

**Real or imagined worlds: an analysis of beginner level
reading books for adult literacy learners in South Africa**

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Declaration

The author hereby declares that the contents of this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, are her own work and that the dissertation has not been submitted simultaneously or, at any other time, for another degree.

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Abstract

The content of books published for adult beginner readers reveals as much about how literacy is understood and valued as it does about how literacy learners are viewed and constructed. This research consists of a description and analysis of the corpus of easy readers or stories published specifically for adult beginner readers in South Africa from 1990 to 2000. It is based on the assumption that texts can be used as evidence of the educational theories which underpin and inform them.

The research consist of three parts:

- the development of analytical tools;
- a broad descriptive review of books published in all South Africa's official languages;
- a detailed content analysis of English books.

The analytical tools are derived from research into children's literature, dominant conceptions of the meanings and purposes of adult literacy and research into gender and language. The corpus of books is examined in terms of literary quality, pedagogy and ideology. 120 books published in all South African languages are analysed according to various criteria relating to genre, theme, setting and design. The 38 English books in the sample are, in addition, analysed in depth in relation to plot, narrative features, character, emotions, direct speech, gender, imagery and readability.

The research reveals that unlike fiction for children beginner readers, fiction for adult beginner readers in South Africa is relatively restricted in terms of genre, theme and literary quality in general. While a significant number of stories conform to conventional notions of what constitutes good fiction, many others are simply over-determined vehicles for "development" messages – non-fiction masquerading as fiction. Despite the presence of a surprising number of humorous titles, many of the books are characterised by overtly moralising and didactic themes.

The majority of the books do not substantially challenge stereotypes. The readership is generally portrayed as docile, predictable, hard-working, decent and stoical. Male characters tend to be more varied and complex and female characters conform to their stereotypical roles. Stories are mostly set in domestic, racially homogeneous domains populated by poor African people. Although there are notable exceptions to the above trends, the stories generally depict an uncontested, harmonious, homogeneous and docile world.

In terms of issues relating to pedagogy the corpus reveals an overwhelming dominance of English second language books. This suggests that literacy acquisition in mother tongue African languages is not a serious endeavour in the current South African context. In terms of readability features, aside from surface similarities, there are wide discrepancies between publishers. Books are mainly written in naturally occurring language and do not appear to be written with predictability or decodability features particularly in mind.

The analysis overall illustrates the complex nature of fiction for adult beginner readers which has to meet the simultaneous demands of readability and engagement. The corpus of books for adult beginner readers reflects competing conceptions of the purposes of promoting adult literacy: functionality, immediate application and relevance versus long-term development of reading through the evocation of emotion and imagination.

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CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

The acquisition of literacy is arguably the central and foundational project of education throughout the world. The means by which this is accomplished reveals as much about how literacy itself is understood and valued, as it does about how literacy learners themselves are “constructed”¹. Induction into the world of print takes many forms and guises, but is primarily achieved through some degree of formal or structured instruction/teaching. However, depending on whether children or adults are the subjects of these literacy interventions, both the means and the ends differ in significant respects.

Children at school are expected to take a long time to learn to become fluent readers and writers, despite the fact that it is their primary occupation with relatively few distractions and responsibilities. Adult literacy learners, on the other hand, are generally expected to master the basics of literacy within a year or two of part-time study, beset by all the distractions and responsibilities of adulthood². Adult who cannot read and write are commonly referred to as “illiterate,” a term which signals a deficit requiring urgent remedy. Children who cannot read and write are seldom referred to as “illiterate” because this is their natural state.

The basic education of children is therefore based on a relatively wide, varied and generous conception of literacy and literacy acquisition. It is commonly accepted that children need to learn to read and write because this is the foundation of all other

¹ The term “constructed” is used here as a metaphor to signify that the manner in which a text is written reflects and, to some extent, determines or creates the reader. The term has its origins in structuralism and post-structuralism which are discussed in Chapter 2. The complexity of constructionism is dealt with by Hruby (2001).

² On average children are given at least three years to master the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and another two years to develop fluency which is sustainable. Adult literacy learners in developing countries like South Africa are typically provided with 180 hours of instruction per annum and are expected to have attained a sustainable level of literacy after one or two years.

learning at school and beyond, as well as being necessary for full participation in the world outside of the school. The uses to which children will put their literacy skills are therefore not tightly circumscribed. Dominant notions about the basic education of adults however, suggest a more restricted and functional view of literacy. The uses to which the newly, and hopefully swiftly, acquired literacy skills of “illiterate” adults will be put are pre-ordained. They must be immediate and “relevant” in the world outside of the school, epitomised by the ability to read and fill in bureaucratic forms and calculate profits on fruit and vegetables sales.

These dominant notions about the meanings and purposes of literacy acquisition for adults are not uncontested. A competing notion and conception of adult literacy acquisition is one which is more closely allied to that of children’s literacy acquisition. This view asserts that adults who decide to be inducted into the world of print, do so for a variety of reasons, many of which do not concur with dominant national or international sentiments. According to this view, the kinds of literacy to which adult literacy learners are exposed, should therefore not be restricted. Allied to this position, there are convincing pedagogic arguments for a move away from narrow, functional approaches to the promotion of adult literacy.

Part of a wider conception of literacy includes the idea that reading can be for pleasure as well as for instrumental purposes. Fiction is central to the notion of reading for pleasure, and plays a dominant role in children’s literacy. In the field of adult literacy, on the other hand, fiction generally plays a minor role. Where it is included, it is mainly as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

It will be argued that it is with regard to the role of fiction in literacy acquisition that there is the most decisive difference between adults and children.. For children beginner readers fiction is well-researched and resourced, while the opposite is true of fiction for adult beginner readers. Literature for children who are beginner readers can be rich, varied, imaginative and creative while adult beginner readers are very often subjected to narrow versions of what passes for fiction. Where fiction is published for adult beginner readers it generally lacks the quality and diversity of fiction published for children who are beginner readers.

This research consists of a description and detailed textual analysis of a corpus of books published for adult beginner readers³ in South Africa from 1990 and 2000. These are books which have been specifically developed to foster and support the acquisition of literacy at the very basic stages of learning to read. They are described and analysed according to criteria and categories developed specifically for this research based primarily on applied research in the field of children's literacy. They are analysed according to various aesthetic, ideological and educational criteria.

2. Rationale

2.1 Background

My interest in this topic developed during a ten-year involvement in the development and publication of easy readers for adults at the New Readers Project⁴, and through ongoing research into literacy generally and the teaching of reading to both adults and children (Lyster 1992a and 1992b). The New Readers Project is a non-profit, publishing initiative based in the School for Community Development and Adult Learning at the University of Natal, Durban. It was established in 1991 in response to a dearth of suitable books for adult beginner readers in South Africa. Such books as did exist, consisted primarily of didactic texts, autobiographies and biographies. The few books of fiction which had been published were largely didactic texts in fictional

³ The term *adult beginner reader*, which will be used throughout this study, is one of a range of possible terms to denote adults with very basic literacy skills. Other terms commonly used in the literature are: *neo-literates* and *newly literate adults*. *Books for adult beginner readers*, a rather clumsy term for books written at a basic level for adult beginner readers, is the term which will mostly be used in this study. Other commonly used terms for books for this particular target audience are: *easy readers*, *easy readers for adults*, *post-literacy materials*, *supplementary materials* and *support materials*. The term *easy readers* is used interchangeably with *books for adult beginner readers* in this study. Equivalent terms for children are difficult to adopt largely because children are not depicted in this manner. The term, *children who are learning to read* is used more than any other in this study.

⁴ The New Readers Project (NRP) is funded by foreign and South African donors and income from book sales (see Schaffer (2002) for a detailed evaluation of the New Readers Project). In January 2002, the project name changed to New Readers Publishers. It is referred to throughout by its pre-2002 name because the study covers the period 1990-2000.

form. One of the main aims of the New Readers Project therefore was to develop and publish “pure” fiction which did not have overtly didactic aims.

The belief that it was important to write and publish fiction for adult beginner readers was based on a number of assumptions:

- adult beginner readers are essentially the same as fluent adult readers in cognitive and emotional terms
- reading has two main purposes: as a means of gaining information and for its own sake, i.e. for pleasure
- reading for pleasure is not the preserve of the leisured middle classes
- in order to become fluent readers, literacy learners should read many and varied types of continuous texts from the beginning of reading instruction
- adult beginner readers should have access to a rich, wide and diverse range of books including works of the imagination
- fiction has unique powers to engage and motivate readers and should therefore play a key role in reading development
- within the obvious constraints of their literacy skills, it is possible to produce good stories which engage, divert and entertain adult beginner readers.

These assumptions flew in the face of conventional wisdom regarding what was appropriate and desirable content for adult beginner readers (see Chapter 3). They were based partly on personal experience through my children who went to a primary school, Manor Gardens Primary School⁵, which teaches reading via a whole language approach. They were also based on my research into adult literacy methods⁶, which had revealed that the field of adult literacy was severely neglected and barren in comparison with parallel debates and research in the field of children’s literacy. The possibilities and potential benefits of generalisations from the field of children’s literacy to adult literacy were apparent, and also found support in other quarters.

⁵ Manor Gardens Primary School in Durban was one of the first schools in South Africa to pilot a whole language approach to the teaching of reading. By the end of Grade 1, each child has “read” and taken home, approximately 200 beginner reading books, most of which are books of fiction (Hortop 1997).

Once the process of writing and publishing fiction for adult beginner readers began in earnest in the New Readers Project, new and challenging questions and dilemmas emerged. For example: what were the features of good stories? Were there certain universal features of good stories? Did the harsh realities of the South African context preclude the promotion of adult literacy for anything other than functional purposes? Should stories reflect real or ideal conditions? Was a story about an African man drinking with his friends or beating his wife racist? Would adult beginner readers enjoy stories that were simply light-hearted and funny?

Despite various pressures, we in the New Readers Project persisted in our contention that adult beginner readers, once exposed to fiction, would enjoy and benefit from it. This assumption was supported by evidence from the routine process of testing drafts with adult literacy learners in order to determine their responses to stories. Their responses illustrated and confirmed the view that adult beginner readers appreciate and enjoy fiction and that it has the capacity to engage readers in significantly different ways from non-fiction. For example, identification with characters in stories was so strong that some literacy learners believed that the stories, which they read during the testing process, were actually written about them particularly (Lyster 1994). Further validation came from a survey conducted at the end of the pilot phase of the New Readers Project which found that adult beginner readers did not fit into prevailing stereotypes in terms of their views regarding the purposes of reading and their enjoyment of fiction. Adult beginner readers believed, to a much greater extent than their teachers did, that their reading books could be for enjoyment and entertainment (Lyster 1994).

Once we had established that fiction was valued by, and valuable for, adult beginner readers, the question of quality became more important. Clearly some stories were better than others in terms of their literary quality and their power to engage, amuse or affect adult beginner readers. Thus began the quest to determine what made a good story for beginner readers, which was the starting point of this research. Very soon it

⁶ This resulted in Lyster (1992b).

became apparent that the adult literacy field could not supply the answers, and so the decision was made to look to the field of children's literacy.

2.2 Rationale for focusing on children's literacy

A comparison between the broad fields of children's literacy and adult literacy reveals vast disparities in terms of general research and publication of books to support and encourage the acquisition of literacy. "Children's literature" has, for example, become an established academic discipline in countries like the USA, England and Australia. This includes a significant focus on books for beginner readers and books suitable for the promotion of early literacy. Research into children's reading garners large amounts of public funding internationally, and occupies scholars in intense debate. Each year, thousands of books are published for children who are learning to read or being inducted more broadly into the world of reading.

By contrast, the study of adult literacy and publication of books for adult beginner readers is severely neglected. The reasons for this are complex⁷. They are linked to prevailing attitudes regarding the relatively greater returns on investment which children's education offers. With limited funds available for investment in education and for remedying educational deficits, adults are very often regarded as the least fruitful sector for investment (Abadzi 1994). The fact that the nexus of literacy research and publishing is located in the first world, where adult literacy problems are relatively insignificant, must also contribute to the poverty of applied research in the field of adult literacy.

The idea that there are considerable areas of overlap between how adults learn to read and how children learn to read is not new (Chall 1987). This concurs with wider debates within the field of adult education. A primary tenet of Adult education as a discipline and separate field of study has been, until the 1990s, that the education of adults is fundamentally different from the education of children. However, it is increasingly argued that the supposed boundaries between andragogy and pedagogy

⁷ This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2: Literature review

are artificial and have more to do with claims to academic territory than with substantial differences (Hanson 1996, Jenkins 1995, and Smith 1999).

The study of children's literacy and literature therefore offered possibilities for deepening understanding of adult literacy, specifically in relation to the provision of fiction. Fiction for beginner readers has received considerable attention both in terms of questions of literary quality and underlying purposes. It was assumed that Adult literacy work could draw conclusions from the much more intensely scrutinised field of children's literacy. The generalisation from children to adults, however, needs to be understood within very particular parameters, with provisos and constraints articulated from the outset. While there are considerable similarities between adults and children who are beginner readers, there are also fundamental differences.

2.3 Provisos about adult beginner readers

When justifying the reasons for drawing on the rich and well-resourced field of children's literacy, it is important to state an over-riding proviso. "Illiterate" adults have been and are often construed/perceived as qualitatively different from literate adults. At best this is understood as difference rather than deficit, but despite strenuous efforts to the contrary, a popular construction of adult "illiteracy" remains that "illiterate" adults resemble children both in cognitive and emotional terms. Any arguments in this research regarding similarities between adult and children's literacy need to be qualified within the context of complex debates about the benefits of literacy and consequent differences between those who are literate and those who are not.⁸ There is no assumption in this research that adults who cannot read and write or who have low levels of literacy are child-like or in a state of arrested development. Children and adults who are beginner readers are clearly essentially dissimilar in terms of their experiences, maturity, autonomy and intellectual competence.

⁸ This point relates to a major debate in the study of literacy and is partially developed in Chapter 2: Literature review. It relates to whether the acquisition of literacy results in fundamental and qualitative cognitive change. This debate is not addressed in any detail. My position differs from the so-called "Great divide" theorists (see Lyster 1992a).

Children and adult beginner readers do however, share a number of unique features in terms of books which are produced for them:

- texts are generally written for them by literate people (the only exceptions are texts written by peers, i.e. literacy learners, which are in the minority in both cases)
- texts written for them are manipulated to a far greater extent than regular texts for fluent readers. The reasons for this vary. Firstly they have, by definition, to cater for basic levels of literacy. Secondly, they are censored and manipulated. This is to cater for the supposed emotional immaturity and malleability of children on the one hand, and the supposedly greater suggestibility and functional requirements of adult beginner readers on the other. The ideological role of literature is therefore much less disguised and more overt in beginner books for both groups
- books for both adult and children beginner readers are generally selected and purchased by mediators like parents (in the case of children), and government officials, teachers and librarians (in the case of both adults and children). This often involves a centralised purchasing process
- in most cases writers and selectors assume that they know what is best for the target group.

In addition to the particular commonalities above, it is assumed that adults generally, like children, continue to take pleasure in creative, playful and imaginative pursuits.

Despite the above provisos regarding differences between adults and children, this research is nevertheless based on the premise that the fertile field of children's literacy and literature offers tools and insights for examining and improving books for adult beginner readers.

2.4 The relevance of this research

Research in adult literacy has not delivered answers as to how fiction for adult beginner readers can be developed, analysed and evaluated. To my knowledge, detailed textual analysis has not been conducted on books for adult beginner readers

in South Africa and has only been done to a very limited extent elsewhere (see Coles 1977).

Books of fiction for adult beginner readers are important both in order to develop the skills of reading and to develop enjoyment of reading. Both purposes assume that enjoyable, engaging books are more likely to be successful in achieving those purposes than dull, irrelevant ones. Research into fiction for adult beginner readers in South Africa is important for a number of reasons. For many adults, these books constitute their first encounter with a story that is written down. Unlike many middle class children who are learning to read, adults with little or no schooling have typically not been exposed to books in their homes in childhood. As adults, their closest association with books is usually with their children's schoolbooks. Their children in turn tend to go to poorly-resourced schools, which do not use real literature or whole language approaches to the teaching of reading. They are unlikely to have access to, or have been encouraged to use libraries, except as places to study or look things up.

The overall result is that adult beginner readers do not know much about how "the rules of the story game are transferred to the print on a page" (Hunt 1991, p.73, referring to knowledge which many young, particularly middle class children possess. In this sense all texts are unconventional to adult beginner readers). It can therefore be argued that a limited first encounter with books of fiction deserves books of high quality. It can also be argued that the better the quality of the books which adult beginner readers first encounter, the more likely they will be to be motivated and persevere with learning to read. Regardless of possible further encounters with books, some adult beginner readers may only read 10 books in their lives. Viewed from this perspective, writers and selectors of books at this level bear considerable responsibilities and need to be as well-informed as possible. It is assumed that this focused, detailed research into a particular corpus of books will have potential practical application in terms of improving the selection, evaluation and writing of books for adult beginner readers.

This research also offers insights into how adult beginner readers are constructed in the South African context. Detailed analysis of these books has the potential to reveal

often hidden assumptions regarding the purposes of literacy and literacy provision for adults. The reading books available for adult beginner readers in South Africa act as a mirror, reflecting how adult literacy is constructed in a context of dramatic social change with competing national and local agendas.

3. The focus of the research and key research questions

This research consists of a detailed description and textual analysis of a particular corpus of books published in South African for adult beginner readers between 1990 and 2000 (see Appendix 1 for list). Often termed “easy readers” these are books which are published as “stand alone” texts which can be used in various ways in different contexts. They are not workbooks or textbooks although they may be used in this manner. The most basic books, i.e. ABET Level 1 books⁹, were selected for this research. The reason for this focus is that books aimed at this level are arguably the most challenging to develop because they have to meet the dual and often contradictory demands of readability and engagement.

In South Africa, ABET Level 1 is widely understood to be the adult equivalent of Grades 1 to 3 for children. Although there are different conceptions of what this means, publishers nevertheless categorise books according to these levels, either in their catalogues or signalled in the books themselves. Level 1 books generally have large print, a few sentences per page, relatively few pages and are generously illustrated. A typical ABET Level 1 book consists of 30 pages in total (15 text and 15 illustrations) with 30 sentences (2 per page) in a 14 point size (see Appendix 8, 9 and 17 for typical examples).

⁹ ABET is an acronym for Adult Basic Education and Training. This is the dominant term currently used to describe adult literacy work in South Africa. It signifies a formalised and systematic approach to literacy provision for adults articulated through the National Qualifications Framework. (NQF). The concept of ABET signals an attempt to integrate education and training which is a foundational principle of the transformed South African education and training system (see Chapter 3 for more detailed explanation). The NQF divides all education and training into 8 levels. ABET is divided into 4 sub-levels which are equivalent to NQF level 1 (see Appendix 2). ABET sub-levels are conventionally referred to as levels, e.g. ABET Level 1.

The research is divided into two parts: a broad descriptive review of all the books in the corpus published in all South Africa's official languages and a detailed analysis of English books. These books are described and analysed using analytical tools developed specifically for the purposes of this research.

These analytical tools allow for description and analysis in terms of:

- ❑ readability (basic text features such as word and sentence length)
- ❑ educational and literary quality
- ❑ how the reader is constructed (ideological considerations)

Specific research questions were:

- ❑ what are the features of books published for adult beginner readers in South Africa?
- ❑ to what extent do they meet criteria for "good" literature as articulated in the study of children's literacy?
- ❑ how do they construct readers?
- ❑ to what extent do they reflect dominant views in children's literacy in terms of literary quality and the construction of readers?
- ❑ what do they reveal about pedagogy and purpose in adult literacy?
- ❑ how are books for adults different from children's books and why?
- ❑ does research into literature for newly literate children, which is considerable, provide models for literature for newly literate adults on either a theoretical or practical level and in what way?
- ❑ is close textual analysis a useful tool for analysing, evaluating and developing books for adult beginner readers?

3.1 How books were selected

In order to contain and control the focus of study, books were selected for detailed examination on the basis that they were:

- ❑ written and published primarily for adults in South Africa
- ❑ designated as ABET Level 1 books by the publishers of these books
- ❑ published between 1990 and 2000

- ❑ published to commercial standards for general distribution
- ❑ freely available
- ❑ written in continuous prose
- ❑ fiction (or at least superficially appeared to be fiction)
- ❑ written in English (this applied only to the books selected for detailed analysis)

Reasons for the choice of each of these selection criteria are explained below:

Written and published primarily for adults

This requirement is based on the fact that there are many children's books which are suitable for adults (see Bloem & Padak 1996, Smallwood 1992 and Sharp 1991) and on the fact that children's books appear in catalogues for adult beginner readers (The ERA Initiative 1995). Commercial publishers promote these dual-purpose books for financial reasons, but unless books were written and published primarily for adults at the beginner level, they have not been used in this research.

Designated as ABET Level 1 books by the relevant publisher

This requirement was introduced to avoid imposing level criteria which might conflict with those of the publishers. Part of the purpose of the general description of ABET Level 1 books is to indicate how publishers categorise books at this level.

Published between 1990 and 2000

This period was selected in order to avoid a historical review of books for adult beginner readers, as well as to coincide with the "new South African" era post 1990, epitomised by the release of Mandela, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) and the formation of a democratically elected government of national unity. In addition, very few books of fiction were published to commercial standards at ABET Level 1 prior to 1990.

Published to commercial standards for wide distribution

This constraint was imposed in order to exclude in-house publications produced by various literacy agencies like Learn and Teach and Operation Upgrade¹⁰. These were generally printed in-house on a low budget. They were mainly intended for their own literacy learners or client organisations. They were generally not freely available, were not marketed and were not purchased by libraries. Although these books are equally valid sources of evidence as those published to commercial standards for general distribution, they are excluded here because of their limited distribution.

Freely available

This constraint was imposed in order to exclude readers that have to be purchased as part of a package containing classroom workbooks.

Written in continuous prose

This criterion was imposed in order to exclude poetry and pure comic books, both of which are used for ABET Level 1 learners but which require different analytical tools. Continuous prose is taken in its widest sense to mean pages of text containing full sentences. In the context of ABET Level 1 books, where some books only contain one sentence per page, this is clearly a generous view of the concept of continuous prose.

Fiction (or superficially appeared to be fiction)

This criterion was imposed in order to exclude clearly non-fictional texts (i.e. those which are overtly didactic or for information purposes). This definition of fiction therefore includes anything written in story form.

Written in English

This criterion was imposed because of the limitations of my linguistic ability and because the majority of ABET Level 1 texts published in South Africa are generated in English. However, books published in all South Africa's official languages are included in the broad descriptive review of ABET Level 1 books.

¹⁰ These organisations are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3.

3.2 Selection of books

According to the above criteria, 120 books in total and 38 English books were included in the corpus. Although every attempt was made to be as comprehensive as possible, there will inevitably be omissions and also disagreements about what should or should not have been included.

4. Theoretical framework and assumptions

The core assumption of this research is that texts in themselves can be used as evidence, and that the analysis of texts specifically produced to promote the acquisition and retention of literacy skills provides a key to how literacy is understood, to how learners are constructed and to the educational theories which underpin and inform these texts. By focusing on texts themselves, the assumption here is that while each reader is unique and responds to texts accordingly, texts in themselves have stable enough meanings to allow for generalised interpretation. Texts can be seen to encode meaning (Hunt 1991 and Baker and Freebody 1989).

The key questions of this research relate to the quality and purpose of books for adult beginner readers. The methods were predominantly derived from research in the related and reciprocal fields of children's literacy and Children's literature. These applied fields draw on literary theory, linguistics, sociology, anthropology and cognitive psychology. The key research methods utilised in textual analysis in these fields are literary criticism, discourse analysis, content analysis and narrative analysis.

4.1 Using texts as evidence – theoretical perspectives

Without going into detailed theoretical debates, which are beyond the scope of this research, it is necessary to briefly locate the theoretical position which this research reflects and adopts. In terms of trends in the study of literature (i.e. fiction and poetry), the idea that texts are stable enough to merit independent analysis, sits uneasily between the theoretical certainties of the first half of the twentieth century, and the instability of the late twentieth century.

Literary theory has undergone radical shifts and transformations in the last century. These shifts are based on changing conceptions of the nature of the relation between the author, the text and the reader, and upon the very definition of the text itself. The general shift from an emphasis on the author, to an emphasis on the text, to an emphasis on the reader has meant that the certainties of the literary criticism of the first half of this century have been replaced by the intense uncertainties of post-structuralism and post-modernism. Emphasis has changed from what texts mean and whether they are good (i.e. evaluation), to how texts mean, what they do and how they are read (i.e. analysis but not evaluation).

These shifts are evident not only in literary criticism but in literacy pedagogy, literacy studies, linguistics, cultural and media studies and communication studies all of which have reciprocal intersection and influence. A dominant influence has been that of linguistics.

“Taking a broader perspective, this disciplinary shift occurred in tandem with a metatheoretical shift across the social sciences and much of the academy overall. Philosophy, social history, literary criticism and theory, linguistics, media study and the theoretical sciences were all beneficiaries of this new linguistic turn.

(Rorty 1967 cited in Hruby 2001 pg. 55).

It is not possible to go into a detailed analysis of theoretical shifts in each of these disciplines many of which relate to what Gee (2000) refers to as “the social turn”. Theoretical shifts in literary criticism are discussed below as an illustrative and influential example of developments in various disciplines.

4.1.1 Literary criticism

Two broad currents will be discussed: so-called traditional literary criticism which dominated literary theory until the 1960s, and newer critical approaches, often referred to as critical theory, which have held sway in various forms in the second half of this century.

Traditional forms of literary criticism¹¹ have been based on “epistemological and ontological certainty” regarding the author-text-reader relationship (Rice and Waugh 1989). In traditional literary criticism epitomised by the work of literary critics like Leavis, Richards and Empson, the text itself is seen as central and stable, and the job of the literary critic is to reveal or unveil the true meaning of what has been inserted into the text by the author (Barry 1995).

There are a number of basic assumptions in this approach. Firstly, that there are some works which are good literature and therefore of timeless significance and which speak to what is constant in human nature. By definition then, there must be some works which are bad literature and not of timeless and of universal significance. Secondly, and central to the methods of textual criticism used, the literary text contains its own meaning within itself. It does not therefore have to be placed in socio-political, literary-historical or autobiographical context. In fact, some critics believe that it is imperative that these texts are analysed in isolation from these contexts, so that there are no prior assumptions or expectations to contaminate the analysis. Another basic tenet of this approach is that the purpose of literature is a noble one - the “enhancement of life and the propagation of humane values” (Barry 1995, p.20). Literature, according to this view, should fuse form and content in an organic way, and demonstrate or show what it means, rather than explaining or saying what it means.

In traditional literary criticism the text becomes a verbal icon, an artefact separate from both writer and reader. The critic is not concerned with things outside of the text – hence the term “intrinsic criticism” (Birch 1991). Literary criticism must interpret the text, mediating between it and the reader. The terms used to define the application of this method are “practical criticism” or “intrinsic criticism”, the latter term illustrating the core assumption of the method. Analysis of texts using these methods consists of examining literary devices such as sense, feeling, intention, tone, rhythm and metre - the psychological effects within the text that enable the reader to understand the essence of the text by treating it as “an embodiment of the authors

¹¹ This refers primarily to the study of fiction and poetry.

consciousness.... of which the unifying essence is the author's mind" (Eagleton 1983 cited in Birch 1991, p. 66)). These techniques can be used on any kind of literary text, whether it is poetry or an epistolary novel.

Literature and literariness is central to traditional literary criticism and has been severely critiqued by critical theory. Traditional literary criticism posits the idea of a literary canon – a collection of good, enduring, universal works of literature which, upon inspection and analysis, reveal themselves to be exemplars of their particular genre. It is assumed that, given the correct amount of sensitivity and understanding, knowledgeable individuals will reach consensus as to what constitutes (good) literature. As mentioned above, by definition, certain works are thereby excluded.

Superman comics and Mills & Boon novels, (i.e. examples of popular fiction), do not fit into notions of literature or literariness (Eagleton 1983). Eagleton and many other critical theorists problematise the idea of “good,” in the sense that it immediately introduces a subjective, context-specific set of value judgements. The idea that a certain set of criteria can be developed, which can be used to evaluate any work of literature despite its author, its context, its intention, or how and for what purpose it is read is highly contested. According to Barry (1995), by focusing exclusively on the text, traditional literary criticism dissociated itself from language studies, historical considerations and philosophical considerations. It was precisely these features which critical theory re-introduced into literary criticism.

Newer critical approaches, often called critical theory, define themselves against traditional literary criticism (or liberal humanism) (Barry 1995). Critical theory arose in the 1960s based on Marxist theory, the structuralism of the linguist de Saussure, and developed by Barthes and Derrida into the post-structuralist approach to literature which characterises and currently dominates literary criticism.

Structuralism had at its core the distinction between the signifier and the signified which make up the sign. By articulating the arbitrariness of the language (the signifier) from that which it signified (the concept), structuralism radically challenged the supposed enduring stability of the sign, and provided a set of tools by which literary theorists (amongst others) were able to challenge and analyse the ideological

as well as formal constructions of a literary work. A key concept of structuralism is that signs are defined by what they are not, rather than what they are. The idea of a hut, for example, can only be understood in relation to other words which signify dwellings such as the word palace. Words stand in syntagmic relation to each other (as in the above example), or in opposition to each other, (i.e. something is defined in relation to its opposite - love in relation to hate, etc.). By defining signs in terms of absences or opposites, multiple interpretations become inevitable (Birch 1991).

Post-structuralism pushed the implications of the arbitrariness of the sign much further, and argued that language itself was the constructor of knowledge and ideas. It thus became impossible for the literary critic to analyse a text because of the slippage of meanings which any single word or sentence or text could mean.

By radically questioning the author-text-reader relationship and the very nature of the text itself, critical theory, at its most extreme casts serious doubt on the possibility of analysing texts at all. Certainly there is no possibility of a definitive reading of a text. Recurrent ideas in critical theory are that the so-called “givens” of existence like truth, human nature, gender, selfhood, and literature are socially constructed. A key feature of critical theory is the belief that reality is constructed through language rather than recorded by language. This introduces the notion of a textual universe – the entire universe consists of infinite webs of meaning.

In critical theory, the emphasis, therefore, moves to the reader who constructs meanings as he or she reads. At its most extreme, post-structuralism suggests that each time a reader reads, a new text is created. In its more modest manifestations, post-structuralism suggests that it is impossible to determine a fixed centre of meaning to a text as it varies according to what a particular reader brings to the text. It therefore becomes almost impossible to ask what a text means, but only how it means and to whom (Birch 1991).

Once texts have been created, they become independent of the author, who is presumed dead or absent. The way in which texts are analysed is through deconstructing them, i.e. revealing their contradictions. Critical theory asserts that

every practical procedure presupposes a theoretical perspective of some kind, even though this may not be evident to the user.

To sum up the critical theory approach:

“Politics is pervasive,
Language is constitutive,
Truth is provisional,
Meaning is contingent,
Human nature is a myth.”
(Barry 1995, p. 36).

“When we analyse literature we are speaking of literature; when we evaluate it we are speaking of ourselves.”
(Eagleton 1983, p. 92).

The problem with critical theory is that it introduces a relativism even to its own project which disables argument. If there are no fixed centres of meaning to texts, how do we even talk about them at all, and how is it possible that so many readers understand a particular text in similar ways? (Solomon 1986). Various attempts have been made by critical theorists to deal with these problems. For example, the idea of interpretive communities has been introduced. Groups of people who have enough background in common are deemed to have a similar reading of a particular text.

The notion of texts as cultural artefacts or social constructions appears to “permit” textual analysis even for those who critique more conservative forms of literary criticism. Serafini (2002) for example distinguishes three literary theories that inform reading instructional practices: modernist, transactional and critical theory. He decries modernist theory which says that meaning is located in the text and can be “uncovered through close textual analysis” (Serafini 2002, p. 3). However, textual analysis is desirable and permissible when it is seen as the interrogation of texts as social constructions. This is done in order to interpret the “systems of power inherent in the meanings available” (Serafini 2002, p. 6).

It appears that the purposes and trajectories of textual analysis determine its acceptability in various quarters. Textual analysis in the service of ideological analysis of issues such as gender, race, and class is considered a legitimate method by critical theorists. Textual analysis in the service of aesthetic judgments returns it to the literary canon and modernism. Corcoran (1990) relates developments in literary theory to what happens in the classroom. At the one extreme, texts are seen as cultural hegemonic artefacts in which the teacher is the custodian and transmitter of literary culture. At the other extreme, teachers and students are subjects who are constructed in the very processes of the reading and writing they have already done.

4.2 Narratology

In addition to its influence on literary theory more generally, structuralism is foundational to the study of narrative, Narratology. This is the term for a particular type of literary theory concerned with analysing narrative, which has close links with what is known as Russian formalism, French structuralism and certain forms of post-structuralism. Narratology is based on the attempt to identify structural elements common to all narratives, and to analyse them as systematic constructions (Bal 1985, Toolan 1988.).

The Russian formalists, using linguistics to analyse literature (see Eagleton 1983), concentrated on the form rather than the content of a literary work. This went against the common-sense notions of focusing on what something meant. By emphasising form rather than content, the Russian formalists focused attention on what was peculiar to the language of literature (which to them gave it its literariness). According to the Russian formalists, literature is distinct because it uses language “made strange”, i.e. language which draws attention to itself precisely by differing from everyday oral language. A literary work is seen as a more or less “arbitrary assemblage of devices like sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme and narrative techniques” (Eagleton 1983, p. 4). The focus is on the transformation and intensification of ordinary language which characterises literature. Because literature utilises unfamiliar language, i.e. language which draws attention to itself, the reader’s perception of the object being described is enhanced. Analysis of texts focuses on the

ways in which literary language is used differently, in the structures underlying, for example, a poem or a novel.

Semiotic narratology, a specific branch of Narratology, concerns itself with any narrative modes, literary or not. It focuses on “story grammars,” and uses minimal narrative units to do this. This method of analysis is exemplified by Propp’s analysis of folktales in terms of seven “spheres of action” (Eagleton 1983) and 31 fixed elements or functions. According to this mode of analysis, any individual folk tale can be reduced to a combination of these spheres of action (the hero, the helper, the villain, the person sought-for, etc.). This technique can be used on any text no matter how popular or contemporary. Eco, for example, using Semiotic narratology, analysed the James Bond novels in terms of a basic narrative scheme relating to the hero having a task or quest, which is thwarted by the villain, who is in the end vanquished (see Prinsloo 1991 and Berger 1997 for Narratology in relation to popular media). The centrality of the concept of “story” in Narratology draws it closer to traditional literary criticism. By determining universal and stable features of stories, Narratology has multiple influences and bedfellows in traditional literary criticism as well as post-structuralist critiques of children’s readers.

4.3 Reception theory

Reception theory is alternatively referred to as reader response theory (Holland 1975, Hayhoe and Parker 1990) or transactional theory (Serafini 2002). Reception theory in its classical form, developed from hermeneutics in Germany and focuses on the reader’s role in literature. Characterised by the work of Iser (1978), whose seminal work was *The act of reading*, reception theory focuses on what takes place in the reader’s mind while reading. The reader “makes implicit connection, fills in gaps, draws inferences and tests out hunches; and to do this means drawing on a tacit knowledge of the world in general and of literary conventions in particular.” (Eagleton 1983, p. 76). Reading is not seen as a linear, cumulative process. What the reader is doing is constructing hypotheses about the meaning of the text, which are constantly revised so that the reader, while reading, may retrospectively change an interpretation made earlier on in the text.

The reader comes to the text with certain expectations which are then modified by what is learnt, and the “hermeneutical circle – moving from part to whole and back to part – will begin to revolve” (Eagleton 1983, p. 77). The reader reads forwards and backwards, predicting and recollecting, in a complex and dynamic process. Although the reader applies certain codes in order to interpret literary works which are written according to certain codes which govern them, there is not a direct correspondence between them. The best literary works are those that challenge these customary codes/expectations and bring new critical awareness to the reader.

Iser (1978) refers to the good reader being transformed at the hands of the text. A good text is one which defamiliarises conventional assumptions and challenges normal habits of perception (There are similarities here with Russian formalism). The reader receives the narrative by composing it. The function of a literary narrative is to “initiate and guide a search for meaning among a spectrum of possible meanings” (Bruner 1986, p.25). For Iser, despite the possibilities of different interpretations by different readers, the reader is logically constrained by the text itself. Later reception theorists like Fish believe that there is no objective literary work “out there,” but merely differing accounts of what the text has done to different individuals (Birch 1991).

Reception theory or transactional theory is situated between traditional literary criticism and critical theory leaning more towards critical theory because of its key focus on context. Whereas critical theory emphasises the social and ideological, reception theory emphasises individual and personalised responses

The brief outline of literary theory, Narratology and Reception theory above, reflects intersecting historical influences. It alerts us to the fact that an analysis of texts without reference to particular readers must, by definition, be tentative. This does not however mean that a focus on texts is not legitimate.

4.4 Linguistics - Discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, stylistics

Theoretical debates in literary theory are mirrored in linguistics. Basically, the trajectory of the debate follows a similar pattern to that in literary theory:

- ❑ stable text or language amenable to objective analysis ,
- ❑ text or language only understood in terms of interaction with reader/speaker,
- ❑ text or language only understood in context/multiple readings and understandings.

The interstices between debates in literary theory and linguistics are most manifest in critical discourse analysis and stylistics.

According to van Dijk (1997) the commonsense use of the term discourse refers to forms of language use and the ideas or philosophies associated with them. In this sense the term “the discourse of neo-liberalism” would be used. Discourse analysis, the more formal term, refers to functions and purposes of language use in context, i.e. “who uses language, how, why and when” (van Dijk 1997, p.2). Discourse has three main dimensions: language use, communication of belief (cognition) and interaction in social context. Each of these three dimensions influences the other and it is the task of discourse analysis to explain the relationships between these three dimensions. Discourse analysis is multidisciplinary, used for example in linguistics, psychology and the social sciences. Discourse analysis can occur at the level of syntax, semantics (meaning), style (variation), rhetoric and schemata (overall form) (van Dijk 1997).

4.4.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a form of discourse analysis which not only analyses text or conversation in its social, cultural and ideological context but utilises this analysis to challenge dominance in its various forms. In other words, critical discourse analysts take sides. The purpose of critical discourse analysis is “to help increase consciousness of language and power and particularly of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others” (Fairclough 1989 cited in Mills 1995, p. 2). Critical discourse analysis emphasises the “dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both *products* of

socio-economic forces and institutions – reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc. – and *practices* which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions” (Fowler 1981 cited in Mills 1995, p. 8).

Gee (2000) defines discourses as:

“...characteristic (socially and culturally formed, but historically changing) ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and toward people and things (ways which are circulated and sustained within various texts, artefacts, images, social practices, and institutions, as well as in moment-to-moment social interactions) such that certain perspectives and states of affairs come to be taken as “normal” or “natural” and others come to be taken as “deviant” or “marginal” (Gee 2000, p. 4).

4.4.2 Stylistics

Stylistics is generally regarded as the analysis of the language of literary texts (Mills 1995). Although there are considered to be significant differences between literary stylistics and linguistic stylistics, there is considerable agreement that stylistics is concerned with close analyses of the *language* of texts in order to determine the relationship between language and artistic function. Researchers consider, for example, why authors express themselves in particular ways and how certain aesthetic effects are achieved through language. The examination of the literariness of texts is clearly influenced by Russian formalism.

Stylistics assumes that a focus on the language of texts enables a more rigorous objective analysis than an individual subjective appreciation or evaluation of texts which is the route of more traditional literary criticism. However, as Hunt (1991, p. 103), cautions regarding the supposed greater objectivity of stylistics, “the selection of both text and analytic method is in itself a critical act: to describe form is to make a critical statement.” As with literary criticism and discourse analysis, stylistics has produced a social turn through the development of critical stylistics which is similar to critical discourse analysis in its goals and emphases.

Mills has developed the concept of feminist stylistics which is “a form of politically motivated stylistics whose aim is to develop an awareness of the way gender is handled in texts” (Mills 1995, p. 207). She refers to the development of a replicable model of analysis which enables a “close, suspicious reading of text” (Mills *ibid.*, p. 15).

4.5 The empirical study of literature

The International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL), consisting of scholars from a range of disciplines from around the world, firmly asserts that literary texts are amenable to empirical analysis by various methods including content analysis. The aim of the organisation is to “give new theoretical approaches an institutionalised form in order to increase the chances of being recognized and acknowledged in the traditional world of literary studies” (Schmidt 2000, p. 1).

Griswold and Hull (1998, p. 1), members of IGEL, distinguish between what they term “strong-text” and “weak-text” approaches to the study of literature. Strong-text approaches are “based on the idea of a universal ‘mind’ responding to the writer’s intentions set out on paper” while weak-text approaches are based on individual readings. They argue for a middle position in which “moments of meaning” (i.e. shared moments of meaning) occur when texts “work” for “some social groups whose members share roughly the same schemata and/or occupy roughly the same position in the distribution of knowledge, resources and other forms of capital.”

IGEL locates itself between New Criticism (Critical theory) and Reader Response Theory (Cupchik 1998) and attributes the increasing interest in the field of the empirical study of literature to the emergence of media studies and to the interest in cultural participation which requires the use of empirical methods (Ibsch 1998). Examples of the application of empirical methods are: establishing how readers establish affective relationships with fictional characters; the experience and recollection of emotions while reading fiction; and how the nature and number of metaphors used contribute to the degree of literariness of a genre (Miall and Kuiken 1998).

4.6 The study of children's books

Children's literature, as an academic discipline, asserts that children's books constitute a distinct and unique genre amenable to literary analysis just like any other genre. Further, mainstream Children's literature studies asserts that good stories are universal and that there is not a separate set of inferior rules for studying literature for children. Its major theoretical impetus is therefore unfashionable in terms of current, dominant trends in literary criticism which lean towards fracture, instability, multiple readings and lack of closure. Mainstream scholarship in Children's literature is, by comparison, relatively traditional and unapologetic in terms of its assertion that great and good literature exists, is identifiable, universal and amenable to analysis¹².

In addition to its mainstream position on literary criticism, Children's literature is also studied from a semiotic, narrative and critical theory perspective. This perspective draws on Narratology and critical discourse analysis.

4.7 Theoretical assumptions of this research

In relation to the above theoretical debates, the assumptions upon which this research is based are situated pragmatically between the two extremes: that texts have universal stable meanings, independent of context, and that texts have multiple unique meanings, defying valid comment and generalisation. It is assumed in this research that it is possible to analyse and to some extent evaluate beginner reading books according to criteria and theoretical perspectives conventionally associated with any other "literary" works. My assumption here is that some stories are better than others and that it is possible, to some degree, to establish which factors contribute to this. In addition I assume that just as no education is neutral, no texts are neutral. Texts are products of particular contexts and reflect or challenge dominant views relating in this case to literacy, literacy teaching, race, class and gender.

¹² See Littlefair (1993) and Perera (1993). This is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 2.

5. Research methodology

This research has been challenging because of the contradictory demands of rigour, and a search for amongst others, the increasingly elusive and unique factors that constitute a good story. “Goodness” can be defined according to a number of criteria: effectiveness for education and literary quality being two of the most obvious and not necessarily compatible features. A good story consists of more than the sum of its parts. Coherence, pace, and the dynamic forward driving motion of a story are notoriously elusive and difficult to identify and reduce to their component parts. Arguably it is impossible to speak about one text being better than the other, only about one text being different from the other according to various text features.

In addition, books for adult beginner readers are particularly challenging because they have two distinct purposes: to teach reading, and to be interesting and engaging stories. They operate on the assumption that a reader can be made to respond in an engaged and imaginative way to a story which has on average only thirty relatively short sentences with which to achieve these effects. Aesthetic judgments are, in this sense, made within very tight parameters.

There were various alternatives to provide evidence for answers to the specific research questions:

- survey research focusing on reader and mediator preferences (the assumption being that what people like is equivalent to what is good, as well as signalling prevailing conceptions of literacy);
- a comparative analysis of a sample of children’s books and adult books (the assumption being that differences reveal prevailing conceptions of literacy and possibly indicate relative merit in terms of aesthetic criteria);
- the constitution of panels of expert judges to select good books for adults and good books for children (the assumption being that subsequent analysis would reveal differences both in terms of quality and construction of readers and literacy)
- an analysis of the books themselves

Each of these options presented particular problems and limitations. Survey research regarding reader preferences has been conducted in South Africa (see French 1989, Leach 1991, The ERA Initiative 1999, Lyster 1994). Various methodological problems have made generalisations difficult, notably: readers have been presented with what is available rather than with what is possible; buying patterns of fluent readers or mediators have been conflated with reading preferences of beginner readers (the target group has not been sufficiently isolated); what is preferred has been confused with what is good (popularity has been conflated with quality); readers themselves very often do not have the language with which to explain reasons for their preferences (Lyster 1994).

A comparative analysis of a sample of children's and adult beginner books was difficult because of the wide range of books available for children at this level and the difficulty of selecting a representative sample. Adult beginner level books at the selected level can by contrast be analysed in their entirety. However, because Children's literature is such a significant component of the theoretical underpinnings of this research, a small number of children's texts selected on the basis of their status in the Children's literature field are analysed with the same analytical tool which is applied to the adult beginner reader corpus where relevant.

The constitution of panels of judges creates many methodological and logistical problems relating to selection criteria, reliability and management. This method was rejected mainly for pragmatic reasons. This does not in any way imply that it is not a valid method.

Finally, a decision was made to conduct a primarily qualitative analysis of the texts themselves. This was based on a combination of theoretical and pragmatic considerations. The specific method used can be seen as a combination of content analysis and narrative analysis.

Terminology - textual and content analysis

I have chosen to favour the term *content analysis* for this research for the following pragmatic reasons: firstly it is the term that is most often used to describe educational research relating to textual analysis of particular types of books such as textbooks and

children's basal readers. The term *content analysis* also suggests a particular research process which is most closely allied to the one which has been followed in this research. The term *textual analysis*, though more contemporary, is a more generic term with multiple uses and meanings. Some authors use *textual analysis* and *content analysis* interchangeably. Others see content analysis as a particular form of textual analysis (Truex 1996) or use the term *textual analysis* interchangeably with *documentary analysis* (Manning and Cullum-Swan 1994). The term *textual analysis*, particularly the term *text analysis* also suggests detailed "schooled" linguistic analysis which has not been used in this research (see for example, *Advances in text analysis* (Coulthard 1994) and *Text and corpus analysis* (Stubbs 1996).

The term *content analysis* appears to be used most consistently in relation to communication or media studies and education whereas linguists, particularly in relation to critical discourse analysis, most consistently use the term *textual analysis*.

5.1 Content analysis

5.1.1 Definition

Merriam and Simpson (1995) define content analysis as the systematic analysis of visual, aural or printed communications. It is defined as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages" (Holsi 1969 cited in Merriam and Simpson 1995, p. 155). There is some dispute about whether content analysis applies only to verbal communication which is or can be written down, or whether it refers to a wider conception of "text". Weber (1990) clearly relates content analysis to verbal communication whereas others such as Stemler (1998, 2001) relate it to visual communication such as paintings and television. Stemler does make the proviso that it needs to be applied to durable data in order to allow for replication.

There is wide agreement that content analysis is a "systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding" (Stemler 2001). Content analysis is used to make inferences about messages within the text, the writer, the audience and even the culture and time of

which these are a part. It is used in a “dizzying array of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science and many other fields of enquiry” (Palmquist 2000, p. 1). Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) see content analysis as a technique to characterise and compare documents mainly in mass communication research and cultural studies.

5.1.2 Characteristics

As a research method, content analysis has certain core characteristics:

- ❑ it is a rule-guided process requiring the completion of certain steps
- ❑ it is systematic, requiring the routine and consistent completion of these steps
- ❑ it is a process that aims for generality, i.e. it can be applied to other contexts
- ❑ it deals with manifest content

(Guba and Lincoln 1981 cited in Merriam and Simpson 1995)

5.1.3 Classification as qualitative or quantitative

Opinions vary as to whether content analysis is a qualitative or quantitative technique. Merriam and Simpson (1995) and Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) argue that it is primarily a quantitative technique, while Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that it is primarily a qualitative one. Weber (1990, p. 10) claims that “the best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operation on texts. Thus content analysis methods combine what are usually thought to be antithetical modes of analysis.”

These diverse views indicate that content analysis can display both qualitative and quantitative features. It can be used to quantify mechanical features of text, for example to do with readability, or to extract qualitative features from, for example, autobiographies, in order to make inferences about genius. How content analysis is classified, appears largely to depend on the ultimate purpose for which it is intended. In this research content analysis is used in both qualitative and quantitative ways.

5.1.4 Practical applications

In its widest conception content analysis can be applied to the content of a wide range of media such as:

- books
- magazines
- newspapers
- photographs
- cartoons
- comic strips
- interviews
- movies
- minutes of meetings
- radio
- television
- political documents
- political speeches
- letters
- individual stories

(geolog.com/gmsmnt/gmca.htm)

It can be used for examining trends and patterns such as shifts in public opinion, public policy, political parties. Its uses range from

- content analysis of newspapers such as the relative amount of space devoted to particular current events
- comparisons of real and simulated suicide notes
- determining authorship of documents
- definitions of heroes in popular culture
- comparisons of song lyrics
- analysis of gender differences in conversations (Weber 1990).

Content analysis of readers and textbooks has been put to considerable use in the study of the literacy. This has been done in order to determine pedagogic methods and constructs such as gender and race (Monaghan and Hartman 2001).

5.1.5 Advantages and critiques of content analysis

Advantages of content analysis as a research technique are that it has broad application, is efficient, economical, objective and reliable (Merriam and Simpson 1995). It allows inferences to be made in situations where it would be too complex, difficult, obtrusive or expensive to obtain information by other means. It also allows researchers to deal with large volumes of data. Also documents provide unique insights. One of the strongest critiques of content analysis is that it does not take context or the reader of the text directly into account, although the creation of the categories for analysis (words, themes, etc.) is in itself an inferential process, based on the views of panels or samples of readers (Manning and Cullum-Swan 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 359) however, caution against the use of rigid quantitative content analysis techniques by quoting Krakauer, a proponent of qualitative content analysis of text in its totality, “inadequacy of quantitative analyses stems from the methods themselves: when trying to establish the meaning of texts by breaking them down into quantifiable units (words, expressions), analysts in fact destroy the very object they are supposed to be studying.” This caution is particularly valid in relation to literature whose qualities notoriously elude quantitative analysis.

Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) trace the development of narrative and content analysis. Narrative analysis, as indicated earlier, arises from a structuralist/formalist approach to narrative in which characters perform a stable and limited number of functions and in which the plot unfolds in an invariant sequence. This technique can be used in a rigorous and formal manner. At the other extreme, narrative analysis is used to study the lives of subjects via the way in which they “narrate” their life stories. Certain elements of narrative analysis are part of this research enquiry, such as the nature and role of the hero, but this is not conducted in a formal sense.

5.1.6 Data analysis

The most common method used in content analysis is to do a word frequency count with the assumption being that the words mentioned most often are words that are most important or reflect the greatest concerns (for example in a political speech). Problems with word counts are obvious: synonyms may be used to express the same concept and some words have multiple meanings depending on context. Sentences and paragraphs are equally valid sources of inference with quantitative or qualitative analyses applied.

Coding in content analysis can be done through two main routes: emergent coding and a priori coding. When emergent coding is used, categories are established after some preliminary examination of the data. With a priori coding, as the name suggests, categories are established on theoretical grounds before examination of the data.

Coding units are defined according to physical, syntactic, referential or propositional features (Stemler 2001). The physical boundaries of a newspaper article or letter, for example, are their natural boundaries. Syntactic boundaries are the separations created by the author, such as words, sentences or paragraphs. Referential units refer to the way a unit is represented. For example, the president of a country can be referred to in the press in a number of different ways. Propositional units are the most complex way of breaking down a text as they divide a sentence into its underlying propositions.

In addition to defining coding units, three kinds of units are typically used in content analysis: sampling units, context units and recording units. Sampling units can be words, sentences or paragraphs. Context units are used for analysing words in context and can be words, paragraphs or longer. Recording units are not determined by physical boundaries but by ideas. One sentence can be recorded in three different recording units for example. Computer analysis is commonly used in quantitative content analysis and increasingly, software is also being used for qualitative content analysis.

5.1.7 Reliability and validity

These are clearly key issues in content analysis as in any other form of research. Reliability relates to consistency of measurement both intra and inter-rater. Intra-rater reliability relates to whether the same coder would get the same results repeatedly whereas inter-rater reliability refers to whether different coders would categorise the text in the same way. The most common and effective way to improve reliability is to develop explicit coding instructions with categories that are exclusive and exhaustive. Validity refers to whether the inferences drawn on the basis of the content analysis are valid. In order to establish validity, triangulation may be required. This requires the use of multiple sources of information, methods, researchers and theories (Stemler 2001).

5.2 Specific methods used in this research

As stated earlier, this research, a description and analysis of a particular corpus of books for adult beginner readers, consisted of three major parts:

- the development of an analytical tool;
- a broad descriptive review of books published at ABET Level 1 from 1990 – 2000 in all South Africa's official language;
- a detailed content analysis of the English books.

5.2.1 The development of analytical tools

The development of analytical tools was based largely on work in children's literacy and literature. It is discussed in detail in the literature review (Chapter 2) and Chapter 4: *Analytical tools*. It attempts to allow for description and analysis of literary, pedagogic and ideological features of books. Chapter 4 describes how the criteria and categories were developed for the analysis of ABET Level 1 books for adult beginner readers in South Africa. Each category is discussed according to its origins and application. It is a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis which has proved useful in the analysis of beginner level books for children and provides a means for analysing a new and complex area. Despite the fact that it draws on the various disciplines which inform the applied fields of education and librarianship, this

research is not a close linguistic analysis, but contains features of it (see Hunt 1991, p. 103 for details of what constitutes a close linguistic analysis).

Categories were derived using a mixture of emergent and a priori coding. As indicated above, the research drew heavily on research in children's literature and literacy but the categories had to be adapted to accommodate the specific manifestations of adult literacy work.

5.2.2 Descriptive review of ABET Level 1 readers in all languages

Surface features of all the books in the corpus were described and analysed using the analytical categories described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 consists of a description and analysis of books in all languages in relation to publisher, language, language origin (whether translated or originated in a particular language), readability features, genre, theme and setting.

5.2.3 In-depth analysis of English books

In addition to the analysis of general surface features as well as genre, theme and setting, the English books were further analysed using more in-depth content analysis.

5.2.4 Comparison with children's books

In order to strengthen discussion, three typical children's books were selected for detailed analysis for purposes of comparison where appropriate. Two are prize-winning picture books and one an example from a reading scheme (Ahlberg and Ahlberg 1986; Yolen 1987 and Hunt 1989).

5.3 Methodological limitations and boundaries

One researcher, applying an analytical tool devised by her, to books some of which she has published, has obvious methodological limitations. Reliability and validity would have to be confirmed via the use of other researchers (to test reliability) and other analytical tools purporting to be measuring the same effects (to test validity). Those applications are beyond the scope of this research, but are potentially fruitful

areas of research in the same field. The use of an analytical tool which contains substantial quantitative features creates unrealistic expectations of “objectivity” beyond those which are created by, for example, the use of an interview schedule and qualitative or ethnographic analysis.

The analytical tool used for this research is a relatively blunt instrument which has descriptive capabilities and can suggest certain trends. Its application to specific texts reveals immediately that textual interpretation is at least partially subjective. For example, the decision as to what constitutes an emotional word or an emotional sentence is dependent on a range of factors, not least of which is the particular mood of the rater at a particular time. Personally, for example, sentences containing imagery¹³ are construed by me as emotional.

Accuracy is also compromised by hand scoring, rather than the use of computer-based scoring which content analysis readily lends itself to. Statistical analysis using computer software is, however, beyond the demands of this research and the capabilities of this researcher! It would in addition create an illusion of objectivity and accuracy which is not my intention.

Notable boundaries of the research are that it does not examine visual features of adult beginner books and it confines itself to ABET Level 1. Illustrations play a highly significant part in conveying meaning in beginner level books. They not only complement text, but convey new and additional information and emotion which is not supplied by the text, especially in relation to depiction of character and setting. Visual literacy is a field of study in its own right and its exclusion from this research does not imply in any way that it is unimportant.

The focus on English books creates particular problems. In South Africa, in practice, English easy readers for adults are read primarily by second language speakers. The literature upon which this research draws for derivation of analytical tools is primarily concerned with books for beginner readers who are first language speakers of the language of the book. In order to draw confident conclusions about the corpus of

¹³ Imagery is here taken to mean figurative language

books for adult beginner readers, books written by first language speakers for first language speakers would need to be analysed. This suggests fruitful areas for further research. The major caution required with this research is that the texts being analysed are second language texts. For example, one of the most common problems which second language readers have to deal with is subjunctive and continuous tenses. Writers of books for adult beginner readers avoid them almost as a matter of course. The use of the subjunctive is, however, highly regarded as contributing to literariness of first language texts (see Chapter 2).

Finally, the New Readers Project has been a major publisher of ABET Level 1 books for adult beginner readers since 1990. The assumptions upon which this project is based have been articulated in this chapter and could potentially skew generalisations in favour of a real literature/Children's literature approach. Attempts are therefore made to control for the influence of the New Readers Project's particular assumptions and approach in the analysis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

This review covers areas pertinent to the research topic. It draws predominantly on the following research areas: reading acquisition, Children's literature, the role and power of fiction, adult literacy and the criteria and methods for evaluating and analysing books for beginner readers.

✓ 2. Learning to read

Reading is an enormously complex process involving perceptual, cognitive, affective and social factors. The imparting and acquisition of the skill of reading is the central project of basic education of both children and adults. The complexity and importance of reading has resulted in inconclusive volumes of research and in methodological debates which continue to rage.

One of the reasons for the lack of agreement regarding effective instructional methods is that literacy is not simply a neutral, homogeneous, technical skill but is also ideological and related to the cultural contexts in which it occurs. The New Literacy Studies has played a pivotal role in challenging conventional notions of the meanings of literacy and emphasising the importance of the social uses and purposes of literacy. The notion of literacy as a single entity, characterised by school-based literacy practices has therefore been challenged by ethnographic researchers who focus on literacy as a social practice (Street 1993, 1995 & 1999; Baynham 1995, Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Baynham and Prinsloo 2001). The key questions underlying many methodological debates are therefore not related to how we read, but why we read, and why certain types of literacy are so central to educational endeavours. New Literacy Studies does not concern itself primarily with pedagogy and will therefore not be discussed in detail here.¹⁴

¹⁴ Gee (2000) traces the history and development of the New Literacy Studies. It is also discussed in relation to adult literacy purposes and easy readers in section 7.1.3 The New Literacy Studies perspective below.

Another significant reason for the lack of agreement regarding instructional methods is that fluent readers simultaneously utilise a number of strategies in order to interpret texts. Depending on which strategy or strategies are regarded as most dominant, different conclusions are drawn about the most effective way to teach reading. Without going into the details of the debates, it is important to summarise some of their key features because they impact directly on the function and importance of easy reading books in relation to beginning literacy.

The major debates regarding the most effective methods for teaching reading have focused on children. These debates have, to some extent, filtered through to the teaching of adults, but the adult literacy field as a whole has never had the financial and consequently intellectual resources at its disposal to engage with the debate on nearly the same scale as occurs in the primary education of children. The reasons for this are speculative: adult education is the poor stepchild of education; adults are not considered to be as important in terms of educational investment as children are because it is thought that the returns are much smaller; the consequences of methodological misjudgements are therefore much less serious than if they occurred with children (Gardener 1991).

2.1 Methodological debates

The two poles of the “great debate” in reading instruction are the phonic approach on the one hand, and the whole language approach on the other. The key differences between them indicate contrasting conceptions of how learning occurs as well as competing philosophical orientations. The brief summary which follows cannot do justice to the complexity of the debate. It is primarily based on the following works: Adams (1991) Adams (1993), Beard (1995), Clay (1991), Durkin (1993), Harrison (1992), Juel (1995), Lyster (1992b), Moon (1988), Meek (1991), Meek and Mills (1988), Oakhill and Beard (1995), Weaver (1998), Pearson and Stephens (1998) and Williams (1993).

The phonic approach, sometimes called a bottom-up approach, essentially views learning as the acquisition of a set of subskills in a predetermined sequence. These sub-skills then combine to form the whole skill. The whole language approach, sometimes called a top-down approach, views learning as a holistic process. Therefore, meaningful wholes are the units of learning and subskills are acquired through inference rather than taught overtly.

Up to the 1960s, the dominant view was that the most efficient way to teach reading in languages using an alphabetic script was through the phonic method. Basically this means teaching learners that certain letters or groups of letters correspond with certain sounds. The underlying premise of this method is that once this basic association has been made and the code has been "cracked", learners will gradually be able to read new words and new texts independently. This method continues to have passionate advocates and remains the method of choice for many teachers. Equally it has passionate critics: "Regardless of its 'technical merit' an instructional approach, whether in the field of reading or any other field, can only be justified as part of an overall educational philosophy. The subskills approaches dominating reading instruction in American schools are clearly rooted in a behaviourist philosophy, where concerns about the learner's mind or spirit are dismissed as irrelevant" (Grundin 1994, p. 77).

During the 1960s, as a reflection of widespread political and social transformation as well as changing conceptions about the nature of learning, a new method for teaching reading arose to challenge the hegemony of the phonic method. This was the psycholinguistic or whole language method. Influential proponents of this method are Frank Smith and Keith and Yetta Goodman (Goodman 1996, Thompson and Nicholson 1999). Terminology for this method varies, often according to the country in which it is used. In the USA the term "whole language" is most commonly used, in England the term "psycholinguistic" used by Smith (1978) is sometimes used and in New Zealand the term "language experience" is often used.

The basics of this method are that learners learn to read by reading meaningful sentences and then groups of sentences. The emphasis is on the reader gaining meaning from the text. Within a pure whole language method, phonics is not taught

overtly at all, the assumption being that phonetic rules will be inferred, just as grammatical rules are inferred when children learn to speak a first language. The fundamental tenet of this method is that a person learns to read by reading. Learning to read using this method therefore requires exposure to a range of texts that use naturally occurring language from the very outset of reading instruction.

Increasingly a middle road between the two extremes has been advocated (see Pearson & Stephens 1998, Harrison 1992). This is as a result of more sophisticated research into the reading process itself, as well as consideration of the pedagogic casualties of strict adherence to extreme and purist approaches.

2.1.1 Mother tongue instruction

Debates about reading methods need to be seen within the context of medium of instruction and language of learning. It is common cause that initial literacy instruction is most effective in the mother tongue/first language of the learner or at least in a language in which the literacy learner is orally fluent. There are overwhelming cognitive, linguistic, cultural and political arguments in support of mother tongue literacy instruction for an extended period before transfer to a second language such as English. Very often, particularly in developing countries where the dominant language is not the first language of the majority of literacy learners, pragmatic considerations prevail. Despite the compelling arguments for mother tongue instruction, the dominant language is used instead. This has implications for the provision of reading materials in languages other than the dominant language as well as on pedagogic decisions about reading methods. It is, for example, difficult if not impossible to use a whole language approach, especially a language experience approach with learners who are not orally fluent in the language of instruction.

2.2 The role of easy readers in beginning reading instruction

The learning materials required for literacy instruction based on the phonic method are workbooks or worksheets containing phonic exercises, as well as graded readers consisting of carefully controlled phonetically-based passages of text. These graded readers, sometimes called basal readers or primers, are the only books necessary for

the implementation of this method. A pure phonic method does not need additional reading books or unstructured reading material during the initial phases of reading instruction.

When the phonic method is used, easy readers (i.e. story books other than primers) are only introduced after graded readers and workbooks. They do not have a role to play in the initial stages of learning to read. Only once the basic skills have been acquired, are learners considered to be ready to read additional easy reading books.

By contrast, when literacy instruction is based on the whole language method, easy reading books are central to the learning of reading from the very beginning of the process. There is not the same linear or staged approach that occurs with the phonic method. Easy reading books are central to the acquisition of the core skills, both in methodological and ideological terms.

Advocates of the whole language approach sometimes use the term, “real books approach”, to distinguish it from approaches which use basal readers. The terminology signals their contention that basal readers are unreal and inappropriate, even for beginner readers. A related and commonly used term is a “literature-based approach” or a “real literature approach”, which also signals a lack of regard for basal readers (Egawa 1990, Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996, Hudson 1988, Campbell 1992 and Aies 1990). Basal readers are regularly criticised for: insipid stories, lack of conflict and character development, contrived language, and low interest. According to whole language proponents, the consequences of using basal readers of this type are that they simply do not encourage reading, and actually put people off reading. Proponents of pure literature-based approaches, are often passionate about the benefits of good literature, and reject any attempts at structuring texts (Pearson 1990, Wiseman 1992, Yule 1992). There are, however, differences of opinion within what is broadly seen as the whole language approach. These differences are dealt with in more detail below.

Phonic and whole language methods are, however, seldom used in their pure form and in practice an eclectic approach is often advocated by researchers and used by teachers. This eclecticism requires that schools and teachers make informed choices about the nature of the easy reading books that they will provide for their learners.

Marie Clay, an international authority on reading, and a proponent of a moderate whole language approach, categorises texts for beginner readers as follows:

- contrived texts (texts in which some level of language is strictly controlled)
- story books (texts which emphasise meaning rather than language)
- transition texts (texts which are close to the oral language of the child)

(Clay 1991)

2.2.1 Contrived texts

Contrived texts are those which are written with the primary purpose of teaching reading. Language is strictly controlled, and phonics often forms the foundation of the text. Quality varies considerably, with some contrived texts successfully introducing meaning, humour and interest. The Dr Seuss books are good examples of this.

Contrived texts often, however, utilise extremely unnatural language, for example:

Lo! I am an ox.
Is my ox to go in as I go by?

(Price in Clay 1991, p.185)

This type of unnatural language is often referred to by its critics as “primerese”, i.e. a language form which does not exist outside of school primers. Grundin, a passionate advocate of a whole language approach based on real literature, refers to primerese as a non-language, and says that primerese writers have “one thing in common: they have nothing to tell children” (Grundin 1994, p. 84). This is because their primary purpose is not to tell a story, but to give children the opportunity to recognise words. This, he claims, is not reading at all, because reading is the process of making sense of printed language which presupposes that there is some sense to make in the language in the first place. Grundin’s criticism makes it clear that the debates in reading are as much ideological as they are technical. The title of Grundin’s (1994) article makes this quite clear: “If it ain’t whole it ain’t language – or back to the basics of freedom and dignity.”

An additional criticism of controlled vocabulary books is that they offer little opportunity to develop the use of syntactic and semantic cues (Hudson 1988). According to this position, the absence of cohesive, forward-moving narratives in these books means that the real purpose of reading does not emerge for beginner readers.

There have, however, been significant developments in the language used in basal readers or primers. For example, in the USA up to the 1970s, basal reading programmes were generally characterised by uninteresting plots, poor writing styles and heavily controlled vocabulary (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996). In the 1980s, the USA publishers of basal readers decided to make significant changes in their products, based on criticisms by teachers regarding the poor literary quality and lockstep system used. This was supported by evidence from New Zealand, where literature-based or real books approaches were being used with great effect, evident in their internationally renowned success in the teaching of reading (Elley et al 1996, Smith and Elley 1994). The quality of stories used in basal readers, was therefore improved, and some basal reading programmes even began to include excerpts from trade books, i.e. books that had not been written specifically for educational purposes.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that many basal readers are increasingly like real books, they are still rejected by proponents of the pure whole language approach because they impose a pre-determined sequence for learning to read onto the child. The idea of a so-called whole-language basal is, for them, a contradiction in terms because whole language implies an overall educational philosophy (Grundin 1994, Hudson 1988 and Stephens 1994).

As basals become more like trade books, the focus is increasingly on how books are used, rather than on any inherent features which books possess. The distinction between books for learning to read and books for reading is constantly being questioned and challenged (Hudson 1988).

2.2.2 Storybooks

Known as real books, trade books or picture books, these are books which are written for young readers and have as their first priority the carrying of meaning. Because they are written with no instructional intent, they are sometimes not simple enough for beginner readers to read alone and have to be read aloud by an adult. These books are at the heart of a “literature-based” or “real books” curriculum.

2.2.3 Transitional texts

Transitional texts are those which, according to Clay (1991) contain the features of story books, but are controlled to some extent, in order to facilitate the acquisition of reading and the induction into the world of print.

Clay (1991) believes that it is important that children are exposed to different types of texts right from the initial stages of learning to read. This is because texts influence children's expectations of what books are about, and if they are only exposed to one type of text, e.g. contrived texts, they will develop incorrect hypotheses about books and reading: “A diet of texts with one style of writing (for example primerese) will not lead to sufficiently flexible reading strategies for the variety of texts that a reader will encounter” (Clay 1991, p. 181).

She believes that many reasons can be advanced for avoiding “the distorting and controlling nature of contrived reading texts,” (Clay 1991, p. 178) and that many solutions can be found for developing easy, uncontrived texts which nevertheless support initial reading instruction.

One of these solutions is to use language experience texts or language experience-type texts. Language experience texts are those which record the actual words which a particular child says and which consequently relate to the immediate experiences of children. This is a method which is sometimes used exclusively in the initial stages of reading instruction (see Lyster 1992b, Smith and Elley 1994). Language experience type texts are those which use the kind of language that children from a particular context would use, i.e. they sound like oral language. Clay (*ibid*) suggests that there

should be a gradual shift from language experience, towards more literary language so that children gain control of the medium, i.e. the written word.

Another solution to the dual demands for naturally occurring language and ease of reading, is the use of predictable texts which emulate oral language and use repetitive sentences and sentence structures which enable the child to predict the form and ending of the sentence. Children can therefore “invent” the text as they read, and come very close to what is actually written.

The advantages of predictable books are that they allow the child to behave like a reader, while still utilising the same strategies that they use when anticipating spoken language. The structure should however be varied enough so that the child does not get bored and continues to pay close attention to print cues.

2.2.4 Concluding comment

Ultimately then, the pedagogy, and consequently the type of text created and chosen, is related to an understanding of the nature and purpose of reading. It is apparent that there is a high correlation between underlying approach and choice of texts: proponents of the phonic method choose and use contrived texts, while whole language proponents choose and use story books or transitional texts for teaching reading. Even within the whole language school, some proponents believe that the only criteria for selection of books should be the child's enjoyment and good, well-written stories which are trade books.¹⁵ Others believe that there have to be some educational criteria for selection, because not all teachers have the expertise to provide the support which children need in moving from dependence to independence in reading. The issue of criteria for selection is dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

¹⁵ This will be discussed in more detail in the section on Children's literature.

3. The role and importance of fiction

A key aspect of reading, especially of fiction, is its power to draw readers in and engage them. It is this power of stories which is a central in children's literacy. Even though there are fundamental and apparently irreconcilable differences with regard to the best methods to teach reading, there is little debate about the importance of fiction in the process of reading acquisition for children. Debates revolve around the timing of the introduction of fiction, not around whether fiction is necessary and desirable in the life of the child who is becoming literate.

Fiction therefore plays a vital and central role in the development of literacy in children (Dyson and Genishi 1994). Even before formal instruction begins, i.e. when the informal process of literacy acquisition is in progress, reading stories is considered to be a highly beneficial activity and is one of the most reliable indicators of later success in school. The literature on emergent literacy and family literacy grapples with the dilemma created by the fact that middle class children who are read to, and who have books in the home, start school with an advantage over working class children which tends to remain throughout their schooling (de Castell et al 1986).

Children are specifically encouraged to read fiction for a number of reasons most notably:

- because of the affective component involved in reading fiction, children will be motivated to read more (keep turning the pages) and will therefore become fluent readers more quickly (Cramer and Castle 1994)
- reading fiction is valuable in its own right because it engages readers, expands their horizons, exercises their imaginations, encourages reflection through identification with the story, and generally opens up both interior and exterior worlds (Bruner 1986, Tucker 1988 and 1993, Stewig 1988)
- it is important for cognitive and emotional reasons because it encourages the reader to see the world from other points of view through finding an echo of significant personal feelings via an inner dialogue with the author and significant characters in the story (Tucker 1993)
- literature plays a vital role in the "education of the emotions" (Solomon 1986, p. 39)

- sustained reading of fiction for pleasure induces unique psychological states, a “capture of consciousness” within the reader, in many ways similar to a hypnotic trance. In this state of absorption or entrancement, the reader is “lost in a book” and often impervious to their surroundings (Nell 1988).

As far as children are concerned then, there is no doubt that reading fiction is considered to be desirable and legitimate, and there is a large publishing industry to support this. The content of this fiction may be contested, particularly regarding issues like censorship, the reinforcing of stereotypes and the hegemony of middle class values, etc. (Lukens 1986, Hunt 1991). Despite these debates, the importance of fiction for children, even at two years old in the bathtub, is not in dispute.

Children are, in principle, considered to be entitled to access to rich, diverse texts, including “literary” texts which have the features of what is considered to be good literature. Notions such as good plot, characterisation, theme and imagery are considered to be legitimate criteria for developing and selecting books for children, both for those which they read themselves, and for those which are read to them (see Section 4: Children’s literature for a more detailed exposition). Absorption in stories and the engagement of imagination and emotion are highly valued.

3.1 The power of stories

Research into stories, their universal appeal, their particular features in oral and written forms and the difference between mediocre and great stories, have occupied thinkers and researchers from a range of disciplines. Psychologists and educationists for example, study reading for pleasure (ludic reading) (Nell 1988 and Trabasso 1994), and perceptions of what constitutes a story (Applebee 1977 and Protherough 1990). Narratologists study the formal structural elements of stories. Applied linguists study the discourses and genres of narrative fiction and its role in social reproduction (reproducing existing relationships of inequality). Literary theorists analyse literature and judge its greatness, or argue that it is impossible to judge a work independently of the reader.

It would be audacious and impossible to attempt to summarise these fields of study within the constraints of this research. What follows therefore is a summary of certain key concepts and of the work of Bruner (1986) who consolidates ideas from a number of disciplines.

3.1.1 Key concepts

As referred to in Chapter 1, Narratology focuses on story grammars and the minimal components necessary for a story. However there is a significant difference between the minimal structure needed to create a story, and what it is about certain stories that makes them good (powerful and compelling). A common feature of the study of narrative is the identification of its unique aspects: a steady state or condition which is altered resulting in a crisis or climax which is then resolved.

Another commonly used concept articulated by the Russian formalists is that stories have two aspects: *fabula* (what is sometimes referred to as “story stuff” or underlying themes) and *sjuzet* (the plot, the order and way in which the reader becomes aware of what happened). One *fabula* can therefore be told through a number of different *sjuzets*. Burke (in Bruner 1986) says that story stuff involves characters in action with goals (intentions) in settings using particular means. Drama is generated when there is an imbalance in these components. This is similar to the notion of conflict as being central to a story.

Bruner, a cognitive psychologist, explores the power of stories in his seminal work, *Actual minds, possible worlds*. He asks the key question, “What makes great stories reverberate with such liveliness in our ordinary mundane mind? What gives great fiction its power: what in the text and what in the reader?” (Bruner 1986, p.4). What follows is a summary of Bruner’s main ideas in some detail, because they combine key concepts from the various perspectives mentioned above, which are utilised in the analysis of books for adult beginner readers.

3.1.2 Bruner's analysis of the power of stories

Bruner (1986) focuses on the power of the story to affect readers on an emotional level – to draw them in and keep them there. What he calls entry and engagement are key to his analysis. This is explicable through the positing of two modes of cognitive functioning: the paradigmatic (logico-scientific) mode and the narrative mode. Each of them provides distinctive ways of ordering experience and constructing reality, and though complementary, the two modes cannot be reduced to one another. Each has very different operating principles, criteria for “well-formedness” and procedures for verification. The two modes can be characterised by a well-formed argument on the one hand, and a good story on the other. Both can be used to convince a listener or reader, but their procedures for verification differ radically. An argument convinces by its truth, a story by its verisimilitude (lifelikeness). Therefore the criteria by which stories are judged to be good stories are different from those by which arguments are judged to be good or good enough.

Bruner (*ibid*) draws parallels between these two modes and Rorty's distinction between the epistemological question of how we know truth (which pre-occupies Anglo-American philosophy) and the broader question of how we come to endow experience with meaning (the pre-occupation of poets and storytellers). The imaginative application of the paradigmatic mode leads to hypotheses (the ability to see formal connections before they are proved in a formal way). The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads to good stories and gripping drama.

According to Bruner, stories deal on two levels simultaneously: the landscape of action (which has agent and intention and corresponds to a story grammar), and the landscape of consciousness (what those involved in the action know, think or feel, or do not know, think or feel). It is the second aspect which is least amenable to analysis, but which he believes is most central to a reader's engagement. It is this psychic reality which Bruner believes dominates narrative. This “dual landscape” view is appealing, because it suggests how the reader enters the story – the consciousnesses of the protagonists are the “magnets for empathy” (Bruner 1986, p. 21).

These two levels, the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness, can be seen as the distinction between plot and character. Many theorists and writers of handbooks for writers, debate the centrality of one over the other. They wrestle with the question of whether plots create characters or whether characters create plots. It is the dynamic interplay between both that leads to a great story (Aiken 1988, Tucker 1993 and Cohan and Shires 1989). Folktales are dominated by highly constrained plots, and the archetypal characters are merely functions of that plot, playing out stereotypical plot roles as hero, helper, villain, etc. Many modern novels on the other hand, focus on the interior lives of characters to the extent that the setting is irrelevant and the plot as such non-existent. One of the greatest feats in the history of narrative art is the “leap from the folktale to the psychological novel that places the engine of action in the characters rather than in the plot” (Bruner 1986, p. 37).

Bruner attempts to develop ways of understanding the components of a story (and a good story) which take into account both the exterior and interior components of action and consciousness. His key assertion is that narrative deals with the “vicissitudes of human intentions” (Bruner 1986, p. 16). In other words, in order to qualify as a story, a story must deal with these vicissitudes. Bruner’s conclusion is that the *fabula* of story is made up of three constituents: plight, character and consciousness. Characters fall into a plight as a result of intentions which have gone awry because of circumstances, or because of characters’ characters, or because of an interaction between the two (circumstance and character). The integration of these three components into a structure which has a start, a development and a “sense of an ending” is what gives a story its unity.

Language itself plays a central role in the appeal or power of stories. The selection and combination of words is done in a unique way when stories are told. Selecting words consists of substituting one word for another either through synonyms or through metaphor. Substitutions can be literal, for atmospheric change, or to “make strange” and thereby reduce the automaticity of the reading.

By contrast, scientific writing tends to choose words that are literal and assure clear and definite reference (this is to minimise the possibility of misinterpretation).

Narrative writing on the other hand uses evocative language which does not conform to the requirements of plain reference or of verifiable predication.

Drawing on the work of Iser and Barthes, Bruner (1986) claims that it is precisely the job of works of literary merit to make the world strange, i.e. not to be obvious and banal, and to create gaps which ensure that the reader becomes “writerly” – a composer of virtual text. The idea of “language made strange” is central to Narratology. Eagleton refers to this as the transformation and intensification of ordinary language, quoting Jakobson who refers to literary language as “organised violence committed on ordinary speech” (Eagleton 1983, p. 2).

Meanings must be kept open so that they are “performable by the reader” (the reader is an active agent rather than a passive recipient). They must “subjunctivise” reality, i.e. traffic in human possibilities rather than settled certainties (Bruner 1986, p.26). Three possible ways by which discourse keeps meaning open are through the use of: triggering of presupposition (language which implies rather than states facts), subjectification (depicting reality through the filter of the consciousness of the protagonists in the story rather than through an omniscient universal narrator), and multiple perspectives (providing multiple viewpoints which each partially illuminate). These techniques for subjunctivisation need to violate what he calls “the banal maxims of clear communication” (Bruner 1986, p. 26).

On a linguistic level, subjunctivisation is achieved through, for example, the transformations of verbs which change from being a *fait accompli* to being psychologically in process. Todorov proposed six transformations of verbs, all of which make them subjunctive: mode, intention, result, manner, aspect and status. Bruner (ibid) believes that the subjunctive language which characterises narrative is reflected in the way in which stories are retold by readers. He analyses the retelling of a story and finds that the number of subjunctive uses of language even increases on the retelling.

Finally, according to Bruner, great storytelling is about compelling human plights that are accessible to readers. They must however be written with enough subjunctivity to

allow them to be “rewritten” by the reader so that the readers’ imagination comes into play. Consciousness and action, subjectivity and openness, allow this to happen.

3.1.3 A note on the short story

Ultimately, stories for beginner readers are short stories. The short story is a distinctive and very old literary form. “The distinguishing feature of the short story is its shortness. Brevity separates the short story from other literary forms. A good deal of psychologically relevant content, characterisation and function are packed into a very few words (usually less than 3000 and sometimes as little as a few hundred” (Lindauer 1987, p. 131). The short story usually has one conflict rather than a series of cycles of conflict and one main character. The reader must be rapidly engaged in the story and the resolution must be quick. Unlike a novel, where the curiosity and attention of the reader can be gradually aroused, the short story, by definition must do this differently. Add to this the constraints of books for beginner readers and the demands on this particular genre become intense.

4. The study of Children’s literature

4.1 Introduction

Children's literature has become a distinct academic field of study in the last thirty years particularly in countries like Australia, the USA and the United Kingdom, evidenced by postgraduate opportunities for study, as well as publication of tertiary level textbooks (see for example Cullinan and Galda 1994; Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996).

As a new formal discipline, it is at pains to define itself. Inevitably, definitions are reduced to the core essence of Children’s literature which is that it involves anything to do with literature which has been written with an audience of children in mind. Problems even with this simple definition arise when children read books which have not been written specifically for them.

Generally though, there is consensus that Children's literature covers everything from cardboard wordless books for toddlers, through to full-scale novels for teenagers which require full adult-like reading fluency. Included in this range, therefore, are children's picture books as well as basal readers or contrived texts, which are at the same level of difficulty as adult beginner readers.

4.2 The formal study of Children's literature

According to Hunt (1991, p.22) the academic outcome of the fact that Children's literature crosses all established generic, historical, academic and linguistic boundaries, means that its study "tends to take place in the practical disciplines of librarianship and education and perhaps psychology, rather than in the more theoretical discipline of 'literature.'"

Books on Children's literature generally fall into seven major categories: general textbooks for students studying the field (mainly teachers and librarians), historical surveys of children's literature, annotated bibliographies and reviews of current children's books, surveys of what books are popular at various ages, pedagogic approaches which focus on different methods of encouraging children to read, books about writing for children and critical analyses of the content of children's books. (Textbooks for students of Children's literature very often cover all of the above categories.)

Despite the range and variety of these publications, they bear a remarkable similarity to each other except for books in the last category which consciously critique children's books using a number of different techniques.

4.3 Common themes in the study of Children's literature

Without articulating the theoretical framework which they are using, many general books on the subject of Children's literature adopt a view of literature which draws on Narratology and a fairly traditional approach to literacy criticism (what Serafini (2002) refers to as a modernist approach). As stated in Chapter 1, the formal study of Children's literature is characterised by a powerful belief in the possibility and

desirability of good literature (even great literature) for children, and there is considerable agreement in this regard. Mainstream Children's literature deals with genre, plot, character, theme, setting, style, imagery, narration and the role of humour.

While the general conception of literature in Children's literature could be considered a slightly outmoded one according to the rigours of post-structuralism, what characterises the study of Children's literature is an often passionate belief in the value and importance of good children's literature both as a product and as an object of study. Intertwined with this conception of good literature, is the belief that all children have the right to access to good literature in all its forms and manifestations.

In summary, the formal study of children's literature asserts that:

- Children's literature is a valid area of study in its own right
- Children's literature can be analysed as literature in its own right.

What follows is a brief summary of some of the dominant themes in the study of children's literature.

4.3.1 Genre

Generally academic books on Children's literature begin with a definition of what constitutes children's literature, followed by a breakdown into characteristic genres. A typical example of characteristic genres is that used by Lukens (1986):

- traditional literature
 - folktales
 - fables
 - myths and legends
 - folk epics
- fantasy
 - science fiction
 - fantastic stories (character and setting realistic but events fantastic)
 - high fantasy (a new internally consistent but fantastic world)
- formula fiction
 - mysteries and thrillers

- romance
- sports stories
- realism
 - problem realism (personal problems like being adopted)
 - social issues realism (social problems like racism)
 - animal realism (animal characters in human settings and situations)
 - historical realism (historical novels)
- picture books.

A similar framework is used by Stewig (1988) who classifies Children's literature according to the following genre categories:

- alphabet books
- picture books
- wordless books
- traditional literature
 - nursery rhymes
 - proverbs
 - fables
 - folk tales
 - myths
 - legends
 - the Bible
- poetry
 - Mother Goose rhymes
 - poems set to music
 - poetry in picture books
 - narrative poetry
 - limericks
 - free verse
 - concrete poetry
- historic fiction
- biography
- contemporary realistic fiction

- fantasy
 - simple fantasy
 - literary folk tales
 - stories about animals
 - stories about toys
 - trips through time and space
 - changes in size and other transformations
 - conflicts with evil powers
- information books
- special interests: children's choices
 - animal stories
 - mystery and detective fiction
 - sports stories
 - science fiction.

As can be seen from the above categorisations, while the sub-categories of genre can be understood slightly differently, the components generally remain the same, and are consistent with general conventional notions of genre in literature.

A number of categories are necessarily unique to Children's literature: alphabet books, wordless books, picture books and nursery rhymes. Picture books are a unique sub-category because they are defined according to form rather than content. They are dealt with in greater detail later in this chapter, because they are similar to adult beginner books in a number of significant ways.

4.3.2 Plot

Plot in Children's literature is usually described in terms which suggest that key features have been transferred from or adopted from the study of literature generally. For example, reference is made to plot as "the order in which things move and happen in a story" or "the sequence of events showing characters in action" (Lukens 1986, p. 63). The general consensus within the formal study of children's literature is that plot is the most important element of fiction for the child reader (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996).

Key notions within the understanding of plot are conflict, tension and action, which are seen as the main mechanisms by which interest is aroused and held. Lukens (ibid) claims that all readers (adults and children) want the following from literature, which must be dealt with via the plot:

- action,
- happenings,
- questions that need answers,
- answers that fit questions,
- glimpses and possibilities of happy and unhappy outcomes.

The notion of conflict is central to discussions of plot in Children's literature.

According to Lukens (ibid), conflict in plot has the following components:

- tension,
- friction,
- force,
- alternatives,
- excitement,
- suspense,
- discovery
- resolution.

There are four types of conflict: person against self, person against person, person against society and person against nature (Lukens 1986, Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996 and Burke 1990). Typical patterns of action in plots can be described according to story shape. For example, the story shape can consist of a simple linear progression, where one incident builds on another until there is a climax; or, a series of actions that generate continuous suspense, and rising action, with a cliff-hanger, where there is a foreshadowing and inevitability about what is to come. The climax or denouement follows.

By ordering events and highlighting certain features over others in a story, the writer is creating a plot. Although typical patterns of action can take various forms, the most common narrative order in Children's literature is chronological order. This is

because it is believed that beginner readers especially, cannot cope with complex sequencing of events and that devices such as flashbacks should consequently be avoided (Aiken 1988). Another common plot structure in Children's literature is an episodic plot, which consists of a number of discrete episodes, each with their own conflict and resolution which are tied together (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996).

Burke (1990) maintains that the following criteria are necessary for good plots for young children: they must be simple and clearly delineated; they must be focal (i.e. there should not be too many subplots or subconflicts); and they should shape and be shaped by the behaviour of characters. In addition, characters should have the opportunity to change, grow, act and cope. Just as in the study of literature generally, the relative dominance of plot and character is debated. Even though plot is normally regarded as more central in the study of children's literature, character is regarded as crucial for good fiction/literature.

4.3.3 Character

The development and role of character is treated as seriously in Children's literature as it is in general adult fiction. Distinctions are made between flat and round characters, with general consensus that round characters are essential for a good story. Round characters are well-developed, not stereotyped, with a variety of traits that make them believable. This enables the reader to identify and empathise with them.

Characters are revealed through action, speech, appearance, relationships with other characters, other's comments about them and the author's comments about them. Character development refers to the changes which a character undergoes during the course of the plot, and this is particularly important with regard to so-called life-changing experiences (Burke 1990, Lukens 1986, Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996).

Burke claims that high quality books have characters who are "believable, simply delineated, physically and verbally active and free of stereotypes" (Burke 1990, p. 39). She claims that a distinctive "gift" of literature is its capacity to reveal the

thoughts of characters, which television, for example, is unable to do. Television can only develop characters through action and dialogue.

4.3.4 Emotion

Closely related to the thoughts of characters are their feelings and emotions. The communication of emotion and the reciprocal emotional engagement of readers is central to literature. Solomon (1986) outlines three emotional functions of stories:

- they tell readers what other people feel (especially people who are different from the readers)
- they help readers to imagine how they would feel
- they help readers to develop and articulate their own emotions.

Barton (1996) outlines instructional approaches which develop metacognitive strategies to assist readers in their understanding of how emotions are depicted in texts. He categorises emotional words which cluster around a particular emotion as being on a continuum from mild, to moderate, to strong (for example words to depict fear can be: nervous, scared, terrified). An emotion like fear is then juxtaposed with its opposite: trust, to create what he calls a “vocabulary thermometer” (Barton 1996, p. 24).

Aside from words which directly depict emotion, emotion in a story can be depicted and implied through a range of overt and subtle mechanisms. Barton (ibid) lists the following ways in which emotion can be portrayed:

Category name	Information type	Example
Character statement	Explicit	“I told you to take me where I want to go.”
Character actions	Explicit	Her eyes opened wide as she turned to run.
Plot events	Explicit	A boy’s property is stolen and no adult helps.
Text features	Explicit	!!!! (exclamation points)

Emotional vocabulary	Explicit	He said timidly
Story setting	Implicit	A character sits alone in the dark listening to the sound of the ocean
Character thought	Implicit	A character wonders if someone is laughing at him.
Story mood	Implicit	A sudden shift in tone from light-hearted to serious
Author's style	Implicit	The author's use of pauses

Barton 1996, p. 25

The communication of emotions clearly relates to Bruner's (1986) conception of the landscape of consciousness.

4.3.5 Theme

Theme is central in the study of children's literature. Basically this refers to the underlying message of the story so that the reader does not end up saying, "So what?" (Lukens 1986). Theme is somewhat akin to the moral of a story, and is considered to be at the heart of the tale - the foundation of all literature. Burke (ibid) claims that there are only a few global themes with variations. She cites the following examples of themes: people can be remarkable even when they are typical, everybody needs a friend, harmonious relationships require patience, the greatest gift that can be given to loved ones is their freedom, bravery or courage can solve many problems.

A common warning in Children's literature is that the theme of a story should not be too overt and moralising. This is regarded as one of the major shifts in the publication of children's literature this century. When books were first written specifically for children in the late 18th century, the only justification for them was the necessity of inculcating moral lessons into the minds of children. Despite the above warning, this view persists in various guises (Knowles and Malmkjaer 1996; Hunt 1991). This issue is dealt with in more detail in Section 5.4 below.

4.3.6 Narration and point of view

There are various possibilities for the role of the narrator in Children's literature. The most common is first-person narration followed by third person narration. In addition, the narrator can be omniscient, as in folk literature and historic fiction, or only present events or perceptions via a single character or a number of characters (limited omniscient) (Lukens 1986) However, according to Stewig (1988, p. 473), "A striking characteristic of contemporary fiction for children is the prevalence of first-person narration."

The advantages of first-person narrators are that they can present other characters convincingly, and they can give readers immediate and valuable insight into themselves (often via the main character). These points need to be considered in relation to the constraints of the length and level of beginner books. Many of the above comments relate to full-length children's novels.

4.3.7 Style and setting

General studies of children's literature also cover setting and style as dominant considerations. Style is loosely described as the author's choice of words – the particular and unique way in which an author uses and chooses and combines words to relate the story. Specific ways in which style is achieved is through the use of images, particularly those involving comparisons like metaphor and simile. Style is elusive and complex as it reveals the author's "voice."

Setting refers to the location of the story and is important particularly in relation to reader identification with the story. It is the backdrop against which the plot unfolds and the characters develop and is integral to the way in which the story is understood and experienced (Burke 1990 and Lukens 1986).

4.3.8 Summary

In summary, the dominant view in the formal study of children's literature is that children are similar to adults in the manner in which they respond to features of literature. The underlying assumptions are therefore that:

- ❑ literary language or language “made strange” evokes more powerful responses in all readers than straightforward language;
- ❑ conflict, suspense and the unanticipated are more appealing to readers than bland and predictable texts;
- ❑ powerful stories contain common structures and features;
- ❑ in terms of character development, round characters are more interesting than flat characters.

4.4 Picture books

Picture books are a unique genre in children's fiction, because they are identified according to form rather than content, and because illustrations play such a crucial role. “Because of its unique blending of illustrations and words, the picture book is considered a genre apart from any other kind of literature” (Cianciolo 1997, p.1). A further distinctive feature of picture books is that they appeal to a range of ages – from children as young as six months old to adults. However it is generally agreed that the primary audience of picture books are young children who cannot yet read or who are beginner readers.

Cullinan and Galda (1994) argue that, because they are usually intended to be read aloud to children before they are read by individual children, picture books contain richer language than would be found in a beginner book specifically intended for individual reading. It is language that adults can read and children can understand. They say that it is therefore, not appropriate to look for simple, and easy to read language in picture books, because they are not specifically intended as beginner reading material, although they may be used in this way. The distinction which they make is questionable, given the real literature versus basal reader debates referred to earlier.

Despite their distinctive qualities, picture books are regarded as being able, just as any other literature is, to enrich, extend and expand young readers, using similar devices as other literature, as well as the pictures themselves.

The role of pictures or illustrations in picture books is beyond the scope of this study, but is an area that has received a great deal of attention in the study of children's literature. Picture books are regarded as being works of literary art, with the integration of visual and literary elements being central. The visual elements are not in any way secondary to the words, and in many instances, the pictures are what dominate and resonate in the appreciation of the work. The fundamental assumption in the analysis of picture books is that pictures more than support the text – they significantly add to the meaning of the text (Cianciolo 1997, and Bishop and Hickman 1992).

Picture books complicate the establishment of absolute standards of excellence for Children's literature. Literary as well as graphic qualities have to be taken into account, as well as the interplay between them. Cianciolo (1997) notes the problems which committees of professional organisations have in reaching consensus about what constitute distinguished or at least notable picture books, despite the application of specific criteria pertaining to literary or graphic excellence.

Many award-winning picture books are highly regarded, specifically because of a complex interplay between words and pictures. The 1991 Caldecott Medal winner, *Black and white* by David Macauley is considered to be one of the most innovative picture books of the last decade if not the century. What is notable about it is that it is "iconoclastic in almost every respect" (Cianciolo 1997, p. 3). It is considered to be extremely sophisticated in terms of format, tone, style, structure and content, utilising visual and verbal puns and visual illusions

It becomes questionable whether a book of this nature is more appreciated by the adult judges or the children for whom the book is ostensibly intended. The question arises as to whether it is possible to appreciate an iconoclastic book of this nature, without a full understanding and appreciation of the conventions which are being overthrown.

Criteria for analysing and evaluating children's books have been developed for a number of purposes, most commonly, so that parents, librarians and teachers can select books from the enormous numbers of publications available for children in wealthy countries.

5. Analysis and evaluation of children's books

Criteria for evaluating and analysing children's beginner books have been developed by various means which fall into two major types: instruments and injunctions. Their primary purpose appears to be to make teachers and librarians critical consumers and selectors of children's books. Instruments are generally checklists of questions or rating scales which are derived by analysing good books and inferring general criteria from them which can then be applied to particular books (Hoffman et al 1994, Cullinan and Galda 1994, Baker and Freebody 1989). Injunctions create criteria by inference i.e. by stating what qualities children's books should or should not contain and by illustrating this through the use of illustrative examples (e.g. Bishop and Hickman 1992, Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996, Aiken 1988, Lukens 1986 and Hunt 1991). There is a large degree of consensus between these two types which are essentially two sides of the same coin.

A major difference in focus arises when the criteria do not simply focus on literary quality, but also include educational concerns (i.e. where the writing or selection of texts has to take into account the level of skill of the reader). Where literary quality alone is taken into account, the assumption is made that there will be a fluent reader (usually a teacher or parent) to read the text to the child if necessary. These books do not therefore have to meet the dual demands of simplicity and quality.

A review of the literature relating to analysis of children's books reveals three major types of analysis which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- literary
- educational
- ideological

Literary analysis focuses on the use of language to achieve specific effects (e.g. use of imagery and unfamiliar language); the development and depiction of character (e.g. reversals of stereotypes, round versus flat characters); plot (e.g. story shape, sequence and structure, unexpected developments or endings) and narration (the role and point of view of the narrator). Educational/pedagogic analysis focuses on features such as word length, sentence length, pronomial usage, polysyllabic words, percentage of direct versus indirect speech and percentage of words denoting emotions. Ideological analysis focuses on how readers are constructed through various devices such as who is represented, who speaks, who has authority, who is rewarded, who is punished, who has agency and who is passive.

A selected number of works are reviewed in detail in order to illustrate the above points, and to provide detailed models for the analytical tools developed in Chapter 4.

5.1 Analysis of books for reading instruction

The real books/real literature approach to reading instruction emphasises the importance of literary quality in beginning reading instruction. An in-depth analysis by Hoffman et al (1994) will be used as an illustrative case study of empirical methods for comparing and analysing beginning reading books. (This study is also described in McCarthy and Hoffman 1995). Hoffman et al (1994) compared so-called “new basal readers” (i.e. readers which met the Texas Department of Education’s new policy requirements for “real literature” in the early grades of school) with “old basal readers” (i.e. the readers which had been used before the policy change). In order to do this, they developed a number of criteria which would enable different judges to analyse and evaluate the readers.

These criteria were divided into two main types: those concerning engagement and those concerning readability. Word/sentence level analysis was considered to reflect readability, while what they termed “qualitative features analysis” was considered to reflect engagement with the text and motivation to read.

Word/sentence level analysis examined features such as number of syllables, word length and sentence length. Literature characteristics/qualitative features analysis

examined features across multiple dimensions: intellectual, socio-cultural, affective, aesthetic and linguistic.

5.1.1 Engagement analysis

In order to achieve the difficult task of evaluating the literature according to qualitative features analysis (i.e. the engagement analysis) the authors identified three aspects regarded as being important to engagement: content, language and design. Each of these aspects was analysed in 3 ways: according to general “overarching” questions; according to rating scales and according to “anchor texts” which were specific illustrative examples of various points on the rating scales . The sections pertinent to this study are summarised below.

Content

Overarching questions:

Are the ideas important?

Are the ideas personally, socially or culturally relevant?

Is there development of an idea, character or theme?

Does the text stimulate thinking and feeling?

Hoffman et al 1994, p. 69

These overarching questions illustrate the difficulty of making objective judgments. Concepts such as importance, relevance and stimulation do not easily lend themselves to objective analyses. The 5-point ratings scales, with illustrative examples for each level of the scale, were intended to assist judges to be more objective.

Examples of criteria for three of the five levels are outlined below to illustrate the detailed criteria used. Because the focus of this study is fiction, specifically expository criteria have been omitted from the rating scales.

Rating scales:

Level 5 text:

- ❑ expression of significant and worthwhile ideas
- ❑ multiple, complex, socially relevant themes

- ❑ not didactic or trite
- ❑ high personal or social relevance
- ❑ create situations that are socially complex
- ❑ high degree of development of characters, ideas or themes
- ❑ complex characters who may change and may have heightened awareness of themselves or their environment
- ❑ multiple problems may present themselves in the plot
- ❑ unexpected twists of story line may occur
- ❑ tension created by suspense within the plot or complex text structure
- ❑ stimulate reader to think about issues and/or evoke strong emotions
- ❑ require interpretation by reader and lend themselves to more than one interpretation

Level 3 text:

- ❑ characterized by the expression of an idea, theme or situation
- ❑ with narrative, themes or messages exist but may be didactic in nature
- ❑ situations are either realistic or provide opportunities for many students to relate and ideas may have some social relevance or importance
- ❑ some degree of development of an idea or character
- ❑ characters may experience conflict but often the problem is solved
- ❑ some tension may be evident through use of rhyme or suspense in relation to events
- ❑ often character development or increased revelation of the character's thoughts or emotions
- ❑ plots or idea development are straightforward without much complexity
- ❑ yet some interpretation may be required on the part of the reader

- should evoke some intellectual or emotional response by the reader

Level 1 text:

- lacks evidence of any important, socially relevant or worthwhile idea
- central message, theme or concept is missing or undeveloped
- situations are usually artificial
- many students may have difficulty relating to them
- little conflict or dramatic tension
- characters are flat, interchangeable with one another and/or stereotypical
- little development of a concept or character
- provides few opportunities for stimulation of thinking or feeling
- no interpretation is required because each aspect of the plot or idea is explicit and concrete

Hoffman et al 1994, pp. 69-70

As can be seen from the above range, level 5 texts, are, despite the fact that they are intended for beginner readers, multidimensional, complex, relevant, unsterotypical, unexpected and stimulate thought and emotion in the reader. Level 1 texts are quite the opposite: irrelevant and not stimulating or demanding thought or feeling on the part of the reader.

Language

Overarching questions:

Is the language rich in literary quality?

Is the vocabulary appropriate but challenging?

Is the writing clear?

Is the text easy and fun to read aloud?

Does the text lend itself to oral interpretation?

As with the overarching questions relating to content, it is apparent that criteria such as richness of literary quality are very difficult to assess. As with the other engagement factors, rating scales and illustrative examples were used to promote objective judgement.

Rating scales:

Level 5 text:

- characterized by language which calls attention to itself in a positive way through stylised use of words and expressions that are unusual, idiomatic and or metaphoric
- causal, sequential and associative connections among propositions may be multiple and suggest multiple interpretations
- compound or complex sentences may be present
- dialogue is idiomatic and/or colloquial

Level 3 text:

- characterized by language that is simple but meaningful
- may contain rhyme and the repetition of phrases
- propositions may be formulaic, linked as comparisons or contrasts, or linked in simple sentences
- expression of meaning guides word selection although words may be monosyllabic and common
- dialogue may resemble standard American speech
- when read aloud the text lends itself to a conversational tone

Level 1 text:

- characterized by language that is redundant and stilted
- sentence syntax is formally grammatical but contains constructions that native literates would not normally speak or write
- connections among propositions are obvious but may be artificial

- difficult to relate to the prosodic features of the text language (prosody is the science of versification)

Hoffman et al 1994, pp. 70 - 71

As can be seen from the above range, level 5 texts are characterized by natural language, as well as language which is unusual and relies on imagery (i.e. literary language). Although more than one interpretation is possible, the connections amongst propositions are realistic or at least plausible. At the other extreme, ABET Level 1 texts are characterized by language that is stilted, artificial, and unnatural/non-idiomatic.

Design

In view of the fact that design does not form part of this study, only the overarching questions are summarised here. It is important to note though that what is referred to here as design is a significant factor in the readability of the text and in engaging the reader.

Overarching questions:

Do the illustrations/art enrich and extend the text?

Is the use of design creative and attractive?

Is there creative/innovative use of print?

5.1.1.1 Findings regarding engagement criteria

Using a range of judges, employing mechanisms for dealing with lack of consensus amongst judges and applying the above criteria to the new and old basals, a number of interesting points emerged. There was a remarkable degree of consensus amongst judges. They found that in terms of content, the new basals had more complex plots, character development and required more interpretation than the old basals. In terms of the language criteria the judges found that in the new basals, language was more colloquial and idiomatic and made more use of metaphor and imagery than in the old basals. In terms of the design criteria, in the new basals, more use was made of the aesthetic use of colour, form, line and design techniques. In summary then, the new

basals were rated better than the old basals in terms of all the engagement factors relating to content, language and design.

5.1.2 Readability analysis

The study also examined the new and old basals in terms of two factors affecting readability: predictability and decodability.

Predictability features are those which make it more likely that the reader will be able to anticipate/predict what is in the text on the basis of knowledge of the language. Examples of features contributing to predictability were identified as: repeated language patterns (e.g. Brown Bear, Brown Bear); the use of familiar concepts (bees sting); a good match between text and print that cues vocabulary; the use of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration (e.g. baby buggy bumper); the use of cumulative patterns (e.g. There was an old lady who swallowed a fly); the use of familiar songs or stories (e.g. The little red hen); the use of familiar sequences (e.g. days of the week).

Predictability

Overarching questions:

Does the structure of the text language enable the reader to predict not only what action will occur but what words will come up next?

Does the structure of the text language enable the reader to “re-read” with some degree of accuracy and expression once it has been read to him/her?

As with the earlier overarching questions, it is evident that it would be difficult to make objective judgments regarding the predictability features of the text according to these features. It would, for example, require in-depth knowledge of the language patterns and cultural references of any particular target group of readers.

Rating scales:*Level 5 text*

Highly predictable text. Uses multiple features to achieve this degree of predictability. Emergent readers could give a fairly close to actual text reading after only a few exposures to the story.

Level 4 text

Very predictable text. Uses three or more features to achieve this degree of predictability. With many parts/sections of the story an emergent reader could give a fairly close to actual text reading after only a few exposures to the story.

Level 3 text

Obvious attention to predictable features. The author tends to rely on one or two features quite heavily. Emergent readers could likely make some predictions of the text language in a few parts of the text.

Level 2 text

Some minimal attention to predictability, achieved primarily through word repetition. Perhaps there is a single repeated word or short phrase that an emergent reader may be able to join in on after several exposures.

Level 1 text

No evidence of predictable characteristics.

Hoffman et al 1994, p. 72

This rating scale reveals that predictable features are seen those which enable the reader to relatively accurately predict what the text will contain based on a combination of the use of familiar language, good combination of print and text and the use of language patterns.

Decodability (These are criteria relating directly to vocabulary control at the word and sentence level).

Overarching question:

What decoding demands does the text language (at the isolated word level) place on the reader?

Rating scale:

Level 5 text:

Mostly common sight words. Lots of redundancy. Few digraphs or vowel combinations.

Level 4 text:

Common sight words mixed with lots of monosyllabic regular (decodable vocabulary). The text is characterized by repetition of words. Some simple compound words with a few contractions.

Level 3 text:

Characterized by one and two syllable words. Word repetition is still in evidence. Three syllable words and beyond are high frequency or easily decoded or strongly cued by the context (sentence or picture). Word endings are mostly inflectional in form.

Level 2 text:

Little obvious attention to vocabulary control and repetition although most of the vocabulary are still in the one- and two- syllable range. Increased use of derivational affixes. Some infrequent words, but not characterized by unusual vocabulary.

Level 1 text:

No apparent attention to vocabulary control. Two and three syllable words are common. There is a full range of derivational and inflectional affixes.

5.1.2.1 Findings regarding readability

Using the above criteria for predictability and decodability as well as anchor texts, the judges found overwhelmingly that the new basals were more predictable than the old basals, thus contributing to easier readability. However, the decoding demands which the new basals placed on the reader were much greater than in the old series. This illustrates an interesting dichotomy between what is valued in phonic and whole language approaches to the teaching of reading. Proponents of phonics value decodability above other criteria, while proponents of whole language methods value predictability as one of the key mechanisms by which the skill of reading is acquired.

The above study by Hoffman et al (1994) was aimed at books specifically for use in reading instruction. The following section focuses on criteria for selecting picture books for children where readability factors do not have to be taken into account. The focus is exclusively on literary and aesthetic qualities.

5.2 Criteria for selecting picture books

Picture books do not necessarily have to meet the educational criteria referred to above because they are not produced specifically for beginner readers. Fluent readers such as parents and teachers often read picture books to children. The emphasis is therefore on literary and artistic quality. What follows is an integration of the work of three influential general texts on Children's literature: Cullinan and Galda (1994), Bishop and Hickman (1992) and Burke (1990).

Good picture books are taken to be those which “reflect, extend or enrich a child’s ever-expanding world” (Cullinan and Galda 1994, p. 80). Picture books do what any good books do: entertain, bring personal satisfaction, teach about content and the world that they represent, as well as about form (Bishop and Hickman 1992). The harmonious interplay between text and pictures in picture books is vital. They require a high level of literary and artistic quality which complement and enrich each other. Criteria (often stated in the form of questions) usually relate to text, illustrations and format. Without minimising the importance of illustrations and format, the focus here,

because of the nature of this research is on criteria pertaining to the text itself, specifically fictional texts.

The criteria used are in many ways similar to those adopted by Hoffman et al (1994) above. They show strong evidence, despite the age of the target audience and readability levels, of sophisticated expectations of story (plot), character, theme and language.

The consensus is that good picture story books exemplify the same qualities as all good stories:

- strong characterization
- engaging plot
- memorable theme
- well-crafted language

Picture books have additional demands placed on them because of their brevity. "Since picture books are slender volumes - often no more than 32 pages - authors must hone the text to use the very best word in every case, and illustrators must capture mood, characterization, plot, setting, information, or concepts in carefully wrought art" (Cullinan and Galda 1994, p. 82). Texts have to be "concise, conveying a good deal of meaning with a few well-chosen words, imaginatively used" (Bishop and Hickman 1992, p.8). A common theme in the analysis and evaluation of picture books is that they should be judged according to the usual literary elements of setting, character, plot, and theme as well as the use of understatement, dialogue, imagery and vivid language often with structural patterns to create "literary texts" (Bishop and Hickman 1992, p. 8).

Characters in picture books must be well-developed personalities that show evidence of growth and change across the story and are active rather than passive. Plots should be in straightforward chronological order and not contain complex flashbacks and subplots. They should centre around a problem or conflict with which children can identify. They should contain a recognizable climax and have a definite recognizable ending with a satisfying and logical resolution. This does not however mean that plots should have predictable endings. Surprise endings, i.e. endings which are

unanticipated and leave the reader delighted and shocked are highly regarded (Cullinan and Galda 1994). Plot should shape the behaviour of characters and be shaped by them (Burke 1990).

Themes should be clearly identifiable and evolve naturally from plot and character. They should neither be blatantly stated i.e. where there is an explicit moral to the story, nor so subtle that they elude young readers. Tone or mood is even more difficult to measure but is regularly mentioned as a feature contributing to the quality of a good picture book. Bishop and Hickman (1992) refer to examples of tone such as nostalgia or humour.

Cullinan and Galda (ibid) also focused on criteria for books for emerging readers – i.e. picture books which are geared towards beginner readers. They divided these into different categories:

- ❑ wordless books (for developing a sense of story and learning language rapidly)
- ❑ predictable books (for children beginning to pay attention to print)
- ❑ beginning to read books (for children who have just become independent readers but still need the support of simple but interesting texts)
- ❑ easy chapter books (help newly independent readers make the transition from beginning-to-read books to full-length novels)

Predictable/patterned books and “beginning to read” books are particularly relevant to this research because they are specifically developed for beginner readers, just as books for adult beginner readers are.

5.2.1 Predictable books/patterned books

These are books which have a highly patterned structure which enables children to anticipate what is going to happen next. They use:

- ❑ strong language patterns
- ❑ repeated phrases, rhyme and rhythm
- ❑ story structures that add or accumulate information
- ❑ familiar concepts, songs or sequences

These criteria are similar to Hoffman's (ibid) predictability criteria. Examples of good predictable books according to Cullinan and Galda (1994) are: *What game shall we play* by Pat Hutchins and *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see* by Bill Martin. Both contain repetition, cumulative structure and familiar concepts.

5.2.2 Beginning to read books

According to Cullinan and Galda (1994), these are books which combine controlled vocabulary with creative storytelling (similar to Hoffman's (1994) "new basals"). Although they were stilted in the past, there are now very good "beginning to read" books that tell stories in a natural way.

They are characterized by:

- strong characterization, worthy themes and tight plots
- simple sentences without a lot of embedded clauses
- direct dialogue
- print layout with breaks in the text occurring according to natural phrasing (meaningful chunks of language grouped together)
- illustrations which depict character and action and both reflect and extend the text

Examples of good "beginning to read" books are: Arnold Lobel's *Days with frog and toad*, Cynthia Rylant's *Henry and Mudge* books and Michael Rosen's *We're going on a bear hunt* (Cullinan and Galda 1994).

5.3 Structural analysis of narrative

A number of in-depth studies have been conducted on single children's books. Their structural and semiotic roots in Narratology are often evident in their titles. In *Deconstructing burglars: formal analysis as a pedagogic jemmy*" Stibbs (1994) analyses a popular children's book according to story nuclei (decisive forks in the plot), catalysers, indices, reversals of expectations and stereotypes. Mackey (1990) in *Metafiction for beginners: Allan Ahlberg's Ten in a bed*, shows how the author makes

the rules or codes which govern storytelling manifest in the story, thus increasing children's understanding of how texts work. (See also Mackey 1995.)

5.4 Ideological analyses of children's literature

There are a number of examples of ideological analyses of children's books which are conducted in order to make inferences about how readers are constructed, how ideology operates within texts, how children are introduced to the culture of literacy and how they are thereby prepared for docile adult citizenship (Many 1989, Unsworth 1993, Luke 1988). These analyses focus on the depiction of the social world. Many utilise close linguistic analysis or critical discourse analysis. One influential study will be discussed in detail here in order to contribute to the analytical categories derived in Chapter 4.

Baker and Freebody (1989) approached the analysis of children's first school books from a linguistic/ideological perspective. They believed that close analysis of documents (in this case children's school books) could be used as "evidence of the linguistic, pedagogical and social theories informing practice" (Baker and Freebody 1989, p. 184), and to explore the relations between those materials, school practices and the wider cultural context in which materials are produced and used.

They began with a descriptive outline of the vocabulary content of the beginning reading corpus in Australia using the following measures:

- mean word length
- mean sentence length
- types of sentences (declarative, interrogative or exclamatory)
- percentage of direct speech
- percentage of frequently occurring words
- analysis of high frequency words
- pronomial usage

The vocabulary content of the beginning reading corpus in Australia was then compared with other corpuses (a spoken language corpus of 4 – 5 year old white

children in the USA and a corpus of textbook language for use with Grades 3 – 9 in the USA). Key findings of this research follow.

In order to analyse how the social world of the child is constructed, they analysed the types of characters which appeared in the stories, the frequency of their appearance, and what they did in the stories (for example whether they were active or passive; were given a voice or were spoken to). These categories were seminal in identifying differences between, for example, boys and girls, animals and children, and adults and children thereby contributing to constructions of gender and childhood.

In order to specifically examine the emotional world of the child, they analysed the nature and frequency of emotional and evaluative words as well as who uttered them or who they were applied to. They compared positive and negative emotional and evaluative words as well as noting the number of internal responses. A key finding was that children's internal responses of an emotional or evaluative nature were rarely represented. Overall, they believed that young children's books present emotionally sanitised and idealised versions of childhood.

Another dimension measured was the nature of authorial presence and activity. In summary this was as follows:

- ❑ the diarist (character is narrator in the first person)
- ❑ the outsider (observer recounts and describes the spoken language of the named characters as in a dramatist's script)
- ❑ narrator's contributions are included within the text portraying the event
- ❑ narrator is outside of text (reports, selects, interprets and adds)

The children's beginning reading corpus was characterized by first and third person narration within the text. Their conclusion was that beginning reading books typically have a "minimally intrusive" narrator who rarely conveys access to internal states (Baker and Freebody 1989, p. 87). In addition, even though oral language is apparently used, it sounds book-like and is not the same as naturally occurring spoken language.

A further dimension examined was an analysis of categories of texts: expository, narrative and experiential. Expository texts were not typically found. More common were narrative texts which describe the everyday lives of children in story form or experiential texts which conveyed experiences and observations of children in first person mode.

Another major form of analysis was the representation of conversation and conversational practices (including who talks to whom and how often) in order to examine how children are constructed in these texts. They compared conversation/dialogue in the texts with oral conversation in order to understand portrayals of children, child-adult relations, family life and school life as well as sites of activity such as the home, school, shops and farms (what Knowles and Malmkjaer 1996, p. 8 refer to as institutions).

Their general conclusions were that beginning reading books are specifically preparing children for school-based literacy so that they accept the “autonomous, authoritative, expository texts which comprise the bulk of the textbooks in later school years” (Baker and Freebody 1989, p.93). While appearing to be works of fiction, consisting of stories to be enjoyed and discussed, their informational and socialising content was in fact of primary importance. This, they believed, was most successfully achieved through concealing the textualising process: whereby a reader is enabled to see that texts are crafted by an author and not given, and through constructing childhood as a passive state with children having a particular place in the social order. “The selection and production of certain kinds of text for particular categories of people is ultimately a matter of conveying an identity to the readership itself.” (Baker and Freebody 1989, p.136). The nature of Baker and Freebody’s analysis and conclusions is in stark contrast to the more aesthetically inclined “Children’s literature” orientation of the analyses in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 above.

Ideological analysis of texts focuses on the way in which people and their often unequal power relationships relating to sex/gender, race and class are portrayed. The assumption is that these depictions/constructions overtly or covertly perpetuate relationships of dominance and submission. Gender is an area that has received considerable attention. The following section looks at the construction of gender in

texts particularly the relationship between language and gender. It is not limited to children's literature but the applied research relates to children's books.

6. Language and gender

The bulk of research relating to language and gender asks the question: how do men and women speak differently? Bing and Bergvall (1996) however assert that the very act of asking questions like this based on binary conceptions of gender strengthens the female-male dichotomy and assumes that there are indeed differences. This, they believe is a false starting point. For them not only gender, but sex is a social construct and each of these concepts is better seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. This reflects an ideological debate within feminist sociolinguistics which cannot easily be resolved and which goes to the very heart of the nature of sex and gender and the purposes of research in these fields. It is not my intention to go into these debates in any detail but rather to locate applied research in terms of various models or schools which have been identified.

Cameron (1996), who is against binary notions of gender, identifies three different models to classify research relating to language and gender: the deficit model, the difference model and the dominance model. In the deficit model, women speakers are seen as different from and inferior to or disadvantaged in relation to men speakers. In the difference model, women are seen as different from, but not inferior to men. This model is exemplified in the work of Tannen and Lakoff who see gender differences as analogous to, or a form of, cultural relativism (different but equal). Males and females are seen as belonging to two distinct cultural groups into which they are socialised. The difference model is the most dominant in language and gender research partly because it fits the descriptive non-judgemental paradigm which is dominant in linguistics more generally (Cameron 1996). The difference model is criticised for failing to deal with the fundamental power imbalances between men and women and for minimising similarities between men and women, thereby reinforcing male/female stereotypes. Cameron believes that the proliferation of self-help books based on the difference model turns feminist linguistics into a "branch of the self-improvement industry" (Cameron 1996, p. 35). This "verbal hygiene" provides advice for women in two spheres: careers and relationships. Particularly in the career sphere, the advice

most often takes the form of teaching women how to speak more like men in order to advance.

Tannen (1993), one of the most influential researchers within the difference model, argues that the investigation of typical patterns of communication between men and women does not preclude or deny the patterns of dominance which typify relationships between men and women.

The dominance model deals with the issue of power head on. Here language is examined particularly in relation to how it is rooted in and maintains the larger political and social order (Bing and Bergvall 1996). In this model researchers examine the question “How does language reflect, construct and maintain male dominance?” (Bing and Bergvall 1996, p. 4). Typically researchers within the dominance model explore how language features such as interruptions, topic control, the use of generic pronouns and nouns, polite forms and formal and informal speech reflect and maintain inequalities and differences between men and women. Researchers typifying this approach are Fishman, Firestone and Daly. Cameron (*ibid*) and her colleagues assert that even the more radical dominance model perpetuates gender dichotomies by asking questions based on these dichotomies.

New research by the anti-dichotomy group (Bergvall et al 1996) has revealed that setting, the nature of the communicative task, race, class and culture are important considerations in moderating stereotypical assertions about male/female differences in language. Despite these cautions most research does reveal persistent differences between men and women. This research is based on findings from both the difference and dominance perspectives.

A summary of the most typical research findings relating to language and gender follows. Tannen (1993, p. 4) summarises the “vast multidisciplinary” literature on this topic which covers a range of aspects of language and gender:

- language socialisation in young children
- lexical, phonological and syntactic differences in language use
- discourse strategies
- the language which is used to refer to men and women

What follows is a brief summary of typical findings excluding language socialisation in young children which is beyond the scope of this research.

In their speech women have been found to be generally more conservative, more polite, more insecure and more status conscious, to seek more intimacy and use more standard or correct speech. Both the content and the functions of utterances are used to make inferences about such differences. The general conclusions are that men and women not only talk **about** different things but their speech serves different purposes/has different functions. In terms of the content of speech, women talk about relationships and people, men talk about things and events.

In terms of the functions of speech, male speech is typically seen as competition oriented or adversarial and males are seen to use speech to assert dominance, attract and keep an audience and take over the floor (Sheldon 1993). On the other hand the speech of girls and women is characterised as affiliative and collaboration-oriented. Females use speech to “create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality; to criticise others in acceptable ways; and to interpret accurately the speech of other girls” (Maltz and Borker 1982 cited in Sheldon 1993, p. 87). This contrast between male and female speech is variously termed competitive versus co-operative, or assertive versus supportive or report versus rapport. This theme holds sway in both academic and popular literature on language and gender (Grey 1996, Tannen 1991). Related to this is the common finding that men talk more (hold the floor more) than women in mixed sex interactions. This has typically been explained as being due to men’s greater power and status. It is also seen as being due to the way in which men and women are taught to approach conversational interactions: to assert status on the one hand and establish and maintain harmonious relationships on the other.

Despite research findings that men talk more than women overall in mixed sex interactions, stereotypes of women talking too much persist. Tannen (1993) speculates on reasons for this and concludes that they persist because women’s talk often serves socioemotional functions whereas men’s talk is often instrumental. Men may consequently therefore not value women’s talk because it does not serve functions which they themselves value. Fishman (1997 cited in Grey 1996, p. 8 and Rodino

1997) refers to this oiling of the wheels of conversation (particularly with men) as “interactional shitwork” whereby women facilitate cross-sex interaction in the face of male reticence. The use of questions can therefore be seen not so much as a sign of insecurity as of facilitation of conversation in contrast to male statements that do not serve to ensure further talk.

Empirical research into the relationship between language and gender regularly takes the form of content/discourse analysis of a number of language features which can broadly be classified in terms of language content or language function. Content in its simplest conception refers to what is spoken about and function refers to what purpose an utterance/language serves. This analysis can be applied to “talk written down” (transcribed conversations) or to how talk is depicted in literature in the form of direct speech

In terms of functions of utterances typical indicators are:

- the use of questions
- the use of hedging devices such as “you know”

Freed, one of the anti-dichotomy school, divides questions into six types:

- yes/no questions
- **Wh** questions
- declaratives which have a final phrase rise in intonation
- tag questions (e.g. They didn’t hit you **did they?**)
- That’s where you lived, **right?**
- **Wh** questions plus guess (e.g. What’s today’s date? The 25th?)
- What about/How questions (e.g. What about when women get older)

(Freed 1996, p. 63)

More frequent use of these types of questions is believed to indicate women’s deference to men in conversation. Questions serve to give the floor to men and to indicate women’s inferiority and insecure status. Using the use of questions and “you know” Freed (ibid) found that there were no significant differences between males and females when setting and relationship between the subjects remained constant. Rather she found that it was the nature of the discursive task that accounted for

differential use of questions and “you know.” Different tasks such as considered speech and collaborative talk produced different discourse requirements and resulted in very different uses of the indicators across gender lines.

Mills (1995) summarises differences between descriptions of male and female characters. Males are typically described in relation to their heads (hair or eyes) and overall size whereas female characters are typically described in terms of their legs, skin, breasts and hair. She argues that the male characteristics elicit ideas about trustworthiness, strength and whether the narrator likes them or not. Female characteristics establish sexual attractiveness and availability.

Mills (1995, p. 163) gives examples from newspaper reports where women are often described in terms of their relationship to others (e.g. “mother of three, Mrs Brandon”; “mad gunman hunt as wife is shot”) or to their looks (“Mrs Smith, a trim brunette from Woking”). Men are most often described in terms of their occupations (e.g. “soccer star barred from nightclub”). When women are described in terms of occupations in children’s books and foreign language textbooks they are most commonly in stereotypical occupations like secretaries or teachers.

In terms of Propp’s concept of narrative roles and functions, females are often the recipients of actions or the mechanism whereby the plot is resolved, for example through marriage or through being given as a gift. In other words, the agency of men is more often central to the narrative structure. Russ (1984 cited in Mills 1995) claims that female heroines perform very limited tasks and have stereotypical roles within texts: concern with emotion rather than action; located in the private rather than the public sphere and seen as adjuncts to males rather than being seen as characters in their own right.

6.1 Language and gender research on the content of books for beginner readers

Research relating to language and gender has been conducted predominantly on children’s beginner readers (Baker and Freebody 1989, Grandison 1981, Witt 1996). Only one example was found which focuses on adult beginner readers (Coles 1977).

The form that this research takes ranges from a simple comparison of the number of main characters who are male and female (Baker and Freebody 1989, Coles 1977, Grandison 1981), to detailed linguistic analysis of the functions of male and female utterances (Baker and Freebody 1989). Grandison (1981) counted the ratio of male to female biographies, Witt (1996) compared gender role orientation of basal readers. Coles (1977) compared admirable personal characteristics such as competence, bravery and rationality.

In terms of close linguistic analysis, the Baker and Freebody (ibid) study provides the most detailed description of close linguistic analysis of children's first school books.

This includes a:

- comparison of descriptive words for males and females
- comparison of adjectives used to describe males and females
- comparison of nouns to refer to males and females
- comparison of verbs related to males and females

6.1.1 Findings

In terms of numbers of main characters who are male and female, males tend to predominate but research suggests that this numerical imbalance is being corrected over time. Coles (1977) found a ratio of male to female main characters of 3:1 in his analysis of adult easy readers which was confirmed in then contemporary studies of children's readers. Baker and Freebody found a ratio of 3: 2 of boy to girl characters.

However, a simple comparison of the numbers of main characters hides the more subtle and arguably more insidious differences which emerge when behaviour, description and speech are compared and analysed. Many of the differences centre on the roles which males and females perform particularly in relation to actions/behaviour in the non-domestic world. This is revealed, for example, through analysis of occupations, analysis of actions in terms of whether they are active or passive/instrumental or facilitative. This can be achieved through close linguistic analysis or through evaluation of behaviours.

Baker and Freebody (1989), for example, searched for verbs in the early reading corpus which were uniquely associated with males or females. They found that whereas there were a number of energetic interactive verbs uniquely used in relation to males, there were only two verbs in total uniquely used in relation to females.

Example of verbs uniquely associated with boys: *answer, hurt, start, think*

Example of verbs uniquely associated with girls: *hold on to, kiss*

They conclude that verbs uniquely associated with boys are energetic and interactive whereas those uniquely associated with girls display what they call “the cuddle factor” (Baker and Freebody 1989, p. 55) The unique actions of fathers and mothers “present in high relief the stereotyped nature of the various behaviours” (Baker and Freebody *ibid*, p. 55):

fathers: *paint, pump, fix, drive, pull, start, water, light*

mothers: *bake, dress, hug, kiss, pack, pick, set, splash, thank.*

Descriptive words associated with boys and girls continue the theme. Boys are described as *sad, kind, brave, tiny, naughty*. Girls are exclusively described with the words: *young, dancing, pretty*. In addition, the most frequent descriptive adjective in the corpus, *little*, is used to describe half the girls whereas it is only used to describe 30% of the boys. In conversational exchanges, the speech of boys and girls/ men and women is also found to reflect gender differences. Baker and Freebody (*ibid*) analysed a popular reading scheme in terms of the direct speech of the main characters. Although the main characters take turns and talk for roughly the same amount of time, the content of what they say and the functions of what they say are quite different. The main boy character, Peter, states preferences and announces courses of action whereas the main girl character agrees and shows deference. This concurs with Fishman’s (*ibid*) and other’s views of the division of labour in talk where girls do more routine maintenance work (co-operative and collaborative work) and boys do more competitive work.

Coles (1977) analysed adult beginner reader themes in terms of whether they were domestic/romantic or non-domestic/non-romantic. Non-domestic themes related to

work (presumably outside of the home), adventure, inventions and athletics. Although there was an equal number of domestic and non-domestic themes, only 25% of the female characters appeared in stories with a non-domestic/non-romantic theme compared with 67% of the male characters.

83% of the characters who were portrayed as competent, heroic or rational were male and only 17% were female. The females in this category were competent, heroic or rational only in the realms of housework or romance.

7. Adult literacy

Adult literacy work, as has been argued in Chapter 1 can be seen, when compared with children's literacy work, to be more directly and overtly concerned with ultimate purposes than with the intricacies of pedagogy. This is largely due to its marginal status, to the urgent and instrumental needs of adult learners as well as to those of providers of literacy classes. Whereas the basic education of children is a long, leisurely process, the basic education of adults is relatively short, and focused on the attainment of overt and particular goals such as development or empowerment, two of the dominant purposes of adult literacy work. These purposes often say more about providers, funders and policy makers than about literacy learners themselves (Lyster 1992a, Wagner 1995).

7.1 The purposes of literacy work with adults

What follows is an attempt to classify broad approaches to literacy work with adults. Of necessity, such a broad classification does not do justice to the subtleties of various perspectives. However, it is done in an attempt to interrogate the consequences of each perspective, as evidenced in texts which are deemed suitable for literacy acquisition. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive and often have reciprocal effects on each other. Various aspects of each, find their way into the discourses of international and South African policy documents.

7.1.1 The development perspective¹⁶

The role which literacy plays in development is a highly contested one. It has occupied the imaginations and intellects of thinkers from a range of disciplines, notably anthropology, linguistics, history, psychology (epitomised by the work of Vygotsky and Luria (Wertsch 1985) and Scribner and Cole (1981)). The fundamental debate revolves around the extent to which the attainment of literacy affects the development of individuals, societies, and countries. Theoretical positions regarding the impact of literacy on development vary. One view is that literacy is associated with development (correlated but not causally related), but that factors other than literacy are primarily responsible for and crucial to development. The more dominant view is that literacy is directly, essentially and causally related to development.

Within the mainstream development perspective, one of the primary benefits of literacy is seen as its capacity to improve productivity and income, whether in the workplace, subsistence farm or small business. The view that literacy contributes directly to development remains dominant internationally despite cautions that the link is not simple or automatic, evidenced by large-scale failures of projects within this particular perspective in the past (Lyster 1992a and Wagner 1995). According to the mainstream view, the ultimate purpose of adult literacy work is to promote development, not only broadly through the acquisition of literacy, but also through the content of the books, which enable this acquisition to take place. The idea that printed materials, amongst others, provide a vital link in the development process has therefore been central in adult literacy efforts.

The term “functional literacy” is directly associated with this perspective. The use of this term is in itself instructive. It is seldom used in relation to children’s literacy but is ubiquitous in adult literacy work. It is used either as a generic term to refer to the direct and practical application of literacy skills in the world outside of the structured learning situation, or, in a more particular sense, to refer to the type of literacy proposed in UNESCO’s Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP). In this programme UNESCO co-ordinated a series of “Functional literacy” pilot programmes

¹⁶ This section draws on a number of references: Lyster 1992a, Wagner 1995, Hamadache and Martin 1986, Kumar 1989, Oxenham et al 2002, Street 2001.

which were aimed specifically at increasing productivity in a number of developing countries. The EWLP is widely regarded as a failure (Lyster 1992a). The notion of functional literacy however persists as a shorthand for the idea that literacy skills acquired by adults should be directly utilised for pragmatic purposes. Criticisms of the functional perspective are that it is too prescriptive, that it is driven by national agendas rather than individual needs, that it is education for domestication and that it disadvantages adult learners by promoting a narrow and restricted version of literacy.

7.1.2 Literacy for empowerment

The idea that literacy is essential for empowerment of individuals and communities has also been a powerful theme in the promotion and provision adult literacy. The 1960s were characterised by dramatic political transformations particularly in many developing countries. As many countries gained independence or challenged their oppressors, literacy acquired new status as a tool for empowerment. The printed word provided the means for challenging repressive regimes and for conveying essential information.

Simultaneously, the idea developed that individuals were as much prisoners of their own psyches as of the dominant powers. Liberation was seen as being as much about critical thinking as it was about the overt symbols of democracy such as voting. Paulo Freire was central in promoting this conception of literacy throughout the world. The term "conscientisation" became common currency to describe the processes by which individuals and communities came to understand the nature of, and reasons for, their oppression. Conscientisation was achieved through discussion of issues central to the lives of oppressed people and then through reading words, sentences and texts related to these issues. "Reading the word" was considered meaningless without "reading the world" (Freire 1975, Freire 1985). A key component of this personal and communal liberation was the empowerment and validation of the lives of ordinary people.

Major criticisms of the radical perspective are that it does not necessarily result in effective teaching of reading and writing, that conscientisation does not necessarily result in action and that it is not applicable in all contexts (Facundo 1988).

7.1.3 The New Literacy Studies perspective

The New Literacy Studies has become increasingly influential since the 1980s. Epitomised by the work of Brian Street, and drawing heavily on anthropology and sociolinguistics, the New Literacy Studies sees many “literacies” rather than a single dominant “Literacy”. Street (1984, 1995) identifies two models of literacy: the autonomous model and the ideological model. The autonomous model of literacy which is the dominant one, views literacy as a single, neutral, technical phenomenon, with its apogee, essay-text type literacy perfected in academic texts. Schooling is seen as propagating this type of literacy.

Juxtaposed with the autonomous model is the ideological model of literacy, which sees literacy as essentially a set of social practices which take place in multiple, particular contexts and periods. In keeping with its anthropological roots, the New Literacy Studies is based on observations of “real” literacy practices and events in “real” contexts where “real” documents/literacy artefacts such as forms, letters, accounts and records are used (Baynham 1995, Hamilton 1999). This ethnographic research has enabled detailed cultural, cross-cultural and historical examination of literacy practices and literacy acquisition. The role of mediators, social networks and informal acquisition in specific non-school contexts is emphasised. Because of this focus, school-based literacy, by contrast, is largely seen as being irrelevant, decontextualised and inappropriate. The New Literacy Studies is consequently relatively silent on issues of pedagogy¹⁷. Other than a focus on the importance of so-called “real” materials, the focus is on the development of critical literacy rather than on what New Literacy Studies advocates refer to as “basic skills” (Luke 1995). It has been seriously criticised in this regard (Gough 1995). Major criticisms of the New Literacy Studies are that it is caught in the trap of its own relativism; that it has resulted in such a broad conception of literacy that it has lost its central focus which should be reading and writing; that it does not offer a viable alternative to mass basic education and that it plays down generic reading and writing skills (Geidt 1994).

¹⁷ This is beginning to change. See Kist (2000), Quigley (1997) and Purcell-Gates (2002).

7.2 Methods in adult literacy

Many handbooks on adult literacy gloss over the fundamental methodological debates which characterise work in the field of children's literacy. There is an often tacit assumption that progressive aims will result in appropriate pedagogy. The Reflect method is a case in point. It focuses on participatory needs assessment and makes a number of assumptions regarding basic literacy instruction. In a manual of 277 pages, only three are devoted to the theoretical foundations of basic literacy instruction (Archer and Cottingham 1996).

Nevertheless, despite the relative neglect of pedagogical questions, trends in the teaching of adult literacy have tended to follow children's literacy, especially in countries like the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom. In countries like these, the predominant view is that a whole language approach is most appropriate for adult learners. In poor countries, where the bulk of adult literacy work is conducted, beginning literacy instruction tends to be via primers which utilise a syllabic method in which words are learnt, and then broken down into syllables which are then combined to form new words (Lyster 1992b, Hamadache and Martin 1986). The syllabic approach is essentially a bottom-up or skills-based approach to the teaching of reading. The main reasons for the use of structured primers in poor countries are that teachers receive little or no training and lack access to the types of resources required for the implementation of a whole language approach. Languages in poor countries are also often phonetically spelt and are therefore more amenable to syllabic approaches. Because Freire's literacy pedagogy is based on a syllabic approach, there is often a conflation of Freire's progressive/radical philosophy and his fairly traditional pedagogy. Educators often mistakenly believe that an approach is radical or Freirean if it utilises a syllabic approach based on picture codes.

7.2.1 The role of easy readers in the provision of adult literacy¹⁸

Regardless of the methods used to teach reading there is general agreement amongst educators, writers and researchers that, at least once the core skills have been

¹⁸ The following sections draw on Bhola 1983, Holland and Rogers 1993, Rogers 1994/1999, Millican 1992, Ouane 1989, Lyster 1990.

acquired, adult beginner readers should have access to easy books other than the primers via which they have been taught to read. This is for three main reasons. Firstly, without practice and consolidation, the ability to read diminishes and eventually disappears altogether. This is especially the case with the short programmes which characterise adult literacy work. Evidence from many short interventions around the world clearly indicates that minimal literacy skills atrophy and are often lost altogether without consolidation (Bhola 1983). Secondly, without access to appropriate reading material, the motivation and primary purpose of learning to read is lost. It is therefore common cause in the field of adult literacy provision, that literacy skills have to be consolidated and nurtured through the provision of what are often called “post-literacy” materials, i.e. books and newspapers especially written for what are often termed “neo-literates”. One of the fundamental contradictions of adult literacy work is that in order to promote literacy, a literate environment often has literally to be created, because there is very little for so-called neo-literates to read. Thirdly, the content is used to convey information that is regarded as essential for development.

The use of the term “post-literacy” itself indicates a particular conception of literacy, i.e. that it is regarded as something which is basic, swiftly acquired, finite and then supplemented. It also indicates a staged approach to the teaching and learning of reading. Post-literacy materials are only provided to learners once the core literacy skills have been learnt. It is important to note that the term “post-literacy” is not commonly used in adult literacy work in more affluent countries like the United Kingdom, USA, Canada and Australia.

7.3 What adult beginner readers should read and why

The content of books for adult beginner readers is determined by dominant views regarding the ultimate purpose of adult literacy work. These views collectively result in powerful ideas about what constitutes appropriate and desirable reading matter for adult beginner readers. They differ significantly from ideas about what is suitable for children’s reading.

Dominant views about appropriate content have in common the stated or implicit assumption that, because of the lost time of the past, and the shortage of time in the present, adults must only read and learn what is relevant and useful. Put more simply, adults have to read for very clear reasons, either the development of useful knowledge such as how to build a pit latrine, the development of critical consciousness or for social transactions such as filling in forms and getting married.

The combined influences of the development, empowerment and social practices perspectives have arguably, and in some cases, paradoxically, led to a restricted conception of adult literacy and to a narrow and functional conception of suitable reading matter.

7.3.1 The development perspective

From this perspective, books for beginner readers (in this context usually called post-literacy materials to signal that the basic skills have been acquired via a primer), must relate to the typical development needs of typical “illiterate” people, i.e. people who are also hungry, sick, have big families, no jobs, whose children die young, and who suffer under various forms of oppression relating to gender, class, caste, and race. In most cases therefore, books cover topics such as health, how to make a trench garden, information about rights and how to deal with bureaucracy (Rogers 1994, Millican 1992, Ouane 1989 and Dumont 1990). The content of these so-called post-literacy readers is most often didactic, even if written in story form. The closest that books in this category come to what might be called fiction, is through folk-tales which are highly regarded in a category of their own, because they are seen to reflect the rich oral traditions of the target groups. Folk tales therefore assume a privileged position as the only legitimate form of fiction within this perspective.

7.3.2 The empowerment perspective

Seen from this perspective, easy readers must not only be relevant to learner’s lives but also be empowering. The content of such books is therefore, commonly about pertinent historical or social issues, with the emphasis on the conscientisation of learners. This is achieved either through political analysis, or through the provision of

what is regarded as important and useful information, for example about legal rights. In line with the emphasis on the validation of learners' lives and experiences, autobiographies of learners are highly valued within this perspective.

A variation of the Freirean approach is one which emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. Known as the "Student writing movement"¹⁹ it encouraged adult learners to develop writing skills and to write "stories" which were subsequently published. The Student writing movement was closely allied to what was known as "Community publishing" which developed and published the writing of working class writers. The Student writing movement emerged to challenge the dominant mode of literacy provision at the time, in which students were seen as, "passive consumers of dominant language, cultural and workplace rules rather than being encouraged to develop the creative capacity to produce their own knowledge and discover their own voice" (Gillespie 1990, p. 6).

A common model for the development of the "voice" of literacy learners was through intensive residential writing workshops, where peer review and editing played a central role (Shrapnel-Gardener 1985). Because the demystification of the book production process was also seen as important for the empowerment of writers, rudimentary book production was also part of these intensive workshops. Using photocopiers, photographs, typewriters and illustrators, hand-written stories were transformed into books literally in front of people's eyes. Empowerment was therefore fostered through the dual processes of the demystification of the book production process itself, and through the legitimisation of learners' lives and experiences. Most of the stories were autobiographical, but creative fiction was also encouraged and considered legitimate if it was produced by learners. One of the limitations of books developed in this manner is, however, that they are not structured for easy reading and are therefore not immediately accessible to beginner readers (Mace 1995 and Duffin 1995).

¹⁹ This brief summary draws on the following authors: Barton and Ivanich (1991), Gillespie (1990), Mace (1995, 1998, 1999/2000), Shrapnel-Gardener (1985), Gardener (1999/2000), Peyton (1989) and Worpole (1977).

The Student writing movement achieved some prominence during the 1980s in the United Kingdom and USA. In the United Kingdom, a monthly national broadsheet, *Write first time* devoted to learner writing, articulated the aspirations and potential of the empowerment perspective. It was considered sufficiently subversive by the Thatcher government for its subsidy to be withdrawn. The Student writing perspective finds some resonance with the concept of “learner-generated” materials, which is used within the development perspective.

7.3.3 The New Literacy Studies perspective

Because of the emphasis on the social nature of literacy practices, within this perspective, artificially constructed texts for literacy learning are generally viewed unfavourably. Solitary reading, especially of fiction, because of its association with the dominant school-based model of literacy is either ignored, or regarded as a particular literacy practice reserved for the leisured middle class. The conundrum of the New Literacy Studies position is that a bureaucratic form is considered to be “real”, but a story book for beginner readers is often not.

In summary, whether because of a development, transformation or New Literacy Studies agenda, fiction has generally been seen as having a limited role to play in the provision of literacy for adults particularly in developing countries and arguably especially in South Africa. This has however to some extent changed over the past decade.

7.3.4 An alternative view of what adults should read

During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of adult literacy educators and researchers, dissatisfied with what they saw as restricted approaches to adult literacy, looked to children's literacy for solutions. This was due to the relatively rich resources allocated to both research into, and provision of children's literacy, and to the concomitant advances in pedagogy and book publishing. Questions were asked about why reading of all kinds was promoted so passionately for children, but not for adults, and why

children were considered to be worthy beneficiaries of the full range and abundance of the world of print, but adult beginner readers were not.

Key tenets of this relatively new position are:

- beginner adult readers should be exposed to the richness and variety of all possible text types, including fiction, for the same reasons as those advanced for children. In other words it makes pedagogic, motivational and cognitive sense for adults to read widely, just as it does for children (O' Rourke 1995, French 1992, Richardson 1999/2000, Pursell 1991).
- it is possible to create good fiction for adult beginner readers which is engaging and moving, just as it is for children.

This position can be seen as a “promotion of reading” approach which links educators and librarians because of their common concerns and purposes. A central feature of this approach is to foster a love of reading, with the emphasis on pleasure and engagement (Nixon-Ponder and Marshall 1996, Benedict and Carlisle 1992 and Buckingham 1996).

O' Rourke (1995, p. 34) referring to the pleasure and power of reading, traces the reading development of a particular adult beginner reader:

“ ‘I never knew what a book was for’, she said, bounding into class the day after she completed *Jackie's Story*. What she meant was that she hadn't realised readers could bring themselves to a book, and enter into its world, feel with its characters as well as thinking and feeling about them. She hadn't realised that it was okay for a book to move you to tears, anger or laughter. That you would remember fragments of its story and characters long after the book was closed, that they could change the way you viewed the world or yourself.”

This is reading that clearly goes beyond instrumental educational purposes.

The particular argument for the promotion of fiction for adult beginner readers therefore comes primarily from educators, librarians and publishers who assert that,

despite differences between adults and children, the power of the story (i.e. fiction) has similar pedagogic and psychological benefits for both groups. Commitment to whole language methods, demands that a wide range of texts, including fiction, is available to adult beginner readers even at very basic levels.

An important proviso to the above argument, is that fiction for adult beginner readers must differ from fiction for children in the following significant ways:

- because of the emotional and cognitive maturity of adults, there is no need to control or censor content in way whatsoever
- any form of censorship of books for adults is therefore unacceptable - beginner adult readers are no different from fluent adult readers in terms of their ability to make mature judgements and decisions.
- fiction for adult beginner readers should differ only in level of difficulty from books for fluent adult readers, i.e. the stories should cover as broad a range as possible in terms of genre and conceptual complexity.

8. Criteria for developing and selecting books for adult beginner readers

As with criteria for the selection of children's beginner books, criteria which have been developed for the provision and selection of adult beginner books reflect particular conceptions about the uses and purposes of literacy. Predictably therefore, they differ significantly from those developed in the children's literacy field.

In line with criteria for selecting children's books, criteria are either overtly stated or can be inferred from lists of recommended reading for adult beginner readers. Broadly speaking, criteria fall into two main types: those for adult beginner readers in developing countries and those for adult beginner readers in affluent countries. The discourse of functional and empowering literacy dominates in the former, while the latter reflects an increasing convergence with the children's literacy position.

8.1 Criteria for books for adult beginner readers in developing countries

UNESCO has been, and remains, one of the foremost proponents of the importance of easy readers for adult beginner readers. UNESCO publications on post-literacy reflect a predominantly development-oriented perspective, with a nod to the empowerment perspective. The UNESCO position is clearly reflected in most literature from developing countries on this topic.

Ouane (1989) summarises the outcomes of an international research project on learning strategies for post-literacy involving 21 countries, only one of which was not a poor country. Topics considered suitable for post-literacy materials were based on so-called basic human needs which were divided into the following categories:

- essential for life
 - food
 - clothing
 - housing
 - water
 - health, recreation, sports
 - others

- socio-economic life
 - environment and population
 - communication
 - income
 - others

- education and cultural life
 - education
 - cultural and spiritual
 - others.

It is common in publications of this nature, for the subjunctive to be used when discussing characteristics or criteria for books for “neo-literate” adults. This shows a definite inclination for prescription rather than description. Prescriptions are

commonly divided into three types: those relating to purpose, those relating to content and those relating to form and application. In relation to purpose, the prescriptions are direct and overt. Materials should, “focus on the real and immediate problems of the learners and on the environment in which they are living,should help the neo-literate to develop a critical attitude towards problems, to reflect on them, analyse them, discuss them and take proper decisions at the right time” (Ouane 1989, p. 55).

In relation to content, the prescriptions relate to correlation with “individual and social development goals”; the provision of “technical and scientific knowledge” to help in solving problems; the promotion of “good citizenship, national integrity, an appreciation of art and culture”; and the use of “resources from the culture, folk wisdom and day to day experiences of the learner” (Ouane 1989, p. 56).

Characteristics relating to form and application refer to language medium, design features and the use of visual aids.

Although the use of terms such as art and culture, suggest a wider conception of literacy, it becomes apparent that these refer only to local, indigenous visual and oral forms. Even though there is a recognition that there are divergent tastes amongst adult “neo-literates”, the prescriptions remain general and focused on narrow functional concerns relating to development. For example, Ouane (1989, p. 58) lists the reading interests of “neo-literates” from different countries as follows:

Tanzania:

famous people, sports and games, trade, traditions, technical publications, crafts and fiction;

Iran:

agriculture, folklore, dressmaking, health, technology, religion, humour;

India:

health, growing vegetables, horticulture, child-care, fiction (mainly based on folklore), simple technology.

Despite indications of non-functional interests and divergent interests, the tenor of publications of this nature remains firmly within the development/functional

paradigm. Recent shifts in UNESCO's focus, relate to the promotion and validation of small-scale, local indigenous programmes, but the dominant view that literacy must be socially useful and "relevant" remains.

Similarly Sasaoka (1990, p. 7), categorises appropriate themes for books for "neo-literates" as follows:

- health: daily health; sanitation; balanced diet; common diseases.
- environment and science and technology: what is good environment; reforestation; science and technology in everyday life; energy.
- production: how to improve production; handicrafts and vocational skills.
- social and economic aspects: citizenship; co-operatives; community responsibility; family life; economic efficiency.
- culture: proper use of recreation and leisure time; cultural heritage.

It is not clear how these reading interests were established and how or whether the methodological difficulties related to research into reading preferences referred to in Chapter 1 were overcome. The reference to "proper use of recreational time" suggests that this list was not based on the stated interests of newly literate adults themselves but rather on conventional wisdom regarding development priorities.

Adult literacy. A handbook for development workers (Fordham et al 1995) reflects features of the development, New Literacy Studies and empowerment perspectives. The concept of functional literacy is expanded to embrace questions of employment (or lack of it), environment, social equality and participation. "We are now more concerned with local literacies and languages than with centralised national agendas" (Fordham et al 1995, p. 11). The influence of the New Literacy Studies is evident in their classification of literacy materials into two types: "special" materials and "ordinary" materials. Special materials (those which are produced specifically for literacy learners) include primary-school materials, textbooks and supplementary/follow-up resources. Supplementary resources include what they refer to as "staged readers" and "simplified readers." Ordinary materials (which are those which are available in a community and not designed for teaching purposes) are divided into "real" materials and "development" resources. Examples of real materials

are advertising leaflets, bills, medicine packaging. Development resources are those which have been written specifically to convey development messages.

Their preference is clearly for ordinary materials, learner-produced materials and locally produced materials which respond to local needs. In earlier chapters, common themes reflecting learners needs are identified as: the use of banks, improved nutrition, co-operatives, crop diseases, legal rights, electricity and safety and the history of political change (Fordham et al 1995, p. 38). It is difficult to see how these themes are different from the more recent UNESCO reviews.

8.2 Criteria for books for adult beginner readers in rich countries

A review of literature from countries like the USA and the United Kingdom, reveals that while the notion of functional and relevant literacy materials for adults remains, there is increasing evidence of a convergence with the wider conception of literacy apparent in literacy work with children. Weibel (1996) in her comprehensive work, *Choosing and using books with adult new readers*, for example, writes with passion about the complex benefits and reasons why adults should read. In the discourse commonly associated with the promotion of children's reading, she speaks of the power of books and how it is "never too late to experience the transformative power of the written word" (Weibel 1996, p. ix). Pursell (1991) adopts a similar position.

Duffin (1995, p. 83), comments favourably on a draft for an adult easy reader which she says contains all the elements of a "good story": interesting characters, their relationships and the depiction of intense emotions like passion, conflict and loss. Describing the dilemmas faced by Gatehouse, one of the oldest and most durable ABE publishing projects in the United Kingdom, she explains how the solution to developing suitable reading books for beginner readers was found in what she calls "the story". This included teaching writers how to introduce and sustain characters, the use of a forward-driving narrative and a suitable ending. This has obvious resonance with the Children's literature position. On the other hand, Smallwood (1992, pp. 1 - 2), suggesting criteria for selecting children's books suitable for adult learners, lists the following questions: does it relate to your curriculum objectives (social, cultural, political, life skills, vocabulary, grammar); does it include adults; are

there clear illustrations that help tell the story; does it contain repeated predictable language patterns; does it use language only slightly beyond the level of the learners; is there a cultural or multicultural perspective? These questions do not reflect a literature-based focus but rather resemble more typical adult literacy concerns.

New Readers Press, one of the oldest publishers of books for adult beginner readers in the USA, has a list of titles which indicates a generous conception of literacy for adults. Their hints for the production of easy readers are also comprehensive and include advice on how to write fiction.

8.3 Detailed analysis of adult beginner readers

Very little in-depth research in the form of close textual analysis, reader response or general evaluation has been conducted on books for adult beginner readers²⁰. As discussed in Section 6.2 above, Coles (1977) analysed ideology in adult beginner readers in the USA through close textual analysis of how race, class and gender were depicted. He found that men were disproportionately represented in a ratio of 3 to 1. They were generally depicted as more competent, adventurous and diverse than women were both in relation to occupations and other activities. Where women were depicted as competent it was usually in relation to housework or romance. Sex role stereotypes were generally exaggerated and maintained. In relation to class and attitudes toward authority he found that harmonious and unproblematic relationships between classes were depicted with individualistic rather than collective solutions to problems. Generally, docile and uncritical acceptance of the status quo was represented.

A racial analysis showed a perpetuation of racist stereotypes with black men particularly being portrayed as inferior to white men and only showing heroism and strength in relation to stereotypical black careers such as boxing. Coles (1977) found that the books did not represent the social and political state of affairs of the time which was characterised by considerable social stress and change. Rather it perpetuated the types of relationships that favoured dominant groups.

²⁰ Quigley and Holsinger (1993) examine ideology in adult literacy curricula more generally.

8.4 Summary remarks

Because of very different conceptions of what constitutes good and appropriate reading material for adults, it is misleading to suggest that it is possible to create a composite list of criteria for books for adult beginner readers. Functionality, immediate utility and relevance are the overarching concerns in poor countries while variety, range, engagement and even fun are increasingly the concerns in rich countries. This is not surprising given the disparities between their various purposes, target audiences, infrastructures, resources, and skill levels of literacy educators.

9. Conclusion to literature review

This literature review has attempted to illustrate the multiple influences on books produced for beginner readers. It has attempted to show that these texts reflect core assumptions about pedagogy and purpose. Particularly within the “real literature”²¹ approach to teaching reading, which relies on books which are literary and have the capacity to engage readers, the tensions of this particular genre are most evident. Books must be simple enough for beginner readers to read, and yet must meet stringent literary criteria. They must fulfil the compound purposes of developing reading skills, fostering a love of reading and inducting readers into the world of print.

Books for adult beginner readers tend to differ significantly from those for children because of overarching and dominant concerns about relevance, immediate application and challenges to the hegemony of liberal middle class schooling. The various criteria and methods of analysis which have been reviewed, show that it is possible to describe and analyse texts on a number of different levels for various purposes, relating to engagement, readability, pedagogy and the construction of the readership.

²¹ “Real literature” must be clearly distinguished from the “real documents” which characterise the New Literacy Studies approach

Comparing and contrasting the dominant concerns of children's literacy with adult literacy should not be seen as an uncritical endorsement of children's literacy provision and a rejection of adult literacy provision. Children's literature can obviously also be fraught with contradictory messages and subtle mechanisms of control.

The following chapter provides a brief background to the South African context. Although this background could have been integrated into the rationale and literature review, it was difficult to define key debates relating to literacy and literacy publishing in South Africa without clearly outlining the key terms of these debates. Some repetition is therefore inevitable.

CHAPTER 3: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

1. Introduction

In order to locate this research within the particular South African context, a brief background account is required. This is not a definitive or detailed history of adult literacy initiatives, pedagogical debates or the publication of easy readers in South Africa. It merely identifies trends and indicates how these mirror or deviate from those identified in the international context in Chapter 2. There are a number of comprehensive accounts of adult literacy work in South Africa (Hutton 1992, Harley et al 1996, Aitchison et al 2000). Much of the following summary is based on these accounts as well as on personal experience.

2. Brief history and general context

Prior to 1990, polarisation was the hallmark of adult literacy work in South Africa. This polarisation was reflected in relation to literacy purposes, pedagogy and adult beginner reader publications (Harley et al 1996, French 1992 and Lyster 1992a). The lines were drawn between what was seen as literacy for domestication on the one hand, and literacy for liberation on the other (Berggren and Berggren 1975). Functional literacy or literacy for development was located firmly within the domestication camp. The liberation/empowerment camp drew heavily on the work of Paulo Freire, who powerfully articulated the ideological role which literacy plays in the development of critical consciousness (Freire 1975). In terms of pedagogy, a phonic approach tended to be advocated by then conservative literacy agencies such as Operation Upgrade, while more progressive agencies such as ELP (English Literacy Project) and USWE (Use Speak and Write English) advocated a Freirean cum language experience approach (Lyster 1992b). Operation Upgrade radically revised its philosophy and approach in the 1990s.

From the early 1990s, the rapprochement, reconciliation and compromise evident in the broader political and economic sphere were also evident in policy and implementation relating to adult literacy work. The exigencies of the dual and

incompatible demands of economic growth, and redress and redistribution, were reflected in the creation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which purportedly satisfied both requirements (Lyster 1997). The NQF is an attempt to integrate education and training based on a competency-based system of assessment and curriculum definition. By disaggregating learning and teaching from assessment, the system in theory allows for recognition of prior learning, flexible accumulation of credits towards qualifications, horizontal and vertical mobility as well as portability.

The framework covers all levels of education from the cradle to the grave (see Appendix 2 for table) In terms of basic education for adults and children, there are two exit points: the GETC (General Education and Training Certificate) which is awarded upon completion of NQF Level 1 (equivalent to 9 years of schooling), and the FET Certificate awarded upon completion of NQF Level 4 (equivalent to 12 years of schooling). Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) which is divided into 4 levels, is equivalent to NQF Level 1. ABET consists of a number of learning areas (formerly subjects) of which literacy is seen as a necessary but far from sufficient part. Learning areas are divided into fundamental, core and elective components (Land et al 1999, Department of Education 1997b).

It is important to note that for assessment purposes, the ABET learning areas and outcomes do not distinguish between first and second or third languages. An analysis of the ABET Language, literacy, and Communication outcomes²² for NQF level 1 (ABET Level 4), reveals a variety of influences: discourse theory, genre theory and New Literacy Studies being dominant. The word “reading” does not once appear in any of these outcomes despite the fact that there are 36 of them²³. The unwitting consequences of imposing this curriculum model on untrained teachers are notable. Many teachers believe that in the new system, reading no longer has to be taught (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999).

²² See Appendix 3 for Summary unit standards and specific outcomes for Language, literacy and communication for NQF level 1 (ABET Level 4).

²³ The Language, literacy and communication Unit standards have since been revised and simplified. The name has been changed to “Communications studies and languages” and the unit standards simplified to make reading and writing overt (South African Qualifications Authority 2002).

Despite the above problems which relate to the complexity of the terminology of the new system as well as to teacher competence, the literacy outcomes do reflect a progressive orientation on the part of the authors if not the implementers of these outcomes. However, a key point is that literacy is conceived as alongside of, rather than foundational to, all other learning. This has resulted in a conflation of process and content or medium and message. In addition, an emphasis on competencies which have to relate to critical cross-field outcomes has led to an instrumental/functional view of literacy rather than to the more general “promotion of reading” approach referred to earlier. This applies to children’s as well as adults.

The critical cross-field outcomes which underpin the entire NQF are as follows:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community;
- Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environments and health of others;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes are:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- Explore education and career opportunities; and
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities. (Dept. of Education 1997a)

Their relationship to national priorities with regard to the global economy and the new work order are striking (Lyster 1997).

The establishment of a legitimate, democratically elected government in 1994 had a number of paradoxical consequences for literacy work in South Africa. Progressive non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which had received generous funding from foreign donors with few strings attached, suddenly found themselves cast adrift as bilateral intergovernmental agreements were made. When NGOs were funded, donors demanded concrete evidence of progress in the form of exam results and identifiable progression through stages. Assessment, which had previously been eschewed as disempowering, moved to the forefront of literacy work. This forced NGOs to focus on pedagogical rather than predominantly ideological questions. The outcomes-based system, upon which the NQF is based, also reinforced a focus on assessment (Aitchison et al 2000).

Alongside the juggernaut which is the NQF, which has had a profound influence on how adult literacy is conceived and delivered, there has also been a small but vocal “promotion of reading lobby” in South Africa which has, in various ways, encouraged the reading of fiction and espoused the pleasures of reading. The READ organisation which focuses mainly on children’s literacy, has a high profile and has been successful in promoting reading in schools and homes via large scale provision of story books as well as training teachers to adopt a whole language/real books approach to literacy and language teaching (Elley et al 1996). The ERA Initiative focused on the promotion of reading for adult literacy and language learners until 2000 when it widened its focus to include children. Major strategies of the ERA Initiative were advocacy, multilingual short story competitions, the production of reading supplements in magazines and newspapers, selling box libraries and sponsoring African language publishing (The ERA Initiative 1999).

A few South African publishers of books for adult beginner readers have strong commitments to the provision of fiction for adult beginner readers and have focused their publishing programmes on fiction notably: Viva Books and the New Readers Project. Learn with Echo, a newspaper supplement for adult beginner readers, has always contained a substantial fiction section.

The Centre for the Book, part of an international organisation/movement, has as its major focus the promotion of reading for adults and children. Academic Departments of Library and Information Studies, Provincial and Municipal Libraries, as well as library associations have also played a major role in the promotion of reading generally, as well as being amongst the earliest advocates of the promotion of reading for adult beginner readers.

The current Minister of Education in South Africa, Kader Asmal, has recently introduced the “promoting reading” discourse into the mainstream of educational policy and provision. His avowed interest in literacy and its promotion, as opposed to ABET, however resulted in early, unintended conflicts of interest between his newly created South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI) and the Adult Education and Training Directorates of the national and provincial Departments of Education.²⁴ In the latter half of 2001 SANLI was given the status of a directorate in the national Department of Education but has yet to deliver on its early promises.

3. A brief history of the production and publication easy readers²⁵

As with trends internationally, this history necessarily reflects dominant trends in relation to purpose and pedagogy. There have also been key individuals who have influenced developments to a disproportionate extent. The volume and nature of books published for adult beginner readers is instructive.

During the 1940s there were serious attempts to produce books for adult beginner readers. Eddie Roux, a former member of the Communist Party of South African, was

²⁴ SANLI was initially going to co-ordinate a mass national literacy campaign run by civil society organisations and taught by volunteers with a strong reading focus, outside of the strictures of the NQF. It is now located within national and provincial Departments of Education.

²⁵ This section is based on a combination of personal knowledge gained through long-term involvement in this field, French (1992), Lyster (1990), National Education Policy Investigation (1992), Dilley and Perold (1993), Harley et al (1996), The Era Initiative (1999), Evans and Seeber (2000), Mpe and Seeber (2000).

instrumental in publishing a series of easy to read books covering a range of topics related to overtly political or development-type topics (Alexander 1998). There were also attempts by various Bible Societies to publish simplified Bible stories for adults with limited reading ability. The motivation for this was clearly to gain and retain converts to Christianity.

An examination of these books reveals that they were written at a relatively high level of difficulty, even though they were specifically written for non-fluent readers. Other books on typical development topics were produced by various agencies. These books reflect the development perspective referred to earlier.

Prior to 1990, literacy agencies, with their widely divergent agendas, were the first serious producers of easy readers for adults in South Africa. Operation Upgrade, a then conservative missionary-oriented NGO, was one of the first literacy organisations to advocate the development, necessity and importance of “post-literacy” materials. The use of the term “post-literacy” itself suggests influences from other developing countries where Laubach, the American founder of Operation Upgrade, was active through his organisation Laubach Literacy International (LLI). LLI has subsequently become one of the foremost producers of easy readers in the USA through its New Readers Press.

Operation Upgrade was driven by a combination of evangelical and development goals which its books reflected. Topics covered by their post-literacy readers were: the Bible, health, hygiene and agriculture. Laubach was outspoken about his organisation’s aims:

“The Communists find them easy, but we find them just as easy. Anybody can have them who lifts them out of ignorance and poverty.” (Laubach cited in Lyster 1992, p. 31).

Operation Upgrade was severely criticised by more progressive literacy agencies at the time, for the patronising attitude which their books displayed towards the target group (see Appendix 10 for an example). A number of provincial and then “homeland” governments used Operation Upgrade materials and were thus exposed to

the “post-literacy” materials which formed part of the package. Aside from the influence of Operation Upgrade, the only government department which made any serious attempt to cater for the ongoing reading needs of its learners was the Ciskei Department of Education, which produced a simply-written newspaper called *Igalelo*.

Three progressive literacy organisations played a significant role in the development of books for adult beginner readers: Learn and Teach, Use Speak and Write English (USWE), and English Literacy Project (ELP). Learn and Teach based its programme on Freirean principles and methods, utilising many of the techniques and ideas for materials which had been used by Freire in Brazil (see Appendix 11 for an example). In addition to learner workbooks, Learn and Teach during its early years produced a number of books for adult beginner readers based on historical and current social and political issues. The emphasis was entirely on conscientisation of learners. A few autobiographical easy readers were produced which reflected the socio-economic conditions of typical Learn and Teach learners. In the early 1980s, Learn and Teach magazine was launched as an offshoot of the literacy organisation. Its stated purpose was to provide beginner readers with appropriate reading materials. It had clear educational purposes, but its more serious agenda was to conscientise readers about conditions in the country.

The content of *Learn and Teach* magazine changed during the years of its existence. During the late 1980s the magazine was characterised by overtly “political” content, but the early 1990s saw a shift to a commercial-looking magazine which was geared more towards the needs of a “young urban audience, possibly more educated than the stated target audience” (Lyster 1990).

USWE, an organisation which also based its approach on Freirean principles was, in addition, committed to a whole language, specifically a language experience approach. The basic tenets of these two approaches resulted in the publication of books like *We came to town*, an account of the experiences of migrant women workers in Johannesburg. In terms of dominant trends internationally, these publications reflected influences from the Student writing movement in the United Kingdom. *We came to town* (Kerfoot 1985) was one of the first easy readers in South Africa published to commercial standards, with a glossy, full-colour cover and

professional design and layout. ELP, strongly driven by a political agenda as well as being influenced by developments in Applied Linguistics internationally also produced one of the first easy readers *I told myself I am going to learn* (Ndaba 1990).

By 1990, the list of published easy readers for adults in South Africa was, despite the above initiatives, grossly inadequate. Most were published in-house, were not widely distributed, and were, in terms of readability criteria, much too difficult for adult beginner readers. The easy readers that existed primarily reflected the development and empowerment agendas of their progenitors.

Post 1990, there was increasing awareness that if literacy initiatives were to succeed, the production and publication of easy readers, especially in African languages, would have to increase dramatically. An educational rather than an overtly developmental or political discourse became dominant. This also fitted in with efforts to promote all South African languages as equal.

Librarians and library associations were amongst the main advocates of the role and importance of easy readers in promoting a reading culture. Libraries were increasingly involved in efforts to reach people with little or no formal education. *Mousaion*, a Library Science journal published in South Africa, was the first journal in the country to devote an entire issue to easy readers for adults entitled “The provision of literature for adults with limited reading ability” (UNISA 1982). The Cape Provincial Library Service through its journal, *Cape Librarian*, has also played a leading role in promoting reading for adult beginner readers.

After 1990, the number of easy readers published by commercial publishers burgeoned, particularly post 1994. This was due to a, in retrospect, naïve belief that the state was poised for a dramatic increase in ABET provision which would make the publication of ABET materials, including beginner books for adults, commercially viable. “In this context, commercial publishers, some of whom had never shown any interest in the literacy or ABET field, began to gear up for production of ABET materials generally and, from 1995, ...began to establish ABET “divisions” within their companies, usually with politically correct African sounding names”

(Aitchison et al 2000, p. 101).

Progressive NGOs like ELP, USWE and ABE Development Services formed alliances with commercial publishers, in which their skills in the development of materials were traded for the marketing and financial acumen of established publishing houses (for example ELP and SACHED Books were incorporated into Maskew Miller Longman which was incorporated into Pearson Education; ABE Development Services publications are published by Juta Publishers; Operation Upgrade publications are published under the Stimela imprint (part of Nasou Via Afrika, which is part of Nasionale Pers; Prolit (Project Literacy) publications are published by Kagiso Publishers (incorporated by Maskew Miller Longman incorporated by Pearson Education (Aitchison et al 2000; Mpe and Seeber 2000). Publishers relevant to this research are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

Such was the proliferation of publications that specialised catalogues of ABET materials, including what were termed supplementary materials, were produced (National Literacy Co-operation 1996, The ERA Initiative 1998). The ERA Initiative also published catalogues specifically focused on easy readers for adults but included books for children which were considered appropriate (The ERA Initiative 1995).

However, the optimism regarding a dramatic increase in provision and funding proved to be unfounded. Many well-established ABET NGOs were forced to close due to withdrawal of funding (exacerbated by widely publicised cases of financial mismanagement and fraud in the National Literacy Co-operation (NLC), a national co-ordinating body for ABET NGOs, and World University Service (WUS) South Africa, a major funder of ABET NGOs. The provision of ABET classes by NGOs as well as their more general influence has been dramatically reduced, as has provision of ABET classes in the private sector. State provision of ABET has increased but not at the basic levels (Aitchison et al 2000). State expenditure on books for schools has also drastically declined overall from R900 million in 1994 to R150 million in 1998 (The ERA Initiative 1999). This is reflected in book purchases for ABET.

By 2000, some publishers had been forced to close down their ABET divisions (for example Juta and Maskew Miller Longman) because the anticipated surge in

purchasing had not transpired. Publishers of ABET materials are now focusing on the publication of learning materials for the under-resourced new ABET learning areas such as Technology, Small, Medium and Micro-enterprises, and Agriculture. Indications are that publication of easy readers, especially of fiction is in decline. For example, during 1999, thousands of unsold easy readers were pulped due to the crisis in which the educational publishing industry found itself. Sales figures from a specialist ABET materials bookshop (NASA), confirm a decline in purchases. Some publishers have also decided to stop publishing readers (Aitchison et al 2000).

4. The role of fiction in adult literacy

The history of publishing and pedagogy has been one in which dominant values have been imposed on disadvantaged minority or oppressed groups. Extreme examples of this in children's literacy are the "Dick and Jane" type basal readers of the 1950s. Here middle class children in sanitised, perfect, two-parent households played happily while the mother baked and the father toiled in a white-collar job. Children, who by virtue of class, geography or personal biography did not fit into such conceptions of family, were clearly disadvantaged and disempowered. In adult literacy, similar examples abound. The most commonly used primer for adult literacy in South Africa up to the 1980s was published by Operation Upgrade. It depicted an obviously white middle class American context in the 1950s (see Appendix 10 for an example).

This trend has partially been arrested for both pedagogic and ideological reasons. Blatant examples of the Operation Upgrade type depicted above are not common. However the trend continues in more subtle, insidious and therefore arguably more damaging ways. A strong reaction to the imposition of dominant and foreign values in the spheres of both children's and adult literacy has resulted in a sometimes intense concern/preoccupation with depicting settings and characters with which readers can identify. This has led to a common perception that in order for a story to be appropriate and appealing, it must be situated in a local context. This leads to views that, for example, people in rural areas would not like to read about people in urban areas, or that people of a particular language group would not like to read about people in another language group.

The brief history above reveals a significant shift from the ideological battlegrounds of the 1970s and 1980s. Then, progressive literacy agencies judged publications according to whether they were domesticating or liberating. Fiction was seen as frivolous unless it was biographical and/or highlighted socio-economic conditions. Conservative literacy agencies generally adopted a functional/instrumental approach to book content in line with developments internationally. Fiction was merely used as an instrument to carry a didactic message.

The creation of the NQF and the resultant pre-occupation with learning areas, unit standards, and outcomes has arguably resulted in an instrumental view of reading which does not encourage reading for its own sake or for pleasure. For example, the section on materials development and media, and on criteria for selecting ABET materials in the *Policy document on Adult Basic Education and Training* (Department of Education 1997a) clearly locates “learning and support materials (LASMs)” within the structured and formal educational framework of learning areas and outcomes.

In an appendix to this document, the criteria for assessing ABET instructional materials (which include LASMs) are grouped under the following headings:

- ❑ specifications
- ❑ content
- ❑ presentation and technical quality
- ❑ readability
- ❑ teaching effectiveness
- ❑ costs
- ❑ maintenance.

The criteria (in the form of questions) are intended for all “learning and support materials”, and therefore include easy readers (which form part of “support materials”). Despite the inclusion of easy readers, the tenor of the list suggests that the criteria relate to didactic materials and not to fiction²⁶. For example, dominant criteria relate to whether and how materials relate to various levels and learning areas in the

²⁶ This was confirmed by John Aitchison, the chief author of the document, who said that the original checklist was specifically designed for textbooks and not for fiction (Aitchison 2002).

NQF, whether the organisation of content is educationally sound (logical, moving from the know to the unknown, etc.), whether they are appropriate for the target group in terms of “cultural fit, contextual relevance, relevance to needs, and compatibility with the ideology and values of the envisaged users” (Dept of Education 1997a, p. 49); and whether they are “free of nationalistic, racial, sexual or class bias.” (Dept of Education 1997a, p.50). Despite the original intentions of the author, the criteria are applied to all LASMs including books of fiction. It is difficult to see how these criteria apply to fiction, aside from performing a gatekeeping and censoring function. The spectre of irrelevance lurks unstated in the shadows.

Within this conception of literacy, there is no ready place for books of fiction. Submissions by publishers to prospective buyers of these materials within the relevant national and provincial government departments, are required to define books according to which NQF learning areas and outcomes they support. As stated earlier, a general promotion of reading approach is not supported by this system. Certainly, reading for pleasure is not advocated. This is not unique to South Africa or to adults. Ousbey (1992, p. 29), referring to reading promotion in the United Kingdom, states, “The trouble with words like ‘pleasure’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘humour’ and ‘celebration’, however is that they do not fit easily into the discourse of current educational debate.”

Debates concerning the issue of censorship in evaluation criteria have continued into the present. The National Departmental of Education audit of LASMs (The ERA Initiative 1998) specifically excludes materials which are sexist, racist, homophobic, etc. Arguably, this could exclude a substantial amount of fiction, as these “materials” would be more likely to present a homogenised, sanitised version of an ideal reality. The mechanical application of criteria such as these can result in embarrassing and ominous decisions. In 2001, for example, a panel of Gauteng schoolteachers attempted to ban reputable literature such as that written by Nadine Gordimer on the grounds that it was racist according to criteria which had been developed for the selection of materials (Swarns 2001).

Despite the above cautions, the discourse of policy documents, the establishment of the NQF, and dominant views about the instrumental nature of adult literacy, all of which arguably militate against the development of fiction, a substantial body of

fiction for adult beginner readers has been published in South Africa. The description and analysis of a selection of these books is the focus of this research.

The following chapter describes how the particular analytical tools for this study were derived.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYTICAL TOOLS

1. Introduction

In order to attempt to answer the research questions relating to literary quality, pedagogy and ideology, original analytical categories were developed. These were primarily derived from models used in applied research in children's literacy, stated or inferred criteria relating to the study of children's literature, and dominant conceptions regarding the content and purposes of the promotion of adult literacy. They allow for analysis at different levels ranging from superficial description to inferences about ideology. Broad categories were created in order to describe and analyse the defined corpus of ABET Level 1 books for adult beginner readers in South Africa. These descriptive categories were then applied to each book selected for this research. In order to facilitate description and manipulation of data, this information was entered onto an Access database. Some categories were pre-determined because of detailed prior knowledge of the subject matter or because they were more easily quantifiable, while others were open-ended in order to allow for more in-depth qualitative analysis.

The categories are grouped according to the following major headings:

- A. Publication details
- B. Literary²⁷ and ideological analysis
 - Genre
 - Theme
 - Setting
 - Plot (English only)
 - Narrative features (English only)
 - Character (English only)
 - Specific language features (English only)

²⁷ This relates to the notion of “engagement features” which draws on a range of disciplines: children's literacy, children's literature, literary theory and narratology. The specific use of the term as distinctive from “readability features” is derived from Hoffman et al (1994)

- Gender-specific language features (English only)
- Imagery (English only)
- C. Educational analysis
 - Design features
 - Predictability features (English only)
 - Decodability features (English only)

All of the books in the corpus (i.e. books in all languages) were analysed in terms of publication details, genre, theme, setting and design features. The English books were, in addition, analysed in-depth in relation to literary and ideological analysis and remaining readability features. A detailed explanation of each category follows.

2. Publication details

These are the conventional and superficial means by which books are commonly described. Aside from the details required for referencing purposes, additional information is the ABET literacy level according to the publisher, either as classified in the publisher's catalogue or signalled on the book itself, the name of the translator if available, the language of origin of the book (if translated), other languages into which the book is translated (if applicable). The purpose of collecting these details is to allow for broad description relating to trends in book publishing for ABET Level 1 and to allow for comparisons between publications in various South African languages. The categories regarding publications details are therefore as follows:

- Title
- Author
- Illustrator
- Translator
- Publisher
- Place
- Year
- Level
- Language of origin
- Languages translated into
- Number of pages (excluding title and general information pages)

3. Literary and ideological features

The analysis of literary (engagement) and ideological features of texts is the most complex because it is the most qualitative, the most elusive and the most subjective. The categories below provide the tools by which literary quality and the construction of the readership and literacy itself are analysed.

They relate to all the features of a written story which are believed to contribute to engagement. They relate to the content, form and structure of stories, to genre, theme, plot, title, character, narrative features and generally to literary quality. Some categories allow simply for description while others allow for inferences regarding literary and ideological questions. These categories were inferred from the relevant sections of the literature review and were selected because of their descriptive and analytical power and/or their suggested or demonstrated use in applied research. None of the categories have been taken directly from other research studies. They have been developed, amalgamated and re-constituted based on my prior knowledge of the content and form of adult beginner readers.

3.1 Genre

This composite list of pre-determined genre categories draws primarily on Children's literature, analysis of short stories for fluent adult readers, and what is known about books for adult beginner readers in South Africa. Hence certain genres like science fiction are not categorised separately but have been incorporated into a single category with fantasy and magical realism even though they have very unique features. The "fictional non-fiction" category is an original term used to denote a prevalent genre in books for adult beginner readers in which an overtly didactic message is conveyed in a fictional form. The decision as to whether a book is realistic fiction or "fictional non-fiction" must by definition be more subjective than other decisions. The classification of genre below is based largely on the work of Cullinan and Galda (1994), Lukens (1986), and Cohan and Shires (1989).

It allows for a simple classification into mutually exclusive genre types:

- ❑ folk tale/epic/allegory
- ❑ fantasy/magical realism/science fiction
- ❑ detective/thriller
- ❑ romance/love story
- ❑ humour/comedy/satire/parody
- ❑ horror/gothic/occult
- ❑ family drama/realistic fiction
- ❑ tragedy
- ❑ historical fiction
- ❑ autobiography
- ❑ biography
- ❑ fictional non-fiction

3.2 Theme

The notion of theme is here taken to mean the underlying message conveyed by the story. Themes vary in relation to content and according to the extent to which they are overt or implied. They are notoriously difficult to articulate, categorise and quantify. Studies in Narratology suggest that there are a limited number of universal themes in stories. Examples of themes would be hope and despair (Tucker 1993); revenge, redemption and reformation (Aiken 1988). It is widely agreed that good fiction, whether for adults or children, should have strong themes, but there is disagreement regarding the degree to which themes should be relevant or worthy. A dominant view in the study of children's literature is that themes should be subtle and not overtly moralising or didactic (even for young children). As the literature review has shown, this is not the dominant view within adult literacy work.

The themes of each book are described in narrative form, bearing in mind that it is difficult to distinguish between plot and theme. This relates to the difference between *fabula* (story stuff/theme) and *sjuzet* (plot) as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 3.1.1. It is helpful to imagine that the same *fabula* can be played out in a number of *sjuzets*. For the purposes of this study, theme is taken to mean the underlying generic message of the story while plot refers more superficially to what happens in the story. An

attempt will be made to describe plots in terms of “compelling human plights” into which characters fall either because intentions have gone awry or because of circumstances (Bruner 1986).

Themes are also crudely classified according to whether they are overt or subtle.

3.3 Setting

Setting is a central consideration in the study of children's literature and adult beginner books. Setting is widely regarded as determining to some degree, the extent to which the reader will or can identify with and engage with the text. Considerations of appropriate setting have led to extreme views that adult beginner readers should directly and only mirror the lives of the target audience. It is assumed here that setting therefore relates directly to how readers, in this case literacy learners, are viewed. The identification of setting often relies on cues from illustrations.

The setting of each book in this study is classified according to the following categories:

- rural South African
- urban South African (includes formal townships)
- urban South African informal settlement
- indeterminate
- rural/urban (transition from one to the other)

In addition, setting is described according to the following domains:

- public (places like the street where strangers are part of the landscape)
- domestic (home or garden or private space)
- workplace (places of work aside from those which occur in domestic spaces)
- mixture

3.4 Plot

Plot relates to Bruner's (1986) conception of the "landscape of action." This is as opposed to the "landscape of consciousness" which relates more directly to character. The manner in which a story unfolds is central to Narratology as well as to literary analysis. It is in the analysis of plot structure (sometimes called story shape) that the idea of closed and open texts resides. This relates partially to whether the text, and by implication the reader is constructed as either readerly (lisible) or writerly (scriptible) (Hunt 1991, p. 81). A writerly text is one in which the reader, through the creation of deliberate gaps in the text also becomes a composer of the text (see Chapter 2).

A good book, according to dominant views in the study of Children's literature, must have some identifiable point of disequilibrium and tension as this is essential for engagement in and enjoyment of a story. A "twist in the tale" or element of surprise enhances this engagement with and enjoyment of a story.

The plot of each English book is initially described and summarised in brief narrative form. It is then further analysed according to the following categories:

- disequilibrium/tension
- ending
- "twist in the tale"
- nature of title

3.4.1 Disequilibrium/tension

The analysis of the high point of disequilibrium or tension in a plot central to the analysis of stories. It refers to a defining point in the structure or shape of a story, the climax (variously described as conflict, disequilibrium, tension, suspense) which results in some form of satisfactory resolution or ending. It is widely regarded as important that in order to be effective, a story has a high point of disequilibrium/tension even if it is humorous. In this study, the high point of the disequilibrium or tension is described in the form of a key question for each book if applicable.

3.4.2 Ending

This relates to plot resolution. Children's literature asserts that the satisfactory resolution of plot is essential. Children are generally regarded as needing at least a satisfactory resolution of the plot if not a happy ending (Cullinan and Galda 1994). This is confirmed by classical Narratology (within the structuralist analysis of narrative form) which avers that the structure of folk tales requires a satisfactory and good resolution of the conflicts created in the plot. It is assumed here that an open-ended ending implies that adult readers do not necessarily require a satisfactory plot resolution but can construct their own meanings and live with uncertainty.

Endings are classified as:

- happy
- sad
- mixed
- open-ended

3.4.3 "Twist in the tale"

This refers to a particular plot feature in which the ending or plot resolution is unexpected, thereby creating an element of surprise (Cullinan and Galda 1994). This unpredictability contributes to a high level of absorption and engagement with the story. In this study the nature of the twist in the tale is described in narrative form for each book where relevant.

3.4.4 Nature of title

In this study, the title of each book is analysed according to the extent to which it leaves something to the imagination of the reader or simply declares the books contents. An extreme example of a closed title is, *Nokhaya saves someone from drowning* (ABE Development Services 1994). An example of an open title is *A quick trick* (Garisch 1994). The assumption here is that an obvious or 'closed' title, which leaves little to the reader's imagination, presupposes that the reader does not have the capacity or inclination to play with or be curious about the contents of a story. An open title on the other hand, constructs the reader as imaginative and does not give the

story away. A more open-ended title therefore relates to traditional notions of a successful plot construction which creates suspense and anticipation in the reader.

The title of each book in this study is simply classified according to whether it is open or closed, even though there are clearly degrees to which titles are open or closed.

3.5 Narrative features

Narrative features here refers to style and form of narration and to features relating to narrative time. Each of the English books is analysed according to style of narration, narrative time, narrative order and narrative tense.

3.5.1 Narrator

The role of the narrator is regarded as a significant feature in the study of children's literature and Narratology. It influences the manner and extent to which the reader is drawn into the story, as well as when and how much relevant information is divulged. Children's stories for example, rely heavily on first person narration as a device to invite identification with the narrator. Most adult novels are written in the third person. For the purposes of this research, a simple classification system was selected. This rudimentary system does not do justice to the complexity of this feature of stories. Narrators are categorised as:

- first person
- second person
- third person

3.5.2 Narrative time

The indicators of narrative time below are derived from Narratology. Because of the constraints of the short story, as well as the constraints of the literacy levels of the books under consideration, it could be assumed that the number of days and episodes in a very short story would be limited. The duration of the story and the number of discrete episodes which it contains give clear indications of the shape of a story.

Narrative time in this study is numerically classified according to:

- number of days (an estimate of the actual time span or duration of the story)
- number of episodes (the number of separate events in the story which are not chronologically continuous)

3.5.3 Narrative order

This refers to the sequence in which the plot unfolds. This can range from simple chronological order to a complex conglomeration of past, present and future narration. In the field of children's literacy, it is generally regarded as important that the plot is related in chronological order for ease of reading and conceptual understanding.

Narrative order in this study is simply classified according to whether it is:

- chronological (narrated in simple linear time)
- mixed (flashbacks, projections, etc.)

3.5.4 Narrative tense

This relates to the tense in which the story is told. The selection of tense relates to narrative form, to clarity of plot and generally to engagement. Good children's books are often written in the present tense which is seen as increasing the possibility of engaging the reader directly. The use of the present tense often correlates with the use of a first person narrator. The use of the present tense is also regarded as contributing to reading ease because of grammatical simplicity. However, the use of the present tense must be viewed with caution, as it is a benchmark of "primerese" and bad basal readers. It is assumed that choice of tense will be dictated more by demands of readability and simplicity than by attempts at complex plot structure.

The tense in which each book is written is classified according to the following categories:

- past
- present
- future
- mixed

3.6 Character

The development of character is central to fiction. The interrelationship between plot and character and the perceived dominance of the one over the other, is one of the focal areas of literary criticism and analysis. The nature of the characters in a story influences identification and engagement of the reader, and also gives strong indications of how the reader is constructed – how relationships of power and authority are depicted. In each book, seven characters are analysed in some detail in order to make inferences about whether they are “round” or “flat” (see Chapter 2) and in order to make generalisations about “typical” characters in adult beginner books which suggest how readers are constructed.

It is assumed that round, complex characters contribute to more complex and interesting plots and also thereby construct readers as capable of complex interpretations and judgements. The representation of characters in terms of demographic variables such as sex, race, age, class and occupation provides useful insights into the dominant ideological conceptions of newly literate adults in South Africa. The categories here draw on studies such as Baker and Freebody (1989), Coles (1977) and Burke (1990).

Characters are identified according to whether they are main characters or supporting characters. Characters are then classified according to the following characteristics: sex, gender stereotyping, age, class, “race”, occupation, character type, name and description (the words with which they are literally described in the text.) Some of the characteristics below have to be inferred from illustrations, for example age and race which are seldom directly articulated in the texts.

The categories for description and analysis of the characters are as follows:

Total number of characters

Role of characters

- main
- supporting

Sex:

- male
- female

Age:

- child
- teenager
- young adult (20 – 34)
- middle adult (35 – 59)
- older adult (60 and up)
- indeterminate

Social class:

- poor/working class
- middle class
- rich
- indeterminate

Race:

- African
- Coloured
- Indian
- White
- Indeterminate

Occupation:**Name (appellation):**

- familiar form (first name)
- formal form (Mr, Mrs, Dr)
- referred to by relationship (my husband, etc.)
- other (specify)

Language origin of name:

- African
- English
- Other

Character type:

- good
- bad
- mixed (good and bad features)
- indeterminate

Character agency:

- active (proactive)
- passive (victim)

Description of character in text (actual words used to describe the character in the text:

Gender stereotypes:

- stereotypical
- reversed

3.7 Specific language features

Arguably, all language features of a text contribute to reader engagement. The features which are isolated here are those relating to the more elusive features of fiction (literariness) and to ideology. Literariness relates to Bruner's (1986) "world of consciousness," the notion of language "made strange" and well-crafted language (see Chapter 2). Ideology relates to how language indicates power (for example who speaks, who is active, who articulates emotions, who evaluates others) (Baker and Freebody 1989). Although literariness and ideology are different, the linguistic tools which are used as evidence are similar in certain cases. For example, the amount and content of direct speech can be used to make inferences about literariness as well as about constructions of gender. Emotions which are considered to be at the heart of engagement, can also be used to make inferences about gender, race and class.

The following specific language features are analysed:

- emotions
- direct speech
- thought
- gender-specific language features
- imagery

3.7.1 Emotions

Literary analysis attempt to analyse the capacity of language, in this case written language, to evoke strong or powerful emotions. The evocation of emotions links directly to identification and engagement. According to the dominant view in the study of Children's literature, good children's books should depict a full range of intense emotions within the limits of what is considered appropriate for varying levels of emotional maturity. The notion of emotional maturity is in itself clearly subjective and contested, but the importance of depicting "real" emotions is not in dispute. The assumption is that the depiction of emotions per se contributes to good literature for children. Books which do not depict real emotions or which depict sanitised and sentimental versions of childhood are subjected to criticism on both literary and ideological grounds. Access to internal states, what Bruner (1986) refers to as the world of consciousness is intangible and elusive.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, emotions depicted in each book are crudely classified as:

- anger
- sadness/anxiety/worry/disappointment
- happiness
- fear
- amusement
- cynicism/sarcasm/scepticism
- love
- embarrassment
- remorse
- jealousy/envy
- compassion
- pride

In addition to the above pre-coded classification of the nature of emotions depicted, the following is attempted:

- identification and analysis of emotional words
- identification and analysis of emotional sentences
- identification and analysis of exclamatory sentences.

The identification and analysis of emotional words and sentences is nevertheless a highly subjective judgment. Emotional sentences and words can be seen as those which evoke, as well as directly portray emotions (see Chapter 2 for discussion of the difficulties associated with this measure). For the purposes of this study, emotional words and sentences are limited to those which portray rather than evoke emotions. Examples of emotional words are: happy, sad, worry. Examples of emotional sentences are: “They are happy to see him,” and “She was very excited.” Exclamatory sentences, i.e. sentences ending in exclamation marks are identified and analysed in order to determine whether this is a useful or significant measure relating to the depiction of emotion.

3.7.2 Direct speech

Direct speech is widely regarded as one of the primary means by which characters are brought alive in a story. Particularly in stories of highly constrained length, direct speech can be an economical way in which to animate characters and transform them from flat into round characters. It also contributes to the overall style of the story. The assumption is that the inclusion of direct speech in a story creates drama and immediacy. Quantifying the amount of direct speech in a story however only suggests quality and engagement. The content of the direct speech can, as is commonly seen in “primerese,” be dull, formulaic and ridiculous as in the ‘Oh! See my red socks,’ said Dick’ variety. In addition, the frequency, as well as the nature and purpose of utterances relates to inequalities in respect of age, sex, race and class. According to Baker and Freebody (1989), in their analysis of children’s first schoolbooks, more powerful characters are given a higher proportion of direct speech sentences. In their analysis, adults spoke more often than children, and men more often than women.

Direct speech is analysed in the following way:

- ❑ number of direct speech sentences
- ❑ number of direct speech sentences spoken by:
 - men
 - women
 - children
- ❑ qualitative analysis of selected direct speech

3.7.3 Thought

The revelation of a character's thoughts is "the special gift of literature" (Burke 1990, p. 39). Whereas television has to define characters in terms of their actions and speech, literature has the capacity to provide direct access to internal states. The way in which the thoughts of characters are depicted is analysed according to:

- ❑ number of direct speech sentences referring to thought
- ❑ qualitative analysis of references to thought processes of characters.

3.7.4 Questions

Because questions are often analysed in male/female conversations as indicators of the different roles which males and females are believed to play, questions are analysed in relation to:

- ❑ number of question sentences
- ❑ nature of selected question sentences in female/male conversation

3.8 Gender-specific language features

Based on applied research on the relationship between gender and language, particularly in relation to the content of books for beginner readers, the following criteria are used as indicators of potential gender differences:

- ❑ amount of direct speech (number of sentences)
- ❑ amount and nature of questions
- ❑ an analysis of the content of selected conversations in order to determine whether it is, for example, competitive or collaborative

Depiction of males and females

- number of male and female main characters
- occupations
- settings (domestic vs. non-domestic)
- comparison of gender roles

The number and range of generic nouns used for males and females are analysed as was done in the Baker and Freebody (1989) analysis. Adjectives and verbs related to these generic nouns are identified and analysed in order to determine whether any trends are discernible:

- generic nouns used for males and females
 - adjectives
 - verbs

Some of the above were not used exclusively in relation to the gender analysis.

3.9 Imagery

Imagery, which is so central to the analysis of literary quality, and which has the power to transform a text from what is merely a recount of events to an engaging and moving experience, is highly regarded by real literature proponents. As with many of the above categories, quantifying or classifying imagery can only suggest potential literary quality. Images can be stale, flat, formulaic and unimaginative. However, regardless of quality, the existence of imagery in a story does suggest literariness as opposed to simple recount.

The imagery in each book is categorised in the following ways:

- Number of sentences involving imagery
- Nature of images:
 - simile
 - metaphor
 - alliteration
 - other

- Number of images applied to:
 - male
 - female
 - actions
 - setting

4. Educational analysis

The question of readability appears to be simple, but is in reality a highly contested area of reading research. Readability formulae offer appealing means for educators and librarians to classify books according to quantifiable features such as word length, sentence length and difficult words (calculated according to number of syllables or common word lists). Most formulae work according to variations of ratios using these measures (Harrison 1980). Word list and word length are regarded as indicators of semantic difficulty, while sentence length is indicative of syntactic difficulty.

For example, the Gunning Fog Index calculates level of reading difficulty according to the number of words per sentence and percentage of polysyllabic words. The Flesch-Kincaid Reading Scale is based on a formula using a ratio of words per sentence and average number of syllables per 100 words. Common criticisms regarding the use of these kinds of formulae to measure readability are that they do not take account of context, reader motivation, prior knowledge of the reader, design features of the text (such as font type, font size and layout) and conceptual difficulty and density. Despite these criticisms, readability formulae are widely used because of ease of application and a relatively high correlation with more complex and time-consuming measures of readability. Readability formulae are often misunderstood and abused because users confuse the predictive purpose for which the formulae were developed with prescriptions for writing simply. The proper purpose of these formulae is merely to predict how easy or difficult readers will find already existing texts.

The readability features which were selected for this research refer to readily quantifiable features of the text which can be used for descriptive purposes or in readability formulae. They relate to design features and linguistic features.

4.1 Design features

These are features in the text that are commonly associated with level of difficulty such as point size, font type and sentences per page. For the purposes of this research the following features are taken into account:

- Point size
- Font type
 - serif
 - sans serif
 - mixed
- Number of illustrations
- Size of illustrations
- Nature of illustration:
 - plain line drawings
 - complex line drawings
 - photographs

4.2 Readability features

These are features which relate directly to questions of readability. Readability, as we have seen, relates to the often competing requirements of predictability and decodability (see Hoffman et al 1994 for an explanation of the difference).

Decodability features, because of their direct relationship with phonetic analysis, are the most easily quantifiable. They relate to word length and sentence length. Each book in this study is analysed in terms of the following categories:

- Number of words
- Number of characters
- Number of paragraphs
- Number of sentences
- Number of pages
- Number of sentences per paragraph
- Number of words per sentence

- Number of characters per word
- Number of sentences per page
- Percentage of passive sentences
- Flesch Reading Ease Scale (calculated in MS Word)
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade level (calculated in MS Word)

Predictability features, i.e. those which contribute to reading ease through syntactic and semantic patterns (as articulated in, for example, the Hoffman et al 1994 study) are analysed in this study via the following categories:

- Number of words repeated
- Repeated words (list of words that are repeated)
- Number of phrases repeated
- Repeated phrases (list of phrases that are repeated)
- Number of sentences repeated
- Repeated sentences (list of sentences that are repeated)

5. Conclusion

The categories created above are designed to allow for literary, educational and ideological analyses of books for adult beginner readers. In the following chapters, the results of the application of the analytical tools are discussed in detail. In Chapter 5, a general analysis is made of the entire corpus of books in all the official South African languages. In Chapter 6, the English books are analysed in detail.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL ANALYSIS OF BOOKS IN ALL LANGUAGES

The research consisted of a general review of books in all official South African languages and a detailed textual analysis of the English books. What follows is the general descriptive review of all 120 ABET Level 1 books which were published in all the official South African languages during the period of review. Chapter 6 covers the detailed analysis of the English books. A list of all the books in the sample can be found in Appendix 1 grouped according to language. The English version of the names of African languages is used throughout, based on the convention of using, for example, the term “French” rather than “Français” to refer to that language when writing in English.

Books in all languages are described and analysed in terms of:

- conventional publication details such as publisher, year of publication, language of publication, language of origin and languages into which they are translated
- surface design features such as number of pages, number of illustrations, number and nature of illustrations, size and typeface
- genre, theme and setting.

All of these features were amenable to surface analysis through visual scrutiny and information in catalogues. In order to allow for immediate and unique identification of each book, books are consistently referred to by their titles rather than by their authors.

1. Language

Graph 1: Books published by language

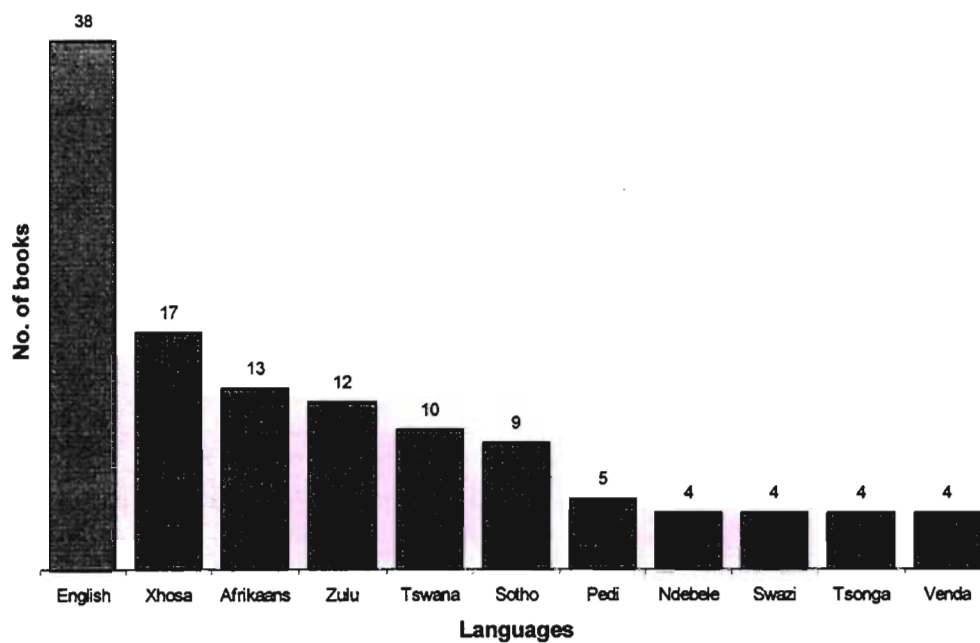


Table 1: Books published by language

Language	Number of books	% Books
English	38	32
Xhosa	17	14
Afrikaans	13	11
Zulu	12	10
Tswana	10	8
Sotho	9	8
Pedi	5	4
Ndebele	4	3
Swazi	4	3
Tsonga	4	3
Venda	4	3
Total	120	100

The table and graph above indicate a number of trends. English is clearly the dominant language of the titles. This is in all probability due to the dominance of English as the de facto official language and consequently the persuasive powers of market forces. This pattern is reflected to some extent in the number of Afrikaans books, which is possibly due to its importance as a second language as well as to the relatively high proportion of first language speakers. The difference between Afrikaans and English however suggests that while Afrikaans is a powerful and dominant language in the workplace and public domains in significant geographical locations in South Africa, English is the language which is considered most desirable by publishers, intermediaries and the target group of readers.

When compared with the number of first language speakers of each language, as well as the number of first language speakers who are potential literacy learners (here defined as people with less than Grade 4), the position becomes much more stark.

Table 2: The potential target audience for ABET Level 1 by language

Language	% First lang. speakers	% First lang. speakers with < Grade 4	% of Titles
Zulu	23	29	10
Xhosa	20	19	15
Afrikaans	14	7	11
English	9	1	32
Pedi	9	11	4
Tswana	8	10	8
Sotho	8	8	8
Tsonga	4	7	3
Swazi	3	4	3
Ndebele	2	2	3
Venda	2	2	3

Note:

% First lang. speakers: Percentage of first language speakers of each language in South Africa

% First lang. < Grade 4: Potential readers - percentage of adult first language speakers of each language with less than Grade 4 of formal schooling

Source: Statistics South Africa 1998

Zulu is the most commonly spoken first language in the country (23%). It also has the highest percentage of adults with less than Grade 4 (29%) (i.e. potential readers of ABET Level 1 books). According to demographic trends Zulu is therefore the language that is most disproportionately represented in the corpus with only 10% of the titles. This pattern is also reflected in the number of Pedi books (4% of titles but 11% of adults with less than Grade 4).

The total number of books published in the minority African languages like Tsonga, Swazi, Ndebele and Venda generally follows demographic trends. There are relatively few speakers of these languages and the proportion of books reflects this fairly accurately. The proportions of Tswana and Sotho books are also in line with demographic trends while Xhosa books are slightly over-represented. However the fact that demographic trends are to some extent mirrored in the proportion of books for adult beginner readers should not obscure the fact that the number of books overall is very low. For example, there are 88 499 first language Ndebele speakers with less than Grade 4. The number of books available in total for them to read is 4!

The very low figures overall reflect attitudes towards easy readers in general as well as attitudes towards mother tongue instruction and African languages. The language issue in relation to books for adult beginner readers is not accidental or neutral. It reflects the equivocation of a government which on the one hand promotes language equality and multilingualism and on the other hand bows to the exigencies of the global economy. When original language books, i.e. books which are not translated, are examined, this pattern becomes even more stark. This is dealt with in Section 4: Language of origin below.

2. Year of publication

Table 3: Books published by year

Year	No. of books
1990	1
1991	7
1992	0
1993	0
1994	0
1995	16
1996	27
1997	25
1998	9
1999	26
2000	9
Total	120

An analysis of publication trends per year reveals significant trends. The early 1990s saw very few publications, with a pinnacle being reached in 1996/1997 and again in 1999. The 1996 peak was in large part due to expectations that the new democratic government post 1994 intended to invest financial and human resources into ABET in line with its avowed intention to expand and support basic education both from a human rights and human resource development perspective. Publishers, especially commercial publishers believed that for the first time ABET publishing had the potential to become commercially viable rather than a subsidised social responsibility wing of other more lucrative publishing initiatives (see Chapter 3). The 1999 peak was due to regional influences discussed below.

Table 4: Languages published per year

Language	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total no.
Afrikaans						2	2	7	1	1		13
English	1	5				3	11	8	7	3		38
Ndebele									1		3	4
Pedi							2			3		5
Sotho						5	3	1				9
Swazi							1				3	4
Tsonga							1			3		4
Tswana							1			9		10
Venda								1			3	4
Xhosa						6	1	6		4		17
Zulu		2					5	2		3		12
Total no.	1	7	0	0	0	16	27	25	9	26	9	120
Total %	1	6	0	0	0	13	22	20	8	22	8	100

Note to table:

Blank cells indicate that no books were published in a particular language in a particular year.

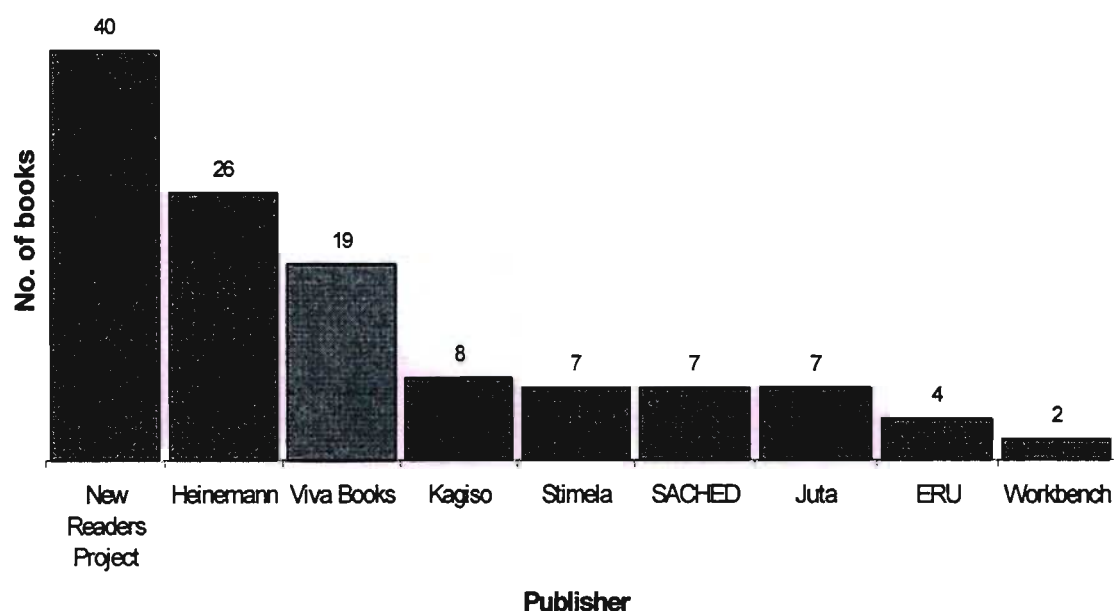
The number of books published in different languages per year is idiosyncratic. It is in large part due to the vagaries of funding mentioned above and to other unpredictable events. In 1997, for example, the ABET Directorate in the Western Cape Department of Education decided to spend its entire “Ithuteng” budget on the purchase of learning and support materials. This led to the publication of a number of new titles in anticipation of large sales of easy readers. This anticipation of large orders resulted in a number of publications in Afrikaans and Xhosa particularly. As it happened, easy readers were in fact not bought in large numbers because of the emphasis which was placed on workbooks (Keyser 2000). In 1999, the Northern Cape put out tenders for “supplementary readers” which resulted in a number of publications being produced in Xhosa, Tswana and Afrikaans (Moyo 2001).

3. Publisher

Publishers of books for adult beginner readers, particularly at the level under consideration, are not homogeneous. Some are commercial publishers, driven largely by financial imperatives, others are or were non-profit publishers and donor-funded. The complex histories of various publishers are referred to in Chapter 3. The table below gives a summary of each publisher of books in the corpus in alphabetical order.

Table 5: ABET Publishers

Publisher	Summary
English Resource Unit (ERU)	NGO focused on ABET teacher training and now on development work. Occasional publisher of ABET materials. Once-off publisher of readers.
Heinemann Publishers	Commercial publisher which had ABET division which has now closed.
Juta Publishers	Commercial publisher which had ABET division which has now closed. Publisher of ABE Development Services (an NGO) publications.
Kagiso Publishers	Commercial publisher (subsequently part of Maskew Miller Longman, subsequently part of Pearson Education which has ABET division).
New Readers Project	Non-profit, donor-funded, university-based publisher specialising in publication of ABET readers.
SACHED Books	Former NGO, first became a division of Maskew Miller Longman, subsequently dormant part of Pearson Education which has ABET division.
Stimela	ABET imprint of NASOU Via Afrika, part of Nasionale Pers. Publisher of Operation Upgrade (an NGO) publications.
Viva Books	Independent commercial publisher specialising in publication of ABET readers.
Workbench Publishers	Occasional publisher of books for trade union members – now closed.

Graph 2: Number of books by publisher

Publishers have made varying degrees and types of contributions to the publication of ABET Level 1 books for adult beginner readers. In terms of total number of publications in all languages (see Table 6 and 7 below and Graph 2 above), the New Readers Project has published the most significant proportion (just over one third of the total books in the corpus). Heinemann and Viva Books have also published a notable proportion of the total number of books at this level. The remaining publishers do not account for significant numbers of books overall. However, when it comes to publications in English, books are much more evenly distributed between publishers, with SACHED Books becoming more significant.

The New Readers Project is the only publisher that has published books in all official languages at this level. Viva Books has published books in 7 out of 11 languages and Heinemann in 6. Note though that Heinemann has published the lowest percentage of original language books (23%) of all the publishers. What appear to be large numbers are in fact due to translated replicas into five other languages aside from English.

The reasons for variations between publishers are complex. The New Readers Project has specifically focused on ABET Level 1 and has been donor-funded specifically to publish original language books in African languages. Publishers also appear to make

decisions according to gaps in the market. ABE Development Services through its commercial publisher Juta has focused on Xhosa. The New Readers Project has focused on original language books in Zulu and minority African languages.

The differences between publishers in terms of total numbers published in all languages as opposed to those published in English suggest that publishers, particularly commercial publishers, are not prepared to take risks on books in languages other than English unless there is some prospect of financial reward in terms of sales to provincial education departments such as those referred to in the language section.

Table 6: Number and percentage of books by publisher

Publisher	No.	%
New Readers Project	40	33
Heinemann	26	21
Viva Books	19	16
Kagiso	8	7
Stimela	7	6
SACHED Books	7	6
Juta	7	6
ERU	4	3
Workbench	2	2
Total	120	100

Table 7: Number of books by publisher and language

Language	ERU	Heine- mann	Juta	Kagiso	New Readers	Sached	Stimela	Viva	Work- bench	Total no.	Total %
Afrikaans		5	1		3			4		13	11
English	4	5	1	4	8	7		7	2	38	32
Ndebele					3			1		4	3
Pedi			1	1	3					5	4
Sotho		5	1		3					9	8
Swazi				1	3					4	3
Tsonga		1			3					4	3
Tswana				1	3		3	3		10	8
Venda					3			1		4	3
Xhosa		5	2		3		4	3		17	14
Zulu		5	1	1	5					12	10
Total	4	26	7	8	40	7	7	19	2	120	100

Note to table:

Blank cells indicate that no books were published in a particular language by a particular publisher.

4. Language of origin

There are strong linguistic, educational, cultural and ideological arguments for publishing original language rather than translated books. It is in this area that the dominance of English and relative disregard of other languages becomes most apparent.

Table 8: Books published in original language by publisher and language as percentage of total books published

	ERU %	Heinemann %	Juta %	Kagiso %	New Readers %	Sached %	Stimela %	Viva %	Work-bench %	Total % original lang. books
Afrikaans		0	0		0			25		8
English	100	60	100	100	100	100		57	100	87
Ndebele					100			100		100
Pedi			0	100	100					80
Sotho		20	0		0					11
Swazi				100	100					100
Tsonga		100			100					100
Tswana				100	100		100	0		70
Venda					100			100		100
Xhosa		0	0		0		75	0		18
Zulu		0	0	100	80					38
Total %	100	19	14	100	75	100	86	37	100	58

Note to table:

Blank cells indicate that no books were published in a particular language by a particular publisher.

Cells containing zero (0) mean that there are books published in that particular language but none are original language books (all are translated).

Example: 20% of Heinemann's Sotho books are original (i.e. not translated).

Most of the English books in the corpus are original language books, i.e. originally written in English (87%). By contrast, only 8% of Afrikaans, 11% of Sotho and 18% of Xhosa books are original language books (i.e. not translated from another language). The pattern for the other languages is unpredictable and unexpected. Ndebele, Swazi, Tsonga and Venda (languages with the lowest numbers of mother

tongue speakers) have a very high percentage of original language books (100%) but very few books in total. The reasons for the high percentage of original language books in these languages probably have more to do with the vagaries of donor funding than with the logic of the marketplace. Funders' reasons for promoting minority languages are educational and political but this commitment is intermittent. The New Readers Project for example received funding specifically to publish three titles each in six of the least resourced African languages. It is unlikely that this money would have been forthcoming for English books or dominant African language books. Similarly ERA received a once off funding grant to sponsor original language publications in all official South African languages except English. Had it not been for these two initiatives which resulted in 19 non-English original language books at ABET Level 1, the percentage and profile of original language books would have looked very different.

Publishers differ significantly in terms of their proportion of original language publication. Excluding publishers who have only published in English, Kagiso has the highest percentage of original language publications (100%), followed by Stimela (86%) and the New Readers Project (75%). Juta has the lowest percentage of original language books (14%), followed by Heinemann (19%) and Viva Books (37%). Juta, for example, translated one title, *I told myself I am going to learn* into five languages. Similarly Heinemann translated five original titles into at least four other languages each. For all publishers the trend is to translate from English into other languages.

Given the above findings, the idea of promoting mother tongue literacy and valorising local languages, seems a vain endeavour. On a more practical level, wholesale translation of titles has the effect of limiting even further what a potential reader can read. A Sotho-speaking adult beginner reader would for example only be able to read one original language book in Sotho and would therefore be faced with the prospect of reading the same books in Sotho and English.

5. General design features

Design features such as font type and size, layout, number of pages, number and nature of illustrations all contribute to the readability and difficulty level of a text. Only superficial design features are dealt with in this general section due to the complexity of dealing with 11 different languages.

The following obvious and immediately accessible surface features are discussed here:

- number of pages,
- number of illustrations
- nature and organisation of illustrations
- font type
- shape and size of books
- covers

These surface design features are analysed according to overall trends. Variations between publishers and languages are analysed where appropriate (see Appendix 4 for detailed analysis per title).

5.1 Number of pages, text pages and illustrations by publisher

In terms of average total number of pages per book, there is a remarkable level of consistency across languages and publishers. The average length of books is 25 pages. The books with the most number of pages are *I told myself I am going to learn* (50 pages) and *Mandla and the bull* (48 pages) and the book with the least number of pages is *The girl with a golden tooth* (12 pages). Despite consistency between publishers in terms of the average number of pages per book, the range overall is significant. Publishers with the highest level of variance are SACHED Books and Stimela.

Table 9: Organisation of text and illustrations by publisher

Publisher	No. of books	Total pages avg.	Text pages avg.	Illustrated pages avg.	Text pages %	Illustrated pages %	Text to illustr. ratio
ERU	4	25	16	13	64	52	1.2/1
Heinemann	26	28	27	26	96	93	1/1
Juta	7	20	20	20	100	100	1/1
Kagiso	8	25	15	15	60	60	1/1
New Readers Project	40	28	17	17	61	61	1/1
SACHED Books	7	29	21	21	72	72	1/1
Stimela	7	26	23	8	88	31	2.8/1
Viva Books	19	18	18	18	100	100	1/1
Workbench	2	19	19	19	100	100	1/1
Total average		25	20	19			

Note to table:

Total pages avg.: average number of pages per book

Text pages avg.: average number of pages containing text (including pages containing a combination of text and illustrations)

Text pages %: percentage of pages containing text (including pages containing a combination of text and illustrations)

Illustrated pages avg.: average number of pages containing illustrations (including pages containing a combination of text and illustrations)

Illustrated pages %: percentage of pages containing text (including pages containing a combination of text and illustrations)

Text to illustr. ratio: ratio of text pages to illustrated pages (e.g. 2.8/1 means that there are 2.8 text pages to 1 illustrated page)

It must be noted however that the total number of pages per book is not necessarily indicative of the level of difficulty of a text. For example, *I told myself I am going to learn* and *Mandla and the bull*, only have 2.1 and 1.9 sentences per page (see Appendix 7), whereas *The spaza*, consisting of only 18 pages, has 8 sentences per page. The amount of text on a page is much more likely to indicate level of difficulty than the number of text pages per se.

A superficial scan of the books reveals a significant disparity in terms of the amount of text on a page. There are considerable differences regarding publishers'

classifications of ABET Level 1 readers. Stimela Publishers, for example, categorises books at ABET Level 1 which other publishers might classify at ABET Level 2 according to superficial text features such as amount of text on a page, font size and number of illustrations (see Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 for example of difference). The general issue of readability is dealt with in more depth in the analysis of English books.

5.2 Number and organisation of illustrations

Illustrations were categorised according to their total number, their organisation in relation to text as well as according to their nature. The average number of illustrations per book is 19 (i.e. on average illustrations appear on 76% of the total number of pages) and the average number of text pages is 20 (i.e. on average, text appears on 80% of the total number of pages although text pages may also have illustrations on them). Most publishers at this level have a balance between illustrations and text, with the ratio of illustration to text being close to 1:1 except for Stimela which has almost 3 pages of text to every one illustration (2.8:1). These ratios do not necessarily give any indication of the complexity of, and differences between books regarding the organisation of text and illustrations. It is important not to underestimate the effect which the organisation of text and illustrations has on readability.

The house style of publishers differs as to how text and illustrations are juxtaposed and obviously influences overall trends. The New Readers Project, for example, tends to position text and illustrations on separate facing pages, whereas Viva Books consistently positions text and illustrations on the same page. Heinemann consistently uses a comic format (see Appendix 12, 13 and 14 for examples of each).

Table 10: Illustration format by publisher

Publisher	Comic		Full page opposite text		Mixed		Same page as text	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ERU			3	75	1	25		
Heinemann	26	100						
Juta							7	100
Kagiso	1	12	5	63	1	12	1	12
New Readers Project			32	80	3	8	5	12
SACHED Books			5	71			2	29
Stimela			3	43			4	57
Viva Books							19	100
Workbench							2	100
Totals	27	22	48	40	5	4	41	34

Note to table:

Comic: refers to books which have speech bubbles as well as “regular” text.

Full page: refers to books in which all illustrations occupy a full page.

Mixed: refers to books in which some illustrations occupy a full page while others occur on the same page as text.

Same page as text: refers to books in which all illustrations occur on the same page as text.

The reasons for these differences probably have as much to do with cost as with readability. For example, it is much cheaper to place text on the same page as illustrations than it is to place text opposite illustrations on facing pages (see Appendix 17 for example) even though the ideal may be to position them separately. The decision to position text and illustrations on different pages significantly increases the number of pages in total and hence overall cost of printing.

5.3 Nature of illustrations

Illustrations were classified according to whether they were photographs, complex line drawings or simple line drawings. The distinction between simple and complex line drawings is not discrete but a continuum. Complex line drawings were regarded as those having any form of shading or cross-hatching (see Appendix 13 for example of simple line drawing).

Table 11: Illustration type by publisher

Publisher	Complex line drawings		Photographs		Plain line drawings	
	No. of books	% of books	No. of book	% of book	No. of book	% of books
ERU			4	100		
Heinemann	26	100				
Juta			7	100		
Kagiso	8	100				
New Readers Project	32	80	3	8	5	12
SACHED Books	6	86	1	14		
Stimela	7	100				
Viva Books	11	58	8	42		
Workbench			2	100		
Total and %	90	75	25	21	5	4

Note to table:

Blank cells indicate that no books were published with that particular format by a particular publisher.

The most common type of illustration is complex line drawings (75%) followed by photographs (21%). Simple line drawings only constitute 4% of the total. The illustrations in the comic format books referred to above use complex line drawing format which is unusual given the conventional comic book format (see Appendix 14 for example of comic format with complex line drawings).

It is necessary to note here that the classification of illustrations does not refer to their quality even though the scrutiny of illustrations suggests that there are wide disparities in terms of quality of illustrations. Quality refers to both aesthetic and visual literacy questions. There are clear differences in style and quality suggested by professional/commercial and “amateur” illustrators. This is also affected by variations in the quality of reproduction of illustrations.

5.4 Size and shape of books

Table 12: Shape of books by publisher

Publisher	Portrait	Landscape	Other	Total
ERU	4			4
Heinemann	26			26
Juta	2	5		7
Kagiso	8			8
New Readers Project	30	7	3	40
SACHED Books	4	3		7
Stimela	7			7
Viva Books	19			20
Workbench	2			2
Total number	102	15	3	120
Total %	84%	13%	3%	100%

Note to table:

Other is anything which is not clearly landscape or portrait-shaped, such as a square book.

Table 13: Size of books by publisher

Publisher	A5	Other
ERU	4	
Heinemann		26
Juta	7	
Kagiso	4	4
New Readers	30	10
SACHED Books	7	
Stimela	7	
Viva Books	19	
Workbench	2	
Total number	80	40
Total %	67%	33%

In terms of choice of shape and size of books, publishers show a high degree of internal consistency. They generally favour a clear portrait shape with the majority of books being A5 size or very close to A5. The reasons for the high number of A5 size portrait shape books are most probably due to cost, to the fact that this is the shape favoured by librarians for ease of display, and the fact that it most closely resembles the shape of books for fluent adult readers. Books which are not A5 size vary according to publishers with the majority being slightly smaller than A5.

Heinemann's books are smaller than A5 but retain a portrait shape, Kagiso's books are portrait-shaped but are bigger than A5 and New Readers Project has a number of books that are square and slightly larger than A5. The biggest book in the corpus is *Mandla and the bull*, which has a landscape orientation and tends towards A4 size.

5.5 Font type

Table 14: Type of font by publisher

Publisher	Serif	Mixed	Sans serif
ERU	4		
Heinemann		26	
Juta	7		
Kagiso			8
New Readers	40		
SACHED Books	1		6
Stimela			7
Viva Books	19		
Workbench	2		
Total number	73	26	21
Total %	61%	22%	17%

Choice of font varies largely according to publishers who maintain a high level of internal consistency. The majority of publishers favour serif fonts but Kagiso, SACHED Books and Stimela consistently use sans serif fonts. Heinemann is the only

publisher which uses a mixture of fonts: serif for narrative and sans serif for text which appears in speech bubbles.

Decisions regarding font type are not simply decorative. There are strong arguments for and against the use of these two major text types in terms of readability. Serif proponents believe that it is better to use serif fonts because fluent readers find it easier to read, both for reasons of familiarity (most newspapers and books are written in serif typefaces) and perception (the “tails” on serif fonts are believed to increase the chances of a word being perceived as a coherent unit rather than a series of letters). The argument is put forward that beginner readers should be taught to read the typeface that they are most likely to encounter in the future when they become more fluent readers. Sans serif proponents believe that it is easier for beginner readers to read because the letter shapes are simpler and closer to printed handwriting. This also suggests that they believe that individual letters are read rather than words.

5.6 Concluding remarks regarding design features

It is not clear to what extent decisions regarding these surface design features of books for adult beginner readers are consciously based on educational grounds. It is as likely that decisions are made on the basis of cost, aesthetic criteria, publisher’s “house styles” and precedent. The consequences of decisions regarding the nature and organisation of text and illustration may appear inconsequential. However, when viewed against the very low total numbers of publications in most languages other than English, these arrangements/decisions assume more significance. For example, Heinemann publications, all in comic format, comprise more than 50% of the Sotho books in the corpus, and New Readers Project books with full-page illustrations opposite text constitute 75% of the total ABET Level 1 books in Swazi and Ndebele. Effectively therefore, readers in some languages are not being exposed to a diverse range of design styles. This must in turn affect their developing conceptions of what books are like.

6. Genre

All the books in the selected sample were analysed according to genre categories developed in Chapter 4. Each book was only allocated to one category. When the genre categories were originally selected, they were based on conventional categories from Children's literature and Short story analysis. A number of genre types were grouped together because it was anticipated that there would be few or no books in each of these categories, for example horror/gothic/occult and fantasy/science fiction. Fictional non-fiction refers to books which are clearly written in order to convey a didactic message but which assume a fictional form. Romance/love story refers to stories which centre on “love” relationships between men and women. Categorisation according to discrete categories was not always easy despite the process of aggregating categories which are normally treated separately.

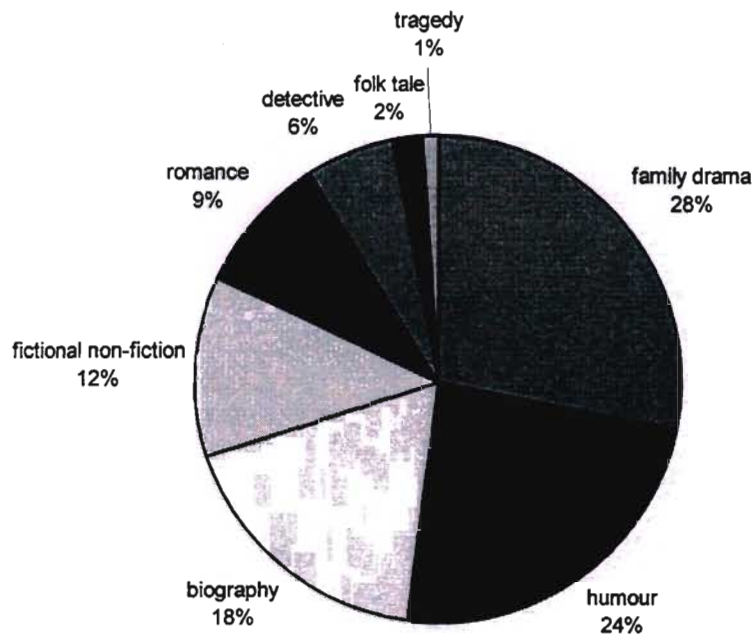
The final list of genre categories is as follows:

- folk tale/epic/allegory
- fantasy/magical realism/science fiction
- detective/thriller
- romance/love story
- humour/comedy/satire/parody
- horror/gothic/occult
- family drama/realistic fiction
- tragedy
- historical fiction
- autobiography
- biography
- fictional non-fiction

A review of the number of genre types in this corpus reveals a limited range and a significant concentration in only four categories.

Table 15: Genre types

Genre type	%
family drama/realistic fiction	28
humour/comedy/satire/parody	24
autobiography	18
fictional non-fiction	12
romance/love story	9
detective/thriller	6
folk tale/epic/allegory	2
tragedy	1

Graph 3: Genre types

The highest percentage of books falls into the family drama/realistic fiction category. These are stories which deal with family relationships (other than erotic love relationships between men and women). They are mostly about things that happen or

could happen in real life – ordinary or commonplace events happening to ordinary people. The fact that they are “lifelike” links to the issue of verisimilitude (see Bruner 1986) and it is not surprising that there is such a high percentage of books in this category.

The number of humorous books is surprising and does not conform to expectations about what is generally considered suitable for adult literacy. As will be seen in the discussion on themes below, many humorous books do not easily lend themselves to the idea of an underlying message which is almost by definition serious. The theme of many humorous books can simply be that life (including reading itself) can be fun, funny and enjoyable. Humorous books constitute 21% of the total, 23% of the English titles and 29% of the original language titles.

Autobiographies/biographies are the next most common genre. Again these “life stories” are about “people like us”. They invite identification with mainly ordinary people whose struggles and successes mirror those of the target audience.

Autobiographies/biographies fall squarely within the development and empowerment perspectives referred to in Chapter 2, validating the lives of ordinary people in relation to their struggles to earn a living, become famous and exercise their democratic rights or organise their communities. They are also they most likely to illuminate the lives of what are regarded as positive role models. There are no autobiographies/biographies of evil, undesirable or notorious characters. All are decent, strong, brave, God-fearing people. This is dealt with in more detail in the section on character.

The number of fictional non-fiction books is high and conforms to expectations regarding books for adult beginner readers. This is discussed in more detail in the section on fiction below.

There are no examples at all of the horror/gothic/occult; fantasy/magical realism/science fiction or historical fiction categories. Tragedy is marginally represented, with only one example in the entire corpus.

An examination of original language books changes the pattern slightly. When only original language books are taken into account, the pattern is as follows:

Table 16: Genre types for original language books

Genre type	%
family drama/realistic fiction	29
humour/comedy/satire/parody	21
autobiography	17
fictional non-fiction	14
romance/love story	9
detective/thriller	6
folk tale/epic/allegory	2
tragedy	1

Humour and fictional non-fiction are more dominant when original language books only are taken into account. This is mostly to do with the preferences of different publishers.

Table 17: Genre types by publisher

Genre	Heinemann	ERU	Juta	Kagiso	New Readers Project	Sached	Stimela	Viva Books	Work-bench	Total	%
Family drama	6			2	18			8		34	28
Humour	10				15	4				29	24
Biography		4	7			2		8		21	18
Non-fiction				3			7	3	2	15	12
Romance/love	5			2	3	1				11	9
Detective	5				2					7	6
Folk tale				1	1					2	2
Tragedy					1					1	1
Total	26	4	7	8	40	7	7	19	2	120	

Note to table:

Blank cells mean that no books were published in that particular genre in that particular language.

Table 18: Genre types by language

Genre	Afrikaans	English	Ndebele	Pedi	Sotho	Swazi	Tsonga	Tswana	Venda	Xhosa	Zulu	Total no.
Family	4	8	1		4	2	2	2	1	7	3	34
Humour	3	9	2	3	2	1		1	2	2	4	29
Biography	3	10	1	1	1			1	1	2	1	21
Non-fiction	1	4		1				4		4	1	15
Romance	1	4			1		2	1		1	1	11
Detective	1	1			1			1		1	2	7
Folk		2										2
Tragedy						1						1
Total no.	13	38	4	5	9	4	4	10	4	17	12	120

Note to table:

Blank cells mean that no books were published in that particular genre in that particular language.

Publishers vary according to the genre types that they favour. For example, the most common genre type published by ERU, Juta and Viva Books is autobiographies/ biographies (ERU and Juta 100%, Viva 45%). New Readers Project favours Family drama/realistic fiction (45%). The most common genre type published by SACHED Books and Heinemann is humour. Stimela, Kagiso and Workbench have the highest percentage of their titles in the fictional non-fiction category (Stimela and Workbench 100%, Kagiso 38%). The dominance of a particular genre with a particular publisher can partly be accounted for by multiple translations of the same book in the case of Heinemann and Juta.

When language is taken into consideration, the distribution of genre types becomes obviously idiosyncratic. For example, Ndebele, Pedi, and Venda have high percentages of humorous books (50%, 60% and 50%) while Tsonga has no humorous books and Xhosa very few (12%).

7. Fiction

In addition to allocating books to particular genre categories, books were also classified according to whether they were real fiction or pseudo-fiction in the form of autobiographies/biographies and fictional non-fiction.

85 books were classified as being real fiction (71% of the total). Therefore in the corpus as a whole, close to one third of what appears to be fiction is in fact not real fiction. The implication of this is that beginner readers, who are developing ideas about what books and stories are, are being “fed” a high percentage of non-fiction in the form of fiction and may construe the purpose of reading accordingly. Also the surprisingly high percentage of non-fiction suggests that the messages and themes which the books overall contain are more likely to be overt and unsubtle. This is confirmed by a classification of themes in section 8 below.

Publishers vary to a considerable extent in relation to how much fiction they produce (see Table 19 below) Publishers not listed do not produce fiction at all (ERU, Juta, Stimela and Workbench). All of Heinemann’s and New Readers Project’s books consist of fiction. Of the remaining publishers which do publish fiction, Viva Books produces the lowest percentage of fiction (47%). When the New Readers Project books are excluded, the percentage of real fiction drops from 71% to 56% - just over half of the total number of books in the corpus. In view of the fact that the New Readers Project specifically focuses on and promotes the publication of real fiction this is not surprising. It is however sobering to realise that a donor-funded project is responsible for half of all fiction published at ABET Level 1 and for 60% of original language fiction. This places the publication of fiction, especially in languages other than English, in a precarious position.

An analysis of original language fiction shows that only 49 (41%) of the books in the corpus are fiction – the rest are translations of fiction. A comparison of fiction in original language books reveals marked contrasts between English and other languages. While 61% of original language English beginner books for adults are real fiction, only 31% of original language books in other languages can be classified as real fiction.

The very low amount of real fiction in languages other than English appears to confirm the dominant adult education wisdom that reading must be instrumental and serious. The differences between English and other languages in this regard are speculative. One possibility is that English authors are more likely to be familiar with, and to favour, a real literature approach. Another is that publishers of books in languages other than English are faced with much more stark choices due to the limited number of books published in languages other than English. They are therefore more likely to reveal their prejudices in favour of didactic and “relevant” content.

Table 19: Real fiction (a) and original fiction (b) by publisher and language

Language	Heinemann %		Kagiso %		New Readers Project %		SACHED %		Viva Books %		Total % per language	
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b
Afrikaans	100	0			100	0			25	0	69	0
English	100	60	75	75	100	100	71	71	57	57	66	61
Ndebele					100	100					75	75
Pedi					100	100					60	60
Sotho	100	20			100	0					88	11
Swazi			100	100	100	100					100	100
Tsonga	100	100			100	100					100	100
Tswana			100	100	100	100			33	0	50	40
Venda					100	100					75	75
Xhosa	100	0			100	0			100	0	65	0
Zulu	100	0			100	80					77	65
Total % per publ.	100	20	63	63	100	75	71	71	47	21		

Note to table:

Blank cells mean that no books were published by that particular publisher in that particular language.

8. Themes

For each book, an attempt was made to identify a single theme. Theme was seen as the underlying message or “moral” of the story. The identification of themes proved to be a complex task. Themes are difficult to identify and to categorise. Most often, books do not have a single theme but a number of intersecting themes, which are not mutually exclusive. For example, themes about literacy, culture and transition from rural to urban areas or traditional to “modern” values are common and may occur simultaneously in one story. However, for purposes of comparison, only one theme was selected for each book and was reduced to one sentence. To a certain extent then, the decision as to which theme to foreground both for purposes of identification and classification is subjective. Also the process of describing and identifying themes says nothing about how subtle or overt they are. Identification, classification and comparison create the impression that themes are all equally obvious, whereas they vary substantially. There is a significant difference between a subtle underlying theme and an overtly didactic and prescriptive message.

The following themes emerged in order of frequency in total:

- literacy - the importance of literacy
- retribution - bad people get their just desserts in the end
- love - love between men and women is complex
- families - family relationships are complex and important
- perseverance – obstacles can be overcome and success achieved
- innocence – good people are abused/ have bad luck
- pride – people should not get too full of themselves
- work – work is hard to find and important
- gender – women have a hard time and should be treated better
- new South Africa – democracy, organisation and cultural tolerance are important
- transition – rural to urban transition is difficult/humorous
- enjoyment – life is fun, funny and interesting

The themes are discussed in detail below in relation to original language titles only. Unless otherwise stated, the language of the title is in the language in which the book was originally written. An English translation of the title is given in brackets.

The importance of literacy

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most common single theme overall is the importance of literacy, which is used here in its commonly understood sense to refer to reading and writing, numeracy and second language learning. The following books focus on the importance of literacy:

Mbusi's bad cold

I told myself I am going to learn

My name is Selina Mabiletsa

Nothembi

The right change

All the way to Z

Forklift No: 4

When translations are taken into account, a total of 20 books out of 120 (17%) at ABET Level 1 in South Africa have as an overt theme, the importance of literacy. The medium in this case becomes the message. It is difficult to speculate about the effects on adult beginner readers of reading about the importance of literacy given that they have presumably already decided to enhance their literacy skills. Would a theme like this possibly affirm a difficult decision, motivate readers and learners or disappoint them because of how obvious it is? Whatever the effect, the main point to note is that 5 publishers out of 9 were of the view that literacy itself was significant enough as a theme to justify 18% of the total number of English titles, 10% of the original language titles and 17% of the total number of titles.

The way in which the importance of literacy is conveyed varies considerably. For example, in *Mbusi's bad cold*, humour plays a central and significant role in the story of a sick man, Mbusi, who has to go to the clinic three times before he is satisfactorily treated. His inability to read and the doctor's inability to communicate in an African language are key themes in the story. In *I told myself I am going to learn*, one of the first easy readers to be published in South Africa, and one of the most translated titles,

a learner in a literacy class simply describes her decisions and struggles to learn to read and write. The conflict with her husband who threatens to throw out her books adds to the tension and creates a fictional form to the autobiographical account. An interesting aside here is that although this is an autobiography, the dramatic conflict with the author's husband was introduced to "increase the tension" of the story. It did not in fact happen (Alkenbrack et al 1992).

My name is Selina Mabiletsa, a pseudo-autobiography, is written in a story form following standard prescriptions and conventions for a fictional format – culminating in the climactic moment when the main character is able to retain ownership of her house because she wrote her name on the wall of the house while practising her literacy skills for her literacy class. In *The right change* and *All the way to Z* on the other hand, the literacy theme is much more overt. In both books, literacy learners sit in their classes and discuss the importance of numeracy and literacy skills by exchanging anecdotes about how they were cheated or struggled without literacy and numeracy skills.

In *Forklift No: 4* the literacy theme is conveyed via the highly improbable device of a letter from a worker in Johannesburg written to his "illiterate" wife in a rural area. The bulk of the letter (which she has to have read to her and which is supposedly written in Zulu) consists of a detailed explanation of miscommunication between the writer and his superior caused by the subtleties and nuances of English grammar.

Nothembi, a genuine autobiography, interweaves the dual themes of the importance of literacy and the importance of retaining traditional cultural forms. Nothembi, a domestic worker, moves to Pretoria and becomes a successful Ndebele musician as well as acquiring literacy skills and formal education. The common sub-theme of how literacy helps a person to avoid being cheated is present in her interactions with her record company.

The importance of work

The centrality of work, and the difficulty of getting and retaining a job comprise central and secondary themes in a number of books:

Joe's new job

Just a job

My own business

Sewing for a living

UMkhize and the cell-phones

Liphandlwa kube kanye libone! (Once bitten twice shy)

UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni (Mahlase visits the town)

Again, there is considerable variation in the form and style of books covering the same theme. In *My own business*, *Sewing for a living*, and *Liphandlwa kube kanye libone*, employment and income generation are dealt with overtly and directly although the books superficially appear to be stories.

In a number of other books the subject and theme of work is dealt with more subtly and woven into a story format. In *Joe's new job* a simple story is created around the anxiety which Joe feels about starting a new job. He is so anxious to get to work on time that he misreads the clock and arrives at his new job at midnight. In *Just a job* and *UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni* the main characters go to the city to look for jobs and, after considerable adversity, get jobs through a series of chance encounters. Wiseman in *Just a job* gets a job at the hospital where he is treated after being attacked by criminals. Mahlase in *UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni* gets a job at the restaurant because he mistakes it for a traditional homestead and partakes heartily of the food without having any money to pay for it. In *UMkhize and the cell-phones*, Mkhize applies for and gets a job as a cell-phone salesman. A considerable part of the story revolves around Mkhize's anxiety about and preparation for his job interview.

Erotic love - reconciliation and loss

Romantic/sexual love and the vagaries of betrayal, stubbornness, misunderstanding, jealousy, pride and reconciliation are a common theme in a number of books in the sample.

Books with this theme are:

The liars

The girl with a golden tooth

The spaza

Waiting for Lerato

Flags on a bridge

Inkinga kaNompi noThemba (Nompi and Themba's problems)

Ndzi rhandza Ohazurike (I love Ohazurike)

Mabubutsa ya rirhandzu (The storms of love)

Ke nyala mang (Who shall I marry)

Despite their apparent similarities, these books are significantly different. *The liars* and *Inkinga kaNompi noThemba* have in common the theme of family interference causing serious problems in a couple's relationship. The former ends unhappily with the protagonist regretting the fact that he has allowed himself to be influenced by his family, while the latter ends happily. Both are based on dialogue rather than following a more conventional story format.

Similarly, *Waiting for Lerato* consists of two women discussing their lives, loves and the problems which men create for women. Simultaneously they are observing a narrative unfolding below them in the street where a young woman waits for her lover to arrive. Despite the desperate circumstances and cynicism of the women discussants, the story on the street unfolds in conventional love story format, with the final insight of the two women discussants being that laughter aids forgiveness and that the spirit of *ubuntu* (humaneness) overrides all supposedly petty gender differences.

The spaza and *Ke nyala mang* deal with mature love relationships that have deteriorated to the point of separation on the one hand and double deception on the other. The stories convey complex and bitter emotions, with the former ending in reconciliation and the latter ending in crisis. *Flags on a bridge*, *The girl with a golden tooth* and *Ndzi rhandza Ohazurike* are by contrast relatively naïve and straightforward romantic love stories with younger protagonists, happier endings, but very different sub-themes such as release from prison, the thrill of the sexual chase and dealing with xenophobia in South Africa.

Bad people get their just desserts

One of the universal themes of stories germane to a number of conventional genre types is that bad people are eventually punished for their sins. This is a key theme in many traditional tales like fairy stories and is said to create a sense of security in an otherwise hostile and unpredictable world (Bettelheim and Zelan 1982).

A significant number of books in the corpus are based on the theme of bad or mischievous people getting caught out and punished in the end:

A quick trick

Pension money

The murder of Mrs Mohapi

Magweya

Ukufika kwam' ekhaya (My arrival at home)

Izindaba zika Nokuthula (Nokuthula's stories)

Nguluvhe dza Vho-Dau (Mr Dau's pigs)

Maano ga a site (One never runs out of a plan)

Bopaki (Evidence)

There is a great deal of variation between these stories in terms of genre, levels of wrong-doing and degree of punishment.

Two of the stories above (*The murder of Mrs Mohapi* and *Bopaki*) are conventional detective stories in which crucial evidence finally ensures that the criminals are brought to justice. *Magweya* (a traditional folk tale) concerns an evil cannibalistic giant who is finally killed by the villagers who have been his victims. Similarly, in *Pension money* vicious criminals who have preyed on an old grandmother and her young granddaughter are finally caught by the villagers. The story ends with the following:

“To the residents of Xihimu: what do we do with these animals?”

Boys cracked whistles. Women ululated. “Let them be jailed! Let them be jailed!”

In contrast, the remaining books in the list above with this theme are humorous stories in which arrogant, greedy, cheating people receive some sort of mild rebuke or reproof for their “crimes” which are often more like mild misdemeanours. In *A quick trick* a rich arrogant man is tricked into paying for something which two beggars have stolen from him already. In *Ukufika kwam’ ekhaya* a greedy husband who tries to deceive his wife by giving her too little of his salary so that he can drink more, ends up spoiling his dinner by mistakenly putting paraffin into the pot. In one of the two stories in *Izindaba zika Nokuthula* a greedy man who loves meat, gate-crashes a funeral so that he can partake of the feast. He ends up falling into the large drum of meat and being chased away. Mr Dau in *Nguluvhe dza Vho-Dau* gets too hasty and greedy in setting up his pig farm which is destroyed by floods.

In *Maano ga a site* two men who are unbeknown to each other, both cuckolding a married woman’s hard-working husband, find themselves in an awkward situation at the end of the story. In an attempt to hide both of her affairs from her husband, the woman hides the one man in a sack and asks the other man to carry the “rubble” which he has left in her house. It is only as the one man is muttering to himself about the heavy load in the sack, that the sack, to his amazement answers back. It is debatable whether this story belongs in the “just desserts” category. It is equally suited to the theme which follows.

Pride comes before a rueful fall – especially for people who get a little too full of themselves

A common theme, related to the one above is one in which a main character experiences mild humiliation, sometimes not even in the presence of anyone else. It is the basis of a certain type of humour and is partially linked to mild hubris on the part of a decent protagonist who is subsequently mortified.

The following books, both humorous, carry this theme, although to refer to them as themes could be said to be stretching the point:

Mandla and the bull

UMkhize and the cell-phones

In *Mandla and the bull*, a young man, happily drunk after socialising with his friends, challenges a bull in a field by referring admiringly to his own penis. He is forced to flee and escapes in an undignified fashion. This story is analysed in more detail in Chapter 6. In *UMkhize and the cell-phones* Mkhize is unduly confident about his ability to sell cell-phones in a rural area and is finally forced to enlist the help of a man on horseback because his car cannot go on rough roads. Eventually he has to get back to his car on a donkey.

This theme links closely with the humorous themes and the distinction between the themes above and humorous themes may well be too artificial.

Good, innocent people are tricked/punished in the end

This theme is the obverse of the “just desserts” theme. Here, basically good, innocent people are taken advantage of or punished in some way. These stories can be seen as cautionary tales:

My red cow

Why dogs chase goats

The gift

Imali kamulume (My uncle’s money)

Iphelelaphi lemali (Where does the money go)

Nko ga e dupe (A dream has vanished)

In *My red cow*, a decent man who loves and loses his cow, finds out that it has been stolen by his own uncle. In *Why dogs chase goats*, a decent law-abiding dog is tricked by his wily friend, the goat, into paying for the goat’s taxi fare. The innocent rural people in *The gift* are tricked into parting with their money to pay to transport the apparent gift of a sheep which never appears. *Imali kamulume* (My uncle’s money) is the story of an unscrupulous businessman who kills his own security guard in order to get the insurance money. The difference between this story and the detective stories referred to earlier is that in this case the “bad guy” remains undetected and so benefits from his crime.

In *Iphelelaphi lemali* (Where does the money go), a decent hard-working man is repeatedly robbed of his money on his way home. He struggles to persuade his wife

that he is innocent and has not spent the money but when she finally decides to accompany him to see for herself how he is being victimised, the journey home is trouble free. *Nko ga e dupe* is so common a tale that it qualifies as an urban legend. Here, a poverty-stricken man and his wife win at the races, and get so excited that they burn their shack and their clothes and predictably and catastrophically, the winning ticket!

Perseverance in overcoming obstacles

Paul Adams

Doctor Khumalo

Dancing to fame

Mubya wu tsemekile (I give up)

Zwo nkhulele (I am fed up)

A common theme in this sample is one of achieving success against difficult odds or displaying fortitude and optimism in the most trying circumstances. *Paul Adams* and *Doctor Khumalo* both deal with prominent sportsmen who succeeded after humble beginnings. *Dancing to fame* is the story of a group of dancers who persevere and practice and finally achieve recognition if not fame and fortune. Nothembi in *Nothembi* perseveres and becomes a famous musician. In *Mubya wu tsemekile* a young talented delinquent lands up in hospital through his misdeeds but decides to turn his life around and become an athlete. The pastor in *Zwo nkhulele* attempts suicide but decides to try again and put his life in God's hands after his spectacular suicide attempt fails.

Love and reconciliation within families

Going home with chickens

The new baby

The Nkosi family

Umntu ongaziwa (The stranger)

Kube bekati (His wealth)

Kutlwano (Harmony)

This broad theme deals with love, generosity, hatred, conflict and/or reconciliation within families. As with the earlier theme of love between men and women, books with this theme differ in significant ways. In *Going home with chickens*, disaster is averted when a migrant worker on his way home with a gift of chickens for his family has them stolen but unbeknown to him his rural family has a gift of chickens waiting for him. *The new baby* deals with intense emotions in a family when a priest has to deal with his teenage daughter's pregnancy. In *The Nkosi family* the personalities of the various members of a family are elucidated through each of their hopes, dreams, and passions. In *Umntu ongaziwa* a father and son are reconciled after a period of long abandonment. The spoilt son in *Kube bekati* realises too late that his jealousy of his siblings is unfounded, with tragic consequences. In *Kutlwano*, conflicts within an extended family unit are articulated and resolved.

The new South Africa and cultural tolerance

Not surprisingly, democracy and cultural tolerance are recurring themes in the corpus of books. The 27th April 1994, a pseudo-autobiographical account of an African woman's first experience of voting, in addition to extolling the benefits of democracy, also refers to the 'rainbow nation':

All of us went to vote. Brown people, black people and white people.

(Land 1997, p. 7).

In *Calling the ancestors*, the common African cultural practice of slaughtering a beast to celebrate a significant and seminal event is given a humorous new slant when it occurs in a previously white neighbourhood. *Ndzi rhandza Ohazurike* deals with the xenophobia of South Africans who are forced to acknowledge the humanity of their foreign fellow passenger when they discover that he is an accomplished and famous musician.

The importance of organisation

A number of books deal overtly with the importance of grassroots organisation. This is not organisation in the anti-apartheid sense, but organisation according to the discourse of development. In *My village* an old woman talks of dispossession of land, forced removals and the importance of grassroots organisation in order to attain

simple community objectives. In *Ntwa kqolo ke ya molomo*, farmworkers struggle to organise themselves in order to effect transformation on farms. Old men in a rural area in *Zikethele* discuss the importance of local government representation. All of the books in this theme are overtly didactic although written in story format.

Gender and transition

Gender issues and the difficulties of transition from rural to urban life or from traditional to modern living are themes of a number of books:

Ugogo ushintsha umqondo (Gogo changes her ideas)

Luhambo lwagogo Motsa (The journey of grandmother Motsa)

O! Yekukuzala (The ups and downs of bringing up children)

Dinako di a fetoga (Times are changing)

Lorato o a nyalwa (Lorato gets married)

UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni (Mahlase visits the town)

La bo phamola (It grabbed it!)

In *Ugogo ushintsha umqondo* the traditional role of women and the challenges of changing traditions are discussed by a group of women. Similarly in *O! Yekukuzala* a group of women discuss bringing up daughters and sons in modern times. In *Dinako di a fetoga* gender and education issues are discussed around the family dinner table. *Lorato o a nyalwa* deals with the complex issue of *lobolo* (bride price) which has lost most of its traditional purpose and become an impediment to marriage. The old woman who is forced to go to the city in *Luhambo lwagogo Motsa* faces nothing but crime and disillusionment. *UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni* and *La bo phamola* by contrast deal with the transition between rural and urban life in a light-hearted and humorous way. Mahlase in *UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni* approaches a restaurant with the traditional greeting used when a stranger requests hospitality from a homestead. He assumes that the fact that he is given a seat means that he is being accorded traditional hospitality. In *La bo phamola* a “country bumpkin” goes on a holiday to the seaside with his sophisticated cousin and because he does not know the ways of the sea ends up with his shorts falling around his ankles.

Just a job and *Nothembi* while dealing with work and culture respectively also deal with the difficulties of adjusting to life in the city. Nothembi Mkhwebane specifically

refers to the loss of culture and tradition which motivate her to become a traditional Ndebele musician:

My job was in Pretoria. But I did not like town life. I always remembered the place where I grew up. I decided to buy a guitar to remind myself of my home. I played Ndebele songs. I never forgot my family while I was in Pretoria. I visited them often.

(Mkhwebane 1999, p. 6)

Enjoyment of life

Ukurhonona kuyabulala (Curiosity kills)

First prize

Mirubo ya vhatukana (Boys' pranks)

Mehlolo ga e fele (Surprises never end)

Woza Friday (Come Friday)

Sweet memories

Batsakatsi (Witchcraft)

The remaining themes are more difficult to classify. Mainly they consist of light-hearted humorous books in which the genre itself can in some sense be seen to constitute the theme. Imputing a theme can in some instances substantially alter the tenor of the story. *Ukurhonona kuyabulala* (Curiosity kills) is about a domestic worker who cannot resist looking in a box which her employer has specifically told her not to look into in order to test her honesty. She is however not punished for this and it is the employer who ends up being perplexed at the end of the story. Although the title suggests negative consequences for being curious, this does not in fact occur in the story. *First prize* deals with a woman who wins a lottery and ends up giving all her money away to her importuning friends and relatives but in the end simply smiles and enters more competitions. The underlying theme here can be seen to be that generosity is more important than money.

In *Mirubo ya vhatukana* a group of young boys good-naturedly tease a crippled boy by not warning him about a ferocious baboon. He is so scared by the baboon that he

manages to leap and run away – a miracle cure. The schoolteacher in *Mehlolo ga e fele* accidentally kills a springbok which he tries to smuggle illegally by dressing it in clothing. The springbok shocks him by coming alive and escaping. Ascribing a theme to this story would be artificially imposing a moral message which is not apparent in the story which ends with the teacher laughing about the incident with his family. *Woza Friday*²⁸ (Come Friday), the shortest book in the entire sample light-heartedly deals with the difference between how a man feels on a Monday morning and on a Friday morning:

On Monday when I wake up
 my head is sore
 my tongue is thick
 my arms are heavy
 my back hurts
 my legs are slow
 I can hardly move.

But on Friday when I wake up
 my eyes are bright
 my heart is light
 my hands clap
 my fingers snap
 my feet tap
 I am ready for the weekend.

(Annecke 1991, pp. 1 - 27)

Sweet memories focuses on particular objects which are precious to the real individuals in the story – such as a fluffy toy dog and a photograph of a man's children swimming in a white employer's swimming pool. The general theme is that

²⁸ *Woza Friday* (Come Friday) is a common Zulu expression in the imperative used by workers to denote disdain for work and enjoyment of weekends.

everyone has memories which are often tinged with pathos and loss. In *Batsakatsi* a young schoolboy is thought to have been poisoned by witches but is in fact merely drunk. It is difficult to attribute a theme to this story which is not told in a moralising way.

9. Setting

The setting for each book was classified according to whether it took place in a clearly identifiable urban area, rural area, mixture between rural and urban or informal settlement. This was done mainly through scrutiny of the illustrations. Very few of the English books refer to their settings in the text and it is assumed that this pattern is similar for the other languages.

Overall there is a good balance between urban and rural settings. A significant number of books are set in both rural and urban areas as they deal with the process of transition between rural and urban life. The lowest number of books are set in informal settlements. It must be noted though that urban areas mainly means formal black townships. It was noteworthy how few books are set in the public domain or in domains where a heterogeneous mix of South Africans would be found such as city streets, workplaces or centrally located leisure areas. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the analysis of characters in the stories (see Chapter 6).

Table 20: Setting of stories

Setting	No. of books	% of books
Urban South African	43	36
Rural South African	41	34
Mixture	19	15
Informal settlement	15	13
Indeterminate	3	2
Total	120	100

10. Conclusion

Although there are a number of surprises, adult beginner readers in South Africa are ultimately exposed to a rather limited range of texts in terms of both genre and theme. Two thirds of the first easy readers that they will potentially encounter consist of either autobiographies/biographies, humorous stories, realistic family dramas or fictional non-fiction. One third of what they will encounter as fiction is in fact really non-fiction.

One can speculate on reasons for this. Publishers do not make decisions collectively with other publishers. Arguably each publisher makes decisions regarding choice of genre and theme based on what they consider to be interesting, suitable and ultimately marketable. Individual writers also influence the range of themes and genres. The most illuminating finding is that literacy itself is considered to be an appropriate theme for such a significant percentage of the total number of texts available to adult beginner readers.

CHAPTER 6: DETAILED ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH BOOKS

1. Introduction

In addition to the general analysis of books in all languages, the 38 English books²⁹ in the sample were analysed in detail according to the criteria established in Chapter 4. These criteria were broadly grouped into literary, educational and ideological features. Literary and ideological features include plot, narrative features, character, emotions, imagery and direct speech. Educational features include measurable features such as word length and sentence length (which relate to decodability) and repeated words and sentences which relate to predictability. This detailed analysis was conducted in order to attempt to go beyond description to the heart of quality. Although every attempt was made to be consistent, there are undoubtedly undetected errors and inconsistencies. Despite the appearance of objectivity and accuracy created by graphs and tables, this analysis can therefore only indicate trends. Selected details for each English title are in Appendices 5 - 7.

For purposes of comparison and reference, three children's books were selected as good illustrative examples of the following (see Appendix 1):

- a picture book where vocabulary is not controlled and the illustrations are dominant “works of art” (*Owl moon*)
- a predictable book where vocabulary and language patterns are controlled to facilitate learning to read (*The cold day*)
- a humorous picture book with a complex plot and style of narration with predictable language features (*Burglar Bill*)

In *Owl moon*, (Yolen 1987) a young girl describes her family's traditional rite of passage which is for each child to go owling with their father at night in the snow. The landscape and mood is evoked through the use of a number of images; suspense is created through the build-up of anticipation and tension in the child about whether

²⁹ See Appendix 1 for list of titles.

she and her father will see an owl. The child is the narrator who describes a single episode. *Owl moon* won the Caldecott medal for the most distinguished picture book published for children in the United States in 1988. It is mentioned consistently in studies of Children's literature as a model of its type.

Burglar Bill is by the famous British children's writing and illustrating team, Janet and Allan Ahlberg (1986). The humour is wry and subtle, the plot complex and the ending happy. The story is narrated in the third person in the present tense with a considerable amount of refrain and echo in the form of repetition of language patterns such as "That's a nice, I'll have that!" and "He sat down with his stolen"

Burglar Bill steals a baby by mistake and humorously struggles to take care of it. He in turn is burgled by Burglar Betty (the twist in the tale) who is the baby's mother. They decide to mend their ways, get married and give money to the Police Benevolent Fund. There are a number of episodes in the story, and a complex interplay between text and illustrations. A part of the action of the story is depicted purely visually. Stibbs (1994) conducted a detailed structural analysis of this book.

The cold day (Hunt 1989) is a predictable patterned book consisting of 17 very short sentences. It describes a trip to the beach in which the reluctant child hero is too cold to do anything, but not too cold to eat an ice cream. It illustrates how even with very limited vocabulary, short words and sentences and a cyclical and repetitive but natural language pattern, an interesting mildly humorous story can be created. It has a high proportion of direct speech, few characters and one episode with a twist in the tale.

2. Plot

The analysis of plot is at the heart of Narratology, and can be approached from the perspective of semiotics, discourse analysis, literary theory old and new, as well as Children's literature. It is in the analysis of plot that the distinction between real fiction and pseudo-fiction, i.e. a text which superficially resembles fiction but which is merely a vehicle for a message, becomes most apparent. At its simplest, plot is the way in which a story is told and events unfold. Central to this is the notion of story

shape which refers to episodes, escalation in tension, the high point of conflict/disequilibrium and resolution. Analysis of story shape lends itself to visual depiction. Even with complex analysis of story shape and structure, what makes for the overall effectiveness and coherence of a story remains elusive. Story structure is as much about what is unspoken as spoken; what is held back and at what point it is introduced.

In this study only a very basic analysis of plot is made. It consists of the following:

- ❑ a brief one-sentence description of the plot
- ❑ a brief description of the high point of disequilibrium in the form of a question
- ❑ a brief description of the twist in the tale if it existed
- ❑ a categorisation of the ending as open or closed, and happy or sad

Many of the plots have already been referred to in the section on themes. It is often difficult to separate the two clearly. The summary of each plot can be found below. This is basically what each story is about.

Table 21: Plot summary by title

Title	Plot
<i>27th April 1994</i>	A woman describes her experiences of voting in South Africa's first democratic election.
<i>A quick trick</i>	Two unemployed men outwit an arrogant rich man who has spurned their request for money.
<i>All the way to Z</i>	A group of literacy learners discusses the importance of literacy while they wait for their teacher to arrive.
<i>Calling the ancestors</i>	An African family living in a white suburb follows traditional practices with humorous consequences.
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	A description of the struggles and dances of a gumboot dance group.
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	The life story of the footballer Doctor Khumalo.
<i>First prize</i>	A woman wins a competition and ends up giving all the money away to her family and friends.
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	An "illiterate" man who has been in jail for 5 years anxiously waits to see whether his girlfriend still loves him - she does.
<i>Forklift No: 4</i>	A man writes a letter to his wife describing the vital importance of communication in the workplace.

<i>Going home with chickens</i>	A migrant worker returns home with chickens for his family which get stolen but he finds that his family has chickens for him.
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>	An "illiterate" woman stops pretending and risks the wrath of her husband by persevering with literacy classes.
<i>Joe's new job</i>	An unemployed man finally gets a job and is so keen to do well that he starts work on his first day in the middle of the night.
<i>Just a job</i>	A man struggles to find a job and fortuitously finds one when he is beaten up by thugs.
<i>Magweya</i>	A cruel giant terrorises a village by eating all the short people and ruining their crops but in the end the villagers kill him.
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	A man is humiliated by a bull after taunting it with his manhood.
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	A man has to go to the doctor 3 times before he and the doctor understand each other and the patient is healed.
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	An "illiterate" woman struggles to become literate and wins the right to her house because she has written her name on the wall.
<i>My own business</i>	A description of how a woman becomes a self-sufficient hawker.
<i>My red cow</i>	A man buys a cow which he loves but it disappears and it turns out that it was stolen by his own uncle.
<i>My village</i>	An older woman describes life before and after being dispossessed of her land.
<i>Nothembi</i>	The life story of an Ndebele musician, Nothembi Mkhwebane.
<i>Paul Adams</i>	The life story of Paul Adams, the cricketer.
<i>Pension money</i>	An old lady and her granddaughter are attacked by the trusted neighbour but the community metes out justice in the end.
<i>Sewing for a living</i>	A young woman describes how she earns her living through sewing.
<i>Sweet memories</i>	Seven different people describe the bittersweet importance of treasured possessions.
<i>The gift</i>	A trusting community is hoodwinked by a confidence trickster who pretends to have a gift for them.
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	A young man pretends that a stick is a snake in order to get a beautiful young girl to fall in love with him.
<i>The liars</i>	A couple cannot have children and interference by relatives causes their loving relationship to collapse.
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	A greedy playboy gets his greedy girlfriend to murder his wife before she can change her will, but she gets caught out.
<i>The new baby</i>	A young schoolgirl gets pregnant and rejected by her priest father who finally forgives her when he sees the new baby.
<i>The Nkosi family</i>	The 7 members of a family each express their wishes, desires and feelings.
<i>The right change</i>	A group of learners in a numeracy class discuss bad experiences and the importance of numeracy.
<i>The spaza</i>	A woman makes her own life and rejects her abusive husband but their son forces a reconciliation by running away.

<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	A man gets what he thinks is a fancy job but ends up mildly humiliated in a rural area.
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>	A man gets inspired by music and goes from singing to playing the concertina to teaching white people the new national anthem.
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	Two older women observe events in the street below and discuss men, relationships and incidents in their lives.
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	Three animals - the rogue, the hero who is outwitted and the dolt, take a taxi ride into the countryside.
<i>Woza Friday</i>	A young man feels different depending on whether it is the beginning of the work week or the beginning of the weekend.

Reducing the plot to a short descriptive sentence inevitably robs each story of its uniqueness and complexity but gives some indication of the overall *fabula* of each theme.

2.1 High point of conflict/disequilibrium

The idea in identifying the high point of conflict in each story was first of all to determine if there was one at all, and if so, what the nature of the conflict was. It was found, after some experimentation, that describing this in the form of a question was an effective way in which to understand this. It provided a means for describing what readers would potentially be asking themselves as they read (What does the reader not yet know in this story and what might they like to find out?)

The high point of disequilibrium/tension is summarised in Table 22 below which also contains a summary of the twist in the tale if this existed. Only 25 stories (66%) could be described as having an identifiable high point of tension. The rest are flat in terms of story shape. The high point of tension cannot be seen separately from characterisation and theme. It relates to engagement with the story as a whole which in turn relates to identification with the character or characters and investment in what will happen next and in the end. Unless identification and engagement are present, the story does not matter to the reader who will end up feeling “So what?” (Aiken 1988).

While this study is not an investigation of reader response, the literature suggests that the likelihood of reader engagement, particularly emotional engagement, is substantially increased through a story structure which builds expectation and tension and culminates in a high point of convex which is then resolved.

The absence of a clear point of disequilibrium/tension therefore indicates that a strong sense of engagement is unlikely to occur. For example, *My name is Selina Mabiletsa* and *The right change* are both about the importance of literacy/numeracy. Their structures are entirely different however, with *My name is Selina Mabiletsa* following a conventional fictional format. The climax of the story where Selina's home is under threat unless she can prove that she lived there before, is tense and dramatic, and the denouement in which she reveals her name written on the wall, emotional and satisfying.

By contrast, in *The right change*, a group of people sit around discussing various episodes in their lives in which they have been cheated because of their lack of knowledge of numeracy. Because there are so many characters and so many mini-episodes, the structure or story shape cannot build up to a high point and, consequently, arguably cannot result in the evocation of the same level of tension or engagement. Most of the books that are classified as fictionalised non-fiction fall into this category. Although they are populated by potentially interesting characters that superficially resemble the characters in the real fictional texts, the plot structure militates against a climax and consequently a denouement. In a similar fashion, *Waiting for Lerato*, even though it deals with potentially emotionally charged themes like child abuse, abandonment and betrayal, is structured in such a way that the two main characters talk about a series of incidents in a bland, matter of fact way. The telling of each incident does not conform to the conventional story structure or shape. For example, the two main protagonists tell each other of incidents relating to past relationships:

“My first man in this place proposed love to me. He promised me he'd lobola my family, he'd love and look after me. Masadi ha fetswe, he sent me to help his mother. But - I heard he had another woman. So I took his money and came to the city and it was true. I was so young, heh, heh.”

“Shame poor you! My man walked around with other women. One day his clothes were gone from my room. I heard where the sisi was. The door was open, and his clothes were there. So, I moved a chair and took them down – all

the ones I'd ironed. I went back to my room. I waited and waited. I thought he would come back. Shame, poor me – I cried and cried.”

(Winter 1996, pp. 4 - 5)

Each of these episodes could have formed the basis of an entire story and has the potential to be structured with a build up of tension to a high point. As it stands, the plot is disjointed into a series of episodes each with a flat story shape.

Simply highlighting the high point of disequilibrium/tension is limited as an indicator of the overall quality of the story shape and plot. The build-up to the high point is often inseparable from the high point itself. For example, in *The spaza*, tension is built up when the estranged parents have to look for their son who has run away because he cannot stand the conflict between them:

Bongiwe looks for Sipiwe. He is not in the spaza or in the house. He is not with Nosipho or with his friends. She asks Nosipho to call Zwelakhe.

Together, they go to the police.

The police say that they cannot help. Sipiwe has to be missing for forty-eight hours before they can look for him.

(Rebelo 1996, p. 13)

In *Flags on a bridge*, George, who has just been released from prison frantically wonders about whether his girlfriend whom he has not seen for five years will be waiting for him when he gets home. Tension is built up through a series of questions that he asks himself:

On the bus George thinks of Lindi. Did she get the letter? Does she love him? The bus goes past the airport outside Durban. It is getting closer to Port Shepstone. What if Lindi didn't get his letter? What if he told her the wrong day? What if someone took Lindi's flag off the bridge? What if the wind blew it away?

(Land 1997, p.13)

In *Mandla and the bull*, a systematic build-up of tension precedes Mandla's final escape from the bull:

The bull looks up. It bellows.

Mandla boasts to the bull. "What do you think I have here?"

The bull stamps the dust. It charges.

Mandla yells. He is not finished. He tries to run.

Mandla wants to run fast. The iJuba makes his legs heavy.

Mandla races for the fence. The bull charges after him.

Mandla jumps over the fence. His trousers tear.

(Annecke 1991, pp.26 - 38)

Bearing in mind that stories in the corpus consist of an average of 55 sentences, achieving the effect of building up tension to a climax can be seen to be a literary feat of note.

Table 22: Plot disequilibrium/tension and twist in the tale

Title	Disequilibrium/tension	Twist in the tale
<i>A quick trick</i>	Will the beggars get away with their trick or not?	The hubcap that the arrogant man pays for, comes from the other side of his own car.
<i>First prize</i>	What will the woman do about all the requests for money?	
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	Will the flags be on the bridge?	
<i>Going home with chickens</i>	What is the surprise that the man's family has for him?	His family has the same surprise for him as he had planned for them.
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>	Will the woman give in to her husband's demands that she gives up literacy classes?	
<i>Joe's new job</i>	Will the man get to work on time?	

<i>Just a job</i>	What will happen to the young man after he is attacked?	
<i>Magweya</i>	Will the giant eat the beautiful maiden?	
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	Will the man outrun the bull?	
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	What will happen when the patient shouts at the doctor?	The wife does not know that he has been to the clinic 3 times.
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	How will the woman prove that the house is hers?	
<i>My red cow</i>	What has happened to the man's cow?	
<i>Pension money</i>	Will the community catch the criminals?	
<i>The gift</i>	Will the man appear with the gift of the sheep?	
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	What will the young girl do when she discovers that the snake is just a stick?	
<i>The liars</i>	Who will the husband listen to - his wife or his relatives?	The husband is actually the one who is infertile, not the wife.
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	Will the detective discover the murderer before she escapes?	The murderer's cats, which she loves, are the cause of her getting caught.
<i>The new baby</i>	What will the father do when he sees the baby?	The baby looks like the priest's mother and so he accepts his teenage daughter's baby.
<i>The Nkosi family</i>	How will each member of the family respond to each question	The youngest child interprets each question differently from the rest of the family.
<i>The spaza</i>	Will the parents find the son who has run away?	
<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	Will the rural man with the transport come back?	The "sophisticated" man has to go home on a donkey.
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>	What favour does the businessman want from him?	
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	Will the young woman's lover arrive in time? (subplot)	
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	What will the dog do when he realises that the goat has tricked him?	
<i>Woza Friday</i>	How will the man feel on Friday?.	

2.2 Twist in the tale

A particular feature of some stories is the twist in the tale. This is highly regarded in Children's literature and by real literature proponents as a device which introduces humour or surprise, thereby contributing to the satisfactory resolution of the plot and the engagement of the reader.

This was not a common feature of the stories analysed in the sample. Only 8 (21%) "twists in the tale" were identified.

In *A quick trick*, the twist in the tale is at the heart of the plot. Here, an arrogant, rich man is tricked into paying for a new hubcap which actually comes from the other side of his own car. In *The Nkosi family*, the youngest member of the Nkosi family acts as a foil to the other members of the family. Whereas each member of the family responds predictably to a series of questions, Philile, the three year old, responds unpredictably, for example:

How do they feel?

Nkosi feels worried.

MaDube feels crazy.

Gogo feels peaceful.

Saneliso feels bored.

Mbali feels happy.

Sipho feels sad.

Philile feels her toes.

What are their dreams?

"Let's dream," says MaDube.

"I'm the owner of a new house," says Nkosi.

"I'm resting for a week," says MaDube.

"I'm young and strong," says Gogo.

"I'm a T.V. presenter," says Saneliso.

"I'm dancing with Lucky Dube," says Mbali.

“I’m Jomo Sono,” says Siphon.

“What’s a dream?” says Philile.

(Lyster 1991, pp. 20 – 35)

Other examples of twists in the tale are summarised in Table 22 above. All have an element of surprise. The fact that there are so few books with identifiable twists in the tale is a significant diversion from conventional wisdom regarding good children’s books. Clearly not all children’s books have them, but the fact that they are only identifiable in 8 out of 38 books (21%), indicates that writers at this level are not generally aware of this particular feature, or do not value it, or do not believe that it is appropriate in books for adult beginner readers.

2.3 Plot endings

The denouement or resolution of a plot contributes to feelings of satisfaction. Children particularly are believed to require closure in the form of a, preferably, happy ending. Happy endings do not have to be sweet or sentimental. Folk and fairy tales generally end with satisfactory and happy closure, with evil in its place and innocent people safely in their beds or married to princes or princesses. If stories do not end happily, they are at least expected to end with a sense of closure. Happy endings are by definition more emotionally satisfying. They do not necessarily, and almost by definition cannot, correspond with real life. Nevertheless they are the endings which children (including children who are beginner readers) and most fluent adult readers find satisfying, and which most adult beginner readers are also most likely to find satisfying. It would be expected then that the majority of stories for adult beginner readers would be happy as well as closed. Stories are discussed below, firstly in terms of the happy/sad distinction and then in terms of the closed/open distinction.

Table 23: Plot endings – happy/sad and open/closed

Plot ending 1	Plot ending 2	Total	
		No.	%
Happy	Closed	22	58
	Open-ended	9	24
Mixed	Closed	0	0
	Open-ended	4	10
Sad	Closed	3	8
	Open-ended	0	0

Note to table:

Happy: is decisively happy

Mixed: is a mixture of emotions

Sad: is sad

Closed: is definitive

Open-ended: is undecided

2.3.1 Happy and sad endings

Not surprisingly, the majority of endings in the corpus of texts analysed are happy (82%) The remaining texts are more or less equally divided between sad (8%) or mixed (10%) endings. The sad exceptions are discussed first.

In *The liars*, the story ends with the foolish husband who has been influenced by his relatives to leave his wife rather than remain loyal to her, saying:

“Those witches made me leave my beloved wife. I am so confused and I miss Mmaletsatsi very much.”

(Siteo 1997, p. 24)

The main character in *My red cow* who discovers, after searching for his cow for months, that his own uncle has stolen his cow, ends the story with the words:

Now I am tired. I will never buy another cow. It is better to buy furniture and leave it in my room. When I go out I will lock the door.

(Kunene 1998, p. 18)

In *The gift*, in which an innocent community is duped by a confidence trickster into paying for the gift of a goat which he does not even have, the story ends with the following:

Fifteen minutes later Henry was not back from the train. The children were tired of waiting. Mr and Mrs Goba were starting to feel worried. They heard the train's whistle blowing. Mrs Goba went to look for Henry and the sheep.

They were nowhere to be found.

(Witthaus 1996, pp.16 - 17)

In *Sweet memories*, each person in the story describes a precious item and what it signifies to them. While the memories are positive, the feelings described and evoked are primarily of nostalgia and loss:

I have only one thing left over from my childhood: a bible.

The bible belonged to my father who died in 1982.

Whenever I see this book, I see my father sitting down, taking the bible out of the drawer and starting to read.

It is a very strong memory.

(Teichmann 1998, p. 25)

By contrast with the endings above, the happy endings are clear and unequivocal. In *Flags on a bridge*, George realises that his girlfriend has waited for him while he has been in prison:

Then he sees the other passengers looking and pointing. They say, "What's that on the bridge? Papers? Political posters? Is it a rally?" George jumps up. He dances between the seats. He shouts for joy because he sees hundreds of white flags all over the bridge.

(Land 1997, p. 17)

In *The new baby*, the priest who has refused to speak to his pregnant teenage daughter for the duration of her pregnancy, forgives her when he sees the baby:

He kissed the baby. Then he kissed our daughter.
"Thanks be to God," he said. "I am a grandfather."

(Brain 1998, pp. 24 - 26)

Not all happy endings are joyously happy as in the above examples. In *The spaza*, although the couple are reconciled, there is a sombre note to the happy ending:

"There is no other wife. She left a long time ago," Zwelakhe says. "There is only you, you and this son of mine. Let's go home."

(Rebelo 1996, p. 19)

In *I told myself I am going to learn*, the main character wins the battle against her husband to continue learning with a sense of quiet determination rather than joyful victory:

He looked at me. He kept silent and went to the bedroom.
And I knew I had won.

(Ndaba 1990, pp. 49 - 51)

2.3.2 Open and closed plot endings

The need for satisfactory, if not happy, plot resolution is a common theme in Children's literature and Narratology. Added to conventional wisdom regarding adult literacy learners and adult beginner readers, the assumption was that plot endings in this sample would be closed rather than open (in addition to being happy rather than sad).

As would be expected, there is a high correlation between happiness and closure and the majority of endings were happy and closed (58%) with a much smaller number (8%) being sad and closed. Therefore a total of 66% of the stories were closed rather than open. The number of open endings was unanticipated (34%). Most of the open-ended endings as would be expected were happy. These tended to be autobiographies/biographies which ended positively but projected the reader into the future:

In *Nothembi*, the story ends happily but openly with a strong sense of what will happen in the future:

I have passed Std 8 now and I am going into Std 9. I would like to get a degree in music. At the same time I will continue entertaining my fans with great traditional music.

(Mkhwebane 1999, p. 17)

Another example of a happy/open ending is *First prize*. In this story, the main character gives all her prize money away to relatives and friends but happily begins the cycle all over again:

She helped everyone until her R50 000 was only R50. "No problem," she said. "R50 is enough to enter some more competitions."

(Seid 1998, p. 30)

Some ending were open but mixed – i.e. not happy or sad. For example, in *Why dogs chase goats*, the traditional story ends with the words:

The taxi driver drove away. The sheep is still standing in the road.
The dog is still chasing the goat.

(Annecke 1991, p. 19)

Another example of a mixed/open ending is *UMkhize and the cell-phones*:

After he fell off Mkhize phoned the man who gave him the horse.
Mkhize waited a long time, and was burnt by the sun.
When the sun had set, the man appeared, riding a bicycle and leading a donkey.
Mkhize got back to his car in the dark.

(Land & Kunene 1997, p. 11)

These two examples are different from the *Nothembi* (happy/open) example in that they leave the ending entirely uncertain, but nevertheless depicts/invites participation in a future beyond the ending of the story.

By contrast, endings that were classified as closed did not project the reader into the future or leave the reader to decide what had happened. Typical examples were:

The people saved Nyeleti and made a feast. The villagers were free at last.

(Bila 1996, p. 31)

In Bruner's conception of fiction, open-ended endings construct readers as writerly (scriptible) rather than lisible (readerly). The endings in this sample cover a wide and surprisingly complex range. Even though the majority are happy and closed they are not simplistic or uniform, potentially inviting a range of responses in readers and evoking a range of emotions. This suggests that adult beginner readers are regarded as capable of dealing with ambiguity and potential trauma.

2.4 Titles

Titles are important in that they are the first entry point into the text and, with the cover, can attract or deter a reader. They have the potential to simply declare the contents of the story or to engage the curiosity and imagination of readers. Titles were classified according to whether they were open or closed. This process proved to be more complex than anticipated. As with endings, titles differ considerably in the degree to which they are open or closed. While some titles clearly fall within the open or closed category, there are a number which are ambiguous to varying degrees.

The titles that were classified as closed declare their contents directly and arguably less invitingly, for example:

The murder of Mrs Mohapi

Mandla and the bull

My red cow

27th April 1994

Nothembi

I told myself I am going to learn

I told myself I am going to learn is arguably the most closed and obvious title in the entire sample aside from the autobiographies and biographies in which the titles consist of the names of the people concerned. It declares that it is going to be about the struggle of a person to “go to school” and become literate. Even though the word, learn, could suggest any type of learning, it is unlikely to do this. In Zulu (and the other Nguni languages – Xhosa, Swazi, Ndebele), the word for both learn and read is *funda*, suggesting that reading and learning are closely connected in the lexicon.

Some titles, which are apparently closed, are in fact misleading in the sense that they are not about what the title ostensibly suggests. For example, *Pension money* suggests that it is going to revolve around the issue of pensions. Instead it is more focused on the vicious theft of a woman’s pension money than on the pension money itself. *The spaza* suggests that it is going to be about running a shop whereas in fact it is about conflict and reconciliation between a couple.

A surprising number of titles in the English sample can be considered to be open (37%).

A quick trick
All the way to Z
Why dogs chase goats
Waiting for Lerato
First prize
Flags on a bridge
Forklift No: 4
Just a job
Magweya
My name is Selina Mabiletsa
The liars
Woza Friday
The girl with a golden tooth
The gift
The right change

A surface examination of the linguistic patterns or trends in the titles showed that 13 titles (34%) contain the name of a person; 8 titles (21%) start with the word “The”; 4 (10%) start with the word “My” and the average number of words in the titles is 3. Compared with the title *A heartbreaking work of staggering genius*, a recent best-seller for fluent, educated readers which is basically a heart-wrenching autobiography which lays bare and declares its authorial and editorial processes (Eggers 2001), these titles can be said to be pithy, direct and very obvious.

3. Narrative features

Specific narrative features were quantified or classified as part of the plot analysis.

These were:

- narrator (first, second or third person)
- narrative time (duration of story and number of episodes in story)
- narrative order (chronological or mixed)
- tense

3.1 Narrator

The role of the narrator in stories is regarded as highly significant. The narrator can range from first to third person and from minimally intrusive to omniscient (i.e. able to “tell” the reader everything from any point of view). For the purposes of this analysis, the narrator was simply classified according to first, second or third person narration.

Most stories (66%) are narrated in the third person. 29% are narrated in the first person and 5% in the second person. This finding however creates a simplistic impression in view of the complexities created by direct speech. For example, some books classified as being narrated in the third person, have a very high percentage of direct speech which partially creates the effect of first person narration.

One of the most complex books in the sample in terms of narration is *The new baby*. The book is narrated in the first person by a character (the mother) who participates in the story but narrates the main drama/conflict in the story which is between the daughter and the father. In *The new baby*, direct speech is interspersed with narrative sections which move the story along.

The way in which the story begins is indicative of the relatively complex narrative style. It begins:

In May my daughter came to me. "Mama," she said, "I'm going to have a baby."

(Brain 1998, p. 2)

The narrator continues to "speak" directly to the reader as though telling the story directly to the reader while at the same time being part of the plot:

For seven months he would not talk to her. "I want nothing to do with her," he told me. "She has brought shame on our family."

Last week my daughter's pains started. I took her to the hospital.

(Brain 1998, pp. 12 - 14)

Analysis of children's books reveals a high level of first person narration. The level of first person narration is low compared with common findings regarding children's books. This suggests a closer affiliation with regular fiction than with children's fiction in this regard.

3.2 Narrative time

The analysis of narrative time in terms of duration of story and number of episodes proved to be a more complex task than anticipated. Story duration was difficult to estimate particularly in books such as *Dancing to fame* and *The Nkosi family* which do not consist of a narrative *per se* but of general descriptions and observations. In these cases narrative time was classified as more than 1 year. It was also difficult to estimate narrative time for books like *Waiting for Lerato*, *The right change* and *All the way to Z* where the duration of the story is 1 day or less in that the story consists of people having a conversation, but the conversation includes recounting events which happened long ago and over a considerable time period. These difficulties illustrate that the above-mentioned books are not "stories" in the conventional sense.

3.2.1 Narrative duration

Table 24: Narrative duration

Duration	Number of titles	% of titles
More than 1 Year	15	39
1 Day	11	29
1 Month	4	11
1 Week	4	11
6 Months	4	10
Total	38	100

Table 25: Narrative duration by genre

Genre	1 Day	1 Week	1 Month	6 Months	1 Year	Total no.	Total %
Autobiography/Biography	1			1	8	10	26
Detective/thriller	1					1	3
Family drama/realistic fiction	3	1		2	2	8	21
Fictional non-fiction				1	3	4	11
Folk tale/epic/allegory	1				1	2	5
Humour/comedy/satire/parody	3	3	3			9	24
Romance/love story	2		1		1	4	11
Total no.	11	4	4	4	15	38	100
Total %	29	11	11	11	39		

Close to 30% of the stories take place in the space of 1 day. 40% occur over a period of more than 1 year and the remaining 30% are evenly distributed between 1 week, 1 month and 6 months. Aside from the books mentioned above, the biographies/autobiographies constitute the vast majority of stories spanning more than 1 year. The only other exception is *Magweya*, a folk tale which in epic style tells the story of innocent villagers terrorised by an evil giant over a long period of time.

Autobiographies/biographies by definition have to take place over a long period of time. This relates to the number of episodes in a story as discussed below.

3.2.2 Number of episodes

Episodes were identified by breaks in continuity or what would be scene changes in a play or movie. The average number of episodes per story overall was 6. In narrative terms this is high for a medium which only consists of an average of 55 sentences in total. The consequence of a high number of very short episodes is that plot “build-up” is virtually impossible, resulting in a series of statements that lack the power to engage the reader in the same way as if one episode was narrated with the development of suspense in mind. A good example of a story with too many short episodes is *Waiting for Lerato* referred to above.

Table 26: Average number of episodes per book by genre (a) and publisher (b)

Genre (a)

Genre	Avg. per genre
Family drama	6
Humour	5
Biography	8
Non-fiction	7
Romance/love	4
Detective	9
Folk tale	3

Publisher (b)

Publisher	Avg. per publisher
ERU	8
Heinemann	6
Juta	1
Kagiso	4
New Readers Project	4
SACHED Books	5
Stimela	10
Viva Books	10
Workbench	7

The number of episodes tends to correlate with story duration and genre. Aside from the single detective story, autobiographies/biographies and fictionalised non-fiction account for the highest number of episodes (an average of 8 and 7 respectively). There is consequently also a corresponding difference between publishers. For example, The New Readers Project and Kagiso have an average of 4 episodes per book whereas Viva Books and Stimela have 10 episodes per book on average. The number of episodes per book does not therefore simply correspond with the number of text pages, words or sentences but is more influenced by genre and publisher.

Excluding autobiographies/biographies which by their nature consist of a number of episodes because they are recounting an individual's life history, it would seem that limiting or at least being aware of the number of episodes in books of this nature may be a helpful mechanism for reducing bland recounting of potentially engaging events as occurs in *Waiting for Lerato* and *The liars*.

3.3 Narrative order and tense

Table 27: Narrative order and tense

Narrative order	Tense	Total no.	Total %
Chronological	Past	18	47
	Present	8	21
	Mixed	3	8
Mixed	Mixed	6	16
	Past	2	5
	Present	1	3
Total		38	100

Almost all of the books in the corpus (78%) are written in chronological order. The exceptions are either fictionalised non-fiction or autobiographies/biographies. The only book of fiction that is written in mixed order is *Waiting for Lerato*. The complexity of this book has already been referred to in a number of sections. This relates to the points made in regard to story duration above.

Just over half of the books (52%) are written in the past tense. The other half are evenly divided between present tense and mixed mode. Books written in mixed tense mode are unusual at beginner reader level because of the demands that they make on the reader. *The liars* and *The murder of Mrs Mohapi* both suddenly change tense from present to past towards the end of the narrative. It appears that this was done in *The liars* in order to cover the major events which occur in the last few sentences of the story. In *The murder of Mrs Mohapi* it appears that it may have been a mistake, as it does not seem to be necessary in order to continue the style or pace of the story. In *My red cow* the major part of the story is related in the past and the story ends with the first person narrator describing his situation in the present. The other books in mixed mode are all fictionalised non-fiction or autobiographies/biographies.

Forklift No: 4, which has the theme of promoting literacy and communication, vacillates between tenses. It starts and remains in the past tense for the bulk of the story, changes to the present to indicate the current state of the main character and

then moves to the past when the main character's wife reads the letter which is the device which carries the story. The use of mixed mode does not necessarily contribute to the effectiveness of a story and especially in second language should be used with caution.

3.4 Concluding remarks regarding plot and narrative features

The detailed analysis of plot and narrative features in itself elucidates the differences between pseudo-fiction and fiction. Analysis of autobiographies/biographies and fictional non-fiction demonstrates the absence of essential features of good fiction particularly within the constraints of language and length at this level. Real fiction in the corpus conforms more closely to these criteria.

4. Character

Characters/heroes are at the heart of stories. The literature review has shown that according to criteria for what is considered to be good fiction, it is consistently argued that without clearly identifiable and strong characters it is difficult for readers to engage on an emotional level with stories. The nature of the characters in the corpus is therefore one of the most important indicators of the quality of engagement of readers and of how readers are construed by the writers of the texts. The characters are to some extent a mirror held up to the potential readers and, of all the features analysed, are most likely to signal how adult beginner readers are perceived. The writers are seldom beginner readers. Only a few books in the English corpus are written by adult beginner readers or literacy learners and even these are written by literacy learners with higher levels of literacy than those of ABET Level 1 readers. These are *My red cow* and *I told myself I am going to learn*.

For each story up to seven characters were identified and analysed according to the following categories elucidated in Chapter 4:

- role (main or supporting);
- sex (male, female or neutral);
- age (child, teenager, young adult, middle-aged adult, older adult);
- class (poor/working class; middle class; rich);

- race (African, White, Indian, Coloured);
- occupation
- morality of character;
- agency of character (active or passive);
- appellation of character (familiar, formal, referred to by relationship);
- origin of name of character (African, English, other);
- description of character
- gender stereotyping (typical or atypical);

Initially an attempt was made to identify and analyse only two main characters. It was assumed that there would be a hero/main character (Hero 1) in the story with whom the reader clearly identifies, who would have a foil, partner or adversary (Hero 2). The identification of Hero 1 was easy and obvious in many cases such as autobiographies/biographies or stories like *Mandla and the bull*, *UMkhize and the cell-phones* and *First prize*, but proved to be much more complex in many cases. This is possibly due to the fact that within the constraints of story length it is difficult to develop a main character, but it is more likely to be due to the non-fictional nature of a large number of the stories. Where the story is merely a vehicle to deliver a message, the characters in the story become more like representatives of types than unique and interesting individuals. It therefore becomes difficult to select one or two characters as the main characters. For example in *All the way to Z* there are five characters in the literacy class, none of who stand out as main characters. Similarly, in *The right change* there are five Numeracy learners who are given equal status in the story.

Other complicating factors in the identification and analysis of characters are where a group of people constitutes the main character. For example in *Calling the ancestors* there are no individual characters except for a minor player. The main character is an entity – the Zondi family. In *The Nkosi family* there are seven members of the family who are all described in the same terms: what they enjoy, dream about, etc. None of the members of the family is given more prominence than others. Further difficulties in classification occur where the first or second hero is an animal as in *Mandla and the bull* and *Why dogs chase goats*. In another complex example, Magweya the

villainous giant in *Magweya* is so dominant that it is difficult not to see him as the only main character.

In order to attempt to deal with the many variations within character roles I therefore decided to identify and analyse seven characters according to the criteria outlined above. In the rare cases where there are more than seven characters, these are individually identified. Many of the classifications required inferences to be made on the basis of the illustrations. Race, age and class were seldom directly mentioned in the text but had to be inferred from the plot or from the illustrations. Sex was often inferred from names and illustrations.

The trends according to each of the criteria are first dealt with separately and then generally.

4.1 Total number and roles of characters

In total, 197 characters were identified. Of these, 180 characters (91% of the total) are single entities, identifiable as males or females, while 17 (9%) are neutral, usually collective groups (referred to for example as the Zondis, people, children, parents). Characters were also identified as being main characters or supporting characters. 81 main characters were identified (constituting 41% of the total number of characters). Of the main characters all except one are gendered individuals. The one exception is the Zondi family in *Calling the ancestors*.

4.2 Sex of characters

Table 28: Sex of all characters and main characters

Sex	All characters Number	All characters %	Main characters Number	Main characters %
Male	109	61	49	61
Female	71	39	31	39
Total	180	100	80	100

As can be seen from Table 28, there is a consistent pattern in terms of both total characters and main characters. Males comprise 60% and females 40% of the characters in each of these groups. Given the dominance of men in South African society it is perhaps surprising that the gap is not wider. However, the dominance of female authors in the English corpus (60% female; 29% male; 11% combination) possibly ameliorates this trend in favour of a more balanced representation. It is instructive though to compare the number of Hero 1 characters produced by male and female authors. Female authors balance male to female first main characters exactly, whereas male authors are seriously biased towards male characters (82% male compared with 18% female first main characters).

Table 29: Sex of Hero 1 characters by sex of author

Character sex	Author's sex (Number followed by %)		
	Female	Male	Female and male together
Female	11 (48%)	2 (18%)	1 (25%)
Male	11 (48%)	9 (82%)	3 (75%)
Neutral	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	23 (60%)	11 (29%)	4 (11%)

In terms of the distribution of men and women with few or no literacy skills, an accurate demographic reflection would require slightly more women than men to be the main characters in stories (assuming that this ratio would be reflected in attendance at literacy classes).³⁰

³⁰ See Aitchison et al (2000, p. 17)

4.3 Age

Characters were categorised according to the following age groups:

- child
- teenager
- young adult (20 – 34)
- middle adult (35 – 59)
- older adult (60 and up)

Table 30: Age of characters

Age	Main characters Number	Main characters %	All characters Number	All characters %
Child	2	3	9	6
Teenager	6	8	7	5
Young adult	30	39	54	36
Middle-aged adult	33	43	68	46
Older adult	5	7	11	7
Total	76		149	

Almost half the total number (46%) of characters who could be classified according to age are middle-aged followed by a considerable proportion who are young adults (36%). This trend is reflected in the main characters although there is a slight increase in the percentage of young adults (43% middle-aged and 39% young adults).

Teenagers and children both constitute 11% of the total characters and main characters while old people constitute 7% of both groups. The emphasis on middle-aged adults is not surprising given the profile of typical learners in ABET classrooms and low expectations about the capacity and desire of old people to learn. It does however suggest that the full spectrum of life as most adults experience it, that is as populated by babies, children and old people as well, is not commonly being represented in the stories.

When a comparison is made between the ages of male and female characters, a slightly different and possibly instructive pattern emerges.

Table 31: Characters by sex and age

Age	Female Number	Female %	Male Number	Male %
Child	5	8	3	4
Teenager	3	5	4	5
Young adult	19	31	35	43
Middle-aged adult	27	44	38	46
Older adult	7	11	2	2
Total	61		82	

When characters are classified according to sex and age, the balance shifts to more older female characters (11% of females as opposed to 2% of males) and more young adult male characters (43% compared with 31% of females). There are twice as many female as male children characters (8% as compared with 4%). Could it be that women are more safely located as old or very young, rather than as young nubile adults?

Only 5 main characters are old, and of these only one is a man (one of the learners in *All the way to Z*). Three of the four old women are fairly stereotypical grannies and the remaining old woman in *The liars* is malevolent.

4.4 Social class of characters

Table 32: Social class of characters

Class	All characters Number	All characters %	Main characters Number	Main characters %
Poor/working Class	142	85	66	88
Middle class	25	15	9	12
Total	167		75	

The overwhelming majority of characters in the stories are poor/working class (86% of the total characters and 91% of the main characters). Only 12% of the main characters and 15% of all characters are middle class and many of these test the definition of what constitutes middle class.

Middle class characters are as follows:

- the literacy teacher in *All the way to Z*;
- the rude man in *A quick trick*;
- the upwardly mobile Zondi family and their neighbours, the Simpsons, in *Calling the ancestors*;
- Doctor Khumalo in *Doctor Khumalo*;
- the TV presenter in *First prize*;
- the factory foreman, the human resource manager and the boss in *Forklift No: 4*;
- the government official and TV and newspaper people in *My name is Selina Mabiletsa*;
- the doctor in *Mbusi's bad cold*;
- the unscrupulous producer and the literacy teacher in *Nothembi*;
- Paul Adams and other famous cricketers in *Paul Adams*;
- the detective, the murderer and the sergeant in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*;
- the farmer in *The right change*;
- the businessman in *UMkhize of Maritzburg*.

Only four middle class characters occupy the Hero 1 position: the detective in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*, the Zondi family in *Calling the ancestors* and the 2 sports stars. The two sports star biographies deal with the “local boy makes good” stories of the soccer star, Doctor Khumalo and the cricketer, Paul Adams.

Class and race do not intersect as cleanly as might be expected in a South African corpus. Where class and race could be classified, 57% of the middle class characters are white, 38% are African and 5% are coloured characters. However, as the findings and discussion on race below attest, while not all middle class characters are white, all white characters are middle class.

4.5 Race of characters

Characters were classified according to South Africa’s stereotypical race classification. The use of this classification in no way endorses or simplifies the concept of race or racial classification. However, given South Africa’s history and the prominence of race as a primary feature of identity and destiny, it is impossible to ignore the ‘race’ of characters. ‘Race’ was largely determined through names of characters and illustrations. There were a number of cases where race could not be established through illustrations or names. In this case they were classified as indeterminate. Where race was not relevant, i.e. with the animal characters and the giant, these characters were excluded from the classification.

Table 33: Race of characters

Race	Main characters Number	Main characters %	All characters Number	All characters %
African	71	92	154	87
White	3	4	12	7
Indian	1	1	1	0,5
Coloured	1	1	1	0,5
Indeterminate	1	1	9	5
Total	77		177	

As can be seen from the above table, African characters dominate the stories (92% of the main characters and 87% of the total characters). People other than African people do not feature prominently in the stories analysed. This is possibly one of the most significant “discoveries” of the English analysis. Given the pervasive impact of South Africa’s racial history on every aspect of life, public and private, it is startling that the stories in this corpus are populated so overwhelmingly by Africans, often in domestic or geographically separate public domains. The only white people that appear as main characters (but not as Hero 1) in the stories are the doctor in *Mbusi’s bad cold*, the foreman in *Forklift No: 4* and the rude man in *A quick trick*. Paul Adams, a coloured person who is the hero of *Paul Adams* and an Indian man who is one of the main characters in *Sweet memories* are the only two clear representatives of Indian and coloured people in the entire English corpus. Aside from main characters, people of other race groups rarely appear: the white neighbours in *Calling the ancestors*, the white and brown people who vote in *27th April 1994*, the white cricketers in *Paul Adams*, the white boss in *Forklift No: 4*, the literacy teacher in *Nothembi*, the sergeant in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi* and the farmer in *The right change*.

It is tempting to speculate about the reasons for the almost exclusive focus on Africans. On the one hand, it can be seen as an affirmation of “normal” life. The lack of racial polemic in these stories can be seen as a blessed relief given the propensity for didactic diatribes which characterise many texts for adult beginner readers. Particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, the rainbow nation/truth and reconciliation discourse is surprisingly absent from these texts. It is likely that the authors of these texts have collectively also avoided the potential minefield/quagmire of inter-racial relationships in order to avoid stereotyping. It is significant that the two of the three main characters who are white, are both vehicles for the message that it is important to learn African languages in order to enhance communication.

4.6 Occupations of main characters

Mostly in keeping with the working class and African focus of the corpus, the occupations when mentioned or amenable to inference, cover an interesting spectrum: factory worker is the most common occupation followed by cricketer, hawker, chief, criminal, security guard, beggar and teacher.

The most notable feature of the occupations of the characters is the discrepancy between not only the type, but also range and number of male and female occupations. 70% of the total occupations relate to male characters and only 30% to female characters. This is not consistent with the proportion of male to female characters overall (60% and 40%). Males therefore tend to be more identified by the work that they do than females. This is consistent with findings relating to gender more generally (see Mills 1995).

Shaded areas in the table indicate occupations related only to males or only to females. Generally these conform to gender stereotypes except for the cleaner in the case of male only occupations and doctor and dance troupe manager in the case of female only occupations

Table 34: Occupation by sex

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
factory worker	6	1	7
cricketer	4		4
chief	3		3
criminal	3		3
security guard	3		3
beggar	2		2
detective	2		2
prisoner	2		2
taxi driver	2		2
boss	1		1
businessman	1		1
cell-phone salesman	1		1
cleaner	1		1
company producer	1		1
conductor	1		1
factory foreman	1		1
farm worker	1	1	2

farmer	1		1
giant	1		1
government official	1		1
newspaper people	1		1
personnel manager	1		1
priest	1		1
prison warder	1		1
shop assistant	1	1	2
soccer player	1		1
teacher	1	2	3
truck driver	1		1
TV crew	1		1
TV presenter	1		1
hawker/spaza owner		4	4
dressmaker		2	2
nurse		2	2
shebeen owner		2	2
musician		1	1
pensioner		1	1
dance troupe manager		1	1
model		1	1
ticket seller		1	1
Total	48	21	69

4.7 Names of main characters

The names of main characters were analysed according to how they were referred to in the texts. Firstly they were analysed in terms of degree of formality or intimacy and secondly according to whether names were of African or non-African origin. The degree of formality of names was categorised as follows:

- familiar form (first name, African surname³¹ or first person)
- formal form (Mr, Mrs, Dr, etc.)
- referred to by relationship (my husband, my friend, etc.)
- other (a taxi driver, etc.)

The analysis of how main characters were referred to was done in order to make inferences regarding the identification of the potential/target readers with the characters. It was assumed that the use of a familiar form of address would be the most common and the most likely to evoke feelings of identification in readers. It was

³¹ It is common in African languages for a person's surname to be used as a familiar form of address.

also assumed that African names would be more common and more likely to enhance engagement and identification.

Table 35: Name of characters

Name	Main characters Number	Main characters %	All characters Number	All characters %
Familiar form	66	81	94	48
Formal form	4	5	7	4
By relationship	4	5	32	16
Other	7	9	61	31
Total	81		194	

Not surprisingly, familiar forms (either first names, surnames used in a familiar way or first person) are predominant for main characters (81%). There is a significant difference between the main characters and total number of characters in this regard. Only a few main characters are referred to by relationship (my daughter, my husband, my friend, etc.) or formally (Mr, Dr). Aside from familiar names for characters, the most common way of naming characters is according to generic labels such as a taxi driver, a security guard, a dog, a bull, etc. More than half of the minor characters (54%) are referred to in this way, which is predictable given the “bit parts” which they play.

Table 36: Origin of name

Name origin	Main characters No.	Main characters %	All characters No.	All characters %
African	37	57	58	59
English	25	38	37	37
Other	3	5	4	4
Total	65		99	

Just over half of all characters and main characters have African names. The number of non-African names is unexpected (close to 40%). Of these, most are English names. Given the singular focus on African characters and contexts, it seemed highly probable that mainly African names would be used in the stories. The disproportionate use of English names can partially be explained by examining the particular genres in which they occur. Autobiographies/biographies and Fictional/non-fiction have a disproportionately high number of English names, possibly because the use of English names are one of the means by which individuals negotiate their identities in an English-dominant world.

Publishers also have a strong influence on the types of names which are used. Close to two thirds of the characters in Viva Books have English names, while all New Readers Project characters have African names. Kagiso and SACHED Books strongly favour African names (77% and 69% respectively) and 60% of Heinemann's characters have African names. Workbench and Juta have an even balance of African and English names. The only publisher, aside from Viva Books, which favours English names is ERU. Aside from the influence of autobiographies/biographies it is difficult to speculate on the reasons for these differences or on whether deliberate decisions were taken regarding the naming of characters. A conscious decision to use indigenous African names was, for example, taken by the New Readers Project.

4.8 Types of characters

Characters were classified according to whether they were good, bad or mixed. This proved to be a highly subjective measure. Bad characters are easily identifiable but mixed characters are not clearly identifiable and depend on personal conceptions of morality. For example, Mandla in *Mandla and the bull* gets drunk with his friends. It is clearly a matter of opinion whether he is normal, good, or mixed. In any event the categorisation yielded the following results:

Table 37: Types of main characters

Type	Main characters No.	Main characters %	All characters No.	All characters %
Good	66	81	164	83
Bad	8	10	22	11
Mixed	7	9	11	6
Total	81		197	

It is clear from this crude categorisation that good characters dominate the stories (83% in total). A small percentage is totally bad (11%), and a few have failings (6%). This finding is not surprising given the fact that heroes are generally noble souls, albeit with often fatal flaws. It is also not surprising given the ostensible intentions of many of these stories which are to promote good and positive behaviour such as working hard, starting a business, learning to read and write, overcome adversity, etc.

In terms of criteria for good literature and great stories, the relative absence of complex characters diminishes the overall quality of the corpus and suggests a patronizing and simplistic view of the potential readers.

Table 38: Villains and their functions

Title	Villain	Function of villain
<i>A quick trick</i>	rich man	rude to heroes
	security guard	rude to heroes
	a ticket seller	rude to heroes
	people	rude to heroes
<i>Just a job</i>	security guard	rude to hero
	criminals	attack hero
<i>Magweya</i>	Magweya	eats people, steals maiden
<i>Mandla</i>	bull	charges hero

<i>My red cow</i>	uncle	steals hero's cow
<i>Nothembi</i>	company producer	cheats hero
<i>Pension money</i>	criminals	rape granddaughter; steal pension money
<i>The gift</i>	criminal	cheats community
<i>The liars</i>	aunts	interfere in relationship
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	murderer	murders lover's wife
<i>The right change</i>	farmer	cheats farmworker
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	goat	cheats friends
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	men (4)	cheat on and beat women

Only 13 of the books (34%) contain bad characters. These characters generally fulfil stereotypical villain roles which range from murder, rape and cannibalism to rudeness. The intensity of evil and culpability therefore varies considerably. A common function of villains is to cheat poor, innocent, decent people (or in one case a dog and a goat). In two of these cases this relates to the literacy theme discussed in Chapter 5.

4.9 Agency

The attempt to identify the agency of characters proved to be too complex with regard to most of the characters. In many plots the central character is initially the victim (i.e. passive) but subsequently overcomes adversity through action (i.e. active). Likewise, villains start out as active but end up as powerless victims as in *A quick trick* and *Magweya*. Agency is therefore a complex concept. As a result, only consistently passive characters are identified and briefly analysed here. Nyeleti, in *Magweya* is passive throughout the story. The giant “makes her his wife,” plans to eat her, and she is then saved by “the people.” Nowhere are her feelings during this ordeal referred to in anyway. Similarly in *The new baby*, although apparently central, the pregnant schoolgirl is entirely passive and without a voice or perspective in the text. Basani in *The girl with a golden tooth* is passive in a stereotypical sense in that she is wooed and chased. In *All the way to Z*, all the victims who are cheated because

of their lack of literacy/numeracy are women. It is safe to conclude that in this corpus, the passive characters are women.

In *Pension money*, the granddaughter is gang-raped. Her grandmother's response, while very proactive, does not refer to the rape at all but merely to the theft of her pension: "I can't sit back while those kids robbed me. Tomorrow, when the sun rises, I am going to the chief's kraal."

4.10 Descriptions of characters

A common device to enhance the development of characters, referred to in Children's literature, is the description either of their physical features or of their behaviour. An analysis of the extent to which characters were described, revealed that this was not a commonly utilised device in the corpus.

Only 7 of the books (18%) used any descriptive words for the characters:

- ❑ very very old, deeply sunken eyes (*Pension money*)
- ❑ huge, ugly, cruel, beautiful, short, thin, magical (*Magweya*)
- ❑ youngest child (*Paul Adams*)
- ❑ very leggy lady (*The murder of Mrs Mohapi*)
- ❑ most beautiful girl, long hair (*The girl with a golden tooth*)
- ❑ red, beautiful (*My red cow*)

The author, Vonani Bila, who wrote *Pension money*, *Magweya* and *The girl with a golden tooth* and who is a published poet and novelist, accounts for 72% of character description in the entire English corpus! This suggests that creative writing develops awareness of the possibilities of this device.

4.11 Concluding discussion regarding characters

In summary the characters populating these stories are predominantly poor, African, middle-aged, law-abiding and predictable in terms of gender stereotypes. Men outnumber women and tend to get the more interesting roles in terms of humour and crime, aside from a few notable exceptions. Women tend to behave themselves and

work hard. Children/teenagers when they do appear at all, tend to be well-behaved and co-operative, at most asking for new clothes. The only young person who causes any real trouble is the young girl who gets pregnant in *The new baby*. Even then she is not difficult but rather a silent and passive victim of circumstances and her father's wrath. In terms of the realities of life and the possibilities of fiction, the characters are overall homogeneous, predictable and unchallenging. This does not mean that there are not many noteworthy, interesting and challenging exceptions.

5. Specific language features

5.1 Direct speech

The decision to examine the amount of direct speech in each book was based on the commonly held view in the study of Children's Literature and the study of narrative and storytelling that direct speech is an economical and effective way of "fleshing out" characters and changing them from flat and stereotypical ones to round ones. It also has the potential to provide direct access to what Bruner (1986) refers to as internal states – the landscape of consciousness as opposed to the landscape of action (see Chapter 2). In addition, the apportioning of direct speech is regarded as highly indicative of power relationships. Who, literally, is given a voice in a story often reflects and serves to maintain the dominance of certain groups over others: men over women, adults over children, teachers over pupils, rich over poor, etc.

A close examination of direct speech in this corpus of texts revealed that it is at best a potential tool to enhance the quality of a story but more commonly, a thinly disguised device to attempt to make a didactic text supposedly more interesting and engaging. This is mainly done through the use of fictional characters to discuss issues of supposed relevance. These books have been categorised as fictional non-fiction in the genre category.

The proportion of direct speech in a book cannot therefore be taken as an indication of round characterisation or as providing access to internal states. The following books have high levels of direct speech but are basically didactic texts portraying a relevant message:

*Waiting for Lerato**The right change**All the way to Z***Table 39: Direct speech by title**

Title	Direct speech sentences	Total sentences	% Direct speech
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	67	67	100
<i>My village</i>	37	41	90
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	108	148	73
<i>The liars</i>	57	79	72
<i>The right change</i>	55	78	71
<i>All the way to Z</i>	54	80	68
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	59	90	66
<i>The new baby</i>	15	29	52
<i>The spaza</i>	34	72	47
<i>The gift</i>	25	63	40
<i>A quick trick</i>	27	75	36
<i>Forklift No: 4</i>	27	83	33
<i>First prize</i>	8	27	30
<i>The Nkosi family</i>	14	48	29
<i>Pension money</i>	15	53	28
<i>Sewing for a living</i>	8	34	24
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	6	33	18
<i>Just a job</i>	11	64	17
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>	9	55	16
<i>Paul Adams</i>	7	48	15
<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	9	67	13
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	3	25	12
<i>27th April 1994</i>	3	30	10
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	6	62	10
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	7	67	10
<i>Magweya</i>	4	45	9
<i>Going home with chickens</i>	4	43	9
<i>Sweet memories</i>	2	77	3
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	1	47	2
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	0	47	0
<i>My red cow</i>	0	22	0
<i>Woza Friday</i>	0	14	0
<i>Calling the ancestors</i>	0	43	0
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	0	47	0
<i>Joe's new job</i>	0	18	0
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>	0	62	0
<i>Nothembi</i>	0	80	0
<i>My own business</i>	0	44	0
Total	682	2107	1003
Average	20	55	26

The following books have more than 50% direct speech sentences

- ❑ *The liars, The murder of Mrs Mohapi* (Heinemann – comic format)
- ❑ *Waiting for Lerato* (Kagiso – comic format)
- ❑ *The new baby* (New Readers Project)
- ❑ *The right change* (Viva Books)
- ❑ *My village* (ERU)

Books using features of a comic format also, by definition, contain a high proportion of direct speech. This does not necessarily enhance the quality of the story or “flesh out” the characters in the story.

A further point to note is that the choice of what is said is obviously of crucial importance in breathing life and engagement into a story. Compare the following direct speech from characters in two different books: *Mbusi's bad cold* and *The liars*.

In *Mbusi's bad cold*, Mbusi, a married man with a broken bicycle who is delirious because he has not understood the instructions from an Afrikaans doctor on how to take his medication, lies in bed thinking,

““I must get a girlfriend who is a doctor. Then she can buy me a car. I will learn to say “I love you” in Afrikaans. Then I will go back to the clinic”

(Garisch 1995, p. 17).

This is arguably economical and effective use of direct speech, creating humour as well as insight into Mbusi's character. This is the trend throughout the story.

The liars by contrast uses up dialogue on pedestrian matters and then reduces the essence of the story to a few brief sentences. For example, the main characters engage in the following dialogue which consists of 16 % of the total number of sentences in the story:

Selepe starts talking about the sewing again.

“I know a place where we can buy material at a very reasonable price. Why don’t we go and have a look at the shop?”

“It sounds tempting, but the truth is we don’t have the money.”

“Mmaletsatsi, we can use the money that we have saved in the bank.”

“Selepe, you know very well that aunt Mmaditaba will be paying us a visit soon. If we use the money, we will have nothing to entertain her with.”

“Don’t worry, my pretty one. I’ll see what I can do.”

“If so, I will buy some material and start working.”

Selepe laughs happily.

“You are a very intelligent woman. You do nothing without giving a second thought first.”

“Let me start dishing up for you, darling.”

He laughs and looks happy.

“Mmaletsatsi, I must buy some new furniture.”

(Sitoe 1997, pp. 6 - 11)

Clearly this is an attempt to convey the fact that the couple have a warm, generous and loving relationship. However it is arguably not maximising the potential of the use of direct speech when compared with the *Mbusi’s bad cold* example. Also, it is uneconomical when compared with the climax of the story which is conveyed in only two sentences:

After two weeks, Selepe started hitting his wife. They eventually divorced.

(Sitoe 1997, p. 22)

Therefore, although the bulk of *The liars* consists of dialogue in the form of direct speech, much of it is pedestrian and commonplace.

Generally then, while well-selected dialogue has the potential to enhance the power of stories, this is not necessarily the case. In this corpus of books direct speech is as likely to be placed in the service of relevance as it is in the service of creating effective fiction.

5.1.1 Allocation of direct speech

Direct speech was analysed in terms of whether it was spoken by men, women or children. Men speak more than women (an average of 9.4 sentences per book compared with 8.2 sentences per book) but this is not as marked as might have been predicted if there was a simple connection between gender and language. This point is developed in Section . The fact that many of the stories are set in domestic settings rather in the workplace or public domains possibly also contributes to the amount which women speak. Children, on the other hand, barely speak at all (an average of 0.4 sentences per book and then only in 5 books). This is in keeping with their minimal presence in the stories as a whole.

5.2 Thoughts

Initially an attempt was made to identify direct thought sentences which would potentially provide access to internal states. It was assumed that there would be sentences such as: X thought to himself, “I wonder if she loves me.” An analysis of direct speech revealed that none of the direct speech sentences refer to direct thought. However the thoughts of characters are referred to in a number of texts utilising reported thought.

Only 37 sentences out of a total of 2107 (2%) refer to thoughts of characters. They relate to:

- mistaken opinions

“People think I can’t see the batsman.” (*Paul Adams*)

“He thought that he had eaten them all.” (*Magweya*)

- speculation and imagination

“I started to think about how I could make more money.”

“George thinks of Lindi.” (*Flags on a bridge*)

- opinions

“She thinks all men are bad.” (*Waiting for Lerato*)

The thoughts of characters are therefore used to a very limited extent in the corpus.

5.3 Questions

The use of questions as an indicator of gender difference is ubiquitous in gender research. The most common finding or view is that women ask more questions than men particularly in mixed sex conversations. This is commonly interpreted as women's "interactional shitwork" (Fishman's 1997 colourful and arguably misogynist term).

Questions were identified and analysed with fairly surprising results.

Table 40: Questions according to age and sex

Title	Men	Women	Child	Neutral	Questions Total	Sentences Total
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	14	8	2		24	148
<i>The liars</i>	6	7			13	79
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	13				13	47
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	2	8			10	90
<i>The Nkosi family</i>			2	8	10	48
<i>The right change</i>	2	7			9	78
<i>uMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	5			1	6	67
<i>All the way to Z</i>	4				4	80
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	4				4	47
<i>Forklift No: 4</i>	4				4	83
<i>The new baby</i>		3			3	29
<i>A quick trick</i>	3				3	75
<i>Just a job</i>	1	1			2	64
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	2				2	25
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>		2			2	67
<i>The spaza</i>	1	1			2	72
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	1	1			2	33
<i>The gift</i>	1	1			2	63
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	1				1	47
<i>First prize</i>	1				1	27
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>		1			1	55
<i>Going home with chickens</i>	1				1	43

Table 40 continued

Title	Men	Women	Child	Neutral	Questions Total	Sentences Total
<i>Magweya</i>	1				1	45
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	1				1	62
<i>Pension money</i>						53
<i>My red cow</i>						22
<i>Calling the ancestors</i>						43
<i>Joe's new job</i>						18
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>						62
<i>27th April 1994</i>						30
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>						67
<i>Nothembi</i>						80
<i>Paul Adams</i>						48
<i>My own business</i>						44
<i>My village</i>						41
<i>Sewing for a living</i>						34
<i>Sweet memories</i>						77
<i>Woza Friday</i>						14
Total number	68	40	4	9	121	
Total %	56	33	3	8	100	

56% of the questions in the corpus are asked by men compared with 33% asked by women. Children only ask questions 4 times (2 by a boy in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi* and 2 by a girl in *The Nkosi family*). Closer inspection reveals that there are two titles which account for 40% of the men's questions. In *Flags on a bridge*, where George the ex-prisoner does not know if his girlfriend still loves him, tension is built up through the repeated use of questions such as, "Does she love him?" (see Section 2.1 above). In *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*, the detective Max predictably asks a lot of questions as he tries to solve the case. 14 books (37%) contain no questions at all.

A few titles have been selected for more intensive scrutiny to examine the use of questions in male/female interaction. Titles in which there is a significant amount of direct speech and/or interaction between men and women are:

All the way to Z
Mbusi's bad cold
The gift
The girl with a golden tooth
The liars
The murder of Mrs Mohapi
The right change
The spaza

At first glance, the conversation in *The liars* appears to be an even-handed conversation between a man and a woman. However, closer scrutiny reveals that in the conversational exchanges between husband and wife, it is the husband that initiates the conversation each time. The use of questions therefore, needs to be seen in the context of control, albeit loving control. Some of Selepe's questions are not questions but suggestions "Why don't we go and have a look at the shop?"

In *Mbusi's bad cold* the majority of questions are asked by the woman doctor – some directly related to her professional role and the more aggressive ones relate to her impatience with the patient Mbusi who cannot speak her language.

In *The right change* women ask three times as many questions as men. There are 3 questions that can be seen as collaborative/sollicitous, e.g.:

"Have you ever sold things on the street?" asked Mary.

All 3 are female to female questions.

The only female to male questions are:

"What's this?" asked Ma Betty.

"This is R50," said the farmer.

(female farmworker asking male farmer to explain something)

Bra Themba said, “We must all learn to work with money.He told me to add all the arrears.”

“Arrears! What does that mean?” asked Mary.

(wife asking husband to explain something)

There are no male to female questions in the story.

All the way to Z has a very similar theme and format to *The right change* (learners discussing their experiences relating to literacy/numeracy and the lack of it). However in this story the situation is reversed re questions. Here, the only woman in the group, Lindiwe, does not ask any questions at all and one of the male learners, Frans, asks her solicitous questions. This is the only story where males ask females these types of questions.

The variation in questions confirms Freed’s (1996) assertion that it is the nature of the discursive task that accounts for differential use of questions. The analysis above suggests that caution is required in relation to simplistic findings relating to gendered language.

5.4 Emotions

Four measures were used to attempt to understand and analyse emotions in stories:

- ❑ classification of emotions according to a pre-determined list,
- ❑ identification and analysis of emotional words,
- ❑ identification and analysis of emotional sentences
- ❑ identification and analysis of exclamatory sentences.

The selection of emotional words and sentences proved to be one of the most difficult tasks in the detailed analysis of the English sample. It took some time for me to realise that the depiction of emotion and the evocation of emotion were substantially different, despite the fact that I was superficially aware of this at the outset of the analysis. Words and sentences which depict emotion do not necessarily evoke emotion in the reader, and likewise strong emotion can be evoked without emotions being overtly depicted in the text. However, because the evocation of emotion is of

such a subjective nature, for the purposes of this analysis the focus was only on the overt depiction of emotion in words and sentences. Even though this was a relatively simpler matter, it nevertheless required a repeated number of attempts before some degree of consistency in coding was achieved.

Selecting emotions from a pre-determined list also proved to be a complex task which required considerable revision of the list itself. Grouping certain emotions together inevitably made the measurement less subtle. For example, worry and anxiety were grouped together. What seemed to be a simple concept, pride, became increasingly complex as it became clear that it could range from a negatively valued emotionally imbued attitude like conceit or arrogance, to a positively valued one such as self-respect or self-esteem.

A further consideration is that the mere recording of depicted emotion does not convey the intensity of an emotion. There is a substantial difference between for example:

Bongi loved competitions.....

Bongi was very happy.

(Seid 1998, pp. 2 & 12)

and

He cried out and laughed wildly.....

He cried out loudly as the people beat and stabbed him.

(Bila 1996, pp. 25 & 29)

This illustrates Barton’s (1996) categorisation of emotional words as being on a continuum from mild, to moderate, to strong (for example: nervous, scared, terrified). The mere recording of emotional words and sentences is therefore a relatively crude measure. In addition it is important to note that emotion in a story can be depicted and implied through a range of overt and subtle mechanisms. For example, Barton (1996)

illustrates how emotion can be portrayed through explicit mechanisms such as character statements, character actions, plot events, text features, and emotional vocabulary. Implicit and therefore less overt are story setting, character thoughts, story mood and author's style.

The analysis of emotions in this study focused primarily on explicit information conveyed via character statements and actions and emotional vocabulary. The following were excluded in this section of the analysis: plot events, story setting, story mood and author's style.

5.4.1 Emotional words

Table 41 below consists of a list per title of all emotional words identified, including the frequency with which they were used.

Table 41: Emotional words

Title	Emotional words
<i>27th April 1994</i>	happy (2), shared, good, free, fair patient, cried (2), heart, cry, laughed, hugged, wonderful, bad
<i>A quick trick</i>	not lucky, tired, angry, cross (2), grinned, pleased, laughed, not happy
<i>All the way to Z</i>	disappointed, laughed (4), sorry (2), envy, helpless, bad, sweated, laughing, smiling, smiled, best, bad
<i>Calling the ancestors</i>	happy, laughing, enjoyed, danced, sang, glad, shouted (2), complained, die
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	proud, love, share, enjoying, hope, wish, fulfil, dreams
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	afraid, shouted, roared with laughter, shocked, darling, inspired, cried, not happy, very happy, angry, felt
<i>First prize</i>	fun, love, very happy, excited, good news, loved
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	afraid (2), loved, loves (2), love (2), mad, hope, dances, shouts, joy,
<i>Forklift No: 4</i>	happy (3), frightened, shocked (2), shouted, accused, laughed, stopped laughing, miss, wished, hope, complained (2)
<i>Going home with chickens</i>	happy (2), worried, proud (2), laughs, happily
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>	demands, worse, lucky, shaking (2), afraid (2), complaining, complained, frustrated, fought, hit, shaking, threw
<i>Joe's new job</i>	very happy, afraid, rushes, hurry

<i>Just a job</i>	sad (2), luck (2), scared, hit, lonely, wish, happy, dreamt, lucky
<i>Magweya</i>	fear, angry (2), happy, cried (2), laughed, beat, kill (2), free at last, died (2)
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	joke, happy (2), not worry, feel better, boasts, yells, laugh, clap, sing
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	feel, burned, ow, love, dying, half dead, surprised, bad (3), wished
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	happy (2), not worry, died (2), cried, crying (2), good news, proud, fighting, burned, wished, dead, shock
<i>My own business</i>	proud
<i>My red cow</i>	loved, sad, cross, tired
<i>My village</i>	forced, crying, happy
<i>Nothembi</i>	loving, happiness, did not like, loved (2), suffer, love, dance, clap, died (2)
<i>Paul Adams</i>	laugh, not laughing, struggled, dreamt
<i>Pension money</i>	loved, helpless, dear, kind, shivering, animals, prey, angrily, jackals, ululated, rushed
<i>Sewing for a living</i>	loves, love, lovely, sad, enjoys
<i>Sweet memories</i>	miss, cute, shooting, killing, love (2), proud (2), loved, sweet, forced
<i>The gift</i>	laughed (2), shouted (2), loved (2), very happy, worried, excited (3), surprised (2), smiled, good news, shocked (2), feel, hope, bit
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	felt, pounding, beware, terrified, feared, laughed, excitedly, love, heart, smile, smiled, rushed
<i>The liars</i>	laughs (2), laugh, worried, worry (2), happiness, happily, happy, darling (3), love, crying (3), tears, furious, childless, rude, thing,
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	feel shy, yelling, dead (2), sobbing, comforted, worry, angry, shouting (2), bad news, killed (6), terrible, pitiful tears, heart,
<i>The new baby</i>	shouted (2), stupid, angry (2), ashamed, shame, tears, dear (2), kissed (2)
<i>The Nkosi family</i>	like, want (2), feel (2), feels (6), dream (2), dreams, peace, worried, crazy, peaceful, bored, happy, sad, dancing
<i>The right change</i>	laughed (2), cried, angry, sorry, sighed (2), lucky
<i>The spaza</i>	good, blessing, shout (2), shouts angry (4), struggles, loves (2), feels (2), proud, forgive, hate (2), hurt, spoilt, wishes (2), snaps,
<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	rushed, frightened
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>	happy, liked, enjoyed (2), danced, dancing, sing (5), sings (4), singing (8), sang (3)
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	shame, love (8), loved (2), cried (3), joy, suffering, suffer, heart, loved, scared, anger, fought (2), stomped, hurt (2), bad,
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	cheeky, rude, angry, snapped, nervous, LOUD
<i>Woza Friday</i>	bright, light, clap, snap, tap

The most common emotional words are love, happy, laugh, sing, shout and cry (see Table 42 below for a list of emotional words occurring five times or more). According to Barton's (1996) analysis of the means by which emotions are expressed in texts, these words fall into character actions and emotional vocabulary. Emotional vocabulary is the expression of emotion itself, whereas character actions require the reader to infer emotion via characters' actions. Laugh, sing, shout and cry are character actions, i.e. verbs which give access to internal emotional states. Happy and love are descriptions of emotional states (direct emotional vocabulary.)

Table 42: Frequent emotional words

Emotional word	Frequency
love	37
happy	28
laugh	23
sing	22
shout	19
cry	17
angry	13
dance	8
sad	6
afraid	6
smile	5
enjoy	5

Love is the most common emotional word but the objects of affection are unexpected.

They are respectively:

- gumboot dancing
- competitions
- a woman (5)
- a doctor (woman – object of sexual fantasy)
- a cow
- music (2)
- drinking
- dressmaking
- a teacher (non-sexual)
- parties

- grandmother
- Mkhize's singing
- father
- man

The benefits of close textual analysis are apparent when the objects of love are identified. A superficial reading of the use of the term love would suggest a romantic or sexual emotion. Women are the most common objects of love (in 5 books). However, more intensive scrutiny reveals that there is a wide and obscure range of objects of affection, most of which are non-romantic/sexual. In fact 50% of the “obscure objects of desire” are not people at all but activities or, in one case, an animal (non-sexual). It appears then that the word “love” is used as a more intense version of “like”. However it is noteworthy that when love is used in relation to men and women, women are much more likely to be the objects of affection than the other way around.

The average number of emotional words per book is 8, with a range between 23 and zero in individual titles. There are noticeable differences according to publisher and genre. In view of the fact that there is a high correlation between number of emotional words and number of emotional sentences, the differences are discussed together (in the emotional sentences section below).

The number of emotional words per title shows considerable variation, ranging from no emotional words (*UMkhize of Maritzburg* and *My own business*) to *The liars* which has the highest number of emotional words. The variation between these titles is illuminating. *The liars*, as has been discussed earlier, does not exemplify a conventional or effective plot shape. Its proportion of direct speech also suggests a level of engagement which would not necessarily be evoked in the potential target readership because of the way in which the plot is constructed. A high percentage of emotional words does not therefore necessarily indicate a potentially high level of engagement.

5.4.2 Emotions - categories

Emotions in each book were categorised according to pre-set categories (see Table 43 below). The emotions depicted by emotional words, concur to a significant degree with the depiction of emotion calculated according to the pre-set categories.

Table 43: Emotional categories

Emotion	Number of titles	% of Emotions
happiness	32	22
anger	17	12
sadness	16	11
love	14	10
pride	14	10
worry	13	9
fear	10	7
amusement	4	3
embarrassment	4	3
cynicism/scepticism	3	2
remorse	3	2
jealousy/envy	3	2
relaxation	3	2
boredom	3	2
compassion	2	1
mental strain	2	1
Total	143	100

According to the above classification, the most common emotion depicted is happiness (22% of all emotions occurring in 32 out of 38 books), followed by anger, sadness, love, pride, worry and fear. These emotions account for 81% of all emotions represented. Overall, therefore, the range of emotions is limited, given the infinite possibilities of the human psyche. On the other hand, the most common emotions in the corpus are those that are arguably the most profound and seminal. The fact that negative as well as positive emotions are depicted suggests that the stories as a whole are not portraying a sanitized version of reality.

5.4.3 Emotional sentences

Emotional sentences were identified and analysed according to whether they portrayed emotions. Examples of sentences that were identified as depicting emotion are as follows³²:

Basani was so **terrified** she rushed backwards and grabbed me tightly.

(Bila 1996, p. 9)

Her father was very **angry**. “I am **glad** my dear mother is not alive to see this,” he **shouted** at her. “She would have been very **ashamed**.”

(Brain 1998, p. 8)

After I voted I **cried**. I had waited for so many years to vote. My **heart** was so **happy** I had to **cry**. People **laughed** and **cried** and **hugged** each other. It was a **wonderful** day.

(Land 1997, p. 17)

“Now leave me alone, I’m late!”

(Garisch 1996, p. 16)

The man who stole my cow was my uncle! I could not believe my ears.

(Kunene 1998, p. 14)

The last two examples above reveal that in addition to more obvious examples which contain emotional words, it is possible to have emotional sentences which do not contain individual emotional words. The more subtle effects relating to overall style and tone are difficult to capture, and reveal the limitations of attempting to analyse emotional effects through isolation of components of the whole.

³² In these examples of emotional sentences, emotional words are highlighted in order to illustrate their influence.

Nevertheless, the more obvious and overt emotional sentences were identified and quantified. Table 44 below shows the number of emotional words per title, followed by the number of emotional sentences per title. The final column reflects the percentage of emotional sentences in relation to the total number of sentences.

Table 44: Emotional words and sentences per title

Title	Emotional Words No.	Emotional Sentences No.	Emotional sentences as % of total sentences
<i>27th April 1994</i>	15	11	37
<i>A quick trick</i>	9	12	16
<i>All the way to Z</i>	16	14	18
<i>Calling the ancestors</i>	10	7	16
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	8	3	6
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	11	12	19
<i>First prize</i>	6	8	30
<i>Flags on a bridge</i>	12	19	40
<i>Forklift No: 4</i>	15	13	16
<i>Going home with chickens</i>	7	9	21
<i>I told myself I am going to learn</i>	14	17	31
<i>Joe's new job</i>	4	4	22
<i>Just a job</i>	11	11	17
<i>Magweya</i>	12	6	13
<i>Mandla and the bull</i>	10	12	26
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	11	15	17
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	14	21	31
<i>My own business</i>	1	0	0
<i>My red cow</i>	4	7	32
<i>My village</i>	3	5	12
<i>Nothembi</i>	11	9	11
<i>Paul Adams</i>	4	3	6
<i>Pension money</i>	11	13	25
<i>Sewing for a living</i>	5	5	15
<i>Sweet memories</i>	11	10	13
<i>The gift</i>	21	20	32
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	12	9	27
<i>The liars</i>	25	25	32
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	20	11	7
<i>The new baby</i>	12	15	52
<i>The Nkosi family</i>	22	23	48
<i>The right change</i>	8	8	10
<i>The spaza</i>	27	27	38
<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	2	2	3
<i>UMkhize of Maritzburg</i>	26	8	13
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	31	21	31
<i>Why dogs chase goats</i>	6	7	28
<i>Woza Friday</i>	5	5	36
Total	452	427	847
Average	12	11	22

The percentage of emotional sentences ranges from 0% (*My own business*) to 52% (*The new baby*). This needs to be seen in context. *My own business* is fictional non-fiction and it is therefore not surprising that it has no emotional sentences. The comparison between *UMkhize and the cell-phones* (3%) and *The spaza* (38%) is more instructive. *UMkhize and the cell-phones* depicts the adventures of the hero via a gently sardonic plot and a mild theme of hubris. *The spaza* depicts two stereotypical heroes with a dramatic plot and stark theme of reconciliation between estranged lovers. Generally, *UMkhize and the cell-phones* is told more successfully than *The spaza* and yet if direct depiction of emotion is taken as an objective indicator of literary value, there should be no comparison between the two. *UMkhize and the cell-phones* is arguably however much more subtle and engages the reader in a much more sophisticated fashion. As a basis for comparison, in *Owl moon*, the award-winning children's picture book, emotional sentences comprise 15% of the total number of sentences.

On the other hand, *The new baby* which has the highest percentage of emotional sentences (52%) successfully, in my view, evokes emotion in the reader. This is based on personal experience of reading this story aloud in a number of educator workshops. A fuller analysis of *The new baby* is in Section 3.1 above.

5.4.4 Emotional words related to genre

Table 45: Emotional sentences by genre

Genre	Emotional sentences Average no.	Emotional sentences as % of total sentences
Romance/love story	20	34
Family drama/realistic fiction	15	31
Fictional non-fiction	14	18
Folk tale/epic/allegory	6	17
Humour/comedy/satire/parody	8	16
Autobiography/Biography	8	15
Detective/thriller	11	7
Total	82	138
Average	12	20

In terms of genre, the detective/thriller category has the lowest percentage of emotional sentences (7%) followed by autobiographies/biographies (15%). Romance/love story and family drama have the highest percentages (34% and 31% respectively). This is as would be expected. The differences between publishers correspond to genre differences: New Readers Project and Kagiso have the highest percentage of emotional sentences (34% and 30%) and Juta and ERU the lowest (6% and 10%).

Table 46: Emotional sentences by publisher

Publisher	Emotional sentences Average no.	Emotional sentences as % of total sentences
New Readers Project	11	34
Kagiso	16	30
SACHED	10	22
Viva Books	12	18
Heinemann	15	17
Workbench	14	17
ERU	5	10
Juta	3	6
Total	86	154
Average	11	19

5.4.5 Exclamatory sentences

Barton (1996) identifies text features such as exclamation marks or large, bold print as one of the means by which emotions are portrayed in texts. Exclamatory sentences were identified and calculated as a percentage of the total number of sentences per title.

Table 47: Exclamatory sentences per title

Title	Exclamatory sentences No.	Exclamatory sentences as % of total sentences
<i>Mbusi's bad cold</i>	41	46
<i>Waiting for Lerato</i>	15	22
<i>The murder of Mrs Mohapi</i>	28	19
<i>The girl with a golden tooth</i>	6	18
<i>The gift</i>	8	13
<i>The right change</i>	9	12
<i>A quick trick</i>	8	11
<i>Pension money</i>	6	11
<i>First prize</i>	3	11
<i>Doctor Khumalo</i>	5	8
<i>Joe's new job</i>	1	6
<i>My red cow</i>	1	5
<i>All the way to Z</i>	2	3
<i>Just a job</i>	2	3
<i>The liars</i>	2	3
<i>The spaza</i>	2	3
<i>Dancing to fame</i>	1	2
<i>Paul Adams</i>	1	2
<i>My name is Selina Mabiletsa</i>	1	1
<i>UMkhize and the cell-phones</i>	1	1
Average	4	22

Note to table:

Only books which contain exclamatory sentences are included.

The use of exclamation marks appears to be an idiosyncratic authorial device. 18 books (close to 50%) do not contain exclamation marks at all, whereas almost half of all the sentences in *Mbusi's bad cold* end with exclamation marks! There appears to be some correlation with the amount of direct speech in a text. The three titles with the highest percentage of exclamatory sentences are also those with very high percentages of direct speech (66%, 100% and 73% compared with an average of 22%).

5.4.6 Concluding discussion about emotions

Taken as a whole, the English books depict a reasonable range of emotion with happiness the most dominant emotion. Given the number of happy endings in this

sample, and the apparent universal desire for happy endings, this is not surprising. Although happiness is the single most common emotion depicted, overall, negative emotional words predominate. A wider, more subtle and complex range of negative emotions are depicted than positive emotions. This relates to semantic and syntactic depictions of emotion. What this suggests is that readers are not being protected or patronised. They are regarded as being capable of responding to a relatively wide range of adult emotions ranging from murderous rage to sweet and bland emotions.

Given the relative preponderance of fictional non-fiction in the non-English texts, the implication is that the English texts disproportionately represent the widest range of emotions. This is despite the fact that English texts are hampered by the fact that they are second language texts which rely on more restricted vocabulary. Words like happy, angry, sad and worry and their grammatical variants are arguably at the heart of basic adult emotions, indeed all human emotions, despite their lack of subtlety within the potential range of English words

It could even be argued that given the combination of the constraints of English second language, limited sentence and word length, as well as the tendency in adult literacy work to want to depict optimistic and positive role models, the range of emotions depicted in the English corpus is surprisingly large. It is unlikely that this pattern would be perpetuated in the non English language books, given the relatively lower proportion of real fiction in this category. This would be the case especially if New Readers Project books were excluded.

6. Gender-specific language features

A number of features above have been analysed in relation to gender as well as other considerations. What follows below is a more detailed examination of gender-specific language in order to enhance the gender analysis of the corpus. It includes an analysis of generic nouns used to denote males and females followed by an analysis of adjectives and verbs related to these generic nouns.

6.1 Gender-specific generic nouns

Table 48 below displays a simple count of the number of occurrences of generic nouns denoting gender. Singular and plural versions are combined within each generic noun category. It is followed by Table 49 which shows the occurrences of non gender-specific nouns.

Table 48: Gender-specific generic nouns

Female nouns	No.	Male nouns	No.	Total
Woman	33	man	53	
Wife	22	husband	13	
Mother	20	father	22	
Grandmother	11	grandfather	4	
Aunt	7	uncle	8	
Girl	6	boy	11	
Daughter	9	son	8	
Granddaughter	3	grandson	0	
Total	111		119	230

Table 49: Non gender-specific generic nouns

Non gender-specific nouns	No.
parents	10
grandparents	2
grandchildren	4
children	39
people	88
Total	143

In total, there is no significant difference between the number of generic references to males and females (119 male and 111 female references). However, *man* and *boy* occur significantly more often than *woman* and *girl*, while *wife* and *grandmother* occur substantially more often than *husband* and *grandfather*. A possible explanation for this is that man and boy are terms independent of relationships, whereas wife and grandmother are relationship terms. This would support findings by Mills (1995)

relating to relationship terms and suggest a subtle gender bias in this corpus. The more frequent reference to grandmothers as opposed to grandfathers could indicate the significant role which grandmothers play in maintaining social cohesion. It could also relate to the discussion regarding the safe depiction of women as old in Section 4.3 above.

Compared with the use of girls and boys (a total of 17) the term *child/children* is much more commonly used (39 times). This seems to indicate that the sex of children is not as important as the sex of adults. When *girl* is used, it refers to sexually attractive young women or adolescents rather than to little girls and similarly when *boy* is used it refers to adolescent boys rather than to little boys. However when *boy* is used, there is not the same implication of sexual attraction as there is with the use of the term *girl*.

For example:

‘Did you see that tall new boy wearing the number 15 jersey?’ one fan asked his friend.

(Rashavha 1999, p. 7)

When they approached, they met with these boys - Nkitsikitsi and his gang.

(Bila 1996, p. 20)

On one of Magweya's hunting trips, he saw a very beautiful, short, thin girl collecting water by the river.

(Bila 1996, p. 7)

It was Sunday evening. As I was walking along the tiny path, I saw a beautiful girl coming from behind.

(Bila 1996, p. 1)

6.2 Adjectives

Adjectives associated with the gender-specific generic nouns were identified and compared.

Table 50: Adjectives directly associated with gender-specific nouns

Female nouns	Adjectives	Male nouns	Adjectives
woman	old (8), young (2), pregnant, proud, other, successful, intelligent, my, another, other	man	drunk, happy, ambulance, cruel, ill-mannered, first, my, her, all, another, both
wife	dear,	husband	
mother	dear late	father	famous, proud,
grandmother		grandfather	
girl	beautiful, short, thin	boy	big, young, new, many, pretty, little,

Adjectives applied to males and females hold few surprises. It is significant that the most common adjectives applied to women refer to age. This is confirmed by research in relation to mass media publications (see Mills 1995). There are no negative adjectives applied to women whereas men are drunk, cruel and ill mannered. They are also happy. Girls are beautiful, short and thin whereas boys are big, young, pretty and little. The use of “pretty” in relation to boys needs some explanation. It refers to a negative perception of Doctor Khumalo which is corrected by a juxtaposition with becoming a successful soccer player: “Some people think he is just a pretty boy.....And some people say he is lazy. But Doctor has worked hard to become a successful soccer player” (Rashavha 1999, p. 18).

Aside from being applied to girls, beautiful mainly applies to objects:

- house (2)
- car
- new clothes
- cow
- dress
- singing

6.3 Verbs

Verbs associated with the above gender-specific generic nouns were identified and compared. The analysis of verbs associated with males and females are most instructive in relation to the construction and depiction of gender. Many of the verbs associated with males and females are so stereotypical and clichéd as to be laughable. The only verb constructions which challenge stereotypes are: the women who chase Mkhize the cell-phone salesman away in *UMkhize and the cell-phones* and the son who helps his mother in *The spaza*. Aside from these, the verb constructions associated with gender-specific nouns are “textbook” cases: women sob, bear children, get hit, come in with tea and collect water. Men look cross, go and hunt and fix cars. Men also simply do more things than women.

A more detailed analysis relating to transitivity in verbs and which must be understood at the outset as a lay person’s attempt at close linguistic analysis reveals the following in relation to the positioning of the words wife and husband in sentences. Wife occurs in 12 sentences and husband in 10. Closer analysis shows that wife is the object of sentences in 75% of the cases whereas husband is the object in 50% of the cases.

Table 51: Verbs

Female	Verbs	Male	Verbs
woman	hold the reins live arrived wrapped herself came closer ululated making salads and pap sobbing her heart out opened chased him away gets hurt	man	jumped, looked cross, was angry, stopped, came out, was not happy, got very drunk, got so drunk sitting, enjoying stopped working are too fast get off the bus (2) sing and clap play cards standing stole go and hunt scattered searched arrived grew up could pay lobola arrived were making a fire might forcefully remove riding a horse starting to phone gave him a horse appeared proposed love gets hurt
wife	came in with some tea bear children was killed sighed	husband	fix (car) brings (money) started complaining left (her)
mother	raised these chickens hold the reins of the family is not alive sells food lend money	father	made a home sitting down, taking the bible was very angry was still angry works as a packer always cross dancing with his mother could be happy
grandmother		grandfather	
girl	collecting water with a golden tooth coming	boy	wearing the no. 15 jersey became Chief's supporters cracked whistles helps his mother

6.4 Gender stereotypes

In terms of gender stereotypes there are few surprises. Characters were simply classified according to whether they were typical or atypical in terms of gender stereotyping. Women in the corpus are generally good, work hard, struggle to make a life for themselves and where there are relationship problems are the ones who have to deal with typical bad behaviour from men (see *Waiting for Lerato*). There are only a few manifestly bad women in the entire corpus – the murderer in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi* and the interfering aunts in *The liars*. In terms of reversals of stereotypes, it is only the murderer that does this. Interfering aunts can be seen as clichés of stereotypes! The only other female character that can be seen partially to reverse stereotypes is Nothembi in *Nothembi* who becomes a professional musician – albeit singing traditional music.

Although there are few bad characters overall, they are, except for the notable anomaly of the female character in *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*, all men: Magweya the evil giant; the rapist and thief in *Pension money*; the confidence trickster in *The gift*; the goat in *Why dogs chase goats* and the bull in *Mandla and the bull*. In terms of lesser evils like drinking and smoking, men are also the villains while women toil in jobs which are not easily identified. (This is dealt with in Section 4.6 above.) Men have more fun than women. In the entire corpus of stories, the only humorous story that has a woman as the main character is *First prize*. Otherwise all the humorous stories have men as the main protagonist.

7. Imagery

The use of imagery (figurative language in the form of, for example, similes and metaphors), arguably lies at the heart of literary endeavour. One of the fundamental features of traditional literary criticism is an examination of the nature and uses of imagery to achieve literary effects. This is also a key feature of Narratology in the notion of language “made strange” in order to engage the imaginations and emotions of readers (see Chapter 2).

It is in the realm of the use of imagery that the corpus under examination displays its true colours and reveals its major difference with “real literature”. The entire English

corpus contains only 11 figurative images and these occur in only 6 books (16% of the total number of books). The paucity of imagery is best demonstrated by a comparison with *Owl moon*. This book, a prize-winning children's book contains at least 15 image-bearing sentences (22% of the total number of sentences) which contain at least one conventional literary image such as, "The trees stood still as giant statues" (Yolen 1987, p. 1). Put differently – one prize-winning children's book contains more images than the entire corpus of English level 1 ABET books under consideration.

A list of the figurative images in *Owl moon* and the English corpus follows.

Owl moon

- The trees stood still as giant statues.
- And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine.
- Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.
- And when their voices faded away it was as quiet as a dream.
- Our feet crunched over the crisp snow and little grey footprints followed us.
- He looked up, as if searching the stars, as if reading a map up there.
- The moon made his face into a silver mask.
- We walked on. I could feel the cold, as if someone's icy hand was palm-down on my back.
- It seemed to fit exactly over the centre of the clearing and the snow below it was whiter than the milk in a cereal bowl.
- All of a sudden an owl shadow, part of the big tree shadow, lifted off and flew right over us.
- We watched silently with heat in our mouths, the heat of all those words we had not spoken.
- The shadow hooted again.
- Then the owl pumped its great wings and lifted off the branch like a shadow without sound.
- The kind of hope that flies on silent wings under a shining Owl Moon.

By contrast the ABET Level 1 corpus contains the following 11 images in total:

1. His chest burned with each breath, and his body was sore. (*Mbusi's bad cold*)
2. Men go and hunt these jackals. (*Pension money*)
3. Because she had developed breasts, she became the animals' prey. (*Pension money*)
4. To the residents of Xihimu: what do we do with these animals? (*Pension money*)
5. She must have been a dead ghost. (*The girl with a golden tooth*)
6. These things make us women strong – like a rock. (*Waiting for Lerato*)
7. I'd stomped his fire to ashes. (*Waiting for Lerato*)
8. The iJuba makes his legs heavy. (*Mandla and the bull*)
9. He falls like a baby on the other side. (*Mandla and the bull*)
10. The bull snorts fire. (*Mandla and the bull*)

A comparison between the images in *Owl Moon* and the ABET Level 1 English corpus is sobering from the point of view of literariness. As can be seen, not all of the images identified in this study would meet strict criteria for literary images. Some of them use common metaphors, for example to refer to criminals as animals (1 – 3). Of the 10 sentences above, only numbers 5, 7, 9 and 10 can be regarded as original in the sense of making language “strange”. The absence of figurative images in these stories is indicative of a more pedestrian and utilitarian view of beginner literature than is present in many examples of children's literature.

8. Readability

Readability is measured in terms of decodability and predictability. Predictability is measured by the number of repeated words and phrases. Decodability is measured by word and sentence length and readability formulae which utilise word and sentence length as well as number of polysyllabic words (see Appendix 7 for details of each title) Chapter 4 referred to criticisms and constraints regarding quantitative measures of readability. Nevertheless readability statistics do provide some indication of the level of difficulty of texts.

Generally the readability statistics reveal a number of interesting points. What is classified as ABET Level 1 in South Africa encompasses a surprisingly wide range both in regard to semantic and syntactic measures of difficulty.

8.1 Overall length

The longest book in the corpus, *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*, consists of 968 words and 148 sentences, while the shortest, *Woza Friday*, consists of 59 words and 14 “sentences”³³. The average length overall is 445 words and 55 sentences.

8.2 Sentence length

According to statistical readability analyses, sentence length relates to syntactic difficulty. With regard to the number of words per sentence, *Paul Adams* has the longest sentences (12.7 words per sentence), and *Mandla and the bull* has the shortest (4.7 words per sentence), with the average being 8 words per sentence. There is therefore considerable range within this measure.

8.3 Word length

Word length is regarded as a measure of semantic difficulty. The book with the shortest words is *My red cow* (3.3 characters per word) and the two books with the longest words are *Pension money* and *UMkhize of Maritzburg* (4.5 characters per word). Word length is the one measure where there is not a great deal of variance between the titles. It appears that there is tacit agreement amongst writers and publishers that ABET Level 1 books need to consist of very short words. This measure however needs to be seen in relation to the fact that many commonly used words (e.g. Oh, I, and am), consist of only one or two characters, will artificially reduce the average length of words. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that the same measure was applied to all the books, comparisons are still possible and valid. Short

³³ In strictly grammatical terms, the entire book consists of only two sentences, but each clause appears on a separate page and is arguably “read” as a complete sentence. In other words, the only people who would perceive the book as consisting of two sentences are the writer and me.

words per se do not mean that a text is easy. Long words like grandmother may be well known because of their frequent use and familiarity.

8.4 Sentences per page

This is not a measure used in readability formulae and yet is one of the most immediate indicators of difficulty level. Books with a few sentences on a page are generally regarded as being easier than books with continuous text filling a page. This applies to children's beginner reading books as well as books for adult beginner readers.

In terms of the number of sentences per page, the average is 3.2 but the range is considerable. *The spaza* has an average of 8 sentences per page. *Woza* formally has 0.2 sentences per page but is a complex example, as is *UMkhize of Maritzburg* which has 1 sentence per page. (For the purposes of this analysis, each frame in *UMkhize of Maritzburg* was counted as a small "page within a page" (see Appendix 15 for example).) Aside from these slightly more complex examples, *The Nkosi family* has the shortest number of sentences per page (1.3).

8.5 Flesch reading ease score and Flesch-Kincaid grade level score

These measures were used and recorded simply because they are readily available as part of Microsoft Word, not because of an assessment of their relative merit. Both are based on calculations involving word length, sentence length and number of polysyllabic words. According to the formula, the higher the Flesch reading ease score (0 – 100), the easier a text is to read. The Flesch-Kincaid grade level score rates texts according to USA grade school levels. A score of 6 means that it is at the level of difficulty of a USA grade 6 text. Without going into the limitations of readability measures in general and these measures in particular, it is important to note that the following comparisons need to be viewed with caution. For example, *First prize* and *Nothembi* have the same Flesch scores but *First prize* is the easier text in terms of overall length and number of sentences per page.

As with other readability measures, there is wide variation between books. *Paul Adams* has the highest grade level (5.9) and *A quick trick* the lowest (0.7). *Sweet memories* is the most difficult (72) according to the Flesch reading ease score, and *A quick trick* is the easiest (100). Excluding books like *A quick trick* which have more complex formats, the easiest are *Mandla and the bull* (1.0) and *Joe's new job* (98).

8.6 Comparisons according to publisher

Table 52: Average readability statistics by publisher

Publisher	Words	Characters	Pages	Sentences	Sent. per para.	Words per sent.	Charac. per /word	Sent. per /page	Passive sent.	Flesch ease	Flesch grade
New Readers	205	862	18	32	2.0	6.6	3.9	2.0	0	90	2.3
Workbench	632	2630	40	82	2.0	7.6	3.9	4.4	1	91	2.4
SACHED	371	1577	25	46	3.1	8.0	4.0	3.2	2	91	2.5
Heinemann	635	2767	56	89	1.6	7.3	4.1	3.2	1	89	2.6
Kagiso	458	1930	22	54	2.6	8.5	4.0	4.4	1	87	3.1
Juta	436	1830	14	47	3.3	9.2	4.0	3.3	8	86	3.5
ERU	437	1818	41	49	1.4	8.8	4.0	2.9	2	82	4.0
Viva Books	601	2602	24	66	2.9	9.2	4.1	3.7	4	82	4.1
Total average	445	1896	29	55	2.4	8.0	4.0	3.2	2	87	3.0

Table 52 reveals a number of trends regarding average readability measures per publisher. The New Readers Project has the easiest books in the corpus in terms of text length (number of words and sentences per book) and level of difficulty (it has the shortest sentences and words and has the easiest books according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability measures (2.3). The only measure where the New Readers Project is not rated easiest is according to Flesch reading ease where SACHED Books and Workbench score 91 (the New Readers Project scores 90). This overall finding is confirmed by the fact that it has the lowest number of sentences per page (2 per page).

These findings are not surprising given the specific focus of the New Readers Project which is to produce books at the beginner end of ABET Level 1.

Heinemann has the longest books in terms of words and sentences and also has the longest words. Viva Books has the longest sentences and words (a tie with Heinemann) as well as the highest average grade level (Flesch-Kincaid 4.1). Juta also has the longest sentences.

In terms of difficulty measures, Viva Books has the most difficult books in the corpus although Heinemann has the longest. Viva Books scores highest on the following measures: word length, sentence length (9.2 words per sentence) and both Flesch readability measures (Flesch-Kincaid 4.1 and Flesch 82). The reason why Viva Books has the most difficult books on average is due to the publication of 3 auto/biographies: *Nothembi*, *Doctor Khumalo* and *Paul Adams* which have the highest Flesch-Kincaid scores (5.2, 5.3 and 5.9 respectively).

When publishers are roughly ranked according to all the significant decodability measures³⁴, they rate as follows from easiest to most difficult:

New Readers Project

SACHED Books

Workbench

ERU

Juta

Kagiso

Heinemann

Viva Books

³⁴ The decodability measures selected are:

- number of words
- number of sentences
- word length
- sentence length
- sentences per page
- Flesch
- Flesch-Kincaid

Viva Books emerges as having the most difficult ABET Level 1 books but this needs to be viewed with caution. Heinemann books are more complex than is suggested by these readability measures because of the use of a comic book format. Arguably the most difficult book overall is *Waiting for Lerato* (Kagiso Publishers) due to its visual format and the fact that the story operates on two entirely different levels (see Appendix 16 for example):

- two women looking onto a street below discuss love and relationships as well as recounting specific narrative episodes from the past
- an unfolding story of a young woman waiting for her lover Lerato.

These cautions regarding judgements about difficulty level do not begin to take into account factors relating to narrative force and interest or the many other measures which interact and contribute to engagement with text and difficulty level.

The most common assumption amongst publishers appears to be that words should be short. There is very little variation between publishers in this regard. There is also considerable agreement regarding the number of sentences on a page (between 2 and 4 sentences per page). Aside from these two measures there is considerable variation between publishers.

8.7 Predictability

Predictability can be measured by a number of complex factors such as repeated language patterns, the use of familiar concepts, the use of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration, the use of cumulative patterns, the use of familiar songs or stories and the use of familiar sequences (Hoffman et al 1994). The only measure which was used here was to count the number of repeated words and sentences and note the nature of the repeated words.

Very few books appeared to consciously utilise repeated words and sentences as in the children's book examples, *Burglar Bill* and *The cold day*. The book with the most repeated words is *The Nkosi family* (8). This was done consciously at the time of writing the book which works on a cyclical pattern of the responses of each member

of the family. An analysis of repeated words in the corpus suggests that the repetition of words is largely accidental and intuitive and not a conscious pedagogic device. Similarly, very few books contained many repeated phrases. These were *The spaza* (5), *First prize* (4) and *The right change* (4).

Generally, if Hoffman et al's (1994) distinction between decodability and predictability is maintained, this corpus is more typical of predictable books except in relation to the use of repeated language patterns. Books in the corpus are not like basal readers except in relation to the use of short words and sentences.

9. Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the English books proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. It illustrated the limitations and complexities of close textual analysis as well as the elusive nature of what determines the overall quality and psychological effects of texts. The final chapter attempts to draw together themes and issues from the general descriptive analysis of books in all languages as well as from the detailed analysis of English books.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

1. Introduction

I have experienced a constant tension between the cautious, contemplative and deferential approach required by the academy and a strong, partly intuitive, sense of what “works” gained through years of practical experience as a publisher of texts for adult beginner readers through the New Readers Project. My ongoing practical involvement in this field means that conclusions and judgments will tend to be more subjective than those of a more dispassionate judge.

The corpus of books under scrutiny reveals certain commonalities and also major differences. All of the books attempt to look easy and inviting by using short words and sentences well-supported by illustrations with larger than normal print. Most have full-colour covers and are shaped like books for fluent adult readers. Nevertheless, in spite of these common surface design features, they cover a wide range in terms of level of difficulty, the amount of text on a page, the relationship between text and illustrations and the aesthetic quality of their illustrations.

The English books are written in simple, natural, colloquial language which is simply written. In terms of their language, they do not resemble basal readers or primers. They cover a limited range of genres concentrating on family dramas, love stories, biographies and fictionalised non-fiction. A number of them depict a wide range of emotion and are written according to what is considered to be an effective plot structure. In terms of aesthetic considerations they are notable for their lack of figurative language. In terms of ideological considerations relating to gender, class and race, the status quo remains largely unchallenged. They remain safely situated within homogeneous, largely monocultural settings.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the original research questions and the extent to which they have been or can be answered, as well as on the usefulness of the method of analysis. The general descriptive overview of books in all languages will

be dealt with first followed by issues raised by the detailed analysis of the English books.

A word of caution is necessary at the outset. In the general descriptive overview, the English books are analysed in the same way as the other languages, despite the fact that they will be read as English second language texts. Although attempts have been made to comment on these differences, this does not deal sufficiently with obvious differences in terms of readability created by the more limited vocabulary and syntax of second language texts. English second language texts need, by definition therefore, to be easier and simpler than first language texts. Treating first and second languages as though they are the same is, however, consistent with the manner in which first and second language learning outcomes are conflated in the NQF.

2. General findings relating to all books

The most obvious general finding is that there are very few books for adult beginner readers in South Africa especially in languages other than English, and particularly original books written in African languages. The reasons for this are largely to do with market forces and to the prominence of English as the de facto official language of the country.

In terms of surface features such as number of pages and amount of text on a page, there is a very broad conception of what constitutes an ABET Level 1 book, ranging from less than one sentence per page to relatively dense text in only slightly larger than normal print. The most obvious explanation for this variation, aside from the fact that ABET Level 1 encompasses Grade 1 to Grade 3 (and therefore covers a wide range in terms of literacy demands), is a commercial one. For example, certain externally funded government campaigns such as the Ithuteng campaign to train government ABET teachers focused on ABET Level 1 only, leading a number of publishers to artificially expand their conception of ABET Level 1 in order to benefit from the potential book sales which the campaign generated. Another explanation is that there is no “scientific” benchmark or agreed upon method for establishing what constitutes an ABET Level 1 book. It appears that publishers are allocating books to

particular levels on the basis of broad consensus and intuition rather than the application of any clear or absolute standards.

Aside from considerable differences, there are also many similarities. Most books are portrait-shaped A5 size with a larger than average point size. Text is usually organised to wrap around in natural paragraphs without the use of devices such as starting a new sentence on a new line which is often used in children's books. There are usually two or three sentences per page. Books invariably have full colour covers with plentiful black and white illustrations which are most commonly complex line drawings.

In terms of content, the most notable finding is that a considerable amount (30%) of what passes for fiction is not fiction at all. It is either thinly disguised didactic material (fictionalised non-fiction) or biographical. In terms of genre there is a limited range, with the majority of books being family dramas, humorous books, autobiographies or fictional non-fiction. In terms of what would be expected regarding pedagogy and purpose, the books as a whole are predictable in many ways but unpredictable in others. The emphasis on autobiography and fictional non-fiction, with noble themes like the importance of literacy, the importance of work and the importance of perseverance in overcoming obstacles, is predictable and commensurate with the typical development/functional perspectives in adult literacy articulated in Chapter 2. In terms of themes, one of the most striking features is the frequency of the theme of literacy itself. As discussed in Chapter 5, it is debatable whether this would be perceived as affirming or tedious. Certainly this theme, and many others, does not allow the imagination to soar or open up worlds of possibility.

A number of features of the corpus were unexpected for adult literacy texts, particularly the amount of humour, love and interpersonal drama. Humour especially, substantially alters the profile and overall message which these texts convey. Humorous books, by definition exude a playful approach to reading and to literacy more generally. The amount of humour is instructive with regard to how readers are constructed, as well as with regard to the role and purpose of beginning reading books and reading itself. Readers are not just serious, dutiful and plodding citizens if they can be playful and imaginative. In the same way, reading itself is not just instrumental but can be pleasurable in and for its own sake.

In terms of typical profiles of books for adult beginner readers, this corpus does not faithfully represent a typical developing country profile, where fiction would be rare and limited to folk tales or fictional non-fiction. The profile reveals multiple influences both from the developing and rich worlds. It has certainly improved considerably since the 1980s when books for adult beginner readers suffered from an over-emphasis on relevance (however that was construed) and were generally moribund and lacking in creativity regardless of ideological perspective.

3. The construction of the readership

The social world of potential readers is depicted and reflected via theme, genre, setting, character, direct speech and specific language features such as types of verbs associated with gender-specific generic nouns. As a mirror these features reflect dominant conceptions of the readership in relation to race, class and gender as well as indicating the desirable boundaries of their worlds. In this sense the readership is generally portrayed as docile, predictable, hard-working, decent, stoical, stereotypical and ultimately triumphing over adversity. There are few real villains.

In the corpus, men are generally more varied and interesting, talk more and have more fun than women although most men are decent and well-behaved. Women generally epitomise struggle and decency. Children seldom feature and when they do are largely well-behaved and moderate in their demands and expectations. Stories are mostly set in domestic, racially homogeneous domains populated by poor African people. Although there are notable exceptions to the above trends, the stories generally depict an uncontested domestic world enlivened by dramas, foibles and humorous events. The stark diversity of post-apartheid South Africa seldom forms the backdrop of stories. The reasons for this are again speculative. Many of these books were written in the anticipation of or first flush of political transformation. So-called “struggle literature,” including a number of books for adult beginner readers, had been criticised for focusing exclusively on the harsh realities and polarisation of apartheid South Africa. A move to gentler, more homogeneous settings and depictions of a range of incidents and emotions can be seen as an optimistic foil to the previous focus as well as a welcome normalisation of life.

Given South Africa's history in terms of publication of books for adult beginner readers where books were overtly oriented towards development or empowerment and in either case left little to the interpretative or imaginative capacities of readers, the overall profile is greatly improved and normalised, if rather stereotypical and cautious.

Many of the books are nevertheless still characterised by overtly moralising and didactic themes. There appears to be a lack of belief that stories can carry complex, interesting and relevant themes without forcing and controlling readers' responses through an over-determination of the content. Publishers and writers still appear reluctant to allow space for differing perceptions and opinions, possibly ones that are contrary to the intentions of the author or to the dominant aims of adult literacy work.

Books of this nature tread a fine line between harnessing the identification of readers through close approximation of their lives and circumstances, and enhancing imagination and enjoyment through the expansion of possible worlds and stories. It is questionable whether characters, plots, genres, themes and settings have to so faithfully replicate the lives of typical imagined readers.

If the job of literature is to "educate the emotions" and extend and expand the minds of readers then this corpus falls far short of what is possible.

4. The degree to which the books are real literature

Taken as a whole these books do not meet the criteria for real literature as articulated in Children's literacy studies although there are a number which do. It is also important to remember at the outset that not all children's books meet these criteria either. This discussion must not therefore be seen as a juxtaposition of "bad" books for adult beginner readers versus "good" books for children beginner readers.

Setting aside the fact that a considerable part of what superficially appears to be fiction is in fact non-fiction, even the fiction within this corpus does not meet the overall criteria for real literature especially in relation to "literariness". Re-examining

the content criteria for real literature developed by Hoffman et al (1994), the standards for a level 5 book (the highest rating) appear dauntingly high especially considering that they refer to Grade 1 texts:

- expression of significant and worthwhile ideas
- multiple, complex, socially relevant themes
- not didactic or trite
- high personal or social relevance
- create situations that are socially complex
- high degree of development of characters, ideas or themes
- complex characters who may change and may have heightened awareness of themselves or their environment
- multiple problems may present themselves in the plot
- unexpected twists of story line may occur
- tension created by suspense within the plot or complex text structure
- stimulate reader to think about issues and/or evoke strong emotions
- require interpretation by reader and lend themselves to more than one interpretation

Hoffman et al 1994, pp. 69-70

In terms of these criteria, one is forced to conclude that very few books in this corpus would make the level 5 rating scale grade. For example, many characters are relatively flat and stereotypical, and many plots are not constructed on the basis of a build-up of suspense or unexpected twists in the story line. If one of the primary purposes of literature is to enable the reader to vicariously experience emotions, then the limited range of expressed emotions is also a serious constraint.

If the language criteria used by Hoffman (*ibid*) were applied, the rating of the corpus as a whole would fare even worse, particularly in relation to language that is “rich in literary quality” especially regarding the use of imagery such as metaphors. These are quite simply not literary texts in terms of the use of “language made strange” (Bruner 1986) or vivid language (Benedict 1992). They are however significantly better than many bad beginner-level texts which are characterised by stilted and over-redundant language (primerese). The language is at least colloquial, idiomatic and natural.

According to my judgement and understanding of engagement criteria for real literature there are a number of English books in this corpus which are at least satisfactory. They are:

The trick

Mbusi's bad cold

The murder of Mrs Mohapi

Magweya

The spaza

First prize

Going home with chickens

Mandla and the bull

The new baby

Why dogs chase goats

Flags on a bridge

UMkhize and the cell-phones

UMkhize of Maritzburg

Joe's new job

My name is Selina Mabiletsa

The gift

The above stories fulfil a number of requirements for what makes a good story at this level, particularly in relation to story shape and the build up of tension.

It is my view, after intensive scrutiny of the English books, that *The new baby* (see Appendix 17 for text, example and book review) is the best story in the corpus. It has a complex, socially relevant theme regarding the nature of forgiveness without being moralising, didactic or trite. It has a complex style of narration, round characters with high levels of emotion, a high proportion of direct speech, a well-constructed plot with a dramatic build up of tension and a moving and satisfying surprise ending where the priest forgives his teenage daughter and accepts the new baby into the family. This view is supported by a glowing book review from a Canadian adult literacy journal (see Appendix 17). Undoubtedly judgements about quality and relative quality are at least to some extent subjective. However I believe that there would be a relatively

high degree of consensus when applying real literature criteria such as those developed by Hoffman et al (1994) to the books in this research.

5. The usefulness of studies in Children's literature and literacy

One of the key research questions was to examine and reflect on the extent to which studies in Children's literature and literacy provide useful models for work in Adult literacy. Children's literature studies and "real literature" proponents resolutely locate themselves as part of mainstream literature, using the same standards and modes of analysis derived from the same sources, namely, Narratology, Media studies and literary theory generally. This research utilised close textual analysis largely based on research and best practice in the field of children's reading. This relates not only to aesthetic (literary) considerations but to educational and ideological ones. Drawing on the large intellectual and material resources devoted to making children literate it appears upon conclusion of this research, legitimate and logical to utilise this in the service of the promotion of adult literacy.

A striking feature of research and development in the field of children's literacy particularly in relation to books for children is the extent to which children are not regarded as limited by their age or reading ability. A dominant theme is that books should not be patronising, didactic, predictable or portray a limited range of situations or emotions. The sheer number of books for children beginner readers and the collective amount of ingenuity and creativity that has gone into their production, provides rich sources of models particularly in terms of plot structure and engagement of readers. This is not to suggest that books for adult beginner readers should be childish or child-like. The three children's books selected as illustrative examples, reveal that humour, beauty, intense emotion and a well-crafted story can be achieved with minimal text and illustrations.

Much of the work in Children's literature and literacy is inspirational. Many authors convey their belief in the passion and enchantment of reading stories even in academic texts. Egawa, for example, analysing the response of first graders to *Owl moon* says, "What leads students back again and again to these books? It is the language, the sound and power of it as it is repeated time after time; it is the substance

of the books, the stories that speak of real life encounters and experiences, of the richness of life here on earth. It is the creation of worlds that become their own.” (Egawa 1990, p. 587). It would be beneficial to the field of adult literacy to absorb some of this passion for reading and the power of stories.

6. Pedagogy and purpose

A key question of this research was how the texts reflected the educational theories which underpin them. Were these texts developed with conscious attempts to make them easier to read in terms of predictability or decodability³⁵ (beginner-oriented texts) or were they real literature with no particular focus on reading instruction (aesthetically-constructed texts)? This research has revealed that the books in the corpus are relatively high on some obvious measures of decodability, namely in terms of the use of short words and sentences. They meet some criteria for predictability, notably the use of colloquial and naturally occurring language, but do not utilise the use of repeated words or phrases to actively facilitate learning to read such as are found in children’s beginner books like *Burglar Bill* and *The cold day*. This suggests that the books are not being written with instructional purposes clearly in mind. They are therefore potentially forfeiting the benefits of both beginner-oriented texts and aesthetically constructed (literary) texts by not maximising the potential of either.

Detailed analysis of the English books in the study has revealed that many of the books do not conform to notions of compelling plots or language which draws attention to itself through being unusual or “strange” (see Chapter 2). Close textual analysis such as was used in this study, raises awareness of a range of features relating to story shape (plot structure), the use of figurative language, the depiction of emotion and linguistic features such as the use of direct speech. On the other hand, analysis of a number of the English books show that is possible to write engaging and absorbing easy books – “real literature”.

³⁵Hoffman et al (1994) create a useful distinction between predictability and decodability, predictability relating to repeated words, sentences and language patterns and decodability relating to word and sentence length.

The high percentage of non-fiction (30%) in the corpus is a clear indication that the purpose of adult literacy work in South Africa is, as elsewhere in the developing world, still heavily influenced and enmeshed with functional and development demands. On the other hand, a surprising number of books are simply absorbing stories without overt didactic themes. These display influences from Children's literature and literacy as well as changing and challenging conceptions of the meaning and purpose of adult literacy work.

7. The effectiveness of close textual analysis

The use of close textual analysis without reference to subjective judgements of readers demonstrates a belief that texts in themselves have stable enough meanings to make aesthetic, ideological and educational judgements possible. The application of the analytical tools used has demonstrated that consistency and conciseness is difficult and that some types of analysis work better than others in research of this nature.

The application of empirical methods such as counting the number of emotional words and calculating the amount of direct speech is useful, simply from the point of view of heightening awareness of their existence and effects or lack thereof. Certain measures proved to be more useful than others, with considerable variation in terms of ease of application as well as the amount of interpretation required. The measures can be grouped broadly under plot, narrative features, character, direct speech, emotions, imagery and readability.

Defining each plot in terms of its high point of disequilibrium/tension and twist in the tale was a useful exercise which clearly separated real fiction from pseudo fiction (autobiographies/biographies and fictional non-fiction). Identifying this high point was most effective for determining the nature of the story shape (whether flat or stepped). Analysing narrative time in terms of duration and number of episodes was also a useful exercise in terms of heightening awareness and illustrating differences between different genre types, particularly non-fiction. Autobiographies/biographies and fictional non-fiction generally extended over longer periods of time with more

episodes per story both of which detract from engagement with stories of this length. Although the methods used to analyse plot are relatively crude measures which do not discern relative quality, they are useful as starting points which force the question of what the readers do not yet know and what they are likely to care about.

Focusing on tense and narrative order is useful in determining where stories become unnecessarily complex or are essential devices for the telling of the tale. Regardless of standards for real literature, these remain texts for beginner readers, and certain narrative features such as clear chronology can facilitate the process of engagement and understanding.

The process of character analysis was beneficial for a number of reasons. Simply identifying the main characters proved instructive: the more easily they presented themselves, the more likely they were to be well-rounded and at the heart of the tale. Flat characters who were simply vehicles for a didactic message did not easily emerge from amongst the cast of characters. Analysing characters in terms of gender, age, class, race, occupation and name provided a quick and relatively straightforward means of ascertaining the boundaries within which the readership was constructed. Counting the “other” characters in each story was not particularly easy or instructive given the fact that some characters were only depicted in the illustrations. This measure has potential only in terms of illuminating issues such as gender relations.

Analysis of specific language features such as direct speech and the use of questions was helpful both in terms of illustrating its benefits and limitations as a mechanism for character development and enlivening the plot. The content of what is spoken is far more important than the mere fact of being spoken. Many poor quality children’s primers attest to this. In-depth analysis of selected conversations provided insight into gender relations and confirmed that simplistic assumptions about the relationship between language and gender need to be viewed with caution. The detailed language analysis of gender-specific generic nouns and related adjectives and verbs proved most illuminating in terms of the ways in which stereotypes lurk.

Identifying and analysing emotions was complex and ultimately not particularly effective. Aside from demonstrating the stark contrast between depiction and

evocation of emotion, the limited range of expressed emotions, and the fact that not all emotional sentences contain emotional words, these measures proved to have limited use. Choosing from a limited range of pre-set emotions was probably the least useful of all, especially given the subtlety and complexity of emotions. Compared with Solomon's (1986) analysis of the subtle range of emotions which can be conveyed by language, the pre-selected list of emotions was crude and provided only a rough indication of the range of emotions, and the over-use of words such as angry, sad and happy.

Counting the number and nature of images was also instructive, particularly in terms of suggesting improvements in the development of writing and editing at this level. The focus on imagery showed the paucity of imagery in this corpus as well as the relative poverty of the quality of such images as did exist.

Measures of readability are useful largely for descriptive and analytical purposes. They allow for comparison for example between genres and publishers and allow for heightened awareness of quantifiable features which affect readability such as repeated language patterns and short words. However their use cannot be regarded as prescriptive, evidenced by their lack of subtlety in distinguishing between very different and complex formats.

Ultimately the attention to and level of detail required by analyses of this nature mean that they will only be conducted rigorously by a limited number of dedicated or foolhardy researchers. However there are a number of uses for selected empirical methods by writers, editors, selectors and ultimately and ideally readers themselves.

The paradox of textual analysis is that while no text can be understood without a reader, texts stand as mute testimony to the intentions of their authors. The spare, pared-down nature of books for adult beginner readers provides a stark view of the features in question.

8. The influence of the New Readers Project

It became clear during the course of the research that the New Readers Project has, because of the volume of books which it has published at this level, exerted a considerable influence on the profile of the corpus of ABET Level 1 books in South Africa. Its core philosophy regarding the importance of good fiction for adult beginner readers (see Chapter 1) has therefore influenced the overall nature and quality of the books analysed. Without the contribution of the New Readers Project, the profile of books and conclusions would have been very different and more aligned with a functional and development-oriented approach to adult literacy, particularly with regard to the African language books.

Although this research did not consist of an evaluation of the New Readers Project it is gratifying from a personal point of view to note that many of its books withstand scrutiny according to real literature and real books criteria. It is also instructive with regard to future publications.

9. Conclusion

This research began as a quest to understand what makes a good story for adult beginner readers. The route taken was to identify features of good stories according to the discipline of Children's literature which draws on Narratology, media studies and literary theory generally. Good stories are understood to be those which have the power to engage readers and evoke emotional responses whether these are happiness, humour, nostalgia or simply mild feelings of satisfaction.

Ultimately the evocation of emotion depends on a range of factors, identification with the characters and engagement and absorption in the plot possibly being the most central. Identification does not however mean that there has to be a close fit in terms of replicating the lives of potential readers. Identification and engagement can also be effected through the use of imagery and the development of round and imperfect characters which challenge stereotypes.

The analysis of these books has led to a deepened understanding that one episode well-told has the power to engage readers more than large social themes depicted via too many flat characters in too many flat episodes. It has demonstrated that it is possible to produce well-written and engaging fiction within the tight parameters of the peculiar medium under discussion. The quest for the constituent parts is elusive but can assist in the process of developing awareness amongst writers, editors and selectors of texts. There is a clear need to question whether a fictional format is the most effective medium for conveying informational or didactic content. Particularly at ABET Level 1 there appears to be an assumption that a fictional format will make “dry” content more palatable and digestible. Well-written, overt non-fiction may in fact be the best and most straightforward means to achieve didactic ends. This way, beginner readers will not be confused and misled into believing that a story is merely a thinly disguised message for how to use a condom or dig a pit latrine.

Ultimately the books which have been analysed can be seen as the primary means by which adult beginner readers are inducted into the wider world of literacy. Aside from these books, literacy is only functional and bureaucratic, signified through signs, forms, notes, school reports, personal letters and letters of demand. For most adult beginner readers in South Africa all texts are unconventional. They have not had the luxury of having stories read to them at their benign, middle class parents’ knees. They have not formed and tested hypotheses regarding how texts work and how stories are written down. Many have never read a book, did not and do not have books in their homes, and have school-going children who attend schools without libraries and who themselves think that books are grubby recycled texts for rote learning, rather than the gateway to imagined worlds.

The books to which adult beginner readers are exposed affect their conceptions of literacy and the ultimate purposes of reading. A detailed examination of these books contributes to our understanding of how beginner readers are introduced to the culture of literacy. In the grand scheme of things, the nature and content of these books are insignificant in comparison with the demands of adulthood, the spectres of unemployment and AIDS, shrinking budgets for ABET and the precipitous demise of the ABET publishing sector.

On the other hand, regardless of whether what adult beginner readers read is an end point or a portal into a lifetime of literacy and reading, the few books to which they are exposed at the beginner level should be as good as they can possibly be. Books for adult beginner readers do not only have to exist as a means to prevent a relapse into “illiteracy”, as a mechanism for conveying useful and relevant information. They can also be models of good fiction which expand and challenge horizons and provide readers with a means of “transport out of the present time” or the means to be “on holiday from myself.” (Mace 1998, p. 11 and 19). While the notion of reading for pleasure may seem incongruous given the primary motivations and circumstances of most adult beginner readers, they should not be denied the opportunity to experience the richness and variety that fiction offers because of the compelling and competing rhetoric of relevance. They should not merely be exposed to “anaemic formulations which masquerade as stories” (Ousbey 1992 p. 41).

Ultimately a good, very short story demands high levels of ingenuity and creativity on the part of writers, due to the dual and often conflicting constraints and demands of readability and engagement. In addition, there is the pressure in the current context to attempt to kill too many birds with one small stone – to meet the multiple demands of learning to read, learning to earn a living and simply growing to love reading. Story books can reflect things as they are, things as they ought to be or things as they might be. It would be a great pity if adult beginner readers in South Africa were sentenced to restricted conceptions of literacy merely through lack of attention and awareness of what is possible.

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³⁶ The dots are intentional.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Bibliography of books analysed

Note:

- * Indicates that the book is a translation
- If a book is a translation, the original language is identified in brackets
- English books are listed first followed by the other South African languages in alphabetical order
- Children's books are listed separately at the end of Appendix 1.

English

- Abrahams, E. 1996. *The story of Paul Adams rise to fame*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- Annecke, W. 1993. *Mandla and the bull*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- Annecke, W. 1991. *Why dogs chase goats*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- Annecke, W. 1991. *Woza Friday*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- Bila, F. V. 1996. *Magweya*. Johannesburg: Kagiso Publishers.
- *Bila, F. V. 1995. *Pension money*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Tsonga)
- Bila, F. V. 1996. *The girl with the golden tooth*. Johannesburg: Kagiso Publishers.
- Brain, H. 1998. *The new baby*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- *Derrick, T. & Hermanus, M. *Dancing to fame – Mfuleni dancers*. Cape Town: Juta. (from Xhosa)
- Fagan, M. & Winter, C. 1995. *Waiting for Lerato*. Johannesburg: Kagiso Publishers.
- Garisch, D. 1994. *A quick trick*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- Garisch, D. 1995. *Mbusi's bad cold*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- Harvey, R. (Mohlalosi) 1996. *All the way to Z*. Johannesburg: Workbench.
- Harvey, R. (Mohlalosi) 1996. *Forklift No: 4*. Johannesburg: Workbench.
- Kunene, V. 1998. *My red cow*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- Land, S. 1997. *Calling the ancestors*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Land, S. 1997. *Flags on a bridge*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Land, S. 1997. *Joe's new job*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Land, S. & Kunene, L. 1996. *UMkhize and the cell-phones*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Land, S. & Kunene, L. 1996. *UMkhize of Maritzburg*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Land, S. 1997. *27th April 1994*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books.
- Lawson, I. 1997. *The right change*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- Lyster, E. 1991. *The Nkosi family*. Durban: New Readers Project..
- Mbuyazi, N. & Teichmann, D. 1998. *Sewing for a living*. Durban: English Resource Unit.
- Mkhwebane, N. 1999. *Nothembi*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- Ndaba, E. 1990. *I told myself I am going to learn*. Johannesburg: English Literacy Project.
- *Rashavha, N. 1999. *Doctor Khumalo*. Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from Venda)
- Rebelo, E. 1996. *The spaza*. Johannesburg: Kagiso Publishers.
- SA Metal Group Learners. 1996. *Just a job*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- Seid, S. 1998. *First prize*. Durban: New Readers Project.
- Shozi, D. & Teichmann, D. 1998. *My own business*. Durban: English Resource Unit.
- *Sitoe, D. 1997. *The liars*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Sotho)
- Stanford, P. 1991. *Going home with chickens*. Durban: New Readers Project.

- Teichmann, D. 1998. *My village*. Durban: English Resource Unit.
- Teichmann, D. 1998. *Sweet memories*. Durban: English Resource Unit.
- van Wyk, C. 1996. *My name is Selina Mabiletsa*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- van Wyk, C. 1995. *The murder of Mrs Mohapi*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- Witthaus, G. 1996. *The gift*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.

Afrikaans

- Abrahams, E. 1998. *Paul Adams*. Johannesburg: Viva Books. (to English)
- *Anneck, W. 1997. *Dawid en die bul* (Mandla and the bull). Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *Bila, F. V. 1997. *Pensioengeld* (Pension money). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Tsonga)
- *Garisch, D. 1996. *'n Vinnige Truuk* (A quick trick). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Garisch, D. 1995. *Mbusi se vreeslike verkoue* (Mbusi's bad cold). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Lawson, I. 1997. *Die regte somme* (The right change). Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)
- *Lyster, E. 1997. *Die Abrahams gesin* (The Nkosi family). Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *Ndaba, E. 1996. *Ek het vir myself gese dat ek gaan leer*. (I told myself I am going to learn). Cape Town: Juta. (from English)
- *Rashavha, N. 1999. *Doctor Khumalo*. Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from Venda)
- *Sitoe, D. 1997. *Die leuenaars* (The liars). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Sotho)
- *South Africa Metal Group Leerders. 1997. *Net 'n werk* (Just a job). Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)
- *Stanford, P. 1997. *Huis toe met hoenders* (Going home with chickens). Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *van Wyk, C. 1995. *Die moord op Mev. Mohapi* (The murder of Mrs Mohapi). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)

Ndebele

- Mahlangu, J. 2000. *Umntu ongaziwa*. (The stranger) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Mathibela, M. 2000. *Ukurhonona kuyabulala*. (Curiosity kills) Durban: New Readers Project.
- *Mkhwebane, N. 1998. *Unothembi*. (Nothembi) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)
- Mthimunye, J. 2000. *Ukufika kwam' ekhaya*. (My arrival at home) Durban: New Readers Project.

Pedi

- Bila, F. V. 1996. *Lengwalo la Mahlodi*. (Lengwalo and Mahlodi) Pretoria: Kagiso Publishers.

- Komana, E. 1999. *Nko ga e dupe*. (A dream has vanished) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Magabane, S. 1999. *Mehlolo ga e fele*. (Surprises never end) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Ndaba, E. 1996. *Ke ipoditse gore ke ilo ithuta*. (I told myself I am going to learn) Cape Town: Juta.
- Rakoma, M. 1999. *Maano ga a site*. (One never runs out of a plan) Durban: New Readers Project.

Sotho

- *Bila, F. V. 1997. *Tjhelete ya peshene* (Pension money). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Tsonga)
- *Garisch, D. 1995. *Sefuba se sebe saMbusi* (Mbusi's bad cold). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Garisch, D. 1996. *Ho qeka ka pele* (A quick trick). Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Lyster, E. 1995. *Lelapa la ha Mokoena* (The Nkosi family). Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *Madlala, N. 1995. *Bothata ba Tselane le Tshepo* (The problems of Tselane and Tshepo). Durban: New Readers Project. (from Zulu)
- *Ndaba, E. 1996. *Ke ipolelletse hore ke ilo ithuta*. (I told myself I am going to learn) Cape Town: Juta. (from English)
- Siteo, D. 1996. *Bathetsi*. (The liars) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- *Stanford, P. 1995. *Ho ya hae le dikgoho*. (Going home with chickens) Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *van Wyk, C. 1995. *Polao ya mme Mohapi*. (The murder of Mrs Mohapi) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)

Swazi

- Mahlalela, S. S. 1996. *Luhambo lwagogo Motsa*. (The journey of grandmother Motsa) Pretoria: Kagiso Publishers.
- Mshaba, N. G. 2000. *Batsakatsi*. (Witchcraft) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Nkosi, A. D. 2000. *Kube bekati*. (His wealth) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Thwala, M. 2000. *Iphelelaphi lemali*. (Where does the money go) Durban: New Readers Project.

Tsonga

- Bila, F. V. 1996. *Mali ya mudende*. (Pension money) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.
- Bila, F. V. 1999. *Ndzi rhandza Ohazurike*. (I love Ohazurike) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Kubayi, J. 1999. *Mubya wu tsemekile*. (I give up) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Mongwe, G. 1999. *Mabubutsa ya rirhandzu*. (The storms of love) Durban: New Readers Project.

Tswana

- Gidigidi, N. 1999. *Lorato o a nyalwa*. (Lorato gets married) Pretoria: Stimela.
- Gidigidi, N. 1999. *Dinako di a fetoga*. (Times are changing) Pretoria: Stimela.
- *Lawson, I. 1999. *Tshentshi e Siameng*. (The right change) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)
- Mlombo, V. W. 1996. *Kutlwano*. (Harmony) Pretoria: Kagiso Publishers.
- Motete, S. 1999. *Ke nyala mang?* (Who shall I marry?) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Motete, S. 1999. *Bopaki*. (Evidence) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Operation Upgrade. 1999. *Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*. (Fights are best solved by talking) Pretoria: Stimela.
- Poo, B. 1999. *La bo phamola*. (It grabbed it!) Durban: New Readers Project.
- *Rashavha, N. 1999. *Doctor Khumalo*. Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from Venda)
- *Witthaus, G. 1999. *Mpho*. (The gift) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)

Venda

- Mudazanani, S. 2000. *Zwo nkholela*. (I am fed up) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Mukumela, M. 2000. *Nguluvhe dza Vho-Dau*. (Mr Dau's pigs) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Rashavha, N. 1997. *Doctor Khumalo*. Johannesburg: Viva Books.
- Sitholimela, S. 2000. *Mirubo ya vhatukana*. (Boy's pranks) Durban: New Readers Project.

Xhosa

- *Bila, F. V. 1997. *Imali yomhlalaphantsi*. (Pension money) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Tsonga)
- *Derrick, T. & Hermanus, M. 1997. *Danisela udumo. Abadansi baseMfuleni*. (Dancing to fame – Mfuleni dancers) Cape Town: Juta. (from English)
- *Garisch, D. 1995. *UMbusi ucinezelwe ngumkhuhlane*. (Mbusi's bad cold) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Garisch, D. 1996. *Iqhinga elikhawulezileyo*. (A quick trick) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Lyster, E. 1995. *Usapho lwakwaMajola*. (The Nkosi family) Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *Madlala, N. 1995. *Ingxaki kaZodwa noThemba*. (Zodwa and Themba's problems) Durban: New Readers Project. (from Zulu)
- *Mbhele, B. 1999. *O! Yekukuzala*. (The ups and downs of bringing up children) Pretoria: Stimela. (from Zulu)
- Mlotha, F. 1999. *Zikhethela*. (Make your own choice) Pretoria: Stimela.
- Moyo, T. 1999. *Gweba nal'ityala*. (You be the judge) Pretoria: Stimela.
- Moyo, T. 1999. *Liphandlwa kube kanye libone!* (Once bitten twice shy) Pretoria: Stimela.
- *Ndaba, E. 1995. *Ndazixelela ukuba ndiza kufunda*. (I told myself I am going to learn) Cape Town: Juta. (from English)
- *Sitoe, D. 1997. *Amxoki*. (The liars) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Sotho)
- *South Africa Metal Group (Ngabafundi abadala be-). 1997. *Umsebenzi nje*. (Just a job) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)

- *Stanford, P. 1995. *Ukugoduka neenkukhu*. (Going home with chickens) Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- *van Wyk, C. 1995. *Ukugetyengwa kukankosikazi Mohapi*. (The murder of Mrs Mohapi) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *van Wyk, C. 1997. *Igama lam ndinguSelina Magasela*. (My name is Selina Mabiletsa) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)
- *Witthaus, G. 1997. *Isipho*. (The gift) Johannesburg: Viva Books. (from English)

Zulu

- *Bila, F. V. 1997. *Imali yomhlalaphansi*. (Pension money) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Tsonga)
- Dlamini, P. 1999. *Imali kamalume*. (My uncle's money) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Dlamini, S.R. & Ntuli, C.D. 1996. *Ugogo ushintsha umqondo*. (Gogo changes her ideas) Pretoria: Kagiso Publishers.
- *Garisch, D. 1996. *Umkhuhlane kaMbusi omubi*. (Mbusi's bad cold) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Garisch, D. 1996. *Iqhinga elisheshayo*. (A quick trick) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- *Lyster, E. 1991. *Umndeni wakwaNkosi*. (The Nkosi family) Durban: New Readers Project. (from English)
- Madlala, N. 1991. *Inkinga kaNompfi noTemba*. (The problems of Nompfi and Temba) Durban: New Readers Project.
- Mvubu, N. 1999. *Izindaba zika Nokuthula*. (Nokuthula's stories) Durban: New Readers Project.
- *Ndaba, E. 1996. *Ngazitshela ukuthi ngizofunda*. (I told myself I am going to learn) Cape Town: Juta. (from English)
- *Sitoe, D. 1997. *Abakholisi*. (The liars) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from Sotho)
- *van Wyk, C. 1996. *Ukubulawa kukankosikazi Mohapi*. (The murder of Mrs Mohapi) Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers. (from English)
- Xulu, C. 1999. *UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni*. (Mahlase visits the town) Durban: New Readers Project. (from Zulu)

Children's books

- Ahlberg, J. & Ahlberg, A. 1986. *Burglar Bill*. London, Granada Publishing.
- Hunt, R. 1989. *The cold day. A story about Kipper*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Yolen, J. 1987. *Owl moon*. New York, Philomel.

Appendix 2: The National Qualifications Framework

Land, S. et al. 1999. *Implementing the new ABET system*. Durban and Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, p. 4.

NQF Level Band Types of Qualifications and Certificates

8	Higher Education and Training Band	doctorates, further research degrees	
7		higher degrees, professional qualifications	
6		first degrees, higher diplomas	
5		diplomas, occupational certificates	
Further Education and Training Certificate			
4	Further Education and Training Band	school / college / training certificates	
3		school / college / training certificates	
2		school / college / training certificates	
1	General Education and Training Certificate		
	General Education and Training Band	Std 7 / Grd 9 (10 years)	ABET Level 4
		Std 5 / Grd 7 (8 years)	ABET Level 3
		Std 3 / Grd 5 (6 years)	ABET Level 2
		Std 1 / Grd 3 (4 years)	ABET Level 1
		1 year reception	

Appendix 3: Summary Unit Standards for Language, Literacy and Communication

Land, S. et al. 1999. *Implementing the new ABET system*. Durban and Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, pp. 16-17. (Based on ABET Level 4 Language, literacy and communication Unit Standards registered with SAQA in November 2000).

Language, literacy and communication

Summary unit standards for NQF level 1 (ABET level 4)

Title 1: Show a critical awareness of language usage

Specific Outcomes:

1. Identify and analyse the likely purpose, audience and source of texts.
2. Explain ways in which language is used to transmit and shape socio-cultural ideas and values.
3. Identify, analyse and respond effectively to the manipulative, ideologically driven and biased uses of language and text.
4. Make inferences from texts.
5. Reflect critically on a writer's/speaker's point of view.
6. Explain, challenge and respond to attitudes towards languages and language varieties.
7. Produce a text to show critical awareness of language.

Title 2: Engage with aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts

Specific Outcomes:

1. Identify, analyse, evaluate and use literary and stylistic devices.
2. Give and justify opinions on texts.
3. Review opinions in relation to the opinions of others.
4. Relate texts to own personal lives and lives of others.
5. Identify ways in which context affects meaning and understanding.

Title 3: Access, process, use and present information

1. Identify the need for and aim of information.
2. Locate, access and select information.
3. Evaluate the accuracy, reliability and relevance of the information.
4. Categorise, classify, select and arrange information.
5. Develop reasoned arguments in the course of applying information.
6. Present results of the information search and processing in an appropriate format.
7. Apply newly-acquired knowledge to life situations.

Title 4: Use appropriate communication skills, conventions, and structures for specific purposes and situations.

Specific Outcomes:

1. Identify the purposes of the interaction and choose an appropriate medium of communication.
2. Use format and conventions appropriate to the task.
3. Select and present content appropriate to the task.
4. Apply knowledge of language conventions to produce a text.
5. Use register and tone appropriate to the written task.
6. Plan, draft, edit and check a text.
7. Use register, tone and body language appropriate to the oral task.

Title 5: Explore and use a variety of strategies to learn.

Specific Outcomes:

1. Use language for learning.
2. Take responsibility for her/his own learning and make choices about learning.
3. Identify different kinds of learning strategies and use what is appropriate to the task.
4. Use resources effectively to supplement learning.
5. Reflect on and evaluate learning strategies.

Title 6: Demonstrate an understanding of discourse structure in texts.

Specific Outcomes:

1. Identify and interpret format, layout and typographical features of texts.
2. Know and apply conventions of different genres.
3. Identify and interpret the literal and inferred meaning of the text.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the internal devices for cohesion and coherence in a text.
5. Identify and analyse visual features of texts.

Appendix 4: General design details per title

Title	Publisher	Language	Pages total	Text pages	Illus. pages	Illustration type	Design	Font	Shape	Book size
A quick trick	Heinemann	English	24	24	24	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
The liars	Heinemann	English	24	24	23	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Mbusi's bad cold	Heinemann	English	32	31	27	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Pension money	Heinemann	English	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
The murder of Mrs Mohapi	Heinemann	English	36	35	37	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Dancing to fame	Juta	English	14	14	14	Photographs	Same page as text text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Magweya	Kagiso	English	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	Other
The girl with the golden tooth	Kagiso	English	12	11	14	Complex line	Same page as text text	Sans serif	Portrait	Other
The spaza	Kagiso	English	18	9	9	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	Other
Waiting for Lerato	Kagiso	English	20	19	20	Complex line	Comic	Sans serif	Portrait	Other
First prize	New Readers	English	30	15	15	Plain line drawings	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Going home with chickens	New Readers	English	20	10	10	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Mandla and the bull	New Readers	English	48	24	24	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	Other
My red cow	New Readers	English	18	9	9	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
The new baby	New Readers	English	26	13	13	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
The Nkosi family	New Readers	English	35	35	35	Complex line	Same page as text text	Serif	Portrait	Other
Why dogs chase goats	New Readers	English	20	10	10	Plain line drawings	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Woza Friday	New Readers	English	28	14	14	Plain line drawings	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Calling the ancestors	SACHED	English	16	8	8	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Flags on a bridge	SACHED	English	16	8	8	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
I told myself I am going to learn	SACHED	English	50	25	25	Photographs	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Joe's new job	SACHED	English	16	8	8	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
uMkhize and the cell-phones	SACHED	English	43	43	43	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Landscape	A5
uMkhize of Maritzburg	SACHED	English	47	47	47	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Landscape	A5
27th April 1994	SACHED	English	16	8	8	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	English	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Just a job	Viva Books	English	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
My name is Selina Malibetsa	Viva Books	English	17	17	17	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Nothembi	Viva Books	English	17	17	17	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
The gift	Viva Books	English	17	17	17	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
The right change	Viva Books	English	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Paul Adams	Viva Books	English	17	17	17	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
My own business	ERU	English	24	12	12	Photographs	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
My village	ERU	English	26	13	14	Photographs	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Sewing for a living	ERU	English	24	12	12	Photographs	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Sweet memories	ERU	English	26	26	13	Photographs	Mixed	Serif	Portrait	A5
All the way to Z	Workbench	English	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Forklift No: 4	Workbench	English	19	19	19	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5

Title	Publisher	Language	Pages total	Text pages	Illus. pages	Illustration type	Design	Font	Shape	Book size
Die leuenaars	Heinemann	Afrikaans	24	24	23	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Die moord op Mev. Mohapi	Heinemann	Afrikaans	36	35	37	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Mbusi se vreeslike verkoue	Heinemann	Afrikaans	32	31	27	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Pensioengeld	Heinemann	Afrikaans	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
'n Vinnige Truuk	Heinemann	Afrikaans	24	24	24	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ek het vir myself gese dat ek gaan leer	Juta	Afrikaans	22	22	22	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Dawid en die bul	New Readers	Afrikaans	48	24	24	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	Other
Die Abrahams gesin	New Readers	Afrikaans	35	35	35	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	Other
Huis toe met hoenders	New Readers	Afrikaans	20	10	10	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Die regte somme	Viva Books	Afrikaans	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	Afrikaans	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Net 'n werk	Viva Books	Afrikaans	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Paul Adams	Viva Books	Afrikaans	17	17	17	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Umntu ongaziwa	New Readers	Ndebele	22	11	11	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Ukurhonona kuyabulala	New Readers	Ndebele	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Ukufika kwam' ekhaya	New Readers	Ndebele	42	21	21	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Unothembi	Viva Books	Ndebele	17	17	17	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Amaxoki	Heinemann	Xhosa	24	24	23	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Imali yomhlalaphantsi	Heinemann	Xhosa	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Iqhinga elikhawulezileyo	Heinemann	Xhosa	24	24	24	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ukugetyengwa kukankosikazi Mohapi	Heinemann	Xhosa	36	35	37	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
UMbusi ucinezelwe ngumkhuhlane	Heinemann	Xhosa	32	31	27	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Danisela udumo. Abadansi baseMfuleni	Juta	Xhosa	14	14	14	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Ndazixelela ukuba ndiza kufunda	Juta	Xhosa	22	22	22	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Ingxaki kaZodwa noThemba	New Readers	Xhosa	32	23	19	Photographs	Mixed	Serif	Other	Other
Ukugoduka neenkukhu	New Readers	Xhosa	20	10	10	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Usapho lwakwaMajola	New Readers	Xhosa	35	35	35	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	Other
Gweba nal'ityala	Stimela	Xhosa	13	13	10	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Liphandlwa kube kanye libone!	Stimela	Xhosa	25	25	8	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
O! Yekukuzala	Stimela	Xhosa	22	22	7	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Zikhethele	Stimela	Xhosa	28	20	8	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Igama lam ndinguSelina Magasela	Viva Books	Xhosa	17	17	17	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Isipho	Viva Books	Xhosa	17	17	17	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Umsebenzi nje	Viva Books	Xhosa	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5

Title	Publisher	Language	Pages total	Text pages	Illus. pages	Illustration type	Design	Font	Shape	Book size
Abakholisi	Heinemann	Zulu	24	24	23	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Imali yomhlalaphansi	Heinemann	Zulu	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
iqhinga elisheshayo	Heinemann	Zulu	24	24	24	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ukubulawa kukankosikazi Mohapi	Heinemann	Zulu	36	35	37	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Umkhuhlane kaMbusi omubi	Heinemann	Zulu	32	31	27	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ugogo ushintsha umqondo	Kagiso	Zulu	36	18	18	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Ngazitshela ukuthi ngizofunda	Juta	Zulu	22	22	22	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Imali kamalume	New Readers	Zulu	20	10	10	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Inkinga kaNompzi noTemba	New Readers	Zulu	32	23	19	Photographs	Mixed	Serif	Other	Other
Izindaba zika Nokuthula	New Readers	Zulu	24	12	12	Plain line drawings	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
UMahlase uvakashela edolobheni	New Readers	Zulu	38	19	19	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Umndeni wakwaNkosi	New Readers	Zulu	35	35	35	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	Other
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	Zulu	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Luhambo lwagogo Motsa	Kagiso	Swazi	30	17	17	Complex line	Mixed	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Batsakatsi	New Readers	Swazi	30	15	14	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Kube bekati	New Readers	Swazi	32	16	16	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Iphelelaphi lemali	New Readers	Swazi	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Bathetsi	Heinemann	Sotho	24	24	23	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ho geke ka pele	Heinemann	Sotho	24	24	24	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Polao ya mme Mohapi	Heinemann	Sotho	36	35	37	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Sefuba se sebe saMbusi	Heinemann	Sotho	32	31	27	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Tjhelete ya peshene	Heinemann	Sotho	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ke ipoleletse hore ke ilo ithuta	Juta	Sotho	22	22	22	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Bothata ba Tselane le Tshepo	New Readers	Sotho	32	23	19	Photographs	Mixed	Serif	Other	Other
Ho ya hae le dikgoho	New Readers	Sotho	20	10	10	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Lelapa la ha Mokoena	New Readers	Sotho	35	35	35	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	Other
Mali ya mudende	Heinemann	Tsonga	23	22	21	Complex line	Comic	Mixed	Portrait	Other
Ndzi rhandza Ohazurike	New Readers	Tsonga	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Mubya wu tsemekile	New Readers	Tsonga	28	14	14	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Mabubutsa ya rirhandzu	New Readers	Tsonga	26	13	13	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	Venda	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Zwo nkholela	New Readers	Venda	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Nguluvhe dza Vho-Dau	New Readers	Venda	24	12	12	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Mirubo ya vhatukana	New Readers	Venda	24	12	12	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Lengwalo la Mahlodi	Kagiso	Pedi	28	14	14	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Ke ipoditse gore ke ilo ithuta	Juta	Pedi	22	22	22	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Landscape	A5
Nko ga e dupe	New Readers	Pedi	24	12	12	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Mehlolo ga e fele	New Readers	Pedi	26	13	13	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5

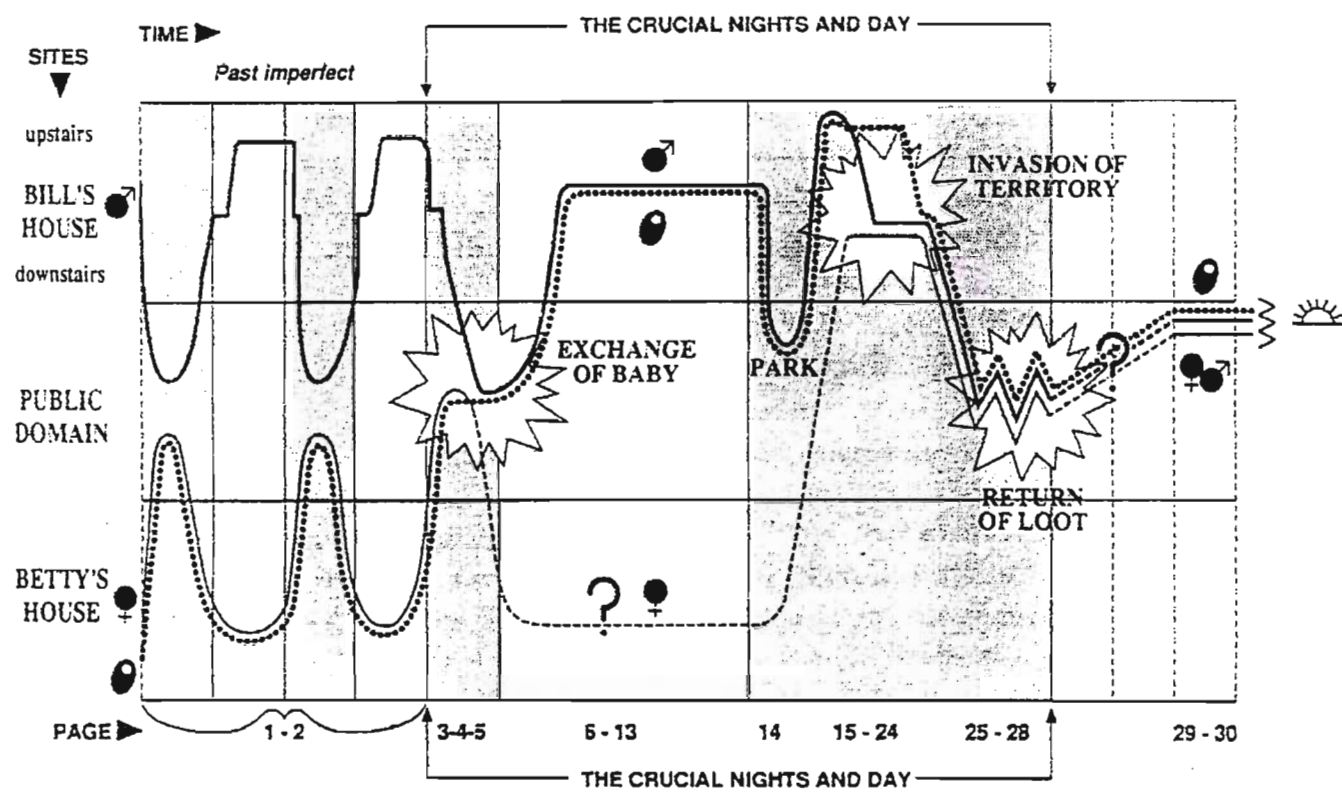
Title	Publisher	Language	Pages total	Text pages	Illus. pages	Illustration type	Design	Font	Shape	Book size
Maano ga a site	New Readers	Pedi	30	15	15	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Kutlwano	Kagiso	Tswana	29	15	14	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Dinako di a fetoga	Stimela	Tswana	15	15	7	Complex line	Same page as text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Lorato o a nyalwa	Stimela	Tswana	33	26	7	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo	Stimela	Tswana	44	39	6	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Sans serif	Portrait	A5
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	Tswana	18	18	18	Photographs	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Tshentshi e e Siameng	Viva Books	Tswana	18	18	18	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Mpho	Viva Books	Tswana	17	17	17	Complex line	Same page as text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Bopaki	New Readers	Tswana	18	9	9	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
Ke nyala mang	New Readers	Tswana	22	11	11	Complex line	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5
La bo phamola	New Readers	Tswana	18	9	9	Plain line drawings	Full page opposite text	Serif	Portrait	A5

Appendix 5: English narrative features per title

Title	Publisher	Narrator	Duration	Episodes	Order	Tense
A quick trick	Heinemann	Third Person	1 Day	5	Chronological	Past
The liars	Heinemann	Third Person	More than 1 Year	4	Chronological	Mixed
Mbusi's bad cold	Heinemann	Third Person	1 Day	8	Chronological	Past
Pension money	Heinemann	Third Person	1 Day	5	Chronological	Past
The murder of Mrs Mohapi	Heinemann	Third Person	1 Day	9	Chronological	Mixed
Dancing to fame	Juta	Second Person	More than 1 Year	1	Chronological	Present
Magweya	Kagiso	Third Person	More than 1 Year	5	Chronological	Past
The girl with the golden tooth	Kagiso	First Person	1 Day	1	Chronological	Past
The spaza	Kagiso	Third Person	1 Day	4	Chronological	Present
Waiting for Lerato	Kagiso	First Person	More than 1 Year	7	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed
First prize	New Readers Project	Third Person	1 Month	4	Chronological	Past
Going home with chickens	New Readers Project	Third Person	1 Day	5	Chronological	Present
Mandla and the bull	New Readers Project	Third Person	1 Day	2	Chronological	Present
My red cow	New Readers Project	First Person	6 Months	8	Chronological	Mixed
The new baby	New Readers Project	First Person	6 Months	4	Chronological	Past
The Nkosi family	New Readers Project	Third Person	More than 1 Year	4	Chronological	Present
Why dogs chase goats	New Readers Project	Third Person	1 Day	1	Chronological	Past
Woza Friday	New Readers Project	First Person	1 Week	2	Chronological	Present
Calling the ancestors	SACHED	Third Person	1 Week	2	Chronological	Past
Flags on a bridge	SACHED	Third Person	1 Month	5	Chronological	Present
I told myself I am going to learn	SACHED	First Person	6 Months	5	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed
Joe's new job	SACHED	Third Person	1 Week	2	Chronological	Present
uMkhize and the cell-phones	SACHED	Third Person	1 Month	10	Chronological	Past
uMkhize of Maritzburg	SACHED	Third Person	1 Month	7	Chronological	Past
27th April 1994	SACHED	First Person	1 Day	1	Chronological	Past
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	Third Person	More than 1 Year	15	Chronological	Past
Just a job	Viva Books	Third Person	1 Week	8	Chronological	Past
My name is Selina Malibetsa	Viva Books	Third Person	More than 1 Year	8	Chronological	Past
Nothembi	Viva Books	First Person	More than 1 Year	16	Chronological	Past
The gift	Viva Books	Third Person	1 Day	5	Chronological	Past
The right change	Viva Books	Third Person	More than 1 Year	9	Mixed (flashbacks)	Past
Paul Adams	Viva Books	Third Person	More than 1 Year	12	Chronological	Past
My own business	ERU	First Person	More than 1 Year	11	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed
My village	ERU	First Person	More than 1 Year	8	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed
Sewing for a living	ERU	Third Person	More than 1 Year	4	Mixed (flashbacks)	Present
Sweet memories	ERU	First Person	More than 1 Year	7	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed
All the way to Z	Workbench	Second Person	More than 1 Year	5	Mixed (flashbacks)	Past
Forklift No: 4	Workbench	Third Person	6 Months	8	Mixed (flashbacks)	Mixed

Appendix 6: Example of story shape

Stibbs, A. 1994. Deconstructing burglars: formal analysis as a pedagogic jemmy. *Children's Literature in Education*. Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 219.



Appendix 7: English readability statistics per title

Title	Publisher	Words	Para- graphs	Sent- ences	Sent. per para.	Words per sent.	Char. per word	Sent. per page	Passive sent.	Flesch Ease	Flesch grade
A quick trick	Heinemann	474	47	75	2	6.3	4	3.1	0	100	0.7
The liars	Heinemann	622	54	79	1	7.8	4	3.2	0	83	3.6
Mbusi's bad cold	Heinemann	619	69	90	1	6.6	4	2.9	0	96	1.4
Pension money	Heinemann	492	25	53	2	9.2	5	2.4	5	78	4.7
The murder of Mrs Mohapi	Heinemann	968	87	148	2	6.5	4	4.2	2	88	2.6
Dancing to fame	Juta	436	14	47	3	9.2	4	3.3	8	86	3.5
Magweya	Kagiso	438	15	45	3	9.7	4	3.0	2	81	4.3
The girl with the golden tooth	Kagiso	270	13	33	3	8.1	4	3.0	0	86	3.2
The spaza	Kagiso	599	23	72	3	8.3	4	8.0	0	88	3.0
Waiting for Lerato	Kagiso	523	36	67	2	7.8	4	3.5	2	95	1.9
First prize	New Readers	187	15	27	2	6.9	4	1.8	0	74	4.7
Going home with chickens	New Readers	293	11	43	4	6.8	4	4.3	0	86	2.8
Manda and the bull	New Readers	223	24	47	2	4.7	4	1.9	0	96	1.0
My red cow	New Readers	183	9	22	2	8.3	3	2.4	0	97	1.7
The new baby	New Readers	197	13	29	2	6.7	4	2.2	0	95	1.6
The Nkosi family	New Readers	291	43	48	1	6.0	4	1.3	0	83	3.2
Why dogs chase goats	New Readers	206	12	25	2	8.2	4	2.2	0	97	1.7
Woza Friday	New Readers	59	14	14	1	5.0	4	0.2	0	92	1.7
Calling the ancestors	SACHED	382	8	43	5	8.8	4	5.3	0	89	3.0
Flags on a bridge	SACHED	383	8	47	6	8.1	4	5.8	2	96	1.9
I told myself I am going to learn	SACHED	459	26	55	2	8.3	4	2.1	0	97	1.8
Joe's new job	SACHED	142	8	18	2	7.8	3	2.2	0	98	1.5
uMkhize and the cell-phones	SACHED	514	62	67	1	7.6	4	1.5	10	89	2.6
uMkhize of Maritzburg	SACHED	503	59	62	1	8.1	5	1.0	0	82	3.8
27th April 1994	SACHED	214	7	30	4	7.1	4	4.2	0	85	3.1
Doctor Khumalo	Viva Books	655	17	62	4	10.5	4	3.6	3	75	5.3
Just a job	Viva Books	551	23	64	3	8.6	4	3.5	0	89	2.9
My name is Selina Malibetsa	Viva Books	444	26	67	3	6.3	4	3.9	0	85	2.9
Nothembi	Viva Books	732	18	80	4	9.1	4	4.4	6	74	5.2
The gift	Viva Books	560	26	63	2	8.8	4	3.7	1	87	3.3
The right change	Viva Books	653	38	78	2	8.3	4	4.3	3	89	2.9
Paul Adams	Viva Books	614	18	48	3	12.7	4	2.8	16	75	5.9
My own business	ERU	504	47	44	1	10.5	4	3.1	0	80	4.6
My village	ERU	300	19	41	2	7.2	4	3.1	4	95	1.7
Sewing for a living	ERU	320	27	34	1	9.4	4	2.4	0	80	4.4
Sweet memories	ERU	625	71	77	1	8.1	4	2.9	3	72	5.2
All the way to Z	Workbench	679	35	80	2	8.1	4	4.4	0	93	2.3
Forklift No: 4	Workbench	584	44	83	2	7.0	4	4.3	1	89	2.6

Appendix 8: Example from *Joe's new job*

Land, S. *Joe's new job*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books, pp. 6-7.

He goes home to tell his family.
They are all very happy about
his new job.



Appendix 9: Example from *Liphandlwa kube kanye libone*

Moyo, T. 1999. *Liphandlwa kube kanye libone!* (Once bitten twice shy) Pretoria: Stimela, pp. 12-13.



“Kwakungekho nephetshana eli elibonakalisa ukuba kwakhe kwakho i-ofisi apho. Nithini ke ngoba yayingekahlawulwa. Yalahlekelwa yimali yenyanga yonke. Iza kumangalela bani obephi? Kaloku kufumaniseka ukuba eso sikolwana besingabhaliswanga ndawo.”

“Niyabona ke, mna andifuni kuva nto tu ngabantu abafuna ukundithengisela umsebenzi. Cingani kakuhle nani. Bangaphi abantu abafuna umsebenzi apha eDe Aar nje kuphela? Lifundwa ngabantu abangaphi eli phepha? Zingenza malini ezi R20 eziza kuqokelelwa kubo bonke aba bantu boMntla-Kapa?”

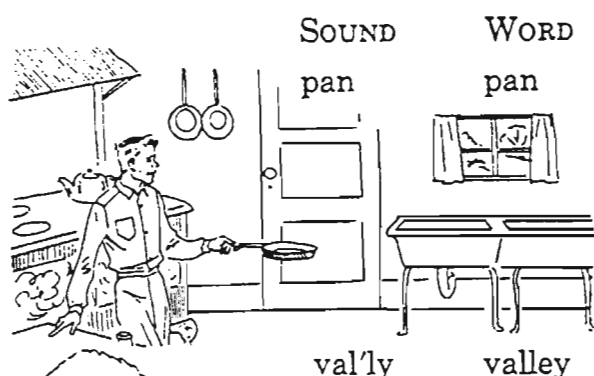
“Xa kungenzeka ukuba abantu abangamawaka amathathu (3000) bathumele eziR20, kungaba yimalini leyo? Ndayibala, yi R60 000! Ndithetha ngamawaka angamakhulu amathandathu mna! Aniboni ke ukuba abantu baza kuba zizinhlanha apha phandle, nibe nina nisifa yindlala.”

“Hayi inene ungandibamba okokuqala, kodwa ngeke undiphinde,” wagqibezela ngalawo uTshawe.

Appendix 10 : Example from old Operation Upgrade reader

Laubach, F.C. 1983. *Read English the easy way for adults. Book 2.*
Durban: Operation Upgrade of Southern Africa, p. 10.

Lesson 5 (continued)



SOUND

pan

WORD

pan

SENTENCE

That is Mrs. Hill's pan.

iz'nt

But that isn't Mrs. Hill.

That isn't Mrs. Hill with the pan.

It is Will with the pan.

Will has the pan in his hand.

It is Mrs. Hill's pan but Will has it.

Will is standing in a valley.

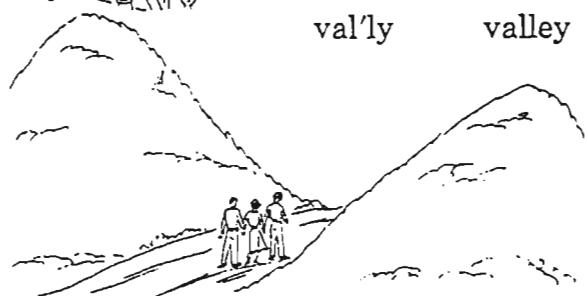
Miss Hill is standing in the valley.

kum too

And Jack has come to the valley.

Jack has come to visit Miss Hill.

Jack has come to the valley to visit Miss Hill.



val'ly

valley

carr'ying carrying



Will has met Jack in the valley.

And Will is carrying Jack's bag.

Will is carrying a pan in one hand.

uth'r

Will is carrying Jack's bag in his other hand.

That is the bag in his other hand.

fam'ily family



That is Mr. Hill and his family.

It is his happy family.

His family is very happy.

Mr. Hill is happy and his family is happy.

Jack is visiting Mr. Hill's family.

giv

Jack will give Miss Hill his ring.

Jack will marry Miss Hill.

Jack Smith will marry Miss Hill.

Jack is very happy.

And Miss Hill is very happy.

And Mrs. Hill is very happy.

WORD LIST

pan marry isn't valley will visit give carrying bag family but other met happy to come

Appendix 11: Example from Learn and Teach reader

Learn and Teach. (n.d.) *Easy English*. Unit 14: Talking about a union. Johannesburg: Learn and Teach, p. 4.

Tell your story. Use these words

started talked
 joined asked
 united listened helped



Read

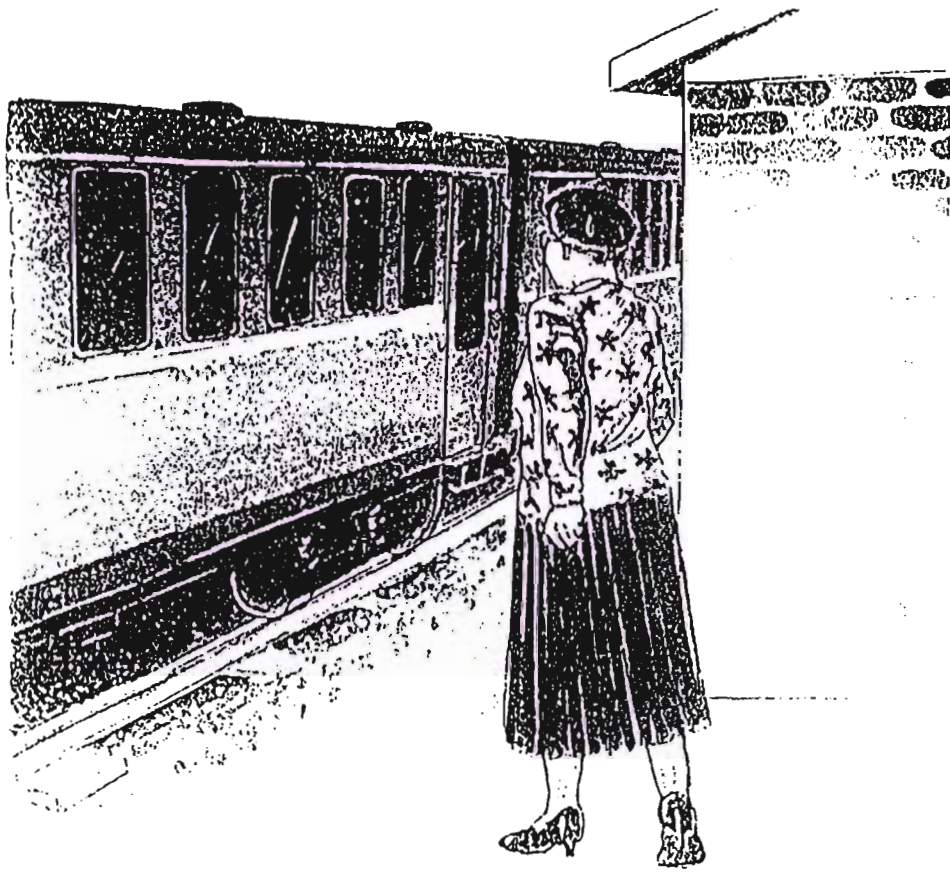


I started at Rolfes in 1962. From 1962 to 1980 the workers received very little money. The workers agreed to the small bonuses and low wages. But we were not happy. In 1981 we joined a trade union. The union united all the workers in the factory. We elected shop stewards. Then the shop stewards talked to the bosses. The shop stewards asked for more money. The bosses listened to the shop stewards. Now we get more money. The union helped the workers. Now the bosses don't give the workers more work for less money.

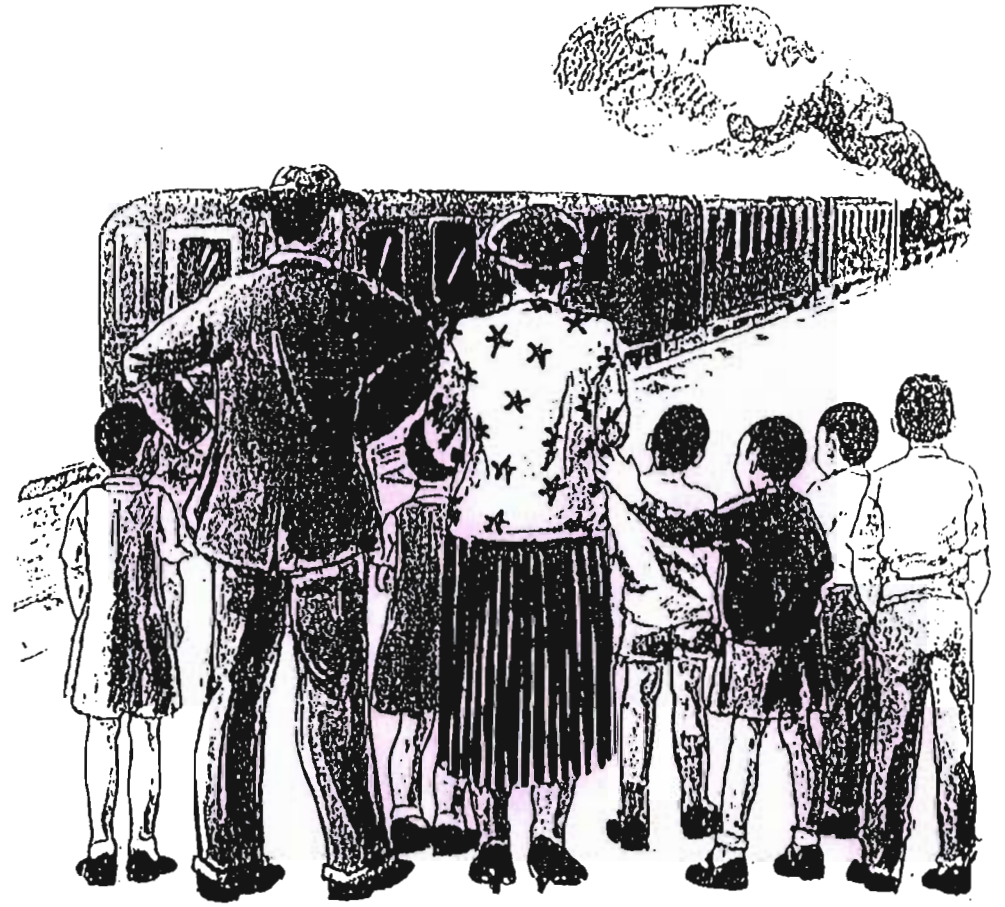
Make lines under the words in the story that tell you about the past.

Appendix 12: Example from *The gift*

Witthaus, G. 1996. *The gift*. Johannesburg: Viva Books, pp. 16-17.



Fifteen minutes later Henry was not back from the train. The children were tired of waiting. Mr and Mrs Goba were starting to feel worried. They heard the train's whistle blowing. Mrs Goba went to look for Henry and the sheep.

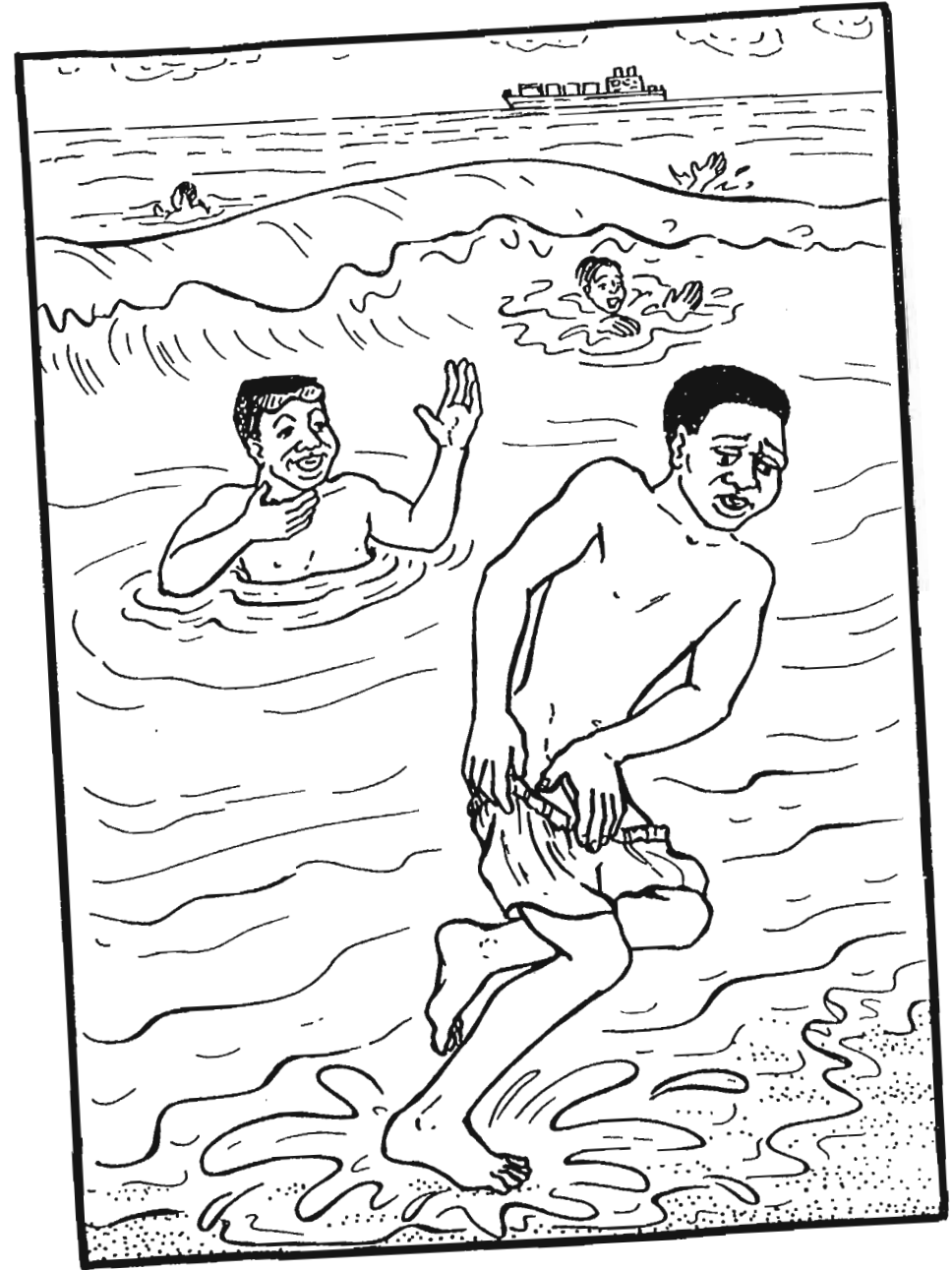


They were nowhere to be found.

Appendix 13: Example from *La bo phamola*

Poo, B. 1999. *La bo phamola*. (It grabbed it!) Durban: New Readers Project, pp. 16-17.

Pule a tshega fa a bona Tladi a tabogela ntlheng ya lebopo. Tladi a tswa a goeletsa a leka go goletsa borokgwana jwa gagwe ka letsogo le lengwe, fa le lengwe le ne le tshwere dithoto tsa Bakgatla.

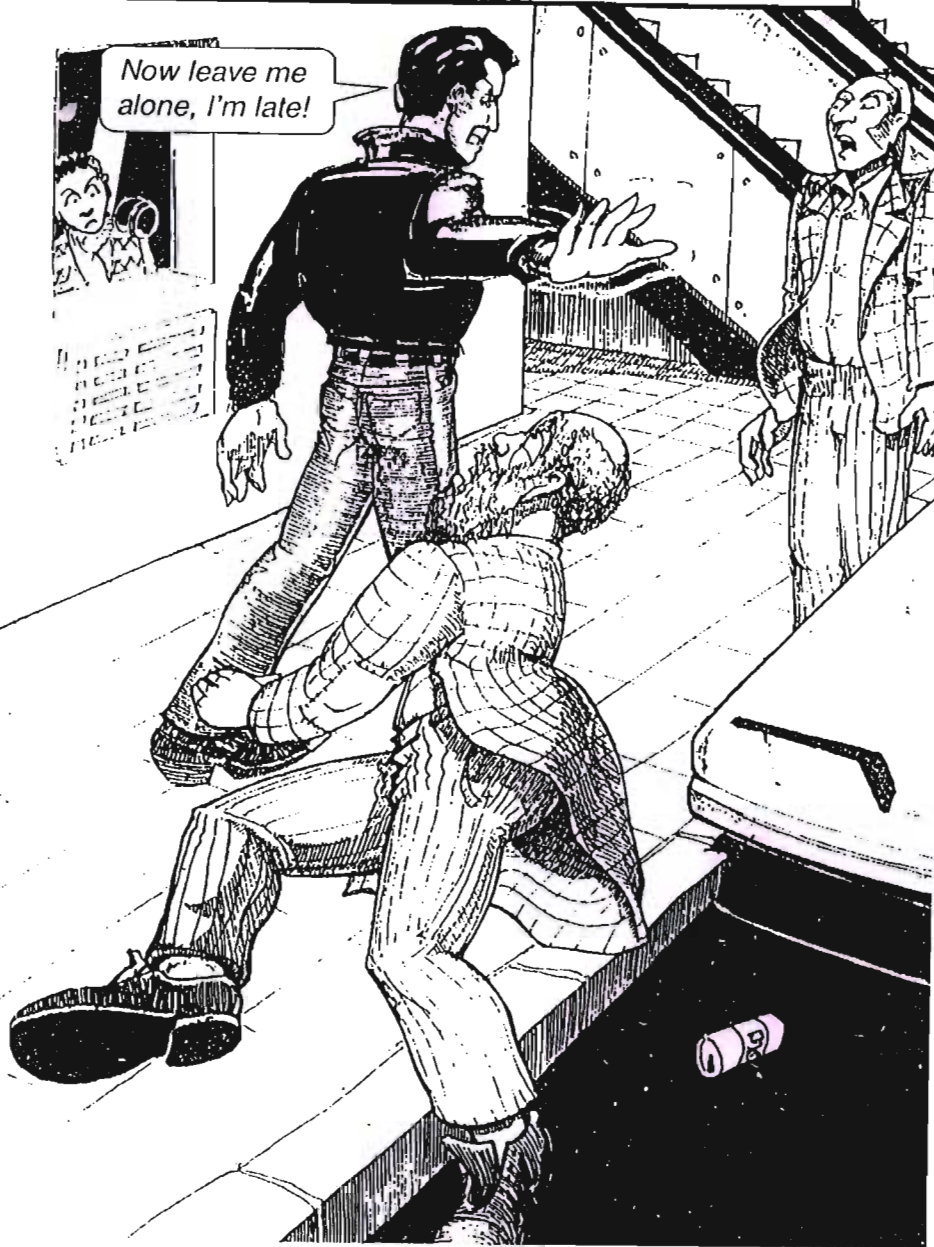


Appendix 14: Example from *A quick trick*

Garisch, D. 1994. *A quick trick*. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers, pp. 16-17.

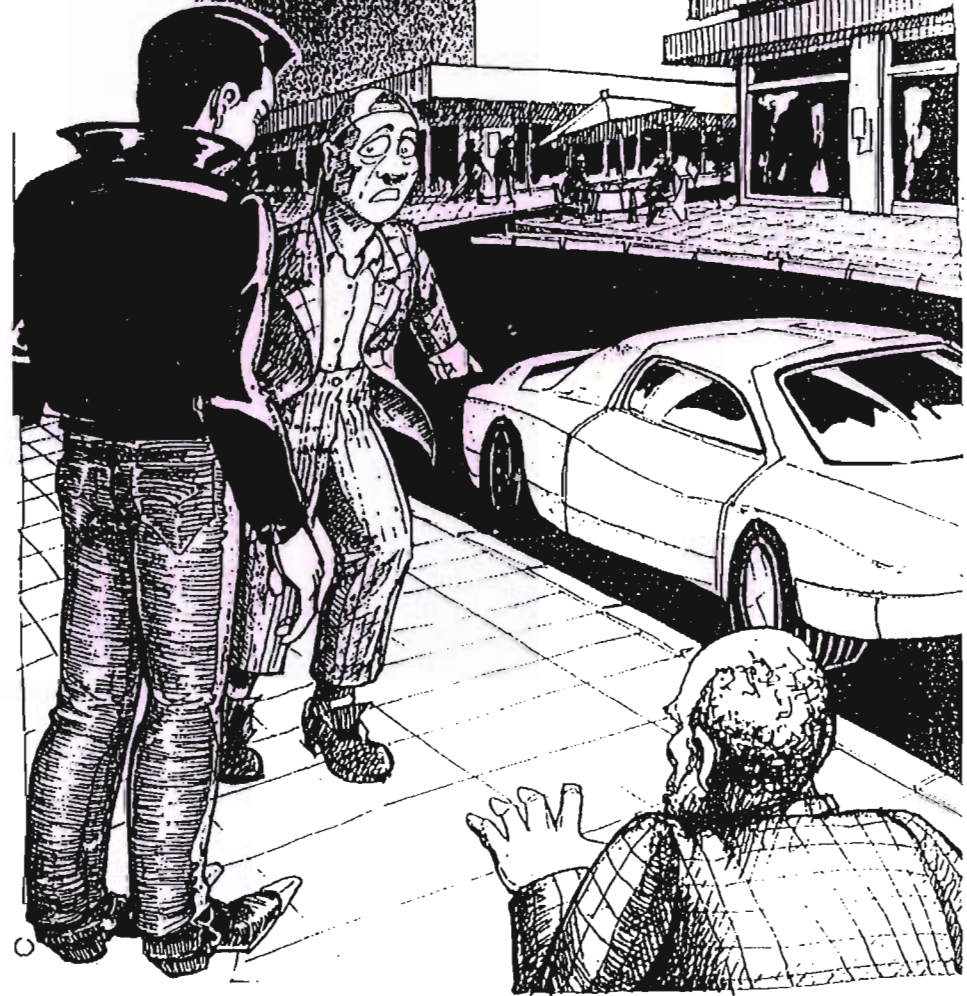
The man was angry. He pushed past Klaas.

Now leave me alone, I'm late!



Just then Amos saw something.

Hey, sir! Your hubcap is missing! I'll get you one for only ten rand!

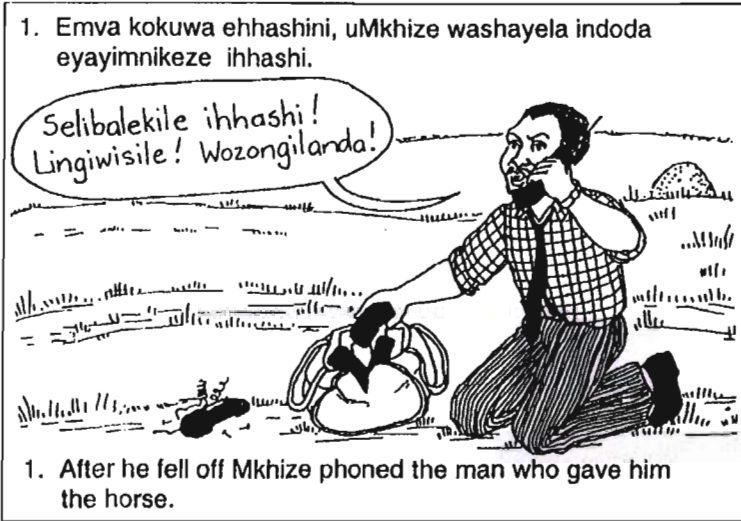


Appendix 15: Example from *UMkhize and the cell-phones*

Land, S. & Kunene, L. 1996. *UMkhize and the cell-phones*.
Johannesburg: SACHED Books, p. 11.

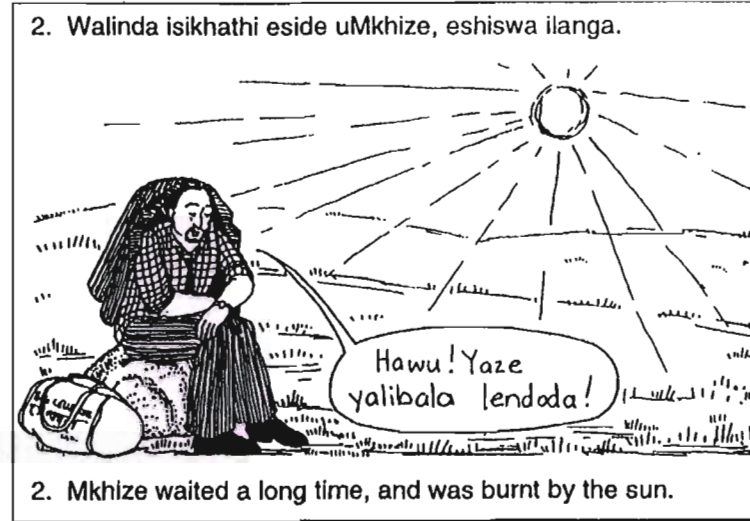
11. UMkhize uyayeka – Mkhize gives up

1. Emva kokuwa ehhashini, uMkhize washayela indoda eyayimnikeze ihhashi.



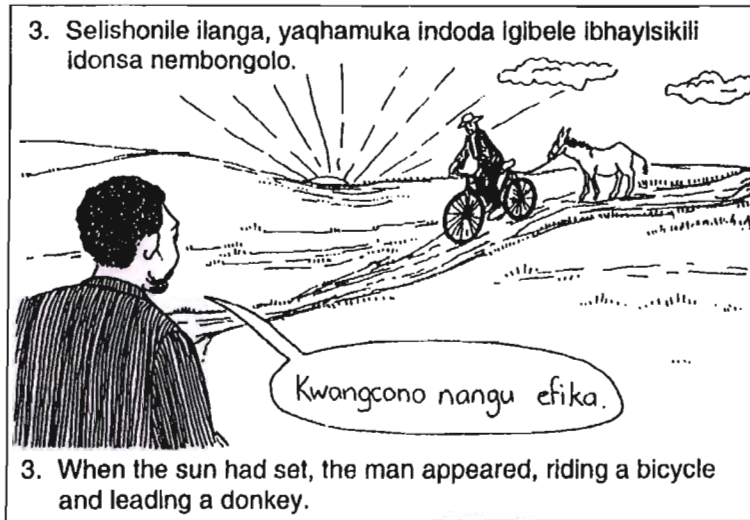
1. After he fell off Mkhize phoned the man who gave him the horse.

2. Walinda isikhathi eside uMkhize, eshiswa ilanga.



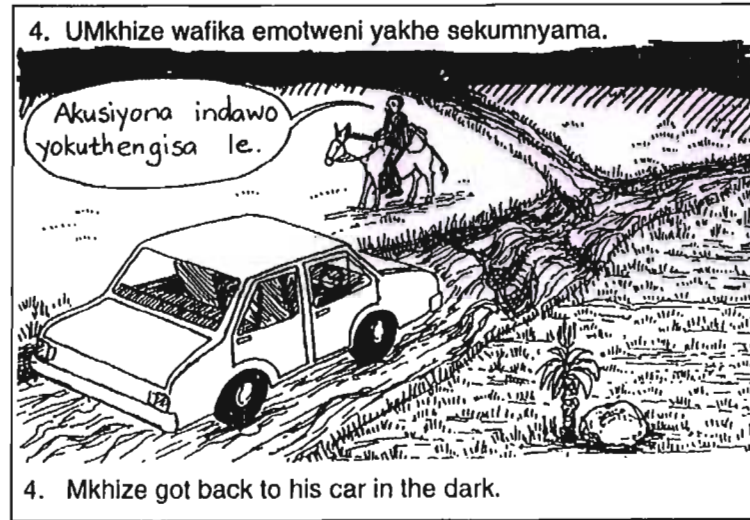
2. Mkhize waited a long time, and was burnt by the sun.

3. Selishonile ilanga, yaqhamuka indoda Igibele lbhaysikili idonsa nembongolo.



3. When the sun had set, the man appeared, riding a bicycle and leading a donkey.

4. UMkhize wafika emotweni yakhe sekumnyama.



4. Mkhize got back to his car in the dark.

Appendix 16: Example from *Waiting for Lerato*

Fagan, M. & Winter, C. 1995. *Waiting for Lerato*. Johannesburg: Kagiso Publishers, pp. 6-7.



Appendix 17: Example from and book review of *The new baby*

Brain, H. 1998. *The new baby*. Durban: New Readers Project, pp. 8-9.

Her father was very angry. "I am glad my dear mother is not alive to see this," he shouted at her. "She would have been very ashamed."



Title: *The New Baby*
 Author: Helen Brain
 Publisher: New Readers Project, 1998
 Available: Peppercorn Books & Press, Inc.
 PO Box 693, Snow Camp, NC, USA 27349
 phone (336) 574-1634 fax (336) 376-9099
 ISBN: 1-86840-294-0
 Price: \$7.00 U.S. plus shipping
 Reviewer: Rena Neufeld, Instructor

The New Baby

The New Baby is a rich and moving story told in beautifully simple words and lovely illustrations. It is the story of a priest and his wife who are ashamed to learn that their daughter is pregnant. When the baby arrives, attitudes and feelings change.

The language in the book is readable for beginning literacy students; the ideas presented are profound. Each page contains one or two sentences in large print; the facing page contains a black and white hand-drawn illustration.

The students who read this book said that it evoked emotions and feelings of sadness, compassion, happiness and love. This is a remarkable feat, considering the entire text contains less than 200 words.

The teachers who used this book described it as an awesome, powerful, lovely book; one that should be in every classroom. Because its language is simple, but its message profound, this book lends itself easily to lessons and activities for any reading level.

Teachers used this book successfully to teach conversation, writing, and comprehension. Some examples of activities include "retelling" the story orally or in writing, mixing up the illustrations and having students put them in the order of the story, and allowing the students to share experiences from their own lives that may have caused similar emotions.

This simple story seemed to touch everyone who read it in a deep and meaningful way. A student from Nanaimo writes, "What I felt when I started reading this book was sadness, compassion for the seventeen year old girl. I found it sad that the girl's parents had the nerve to say that she brought shame to her family. I felt compassion for the girl when the father (priest) wouldn't talk to his daughter for seven months."

The ending of this story is as happy and, importantly, as believable as the beginning is tragic. Read it and share it with your students!

Appendix 18: Full texts of English books

27th of April 1994

My name is Mavis Mbanjwa. I remember the first time I voted.

It was on the 27th of April 1994. That was the first real election day in South Africa. We voted for a new government.

All of us went to vote. Brown people, black people and white people. People waited in long queues to vote. It was the first time we all did something together.

We waited all day. We got hot and thirsty. Sometimes policemen brought us water to drink. We shared what we had. We were very happy.

Disabled people, pregnant women and very old people did not have to wait in the queue. They went to the front of the queue.

The rest of us were all together. I was with rich people, poor people, young people, mothers, fathers, even grandmothers and grandfathers. It was good to be together.

People from the TV came with cameras. They asked a young woman if it was bad to wait long. She said, "We are free. We are fair. We are patient." She was right.

After I voted I cried. I had waited for so many years to vote. My heart was so happy I had to cry. People laughed and cried and hugged each other. It was a wonderful day.

A quick trick

Amos and Klaas sat on the steps outside the bank. The sun was hot. The city was noisy.

People walked in and out of the bank. They had money. But Klaas and Amos had no money. They had no work.

“I’m thirsty.”

“I’m hungry.”

They asked the people going in and out of the bank for some money.

But the people held their bags tightly, and walked by.

A guard came up to them.

“Go away. We don’t want you here.”

Amos and Klaas walked away. People told them to go away all the time.

They walked all over the city. They asked people for money.

But that day it did not look like they were going to be lucky.

“I’m tired of this. I must get some money.”

“Are you going to steal some?”

Amos shook his head.

“I don’t want to go to jail.”

They stopped outside a movie house. People who went to movies sometimes gave them money.

But the street was empty. There was only the ticket seller at her window.

“Go away. We don’t want you here.”

Amos and Klaas started to walk away. Just then a fancy car raced up. It was going so fast that it turned the corner on two wheels.

The car stopped and a man jumped out.

“That man is late for the movies.”

But that didn’t stop Klaas.

“I’m in a hurry.”

“Please sir, my friend and I are hungry.”

The man looked cross. But Klaas didn’t give up.

“Please sir, just a few cents to buy some bread?”

“You must work for your money like I do!”

The man was angry. He pushed past Klaas.

“Now leave me alone, I’m late!”

Just then Amos saw something.

“Hey, sir! Your hubcap is missing! I’ll get you one for only ten rand!”

The man stopped. He had a very smart car. He was cross that there was a hubcap missing. It spoilt the look of his car.

Ten rand was cheap for a new hubcap for his car.

“Okay. Get me a hubcap, and I’ll pay you ten rand.”

He walked into the movie house.

Klaas looked at Amos.

“What did you say that for? You haven’t got any hubcaps!”

Amos grinned.

“Wait and see. I have an idea.”

When the man came out of the movie house, a hubcap was on the wheel. He was very pleased. His car looked smart again.

“Here’s the ten rand. Well done!”

He got into his car and drove off.

Amos and Klaas looked at each other and laughed. They walked down the road to the shop to buy some food.

They went to the park and ate the food.

“That’s better.”

“I didn’t know that you were such a clever one.”

“That man won’t be so happy when he sees the other side of his car!”

All the way to Z

It was raining. We waited, but Bernard did not arrive.

Frans looked at his watch. He said, "Maybe Teacher won't come today. It means we will miss our lesson."

Mthandeni looked disappointed.

Johnson said, "Mthandeni, why do you come for lessons? At your age it is difficult to learn."

Mthandeni answered, "Young or old, everyone should know how to read and write."

"Look," he said, "I cannot even read an address. If I want to go somewhere, I have to ask my wife for help."

"Ah," said Ephraim, "you want to read addresses that your wife does not see."

We all laughed.

"What about you, Lindiwe?" asked Frans. "Why do you come for lessons?"

Lindiwe said, "I live in Thokoza, but my family is in Ermelo. If I want to send a letter, I have to ask someone to write it for me."

"Maybe that person will say to me that I am wasting his time. He is busy with his own things. Then I must pop out five rand."

Frans said, "Why don't you ask your daughter to help you write a letter?"

Lindiwe shook her head. "Children don't have patience. Mpho shows me how to draw A and B and some other letters. But she is in a hurry. She runs out of the yard to play netball with her *chommies*."

Ephraim said, "Maybe Lindi cannot write because she too liked to play netball."

We laughed, but Lindiwe said, "We lived at the farms. Our master said I must not go to school because Mosadinyana wants me in the kitchen. I did not go to school at all."

We all looked at Ephraim. He said, "I also grew up on a farm. I stayed away from school, being naughty. Now I am sorry. In the taxi I envy people who read the Sowetan. I am a Bucs fan. I like to follow my team. That is why I am learning."

"One day I will look at the paper and I will then say to everyone, loudly,

"He! Bafowethu, Chiefs paid one million for Temba 47 Mtshali. What a Star!"

That will be my best day in this life."

“Yes, yes, *com*, that’s the way,” said Johnson. “And here too, at work, we must know how to read. Workers in the stores section want to elect me shop steward, but I refuse. People are helpless if they are not educated.”

He said, “I had this bad dream. My manager gave me a notice for the staff. I looked at it. I could not see any words. I sweated. In the morning I told my wife that I would start lessons.”

“It’s important, Mr – um.”

“Now I already know my letters A to G,” he said.

Lindiwe laughed. “Com, the letters go all the way to Z.”

We also laughed when she said that.

“Well,” said Johnson, “You see I am on the right way.”

The rain had stopped. Frans said, “I told you that our teacher would not arrive today. Maybe he will make excuses about the rain or about taxis. Next time we see him let’s give him a warning.”

Ephraim went to the teacher’s desk. He said, “No, Frans. Wait until he has taught us everything we need to know. Then we will give him a **written** warning.”

We were leaving our desks, laughing and pushing each other.

It was nearly chaile time, and we were going home.

But the door opened suddenly and someone entered, smiling.

It was Bernard, our teacher.

He said, “I am sorry I am late. It was raining. I stood for a long time waiting for a taxi.”

When we heard him say that, we sat down and began to tease him.

Ephraim said, “There is a penalty, Teacher. You must buy us a litre of coke before the end of today.”

Bernard smiled. He said, “OK, I will buy the coke. But not before you are able to write “a litre of coke” with no mistakes. Now, let’s get on with the lesson. We have a long way to go.”

Calling the ancestors

The Zondi family had a beautiful new house. It was very expensive. It was in a smart new suburb. They were very happy with their new house. They wanted to have a party on Saturday to show the house to their friends and their ancestors. On Tuesday they started to brew Zulu beer.

On Friday they brought lots of things for the party. They brought chips, salad and bread. They brought cooldrink, brandy, wine and Castle beer. They also bought a white goat and cow. They killed the white goat. They sprinkled the gall from the goat around their new home. Then they put the meat and some Zulu beer down for the ancestors. They put it on the floor because the ancestors don't know about tables.

Then they started to kill the cow in the garden. Their neighbours, the Simpsons, heard the cow bellow. They shouted over the fence. They said they would call the police. They didn't know that they cow should bellow to call the ancestors.

On Saturday morning friends came to cook meat. They cooked in big pots because this was a serious party. They children took food and hid it in plastic bags to take home. There was a lot of noise and everyone was laughing and talking.

In the middle of the day more friends came to cook the meat. They found the house by looking for the smoke from the cooking fires. The Zondis invited the Simpsons and their other neighbours to come. But only some of them came. Others just looked over the fence and complained about the noise.

All afternoon people ate and drank and enjoyed themselves at the Zondi's house. They ate lots of food. They played music. They danced and sang while the children played. Some of the men got very drunk and shouted at lot. Some of them even fell over.

One man got so drunk that everyone thought he was going to die. The Zondis phoned the hospital and the ambulance came. They took the drunk man to the hospital. When it started to get dark people left the party and went home.

After the party the house was very quiet. Some people started to clean up. The Zondis were very tired. The house was in a mess. But they were glad about the party.

Dancing to fame

What do you see here? Rugby players? Cricket players? No! We are Gumboot dancers who are proud of what we do in our community.

We as a group love gumboot dancing. It keeps us busy, fresh and healthy.

We are the new generation. We are proud of our culture. Let me tell you about the different kinds of dances that we perform.

This one we call *Isitimela Dance*, which means the Train Dance. It shows people moving to and from work by train.

We also do the *Mngqusho Dance*. This one reminds us of people who do not use a spoon when they eat samp. The dance reminds us to return to our culture.

Here is a dance that always takes us back to our homelands. It is called the *Isqo Dance*. *Isqo* is a short word for *umqombothi* which means traditional home-brewed beer. The dance shows men sitting in a circle enjoying *isqo*.

Have you ever seen migrant workers leaving home to go back to work? This is what is happening here. This dance is called the *Peace Dance*. It shows how people wish the workers a peaceful journey back to work.

We are unlike other dancers. We don't use musical instruments. Instead we clap our hands then tap on our boots, while some of us whistle or shout. All this gives us rhythm.

I am Patrick Martinus. I live in Mfuleni. When I started this group I had one thing in mind. I wanted to help the youth of my community. So I started to organise some dancing for the youth.

I like us to respect each other and every one must have confidence in themselves. If we do not have these two points in life then there is no future for us.

My mother, Sara, is our group manager. She helps us and encourages us whenever we perform. She says our future is bright, that's why she teaches us how to work with money, and how to build one spirit amongst us. She wants us to fulfil our dreams.

We meet twice a week to practice our dancing. We spend one and a half hours each time. We cannot spend more time because some of us are still at school and we need time to study.

We have worked hard. In 1996 we were in a television programme called *Shell Road to Fame*. We have danced in our community and around Cape Town. People really like what we do.

We hope to become known far and wide. We want to go overseas and around the whole of Africa to share our traditional dances.

Doctor Khumalo

Theophilus Doctorson Khumalo was born on 26 June 1967 in Dube township, and he grew up there. He is the son of Eliakim Khumalo.

He used to go to the grounds with his father when he was a young boy. Eliakim was a defender for Kaizer Chiefs. One day Doctor said to himself: 'I want to be famous like my father.'

Doctor started playing soccer when he was about four years old. He played for junior clubs called Dube Callies and Mofolo Young Destroyers. He was always a midfielder.

Doctor went to school in Dube. Every afternoon he ran to the grounds to play soccer. He was very good at dribbling the ball.

At high school he started playing with big boys. But they were afraid of him because they could not take their ball away from him. Many people came to see Doctor clowning with the ball. 'Doctor! Doctor!' they shouted and roared with laughter.

One day in 1987 Eliakim was shocked to hear that Doctor was going to play against their big enemies, Orlando Pirates. Eliakim did not want Doctor to get hurt. But Doctor was not nervous. And at the end of the game everyone was talking about him.

'Did you see that tall new boy wearing the number 15 jersey?' one fan asked his friend. Since that day Doctor became the darling of the fans. They called him '16V'. The name comes from the Volkswagen Golf 16V which is very fast.

Newspaper people wanted to take pictures of Doctor whenever Kaizer Chiefs were playing. And people filled the stadium wherever he played. Some said he had a magic name.

'I just want to keep doing my best,' Doctor told himself. Doctor played for eight years for Kaizer Chiefs. He scored a lot of goals. Everyday he received letters from his many fans.

Doctor started to make money from soccer. In 1992 he was chosen as footballer of the year. The Sunday Times gave him R50 000! Doctor could not believe it.

Also, in 1992, Doctor made history by scoring the goal that gave South Africa a 1-0 win over Cameroon. This was the first game the South African team played against another country since Nelson Mandela came out of prison.

Doctor played well in the next two years. In that time, many boys became Chiefs supporters because of him. 'Please Doctor, show us how to play soccer,' they always said.

In 1994 Chiefs were in danger of losing to Sundowns in the final of the BP Top 8 Cup. With the score at 2 all, Doctor was brought on as a substitute. He was limping. But he inspired the team and set up the winning goal.

In 1995 Doctor signed to play for a team in Argentina. Some fans cried when they heard Doctor was leaving. But he returned after three months because he was not happy there.

Doctor was a very happy man when he played for Bafana Bafana in the African Nations Cup in 1996. He played very well in the final against Tunisia. He set up the two goals of Mark Williams. Bafana Bafana won the trophy and gold medals.

After that, the American Major League Soccer asked him to go and play for the Columbus Crew Club. In America they bought him a beautiful car and a big house. 'The Doctor! The Doctor!,' the fans call him.

But Doctor returned to South Africa in April to score the second goal of the match against the world champions, Brazil. The South African coach replaced Doctor in the second half. Some of the fans were angry because they felt that Doctor could have helped prevent Brazil's win.

Some people say Doctor Khumalo is just a pretty boy. And some people say he is lazy. But Doctor has worked hard to become a successful soccer player. Soccer has made a big difference in the life of the boy from Dube.

First prize

Bongi loved competitions. She entered every competition she saw.

Bongi spent lots of money on stamps. She entered many competitions but she never won anything.

“It does not matter,” she said. “I have lots of fun entering competitions.”

One day Bongi got a phone call.

“Congratulations, Mrs Khumalo! You have won first prize in our competition! You have won R50 000!”

Bongi was very happy. She was very excited.

She told her husband She told her children.

She told the neighbours and all her friends. She sent a telegram to her relatives in Kokstad and told them the good news.

Her husband needed to fix his car.

Her children wanted beautiful new clothes.

Her neighbour asked for help to buy a new stove.

Her best friend did not have money to pay electricity.

Her uncle in Kokstad was busy building an extra room.

Bongi helped everyone. She helped her husband and her children and her neighbour and her best friend and her uncle.

She helped everyone until her R50 000 was only R50. “No problem,” she said. “R50 is enough to enter some more competitions.”

Flags on a bridge

George is in jail. He has been in jail in Johannesburg for five years. He can't read or write. He has heard no news from home for three years. Life in jail is all he knows now.

One day the warden tells him he is going to be released on the 2nd of June. He says they will give him a bus ticket home to Port Shepstone. George is afraid to be free. He has no job. He has no place to stay.

George can't sleep. He can't eat. He thinks of Lindi, the woman he loved before he went to jail. He wants to go home to her. But will Lindi still want him? Does she have another man? How can he find out?

He asks another prisoner to write a letter to Lindi for him. In the letter he asks Lindi if she still loves him. He says that if she loves him, she must put a white flag up on the bridge outside Port Shepstone.

It is the 2nd of June. George leaves prison. He gets on the bus and watches the towns go past. He sees Heidelberg, Villiers, Warden, then Harrismith. Then the bus goes down through the mountains at Van Reenen's pass. Then it goes past Estcourt, Pietermaritzburg and on to Durban.

On the bus George thinks of Lindi. Did she get the letter? Does she love him? The bus goes past the airport outside Durban. It is getting closer to Port Shepstone. What if Lindi didn't get his letter? What if he told her the wrong day? What if someone took Lindi's flag off the bridge? What if the wind blew it away?

The bus is coming to Port Shepstone. George tells himself that Lindi will not want a man who has been in jail. He thinks that he is mad to hope for her. When the bus gets near the bridge he is afraid that there will be no flag, so he does not look out of the window.

Then he sees other passengers looking and pointing. They say, "What's that on the bridge? Papers? Political posters? Is it a rally?". George jumps up. He dances between the seats. He shouts for joy because he sees hundreds of white flags all over the bridge.

Forklift No: 4

Sam Dlomo wrote to his wife, Ma-ka-Thuli, in Msinga.

She called Themba Dlomo, Sam's younger brother.

She said to him, "Bhuti, you know I can't read. Please help me with this letter."

Themba said, "Ma-ka-Thuli, the letter comes from ubhuti Sam in e-Goli. I will read it."

Phila nkosikazi yami, ngi sa phila. I hope abantwana ba sa phila.

I am still employed at Apex Metals. We are very busy this year. In June I started driving forklift number 4.

It is for moving heavy metal and large blocks of wood. I drove fast.

There is a new foreman in the factory. His name is Mr Des.

One day he praised my work. He said, "Sam, you drive too fast."

I was happy and began to drive more fast.

I went to fetch a crate in the warehouse.

Some workers were frightened when they saw me drive towards them. They dropped the crate.

I was shocked to see them run away.

I heard *intsimbi*. This bell warns you about danger.

The men stopped working. They came to the forklift and shouted at me.

They accused me. They said, "*Hey wena, uyahlanya na?*"

Some people like to quit work and make noise. That is all.

They complained to the personnel manager, Obed Mnisi.

Obed called me at lunch. He said, "*Bra Sam, uMnumzana Elliot ufuna ukukubona. Let's go to the office.*"

Mr. Des, too, was in the office.

He complained about me. He said that I drive the forklift badly.

Obed repeated this in our language. I understood everything.

It was my chance to speak.

I said, "Mr Elliot, many times I told Mr Des that I can work fast. He always said *Yebo*. Why does he now say something different?"

Mr Elliot said, "I will talk to Mr Des about this, and I will call everyone back later."

We went out of the office.

In the store, Mr Des said to me, "Take it easy now, *fana*."

I replied, "I am not Fana. My name is Sam Dlomo."

He did not say anything more.

At 4 pm our boss called us to the office. He said, "Mr Mnisi, I think Sam has done wrong. Do you agree?"

Obed said, "Sam drives fast. But Mr Des talks fast, and he does not give orders clearly. Both men are too fast."

Mr Elliot laughed. Then he said, "Sam, you must learn English. This will help you in your work. You must go to night school."

Mr Des was happy.

But he stopped laughing when the boss said, "And you must learn Zulu, Des. You must know the languages of workers. You too must go to night school."

He was shocked.

After this I attended night school. Our teacher is Pat Ngubane.

He teaches us many things.

He told me that 'too fast' does not mean 'nice and fast'. It means 'over fast'.

Now my job is to clean some rusted *insimbi* with a blow-torch and a file.

It is a skilled job.

I miss my forklift. Perhaps I will drive it again one day.

From last week Mr Des does not say *Yebo*. He points to things and asks, "*Yini leyo?*" We tell him the words in isiZulu.

I will send you money at month end. *UKhonze kuThuli noZodwa. Obhalile ngowakho, Sam.*

Ma-ka-Thuli was happy to get the letter.

She wished she could write. She wanted to tell her husband that Thuli and Zodwa are healthy. She will see Sam in December, when he returns home.

Going home with chickens

Thobela is in the Boland bus. He worked on a peach farm for nine months. Now he is going home. Thobela is happy.

He wants to see his family. He wants to see his fields. The land looks very dry. Thobela is worried about the drought.

Thobela has gifts for his family. He is proud of what he brings home. On top of the bus is a big crate of chickens. In his pocket is four hundred and fifty-two rand.

The bus stops at Madakane. Some men get off. They climb up and take their bags from the roof. The bus stops at Tukela and more men get off. At last the bus stops at Thobela's village.

Thobela's wife, Thandeka, is there. She has been waiting for a long time. Thobela gets off the bus. He climbs up the ladder. He looks on top of the bus.

There is no crate. The chickens are not there. Thobela takes his bag. The bus drives away.

Thobela greets Thandeka and Mafi, Nonyu and Nothobela. They are happy to see him. Thobela says nothing about the crate of chickens.

Thobela walks through the village with Thandeka and their children. They go to their house but they do not go inside. Little Nothobela holds her father's hand. She says, "Come this way, Tata."

She takes him along the path near the mielie field. Thandeka and Mafi and Nonyu follow them. Thobela asks, "Where are you taking me?"

Nothobela shows her father a cage full of chickens. She says, "Look, Tata, our mother raised these chickens. This is our gift for you because you are with us again."

Thobela picks up Nothobela. He laughs happily. Thandeka is proud. She does not know about the lost crate of chickens.

I told myself I am going to learn

As mother and woman I hold the reins of the family. I give the family the support they want. I am responsible for keeping the family together.

My husband just brings money. He demands food and clean shirts from me.

He wants me to budget for everything in the house. He wants me to see that the accounts are paid.

When the post comes in I must open it and see what the letters say. Sometimes it is accounts. Sometimes it is letters from relatives or friends.

The children are there. They want me to help with school work. Sometimes they want to read to me. They bring reports from school.

They want me to go to the parents meetings.

I had a friend who helped me with all of this.

I made my husband think I know how to read and write a little.

What was worse, I made my children think I know how to read and write.

One day an account came to say we must pay more money. But we had paid the account.

My husband said, "Let's see all the receipts." I was lucky. I had kept all the receipts. Then my husband said, "Put the accounts and the receipts month by month."

I started shaking because I knew I did not know how to read. I got accounts of other shops mixed up.

This was the day I told my husband that I did not know how to read and write. I told him that I was afraid he would leave me.

He gave me support.

I told myself that I am going to learn. I found a place.

But then my husband started complaining. He complained that the days I go to my class, I come home late. The food is not ready on time.

I kept silent. I said to myself, "I am not going to give him a chance. I have frustrated myself too long by pretending I know how to read and write."

One day, I attended a learners committee meeting.

I came home late. There was no food. He fought me for the food.

I said, "Why not cook yourself? You have hands."
He hit me.

Next time, I came late again. This time it was from class. I was afraid. I was shaking.

He said to me, "I am going to stop this business of learning." He took my books and threw them out the door.

I went out and picked them up. I said, "If you do this again, I will pack my clothes and go away. And you will have to cook and wash for the children."

He looked at me. He kept silent and went to the bedroom.

And I knew I had won.

Joe's new job

Joe is looking for work. He wants to be a truck driver.

One day he gets a job with a big company. He has to start at seven o' clock the next morning.

He goes home to tell his family. They are all very happy about his new job.

Joe is afraid that he will wake up late. He sets his alarm clock to ring at six o' clock the next morning. He goes to bed early.

Joe wakes up. He looks at the clock. He thinks that it is time to get up.

He rushes out of the house. He is in a great hurry.

He drives to work very fast in his old car. He wonders why it is so dark.

At work he finds only the security guard. The security guard says it is the middle of the night!

Just a job

Wiseman Khumalo lived with his parents in a small house in Port Elizabeth. They did not have much money. And Wiseman could not find work. "I just want a job," he always said.

One day a friend told Wiseman that there was good work in the factories in Cape Town. Wiseman decided to go to Cape Town. Perhaps he would also find a job there.

Wiseman's parents gave him the train fare and a little money to use in Cape Town. "You can stay with my cousin in Cape Town," Wiseman's mother said. She gave Wiseman her cousin's address.

Wiseman's parents were sad that he was going away. They said goodbye to him at the station.

When he got to Cape Town, Wiseman asked a taxi driver to take him to his mother's cousin. But when he got to the house, no one knew his mother or her cousin. It was the wrong address.

Wiseman did not know what to do. He asked people for help. But it was no use. It was getting dark and a cold wind was blowing.

As last he found a place to sleep inside a cement pipe. It was not a very good place to sleep but it was out of the wind. Wiseman did not sleep well that night.

In the morning Wiseman started to look for a job. He went to lots of factories. At one factory the security guard said, "There's no job here. We will call the police if you don't go away."

At another factory they said, "Go and ask Mandela for a job."

At another factory they gave him only two hours of work.

That night Wiseman went back to his cement pipe to sleep. In the morning he tried to find a job again. But he had no luck. No one wanted to give him work.

After a few days Wiseman had no money. He slept in his cement pipe at night. One night he heard voices.

Someone said, "Give us your money!"

Wiseman was scared. "I have no money!" he said.

At first the tsotsis did not believe Wiseman. They hit him. One of them stabbed Wiseman's arm with a knife. Then they went away.

Wiseman was sore all over. Blood dripped from his arm. What was he to do? He started to walk slowly down the road.

At last he got to a taxi rank. There he was lucky. One of the drivers took him to the nearest hospital.

In the hospital Wiseman started to feel better. But he was still sad and lonely. His family did not know where he was. He still had no job.

At the end of the week the sister told Wiseman he could go home. Wiseman thanked her and said, "I just wish I was going to a job."

"Would you like to work for us?" asked the sister. "We need a cleaner."

The next Monday Wiseman was back at the hospital. He was not in bed this time. Wiseman swept the floors, washed the walls, and emptied the rubbish bins.

Wiseman now had money for food and a shack. This made him happy.

Wiseman still dreamt about good work in a factory. "I know my luck has changed," he often said, "but this hospital work is just a job."

Magweya

A long time ago, there lived a huge, ugly giant who lived on top of a hill which overlooked the village of Mbavala.

Magweya liked to eat the short people of Mbavala because they were sweet and tasty. The villagers lived in fear of him.

On one of Magweya's hunting trips, he saw a very beautiful, short, thin girl collecting water by the river. Her name was Nyeleti, daughter of Chief Nyakani.

Magweya was very hungry but his eyes were caught by the beauty of Nyeleti. He threw down his long spear and large bag. Then he captured Nyeleti and made her his wife.

One day, Magweya saw that there were no longer any short people left in the village. He thought that he had eaten them all. Magweya was hungry and angry. He punished the village by stopping the water from flowing. The people had no water.

The giant made a plan. He said, "Since I have eaten all the short people in the village, I must eat Nyeleti, my wife. But Nyeleti is so beautiful. If I eat her, who will look after me?" But Magweya was very hungry so he decided to eat Nyeleti.

Nyeleti was still very thin. She would not make a good meal. So Magweya ordered Nyeleti not to do the heavy work like ploughing, fetching wood and collecting water.

Magweya hunted and killed many animals for her to eat. He also collected wild berries and crops from the village for her.

The people of Mbavala were angry because their fields were dry and their crops were dead. They heard that the giant planned to kill and eat the chief's magical daughter. The chief called a meeting and the people made a plan.

The last short person had been hiding in a cave. The people called him. They sent him to Magweya as a gift.

Magweya prepared to eat him. The short person said weakly to Magweya, "Before you kill me, we must go to the river so that as you eat me, the rivers can be full."

They went down to the river. All the people of the village were there, bending, pretending to be short people. The giant was very happy. He cried out and laughed wildly.

But the people were hiding sticks, clubs and sharp weapons. They were ready for him. The people chased Magweya. The dogs also chased him. He did not run very far. Magweya was down.

He cried out loudly as the people beat and stabbed him. The cruel giant died slowly. The people saved Nyeleti and made a feast. The villagers were free at last.

Mandla and the bull

It is Saturday. The sun is hot.

Mandla goes to MaShezi with his friends.

They sit under the tree. They drink iJuba.

Sipho plays his guitar. Some men sing and clap.

Mandla is thirsty. He drinks more iJuba.

Some men play cards. Others rest and joke.

Mandla drinks more iJuba. The sun goes down.

The shadows get long. Mandla yawns.

It is time to go home. Mandla walks home across the veld.

The beer is in his stomach and in his head. He is too full of beer.

Mandla sees a tree. A bull grazes under the tree.

Mandla is happy. He does not worry about the bull.

He goes to water the tree. He pulls open his zip. He starts to feel better.

The bull looks up. It bellows.

Mandla boasts to the bull. "What do you think I have here?"

The bull stamps the dust. It charges.

Mandla yells. He is not finished. He tries to run.

Mandla wants to run fast. The iJuba makes his legs heavy.

Mandla races for the fence. The bull charges after him.

Mandla jumps over the fence. His trousers tear.

He falls like a baby on the other side.

The bull snorts fire.

Mandla gets up slowly. He shakes his head.

Mandla looks around. He is happy because there is no-one to laugh at him.

Mbusi's bad cold

One morning Mbusi woke up with a very bad cold.

His throat was sore, his nose was blocked and he was coughing.

His wife came in with some tea.

“Xoliswa, I feel so sick. I can’t go to work!”

“I know. You were coughing all night!”

“You must get to the clinic early, or you will wait all day!”

As soon as Xoliswa left for work, Mbusi cycled to the clinic.

His chest burned with each breath, and his body was sore.

He locked up his bicycle at the door, and went in.

Xoliswa was right about the long wait.

“You should have brought a book.”

“That is a good idea but I don’t read very well.”

At last it was his turn to go in.

“Kom in! Waarmee kan ek jou vandag help?”

“Waar het jy seer?”

“Kan jy Afrikaans praat?”

“Verpleegster, gee hom aspirien en vitamien C!”

“Yes, doctor!”

“Why can’t you speak my language?”

Outside the clinic, Mbusi looked at the bottles of pills. He wished the doctor had explained how to use them.

On the way home his nose began to tickle. He could feel he was going to.

“Ah- Ah- Ah”

sneeze the biggest sneeze of his life!

AHTCHOOO!!

His bicycle broke and his head hurt more than ever.

Back at the clinic, the queue was just as long as before.

“You should have brought a book.”

“Yes! I know that already! But I don’t read very well!!”

At last it was his turn to go in.

“Al weer jy! Wat is nou fout?”

“Wat het gebeur?”

“Jy moet versigtig wees!”

“Verpleegster, kry asseblief pynpille!”

“Yes, doctor!”

“Ow! That hurts!”

“Neem twee van die drie keer per dag na ete!”

“Why should I listen to you? You don’t speak my language.”

At home Mbusi looked at his pills.

“I want to get better quickly, maybe I must take lots of them!”

He lay down on his bed, thinking about his broken bicycle.

“I must get a girlfriend who is a doctor. Then she can buy me a car. I will learn to say “I love you” in Afrikaans. Then I will go back to the clinic.”

Soon he was fast asleep.

Mbusi woke up suddenly. He felt like being sick.

“I’m dying! I must call the ambulance!”

But the ambulance man said he was too busy to fetch someone with a cold.

“But I feel half dead!”

Just then he saw his friend Samson, who lived next door.

“Samson! Please help me! Take me to the clinic in your car.”

“You look sick!”

“You are having bad luck today!”

“It’s not bad luck! It’s that bad doctor! She didn’t tell me how to use the pills!”

“I DON’T HAVE A BOOK BECAUSE I CAN’T READ VERY WELL!!”

“Ek dink jy hou daarvan om hiernatoe te kom.”

“I’ve had ENOUGH of this!”

“YOU GO TO UNIVERSITY TO LEARN HOW TO BE A DOCTOR, BUT YOU CAN’T TALK TO YOUR OWN PATIENT!”

“YOU’RE NO GOOD AS A DOCTOR! YOU SHOULD GO TO LANGUAGE CLASSES!”

Mbusi was just as surprised as the doctor. They both sat down.

“Verpleegster, wat is fout?”

The nurse explained what Mbusi had said.

“You can’t speak my language and I can’t read, so you’re no help to me.”

The doctor thought about it.

“Jy is reg. Ek werk al lank hier. Dit is nou tyd dat ek my pasiente se taal aanleer.”

“I really must learn to read at last!”

Samson was waiting outside.

“Tot siens.”

“Bye, doctor!”

Xoliswa was home from work by the time he got back.

“Mbusi! Have you been at the clinic all day? How’s your cold?”

“I’ve still got a terrible cold but I feel much better!”

My name is Selina Mabiletsa

Selina Mabiletsa and her husband Joe lived in a small house in Thokoza. They had many friends, and they were happy.

Selina could not read or write, but this did not worry her. Joe could read. He read the newspaper to Selina. He also read letters to her.

"Joe is my eyes," Selina always said.

One day Selina's eyes closed forever. Joe got very sick. He went to hospital. And he died.

Selina cried for many days. One day she stopped crying. She said: "Selina, you must be strong. You must stop crying. You must start living again."

The next day Selina went to a school where adults learned to read and write. She began to learn to read and write.

Selina tried to write her name. This was hard. Selina wrote the words. But she always got them wrong.

One night Selina was lying in bed. Something good happened. Selina saw her name in her mind. She wanted to write it down.

Selina found a crayon. But she had no paper. So she wrote on the wall in big words:

My name is Selina Mabiletsa

Selina was a proud woman.

Then war came to Thokoza. People were fighting in the streets. People died in the streets. Cars and buses burned. Shops burned. Houses burned. Selina's house burned.

Selina and her friends went to live in the veld. They built zinc houses. The houses were very cold in winter. In summer they were very hot.

Selina stopped going to school. Sometimes she wished she was dead.

After a year there was good news. The government was going to fix the burned out houses in Thokoza.

Everybody talked about this, but Selina did not believe them. So she went to see for herself.

It was true! Builders were putting new roofs on the houses. They were hanging on new doors. Soon the houses were almost like new again.

Selina went to move back into her house. The TV people were there. The newspaper people were there. Everyone wanted to see this happy moment.

Then Selina got a shock. She saw two men standing at the door of her house.

"You must show us that you lived here," one of the men said. "Please show us your papers."

Selina knew nothing about papers. She picked up her bags and began to walk away.

Then she remembered something.

"I can show you that this is my house", she said.

She walked into the house and the people followed her. She walked into her bedroom.

Selina pointed to the writing on the wall. A year had gone by, but it was still there:

My name is Selina Mabiletsa .

My own business

My name is Thandazile Mthembu.

I was born in 1957 into a big family.

I am single and have no children.

For five years I worked as a domestic worker in Crossmoor.

I was given food, a room, and R250 a month.

But my family wanted me to send more money than I had.

So I started to think about how I could get more money.

I spoke to MaMbili. MaMbili is selling amadumbe at the Durban Market.

She told me that I must pay R60 to the taxi rank manager to get a good place next to the taxis and buses.

I saved R60 for the stall.

Then I borrowed R200 from my sisters in law.

I started my business in April 1997 and paid this money back in less than a year.

Now I sell apples, bananas, oranges, amadumbe, avocados, sweets, and loose cigarettes near the taxis.

All hawkers charge R2 for four fruits or a bowl of amadumbe and 30 cents for a cigarette. So do I.

It is very difficult to ask for a higher price.

I stay with two other woman and a girl in a house in Umlazi.

My real home in at Esidumbeni near Tongaat, where my family lives.

I go there once a month. It costs me R22 to visit my family.

I always take bread, meat, fruits, and money for groceries with me.

Most days I order:

one box of medium bananas,
100 bananas for R40;

one box of small apples,
120 apples for R45; and

one bag or box of small oranges,
80 oranges for R32.

In the evenings I keep the goods in a storeroom next to the market.

I pay R12 a week to rent the storeroom.

And I pay R3 each day to a person who carries my goods to and from the storeroom.

On a normal day I sell fruits for around R70. Pay days are good days. On these days my turnover is more than R150.

I only can count my money at home in the evening.

To know my profit I must take all my costs away from my daily turnover.

Now all my days look like this:

I wake up shortly after four.

I leave home at dark most of the year.

I arrive at the market around sunrise.

I order my stock as soon as the market opens.

I start selling at 6:35 a.m.

I pack up and leave at 6:00 p.m.

I arrive home at 7:00 p.m.

I go to bed around 9:00 p.m.

I do have a bank account which I use as a saving account.

And I keep money in a stokvel.

I pay R10 per day to the stokvel group, and I withdraw this money at the end of every month.

I can write and sign my name, but I never went to school.

I can count and read numbers and prices, and I never have a problem of giving the right change.

I am proud to be a successful business woman.

My red cow

I will never forget when I bought my first cow. It was a red cow and it was 1991. I loved that cow.

One day in 1992 I could not find my cow. Somebody had stolen it.

For three months I looked for my cow in the mountains of Bulwer. I did not stop because I was very sad.

I asked many people about my cow. Some people said they had seen it.

But when I went to that place, it was the wrong cow. It was not beautiful like my cow.

I asked more people about my cow. One day my friend told me who had stolen it.

The man who stole my cow was my uncle! I could not believe my ears.

I was very cross but I did not take a gun. I did not go to talk to him. I did not want to see him ever again.

Now I am tired. I will never buy another cow. It is better to buy furniture and leave it in my room. When I go out I will lock the door.

My village

MaZondi shows us her home.

"This is my house. We all have two rooms. The walls are made of tin. The doors are made of tin.

The roof is made of tin. The windows are small. They are also made with tin with plastic, not glass.

We call our village Tin Town.

First we also had tents. After they were broken we built rooms from wood and mud.

Nobody here has electricity. But the floors are cemented and we all have our own toilet.

I fetch water from the tap. And I must still bring it home in containers."

MaZondi walks far to the mountain. She points out to the dam. She says:

"This was my village. I liked it very much. The government forced us to go in 1987.

My house was very nice. It had three rooms and even a verandah. I did not want to leave it.

Some of us are still crying.

The fields were big by the river side. The soil was good. We had plenty of food and water from the river for the plants. Some people had cattle in their kraal."

Back in Tin Town MaZondi goes to the other side of the road.

"You see, this will be our new village. But the work has stopped. Many things are wrong.

I want a house with four rooms and a kitchen with running water. I want to water my new garden from the tap with a hosepipe. I want a good fence around my yard.

But the new plots are too small.

The chief does not ask us. And there are not many women on the Development Committee.

But the money from the government is there.

We could all be very happy in our new village. They only need to listen to us."

Nothembi

My name is Peki, Emelina Nothembi Mkhwebane. I was born in Carolina near Swaziland in Mpumalanga Province on 1 January 1953. I grew up loving music, especially Ndebele music.

My parents died when I was five years old. I was left with my grandparents. They took care of me from then on. I looked after my grandfather's cattle and sheep. I could not go to school because my grandparents did not have enough money.

I was born into a family that likes music. My grandmother, Dinah, taught me how to play a reed flute. My sister taught me how to play the *isikumero*. Later, I started ploughing the fields with my uncle, Besaphi Mthimunye. During lunch time my uncle taught me how to play the guitar. He made a guitar out of an oil tin. I learned a lot about Ndebele culture.

I started a musical group called 'Izemalani zakoNomaziyana'. We played at cultural gatherings and weddings. When the group was playing, people would clap hands and dance. Our music brought happiness to people in our area.

When I was nineteen I took over my grandmother's job as a domestic worker. She was too old to work and my grandfather had died by then. My job was to look after an old white couple.

My job was in Pretoria. But I did not like town life. I always remembered the place where I grew up. I decided to buy a guitar to remind myself of my home. I played Ndebele songs. I never forgot my family while I was in Pretoria. I visited them often.

I also bought a small keyboard to use together with the guitar to compose songs. I then bought a tape recorder to record all the songs that I composed.

The first album that I recorded was called 'Iintaba azihlangani, amathunzi ayahlangana.' With this record, I first began to show the talent I was born with.

After some time, I realised that I had composed many songs. I looked for a recording company that would record my songs. I did not know where to start.

I finally found a record company that would record my songs. I did not know how to read and write. The company producer read a contract to me that I had to sign. I signed with a 'X'. He lied to me about the contract. I did not get money for my album. I was tricked by the producer. I decided then to go to school.

In 1985, I started attending adult education classes in Pretoria. My first school was called 'Kageng' WPS. The principal was Jenny Neser. I told her about the problem that I had with the record company. She took steps to get my money back.

I continued composing my own songs. I went to another record company to record three albums. I did not get a cent for those albums. I decided to stop recording because I could not find the right people to do business with.

In 1986, I entered a music competition representing Radio Ndebele. I came third out of seventeen radio stations.

In 1988, I went to perform overseas. I performed in New York and London. I received an award for my best Ndebele songs. The name of the award was 'Woza Africa Foundation'. Duma Ndlovu promoted my overseas tour.

As time went on, my songs became popular. They were loved all over South Africa. In 1993, I finally found a record company that treated me well. This was RPM. I then recorded my fourth album. In 1995, I recorded my fifth album called 'Vukani Bomma'. This album was the best of all my albums. People loved it very much.

Now I am well-known throughout the world. I am now helping up-and-coming musicians. I do not want them to suffer as I did. My two children are in my band. The first one is Mathews, who is twenty years of age. He plays drums. Busiswe, who is 16, is a backing vocalist and dancer.

My advice to up-and-coming musicians is not to play just for the sake of money. They should have faith in themselves and a love for music.

I have passed Std 8 now and I am going into Std 9. I would like to get a degree in music. At the same time I will continue entertaining my fans with great traditional music.

The story of Paul Adams rise to fame

Paul Adams was born in Grassy Park in Cape Town, on 20 January 1977. He is the youngest child of William and Anne Adams. He has a sister and two brothers.

Adams started playing cricket as a batsman at both club and school level. He played for a lower division club in the Cape area called the Blue Bells.

Adams went to Plumstead High School. There a teacher asked him to bowl spinners. His cricket master says, 'When he first bowled the other team used to laugh at the way he bowled. But when he started taking their wickets they were not laughing anymore.'

Because Adams did not come from one of the well-known cricketing schools, he struggled to get recognition. Yet, in Standard 10, he was selected to play for the SA Colts, the schools C side.

But he was not selected for the South African under-19 team that toured England in July and August 1995. It was felt that he was not good enough. He was also overlooked in the selection for Clive Rice's Plascon Cricket Academy.

But Adams impressed Eddie Barlow, the well-known cricket player and coach. Barlow insisted that the selectors include Adams in the Western Province cricket team. Barlow said, 'I have never come across a wrist spinner who has such amazing control of length.'

Finally, Adams played for the Western Province B team against Eastern Transvaal. They were so impressed that they selected him for the A team match against Northern Transvaal. He took three wickets in their first innings and six in their second innings. Team-mate Brian McMillan nicknamed him Gogga.

Because of the way he played in this game, he was selected to play for the South African A team against the touring England side in Kimberly in November 1995.

Adams' parents drove all the way to Kimberly to watch the match. Adams dismissed two top England batsmen Hick and Thorpe, in one over.

'People think I can't see the batsman when I bowl, but I can,' says Adams. 'When I drop my head, I can still see him in my mind's eye. It comes from practice. It is not just luck.'

Adams was now attracting growing interest. In a Western Province match against Boland in November 1996, 10 000 turned up to see their new hero, instead of the usual 100 spectators!

Adams played in the fourth test match against England. He was the first 18 year old to be selected for the national team. Some people felt he was still too young and inexperienced for this. He took 3 wickets for 75 runs in the first innings.

In the fifth test at Newlands, he showed he could do more than bowl well. His partnership of 73 runs with Dave Richardson turned the game in South Africa's favour. Adams showed that he can also be useful with the bat and scored 29 runs.

Adams then played in another two one day matches against England. Although he did not always do so well, he showed that he had the ability to play in the World Cup.

Adams was brought in to play against Pakistan in the World Cup. He also played against the West Indies. He took a total of three wickets. Again the question of his age and experience was raised by some.

He went to United Arab Emirates to play in the Sharjah Cup. He did not play in the first few games but was Man of the Match against Pakistan, taking 3 wickets.

Paul Adams has gained experience which many cricketers only dream of. He has shown courage in handling this challenge. Time will tell if he can make it last.

Pension money

N'wa-Makasani was very, very old. Her deeply sunken and shiny eyes could not see very far. This old woman lived with Mlahleki, her granddaughter.

This granny depended on her pension money for her livelihood. Since it was pay-day, granddaughter and Granny left home very early. Mlahleki pushed Granny with the wheelbarrow.

“I am old and helpless my grandchild. Without you, my dear, I would have kicked the bucket long ago.”

The old woman was paid her cheque, and she cashed it by buying a chicken, masenja and a small pot. After that, they left for home.

On the way they came across three boys. Granny knew Nkitsikitsi, her neighbour.

“An old person has the right to ask favours from any child.”

It was dark when the old woman arrived at home.

“You'll buy bread, my grandchild. It would be difficult to find someone who is so kind as you.”

Mlahleki was Granny's favourite grandchild. She cooked the chicken and xibasa, which is very fine home-crushed porridge.

She finished cooking and rushed to the bottle store to buy a bottle of beer. Granny loved drinking after pay-day. After that, they had supper.

As usual, Granny would tell folktales before going to sleep.

Grandchild and Granny were fast asleep when Nkitsikitsi and his gang crept closer, kicked the door open and went into the hut. N shone the torch in Granny's face. He had covered his face with a hat.

“Old woman! Old woman! Quickly give us your pension money before we stab you!”

The old woman wrapped herself with tattered blankets. One of the criminals pushed her to the ground and untied her purse on her waist and took all the money.

Mlahleki was shivering intensely. Because she had developed breasts, she became the animals' prey.

The criminals stole some meat in the small pot and escaped, swallowed by the darkness.

“I can’t sit back while those kids robbed me. Tomorrow, when the sun rises, I am going to the chief’s kraal.”

The following morning Granny went with her complaint to the chief. While she was busy explaining her story, three other old women came closer angrily. Even the people disapproved of the criminals’ actions.

“The village of Xihimu cannot house these dangerous criminals. Men, go and hunt these jackals!”

The men scattered all over, heavily armed with clubs and knobkieries. The dogs also followed.

The men searched everywhere, including the fields.

When they reached the river, they smelt dagga smoke. When they approached, they met with these boys – Nkitsikitsi and his gang. The criminals tried to run away, but they could not get far before they were put on chains.

The village men arrived at the chief’s kraal with the criminals. The animals got tied up to a tree which had a lot of ants on it.

“To the residents of Xihimu: what do we do with these animals?”

Boys cracked whistles. Women ululated. “Let them be jailed! Let them be jailed!”

Sewing for a living

This is Clara Dudu Mpanza.

She is a dressmaker. Clara started sewing in Standard 7, and she loves dressmaking.

Clara makes beautiful dresses.

Her customers love her work. They always come back to her.

They also tell other people about Clara's good work.

Most people order dresses to wear at funerals and weddings.

Clara earns her living by dressmaking, and she pays the college fees for her daughter.

MaNtuli is one of Clara's clients. She is a very big woman.

She always wants Clara to sew her dresses, because her size is not easy to find in shops.

"I heard the sad news that your niece has passed away, " says Clara.

"That is why I came to see you, Clara. I want you to sew a smart new two piece suit for me. I bought this material."

Clara shows MaNtuli the design she thinks will be nice for her.

"This will be lovely Clara, but I think the skirt must be longer."

Clara then takes MaNtuli's measurements. She uses a tape measure for this.

"You are now bigger than when I made your Christmas dress," says Clara.

Two days later Clara starts working on MaNtuli's purple two piece suit.

She spreads the fabric flat on her bed, folds it, and pins the pattern on it.

When she cuts, she must not forget the seam allowance.

Then she tacks two pieces together by hand, before she uses the sewing machine.

It takes Clara almost two days to finish MaNtuli's two piece suit.

"It is a really nice outfit," Clara says to herself. "Everybody can see that I had good training."

Clara finished her training ten years ago.

She borrowed money from her friend to start her business.

Now she has everything to run her workshop.

Clara spends most of her time on the sewing machine.

Sometimes she works until midnight, but she enjoys dressmaking.

She earns all her income by sewing.

Sweet memories

Object: stuffed toy dog, 20 cm high.

Owner: Margret Mthembu.

Dogs.

I grew up with dogs on a farm.

Now I live in a flat. Dogs are not allowed. I miss my dogs very much.

I bought this small dog for myself. I found it so cute.

Margret Mthembu, born 18-01-1971 in Eshowe.

My children are not allowed to play with it.

The dog sits on top of the fridge next to the door.

If somebody knocks on the door he barks.

Object: Zulu grass mat, 20cm by 30cm.

Owner: Vincent Dlamini.

The Symbol.

This is a new table mat. It is made in the traditional Zulu way.

Vincent bought the mat because he wanted his four children to know about Zulu traditions.

It is the only decoration at home.

Vincent Dlamini, born 28-08-1942 in Ngwavuma/Maputoland.

Their house is in Lindelani, near Ntuzuma,

where shooting and killing is still going on

almost every night.

Object: colour photograph, white/golden frame, 10cm by 15cm.

Owner: Michael Ngcobo.

Visit to Another World.

My sister is working in Durban North.

She is working as a domestic Auntie.

Three years ago her employer said: "Bring your children tomorrow. Bring all the children in your family."

So, the next morning they all went.

Somebody took this photo on that day.

Michael Ngcobo, born 23-12-1965 in Chesterville.

They gave it to me.

I bought a frame, and the picture now stands on the room divider in our home in Ntuzuma.

Everybody likes it, but I have never been to this swimming pool.

The photo is all I know about the visit.

Object : George Benson record, produced 1979.

Owner: D. Wilson Mkhize.

The Present.

Ten years ago I went to my place of birth. Nobody from my family lived there any more.

The only person I knew was a man who grew up with me. He was also visiting.

So, we went to town together.

We saw a shop with a record by George Benson in the window.

Dumisani Wilson Mkhize, born 15-02-1967 in Ntunjambili.

I told my old friend how much I love this music.

Two days later, on my 21st birthday, he gave me that record.

It is the only gift I have ever received in my life and I still have no record player to listen to it.

Object: trophy, 8 cm high.

Owner: Abdool Ibrahim.

A proud father.

My son gave this trophy to me some years ago.

He was doing Standard 7 and was running a marathon one day.

It was the first thing he won at school.

Abdool Ibrahim, born 13-04-1942 in Clairwood/Durban.

Now he is doing matric and has never let me down.

I work hard to pay for his education.

But I like to do it, because he is a good student.

I am very proud of him.

Prince Goge, born 15-05-1967 in Pietermaritzburg, owner of the bible.

Memory of my childhood.

I have only one thing left over from my childhood: a bible.

The bible belonged to my father who died in 1982.

Whenever I see this book, I see my father sitting down, taking the bible out of the drawer and starting to read.

It is a very strong memory.

Object: wrist watch, Tempo, reddish golden.

Owner: Radford Hlongwa.

Sweet memory.

I got this watch five years ago. It was a Valentine's gift.

Sbongile gave it to me.

I was in love with her, and I was her boyfriend for six years.

Radford Hlongwa, born 12-08-1968 at uMtwalumi Farm.

Unfortunately, she married someone else.

I was too poor, and her parents forced her to marry a man who could pay lobola.

But when I look at the watch I remember her and how I loved her for all those years.

The gift

Mrs Goba was the teacher in a small village. One afternoon a man arrived at the school. He told Mrs Goba that his name was Henry Kgopong, and he was the brother of Julius Kgopong. "My brother was in your Grade One class twenty years ago," he said.

Mrs Goba did not remember Julius Kgopong. But she did not want to hurt Henry so she said, "I remember your brother. He was a clever child!"

The children laughed and shouted, "A clever child just like us!"

Henry also laughed. "Julius loved you very much. Now he is a teacher."

Mrs Goba was very happy to hear this. But she was a bit worried that she did not remember this Julius.

"My brother has sent me to bring you a gift to thank you," Henry said.

"Oh Henry, thank you!" said Mrs Goba. "But I don't expect gifts from my pupils."

"Well, I have travelled a long way to bring you this gift," said Henry. "It is on the train at the station!"

"At the station, at the station!" shouted all the children, very excited.

"It's a sheep, Teacher," said Henry to Mrs Goba. "But we must hurry. The train is leaving in an hour."

"A sheep!" Mrs Goba was surprised. Then she smiled and said to the children, "Tell your parents to come to a big party at my house tonight!"

The children all ran home to tell their parents the good news.

Twenty minutes later, Mrs Goba had got a bakkie from next door. All the schoolchildren climbed onto the back of the bakkie. Mrs Goba also climbed on, to help bring the sheep home.

Mr Goba was very excited, because he loved parties. They stopped at the bottle store, and Mr Goba bought a lot of beer.

Everyone in the village knew about the sheep, and they were all excited about the party. The women were making salads and pap. The men were making a big fire.

When the bakkie got to the station, Henry climbed out. "I need some money," he said. "I must pay the conductor to get the sheep off the train."

Mr Goba was surprised. "How much will it cost?" he asked.

"A hundred rand," Henry said. "We have travelled a long way."

Mr Goba's mouth fell open. He was shocked. He gave Henry thirty-five rand.

Mrs Goba was also shocked. But then she thought of the nice gift that Henry's brother, Julius, was giving them. And Henry had travelled such a long way on the train! She took fifty rand out of her purse.

Then the children looked inside their pockets and gave Henry all the money they had. Everyone was thinking of the nice party they were going to have.

Henry got ninety-seven rand and sixty-three cents. "Will that be enough?" asked Mrs Goba.

"I hope so," said Henry. "Wait for me here. I'll soon be back with the sheep," He walked off to the conductor. He was whistling a song to himself.

Henry and the conductor got into the train to fetch the sheep.

Fifteen minutes later Henry was not back from the train. The children were tired of waiting. Mr and Mrs Goba were starting to feel worried. They heard the train's whistle blowing. Mrs Goba went to look for Henry and the sheep.

They were nowhere to be found.

The girl with a golden tooth

It was Sunday evening. As I was walking along the tiny path, I saw a beautiful girl coming from behind.

It was Basani, the most beautiful girl in Shirley village. She had long hair and dark, liquid eyes.

No-one in the village had ever seen her golden tooth. Birds were chirping in tall blue gum trees. The falling leaves backed the sweet music.

I looked back. Basani was very close this time. Only three metres away.

I felt my heart pounding -gi- gi- gi! But I had to be a man. I had to meet her.

“Hello Basi,” I greeted her with a wide smile. Oh my lord, she kept quiet.

“Hello Basiii!”

But Basani decided to remain silent and walked past. She must have been a dead ghost. How could she decide to ignore me with a new red shirt and a blaster?

Basani’s parents did not allow her to move out of their big and beautiful house. They said that if she moved out, some cruel men might forcefully remove her golden tooth.

Over the tiny path lay a long, thin and black stick. “Aha,” I thought, “This must be a snake to make Basani talk.”

“Hey Basani!” I cried very loudly. “Beware of the black mamba!” Basani was so terrified she rushed backwards and grabbed me tightly.

“Where is the snake, Fred?” she asked, whispering into my ears. “Around your slacks, between your legs!” I said, to her mouth.

Later I told her that she feared a mere blue gum stick. Basani laughed excitedly! This is the time I told her the magical words, “I love you.”

The liars

Selepe and his wife Mmaletsatsi are in the house.

“Sweetheart, do you think you can still sew?”

“How could I forget to sew when I just left school so recently?”

They laugh as they talk.

“Mmaletsatsi I was only bluffing.”

“Of course, I know that Selepe.”

“Mmaletsatsi, you look worried. Can you tell me what the problem is?”

“Selepe, I’m thinking of how good you are to me. My wish is that we could have children to complete my happiness with you.”

“Darling, please do not worry about that. I still love you. God is the answer to our prayers.”

She is crying. She wipes the tears off her face.

“Truly darling, we should have more faith in God.”

Selepe starts talking about the sewing again.

“I know a place where we can buy material at a very reasonable price. Why don’t we go and have a look at the shop”

“It sounds tempting, but the truth is we don’t have the money.”

“Mmaletsatsi, we can use the money that we have saved in the bank.”

“Selepe, you know very well that aunt Mmaditaba will be paying us a visit soon. If we use the money, we will have nothing to entertain her with.”

“Don’t worry, my pretty one. I’ll see what I can do.”

“If so, I will buy some material and start working.”

Selepe laughs happily.

“You are a very intelligent woman. You do nothing without giving a second thought first.”

“Let me start dishing up for you, darling.”

He laughs and looks happy.

“Mmaletsatsi, I must buy some new furniture.”

Aunt Mmaditaba comes to visit.

“Knock, knock. Can I come in?”

“Come in aunt Mmaditaba, how are you?”

“I am well my child. Why don’t I see Selepe anywhere?”

“He has just gone to fetch uncle. They should be on their way back.”

Meanwhile, Selepe and the uncle arrive home.

“Hello Mmaditaba, is everything well with you?”

Mmaditaba starts crying.

“I am alright, if it wasn’t for that ill-mannered man. I am not going back home.”

“Don’t cry, Mmaditaba. Put your faith in God. He will hear your prayers one day.”

“I agree with you, uncle. God is all around us. He will listen.”

Mmaditaba is furious with Mmaletsatsi.

“What do you know about God? You childless little thing!”

“Mmaditaba, I thought Mmaletsatsi was merely trying to help. What give you the right to speak to her like that? Would you like to tell me what your problem is?”

Mmaletsatsi starts crying.

“It’s not Mmaletsatsi’s fault that your husband isn’t making you happy.”

“I don’t know why the aunt is so rude to me.”

“Selepe should find himself a wife who can bear him children, not this thing!”

In the meantime the aunt comes in.

“What is the noise I hear”

“I was just telling Selepe he must find himself a wife that can bear him children.”

“What happens in my house is none of her business. On second thought, I think you are the one who is giving problems to uncle.”

Mmaditaba and Selepe’s aunt speak in private.

“What do you think of this whole business, Mmaditaba?”

“Yes, I think Selepe lets his wife say whatever she wants, and I don’t agree with such nonsense.”

“I think we should find a traditional healer to solve this problem.”

“I know where the traditional doctor is. We have to go and see him immediately.”

After two weeks, Selepe started hitting his wife. They eventually divorced.

Mmaletsatsi fell pregnant by another man. They married soon afterwards.

Mmaditaba and Selepe’s aunt found Selepe another wife. He married her, but he still couldn’t have children.

“Those witches made me leave my beloved wife. I am so confused and I miss Mmaletsatsi very much.”

The murder of Mrs Mohapi

Max Zuma is getting ready for a game of golf with Sergeant Visser, when.

“Leave me alone! I’m off duty today!”

“Who are you yelling at, Zoom-Zoom?”

How can he tell the kid from next door that he was shouting at a ringing phone?

“I, er, my name is not Zoom-Zoom!”

“But everybody calls you Zoom-Zoom. That’s the sound your car makes when you chase tstotsis.”

The kid made Max feel shy.

“Everybody knows you are the best detective in Soweto! Are you chasing tstotsis today, Zoom-Zoom?”

“No, today I’m chasing little boys to school.”

Zuma drove slowly through the busy Soweto streets.

He saw a crowd outside Mohapi’s Cash and Carry store. He stopped to see what was happening there.

Then he saw the ambulance. He pushed his way through the crowd.

“What’s going on here?”

“Mrs Mohapi is dead!”

Max went inside the shop. Sergeant Visser was there. They both knew there would be no golf for them today.

“Hi, Visser. Has much been stolen?”

“Hi, Zuma. No, nothing at all, just blood all over – even on the cash register.”

At the back of the shop a young woman was sobbing her heart out.

“Who’s she?”

“Palesa Phadi. She says she works here.”

Max walked over to Miss Phadi and comforted her.

“Miss Phadi, I’m Max Zuma. You look like you need a drink. Let me take you to a shebeen.”

“Thanks, Max. You can call me Palesa.”

As they leave the shop.

“DON’T LEAVE TOWN, MISS PHADI. YOU’RE A NUMBER ONE SUSPECT!”

“Don’t worry. He’s just angry because he can’t play golf today.”

MaKhuzwayo’s shebeen was a mess. Ashtrays overflowed with stompies. And there were empty bottles and dirty plates everywhere.

“You look tired MaKhuzwayo. Nice party last night hey?”

“Nice! Don’t joke, Max. They drank all night but when I wanted my money they said they didn’t buy all those drinks.”

“But did you write down their orders?”

“Of course! But they said I was making it all up!”

“You should get a cash register like we have in the shop. It prints the name of everything you sell. If you sell brandy it prints the word ‘brandy’, if you sell beer it prints the word ‘beer’.”

While MaKhuzwayo went to make them some breakfast.

“Palesa, Visser is after you. If you don’t want to be arrested you must tell me everything. Like where was Mrs Mohapi’s husband, Jakes, last night?”

“Oh, you know Jakes?”

“Everybody knows Jakes. The best wing Naledi Chiefs ever had. And the handsomest playboy in Soweto.”

“Max! I’ve just remembered something!”

“Yesterday I hear Mrs Mohapi shouting at Jakes on the phone. She said if he didn’t come back from Sun City at once she would write a new will and cut him out of it!”

“So Jakes couldn’t have killed her himself because he was in Sun City. But I bet he wanted her dead.”

“Let’s see if Jakes is home yet. I want to ask him some questions.”

“Hey, what about your breakfast?”

“Max! Please excuse us.”

They turn into Kamana Street in Orlando.

“Jakes lives in that double-storey house.”

“And someone’s leaving that house double quick. Hold on tight, Palesa.”

The chase is on after the mystery car.

“So this is the zoom-zoom car everyone talks about!”

“I can’t hear you!”

Suddenly the car stopped outside a house in Pimville. A very leggy lady stepped out and disappeared into the house.

“Wow! Let’s find out who she is.”

Max knocked on the door. The woman opened it but kept the safety catch on.

“Hi! Remember me? Bra Jakes introduced us. You are?”

“Angie.”

Angie opened the door wider.

“Angie, this is Palesa. We have bad news: Jakes’s wife was killed last night.”

“Oh! How terrible! But I can’t ask you in. I have to feed my babies.”

“You have babies and a figure like that?”

Then they saw what Angie meant.

“CATS!”

Max and Palesa left in a hurry.

“So, you HAVE met Angie before?”

“No, I lied. I saw a picture of her once on the cover of a magazine. Fashion models like her meet so many people that they can’t remember everyone they’ve met.”

“No woman would ever forget you, Max Zuma.”

“Er, Palesa, can I ask you a question?”

“Do you have keys for Mrs Mohapi’s shop?”

“What? Of course I do! So you think I went in there last night and killed her?”

“Not at all. I just need to get into that shop and look around.”

Outside the sun is setting. The shop is in darkness.

“Aha!”

Minutes late they are zooming away from the shop.

“Max, where are we going?”

“A place you’ll remember only too well.”

“Just what I thought! Taking your babies on holiday, Angie?”

“That’s none of your business!”

“Yes, it is! I arrest you for the murder of Mrs Mohapi!”

Suddenly Angie burst into the most pitiful tears.

“Jake forced me to do it. He said if I killed her he would take me to Paris and get me work there on the best fashion magazines.”

Later, at the police station.

“Jake used you, Angie. If you tell the truth about him you should be able to reduce your sentence.”

“What will happen to my babies?”

“We’ll look after them, I promise.”

“She would’ve got away if you didn’t give me that clue.”

“I gave you a clue? What clue?”

From his pocket Max took out the cash roll from Mrs Mohapi’s cash register. He showed Palesa what the last customer had bought the night Mrs Mohapi was killed.

“Remember what you told MaKhuzwayo about the cash register?”

“Oh no! She first did some shopping before she killed Mrs Mohapi.”

MOHAPI'S CASH & CARRY.

30-03-95.

THANK YOU.
CALL AGAIN.

3 X MILK	6.00
.....	6.00
.....	2.00
BREAD	2.00
6 X PAMPERS CAT FOOD	18.00
CASH	40.00
CHANGE	6.00

The new baby

In May my daughter came to me. "Mama," she said, "I'm going to have a baby."

"You're only seventeen," I shouted at her. "How could you be so stupid?"

"What will the people in the church say? What will your father say?"

Her father was very angry. "I am glad my dear mother is not alive to see this," he shouted at her. "She would have been very ashamed."

"You are the child of a priest. You should not have let this happen."

For seven months he would not talk to her. "I want nothing to do with her," he told me. "She has brought shame on our family."

Last week my daughter's pains started. I took her to the hospital.

On Monday I fetched her. We came home with the baby. Her father was still angry.

But then I showed him the baby.

He looked at his granddaughter. She opened her eyes and looked at him too.

"Maria," he said to me. His eyes were full of tears. "Maria, this child looks like my dear late mother."

He kissed the baby. Then he kissed our daughter.

"Thanks be to God," he said. "I am a grandfather."

The Nkosi family

This is a story about the Nkosi family. It tells you about them.

What do they like? What do they want? What do they feel? What do they dream?

The Nkosi family lives in a house in Inanda. There are seven people in the family.

Bonga Nkosi, the father, works as a packer in a factory.

MaDube Nkosi, sells food at the station.

Gogo Nkosi looks after the small children at home.

Saneliso Nkosi, the first born, is looking for a job.

Mbali Nkosi, the daughter, is in standard nine.

Sipho Nkosi, the second son, is in standard two.

Philile Nkosi is two years old and is the daughter of Mbali.

WHAT DO THEY LIKE?

Nkosi likes beer and horse-racing.

MaDube likes peace and quiet.

Gogo Nkosi likes the radio and knitting.

Saneliso likes going to meetings and girls.

Mbali likes Lucky Dube and reading.

Sipho likes soccer.

Philile likes porridge.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

“I just want some spare cash,” says Nkosi.

“I need a new hat for church,” says MaDube.

“An old lady needs a warm blanket,” says Gogo.

“Please give me some money for shoes,” says Saneliso.

“I really want my hair done,” says Mbali.

“Please give me some money for a football,” says Sipho.

“What’s money?” says Philile.

HOW DO THEY FEEL?

Nkosi feels worried.

MaDube feels crazy.

Gogo feels peaceful.

Saneliso feels bored.

Mbali feels happy.

Sipho feels sad.

Philile feels her toes.

WHAT ARE THEIR DREAMS?

“Let’s dream,” says MaDube.

“I’m the owner of a new house,” says Nkosi.

“I’m resting for a week,” says MaDube.

“I’m young and strong,” says Gogo.

“I’m a T.V. presenter,” says Saneliso.

“I’m dancing with Lucky Dube,” says Mbali.

“I’m Jomo Sono,” says Siphho.

“What’s a dream?” says Philile.

The right change

One evening, five learners arrived early at their numeracy class. They spoke about the problems people have with money.

Sonto said, "Life is very difficult if you don't know how to add and subtract. It is very important, especially if you sell things to people on the street."

"Have you ever sold things on the street?" asked Mary.

"No," said Sonto, "but one day I bought some things from a street vendor. Everything cost 85,25. I gave the vendor R10 and she gave me R5,75!"

"Did you give back the extra change?" asked Ma Betty.

"No," said Sonto, and everyone laughed.

"You think that's funny?" said Ma Betty. "Wait until I tell you my story."

A farmer in their village asked Ma Betty to help him plough his fields. "I'll pay you R50," said the farmer.

"It's peanuts, but I'll do it," said Ma Betty.

When the ploughing was done, the farmer gave Ma Betty a R50 note. "What's this?" asked Ma Betty.

"This is R50," said the farmer.

"You can't fool me," said Ma Betty. "I know what fifty rand looks like!"

"This is R50," said the farmer again.

But Ma Betty now wanted to be paid in coins. In the end the farmer gave her a big pile of coins. The next evening her daughter counted the money for her.

"Oh, Ma," she cried. "It's only R27!"

Ma Betty was very angry.

"That really is peanuts," she said.

Bra Themba said, "We must all learn to work with money. Two years ago, I worked at a shop in town. There the boos found out that I was sharp. He told me to add all the arrears."

"Arrears! What does that mean?" asked Mary.

"Sometimes a customer owes money," said Bra Themba. "But she can pay it off every month. If she does not pay one month, then that is called arrears. We then say that person is in arrears."

"Bra Themba," asked David, "how did you add all those arrears?"

"Oh," said Bra Themba, "I did a quick counting. Don't you know about a calculator?" He took out a calculator and showed them.

David said, "I was in arrears last month. I am paying off my new furniture. I earn enough money to pay off my furniture every month. But last month I spent my money on useless things. So I tried to change the way I work with money."

David then told his story.

David decided to do a monthly budget. He added up how much money he needed for rent, food, transport and other things. Then he subtracted that amount from his wages to see how much money was left over. But there was nothing left over!

"I'm sorry," David told his wife, "I've done my budget, but there is no money to pay for the furniture."

"I think you didn't count properly," said his wife. "You made a mistake."

"I think you're right," said David. "I'll break my budget and pay for the furniture first."

"This budget!" his wife sighed. "It's making my head sore. You must never do it again!"

"My story makes my head sore also," said Mary. "Listen to this."

One day Mary went to the shop to buy some groceries. She had R40 to spend. She bought all the things she needed.

When Mary got home, she gave her mother the change to keep. "How much did you spend on all these things?" asked her mother.

"R22,55," said Mary.

"This change is wrong. It's only 87,45," said Mary's mother.

"On, no!" cried Mary, and she ran all the way back to the shop.

"Did you get your money back?" asked Sonto.

"No," said Mary. Everyone sighed.

"Well," said Ma Betty, "we are making the right change in our lives when we come here to learn." She laughed. "And we are making sure that from now on we will always get the right change!"

The spaza

Bongiwe has a spaza. She sells paraffin, mealie meal and sweets. When Zwelakhe, her husband, left her three years ago, she had no job and very little money. So she borrowed money from her mother, built a shack in her yard and opened the spaza.

Now Bongiwe and her son, Sipiwe, eat well. Bongiwe has money to buy her son new clothes and to pay for his schooling.

Every afternoon Sipiwe helps his mother in the spaza. Nosipho, Bongiwe's neighbour, says: "You have a good child, sis. A boy who helps his mother is a blessing."

Zwelakhe visits them often. He comes to shout at them. "This is my house and my spaza!" he says. "Give me money from the spaza. I want my share."

Zwelakhe is angry. He is angry because he struggles to find money. He is also angry because he still loves Bongiwe. He wants to come back to her but he feels ashamed. He is too proud to ask her to forgive him, so he shouts at her.

"I have no money to give you," Bongiwe replies. "I did not leave you, you left me. You left me and your son, I hate you!"

Bongiwe's words hurt Zwelakhe so he says, "Why are you always eating? You will get fat. I left you because you are always eating. You are spoilt. You think you must have meat everyday."

Sipiwe feels sad to see his father always cross. He remembers his father when he was younger and less angry. He remembers his father dancing with his mother.

Sipiwe wishes that his father could be happy again. He wishes that his father still stayed at home. He wants to spend time with his father so he asks Zwelakhe if they can go to FNB to watch the Amakhosi on Saturday.

"No," snaps Zwelakhe. "I am not going anywhere with you on Saturday. You must study."

"Leave the boy alone," shouts Bongiwe. "Leave us both alone. Go to your other wife. We do not want you here."

Sipiwe is tired of hearing his parents shout about the spaza, about money, about him, about everything. He packs his clothes in a Checkers bag and leaves home.

Sipiwe walks along the highway. He hopes that someone will give him a lift to Pietersburg.

Bongiwe looks for Sipiwe. He is not in the spaza or in the house. He is not with Nosipho or with his friends.

She asks Nosipho to call Zwelakhe. Together, they go to the police.

The police say that they cannot help. Sipiwe has to be missing for forty-eight hours before they can look for him.

Zwelakhe has an idea. "I think Sipiwe has gone to my mother in Pietersburg. He loves Gogo. Yes, I think he has gone to Pietersburg."

"Let me get my car," Nosipho says. "We will look for him in my car."

They drive along the highway towards Pretoria. Near Midrand, they see Sipiwe getting out of a van on the side of the road.

"My son, why did you run away from me?" Bongiwe asks.

"I did not run away from you, mama. I ran away from all the shouting. I hate to hear you and baba shouting all the time. I want my father to be happy and live at home. I want to see him dancing with you again, mama."

"Baba cannot come home. You know he has another wife," Bongiwe frowns at Zwelakhe.

"There is no other wife. She left a long time ago," Zwelakhe says. "There is only you, you and this son of mine. Let's go home."

UMkhize and the cell-phones

Mkhize applies for a job.

Mkhize wondered what to do because he had no job.

MaMsomi said he should look for a job in the newspaper.

He found an advertisement for a good job with a very high salary.

He wrote a letter to apply for the job.

Getting ready.

Mkhize received a letter asking him to go to a job interview.

He went to a shop to buy a suit and a briefcase.

He searched for a long time but couldn't find a suit that looked good on him.

Finally he found a suit just like the State President's.

Family support.

At home Mkhize showed the family the suit and briefcase he had bought.

They made him put on the suit and show it off.

The children asked him what he was going to put in the briefcase.

Mkhize said he wouldn't put anything in the briefcase, he would just carry it for show.

The interview.

Mkhize went to the job interview. He wore his new suit.

At the office he waited with many others who wanted the job.

“Good morning Mr Mkhize.”

“Take a seat.”

He met with the managers of the company.

They asked him so many questions he got confused.

“Do you have experience?”

“Can you tell us about your business?”

Does Mkhize get the job?

Mkhize left the interview without hope of being employed.

The company managers discussed Mkhize.

“So smartly dressed.”

“And that briefcase.”

They decided to hire him as a cell-phone salesman.

They told him about the job over the phone.

Mkhize gets ready for work.

Everybody helped to get Mkhize ready for work.

Finally he rushed out.

He arrived late because he spent so much time getting ready.

“He’s late on the first day!”

Mkhize arrives at work.

At work Mkhize was introduced to other people at the company.

He was shown where he would be selling cellular phones.

He was shown how a cell-phone works.

He was given a cell-phone of his own.

Mkhize, the salesman.

Mkhize went to Camperdown to sell cell-phones.

He tried to sell on the bus.

In a store he managed to sell one.

Old women chased him away, saying they didn’t need cell-phones in rural areas.

A bad road.

Mkhize couldn’t go on the rough roads.

He met a man who was riding a horse.

They decided to swop: Mkhize gave the man a cell-phone and took the horse.

Mkhize left his car and got on the horse. The man started to phone Jo’burg.

“Hallo? Hallo? Is that Joburg?”

Disaster.

Mkhize went on selling cell-phones on horseback.

While he was demonstrating, the cell-phone rang.

The horse was frightened by the noise of the phone. It bolted.

Mkhize fell off, the cell-phones were scattered everywhere and the horse ran away.

Mkhize gives up.

After he fell off Mkhize phoned the man who gave him the horse.

Mkhize waited a long time, and was burnt by the sun.

When the sun had set, the man appeared, riding a bicycle and leading a donkey.

Mkhize got back to his car in the dark.

UMkhize of Maritzburg

Mkhize of Maritzburg.

This is Mkhize and his wife, MaMsomi.

This is gogo, MaMsomi's mother, and the children, Shukela and Parafini.

They are just like you and me. They live in Pietermaritzburg.

Mkhize hears Mambazo.

Mkhize was relaxing at home watching TV.

While he was there he heard Ladysmith Black Mambazo sing beautifully.

He got up and sang and danced with Mambazo.

He carried on singing even when Mambazo had stopped. Their music had turned his head.

Mkhize sings on.

Mkhize's family was watching the news on TV.

But Mkhize went on singing that "cathamiya" kind of music.

He started singing and dancing in the bedroom.

MaMsomi kept quiet and watched this sight.

MaMsomi can't take it.

Mkhize went on singing for five hours.

The dogs howled outside because of the noise.

MaMsomi could not take any more and went to Mkhize.

She asked him to sing outside. She said they wanted to sleep.

What do the neighbours say?

Mkhize carried on singing outside.

Mkhize's family went to sleep peacefully.

In the morning Mkhize's neighbours came to praise the singing that had put them to sleep so well.

They asked Mkhize to put on a concert for them.

Mkhize's concert.

Mkhize agreed to do the concert.

He wondered how he would make it a success.

Ma suggested he find out from the experts.

So they went to a concert to get ideas.

Preparing for the concert.

Mkhize and MaMsomi enjoyed the concert of Hadebe's choir.

Afterwards Mkhize asked Hadebe's choir how to organise a concert.

They showed him the posters, the lighting and the sound control board.

Before they had finished showing him, Mkhize got tired and went away.

Mkhize does it his way.

Mkhize said he would hold a concert his own way.

Mkhize put up a curtain in the corner.

He showed his children how to open and close it.

He sent the children to tell the neighbours he was ready.

Mkhize sings.

Mkhize waited behind the curtain while the neighbours sat down.

Shukela opened the curtain, Mkhize began to sing.

The neighbours loved Mkhize's singing and began to sing with him.

They enjoyed singing so much they forgot to listen to him.

Mkhize learns the concertina.

Mkhize was happy that everyone sang together at his concert.

He listened to a friend playing the concertina.

Then Mkhize asked his friend to teach him how to play.

In no time Mkhize could play tunes on the concertina.

Mkhize plays the concertina.

Mkhize was playing his concertina in a kombi.

A businessman heard him and stopped the kombi.

He said he really liked the way Mkhize sang.

He asked Mkhize to come to his office to do him a favour.

Mkhize sings the national anthem.

Mkhize went with the businessman to his office.

The businessman called all the people in the office to meet Mkhize.

He told Mkhize that most of them could not sing Nkosi Sikelele.

So Mkhize taught all the people in the office how to sing the new national anthem.

Waiting for Lerato

Haish! That one has man trouble.

Ja, he's promised the good life and now he's running!

“Masambeni! We're full up.”

“I'm waiting for Lerato.”

Heh, heh, a man is a lovely person. He can comfort you and say this and that and you're my woman and what what.

He says he'll give you everything you can dream for.

Haai shame.

“Hoo hoo hoo.”

He'll give you a train too – but he forgets he doesn't have the rails.

Not even the train! My first man in this place proposed love to me. He promised me he'd lobola my family, he'd love and look after me. Masadi ha fetswe, he sent me to help his mother. But... I heard he had another woman. So I took his money and came to the city and it was true. I was so young, heh, heh.

He's my man – not her man.

Shame poor you! My man walked around with other women. One day his clothes were gone from my room. I heard where the sisi was. The door was open, and his clothes were there. So, I moved a chair and took them down – all the ones I'd ironed. I went back to my room. I waited and waited. I thought he would come back. Shame, poor me – I cried and cried.

Heh, heh – promises and dreams! What happens to the love?

“Mma!”

This is what happens to the love.

“Oh, Lerato.”

Really, he's the only joy around with so much love, no matter what you are. But, haish! You start to suffer with mali.

Ja, but sometimes mali-suffering keeps people together when their heart isn't there. Then strange things can happen in the family.

I loved my father. I thought he was a god.

But he didn't know how to love like a father, only like a man.

Only I could see the true person.

It scared him and he became full of anger.

Maybe that's why he took out my eye.

“Nyama – Nyama, Baby! A person can do that?”

That's it sis! Show him you can stand in your own shoes! These things make us women strong – like a rock.

Ha ha, who says women are weak! Sometimes we want too much money from men and they are just people.

My father made a home for a mma in Brits. I loved him, so I went to grab him back. “I love this woman,” he said, but he came back and fought and fought with my mother until they both cried. He didn't want to be with us, but he could never go back back. I'd stomped his fire to ashes.

“Mbali!”

“Lerato – you're late!”

Sometimes, when a woman gets hurt by a woman, she thinks all men are bad.

And when a man gets hurt by a woman, he thinks all women are dangerous.

“I'm sorry!”

“It's alright.”

Andiase...you can never learn about love with words – you listen with your heart, you act from what life shows you.

Mm... life shows you how to see the thing and laugh, and laughing helps you forgive – even yourself.

People are people because of other people – after all.

Why dogs chase goats

One day a goat, a dog and a sheep got in a taxi.
They were going to visit their families on the farm.

The goat was very drunk.
He drank spirits from a bottle all the time.

He shouted cheeky remarks out of the window at women.
He sang rude songs in a LOUD voice.

The dog got angry at the goat and snapped at him.
The sheep got nervous because he was in the middle.
The goat fell on the floor.

When they got to the place the taxi driver said, "The fare is 50c each."

The sheep gave the taxi driver 50c.
He put it in his pocket.
The dog gave the taxi driver R1.

The goat opened the door, fell out of the taxi and ran away.
The sheep got out of the car and just stood there.

The dog said, "Where is my change?"
The taxi driver said, "What change?
Your friend hasn't paid. Go and get your change from him."

The dog jumped out of the taxi.
He ran after the goat.
The dog chased the goat zig-zagging across the veld.

The taxi driver drove away.
The sheep is still standing in the road.
The dog is still chasing the goat.

Woza Friday

On Monday when I wake up

my head is sore

my tongue is thick

my arms are heavy

my back hurts

my legs are slow

I can hardly move.

But on Friday when I wake up

my eyes are bright

my heart is light

my hands clap

my fingers snap

my feet tap

I am ready for the weekend.