able to read books at their grade level quite easily — and even enjoy books beyond their grade level. It now becomes imperative to expose them to children's literature and to encourage and motivate them to become voluntary readers. Exposing learners to a variety of genres of well written, entertaining

and transformative children's books that serve both mirror and window functions encourages learners to enjoy reading, to learn new things through reading, and to become readers and to see themselves as competent readers. Exposure to children's literature helps them develop reading habits where reading becomes an automatic tool for entertainment, enjoyment and for acquiring new knowledge about the world and all its wonders. Having a well-stocked Book Corner or classroom library is important for encouraging a culture of reading in your class. It is also important to encourage learners to go to the school library (if there is one at your school) and to join a municipal library in the neighbourhood.

Teachers must be able to identify with learners when they are evaluating a book and judge how learners may react to a particular book and whether they will enjoy the book. As a teacher you should be familiar with the history of the genre and be able to make comparisons between authors, books, and illustrations. The teacher evaluating the book must maintain a balance between considering the story events and critically evaluating the story as a whole, exploring deeper meanings. When evaluating a book, the teacher should take into account what the group or individual learner knows about the setting, characters, events and theme in the book, as all these can influence interpretation.

There is no one right way to evaluate books. It is important to bear in mind that evaluating a book is not an exact, objective process because each person's perspective and experience with books play a role in the interpretation of books. It is therefore important for the teacher to be aware of their own perspectives and experiences. However, by building up knowledge of children's books and the reading process, by becoming familiar with existing books and evaluation guidelines, teachers can develop the ability to evaluate children's books within a broader framework. Following and expanding on Silvey's guidelines (2004:8), the following factors should be taken into account when evaluating a book for children:

Narrative elements: Firstly, one should examine how effectively the development of the various narrative elements is achieved. Is it a good story, are the characters well depicted, do the narrative events unfold clearly, is there a problem and a clear resolution? Is there a discernible 'big idea' or is the story just a superficial series of events?

Illustrations: Secondly, questions should be asked about the visual art in the book, such as the illustrations, and how effective the illustrations and the illustrator's technique are. The best picture books are those in which there is a balance between illustrations and words in the book, where word art and visual art together tell a story. The evaluation of illustrations should be based on factors such as whether the illustrations support the story and focus on important points, contribute to the emotions, and add humour, delight or dramatic tension to the story. How do the illustrations help tell the story and provide deeper meanings (e.g. depicting how the characters feel, their emotions and responses to events)? As discussed in the earlier section on illustrations, visual literacy can be defined as the ability to construct meaning from visual elements such as line, colour, shape, texture, space, composition, and perspective. Learners should be encouraged to be visually literate and develop the ability to understand

messages conveyed through illustrations and other visual elements. Do the illustrations support the story? Do the illustrations help readers/listeners engage with the story? How do details in the illustrations add enjoyment of and depth to the story? In what way do the illustrations add humour to the story?

Language and logic: Thirdly, pragmatic questions should be asked about language use and grammar and how accurate and logical the material in the book is. Not all children's books are well written; sometimes the story line is thin, the characters are not convincing, or the point of the story is not clear. How plausible is the plot, how accurately is information conveyed in the story? In the case of information books, accurate information about a topic is particularly important. Sometimes the text may contain grammatical or spelling mistakes or not reflect the standardised grammatical forms of a language in the written mode.

Although the translation of children's books is a worldwide phenomenon, poorly translated books (especially if they are literal translations) can also obfuscate meaning and mar the enjoyment of a story. For example, a *toadstool* in English is a kind of colourful mushroom and often occurs in English fables or fairy tales, often with a frog or fairy sitting under or on top of a toadstool. When translated into an African language in one story it was unfortunately rendered literally as 'frog excrement', causing incoherence in the midst of the story line.

The big ideas: Fourthly, philosophical questions should be asked regarding the 'big idea' expressed in the book and how it could enrich the readers' lives. In every book, there are ideas that go beyond the mere events in the book, themes that are subtly conveyed to the reader. The deeper meaning is usually not spelled out for the reader. In many cases, learners may not even aware that there is a deeper meaning or discover it naturally during the listening/reading process. Through the use of appropriate questions, teachers can guide learners to thinking about the themes or big ideas that are conveyed in children's literature.

Enjoyment: Finally, personal questions should be asked, such as whether learners will enjoy a particular book. Even if learners are not interested in a particular topic or genre of children's literature, a well-written book can pique their interest or capture their imagination in ways that lead to emotional and intellectual enrichment and pleasure. The way a teacher or caregiver reads a story, shares the book with children and asks thoughtful questions can also affect the children's response to a story or a topic.

Some people may argue that having evaluation criteria for children's books in African languages is premature at this stage since there are still relatively few children's books available in these languages compared to other world languages and that teachers should use whatever books are available irrespective of evaluation criteria. However, the field of children's books in African languages is a steadily increasing one. As teachers' knowledge about reading and children's literature increases and as they become more familiar with children's books and what is available in the language in which they teach reading, they need to develop evaluation criteria concerning narrative, illustration, language and fiction/nonfiction elements in the texts that they use in their classrooms.

Conclusion

This unit focused on two aspects of children's literature, namely narrative elements and illustrations. Most stories share five common elements, viz. a story occurs in a setting, it has one or more characters (that can be humans, animals or strange creatures), in the course of the story the character encounters a problem that needs to be resolved and the main events in the story revolve around the problem and its resolution. Finally, there is more to a story than just the characters and events in it. Most stories carry a more abstract theme, a 'big idea' about the world that the author wanted to share with the readers.

In children's literature illustrations play an important role and in picture storybooks, especially, they are as important as the text. It is important for teachers to help develop learners' visual literacy by drawing their attention to the illustrations and stimulating discussions about them by providing comments and asking questions.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

    a) The basic elements of a narrative are also referred to as _____. (1)

    b) Usually, the _____ and characters are introduced at the beginning of a story (1)

    c) It is in the genre of _____ especially that illustrations form an integral part of the story text. (1)

    d) The phrase *Once upon a time* typically occurs in _____. (1)

    e) In order to guide learners to read at a deeper level teachers should make sure that they discuss the _____ in a story. (1)

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

   a) The illustration on the cover of *The Day Gogo went to vote* depicts warmth and closeness between the two figures.

   b) This illustration from *We're going on a bear hunt* shows how the depiction of a narrow, dark space can add dramatic tension in a story.

   c) The illustration on the cover of *Asnath Mahapa mofofisi wa difofane* is a depiction of the office space in which the main character operates.

   d) The inclusion of the animals in this illustration adds humour to the story.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the **correct** one. (1)

   a) Although all humans have an innate ability to distinguish different colours, this does not mean that the meanings associated with colours are the same across cultures.

   b) If teachers have good knowledge of reading and of language then they should be able to evaluate children's books quite reliably.

   c) Children have an innate ability to interpret visual elements in books.

   d) If teachers ask children to recall the main events in a story then this will enable them to arrive at the big idea in the story.

4. Consider the following scenario and then select only **the option** which is likely to be **an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

Some Foundation Phase teachers are sitting around their school computer to see what books are available in Sesotho/IsiZulu on the African Storybook (ASb) website (http://africanstorybook.org/) *so that they can download and print some for use in their classrooms. Teacher Kedibone wants to make sure that they look mainly at the ASb-approved books. Teacher Lindiwe says that her Grade 1s come from a rural area and haven't yet developed good visual literacy skills so she only wants stories with very simple pictures. Teacher Thabile is especially keen to see the stories in Levels 4 and 5 with 3-4 paragraphs per page for her Grade 3 learners, while Teacher Nomsa says she would like to download some stories set in modern times for her HL learners.*

a) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Thabile feels it is important for her Grade 3 learners to be able to practise reading extended texts.

b) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Lindiwe is aware of how teachers can develop learners' visual literacy skills from a young age.

c) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Nomsa may feel that African children should not associate reading in African languages with traditional stories only.

d) From the scenario above it seems that Teacher Kedibone is sensitive to factors relating to the critical evaluation of children's literature.

Unit 5: Emergent literacy in preschool and the use of children's literature in foundation phase

Introduction

The emergence and availability of books written specifically for children in the modern world has given rise to new concepts. One such concept is that of emergent literacy, which refers to what pre-literate children learn about books, written language and visual literacy in their early years before formal reading and writing instruction begins in school. It turns out that the knowledge they acquire in the preschool years about books and written language can have a powerful influence on how easily they learn to read and write once they start school and their attitude to books and reading in general. This has given rise to a whole new domain of scholarship and research that focuses on what kinds of things children learn about books, reading and writing before school, how children acquire such knowledge, what factors facilitate or impede it, and what effects it has on schooling.

In this unit we first examine the notion of emergent literacy more closely. We briefly outline how it originated and what kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired during emergent literacy. Attention is drawn to the close link between emergent literacy and children's exposure to children's literature. Thereafter we revisit children's literature more generally and suggest how it can be used in Foundation Phase classrooms in ways that are CAPS compliant.

What is emergent literacy?

Literacy does not develop in a vacuum. It occurs in a broader social context where written language, print-based and digital materials and books are used on a daily basis for work, social or personal purposes. The broader social context also explicitly or implicitly reflects various values, attitudes to and opinions about books and literacy. Emergent literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes concerning written language and books that children acquire during their preschool years. It is not something that is explicitly taught to children; rather, they acquire an awareness and knowledge about literacy through social and verbal interactions with adults in their environment and seeing adults model literate behaviours. The home, family, community, preschools and caregivers/teachers are all part of the context in which emergent literacy is acquired.

The early stages of reading and writing start when children engage in print-based activities in the preschool years. They hear stories read to them from books, they see adults in their

environment engaging in various reading and writing activities, and they develop a concept of written language from books and other text forms. Through these activities they gain a sense that written language and books are related to spoken language, and that books are important, meaningful and pleasurable. This is done largely through parents, guardians, older siblings and teachers reading stories to children from books, looking at picture books with them, pointing out printed letter symbols, words and pictures to them and encouraging them to draw and scribble and write things even if they don't yet know how to do so. In this way literacy emerges from specific everyday activities involving written forms of language.

The term emergent literacy expresses a belief that even very young children will gain some concepts and understanding of print, books and writing if they live in a literate environment. In this environment, children are exposed to books, parents or caregivers read to children regularly, let them handle books, let them draw, pretend to 'read' and scribble 'write'. Parents or caregivers also draw children's attention to words and signs in the broader environment, such as traffic signs, logos, advertisements and names of well-known products, like *KFC, Nike, Joko,* etc. This happens long before children can actually decode the text in a book.
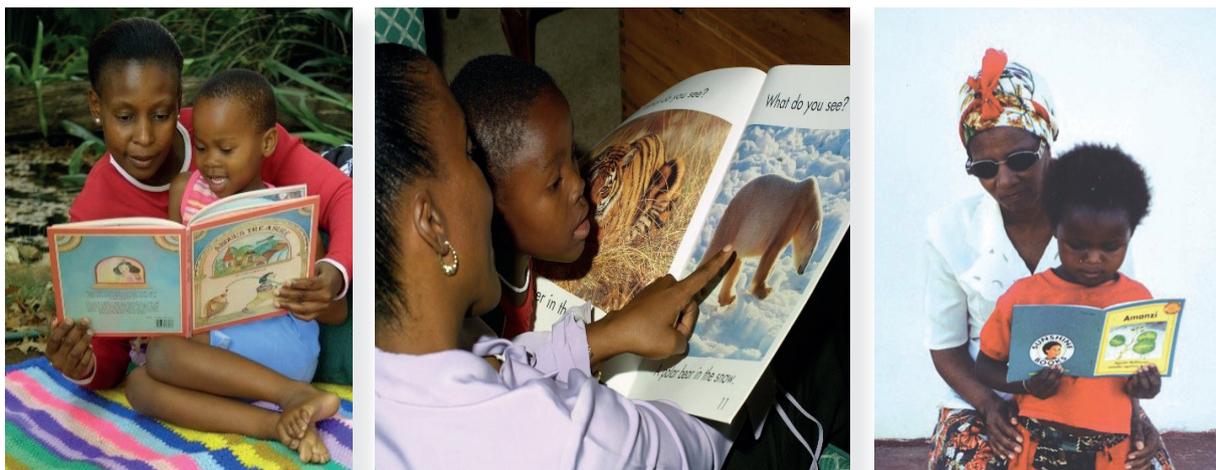
For example, children may learn how to hold a book and turn pages. They may understand that, although they cannot actually read yet, print is read from left to right and top to bottom, that printed words consist of letters and that spaces appear between words, and that print is often accompanied by pictures and can tell a story or provide information about things in their everyday world or things beyond their familiar world. This print awareness is children's earliest introduction to literacy. At the same time children may scribble 'write' as a visual imitation of printed text or of things parents, caregivers or teachers have written. In a preschool classroom the presence of print in its various forms can be reinforced through signs, labels, posters, calendars, and other visuals.

Children with print awareness begin to understand that print has different functions depending on the context in which it appears – e.g. menus list food choices, a book tells a story, a traffic sign can instruct drivers what to do or warn of potential hazards, while a commercial sign can announce a favourite fast-food outlet or advertise a product.

Research has shown that the concepts, skills and knowledge that children acquire in the preschool years are important in preparing them for the difficult task of learning to read and write (Bishop & Adams 1990; Catts 1993; Whitehurst & Lonigan 1998; Catts, Fey, Tomblin & Zhang 2002). Through being embedded in a literacy-rich environment and with the support of parents, caregivers, pre-school and Grade R teachers, children receive an early start in the journey to genuine reading and writing. Being exposed to regular storybook readings, children develop strong oral language skills and vocabulary, a sense of story structure, print awareness, some awareness of the letters of the alphabet and also phonological awareness. These skills build up over time between birth and age six so that by the time they start school, they already have some knowledge and skills that make the task of learning to reading and write easier. However, children acquire emergent literacy only if they are exposed to a literacy-rich environment, either in the home and/or in a preschool.

Unfortunately, there are many children in South Africa who do not grow up in literacy-rich environments and who are not exposed to emergent literacy practices before they start school. Many children come from disadvantaged homes where books are scarce, where parents may have low literacy levels and be too tired to engage their children in literacy activities after a long day at work. Two thirds of households in South Africa do not own a single picture book. Even though many children go to creches and preschools and later attend Grade R, the preschool centres may not be well resourced with storybooks and other print-based materials and the caregivers may not engage the children in print-based activities. These children may thus start Grade 1 with few emergent literacy skills. It is thus important for Grade 1 teachers to be aware of the diverse language and literacy skills that preschool children bring with them to the classroom. Grade 1 teachers need to create a print-rich classroom environment and make sure that children are given opportunities to acquire emergent literacy skills concurrently while learning to read, write and do arithmetic.

A brief history of emergent literacy

During the first part of the 20th century, educators believed that reading instruction should not begin until children were ready for it. Up to the 1950s the dominant belief was that children were not ready to learn to read until they had reached a certain level of physical and mental maturity.

In the early part of the twentieth century developmental psychologists such as Arnold Gesell (1880-1961) argued that maturation was the most important factor in learning to read. Parents

and teachers were advised not to interfere with children's natural development by forcing literacy activities on them. Instead, they were advised to focus on children's social, emotional and physical development and to postpone the teaching of reading until they were ready for it (Morrow 1992). This naturally raised the question: "When are children mentally and physically ready to start learning to read and write?" Ways of assessing this were devised – hence the concept of 'reading readiness' and ways to assess when children had developed skills adequately enough to a point where they were ready for reading instruction.

Later, instead of waiting for a child to mature to a point of readiness, educators started providing more direct instruction in skills regarded as 'prerequisites for reading'. The idea that children first had to be maturationally 'ready' before they could become literate was increasingly challenged in the early 1970s. For example, a developmental psychologist from New Zealand, Marie Clay, took the idea of reading readiness further and developed the idea of **emergent literacy** to describe the earliest behaviours and concepts young children employ in interacting with books even before they are capable of reading in the conventional sense. She viewed children's preschool development as a broad continuum of development, from the earliest years to beginning school. She disputed the idea that there was a specific point in time after which children were 'ready' to learn to read and write. Instead, she argued that there were continuities in children's literacy development between early literacy behaviours and those displayed once children could read independently. Clay also emphasised the importance of the relationship between writing and reading in early literacy development. Until then, it was commonly assumed that children must learn to read before they learn to write.

The 1970s and 1980s saw much research focus on children's early language and cognitive development, early childhood socialisation and education, and literacy practices in the home during the preschool years. As new evidence emerged, the notion of reading readiness was gradually replaced with a broader understanding of the knowledge and skills that develop from birth to the time when children go to school, as children interact with literate adults, are exposed to books and other written resources and engage in literacy practices involving reading and writing (Teale & Sulzby 1986).

The concept of emergent literacy evolved further through the 1990s and is now recognised as a combination of cognitive, linguistic, social and physical activities and practices, with intentional guidance in learning about literacy, books and written language (International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children 1998; Copple & Bredekamp 2009).

The importance of emergent literacy – the concepts, skills, and knowledge that are acquired before the child commences with formal reading instruction – has now been well documented (Teale & Sulzby 1986; Bishop & Adams, 1990; Catts 1993; Catts et al. 2002). An extensive body of research has shown that a child's literacy development can begin well before formal introduction in school and is influenced by social interactions with adults, exposure to literacy materials, and the use of engaging learning activities. Developing and enhancing emergent

literacy is now recognised as a vital part of the pre-school curriculum and there is a strong research base examining its use in pre-schools (Blank 2012; Connor, Morrison & Slominsk 2006; Watson & Wildy 2014) and its long-term effect on reading skills (Chui 2018).

For example, Chui's (2018) longitudinal study found a strong set of relationships between the oral language and code related skills that 3- and 4-year-old children displayed in their preschool years and similar skills the same children displayed four years later in Grade 3.

However, the term 'emergent literacy' is a somewhat contested term in some respects. (It is the term that is contested, not the usefulness of the knowledge and activities it describes. Other equivalent terms are *early reading, beginning reading* and *pre-literacy*.) The Whole Language approach to reading argues that oral and written language are similar and are acquired in similar ways. Because the term 'emergent literacy' was coined by Marie Clay (1966), who became a Whole Language proponent, the term may suggest that reading and writing skills naturally emerge in the same way that spoken language does. However, although orality and literacy share the same language, this does not mean that they are acquired in the same way (see Module 7 for a more detailed discussion of this issue). Written language is a more recent technological development in human history and is not part of our genetic prevalence for acquiring spoken language. As is well known, children have a natural capacity to acquire the spoken language(s) to which they are exposed, and they can learn how books work and become familiar with storybooks and elements in a story, but they do not acquire the alphabetic code in the same way. Simply exposing children to books and a print-rich environment does not necessarily mean that they will all work out how the alphabetic code works – some do, but most don't (60-70%). As the neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene (2020: 67) points out:

> *… the overwhelming evidence is that reading and writing are **not innate abilities** in the sense that language acquisition is. While children develop oral language skills (listening and speaking) by merely being immersed in the language, the written language skills (reading and writing) need to be taught. True literacy requires instruction.*

Emergent literacy therefore is more about the knowledge and skills that children develop in the preschool years in a specific environment that is oriented to literate activities and resources; emergent literacy is not about explicit instruction in the alphabetic code or reading. Exposure to books and other forms of written language and engagement in literacy-related activities are needed for emergent literacy to emerge. Some aspects of emergent literacy (such as phonemic awareness, awareness of story structure, invented spelling) are developed through conscious attention to certain preliteracy activities that raise awareness and foster relevant skills.

Although children who start Grade 1 with strong emergent literacy skills and are familiar with story books learn to read and write with relative ease, this does not mean that children who start Grade 1 without emergent literacy skills cannot do so. However, a knowledgeable reading teacher in Grade 1 can play a critical role in providing additional instruction, support and encouragement to children who have few emergent literacy skills when they start school. We now examine more closely what it is that children learn in emergent literacy.

Emerging knowledge, skills, attitudes and values associated with books and print

There are different ways of describing what children acquire about literacy in the early years. For the purposes of this discussion, we identify four areas related to written language and books in particular: print skills, early decoding, familiarity with story structures and genres, and attitudes and values concerning books. These skills develop during different periods of time from birth throughout childhood. The more regular, focused and explicit the adult-child literacy interactions are, the more likely the emergent literacy skills will develop.

Print skills

Print skills refer to the knowledge and skills that children acquire about written language. It includes book handling skills like knowing which way up a book is held, which is the front or back of a book, turning pages from the right side to the left, learning the directionality of print from left to right, top to bottom. It also includes learning to hold a pencil or crayon, making squiggles across a page and learning to write one's own name or surname. An awareness of environmental print is also part of early print skills.

Most children notice print to a greater or lesser extent, they see it in books and documents their parents handle, they see it in signs and logos outside the home, and on toys, food containers and so on. They gradually develop print awareness, they learn how to handle a book, to start from the front of a book and how to turn the pages carefully, moving their eyes from page to page, from left to right, from top to bottom, until they get to the back of the book. Their attention may be drawn to words on a page, with a parent's finger sliding below each word as he/she reads a story to the child.

'Environmental print' refers to words, slogans and writing we see on a daily basis in road signs, shop names, advertisements and logos on walls, television screens, on posters, on clothing, etc. Much of environmental print is designed to attract our attention, and some of it is deliberately designed to attract children's attention. And things that attract our attention are often important or meaningful. Environmental print is one of the first places where children start to understand that print can carry meaning. like saying 'McDonalds' or 'burger' when seeing the icon.

Early decoding skills

The early code-related skills that children gain in the preschool years include phonological awareness, print awareness and some alphabet letter knowledge. These early skills form part of the foundational skills children are required to learn to enable them to decode words.

Children may acquire phonological and phonemic awareness through exposure to children's nursery rhymes and songs in the preschool years. Although children are not usually taught

decoding skills formally in the preschool years, they may start learning the names of letters through singing the alphabetic song, or they may learn the letter-sound relationships of some single letters, especially those that occur in their names or surnames. They may also start recognising some words in print, especially high-frequency words. Understanding that letters of the alphabet are different from each other, learning their names, shapes and the sounds they represent, and recognising letters in different contexts are all aspects of early decoding skills that children learn about in their preschool years.

The **alphabetic principle** refers to the realisation that the letters of the alphabet and combinations of letters are the symbols used to represent the speech sounds of a language based on systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words.

Alphabetic knowledge comprises two major components, namely letter-name knowledge and letter-sound knowledge. Letter-name knowledge and the basic understanding that letters represent distinctive speech sounds is a component of emergent literacy that some children may acquire in the preschool years, especially if caregivers or teachers draw attention to this. It consists of knowing, naming and writing the letters of the alphabet, knowing their sounds and learning uppercase and lowercase letters. In preschool some children may learn letter-name knowledge through singing the alphabet song and they may be able to write some or all of the letters in their name, before they formally learn about letter-sound relationships in greater depth through phonics lessons in Grade 1.

Narrative and text genre knowledge and visual literacy

Children build their ability to understand narratives by hearing stories, retelling stories, telling their own stories, and having to describe events to their parents, caregivers or educators. The essence of story building is to describe events in a coherent (time) sequence. Parents and teachers can strengthen narrative understanding by prompting children to provide more details, elaborating their storytelling or descriptive skills. Children's narrative skills and awareness of different genres of books are enhanced through exposure to a range of children's fiction and nonfiction books. Through exposure to picture storybooks, they also become familiar with aspects of visual literacy from an early age, they become aware of how illustrations are part of the story and they learn how to 'read' illustrations and relate them to the story conveyed in the text.

Social, emotional and reading attitudes and values

Children learn a lot about attitudes and values related to books and reading. Being interested in, appreciating and enjoying books is an important step in the development of emergent literacy. Children who are exposed to storybook reading from an early age develop a positive attitude to books and reading, enjoy being read to, playing with books, pretending to read or write, and enjoy selecting books and going to the library. Children who enjoy books learn the value of reading and are more likely to want to read, and to keep trying, even when it is hard.

In sum, if children are exposed to regular storybook reading by parents or caregivers, if they are given opportunities to scribble and draw, if they engage in print-based activities like sorting pictures, or making jig-saw puzzles, if adults in their environment converse with them and encourage them to talk and express themselves, then various emergent literacy skills and abilities are stimulated, including their oral language proficiency, listening comprehension, vocabulary, narrative skills, print-based skills and visual literacy develop strongly during the preschool years, far more so than children who are not exposed to print-based activities, books and children's literature.

It Is important to bear in mind that emergent literacy is an interactive process rather than simply a series of individual components. It must also be remembered that children will pass through stages of literacy development in a variety of ways and ages (Frith 1985, 1986), depending on both their individual characteristics and the amount and richness of exposure to books in their home and broader community and preschool environment.

Models of emergent literacy

Various models of emergent literacy have developed, and different aspects or components of emergent literacy identified (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant & Colton 2001). These include:

- concepts and functions of written language
- visual representation of objects and language in visual or written forms, even if these are initially just drawings and scribbles; writing and composing messages (words, sentences, elementary stories)
- knowledge about letters and words
- listening comprehension, vocabulary and knowledge of story structure (how stories 'work') (Mason & Stewart 1990; Sénéchal et al. 2001).

Whitehurst and Lonigan's (2008) model of emergent literacy developed from a cognitive science approach to reading and shows how different aspect of emergent literacy develop and interact in different ways at different stages of development.
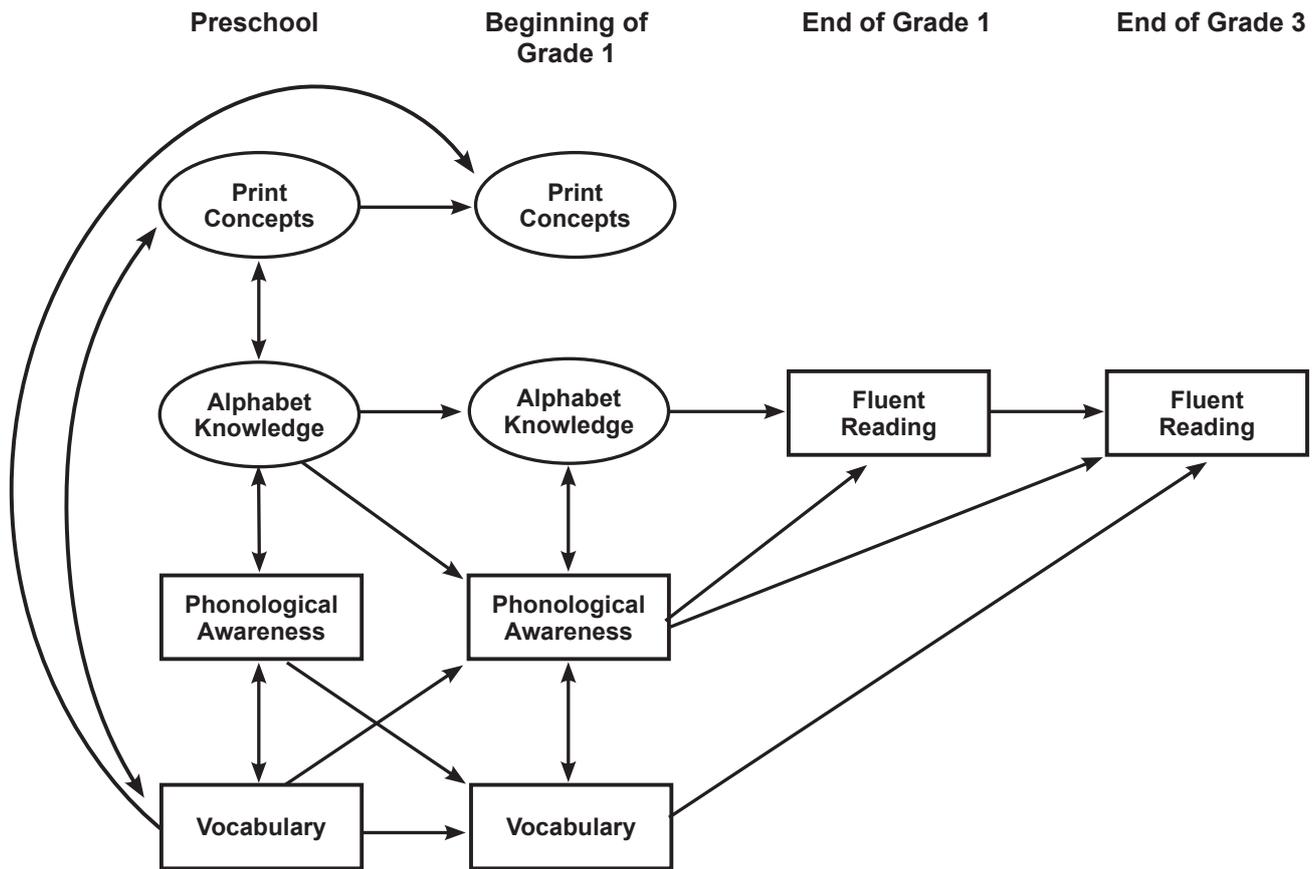
Figure 6: Whitehurst and Lonigan's (2008) model of emergent literacy

Rohde (2015: 4) argues that research findings on emergent literacy over time point to a complex and interactive learning process that calls for a comprehensive model of emergent literacy which must also take into account the importance of the environmental setting and context. The skills and knowledge they acquire can overlap and interact with one another and help to reinforce learning. For example, print awareness leads to word identification. Vocabulary development can help support word identification and morphological awareness. Print awareness and phonological awareness overlap with skills such as understanding the relationship between letters and sounds and inventive spelling.

Writing includes all of the pieces of the model. Writing has a strong reciprocal relationship with the other three components (Teale & Sulzby 1986). The skills of composition and the mechanics of writing support the skills of language development, print awareness, and phonological awareness. These components are also critical in supporting the development of the skills and conventions related to the writing process.

Each home has its own unique family literacy patterns, and in some families, literacy skills are

taken for granted and used much more casually than in other families. Looked at superficially from the outside, people in families with highly developed literacy skills take them less seriously, and often use them in casual ways. But that is because these literacy activities are part of their everyday lives and have become thoroughly naturalised. People who curl up in a chair with a cup of tea and a novel, scribble casual notes to one another and don't object if their children want to play with their pens and paper (or computers) are likely to have a tertiary education, an extensive collection of books and very high literacy skills. Conversely, people in families with very limited literacy skills, especially those whose personal level of literacy skills is low, tend to take reading as a serious and formal activity. They are likely to undertake reading sitting up straight at a table, write only formal, laboriously written texts, and would be horrified if children got hold of their pens and papers.

When children grow up in a literacy-conducive home environment where informal literacy activities are constantly present, they have a large advantage over learners who do not. They start learning the features of written language at an early age. Not surprisingly, children who come from households in which literacy skills are used casually and playfully, and who are expected to read and join in with this play as soon as they can pretend to read and write, end up with the most highly developed literacy skills. Children whose parents/caretakers read them stories have a significant advantage over those whose parents do not, and the quality and frequency of family reading and writing activities is a dependable predictor of children's future academic performance.

The problem for many pre-school and early grade teachers is that many children do not come from literacy-rich home environments and have not been exposed to or experienced many emergent literacy activities. Programmes designed to encourage literacy activity in the home for both parents and children are sometimes called Family Literacy (Morrow 1995).

The relationship between reading readiness and emergent literacy

Some precursor skills might be necessary for a literacy skill to be acquired. Children must for instance have reached a particular level of cognitive development before the formal teaching of reading can commence.

There are various skills involved in language reception and production that underlie emergent literacy and eventual reading. Oral language proficiency and phonological awareness are for instance prerequisites for phonics, while phoneme identification of vowels and consonants is an essential precursor to segmentation and blending skills.

Reading readiness refers to the enabling capacities a child needs, to be ready to formally learn to read and write. These would usually include:

- Age-appropriate **oral language development** and **vocabulary.**
- Familiarity with stories and books.

- **Phonemic awareness** (the ability to distinguish individual sounds).

- **Auditory discrimination**, for example being able to hear the difference between /f/ and /v/ sounds (-*fusa* and -*vusa*) and hearing the difference in ending in the words *leli* and *lelo* and being able to manipulate individual sounds of language).

- **Visual discrimination** (e.g., being able to see and distinguish between individual letters and shapes, such as being able to differentiate between the letters L and T, a and o, b and d, or the numbers 6 and 9) and **visual motor skills** – e.g., be able to follow a finger pointing at the letters in a word or the words in a sentence.

- Understanding of **basic print concepts,** for example that printed text represents spoken words; knowing that the text on a page is written from left to right, starts at the top of the page going downwards, that spaces between words are meaningful, books have a title and an author, and so on).

- Understanding of the **alphabetic principle,** that letters represent the sounds of the language; the ability to identify at least some letters of the alphabet by name or sound.

- **Fine motor skills** (e.g., being able to hold and manipulate a pencil for writing). Fine motor skills involve the control and movement of small muscles that require children's brains to coordinate between an action and what they see. This impacts everyday actions such as holding eating utensils, tying shoelaces, tying a knot or using a pen or pencil when writing. Fine motor skills should be practised, especially in preparation for turning the pages of a book and for writing. Fine motor skill development exercises include stringing beads, playing in or with sand, tying knots and bows in a piece of string, building puzzles, cutting out pictures with scissors, playing with play dough, building with blocks or Lego, drawing, finger painting and using tweezers to pick up small objects such as buttons and putting them in a bowl.

- **Gross motor skills.** These involve the large muscles of the body that enable such functions as jumping, walking, throwing and catching a ball, kicking, rolling, and sitting upright. Gross motor skills are involved in moving the arms, legs, and torso in a functional way. Acquiring gross motor skills is an important part of children's development. Researchers found that gross motor skill development and free play is important for preparing children for learning. Regular participation in physical activities has been associated with improved academic performance and has proven to improve important learning functions such as attention and memory.

- **Eye movement.** Correct and smooth eye movement when reading needs to be practised. Involving young children (in Grade R) in activities that help them to follow text from top to bottom and from left to right is helpful. They can for instance follow text in a book or on a sheet of paper by moving their finger smoothly below the text from left to right and allowing their hand to move with their eyes (Zuk 1992).

In addition, at a broader level, the child's maturity is assessed in the following areas:

- Social development: This is important because children need to know how to take turns, cooperate, and develop self-control in order to properly engage in activities associated with learning to read.

- Emotional development: Children need to have a good self-concept and a sense of how they fit into the world.

- Cognitive development: In the case of reading readiness, children need to have reached a cognitive level where they can both visually and auditorily discriminate between letter shapes and different letter sounds.

Reading readiness assessment instruments are used to check the attainment of these skills. As can be seen, there is a lot of overlap between skills associated with reading readiness and with emergent literacy. The main difference lies in the assumption of the former that children need to develop these skills to the point where they are ready to read, versus the assumption of the latter that it is through exposure and being involved in print-based activities that children develop these skills.

Activities to develop emergent literacy

There are many activities that caregivers and Grade R teachers can use to help children develop emergent literacy skills in the preschool years. Most of these activities are fun, play-based activities that do not always involve formal, explicit teaching. Activities used to develop young children's emergent literacy skills should be fun and meaningful – it is vital to enhance the idea that books and literacy are meaningful. However, parents, caregivers and teachers can also explicitly draw children's attention to aspects of literacy and show them how to do things while explaining in simple language what they should do.

Print awareness

Preschool caregivers and Grade R teachers should make every effort to create a welcoming, interesting, print-rich environment in their classroom to enhance print awareness. Even if the preschool is in a poor or rural environment, teachers can use their creative talents to make their classroom welcoming and interesting. The picture below left shows an unprepossessing one-roomed preschool in rural KwaZulu, yet when one steps into the interior of the preschool one enters a world of literacy with books, pictures, alphabet friezes, drawings, word cards and other artefacts related to reading and writing – and an enthusiastic caregiver who reads the children two or more stories every day and apprentices them into the world of reading and writing in interesting, meaningful and fun ways.

Figure 7: Creating a print rich environment in unlikely places

The use of environmental print in the classroom to support child learning has shown greater benefits than using standard print alone in the areas of letter-sound knowledge, letter writing, and print reading.

- One does not need a fancy bookcase to create an interesting book corner; one can create a book corner using planks and bricks or sturdy cardboard boxes painted a bright colour. Even though children cannot yet read a book on their own, they learn to page through books, look at pictures, pretend read, and learn about a print world beyond their own physical world. The book corner exposes them to books, makes books readily available to them and in this way the children learn that books are important, convey meaning and that reading can be interesting and fun.

- Bring in objects and artefacts from road signs, food, clothing and toys in the neighbouring environment. For example, a teacher can draw children's attention to the different letters in a STOP sign and then get them to practise writing them. Words on cereal boxes or tins of food can be read aloud and children can practise recognising them. Children are not of course reading in the conventional sense. They may still be in the logographic stage of learning to read (seeing writing as pictures or words as wholes) and may not necessarily be decoding each letter separately, but in the process they are learning that written language represents spoken language and has a purpose and carries meaning.

- Children learn about book handling from role modelling when caregivers or teachers read them storybooks. Parents or educators can show children how to handle books, turn pages, discuss pictures and print features with them. They can also intentionally engage children in book handling activities such as asking them to point to the parts of the book and its contents, such as the front cover, the title, the first line of the book, a word, a letter, and the back cover.

- Educators can make a book collectively with children, illustrating it with family pictures and their captions or children's own drawings. A parent or educator can write the words of a story that children dictate to them. A parent can write down a recipe and prepare food using the recipe. At a restaurant, parents can read the menu and point to the words as they read and then help children choose what they want from the menu.

All these activities help children connect the use of writing to their everyday lives. They are starting to connect the writing they look at with meaning and this serves as a positive encouragement for them to want to learn to read and write.

Early code-based skills

Although in some countries like Finland and the United Kingdom children are formally taught phonics in preschool already, this is not the case in the majority of countries, including South Africa. In the latter countries, phonics is taught only from Grade 1. However, it is helpful if children already start developing phonological and phonemic awareness through games and songs in Grade R, as this lays the foundations for the alphabetic principle and learning letter sounds in Grade 1. Due to its importance, many preschools have phonological awareness programmes. Using specific and explicit phonological awareness activities is the most effective way for children to learn it. Although phonological and phonemic awareness and code-based issues are discussed at length in Modules 2 and 3 respectively, they are summarised below briefly to refresh your memory.

- Activities can include songs, nursery rhymes and chants; word play, games, rhymes and riddles and poetry. Children can wave their hands when they hear repeated sounds, or learn to clap the syllables in words, they can manipulate letters on cards or blocks, etc. Everything should be playful, engaging, and interactive, stimulate their curiosity, and encourage experimentation with sounds, cadence and rhythms in the spoken language.

- Learners should ideally learn the names of the letters of the alphabet and that of the numerals in the language of instruction (Sesotho or isiZulu) in Grade R. Not only do the letter-names serve as useful cognitive 'hooks' for acquiring formal letter-sound knowledge in Grade 1, letter-names also empower learners to refer to and speak about these symbols that underlie the alphabetic writing system employed by the African languages. A striking feature of letter-names in African languages is that the letter-names correlate strongly with the letter-sounds in the particular language. This correlation makes it easier for learners to learn the formal letter-sound relationships in Grade 1 if they already know the letter-names. In sum, learning the letter-names in Sesotho or isiZulu and doing so even before the children start learning to read is a sound principle. Children who know letter-names and who can recognise most of the letters of the alphabet by the end of pre-school are less likely to have reading difficulties when they are formally taught to read in Grade 1. Children are also more likely to know letters that are used more frequently in their written language than those with a lower frequency of usage. The first letters children learn are often ones found in their name as well as those at the beginning of the alphabet.

- Children can also start learning letter shapes in Grade R. This is often done informally, when they learn to write their own names. Research shows that using embedded **mnemonics** (i.e., pictures that remind the children of the letter-name or letter-sound relationship, such as using a picture of a snake for the s-letter or sound in English) actually improves learning (Shanahan 2021). Various studies have demonstrated that such embedded mnemonic pictures can minimise memory overload and confusion and reduce the amount of repetition needed for learners to learn the letters and sounds. (Note that such mnemonics work well for letter names, shapes and sounds. This does not apply to the decoding of words where picture cues are inappropriate and can encourage guessing rather than accurate word recognition. This issue was discussed in Module 3 and will be discussed further in Module 7.)

- Though singing or reciting the ABCs is a well-known starting point for acquiring code-based skills, it is important to note that singing the song does not mean a child can make letter-sound connections: they may simply have memorised the names and the song. Children need to learn to say and recognise letters and their names, out of context of the alphabet song or the frieze.

- Teaching children to write their names is an exciting step into literacy in Grade R. The ability of a child to write their name correctly is a good indicator of their emergent alphabetic skills. Children who can do this task will more likely know how to write other letters, know other letter names and sounds and have better phonological and phonemic awareness.

- It is also important to alert the children to **prosody** (tone, vowel length and pitch) of the language which is superimposed on the phonemes.
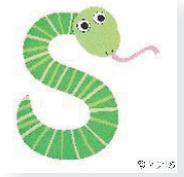
High and low tone

The African languages are tonal languages and children need to learn to distinguish between the high and low tone in the phonemes of a word. For example, the third person singular subject morpheme and the second person singular subject morpheme ó and ò (for Sesotho) and ú and ù (for isiZulu) differ only in terms of tone. The third person singular subject morpheme in both languages has high tone while the second person singular subject morpheme has low tone.

Vowel length

The length of a vowel may distinguish between different words. The long vowel /a:/ in the verb ba:dlala in the sentence: Badlala ngalelo langa 'They played on that day', denotes the remote past tense while the short vowel /a/ in this context indicates a present tense verb: Badlala phandle. 'They are playing outside (now)'. The children must not only be able to hear these sounds, but they must also be able to pronounce them correctly.

> **Pitch**
>
> Pitch is the rise and fall of our voice when we speak so we can say words in a high- or low-pitched way. A question is often distinguished from a statement only by the pitch of the voice going up at the end of a question. Consider the difference in pitch at the end of the sentences *Uyadla? Uyadla.* and *O a ja? O a ja.*

Developing oral language proficiency

There are three basic language skills that fall under the broad term oral language proficiency: these include basic interactive conversational skills (listening, turn taking), vocabulary and learning basic narrative skills. Table 3 summarises some activities that teachers can do to promote various aspects of language proficiency and develop emergent literacy in Grade R and Grade 1.

Table 3: Developing emergent literacy through oral language development

> **Interactive storytelling**
>
> Reading picture storybooks to children and getting them to engage in the story by way of discussions, dramatising (part of) a story or retelling the story are good for oral language proficiency development.

> **Relay storytelling**
>
> In this game, the teacher starts a story with an opening sentence or two. Each child then has to add a sentence to the narrative one by one as it is relayed to him/her. They must listen carefully, follow the story closely and remember what has been said previously so that in the end the story makes sense.

> **Developing a story and retelling it**
>
> This is another version of relay storytelling, but in a smaller group. The learners are divided in groups of 3 or 4. Each group starts telling a story with each member taking a turn to add a sentence. The first learner may for instance start by saying *Meercat dug out a carrot*. The second learner says *The carrot was too big for him to carry.* The third learner adds *He made a plan to carry the carrot home*. The first learner then develops the plan further by saying *He asked jackal to help him, promising him a piece of the carrot.* After each member has had 2 or 3 turns to add to the story, they stop. One member of each group then joins another group and retells the story to his/her new group.

> **Relaying secret messages**
>
> Let the children stand in a circle and explain that they need to relay a short message, starting with the teacher quietly telling something to the first child, who then whispers the message into the ear of the next child, and so on. The last child then says the message out aloud. The idea is to determine, in a fun way, whether the message has been relayed correctly from one child to the other.

Whole body listening

'Whole body listening' is a well-known concept in the early grades. In whole body listening, a learner practises keeping particular key parts of her body focused on the speaker. Her eyes are watching, the ears are listening, the brain is focused on the speaker's information, the mouth is closed, the shoulders are kept straight and turned towards the speaker, the heart is caring about the message, the hands are folded or in the lap and the feet are on the floor and kept still. In other words, the learners are actively listening with their entire bodies. Teach your whole class this concept and practise it a few times as a group, before expecting them to put it into practice. It helps children to desist from fidgeting and being distracted while listening to the teacher.

Class discussions

Guided class discussions can be a good opportunity to model and practise listening and speaking skills. The learners sit in a circle and take turns to share their thoughts and feelings on a topic being discussed. The children are encouraged to look at each speaker and listen to what each speaker says. They can learn phrases like *I agree with Lerato/the previous speaker* or *I see things a bit differently from Lerato/ the previous speaker,* which help them see that it is OK to express different views in a respectful manner.

Listening and drawing a story or event

After listening to a story that the teacher has read, children can be asked to draw a particular character or scene in the story. This helps them engage with the story and also shows the teacher which aspect of the story children respond to.

Drawing figures on a sheet of paper

One way to improve the learners' listening skills is to give them short, daily practice in listening. Any daily practice should be fun, and practical. The practice could include encouraging learners to focus on oral instructions, visualising the tasks given, and completing them accurately – like drawing figures on a piece of paper. Give them short verbal instructions for completing a task, or two or three in succession (depending on their age and cognitive development) and have them practise listening and completing the tasks without the instructions being repeated. For example, they can be asked to draw a circle in the middle of the paper. Then add a big black dot in the middle of the circle. They then have to draw two small triangles, side by side above the dot. This gives them the basic outline of the face of a clown, to which they can add details and colour in.

Many basic cognitive and literacy concepts that apply to the shape of letters, the handling of texts and the sequence of objects or events are as applicable in literacy as they are in the physical world – concepts such as beginning/end, top/bottom, left/right, big/small, same/different, etc. Activities such as the one above help to develop these skills in multiple ways.

Touching particular parts or pictures on a poster/picture

The teacher instructs the children one by one to point at different objects on a poster or picture. This helps them pay attention to visual details and distinguish parts from wholes.

Guessing the object described

The teacher pretends to be something or someone specific. The children must then ask 20 questions to determine what she is or who she is. (This exercise can be used as a reminder of something read about previously – e.g., a story about an elephant.)

Putting objects in the order that they have been mentioned

The teacher puts a number of objects (between 3 and 8) on the table. She then stands back and mentions the objects slowly and clearly, but in random order. After that, she selects a specific child to come forward and arrange these objects in the order in which they were mentioned. The teacher can give different children turns to arrange the objects by varying the objects and their sequence. She can start with 3 objects and then gradually increase the number of objects. (The teacher must remember the order in which she mentioned the items!)

Touching specific body parts on instruction

The teacher tells the learners to touch specific body parts when instructed in a particular way. This is a variation on the theme of *Simon says*… The teacher explains to the children that they must only touch the particular body part if the instruction starts with *Ugogo uthi* … ('Grandmother says …'). If it does not start with these words, they must not respond. She may thus say *Ugogo uthi, thinta isifuba* ('Grandmother says, touch your chest') and the children should touch their chests. She says *Ugogo uthi, thinta ikhanda* ('Grandmother says, touch your head') and the children do likewise. If the teacher says *Thinta umlomo* ('Touch your mouth'), the children should not respond because the instruction did not start with *Ugogo uthi* ... Apart from being a listening exercise, this game can also serve to develop body image, the naming of body parts, and even **laterality** and **mid-line crossing** at the same time by giving instructions such as *Ugogo uthi, thinta indololwane yangasokudla ngesandla sobunxele* ('Grandmother says, touch the right elbow with the left hand').

Socio-affective factors: Positive attitudes and behaviours

Emotional development occurs on a parallel path to early literacy development and it does so through positive relationships with adults, family members and peers. Emotional and intellectual development go together as children develop physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially and culturally. Children have to learn to manage their emotions, particularly in their interactions with adults and peers, and to feel good about themselves. Children are more likely to learn important cognitive-linguistic skills such as reading when they are confident, can persist at tasks, and can engage in positive interactions with other children and adults.
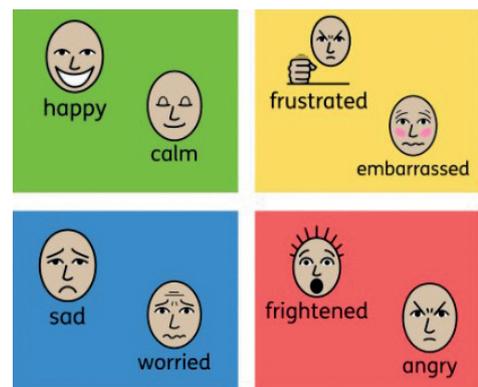
Understandably, educators tend to focus on the linguistic and cognitive aspects of reading development – such as word identification and decoding, phonological awareness, and reading comprehension. However, reading is also an activity that requires effort, involves motivation and attitudes, affects the emotions and requires management of feelings that hamper our ability

to concentrate and stay on task. How young children feel is as important as how they think, particularly with regard to learning to read and write (Connors-Tadros & Yates 2003; Altun, Erden & Hartman 2022).

Children with positive attitudes towards books will enjoy being read to, playing with books, pretending to write, and going to the library. Crucially, children who enjoy books are more likely to want to read, and to keep trying, even when it is difficult. There are a variety of activities that parents and teachers can share with children to help them feel good about themselves and develop positive attitudes to books, reading and writing (Doyle & Bramwell 2006).

- The quality of relationships with teachers and peers predicts increases in emotional knowledge and academic achievement during the preschool years (Torres, Domitrovich & Bierman 2015). Teachers who are grumpy, angry or very strict or classrooms where bullying occurs can affect children's well-being and feelings of safety, which in turn affects their ability to learn and enjoy being in the classroom. Teachers need to create safe, caring classrooms for learning. They need to role model good conduct and relations, they need to watch out for bullying and aggression, and teach children how to be aware of their feelings and resolve conflicts. Understanding emotions is important in building relationships and fostering social interaction.

- Children can bring a lot of emotional baggage with them to class, especially if there is stress or tension in the home, and they are often not aware of their feelings that drive antisocial behaviour and have difficulty verbalising them. For example, if a child hits another child, they may be feeling angry or hurt by something that happened at home, or they may be feeling tired because there are no boundaries at home and they go to bed late. Helping children become aware of and identify their feelings is the first step in helping them develop strategies for managing inappropriate behaviour and reach a more neutral state that is congenial to learning. One way to do so is to help them associate different feelings with colours – the red zone is associated with feelings of anger, aggression or fear; the green zone is a safe, clam and happy zone; the blue zone is a sad or worried zone, and the orange zone is one where we feel embarrassed or frustrated. By putting up a chart like this in the classroom and discussing it with learners, teachers can help children can learn to identify their own emotions and the emotions of others by using these visual colour cues, with teachers helping them to talk about and manage their emotions – e.g., *Naledi, why aren't you doing your work, my dear? What colour zone do you think you are in? What's making you feel frustrated, mmm?*

- Children who are emotionally engaged when an adult reads a storybook to them are more motivated to read and develop better literacy skills. Storytelling or storybook reading

offers an opportunity to support children's social-emotional development by sharing enjoyment of a book with them, showing them that books are enjoyable and interesting, thus building positive feelings about and attitudes to books.

- As was discussed in Unit 2, children learn a lot about social conduct and emotions through storybooks. Storybooks often simulate problems and challenges in life and portray characters who may have similar feelings to what children feel. Through exposure to storybooks children learn about social values and important life lessons, and this helps their own social and emotional development. Teachers and caregivers who expose children to storybooks on a daily basis in the preschool years are thus strengthening their learners' social and emotional development.

- Paper and writing equipment should be accessible to children to encourage them to scribble and draw, even though they cannot yet write properly. This helps them express themselves and develops their creativity and imagination.

Using children's literature to help children become literate

In many schools, teachers often tend to focus on the mechanics of decoding and use decodable texts and worksheets for developing reading and writing skills, without exposing the children to children's books and sharing stories with them. There is nothing wrong with focusing on the mechanics of decoding in the early years, and decodable texts and worksheets serve important functions. However, the problem lies in the imbalance of not exposing learners to children's books and depriving them of the many benefits that accrue from having storybooks read to them and the opportunities to practise reading these books on their own as independent readers who can engage with books and enjoy them. The imbalance affects children from low socio-economic backgrounds in particular, and perpetuates the inequality gap between the rich and the poor. Research has increasingly revealed the vital role that exposure to children's literature plays in developing language, literacy, cognitive and socio-emotional skills (Rasinski et al., 2000) for children from all languages and backgrounds. Good reading teachers in Foundation Phase know how to teach and support foundational language and reading skills from Grade R-Grade 3, and they also know how to include and integrate children's literature into their daily language and literacy lessons. The two aspects are complementary, not oppositional.

- Developing phonemic awareness, teaching letter sounds, blending and segmentation, developing handwriting skills, building up word recognition, and developing fluency are vital for enabling learners to read with comprehension. To achieve this, learners need plenty of opportunities to practise their decoding skills by reading decodable texts and then graded texts suitable for their reading level, and reading aloud regularly to build up fluency.

- In tandem with these foundational skills, teachers must also make sure that they create a print-rich classroom for their learners that includes a reading corner, with bookshelves that include a range of picture books, information books and other genres that children can take out and read.

- Additionally, teachers must read books with and to their learners on a daily basis. CAPS makes provision for this in Shared Reading and Read Alouds. As Liben (n.d.) points out:

> *Teachers can read aloud to build learners' knowledge of the world beyond their scope and to help learners make connections from the known to the new. There is likely no better way to draw children into the treasures stored in the written word than through reading aloud to them as much as possible.*

Exposing learners to a range of genres and levels is important for developing their literacy skills beyond their everyday discourse. As children learn to read and write, they must also acquire the language of academic discourse. They need exposure to adequately challenging texts to develop proficiency in using sophisticated vocabulary, intricate sentence structures, and well-written and well-organised text that is characteristic of quality children's literature. Being exposed to stories from an early age where visuals are integral to the story also helps them develop visual literacy. These demanding texts also enable learners to achieve comprehension of both literary and informational content (Snow & Uccelli 2009; Brown et al. 2017; Northrop & Kelly 2019).

We now briefly consider three areas in which teachers can expose learners to children's literature in their classrooms in ways that are aligned with the CAPS curriculum. The practical planning and organisation of these aspects are dealt with in Module 6, so only broad guidelines are given here.

Access to books

Teachers cannot change the home circumstances of their learners, but they can change what their own classrooms look like and what kind of literacy activities take place in them. Access to books at school serves not only as encouragement to read but also creates a reading culture in the classroom and the school generally. Through exposure to picture storybooks and other books, learners see reading as part of their daily life, and not as something separate from schoolwork, and books help them connect to life (Lipson 2001; Morrow 1991).

Some ways to give learners more exposure to children's books include the following:

- Creating an interesting Book Corner in the classroom where learners can handle, page through and read children's books. Put a mat and a few cushions in the Book Corner to make it a comfortable and enticing space.

- Share with parents the value that reading can hold for learners. Raising awareness helps to educate parents and encourage them as well to expose their children to books.

- If the school has a library, organise trips to the library on a weekly basis where learners can encounter other books and take them out.

- If there is a municipal library in the area, arrange a field trip to it to expose the learners to it, encourage their parents to let the learners become library members and make it part of their lives. Learners who visit a library and borrow books are usually those who

perform well in school (Tunmer et al. 2011:27).

- Make it a special occasion when a learner receives their first library card so that the learner can take pride in it.
- Ensure that learners understand how to handle books, taking care of their own books and those from the library.

Read Alouds

A Read Aloud occurs when a teacher reads a story to learners as a class. The main purpose of Read Alouds is to role model good reading to learners, to share and discuss interesting and enjoyable stories with them, to expose them to a range of quality children's books that they cannot yet read on their own, and to demonstrate a love of reading through these actions.

During a read aloud, the teacher does the actual decoding (i.e., reads the text), while the learners listen and follow the story. A Read Aloud can be done standing in front of the class or moving up and down the aisles so that children can be shown the pictures in the book. Alternatively, learners can go to the mat where they sit around the teacher reading the book. In this way, learners can see the book up close (although they don't need to be able to read the words).

Prepare for the Read Aloud by reading the story beforehand. Practise reading it aloud on your own, so that you can read with feeling and change your voice to the different characters, and pause at relevant points to create dramatic suspense. You must enthral the learners with your dramatisation and use of voice, as this will help draw them into the story.

A Read Aloud must not be too 'teachy'; the focus should be on the story and enjoyment of it. You don't want to have too many stopping points to disrupt the overall flow of the book. Although you can supply the meanings of 4-5 words in the story beforehand that you think the learners may not know, don't interrupt the flow of the story too much with questions. Rather ask the questions afterwards, when you talk about the story with them.

Typically, Read Alouds should happen daily. CAPS does not specify a period for Read Alouds, but they can be done in Listening and Speaking or in Life Skills, to align stories with the theme in Life Skills. They can even be done in Numeracy (if a story involves numbers or other arithmetic concepts such as addition, subtraction, multiplication or division). Read Alouds should take about 15 minutes, not counting any follow-up activities you may do with learners. Because it is the teacher reading the text, the books selected for Read Alouds can be more advanced than what the children's own reading level is. This is the ideal opportunity to expose learners to high-quality children's books, which will prompt children to think and talk about various issues (e.g., social) that impact their daily lives.
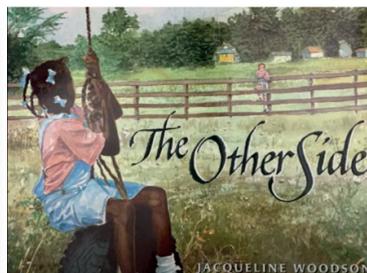

Watch the following video on a teacher read aloud (isiXhosa).
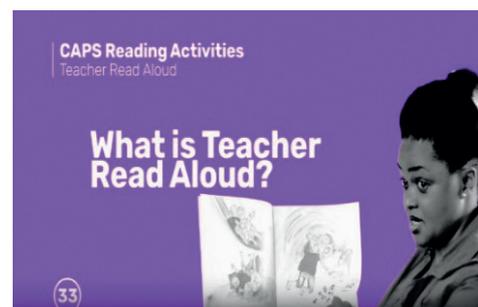
https://fundawandee.org/img/cms/video-resources/33.%20What%20is%20Teacher%20 Read%20Aloud_1.mp4

There are also lots of video resources on YouTube that enable you to get ideas about presenting Read Alouds by watching other teachers reading stories to their class. *https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=3gVu0qOL9Yw*. For example, you can watch the Read Aloud of *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPiaGDbvUPs

Benefits of Read Alouds

- By reading aloud, you're giving learners access to more challenging text with richer language than what they would be able to decode on their own. They are exposed to more complex language structures and new vocabulary. Learners also need to learn words beyond those that they encounter in everyday conversation.

- By reading fluently and with feeling, you model skilled reading and make the invisible act of reading more visible. By pausing sometimes and thinking aloud *(What will happen next? What will she do now?)* you model how fluent readers think about the text and problem solve as they read, thereby helping learners develop the 'habits of mind' that proficient readers employ.

- Read Alouds also expose learners to language and ideas that they cannot yet access on their own. By reading aloud to them, you help grow their minds and worlds. With a read aloud, you can engage learners in higher-level thinking since the text may be more challenging than texts that Foundation Phase or Intermediate Phase learners could read independently.

- When learners have positive experiences with books, they are more motivated to read on their own. They learn that reading can take them to magical places, introduce them to people who are alike and different from them, and teach them interesting facts about animals and their habitats. Some learners may have had the privilege of being read to by their parents, many do not. It is your job as a reading teacher to help create positive feelings around reading and show learners why books are so valuable.

Extension activities are not necessary for every Read Aloud. However, depending on their grade level, you might sometimes ask your learners to draw a picture of a favourite moment in the story. For older learners, they can do a structured comprehension activity, like filling out a story web, showing the different elements in the story.

Guidelines for planning and implementing a Read Aloud lesson are dealt with in detail in Module 6.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is a more explicitly instructional approach to reading than a Read Aloud. In it, the teacher reads a story of information text to the readers, and then rereads it with them to draw their attention to aspects of the text, showing them how texts work, teaching them about texts and visuals, and demonstrating different strategies that readers can use to read and engage with texts on both a literal level and at a deeper level.

Shared Reading is not intended as a lesson for learners to practise their decoding skills. Decoding skills are practised in phonics lessons, and in extension activities where readers read aloud to improve decoding skills and fluency. Instead, Shared Reading provides a framework for the teacher to teach learners about texts, visuals and reading strategies. These are important lessons especially for learners who come from disadvantaged homes where there are no or few books in the home and the children are not exposed to children's literature.

For younger learners, teachers can use the mat for Shared Reading so that it is an enjoyable shared experience and the learners are closer to the book and can see it better. They don't have to decode the text themselves, but they need to see the page layouts, paragraph divisions, visuals, etc. Older learners can sit at their desks during Shared Reading and have copies of the text in front of them, following the text as the teacher reads. After the initial reading of the text by the teacher, the teacher and learners then together do 'text work', with the teacher drawing their attention to various features of the text, explaining things, modelling reading, and asking questions to guide discussion.

CAPS recommends that Shared Reading be done at least three times a week, **using the same book** but focusing on different aspects of it across the three days. Teachers can select and use many instructional strategies during the sessions for Shared Reading. For example, after the first reading, the teacher can focus on the story elements, vocabulary, language structures, how the genre structures information, paragraph divisions, illustrations, or explain and model different reading strategies. Teachers should select a rich text that is especially suitable for sharing so that these aspects can be dealt with across the three different slots allocated to Shared Reading during the week.

Because the teacher is the one who mainly reads the text and leads the discussion, the book chosen for Shared Reading can be slightly more advanced than the learners can read on their own. Although Shared Reading and Read Alouds share similar features, Shared Reading is more

'teachy' than a Read Aloud and the text is studied more intensively than during a Read Aloud session, since it happens over three days.

It is important for teachers to plan Shared Reading sessions carefully. Books are multi-faceted and lend themselves to multiple skills, and learners will be overwhelmed if they are asked to focus on too many things at once. Choose only one or two goals per session. The teacher has different instructional objectives for each Shared Reading session, which should be shared with the learners at the start of the session. For example, after the first reading of the story, you might like to make sure that the learners have understood what the setting is, who the characters are, what the problem was and how it was resolved. Thereafter you might like to focus on the big idea, where the story contains an important lesson that could be helpful in building classroom community or teaching social skills. In the second session, you might want to draw attention to vocabulary, language and aspects of visual literacy and demonstrate a reading strategy such as re-rereading to monitor one's comprehension and gain clarity. In the third session you might like to spend more time on demonstrating and explaining another reading strategy such as making inferences.

When planning for Shared Reading, teachers should select books with rich language, meaningful plots, compelling characters and engaging illustrations. They also need to alternate books that serve a mirror and a reading function. Information books should also be an integral part of Shared Reading so that learners can get exposure to this genre of text too.

Choral reading or reading in chorus is not Shared Reading. When learners read in chorus, they read sentence after sentence and the teacher might correct pronunciation, but the class never stops to discuss what they're reading, how they're processing it, and what it all means. Shared Reading always includes a conversation about the text. The teacher shows the learners how to read and access information from the text to help them make meaning, identify relevant language features, discuss unfamiliar vocabulary, and think critically about the text. The teacher models good reading habits and explicitly teaches the learners about and discusses aspects of the text with them.

You can watch the following video on Shared Reading by Funda Wande (isiXhosa)

https://fundawande.org/img/cms/video-resources/61.%20Shared%20Reading%20Lesson%202_1_1.mp4

You can also watch the following video on You Tube: *What is Shared Reading?* (in English)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uFZMQQlzOY

Benefits of Shared Reading

- Because the teacher reads the text to the class, Shared Reading enables learners to make meaning of texts that are too challenging for reading on their own.

- The learners are exposed to rich language in the text that supports their vocabulary and language development.

- When teachers read to learners, the learners participate as active listeners. In shared reading, the teacher and the learners read a text together, although it is the teacher who takes the greater responsibility for the reading and reads the text aloud, with expression, modelling the behaviour of a fluent, accurate reader. In this way the teacher's support enables the learners to behave like proficient readers and to understand even complex texts that they could not yet read silently themselves.

- Shared Reading provides a framework in which teachers can systematically, purposefully, and explicitly teach text features (setting, characters, sequence of events, making inferences, inferring the meaning of new words from the text, discussing the big ideas, visual literacy, linking the book to life), and specific strategies for reading, especially for making meaning and thinking critically.

- During Shared Reading, teachers and learners can participate in collaborative reasoning to discuss and talk about books and literacy-related issues.

- The shared reading approach enables the teacher to provide explicit instruction in reading strategies and to practise these strategies with their learners. This fosters the learners' development of metacognition. When learners can distinguish the reading strategies and their different uses, they begin to select and use them purposefully to understand and respond to any text that they may want or need to read.

- Through the books selected for Shared Reading, learners see themselves as well as other people, cultures, communities and issues in the books read to and with them. They see how characters in books handle the same fears, interests, and concerns that they experience. By selecting a wide range of culturally diverse books for Shared Reading, teachers help their learners find and make connections to their own life experiences, other books they have read together in class, and universal concepts and principles. In this way Shared Reading supports children's social and emotional development.

- When information books are used in Shared Reading, this helps learners learn to process and comprehend the new kind of texts that they need to master, for example, in science, social studies, mathematics, and technology. Being able to read this genre of text will help them tremendously when they move into the Intermediate Phase after Grade 3.

When teachers work with small groups of learners in Group Guided Reading and learners can read texts on their own, the teachers can observe and encourage the learners to apply the reading strategies they learned about in Shared Reading, and to discuss the texts they read (and the visuals) in the same way they were modelled in Shared Reading.

Guidelines for planning and implementing a Read Aloud lesson are dealt with in detail in Module 6.

Conclusion

In this unit the focus turned first to a relatively new concept in early child development, that of emergent literacy, relating to the knowledge and skills about books, reading and writing that children develop during the preschool years. Because so many children in South Africa come from households that do not contain children's books, it is important for preschool caregivers and teachers to create print-rich classrooms and engage children in activities that will help them develop these skills.

The unit then wraps up the module by considering how learners can be exposed to children's literature in Foundation Phase classrooms in ways that align with CAPS recommendations. These issues are taken up again in and discussed in more detail in the next module, Module 6.

Self-assessment activities

These are 'quickie' assessment activities to check how well you have understood key concepts discussed in this unit and whether you are able to perceive the pedagogical implications of such concepts in the teaching of reading.

Note: The key to these self-assessment activities is given in the Appendix at the end of this module. If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

1. In each of the statements below provide **the appropriate missing word (or words)**. (5)

   a) The process of acquiring knowledge and skills related to books and written language during the preschool years is referred to as _____ _____. (1)

   b) The various eye movements that children need to develop to follow the sequence of words on across a page involve _____ motor movement. (1)

   c) The use of a symbol like this to help teach children about letters and the sounds they represent is called an _____ mnemonic. (1)

   d) For Read Alouds, teachers can select books that are slightly _____ the level at which the learners can themselves read. (1)

   e) Shared Reading presents an ideal opportunity to draw children's attention to the illustrations in a picture storybook and develop their _____ literacy skills. (1)

2. Indicate which one of the following statements is **false**. (1)

    a) Drawing and scribbling in the preschool years help to develop children's sense of representing meaning on paper.

    b) Learning how to manipulate a pencil for writing and using one's fingers to turn pages of a book are gross motor skills that are important in preschool emergent literacy.

    c) Storybook reading to preschool children helps to develop their listening and comprehension skills.

    d) Exposure to picture storybooks helps children develop visual literacy skills in the early years.

3. Indicate which of the following statements is the **correct** one. (1)

    a) All children develop emergent literacy irrespective of their home backgrounds.

    b) Emergent literacy starts developing from birth and stretches through the preschool and early school years, ending around 8-9 years of age.

    c) Research shows that regular exposure to storybooks can develop children's perception of intent in others.

    d) If a child says *McDonalds* when seeing the relevant logo, this means that s/he understands the alphabetic principle.

4. Consider the following scenario and then select only **the option** which is likely to be **an inaccurate reflection** of this scenario. (1)

It is the start of a new school year. Teacher Siphumela has a Grade R class in a school that serves a large informal settlement. Each day in the first week of the term she sets aside an hour to assess 5-6 children on a one-to-one basis while a classroom assistant keeps the other children busy with play-based activities. Amongst the various one-on-one assessment tasks, Teacher Siphumela hands a learner a storybook upside down and back to front and asks him/her to show her the front cover of the book. Later she puts four separate picture frames on the table. (In the first picture frame children are kicking a ball; in the second the ball flies over to the fence towards the window of a neighbour's house; in the third frame the ball hits the window and breaks the glass; in the fourth

frame the neighbour scolds the children for breaking her window.) The teacher mixes the frames so that they are in random order. She asks the child to sort out the frames in sequence and to tell the story shown in the picture frames.

a) Handing a picture book upside-down and back-to-front to a learner is a way of assessing their print-based skills.

b) Handing a picture book upside-down and back-to-front to a learner is a way of assessing their listening comprehension skills.

c) Asking children to arrange picture frames in a sequence is a way of assessing their ability to interpret visuals.

d) Asking children to arrange picture frames in a sequence is a way of assessing their story comprehension skills.

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List of children's literature books

Note: There are usually many different versions or reprints of many of these books. The bibliographic details listed here serve as representative examples.

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Module 5:
Children's Literature

Appendix

Key to self-assessment activities

The correct responses to the self-assessment exercises are indicated below.

NB: If you score less than 6/8 (75%) for these questions you are advised to re-read the unit again to strengthen your content and pedagogic knowledge.

Key for Unit 1

1a	traditional/oral storytelling	(1)
1b	the printing press	(1)
1c	middle	(1)
1d	mirror	(1)
1e	the Bible	(1)
2c		(1)
3c		(1)
4d		(1)

Key for Unit 2

1a	**mirror** function	(1)
b	**window** function	(1)
c	**visual** literacy	(1)
d	**perspective taking**	(1)
e	**vocabulary** development	(1)
2d		(1)
3b		(1)
4c		(1)

Key for Unit 3

1a	genre	(1)
1b	biography	(1)
1c	fiction	(1)
1d	fantasy	(1)
1e	riddles	(1)
2b		(1)

| 3a | (1) |
| 4c | (1) |

Key for Unit 4

1a	story structure / story grammar	(1)
1b	setting	(1)
1c	picture storybooks	(1)
1d	traditional stories	(1)
1e	big idea	(1)
2c		(1)
3a		(1)
4b		(1)

Key to Unit 5

1a	emergent literacy	(1)
1b	fine	(1)
1c	embedded	(1)
1d	above	(1)
1e	visual literacy	(1)
2b		(1)
3d		(1)
4b		(1)

Examples of summative questions requiring longer, more detailed responses

The questions given here serve as *examples* of summative assessment questions that are typically given in formal written assignments or examinations.

These are longer essay type questions that require students to demonstrate their content knowledge of reading and its application to classroom instruction in ways that are **clear** and **systematically** presented.

The mark allocation for questions provides a *rough* guide of how long your answer needs to be in relation to the total marks allocated to the examination paper. A question of 10 marks would require at least 1-1½ pages, while a 20-mark question requires a more detailed and extensive exposition of about 2-3 pages. When in doubt, rather write more than less. Remember, your response to a question is a display of your knowledge, so short answers suggest superficial and inadequate knowledge.

A rubric has been provided at the end to give you an idea of the different aspects of an essay that are taken into consideration – e.g., planning and logic; content, argumentation and examples; use of sources; language usage; technical finishing.

Note: When questions require examples to be provided, it is important for students to give their own, original examples and not simply copy examples from the module. Examples demonstrate whether students understand the content. Students who copy examples from the module will not be given credit for them; only original examples will be accepted.

Answer any four of the six questions below.

Question 1

The development of children's books over the centuries has been influenced by a variety of factors. Briefly explain how the factors below influenced the nature and accessibility of children's literature, globally and locally.

a. Technological advances (9)

b. Changing views of children and childhood (8)

c. Political and economic events and changes (8) **(25)**

Question 2

a. It is said that children's picture books combine text and art. Explain what is meant by this. Select two Sesotho/isiZulu books that have been published in the last decade by Book Dash or Puku to exemplify the role that illustrations play in picture storybooks. (15)

b. discuss how globalisation in the 20th and 21st centuries has influenced translation, cross-cultural exchange and the diversity of themes in children's books. (10)

(25)

Question 3

a. Explain what is meant by the metaphor that children's books can serve as mirrors or windows. Select two storybooks in Sesotho/isiZulu from the Nal'ibali, Book Dash or Puku websites and show how they reflect these two functions. (5)

b. Imagine that you are going to use the two books you selected above to read with your Foundation Phase learners. For each of these books, write down 10 questions that you would use in your class discussion to help learners understand the elements of a story, using a story glove. (20)

(25)

Question 4

    a.   Explain what emergent literacy is and at what age it typically occurs. (5)

    b.   How do children develop print awareness, and what role does it play in emergent literacy? (10)

    c.   Describe five classroom activities that can foster emergent literacy skills in preschool classrooms. (10)

(25)

Question 5

Explain the difference between **Read Alouds** and **Shared Reading**. In your explanation make it clear how they differ in terms of their main functions, the kinds of literacy skills that can be fostered, and the texts used. (25)

Question 6

It is often said that teachers' content knowledge (what they know about subject/topic x) can influence their attitude and approach to teaching that subject/topic. In light of this statement, reflect upon what you knew or didn't know about children's literature before you studied this module and what you now know, and explain how this information has influenced or motivated you as a prospective Foundation Phase teacher. Use the three questions below as guidelines to frame your reflections and responses.

    a.   Identify at least three new aspects about children's books that you have learned since studying children's literature in Module 5 that you did not know (or had not really thought about) previously.

    b.   As a prospective Foundation Phase teacher, explain in what way your new knowledge has influenced your attitude to children's books.

    c.   Worldwide, children in high poverty communities do not have easy access to children's books. Identify three things that you would like to do in your prospective classroom to help Foundation Phase learners become literate, irrespective of their home environment.

(25)

Rubric for essay type assignments

The rubric below can be used to mark summative assignments. The mark allocations are examples only to show how different aspects of the essay are evaluated. They can be adjusted proportionately to the total mark of an assignment.

CRITERIA	Below expectation	Progressing towards expectation	Meets expectation	Exceeds expectation	Score
Planning and logic of exposition	The work lacks proper planning; no problem statement/aim/purpose statement; no logic exposition. Findings reported unsystematically. No conclusion/ recommendations..	Planning mostly lacking; exposition difficult to follow; findings could be reported more clearly. Headings and subheadings reflect some organisation.	Provides a satisfactory exposition and discusses the topic logically and clearly. However, there are areas that need improvement. Not all facets of the topic have necessarily been adequately addressed.	The exposition of the assignment is excellent; the argumentation is logic and absolutely clear; the reader has no problem following the discussion.	
Maximum 20	1-5	6-11	12-17	18-20	
Content, argumentation and examples	The content is poor. The arguments do not build up systematically. Examples are inappropriate.	Parts of the content is relevant. There are instances of staccato-like argumentation. Some examples illustrate the principles well while others don't.	The content is relevant and well structured. The argumentation is systematic. The examples are appropriate for the purpose they have been used.	The content is excellent. The examples have been integrated excellently in the text to strengthen the argumentation.	
Maximum 30	1-9	10-17	18-25	26-30	

Information gathering and use of sources	No sources used, or seminal sources not consulted. Sources misinterpreted. Improper recognition of sources.	Some authoritative sources have been used; there are errors in the recording of sources; in some instances recognition has not been given to sources.	Consulted sources have been duly listed. The most important sources have been consulted. The sources have been interpreted correctly. There are a few errors in terms of information gathering though.	Authoritative sources have been consulted; all consulted sources have been listed correctly. The referencing is correct, and sources have not been misinterpreted or mispresented.
Maximum 20	1-5	6-11	12-17	18-20
Language usage	The formulation is clumsy and there are many grammatical and/or spelling errors in the text. Sentences often make no sense.	The formulation is fair but there are instances of poor sentence structure/ grammar/ spelling errors.	The language usage is very good. There are no instances of poor formulation or grammatical errors; there may be a few spelling errors.	The academic language usage is excellent. There are no instances of poor formulation or grammatical or spelling errors.
Maximum 15	1-3	4-8	9-13	14-15
Technical finishing	The formatting is poor. The assignment lacks headings; it lacks cohesion; there may be repetitions; punctuation is also wrong in places.	The formatting is not always good; the headings may be inappropriate or confusing; there are instances of poor punctuation.	The formatting is very good; headings are appropriately used. There is cohesion and coherence in the text. Punctuation is good.	The formatting is excellent; headings and subheadings are immaculate; cohesion and coherence are excellent. Punctuation is exceptional.
Maximum 15	1-3	4-8	9-13	14-15
Notes to student:				