Exploring Learners' Engagement with Literacy in a Book Club

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Abstract

This study observes the literacy engagement of a group of learners enrolled in Grades 8–10 in Nombulelo High School, a poorly-resourced school in the city of Makhanda in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The learners participated in a book club hosted and run by St Andrew's College, a privileged independent school, as a community engagement initiative.

The idea of extending literacy engagement and engagement with written texts beyond textbooks used in schools is critical for learners with ambitions to enter higher education. Studying at a university requires a lot of reading, and if reading has not been taken up as a practice that involves more than 'text consulting' (Geisler, 1994) students will be unlikely to read the number of texts required of them. Studies (see Geisler, 1994 for an overview) have shown how the literacy of the university is very different to school based literacies. The assumption behind the study on which this thesis reports is that engagement with fictional texts might promote reading and bring about understandings of this activity as enjoyable and not a task only associated with schooling.

The study is underpinned by a critical realist philosophy which allowed for the identification of structures and mechanisms that led to the emergence of literacy events in learners' lives and to their experiences and observations of those events.

The study was guided by the following questions:

How do learners from a poorly-resourced high school engage around fictional texts in the context of a book club?

What enables or constrains this engagement?

The study was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in that lockdown requirements meant that learners from St Andrew's College could not participate in the book club as much as anticipated initially as they had been forced to return home to pursue online learning. Learners from Nombuelo High School were, however, granted access to College premises, where they met in the school library following strict Covid protocols.

The study draws on in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis of five learners from Nombulelo High School who participated in the book club, as well as on book reviews they wrote for the book club website.

The critical realist analysis allows for the identification of mechanisms in learners' homes and communities that enable literacies, including those that are screen-based such as using a computer, mobile phones and other technologies.

This study found evidence of challenges regarding school based texts, reading fictional texts and viewing it as an enrichment of the school project.   Because of children were African the emergence of communal practices and story telling is woven throughout the results section. However,   is an example of the complexity of social and economic challenges facing South African marginalised schools.

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My family and friends for constant support and encouragement during the time of writing this thesis.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my late friend, Thenjiwe Siga, who left us during the Covid-19 pandemic. When you departed, I felt like I had nothing more to write about, but you believed that this thesis needed to be written. You will forever be remembered as one of the important contributors to education. Your choice of managing a school library in order to make a difference in the lives of the learners at Victoria Girls' High School left a powerful message in our hearts.

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To my guardian mother, Noziphiwo Winifred Mhambi, who remains the pillar of my strength in all seasons – your prayers and unfailing love are what shaped my life.

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

This study is located at the interface between a highly prestigious independent school and an impoverished state school in a town beset by poverty in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. St Andrew's College is an Anglican school for boys located in Makhanda (Grahamstown), in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. St Andrew's College currently has 470 learners, who are all boys and who mostly come from privileged social groups. Nombulelo High School is a state school located in a deprived area of the town. The 1,000 learners are all black, from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and are both male and female.

(Lemon, 2004) provides a glimpse into the context of Nombulelo High School with his exploration of the inequalities in the school system in the Eastern Cape. His study shows Nombulelo High School as characterised by serving poor communities and he identifies this as the basis of the school's financial struggles. Along with other schools in the area, Nombulelo High School held fundraising activities such as shows, concerts and other cultural activities to supplement its meagre fee income. Schools also ran raffles and hired out chairs or even buildings in some cases.

Of the four schools that were surveyed, Lemon cites Nombulelo as the most successful in the extent to which it was able to raise funds. According to Lemon, more than 55% of its albeit meagre budget was raised through fundraising. In common with most township schools, all four schools in the survey exhibited poor facilities. Only one of the four schools had a functioning library, which was poorly used, and laboratories were poorly equipped. Computer provisioning was inadequate at all the schools with one computer for every ninety five learners at Nombulelo. All fourteen of the computers at Nombulelo had been provided as the result of a run by Rutgers University and the World Bank. Although these computers were available, internet access still remained a challenge, and does so to this day. All schools reported difficulties in obtaining textbooks from the ECED, with Nombulelo claiming that it had received none for six years with the result that, in 1999, it had spent more than 20% of its budget on producing and duplicating materials. None of the schools had playing fields. In most cases facilities were rented. Nombulelo benefited from an arrangement with Rhodes University, however. Although Lemon's survey took place nearly two decades ago, the problems it identified continue to prevail.

Nombulelo shares the high attrition rate common to most African schools. This includes the loss of some of its strongest students who gain scholarships to 'Model C' (previously white)

schools in Makhanda. Attrition at grade level also results from students failing examinations and having to return to re-take a year's study. In spite of this, Nombulelo is well regarded in the area in which it is located receiving more applications for study than places available.

In many respects, the educational experience offered to the boys at St Andrew's College is one of an island of privilege in a sea of poverty and despair. Makhanda, the city formerly known as Grahamstown, has a population of about 82,000 people, many of whom are unemployed. According to a recent report, the Eastern Cape province, where Makhanda is located, has the highest unemployment rate in the country, at 40.5% of the population (Eastern Cape Socio-economic Consultative Council [ECSECC], 2020). As Makhanda is at least 130 km away from the nearest metropolis where jobs are likely to be more available, the figure of 40.5% supplied by ECSECC could well be optimistic. Unemployment is likely to be exacerbated by the current Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in an overall decline in the South African economy.

Rhodes University and six of the country's oldest and finest schools are located in Makhanda. Education is the largest employment sector in the town. The city is the seat of the High Court of the Eastern Cape Province and is the home of the National Arts Festival and the National Science Festival, events which bring thousands of visitors into the town each year.

The eastern part of the town, widely known as the 'township' or 'the location', provides a stark contrast to the historic centre. The local municipality faces many challenges related to infrastructure and the provision of an adequate water supply, and this impacts on dwellers in the eastern part of the town more than people in the more privileged historic centre. Many families are dependent on a child support grant, with money intended for children being used to support entire families. In other families, grandparents in receipt of old age grants support a large number of relatives.

Community Engagement programmes are abundant in the town thanks to the efforts of Rhodes University, the more privileged schools, and various civil groups. Many school-aged children therefore may have interaction with a programme aimed at developing their learning.

1.1.1.   A sea of privilege

'The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others' (Mahatma Gandhi).

In common with many other schools in South Africa, St Andrew's College engages with the communities that surround it. I have experienced the College's Community Engagement activities firsthand due to my position as librarian there.

Recently, the St Andrew's College library was upgraded and redesigned using the concept of the 'Library of the Future'. Learners at the school were invited to partner with us during the design process. At the end of the project, the learners posed a question that could not be ignored by myself or anyone in the school: 'What do we do now? What about the community we live in?' They were referring to the library we had just re-opened and the resources we owned, and what needed to happen in terms of sharing those resources with the less privileged in our community. This required a special plan as these learners made it clear that they did not just want to do 'Community Engagement' in the way they had observed it done at other schools. This time they were looking for meaningful 'partnerships'.

In Chadwick (2004), the National School Boards Association defines 'public engagement', which is an earlier term for community engagement, as an 'ongoing, collaborative process during which the school district works with the public to build understanding, guidance, and active support for the education of the children in its community' (Resnick, 2000:1). The Annenberg Institute (1998) identifies five shared characteristics of public engagement initiatives as involving:

- An inclusive and dialogue-driven process;
- A dedication to making meaningful and long-term improvement in schools;
- A commitment to creating dynamic, two-way partnerships;
- Sincere efforts to find common ground;
- An atmosphere of candour and mutual trust.

Mathews (1996) helps us understand what community engagement is not. He makes a clear distinction between an 'engaged public' and a 'persuaded populace'. A 'persuaded populace' is the desired result of traditional public relations efforts. He notes that public relations efforts can persuade people and gather support for good causes, but they cannot create genuine publics. Publics are formed when people decide, among themselves, to live and act in certain ways. Making these decisions together gives their choices legitimacy and moral force.

Machimana, Sefotho and Ebersöhn (2018) argue that it is no longer enough to view society by means of the traditional role and voice of 'the expert' without engaging non-researcher partners and place Community Engagement at the centre of the teaching, learning and research matrix as a result. Their exploration of the experiences presented by relationships and partnerships between universities and communities allows them to document their positive contributions to marginalised communities. Although the relationship that is the focus of the study reported in this thesis is at the level of schooling, there is no reason to believe that it did not benefit the community it aimed to serve especially since it was

founded on the concept of 'partnership' between the two institutions in order to avoid the risk of privilege being 'imposed' on the marginalised.

Although I was conscious of the need to consider St Andrew's learners' age and time commitment, it occurred to me that, as the school was the place where they would lay the intellectual and moral foundations for the rest of their lives, a community engagement project would be a fruitful learning ground for their roles as South African citizens.

The first contact with the community partners involved in the project that was the focus of the study on which this thesis is based came as a result of a request by a teacher at Nombulelo High School asking for input into the renovation of their library. It was because of this initial contact with Nombulelo High School that the learners at St Andrew's College first became aware of the concept of an 'Interact Club', an initiative fostered by local Rotarians. Interact Clubs aim to better the lives of the poorer members of the community and, having encountered the concept, learners took up the idea of forming a club at their own school.

The St Andrew's College Interact Club became the eighth Club to join the Interact Clubs of Grahamstown/Makhanda (ICOG) in July 2018. Learners received a certificate at a formal assembly at which the Rotary Club President also made a speech thanking everyone involved. The Club saw growth immediately afterwards as others made requests to join. These requests have become more common as the St Andrew's Club now organises fundraisers and events.

As a result of the request to assist with the renovation of the library at Nombulelo, a workshop was organised for both partners. This took place in the Nombulelo school library building and was facilitated by a Nombulelo teacher. This event saw the birth of many original ideas that came from learners at both schools.

One of the biggest hurdles faced by Nombulelo related to finances. We decided to remove this hurdle in principle by asking the question, 'If money were not an issue, how would you like this library to look?' Ideas that came out of this workshop set the tone for what became the Nombulelo school library today. St Andrew's College Interact Club members joined up with Nombulelo Interact Club boys every second Sunday, when their term dates corresponded, for 'clean-up' days. These focused on painting the walls of the school library, cleaning up the shelves, sourcing and organising the books, asking for book donations from the community, organising fundraising initiatives, and simply socialising together.

The book club project on which this thesis is based is not the only initiative between Nombulelo High School and St Andrews College to have emerged. In 2021, the Interact Club at St Andrew's College recognised problems resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic which

had resulted in learners at some poorer schools missing months of schooling as a challenge and created a Tutor Project run jointly with learners from its sistern school, the Diocesan School for Girls (DSG). Learners from Grades 11 and 12 at St Andrews and DSG acted as tutors to 10 Grade 9 learners from Nombulelo focusing on what are identified as the core school subjects of English, Maths and Science. An invitation was also extended to all Nombulelo learners to request help in other subjects. The ten Nombulelo learners were selected by the teachers at their own school.

1.1.2. The concept of the 'library of the future'

My assumption, based on Tait, Martzoukou and Reid (2016), and my personal observations resulting from my work as a librarian, is that little has changed in library users' needs, as information needs have remained more or less the same. Rather, it is the case that users' information-seeking behaviours have changed. This change has very much been governed by technology. In their paper, Tait et al. (2016) state that the technical infrastructure of libraries is important in assisting users to understand the integrity of scholarly publication and information in an otherwise unregulated and unmediated digital environment. They further posit that blended learning, drawing on both the physical and virtual spaces, has compelled the reconfiguring of academic libraries in much the same way as technological developments have changed the role of the academic librarian.

The Cawse Library at St Andrew's College is a recent example of a revolutionary approach to the design of libraries reflecting the changing nature of their use. The high demand for access to the library substantiates the users' need for information using both available technology and the physical space. Users are particularly attracted to the use of seminar rooms which are equipped with state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment and high-speed internet services. These soundproof rooms provide collaborative spaces. Since the renovations in November 2017, the College library has been experiencing a healthy growth in use, and it is hard to close its doors as the demand from the users to extend opening hours has increased. There has been an increased appetite in learners' reading on both the physical and digital platforms.

I also believe that libraries need to take into account the socio-cultural context in which they are located. This involves consulting with library users so that they are more likely to readily recognise themselves and their specific needs in the library's services. Consultation with library users also serves to improve library services as their needs change.

According to Sagtoor (2015), before 1994, when schools were divided according to race, white schools were provided with libraries and teacher librarians. Black secondary schools that fell under the South African government had libraries but no library staff, while some

black primary schools had classroom collections. Schools in the so called 'homelands' and townships had no library provision whatsoever.

After the democratic election of 1994, all teacher librarian posts were abolished. Many existing school libraries were closed and some even dismantled. School libraries did not feature on the educational agenda for a variety of reasons, including unrealistic expectations of the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), a lack of understanding of the role of libraries, and the many other urgent demands on state funding. The only schools that maintained, and even expanded, well-functioning libraries were those formerly white schools where the parents could support the library and pay for a teacher librarian (Brown & Senyolo, 2015).

The Eastern Cape Province is the poorest province in South Africa, and is predominantly rural. At present, there are virtually no skilled librarians in the rural areas and, in the towns, there are limited numbers of librarians/library assistants. In the schools, libraries and librarians are virtually non-existent. Research done by Equal Education (The Bookery, 2010) shows that only 8% of public schools in South Africa have functional libraries. According to the Bookery Equal Education Book Drive, approximately 20,000 schools are without libraries, thereby denying their learners access to regular reading opportunities.

I am fortunate in that, because of my position as librarian at one of the most well-resourced schools in South Africa, I was given the opportunity to design what I considered to be the ideal school library, and thus drew on the idea that library users need to recognise themselves in library spaces.

I set about redesigning the library by putting together three 'smart teams'. The building team was comprised of an architect, engineers, electricians and other members who were of critical importance to the physical construction of the library. A second team consisted of teachers from different departments and the third of learners. For me, the most important team was that consisting of the learners, boys ranging from Grade 8 to Grade 12. I acted as the main coordinator of the building project. Regular meetings were scheduled with each of the teams, and I believe it is fair to say that 90% of the ideas generated by the learners' team shaped what the St Andrew's College Library now is.

To a large extent, this process was modelled at Nombulelo High School, where engagement with learners allowed us to see how they wanted the library to look, although resources at our disposal were obviously more constrained. What the engagement with learners at Nombulelo High School allowed, however, was for the learners themselves to influence the way their library would look in a way which, hopefully, led them to 'see themselves' in it. However, arguably more was needed if learners at the school are to develop the kinds of literacy practices that will serve them well as their education progresses.

The understanding of literacy underpinning work on the library will be drawn explicated below. Although this understanding encompasses encoding and decoding it goes beyond these two processes to encompass literacy as social practice.

1.2. Understanding literacy

As a result of work of social anthropologists such as Brian Street (1984, 1995) and Shirley Brice Heath (1983), two main ways of understanding literacy have been identified. The first, termed by Street the 'autonomous model' of literacy, largely ignores socio-cultural backgrounds in that it constructs literacy as a neutral, asocial, acultural, apolitical set of skills focused on the decoding and encoding of printed text. The focus on literacy as a process of encoding and decoding means that literacy is understood as a singular phenomenon accessible to anyone who is able to master the technical processes involved.

The second way of looking at literacy is termed the 'ideological model' (Street, 1984, 1995). The ideological model of literacy understands literacy as a set of social practices. Social groups will engage with printed text in different ways, not only in relation to the kinds of text chosen but also in relation to ways of engagement themselves. As a result, literacy is understood as a multiple phenomenon, with different literacies manifesting themselves in different social groups and in different social sites. Processes of encoding and decoding are understood to be part of some literacies that encompass engagement with printed text. Others may set aside printed text altogether or choose to work with signs other than alphabetic or other writing systems (Breier, 1996). A crucial point to note is that mastery of encoding and decoding is improved with practice. If readers do not practise reading, it is unlikely they will develop the skills necessary to read quickly and for meaning.

While processes of encoding and decoding can be taught at school, willingness to engage with a range of different kinds of texts, some of which are encountered only in some literacies, is achieved over time through immersion in social groups that value the texts themselves. For example, the practice of reading stories and novels is underpinned by beliefs and values related to reading being a pleasurable activity and something that is done in free time. These values and beliefs would typically be acquired in homes where adults read and children observe them doing so. Children raised in homes where literacy practices associated with formal schooling are practised are thus at an advantage, since they will have been exposed to them literally from birth.

Processes of encoding and decoding form the basis of literacy. However, these processes are unlikely to be mastered well without engagement with the practices they underpin. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between what Street (1984) terms the 'technology' of literacy and the practices themselves. Technology and practice sustain each other.

Approaches to reading development which simply focus on encoding and decoding are therefore unlikely to be entirely successful.

Learning in schools is dominated by reading and writing, although the majority of the texts to which learners are exposed in classrooms are textbooks, a particular genre focused on the transmission of unchallenged information (Geisler, 1994). Geisler refers to Goldstein's (1978) estimate that learners in the United States in Grades 1–12 spend an average of 75 % of classroom time and 90% of homework time working with textbooks.

As well as presenting unchallenged information, textbooks serve to demonstrate the amount of learning that has to take place in the form of reproducing the text, which is the main purpose of most writing produced in schools. Geisler (1994) coins the concept of 'text consulting' to refer to a literacy practice involving reading and writing where the writing draws heavily on the text being consulted. Although learners may be able to produce their own understandings of what they need to learn, dominant school-based literacies require 'bookish' answers based on textbooks.

My experience as a teacher-librarian is that it is possible to extend learning beyond textbooks provided guidance and additional resources are available. The existence of a functioning library is clearly very important here.

The idea of extending beyond textbook learning is critical for learners with ambitions to enter higher education. As Geisler (1994) points out, the literacy of the university is very different to school-based literacies. Arguably, this is related to the way knowledge is understood. In the universities, knowledge is understood to be contested and evidence-based. Provided evidence can be produced for a knowledge claim, the claim will be accepted (Boughey, 2018). Extending learners' willingness to read beyond the textbook therefore involves the development of new literacy practices and, ultimately, is a step towards the development of more academic, rather than school-based, literacies.

Stories and other genres may be introduced in language-related classes, but the extent to which learners will read for enjoyment outside class is very much dependent on the availability of books and encouragement from others. Fiction has the potential to open up new worlds for learners who have very little experience of the world other than the environments in which they were raised. In contexts where access to fiction may not be available in the home environment, and where encouragement to read may be limited, the library becomes even more important.

1.3. Developing a book club

As already indicated, the study on which this thesis is based rests on an interaction between learners at one of the most prestigious schools in the country, St Andrew's College, and a poorly-resourced state school, Nombulelo High School involving the establishment of a book club. The book club was made possible as a result of a fundraising initiative associated with the South African School Librarians' Conference held by St Andrew's College in June/July 2019. Learners from Nombulelo High School and St Andrew's College worked as volunteers at the conference and all the profits raised were used to purchase books for the Nombulelo book club members.

Gee's (2008) construct of Discourse (explored in more detail later in this thesis) allows us to understand ways of reading and writing as part of an 'entire being'. The thinking behind the book club was therefore that, as a result of interaction with learners at St Andrew's who were avid readers of fiction, learners at Nombulelo would be exposed to another Discourse associated with schooling. It is important to note at this point that some Discourses are not inherently 'better' than others. However, depending on the social context, some are *privileged* over others. If the learners at Nombulelo are to learn to engage with books in ways which will serve them well in formal education, especially beyond school level, they need to acquire values associated with reading and writing as pleasurable activities. Reading needs to be done because it is pleasurable and not only because it is initiated by the teacher. By interacting with other young people who do experience reading as enjoyable, and by talking about books, the thinking was that not only would practices associated with reading develop but also that experiences of those practices would change along with the values that underpin them.

In using a book club to explore issues related to literacy, I was very aware that an initiative of such a limited duration was very unlikely to be able to make a large impact on the Nombulelo learners' reading practices. The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic early in 2020 also affected the anticipated impact as meetings between learners from the two schools were constrained first by the 'hard' lockdown of March 2020 and, later, by difficulty in accessing internet connectivity on the part of the Nombulelo learners. The study therefore needs to be understood as exploratory in nature, and the insights derived from it as necessarily limited. This is all the more the case given that only a small number of learners participated. The aim of the study, however, was to achieve depth and not necessarily breadth of understanding as a group of young people engaged around books.

1.4. Success in South African education

Much has been written about the problems of what is often claimed to be a failing education system in South Africa. In a report commissioned by the Centre for Development and Enterprise in 2013, Spaull provides a clear map of where South Africa stood in a

progressive time period of just under 10 years of democracy. He cites South Africa as the country with the worst educational system of all middle-income countries that participated in cross-national assessments of educational achievement. What is more alarming is a deeper analysis he provides as he looks beyond the surface into the Grade 12 results of the country. He reports that of 100 pupils that start school, only 50 will make it to Grade 12, only 40 will pass, and only 12 will qualify for university.

It should concern one to note that the annually-reported statistics from the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam in Grade 12 are particularly misleading since they do not take into account those pupils who never make it to Grade 12. This provides a skewed picture of the country's education. It does not take into consideration the 88% of youth, in the critical age group of 18- to 24-year-olds, who do not acquire some form of post-secondary education, who are at a distinct economic disadvantage, and who not only struggle to find full-time employment, but also have one of the highest probabilities of being unemployed for sustained periods of time, if not permanently (Spaull, 2013).

Spaull's more recent work (2019) argues that, following an improvement in learning outcomes for learners in South African schools between 2003 and 2011, the country is now in a 'stalling phase', with tests such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) and TIMMS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) showing gains made in reading and mathematics up to 2011 before showing a subsequent 'flattening out' in performance.

Spaull (2019) goes on to argue that the South African education system is grossly inefficient, severely underperforming and egregiously unfair, with black learners faring much worse than their white peers.

A look into the content knowledge of the teachers who are in the system compounds the picture presented above. In addition to testing Grade 6 pupils, the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality SACMEQ III (2011) also tested Grade 6 teachers. Analysis of this data shows that many South African mathematics teachers have below-basic levels of content knowledge, with high proportions of teachers being unable to answer questions aimed at their pupils. Given that teachers cannot teach what they do not know, these findings have severe implications for the quality of education in South Africa. Unless the content knowledge (and thereafter pedagogical content knowledge) of mathematics teachers in poor and rural areas is improved, it will be exceedingly difficult to raise pupil achievement in these areas (Spaull, 2013). Drawing on the ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984), it could also be argued that teachers who do not value reading anything other than a textbook, and who do not practise engagement with other kinds of texts in their own lives, cannot be expected to support the learners they teach in the acquisition of such practices.

Even when high-school graduates manage to gain access to higher education, the journey to a degree can be very difficult because of the difference in literacies outlined above. O'Shea, Thomson and McKenna (2018) show how the failure to develop the reading practices associated with higher education at school impacts on students at a historically black university. They also demonstrate the importance of social context with students noting that, even if they did read for pleasure, this activity was frowned upon by others and so had to take place surreptitiously.

This study underpinning this thesis aimed to explore the development of the literacy practices of learners at Nombulelo High School using a book club.

1.1. Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

● How do learners from a poorly-resourced high school engage with fictional texts in the context of a book club?

● What enables or constrains this engagement?

1.2. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised according to the following chapters:

● Chapter Two reviews the literature on literacy as an introduction to what I term 'explanatory theory' used in my analysis.

● Chapter Three outlines the design of the study.

● Chapter Four consists of five case studies, one for each of the learners from Nombulelo High School who participated in the book club.

● Chapter Five looks across the case study in order to identify insights in response to my research question.

2. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framing

2.1. Introduction

This study draws heavily on theory that has informed work of the New London Group of literacy researchers. The origins of this work, which understands literacy as a set of social practices rather than as a 'technology', lie in the work of social anthropologist Brian Street. In understanding literacy as a phenomenon that is both social and cultural, Street's work means that the context in which reading and writing take place has to be taken into account.

2.2. Street's models of literacy

Street's (1984) seminal work identified two models of literacy: the 'autonomous model' and the 'ideological model'. The autonomous model, which dominates most thinking about literacy, sees the ability to read and write as dependent on a set of neutral, asocial, acultural, apolitical skills involving the decoding and encoding of language into writing. In alphabetic writing systems, processes of encoding and decoding require mastery of the correlation between the symbols (letters or combinations of letters of the alphabet) and the sounds they represent. Learners are then taught to use their understanding of this correlation to build words and, thus, read and spell. The process of mastering the sign/sound correlation is understood to be neutral and, thus, open to all who do not suffer from physical or mental impediments which make recognition of symbols or sounds impossible.

The ideological model acknowledges the importance of mastering the correlation between symbols and sounds but goes further than this in seeing reading and writing as sets of socially-embedded *practices*. These practices, or things people do with and around printed text, emerge from a set of values related to what is appropriate to read and write and what are the appropriate ways of engaging with the reading or writing identified. In some cases, social practices can involve minimal engagement with actual processing of symbols on the page (Breier, 1996). In other cases, print can be set aside altogether in preference for oral modes of communication. The identification of literacy as a set of social practices allows for the identification of multiple *literacies* rather than a uniform *literacy*. It also means that the term 'illiterate' is understood to be inappropriate since all communities will draw on a set of literacy practices which will engage with printed text in different ways and to a greater or lesser extent.

One of the claims made in relation to the autonomous model is that literacy itself bestows cognitive advantage (Ong, 1982). This is known as the 'Great Divide Theory'. The work of

Olsen (1977) is useful in understanding the claims made by Ong. Olsen points out that in oral societies knowledge is transmitted down the generations in stories and poems. Each iteration of a story or poem is different, and listeners to a narrator or poet are able to supply information which is not contained in the oral text thanks to their background knowledge of the story or poem itself or their knowledge of the world. These oral texts are therefore context-bound and information is often implicit. In contrast, written texts try to capture meanings explicitly so that they can travel over time and space. In order for this to happen, meanings often become abstract and codified. In a piece critiquing the work of Ong, Street (1996:153) argues that, for Ong, the 'literate world is … abstract, distancing, objective and separative' and this allows him, and others such as Goody (1968), to claim that the mastery of literacy bestows cognitive advantage.

The claim that literacy per se brings cognitive advantage is in disagreement with Scribner and Cole's (1981) research with the Vai people of Liberia. The Vai people use three separate scripts, two associated with formal education and one traditional script associated with everyday life. Scribner and Cole's research showed that performance on different types of tests was associated with the type of script the test taker had mastered. Literates in Arabic, for example, performed better on tests of memorisation than other test takers, an observation attributable to the focus on memorisation in Qur'anic education. This allowed Scribner and Cole to claim that it was not literacy per se that bestowed cognitive advantage but, rather, that different forms of literacy were associated with different kinds of performance on their tests.

Although the 'Great Divide Theory' has been rebutted, forms of literacy that engage with printed text continue to be privileged over others that may put print aside altogether. The ability to read and write is valued in many contexts, and access to employment and other activities denied to those who have not mastered high levels of encoding and decoding and the social practices associated with literacy in the particular context.

As a result, the ideological model also allows for the identification of the way literacy is used to maintain power and is implicated in reproduction of the status quo. Typically, the literacies implicated most in social reproduction are the those associated with formal education. Children from homes where caregivers have mastered the literacies used in formal education are likely to be introduced to the practices associated with them in their early years. They thus arrive at school more prepared than children from homes where other forms of literacy are practised (Heath, 1983). Once in school, experiences in their home environments mean that these children are further supported and extended in their use of practices associated with dominant forms of literacy. This observation accounts for global data which shows, for example, that the young people most likely to gain access to and success in higher education are the children of middle-class, educated caregivers (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Guinier, 2015; Mettler, 2014; Walpole, 2003).

In referring to debates about reading pedagogy, Reyhner (2020: no page number) summarises the way home background plays out in literacy development thus:

> Students who come from 'high literacy' households – where young children are read to on a regular basis, there are lots of children's books, and adults read regularly – tend to learn to read well regardless of the teaching approach used. These students tend to enter school with large vocabularies and reading readiness skills (an estimated 5% can already read when they enter school).

In spite of the fact that Street's ideological model allows us to see the way social practice impacts on literacy and the way literacy is implicated in the maintenance of power in social life, literacy debates tend to focus on the most efficient ways to teach encoding and decoding.

2.3. Reading wars

In her review of Street's (1995) work, Larson (1997) notes the fierce debates amongst theorists about approaches to developing literacy which she identifies as 'reading wars'. Two approaches dominate these debates: (i) 'whole language' approaches, advocated by the likes of Goodman (1986) and Smith (2011), and (ii) phonics.

Phonics-based approaches tend to draw on behavourism (Skinner, 1953), while whole-language approaches draw on constructivist theories of learning. In teaching phonics, the focus is on the relationship of the symbol (for example a letter in the English alphabet) and the sound. Learning this correlation until it become automatic (the stimulus/response identified by behaviourists) is then understood to allow for the building of words and, then, stretches of meaning.

Whole-language approaches, on the other hand, draw on constructivist learning theories, or the idea that knowledge is built by connecting incoming information with that which already exists in order to construct new learning. In whole-language approaches, existing information related to the structure of a language or the content of a text is 'activated' in order to allow for more efficient processing of incoming data (see, for example, Bransford, Stein & Shelton, 1984). Knowledge of a language, for example, allows a reader to use background knowledge about the sequences of letters or sounds that can follow each other to predict entire words having only processed their initial letters (Ohlhausen & Roller, 1988). In a similar fashion, knowledge of syntax allows readers to predict the kinds of words that can follow each other and then look for clues to confirm their predictions (Ohlhausen & Roller, 1988). Background knowledge narrows the field of possible meanings and allows for those that are possible to be anticipated. So, for example, if a sentence began, 'The boy

walked along …', it would be possible to predict where the boy walked (the street, the road, the path, the beach) on the basis of our knowledge of the world. Advocates of whole-language approaches argue that only a small proportion of symbols on a page of printed text actually need to be processed once background knowledge is brought to bear. This leads to Goodman's (1967) claim that reading is a 'psycholinguistic guessing game'.

In a review of Goodman's work, following his death, Sawchuk (2020: no page number) notes that:

> Goodman was not, as is often asserted, wholly dismissive of phonics, a view more accurately ascribed to fellow whole-language theorist Frank Smith. He believed readers did use knowledge of sound-letter systems when reading, but relied on them less as they grew more efficient.

Whole-language approaches require teachers to provide a literacy-rich environment for their students, and to combine speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Whole-language teachers emphasise the meaning of texts over the sounds of letters, and phonics instruction becomes just one component of the whole-language classroom.

The teaching of skills identified by Street is most often associated with one form of literacy taught in schools, and termed 'essay text literacy'.

2.4. Essay text literacy

Following Street's (1984) ideological model which sees literacy as multiple rather than singular, essay text literacy is a literacy associated with formal schooling. Geisler (1994) cites Goldstein (1978, in Apple, 1989), whose research on classroom-based learning showed that, in the USA, learners in school spent an average of 75% of their time in class and 90% of their time devoted to homework working with textbooks. Textbooks thus play a major role in the transmission of school-based knowledge, and demonstrate the amount of learning that has taken place as learners reproduce the text for themselves. They are a source of authority for the knowledge to be acquired in the school curriculum. Learners who cannot read at the level necessary to engage with a textbook are therefore disadvantaged, not just because of their reading level, but also in their ability to access authorised knowledge.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987, in Geisler, 1994) identify a 'knowledge telling' strategy in school-based writing. This involves the retrieval of ideas from long-term memory in response to cues in either the topic of an assignment or the conventions of a genre. Once an idea has been retrieved, learners test it for appropriateness to the composition. If it passes the test, it is added to the written text. Writers continue to generate content in this way until no more ideas can be retrieved. At this point, composing stops. No time is spent

planning a piece of writing or thinking about the way a prospective reader might receive it, which would then result in redrafting a written piece.

As already indicated, South Africa is one of the countries that has performed most poorly on international standardised tests of reading such as the Trends in International Mathematical and Science Studies (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS). According to Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & Palane (2016), the 2015 assessment of 12,810 Grade 4 learners from 293 schools across the country showed that 78% of the cohort could not reach the Low International PIRLS Benchmark in reading.

Performance on these standardised tests of reading provides a reason for poor performance generally, given the importance of reading in learning activities in schools. According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2020), the 'survival rate' per 1,000 learners in South African schools was about 520, giving an effective drop-out rate of 48%. This means that only about half of the learners who begin Grade 1 continue in school to achieve a Grade 12 pass. Given the observations made above, it would seem that reading is a major contributor to this poor performance.

What Street's (1984) ideological model shows us is that, regardless of which approach to literacy teaching is adopted (whole language or phonics), unless literacy is understood as a set of socio-cultural practices underpinned by values around what it is appropriate to do with and around text, any literacy tuition is not likely to be successful if learners' home backgrounds are not supportive of acts of reading and writing. To become fluent in decoding and encoding, practice is needed. Learners in crowded classrooms are unlikely to receive the amount of guided support and time to practise the encoding and decoding skills to which they have been introduced unless home-based practices also include acts of reading and writing in ways that mirror those of the school. Even more significantly, if reading and writing are not valued in the home, learners are not going to develop a sense of themselves as readers and writers as they grow older.

2.5. The policy context of literacy in South Africa

According to Prinsloo and Breier (1996), the years 1990 to 1994 were characterised by intense policy debate in anticipation of the work that would face a new government once the first South African democratic election had taken place. 'Reconstruction' and 'development' were key terms in the debate, with both signalling a shift from concerns with the injustices and inequalities of the preceding era to the need for practical policies for the future and, also, the need for partnerships between major interest groups representing the state, business, and civil society.

A proposal for a large-scale Adult Based Education and Training (ABET) programme led by the state, which would guarantee access to further education and training and, thus, to better employment prospects and higher levels of employment, was part of this planning process. It was estimated that 15 million black adults (over one-third of the population) had not mastered the literacies needed to engage in social, economic and political life (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). As a result, millions had been consigned to silence and marginalisation.

Prinsloo and Breier's own research, drawing on the ideological model of literacy, questions the privileging of dominant literacies along with the homogenous need for literacy and the desire to attend literacy classes identified in ABET planning. In spite of this questioning, there is no doubt that for many, and especially young learners, mastery of dominant forms of literacy is key to success.

Although the new government elected in 1994 included a concern with literacy and ABET in the catalogue of interventions that were part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) implemented soon after its succession to power, the field was given no direct funding and was marked and as an arena for donor funding. According to Prinsloo and Breier (1996), the demand for literacy development 'on the ground' also was not visible. Plans to provide access to dominant school-based literacies therefore did not come to fruition. Had this access been achieved, the experiences of learners in South African schools today, nearly thirty years after the election, might be very different. Rather, a wide range of literacies continue to be drawn upon in their homes of origin, not all of which support school-based learning. Sadly, these literacies are not recognised and not drawn upon by teachers and curriculum developers as a means of supporting learners and ensuring that they are 'multi-literate', or able to draw on a wide range of literacy practices, each of which is appropriate to different contexts.

Since the early 1990s, the basic education system has been subject to ongoing reform. The introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) in 1997 was seen as a way of emancipating learners from a content-focused system that had emphasised rote learning (Botha, 2002).

Critiques of OBE soon emerged (see, for example, Jansen, 1998) and more change followed. Currently, the school-based curriculum is guided by a series of National Curriculum Statements which, according to the DBE, value inclusivity:

> Inclusivity should become a central part of the organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity (DBE, n.d.).

There is, however, little evidence to suggest that all teachers have a sound understanding that literacy functions a barrier to learning other than drawing on Street's (1984) autonomous model and teaching encoding and decoding. The need to acknowledge that reading and writing are social and cultural practices and that learners need to be supported in developing dominant practices as well as in the skills related to encoding and decoding is not common practice at the majority of schools in the country.

2.6. Multimodal literacies

This section introduces the concept of multimodal literacies (and the use of technology) in order to explore how these contribute to academic success.

Hull and Nelson (2009) argue that, in a globalised world, the ability to communicate across enormous differences in language, culture, geography and ideology are at the core of what it currently means to be 'literate'. They go on to place emphasis on 'literacies that are multimodal, aesthetically alert, and morally attuned' (2009:199).

According to Bronfenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Moen and Ceci (1996), as societies increasingly draw on technology, the demands for literacy increase, creating ever more grievous consequences for those who fall short, and contributing to wider economic disparities in society. These economic disparities often relate to inequalities in educational resources, which then have the self-reinforcing effect of further exacerbating economic differences.

As the current pandemic resulting from the SARS-CoV-2 virus shows, access to literacies can make a difference beyond the economic sphere. The roll-out of vaccines in South Africa, for example, requires registration using a web-based platform. Once registration has been completed, communication proceeds using short text messages. Although those who cannot access the web-based platform, either because they do not have access to devices or data or because they have not mastered the literacies to be able to interact with devices made available in public spaces, are now being assisted, acknowledgement of the need for this assistance was slow in coming. It is not only registration that is a problem, however – communication with individuals is also needed to ensure they are aware of the availability of vaccines, the things they need to do to secure a vaccination and, importantly, to assuage fears about possible negative consequences of accepting a vaccination.

Multimodality is more than simply engaging with technology, however. Gee (2014:xi) notes that '[t]he new world is a multimodal world. Language is one mode; images, actions, sounds and physical manipulation are other modes. Today, students need to know how to make and get meaning from all these modes alone and integrated together.' While the use of images, sounds and actions to communicate meanings is assisted by technology,

understanding literacy as multimodal involves seeing it as involving more than traditional alphabetic text. Gee goes on to add that, without the ability to analyse all these modes critically, individuals are open to being deceived, scammed and manipulated by those advertising products and trying to advantage themselves in some way.

Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy allows us to understand multi-modal literacies as not only involving an ability to use technology but also a disposition or willingness to engage with the images, sounds, actions and so on associated with its use to communicate meaning. To be employable in the modern economy, high school graduates need to be able to read challenging material in a wide range of forms, to perform sophisticated calculations, and to solve problems independently (Murnane and Levy, 1993). The demands are far greater than those placed on the vast majority of schooled individuals a quarter-century ago.

For a long time, academic success, as defined by high school graduation, was predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of grade 3 (for reviews, see Slavin, 1994). For the same prediction to hold true today, a learner's ability to read multiple forms of texts (images, sounds, animations) would need to be measured. Only a generation ago, this did not matter so much, because the long-term economic effects of not graduating from high school were less severe. In the new global economy, with its demand for 'high skills', this is no longer the case.

Perhaps not surprisingly, when teachers are asked about the most important goal for education, many teachers will note the need for 'basic skills'. What is often missed in literacy education, however, is first that literacies are now multimodal and secondly that they consist of socially embedded practices and that learners' home backgrounds will impact on the development of their willingness to engage with a range of text types.

'Technology' as a subject was introduced into the South African school curriculum as a result of curriculum reform in the early 2000s. According to Franklin (2017), more than 60% of South African children attend 'no-fee' schools. Schools that are able to levy fees are able to employ more teachers, provide extra-curricular activities and provide more resources. Even when technology-related resources are available in schools, many educators do not feel prepared to teach the subject (Makgato, 2014). According to Torres & Giddie (2020), many teachers, especially those in rural areas, are not computer literate. A study by Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) showed, moreover, that many teachers had not been exposed to professional development focused on technology and the pedagogical approaches needed to deal with learner's understanding of it. However, given the dominance of the autonomous model, not only in South Africa, but also globally, it is doubtful that professional development initiatives would deal with the 'softer' aspects of learners' willingness to engage with, for example, multimodal texts in the critical ways identified by

Gee (2014). The assumption is more likely to be that, provided learners have mastered the basic skills of encoding and decoding, engagement will be possible.

Nonetheless, access to devices and data is likely to be a problem for many years to come in South African communites at the poorer end of the socio-economic continuum. Prinsloo (2014) and Rowsell, Burke, Flewitt, Han Teng, Lin, Marsh, Mills, Prinsloo, Rowe and Wohlwend (2016) report on research which identifies the way the growth of multimodal literacies is widening the divide between rich and poor children in South Africa. Prinsloo's work (in Rowsell et al., 2014: 215) identifies ways in which individuals and groups improvise with the technologies available to them 'in ways that are novel and that, in particular cases, are sometimes less than successful'. Nonetheless, Prinsloo goes on to note (ibid.) that:

> … social class differences among African children take on globalised cultural dimensions by way of language practices and online media practices, which sharpen differences between middle-class children and poorer children. The children of professionals absorbed the cultural capital that English-language resources, digital hardware, and unlimited broadband Internet connectivity in their home afforded them by way of connections to global middle-class cultural flows. In contrast, the children of unemployed parents living in a shack settlement outside Cape Town played with the Internet-connected cell phones of their parents, but such play did not provide any access to more global resources of information and entertainment—partly because the children did not share the sociocultural backgrounds or linguistic resources that are typically taken for granted on websites designed for children and partly because the parents saw little point in allowing their children free access to play with digital resources.

Armstrong's 2018 study of children's learning in a marginalised community also revealed the way in which poverty impacted on access to digital resources. Children had learned to search downloaded playlists for the names of songs they liked to hear (a literacy practice) but were often admonished by their parents for using up battery life dependent on precious electricity. In her study, children had not developed the same range of abilities to create and interact with multimodal texts as those reported by Rowsell et al. (2017) in their 'road trip' of studies around the world.

2.7. Literacy identities

This section addresses the question of the way literacy identities contribute to literacy engagement towards academic success?

Street's (1984) ideological model has implications for what are termed 'reading identities', given its understanding of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices. It is possible to

see how different roles played by people in their lives relate to engaging with different kinds of texts in different ways. An individual drawing on an academic identity is likely to engage with a different set of practices than the same individual drawing on her identity as a mother.

Gee's (2008) concept of Discourse (always deliberately capitalised) describes a social role played by individuals. For Gee (2008:154) a Discourse is

> … composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognized activities (original emphasis).

A Discourse, then, encompasses a 'whole role' and not only acts of reading and writing.

Gee argues that everyone is socialised into a primary Discourse from birth. Thereafter, it is possible to acquire as many secondary Discourses as individuals are exposed to over the course of their lives. Discourses cannot be taught but can only develop as a result of immersion in a particular social context. The implication of Gee's construct of Discourses in South African literacy education and development is not hard to see. If learners are born into Discourses that value acts of reading and writing related to dominant literacies and where the practices associated with them are demonstrated on a daily basis, they will begin their school years at a considerable advantage as they will already have mastered elements of the social role or identity needed for success.

As learners enter schools, they will encounter Discourses associated with dominant literacies. However, these Discourses are likely to vary depending on the school itself. In a minimally resourced, no-fee school, the chances of teachers themselves demonstrating Discourses associated with multiple acts of reading and writing are relatively slim. Bertram's (2004) study of South African teachers' own reading in an informal study group showed, for example, that reading for meaning was not easy for them, with most relying on what is termed 'referential' reading[1] when confronted with a question. Rimensberger's (2014) inquiry into teachers' own reading practices showed that, although the 171 teachers in the study expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards reading, only 16% read every day, 26% read once or twice a week and 33% read for pleasure every few months. This meant that positive attitudes were not a precursor to actual reading practices. According to Rimensberger, it also showed that acknowledgement of the importance of reading on the part of the teachers was overshadowed by a reality that did not match the

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[1] Referential reading involves using a cue in a question and matching it with part of a text in order to find an answer.

acknowledgement itself and had the potential to send the message to learners that, although reading was important, it was not pleasurable.

The dominance of 'essay text' literacy in formal schooling has already been noted. Geisler (1994) identifies the limiting effects of this type of literacy given its requirement for adherence to the text as a form of authoritative knowledge. Christie (1993) points to the way in which what she terms the 'Received Tradition of English Teaching' serves to reproduce the status quo. Her argument traces the origins of grammar teaching in the shift to written language, the availability of which resulted in stretches of language becoming available for analysis for the first time. The first grammars were then developed as a result of this analysis. Christie's work (1993:77) shows how, over time,

> … a number of time-consuming exercises came to absorb the energies of teachers and students alike: exercises in parsing and analysis, in correcting 'faulty sentences', in rehearsing the creation of simple sentences, in copying improving tales, in writing paraphrases of the writing of others.

Historically, a great deal of literacy teaching has focused on the 'Received Tradition' and, in spite of curriculum reforms, continues to draw on it today as the experience of being taught impacts on our work as teachers. Christie also points out that those who do not speak standardised version of a language not only find 'parsing and analysis' and the 'correction of faulty sentences' difficult but also meaningless as the variety of the language they are required to produce does not match that with which they are familiar. Given the historical context of a lot of literacy teaching and the fact that socio-cultural practices in many communities do not value reading and writing as enjoyable activities, it is hardly surprising, firstly, that teachers themselves do not appear to enjoy reading and, secondly, that reading is then not taken up by the learners they work with.

The dominance of these forms of literacy teaching and engagement in schools can be detrimental to the concept of 'reading for pleasure' or 'leisure reading'. In South Africa, Tlou & Snyman (2020) undertook a study that sought to explore adolescent reading practices in a marginalised school community that frequented the local public library in order to identify ways of promoting reading within the community. The study was inconclusive as responses provided by study participants were conflicting. The constant confusion in the children's answers also revealed the challenge of mixing leisure reading with textbooks that are school related reading.

2.8. Language and language processing

It is not possible to conclude this chapter without contextualising the issue of language. Although this chapter has drawn extensively on the idea of literacy as a set of social

practices, this does not mean to say that language processing is not important. Reading is a complex process requiring readers to recognise words in a particular language. Familiarity with that language will affect the ease with which this recognition occurs. All the readers from Nombulelo High School were home language speakers of one of the indigenous African languages where notions of what constitutes a 'word' varies across different language groups. The need for them to have developed language specific decoding strategies was therefore important although, in South Africa, it is arguably the case that the majority of learners do most of their reading in English and not their home language because of the early shift to using it as the language of teaching and learning. The study therefore does not seek to 'downplay' the issue of decoding. Rather, it sees decoding and encoding as elements of the wider view of literacy encompassed by Street's (1984) ideological model. Arguably, the focus in the development of reading is often on decoding at the expense of understandings of it as a set of social practices. In order to read fluently, decoding has to be practised and if novice readers are not practising reading then fluency is unlikely to develop. It was on this basis that the study proceeded.

2.9. Conclusion

Much has been written about the problems of what is often claimed to be a failing education system in South Africa. The centrality of reading to formal education and its relationship to the multiplicity of literacies in a country such as South Africa provide insights into the reasons for what is perceived as failure.

Even when high school graduates manage to gain access to higher education, the journey to a degree can be very difficult because of the difference in literacies outlined above. As Fitzgerald (2004:19) notes:

> Many high school graduates, accustomed to easy success in high school, struggle in college. In their first semester they must read reams of difficult text, take comprehensive exams that require analysis not covered in class, and write papers that synthesize ideas from multiple resources. Unprepared to handle the volume and level of academic work, they fail.

The Council on Higher Education (2004) echoes Fitzgerald's understanding of difficulties that high school graduates are faced with when they enter university, identifying the discontinuity between school and undergraduate studies in Higher Education as the 'articulation gap', noting that the gap

> … is manifest in programmes that are based on inappropriate assumptions about students' prior knowledge, that are inflexible in terms of learning pathways, and that

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do not take sufficient account of students' differing educational preparedness to bridge transitions between various phases of undergraduate study (CHE, 2004).

Although the 'articulation gap' is widely acknowledged as a problem related to schooling, the discussion of literacy offered in this chapter shows that the home of origin is also implicated because of the way literacy practices are developed, or not developed, as the case may be. In many respects, therefore, the study reported in this thesis also aimed to contribute to understandings of the 'articulation gap'.

3. Chapter Three: Research Approach and Design

3.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining activities in the book club on which this study focuses before moving on to consider Bhaskar's (1978) critical realism, the philosophy on which the study draws. It then moves to look at the design of the study itself, detailing the methods used for data collection, and the way data was analysed. It ends by dealing with the important issue of my own positionality as a researcher and the way ethical considerations were addressed.

As the bookclub on which the thesis is based was key to the study, the chapter begins by outlining its development.

3.2. Developing a book club

As already indicated, the study underpinning this thesis drew on a book club set up for learners at Nombulelo School and St Andrew's College. As also indicated, the book club was possible as a result of a fundraising initiative associated with the South African School Librarians' Conference held by St Andrew's College in June/July 2019, where learners from both schools worked as volunteers. All profits from the conference were used to establish the club.

Gee's (2008) construct of Discourse, discussed in the previous chapter, allows us to understand ways of reading and writing as part of an 'entire being'. The thinking behind the book club was therefore that, as a result of interaction with learners at St Andrew's College, learners at Nombulelo would possibly be exposed to another Discourse associated with schooling. It is important to note at this point that some Discourses are not inherently 'better' than others. However, depending on the social context, some are *privileged* over others. If the learners at Nombulelo are to learn to engage with books in ways which will serve them well at school, they need to acquire values associated with reading and writing as pleasurable activities and not only as those initiated by the teacher. By interacting with other young people who do experience reading as enjoyable, and by talking about books, the thinking was that not only would practices associated with reading develop, but also that experiences of those practices would change along with the values that underpinned them.

The study on which this thesis is based sought to explore this process. In using a book club to explore issues related to literacy, as I have already noted, I was very aware that an

initiative of such a limited duration was very unlikely to be able to make a large impact on the Nombulelo learners' reading practices. The study was therefore intended to be exploratory in nature, and I had to be constantly aware that any insights I gained were necessarily limited. However, by involving the teacher in charge of the library at Nombulelo in the initiative, my hope was that its impetus would be maintained once my study ended. I had a good relationship with the teacher at Nombulelo who originally approached St Andrew's College for assistance in upgrading her school's library. The teacher was therefore involved in the project from its inception and, in the book club, I worked alongside her as a partner.

Five learners from Nombulelo High School from Grades 8, 9 and 10 participated in the book club alongside five from St Andrew's from Grades 10, 11 and 12. The study did not involve a large number of participants but the aim was to explore participants' experiences in depth. This meant that numbers needed to be limited. The focus in the study was on the Nombulelo learners only as I did not want to introduce any element of comparison between the two groups of learners with very different backgrounds and histories.

The participation of the Rotary Interact Club Co-ordinator was integral to the establishment of the book club. As already indicated, the book club grew out of an earlier interaction between St Andrews College and Nombulelo High School focused on the renovation of the Nombulelo library. The Interact Club Co-ordinator was instrumental in this early phase of the project. However, participants in the book club essentially self-selected for membership. In an interview, one participant noted that book club members were friends outside the club and had told each other about it. As later chapters will report, book club members later identified other learners at Nombulelo who had heard about the club and who wanted to join. The study did not focus on these late joiners. It rather focused on the original self-selected members.

Book club meetings took place mainly in the library of St Andrew's School although meetings were also held in the library at Nombulelo High School. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, precautions had to be taken to limit the spread of infection. For the beginning of the period the book club ran, the St Andrew's learners were still not on campus. However, I obtained permission for learners from Nombulelo to come onto the St Andrew's campus provided Covid regulations were enforced. As many township schools were also closed, and as online learning was not always implemented as successfully as it might have been had there been more resources, this meant that learners were often hanging around the streets with nothing to do. The trips to the St Andrew's campus were therefore welcomed by the book club participants. Transport was provided for the learners from Nombulelo to travel to St Andrew's on the occasions it was held there and learners were provided with a light snack before meetings began. Once the lockdown eased, learners from both schools attended the book club sessions.

The initial aim was to run the book club from August 2020 until the end of the year. Because of the Covid crisis, the 2020 school year was extended and ended only in June 2021. Participants in the book club asked for it to be continued beyond this date, however.

The book club was structured around different kinds of sessions:

1. Learners met together to talk about stories they had read and recommend books to each other. As it was assumed that learners from Nombulelo School would have little experience of reading full-length novels, the club focused on short stories at first. Learners were encouraged to read and write short reviews of the texts they had read. These reviews were written in a language of the learners' choice. All learners preferred to write in English. I facilitated all meetings.

2. Formal teaching in the use of the library took place. This formal teaching was aimed at introducing the use of the library as a 'fun activity' and involved, amongst other things, quizzes which required reference books to be identified and consulted. These activities involved team work. I facilitated these sessions with the teacher from Nombulelo school.

3. A book club website was established. The website functioned as a virtual library as the books available to learners were listed there. Reviews of books were posted on the website by the learners themselves (in much the same way as reviews of books are posted on sites such as www.amazon.com). Writers of reviews could choose to identify themselves or remain anonymous. In the event, all writers chose to identify themselves. Reviews carried the names of their authors should the writers wish to be acknowledged. Alternatively, a pseudonym could be used. I designed and moderated the website and monitored the reviews.

4. Learners were also introduced to the digital library of St Andrew's College. This requires an official login and password to the St Andrew's College IT system. By logging in to the digital library, the learners' world was opened up to Overdrive Library and a SORA App – a student reading application powered by Overdrive Library. This allowed participants to access a world of audio books and eBooks. The Nombulelo learners were free to borrow eBooks and Audiobooks and were encouraged to use the library and borrow books in hard copy to suit their preferences. Not all Nombulelo learners had access to a computer but most had access to phones.

5. The learners were also introduced to other critical thinking and problem solving exercises. One exercise involved a situation of being stuck at sea surrounded by

sharks. Language differences emerged in this exercise as one of the learners understood the word 'shark' as 'shock'. As a result she offered incorrect answers to the questions. As soon as this misunderstanding was identified, the learner was able to answer the questions. Many mechanisms were potentially at play here including differences in pronunciation. The exercise showed how it was possible for learners to be constructed as not understanding and not being able to construct a solution to a problem when the issue was one of language difference.

6. As the learners from the two schools developed a stronger bond, they organised a movie evening together. The movie was based on a book entitled *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Learners read the 420 page title in preparation for the movie night. In this session, the way that club members mingled together and were comfortable with each other demonstrated that a relationship had developed between the groups from the two different schools.

7. The learners were also exposed to the *Interschools Quiz*. The quiz was based on a title in Daniel Handler's *Unfortunate Events* series, *The Bad Beginning*. The Nombulelo school club members won the Interschools Quiz. When asked how they found the questions, they were excited to inform me that, even though each person in their group had a copy of *The Bad Beginning*, they still gathered in each other's houses to prepare together as a group.

3.3. Critical Realism

The study underpinning this thesis drew on the experiences of learners expressed in interviews as well as my own observations as a librarian and the individual involved in running the book club in which they participated. As a result, it was necessary to take into account the way social and cultural differences were involved in shaping my own observations and experiences as well as those of the learners. As experiences differ, accounts of them are specific to the individuals who provide them, and consequently research that draws on such accounts is relative. However, the use of Bhaskar's critical realism (1978) allowed me to acknowledge the relativity of human experience and observation while, at the same time, offering me the potential to explore a more enduring level of reality.

In his introduction to critical realism, Bhaskar (1978) makes a distinction between three ontological domains: the empirical, the actual, and the real. The *empirical* consists of observations and everyday experiences. It is separated from the *actual* domain where events happen regardless of whether we experience them or not. What happens in the world is not the same as that which is observed. The actual is in its turn separated from the

real. In the *real* domain are found the structures and the mechanisms that contribute to the emergence of events in the world and our experiences of them at the level of the empirical.

The *real* includes all events of the actual layer and experiences of the empirical but also includes mechanisms from which the layers of the actual and empirical emerge. These mechanisms are said to be intransitive and relatively unchanging. They are intransitive in that they exist and have power whether one is aware of them or not. Socio-cultural differences in the form of structures such as social class, gender and race would be located at this level and could thus be seen to lead to the emergence of very different sets of practices (conceptualised as events) and experiences of those events. Also located at the level of the real would be the ideas and values that underpin actions (conceptualised as events) and our experiences of them. Following Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), I understood these ideas and values to constitute 'discourses', or sets of statements that exist in language and other sign systems and which enable and constrain what it is possible to do and not do.

While the empirical domain allows us to observe and experience events directly, it cannot provide us with direct access to the structures and mechanisms at the level of the real. This leads to Bhaskar's observation that the reality cannot be reduced to observation of phenomena at the empirical level. For Bhaskar (1989:133), the conflation of what is with what can be known as a result of relying only on empirical observation and experience is to commit the 'epistemic fallacy'. Bhaskar (1978) allows us to see beyond the positivism which assumes that knowledge and reality can be conflated and the relativism which presents a concept of constantly changing, multiple realities by acknowledging a layer of enduring structures and mechanisms and, at the same time, the relativism of human experience and observation.

An example related to the study will help to illustrate how I understood critical realism to be useful in informing it. Whilst St Andrew's College learners have ready access to the library to read story books, select books from the shelves independently, identify authors they want to read and even request or suggest books for purchase, my observation is that this is not the case for Nombulelo learners. Their experiences differ in the sense that their use of the library is often related to completing a task or studying for a specific assessment. They are normally given instructions to follow and are expected to obey a teacher's order in accessing and using the library. Even though the library is packaged to be self-service, Nombulelo students often request help in finding and checking out books.

Several different mechanisms can be seen to be at play in the emergence of these two different scenarios. Every event at the level of the actual and every experience at the level of the empirical emerges from a complex interplay of mechanisms at the level of the real (Wynn & Williams, 2012). There are distinct social class differences between Nombulelo

learners and those at St Andrew's College. The level of wealth which has provided the two groups of learners with access or a lack of access to resources clearly is relevant. The social class of parents therefore plays a role in the provision of previous access to books and in paying fees for two very differently resourced schools. Similarly, my assumption was that Nombulelo learners may not have experienced their parents reading to them whilst they were babies and some may not even have been exposed to oral literature in the form of stories and riddles that have been shown to be conducive to the development of literacy and numeracy (Ishengoma, 2005). At play at the level of the real are beliefs and values about reading being enjoyable and valuable, something that is 'done' in the home to entertain children.

Also implicated in the two scenarios are the beliefs and values underpinning the practice of teachers. My assumption was that it is possible that the teachers at Nombulelo also do not experience reading as pleasurable and as something that is part of life outside school. As a result, they are likely to guide the learners at the school in their use of the library in different ways to those at St Andrew's College. Nombulelo learners will therefore not experience reading as enjoyment like St Andrew's College boys, but will mostly see it as having a necessary outcome related to school-based learning.

Critical realism shows that it is important to understand the way social structures and the beliefs and values that are often associated with them can impact on learning. Its use does, however, require careful choice of tools that can be used to identify and understand the complex mechanisms underpinning the experiences of and observations made about learners if truth claims are to be made.

Boughey & McKenna (2021:17) provide a very clear explanation of critical realist understandings, using an example of a virus entering a person's body. A virus is a physical mechanism that has the power to produce physical symptoms associated with ill health. The fact that the virus enters the body does not mean that symptoms will emerge because of other mechanisms at play. For example, a person who has access to good nutrition may have an immune system which is able to resist the virus. The opposite may be true for the person who comes from a poor background with no access to good healthcare and nutrition. In this case symptoms may start to emerge.

On the basis of this example, it is possible to see that simply upgrading or establishing a library will not mean that literacies that will serve learners well as they try to progress into higher education will emerge. Other mechanisms at play in the context in which they learn may inhibit their use of the library altogether or constrain them to use it in limited ways (O'Shea, Thomson & McKenna, 2018).

Bhaskar's (1978) thinking is that although mechanisms have causal powers, they are not strictly causal. Just because learners may not have been exposed to books because of circumstances in their home environments does not mean that they cannot and will not develop dominant school-based literacies. Things can be changed.

I drew on theory and research from the field associated with Street's (1984) identification of the ideological model of literacy, now known as 'New Literacy Studies (NLS)', to conduct the study. In positing multiple literacies rather than a unitary literacy, NLS has been accused of 'romanticism' (Street, 1996), or the idea that 'anything goes'. As Street (1996) also points out, in terms of research, NLS is usually conceptualised as drawing on relativism. Critical realism allowed me to challenge the 'romanticism' of the 'anything goes' position identified by Street and, also, the relativism of socially situated literacy practices by acknowledging an ultimate reality consisting of structures and mechanisms from which events at the level of the actual and experiences and observations at the level of the empirical emerge. It is the interplay of these mechanisms that leads to this emergence. In this study, I therefore sought to explore this interplay in order to understand the experiences and observations reported by learners.

Even more importantly, I sought to explore how power plays out in this process since there is no doubt that some literacies are privileged over others. Without mastery of dominant school-based literacies, learners at Nombulelo have been assumed to struggle to progress up the educational ladder and have been expected to be pressured to forgo the literacies that have sustained them and their families as they do this. This can lead to experiences of loss. Critical realism therefore allowed me to acknowledge the relativism (and romanticism) of NLS while, at the same time, positing an ultimate reality although the understandings of it that I derived may well be fallible.

3.3.1. Probing the level of the real

As explained above, the structures mechanisms located at the level of the real are not directly accessible, but need to be inferred by a researcher by moving from empirical data to this deepest level of reality using the processes of abduction and retroduction.

Abduction involves using theory to see empirical data in a different way (Danermark, Ekstron & Karlsson, 2019). According to Collins (1995, in Danermark et al., 2019:55), 'one moves from one set of ideas to their conclusions in another set of ideas'. From a critical realist perspective, the last part of this sentence is important. Critical realist researchers aim to discover relations and structures, not directly observable, by which we can understand and explain already known phenomena in a novel way (Danermark et al., 2019:114).

Retroduction involves trying to discover underlying mechanisms that, in particular contexts, explain observed regularities. The logic of retroduction refers to the process of building

hypothetical methods of structures and mechanisms that are assumed to produce empirical phenomena (Bhaskar, 1978; Blaikie, 2009). Retroduction involves moving from empirical data, from for example, a description of experiences provided by a learner, to positing the conditions which could have led to their emergence. A researcher thus asks questions such as 'What must the world be like for this to be possible?'

In order to move from levels of reality that are directly accessible to those that are not, critical realist studies draw on what are broadly termed qualitative research methods. One of the advantages of conducting qualitative research is that it allows the researcher the benefit of language, which provides a far more sensitive and meaningful way of recording human experience than statistical data (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013).

The following methods have been used to access the experiences and observations of participants of the study and to observe the events from which these emerge.

3.4. Research methods

The study underpinning this thesis took the form of a case study, the case of the book club at Nombulelo High School. However, this single case encompassed five further cases in that the six learners were treated individually.

Yin (2009) identifies three types of case studies: the 'critical' case, the 'unique' case and the 'relevatory' case. A critical case is selected as a means of challenging an existing theory or hypothesis. A unique case is chosen because of it demonstrates distinctive features. A revelatory case has the potential to provide new insights and ideas. The study comprised a relevatory case encompassing a series of 'lower level' relevatory cases each with the potential to provide new insights and understandings. As my analysis in later chapters will show, this was certainly the case with each of the learners who participated in the book club. Participants were unique individuals from varied backgrounds. Treating each learner as a relevatory case within a larger relevatory case allowed this uniqueness to be recognized.

Cousin (2005:423) notes that '[a]lthough case study researchers enter the field with an open, exploratory frame of mind, they need some kind of compass to guide them'. My understanding of a relevatory case as having the potential to provide new insights provided a compass of an 'open mind' in that I had to be careful not to impose my biases on my findings, a issue I will discuss later in the chapter.

Within the understanding of the case outlined above, the following methods were used to answer the research questions that guided this study.

3.4.1. Interviews

As already indicated, the book club ran from August 2020 to June 2021. Interviews were conducted at the end of March 2021 and the end of May 2021. Participation in the interviews was voluntary. In the event, all five learners from Nombulelo High School were happy to be interviewed.

Two interviews were conducted with each learner. These interviews sought to probe learners' experiences of reading by asking about how they had learned to read, whether they read at home and so on. The focus in the interviews was on a learner's *experiences* of the book club and particularly of their engagement with text.

Interviews were guided by a series of questions. As I have explained, the purpose of the interviews was to try to explain participants' differing and shifting experiences of reading. In developing the questions, I therefore needed to take account of Wengraf's (2001) distinction between 'theory questions' and interview questions and prompts. For example, at the beginning of each interview, I tried to explore a participant's literacy history by asking about reading practices at home. As I did this, I drew on theories developed by Street (1984) and Gee (2008). However, the questions I developed were only based on the theories and needed to be couched in a way that could make them accessible to participants.

Wengraf (2001) also makes a number of suggestions about the structure of interviews. I therefore began with very broad, open questions aimed at allowing participants to relax. I then moved into the questions on my schedule. I concluded by asking participants to tell me anything that I had not asked them about.

Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004) note that, in interviews, it is not only what people say and do that is important, but also that what they fail to say and do needs to be taken into account. In interviews, I needed to be particularly sensitive about my own position as a member of staff at a prestigious school and adapt my questions depending on my interaction with each participant.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed if learners agreed to this. A pseudonym chosen by each learner was used to refer to the interviews as they were analysed and reported upon in the thesis.

3.4.2. Observation

Observation of the book club meetings took place and notes were made. These notes recorded interaction between learners and how teachers intervened to guide them if necessary. I was also aware of the fact that the learners from Nombulelo High School were

using English as an additional language whereas those from St Andrew's College mostly were not. The learners were also observed in the use of technologies in the library. All participants in the book club were asked to write book reviews using the computers in the library at St Andrew's College. The difficulties experienced by learners as they did this were noted.

3.4.3. Document analysis

The learners were taken through a careful process of writing book reviews. They were given a paper worksheet to guide the writing of these reviews. The worksheet was divided into sections requiring them to record the author and title of the book, a summary of the story or plot, and a recommendation.

In early meetings, learners were asked to write reviews in hard copy. As they did this, they sat alone. The purpose of doing this was to encourage participants to think about and record their experiences of reading the book without needing to consider technology or being tempted by the availability of information about what they had read on the internet. Guidance and feedback were provided as this process took place. Once learners were happy with their book reviews, they were invited to write them up electronically for inclusion on the library website.

The website form shared some of the features of the paper form but also asked reviewers to indicate the genre of the book they had read. On the library website, reviews are recorded according to the school house to which readers belong. A new 'house' of 'Nombulelo High School' was created for the purpose of the book club and in order to allow for the introduction of an element of competition. Participants watched the numbers of reviews written by members of each house grow on graphs and were able to compare the number of books read in their house with those read in others'.

The reviews of books written by learners were analysed in order to provide additional insights into the way learners had engaged with the texts they had read and how they positioned themselves as learners. All reviews submitted to the library website by learners from Nombulelo High School were analysed for the purposes of this study.

3.5. Analysis

I conducted my analysis with awareness of the need to identify structures and mechanisms at the level of the real. However, my analysis began by identifying experiences and events at the level of the empirical using my interview data, observations and the reviews written by participants. I then used abduction and retroduction to move from the levels of experience

and events to try to identify structures and mechanisms at the level of the real. The following extract from an interview shows the way I worked from the empirical to the real:

So, first question, can you remember where you learned to read and who taught you?
I learned at home. Actually my big sister. She has been the one pushing for us to learn the most. She, even now that I'm in Grade 10, I'm in high school. She's still pushing for us to read. She's still pushing for us to do better in our academics, you know, as much as I … it's wrong when I say it, but she doesn't get enough because she's always like you can do better. You can do better, and I think that's what's driven me and my siblings to try and do better with everything we do.

Structure	Mechanism (discourse)	Evidence
The family, the home		My big sister. She has been the one pushing for us to learn the most
The school		Even now I'm in Grade 10, I'm in high school
	The 'reading is good' discourse	She's still pushing for us to read.
	The 'work hard at school' discourse	She's still pushing for us to do better in our academics She doesn't get enough because she's always like you can do better

Analysis was interative in the sense that my initial identification of structures and mechanisms resulting from a first reading of the data was strengthened by further readings. As this happened, I collapsed discourses together and identified new discourses. This was also the case for my analysis of structures.

3.6. Positionality

I am a black woman working as a librarian at St Andrew's College, the prestigious school involved in this study. Before taking up my post at St Andrew's College, I worked in the Rhodes University library. Although I now work in a highly-privileged context, my own background was one of disadvantage. I was born in a village in the rural Transkei with access only to poor schooling. I succeeded at school and, so far, have managed to attain an Honours degree in Library Science from the University of Cape Town, one of the most highly-regarded universities in South Africa. I am now pursuing a Master's degree at Rhodes University, another highly regarded institution. I still visit my home village and, in many

ways, find myself with feet in two worlds: a rural world of poverty characterised by a lack of education and other social problems, and the more sophisticated 'modern' world in which I now work and live. As I embarked upon this study, I was therefore conscious of my need to consider my own positionality in relation to participants in it and, thus, to what I sought to report as insights from the study.

Hall (1990:18) points out that '[t]here is no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere to say anything at all'. In many respects, positionality falls between objectivity and subjectivity. We can strive to be objective but we can never be truly free of our own subjectivities. For Freire (2000:50), subjectivity and objectivity exist in a 'dialectical relationship'. In my case, this dialectical relationship exists between my current self, my rural self and objectivity. It is therefore a three-way relationship.

Although my position at St Andrew's College is that of librarian, I am a member of the academic staff and I teach an Information Literacy course which is embedded in the curriculum. When I teach this course, I function as a teacher in the classroom. I also provide guidance to individuals and groups of learners. I therefore occupy a position of authority. I can discipline learners, tell them to be quiet, punish them and so on. When I go into Nombulelo High School, I am aware that I continue to draw on my teacher identity as I work with learners there. One of the 'rules' of schooling is that teachers ask questions and learners answer them, usually seeking to provide the 'right' answer. I therefore needed to be aware that, when I asked learners a question in interviews, I exercised my power as a teacher and that students may well have sought to give me the answers they thought I wanted to receive.

As I have already explained, in this study, I draw on Bhaskar's critical realism as an underlying philosophy. Although Bhaskar posits an ultimate reality, he also acknowledges the relativity of experiences and observations. As a researcher, I have made observations of the participants in my study based on my interactions with and experiences amongst them. I am therefore very conscious that the observations I have made are relative to me and, potentially, fallible, and that my positionality has played into this. As I made those observations, I needed to be aware that my own beliefs about literacy and reading, many of which have been acquired because I had been able to pursue an education, colour my perceptions. I therefore needed to take care always to call on my 'other self', the 'self' of the black child from the rural Transkei, as I sought to make claims about the young black participants in my study. I also needed to draw on research practices such as triangulation to ensure that others are able to check what do emerge as observations. This included the learners in the study.

hooks (1990) points out that any study that seeks to explore issues of difference is at risk of contributing to the further marginalisation of those who are already marginalised. In dealing

with my own positionality in my study, I needed to be constantly aware of the danger of contributing to further marginalisation of participants; a consideration which is ultimately ethical.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Approval to conduct the study underpinning this thesis was provided by the Ethical Approval Committee of the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University.

All participants in the study were minors and permission from their parents or caregivers needed to be obtained. I wrote to parents and caregivers and, where necessary, followed up by contacting them personally in order to explain what the study would involve, what would be required of the children for whom they provided care and how that child's rights would be protected.

The letters informed parents and caregivers of the measures that would be taken to ensure that the children in their care would incur no harm. These measures included:

(i) The right to anonymity. All participants were be invited to use a pseudonym. Transcripts of interviews were saved using this pseudonym and learners were never referred to by their own names in any written work.

(ii) The right to withdraw at any time. As indicated, participation in the book club and all its activities and in interviews was voluntary and learners were free to choose how they engaged. In the event, all proved to be very enthusiastic about the book club and were frustrated when activities could not proceed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. All learners from Nombulelo High School chose to participate in interviews even though they were fully aware that they were not obliged to do so.

(iii) Permission from the Department of Basic Education was obtained. In order to obtain this permission, I needed to complete an application and submit my research proposal for perusal by officials.

(iv) Permission of the headteachers of each school was obtained. I obtained this permission by visiting each head to explain my study and its purpose. Both provided permission in writing.

3.8. Conclusion

As I have indicated above, I began the study with assumptions about learners from Nombulelo High School, one of the most under-resourced institutions in Makhanda, itself a

town characterised by huge levels of poverty and unemployment. By drawing on a critical realist philosophy, I aimed to explore the way that, for example, social structures such as race and class led to the emergence of reading-related events and experiences. As the next chapter in this thesis will show, in the case of this study, many of my assumptions did not hold true.

4. Chapter 4: The Case Studies

4.1. Introduction

As I have indicated in Chapter Three of this thesis, each of the learners involved in my study was treated as a single case for the purpose of analysis. I then looked across all the cases to identify commonalities and differences. The first part of this chapter discusses each case. As also indicated in Chapter Three, pseudonyms are used for each learner.

It is important to note that most of the analysis in this chapter emerged from the first interviews I conducted with learners and from their engagement with learning materials used in the club. The second interview was used largely to confirm my initial insights.

4.2. Siphesihle (Siphe)

Siphe was born a boy but prefers to be identified as female. She comes from a family that is closely knit and that appears to be dominated by two strong women, her mother and her sister, who exercised their agency to ensure that the children within the family were nurtured and encouraged to engage with school-based practices. Siphe described her mother taking in a female cousin as the child's own mother was not very involved in her life. In doing this, Siphe's mother was drawing on a discourse that privileged the mother figure in a child's life, especially if a child was female:

> *She was like 'I'm not having a child that is not going to have a mother figure especially it's a girl' so she was like I'm not having a child. And that child is going to grow up without a mother figure, so she took her in so I could say there's four of us.*

Siphe herself identified the close relationships between family members noting, 'We're such a close family'.

Siphe's family also appears to be reasonably well resourced financially. In interviews, Siphe described her mother as

> *… a very business orientated person and she's got into industries that were mainly dominated by men and she has thrived through everything.*

As a result, the family appears to have money available to buy books. In response to a question about where Siphe accessed books to read, she noted that her sister

… takes her to Book Bargain or something like that. And then we'd always pick out books that we like.

What Siphe calls 'Book Bargain' is a shop in the main shopping mall in Makhanda which is part of a large chain offering discounts on books. Many of the learners at Nombulelo School come from families who are desperately poor, with the result that there would be no disposable income available to buy books. In contrast, in Siphe's home the children appear to be given pocket money, as the extract where she describes what happens in the book shop shows:

You know, have get a cute little sibling moment and pick out books that we like, and then she'd make us pay for them. Do you understand?... Like she'd make us pay for them so it's … I think that's another way she says she's, she's helping us save and use our money in a smart way. But I mean, buying books is a lot of money.

From a perspective in critical realism, therefore, the availability of money in Siphe's home functions as a mechanism enabling practices related to reading for pleasure. Even more important, however, are discourses dominant in the family, that construct money spent on books as well spent. These discourses are evident in Siphe's comments that her sister encouraged younger children to save and use their money 'in a smart way'. Being able to buy books, and then read books, was also facilitated by the fact that Siphe lived in a university town (Makhanda) with a book store. It is thus possible to see that events in Siphe's life (buying and reading books) and her experiences of these events emerged from a set of socio-economic conditions that would not have been widespread in her community.

Although Siphe described her mother as a competent business woman, it was her sister who played a more significant role in her literacy development. Siphe describes how her sister:

… has been the one pushing for us to learn the most. She, even now that I'm in Grade 10, I'm in high school. She's still pushing for us to read. She's still pushing for us to do better in our academics, you know, as much as I … it's wrong when I say it, but she doesn't get enough because she's always like you can do better. You can do better, and I think that's what's driven me and my siblings to try and do better with everything we do.

In Siphe's home, a discourse valuing education is clearly dominant and younger siblings are encouraged to work hard at their school work. Important is what I have identified as a 'reading is good' discourse. In Siphe's home, reading is constructed as an enjoyable activity which will lead to success.

Siphe's home background may well have made her more disposed to join the book club and, although this is not mentioned in the interview, she may well have been encouraged by her sister and dominant discourses in her family to engage in its activities. The book club itself encompassed and furthered a set of literacy practices that were akin to those valued in Siphe's home, but may not have been so well aligned with those in the homes of other learners. Siphe's experiences of the book club need to be understood in the context of this observation.

Siphe took charge of the book club at the school and loved her leadership role. She noted that, before the book club started:

> *I was already a confident person, but I was always like, I was always like very much, I was looking for confirmation from people. Do you understand like I was confident but I wasn't confident in what I can do …*

Belonging to the book club appears to have had a profound effect on her sense of self, however:

> *But now I've got confidence because I know that every time I come here, I get to read, I get to express myself and I get to debate like I did last week. I get to do all these things that I can only do at home and not outside, do you understand? So I think the confidence levels have also improved.*

Siphe's comment that she can now 'do all these things that I can only do at home and not outside' is important in that it indicates a mismatch between the literacy practices of the school and local community and those of her home. Belonging to a club where discussion was encouraged and where other members read and reported on enjoying their reading appears to have been akin to what went on in her home:

> *My sister forces us to sit together and talk about books and I think we got used to that. Now she … she doesn't even say anything. We just sit together and we chat and we debate. Oh, my family loves debating. We debate a lot, yeah? 'Cause we … we have different views on everything and my sister comes in. My sister is constantly like 'Exactly I want your opinion. I don't want what you heard from someone. I want what you feel about the situation and then we'll all discuss it and then come out with one solution'.*

Siphe does not mention if her sister has been to a university but, regardless, the elder sibling appears to value discourses which construct knowledge as contested rather than as fact.

Siphe clearly saw the experiences in the book club as different to those offered at her school. When asked about whether or not she spoke to other learners at Nombulelo High School about the club, Siphe responded:

> *I've told them about how fun it is at the book club, and I've mostly, I think I've told them about the freedom we have here … You know, I've told them about how we can just express ourselves and be ourselves and be free and 'cause, right now, usually in interviews I … I get so nervous because I'm like, 'Am I going to say the wrong thing?' And literally as you were telling me these … as you were asking me these questions I'm like, 'I'm not even scared I'm literally just relaxed', you know.*

What appears to be the case, therefore, is that Siphe appreciated the opportunities afforded in the book club to express herself in the same way as she does at home. Many of her comments in the extract above are also indicative of her experiences at school. As I have already indicated in Chapter Three, my role in the book club was that of facilitator, but I was also perceived as a teacher. As I interviewed the participants, I could therefore have been perceived as an 'interrogator' in much the same way as teachers could interrogate learners to produce the 'right' answers to their questions. Siphe's comment that she was 'not even scared' and was 'literally just relaxed' indicates her awareness of the difference between the book club and school.

Siphe also acknowledges the mismatch between practices in her home and those amongst other learners at school in response to a question which asked if she had more books would she read them all the time and would she recommend them to her friends:

> *I'd definitely read them all the time because I think the more books that I that I have, the more motivated I get to finish a book so that I can start the other one. Most people in my class, specifically don't really like books, so I don't know about reccommend ... I don't know about speaking to them about books.*

When Siphe joined the club she was unsure about what genres she liked to read. In our first shopping trip to buy books for each learner, Siphe only succeeded in buying three titles, claiming she could only read titles that were light in content with lots of pictures. Interestingly, Siphe describes herself as a 'very graphical person' who wants to 'see something' – hence her preference for books with lots of illustrations. Upon joining the book club, she claimed her favourite book was Spencer Johnson's *Who moved my cheese?* Her engagement with book club processes appeared to shift this apparent reliance on the visual, however:

> *But now when I started coming here to the book club, I think that's kind of changed a little bit because I was like, 'You know what? I ... I must make my own image,*

imagination, I must ...' I was trying to picture my own thing. Do you understand because I think ... especially our age group, we are just like ... so confined in this box of norms and normalities of things that we cannot do, you know? So I think it's it's ... it's nice to try and be different and try to picture something on your own without actually seeing it.

Siphe's identification of the dependence of those in her age group on the visual is a phenomenon which is not surprising given the prevalence of social media platforms that are heavily reliant on videos and photographs. Siphe's growing awareness of the power of printed text to prompt the imagination is apparent in some of the comments made in book reviews, written as part of her participation in the book club. For example, of Michael Morphurgo's *Boy Giant*, Siphe notes that it 'opens your mind towards the bigger picture'. Of Ivan Brett's *Caspar Candlewacks in Death by Pigeon!*, she writes:

I recommend for the ages 10–16 because your imagination is still unlimited and we all want to try something new besides the beautiful and smart. At those ages we get bored quickly when reading so this is good to keep entertained.

In interviews, Siphe was asked how she felt about needing to write book reviews. Her response to this question suggests a sophisticated understanding of her relationship to the authors of the titles she read and her own identity as a reader:

The author tells the story to me. Do you understand? I've always had that that conspiracy in my mind, that I'm speaking to the author and the author is telling me their story. So now it's my responsibility to ... to convince other people to read this book that I read. You know, I ... I don't know the book first hand because I didn't write the book, so it's my responsibility ... So it challenges me. So, it's like 'How do I sell this book to other people?' Do you understand and not make it what I read?

The comment above indicates an awareness of her need as a reader not to 'appropriate' the book she has read in order to convince others to read it. It would appear that Siphe sees her identity as a reader as separate to that of the author and that she is aware of her need to attain a degree of objectivity as she reports on the book and not get swept up in it. She also appears to have a strong sense of her responsibility as a reviewer, as is indicated by the following comment made in response to a question about whether or not she was aware that she was 'educating the entire College community' with her reviews:

Exactly, that's one of the challenges I was like, you know, not only is the Book club gonna read this, but the whole College is going to read this. So, if I represent the book in a wrong way. Then they won't want to write [read] the book they understand, so already I've made an enemy of the author.

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After nine months in the book club, and in spite of her insistence on only liking books with lots of pictures, Siphe had managed to read a 450-page text, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. One of the reasons she provided for her enjoyment of Thomas' text was that it was 'so relatable'. As a follow up to *The Hate U Give*, Siphe chose *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

In her time in the book club, Siphe opened up to learning from others, a point that is evident from observation of discussions. In the Interschools' Reading Quiz, which focused on Daniel Handler's *The Bad Beginning*, Siphe achieved a score of 99%, indicating a close engagement with the text.

The titles read during Siphe's participation in the book club appear below.

Self-selected titles
- *Casper Candlewacks in Death by Pigeon!* by Ivan Brett;
- *The Magic Finger* by Roald Dahl;
- *Dork Diaries* by Rachel Renee Russel;
- *Boy Giant* by Michael Morpurgo

Interschools' Quiz reading - prescribed
- *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler Lemony Snicket

Score achieved: 99%

Christmas Holiday Reading
- *The Mark* by Edyth Bulbring;
- *Timmy Failure* by Stephan Pastis
- *The Lost City* by Amanda Hockings

Prescribed books
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.
- *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

In many respects, Siphe's case represents a challenge to dominant perceptions of learners in poor township schools. She comes from a family that has material resources thanks to her mother's activities as a businesswoman, and these allow her access to books. Significant too are her observations about her life in the family, where members are encouraged to read and debate and express their opinions on the basis of their own thinking. In many respects, this contradicts observations made elsewhere about traditional African family life, where the subservience of children to authority figures is often noted (see, for example, Richter &

Dawes. 2008). Evident in the interview with Siphe was a discourse in her family privileging the idea that individuals need to develop their own positions and thinking and not simply draw on dominant notions shared by others ('I don't want what you heard from someone, I want what you feel about the situation'). Boughey & McKenna (2021:66) point to the way learning at university differs from learning at school. At school, learners are often encouraged simply to repeat what they have learned as fact. At university, students are required to engage with a range of texts, both spoken and written, which may be expressing different opinions. They then need to develop their own opinions in a series of 'knowledge claims'. What appears to be the case is that practices in Siphe's home, privileging discussion and the expression of an opinion, are conducive to the kind of learning valued in higher education at least. Siphe indicates an awareness that her school is not a place that values these practices.

The merging of practices in the book club with those valued in her home was also apparent in Siphe's comments about her family's response to her membership of the book club:

And now it's annoying me because I can't do anything like I literally get home from school and they like 'You know what you have to do', you know. And I'm like guys 'I … I haven't eaten. I haven't changed my uniform'. I … I sometimes I just need like a good nap as a person and you should see them and they're like well, 'You'll nap at night you'll sleep at night, everyone sleeps at night, you know', it's like now I have to read this book to them. You know …

One of the most striking observations about Siphe's experiences in the book club, however, relates to her sense of her identity as a reader and as a critic who needs to do justice to the author of the books she has read. In my experience, this is a very sophisticated understanding that would form the basis of work in literary studies in the future.

4.2 Thembi

Thembi was the youngest member of the group club. She was in Grade 8 when she joined but her status in a more junior year did not impede her full participation in book club activities. The importance of her family in her life was made clear when she spoke about herself in the orientation session for the club.

Thembi is the youngest of seven children. Her mother died when she was about five or six years old (she could not recall her exact age), at which time her 'Grandmom' stepped in to look after the children. Thembi's father plays an important role in her life and she clearly enjoys a close relationship with him. The extended family also appears to be close.

Thembi's family appears to be reasonably well resourced financially. For example, in an interview she spoke about her father owning books and of having an 'office' at home, something which is not common in crowded township homes:

> *He has so many books and he keeps them in his office. He has an office in…in my house. He always goes there when he wants to … to relieve himself and have a bit of relax. He always go there and read books so this … his office is messy with books. So my sister bought this bookshelf for him, on the 26th for his birthday gift, yeah. And he was so grateful. 'Cause yeah, it even tidied it up his office.*

In the communities where Nombulelo High School is located, food is often scarce and the ability to buy books and to have space to set aside a room as an 'office' is rare. Thembi's family are clearly able to draw on material resources that are not commonplace in the school community.

Perhaps even more significantly, those in Thembi's home appear to draw on literacy practices that serve her well as a learner. For example, she spoke of her grandmother reading and telling stories to her and the children at bedtime:

> *… when we're about to sleep. She likes reading stories to us, me and my siblings. 'Cause we … we … we just can't sleep without her. She always come to our room and read us stories and … and we fall asleep.*

In response to a question about whether her grandmother read books or told stories, Thembi responded:

> *She comes with books often. And sometimes she just tells us some fairy tales and stuff like that.*

Other members of Thembi's extended family also support the development of reading practices. For example, Thembi described how her uncle was involved in a literacy project at the local youth hub and took 'every kid in the street' to events on Saturday morning. However, it is Thembi's father who appears to have the most influence on her as a reader. Her father's ownership of books and their location on a bookshelf in his office at home has already been noted. In the interview, Thembi described attending a literacy event with her father:

> *… there was this contest of books you share, like a speed dating, you share your book, OK, with somebody and my dad and I went there and it was so fun and I … I shared the books with him. I even shared The Hate U Give and he said he's … he's going to look for the book 'cause it sounds very interesting to him.*

Thembi goes on to describe then giving Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* to her father as a birthday gift:

> *And on his birthday. I… I gave him The Hate U Give. But I was like you have to return it 'cause I I also want to know what happened. And he was like 'No way, it's so wrong'. But like 'I also want to know' and he was like he's gonna buy the book 'cause it's really, really nice and he was so sad. I was like, 'I know it's your birthday, but I also want the book'.*

Thembi went on to describe asking her father to return the book so she could read it:

> *And the next day I was like 'Are you done reading?' And he was like, 'No, I'm still reading and I find it very interesting and it was so sad'. And I was like 'No, I also want the book'. He was like 'This wasn't a present at all, I was like it was a one day gift'.*

In Thembi's family, books are not only valued, evidenced by the fact that her father owns books and by the fact that her sister brings books home when she returns from work in a book shop, but family practices themselves support her reading. Her ability to share a book with her father, for them both to read it and talk about it, clearly supports her reading identity and her enjoyment of reading.

When asked how she had learned to read, Thembi provided another interesting insight, citing her curiosity about a reading competition being held at a local school. She describes going along to the school because she was curious about the competition and being asked by a teacher why she was there. When the teacher heard that Thembi was interested in the competition, she took her aside and 'taught her a book':

> *I was in primary, in Grade 2, and I entered a competition, yeah. Even though I didn't know how to read. But I was just curious to see what was going on and I entered this competition. And my teacher said, 'Why are you here at the competition day?' and I was like 'No ma'am, I just wanted to see what was going on'. And she was like, 'OK, let's go to a private room quickly' and she taught me at a very short time and I learned I'm, I'm actually a fast learner. So, I'm not surprised so. She taught me a book.*

Key to this anecdote is Thembi's construction of herself as a 'fast learner' and claims that she was 'not surprised' that she was able to learn to read the book in such a short time. These claims are indicative of Thembi's own confidence in herself as a learner. She went on

to describe the teacher's surprise at her ability to 'learn to read' and her own pride in having done so:

> She read the book to me and she was like 'Can you read it for me?' I was like 'Yes ma'am'. And I read and she was so, so surprised and I was so proud of myself.

Regardless of how much reading Thembi had already mastered on the day of this incident, what appears to have happened is that the interest showed by a teacher in a young girl, her willingness to tutor her reading and Thembi's own construction of herself as a 'fast learner' had a profound impact. It also appeared that the method employed by the teacher, which drew on a discourse of 'reading as repetition' involving a learner repeating what the teacher had already read aloud, worked at some level.

What appears to be the case for Thembi is that socio-economic circumstances related to her membership of a family that appeared to be relatively well resourced financially, along with discourses valuing reading and discussion about reading in her home, have supported the development of a set of reading practices that have served her well at school. Other mechanisms were also enabling of Thembi's development as a reader. For example, the fact that a literacy project, supported by Rhodes University's Community Engagement Programme, was functioning near her home meant that she had easy access to resources that would contribute to her reading development. In addition, the fact that her sister worked in a book shop in Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) and was able to bring books home for Thembi to read also functioned as an enabling mechanism.

As in Siphe's case, Thembi's family also functioned as an important structure in developing a willingness to engage with books and stories. Thembi enjoyed and benefited from having her grandmother read and tell stories to her at bedtime. As Heath (1982:56) points out in her study of the role of bedtime stories in childhood development, when children have experienced literacy practices at home that resemble those that they meet in formal education:

> … learn not only how to take meaning from books, but also how to talk about it. In doing the latter, they repeatedly practise routines which parallel those of classroom interaction. By the time they enter school, they have had continuous experience as information-givers; they have learned how to perform in those interactions which surround literate sources throughout school.

In the context of Heath's remarks, Thembi's father's willingness to talk to her about books has clearly been very important. As indicated in the extract from the interview quoted above, Thembi and her father both shared an emotional response to *The Hate U Give*, suggesting they were both able to engage with the text in a very meaningful way. Also

significant in Thembi's narration of this incident in the sharing of the book with her father is the idea that a book can be a gift, that books are of themselves valuable in promoting enjoyment and can be shared with others in celebration of special days such as a birthday. Although Thembi's grandmother may not have benefited from high levels of education herself, her practice of reading and telling stories to the children in her care had the potential to drive their development as learners in school. Gough and Bock's (2001) analysis of formal oral discourse in isiXhosa shows how oral texts function as a form of secondary Discourse (Gee, 2008). In Thembi's home, her exposure to narrated stories could therefore have impacted on her development of literacy practices associated with formal schooling. The titles read by Thembi in her time in the book club are shown below.

Self-selected titles
- *Secrets of Old Hanson House* by Katherine Sallé and Terry Wong;
- *Creatures Infest Local School* by C.J. Henderson;
- *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Killer Hairdo and Other Urban Legends* by J.B. Stamper;
- *The Battle of the Bands* (read before joining the book club)

Interschools' Quiz reading - prescribed
- *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler

Score achieved: 60%

Christmas Holiday Reads
- *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J.K. Rowling
- *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling
- *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling

Prescribed books
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

When the group was given prescribed reading, Thembi had missed her transport to the book club and she ended up with one of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's thicker titles, *Americanah*, the last title left on the library bookshelf.

When asked about the impact of the book club on her reading practices, Thembi cited regular and secure access to books as a benefit, noting that sometimes:

> *My sister wouldn't come. Sometimes she would come. Sometimes my uncle wouldn't take us to the Youth Hub … Youth Hub, sometimes he would. So coming here having*

> *books every day really increased my level of reading 'cause I was, sometimes I would just sit at home, watch TV and get bored whilst I would be reading books. Hmm. Yes, so ever since coming here, getting books, that's … that's really a good thing. 'Cause I I read more now than I used to before.*

When asked about writing book reviews, Thembi constructed the practice as 'selling' a book, a discourse that had been introduced in the instructions given to participants in the book club:

> *It's like selling the book because you tell a person how you feel about the book and what is happening in the book and that person gets interested. You know. So you, you're like selling your book to somebody else so that he or she could read the book. And get more … more interests like you do.*

She then went on to identify the ability to 'sell' a book as an important skill that develops over time:

> *Yeah, and you'll see that the more you do it, especially because you're the youngest in the group, and I think you'll actually have more advantage in your class because it's a … it's a very, very important skill. And the more you do it, even when you when you … when you are done with the club, I encourage you to please do it.*

Discernible in the extract above is a discourse about the need to do well at school, to 'have more advantage in class'. This could be indicative of a value placed on doing well in formal education inherited as part of Thembi's home background. Her ideas about book reviewing are also indicative of a sense of the need to have opinions, to make statements about what a speaker or writer believes to be true, rather than simply of seeing learning as repeating what others have already said or written. As noted earlier in relation to Siphe's case, this understanding is likely to serve Thembi well if she moves into higher education.

The structure of the online reviews also appears to have played a part in developing Thembi's sense of the need to evaluate what it is most important to say:

> *… and you have this small space and like 'What I'm gonna write here?' And yeah, sometimes you … you've got so many favourite parts in the book and I'm like 'I wanna write this one, I wanna write this on this' so it's just a small space.*

The interview with Thembi also provided insights into the way her participation in the book club impacted on other people in her family and into the way other participants were able to influence each other's reading:

My younger brother finds reading boring. I'm like you, 'You're gonna see' and he's starting to read now as I bring the books you see. Siphe gave me this book … 'Of the Magic Finger'. He [her brother] *read the book and he was … he came over and was like 'Thembi, Thembi,. I read this book about magic.' I'm like 'I know the book what? Wena you didn't even find reading interesting … Why? Now?'* [He's] *like 'No, I'm so interested. Can you please bring me more books?' I'm like 'I'm going to bring you. Don't worry, don't worry. Don't worry'.*

In many respects, Thembi's experience of her younger brother's reaction to reading parallels her own:

Reading what wasn't my thing at first, Like in Grade 4 and stuff. But as I grew I was like, 'Oh, let me try this out.' 'Cause my dad told me … my dad … he reads he would tell me stories and like 'I, I don't know that popular book you should read it and you always tell me to read stories and you just give more and more and I can't concentrate in one book 'cause you just tell me more and more'. So, as I grew older I was like 'Let me try this out'. 'Cause my dad finds reading so, so fun and interesting. Yeah, so I read books and I was like 'I'm interested yeah.' 'Cause I enjoy. I … I just enjoy reading so much so like 'Let me try this out' and it worked.

In many respects, the extract above is testimony to the claims made by Street (1984) and Heath (1983) that literacy is essentially social and cultural. Immersion in a context where others read and are enthusiastic about reading clearly impacted on Thembi's own willingness to read, and now it appears that her own practices are influencing those of her brother.

Thembi was also able to relate her reading to the learning required of her at school:

'Cause reading now give me more knowledge somehow. 'Cause there's some books that tells you about maybe school stuff and like I needed this. Maybe in your … in my assignment or like' I needed this', they may take it and write it.

Thembi still appears to see the learning required of her at school as a process of 'getting information' and repeating it in her school work. Boughey (2015) argues that learning in higher education involves making knowledge claims, or statements about what a speaker or writer believes to be true, and supporting them with evidence which may come from the work of others published in the literature. Only time will tell whether or not Thembi's awareness of her ability to give an opinion about books will impact on her ability to make statements about what she believes to be true in the future and thus shift her understanding of what is involved in meaningful learning as she progresses up the academic hierarchy.

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4.3 Lisa

Lisa is a quiet young woman who was not very forthcoming in her interview and who initially did not contribute much to book club discussions and activities, but who slowly gained confidence over time. In the orientation session, she identified her ambition as becoming a teacher or a pharmacist. She was in Grade 10 when she joined the book club and was promoted to Grade 11 at the end of the year.

Lisa is one of two children. She responded to a question about how she had learned to read by noting that her mother had taught her. Her grandmother appears to have been influential in the development of Lisa's literacy practices, as Lisa describes her has having 'taught [her] stories'. In response to a question about whether story telling was something that happened frequently in her home, Lisa responded that it was, adding that watching TV was also something that happened frequently. When asked about the reading practices of other family members, Lisa noted her brother, adding that 'he is not reading frequently'. I asked if Lisa was planning to encourage her brother to read and the response was 'Yes, ma'am, but it's hard, yho'.

When asked about the kinds of books she read at home, Lisa was quite vague, identifying 'Adventure stories, fiction or something?', noting that she obtained the books from the library:

> So, when I have time, when I do not have homework, I go to the library and take some books.

The idea that reading is something that can be done when she does not have homework and therefore has time is indicative that reading is not especially valuable or enjoyable for Lisa. However, when I checked her statement that she took books from the public library, Lisa responded that 'Yes, ma'am, it's something that I do'.

In her time in the book club, Lisa expressed a strong preference for books that were not lengthy. When the group was given prescribed reading, she insisted on taking *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie because of its size in comparison to other titles.

In comparison to other participants in the book club, Lisa's family does not appear to have drawn on the kinds of literacy practices conducive to her own development as a reader in formal education. The interview was hard to conduct because of her quiet nature and what came across as a lack of interest in reading. She did, however, become animated when she described her friend's reading app on her phone and this could be indicative of a disposition

to engage with screen-based texts, possibly promoted by watching television. As already indicated, Lisa's preference for books in hard copy were those with lots of pictures and minimal text. She appeared to be comfortable in expressing this preference and was willing to speak up when she felt that she could not cope with the length of a text the group was reading.

When asked if she ever talked to other people about books she had read, Lisa mentioned her schoolfriend who had a reading app on her phone and that the two girls talked about the stories on the app. Lisa appeared to be attracted to screen-based texts, or texts that had a 'visual presence' on a screen. For example, she noted that one of the books she and her friend had discussed was *Romeo and Juliet* 'because she [her friend] know that book show'.

When the group read *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, a 450 page text, Lisa asked for extra time after 4 weeks, stating that the book was left at St Andrew's College by mistake during the April holidays so she had had limited access to the text itself. However, after we watched the adaptation of the book for film, Lisa immediately recognised that some characters in the book did not appear in the film.

Interacting with Lisa alerted me to the role of screen-based literacies amongst the group and raised questions about how they could be used to further reading. Had the group seen the film of *The Hate U Give* before reading the text itself, would Lisa's familiarity with screen-based texts have furthered her reading of the written text? I was also interested in the fact that she chose a play, *Romeo and Juliet,* reproduced as a story for one of the books she selected for purchase from the bookshop. Again, I wondered if this was because she had seen or was aware of the existence of film versions of this story.

Lisa achieved very highly in the Interschools Quiz with a score of 100%. As indicated, the group of learners from Nombulelo worked together to study for the quiz and possibly this was a motivating condition for Lisa.

In her time in the club, Lisa read the following titles:

Self selected titles

- *Night of the Living Dummy III* by R.L. Stine
- *Elizabeth* by Zoe Norton Lodge
- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- *Moby Dick* by Terry M. West
- *Waiting for Normal* by Leslie Connor
- *Codebusters* by Dan Metcalf

- *My Weird School Special* by Dan Gutman

Interschools' Quiz reading - prescribed
- *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler

Score achieved: 100%

Prescribed books
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Thing Around your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Lisa's sense of reading as associated with school work is also apparent in her reviews. For example, she notes that Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* is about 'our history', and she recommends it 'for mostly history students'. Other book club participants experienced this book as meaningful to their lives. In her interview, Lisa does not note that adults in her home read, however. Rather, it was the television that was noted as an activity that occupied her free time.

4.4 Khanya

Khanya is the first born of five children but sadly one of her siblings died. She lives with her mother and step-father. Like the families of other members of the book club, Khanya's family appears to have access to disposable income insofar as she describes her mother as being able to buy books for her.

When asked about the way she learned to read, Khanya described being taught by her primary school teacher and also by her mother. However, her wider family also appears to engage in the literacy practice of reading aloud to children and of telling stories:

> *My grandmother used to read stories and tell us stories and the whole family had many stories. Then maybe when it's raining we all siblings sit with our parents, then they … they shared stories with us.*

Khanya also identified her mother as someone with whom she could discuss books and who encouraged 'talk around text', as indicated in her response to a question about whether she was able to talk to anyone about the books she read:

> *I talked to my mother then she advised me to … to tell the story to my siblings.*

In spite of these claims about literacy practices in her family, my observations of, and interactions with, Khanya are that she strongly associated reading with school. When book club members were encouraged to pick up holiday reads at the end of November so that

they would have enough books to read for two months, Khanya chose only one book, explaining that she was going to visit family in Johannesburg so there would be no time for her to read. In my experience, this is a typical observation of an African family holiday where family members are expected to spend time with each other rather than reading in isolation. In many families, reading is constructed as a 'western' practice and if a child is seen reading frequently, they are labelled as a 'coconut'. The term 'coconut' is used in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut,* to refer to black youths who attend private schools. The term means one is black on the outside and white on the inside. In the event, Khanya did not finish the book she had selected as holiday reading, claiming that a 'family crisis' had prevented her from doing so.

According to Khanya, the book club had resulted in her experiencing increased confidence as a reader:

> *I used to be scared when I read in front of the class, but now since I've been reading in front of all of you guys, I just picture myself in the class. Then when I'm in the class, I just picture you guys only, that's why*.

This image confirms Khanya's experience of book club as a place where she could experience reading in less stressful and caring environment. Khanya went on to talk about not liking reading because she was:

> *… scared of people judging me, but now since I'm expressing my feelings through a book by reading it, it makes me a better person.*

The idea that reading, or perhaps discussing and commenting on written texts, is about self expression is important, especially in the context of the overwhelming reliance on textbooks, which usually present knowledge as undisputed fact (Geisler, 1994) in school-based reading practices. It is unclear where Khanya encountered this discourse since her own family did not appear to read a great deal, although her mother was reported as buying books. What is significant, however, is that Khanya was exposed to traditional African literacy practices involving story telling within the family structure, and experienced the bonding that emerged through story telling on rainy days. At the same time, however, she recognises, at some level, the prestige associated with literacies focused on engagement and discussion of written texts and their relationship to formal education.

The development of confidence as a reader clearly impacted on Khanya's sense of identity. Interesting in this observation made by Khanya is a discourse constructing reading as bestowing benefits on an individual, of making them 'a better person'. In some respects, this is reminiscent of the 'Great Divide Theory' (Goody, 1968; Ong, 1982), long since refuted by the work of scholars such as Scribner & Cole (1981), which argued that literacy per se

bestowed cognitive advantages. However, Khanya could also be drawing on discourses that associate reading with being educated in a country where education is prized as a means of escaping poverty. Interestingly, Khanya reported her family asking questions about whether or not the school she attended was the only state school that benefited from the book club associated with one of the most prestigious independent schools in the country.

Khanya went on to identify the book club as making her:

> *… feel special to everyone and it gives you courage to talk to people to talk in front of many people and it helps you to read perfectly.*

She also noted that reading in a group allowed for the development of a sense of community:

> *… when you're talking with someone, it seems like we're in the same …*
> *same situation or the same. We are reading the same book. But what I like the most is that when I'm … I'm telling a person about a book. They just picture what I picture, yeah?*

Khanya also commented on the public nature of the reviews on the book club website noting that 'I think it's making us popular'. Other participants in the club noted that friends approached them constantly wanting to know how they could join the club. It would appear that the website had some part to play in this.

Khanya's interview provided important insights into the way some literacies are constructed in the community in which she lives and the contradictions inherent in them. Krashen (1993) argues that adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future, noting that '[i]n a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read can be crucial' (Krashen, 1993:85). In making these statements, Krashen appears to be drawing on Street's (1984) 'autonomous model' of literacy rather than identifying the way different literacies will be called upon in different contexts. In 1993, the internet had not yet arrived in homes, and so he was not able to identify the role of screen-based literacies. However, much of what he has to say is probably true, and learners who do not master dominant literacies associated with the functions he identifies are likely to be disadvantaged.

In the course of her time in the book club, Khanya read the following titles:

Self-selected titles
- *Vampire Diaries: The Return: Midnight* by L.J. Smith
- *Night Life: A Vamps Novel* by Nancy A. Collins
- *Seafire* by Natalie C. Parker
- *Children of Virtue and Vengeance* by Tomi Adeyemi

Interschools' Quiz reading - prescribed
- *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler

Score achieved: 96%

Christmas Holiday Reads selection
- *Children of Virtue and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi

Prescribed books
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Khanya's book reviews tend to be quite simplistic, involving a simple summary of the story and a straightforward recommendation. In spite of her claims that book club allowed her to express her feelings, this is not evident in her written reviews. Of Nancy Collins' *Night Life,* for example, Khanya writes a simple summary:

> *This book is about a vampire that decides she wants a modelling career her name is Lilith Todd. She disined her ~~self~~ own ballroom gown. Her father does not want her to disine clothes or do a modeling career and Lilith won't let her father stop her even if he threaten to cut off her credit card.*

> *I recommend this book because it's exciting and Romance, it has many carracter's and this book needs someone who has a big dream.*

One last interesting comment made by Khanya was in response to a question about how the book club could be improved. Khanya expressed a wish that every book she had read could be made into a movie, a possible indication of her preference for the visual over printed text. Such a preference would not be unusual in the communities with which she was familiar, where reading is not generally a privileged pastime.

4.6 Sine

Sine is a lively young man who prefers to be identified as a girl. Sine was an avid reader who claimed to read one book a day and who loved discussing books.

When asked about how she had learned to read, Sine initially claimed to have taught herself from about the age of three onwards:

> *Well. I taught myself how to read. I taught myself how to read. I … that's half true. My that's half true. My dad used to read to me … he [read the] dictionary every night to sleep. Then I just started from there and taught myself how to read onwards.*

When asked whether anyone in her family had told stories, Sine responded that her father had read the dictionary to her every night 'so that's a kind of story telling'. I probed this response, asking if her father had used a word from the dictionary as a basis for a story but it appears that this was not the case:

> *No, he would just like read to me every word from starting from 'A'. All the words in 'A' then explain to me their meaning, something like that. Yeah. Yeah.*

Sine was certainly able to use sophisticated language and draw on a wide range of vocabulary in discussions, to the extent that she sometimes needed to be told by her peers that she needed to 'tone down' her language so everyone could understand. It would appear, then, that her father's strategy of reading the dictionary to her had impacted on the development of her vocabulary favourably.

During our bookshop trip, Sine initially selected about fifteen books which had to be returned to the shelves as no one else in the group could relate to them. The group had been asked to choose six books per learner. Other members of the group had chosen only three titles and Sine was asked to distribute her titles amongst her peers, but no one was prepared to take the books she had chosen. It was therefore apparent from the very beginning that Sine was different to other members of the group.

Sine claimed that her favourite genres were horror and fantasy, noting that:

> *I'm a dark … I'm a dark kind of person so I like mainly horror, horror books and fantasy*

and credited his primary school teacher with developing this interest, recounting how she had once given her a vampire book as a gift.

> *It was my teacher, with my teacher. She it was … on my birthday. I remember it was in 2014. It was my birthday and she bought me a book. A scary book by mistake. She took the wrong one, and she was supposed to buy me some other kind of book I*

obviously don't remember right now, then I just read the book just for knowledge faith, then it got me interested in it. And I was like 'Ok I'm a dark person'.

In common with some other members of the book club, Sine's family appeared to have disposable income which allowed her to have money to buy books. In the interview, Sine also noted that she had attended Ntaba Maria Primary School in Makhanda. Ntaba Maria is one of the better-resourced schools in the town, which charges some fees. Competition for places is fierce. That Sine had attended the school is indicative of her family's ability to pay some school fees, and that they were able to draw on the social and cultural resources to get her enrolled there.

As indicated, Sine came to the book club with a strong sense of herself as a 'dark' person who enjoyed horror and fantasy books. When asked about what she particularly liked about the book club, Sine noted:

… the interaction with other other people … interaction with different people who read different genres of books. Yeah, that that could get me interested in other kinds of books and like 'Oh! Maybe, maybe, maybe I'm not such a … a horror person. I can read other genres 'cause I've mainly been focused on dark horror.

This response indicates an awareness of herself as a reader and of a reading identity that was more developed than that of other members of the group. Interestingly, Sine appeared to think that reading allowed her to 'have the knowledge' that allowed her to 'speak out' and give an opinion on things. She claimed not to have enjoyed reading *The Hate U Give*, noting that:

I literally don't find any particular interest in the conflicts of race and police brutality

before going on to add that she would read this kind of book:

If I have to …. I have the knowledge to. To be able to speak out about it.

For Sine, the ability to 'speak out' and express an opinion was clearly very important. When Sine joined the club, questions were asked about the potential benefit she would derive from membership, given her advanced reading levels and interests. However, as time went on, Sine learnt valuable lessons by listening to other members' opinions. She learned, for example, that she needed to use vocabulary that was accessible to others, although she did not see this as a positive outcome:

Then the book club diminished me and told me how to talk to my fellow peers as I'll be using, like, really big words. Some people won't actually know them because yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

In many respects, Sine's response above is indicative of an attitude that is dismissive of others who cannot draw on the same range of vocabulary. This was confirmed by an exchange later in the interview, where Sine noted:

How can I put this. This is gonna sound really mean? … This is going to sound really mean but I really love … I like. I'm like on critique level, I love judging people. And enunciation and reading, reading strategies based on what they've told me. [What] they've read to me or… like the activity we did, but we shared. Like, yeah, we shared reading experiences and stuff like that that I like judging people on critique levels.

As already indicated, Sine had attended a small primary school that was better resourced than other schools in Makhanda. When asked to identify people with whom she discussed books, Sine noted that she was generally able to discuss books mostly with:

… older people like my teachers, I can talk to but yeah, but yeah, not the ones that are at [her current high school], no my old school teachers.

Sine had noted that one of her teachers at her old school had given a book to her for her birthday. It could be the case, therefore, that Sine was able to discern a difference in the culture of the two schools in relation to literacy practices.

Sine claimed not to enjoy writing book reviews although she did enjoy talking about books:

Well, I … I don't, I don't. No, I don't. I feel like I like talking about them. I don't like writing them down because someone will read it while I'm not there. So, I literally cannot explain it more further to them like sell it to them. I feel like talking about the book itself, person to person.It's more. Yeah, it's more. I don't know how to put it, but yeah.

What appears to be the case is that Sine feels most confident and comfortable with her ability to use spoken language to persuade and convince but is less confident about her ability to do this in writing:

Well, yeah, but I feel like talking to the person is much better than writing those book reviews 'cause I literally cannot. What if someone has a certain question about something and I'm not there and you know you can't leave comments on … on the other review?

This comment is indicative of an understanding of the fact that written text can travel over time and space and potentially 'lose meaning' as it does so. In face to face spoken conversation, a speaker may feel more able to control the meanings made. One book club session drew on the idea of 'speed dating', where participants had one minute to speak to another person and convince them to read another book. Sine enjoyed the 'speed dating' exercise, noting that she:

> … can talk really fast. I can talk really fast and I can navigate my words so you can hear what I'm saying by talking really fast, really fast.

Other members of the book club claimed that participation had led them to read more books than they might otherwise have done. For Sine it was the opposite. Rather she saw the book club as 'lessening' her because:

> I'll be mainly focused on the certain book and I wouldn't actually have time to read other books because I'll be like trying to write down notes and certain ideas and judging, well, the author's writing and answering me, judging the author's writing on based on that singular book. Which … which … which with one book that I'm reading on my free time … That could take me like about half a day to finish a book. Half a day to finish a book. Then I'll be done with it, then read another one, then be done with it.

For Sine, then, the need to write book reviews and engage in practices associated with literacy criticism detracted from her ability to simply read books, to 'devour' them without thinking about them too much. This insight from an avid reader was important in prompting me to think about what the book club had achieved and how it had been run. Had it focused too much on developing literacy practices associated with schooling, such as writing book reviews, at the expense of simply trying to develop a sense of reading as an enjoyable activity amongst participants?

One of the questions asked of all participants in interviews was whether they would recommend the book club to friends. Other participants said they would recommend the club to friends, and noted that many wanted to join. Sine, however, said she would not encourage all of her friends to join:

> … only because I know some of them aren't like really, really interested readers … There are that I'm really quite sure that will join and can put in the work. That is not all, because they are not interested in reading. They, they are, but not on the level and extent that we are like. We love reading and they just read for the sake of it.

In making this comment, Sine makes a distinction between herself as someone who loves reading (and possibly other participants in the club evident in her use of the term 'we') and others who read 'for the sake of it'. She also notes that the book club needs 'work' and that some might not be able to 'put in the work' because they are not interested in reading. In this respect, she is able to identify reading as a set of practices.

When Sine first joined the bookclub, she was reading *The Core* by Peter V. Brett. Other books read during her time in the club were:

Self-selected titles
- *Stormswept (Ingo #5)* by Helen Dunmore
- *The Deep* by Helen Dunmore;
- *Unnatural Creatures* by Neil Gaiman;
- *The Last Vampire (Phantom)* by Christopher Pike;
- *The Last Vampire (Red Dice)* by Christopher Pike

Interschools' Quiz reading - prescribed
- *The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events*: by Daniel Handler

Score achieved: 90%

Christmas holiday reads selection
- *Spooks Alice* by Joseph Delaney
- *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Prescribed books
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.
- *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The reviews written by Sine affirm her sophisticated command of language, which possibly draws on imagery encountered in her reading, and, also, her ability to critique what she was reading. Sine wrote two reviews of Christopher Pike's *The Last Vampire*, both of which identify different elements of the book. The first reads:

> *This book is about Alisa a five thousand year old daughter to the first vampire. Born of snakes in the fire pits of hell, she is on the run as the US government pursue her. They are after her blood but no one can get her DNA as it is deadly and dangerous. All the while an old flame raises to reclaim the past.*

I recommend this book because it is a great read. It goes in context into her past and has very descriptive content. If your a fan of vampires and is looking for something good to read then this is the book for you.

In the second review, Sine notes:

Ailsa has made a discovery that could bring her untold tragedy. And all the time a powerful force is watching. Someone who knows all that ever was and will be. Dive in to find out more.

I recommend this book because it is a great read. It goes in deep of science and neurology. So you will be learning as you read.

The second review is particularly interesting as it ignores the prompts provided on the worksheet guiding the writing of book reviews ('This book is about …'). Rather, it appears to draw on the style of comments made on the back covers of books that are intended to whet a reader's appetite. The second review also draws on an awareness on Sine's part of the relationship of reading to learning. None of the reviews written by other book club participants revealed this level of sophistication.

4.7　Conclusion

Earlier in this thesis, I indicated that many of my assumptions about learners at Nombulelo High School had been challenged as a result of my research and, also, that I had learned a lot about the world of teenagers. One of my assumptions related to the nature of literacy practices in learners' homes, which I did not think would be conducive to the enjoyment of reading. What I found was that some learners' homes were rich in practices related to the development of reading as a form of enjoyment and to the mastery of dominant school based literacies. I had also expected learners not to have access to books, but in three homes at least, the family's income was such that books could be purchased, or at least procured, because of the employment of a family member.

Perhaps the most important insights for me, however, were related to the learners' literacy identities, to the ways they saw themselves as readers. Comments made about the relationship of the reader to the text by Siphe were astonishingly sophisticated. I was also struck by Sine's insistence that writing book reviews had diminished her experience of reading as a pleasurable activity and her sense of herself as a reader. Clearly Sine saw the reviews as a school based practice and demonstrated the way she herself could distance herself from some school based practices in pursuit of the way she perceived herself as an individual and a learner. As a result of my interaction with Sine, I will reconsider the use of written reviews in the book club in the future. If the intention of the club is to promote

reading as a pleasurable activity, the use of recorded verbal reviews which can be played via the website may be a more appropriate means of sharing reading experiences and impressions of books.

Academic research is about using theory to see the world differently. My introduction to Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy allowed me to see reading differently, and my research confirmed the value of the understanding of literacy as a set of literacy practices. The most significant piece of learning for me, however, is not to underestimate the richness of the practices and the understandings from which they emerge in the learners with whom I work.

5. Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to observe the engagement of learners from a poorly-resourced high school with literacy in a book club setting. The book club not only made available a wider range of texts than the learners might otherwise have been able to access, but also promoted engagement with and around the text.

Chapter Four discusses the five case studies of individual learners. This chapter moves to a cross-case analysis in order to answer the two research questions that guided the study:

- How do learners from a poorly-resourced high school engage with fictional texts in a book club setting?
- What conditions are enabling of this engagement?

For the purpose of the cross-case analysis, I identified events. Literacy practices were understood as repetitive events. I also identified the experiences and observations made by each learner and, following critical realist philosophy, analysed them as emerging from these events. This process allowed me to answer the first research question. The second question was answered by seeking to identify the structures and mechanisms from which these events and experiences emerged.

5.2 The school background

In his paper, 'Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap', Spaull (2013) writes extensively about the correlation of low-quality education and socio-economic status, particularly for black youth. He refers to other studies that have shown that the low quality of education offered to the poor eventually becomes a poverty trap. He demonstrates how black youth who cannot access quality education eventually grow to inherit the social status of their parents and therefore fall into a cycle of poverty. Although racial segregation has been abolished for more than 20 years, schools which served predominantly white learners under apartheid remain functional, although now racially mixed, while the vast majority of those which served black learners remain dysfunctional, with low levels of literacy and numeracy among learners.

The grade levels of the learners in my study ranged between Grade 9 and Grade 11. Three of the learners (Siphe, Thembi and Sine) had attended Ntaba Maria Primary school, a well-resourced small church primary school in Makhanda, before attending Nombulelo High School, an impoverished state school. These learners do not struggle to read for meaning.

There is a distinct difference between these three children and the two who started school in poor township primary schools. Better-resourced schools charge fees that are unaffordable for poor families. There is more than money at stake, however, as securing a place at a better resourced school requires parents and caregivers to draw on literacy practices that may not be common amongst those who have not themselves been educated. Finding out about dates for enrolment, which are often published online, completing forms necessary to apply for a place, and heeding calls to attend interviews if invited may all pass some families by as they may not be able to draw on the practices necessary.

The attendance of three of the learners at a better-resourced primary school can be seen to emerge from conditions in the learners' homes. Families were clearly able to afford fees and, even more importantly, to draw on practices that led to the learners being enrolled in the school.

5.3 Engaging with computers

Regardless of the fact that three of the learners had had a head start by attending a better-resourced primary school, all five learners found the production of e-versions of book reviews difficult because of their lack of familiarity with a computer. Learners produced handwritten book reviews initially, but were later registered on the St Andrew's College online system and were required to transfer the handwritten reviews to the St Andrew's College Cawse Library website, using a computer. This presented enormous challenges, and learners worked with participants from St Andrew's College beside them providing guidance in the use of a computer. It is thus possible to see that participants' attendance at a poorly-resourced high school led to a lack of familiarity with computers, which was only addressed when they participated in a book club at a school at which computer access was freely available. The use of computers can thus seen to emerge from the community engagement structure and discourses promoting the need to share privilege with those from less fortunate circumstances.

5.4 The Interschools Quiz

All participants in the book club participated in an Interschools Quiz based on *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler. Both participating schools were challenged to read the first book in the series, *The Bad Beginning*. There were also bonus questions which considered those who preferred the visual element of literature in the form of the movie adaptation of the first book. Nombulelo learners won the quiz, with four learners scoring between 90% and 100%, and one scoring 60%.

The learner scoring only 60% accounted for her score by noting that she had not finished watching the movie. My sense is that the preference on the part of some Nombulelo learners for the visual and their familiarity with the practice of watching television served them well in the quiz. Although each book club participant had a hard copy of the book, they were all given the opportunity to watch the movie at St Andrew's College during a book club meeting.

5.5 The cartoon task

A task given to participants at one book club meeting also shows challenges experienced by learners. A teacher, who helped with the club, read a story to participants about an incident involving a shark and a human who had gone swimming at sundown. The story invited readers to travel into the mind of the shark and to see it as a living being that could be loved and appreciated. The story also detailed the way the shark attacked and killed someone who went swimming at sundown.

The task provided to participants was a cartoon-type picture with empty thought bubbles. Learners were then asked to complete the thought bubbles using the following instructions/questions as guidance:

- Write what the diver is thinking.
- What does the shark think?
- What is your solution to the problem?

One learner (Lisa) scored 100% in the Interschools' Quiz thanks to the bonus marks achieved by answering questions based on the movie version of the text. This same learner found it difficult to engage with the task related to the shark story. She was unable to verbalise words or thoughts for the shark or the diver in the picture, instead taking up a position of someone reporting on what had happened:

The shark thinks she is getting close to it, so that the shark can eat her.

The diver thinks that the shark is going to be friendly or it is happy to see her. But And the shark is happy to be around her in the sea.

In many respects, Lisa's response to the cartoon task is reminiscent of a school exercise where the focus is on knowledge telling or, as Geisler (1994) terms it, 'text reporting', and not using the imagination. Her response is indicative of the fact that, of all the members of the book club, she was the one who appeared to read the least, noting that reading was something she did 'when she had time'. For Lisa, then, her experiences of reading at school still seem to be conditioning her response to the task.

Some of the other learners who were clearly more familiar with the genre of the humorous cartoon were able to verbalise the shark's and the diver's thoughts. Sine, for example, who read avidly, provided the following response to the task, which not only illustrated her ability to verbalise the thoughts of a character in the cartoon but also her awareness of the discourse which constructed a relationship with a non-human being as being possible. Her response is also indicative of her command of vocabulary ('Shall I buffet on that?').

Oh my word a great white, wish could just touch. Wait look at its face, its smiling :)

Hey darling. You look like my favourite kinda food. Shall I buffet on that.

Sharks dont hurt hu ans for food, they simply mistake us for seals. Do not panick. Dont swim away, when comes to inspect you hold it gently on the nose and gently pushing away.
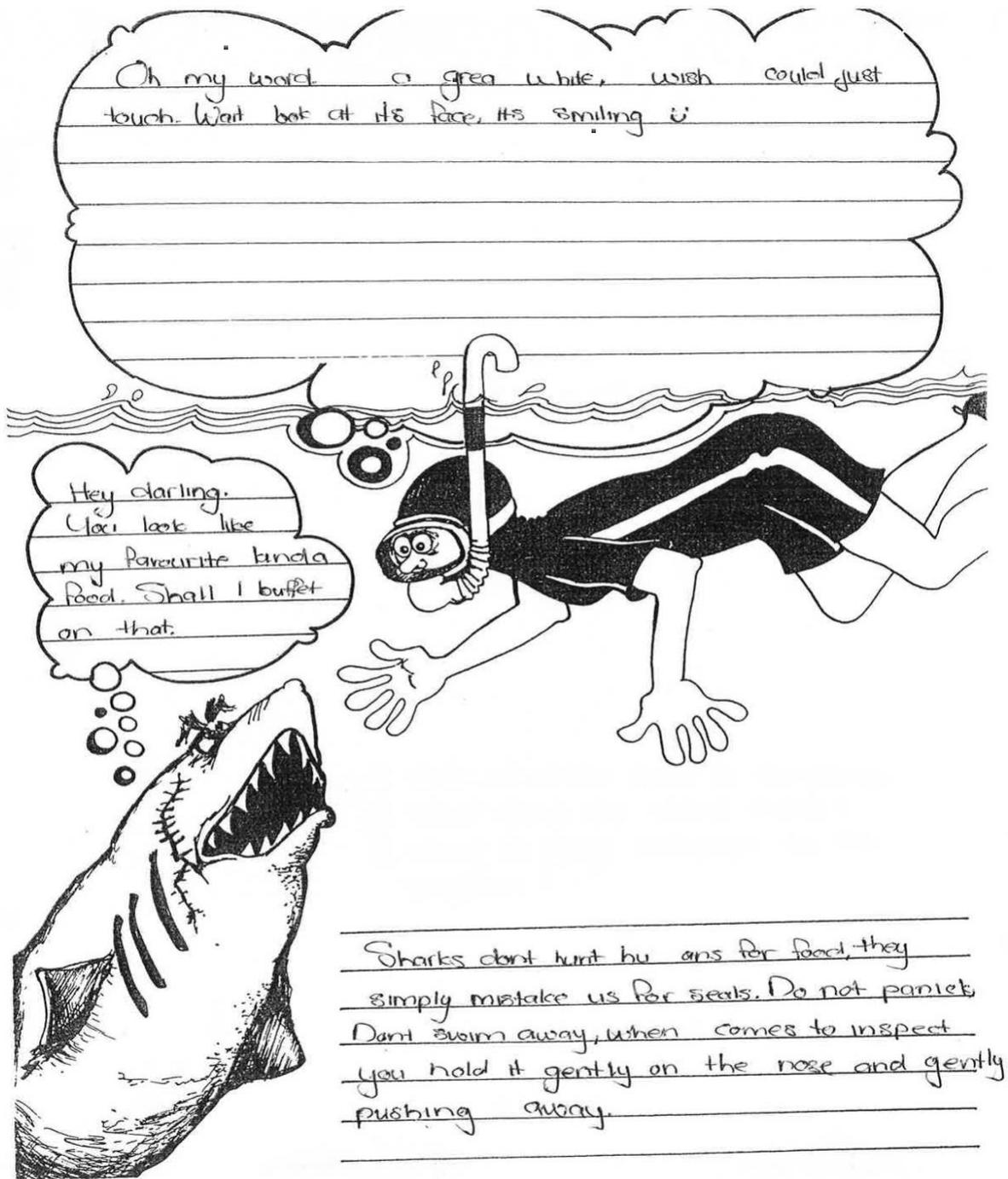
Khanya's response below also indicates a familiarity with the genre and the fact that it often uses humour ('Finally I found my dinner') as well as an awareness of a discourse that a human being can interact and empathise with a non-human being:

This is the first time im seeing a shark much closer maybe i could just brush it and see it's reaction. maybe it will like me ?
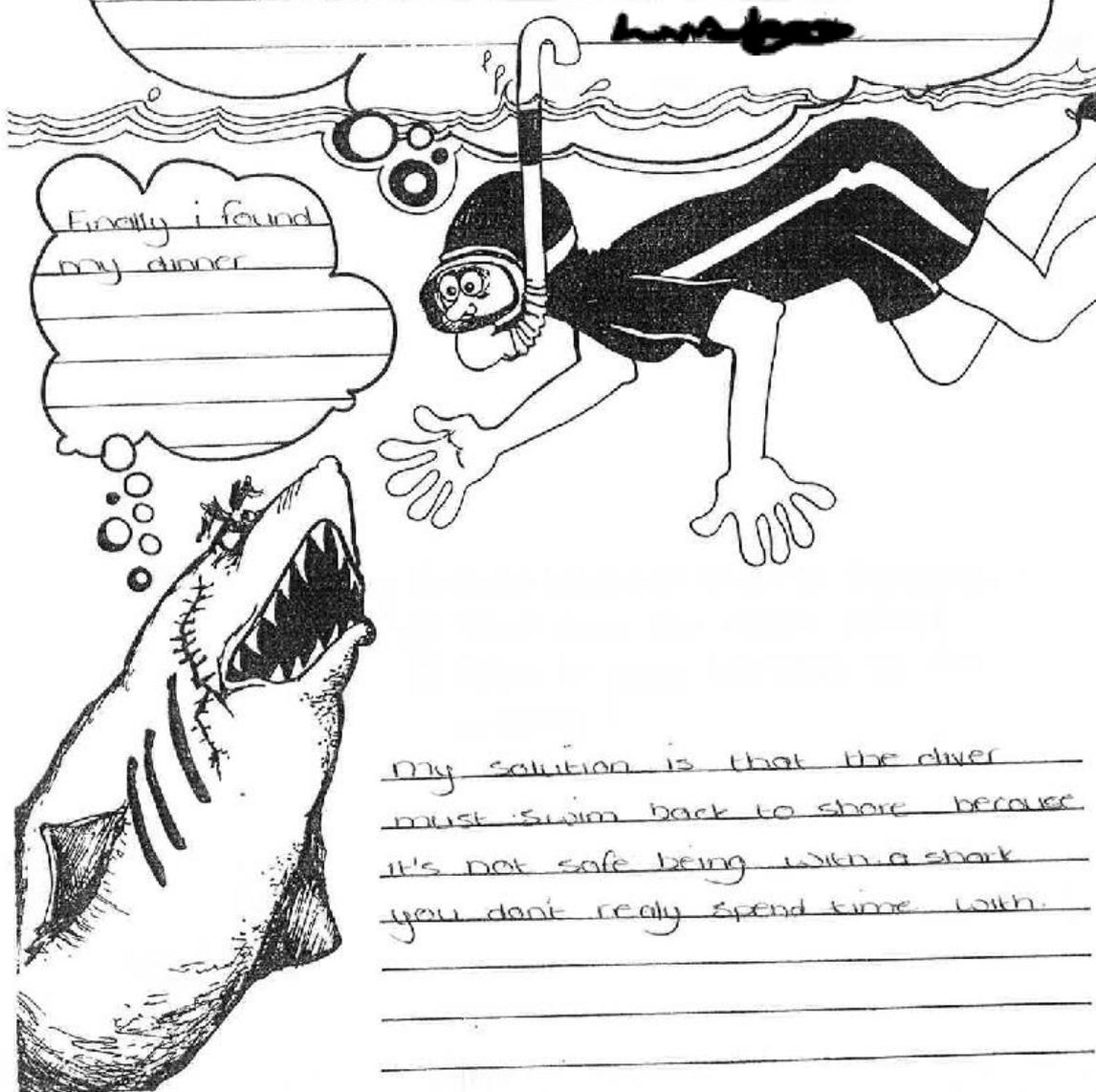
Finally i found my dinner

My solution is that the diver must swim back to shore because it's not safe being with a shark you dont realy spend time with.

However, Khanya also produced an earlier version of the cartoon task, using the same strategy as Lisa of reporting on what appeared to be happening in the pictures.

The diver is thinking to hold bothe sides of the shark's mounth so that the shark doesn't bitte and swallow him. And then after that the diver is going to find a way to get away from the shark.

The shark is thinking to go all around the diver and find a way to get him

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

My solution is that the diver be gentle with shark and calm down.

Khanya's initial response can be understood as emerging from a familiarity with school-based tasks and an understanding of the book club context as 'school', requiring the demonstration of mastery of what is, in effect, a practice associated with essay text literacy. However, Khanya was subsequently able to move from reporting to imagining reactions and responses.

Lisa was probably the least avid reader in the group and her description of her home background did not indicate the presence of many reading activities in her household. It could be the case, therefore, that the other four participants drew on their engagement with fictional texts, enabled by their home backgrounds, in order to enter the imaginary world of the diver and the shark. Lisa was not able to do this because she had less experience of the imaginary as she had not read as much fiction as her peers.

In Chapter Two, I quoted Gee's (2014:xi) observation that '[t]he new world is a multimodal world. Language is one mode; images, actions, sounds and physical manipulation are other modes. Today, students need to know how to make and get meaning from all these modes alone and integrated together.' The exercise requiring learners to complete the thought bubbles in a cartoon involved images, but it also required an awareness of a genre and the expectations it created. As indicated, learners from home backgrounds rich in reading appeared to be better able to enter the imaginary world of the text. The school curriculum does have outcomes related to a multiplicity of genres, and these are tested in the school leaving examinations. Questions about the extent to which Nombulelo learners are exposed to these genres in school remain, however.

5.6 Expressing opinions

Very apparent in all the interviews with learners was their identification of a growth in confidence experienced as a result of their participation. Siphe, for example, responded to a question about whether her reading had improved by identifying an increase in confidence without any prompting:

> *Definitely and confidence. There are those things I saw improved because, umm, before the book club I was already a confident person, but I was always like, I was always like very much, I was looking for confirmation from people. Do you understand like I was confident but I wasn't confident in what I can do.*

Siphe went on to note that this increase in confidence was related to the fact that the book club allowed her to do things that she could normally only do at home:

> *But now I've got confidence because I know that every time I come here I get to read, I get to express myself and I get to debate like I did last week. I get to do all these*

> *things that I can only do at home and not outside, do you understand? So I think the confidence levels have also improved.*

Khanya also noted that

> *… I was the person who was shy at school in primary school. I didn't like reading a lot, 'cause I… I was scared of people judging me.*

The idea of feeling afraid of judgements on reading made by other people could possibly stem from the school-based practice of getting learners to read aloud in front of the class. From a perspective in critical realism, the understandings behind this practice are probably related to understandings of reading as a process of decoding, the accuracy of which needs to be tested. However, in the book club, the focus was not on decoding but rather on getting participants to enjoy the books they read, and to share their experiences of reading them with others. This observation would need to be affirmed in further research which more directly compared the practices of book clubs with those dominating classrooms in schools. What could be the case, however, is that the book club functioned as a space where the emphasis on decoding and the testing of that decoding was removed, and this resulted in a reduction of learners' fears about being found wanting.

5.7 Communalism

In preparing for the Interschools' Quiz, the Nombulelo group demonstrated a practice that is commonly observed in typical African families, that of coming together as a community in order to achieve a common goal or outcome. Coming together as a community in a series of events devoted to studying for the Quiz can be understood as emerging from discourses promoting 'ubuntu' – a sense of identity that can be translated as 'I am because we are'. As also noted in Chapter Four above, Thembi's uncle took her to the Joza Youth Hub. This practice did not only involve Thembi but also other children in her street joining the outing. Another example of communalism is seen in Siphe's description of her mother taking another child into her family as she did not believe the child would fare well without the care she could give.

The communalism evident in the way the Nombulelo learners approached the Quiz could also be seen to have emerged from a strong sense of competition and a perceived need to show their peers at the more highly-resourced school that the Nombulelo group could excel. As I designed my study, I was very conscious of the need not to compare the two groups of learners. However, an element of competition was introduced into book club activities as I have already described. A 'house' was created for Nombulelo learners on the Library website and book reviews appeared under it. Graphs showed the number of reviews written

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and books read by the different houses. In the case of the Nombulelo learners, competition along with discourses valuing the 'we' appear to have led to communal studying events in preparation for the Interschools Quiz. Competition and the valuing of the 'we' can also be seen to have led to the experiences of elation demonstrated by learners when the Nombulelo group achieved scores higher than those achieved by their peers at St Andrew's College.

5.8 School and home as enabling and constraining contexts

Evident from the analysis attempted in the study on which this thesis is based is the way the home functioned as a structure leading to the emergence of different ways of engaging with text. In some learners' homes, financial resources allowed for the purchase of books and there were books and spaces to store them. Even more importantly, parents and caregivers in those homes engaged with reading and story telling and, even more significantly, were willing to engage in discussions around text with learners. In one home, an uncle was involved in a literacy project and took children with him to events at the weekend. The participant who showed the least enjoyment in reading, on the other hand, appeared to come from a home where the viewing of screen-based text in the form of television shows and movies was a preferred form of enjoyment. The sample for the study was admittedly very small, but it still allowed for a rich description of the way practices in learners' home backgrounds had led to different forms of engagement with text and also to varying levels of language development. Sine's father had read the dictionary to her as a child and her vocabulary was the most extended of all members of the group. What emerged from the study, therefore, was the importance of the home in modelling and promoting engagement with written text. As I have already indicated, I had not anticipated the range and richness of practices in the homes of the participants from Nombulelo.

I was, however, left wondering about learners who had not volunteered to join the book club when it was advertised to them. Did at least some of the learners who participated from the beginning do so because they already drew on some of the literacy practices it aimed to promote and because they saw it as a means of getting access to more books? In interviews, participants indicated that their friends were all now interested in joining the book club. My hope is that the sense of communalism evident in the original group as they engaged with some book club tasks will lead to more involvement from others as the club continues into the future.

Also apparent is the way the school has functioned as a structure enabling and constraining different forms of engagement with text, and the tasks associated with that engagement. The Nombulelo learners appeared to indicate an environment at school that promoted text reporting (Geisler, 1994), and which constructed reading as a process involving decoding (evidenced in learners' reports of feeling scared when reading aloud in class). The

environment at Nombulelo also did not appear to promote self-expression and the provision of an opinion, as indicated by learners who identified the book club as a context that more closely matched contexts outside school in which they felt able to express themselves.

5.9 Moving on

Spaull (2015) identifies the need to find ways of remediating the learning 'backlog' that has accumulated by the time learners reach high school. The study underpinning this thesis reveals that this backlog is not uniform amongst learners from a poorly-resourced school. Some of the learners were able to draw on a rich array of literacy practices in their homes while others were not so fortunate. The study also showed that assumptions about what learners would know and would be able to do had to be interrogated. The task involving imagining the thoughts of a diver and a shark assumed that learners would be familiar with the genre of the humorous cartoon, that they would be able to acknowledge a discourse that constructs interaction between human and non-human animals as possible, and that humans should be able to feel some empathy for the non-human. This assumption was tested in the case of one learner at least.

As already indicated, Community Engagement is considered to be very important at St Andrew's College. Members of Interact Club have now implemented a Nombulelo Tutor project in order to address the issue of the 'learning backlog', which has now been aggravated due to Covid-19 challenges. While St Andrew's College could switch to online learning relatively easily during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nombulelo learners could not access school, and when they did go back they were faced with challenges of only attending every alternate day, losing several months of learning time as a result.

The Tutor Programme consists of 10 learners who are tutored individually once a week for about an hour. The initiative targets Grade 9 learners, because teachers at Nombulelo already have an understanding of their challenges. The aim of the initiative is to provide assistance at a younger age so they have more time to improve their learning. Learners are tutored on any subjects with which they are struggling, but the focus is on what are considered to be the core subjects of English and Maths. The key is to create a bond and a relationship between the learner and tutor so that the learner can feel comfortable explaining what is difficult for them.

This is but one project now in place across the country, which aims to address a situation amongst learners that was already bad but which has now been worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. My hope is that the small-scale study on which this thesis is based will contribute to the initiative begun by the Interact Club because of the insights it has provided into learners' homes and backgrounds, as well as into the way practices that are alternative to

those dominating classrooms can function to improve the reading which this thesis has identified as key to learning success.

In the meantime, the book club goes on and hopefully will continue to contribute to members' continuing engagement with fictional texts, which I believe can enhance their chances of success in education more generally and enrich their lives enormously.

My hope is that this study will contribute to understandings of the fractured schooling system in South Africa and, also, will challenge conceptions of 'illiteracy' in marginalised communities. Street's (1984) ideological model, on which this study is based, does not acknowledge 'illiteracy'. Rather, it sees all forms of engagement with texts, and even if these involve the setting aside of written forms, as individual literacies. The study shows the richness of literacy practices in learners' homes and challenges perceptions of marginalised communities as 'illiterate'.

In doing this, it calls for the literacies that learners bring to schools and libraries to be acknowledged and used in the development of their mastery of the dominant forms of literacy that allow for educational success. South Africa needs more libraries in schools but it also needs more initiatives like book clubs that will affirm what learners bring to their engagement with the texts they contain and build on that engagement in positive ways. South Africa needs more librarians who understand literacy as a set of social practices and who can contribute to this process. This study advocates for social justice, for the need to equalise educational opportunities and for the better distribution of resources in order to ensure that no child is left behind. However, unless we change our mindsets about what can be considered to be 'literate' this will not happen.

5.10. A Covid-19 postscript

This study was conducted in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite restrictions on meeting, learners from Nombulelo school were permitted to attend bookclub activities at St Andrew's College . The boys of St Andrew's College converted to online learning and were not on campus but the bookclub continued using contact sessions. This meant that it took longer to complete the bookclub activities. It also meant that activities such as movie night had to be closely regulated and controlled. In spite of all this, the learners had fun and the book club continues as this thesis is concluded and moves into libraries.

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6. Appendices

7.1 Appendix I: Letter to parents and caregivers

ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE

To:
The parent/caregiver of

My name is Vuyokazi Jamieson and I am the librarian at St Andrew's College in Makhanda.
As you are aware, your child has been involved in a project that has resulted in the renovation of the library at Nombulelo High School. The library has been painted, existing books have been catalogued and new books have been provided thanks to fundraising efforts.

It is now time to build on the success of the library renovation project with a new project intended to develop your child's reading and love for reading. I plan to establish a book club for learners from both St Andrew's College and Nombulelo High School. Members of the book club will be invited to read books and stories, discuss them with each other, make recommendations for reading to each other and to write reviews of books they have read on a book club website that has been established for this purpose. My aim is to base the website on the format used by amazon.com where readers are able to review books they have read using a 'starred' rating system and by providing comments. Learners writing reviews on the site will be able to use their own names or another name of their own choosing.

All meetings of the bookclub will follow the strict guidelines set down for schools in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Attending the book club will therefore present no more risk to your child than a day at school.

I would like to use this book club as a study for a master's degree. I am registered for master's research in the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Chrissie Boughey.

Headmaster: Alan Thompson MEd, BEd (Hons) (Witwatersrand) MBA
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NEC ASPERA TERRENT

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Your child has volunteered to participate in my study. Participation will involve engaging with me in two interviews. In the interviews, the names of the learners will not be used. Details of the interview will be recorded under the name chosen by your child. It will therefore not be possible to identify your child at any time using the interview transcript. If I refer to your child in the thesis that will result from my study, I will not use their given name. I will use the name they have chosen. This means that it will not be possible to identify your child from the thesis.

In each interview, I will be asking your child about her/his experience of being a member of the book club. I would like to record these interviews and use them for my study. I will send you a transcript of each interview so you can read what has taken place in the interview. If you object to anything that is said in the interview, I will delete this.

You and your child will also have the opportunity to withdraw from my study at any time. I would also like to analyse the reviews that are posted on the book club website for the purposes of my research. As I have explained, these reviews will not appear under your child's given name. If I refer to these reviews in my thesis, I will only use the name your child has chosen for the purposes of my study.

I am happy to provide you with drafts of anything I write as a result of my research. I am also hpy to meet with you as a group or individually to inform you about what I have discovered.

I ……………………………………………….. agree that ………………………………. can participate in Mrs

[NAME of PARENT or CAREGIVER] [NAME of LEARNER]

Vuyokazi Jamieson's research study.

I understand the contents of this letter or agree that the contents have been explained to me
Yes/No

I agree that:
1. Mrs Jamieson can interview my child about her/his experiences of being in the book club.
Yes/No

2. An audio recording can be made of the interview.
Yes/No

3. Mrs Jamieson can analyse any book reviews written by my child for the purposes of her study.
Yes/No

ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE

The Headteacher
Nombulelo High School/St Andrew's College

Dear

I have already indicated to you my interest in starting a book club for learners at both St Andrew's College and Nombulelo High School to build upon the collaboration we have already enjoyed renovating the library at Nombulelo.

In the book club, learners from both schools will be invited to engage around books by talking about why they chose to read a particular text, what they enjoyed or did not enjoy about it and by writing a short review of the text on a website I will establish for the book club.

The aim of the book club is to try to engender and foster a love for reading through engagement as a group.

I am registered for a master's degree in the Faculty of Education at Rhodes University under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Chrissie Boughey. In addition to running the book club, I would like to use it for my research study. Doing this would involve interviewing each learner participating in the club twice over a period of three months.

My plan is to host the book club at St Andrew's College. I am aware of all the restrictions that will apply to any activity involving learners in the context of Covid-19. In order to mitigate risks, I will be providing learners from Nombulelo High School with their own personal copies of books to read. These copies will be theirs for ever. Learners from St Andrew's College already have access to the books we will use. Other restrictions on social distancing, the use of masks, sanitiser and so on will be adhered to and, wherever possible, I will use electronic means to conduct the club.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission for learners from your school to participate in the book club.

If you are happy to provide permission, please could you complete and return the page attached to this letter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Vuyokazi Jamieson

Audio file
ZOOM0020.MP3

Speaker 2: Vuyokazi Jamieson
Speaker 1: Siphe
Speaker 2
OK, as you know that I am doing this research from Rhodes University and we have been together now for a few months and I do think that we are ready to do this interview. I'd like you to just relax and introduce yourself.
Speaker 1
I am Siphe, I'm from Nombulelo [High School] in grade 10A.
Speaker 2
OK great, so I will just run through a few questions and just let me know if you're not comfortable answering a question and we …
Speaker 2
So first question, can you remember where you learned to read and who taught you?
Speaker 1
I learned at home. Actually my big sister. She has been the one pushing for us to learn the most. She even now that I'm in Grade 10, I'm in high school. She's still pushing for us to read. She's still pushing for us to do better in our academics, you know, as much as I it's wrong when I say it, but she doesn't get enough because she's always like you can do better. You can do better, and I think that's what's driven me and my siblings to try and do better with everything we do.
Speaker 2
OK and I also realise that you are the one who's taking charge of the group. Do you think you are learning from your sister, that skill as well?
Speaker 1
Definitely, but as much as from my sister, from my mother. My mother is such a wonderful woman and she's just been a leader all her life and when we sit down, we have casual conversations about her upbringing and she's always been a leader and I think that's the number one thing she's passed on to us as her kids. And that's one thing that everyone takes out of her. She's such a great leader and her leadership skills are just amazing and sometimes she does make mistakes, which is what everyone does and I think the one thing that we love about her is how she handles her mistakes.
That's what we love about her because she's so good with fixing her mistakes and helping us and grooming us to be the best people that we can be.
Speaker 2
Yeah, great. I'm sure we can divert, how many children are you in the family?
Speaker 1
We are three, but I have a cousin and my cousins... my my cousin's mother is not very involved in her life, so my mother was like I'm although she kind of said it as if it's her kids. She was like I'm not having a child that is not going to have a mother figure especially it's a girl so she was like I'm not having a child. And that child is going to grow up without a mother figure, so she took her in so I could say there's four of us.
Speaker 2

Wow, that's great.

So before you learned to read, did anyone read stories to you or tell you stories?

Speaker 1

I think it would have to be my sister because I think my family there's always been four of us. There's always been me, my my mother and my two sisters. So I think my older sister since she was I think she was 16 when my mother had me, so she's always been a mother, a second mother to me. Because my mother is always been busy trying to take care of all of us. Although she does make time for us, but she's she's not. Not as involved as regular mothers are because she has to make sure that we get all everything that we need. So I think my oldest sister, she's always taught us to read. She's always made sure we make time to read, even if sometimes we might get mad at her because you know, we wanna to go out and we wanna do all these things, but she's always like. No, do you understand?

And sometimes I think. I I won't say we hated her, but I I'll just say we disliked her more than my mother because my mom would be like. Yeah you guys could have, you guys can go out with your friends because I get you guys, you're kids and whatever and my sister would be like who's going to study for you whilst you're out with your friends you know and we we we didn't...

We didn't like her for that.

Yes, we hated her, you can say, but after all of that now our vocabularies are improving and our grammar is just improving and

Everything is just academically, is just improving and I guess we're going well...

We're seeing what we've been doing all this time and I guess we can only thank her for that.

Speaker 2

Great.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Great, so Siphe in your free time I suppose that you do read..., I'm just judging from the background of the stories that you just told me OK, and you credit that to your sister?

Speaker 1

Yeah, definitely.

Speaker 2

So what kind of books that you like reading?

Speaker 1

Fiction? Yeah, definitely.

Speaker 1

Fiction and adventure.

I'm a very adventurous person even if I do say so myself, I love being outside. I love exploring. I love learning new things of different people, different cultures, different religions, doing different things, baking, breaking boundaries, and I think that's another thing that I got from my mother, she has she is a very business orientated person and she's got into industries that were mainly dominated by men and she has thrived through everything, so I think that's another thing I got from my mother I guess.

Yeah, so it's yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah interesting yeah yeah.

Speaker 2
And tell me where do you get books like your main source of books?

Speaker 1
We usually buy books and frankly my sister makes us buy our own books for some reason. Yeah, like she, she always makes us save to buy our own books because she always takes us to book bargain or something like that.

Speaker 1
And then we'd always pick out books that we like. You know, have get a cute little Sibling moment and pick out books that we like, and then she'd make us pay for them. Do you understand?... like she'd make us pay for them so it's I think that's another way she says she's she's helping us save and use our money in a smart way. But I mean, buying books is a lot of money.

Speaker 2
Yeah, I really like your sister.

Speaker 2
So Siphe do you talk to anyone about books that you read generally.

Speaker 1
Mainly my cousins, 'cause we're such a close family. My sister forces us to sit together and talk about books and I think we got used to that. Now she she doesn't even say anything. We just sit together and we chat and we debate Oh my family loves debating. We debates a lot, yeah? 'cause we we have different views on everything and my sister comes in. My sister is constantly like exactly I want your opinion I don't want what you heard from someone I want what you feel about the situation and then we'll all discuss it and then come out with one solution I guess.

Speaker 2
Wow, yeah, well I think that's also very evident in the way you take charge in the group and especially in last week's session.

Speaker 1
Yeah. Thank you.

Speaker 2
If you had books, would you, would you read them all the time? And would you also recommend them to your friends at school?

Speaker 1
Uhm?
 I'd definitely read them all the time because I think the more books that I that I have, the more motivated I get to finish a book so that I can start the other one. Most people in my class, specifically don't really like books, so I don't know about rec... I don't know about speaking to them about books, but I would definitely recommend them.

Speaker 2
Yeah, because the reason why I'm asking that question is because you when you joined here, you told us about liking more of picture books, but now I can see the leap from that Siphe that we met. You are now reading so quickly very very advanced booking.

Speaker 1
Yeah, I think it's It's it's always been like, I've loved books from a very young age, so I've gotten used to reading books with pictures because I'm a very graphical person, I want to see something. I wanna imagine, I want do all these things, but now when I started coming here to the book club, I think that's kind of changed a little bit because I was like, you know

what? I... I must make my own image, imagination, I must I was trying to picture my own thing. Do you understand because I think? … Especially our age group. We are just like... So confined in this box of norms and normalities of things that we cannot do, you know? So I think it's it's It's nice to try and be different and try to picture something on your own without actually seeing it.

Speaker 2

Wow.

Speaker 2

And moving to the book club just tell me generally what you think of the book club.

Speaker 1

Oh love the book club! I love the book club. I don't know how to explain, but I'll try. When I first came to the book club and I met you ma'am, I was like OK so this is an overall nice person. Do you understand? But how long is she going to be nice? You know 'cause people change on you but so far you haven't changed. You've been this nice person consistently. Every time we come here, you are just the sweet soul and when we met Miss Libby which is another sweet soul, love her, and then we met Mrs Webb, which is also nice and she has amazing Storytelling skills yeah. Love her for that.

And then I think it [the Bookclub] brought us 'cause many of us were already friends outside, so now I think it brought us together as a group. We got to know each other more academically than just hanging out and talking silly and just talking about everything else. And now it's challenging us 'cause it's it's nice because it's challenging. 'Cause now I know most of Siphe's abilities, which is someone else in the group.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 1

I know his abilities and his amazing writing skills. Do you understand? And it it, it motivates me to say, you know what, I'm actually going to push so that I can also be a good writer? Do you understand? And I know about Thembi is just a sweet soul and she has imagination for days. You know she has really good emotional imagination skills and she's really good with talking to people. So I'm like you know what? Maybe I can also be good. Maybe I can, you know, push to be this good person and I can push to try harder than her, you know, and I it's, It's an amazing experience and beautiful lunches. They are so delicious by the way.

Speaker 1

Really. I love the book club though.

Speaker 2

Great great OK.

Speaker 2

So do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club?

Speaker 1

Definitely and confidence. There are those things I saw improved because, UM, before the book club I was already a confident person, but I was always like, I was always like very much, I was looking for confirmation from people. Do you understand like I was confident but I wasn't confident in what I can do.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

My confidence was just because I wanted to survive.

Speaker 2

OK.

Speaker 1

You know, be OK and whatever. But now I've got confidence because I know that every time I come here I get to read, I get to express myself and I get to debate like I did last week. I get to do all these things that I can only do at home and not outside, do you understand? So I think the confidence levels have also improved.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 1

I've saw that in myself. That's one thing that I think I can notice. And that's that's one of the things that make me excited to come to the book club because I I constantly get a confidence boost and I get to take my leadership skills to action.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah, and I think to me that's actually one of the biggest things because I saw you take that charge last week and giving leadership and direction to others and also just inspiring them to be better.

Speaker 1

Thank you.

Speaker 2

So if you can just just keep going in that direction.

Speaker 1

Yeah, OK, I'll I will.

Speaker 2

So do you feel free to give your opinions about books in the book club.

Speaker 2

I I know the answer to this, but I want you to answer.

Speaker 1

Definitely. Yeah, definitely, definitely.

Speaker 2

So now let's move on to the next question. Do you like writing book reviews for their website?

Speaker 1

Yes, I've enjoyed them.

I've enjoyed them because I feel like. The author tells the story to me. Do you understand? I've always had that that conspiracy in my mind, that I'm speaking to the author and the author is telling me their story. So now it's my responsibility to to convince other people to read this book that I read. You know, I I don't know the book first hand because I didn't write the book, so it's my responsibility... So it challenges me. So it's like how do I sell this book to other people? Do you understand and not make it what I read?

Speaker 2

Sure.

Speaker 1

So it's a good challenge and I'm always up for a challenge and I've loved book reviews and putting them in computers and just doing all these different things. Loved it. Beautiful experience!

Speaker 2

I hope you're realising that you're also educating the whole College community by you doing that and putting it out there, yeah?

Speaker 1

Exactly, that's one of the challenges I was like, you know, not only is the book club gonna read this, but the whole College is going to read this. So if I represent the book in a wrong way. Then they won't want to write [read] the book they understand, so already I've made an enemy of the author.

Speaker 2

Yeah, you know? But if you did it right you are making impact, … it's amazing.

Speaker 1

Exactly.

Speaker 2

And also I mean I have never seen so much passion in any young person saying 'Come on guys, we're going to have a session'. I didn't even say anything last week we said we're going to have a session we need to review how we need to critique our own book reviews and that is also coming in my study and I was going to make you guys do it, but you made it easy for me. You just took charge and you did. So that's when I knew we've chosen correctly …

In fact we didn't even choose you, it it happened through your natural leadership abilities, so I really appreciate that.

Speaker 1

Thank you ma'am.

Speaker 2

Have you told any of your friends about about the book club and what have you told them?

Speaker 1

I have, I have actually and I've I'm constantly speaking about the book club. I've had like 50 people wanting to join the book club and I'm like Covid guys, you know, I'm like literally ma'am. I have people calling me and texting me on some. 'When can we join the book club' and I'm like guys. We also need to consider Covid regulations.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 1

I've told them about how fun it is at the book club, and I've mostly, I think I've told them about the freedom we have here.

Speaker 2

Great yeah.

Speaker 1

You know, I've told them about how we can just express ourselves and be ourselves and be free and 'cause right now, usually in interviews I I get so nervous because I'm like am I going to say the wrong thing and literally as you were telling me these quick as you were asking me these questions I'm like I'm not even scared I'm literally just relaxed, you know.

Speaker 2

Yeah, look at you!

Speaker 1

So I'm like those are one of the things that are so good about the book club, because now whenever I have another interview and I have a very big project coming through. I'm not gonna say too much, but yeah, so no.

So I'm like whenever I have these interviews now I know, that at some point I was so comfortable in an interview that I, my heart is literally normal pace. I'm having a good conversation, you know, with love.

Speaker 2

Wow.

Speaker 2

I'm so happy, wow that makes me happy.

Yeah great, you just answered my next question because I was going to say would you recommend them to join so?

Speaker 1

They're already lined up.

Speaker 2

Yeah, ah, so the last question is, do you have any suggestions on how we could have improved the book club?

Speaker 1

How we could have? how we could have? I think maybe. It would have to do with me. I think maybe had I taken charge with the book club earlier, maybe we wouldn't have like wasted... 'cause I feel like sometimes we I don't know if it's me just being like this very perfect, this perfectionist, but I feel like sometimes we just wasted time that has to do with us. Like maybe eating, talking doing all these unnecessary things. So I think maybe had I took charge then. I was like you know what do your own thing, you know so I think had I taken charge then, maybe we would have done so much, maybe we would have been done with these book reviews. Maybe we would have read beautiful books and relatable books like 'The Hate U Give'. Maybe we could have read that a whole lot earlier.

Speaker 2

Yeah, so you like the 'The Hate U Give'?

Speaker 1

So yeah I love it. I love it, it's so relatable and I read it to my sisters all the time.

Speaker 1

And now it's annoying me because I can't do anything like I literally get home from school and they like you know what you have to do, you know. And I'm like guys I I haven't eaten. I haven't changed my uniform. I I sometimes I just need like a good nap as a person and you should see them and they're like well, you'll nap at night you'll sleep at night everyone sleeps at night, you know, it's like now I have to read this book to them. You know...

Speaker 2

That's amazing that you sharing your writing experiences with your whole family.

Speaker 2

So you like that book?

Speaker 1

I love it. I love it. I love it and the different characters that it has and they are so relatable to our friendship groups as the youth right now, like, they so good. They're so good. And they're really nice to tell. You know, it's really nice to tell, so it's a beautiful book. That's what I have to say.

Speaker 2
Yeah. I'm glad and I can't wait to see that book review on the website.
Speaker 1
Book review. OK OK.
Speaker 2
Siphe thank you very much.
Speaker 1
Yeah, thank you for having me ma'am.
Speaker 2
Great yeah OK OK Angel thank you, thank you.

Audio file
ZOOM0021.MP3

Speaker 1: Thembi
Speaker 2: Vuyokazi Jamieson
Speaker 2
OK Thembi I'm Mrs Jamieson, as you know we've been doing this research and I'm studying and doing my Master's at Rhodes University and we've been spending some time together for a few months now. So now, the time has come that we can have a chat. Yeah, and it's just simple. Straightforward questions, just wanted to relax, have a chat and we can just answer these questions honestly as possible. OK, I want you to introduce yourself so that we know which school you are from and what grade you are.
Speaker 1
So I'm Thembi. I'm I go to Nombulelo Senior Secondary school and I'm in Grade 9.
Speaker 2
So first question: ***Can you remember where you learned to read and who taught you?***
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am I do, I was in primary in grade two and I entered a competition.
Yeah. Even though I didn't know how to read. But I was just curious to see what was going on and I entered this competition. And my teacher said, why are you here at the competition day, and I was like no ma'am, I just wanted to see what was going on and she was like, OK, let's go to a private room quickly and she taught me at a very short time and I learned I'm, I'm actually a fast learner. So I'm not surprised so. She taught me a book.
Speaker 1
She read the book to me and she was like can you read it for me? I was like yes ma'am and I read and she was so so surprised and I was so proud of myself.
Speaker 2
Well done.
Speaker 2
OK, so tell me before you learned to read. Did anyone read stories to you or tell your stories?
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am. My grandmom. Yes she when we're about to sleep. She likes reading stories to us, me and my siblings. 'Cause we we we just can't sleep without her. She always come to our room and read us stories and. And we fall asleep.
Speaker 2

..and tell me about that, I mean, so does she read from books. Or does she just tell natural stories?

Speaker 1
She comes with books often. And sometimes she just tells us some fairy tales and stuff like that.

Speaker 2
Mh that those are nice treats hey?

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am, because we really enjoyed them.

Speaker 2
So from baby, she's always been doing that. It's like it's something that just that, you know.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am. 'cause my mom died in 2013 and she's been there for us since then. 'Cause we're 7 from my mom.

Speaker 2
Yhooo?

Speaker 1
All from the same mum, we all share the mum 'cause we're seven and since then she's been here for us kids.

Speaker 2
And how old were you when your mom died?

Speaker 1
I think I was about six.

Speaker 2
OK, ok.

Speaker 1
Or 5, between 5 and 6 and...

Speaker 2
OK, so your grandma is like your second mother?

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am. And I... and I I didn't know anything at that time. So like why are people crying? What's going on? And as I was growing up I always asked... Where's mom? ...and my grand mom, sat with me and she told me what happened.

Speaker 2
And you are much younger than others.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am, I am the last born, I'm the 7th.

Speaker 2
Ah, OK, so you might be the most spoiled. That's why she's reading more stories to you.

Speaker 1
Yes. Yes ma'am.

Speaker 2
OK, OK and then do you? Do you read in your free time?

Speaker 1
Yes, I do actually 'cause my uncle does this project of of taking every every kid in our street to the youth hub. Uh. Do you know the youth hub? at Joza..

Speaker 2

I've seen the Youth Hub, yeah.
Speaker 1
At Joza, yes ma'am. So he just does this Nali Bali.
Speaker 1
He's also part of the project, so he takes us every Saturday and takes us to the youth hub and we actually get books. And so I read, I read a lot.
Speaker 2
Great privilege. OK, OK OK, so tell me what type of books do you like reading?
Speaker 1
I I'm not a fan of scary books. I like books like you know those books like Frozen, The Smurfs and stuff like that.
Speaker 2
Hmm. Ok?
Speaker 1
I I really like those books. And I like books like a bit, scary or not scary 'cause I'm like scared. I don't like being scared. A bit scared those parts, nje yes ma'am.
Speaker 2
Just a little bit of horror.
Speaker 1
Yes man, so that you can get a bit frightened and then move on.
Speaker 2
OK OK, OK, and then you did say that you you go to Nali Bali every Saturday, but where do you get most of your books?
Speaker 1
Yes.
Speaker 2
What is your your source, your main source of books?
Speaker 1
So my sister works at this library … library store at Port Elizabeth. She always come back on Mondays coz. She's coming back today and then she's going to leave on Friday. Come back on Monday so she brings me these books 'cause I always tell her not to forget.
I 'cause I. I also tell her that I go to this. I'm book book club so I told her about what we do here and stuff like that and she just gets more interested.
Speaker 2
Oh great OK good good.Good that you talk about the book club. So in fact
Uh, my my next question was do you talk to anyone about the the books you read?
Speaker 1
Yes ma'am I talk to my dad 'cause my dad is a reader, he likes reading....
Speaker 2
OK, OK
Speaker 1
We even went to this movie. Well ok don't mind the movie there there was this contest of books you share like a speed dating you share your book OK with somebody and my dad and I went there and it was so fun and I I shared the books with him. I even shared the Hate U Give and he said he's. He's going to look for the book 'cause it sounds very interesting to him.
Speaker 2

Amazing.
Speaker 1
And on his birthday. I I gave him The Hate U Give but I was like you have to return
it 'cause I I also want to know what happened and he was like no why is so wrong but like I
also want to know and he was like he's gonna buy the book 'cause it's really really nice and
he was so sad. I was like, I know it's your birthday, but I also want the book.
Speaker 2
You just gave me this gift for a day. And then you were like, you must return it.
Speaker 1
And the next day I was like are you done reading? and he was like, 'no, I'm still reading and I
find it very interesting and it was so sad', and I was Like no. I also want the book. He was like
this wasn't a present at all, I was like it was a one day gift.
Speaker 2
It's so funny.
Speaker 1
And he was so sad and he was like I'm not gonna ever talk to you. Yeah. 'Cause you really
like the book?
Speaker 2
When was this birthday?
Speaker 1
On the 26th.
Speaker 2
Of March?
Speaker 1
And he was, he was like I'm gonna cry, and I was like cry ke?
Speaker 2
So you have no mercy at all. Yo, that is such a funny story. OK, so. Uh, yeah, we can actually
just skip all these other questions because because we've already answered them without
realising it. So if I understand correctly, other people in your house read books because
yeah, my last question was, do other people in your house read books? So it seems that
your whole household.
Speaker 1
Yes man.
Especially me, my sister and my dad. We like reading. He bought this bookshelf on the 26th
while my sister bought bought it for my dad.
Speaker 2
Mm-hmm, Yeah.
Speaker 1
He has so many books and he keeps them in his office. He has an office in in my house. He
always goes there when he wants to to relieve himself and have a bit of relax. He
always go there and read books so this his office his messy with books. So my sister bought
this bookshelf for him, on the 26th for his birthday gift, yeah. and he was so
grateful. 'Cause yeah, it even tidied it up his office.
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
Oh my gosh, but your gift was so funny.
Speaker 1

He was so sad.

Speaker 2

So tell me what you think about about the book club and if you like coming to the club.

Speaker 1

I I think it's it's very encouraging and it's very interesting. It is it in it encourages you to like, do more, more of good stuff 'cause you come here, and other kids are at home doing wrong stuff. Others are stealing and doing wrong stuff. And you here reading books, getting more knowledge, knowledge about everything 'cause. Well, you even have fun. This is a fun place. This is a very interesting place.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 1

You come here? Relax, do your, do your exercises if you have exercises. Read books for book reviews. We do Book reviews a lot. That's very important. I even told my mom that oh I have to do a Book review, and she was like 'do it'. You don't have any choice.

Speaker 2

Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 1

You chose to come here. Like yes, ma'am and it's feel like it's very very fun. I like I'm grateful and I I really love coming here 'cause this is a relaxing place and it's a it's a place of fun, yeah?

Speaker 2

I'm glad. Good OK great. OK. So I'm not going to ask you this question,

What do you like best or least? Or maybe you could tell me what you like least about the club?

Speaker 1

Least. Least.

I don't think I like anything least about the club.

Speaker 2

OK, so we can skip that. Sure. Yeah, OK.

So do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am a lot 'cause... Sometimes. My sister wouldn't come. Sometimes she would come. Sometimes my uncle wouldn't take us to the youth Hub. Youth hub, sometimes he would, so coming here having books every day really increased my level of reading 'cause I was, Sometimes I would just sit at home, watch TV and get bored whilst I would be reading books. Hmm. Yes, so ever since coming here getting books, that's that's really a good thing. 'Cause I I read more now than I used to before.

Speaker 2

And OK great I'm glad.

Speaker 2

OK, so do you? Feel free to give your opinions about the books in the Book Club?

Speaker 1

A lot. A lot 'cause it's like selling the book like you always say. It's like selling the book because you tell a person how you feel about the book and what is happening in the book and that person gets interested. You know So you, you like selling your book to somebody else so that he or she could read the book. And get more more interests like you do.

Speaker 2

Yeah, and it's it's an important skill as well. Yeah, and you'll see that the more you do it, especially because you're the youngest in the group, and I think you'll actually have more advantage in your class because it's a it's a very, very important skill, and the more you do it, even when you when you when you are done with the club, I encourage you to please do it.

Speaker 1

Yes ma'am, OK ma'am.

Speaker 2

OK, so where are we? So do you.

Do you like writing book reviews for the website?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, 'cause? It's like summarising the book, yeah, and it even makes you learn more things 'cause. Summarising, a book is not that easy if I could say so. You just get like OK, let me do this and just get it over with. You write as much as like it's selling the book, because you write as much as important things as you can find in the book. So you write everything that's important and then left the book for the person who's gonna read the book next.

Speaker 2

Yeah, and I must say I still find it very, very difficult to decide because most of the time especially if you like talking and telling...

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, it's like... and you have this small space and like what I'm gonna write here. And yeah, sometimes you you've got so many favourite parts in the book and I'm like I wanna write this one I wanna write this on this so it's just a small space, yes ma'am.

Speaker 2

Yeah, right.

Speaker 2

Yeah, OK, so do you think that the club has encouraged you to read more books than you would usually read?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am. As I said. Reading what wasn't my thing at first, Like in grade four and stuff. But as I grew I was like, oh, let me try this out. 'Cause my dad told me..., my dad... he reads he would tell me stories and like I, I don't know that popular book you should read it and you always tell me to read stories and you just give more and more and I can't concentrate in one book 'cause you just tell me more and more. So as I grew older I was like let me try this out. 'Cause my dad finds reading so so fun and interesting. Yeah so I read books and I was like I'm interested yeah. 'cause I enjoy I I just enjoy reading so much so like let me try this out and it worked. 'Cause reading now give me more knowledge somehow 'cause there's some books that tells you about maybe school stuff and like I needed this.

Maybe in your in my assignment or like I needed this, they may take it and write it.

Speaker 2

Oh wow.

Speaker 1

Wow, it's so it's so encouraging, ma'am.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Sure, you guys can actually wow can advise other people about reading.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, 'cause my younger brother finds reading boring. I'm like you, you're gonna see and he's starting to read now as I bring the books you see Siphe gave me this book. Exactly. Of the magic finger he read the book and he was.... he came over and was like.. 'Thembi, Thembi.' I read this book is about magic.' I'm like I Know the book what? Wena you didn't even find reading interesting... Why? Now? I'm like no, I'm so interested. Can you please bring me more books? I'm like I'm going to bring you. Don't worry, don't worry. Don't worry

Speaker 2

So you changing somebody's life story now, well done.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, 'cause he didn't like he didn't love reading, he didn't love reading.

Speaker 2

Well done.

Speaker 2

So you can say I changed my brother's life story. Yeah.

Speaker 1

'cause he would just sit around and watch TV. Yeah.

Speaker 2

So tell me, have you told any of your friends about the book club?

Speaker 1

Yes ma'am, I have.

Speaker 2

And what have you told them?

Speaker 1

Them so I've got this best friend. It's she's Siphe's cousin, but we're best friend she's from Joburg so we talk over WhatsApp. I told since this is my favorite book I told her. No. About the the hate U give 'cause I I just love the book I told her and she was like I once watched the movie and we were telling each other about the the book. I was like why are we doing this 'cause we both know the book you know she was like no maybe the the move is not the same as the book, I'm like how and we were busy chatting about the book and it was so fun 'cause we both know the characters, what's happening and what happened in the end was what's the beginning? The body and you know, so it's just so fun 'cause I was just talking and talking and telling her about the book. It's like I also know the book.
Why are you telling me? Like I, I don't know? I'm like, no, maybe you don't know. I just wanted to tell her about how I actually feel about the book. She was like no stop. 'cause I also know the movie, she and I was like you don't know the book. I don't know the movie, you know the movie. I don't know the. The the movie and you know the the movie.
So she was like. No stop 'cause I also know what happened. Yeah. I don't know when I tell you, maybe you don't know.

Speaker 2

Oh my gosh, The Hate U Give.

Speaker 1

It was just so fun.

Speaker 2

Its making commotion. So would you recommend those people to join the club and and why?

Speaker 1

I would ma'am cause as Esinaso from the interact, she asked me to talk to you, OK, but I I was gonna talk to you after the.

Speaker 1

After the the interviews, he asked me to talk to you about joining because I also think Nomhle OK, yes ma'am. So she was like can you please talk to Mrs Jamieson about joining the Book Club? 'cause she I I once showed her a book that I I got from here and she was like wow, I I want to join the book club 'cause you just keep on showing me books but you don't talk to Mrs Jamieson about me joining the group. So I was like today I'm going to talk to you 'cause we met at school. I went to school to submit my assignments so I was like I know I'm going to talk to her and she was like please don't forget 'cause. I want to join the book club. She like desperately want to join the book club, so I was like I'm gonna talk to you.

Speaker 2

OK, OK.

Speaker 1

So that's the first person who wants to join the the book club that I showed the book from here.

Speaker 2

Great.

And that that was true The Hate U Give, yes, ma'am. Excellent!

Speaker 1

No, it's not The Hate U Give the other books.

Speaker 1

But she asked me to give her the hate U give, and I was like next time 'cause the book... I really like the book. It's like if I give it to someone that person is not gonna bring it back. No I just want to keep the book to me.

Speaker 2

OK, so tell me now the last question is do you have any suggestions on how we could have improved the Reading Club?

Speaker 1

Hmm. I think we should come here more often. That's the solution. I think we should come here 'cause man, we just, we just feel relaxed. I even tell my mom sometimes that I wish I could go to St Andrew's right now. 'Cause if I go there I just relax, read books and just have fun. With my my teachers, that's you and Miss Libi and then my my other partners of the book club. The members of the book club and I'm like no we should come. We should go there more often 'cause we just and even when we sit together at school we like...

Speaker 2

Yeah. Yeah, OK.

Speaker 1

Yhuu everybody misses going to St Andrew's, when it's going to be Monday next week so everybody just gets frustrated. Like yho, hayi I can't wait 'cause we just yeah we just can't wait for yes man and we like. No, we just wanna go 'cause and it's gonna improve us to reading more.

Speaker 2

Well thank you Angel is a great contribution.

 Speaker 1

Thank you ma'am.

Audio file
ZOOM0022.MP3

Speaker 1: Lisa
Speaker 2: Vuyokazi Jamieson
Speaker 1
My name is Lisa. Nombulelo, Grade 11.
Speaker 2
So Lisa, I'm Mrs Jamieson, As you know I've been doing this research through Rhodes University and we've been together for a few months now and I'm sure we can have a nice relaxed chat.
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
OK, so just relax. And I'll be asking you these few questions.
OK, so first question, ***can you remember where you learned to read and who taught you?***
Speaker 1
I think in at home.
Speaker 2
So it was at home?
 How many are you at home and?
Speaker 1
Two
Speaker 2
Two so are you the eldest, OK?
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
So who taught you at home?
Speaker 1
My mother and my cousin brother but. He's not staying [at us] with us at home.
Speaker 2
OK, so it's basically your mother who taught you to read OK, so tell me before you learned to read.
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
Did anyone read books to you or did anyone tell you stories?
Speaker 1
Yes.
Speaker 1
Yeah.
Speaker 2
OK, who who is that person?
Speaker 1

My grandmother.
Speaker 2
So, your grandmother read stories to you or...
Speaker 1
[S]he taught me stories.
Speaker 2
OK, so she just told you stories. OK, so normally you would just be sitting around the house and then she'll be just be telling you those.
Speaker 1
And also watching TV.
Speaker 2
Oh OK, OK, and then she'll be telling you stories through maybe what's happening on TV.
Speaker 1
Yes ma'am.
Speaker 2
OK.
Speaker 2
OK and then did you? Do you read in your free time?
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
OK, and tell me what type of books do you read?
Speaker 1
Adventure stories, fiction or something?
Speaker 2
OK, so you like to read fiction and adventure stories. OK, so that's more you, you are an adventurous person.
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
And when do you get these books? So what's your source?
Speaker 1
I have the Duna library membership card.
Speaker 2
OK, that's good so. OK, that's good.
Speaker 1
So when I have time when I do not have homework, I go to the library and take some books.
Speaker 2
OK OK so and who taught you about the library? Or is it your high school teacher or? Is it something that you do?
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am it's something that I do. So you've always been interested in reading. Yes ma'am
Speaker 2
So it's a home thing. From your grandmother.
Speaker 1
Yes ma'am
Speaker 2

OK. And then do you talk to anyone about the books that you read?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, to my friend Esinase from at school.

Speaker 2

Hey hayi this Esinase is famous. This is the second time her name is coming up.

Speaker 1

She's the Interact President this year.

Speaker 2

OK, OK So what kind of stories did you talk to her about?

Speaker 1

Like the adventure stories ma'am and the the book that I read. i, Romeo and Juliet, OK, because she know that book show. So we talk with it and she has an app PDF and she have stories [there] pha. 'The After.

Speaker 2

The After, so is that is that an app? Yeah.

Speaker 1

No ma'am the app is PD and the story is "the after".

Speaker 2

OK, OK, So basically if you if you get a book out you or the two of you always share?

Speaker 1

Yes ma'am. Some books. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Well, that's interesting. Umm and then.

Speaker 2

So do other people in your house read books now? I know that in the past you saying that they influenced you to read.

Speaker 1

My brother, but she you but he is not reading frequently.

Speaker 2

So you are the one you are the main reader now in your house.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2

So are you planning to influence him again?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, but it's hard yho.

Speaker 2

Yeah. You know what? uThembi ...told me that she's she's actually the I think she's the youngest of eight or seven children and she's been in influencing her brother and to read because her brother it was not the the best reader.

Speaker 1

Yho hayi.

Speaker 2

So maybe you could do the same thing. And then now let's move on to the book club. Tell me what you think about the book club.

Do you like coming to the book club at all?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, I do like to come to the book club, but I think we must like add more people the book club because we are only 5 and.
Speaker 2
Huh?
Speaker 1
We we share this like we share the same. Yeah. Since we are all friends nhe ma'am so I think we should add some people who are not our friends or our friends too. But.
Speaker 2
OK, OK so you think we should add more people, OK?
Speaker 1
Yeah.
Speaker 2
But you still like coming to the club.
Speaker 1
Yes.
Speaker 2
OK, great.
Speaker 2
So tell me, what do you like best about the club?
Speaker 1
When we are sharing the book reviews.
Speaker 2
OK, and what do you like least about the club?
Speaker 1
The thing is that I like least.
Speaker 2
If there is, it doesn't have to be.
Speaker 1
Nothing? Ayikho
Speaker 2
OK. Do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club?
 Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
Why?
Speaker 1
'Cause I was not reading frequently, but now since I am reading I am improving and some and I also know in meanings of other words that I didn't know.
Speaker 2
Great yeah, that's important.
Speaker 1
OK.
Speaker 2
So do you feel free to give your opinions about the books in the book club?
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2

OK, so give me examples and and why. Yes. And and and why? For example, if we think of the situation that we had last week and you were giving your opinion on what made you feel free to give your opinions. Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1

'Cause I mean like when you give free opinions, you learn more, yes.

Speaker 2

Yeah, OK, and you feel like that. Do you feel like that confidence grew over time?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am. OK. Yeah, because I did notice that your your confidence is actually has grown a lot.

Speaker 2

OK, Umm, do you like writing book reviews for the website?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am, I do.

Speaker 2

OK. Yeah. So what do you think you are learning from that process?

Speaker 1

To like you are actually selling your book to someone and also.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 1

Attracting people to read your book that you are reading.

Speaker 2

Yeah, and when I think about that process, I'm thinking yho the book is so big. I mean, it could contain about 100 or 150 pages, but the book review is just so tiny, so deciding what to put in there must be a challenge. But you guys are getting so much smarter and clever in that process.

Speaker 1

Yes.

Speaker 2

So what? Then so do you think the book club is encourage you to read more books than you would usually?

Speaker 1

Yes ma'am. 'cause like when I get I usually. I get time to read books when I don't have anything to do at home.

Speaker 2

That is good. That's very good, so. Have you told any of your friends about the book club? And I think I know the answer to this one.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am. Siyolisiwe, and Esinaso and Emihle.

Speaker 2

OK, so you've told four friends.

Speaker 1

Three ma'am. Four friends, yeah I thought you mentioned four names.

Speaker 2

Well. OK so. What have you told them?

Speaker 1

Yeah. I told them ma'am that it's nice, 'cause you improve? You know your own knowledge about some books that you have read. And you only choose books that you are comfortable to read through.

Speaker 2
Great yeah. And would you recommend them to join? Yes and why?

Speaker 1
Because. Siyolisiwe and Esinaso ma'am.

Speaker 1
They they do have the PDF.

Speaker 1
App nhe? and then on like on Mondays before school when we come early they always talk about that book.

Speaker 2
OK. OK.

Speaker 1
They summarise to us that book.

Speaker 1
And we will all be lost like what is happening and then they told us that we must have this app too so that we can all read this group with this book and be a group off of PDF.

Speaker 2
Yeah. So funny. Yeah. OK, so there you go. So now the last question to you.
Do you have any suggestions on how we could have improved the Reading Club?

Speaker 1
To to attract more people ma'am.

Speaker 2
OK.

Speaker 1
Great thank you Angel.

Speaker 1
'Cause many people would like to join this Book Club.

Speaker 2
OK OK yeah, I see that.

Audio file
ZOOM0023.MP3

Speaker 1: Khanya
Speaker 2: Vuyokazi Jamieson
Speaker 2
OK, I'm Vuyokazi Jamieson as you know, we've been together for a few months now and I'm I'm doing this research for the Rhodes University, so now the time has come that we can chat about it. So I'm just going to follow a script of a few questions. I'd like you to introduce yourself and um, yeah.

Speaker 1
Uh, my name is Khanya and I'm in Nombulelo high school and I'm in Grade 11.

Speaker 2

Excellent. OK Khanya. First question,
Can you remember where you learned to read and who taught you?
Speaker 1
I learned to read an in Grade 2 and I Miss Watterson taught me then. My mother taught me too.
Speaker 2
So you had these two mentors at school and at home, so you had absolutely no choice. OK, so before you learnt to read, did anyone read stories to you or tell you stories?
Speaker 1
My grandmother used to read stories and tell us stories and, the whole family had many stories. Then maybe when it's raining we all siblings sit with our parents, then they they shared stories with us.
Speaker 2
Well, that's so nice, Umm a nice picture you painting there. Yeah. OK, and tell me how many are you at home and are you first born, last born, middle child?
Speaker 1
We are for my mother has four kids. My mother has five kids but she lost one. Then we are four kids and I'm the first born.
Speaker 2
Oh dear, OK first born. OK, so you probably you definitely learn to read first.
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
OK, sorry about your so.
Speaker 2
When was it the last one that she lost?
Speaker 1
It was the last born, there it was the fourth born, then she, she died, then the fifth born came.
Speaker 2
OK.
Speaker 2
OK, OK so that's why you ended up being four children.
Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.
Speaker 2
OK, sorry about that. OK and um. So do you read now in your free time?
Speaker 1
Ma'am a lot.
Speaker 2
OK, so naturally you just pick up a book and nobody tells you about it. It's something that you do OK and what type of books do you like reading and where?
Speaker 1
Yes ma'am.
Speaker 2
Where do you get these books? What's your source?
Speaker 1

Sometimes my mom buys books and I like I love fantasy books or mystery books or books that have adventures and scary stories.

Speaker 2

OK, OK, well that's great so but it's interesting that your your mother so so you you have family of readers, so she's the one who buys these books for you. Yes, OK, so there's absolutely no need for you to still go to the library? Yeah, because they have books at home.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2

OK, so do you talk to anyone about the book that you read?

Speaker 1

Yes, I do.

Speaker 1

First of all, I talked to my mother then she advised me to to tell the story to my siblings.

Speaker 2

That's good wow. So your mother is the channel. Yeah. OK. She's doing a great job. OK, so so I won't ask this other question then because it was.

Do other people in your household read books? Yeah, because you've answered it.

So tell me what you think about the book club.

Speaker 1

It's amazing, ma'am.

Speaker 2

So that means you like coming to the club.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am and the book club has made me have. Many mothers OK and I have now I have brothers and sisters.

Speaker 2

That's good. So you like coming here?

Speaker 1

A lot ma'am

Speaker 2

OK, So what are the things that you like? Like specific things that you like about the club and and what do you like least about the club?

Speaker 1

What I like about the club is that when I maybe I have anger at school, I just come here, then relieve my anger, ma'am. Then there's nothing I don't like about the book club.

Speaker 2

OK. Wow, that makes me happy. OK, so do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club and why?

Speaker 1

A lot ma'am. 'cause I used to be scared when I read in front of the class, but now since I've been reading in front of all of you guys, I just picture myself in the class. Then when I'm in the class, I just picture you guys only, that's why.

Speaker 2

Wow, that's that's amazing. So you're getting practice. And in two places here, wow, that's that's great. So do you feel free to give your opinions about books in the book club?

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2
And what makes you feel that way?

Speaker 1
I like I love. Spreading my knowledge with other people 'cause it makes you a better person. It doesn't make you a person that will have depression, you just. But when you're talking with someone. It seems like we're in the same same situation or the same. We are reading the same book, but what I like the most is that when I'm I'm telling a person about a book. They just picture what I picture, yeah?

Speaker 2
Yeah, yeah, so you're drawing a word picture.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2
OK, do you like writing book reviews for the website?

Speaker 1
And why, yes ma'am, 'cause I think it's making us popular.

Speaker 2
Yeah yeah, and you do realise that you are not just writing those book reviews for yourselves.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2
The whole college community can see those reviews.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2
Yeah, and you put your name there and everyone knows who wrote that.

Speaker 1
Who are his friends?

Speaker 1
Who you are.

Speaker 2
Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 2
So you guys are making an impact here, educating everybody and we are making sure that that author, even if people didn't know about it now that order can be seen.

Speaker 1
Yes, ma'am?

Speaker 2
So well done.

Speaker 2
So do you think the book club has encouraged you to read more books than you would usually read and why?

Speaker 2
Yes ma'am. Yeah.

Speaker 1

I first of all I was the person who was shy at school in primary school. I didn't like reading a lot, 'cause I I was scared of people judging me, but now since I'm expressing my feelings through a book by reading it, it makes me a better person.

Speaker 2

Sure.

So, have you told your friends or any of your friends about the book club?

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am and they were wondering if. Is Nombulelo the only school that will be coming to the book club and I said I'm going to ask.

Speaker 2

OK, So what have you told them?

Speaker 1

I said, um. Yeah. The book club is amazing. It it makes you feel. Feel special to everyone and it gives you courage to talk to people to talk in front of many people and it helps you to read perfectly.

Speaker 2

OK, and then tell me about these friends.

Speaker 2

Which school are they?

Speaker 1

Some of them are. Some of them are in Nombulelo, some of them are in Mary Waters. OK, some of them are in Nathaniel Nyaluza, and some of them are in Ntsika.

Speaker 2

And Ntsika and then yeah, did you say Nyaluza? OK, and then these three schools, Ok.

Speaker 1

Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 2

OK, so would you recommend them to join and why?

Speaker 1

I would recommend them to join because. Some of them don't have the courage. To speak in front of the class since it has helped me, I was I was just suggesting that it will

help help them too and reading is is the way how you express yourself.

Speaker 2

OK, so you feel like it will boost their confidence and OK.

Speaker 1

Yes.

Speaker 2

Great, I like that.

So do you have any suggestions on how we could have improved the reading club?

Speaker 2

So that's your very last question, your very last chance at this...

Speaker 1

If if what I would say is that if since you gave us books to read, I would like if each and every book we've read we read to watch a movie.

Speaker 2

So then your job is to find out if they are movies with those books. So movie version. Yeah. Of the book. Yeah. Yeah. OK, great and also to find out if we have time. OK great.

Thank you Angel.

You've done so well.

Audio file
ZOOM0024.MP3

Speaker 1 Sine
Speaker 2 Vuyokazi Jamieson
Speaker 2
I'm Mrs Jamieson, as you know that I'm doing this research through Rhodes University, Ummm, we've been together for a few months now and I think it's time that we can do this interview OK. So I'd like you to just answer a few questions. But before you do that. I want you to just introduce yourself.
Speaker 1
OK, hi. I'm Sine I'm doing grade 11, and I currently go to Nombulelo High school.
Speaker 2
Great thank you. OK, so my questions are quite straightforward the first one, is can you remember when you learned to read and who taught you?
Speaker 1
Well. I taught myself how to read I taught myself how to read. I that's half. True my that's half true. My dad used to read to me. The dictionary every night to sleep. Then I just started from there and taught myself how to read onwards.
Speaker 2
And you can't quite remember when,
Speaker 1
Three years old. 3 years old
Speaker 2
Wow, it's like you were just born reading. OK, so before you learned to read did anyone read stories to you, or tell you stories?
Speaker 1
No my dad used to read me the dictionary every night so that's kind of like storytelling.
Speaker 2
OK. So so that dictionary was so would he just pick a story around a word?
Speaker 1
No, he would just like read to me every word from starting from 'A' all the words in 'A' then explain to me their meaning, something like that. Yeah. Yeah. Wow..
Speaker 2
So it's like he was making in particular scholar.
Speaker 1
Yeah, yeah, they told me I was insane. Yeah.
Speaker 2
OK, that's interesting so tell me Sine do you read in your free time and what type of books do you like reading?
Speaker 1

Well, I'm I'm a dark. I'm a dark kind of person so I like mainly horror horror books and fantasy.

Speaker 2

And then tell me the source of these books? Where do you get these books?

Speaker 1

Sometimes I buy them and sometimes I just get them get them sometimes my teacher teacher just buys them for me for me for teachers, not teachers.

Speaker 2

Is your teacher OK and then who introduced this? This genre to you?

Speaker 1

Oh, it was my teacher with my teacher. She it was on my birthday. I remember it was in 2014. It was my birthday and she bought me a book. A scary book by mistake. She took the wrong one, and she was supposed to buy me some other kind of book I obviously don't remember right now, then I just read the book just for knowledge faith, then it got me interested in it, and I was like ok I'm a dark person.

Speaker 2

Hmm OK. Yho, and then do you talk to anyone about the books that you read?

Speaker 1

Well, actually no, I've I haven't met anyone who. Like the same book kind of books as I do and no one shared the same experiences as I do, so.. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Hmm OK, so probably the same in the same age group you mean.

Speaker 1

Yeah, in the same age group mostly older people like my teachers, I can talk to but yeah, but yeah, not the ones that are at Nombulelo, no my old school teachers.

Speaker 2

Where did you, which school was that?

Speaker 1

Ntaba Maria

Speaker 2

Oh, OK, OK, yeah, I understand.

Speaker 2

So this teacher was at Ntaba Maria, who bought you this book by mistake?

Speaker 1

Yes ma'am, it was Mrs Thomas.

Speaker 2

OK, OK. So you would credit the genre that you that you like to Mrs Thomas.

Speaker 1

Well, yes, and Mrs Simango both of them.

Speaker 2

Yeah. OK so tell me what do you think about the club and do you do you even like coming to the club and why?

Speaker 1

Well, I well, I'm. First of all I think that there could be more of us but since Covid. Yeah, it's actually understandable and I really like coming to the club. Yeah.

Speaker 1

I do, I do

Speaker 1

...for knowledge sakes and experience sakes.

Speaker 2

OK. OK. OK, So what kind of experiences do you think are helpful to you?

Speaker 1

Well, the interaction with other other people. Are really helpful and? And interaction with different people who read different genres of books. Yeah, that that could get me interested in other kinds of books and like oh. Maybe maybe maybe I'm not such a a horror person, I can read other genres 'cause I've mainly be focused on dark horror.

Speaker 2

Because the reason why I'm asking you deeper questions is because you came to us already reading. Some advanced books. Yeah, so I'm so I'm not sure if the book club has benefited you in any way. Yeah, so that's why we want to know if the How is the Book Club of benefit so you feel like social experiences? Are good for you? Yes, yeah, and the book that you. We just gave you last week, do you feel that that book is a good experience as well?

Speaker 1

Well. No to me, it isn't 'cause I literally don't find any particular interest in the conflicts of race and police brutality.

Speaker 2

OK OK OK. So you you don't engage in those kinds of in those kinds of discussions.

Speaker 1

Yes, but if I have to I have the knowledge to. To be able to speak out about it.

Speaker 2

OK, so you, you do read books like that, so that you can have the knowledge.

Speaker 1

I'm not not really but. Yeah, if I have to read it.

Speaker 2

Yeah, OK, but you did, read the book.

Speaker 1

Then I will. Yes, if I had a book I would literally go for it was if I was my choice.

Speaker 2

OK, that's interesting. OK, So what do you like best about the about the club?

Speaker 1

Best about the club. As I said, before the social interactions and learning what other people like and their genres of books they like.

Speaker 2

OK and then what do you like least about the club? Yeah.

Speaker 1

What I like least? Nothing nothing.

Speaker 2

Nothing OK, so you like you like coming to the club.

Speaker 1

Yeah, I really do.

Speaker 2

OK, OK great. So do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club and if so why?

Speaker 1

Uhm well. Yes yes and no it's a 2 parter question the positive part is I've learned on how to since I mainly based based my my findings and readings on on being judged by critics and not being judged by my peers. Uh. Then the book club diminished me and told me how to talk to my fellow peers as I'll be using like really big words. Some people won't actually know them because yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 2
OK, so you feel like the book club helped tone you...

Speaker 1
Toned me to the level my peers are on.

Speaker 2
Yes in terms of using language that can be understood by your peers, OK. Yeah. So OK, so do you think that the level of your reading has improved since joining the club OK so how would you answer that question?

Speaker 1
I'm, I I don't know since I've I came to the club reading. Mostly horror and I came out of the club reading, other genres. So I don't know how to answer that question.

Speaker 2
OK, OK, yeah, no that's what I wanted to to hear. Yeah, because therefore it's you could have expanded so, so maybe it expanded your genre. Is that is that what happened?

Speaker 1
Yes it did. Yes, that's what happened.

Speaker 2
OK, so do you feel free to give your opinions about books in the book club.

Speaker 1
Uh yes, I do and I think and mostly mostly. I I like. How can I put this this is gonna sound really mean?

Speaker 2
No, that's fine. Yeah.

Speaker 1
This is going to sound really mean but I really love.

Speaker 1
I like. I'm like on critique level, I love judging people. And enunciation and reading reading strategies based on what they've told me.

Speaker 2
Based on what they have...

Speaker 1
They've read to me or. Like the activity we did, but we shared. Like Yeah we shared reading experiences and stuff like that that I like judging people on critique levels.

Speaker 2
Yeah.Yeah. OK, so you you listen with a critical ear.

Speaker 1
OK, so do you feel free to give your opinions about books in the book club?

Speaker 2
Yeah, yeah, because you're listening with a with a critical ear. Yeah, and you do feel free to to to to Give your opinion and I was listening to you last week and you were very free to give your opinions and and what I love is that other people. They also felt free. To give you

their opinions as well, I mean to give opinions to you as well, yeah? Which is, I think everyone is growing in a way and everyone is taking that feedback in a positive way.

Speaker 1

Uhm, do you like writing book reviews for the website?

Speaker 2

Well, I I don't, I don't. No, I don't. I feel like I like talking about them. I don't like writing them down because someone will read it while I'm not there. So I literally cannot explain it more further to them like sell it to them. I feel like talking about the book itself, person to person. it's more Yeah, it's more. I don't know how to put it, but yeah.

Speaker 2

I I get you so it it's a writing part, umm so so you feel like... and do you remember when we did that speed was a speed dating?

Speaker 1

Speed dating

Speaker 2

Or did you find that exercise easier than writing a book review?

Speaker 1

Well yeah yes OK. Well yeah yes.

Speaker 2

OK, so you are a speed dater than a book review writer, and is that what you're saying? Yeah, because a book has got maybe 150 pages. But which information are you going to decide to put it onto that little paragraph?

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

But don't you think with speed dating as well, you've only just got one minute to sell that book? to that person so it's a skill that you've got to to learn because you are basically just selling that book to me so that I can decide on which information information you're going to give me in order for me to read your book. I'm going to go on the website, look at those book reviews of yours and decide if I'm going to go for your book.

Speaker 1

OK.

Speaker 1

Well, yeah, but I feel like talking to the person is much better than writing those book reviews 'cause I literally cannot. What if someone has a certain question about something and I'm not there and you know you can't leave comments on on the other review.

Speaker 2

I get you. Yeah, I'm on your side that's why I'm saying. Yeah, yeah that you prefer that you sit there and rather sell it, but don't you think also that speed dating closes you off because once it's one minute is up?

Speaker 1

Right, I can talk really fast. I can talk really fast and I cannot navigate my words so you can hear what I'm saying by talking really fast, Really fast.

Speaker 2

Yeah, but I think you're going to become a good writer, so please continue writing those reviews. I mean, remember, you're gonna write that book.

Speaker 1

Oh yeah..

Speaker 2

Yeah, and we want people to critique your book and to write book reviews and book reviews are the only thing that are going to sell that book. You're going to ask me to write a book review about your book so that it can be, it can go to Goodreads so that people can discover it quickly. So book reviews are so

Speaker 2

So so important. And you do realise that you are educating the College community because now the whole college community knows that you've written that book review and they can read it and decide if they want to stay with that book or not. Yeah, so when you do produce that bestselling book, its because I will be writing a book about your book. Yeah. So love those book reviews. I know that we divert.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

So. ***Do you think the book club has encouraged you to read more books than you would usually read?***

Speaker 1

No no it's just lessened me 'cause I'll be mainly focusing on one book and one book which normally normally I read like a paragraph like a chapter of one book and another chapter of notebook, then compare them together. And yeah, maybe in in a week I could read like 7 to 8 books in a week and be done with it.

Speaker 2

So what what is causing you not to read those other books because you know?

Speaker 1

I'll be mainly. I'll be mainly focused on the certain book and I wouldn't actually have time to read other books because I'll be like trying to write down notes and certain ideas and judging well, the authors writing and answering me, judging the authors writing on based on that singular book, which which which with one book that I'm reading on my free time, I just write what I think just write I think, then be done with it, then read another one that could take me like about half a day to finish a book half a day to finish a book. Then I'll be done with it, then read another one, then be done with it. Then jot down my ideas and be done with it. Like file it and be done with it, but then. But then I feel like when you're writing the book reviews, I have to have my ideas and critiques in there so I can see what can and I cannot. Can I not write on the paper so as to tell my book?

Speaker 2

Uh. OK, I I think that would book reviews. Don't think about it when you're at home. Only think about book reviews when you are here. OK yeah, do you think? About book reviews when you're at home? At home just read the book and and and leave it, just enjoy because we want you to have this joy of reading the book. So that when you are here, you just take the form and actually think about the books that you've been reading and just write the book because I think the problem is going to be thinking about this too much, otherwise it's not going to be coming an enjoyable reading experience.We don't want to take away from from from you, but we want to give more. If you've been reading seven books a week. You should go away here reading more books, or at least having expanded your reading experience.

Yeah, so don't don't lessen what you have, so continue reading what you are reading. But this one this one more book that you are taking away from here just read it, file it you will come back here and and and write about it. Can you do that?

Speaker 1

Yes I can.

Speaker 2

Yeah please. And if you don't understand the process let me know. OK. So moving on, have you told any of your friends about the book club and what have you told them?

Speaker 1

Oh yeah, I've told a lot of my friends about the book club and most of them are really interested in joining, but since, like.

Speaker 1

No. I don't have. I don't have many friends at my particular school, but I have hundreds of friends at other schools, so I've been telling them about it, but they've been wanting to join, but they're not part of Nombulelo, and they're in different parts of different in different schools.

Speaker 2

What? schools are those? Yeah.

Speaker 1

Then there's one from Mary Walters, then there's a few from Ntsika. OK, and yeah, and I have. And also my the primary school friends like in Grade 7 and primary school.
OK.

Speaker 2

I mean, what is this called again? In primary school Ntaba Maria. OK.

Speaker 1

My primary school friends, I have been trying to encourage them to read.

Speaker 2

OK, so would you recommend them to join?

Speaker 1

Umm, well, not all of them. Not all of them. Not only because I know some of them aren't like really, really interested readers.

Speaker 2

OK, so you would not recommend all of them to join.

Speaker 1

Not all of them to join, but there are that I'm really quite sure that will join and can put in the work that is not all, because they are not interested in reading. They they are, but not on the level and extent that we are like we love reading and they just read for the sake of it.

Speaker 2

OK, but remember we we also started at different paces here or different levels here? Yeah, but look how everyone has grown because I think the aim of the book club should be to help people.

Speaker 1

Help people grow. Yeah and actually a book club shouldn't be for people who who are advanced readers.

Speaker 2

It should be. For people who who absolutely couldn't read. But they get here and experience this exciting world of reading.

Speaker 1
OK?
Speaker 2
Yeah, I think that's the aim of and that should be the aim of book clubs, because if a book club has readers who who already loved reading, then what's the point of its existing? Yeah. Because therefore the aim will die. Because everyone already has and they already love reading and then what's the point of it going on? So I think those people who don't love reading should actually be joining the club so that we can help them to start reading that.
Speaker 2
That is it. I mean, if you agree with me.
Speaker 1
Yeah I do.
Speaker 2
OK, so. Last question, do you have any suggestions on how we could have improved the reading club?
Speaker 1
Any suggestions? Well, not things that we actually do not know now. Yeah, but I said more people could join. But yeah, I understand Covid and what else? Can we have like? Can we have like fun like not like fun mainly for like a social event where just someone brings a book that they've read before and people like talking about it like any any anybody? Anybody, literally anyone who's read a book and it can be able. To talk about their book like. Like what we did in 2019, like the library conference? Yeah, yeah, something like that way someone or some. I don't know. Or anybody literally anyone like a teacher, a student. I really don't mind can come forward and talk about. Like they've read. Thank you. Their personal reading experiences and what kind of books they like and what they would maybe if they had regrets of not reading a certain book. Not really a certain book, But yeah, telling us about their history of reading.
Speaker 2
OK. OK yeah OK we do have a series like that that we recorded called telling our stories I'll let you listen to that at some point, Then tell me if that's what you are suggesting.
Speaker 2
And then yeah, maybe we can organise something. Great, thank you.
Speaker 1
OK.

Siphe

Reading List

NAME:
HOUSE AND GRADE: Jacbuldo 9

Date	Title and Author	Finished
31 Aug 202	Cospa Candlewicks; death by pigeon	✓
14 Sep 202	Ronald Dahl; The Magic finger	✓
28 Sep 2021	Rachel Renee Russel; dork diaries	✓
50 Nor 202	The Mark Edyth Sulbring	
30 Nor 202	Stephan Pastic Timmy failure	
30 Nov 20	Puranda Hochings The lost city	

Book review

Author: ~
By Name..Ivan Brett.........................

For Title Casper Candlewacks - Death by pigeon

SUMMARY

This book is about an "extra-ordinary" boy, who
lives in a small town where being stupid is
normal. He was dumb too but everybody else
is way-way dumber. He does something terrible
that ends up with the whole town being
cursed. But throughout everything, he ends
up fixing everything and uplifting the ~~curse~~
curse. And its not, happily ever after.

RECOMMENDATION

I .... recommend this book because
its funny, very funny and fun to read. as
~~the~~ well. Instead of your regular smart
and beautiful books, this one is the
exact opposite. I recommend for the ages
10-16 because your imagination is still
unlimited and we all want to try something
new. besides the beautiful and smart at
those ages we get bored quickly. when
reading, so this is a good to keep enter-
tained.

Book review

By Name Author's ...Rachel...Renée...Russell...............

For Title ...Dork Diaries: Skating sensation...

SUMMARY

This book is about ...a girl (Nikki Maxwell) whose school.........
has a fundraiser for less fortunate places. and obviously....
there's a boy she likes (Brandon) He volunteers at an animal
shelter that was going to get shut-down because of no......
money. She decides to skate for the shelter at the..........
fundraiser but there's a girl who tries to get in the way.

....

....

....

....

RECOMMENDATION

I ███████ ....recommend this book because
its fun, funny and relatable at the same time..........
its your tipical girl from next door; yes, but its.........
different because she didn't have to do much..........
to get what she wants...

....

....

Book review

Authors
By Name. Morpurgo Micheal

For Title Boy giant (He crossed the world and found a home.)'

SUMMARY

This book is about A boy named Omar when war began back in Europe, He and his family were forced to leave but sadly, the day scheduled for their departure, his father and sister were brutally murdered. His mother didn't have space on the boat so he had to go alone He was told to go to fore Street, Mevagissey to find his uncle but he got derayled and woke up on a strange Island and the people that lived there were not taller than his ankle. They knew him but he didn't know them and he must find his mother.

RECOMMENDATION

I ██████████ recommend this book because It opens your mind towards the bigger picture. It makes you believe everything is possible. It tells you home is not where you stay, its where your heart is family is not blood, its the people that aprettiate and support you in life. I recommend it for the ages 15 upwards because its very educational and it shows you diversity, war and power of hope cause "hope always wins"

fiction, Adventure

"All mighty lord; please forgive my sins i have done a lot of bad things i know but hay, man, not like this! Woah yam here it comes, ok, i hope its not hungry!"
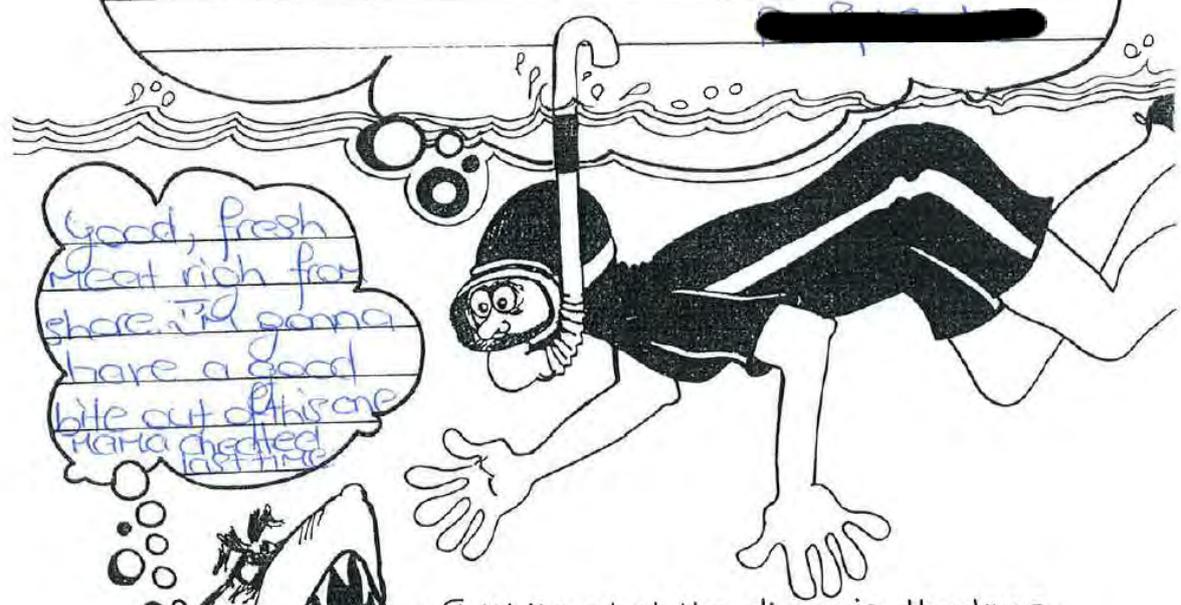
"Good, fresh meat rich from shore. i'm gonna have a good bite out of this one Mama checked last time."

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

Calm down; try relax your heart beat and pray it won't eat you!

Thembi

Reading List

NAME: ████████████████

HOUSE AND GRADE: Nombulelo High : GRADE 8

Date	Title and Author	Finished
31-08-2020	SECRETS OF OLD HANSON HOUSE / Katherine Seille	✓
14-09-2020	CREATURES INFEST LOCAL SCHOOL / C J Henderson	✓
14-09-2020	DR. JEKYll AND MR. HYDE / ROBERT louis STEVENSON	✓
28-09-2020	THE KILLER HAIRDO	✓
25-11-2020 08-11-2020	The bottle of the boards	✓
30-11-2020	HARRY POTTER / J.K. ROWLING (Philosophe's stone)	✓
30-11-2020	HARRY POTTER / J.K. ROWLING (Chamber of secrets)	✓
30-11-2020	HARRY POTTER / J.K. ROWLING (Prisoners of azkaban)	✓
04-2021	The Hate U Give	✓

Book review

By Name: Author's [Authork] Katherine Salle

For Title: SECRETS OF OLD HANSON HOUSE

SUMMARY

This book is about four friends who are planning on how to raise money. So Mr Sanchez came up with an idea of The Arts fair. But it didn't work out. Emily my favourite said they should use the Old Hanson House and they all agreed to that. But Miss Milly Moran warned them about the house and she said that the house was haunted. But someone informed them that Miss Milly Moran didn't want any in that house, that is why she said that. But they didn't know who to believe so they decide to go spend a weekend there.

RECOMMENDATION

I .... recommend this book because it is really interesting and scary somehow. I'm not a fan of scary book but when i read this i realised a lot. So I suggest that this book is read by (12-15) years old people so that they would start having interest to the book of the books like these. That is why i find them very interesting. It also has character that you wouldn't think that they would take such risks after reading these type of stories. I think you should read this book so that you also could find intrest in it.

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Book review

By Name ..Author's.. J.B. Stomper.....................

For Title.. The killer Hairdo. ....

SUMMARY

This book is about .A. human that was mixed water and..
sugar but they were a bit different from the ones...........
he usually know. She mixed them with a ~~pencil~~ pencil,....
the one she was using. She rubbed the pencil inside...
her hair and she did it over and over again. When she
rubbed for the last time, there was blood coming out
of her hair and it was itching. Her scalp ~~felt~~ felt like it was
having bugs on it. The teacher called on ambulance. The nurse
said she had hundreds of spiders crawling in the girl's
head.....................

RECOMMENDATION

I ██████████████████ ..recommend this book because
it is nice to read, because you just get too.................
curious to know about what's going to happen next......
So that's one of the reasons why I'm saying it nice to read.
You also get those scary or shocking moments that shows your
excitement and your interest in the book........................
....

Book review

By Name...
Authors

For Title..

SUMMARY

This book is about a girl called Starr. She is a very quite and she has a friend called Khalil. They knew each other for quite some time. They once went to this party. They were really having fun exept for Starr. She had nobody to talk to. She was standing there also alone like a fool. Until a friend of their almost got shot, Kenya. Starr and Khalil ran outside and went into Khalil's car.

Lisa

Reading List

NAME: R.L.STINE ████████

HOUSE AND GRADE: Nombulelo School 10^A

Date	Title and Author	Finished
31/08/2020	Night of the Liviling Dummy 3	✓
14/09/2020	Elizabeth written by Zoe Norton Lodge	✓
09/10/2020	Romeo Juliet by William Shakespeare	✓
23/11/2020	Moby Dick by Terry M.West	✓
30/11/2020	Waibing for Nermal by Leslie Conner	✓
Nov	CodeBusters by Don Metcalf	✓
Nov	My Weird School Special by Dan Gutman	✓
April	The Habe you Give	✓
May	Americah	

Book review

By Name..Authors.. ~~Gulman~~ Dan............................

For Title..Oh, Valentine, We've.. Lost Our Minds!.

SUMMARY

This book is about ....a.. ~~named~~ boy.. named.. A.J.. who.. hates..
..the.. L..word (Love). He.. thinks.. valentine's.. day.. he..said.. it.. is......
..gross. The.. has.. a..new.. come.. at.. his.. school. Pee.. Air.. he......
..liked.. to.. inspress.. the.. girls.. on.. his.. class,.their.. were..
..~~three~~ two girls.. named.. Emily.. and.. Andrea.. who.. ~~were~~ A.J.. did.not..
..like.. them.. because.. they.. were.. kind.. of.. bossy.. but.. Emily..
..A.J.. was.. Emily.. Secret.. valentine,.......................................

RECOMMENDATION

I ....██████████............recommend this book because
..it.. is.. fun.. to.. read.. and.. ~~it is~~ ~~re~~ has.. romance,..
..This.. book.. is.. mostly.. recommend.. to.. weirods,..
..people.. who.. does.. believe.. in.. love,.......................................

Book review

Author
By Name. R.L. STINE.....................................

For Title Night of the Living Dummy 3.............

SUMMARY

This book is about a girl named Trina whos father was a ventriloquist and she was living with he's brother Dan. Trina's dad has dummies in the attic and he calls the attic as a Dummy museum. One day there niece once visited and they were carry Zane(niece) a Trina's dad thinks these dummies are being carried by people because they keep showing up in the strangest places and the dummy its always Rocky.

RECOMMENDATION

I ....████████....... not.............recommend this book because its like a horror movie/book because its like a movie. I recommend this a book for people who are aged 16 and above.........................

Book review

By Name ~~Authork~~ Zae Norton Lodge ....

For Title Elizabella .... meets .... Her .... Match ....

SUMMARY

This book is about a girl who was ten and a quarter old, who is is a Poet, Fixer of Fairytales and the biggest pranker in the ~~history~~ history of Bilby Creek Primary. And her plans was involving ~~what~~ making a swimming pool in the playground without consulting a single and the students in her school are behind her in every step of the way. ~~She~~ She ended but doing the pool and the teachers where suprised that Elizabella had a great plan for her school ....

....

RECOMMENDATION

I ███████████ .... recommend this book because "it's funny to read it and I recommend this book for teenagers who are around 10 to 13a.

....
....
....
....

The diver thinks that the shark is going to be friendly or it is happy to see her. But And the shark is happy to be around her in the sea.

The shark thinks she is getting close to it, so that the shark can eat her.

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

The diver may get out of the beach and live the shark moving alone

Khanya

Reading List

NAME: ████████████████

HOUSE AND GRADE: Nombulelo School grd 10

Date	Title and Author	Finished
31/08/20	Vampire Diaries - L.J. Smith	✓
14/09/20	Night Life : Vamps novel — &aNancy A. Collins	✓
09/11/20	Seafire - Natalife C. Parker	✓
23/11/20	Children of Virtue and Vengeance - Tomi adeyemi	✓
30/11/20	Children of vitue and vengeance Bone - Tomi adeyemi	✓
30/11/20	The hate you give - Angie Thomas	✓

Book review

Author's
By Name... L J Smith ....

For Title... Vampire Diaries : The return midnight ....

SUMMARY

This book is about ... A Girl who's a vampire that is in
... love with two people their names are Stefan and ....
Damon. Elena is dating Stefan while having a crush on Damon,
Damon know's that Elena has a crush on him but Stefan
does'int now that Elena is finding it difficult to love two ......
people at the sametime. There are more romance, Action,
story's they dont know about them selfie's and they need
to go to the Dark dimension to find other thing and ......
Elena has to free his boyfriend. ....
....

RECOMMENDATION

I ... ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ ....recommend this book because
It's exsiting and has many adventure's, Romance, Action
and has amazing carrecter's and this book needs someone
who has big imagination, what I recommend is ....
that children under 16 are not allowed to read this ......
book only 16 and above. ....
....
....
....

Book review

By Name.. ~~Authors~~ Nancy A. Collins ....

For Title..Night Life...

SUMMARY

This book is about ..A vampire that decides she wants a modeling career her name is Lilith Todd. She disined her self own ballroom gown. Her father does not want her to desine clothes or do a modeling career and Lilith won't let her father stop her even if he treaten to cut off her credit card.

....

....

....

....

RECOMMENDATION

I .~~▬▬▬▬▬▬▬~~................recommend this book because It's exciting and Romance, it has many corrector's and this book needs someone who has a big a dream.

....

....

....

Book review

Author's
By Name... Natalie C. PARKER ....

For Title... SEAFIRE ....

SUMMARY

This book is about .. A girl ~~could~~ cold Caledonia Styx who lived
with her family that loved to go on a tripe using
their boat, they loved to sail around the ocean a
lot. One day they were on a tripe again sailing around
the ocean and they met a ~~gu~~ gentilmen could Aric
the gentilmen came aboard and murded Caledonia's family
and Caledonia survived after their boat sunked down.
Caledonia was saved by a group of girls the girls worked
together to bring down Aric.

....

RECOMMENDATION

I ....████████████................. recommend this book because
there are many adventures and obsticles that they
t girls are going to have and this book is amazing
because there are many girls that are powerfull and
strong. if you want to here an amazing ending
sit down and relax and give this book a try:

....

....

Book review

By Name. Author: ADEYEMI TOMI

For Title. Children of virtue and vengeance

SUMMARY

This book is about a girl cold Zelie. She lived with her dad and brother in a magic island her mother died when they were attached by pirates. After few years they lived in a magic island that kept them safe, the pirates returned and took their magic and tried to bury them alive. Zelie is trying to get back their magic and getting back what belongs to their island.

RECOMMENDATION

I ██████████ recommend this book because it's about black people that are fighting for their freedom and keeping their people safe. This book has a big fantasy breakout. It has love, pain and adventure. I recommend this book for the hole family.

Book review

By Name..**Authors** ADEYEMI TOMI ....

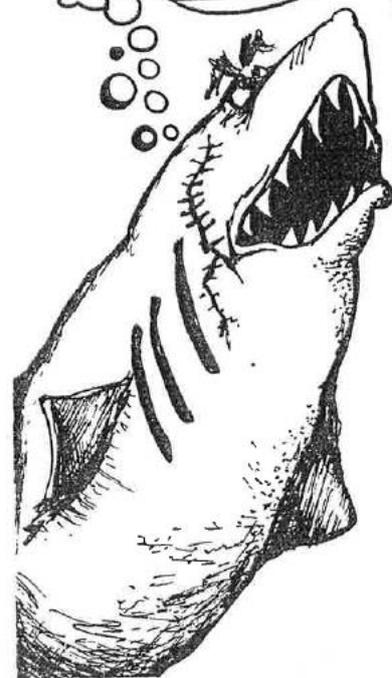For Title..Children of blood and Bone II..........

SUMMARY

This book is about ....This book is about a girl who has bad dreams about her mother that has died a longtime ago, she was killed by pirates she's trying to stop the night mares. She is united with her family and there are many new things she has to descover.

RECOMMENDATION

I ..████████████.............recommend this book because the book has magic and adventures that has made me an avid lover of fantasy. I recommend this book for the hole family.

This is the first time im seeing a shark much closer maybe i could just brush it and see it's reaction. maybe it will like me?
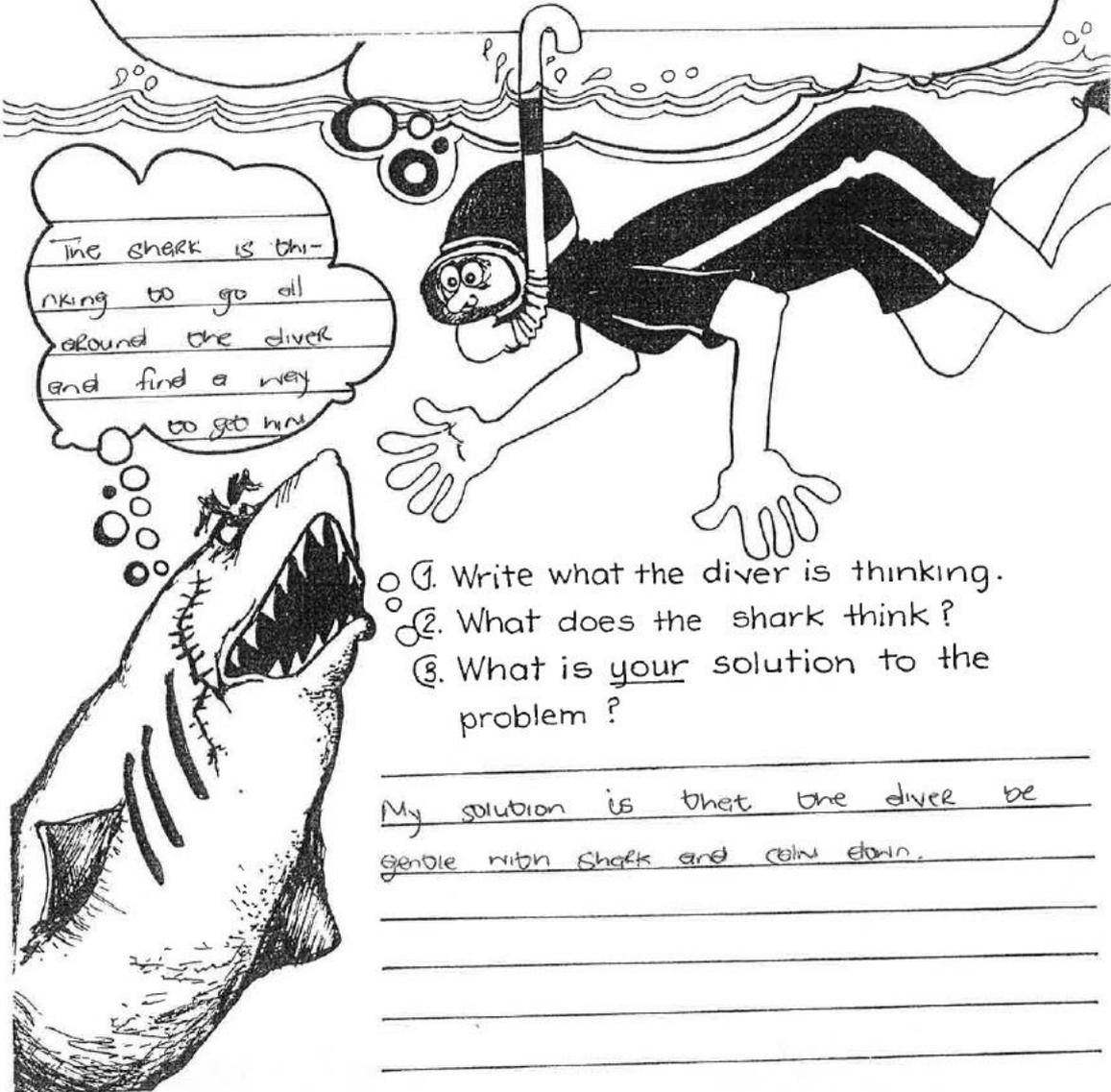
Finally i found my dinner

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

My solution is that the diver must swim back to shore because it's not safe being with a shark you dont realy spend time with.

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The diver is thinking to hold bothe sides of the shark's mounth so that the shark doesn't bite and swallow him. And then after that the diver is going to find a way to get away from the shark.

The shark is thinking to go all around the diver and find a way to get him

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

My solution is that the diver be gentle with shark and calm down.

Sine

Reading List

NAME: ████████████████

HOUSE AND GRADE: Grade 10

Date	Title and Author	Finished
31 Aug	The Core Peter V. Brett	✓
Aug	Storm swept	✓
Sept	The deep	✓
Oct	The last vampire	✓
30 Nov	Spooks	✓
30 Nov	Monster	✓
18 Dec	Unnatural creatures	✓
April	The Hate You Give	
May	Ame Ri Canah	

Book review

By **Author** Name..... Gaiman Neil ....

For **Title**..... Unnatural Creatures ....

SUMMARY

This book is about ..... Multiple cringing stories. It is adapted ..... from many horrific stories that chill the bone. Dive in ..... to stories that allow amazing, beautiful and terrifying ..... creatures to life. This is Neil Gaimans selection of his ..... favourite stories featuring beasts from myth, fable and imaginati Creatures extraudinary, exotic, extinct, living, dead and undead ..... Prawl the pages of this book. .....

RECOMMENDATION

I ..... ▓▓▓▓▓▓ .....recommend this book because ..... it has a number of exciting stories for those chill ..... seekers.

Book review

Author's
By Name...Thomas, Angie...........................

For Title.The Hate You Give...........................

SUMMARY

This book is about Starr, a girl living in a black poor neighbourhoodz and goes to a white middle class high school. There she needs to leave behind her neighbourhood personality and take on black girl in a white school persona. She cannot act too garden heights or else be called hood. She is just Starr Carter the approachable black girl. There is an altercation where by her friend is killed by a police man. The public get enraged and hold strikes and protests in the name of the deceased. Snitch rules in her neighbourhood applies and she must choose to speak out or shut up. Strut into the pages to find out more

RECOMMENDATION

I ...██████████.................recommend this book because its a great read and dives in into the racial struggles we face in our day to day lives and the police brutality alleges in the U.S.A.

Book review

By Name Authors Joseph Delaney

For Title Spooks Alice

SUMMARY

This book is about Alice, an allie of the renowned Spook and his apprentice is banished to the realm of the dark. Now she must fight the creatures she has banished there. With the intent of getting revenge the creatures hunt her down every knook and cranny. She has to find the last and final weapon to defeat the Fiend before she becomes one of them.

RECOMMENDATION

I ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ recommend this book because its a dark horror fantasy and captures the readers dark side. You would have to have a dark imagination to get the content.

Book review

Author's
By Name..........Christopher Pike..........................
For Title........The last vampire (Red Dice).........

SUMMARY

This book is about ...Alisa a five thousand year old vampire, daughter to the first vampire. Born of snakes in the fiery pits of hell. She is on the run as the U.S. government pursue her. They are after her bled blood but no one can get her DNA as it is very deadly and dangerous. All the while an old flame rises to reclaim the past.

RECOMMENDATION

I ....███████████.............recommend this book because it is a great read. It goes in context into her past and has very discriptive content. If your a fan of vampires and is looking for something good to redd then this is the book for you.

Book review

By Name Author: Christopher Pike

For Title The last vampire (Phantom)

SUMMARY

This book is about Alisa has made a discovery that could bring her untold tragedy. And all the time a powerful force is watching. Someone who knows all that ever was and all that will be. Dive in to find out more

RECOMMENDATION

I ████████ recommend this book because it is a great read. It goes in deep of science and neurology. So you will be learning as you read.

Book review

By Name Author's ...Dunmore Helen..................................

For Title ...The Ingo Chronicles (The Deep)............

SUMMARY

This book is about ...Ingo, half mermaid half human girl. She
is the only one that has gone to the bottom of the ocean
and came back. Now a monster has been stirring and
she and her friends Sapphy and Conour must return
to the deep to help fight this creature. Splash in to find
more.

RECOMMENDATION

I ....████████████......... recommend this book because
its a book based on mermaids for those tail seekers
out there. Mystery and fun engulf the realm of the
deep

Book review

Authors
By Name... I Peter V. Brett ....

For Title...... The Core ....

SUMMARY

This book is about Leesha, a countess of an underworld kingdom must protect her world from an invasion of demons. Stuck between taking care of her kingdom or protecting her baby, she must make a very hard choice. Arlen and Jadir, fellow males of Leesha decide to take the way to the demons but there is a snitch inside. The demons have planned an all out assault.

RECOMMENDATION

I ████████████ recommend this book because it is a fantastic into the dark book. Its an adult oriented book but can be read by all ages. It gives us insight on demonology and its culture.

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Title: A serie The Bad Begining
Author: Lemony Snicker

    Violet

    Claus

   Sane

    & Grey & Cloudy day

Its a series

Count Olaf
Executor of parents estate - Mr Po
Violet will receive the wealth when she comes of age
Boaler Mansion
Giotest colours on their clothes
Edgar and Albert (Obnoxious)
Fourth cousin twice removed
Acter by trade & travels with the
Cramped solem room
Shiny brass doorway (Smartly dressed elder women)
Justice Straus
Tall, thin, grey suit with dark stains
Shiny eyes
Filthy room
Stuffed head (lion)
bowl of applecares
First impression matter
No use in making themselves comfortable
Demanding, Short tempered and bad smelling
Justice Straus came for a visit
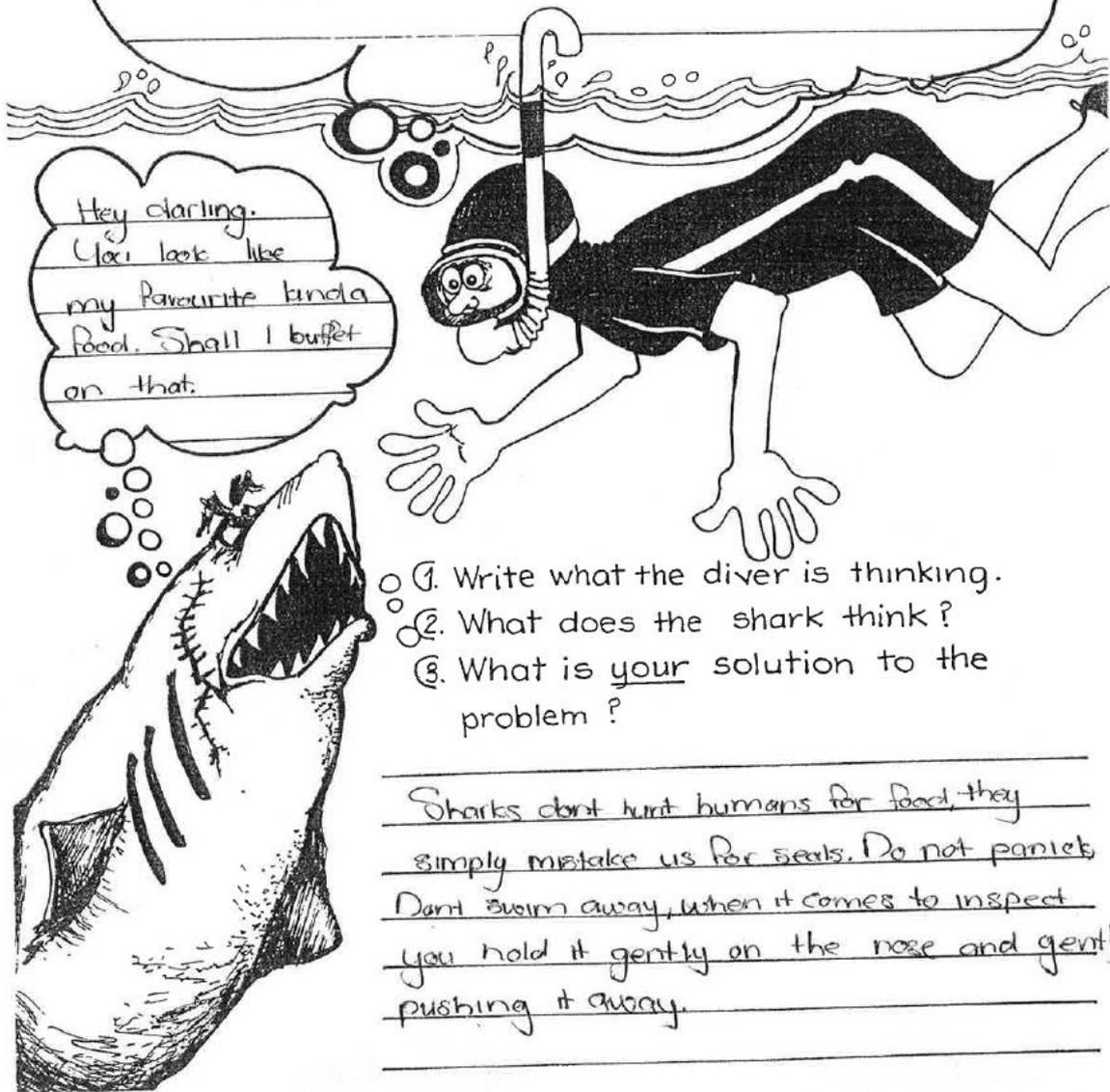Private Library
Collecting books for years

Book review

Americanah

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Description

main points

views

report

rating

end
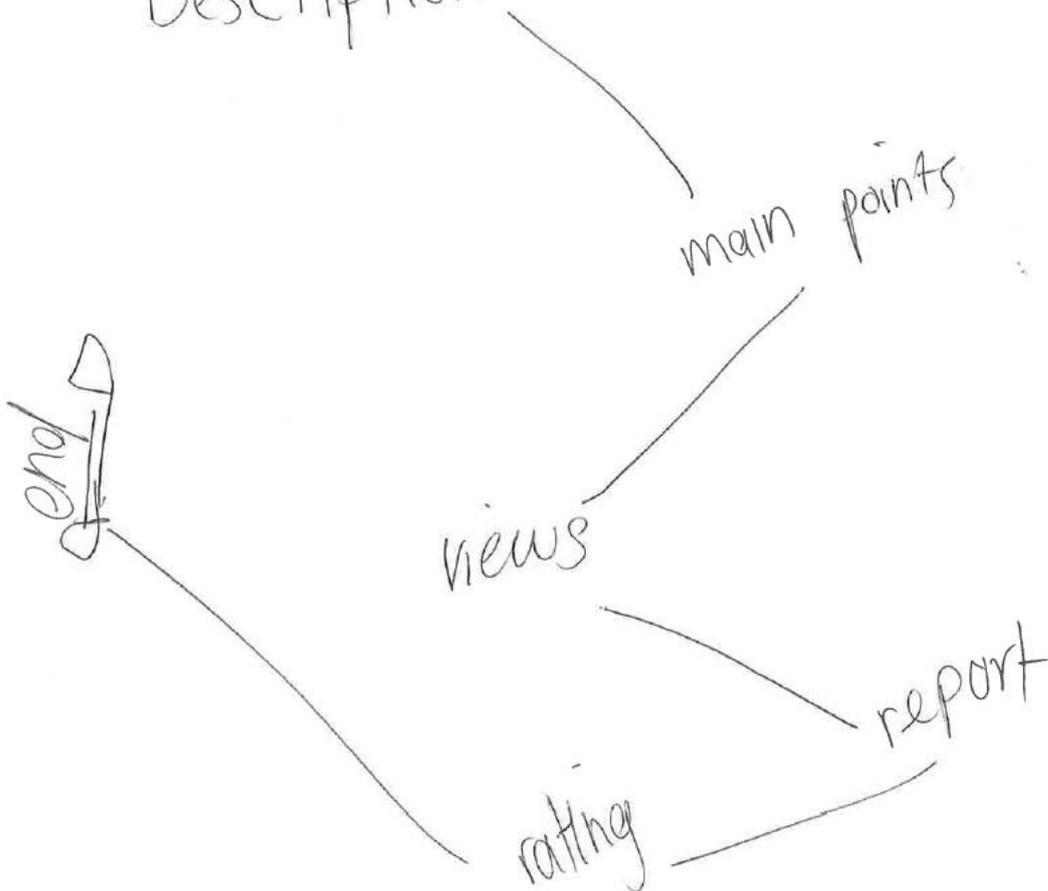
Oh my word. Its a great white, I wish I could just touch. Wait look at its face, its smiling :)

Hey darling. You look like my favourite kinda food. Shall I buffet on that.

1. Write what the diver is thinking.
2. What does the shark think?
3. What is your solution to the problem?

Sharks dont hurt humans for food, they simply mistake us for seals. Do not panic. Dont swim away, when it comes to inspect you hold it gently on the nose and gently pushing it away.