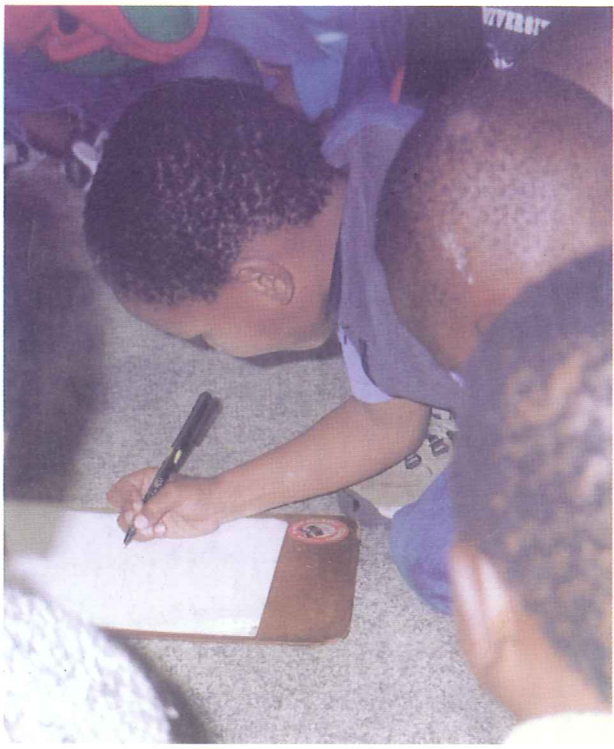
UNIVERSITY OF
FORT HARE
Eastern Cape Education
Department

Distance Education Project

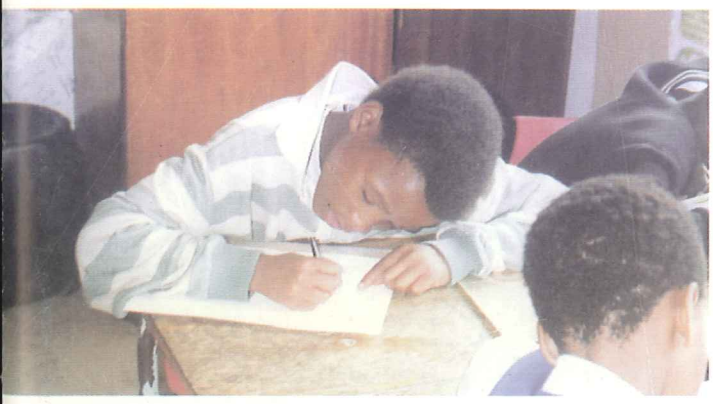


Core Learning Areas Course

Language, Literacy & Communication

5th Umthamo

Developing and Extending Literacy



Pilot Edition – October 2000

Contents

Introduction

What do we mean when we say somebody is 'literate'? Does being 'literate' mean somebody has gone to school? What about our grandparents who never went to school? Are they 'illiterate'? Is there only one kind of literacy? What about oral literacy? Paulo Freire speaks of 'reading the world'.

Read this extract from his book.

Paulo Freire worked in South America with marginalised adults. He developed an approach to literacy learning and teaching of the printed word which has influenced many teachers. The purpose of his approach is to make those who acquire print literacy more powerful in their lives.

Reading 1 - Reading the Word and the World

I see myself then in the average house in Recife, Brazil, where I was born, encircled by trees. Some of the trees were like persons to me, such was the intimacy between us. In their shadow I played, and in those branches low enough for me to reach I experienced the small risks that prepared me for greater risks and adventures. The old house — its bedrooms, hall, attic, terrace (the setting for my mother's ferns), backyard — all this was my first world. In this world I crawled, gurgled, first stood up, took my first steps, said my first words. Truly, that special world presented itself to me as the arena of my perceptual activity and therefore as the world of my first reading. The *texts*, the *words*, the *letters* of that context were incarnated in a series of things, objects, and signs. In perceiving these I experienced myself, and the more I experienced myself, the more my perceptual capacity increased. I learned to understand things, objects, and signs through using them in relationship to my older brothers and sisters and my parents.

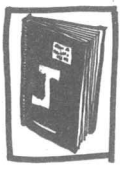
Part of the context of my immediate world was also the language universe of my elders, expressing their beliefs, tastes, fears, and values which linked my world to a wider one whose existence I could not even suspect.

In the effort to recapture distant childhood, to understand my act of reading the particular world in which I moved, I re-created, relived the experiences I lived at a time when I did not yet read words. And something emerged that seems relevant to the general context of these reflections: my fear of ghosts. During my childhood, the presence of ghosts was a constant topic of grown-up conversation. Ghosts needed darkness or semidarkness in order to appear in their various forms — wailing the pain of their guilt; laughing in mockery; asking for prayers; indicating where their cask was hidden. Probably I was seven years old, the streets of the neighborhood where I was born were illuminated by gaslight. At nightfall, the elegant lamps gave themselves to the magic wand of the lamplighters. From the door of my house I used to watch the thin figure of my street's lamplighter as he went from lamp to lamp in a rhythmic gait, the lighting taper over his shoulder. It was a fragile light, more fragile even than the light we had inside the house; the shadows overwhelmed the light more than the light dispelled the shadows.

There was no better environment for ghostly pranks than this. I remember the nights in which, enveloped by my own fears, I waited for time to pass, for the night to end, for dawn's demilight to arrive, bringing with it the song of the morning birds. In morning's light my night fears sharpened my perception of numerous noises, which were lost in the brightness and bustle of daytime but mysteriously underscored in the night's deep silence. As I became familiar with my world, however, as I perceived and understood it better by *reading* it, my terrors diminished.

*This reading comes from **Literacy: Reading the Word and the World** by Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, 1987:30-32.*

In the very first umthamo of this B Prim Ed course, we spoke of non-verbal communication, and 'reading' other people's body language! People also speak of computer literacy, 'science literacy', 'maths literacy', and so on. When you were working through Umthamo 27, you asked your learners to bonga plants. You were able to see how *orally literate* they were. And you discovered how much they already knew about plants and plant products. So what does being literate really mean?



Activity 1 - What *is* literacy?

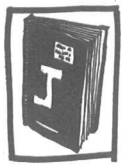
Open your Journal and write down what *you* understand by the term 'literacy'. **What** does literacy involve? **What** do *you* do when you are engaged in literate activities? **When** are you literate? **Where** are you required to be literate? Use these questions to guide you as you write.

When you have finished writing, turn to a friend and share what you have both written. Compare your understandings. Make a list of what is the same, and what is different.

Then get together with another pair and make a mind-map of your collective understanding of what you understand by the word, *literacy* and what it means to be *literate*. Again, use the questions above to guide you. Try to make sure that you include examples of literate behaviour, places where you need to practise literacy, and occasions when you are required to be literate.

The dominant literacy of our time is *print literacy*, or the text of letters. And in this umthamo, we are going to focus on this particular form of literacy. We are going to look at ways in which we, as teachers, can help our learners develop and extend their understanding, as well as their literate behaviour when they are engaged in literacy events involving the printed word. Whether you work with younger learners, or with learners who already read and write the written word, we will ask you to explore ways to provide opportunities for learners to develop and extend their literacy of print.

"...we are inclined to associate literature with writing; but such an association is accidental....Writing is unessential to either the composition or the preservation of literature. The two arts are wholly distinct." (Chadwick: 1939, in Finnegan: 1970) Think of Mrs Zenani, the master storyteller we mentioned in Umthamo 9. Her stories weren't written down in print, but they were literature.



We also want you to think about your own print literacy experiences. You will need to make notes in your Journal, frequently and regularly, on what you notice about your own literacy experiences. And you will ask your learners to think about and make Journal entries, frequently and regularly, about *their* print literacy experiences. They can use the Journals that they started in Umthamo 26 - *Powerful Thinking - Powerful Thinkers.*

We are all learning to read and write all the time. When there is something different to read, something unexpected to write, we see the limits of our literacy. (Meek, 1991:69)

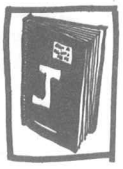
There are Readings throughout this umthamo. These Readings are important and have been included to provide support as you work through the activities.

We ask you to have discussions with your learners about literacy. These discussions are important because they give your learners a chance to think about ideas and aspects of their lives they may not often be asked to think about. The discussions also provide opportunities for learners to share their *own* thoughts and ideas.

In Unit 1 we look at the *process* of reading and writing. We think about what *happens* when we read and when we write. We ask the question, *What is actually going on when we read or write the printed word?*

In Unit 2 there are four studies which demonstrate what young readers and writers do, or have done, as they make sense of the process of reading and writing print.

In Unit 3 we provide some suggestions and ideas of ways in which a teacher can create a classroom environment which encourages her learners to use their print literacy for *real* purposes and in *real* contexts. You are required to select a few ideas or activities from the suggestions, and to try them out in order to create a richer *print-literacy environment* in your classroom. You need to think of ways in which you can help learners work within their zones of proximal development so that, with your help, they do more than they could, or would, alone. If you are subject teaching, you need to make careful decisions about just how you do this. You are expected to record your experiences and observations in your Journal.



Unit 4 provides guidelines for reflecting on and writing up what you have done so far - that is, the first stage of working to create a print-rich environment - as a *Work in Progress* Report. Your Report will include ways in which you have changed your classroom in order to make it an environment which develops and extends your learners' print literacy. And it will include your initial observations of a learner (or group of learners) whom you intend to observe and study

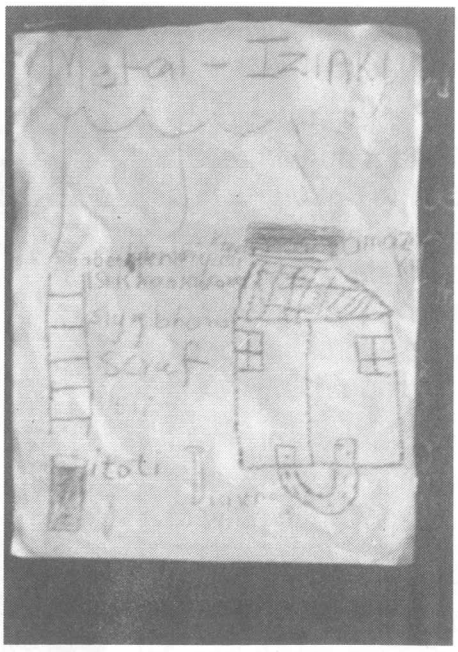
throughout the next 12 months. You will be required to share your experiences with the other teacher-learners in your group. Then you will hand in your Report for your umkhwezeli to appraise. **But you will be expected to continue the work you start in this umthamo throughout the year.**

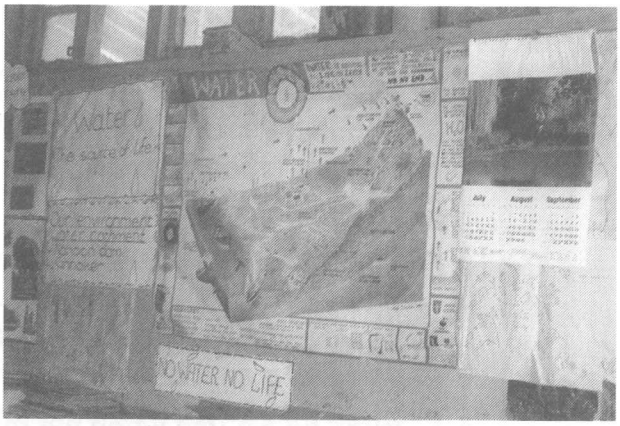
At the end-of-year Portfolio Presentation, you will be expected to share samples of work, and your Journal entries where you have reflected on both this learner's progress, and your role in her/his literacy development. In other words, the **Key Activity** will not be completed when you hand in your *Work in Progress* Report. You will continue to work on these ideas throughout the year.

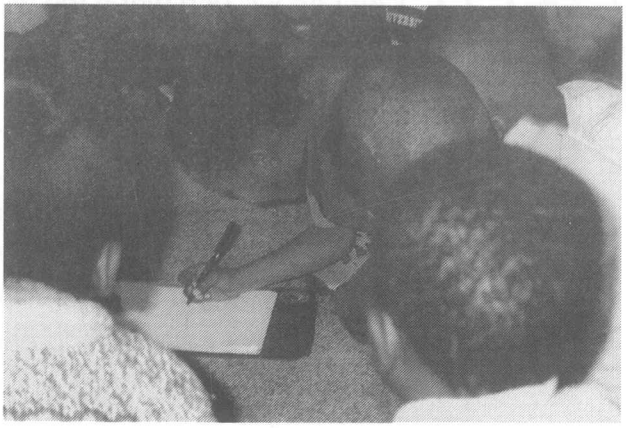
Intended Outcomes

When you have worked through this umthamo you will have

- thought more about literacy processes and what emergent readers and writers do
- thought about your role as an 'enabling adult' in apprenticing and developing readers and writers
- created a richer print-literacy environment for learners
- begun to closely observe and study how one learner's print literacy is developing
- reflected on your role in these processes.

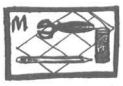






Unit 1 - How do we learn to read and write?

In the Introduction, you thought about what *you* understand by the word '*literacy*'. Now we would like you to discuss this with your learners.



Activity 2 - What *is* reading? What *is* writing?

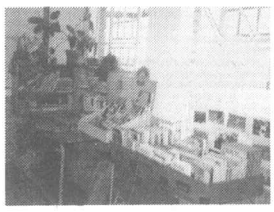
The purpose of this Activity is to get your learners thinking about reading and writing. You want them to think about what is going on when we read and write. And you want them to think about *what* people read and write, *when* people read and write, *where* people read and write, and *why* people read and write.

You will need to have a large sheet of paper and a dark wax crayon or a koki to write with. Draw a large mind-map on the paper. Write *Reading and Writing* in the middle of the mind-map. Make sure that you take some books and a newspaper and some magazines when you go to your class.

Then prepare some questions to guide the discussion on literacy, and write them down on cards, as a reminder. You could include some of the questions that follow. We have prepared two sets. One set is a *'core'* set. The second set are additional questions.

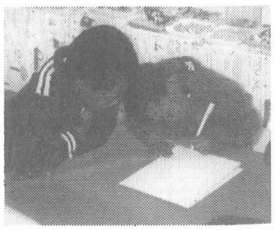
Core questions

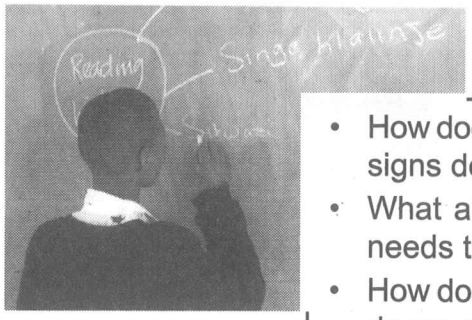
- What do people do when they read?
- What do people do when they write?
- *Where* do people read?
- *Where* do people write?
- What do people read? When? *or* What do you read? When?
- What do they write? When? *or* What do you write? When?
- *What* do we use when we read?
- *What* do we use when we write?
- *Why* do people read?
- *Why* do people write?
- *How* do people learn to read?
- *How* do they learn to write?



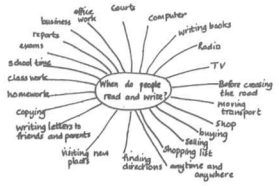
Additional questions

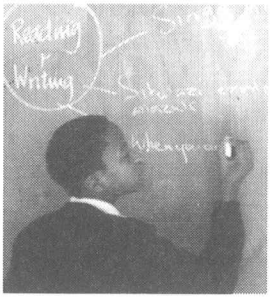
- How can you get better at reading and writing?
- In what ways can reading and writing be useful?
- Are there different kinds of reading and writing?



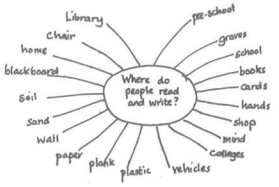


- How does a doctor know when somebody is sick? What signs does he look for and read?
- What about a farmer? How does he know when he needs to water the crops?
- How do we know what the weather will be? What signs do we read?
- *Who* do people read for?
- *Who* do they write for?
- If somebody writes, what happens to their writing?
- Who *owns* a piece of writing?
- Is reading important? Why?
- Is writing important? Why?
- Can you survive or live without being able to read and write? How?





Then, gather your learners around you and tell them that you want to discuss reading and writing with them. As they give you their ideas, record what your learners say in a logical way. For example, you might want to record all the ideas about reading in the top half of the page, and ideas about writing in the bottom half. If they suggest some things which are really about both, you could put them in between the two halves.



Don't spend too long on the discussion. You just want to brainstorm this topic, and to get your learners thinking about the processes of reading and writing. And you are giving them a chance to share what they think about these two activities. At the end of the discussion, we hope that your learners will have begun to think about reading and writing in a broader way.

With older learners, the discussion could last as long as half an hour. Try to be sensitive to your learners. If they are interested in a particular aspect of this debate, give them time to share their thoughts and ideas. Encourage them to refer to their own experiences, what they have seen and know, their own frames of reference. You will know which questions to ask and which to leave out.

Store the mind-map of this discussion safely in your Concertina File. You will need to refer to it when you come to write your Report.

But how do we *acquire* literacy (reading and writing)? How do we join 'the literacy club'? How do we learn to make sense of, and derive meaning from, marks on paper? How do we learn to *make* meaningful marks on paper? Before we discuss this in more detail, we would like you to think about how **you** learned to read. This might not be a very easy thing to do.

If you ask intending teachers (or perhaps any adults) if they can remember learning to read, most will have no clearer memory of learning to read than they have of learning to talk. Those who do remember, speak of flash cards, reading schemes, sounding out, blending. The memories are always of the bits and pieces of literacy. Even those with no clear memories conclude that someone must have taught them 'the basics' to enable them to decode print. It is the assumption that we owe our literacy to methodical teaching of 'basics' that is one of the hardest to shift when we are asking student teachers to consider where their full literacy has come from. (Graham, 1992: 210)

If for some reason you are unable to attend the face-to-face session where this umthamo is introduced, you will need to carry out Activity 3 on your own. And you need to do it **before** you carry out Activity 4 with learners.

Activity 3 - My literacy history

Spend some time thinking about how *you* learned to read and write. When did you first become aware that the marks made on a surface (paper) could carry meaning? When were you aware that your name could be written? When did you first try to write or read? Where were you? Who were you with? How did you feel? What were you using? Close your eyes and try to picture the scene, yourself, the other person/people, and try to recall what the place was like.

Then open your Journal, write the date and the heading, *My Literacy History*, and spend some time writing what you remember. When you have finished writing, read through what you have written. Have you left anything out? What would make the picture clearer? Add any details you wish. Then turn to a friend, swap Journals and read your friend's literacy history.

Now spend a short time comparing what you have written. What is the same? What is different? Why is this so?

NB You will need to leave about half a page in your Journal after this entry. Then you can write more later.

Read the two reading histories which follow. The first is from a book called *The Reading Environment* by Aidan Chambers. Aidan Chambers was a teacher of English and Drama before he became a full-time writer.

Reading 2 - Know yourself as a reader

Know yourself as a reader. Tell yourself your reading history, write it down if this helps, and think about what it means in relation to learning readers.

I know, for instance, that I was born into a house where little reading of any kind went on but where there was a lot of storytelling – local gossip turned into dramatic or funny episodes told by my father, local folk tales told by my grandfather, Aesop's stories told by my mother. I know that I didn't learn to 'read' till I was eight – I remember the moment it happened – but I had an infant-school teacher who read aloud to us every day. And with hindsight I know that hearing so many stories at home and hearing so many books read aloud at school before I could read for myself, made me into the kind of reader I am now: one who hears every word in his head while he reads, as if someone is telling the story. Which means that as much as anything I enjoy the drama of narrative – the characters talking in voices of their own, the narrator telling what is happening, the pace and colour of the text. I also know that it was only because a friend insisted I go to the local library with him that I found out rather late (I was twelve) that there were thousands of books for young readers and that I could have any of them I wanted. It was only because a couple of secondary school teachers talked about books as if they mattered that I learned that reading literature was more than a pastime occupation. And it was a book I found for myself when I was fifteen, *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence, that at last showed me how literature included me, that I could find myself there, the life I knew and a life I could hope to live.

Equally, it is by keeping track of what I read that I discover my prejudices. I don't much care for historical fiction, for example; and I take particular pleasure in the formal techniques of narrative, to the extent that I'm often more interested in how a story is told than I am in its content. Because I know this, I know I need the help of readers who enjoy historical fiction when I'm choosing books for a school library or classroom so that my prejudice doesn't warp the selection, and I need to listen carefully to what other people have to say about the content of a story if I'm to enjoy a fuller understanding of a text than I can manage on my own. I also know that it is never too late to become a serious reader, but that this is hard if you've no regular background of being read to or haven't many books near at hand, waiting till you're ready for them.

Most of all, I know that without enabling adults who are thoughtful readers to give you guidance, it is all but impossible to become a thoughtful literary reader yourself.

(Chambers, 1991: 87-88)

The next extract is from a book called *Reading the Difference*. It is a book about the differences in the reading habits of girls and boys in primary schools in Britain. This is Valerie Walkerdine's Reading History. Valerie Walkerdine was a primary school teacher for many years. These days she is a highly respected academic.

Reading 3 - A Reading History

Actually, the first memory about my reading history that comes to mind is not about reading at all, but a knowledge of words. I was on a coach trip with my parents and younger sister. I must have been about six and as the coach came to the top of a hill with a rather wide and spectacular view of Derbyshire, I remarked "Oh, what a wonderful panorama". My startled parents practically told the whole bus that I had used this long and rather exotic word, panorama. I learnt, of course, what an impression words could have. I learnt too, that such erudition was thought to be precocious and very clever. I have no doubt that the bus occupants were impressed. I think I learnt the word at school and maybe from my reading, but actually I remember little about my early reading history except that I learnt to read at school using those Janet and John and cat-sat-on-the-mat type reading books and that Julia Goddard's mother complained to mine that I was being used to teach her daughter to read.

I'm sure my parents read stories to me, but I can't remember any. What I do remember though, is that I loved the flower fairies books that were popular in the 1950s and still available today. I think there was an alphabet with a flower fairy and poem for each letter. How I dreamed of being like those fairies, tiny, beautiful little creatures, so diminutive and yet so powerful. It was perhaps a way of imagining being small and loved and yet having one's wishes fulfilled, indeed to make dreams come true. I have written at length elsewhere about how those little fairies fitted well both with the image of me as a bluebell fairy winning the local fancy dress competition at three and the nickname that my father had for me, Tinky, short for Tinkerbell.

I loved those books because of all the powerful fantasies that caught me inside them, like a spider in a web and which I caught and held to make sense of myself, of being a girl, of growing up. I liked too the book of Grimm's fairy tales that had belonged to my mother as a child, in which there were wonderful illustrations, beautiful plates with line drawings and vibrant colours. Perhaps it was because drawing meant more than anything else to me as a child that it is the illustrations of the books that I remember best. I don't remember myself as a great early childhood reader; I was certainly not the sort of child who always had her nose in a book.

We didn't have many books at home, but this should not be mistaken as a lack of interest in reading on my family's part. Books were very expensive before the advent of paperbacks (which did not emerge until Penguin started them when I was at grammar school: then and only then was I encouraged by the school to actually *buy* books). My mother in particular was an avid reader who borrowed books from the local library every week. I remember it very well. Often I would walk with her to the wooden village hall which housed the library several days per week. On these days the librarians arrived to open up the display cases of books and we used to wander around, browsing. She read mostly romantic fiction and historical novels. I gradually went through the children's classics and graduated onto - well, the ones I most remember - were in a series about 'the Whiteoaks of Jalna' by Mazo de la Roche! I liked the browsing, the tickets, the taking of the pile of books and returning them for others.

We never really entered bookshops but that certainly did not mean that we never read. I feel angry often when I hear once again the usual diatribes about working class parents who don't care about reading and their children's education. It is the level of ignorance about working class reading practices which particularly annoys me, along with the moralising. Yes, I read books about flower fairies, comics, encyclopaedias

and later 'Woman', 'Woman's Own', the 'People', the 'News of the World' and the 'Derby Evening Telegraph' and of course, since they were part of my world, I liked them very much. Reading them did not stop me becoming an academic, indeed one who has written her fair share of books. So, the complexities of subjectivity and how we become what we are lost on those who insist that socialisation is the work of agents, especially parents, who may be blamed for having rendered their children sexist for life by allowing them to read girly stories or trashy comics.

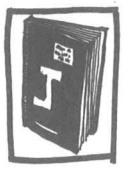
Perhaps that is why I am prepared now in my own work to look at what forms of popular media and literature mean to those that read them, and am not prepared to simply toss them away as so much useless garbage. Sure, now I read the 'Guardian' and not the 'Sun', but that does not mean that I don't also get voyeuristic pleasure from reading about the latest Royal exploits or the lives of film stars. Or that I am willing to call moronic the readers of such material just because others are not prepared to attempt to understand the complexity of the lives in which such reading has a place. What I mean, is that flower fairies, The Whiteoaks of Jalna, encyclopaedias, all caught me up inside a world of my imagination. The fantasy space created using the materials available to me was important in forming my creativity. Those who insist in a cognitivist way that mothers or fathers pass on habits and that those habits may be towards trash and therefore not about 'real learning' or the 'best literature' are missing the point about the world both created for me and which I created with the tools available to me.

Back to my childhood. My father bought a set of encyclopaedias called *The Book of Knowledge* from a door-to-door salesman. I really liked these and often made up my own little books, copying out information and pictures from them. For example, I still have one little book I made, called 'Children and costumes of other lands', which was heavily into the exotic. Perhaps that early experience of creative authorship gave me valuable lessons in the sense that I did not only read books, I made them for myself, but then I always had little projects on the go, long before project work became common in primary schools. What is clear is that reading for me was never a passive activity, it if ever is for any reader. I imagined, I dreamed, I created, just as I am still doing to this day. One of the central points in my life as an academic and a writer was formed then. The capacity to dream and to create, using reading as a tool, were learnt in those early days.

But it was at grammar school that I had to hang on hard to that creativity in the face of derision from teachers and other pupils about the newspapers we took, or the girls who roundly castigated me because I thought that the story that I liked in the 'Girl' comic, 'Belle of the ballet', was pronounced 'belly' to rhyme with ballet (bally in Derbyshire). I missed Belly of the Ballet when I had to learn that this was not correct, just as I missed the tabloids when it was suggested that I try the (incomprehensible) 'Daily Telegraph', which I paid for with money from my paper round. What I remember then of my peers is simply the happy acceptability of my creativity at primary school and a middle class culture that nearly stifled it at grammar school. Perhaps that is why I feel so angry about all those remarks about inculcation of the 'wrong' habits.

Those early practices that created and sustained me as a reader and writer do so to this day. I still find fertile ground in the richness of my fantasies, fantasies created with fairies who looked like flowers, damsels with beautifully painted costumes and tales of worlds about which I could then only dream. I am not saying that at the very least there aren't contradictions in those very fantasies but I do want to acknowledge their sustaining power in the formation of the adult that I am today.

(Walkerdine, 1993: 15-17)



Journal Write

Open your Journal. Re-read what you wrote about your Literacy History. Think about the discussion you had with your partner. As you reflect on that activity, think about what is different between what you and your partner thought, and what these two writers have written. What is similar? Why do you think there are these differences and similarities? Write down your ideas and thoughts in the half page you left after your Literacy History. Make sure that you date this entry.

So how do people learn to read print, and how do people learn to write print? What happens when we read? What are we actually doing? And what exactly do we do when we write? What is actually going on? Let's think about the *process* of reading, and the *process* of writing. Many people have thought about this and have written about what they think is going on. And even more books have been written about how the reading and writing of print should be taught.

When we were developing this umthamo, one of the writers spoke about her 4-year-old daughter's awareness of printed words and symbols. There is a cloth from West Africa hanging on one of the walls in their home. The cloth is covered with marks which look very much like letters. One day her daughter asked what the marks on the cloth meant or 'said'.

She expected the marks to have a purpose, that they had been put there for a reason, and that they communicate something! She is looking for the sense in the things around her, she is going for meaning.

In 1967, Kenneth Goodman, a researcher in America, wrote a paper entitled, *Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game*. In that paper, Kenneth Goodman described what he found when he carefully studied Grade 1 children who were beginning to read. He found that even beginning readers and writers 'behave like readers and writers'. They expect the marks on a page to mean something. And they treat writing as an extension of drawing.

Goodman gave the children he studied several of the first books from a reading scheme, and asked the children to read them aloud to him. These were books with a picture or drawing on each page, and a few words. The first book in the series had the least words, and the words that had been chosen were considered by the writer of the series to be 'easy' words. Sentences were very short, and there was a great deal of repetition. However, Goodman discovered that the book which was supposed to be the easiest to read, was in fact the most difficult. Why do you think this was so?

Alan found the same thing when he was 'coaching' students at Lovedale, who were re-writing Matric Biology. The 'Bantu Education' text-books were written as simplified summaries of quite complex ideas. They were hard to make sense of. The students he worked with did much better (learned more) when he gave them American University text-books with more detail to read.

Goodman concluded that because the writers had used a *restricted* vocabulary (a limited number of words), they were forced to write an 'unnatural' text. In other words, the sentences were quite unlike any that a child or beginning reader, would hear around her, or that she would be likely to say herself.

One academic called this kind of language 'primerese' because the language in those books is peculiar to primers, or early reading books. (Hunter-Grundin: 1979)

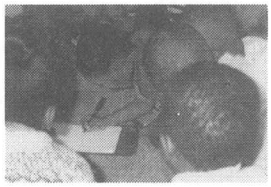
Goodman observed that the 'mistakes' or 'errors' that these young children made as they read aloud, showed that they were *trying to make sense* of both the pictures and the words

on the page. Frequently, what these beginning readers *expected* the text to say, made more sense than the actual text.

On page 23 you will find an example of a South African child struggling to make sense of a Reading Book which did not make sense!

In his research, Goodman tried to find out what information readers (even beginning readers), are actually *using* when they read a text. He found that there are three kinds of information we use when we read. (And this is true of emergent and beginning readers, also.) These three kinds of information are:

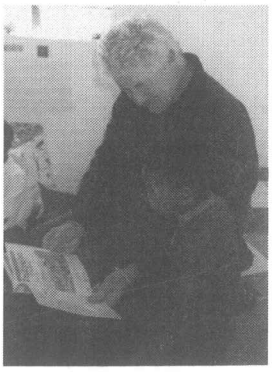
- **semantic** information - This is the knowledge we bring from our experiences of the world. It enables us to make sense of what we are reading.
- **syntactic** information - This is our knowledge of the grammar of the language, and it enables us to predict which part of speech is most likely to follow.
- **graphophonic** information - This is our knowledge of print which enables us to match a letter or combination of letters with a particular sound.



"I can write car."

Kenneth Goodman stressed that the most important of these three kinds of information is **semantic information**. And the least important information is the *graphophonic information*. And yet, in so many parts of the world (including South Africa), teachers have concentrated on making sure that learners master the graphophonic information. Although you cannot read print without some knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds, this is **not** the most important information. Reading is about bringing meaning to text, and getting and understanding the ideas and meanings of the writer.

> *In the act of reading what someone has written, we enter into a kind of social relationship with the writer who has something to tell us or something to make with words and language. The reader takes on this relationship, which may feel like listening, but is in fact different in that it is more active. He recreates the meaning by processing the text at his own speed and in his own way. As he brings the text to life, he casts back and forth in his head for connections between what he is reading and what he already knows. His eyes scan forward or jump backwards. He pauses, rushes on, selects from his memory whatever relates the meaning to his experience or his earlier reading, in a rich and complex system of to-ing and fro-ing in his head, storing, re-working, understanding or being puzzled.* (Meek, 1982:20-21)



Whenever we read a printed text, the three sources of information are available: **semantic** information, **syntactic**

information, and **graphophonic** (or symbolic) information. And as we read, we use these three sources of information simultaneously. But if the topic or content of the text is outside our experience, we are unlikely to be able to use our knowledge of the world to bring meaning to the words.

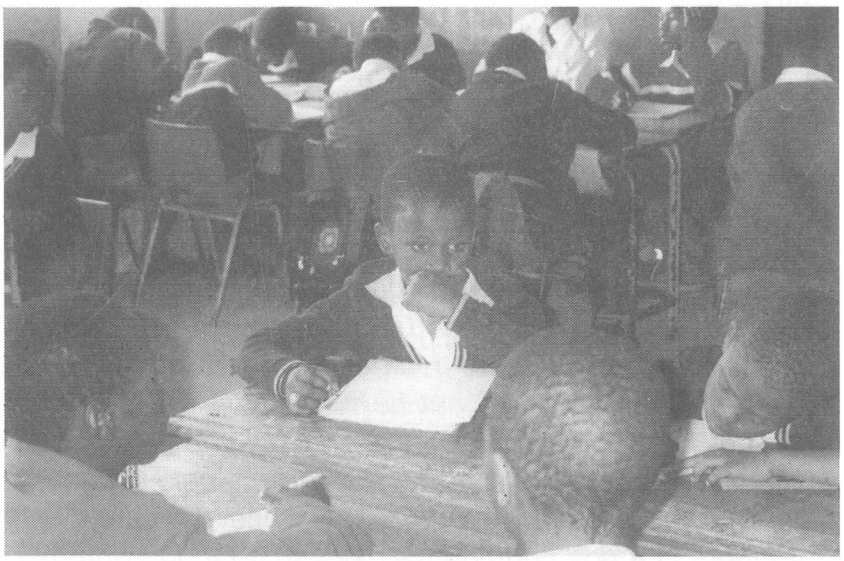
And whenever we write, the same three sources of information influence what and how we write. We draw on our experience of the world, and what we know and feel (**semantic** information). And in order to communicate our thoughts and feelings we use our knowledge of how language works (**syntactic** information). And we draw on our knowledge of how sounds are recorded in letters or letter combinations, in order to actually write the words (**graphophonic**, or symbolic, information).

But how do we *learn* to write? Frank Smith has said that, 'we learn to read by reading'. We would add, 'we learn to write by writing'. But there must be a *need* or *purpose* for writing. Think about yourself. When do you write? What do you write? What do you use? Why do you write? Who reads what you write?

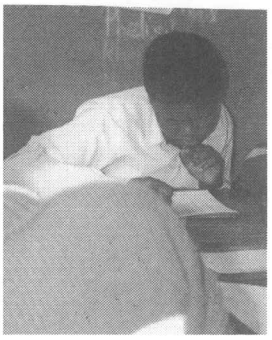
In Unit 2, you will read about 4 children's 'first steps' into print-literacy.

When we write using letters, there are a number of things going on. We have our thoughts and ideas which we want to express (the content, if you like). But we also want to *record* these ideas (the actual writing). The process of thinking and planning *what* to write is often referred to as **'composing'**. The process of recording those ideas and thoughts is often referred to as **'transcribing'.**

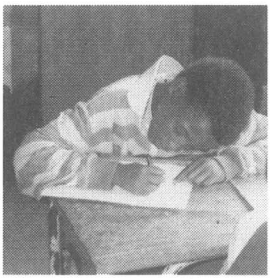
Some people prefer to write with a pencil, others prefer writing with a pen. Yet other people have grown used to using a computer to express their thoughts and ideas.



The process of **composing** is a very important one. When writers talk about how they write books, they say that they spend a great deal of time thinking about **what** they want to write. Then they start.



But they don't just sit down and write the final finished version the first time they write. They write a part, maybe a chapter, maybe just a few pages. They spend time thinking and re-reading what they have written. They cross out certain words, phrases, and sentences. They change the order of other words and phrases. They write more. And they make more changes and cross out and add more. *"At any time a line can be erased, a page thrown away. And at any time everything that has been written can be changed, added to, deleted from, and put into a completely different order."* (Smith, 1982: 107)



As they write the different parts, they may need to go back to other parts to make changes so that the parts fit together logically. Sometimes they change the order of paragraphs or events so that the whole book is more logical and makes more sense. It's quite a 'messy' business.

When most of the book is written, a writer reads and re-reads through what s/he has written. Sometimes the very last part that a writer writes is the very beginning of the book! Do you find that this is true of yourself when you write your Reflective Reports?

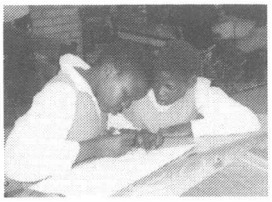
When they have almost completed their piece of writing, writers usually ask somebody whom they trust to read through what they have written. This person sometimes suggests possible changes which could improve what has been written.

Yet if you think back on your own experiences of writing the printed word at school, did you ever have the chance to write several drafts of an essay or piece of writing? The writers of this umthamo only ever remember writing out an essay in rough first, and then copying it into their books neatly, checking their spellings and grammar as they wrote.

And even at this point in time, all too often, learners are still expected to write neatly, to spell all the words correctly, and to produce the finished version of a piece of work the very *first* time they write it! Why don't we let our learners behave like **real** writers and authors?

In many countries in the world, teachers *do* give their learners opportunities to write a number of drafts of a piece of work. They encourage learners to treat their writing like a work of art and to concentrate on the *process of composing.* It is only when they produce the final draft that learners worry about making sure that their handwriting is neat, and that their spelling and grammar are correct (in other words the

transcribing process). This kind of writing is known as **process writing** because there is an emphasis on the *process* of developing the piece of written text - not just on the finished product.



These learners share their writing with one another. They value the support and critical comments they receive from their peers, as well as from their teachers. Learners like these write for different purposes, and for different audiences. They see themselves as writers and authors. They are confident and enjoy writing.

With this approach-based course, and through the activities in many imithamo, you, too, have been giving your learners opportunities to write, not just for you, but also for their peers (that is, for a different audience). And you have been encouraging your learners not to be satisfied with their first draft, but to find ways in which they can improve what they write. Your learners have not been writing in isolation. They have been writing in a *social* context. In many imithamo in this course we have stressed the *social* nature of learning. We have pointed out that when learners are able to collaborate and work together, they are able to achieve so much more.

The next Activity is for learners in a Grade 3 class and beyond. If you work with younger learners, you will need to arrange to take a colleague's class. Or you could work out of school hours with a willing group of older local children.

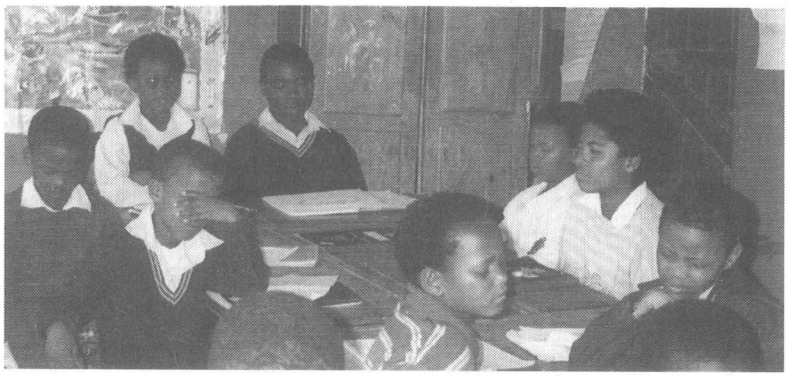
Activity 4 - Getting learners to think about their literacy histories

In this Activity, you will be asking learners to spend some time thinking about their literacy histories. You have written your own literacy history, and you have read the literacy history of one or two other people. Before you work with your learners, write down the questions below to remind you, as you guide and jog your learners' memories.

- What do you first remember about reading and writing?
- What were the first words you remember seeing in print?
- Where were you?
- Who were you with?
- What were you actually doing?
- What was the other person (people) doing?
- What was the first book you remember reading?
- How did you feel about that book? Did you enjoy it? Why?

- What was your first experience writing?
- Where were you?
- What did you use to write, and to write on?
- How did you feel?
- When do you read now, and where?
- How do you read? Do you read aloud, or silently?
- When do you write, and where?
- Why do you read and write?
- How do you feel about reading and writing?

Start off by asking your learners to close their eyes, and then use the questions above to take them through a careful remembering of their early experiences reading and writing. Pause after you ask each question. Give them time to think about the question, and to remember their experiences.



This remembering will take between 5 and 10 minutes. Now ask your learners to open their eyes, and to turn to the person next to them and to share what they remembered. Watch your learners as they share their experiences. Each learner should have something to say. When they have finished sharing, ask each pair to make a list of the things they remembered about their experiences of reading and writing.

Next, ask each pair to join up with another pair. Ask each learner to tell the rest of the people in the group of 4 what her/his partner told her/him. Move around your class, eavesdropping on different discussions. This discussion is important because when learners hear others share memories they may be reminded of their own experiences which they had forgotten.

Now ask your learners to open their Journals, and to draw and write down everything they can remember of their experiences of reading and writing. Tell them that they will be writing their literacy histories.

If the learners you are working with do not have Journals, you will need to hand out a sheet of paper to each one.

Collect some of your learners' Journals. Make sure that you take a range of Journals. Don't just take the Journals of the most able learners. And don't take only the Journals of those learners who struggle. Make sure that you take a good mix.

Later, read each child's entry carefully, and make a positive and encouraging comment. Remember, you don't need to correct any thing in anybody's Journal. Your learners can draw and write what they like in their Journals.

Gr 4 Sinle 00 08 10

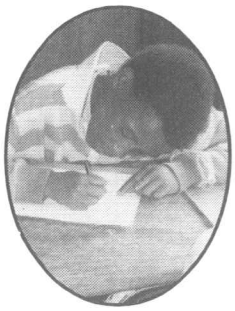
Mhla ndaqala ukufunda

Ndaqala ukufunda ekrishi ndafunda amagamaangafu ndekiyo. ndaqasa ekrishi ndiyakwa eyindifunda o.qeiou. ndafunda iccwadi ethe sifunda isixosa.

ulancwadi ndandiyifunda yaym nand kulthulu ndandiyi funda kakhulu umemyayesifundela incwadi kwalkumnandi kwa eyi

Sasihla laezitulcwem esincinci umem esfunde la isikori esimnandi iztori ezininzi Sasi nikwa amaphepha sprocwa

Wnxola sibaninzi kwa eyi umem esihlekisi Siphume sibaleka siyo Shalaza Sibuyesi baleka



Vuyokazi Blaai ~~Mpongo School~~ ~~Grade 5~~ 1August 2000

homework

Mpongo s

The First ~~Fest~~ word do I see I see Nomandla writting in the wall I say teach me to writ my name and she teach me to writ My name and numbes and she go to writting to shool and she reading Book the name of Book is ~~Betty~~Berry and Betty the Book she tell in Colour like this the dress is red and she sing the cobur and number

~~Luvuyo~~ Grade6 Mpongo Schoo)

When I see the first word it was ~~ukuhla ndiyuka~~ Hospital The first book that I read is Ukuhla ndinyuka it was nice because Ilike that was reding they story. When I see the first world I was in ~~Hewas~~ Hospital I dident knew the name my Mother said to me I was 2 years old did you no that Name I said I no it is hospital we in 1990. When Siyakudumisa was born.

Gr4 Noluvo Ngqandu 08.10.2000

Mhla ndaqala ukubhala nokufunda

Mhla ndaqala ukufunda nokubhala ndafunda UGr1.
Ndandifundiswa ngumam uSpelmadla.
Saqala sanibala usisicatatanomama nokuzoba.
Sifundiswa ukubambaidldi nokungathuki.

Ndafunda funda UGr2 safu icwanda ethi umthombo.
Safunda icwadi ethi abantwana besikolo.
Ndandizithanda ezocwadi zimbini kakhulu.
Ekuhambeni konyaka safunda icwadi yesingesi.
Nazo zazinamabali amnandi kakhulu sifunda kakhulu.
Isixhosa sasi sifunda kakhulu nawabaliaso uyemnandi.

Ndandimthanda kakhulu umam wam ngobawaye sifundisa.
Esilungisa ukuba silungise inggondo sethu.
Singabathuki abazali bethu singabatshi tuxea ce sithuma.
Ne mom yethu yayisithanda sisafunda phaya.
Sithanda ukubhala imaths kakhulu nokubala.

hinda Grade 4

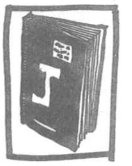
Mhla ndaqala ukufunda

Ndaqala ukufunda ndina 5 iminyaka yam. Ndandifunda incwandi. Incwa ndandiqifuna yayi sithi uSana Lonowandi yayi mnandi kakhulu ngokuba ndiyifundiswa ngumama

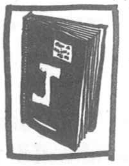
Ndafunda ndathi a o e i u ndaza ngo sasesisou. Ndaphinda wandifundisa Umama Nokuthe thaku-Je ndiye ethreshi naphoya ndafundiswa a e i o u

Ukuqala kwam ukufunda esikoleni ueqi nda siwa ngumama wam ndifundiswa ukubhala amangam Ndande ndakwazi okufunda kodwa zange ndifunde kakuhle

Ndapasa ku eqi ndaya kubhi kuzenje ndibe kwi-banga lesibini ndaqala ngalencwa ndi ithi usana. Ndaya nasesiko lweni ndakwazi ukufunda.



Before you move onto the next Unit, take out your Journal. Think about the discussions which your learners have had. Think about what they have written and drawn in their Journals. What did you expect to happen in their discussions? What surprised you? What did you learn about your learners? How do you feel now? Why? If you were to carry out this activity with another group of learners, what would you do differently? Why?



Are you writing regularly in your Journal? Make sure that you write about 4 times each week. Write about what you are noticing about your own literacy practices (what you do when you read and write). Think of the different purposes for which you read and write (to get information, this B Prim Ed, your church, as a union member, in order to make lists, appraising learners' work, etc). By the time you hand in your Work in Progress Report, you should have made notes on your own print literacy about **16 times!** If you continue to be conscious of your own reading and writing of the written word throughout the year, and continue to write in your Journal regularly, it will be interesting to see the changes you notice.

Make sure that your learners also have opportunities to write and draw in their *Thinking Journals*. Get them to write about what they notice about their own literacy practices, and the literacy events (or activities) in which they are engaged - both inside and outside school.

Unit 2 - Emerging literacy

In this Unit we want to look at examples of young children making sense of the writing in their environment. But before you look at the four studies we have included, you need to read the following extract. It comes from an article by Myra Barrs. Myra Barrs is the director of the Centre for Language in Primary Education in London. She is an experienced teacher and writer.

In this passage, you will see that for some time, in many parts of the world, teachers of very young children have been encouraging their learners to 'have a go' at writing. These teachers expect their learners to use what they already know and have worked out about written language in order to express themselves in print.

*With Umthamo 15, you received a Reading from a very important book, **Ways with Words**, by Shirley Brice Heath. In that Reading, you will find examples of 'emergent writing' on page 195. Those young children were 'having a go' at writing.*

There is a copy of this book at your Centre.

Reading 4 - Learning to Write

In the last few years there has been a considerable shift of emphasis as studies of emergent literacy have begun to focus on what children can do independently, in both reading and writing, often before they come to school. Many books, including some that we have decided to review for a second time in this issue, have charted what can be discovered when children's earliest writing-like marks are examined for their significance, and how much children can do when they are encouraged to use what they know about written language. Such studies show children hypothesising from first principles; working out how meanings can be conveyed on paper, how writing is like and unlike drawing, and what the basis of the writing system they are operating in actually is. As with reading, early 'miscues' frequently turn out to be the products of logical guesses, and studies of children's invented spellings have often revealed how hard and well they are thinking.

As the lessons of these kinds of studies have begun to be applied in classrooms, teachers have become increasingly interested in being able to identify 'stages' that children go through in their writing development. Many of the books that attempt to chart this area suggest that there *are* patterns at work, and that the spelling of children who are learning to write does progress in recognisable ways. This focus on orthographic development can, however, become rather a narrow preoccupation and can divert attention from the actual content of texts. If reading is not decoding, neither should writing be viewed as encoding.

Spelling development is of course important, but it is far from being the only index of progress in writing. Children who are learning to write are learning how to 'draw speech', in Vygotsky's phrase. They are also learning how to manage written language, and different *kinds* of written language, and how to say what they have to say on paper. We need to understand their development in all of these areas. Discussions of 'developmental writing' do sometimes get bogged down in talk about spelling.

One major obstacle for beginning writers of English is the nature of the spelling system which, as we know from all the debates about phonics, is not phonically regular. Children's own early independent attempts at spelling are often phonetic in character, and this is an indication of their thinking.

But children may get used to 'sounding out' words. It seems crucial that they should not be misled into believing that this is the best or only strategy for spelling in English. There are other ways of being independent as a writer than 'sounding out'. Most studies of spelling have shown how vitally important *visual* factors are in learning to spell correctly; children who learn to observe the *look* of words from early on will be in a better position than children who continue to use mainly phonic strategies. Once children have a basic understanding of the writing system, in fact, what matters that they should acquire strategies for using it effectively and correctly as possible.

(Barrs, 1987: 1-2)

In the studies which follow, you will see that young children are very observant of their surroundings, and generally notice far more than we realise. Think about the printed words that your learners see in their homes and their communities. There are labels on the different packagings of the foods and groceries in their homes. Think of a bar of soap. There, on the bar of soap is the name of the brand, and sometimes even the symbol or logo, which 'can be traced and felt'. Even in the most rural settings, children find samples of print.

The children described in the studies below, show that they were aware of the print in the world around them long before they went to school. They expected, and found, that print held meaning. These studies are important because they provide examples of ways people write about the experience of becoming literate. You will be able to draw on these studies as you compile case studies of your learners.

Asakhe

Before school

Asakhe started showing keenness in reading and writing towards age 3. He used to identify logos and words on packaging, adverts, TV, etc, even when these appeared in places he had never been to - for example, CNA, SPUR, LIBRARY.

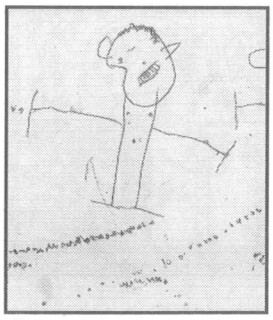
He graduated to identifying numbers from street signs like 60 in a 60 kilometre zone and this became a game whenever we were travelling with him.

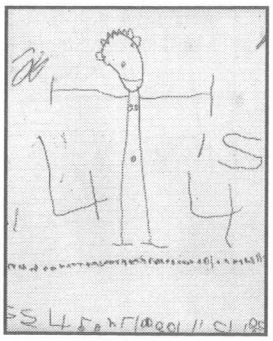
Needless to say, his first attempts at writing were with numbers at around age four. These would face any direction but it was a bold attempt at making his first legible scrawls.

Soon after this, he started making squiggles next to drawings he had made, and he would explain what they meant. Almost always, they would tell a story about his drawings.

Writing from right to left came next, with letters and numbers facing the opposite direction. When he started school, he was still writing like this.

Being surrounded by books, magazines, and so on, Asakhe and his sisters always take something to read to bed with them, clearly imitating us - but they never take a story book or a children's book. In Asakhe's case, he never even takes a school book!





Since school

Since starting school, Asakhe's eagerness to read and write has actually increased. He used to copy words off books, magazines, TV, packaging, etc and we would really be fascinated by his ingenuity. He would practise all the time and we would have to be ready to interpret whatever he had written. Often it would look like this:

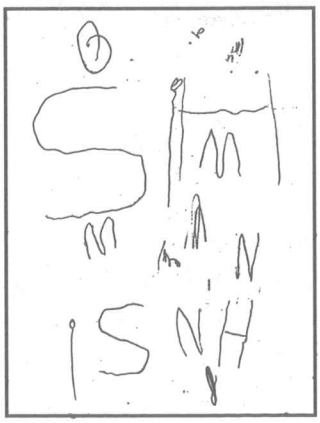
LFTZBONSANBYAST

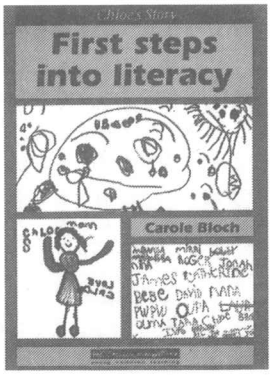
This was a scary and very tricky time for me. For a while I didn't know how to handle it. I was scared of discouraging him by telling him it made no sense. At the same time, I didn't want to mislead him by reading what I made up (which would have made him very happy). I was helped out of this by someone knowledgeable in these things!

About six or seven weeks after starting school, Asakhe and his sisters were given *LAYS* chips by their grandfather. Asakhe looked at the word LAYS and asked me to read it. When I'd finished, he surprised me by saying "There is an 'S' in LAYS as in 'LISU' and 'SISEKELO'," (the names of his sisters).

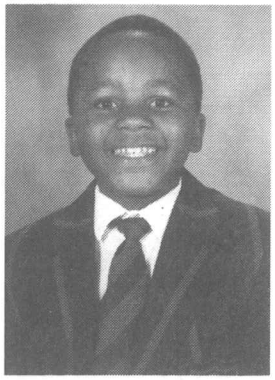
He is now able to read and write most words in isiXhosa and is keen to read English. He reads English words in isiXhosa. For example, 'How' is read like 'hoe', then he asks if that is the correct pronunciation.

I must say that I'm much more relaxed now in my role as an 'enabling adult', especially since reading *'Chloe's Story'*. Initially I wasn't sure I was doing the right thing in letting him go about it his way. Sometimes letting him do it his way was a function of tiredness and laziness on my part. I was especially anxious when he started school because I thought he was far behind others since he had never been to pre-school. But in fact this has not been the case. Asakhe has quite a remarkable understanding of the process of reading and writing the written word.





Ulwando



Ulwando is thirteen years old. He started literacy at the age of 4. His first number, not letter, was 4. He could identify the number 4 everywhere. For example, on calendars at home, in old books, in town, and at the shops. It was surprising, as a parent, because I wanted to know what was the big deal about four. Maybe he never thought he could be a big four-year-old boy? His birthday is in April (the fourth month!). Later that year, he began to identify horses everywhere in pictures at home. One of my neighbours told me that he even said that the drawings on her curtains were like horses and their legs.

At 5½ Ulwando started Grade 1 at a lower primary school in Zwelitsha. The only thing he managed was beautiful handwriting. Most unfortunately, he couldn't master well reading and writing isiXhosa. He did Grade 1 again at the age of 6½ at a private school in King William's Town. He performed very well, I think, because he was more mature than the previous year. He could read, write and count well, and he was admitted to a 'Model C' junior school to do Grade 2. He had mastered a lot of vocabulary.

At the age of 7½, I also brought him a Molteno pupils' book to read the English phonics. It had a lot of pictures and simple sentences. When we read it, Ulwando asked me why it was written the way it was. He didn't find the book very interesting and claimed it was too simple.

The cart is on the farm.
The car is on the farm.
The men are in the cart.
The men are in the car.
The bed is on the farm.

When he was 9½, I introduced Ulwando to isiXhosa, because I thought it was important for him to be able to read and write in his mother-tongue. He didn't have a problem either. I borrowed some Reading Books for Grades 1 and 2 from schools in Mdantsane. He read one book, "*Inene, inunu, nana nala isele. Susa isilo ese nalo usana*." He looked at the pictures and asked, "Do these people live in this hut?" I said, "Yes, why?" He paused for a moment and looked at me. "Why do they talk like this?" So I asked him, "Why do you ask that?" "It's because we don't talk like this." I couldn't answer. What I discovered was that he wasn't interested in reading that series at all because it didn't make sense.

This example supports Goodman's findings which we mentioned in Unit 1 on page 12.

Later, he said, "Why can't you read for me a Xhosa story book, Mama?" I read the Grade 4 Jongilanga series. I remember, there was a story about a man who liked meat too much. Ulwando was interested in the story book, but he didn't want to read by himself. He wanted me to read it to him.

Sifanelwe

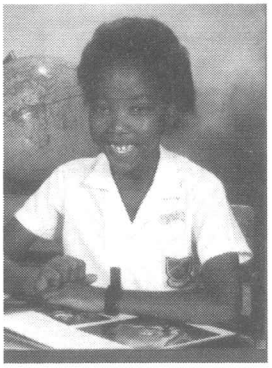
Before Sifanelwe was a year old, it was easier to read to her while I was feeding her. Before her third birthday, when she was about two, she would open the pages of a book. At this age she didn't try to fold and put the book in her mouth like she had done when she was just a year old. She could also identify things in pictures and would shout out their names. At three, I would read story books to her, and Sifanelwe would listen attentively. But she asked a lot of questions, whereas at two she just listened quietly.

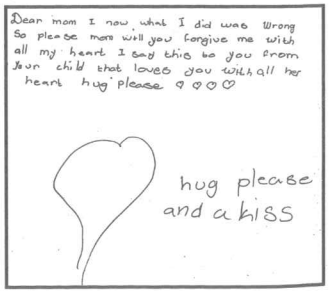
At about four or five, when she started school, Sifanelwe could read in a number of ways. She could compare rows of pictures and find the odd one out. She also made associations between things she saw on TV with things she knew in real life. When she saw the logo for the SA Perm, she knew it was the same as the one on her mother's bank card. When Sifanelwe was between five and six, I think, when she was with her cousins, they could circle certain words, and they would play a game using magazines.

She loved singing and sang a lot of English rhymes and Xhosa hymns which she had learned at pre-school. She still loves singing. She also loved drawing. It was the way she expressed herself. I remember at one time I was transferred to another place. I hadn't told Sifanelwe, but she must have heard me telling a friend. Then her teacher spoke to me and asked if there was a problem. When I asked why, she told me Sifanelwe was drawing and painting with dark colours!

When she was in Grade 1, I helped Sifanelwe with spelling. For example, she would ask me to spell a particular word. Then I would say the word slowly. She would say it after me, and then she would write it down. After Grade 1, the process changed a little bit. Now when she had written down the word, she would look at it carefully to check that she was happy with her spelling. If she wasn't happy, she would change it.

Sifanelwe really enjoys reading and writing. She belongs to the local library and borrows books regularly. She even chooses books for her baby brother and reads them to him! And because she loves reading so much, we have a very special bond. We share the same books. We do things and share things together. If we have a quarrel, she always writes me little notes!





Chloe

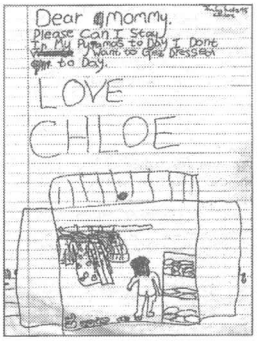
Like all children, Chloe has been involved, from birth, in a continuous process of making sense of her life. For her, like many children, this has included finding out how written language works, and how to make it work for her. From early on, she found herself interacting with people who included her in their many and varied uses for reading and writing, within a home and social environment which reflected and reinforced these uses.

Babies notice print

In many middle-class homes, it is understood as 'natural' for parents to share books with their young children. We read to Chloe when she was a little baby. Her excited response told us that she loved the sounds and rhythms of stories and the visual images and colours that passed regularly before her eyes. She loved sitting on a lap and getting a cuddle and some undivided attention. Once she could sit up, she started looking at board books for herself, and tried turning over pages. A big book called *Tickle Tickle* by Helen Oxenbury was a favourite:

Squelch squelch in the mud
Splish splash scrub-a-dub
Gently gently brush your hair
Tickle tickle under there!

She used to take over the last line and say with great feeling, 'Ticka ticka deh!'



Appreciating rhymes

Chloe grew to love rhymes and soon knew many off by heart. She loved to sing with us, and to play games and pretend to be the characters in the rhymes, like Little Bo-Peep. We often listened to music and included tapes of nursery rhymes put to music. Chloe had access to a child's tape recorder and a selection of tapes when she was about two. Because she was so keen to work it, she quickly came to recognise the PLAY button, the REW for rewind and the FF for fast forward. She also often asked an adult to sit with her and read through the list of song titles on each tape, asking, 'What dat say?' She would hold the tape insert while listening, pointing to the titles as the songs came up and she also liked to 'read' them without the music. These tape inserts, the contents pages of story and nursery rhyme books, and the nursery rhymes themselves were central to Chloe becoming a reader. Knowing the order of songs and rhymes, and having watched adults point to the words while reading, she too began pointing at the written symbols as she said the words out loud.

Stories – alone and with others

In those toddler days, Chloe used to climb up to a high book shelf, pull down a pile of books and sit for an hour at a time, 'reading' to herself. There was often a story as part of the bedtime routine, either told or read. Generally, we spent a lot of time looking at books, reading and telling stories together. Sometimes I would write down a well-liked story I had told her, and I also started offering to write down Chloe's own stories.

Writing to communicate

As we lived away from many of our family members and friends, letters were important at home. Chloe loved the ritual of letter writing and sending – the satisfaction at having completed the letter, putting it in and sealing the envelope, finding and writing the address, going to the post office, licking the stamp, deciding where to stick it and, finally, popping the letter into the letterbox and wishing it on to wherever. She also experienced the different moods that were part of literacy-related activities, like paying bills, which involve a totally different emotional investment to writing or reading letters.

A variety of uses for reading and writing

Some parents and teachers will recognise and identify with the kinds of encounters with reading and writing I have described, and the examples of writing which follow; others will not.

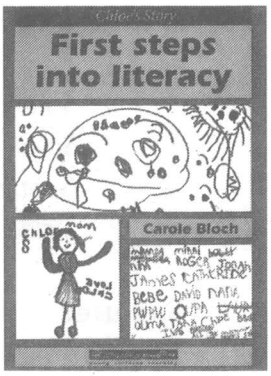
We do not all have the same reasons for reading and writing, nor is there any reason why we should. Different communities have their own ways of using written language. The idea which is central to this book is that first experiences with literacy, wherever they take place, can and should be ones which are real, purposeful and meaningful for all children. As Gordon Wells (1986, 222) writes:

> *We are the meaning makers – every one of us: children, parents, and teachers. To try to make sense, to construct stories, and to share them with others in speech and in writing is an essential part of being human. For those of us who are more knowledgeable and more mature – parents and teachers – the responsibility is clear: to interact with those in our care in such a way as to foster and enrich their meaning making.*

If you are especially interested in this particular aspect of children's learning, you might like to write a similar book which documents the emerging print literacy of a child whose home language is isiXhosa or another African language.

The story of Chloe comes from a book called, *Chloe's Story: First steps into literacy*. In this book, Carole Bloch goes on to write about Chloe's writing. She classifies the different forms of Chloe's writing in the following way:

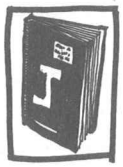
- *Writing to name and to label* - this starts as scribbles which are sometimes connected to a drawing. After some time, the scribbles may include letters, often the letters of the child's name.
- *Writing to organise daily life* - for example, making lists of things, like shopping lists.
- *Writing to communicate at home* - notes to other family members.
- *Communicating further afield* - including filling in forms, entering competitions, writing letters.
- *Creative writing* - writing stories and poems.
- *Working at writing* - copying out words and numbers, wanting to spell particular words correctly.
- *Writing in play* - dramatic play often creates contexts for writing. For example, in a shop you need to label products and their prices, advertise a sale, and so on.



You will find a copy of this book at your Centre. Try to make a point of borrowing it. When we were developing this umthamo, we felt that this was a very important and accessible text. Also, it is written by a South African writer.

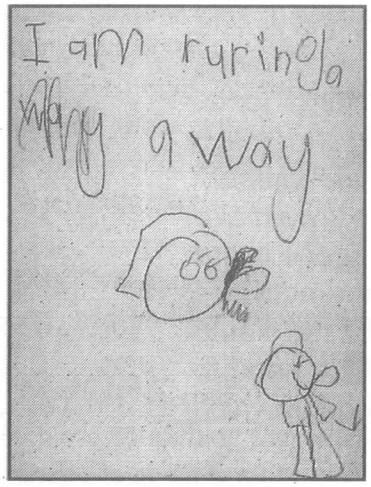
Activity 5 - Reflecting on the case studies

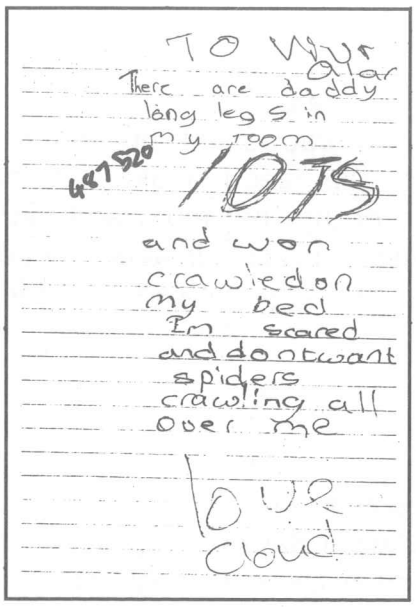
Go back and skim through these four studies of young children making sense of print. What do you notice about them? What have you learned about the emergent and developing print literacy of young children from these studies? What surprised you? Why? Isn't it remarkable that young children can achieve so much when they are supported and encouraged to try things for themselves? They become confident, and are not afraid to make mistakes or to take risks. This can be true of older learners too, if we provide them with opportunities to read and write **real** texts for **real** purposes.

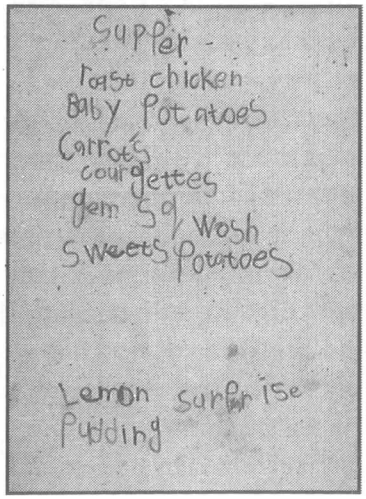


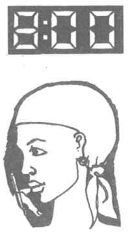
Open your Journal. Write down your thoughts and feelings about what you have read. Think of examples of anybody you know who has shown an interest in print before they went to school. (This could be memories of yourself, a brother or sister, or one of your own children.) Then write about what you noticed.

Lastly, think about the ways you yourself use writing in your daily life at the present time. Make a list of all the different forms of writing you carry out. Which do you enjoy most? Why? How do you go about doing this kind of writing?







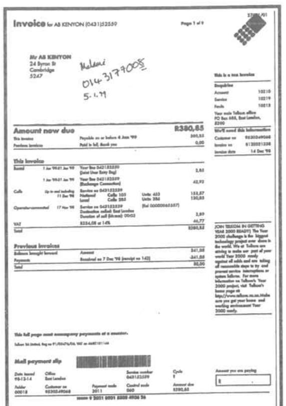


Unit 3 - Creating a print-rich environment

In many parts of the world, primary school teachers work hard to provide experiences and opportunities for their learners, in which their learners can use the knowledge and information that they bring from their experiences *outside* the classroom. These teachers make sure that they provide print literacy events which have **'real'** and **different** purposes.

> *It's like speech. We don't speak to everybody we know in the same manner. It depends on how well we know a person, and what our relationship to that person is. We use different styles of speaking, different registers (or* ***spoken genres****) to speak to the different people we mix with.*

In real life (that is life beyond the classroom), we use print literacy for different purposes. And for each purpose, we write in a different way. Sometimes we have to *complete forms*. At other times we may need to write a *letter*. And letters can be different. Think about the kind of letter you write to a friend, and then think about the kind of letter you write when you want to apply for a job. They are quite different. The words you use, and the way you phrase the words, are different.



A bill

Poetry is another way of putting words together. And in this course, we ask you to write in yet another way. We ask you to discuss different theories, to comment and then to give your own opinion. In this kind of writing you have to write down two or more sides of an *argument*, and then you have to *explain* your own opinion. Your reflective reports have *narrative* descriptions which tell what you have done, and reflective *analysis* to explain what you think.

I AM NO LONGER THE SAME

I am no longer the same now;
I have changed completely. (x2)

I see my life differently now;
I have changed completely. (x2)

I am no longer, longer the same now;
I have changed completely. (x2) CHORUS

I used to be weak;
I am strong now;
I have changed completely.

I was a loser;
Now a winner;
I have changed completely.

I was a victim;
Now a hero;
I have changed completely;
I was a victim;
Now a champion;
I have changed completely.

I am no longer an easy target;
More inspired, more than a conqueror;
I have changed completely.

I see my life different now;
I have changed completely;
I am no longer an easy target;

A poem by Mzwakhe Mbuli


6 Newtown Road · Malvern · Worcs · England WR14 1NZ
Telephone +44 1684 56 5262

31 March 2000

Dearest Viv + Alan

. . I began a letter to you on 24 & decided, on re-reading it, that I had better start again. Your delightful, invigorating + inspiring collage was brought to me in hospital by Alan D. when he visited one afternoon, it gave me the boost I needed. I have returned to it again + again, each time finding something new, something about which I wanted to know more – heaps + heaps of questions. You felt so close + yet you are so far away – physically – + there is the frustration!

Did that wonderful wedding, when we all wore our 'Tribal dress', actually take place 25 years ago? One of the great unforgettables in my life!

Mandy wrote that she had met you, Viv, in Grahamstown when you brought Cloud to Rhodes to begin her first Term ('she has Viv's lively brown eyes' – I quote) + no doubt she told you of Alan's

A letter to a friend

All these different forms of writing are called **genres**. And if we want our learners to become powerful readers and writers of the written word, we have to ensure that we provide opportunities for them to work with different kinds of texts. *"We have to create lesson contexts where reading and writing let the literate world into the literacy world of the school."* (Meek, 1991: 201) We will succeed in doing this if we make sure that the print literacy events our learners engage in are **real** or **relevant.** We need to make sure that the activities we set them to do are not more and more of the same mindless repetition and drill. Instead the activities need to help learners to participate powerfully in the world in which they live *now*, and in which they will live in the future.

If we want to create a community of readers and writers in our classrooms, then one of the things we need to do is to create an environment which will support and nurture their literacy development. This will mean that we will have to consciously make our classrooms places where learners are encouraged to participate in meaningful literacy events.

Before you study the suggestions for enriching your classroom, read the extract below. Although it focuses on what teachers of younger learners can do, many of the ideas can be adapted or adjusted to suit the needs of older learners.

Children gradually come to understand the conventions of written language as they compare and adjust their own writing to that of more experienced writers. In the same way as toddlers come to refine their speech so that they are better able to make themselves understood, children realise that they need to write conventionally for others to read what they have written.

In-depth research into young children's writing progression led Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982, 277) to note that

> *[w]e must let children write, even in a writing system different from the alphabetic one; we must let them write, not so they invent their own idiosyncratic system, but so they discover that their system is not the conventional one, and in this way find valid reasons to substitute their own hypotheses with our conventional ones.*

This takes many encounters with different uses and forms of written language, and involves reading and writing as well as talk about reading and writing. Children need to talk about print with those who are more experienced, thereby learning which conventions are used in which contexts.

A flexible approach

Young children begin to write when:

- They realise that they can use writing to achieve something they want to achieve.
- They are given opportunities to write for real reasons in the language or languages they feel 'at home' with.
- Their attempts are recognised as worthwhile by the important people in their lives.
- They interact with more experienced writers who help them or who act as models and mentors, like the way apprentices learn their trade from skilled workers.

The rules need not be fixed when children write purposefully because:

- Sometimes the child writes.
- Sometimes the experienced writer writes down what the child says.
- Sometimes they co-write something – like a list, story or letter.
- Sometimes the child tries the spelling alone.
- Sometimes the child asks how to spell a word.
- Sometimes the child initiates something, and asks for assistance.
- Sometimes the experienced writer makes a suggestion for writing something.

Creating a print-rich environment

While the suggestions that follow are addressed to teachers in classrooms, they have value for home situations as well.

To begin to weave literacy into daily classroom life, create an appropriate print-rich environment at school. Start by thinking of the ways you use reading and writing in your life and which language or languages you use. Chat with the children and their families about how reading and writing are useful for them, and which languages they use in different situations.

For instance, families may read religious texts, newspapers, magazines, books, train timetables, recipes, leaflets, street signs or other environmental print. They may write letters, notes, shopping lists, and fill in bank forms. They may do all of these things, some of them, or none of them. They may have reasons for reading and writing which you have not thought of before. Children may have experienced some print in one language, and some in another. They might go to the library regularly, or might never have been into one. Gathering this kind of information helps you to begin with what your learners know and bring to the class, and it also helps to make parents feel welcomed. In this way, both home and community life are linked with the school, and parents' literacy

with that of their children. It also gives you information about how to extend the literacy-related understandings children bring to class and how you can help them explore these understandings in their play.

Provide tools for writing, such as pencils and paper, and different reading materials. These can include newspapers, magazines, junk mail (such as the leaflets from supermarkets with pictures of different groceries and their prices), recipes, competition entry forms, train timetables and story books.

Invite parents to spend time in the classroom, working alongside you with the children. Parents who speak, read or write more than one language may be able to help with literacy in more than one language (biliteracy and multiliteracy). They can interpret and translate, or write stories and rhymes in another language. Make it clear to parents who cannot read and write that they are not redundant – oral language feeds written language. Telling stories and talking about stories and other projects has immense educational value.

Ask parents and children to collect and bring in grocery packaging to use in play. Play with the children. Children learn and develop more when adults interact with them than when they are just given something to play with and then left alone. Offer ideas to extend what the children are doing in their play. If, for example, the children are pretending that they are at the hospital, supply paper and pencil and information about how to write a prescription for medicine. In this way, you will be a model for them to learn from and they will discover a different reason for reading and writing.

Emergent writing is normal

A child may write something which you cannot read, either because the letter formation is not conventional or because it is a string of letters which do not make sense. She may ask, 'What does it say?' or 'What did I write?' Judge the situation for yourself. Try and work out what it is that the child is trying to achieve in the particular context. If, for example, you know she is writing a letter to a real person, you can write down what she is saying under what she has written. If she is playing, make up something 'letter-like' and read it aloud. If she knows something about the relationship of letters to their sounds, and has written a string of disconnected letters, like *ooipogloofop*, you could read that out and you might find that this stimulates a very amusing game. Sometimes children tell you what 'it' says; other times they are satisfied with telling you that it is 'just writing'.

As children concentrate their energies in self-expression and communicating something meaningful, the physical skill and muscular co-ordination needed to form the distinct symbols of conventional writing develop almost incidentally. Gradually, unconventional symbols are replaced by conventional writing.

Making changes

There is not necessarily a 'right' age for learning how to read and write. Becoming literate begins when a child or adult engages with written language in socially meaningful ways. There is no good reason why this should not be initiated with young children at home or at pre-school. I have discussed how most pre-school teachers are reluctant to welcome literacy into their classes or to encourage play with literacy. Such teachers need to update their information. With new insights into literacy development, they can make sure that, rather than inadvertently preventing young children from exploring written language, they find ways to weave the different literacies from 'out there' into play and other activities in classrooms.

Most teachers in South Africa work with very large classes and inadequate resources. It may at first sound unrealistic to suggest using an approach which starts with individual children, trying to find out how literacy fits into their lives and working with ways to develop and extend this. But if we seriously want to

give all children the chance to become literate, rather than taking short cuts which will prove expensive in the long term, teachers have to meet the challenge.

A key to this involves a change in attitude towards parents and community involvement in education. Space needs to be found for family members and the wider community to share in the responsibility of helping children with literacy, both inside and outside the classroom. Parents and teachers need to recognise and act on the fact that communities provide invaluable resources for reading and writing. They generate reading material in the different languages spoken by the children, reasons for writing and people who can tell and read stories.

The change needs to go further, however, to a flexibility towards the requirements of literacy learners of all ages. While the focus of this book is on young children's literacy, it is clear that it is within families and communities that real engagements with written language occur. Literacy programmes can be developed with the needs of family members in mind, irrespective of age. Rather than isolating generations from each other, family literacy programmes can focus on the common concerns of adults and children.

Finally

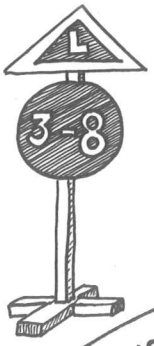
All young children need regular opportunities to use written language in ways that make sense to them. Children want to be readers and writers for real reasons, interacting with both accomplished readers and writers and those less experienced than themselves. They also need to talk and reflect with older children and adults about their own reasons for writing – their own stories and stories they have heard, in the languages which best express what they feel and mean.

Children need to have their questions about print answered. Many adults try to provide appropriate answers to the questions that children ask in other areas of their lives, but when their questions concern literacy, it is taken that they need instruction, whereas what they need are answers!

None of this has to do with 'pre-skills', any more than first words or first steps are 'pre-talking' or 'pre-walking'. It is all part of a process which contributes to giving people various ways to express themselves, and to communicate their needs, desires and ideas, both to themselves and to others.

(Bloch, 1997: 36-39)

On the next four pages there are more ideas and suggestions for making a classroom print-rich. The ideas are arranged at two levels: for younger learners who are beginning to take their first steps into the world of print, and for learners who read and write with some fluency. We have set out the ideas on two double-page spreads. You will have to decide which ideas and suggestions you like and feel are most appropriate for you, your learners and your particular classroom situation.



Spider

Daily, engage several children in conversation. Write down on card the important word that a child wants that day. These cards can be kept in individually labelled boxes. Or each individual's words can be kept together with a rubber band.

Word cards

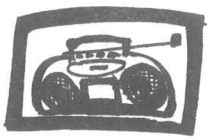
Each day, meet and greet a few children as they come into class. Tape-record each child's comments. Later on the same day, transcribe these comments onto long strips of paper. Staple each individual's comments to those of previous days. In this way, each child has a personal book of her/his thoughts and comments.

Inyoka

Read and tell lots of stories. Make opportunities for learners to tell their stories. Before any new book (home-made or otherwise) is put out to be read, read it aloud to the learners. Then they will know the story, and when they read it themselves, they will be able to make intelligent guesses at any new words they find on the pages.

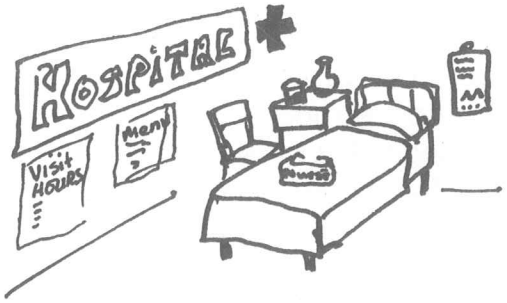
Set up a Literacy Table. Put out a storybook (home-made or otherwise) on the table, together with cut-out figures of the characters in the story, or some puppets. Also, put some props to encourage the learners to act out the story. Add some simple question cards which encourage them to read and do something specific. If the learners make some large pictures of the sequence of events in the story, these can be made into a Big Book (for several children to look at, at the same time) when the display is changed. Alternatively, make a display of a number of books on the same topic or theme.

Read aloud to your learners on a daily basis. Make a point of finding different kinds of books - books of poetry, stories, proverbs, riddles, etc. Model how to read aloud well. In this way, learners who are struggling to make sense of the print they read will become more and more aware that the written word is another way of communicating ideas.



Put a tape-recorder in a special corner of the classroom, together with tapes of stories told by people you have invited into your class. If the story has also been made into a book (by the teacher and/or the children), the children can listen to a tape and follow the appropriate story in its written form at the same time.

Use the everyday environment as a source and stimulus for reading (signs, adverts, notices, labels on food packets, food products, clothing, the Post Office and Hospital). With younger learners, you can make a space in your classroom for your learners to carry out dramatic play - set up a shop, a hospital, a post office. Make sure that there is paper, pencils, a stapler, paper clips, envelopes so that the learners can use this context for literacy activities. This can be changed regularly so that learners have a variety of experiences.



Writing Place

Create a special place in your classroom for learners to write. Put out different sizes of paper, pencils, pens, wax crayons, pencil crayons, paper clips, a stapler, pritt or glue. Make sure that some of the paper is big enough to use to make an envelope. This could be in a corner, against a wall, or simply the 'Writing Table'. When you set up this special place, talk to your learners about this place, and discuss how they think they should behave and use the materials in this part of the class. (You will be evolving a code of conduct with your learners. And because you negotiate it with them, they are more likely to treat the materials with respect, and not to waste.)

Link reading and writing with other activities. For example, reading and following instructions to make something (how to make bread). Find a small creature (a worm, insect, or beetle). Learners can read some instructions and then make a suitable home for the creature. They can also feed it, observe it daily and keep a diary of what it eats, and how it behaves.

How To.....

Provide opportunities for your learners to write for different purposes. They could write instructions for other learners to make something, or to carry out an experiment. The test of how successful their instructions are, will be whether their peers are able to make the article, or to set up the experiment.

Make time for learners to talk, and tell their 'news'. Record this and put it together to make a Wall Newspaper. Share with your learners the way newspapers are laid out. Draw their attention to the headlines, the different sizes of print, writing in columns, the pictures and captions, and cartoons. Your learners can write and draw, depending on their experience of print literacy. Make a new newspaper regularly. We are able to buy both daily and weekly newspapers. 'Old' wall newspapers can be made into a 'book' for learners to look at and read as and when they finish a particular task or piece of work.

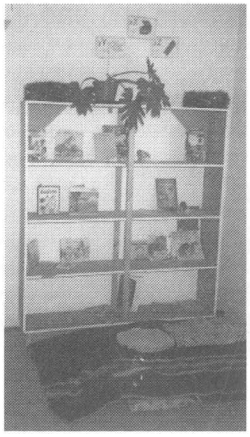
SHARE and Discuss

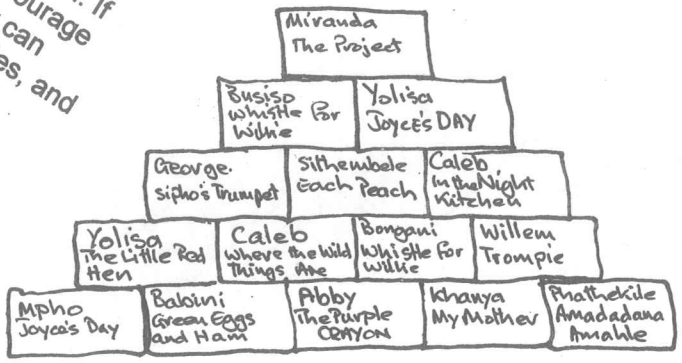
Encourage learners to share their reading and writing with one another. Get your learners to read one another's work, and to read to one another. Discuss books and stories that you share with learners. Encourage them to think of different possibilities, different endings, and what might happen if the circumstances were different in a particular story. Get your learners to discuss and write their own alternative endings to stories. Give them opportunities to act out and write stories from a different character's point of view.

Make a letter-box. Talk to your learners about envelopes. Get some paper, scissors and glue. Let them make their own envelopes, and then write letters to one another. They can 'post' their letters in the letter-box,

Put up a chart with learners' names so that they can write up the books they have read, whether or not they enjoyed them, and why. This will help them develop their own critical attitudes to what they read. Make a wall of bricks. On each brick write the name of the child who has read a particular book, and the title, author, and illustrator of the book. Try to make a really high and wide wall!

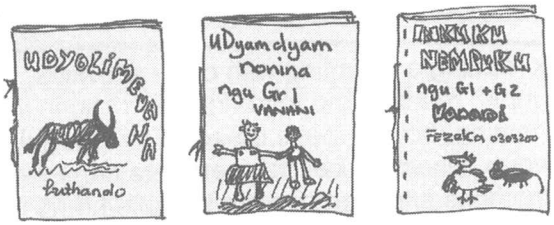
Set up a Book/Reading Corner in your classroom. If you haven't got a Book-Box from READ, encourage your learners to make their own books. They can make up their own stories, use traditional stories, and create both story books (fiction) and information books (non-fiction).



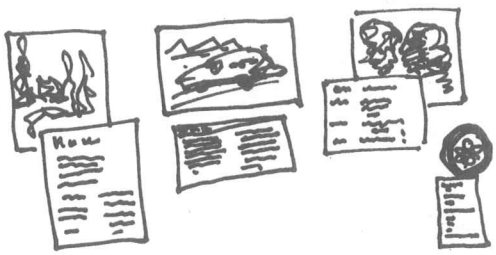


Book Week

Have a Book Week. Invite some people from the community to come and tell traditional stories to your learners. Involve your learners in the process. Invite one of the learners to open the proceedings with a praise poem. If at all possible, make sure that everybody in your class gets a chance to make a book during the week. If you have a very large class, your learners could collaborate to make group books. (You could use newsprint and wax crayons and follow the instructions at the end of Umthamo 9.) This will be a sure way to increase the number of books available to your learners!



If you work with older learners, get them to make books for younger learners in the school. They could interview the children for whom they are writing, and find out what they like to read. (We suggested this as an optional activity in Umthamo 25) If you work with younger learners, get a class of older learners to write stories for your learners. When they have made their books, the older learners can read them to the younger learners.

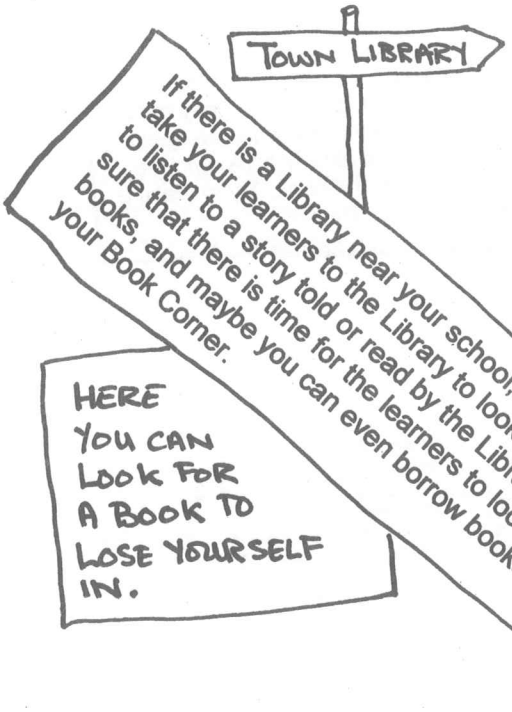


Have a day when everybody must bonga. The following day, provide an opportunity for learners to write down their poems, or for a more experienced reader and writer to record their poem.

Cut out pictures from magazines and stick them onto pieces of card with a large space underneath, or next to the picture. Write neatly, in 'natural' language, something about the picture in the space. If you work with older learners, they may want to choose their own pictures and wish to write their own texts. These can be stories, dialogues, or information texts. Add one or two questions to stimulate the learners to read on, or to write something for somebody else to read. Store these cards in a box and encourage the learners to take one out to read when they have finished a particular task or piece of work.

Water Week

Select a topic or theme for two or three weeks. Then try to find books on that theme or topic. You can also make opportunities for learners to write their own books on the topic or theme. These could be story books, or information books.



Have a "riddle day". Then your learners can either write down their riddle, or dictate it to you. You could put all the riddles in a box, and each learner could pull out a riddle. Then they can read the riddles, or you can read them aloud. Your learners could then try to guess the riddles. You could do the same with proverbs and idioms. If you choose to use proverbs or idioms, then your learners could act them out, and then draw a picture and write out the appropriate proverb or idiom.

Writing Conferences

Model good questions that your learners can ask to encourage one another to write more clearly, logically, and in a more focused style. If your learners are in Grade 4 and beyond, put up a list of questions on the wall so that learners can monitor themselves, and support one another.

- I really like the way you . . . . .
- Could you tell me more about . . . .?
- What other information could make your writing clearer?
- Are the ideas in a logical order?
- Is there a new paragraph for each new idea?
- Do the sentences start in different ways?
- Are some words used too often?

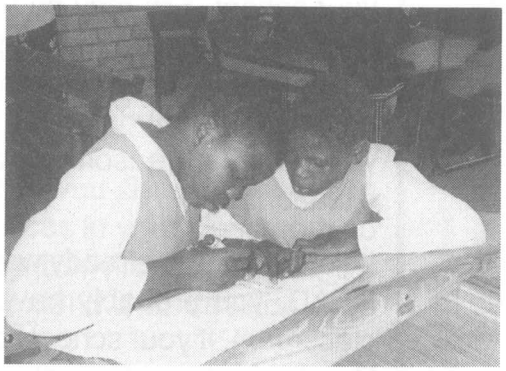
Introduce your learners to different forms of the written word. Make sure that you have different kinds of texts for them to read, including newspapers, magazines, junk mail (for example, leaflets from supermarkets with pictures of different items and their prices), recipes, competition entry forms, bus or train timetables, and of course story books and collections of poetry.

Reading Conferences

Encourage learners to share their reading and writing with one another. Get your learners to read one another's work, and to read to one another.

Process Writing

Allow your learners time to write. Don't expect them to produce the final copy the first time they write something. Encourage them to leave a piece of writing for a day or so, to return to it and re-read it. To share their writing with a partner or group of friends, to extend and develop it, before checking the grammar and spelling, and finally writing the 'finished copy'.



Sharing and discussing writing

Provide opportunities for your learners to use forms of writing other than stories and poems. For example, after they have done something, or been somewhere together, get your learners to write recounts to describe what they did and the event, both to inform and to entertain somebody else. Get your learners to observe some local plants or creatures and then to write information reports, in which they write everything they have found about the plant or creature which they investigated. They can write instructions or procedures when they write a list of a sequence of actions or steps to make something. If they have researched how something works, they could write explanations to explain the process of how that particular thing works. Get them to think about and to write adverts. Discuss issues with your learners in which there are two very different views. Get your learners to write down the two sides of the argument (with reasons for each view), and then give their own point of view. In this way they will learn about how to write an argument or how to persuade in writing.

You will find more about different forms or ***genres*** *of writing in the Appendix on pages 46 & 47. Many teachers throughout the world believe that it is very important to provide opportunities for learners to write in different styles. Some teachers consciously teach these forms. However, if we worry to much about* ***form, language and grammar,*** *we may prevent our learners from writing what they have to say. And* ***wanting*** *to write is perhaps the most important reason for writing.*

The **Key Activity** in this umthamo is one which will last the whole of the third year of this course. It is not something you can do, tick off, and forget. The purpose of the **Key Activity** is to help you to shift your practice as a teacher of language. (And we are all language teachers.) At the end-of-year Portfolio Presentation you will be required to provide evidence that you have made your classroom a richer print-literacy environment. We will want to hear how this umthamo has affected your practice as a primary school teacher. What have you gained or learned from the activities you have carried out yourself, and with your learners?

You will find that this is also true of other imithamo that you will work through in the first semester of this year of the course.

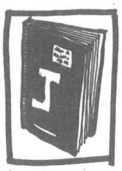
As you work to enrich your classroom throughout the year, note the effect of what you are doing on your learners, and also on your colleagues. Some of your colleagues may be excited and want to use some of the ideas to enhance their classrooms. Others may be a little threatened. How do you respond to these different reactions? In what ways are you becoming an 'agent of change' in your school? Make notes regularly in your Journal of what you notice and observe.

Activity 6 - Key Activity - Implementing Ideas

Now you have looked through the suggestions, ideas and activities suggested on the preceding pages, you need to make choices about which ones you feel are appropriate for your learners, for your classroom, and for your school. You may be able to 'tick off' some ideas as things that you already do. Next decide on some that you would like to try to improve the richness of the print environment of your class. You will have to think about what you can reasonably do in your particular teaching situation.

If your school is already working with an organisation like READ, you probably have a number of books in your classroom. If your school has been working with a project like the Molteno Project, you will have materials which encourage and promote reading. Your school may also have books from or through another source. But you can still add to the richness of print in order to encourage your learners to read and write more, and for different purposes.

First of all, you need to consider your classroom. What do you already have in your classroom that encourages your learners to carry out print-literate behaviour? What do you already have that extends and develops your learners' understanding of print literacy, and encourages



them to participate in print literacy events? How can you use or adapt what is in your classroom? Open your Journal and make a note of what already exists in your classroom to promote print literacy activities.

If you are subject teaching at your school, you will have to decide where you can add to your learners' print environment, and in what ways. You may be able to make a difference to several classrooms. Or you may need to focus on just one classroom. It might be wise to talk to some of your colleagues, to negotiate what would be best for your particular school.

Next, you may find it helpful to go back to the two double-page spreads, and to re-read the suggestions and ideas there. Then you need to decide which idea or suggestion you are going to put into practice first. Choose the idea you would really like to begin with, and which you know you can set up in your teaching situation. You will probably have to make some preparations. You may need to collect some materials, and this could be quite time-consuming. But we are sure that you will find that any efforts you make to create a richer print-literacy environment will be worthwhile. Try to implement at least three ideas before you write Stage 1 of your Reflective Report.

Write **regularly** in your Journal about what you plan to do, and about the ideas you intend to try out. Write about and describe **how** you implement each idea. Make sure that you write about the **effects** that you observe, both in your learners and in your colleagues. Include anecdotes of what learners and colleagues say and do.

Throughout the next 12 months, you should continue to extend and develop the resources in your classroom so that you create a truly rich print environment. This will encourage your learners to extend and develop their literacy practices.

If you decide to implement several ideas at once, you will have to make wise decisions about what is possible. You may well find that there is a more obvious change in your learners' attitude more quickly and that it is more evident that their print literacy is developing and extending. Again, write **regularly** in your Journal about your plans and the ideas you intend to try out. Write about and describe how you implement the suggestions. And make sure that you include anecdotes about the effects that you observe in both your learners and your colleagues, and what they say and do.

Unit 4 - Reflecting on work in progress

One of the books that we found most useful when we were developing this umthamo was a book called, *Pathways to Literacy*, by Trevor Cairney. Trevor Cairney began his career as a teacher in an Australian primary school. Before you write your Reflective Report, we would like you to read an extract from that book. In this Reading, he describes what happened when he created 'a rich literary environment' in his classroom.

Reading 6 - Creating rich literary environments - developing a sense of community

I believe that the starting point for introducing students to the world of literature is to look at the reading environments we create in our classrooms. The classroom environments we create are reflective of our assumptions about language and learning. One of the problems we face as teachers is that much of our knowledge is tacit. Each of us operates according to a set of inherent assumptions about literacy, learning and teaching (Hutchings, 1985). These assumptions direct our thinking as teachers, and influence the type of learning environments we create within our classrooms.

It took me a number of years to realize that literature can be a vital part of the common ground that I am able to share with the students in my classrooms. The turning point came in my second year of teaching while teaching a grade 6 class. I started the year as I had ended the previous one, using a primary school magazine containing extracts from literature and factual texts. I used this mainly for oral reading, comprehension activities (typically a set of 10 questions). I supplemented these lessons with a battered reading laboratory. Six weeks into the first term I was given a Core Library (Ashton Scholastic) by my school principal with the instruction, 'I want you to try this out'. The package was essentially a set of 100 children's books (mostly literature), some supporting materials designed to stimulate creative response to the texts, and a copy of Don Holdaway's (1972) book *Independence in Reading*. This book, and the Core Library itself, were to lead to changes that transformed my approach as a teacher.

I began to talk to my students about their reading, and in the process made many discoveries. I found that while they could all read (obviously to differing extents), none of them did, except for a range of school purposes. No one had read a book in recent times, and most had never read a complete novel. Even the best readers in this class could only recall one or two books they had read during the primary school years. The 100 paperback books provided the perfect basis for changes in my reading programme.

What brings about a change in teaching?
- A stimulus.
You may want to remember this example in case you want to quote it some time in the future.

I began to make changes by introducing a daily independent reading programme. For thirty minutes every day I encouraged my students to read books of their choice. I also began to collect as many pieces of literature as possible to build up a class library. I arranged bulk loans from the school and community libraries, and asked children to bring in their favourite books. The class library was quickly established and my students began to read almost immediately. I introduced a system of conferences with my students (as suggested by Holdaway) which were designed to permit them to talk about their books. I also encouraged them to meet in groups to share their literary experiences. I began to provide time for my class to respond in their own way to the books they read. This response time utilized a variety of media and sign systems, including drawing, dramatization, writing, and craft. Finally, I began reading to them daily to share a variety of genres and authors' work. The results were overwhelming. By the end of the year this class had read over 1,500 books, with a range of 25 to 160 separate titles. All of these children were avid readers.

The change in my classroom was quite dramatic and went well beyond a simple change in my reading programme. At the beginning of the year my classroom was a place where:

- people worked quietly
- no one spoke unless spoken to
- tasks were usually completed alone, or on occasions, in ability groups with set requirements
- students completed only what was asked of them
- I marked set tasks and provided feedback in the form of scores, grades and, occasionally, written comments.

By the end of the year the classroom environment had undergone a number of fundamental changes. My classroom was now a place where:

- students talked to each other about their work and their interests
- activities were frequently completed in informal interest or friendship groups
- we frequently shared as a class our reading interests
- I talked with all students about their reading interests
- people recommended books to each other
- students frequently initiated literacy activities themselves
- students spontaneously responded to their reading in a variety of media, including drama, drawing, writing and discussion
- students began to analyse and reflect on the content, purpose and ideology of the texts we had been reading
- the students and I each responded to the work of others in a variety of ways including spoken comments, written responses (e.g. journal entries) and informal conversation.

Do I find any of these things happening in my class yet?

Do I give my learners chances to respond to each other's work?

What had happened in this classroom was that literature had provided a vehicle to transform a teacher dominated and teacher directed learning environment (Rogoff, 1994, refers to this as an 'adult-run' instructional model) to one based on the development of a community of learners. In this classroom both the teacher and the students were now active in managing and contributing to each other's learning. The students were now learning about literacy as they participated with each other in the exploration of literature. While much of the reading was being done silently and independently, students were constantly engaged in conversations about their reading, and were all contributing to the group's growing understanding of literature and their world.

This class had now become a community of readers that valued reading and gave it a prominent place in their lives. My students were no longer simply students who read because they had to: they now read because they wanted to. As the title of this chapter states, they were now 'readers who read'.

The classroom had now become a place where students:

- *Shared* personal discoveries, concerns, and issues that arose as they read literature
- *Reflected* on their discoveries, the insights of others, the texts they had been reading, group purposes and goals, and group priorities
- *Responded* to each other as people, as well as responding to each other's meanings, discoveries, problems and insights
- *Communicated* their discoveries, insights, feelings, values, reflections and purposes.

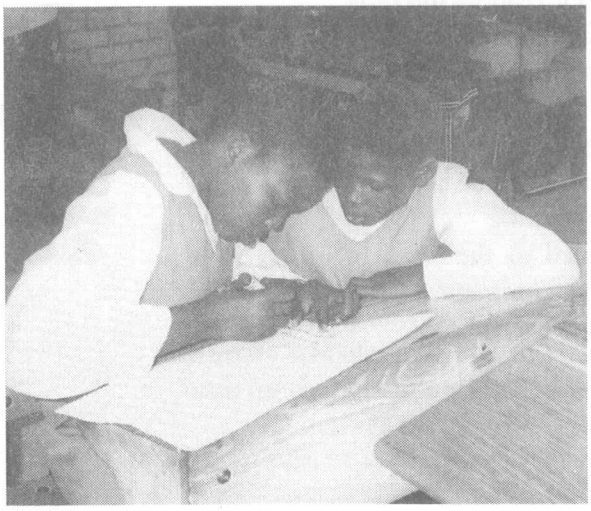
Furthermore, it had now become a place where the members of this community of learners provided positive demonstrations of reading and writing which had the effect of encouraging each other to:

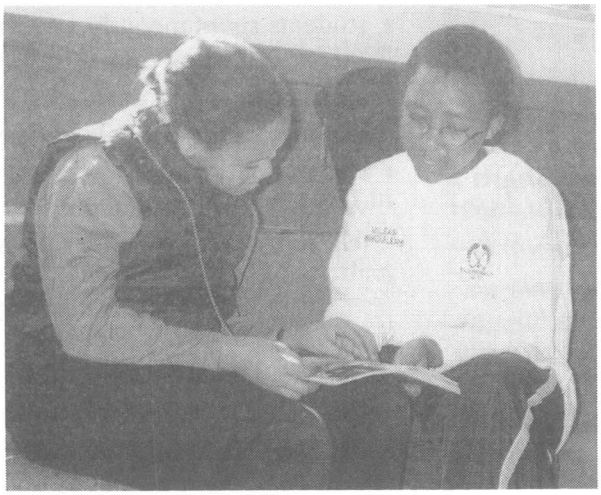
- *Talk* about their reading
- *Construct* shared understandings of specific books
- *Critique* the texts that they had been reading and the views and interpretations of others concerning the text meaning and ideology
- *Read* independently for personal satisfaction and a variety of purposes.

(Cairney, 1995: 78-81)

Wow!! Isn't that just what we want?

Do I see these things happening in my class? Do I recognise them and respond to them so that the learners also realise how they have changed?





Activity 7 - Writing a Reflective Report

We expect you to continue to carry out the **Key Activity** in this umthamo over the next 12 months. At this stage, you are expected to hand in a *Work in Progress* Report for your umkhwezeli to appraise. This report will focus on what you have done so far. What have you gained from the umthamo so far? What have you started to put into practice? You can also include interesting things that you are beginning to see!

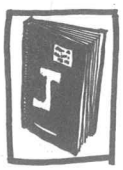
At the end of the 12 months, you will need to gather together all the artefacts that you have collected, and you will need to reflect on the ways in which your classroom has become more literacy-rich, and the effect that this has had on your learners, and on your colleagues. You will need to reflect on your role in this process. You will be expected to write this up for your own personal edification. This later Report will also enable you to share your experiences with confidence at the Portfolio Presentation.

Stage 1 – Work in Progress (After three or four weeks)

During the past three weeks, you have been thinking more deeply about literacy. You have worked to make your classroom and school a literacy-rich environment. Now we want you to reflect on what you have been doing.

Begin by thinking about what your classroom was like before you started working on this umthamo. Perhaps it was already fairly literacy-rich. Perhaps not. It depends on how much access you have had to organisations such as READ, and what materials you have in your school.

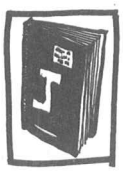
Then describe **in detail** what you have done to change your classroom and school. What suggestions and ideas have you started using? Write about **2 pages.** Remember, you need to create a clear picture of what you have been doing, so that whoever reads the description can imagine exactly what has happened.



Look through the entries you have made in your Journal as you have worked through this umthamo. Re-read what you have written. Your entries may remind you of particular incidents involving the learners you have been observing. You have probably made notes about them, and what you have found in their Journals. What have you found out about each one's literacy? What needs to be developed for each one? Have you seen any changes? What else can you do? Write another **2 pages.** Make sure that what you write is clear, and to the point.

Stage 2 – Reflecting critically (At the end of 12 months)

During the past 12 months, you have worked to make your classroom (or in the case of subject teaching, your school) a literacy-rich environment. You have taken suggestions and ideas and put them into practice. You have also been observing and monitoring the progress of a learner (or group of learners). And you have continued to think about your own practice as a teacher, as you try to extend your learners' literacy skills and understanding. Now we want you to reflect on the *long-term* effects of what you have done. We want you to reflect *critically* on what has worked well, and what has not been so useful.



First of all, take your Journal, write the date, and then describe **in detail** what your classroom is like now. In what ways do you provide opportunities for your learners to extend and develop their literacy skills and understanding? How does the environment of the classroom encourage your learners to use their literacy skills for ***real*** purposes? Include examples of things your learners do which demonstrate that they are able to use, extend, and develop their literacy skills. Write at least a page.

You may find it useful to refer to Trevor Cairney's reflection on how his classroom changed.

Now turn back in your Journal to the description you wrote of your classroom at the beginning of the 12 months. Re-read what you wrote. What has changed in your classroom? What differences have these changes made to your learners? How have these changes affected the ways you work with learners?

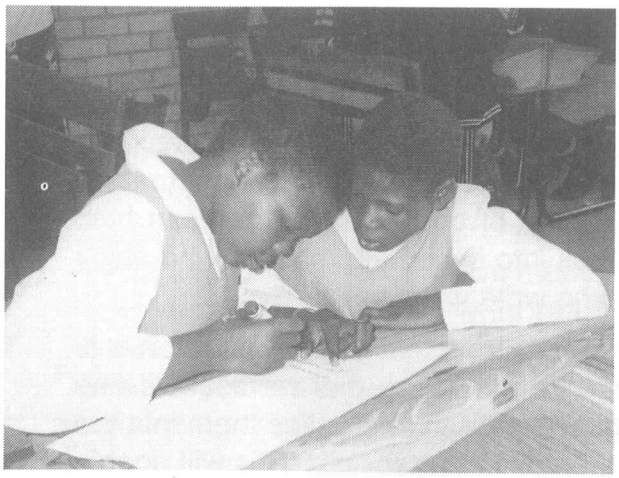
Turn back to the description of your classroom now. Write about the changes you have made in your classroom and the differences you have noticed in your learners. What effects has this had on your colleagues? What about the local community? Don't forget to include examples from your observations of the learner(s) you have been monitoring during the last 12 months. Reflect on *your* role in this. In what ways have **you** used this literate-rich environment to extend and develop your learners? Let a few days pass before you take some paper and begin to write your first draft of this Reflective Report.

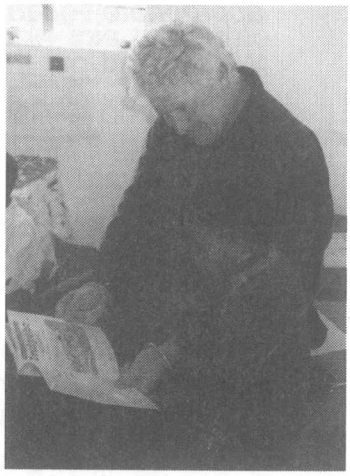
Take your Journal and re-read what you wrote in your description of your classroom. Re-read what you wrote about changes in your classroom, and the differences you notice in your learners. You can use this as a basis for your Report. Then start to write.

Your Report should include:

- a **detailed** description of your classroom (which should be literacy-rich)
- observations of the changes you have made (the successful ones and those which have not been so successful)
- an analysis of why these changes have been successful or not so successful
- the effects on your learners, in particular the one (or more) you have been observing and monitoring carefully throughout the 12 months
- how this has affected your colleagues
- your reflections on what you feel your role has been in the changes in your learners and colleagues.

You will probably write at least **4 pages.** You are not required to hand in this Reflective Report. It is for your own personal edification. If you write thoughtfully and carefully, you will find that this Report is a great help at the Portfolio Presentation when you share your experiences of this umthamo with your peers and umkhwezeli.





Conclusion

In this umthamo, we have pointed out that there are many kinds of literacy, but we have focused on developing and extending *print* literacy. We have looked at the reading and writing processes. We have provided examples of how emerging and beginning readers and writers make sense of and experiment with print. And we have provided suggestions of ways in which teachers can help apprentice, develop and extend the print literacy of learners throughout the primary school.

But this is an enormous aspect of the primary school curriculum. Many books have been written about these issues. And in this umthamo, we have only been able to provide a taste. We have pointed out that when young children learn to speak, they do so within a community of speakers. Within that community, they see and hear language being used in **real** situations and for **real** purposes. They learn to speak and to participate in speech events through being part of **social** contexts. And not only do they learn to participate in speech events through *taking part* in those events, but they also learn *how* to participate. They learn what is **culturally** appropriate in their community. They learn *what* to say, *to whom,* in *what manner,* as well as the *appropriate vocabulary.*

As they learn their language in conversation with their elders, children learn their culture, including its values and taboos, its facts and fantasies, as their first picture of the world.
(Meek, 1996: 87)

We pointed out that it can be the same with **reading** and **writing**. Young learners are trying to make sense of the print they find in their environment. When teachers are sensitive to, and aware of, the ways in which their learners are making sense of their experiences of print literacy, they can help apprentice their learners into becoming readers who enjoy reading, and writers who write with confidence.

As teachers, we have a very important responsibility towards our learners. We need to make sure that we scaffold and support their learning. We need to apprentice them into the conventions of print literacy in our society. This will enable them to act powerfully, rather than feel *dis*empowered.

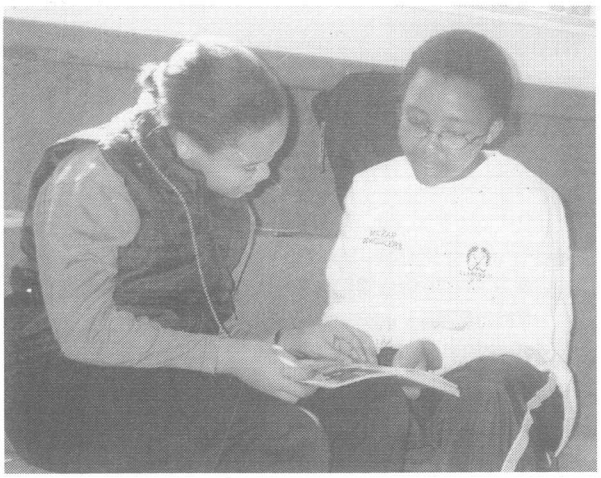
Learners need to engage with **real** materials, **real** texts, and develop their reading and writing skills in **relevant** activities. They need opportunities to talk about what they read and write. We need to create a nurturing environment in our classrooms so that we can work together with our learners. This support will enable them to achieve on their own tomorrow, what they can achieve today with our help, and the help of their peers. We need to consciously work to help our learners work within their **zones of proximal development.** In this way we can ensure that we 'give them wings to fly'.

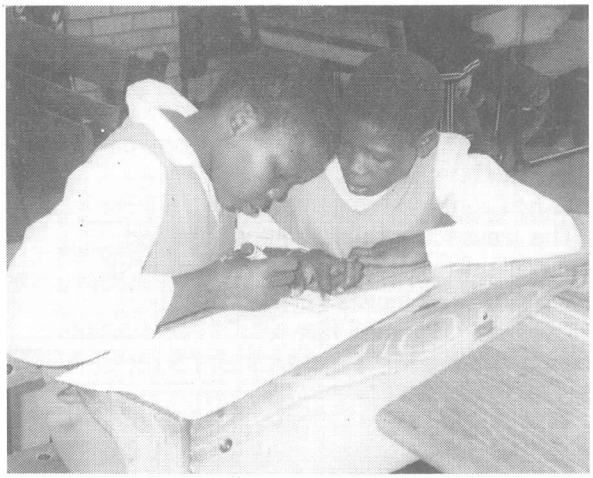
Learning is not about detached teachers taking control of learning away from students; it is about support, help and encouragement to reach new levels of understanding and skill.
(Cairney, 1995: 39)

As teachers we need to we need to ask ourselves from time to time,

- What are we doing to provide ***real*** opportunities for our learners to learn to read and write?
- How are we helping them to join the 'literacy club'?
- What literacy events are we setting up to enable them to extend and develop their involvement with the written word?
- What contexts are we setting up, or exploiting, so that we can expose learners to different forms of written texts?
- How do these texts reflect our learners' world *outside* school?
- How do the different texts we share with our learners reflect the world our learners will find themselves in when they leave school?
- What opportunities are we providing for learners to share and discuss the texts they read and write?
- Do we just want to produce learners who have mastered the mechanics of reading and writing? Or do we want our learners to be people who make reading and writing an important part of their daily lives?

If you continue to work with the ideas in this umthamo throughout this third year of the B Prim Ed course, at the end of the year you should be able to reflect on how you have found ways to develop and extend print literacy in **all** aspects of the primary curriculum. You will see how the literacy environment of your classroom has been enriched. You will also see how you have made more opportunities for your learners to read and write **real** texts. And you will be aware that you have provided more opportunities for them to talk together about what they read and write. You will have created a community of confident readers and writers.





Appendix – Some examples of different genres of writing

In recent years there has been some debate about whether there is too much *narrative* writing in primary schools. As a result, a number of primary teachers in different parts of the world make a point of exposing their learners to different styles, or **genres,** of written texts. In this Appendix, we have outlined six different non-fiction genres. But before you go through them, we have a story (or narrative) for you to read.

A writer in the American magazine English Journal *once began an article entitled* How the British Teach Writing *with one brief sentence; "They don't". He went on to say that he had been on sabbatical leave for a year in England and that his children had attended the local primary and secondary schools during that time. He was as amazed by the fact that, throughout that year, they received no direct instruction in writing as he was by the amount of writing they actually did, and by its quality. No-one, apparently, was teaching them writing, and yet they were learning to write.* (Barrs, 1991/92: 9)

This story is important because it points out that **providing opportunities** for learners to write, is more important than directly teaching a series of 'recipes' or formulas for writing. Often, writers play with genres and 'break the rules' in order to achieve greater dramatic effect. A poem about a shocking event can be more powerful than a recount. Part of becoming a fluent and powerful language user is learning to play with language and not being afraid of 'breaking the rules'. As we said earlier, the most important thing is for learners to **want** to write. *We learn to write by writing.* It is vital that we remember this as we introduce our learners to different **genres,** and as we create opportunities for learners to **experiment** with different forms of texts.

Recount

Recounts retell something that happened. They can be personal, factual or imaginative. A recount is usually made up of

- an opening statement which sets the scene (*who, where* and *when* the event took place)
- a recount of a series of events, in a logical order
- a closing statement.

Recounts are usually written in the past tense and use action verbs. We find the genre of recount in biographies, and history books.

The Football Match

On Sunday I went to watch our team play soccer. They were playing the team from the next village. In the first half, nobody scored. In the second half our team scored 2 goals. The other team only got 1 goal. We won! Our team is the best!

The Aloe Ferox

One of the species of aloe which grows in the Eastern Cape is the Aloe Ferox.
It has a single stem and grows to 3 metres.
The leaves are thick, dark green and succulent, with sharp thorns along the margins. The leaves form a rosette.
In winter this aloe has bright red flowers which attract lots of birds and insects.

Report

Reports are written to describe the way things are. They record factual information about natural, cultural, or social things. A report usually consists of

- an opening general statement about something
- a factual description of different aspects of the item
- a closing statement.

Reports are usually written in the present tense and use action verbs. We find the genre of report in science and geography books.

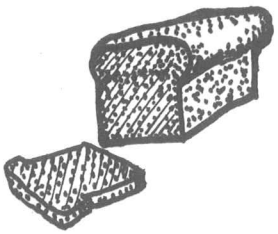
Procedure

Procedures or instructions tell somebody how to do or make something. A procedure usually consists of

- a statement of the goal, or what is to be achieved
- a list of materials
- a sequence of steps to achieve the goal.

Procedures are usually written in the present tense, in chronological order, and use mainly action verbs. They often include quite detailed information. We find this genre in instructional manuals, with games and in recipe books.

Quick Brown Bread



Mix together,
5 cups whole-wheat flour
1/4 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup shredded coconut
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon dried yeast
1/4 cup honey
2 1/2 cups lukewarm water.
Place in an oiled tin.
Allow to rise for about 40 mins in a warm place.
Bake at 400°F for 20 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°F and bake a further 10-20 mins.

Joining Wood

There are different ways to join wood. One way is to use screws.
First you have to make a hole. Next you fit a screw. Then you screw it in with a screw-driver, until it's flush with the surface of the wood.

Explanation

Explanations describe how something works, or give reasons for something. Explanations usually consist of

- a general statement which introduces the topic
- a sequence of logical steps which explain how or why something works the way it does.

Explanations tend to be written in the present tense, and use action verbs. There are usually words like, *because*. The genre of explanation is often found in science, geography, history and social science books.

Persuasion

The purpose of a persuasive piece of writing is to promote **one** point of view or argument. Persuasive writing usually consists of

- an opening statement of a particular belief or point of view
- arguments in support of that point of view
- a summary and re-statement of the point of view.

Persuasive texts are usually written in the present tense and use causal words like *because*. This genre is found in political writing and in advertisements.

Beautiful Lips!

Are your lips dry and rough? Have the winter winds made them cracked and sore? Get **Beautiful Lips** today, and feed them each night. You'll see and feel the difference after just one night!
Beautiful Lips for beautiful soft lips!

School Uniform

Some people think primary school children should wear uniform. But others disagree.
Those who are in favour of school uniform argue that when children wear school uniform they all look the same. They also claim that if children wear uniform they will always be neat and tidy, and appropriately dressed.
Those who are against school uniform claim that it can be expensive. Children from poorer families will only be able to buy one set.
Perhaps the best thing is for schools to choose school colours and to encourage children to wear clothes in those colours.

Discussion

The genre of discussion presents information from **different** points of view, before it reaches a conclusion. It usually consists of:

- a statement of the issue and a preview of the main arguments
- arguments in support of one view, with supporting evidence
- arguments in support of another view, with supporting evidence
- a recommendation in the form of a summary or conclusion.

Discussion genre is usually written in the present tense and uses causal words like *because*. We find examples of discussion genre in history and social studies books, and in newspaper editorials.

Bibliography

Ashton-Warner, S. 1963. *Teacher*. (London: Virago)

Barrs, M. 1987. "Learning to Write" in *Language Matters*. 1987 Nos 2 & 3. (London: Centre for Language in Primary Education)

Barrs, M. 1992. "Genre Theory: What's it all about?" in *Language Matters*. 1991/92 No 1. (London: CLPE)

Barrs, M and Pidgeon, S. (eds) 1993. *Reading the Difference*. (London: Centre for Language in Primary Education)

Bloch, C. 1997. *Chloe's Story: First steps into literacy*. (Cape Town: Juta)

Cairney, T. 1995. *Pathways to Literacy*. (London: Cassell)

Chambers, A. 1991. *The Reading Environment*. (Gloucester: The Thimble Press)

Chambers, A. 1993. *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talking*. (Gloucester: The Thimble Press)

Derewianka, B. 1990. *Exploring How Texts Work*. (New South Wales: Primary English Teaching Association)

Finnegan, R. *Oral Literature in Africa.* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press)

Freire, P and Macedo, D. 1987. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul)

Goodman, K. 1967. "Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game" in Gollasch, F (ed). 1982. *Language and Literature: the selected writings of Kenneth S Goodman Vol 1*. (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul)

Graham, J. 1992. "Teachers Learning about Literacy" in Kimberley, K et al (eds). *New Readings: Contributions to an understanding of literacy*. (London: A & C Black)

Graves, D. 1983. *Writing: Teachers & Children at Work*. (New Hampshire: Heinemann)

Heath, SB. 1983. *Ways with Words.* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press)

Hunter-Grundin, E. 1979. *Literacy: A Systematic Start*. (London: Harper & Row)

Lewis, M & Wray, D. 1995. *Developing Children's Non-Fiction Writing: Working with writing frames*. (Warwickshire: Scholastic)

Meek, M. 1982. *Learning to Read*. (London: The Bodley Head)

Meek, M. 1991. *On Being Literate*. (London: Bodley Head)

Meek, M. 1996. *Information & Book Learning*. (Gloucester: The Thimble Press)

Newman, J. 1984. *The Craft of Children's Writing*. (Toronto: Scholastic)

Nicholls, J et al. 1989. *Beginning Writing*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press)

Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum. 1989. *Mr. Togs The Tailor; A Context for Writing*. (Dundee: SCCC)

Smith, F. 1982. *Understanding Reading* (3rd edn). (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

Smith, F. 1982. *Writing and the Writer*. (London: Heinemann)

Smith, F. 1984. *Joining the Literacy Club*. (Reading: Centre for the teaching of Reading)

Stewart-Dore, N. (ed) 1986. *Writing and Reading to Learn*. (New South Wales: Primary English Teaching Association)

Walkerdine, V. 1993. "A Reading History" in Barrs, M & Pidgeon, S. 1993. *Reading the Difference*. (London: CLPE)

Waterland, L. (2nd edn) 1988. *Read With Me: An Apprenticeship Approach to Reading*. (Gloucestershire: Thimble Press)

Bulelwa 16 July 2000

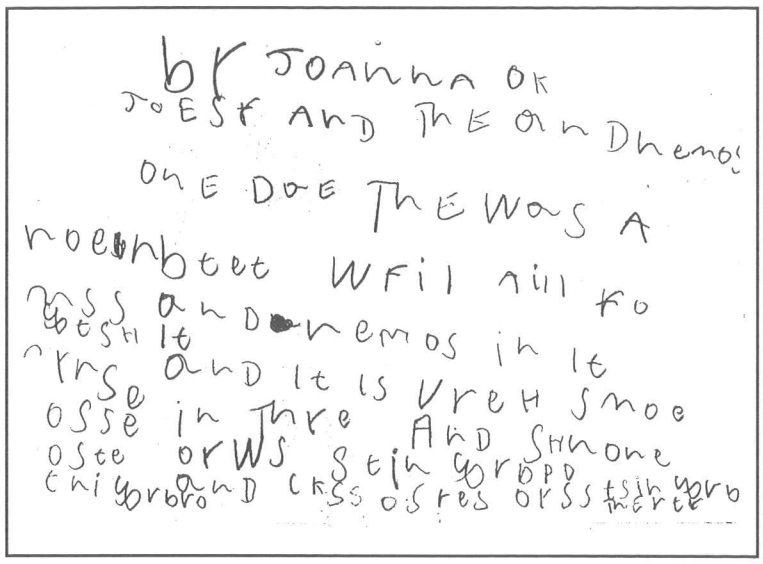
My memory makes me cry

My mother she went to his parents and he didn't come back. When I'm thinking ~~not~~ about my mother I'm crying. I'm writing the letters to my mother and she ~~dad~~ doesn't give me my answers. When I go to her home her parents say to me my mother does not live ~~here~~ in this place she lives in Gauteng

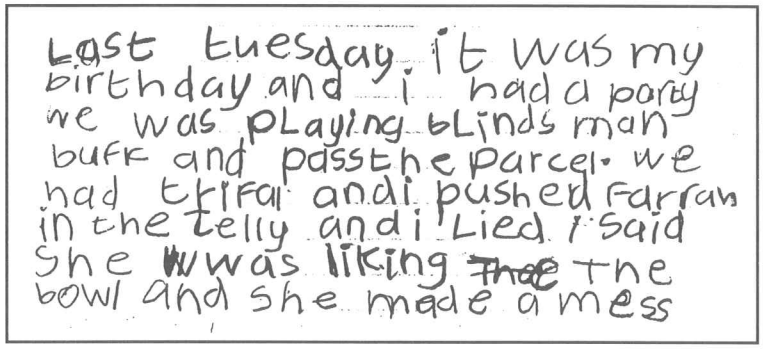
Mzwanele

My memory make me cry

I was at home at friday not going to school. And my books were at school sturday and sunday past. I woke up at morning I wash and I wear my clothes I go to school. That day I was late I stand beside the door then miss said go sit down. The miss said take your Maths book then I look my books on the desk I didn't see it. I tried to look on the other desk. I didn't find it them I went to ask father Mrangeli then father Mrangeli did not know my book were. And then I went to look beside the tank and I didn't find it. I get inside the classroom I sit down I wrote on the paper At half past eleven the break begin and some boy tried to look for my books. Masibulele came to me and said your books I saw them in the tank that have water. I went ~~took~~ to look at my books I saw all watering and they we so wet and my eyes filled with tears and I started to cry to cry slowly and my tears we still running down to my cheeks that is my memory



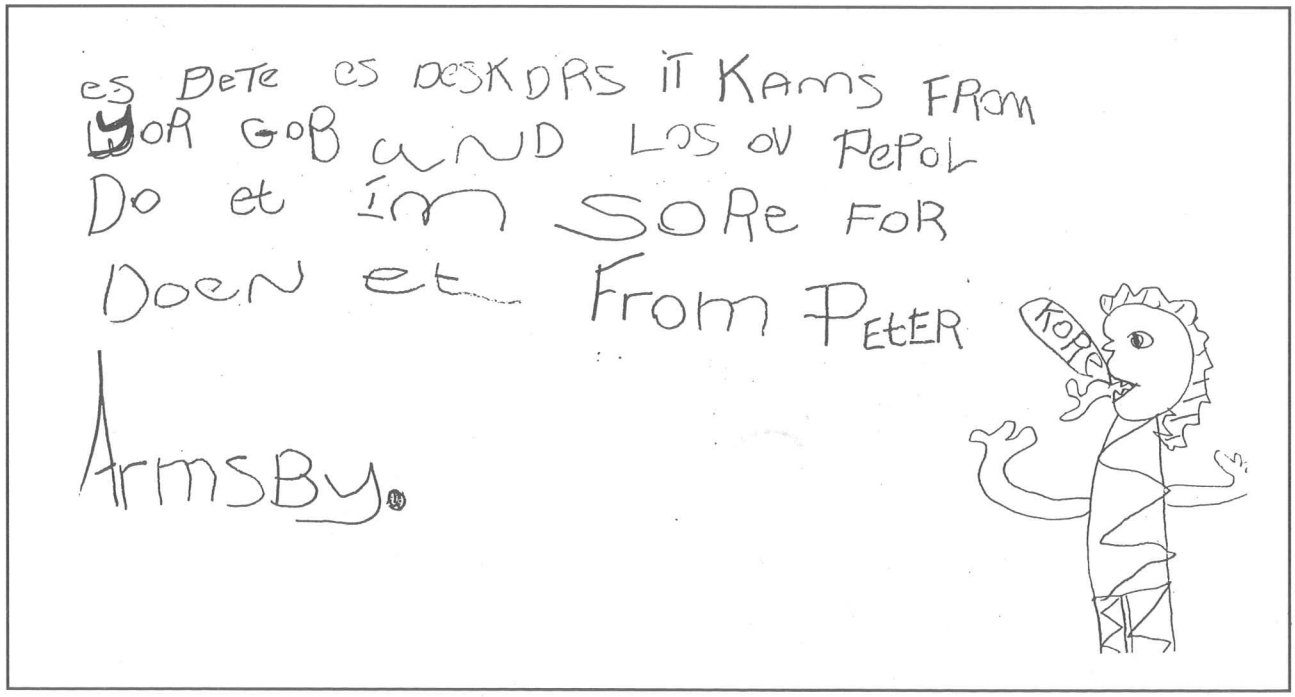
A review of a book by Joanna – an emergent writer.



Five months later – Joanna's account of a party.

Literacy has two beginnings: one, in the world, the other, in each person who learns to read and write. So literacy has two kinds of history: one, in the change and development over time of what ***counts*** *as literacy; the other in the life histories of individuals who learn to read and write, and who depend on these skills as features of their lives in literate societies. It is impossible to understand literacy without referring to its history, to those who are literate at any given time, and to what people actually* ***do*** *with reading and writing. So we have to unravel some of the meanings we give to literacy as a word, and some of the situations where we find it in use. This should help us to see more clearly what we understand about the nature of literacy nowadays, what we mean when we say we are literate, and why we are concerned about the literacy of our children.*

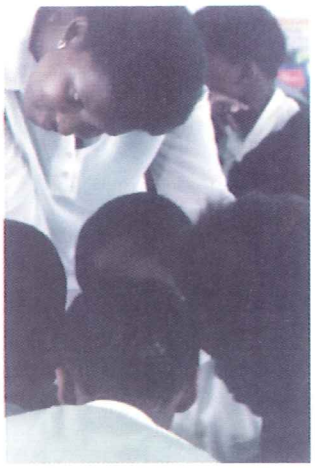
Meek, M. 1991. On Being Literate. (London: Bodley Head)



A letter of apology by Peter – an emergent writer.

Printed by: L. Harry & Sons,
18 Kimberley Road, East London 5201. Telephone 7220604.

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT



CORE LEARNING AREAS COURSE
Language, Literacy & Communication

5th Umthamo
Developing and Extending Literacy

First Pilot Edition - 2000

Conceptualised, developed and written as a collaborative effort by Viv Kenyon, Alan Kenyon, Shumi Makalima, Celiwe Ngetu, Namhla Sotuku, Mthunzi Nxawe, and Zoliswa Mafanya.

Co-ordinated, illustrated and edited by
Alan and Viv Kenyon

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Nomalungelo Spelmandla, Kholiwe Mweli and their learners from Vanani Farm School, Nomhlophe Ntsunguzi and the Grade 5 and 6 learners of Mpongo Primary School, Julia Raffie and the pre-school class from Selborne Child Care and Pre-Primary, and the teachers and learners at Zanokhanyo Early Childhood School for helping us trial the activities in this umthamo.

We are also grateful to the WK Kellogg Foundation for generously sponsoring the development of this material, and Thokozile Chitepo-Mawere, who has taken a keen interest in our work.

Without the patience, expertise and help of Ron Kahn and Ricardo Stevens of L Harry and Son, we could not have completed this book. Thank you.