

RESPONDING TO LITERATURE
EMPOWERING GIRLS TO SPEAK WITH
THEIR OWN VOICES
IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the space provided by a reader-response transaction between girls and the text, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor 1977), empowered pupils to tell their own stories. It also sought to identify ways in which the problems and possibilities perceived by these pupils might guide curriculum decisions in a transforming education system.

In addition to engaging in reader-response activities around the text, drama and videos providing social context were integral to the programme. Related work in the subject areas of history and lifeskills was also undertaken. Data was drawn from pupils' reading journals, responses to specific passages, transcripts of small group discussions, and interviews.

The study is ethnographic in nature and all the data qualitative. Theoretical insights were drawn from the fields of cultural studies, postmodern criticism, and poststructural modes of cultural and social analysis insofar as they illuminate and inform the relationship between language, knowledge and power.

The research was conducted in an historically white, girls' school which adopted a non-racial admissions policy in January 1991. Despite the fact that existing traditions and values of the school to a very large extent influence what is taught, the data suggests that pupils were becoming agents in their own learning and were taking up multiple identities both within and without the world of the school.

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For the purposes of anonymity I have created pseudonyms for the school and the pupils that were part of the study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study explores ways in which a school could effectively educate girls to live in a society very different from the one their parents and teachers grew up in. In post-Apartheid South Africa they need to be able to participate fully in circumstances where they will meet, live and work with people of different cultures, religions, languages and ethnic origins. The relations of power in this 'new' society are likely to be very different from those in the past. It is essential that schools find ways of helping pupils see the possibility of a future in which the roles of oppressor versus oppressed are not simply reversed, a future in which there is a real possibility for freedom, equality and justice for all.

South Africa is in a process of transition. The government has committed itself to the provision of equal education for all children under one education department. This is made clear in the South African Schools Act which was ratified in parliament on 15 November 1996.

WHEREAS this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities.

(Government Gazette 377(17579) 2)

The Act aims to provide a uniform set of norms and standards for the education of learners at all schools in the country.

Education has a vital role to play in easing children into a rapidly changing society through its function as a microcosm of that society. Under the previous dispensation schooling was provided separately for the different population groups. Citizens and

pupils were kept apart from one another in all walks of life. Thus, radical adjustments have had to be made as one national education department and provincial education departments serving all population groups have replaced the former fifteen different education departments. In the Eastern Cape this has involved the amalgamation of six previously separate departments of education, and contact between previously separate groups of children, on the sports field, in the classroom and in all facets of society.

Racial terms

According to Epstein (1993:16) we "categorise ourselves and others by their notional race (and/or colour)". The apartheid system in South Africa depended on these categories in order to enforce racial separation "but even it found race very hard to define" (Dyer, Eyber and Versfeld 1997:1). The categories used during this time have in some way become part of people's identities in this country and due to the complexity of our political past may still be misused and misunderstood.

In my research I use the terms black, coloured, Indian and white. I use the term Xhosa when referring to those who speak the language isiXhosa. Culture which is a contested category I have dealt with in more detail in Chapter Three but, for the purposes of clarity, I use 'culture' to acknowledge that different people interpret and make sense of the world in different ways and for this reason might find it congenial at times to group themselves together. I also refer to the beliefs, values and traditions of Acacia as being reflected in the 'culture' of the school and as being the dominant culture of the school.

Teacher as researcher

I had, in the early eighties, worked as a remedial teacher at two non-racial private schools and was aware of the difficulties encountered by black pupils whose languages and cultures were different from the dominant culture of the schools. The approach adopted

by these schools, would in today's terminology, be referred to as a 'subtractive approach' to language competence (Baker 1993:243) in which both the home language and the culture of black pupils was excluded from the school and a transmission oriented curriculum was implemented. Many of the pupils identified by teachers as underachievers and referred for remediation were children whose first language was not English. It was my impression that these pupils often developed a poor self concept, internalising their lack of success and confirming their inferiority in the eyes of their teachers and in those of the white children in their classes. I was concerned that this pattern should not repeat itself.

I had transferred to Acacia, an historically white Junior School, in which the current research was undertaken, from a non-racial school within the Catholic Church's school system, a system which was working actively to promote equal education for all through workshops for teachers and the development of materials which challenged traditional thinking and stereotyping. I had been employed by Acacia in July 1990, six months prior to Acacia's adoption of a non-racial admissions policy, specifically because of my experience. I therefore saw it as my professional responsibility to be as informed as possible about approaches to multicultural education and to support both teachers and pupils in what was, for everyone, a new experience.

Classroom challenges

During the course of 1992, when for the first time I had a significant number of pupils from nondominant cultures in the classes I was teaching, I became aware that pupils from these groups appeared reluctant to participate in discussions in the classroom. Further investigation revealed that pupils from similar cultures sat together during breaktimes. Whenever there were opportunities to form friendship groups for work - for example, in the library, in the artroom, and during needlework lessons - pupils would separate into cultural groupings. I also established that there was almost no cross cultural social mixing after school. It was after I had introduced a history project in which pupils were

to research and share their family histories that I observed a very different interaction among the pupils. They showed a great interest in each other's stories and engaged each other through questioning in the exploration of one another's cultures. I began to feel there might be ways of structuring learning situations which would include those pupils who had been marginalised by the dominant culture and who had been unable to challenge or resist their experience of exclusion.

In search of strategies

Rather than impose my own perception on the phenomena I was observing and develop strategies to change the situation, it seemed important to me to create safe spaces in which pupils could talk freely and could arrive at their own interpretations of their experiences and create their own meanings. I was interested in exploring pupils' own perceptions of their positioning within the existing white, middle class, culture prevailing at the school and in the society beyond the school in which there had been dramatic changes in positions of power with whites relinquishing political power to a black majority. Notwithstanding new approaches in schools which advocate the constructionist approach and greater learner centredness, evidence suggests that in actuality students' own meanings have seldom been acknowledged in South Africa or elsewhere in the world. According to Epstein:

As recently as 1992 Mac and Ghail (p230) found ... management and the majority of teachers ... failed to acknowledge the students' meanings or the need for their active involvement in curriculum innovation. The students' perspective was not recognised as a legitimate interest within the school.

(Connell *et al* 1992, quoted in Epstein 1993:247)

It was while I was grappling with my own understanding of the phenomena that I was observing that I read *Through Whose Eyes* by Beverley Naidoo (1992). In this book she records her literature-based exploration of issues of racism with white students in a school

in England. I felt that her study could be adapted and applied in the school in which I was teaching and that this research might provide a means of gaining insights into how pupils were experiencing changes in the school and in the wider South African society. I felt her work was particularly relevant to our situation due to her own personal experience and reflections on her girlhood in an all white, girls' school in South Africa:

Having been brought up as a white, middle-class South African child - with all that entailed in terms of the construction of blinkered, racist childhood perceptions - I have personally found books written by writers from very different backgrounds a major resource in enabling me to listen to other voices.

(Naidoo 1992:16)

An exploration of pupils' perspectives

My investigation takes the form of a case study of work done in one school: Acacia Junior School. It forms part of ongoing action research initiated in June 1990. As mentioned previously, historically the school had been an all white girls' school. Which adopted a non-racial admissions policy in January 1991. As a teacher in the school I was involved in the lead up to this event and the subsequent changes in both the overt and hidden curriculums of the school. A central concern was that the school should continue to provide a learning environment in which all girls would have access to the quality of education traditionally offered by the school. It was important that the school be experienced as a physically, emotionally and socially safe space by pupils in order that they might benefit from the learning and teaching environment provided by the school.

Based on my premise that Naidoo's work provided an entrée to the kind of evolution I wanted to facilitate, I decided to develop a literature-based reading programme. I would then observe and record the pupils' transactions both with the texts which they read and with each other. I was interested to see whether the girls' discussions and written tasks might provide any insights for curriculum change and the development of appropriate responses to cultural diversity on the part of the school.

In the view of Finn:

Research evidence ... has a crucial role to play in assisting teachers to come to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of children's thinking, and to the realisation of the need to tackle controversial issues.

(1990:13)

As a teacher-researcher engaged in action research, I identified issues on the evidence emerging from the pupils responses. Adjustments were made to the curriculum and learning modules were developed in an effort meet the needs identified by the pupils.

According to Epstein:

... reflection on practice is of as much benefit to the researcher wishing to develop and refine theory as it is to the teacher wishing to improve classroom practice.

(1993:6)

In addition to these classroom innovations, I needed to develop a theoretical framework through which to make sense of the emerging historical and qualitative data. Theoretical insights have been drawn from the fields of cultural studies; postmodern criticism; poststructural modes of cultural and social analysis in as far as they examine the relationship between language, knowledge and power (Jordan and Weedon 1995; Epstein 1993; Giroux 1992,1993; Henriques 1984; Thomaseli 1988; Heath 1983; Weedon 1987); and transactional reader-response approaches to the teaching of literature (Naidoo 1991,1992; Benton 1985; Corcoran 1987,1990; Davies 1989; Evans 1987, 1992; Green 1993; and Rosenblatt 1938, 1978, 1985).

Overall structure of the study

In this chapter I explain the purpose of the study and provide a brief historical background to the perceived need for such a study. In Chapter Two I contextualize the

study within the broader social and political developments in South Africa and within the social relations in the school itself. I take a retrospective look at the political and social pressures which led to a shift from segregation to integration in the school system. This is followed by a brief history of the growth of the liberal humanist tradition in Acacia which privileged and empowered a white elite, while this same tradition, (and later, Afrikaner nationalism), imposed an education system on other population groups which was under financed and generally inferior. I conclude this chapter with an examination of the school's response to the changing nature of its pupil population. In Chapter Three I focus, through a review of the relevant literature, on the development of a theoretical framework which I use to provide a perspective from which to view the themes and issues which emerged in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Four I explore the potential of literature and children's reading as a possible practice for allowing the voices of the girls to speak for themselves and to be heard. I also argue the case for my use of ethnographic research as a methodology for the study through a review of the field and a discussion of the advantages of this approach for research in education. The context of the study is outlined in Chapter Five and in Chapter Six, Seven and Eight I present the data and my analysis of the pupils' responses to the text and reader-response activities in which they engaged during the course of the project. My conclusions make up the final Chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

CHANGING SCHOOLS IN A CHANGING COUNTRY

Creating the borders

The assumptions underlying the development of schooling in South Africa need to be explored, questioned and theorized if they are to be understood and appropriately challenged.

History and culture are fundamental aspects of the fabric of everyday life. They help to give us our sense of identity, telling us who we are, where we are from and where we are going.

(Jordan and Weedon 1995:3)

Historically, definitions of culture have enabled 'culture' to be used as a boundary concept to draw borders around cultures and thereby include or exclude on the basis of class, race and ethnicity. Theories developed by Giroux provide valuable insights for the analysis of the development of education in South Africa and I draw on his notions of "borders" and "border pedagogy"(Giroux 1992). In South African education the creation of borders around cultures led to the privileging of whites and disempowering and alienation of blacks.

In any society the denial or marginalization of histories and cultures other than those of the dominant group has profound implications for subjectivity and identity.

(Jordan and Weedon 1995:3)

The process of white withdrawal from multicultural educational environments had its beginnings early in the colonial history of the Eastern Cape. In the early days in Port Elizabeth multiracial schools were not uncommon. By 1840 a completely multiracial

Government Free Elementary School had been established (Redgrave 1974). Redgrave records how attitudes toward this school changed:

... the Government Free School, which was once deemed fit for the education of the sons and daughters of the early settlers, was now regarded as most unsuitable by the early segregationists.

(1974:6-7)

The higher education of the sons of wealthier families in Port Elizabeth was catered for at a school which was founded in 1856. There was initially no similar provision for girls but by 1873 it was felt that "a good school for the better class of European girls was urgently needed" (Redgrave 1974:9).

Acacia School for Girls was established in response to the above perceived need. The evolution of its values and traditions and the enculturation of its pupils contributed to the present context for the reader-response study. The culture which evolved in Acacia was part of the dominant colonial culture of the time. It set itself apart from the culture of other groups in the country whose histories and cultures were marginalised. Their education was catered for in ways which had profound implications not only for their identity but also that of members of the dominant culture.

Borders that enclose : Educating an elite

Acacia School for Girls is one of a number of South African schools established in the British tradition. It has been in existence for approximately 120 years and during this time the values and traditions which characterise its ethos have largely been based on a liberal humanist concept of culture as:

A body of values, transmitted from the past to the future through the imaginative works of men. ... This, in turn, implies a teaching and learning process, and generates theories of a distinctive class with a duty

to protect and disseminate traditions. It becomes simultaneously a code of values and a mode of perception.

(Griffiths 1987:51)

The code of values embedded in this tradition allows for a questioning of discrimination and a challenging of tradition. A brief history of Acacia reveals that while it was creating boundaries around its culture, it did not exclude the possibility of stepping outside the boundaries. It is recorded that the first principal was known to support votes for women and engage girls in discussion on public opinion. On having been denied permission to address the parents on the occasion of the first prize-giving she got her way the following year and presented a view of the education of girls as one which should "prepare our daughters for a life of work, and provide them with a future that can never depart from them - and that is a good sound education" (Redgrave 1974:20). Other examples of crossing over boundaries are recorded. A subsequent head of the school was said to have "had many friends among the Coloured races of South Africa, and was deeply interested in their education" and to have seen "both sides" (1974:61) during the second Boer War. During the Second World War on the occasion of the D-Day landings the black staff gathered with the rest of the school in the hall and were asked to sing the Xhosa National Anthem. An old girl remembers; "... and who could blame us that there wasn't a dry-eyed girl in the Hall?" (Redgrave 1974:173).

Despite these indications that the boundaries among cultures were not entirely fixed, liberal humanist education practices in the school continued to privilege pupils who were members of the dominant white English-speaking culture of the country at the time. Within the classrooms of the school knowledge was anchored in the experience of white, middle-class social groups and based on European (particularly British) models of education.

The culture of the school, expressed in its values and traditions, and lived through the identities of its pupils, was given life by the creation of an ideal personality embodied in the form of an 'Acacia girl' who could be recognised by the wearing of a school uniform.

The uniform was both a symbol of identity and of exclusion. It was also to provide a means of monitoring standards in order to ensure the maintenance of the values of the school. The principal who introduced the school uniform made this clear:

The present members of the (school) have a great name to maintain and splendid traditions to cherish. ... I hope that every girl will remember that she wears colours that belong to a fine old school of the highest traditions, and that she must not by any dishonourable or mean action, or by any carelessness or selfishness, or by any want of true gentleness and courtesy, bring dishonour and disgrace on the name of the ... School.

(Redgrave 1974:109)

It is within this culture that the identities of girls of Acacia were constructed. The goal of this education was to ensure that they would become economically and internationally mobile. This goal has become even more focused as life in the information age gives us citizenship in the global village.

Borders that exclude : Educating for inferiority

In stark contrast to the education provided for the privileged pupils of Acacia, a very different system of education was being put into place for black children. This system was aimed at marginalizing their culture and creating subject positions which would finally lead to their alienation and anger. The colonial order which gave birth to schools for whites was to spawn a system of education for black children which helped to prepare them for the position of inferiority they would occupy in society. Mission schools played a part in this development:

The missionary came to South Africa to preach the Gospel and dispel the darkness of the heathen. But he taught elements of the same culture to which the trader, the magistrate and the farmer belonged.

(Cook, as quoted in Molteno 1984:49)

According to Molteno blacks were brought into the system "not as equal individuals" but as a "subjugated colour-caste, integrated economically, while kept outside politically and at a distance from society" (1984:52). Therefore at the same time that blacks were being taught the dominant culture they were also being effectively excluded from this culture. This exclusion was written into the statute books at the time of the Act of Union in 1910 which stated: "We must give the Native an education which will keep him in his place".

Thus a system of separate and unequal schooling developed which transmitted the 'high culture' of the dominant white group while "teaching them to despise their own history and culture", and ultimately, to "despise themselves" (Molteno 1984:68). A further fracturing of identity took place when whites identified 'bantú culture' as a way of categorising and separating groups and then imposed the instruction of 'Xhosa' or 'Zulu' culture on pupils who had internalised the inferiority of such identities and cultures. Eric Molobi gives a black perspective on this process:

From the turn of the 19th Century the real purpose of the racist structuring of education in developing different curricula for the different racial groups was to train for inferiority; to train for the lowest jobs in the labour market; to shut black people out of power. ... Verwoerd was quite clear about this. Black people have a specific and limited place allotted to them in the social order. Education should keep them within the bounds allotted to them.

(Quoted in Moore 1993:20)

Colonial policies of segregationism grew into the National Party policy of apartheid or racial discrimination. The identities constructed within these systems of education excluded participation in the world of culture for which white pupils were being prepared. As pupils rejected their destiny in the tribal village, schools became sites of struggle in the fight for liberation. Foreshadowing Giroux's theorizing about the 'bordering of cultures' in which he draws attention to the "ways in which the dominant culture creates borders saturated in terror, inequality and forced exclusions" (1992:33).

Culture became one of the main weapons of this struggle and in the words of Cabral, "national liberation is in one sense an 'act of culture'" (Cited in Alexander 1988:3). Culture is, therefore, "capable of being mobilised for political, economic and social ends" (Tomasei 1988:8). This mobilization was one of the forces used in the onslaught upon the boundaries that separated groups in South Africa. President Nelson Mandela referred to the 20th anniversary of the 1976 student uprising in Soweto in his speech at the opening of Parliament on 9 February 1996:

We owe it to that corps of brave young people who rose up against apartheid to institute further measures to move towards a non-racial and equitable education system.

(EP Herald, February 10, 1996)

Pressures on borders : Changes in schooling

The 1976 student uprising was regarded as a landmark in the history of black protest in South Africa. It was followed later by widespread school boycotts which started in Cape Town in April 1980 (Christie 1985:244) and soon spread throughout the country. In addition, by the mid-1980s, the whole country was experiencing an economic recession. Port Elizabeth had been particularly badly affected by the consumer boycotts of white business which had been in place on an off since 15 July 1985. There had been many retrenchments and mass dismissals of workers during this period, starting when the Ford Motor Company closed down its factories in the area. Whites in the professions and in management positions had left Port Elizabeth in a steady stream taking their families and school-going children with them.

The disparities between educational provision for the different education departments became more glaringly obvious as white schools emptied while overcrowding continued in black schools. France and Melunsky reported that there were approximately 6 500 vacant places in white schools in the Port Elizabeth area while there was an estimated shortage of 13 150 places in black schools (1990:117,118). Further, double sessions (where two

teachers take two classes of the same school in the same room but at different times) were being conducted in nine black primary schools affecting 2 332 pupils. The platooning system (in which two schools utilize the same facilities but at different times) was in place in 13 black primary schools (10 158 pupils and 241 teachers) and at 8 black secondary schools (9 040 pupils and 230 teachers). The Northern Areas Co-ordinating Committee (NACC) had estimated that 1 000 pupils would not find a place in Port Elizabeth's coloured schools. Two schools which had been promised two years previously had not been built.

The economic recession forced the government to explore methods of a more cost effective education for South Africa. It was made known that future funding of education would involve the "consideration of additional models for the provision of education and the greater autonomy of educational institutions" (SAIRR Survey 1989/90 :769). Schools could opt to become Model B schools. They would remain state schools but the school management council would determine admissions policy, provided that a majority of the students remained white. In order to achieve Model B status schools would have to hold a poll in which 80% of the parents approved the model and 72% of the parent body had to have voted. This information was contained in an announcement by Mr Piet Clase, minister of education and culture on 23 March 1990. Mr Clase stated further with regard to Model B that:

If this second model were approved, admission of this nature would have to take place without the nature and character of the school being disrupted.
(SAIRR Survey 1989/90:769)

In addition "the underlying principles of Christian, culture oriented, mother-tongue education" should be maintained (SAIRR Survey 1989/90:770). It was clear that what was intended was that the curriculum and present ethos of the school should remain the same and that children from other communities entering the school would be expected to adapt and assimilate into the existing environment with as little disruption in the schooling process as possible.

Acacia recorded the highest percentage poll in the open school opinion poll in the area. The change in status to a Model B school was welcomed by staff and parents. The school would remain subsidised by the State but could prescribe its own admissions policy (EP Herald 24 October 1990).

Further financial constraints in the form of an expected 17% cut in the budget for white education led to another shift in policy.

In February 1992 the minister of education and culture in the House of Assembly, Mr Piet Marais, announced changes to the models system of schooling implemented during 1991. ... He said that all status quo (all-white) and state-aided model B schools were to be converted to semi-privatised model C schools with effect from 1 August 1992 (Circular 18 February 1992).

(SAIRR Survey 1992/93:579).

These changes in the provisioning of education for white pupils did not go uncontested. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) rejected the view that the changes were necessitated by budget constraints.

To us it is simply part of the ploy of the NP (Nationalist Party) to erode the powers of a future government and remove the base for one of the fundamental social rights, the provision of free education.

(SAIRR Survey 1992\93:593)

An ANC (African National Congress) delegation headed by Mr Nelson Mandela (February 1990) met Mr Marais and argued that "the conversion of schools to model C would push up fees, thereby allowing only the privileged access to previously white schools" (SAIRR 1992\93:593). In August 1993 the head of the Education Department of the ANC, Mr John Samuel, said that the

...educational assets of the country had been handed over 'arbitrarily' to a small minority and that they would have to be transferred back into the national pool to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources.

(SAIRR 1993\94:697)

Pressures on the borders : Changes in society

During this time of change for schools, dramatic political events had been taking place in the country. The system of apartheid which had divided people and entrenched a policy of discrimination against blacks was increasingly being contested in the workplace, in the community and in schools. Political action took the form of boycotts, stayaways, mass demonstrations and protest marches. The oppressed were engaged in a struggle for liberation which aimed to create a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic New South Africa. A high level of violence gripped the country. Television programmes covering the news brought these events into the homes of all South Africans. On 2 February 1990, the state president, Mr F.W. de Klerk, lifted bans on the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress and various other organisations. Nine days later on 11 February, Mr Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years in prison. Mr Mandela was appointed deputy president of the ANC and negotiations for a new dispensation were begun.

The liberalization of the political process upon which the government embarked in February 1990 was followed by an unprecedented upsurge in political violence in various parts of the country. Port Elizabeth was shocked when riots swept its Northern (coloured) Areas and Uitenhage's coloured area in the second week of August 1990. Social analyst, Deon Pretorius discussing the causes of the riots warned:

Despite what has happened since 2 February, South African society is acutely abnormal ... The "New South Africa" is still very far beyond the horizon despite its apparent visibility on SATV.

(1990:20)

Mass mobilization in the form of protest marches and threatened occupation of white schools by black student activists impacted directly on the lives of pupils at the school. The ANC called for a national campaign of mass action on 3 and 4 August 1992. Schools practised emergency drills during which pupils had to evacuate the school buildings in response to signals from the school alarm system and hide under desks in the event of a bomb threat. White parents became extremely anxious about the safety of their children in the school and demanded greater security measures. Iron grill doors appeared on classroom doors and an atmosphere of fear and tension spread through Acacia Junior. Fathers were ready to patrol the school and contact was made with local peace monitors who could be called on to mediate should the need arise. Black and white demonised one another in the press and on television and yet their children were sitting alongside one another in the school's classrooms.

March 29 1993 was declared a 'Day of Protest' by the ANC. A march was planned to converge on the Supreme Court in Bird Street in Port Elizabeth. Marchers in taxis and other vehicles dispersed up Cape Road at the same time as parents were fetching children from school. Parents with children in their cars found themselves part of the crowd. Many white parents and children, caught in the crowd, were badly shaken although none were hurt while many black parents and children participated as demonstrators in the protest march.

Chris Hani, general secretary of the South African Communist Party, was assassinated on April 10 1993 and the country erupted in violence and turmoil. His assassin was white and anti-white feeling ran high, being relieved only by the fact that it was a white woman who was able to identify the assassin's car. Few pupils returned to school on the first day after the Easter break. April 14 was set aside as a Day of Commemoration and mourners were to march to the square in front of the City Hall for a commemoration service. Chaos ensued when groups ran riot in North End shattering display windows and looting. Marchers had to be re-routed when it was realized what might happen in the city centre. A tense situation was defused only just in time.

As the April elections approached violence in the country reached new levels of intensity. Rumours that essential services were likely to be cut and that supermarkets and shops would be looted led to frenzied stockpiling of tinned food and milk while a power failure was anticipated through the purchase of paraffin and candles. Schools were to be closed for election day and subsequently it was decided to close them for a second day.

Voting took place in an atmosphere of calm and friendliness. In the Eastern Cape the ANC won with an overwhelming majority. The elections turned out to be a time of healing and 'nationbuilding' and Archbishop Tutu caught the mood in his celebration of a 'rainbow coloured nation'. "South Africa has the challenge of building a culture of tolerance" was the view expressed by University of the Western Cape anthropologist Ben Cousins;

People do not have just one identity, we are all more than one thing. We must open the debate on multiple identities ... We have got to deal with the depth of hurt and anger arising from generations of racial discrimination.

(Cousins, as quoted in Valentine 1993:6)

Assimilationist approaches to education

Despite the new admissions policy, entrance criteria ensured that those who gained access were similar in academic background to those pupils who had traditionally made up the pupil population. Its values and traditions continued to seal the border among the cultures and identities of the pupils who entered the school. Liberal humanism's notions of universal truth and an essential human nature had enabled the school to develop a culture which legitimized certain forms of knowledge and denied others.

The tradition of 'high culture' in the school with its unproblematic acceptance of certain representations of art, literature, science and technology as truths confines itself to a

Eurocentric view of the world. This 'truth' informs common sense and taken-for-granted positions on issues and:

... enables the dominant claims about the real and existing power relations to appear rational and objective; it forces opposing views to establish their rationality and intelligibility according to norms that already favour that which they oppose.

(Henriques 1984:111).

It also provides a norm from which to define and exclude others:

The whole idea of bridging is surely to absorb children from outside our system into our system - not to adapt our system to them. We cannot be all things to all people.

(Note passed to me at a Teacher Centre meeting on bridging)

These common-sense notions are deeply embedded in white consciousness and they have been part of the enculturation of all groups in South African society.

English is the language of learning in Acacia. Language plays an important role in the construction of meaning and "it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed" (Weedon 1987:21). According to Weedon post-structuralism makes the assumption "that language, far from reflecting an already given social reality, constitutes social reality for us" (1987:22). The manner in which the home language of English second language speakers is recognized, respected and legitimated will impact on the formation of their identities. "Language is a significant part of our identity - if someone devalues our language, they devalue us" (Klein 1993:124).

The "immersion principle of language learning ..." (Klein 1993:54) works on the basis that if all the pupils hear is English they will learn it in order to survive. This fits in well with assimilationist approaches to education which encourage respect for other cultures, while:

... teachers continue to see their role as putting over a certain set of values (Christian), a code of behaviour (middle-class) and a set of academic and job aspirations which will ensure a place in the middle-class.

(Williamson, as quoted in Mullard 1982:121)

Most white parents and many black parents would endorse these educational goals. The reality expressed in this approach is that many white teachers and parents still perceive people of colour in stereotyped forms and, although not openly articulated, hold to a belief in the cultural and racial superiority of whites, thus for them opening the schools means "to stay the same" (Mullard 1982:125).

The attitudes of Xhosa parents and pupils to language learning reflect values internalised from the past which support this position. Coupled to this is their recognition that English remains the language of power in our society. Parental authority is deferred to by school management in order to justify 'staying the same':

In all my dealings with parents of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds I have found that what they are seeking as far as education of their children is concerned, is not a lowering of our standards to accommodate them but extra assistance and intensive tuition to enable them to attain high levels of achievement and so maintain our standards.

(Letter from the Principal to person X dated 1994.10.31)

The recognition of other histories, experiences, values or knowledge, for example, the language and culture of the Xhosa people, is therefore likely to remain low on the agenda.

In the past Acacia High was not prepared to recognise a pass in Xhosa as equivalent to a pass in Afrikaans at the same level as an adequate entrance qualification. In a response to such a request the Junior school was informed:

My recommendation is, therefore, that the Junior school should not in any way compromise its position in the academic quality of the pupils it sends on to the High school by altering its promotion criteria ...

(Letter from the Principal to person X dated 1994.10.31))

The knowledge of Xhosa and a pass in that language, when set against a pass in Afrikaans, is regarded as a compromise of academic standards suggesting that traditions of knowledge, truth, objectivity and reason may merely be the:

... effects of a particular form of social power, the victory of a particular way of representing the world that then presents itself as beyond mere interpretation - truth itself.

(Giroux 1992:53)

Reflecting the changes in political and social power in the country, this power of exclusion on grounds of language proficiency has recently been neutralized in a circular from the Eastern Cape Department of Education:

... the pass requirement of two languages is amended with immediate effect. The result of the amendment is that from standard 2 - 7, only ONE APPROVED LANGUAGE must be passed for promotion purposes. Furthermore, this language does NOT have to be the language of instruction.

(Circular No.46/1996 Dept. of Education, Culture and Sport. Province of the Eastern Cape)

Multicultural education

The most common understanding of multicultural education in many previously all white schools is that it "implies the recognition of the presence of pupils from different cultural heritages learning together in the same classrooms" (Coutts 1990:1). It is informed by the liberal belief in freedom, equality and justice, the right of every individual to develop to his or her full potential. This politically neutral view underpins the relatively positive response of Model C schools to a multicultural approach to education. Elements of both assimilationist and multicultural education can be detected in the responses of teachers to

workshop sessions held at Acacia Junior School in January 1991 before the start of the first term:

- Teacher 1 They have decided to send their child to our school and they must adjust to the way we run things.
- Teacher 2 Remaining as is, as far as possible, but constantly being aware of differences and changing - incorporating those differences.
- Teacher 3 Think about what we did this afternoon and so become more aware of the different needs of all pupils. Try not to be prejudiced.
- Teacher 4 How to actually do it? Awareness of not tacking bits on to curriculum but making a positive and directed effort at getting rid of prejudice. Need for resources on how to integrate curricula etc., to overcome prejudice.

It would seem that multicultural education as engaged by these teachers, would in practice mean:

... little more than 'adding on' some information about different cultures to the existing curriculum, reinforcing a division between 'us' and 'them' - 'us' being the normal and familiar, 'them' being the exotic and unfamiliar. ... Usually the groups have no say over how they are presented in the curriculum and often the information is inappropriate and out-dated.

(Eybers 1994:16,17)

In both the assimilationist and multicultural approaches to education 'culture' appears to be seen as something 'others' have. These approaches are, therefore, incapable of incorporating a critical dimension *vis à vis* Eurocentric culture and its relationship and interaction with other cultures. In the end these approaches merely serve to reinforce the view that European culture is superior to others.

Common-sense as rationale

Common-sense is, to a large extent, relied on to provide a rationale for responses to changes in the school. Henriques clearly outlines the theory upon which a common-sense view of the individual is based:

...the presupposition of the individual as a unitary entity, a thinking, feeling machine which is self-directed as far as thought processes are concerned, is basic to child-centred pedagogy and to developmental psychology. It has become part of the common sense, taken-for-granted background for these practices. The science of psychology at once - confirms this 'truth' whilst depending on it for its own intelligibility.

(1984:102)

Child-centred education and developmental psychology are seen to be the founding principles upon which any good education system is based. According to Debbie Epstein these common sense understandings "construct the ways in which racism and antiracism in predominantly white early years classes are perceived and addressed (or not addressed)" (1993:318). A view often expressed by teachers is that 'there is no racism here' or 'young children don't see race' (Klein 1993:114). This is based on a notion of innocence and a belief that young children are not and cannot be racist.

A current 'urban myth' doing the rounds in the staffrooms of previously all-white schools in Port Elizabeth. Two small boys, one black and one white, are great friends. After a class party arranged by the teacher the small black boy's father comes to fetch him. Taken by surprise the small white boy rushes to the teacher and tugging at her dress says; "Did you see? Vuyo's daddy is black!" This story proves conclusively to all those who tell it and hear it that small boys do not see colour within their peer group.

Statements such as 'I only teach children' or 'all children are the same' find their roots in a child-centred education which fails to place the child in the social context of its

cultural group and therefore make it possible to deny that reality as being part of the child's identity.

An incident from the school's Pre-primary department was reported to me by a prefect who was present at the time illustrates how children link their experience of social relations to the identities of others. The little girls were sitting at a table having their lunch. A little black girl spilled her cooldrink and, as was customary, the senior sent her for a cloth to wipe up the spill. While she was busy mopping up the cooldrink another little girl asked her whether she was going to be a 'nanny' when she grew up. She denied this vehemently only to be met with a chorus from the little girls seated at the table: "You're going to be a nanny! You're going to be a nanny!" Little white girls' experience of black women is often limited to contact with the domestic servant who works in their homes. They had clearly linked the little black girl's identity and role to that of the 'nanny' in their own homes.

Notions of sequential development, derived from Piaget's work, suggest that children are incapable of dealing with moral and social issues until they have reached specific levels of moral development, usually set around a "mental age" of 10 or 11 years (Epstein 1993:325). Hence racism, "because of the assumed innocence and naivety of younger pupils" (Finn 1990:5), is seen as being an inappropriate issue to raise with young children. It follows then that children should be protected from this unpleasant and harmful knowledge. Based on this view, issues of racism, discrimination and oppression embedded in our apartheid past are regarded as too harmful to raise in class discussions or as curriculum issues. Teachers often reflect the view that to discuss racism is likely to create racist attitudes in otherwise innocent children. According to Klein "There is a 'common-sense' notion that talking about racism makes it happen" (Klein 1993:114).

This notion informed the response received from the staffroom when I recounted a story told to me by a senior in the school: Mrs Foster the other day I was in the cloakroom and I was busy getting dressed and this one little white girl, she was sitting with a black girl and she is saying to the black girl; 'Have you seen the new Miss South Africa?' And the black girl says, 'Yes I have seen her.' And the white girl says, 'She is horrible hey?' Then the black girl says, 'No, she is nice.' Then the white girl says, 'But she is black!' I was assured by other members of staff that the white girl in question was not racist but was innocently voicing opinions she had heard at home. The fact that she was speaking to a black girl was proof that she did not see colour. To make an issue out of the incident would only create awareness of racism where it had not been before. The likely impact of such a statement on the identity of the black girl could be discounted because in the eyes of the teachers to whom 'all children are the same' she had become 'white'.

These views are often reinforced by teachers' refusal to intervene as common sense informs them that there is no problem. This lack of intervention "allows them to remain unexposed to the actual belief systems that pupils develop" (Finn 1990:16). These common sense views "presuppose an essence at the heart of the individual which is unique, fixed and coherent and which makes her what she is" (Weedon 1987:33), which in this case, is a pupil of the school, 'an Acacia Girl', an identity constructed for her through the language of Acacia and by its values and traditions which often ignore her own history, culture and family identity. The school is therefore seen to define pupils through its power to exercise control over them. This view of the individual denies pupils the possibility of taking up their own "subject positions - ways of being an individual" (Weedon 1987:3) and of bringing their own social and linguistic backgrounds into the school context.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEED TO MAKE SENSE OF EMERGING THEMES

A LITERATURE REVIEW

South African society represents an extreme example of the social relations of inequality. These found ultimate expression in the policy of apartheid and were reproduced, among other means, through its systems of education. In order to engage in the transformation of these relations of power it is important to understand how they are legitimated. Culture and subjectivity have emerged as dominant themes in the creation of relations of power in the society. The dominant culture has "the power to define what things mean" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:13) and in this respect it has the power to represent common sense and to define and confer identity. Liberal humanism is the philosophy which has informed the culture in the school and it is characterised by the dominance of certain versions of knowledge and identity and is one of the two major theories of modernism "which grounded cultural politics in Western societies" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:19).

Culture and Liberal Humanism

Bowker, informed by Jordan and Weedon, argues a brief and useful insight into the roots and functioning of liberal humanism in our society:

Liberal Humanism is based on liberal philosophy and humanism, which are characterized, respectively, by the belief 'in the inalienable rights of an individual to realize him- or herself to the full', and in "an essential human nature and in the power of reason to bring about human progress" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:23). Because of its origins in a European, patriarchal society, the belief in a universal individual led to the values and truths of the white European male becoming universal truths. These 'universal truths' have the potential both for liberation and imperialism; for freedom and justice, if the 'inalienable rights of the individual to realize him-or

herself' apply to all people, for control and injustice, if these rights are not available to all.

(Bowker 1996 : thesis in process)

The 'universal truths' of liberal humanism are embedded in the concepts of culture which inform modernism. Using Williams' definitions as starting points Jordan and Weedon draw out their social implications. In the first place Williams defines culture as a "general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" (cited in Jordan and Weedon 1995:6). This view assumes that; "'culture' is something that is cultivated, that one gets more 'cultured' over time - for example, by reading the right books, attending the right schools, learning the right accent, acquiring the right tastes and so on" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:6). Williams further defines culture, in what is often referred to as the 'high art view', as "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (cited in Jordan and Weedon 1995:6). These two definitions confirm the Arnoldian view that culture is a pursuit of "the best that has been thought and said in the world". This concept in turn "generates theories of a distinctive class with a duty to protect and disseminate traditions" (cited in Griffiths 1987:51).

Bourdieu argued that the culture of the dominant social groups is transmitted as universal, legitimate knowledge and that different classes in society do not have equal access to this culture. The possession of cultural capital ensures the continued power of the dominant culture in a society. In Bourdieu's view the dominant culture is implicit in a wide range "of school practices, ie. the official language, school rules, classroom social relations, the selections and presentation of school knowledge the exclusion of specific cultural capital" (Bourdieu, cited in Giroux 1993:39) This involves both the overt and the hidden curriculum.

Once western culture becomes universalised as civilization it becomes possible to view 'culture' as something 'others' have. In these circumstances yet another definition of culture, "as a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" (cited in Jordan and Weedon 1995:7) comes into play. Inherent in this view lies the potential for

the marginalization of the 'other'. In this sense "culture is the 'property' not of individuals but of groups, in this sense 'culture' is used in the plural ... one talks of cultures" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:7) and refers to, for example, Xhosa culture. This usage is "sometimes referred to as the anthropological conception of culture" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:7). The definition of anthropology provided in the Collins Dictionary (1987) is "the study of man, his origins, institutions, religious beliefs, social relationships etc.". The Liberal humanist quest for knowledge objectified the 'other' and assumed the power to name and to define and fix meaning, and represent the legitimate social world of the 'other' using Eurocentric culture as a referent against which to measure observations. According to Giroux liberal humanism has "failed to account for the power of its own authority as a central component in structuring the very notion of 'other' as a site of objectification and marginalization" (1992:220).

This power was central to colonialism and enabled the abuse of "the concept of culture for cynical racist ends" (Enslin date unknown:21) It is in these terms that racism should be understood as having been learned as a particular social and historical construction emerging out of the relations of power described. If it is to be challenged there must be an awareness of "the ways in which it is produced, sustained and taken up within a cultural politics situated within wider dominant relations of power" (Giroux 1992).

Common-sense framed by liberal humanist views of culture

Teachers, like pupils, are cultural beings and it is not possible for them to stand outside their own lives or the cultures they inhabit (Epstein 1993:3). Teachers at historically white South African schools are most likely to reflect the liberal humanist views of culture which have served to inform common sense and to privilege the white elite and define people of colour as negatively different and deny them self-worth. This serves to reinforce the view that Eurocentric 'high culture' is superior to other cultures. Obvious sources of common sense are general education, the media, relatives and friends. It relates to particular definitions of what is natural, appropriate, moral or good. Common

sense consists of a number of social meanings and particular ways of understanding the world which guarantee them. These are meanings which inevitably favour the interests of particular social groups and "which become fixed and widely accepted as true irrespective of sectional interests" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:77). Henriques emphasises the difficulty of countering or proposing alternatives to commonsense claims that appeal to rationality and reasonableness (1984).

According to Jordan and Weedon; "Common sense tends to privilege conscious knowledge and experience, more often than not reproducing the liberal humanist versions of subjectivity" (1995:75). The term subjectivity refers to a conscious and unconscious sense of self and ways of understanding personal relations to the world. The individual is presumed to be unique, rational and imbued with potential. It is believed that, given the right environment this potential can be realised through education and personal development.

Epstein argues that "'common-sense' theorisations are dangerous for, in adopting them, we fail to think about what we are doing and why" (1993:3). In order to assist in an examination of these issues she provides us with useful guidelines. Drawing on the French philosopher, Michel Foucault's thinking about power and language she points out that "there are different possible ways of behaving and of understanding the nature of the institution" (Epstein 1993:9), in this case the school. These "ways of behaving and understanding" she says are in competition with each other for dominance and, at different times and in different places, different versions will be more or less successful. "Foucault used the term 'discourse' (taken from the field of linguistics) and 'discursive practices' to describe these understandings and their expression through language, organizational forms and ways of behaving." (Epstein 1993:9) According to Giroux, "dominant ideologies are constituted and mediated via specific cultural formations" (1993:37) and one of these formations is a school.

Commonsense and transformation

Programmes of multicultural education, while they remain informed by common-sense versions of what is best, are likely to result in "assimilation in which the cultural heritages of a group of pupils are consciously submerged in a process of integration into the mainstream" (Coutts 1990:5). Klein maintains that "Celebrating cultural diversity in school was, as ethnic minority communities had known for years, no solution to racial discrimination"(Klein 1993:70). The reason for this is that so long as common sense informs us that culture is what 'others' have it will be seen as:

...a mark of ethnicity and difference. What has changed in this hegemonic formulation/ strategy is that diversity is not ignored in the dominant cultural apparatus, but promoted in order to be narrowly and reductively defined through dominant stereotypes. Representation does not merely exclude, it also defines cultural difference by actively constructing the identity of the Other for dominant and subordinate groups.

(Giroux 1992:58)

Proponents of anti-racist education believe that they have found an approach that "penetrates to societal injustices based on racism and socio-economic class discrepancies" (Coutts 1990:5) and yet the discourse of anti-racism positions individuals as either racists or anti-racists and denies the multiplicity of positions proposed by poststructuralism or, indeed, postmodernism. It may be experienced in its turn as the suppression of heterogeneity and multiplicity in efforts to impose new relations of power.

Rethinking common-sense : The contribution of postmodernism and post-structuralism

"Postmodernists believe there can be no universal culture and no universal narrative - just multifarious readings or interpretations of the world, coming into play in contingent and fortuitous moments of intertextuality" further "symbols can have no consistent meaning" (Giroux 1993:223). This statement challenges assumptions about culture, history,

knowledge and language which inform common-sense and allows for the possibility of moving beyond these fixed meanings. These new possibilities are embodied in the postmodern concept of culture defined by Giroux, he says:

Culture is not monolithic or unchanging, but is a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege.

(1992:32)

Neville Alexander stresses that "we have to get back to understanding culture as a process" (1988:4) and once we have done this then it may be recognised as one " which informs the way meanings and definitions are socially constructed and historically transformed by social actors themselves ..." (Tomaseli 1992:38).

This represents a radical shift in power in which culture may be viewed as a "dynamic force in the world, one which is in a constant state of flux with no fixed boundaries" (Bowker 1996: unpagged). Educators, therefore need to be alert to, and challenge, dominant views of culture such as the liberal humanist view, which enables them, consciously or unconsciously, to regard their cultural responses as 'natural', the products of 'commonsense'. It also leaves open the possibility for developing spaces in which the liberal humanist principles of liberty, justice and equality might challenge racist practices and ideologies and affirm differences.

Postmodernism also challenges the concept of a universal narrative of history. "Tradition or 'total' history", according to Sarup, "inserts events into grand explanatory systems and linear processes, celebrates great moments and individuals..."(Sarup 1993:59). Postmodernism puts into question these "singular narratives of the past, which largely excluded the experience of ordinary people, people of Colour and most women" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:551). This view is replaced by a version of history which acknowledges a "plurality of narratives which are linked to different groups and interests" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:551).

Language is no longer accepted "simply as a transparent medium for transmitting ideas and meanings" (Giroux 1992:70). The postmodern view of discourse:

... challenges reason on its own ground and demonstrates that what gets called reason and knowledge is simply a particular way of organizing perception and communication, a way of organizing and categorizing experience that is social and contingent but whose socially constructed nature and contingency have been suppressed.

(Peller, as quoted in Giroux 1992:30)

Postmodernism, informed by post-structuralism, provides a view of subjectivity as "multiple, layered, and nonunitary; ... the self is seen as being "constituted out of and by difference and remains contradictory" (Giroux 1992:60). Walkerdine contributes significantly to this concept of subjectivity. In her view individuals:

...are not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless.

(1984:14)

While not allowing postmodernism itself to become another masternarrative, postmodern thinking provides helpful ways of challenging assumptions and of engaging in a process which allows for the possibility of moving beyond concepts of universal 'truths' and fixed categories.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONSTRUCTION IN AND THROUGH LITERATURE

In the initial chapters of this investigation I, to a large extent, confined myself to a cultural analysis of the traditions, values and meanings which have come to inform and privilege the dominant white, English-speaking culture of Acacia. I used insights drawn from Giroux (1992) to show how this created a border around the culture prevailing in Acacia which effectively separated it from other groups and from a critical engagement with social and political developments in the wider society beyond the school. It is this bordering of a culture which gives expression to the "eurocentric aspect of liberal humanist thought and practice" which "often has racist implications" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:59).

The vision for South Africa presented in the Preamble to the Constitution reads:

We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our
diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this
Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to -

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic
values, social justice and fundamental human rights:...

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996)

The sentiments expressed in the Preamble are likely to be wholeheartedly embraced by all schools in the country. The values coincide with those liberal humanist values which, at least in theory, reject discrimination on the basis of class, gender, race or ethnicity.

Despite the political, economic and social changes in the country it is unlikely that established institutions such as schools which have empowered and privileged certain groups through the valuing of a particular language and forms of knowledge and cultural expression will change very quickly. Neither should we expect that the constructions of identity and otherness implicit in the practices of such schools is likely to become a matter for conscious reflection. Their taken-for-granted nature blinds many to their potential to be experienced as oppressive. Terms such as 'institutional racism' and 'cultural racism' are used to describe situations in which a dominant ethnic group controls the institution through the policies, practices and procedures of the institution and embrace the cultural preferences of that group. We need to find a language which enables reflection on those aspects of the social order which are communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored through the school culture. Behaviour which is experienced as oppressive but is not malicious by intent may manifest itself in subtle forms, and the labelling of this behaviour as 'racist' needs to be undertaken with caution. It can very easily lead to the "construction of binary oppositions" which fall "into the trap of simply reversing the old colonial legacy and problematic of oppressed vs. oppressor" (Giroux 1992:20).

Within the context of reconciliation and reconstruction in education I have so far tried to avoid the use of terminology which is emotionally loaded and open to abuse and misinterpretation. Holding this reluctance in mind it becomes necessary to engage with the terminology of 'racism' as it appears in the literature concerned with 'anti-racist' education and 'reading against racism' referred to in my research project.

In discussions about representation, 'omission' is identified as a form of 'racism' frequently found in previously all white schools. It operates through the silencing and invisibility of the cultural and racial identity of members of the non-dominant culture in the learning environment. Giroux reminds us that "the referent out of which we operate is a white upper-middle-class logic that not only modularizes but actually silences subordinate voices" (1992:14). In both the play and learning that are provided pupils do not hear their home language nor listen to the stories of their histories. The absence of

familiar food, music and clothes and the non or negative references to skin colour, features, family and spiritual values are subtle influences operating in the school environment.

Maxine Greene refers to invisibility as being a metaphor which she says "haunts many of us: the invisibility that has been imposed upon those thought of as "other", those perceived as alien in the familiar world" (1993:1). She quotes Tillie Olsen speaking of silences which "are unnatural: the unnatural thwarting of what struggles into being, but cannot". Greene maintains that "we have to develop a new regard for difference and the integrity of human difference" (1993:2).

Invisibility is a theme that is echoed in the words of many individual members of oppressed groups. "Since I don't see myself or most people I know in most things I see or read about Black people, I can't be bothered with that" (Harriet Jones, cited in Bishop 1992:19). "I felt very much the Invisible Man, without form and without shape" (Yep, cited in Bishop 1992:19).

But we need also to be aware of "the silences and denials that surround privilege" which form a part of that history which allows the dominant culture to experience itself as somehow 'standard' or 'normal' and encourages the notion "that it is only those people who are noticeably different from the white majority, because of their skin colour, who have a 'culture'" (Epstein 1992:26). In Giroux's view ; "the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible" (1992:225). It is this discovery of whites of themselves as an ethnic group, which still needs to be made if accepted practices are to be questioned and underlying values explored. Bennett suggests that "an ethnic group which has only recently been discovered" is that of "European Americans" (1996:1,15). Perhaps 'European Africans' is a group still awaiting discovery.

According to Giroux the possibility of overcoming this silencing and invisibility rests on a postmodern concept of identity and culture. The school needs to view itself as a 'borderland' crisscrossed by;

... a variety of languages, experiences and voices. There are no unified subjects here, only students whose multilayered and often contradictory voices and experiences intermingle with the weight of particular histories that will not fit easily into the master narrative of a monolithic culture.

(Giroux 1992:34)

Rationale for a project exploring pupils' perceptions through literature

The challenge to educators is whether traditionally all white schools can become 'borderlands' in which safe spaces may be created for pupils to cross borders as a way to furthering their own understanding. How may the barriers which previously separated pupils from one another be broken down in order for them to take up or refuse the subject positions available to them? Greene (1993) shares her vision of how this may be achieved:

It is imagination that enables us to open new vistas, to picture new possibilities in our lives, realize that experience holds more than most of us can predict ... It is not only the personal encounter that awakens; it is also the talking about it later. It is seeing a piece from different angles, feeling it grow and diversify in experience, working with others toward wider perspectives, new possibilities of completion ... It is a matter of overcoming the silences, of creating schools that are natural habitats of learning, schools on the way to becoming the kinds of miniature communities that embody possibility ... It is a matter of breaking with separateness, with insularity, of joining with others ... in the naming and exploring of a common world.

(Greene 1993:11-12)

In order for this vision to be realised what, in her view, is needed is the: "... creation of situations in which youngsters might present what they feel is peculiarly theirs to others,

explaining it to others, translating, exploring in the others language, discovering what emerges as human, what can be shared" (Greene 1993:11).

Finding ways of sharing cultural traditions and values is particularly important when individuals are having to

...face challenges to their traditional views and attitudes - such as relationships between young and old, attitudes towards women and girls, and views held about people of a different race, colour and religion.

(Hester 1985:4)

Narratives (stories) are the sense-making mechanisms of society and they are universal in that they occur in all societies. Lemmer suggests that

... stories could help provide one means of liberating our society from the fears and ignorance engendered by the group exclusivity that apartheid attempted to foster and sustain.

(1993:3)

Beverley Naidoo, reflecting on the blinkered vision her experience as a white schoolgirl in South Africa provided her with, comments on this potential of literature in the following words; "As I see it, literature's prime quality is the ability to carry human voices across time, place, experience, society, culture (Naidoo 1992:16). She sums up her belief in the power of literature in an introduction to an anthology explicitly concerned with young people coming into social and political consciousness:

Literature has the tremendous quality of allowing us to engage imaginatively in the lives of others. It enables us to move beyond ourselves and our own experiences. If we allow ourselves to respond to it fully, it can be a great educator.

(Naidoo 1992:16)

The view that literature has the ability to open up unknown worlds is shared by Bishop:

Books can be windows, or sliding glass doors, through which students can view and participate in the lives of people whose culture and life experiences are different from their own.

(Bishop 1992:32)

These views are echoed in the writing of Klein who suggests that; " The more we read or listen to the stories of others, the more we extend our understanding of humankind ... (1993:130).

Bishop draws attention to the manner in which books can affect " the way people see themselves as well as the ways they are seen by others". He believes that "books can serve as important weapons against racism for children of both the dominant and non-dominant groups" (1992:19). Elaborating on this idea he points out that readers seek their reflections in books:

The potential benefits of having books about people of colour available for children who are members of those groups are obvious: a sense of belonging, improved self-concept, a transmission of the values of the home culture, a sense of their own history. But equally important, are the potential benefits of such books for those children who are members of the dominant groups.

(Bishop 1992:20)

Endorsing the view that finding one's reflections in books is important Kable suggests that:

It is very difficult for healthy growth to take place when the mirror does not reflect what is there. If the image is indistinct and distorted, then surely a sense of dissatisfaction and discontent along with an unbalanced development must result.

(1992:66)

He refers to the "Liberating power of literature which explains life" (1992:75) and which facilitates the making of connections between literature and life. He has found confirmation of this power in his research:

Literature allows this to happen. And in the reflection it offers on our national life and in the gasp of recognition with which such examination is inevitably greeted, comes the chance to leap off into a richer and more secure life.

(Kable 1992:77)

Strang believes that an anti-racist approach to the teaching of literature encourages reflection on practice through the recognition that children must engage actively with the business of learning. Children, she says;

... should be encouraged to look upon themselves as active 'meaning makers' who can handle language and control words rather than be on the receiving end. Explorations with and into language could then be seen as children making and preserving meanings for themselves.

(1992:16)

Pupils in South African schools were as a rule prevented from engaging in such a process of active learning from literature through; "the study of elitist British high culture" which protected them "from having to focus on the terrifying problems of the world in which we live" (Janks and Paton 1991:227). According to Newfield, "the official selection of texts has revealed a uniformly hegemonic and Eurocentric bias ... [which] has tended to devalue both the black and white students' sense of their own worth and of the worth of the country, resulting in a feeling of inferiority" (1993:41).

The Storyteller Group, based in Johannesburg, aims to provide black readers with a sense of dignity and worth, through presenting them as seen through their own eyes. The Group believes that ordinary South Africans are caught in a spiral of fear and ignorance that effectively robs them of a vision of future possibilities. They believe that it is necessary to project images of "what can be" in literature in order to 'pull' people with a vision of

the future rather than to 'push' them with the guilt and resentment of the past (Esterhuysen, cited in Newfield 1990:57). Newfield feels that: "stories, although neither prescriptive nor propagandistic, attempt to be a 'way of empowering people', which seems to me the essential component of the struggle against racism" (Newfield 1993:58). She concludes her article by saying: "I wish to stress the dual themes of reconstruction in literature and reconstruction through literature ..." (1993:61).

Words of caution are sounded by Lemmer; "This is not to say that stories can provide some sort of easy panacea for our ills" (1993:4) In similar vein Isaac Bashevis Singer strongly opposes a didactic view literature. This is reflected in the remarks from his acceptance speech, quoted in Time Magazine, on the occasion of his winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature in Stockholm. Children he maintains do not read to:

... find their identity. They don't read to free themselves of guilt, quench the thirst for rebellion or get rid of alienation. They have no use for psychology. They detest sociology. ... They don't expect their beloved writer to redeem humanity., Young as they are, they know it is not in his power. Only adults have such childish illusions.

(Time Magazine date unknown)

The possibilities discussed in this section are inevitably dependent on a model of reading and an accompanying philosophy of teaching which might create the opportunities for literature's potential to be realised. Proponents of reader- response theories believe that their approach elicits such responses and provides opportunities for readers to become active meaning makers.

Theories of reading

The claims made for literature in the previous section are largely of potential. This potential is unlikely to be fully realised without changes in classroom practice:

Reader-response theory, in particular, is of special importance to literature teachers. It offers a new perspective on the moral values of reading literature by asserting the importance of the individual's 'reading' of a text. The responsibility for making meaning lies with the reader; the teaching/learning emphasis shifts away from critical authority and received knowledge towards the development of personal responses, their refinement through sharing these responses with others, and their evaluation through what Stanley Fish calls the authority of the interpretive community of the classroom.

(Benton 1988:13)

Reader-response theory as outlined above is informed by "the transactional versions of reader-response theory offered by Iser (1978) and Rosenblatt (1978)" in which "the emphasis falls on the lived-through transactions between readers and texts" and in which "teachers must be skilled in the task of setting the reader's repertoire of literary and life experience to work on a range of appropriate texts" (Corcoran 1990:133).

This theory of reading represents a shift from: "The 'cultural heritage' position, associated primarily with Arnold and Leavis," in which the teacher functions as the "transmitter of the literary culture and reduces the student to a cultural *tabula rasa* (Corcoran 1990:133). This altered emphasis also challenges the later literary movement known as the New Criticism which views the text as autonomous, "Wimsatt's (1970) 'verbal icon'" (Corcoran 1990:133). The New Criticism also viewed readers as having a 'commonality of experience' (Evans 1987:29) based on the assumption that they led the same sort of lives, shared the same views and read the same books and were all members of the same culture. Teachers provided 'expert' explanations of which students were the passive recipients.

The claim that a reader's cultural heritage, through their life experience, influences the meaning that the reader makes of a text emphasises the contextual and individual nature of meaning. The view that meaning "inheres in the reader and not in the text" implies that "the same text can be interpreted by different readers or communities of readers in very different ways" (Guerin *et al* 1992:343). It is suggested that "Better human

relations will result from readers with widely differing views sharing and comparing their responses" (Guerin *et al* 1992:340).

It is the view of Rosenblatt that a text "is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work"(1978:ix), and of Evans that, "what the reader does in reading an imaginative text is to "recreate" it (1987:23). Therefore:

... no work of art is fully "made" when it leaves the chisel, brush or pen of its original maker. It depends, in every setting, in every period of time, and in the mind of each individual viewer, hearer, or reader, on a remaking, in which that viewer's own experience of life is related to it, interprets it, and is sometimes altered temporarily or permanently by the encounter ...his recreative process is much affected by the context in which it takes place. The context in turn is affected by whether the reader is alone or in a group.

(Evans 1987:23)

Should students read a text with the whole class then it becomes communal property and the comments of other class members become a part of the process.

Reader-response therefore allows for and recognizes as meaningful the connections that are made between the experiences provided through a reading of a text with experiences that have actually been lived through in the reader's life. Evans suggests that: "Up to a point, it must be true that we make sense of what we read partly through a comparison between what the text is proposing to us and what we know directly from our own living" (Evans 1987:28).

Evans also stresses the importance of the "willingness to rethink and revise" (1987:30) our impressions in the light of what we read. There are many novels which set out to challenge the assumptions of different societies about the relationships between people of differing sexes, races, or beliefs.

Rosenblatt also offers another way of looking at literary texts which has bearing on the suggested potential power of literature. "We are used," she says, "to thinking of the text as the medium of communication between author and reader ... perhaps we should consider the text as an even more general medium of communication among readers" (1978:146). This inter-cultural communication among readers around a text which becomes possible in multicultural classrooms has a further potential outcome:

- By collaborating with and even denying assent to authors, we deliberately forge rather than find a cultural capital in what and how we read, and not who we read.

(Corcoran 1990:146)

Response, according to Benton (1988), has become an umbrella term to cover a variety of interrelated processes that occur during and after reading and there are many strategies and devices which may be used to elicit response. Response may be monitored, recorded and analysed in order to detect whether any specific patterns of response are revealed.

Pupils' responses to the text used in my research provide the data from which themes for analysis emerged. The procedure I have used in my data analysis is detailed later in this chapter.

The move towards ethnography and the contextualizing of reading and readers

According to Rosenblatt the "strength of any research design depends on the model of reading" (1985:33) which is selected. Reader-response theory and the transactional model of reading which she developed (1978,1985) formed the base upon which Benton (1988) and Naidoo (1991) developed their research designs. It also seemed most appropriate for my investigations:

...the term transaction, as I use it, implies that the reader brings to the text a network of past experiences in literature and in life. (The author's text

also is seen as resulting from a personal and social transaction...) In the reading situation, the poem - literary work - is evoked during the transaction between reader and text.

(Rosenblatt 1985:35)

This model differs from the transmission model in which the teacher as 'expert' imparts knowledge about the text to passive pupils and it emphasises the importance of the pupils' own lived experience to the process of 'meaning making'.

Rosenblatt regarded the "literary transaction" as a form of "human behaviour" which she felt could be "studied from the point of view of any discipline" but she found an ethnographic approach "especially congenial" to its study (1985). I was drawn to the possibilities of using reader-response and an ethnographic approach as characterized by Benton and Naidoo in their investigations. From my readings ethnography seems to incorporate elements of many other research approaches. My approach, therefore, is broadly ethnographic a term:

... commonly used to characterise the work of teacher-researchers whose research problems are formulated before their own eyes, as it were in the course of their teaching; who collect data from the classroom and develop concepts and theories to explain what they find.

(Benton 1988:27)

Ethnography is concerned with detailed description and relies on the techniques of the anthropologist such as keeping records of observations, conducting unstructured interviews and recording responses to situations with a view to gaining understanding of the cultural perspectives on which they are based.

In ethnographic research the significance of the context is emphasised. The focus is usually on a single setting, the school, and a single group, in this case pupils selected from one class. Rosenblatt's early interest in anthropology contributed to her recognition that the readers' "reactions like the author's work of art, are the organic expression not

only of a particular individual, but also a particular cultural setting" (1985:100). The ethnographer takes into account the particularity of the reading transaction and sees it:

... as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group.

(Rosenblatt 1985:100)

Participant-observation is another characteristic of ethnography which "is not a matter of methodological commitment", but rather, "an existential fact" (Atkinson and Hammersley 1983:72). As teacher-researcher I wielded considerable authority in selecting the texts, assigning the response activities and structuring the classroom for the learning activities. The characteristic of reflexivity takes this role into account by viewing the researcher as part of the phenomenon to be studied:

... all social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation. We act in the social world and yet are able to reflect upon ourselves and our actions as objects of that world.

(Atkinson and Hammersley 1983:25)

Ethnographic research has been criticized for the resulting subjectivity and reliance on 'common-sense' interpretations but "there is no escape from reliance on common-sense knowledge" and Hammersley points out "although quantitative researchers typically reject commonsense knowledge as unscientific they nevertheless implicitly depend on it" (Hammersley 1994:25). Drawing as it does, on social or cultural anthropology and sociology, ethnography requires prior knowledge and experience on the part of the researcher of the culture being studied. As a teacher is part of the classroom and school culture there has been, for this reason, among others a trend towards the increased adoption of ethnography in educational research. My familiarity with the school culture being studied goes back to my presence at the school as a pupil, then as a parent and now as teacher-researcher. Another characteristic of ethnography is its flexibility. It does not

involve extensive preparation as in the case of experimental design and the strategies and even direction of the project may be changed relatively easily in response to the perception of changing needs. Data may be collected from a range of sources and its collection may also be seen as 'unstructured', in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning. As the investigation is concerned with discovering what pupils are experiencing and thinking and with learning from them it was important to "begin research with minimal assumptions in order to maximise one's capacity for learning" (Hammersley 1994:6).

Despite its broadly ethnographic nature my research also draws on critical theory and postmodern research. My approach is critical insofar as it attempts to explore the experiences and perceptions of pupils from nondominant cultures and is concerned not only with describing the social relations but "with discovering how they might be changed for the better" (Hammersley 1994:12). It is postmodern in its tentativeness and acknowledgement that all that can be examined is a "particular segment of the educational world" which is subject to "continuous contextual change and the divergence of different teaching situations" (Kincheloe 1991:121).

Data analysis

The choice of the ethnographic approach led to the amassing of a vast quantity of material gathered from focussed writing activities, reading journals and transcriptions of recorded interviews. I hoped through a study of this material to explore the relationship among language, knowledge and power as it was revealed through the subject positions taken up by the pupils as they engaged in making meaning of the reading experience in which they participated. I therefore needed a theory which would help me make sense of what the pupils were saying. I found this framework in the work of Davies (1989) who chose the discourse of post-structuralist theory because it provided her "... with the conceptual tools to make sense of my data and allows me to formulate answers to the questions that I set out with" (Davies 1987:4).

Her application of post-structuralist theory in the analysis of young children's understanding of feminist stories provided me with tools that I could use to begin to make meaning of the data provided by pupils during interviews and in their written responses to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor 1978) a story about racism which I used for my research.

Although Davies' focused on sexism and I was concerned with racism, I nonetheless felt that her framework was helpful for, as Jordan and Weedon maintain:

... both racism and sexism pose the need for a theory of subjectivity which can throw light on subjectivity, power and pleasure ... We are either active subjects who take up positions from which we can exercise power within particular social practices or we are subjected to definitions by others.

(Jordan and Weedon 1994:551)

I was interested to find out what evidence the data would disclose about the subject positions being taken up by the pupils in the school. Further to this I hoped to find indications of the discourses in which the pupils became engaged. In Weedon's view:

... post- structuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in the process constantly of being reconstituted in discourse each time we speak.

(Weedon 1987:33)

Having identified the dominant culture of the school and acknowledging that "the structures and processes of the social world are recognised as having a material force, a capacity to constrain, to shape, to coerce, as well as to potentiate individual action" (Davies 1987:xi) I hoped the data would provide an opportunity to investigate what subject positions the social world of the school offered pupils. It was, in addition, important to bear in mind that the data was collected during a period of tremendous change in the political and social balances of power in South African society and specifically in the Eastern Cape Province in which the study is set. Placed against a

background of "postmodern thinking with its imperative to see forms of identity as situationally produced - as, in principle, temporary and historical" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:551), post-structuralist theory as applied by Davies provides a framework for:

... understanding the relation between persons and their social world and for conceptualising social change ... The processes whereby individuals take themselves up as persons are understood as ongoing processes. The individual is not so much a social construction which results in some relative fixed end product, but one who is constituted and reconstituted through a variety of discursive practices. It is the recognition of the ongoing nature of the constitution of self and the recognition of the nonunitary nature of self that makes post-structuralist theory different from social construction theory.

(Davies 1987:xi)

The transactional model of reading applied in my research represents a model of socialisation and identity construction which values "the child as active agent, the child as theorist, recognising for him or herself the way the social world is organised" (Davies 1987:4). And if, as Epstein suggests; "Young children are able not only to understand, use and construct dominant ideologies but also to decentre and take part in the deconstruction of these ideologies (1993:26), then the discourse of post-structuralism, which allows for thinking beyond the dualisms of male\female and black\white as inevitable and fixed to the "constitutive processes through which we position ourselves" (Davies 1989:5), offers me a framework for the systematic exploration of my data.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEFINING THE CONTEXT

As indicated earlier, this research project is set within the wider context of action research which I conducted during the implementation of a literature-based reading programme (see Appendix 1) introduced in 1993. As also emphasised earlier, this programme should be seen against the background of changes in the society beyond the school and curriculum initiatives within the school. For the purposes of this particular study, I focussed my research on a selected group of pupils and their responses to one text during the second term of 1996.

Defining the boundaries

In exploring pupils' perceptions I confined both the time period (ten weeks, starting April and ending June 1996) and readers' responses to one text which I had selected: *Roll of Thunder: Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. Passages and activities selected for recording were chosen because pupils' responses provided insights into the questions for which I was seeking answers. These questions related to pupils' perspectives and meaning making around issues of racism, subjectivity and power detailed in the previous section. In order to keep the amount of data manageable, and to ensure that it would be feasible to integrate the work with my normal teaching commitments, I monitored the responses of only half the class of thirty-eight pupils. For the purposes of the study, I therefore, included all the black, coloured and Indian pupils in the class, (twelve in total), plus a random selection of seven white pupils (chosen alphabetically from those at the top of the list). In terms of my mainstream commitments, I involved the entire class in the focussed writing activities. History and Lifeskills lessons with linking themes also involved all pupils (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4).

Rationale for reporting responses in racial categories

I was confronted with a dilemma as I attempted to categorise pupils' responses. I wanted to escape from using the definitions of apartheid as categories, and yet, I wanted to explore how pupils were redefining themselves and whether they appeared, in the words of Greene to be "...breaking with separateness, with insularity, joining with others... in the naming and exploring of a common world" (1993:12).

At the same time I wanted to explore to what extent pupils remained constrained by the boundaries imposed by apartheid and whether finding their voices and "overcoming the silences" (Greene 1993:12) was influenced by power relations experienced within the context of the classroom and what these relations might be.

In order neither to deny difference nor to see it only as 'the colour of one's skin' I needed to enable the pupils' voices to speak out of their own histories, experiences and cultural backgrounds. The order of recording the responses was dictated by the order of names on the classlist. I also attempted to individualise the voices in order to allow them to share their personal awakenings and struggles towards wider perspectives and "new possibilities of completion" (Greene 1993:11). I had, therefore, to ensure that the programme allowed for pupils to take up as many subject positions as would ensure that each one might find the occasion to respond as freely as possible.

Recognising pupils' varied competencies

A factor which emerged during the recording of responses was that some pupils were most articulate when writing their responses, while others were more comfortable when responding verbally. Written responses were discussed during cross-cultural encounters in groups in the classroom while the interviews were carried out in homogeneous groups.

A brief introduction to the pupils in the study

In the following three paragraphs, insofar as I was able, I have provided very brief commentaries on each of the pupils comprising the research sample for the research project. These are based on my own perceptions of who they are.

White pupils were drawn from the pupils who would be reading the novel during the time of the study and then later confined to those who participated in the recorded interviews. Mary, who was not present during the interview, provided some very interesting insights and I have therefore retained her responses. The home language of all these pupils is English and with the exception of Heather they have all spent most of their Junior School years together. Alice tells us during the course of discussion that her best friend is Pumla one of the Xhosa-speaking girls in the study.

I included Derusha, the only Indian girl in the study, in the coloured group which happened also to be her friendship group. Derusha and Thanusha are presently living in previously white suburbs of Port Elizabeth. The other girls continue to reside in areas previously reserved for Coloured people. Zakeera and Thanusha are Muslims and were very reticent in talking about issues in a group situation but wrote about them in depth during the focussed writing activities. Amber and Pamela who are Christians were less restrained in their verbal responses but did not write as freely as the other pupils in this group. They became very involved in the position of coloured people in the society. Karen is a new pupil at the school having moved from a previously coloured school in January.

Among the black pupils not all those in the study are equally at home in English. Zipho lives in a previously white suburb and is probably exposed to more English than Xhosa in this environment. Thoko stays in the school hostel which is attached to the High School. The rest of these pupils live in areas traditionally reserved for black people. Asanda and Melissa are new pupils at the school while Pumla moved to the school in Standard four. Zipho and Litha have been at the school either since the time the school

changed its admissions policy or soon after. It is interesting to bear in mind their length of 'immersion' in the school culture when analysing their responses.

The text

The use of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* was primarily motivated by three considerations. Firstly, this was one of the texts used by Naidoo (1989) in her research. As such, a considerable number of reader-response activities had already been developed around the novel. Secondly, it is set in the American south and it provides a black perspective of a racist society. It, therefore, deals directly with issues that resonate with both South Africa's past and present from a perspective which is missing from most of the literature chosen for reading in school programmes. And thirdly, responses to the novel in other settings could also serve as a basis of comparison if this should prove useful to this or other studies;

... we still know very little about how factors such as ethnicity, gender and socio economic status influence response. How, for example, would the responses of a middle-class black child differ from those of a white child to books like Taylor's (1977) *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* ...

(Corcoran 1990:144)

The novel is set during the depression of the 1930s and it evokes a picture of life in the American south as seen through the eyes of a young black girl, nine-year old Cassie Logan. She and her three brothers "learn the harsh realities of living under white power, they also learn from their family about the principles of fundamental human dignity and resistance to injustice (Naidoo 1991:192).

In a background booklet used as a resource for the project, Mildred Taylor, in her acceptance speech for the Newberry Medal "speaks of the distortion of her own family's history to which she had been subjected in school and her determination to address that in her novel" (Naidoo 1991:192). She says:

In *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* I included the teachings of my own childhood, the values and principles by which I and so many other Black children were reared, for I wanted to show a different kind of Black world from the one so often seen. I wanted to show a family united in love and self-respect, and parents, strong and sensitive, attempting to guide their children successfully, without harming their spirits, through the hazardous maze of living in a discriminatory society.

(English Centre 1984:15)

We meet three generations of the Logan family. Big Ma(Cassie's grandmother), Papa and Mama each convey, through memories and stories, a sense of their history to the children. The children in the family are Cassie and her three brothers - Stacey, Christopher-John and Little Man. Other characters make their appearances in the passages selected for focussed writing. Miss Crocker who teaches with Mama; TJ, a somewhat untrustworthy friend of Stacey's; Jeremy, a white boy who wishes to be friends with the Logan children; and Mr Barnett a storekeeper and owner of Barnett Mercantile.

Reading journals

Pupils were issued with notebooks in which they were to keep jottings of their thoughts and feelings while reading the novel. According to Benton and Fox the purpose of the reading journal is to:

... respond in any way they choose to a novel including speculations about how the story will develop, judgements, comparisons with their own experience, illustrations of characters, reflections on moments or themes from the book, comments on how the author is telling the story and notes about their own experiences prompted by the book.

(1985:121)

Keeping a reading journal provides the opportunity for what Britton "sees as active response to literature ... an unspoken monologue of responses - a fabric of comment, speculation, relevant autobiography" (Quoted in Corcoran 1989: 60).

In order to get pupils started on this kind of subjective, exploratory writing, Corcoran proposes a number of questions which pupils might find useful:

- How do I feel about this character?
- Does anything in the story remind me of things that have happened to me?
- Is there anything in the story that is putting me off?
- Is that the way things happen in real life?
- Surely the author doesn't expect me to believe that?

(1989:60)

These are the questions that he believes might "make 'unspoken monologues' articulate, and thereby provide a basis for talk among a community of readers" (1989:60). I provided pupils with suggestions and questions (see Appendix 5), and a copy of a page of entries in one thirteen-year-old's *Z for Zachariah* response journal (see Appendix 6), to serve as a model for their own writing (Corcoran 1989:61). In order to provide background information to the novel and help pupils contextualise the events they were shown the English Programme video which features an interview with the writer Mildred Taylor talking about her childhood. They also viewed extracts from the video *Apartheid* produced by Granada Television Company in order to provide them with a retrospective look at the practice of apartheid in South Africa. Time was set aside each week for pupils to write in their journals and I attempted to read and respond to their writing each weekend. Unless a specific task was set they were free to respond as they chose. I tried as far as possible to extend their own insights basing the format of my comments to their writing on those recommended by Corcoran (1989).

Response sheets and focussed writing

Apart from their journal writing pupils were asked to complete a number of assignments from the English Centre Booklet (1984), some of which I adapted in order to ensure their relevance to the project being undertaken. They were asked to complete a chart on the characters (see Appendix 7) whom they had met in the course of reading the first chapter of the novel and exchange their impressions with others in their group. In addition each group focussed on one character and shared their view of that character with the whole class. They also completed charts of Racism and Resistance drawn from incidents in the book (see Appendix 8). Passages from the text were selected for focussed writing exercises. These were passages which had been selected by Naidoo (1991) and dealt directly with incidents relating to issues which I hoped would provide insights into pupils' thinking. Detailed descriptions of each passage are provided in the lead in to the pupils' responses to them.

Hotseating

I used 'hotseating' to explore aspects of the pupils' responses. This is a technique used in educational drama in which persons take on the role of characters from the novel and answer questions put to them by other pupils. Hotseating sessions took place within the classroom during the reading of the novel. Stopping to interview some of the characters in role proved to be a successful way of helping pupils explore characters and situations in the novel. Among the advantages of 'hotseating' perceived by Naidoo are that it can "reveal gaps in students' understandings of the text" (1991:260) while:

... it is also possible that the person being hotseated moves deeper into the role and the feelings of 'as if'. This in turn might deepen the other participants' sense of actually getting to 'know' the character being role-played, affectively as well as cognitively.

(1987:106)

Recorded interviews

During the final week of the course I conducted separate interviews with each of the three groups of pupils defined earlier. As a stimulus to discussion I provided pupils with some ideas for discussion (see Appendix 12) but by and large they needed little prompting. My participation was kept to a minimum and the talk was largely pupil/pupil talk. To control the flow of talk pupils used a 'talking-stick'. The pupil holding the stick was allowed to speak and when she was ready she passed it on to another pupil who wished to contribute to the conversation. Only the pupil holding the stick was allowed to talk.

Responses showed pupils making connections between literature and life in their exploration of the way in which the social world both inside and outside the school is organised. They inserted themselves into the text, interpreted and used the text as a metaphor for exploring their own positionings in the social world and for conceptualising change.

CHAPTER SIX

OVERCOMING THE SILENCE

Power and racism

At the outset of reporting on the data collected during the course of this study I need to acknowledge the truth of Epstein's statement (1993:3) that it is not possible to remove myself entirely from my own life or culture and that I have a point of view. One of the aims of this research was to ascertain pupils' perceptions in order to refute or validate my own perceptions. A danger inherent in this position lies in the extent to which pupils have internalised the values and traditions of the school and reproduce those views and secondly the possibility that I might select responses which confirm my views. It is my belief that pupils need to learn about power and inequality in order to understand the dynamics operating in the society so that they might question these dominant ideologies and develop counter discourses. I hoped that by creating spaces for pupils to engage with these issues their responses might provide insights that would suggest appropriate methods which might be used to change both the overt and hidden curriculum. During the course of my research into pupil's perceptions it had become clear that awareness of race and racism were part of the pupils lives both in and out of school. Commonsense perceptions that "there are no problems here" or that dwelling on such problems actually creates them needed, I felt, to be challenged. According to the authors of *Resisting Racism (1997:83)* approaches to the curriculum which found acceptance were those which promoted nation building, rather than dwelling on the injustices of the past.

Change is not easy, but pretending that everything is fine makes it harder.
Students' and teachers' prejudices may silently increase rather than
decrease as there is more integration but no discussion.

(Eyber, Dyer and Versfeld 1997:83)

I hoped that discussion around a text would allow me to hear what the girls might have to say.

Initial predictions about the novel

Pupils were introduced to the novel at the beginning of the project and asked to examine the cover of the book and to write down the thoughts that came into their minds and the feelings they had about reading the book. The front cover of the book shows Cassie in the foreground with one of her brothers, while on the back cover TJ is being attacked by three white men. I was interested in gauging the girls' responses to a story which was going to involve black\white relations and in discovering what their perceptions of the relations of power between black and white might be.

Initial responses from the girls on receiving the book were largely positive. Girls felt that they would "learn about their culture" and "know a lot more". Amber, a coloured girl, was interested to find out how the author "deals with the truth of where they stay and the way other people feel towards blacks". It might be possible to infer that she is drawing attention to what she experiences as a lack of openness about these issues in the context of the school.

Two girls were reluctant to read the book. Alice, a white pupil, was not looking forward to reading the book at all:

I really don't feel like reading this book because my sister said that it's really boring and that she feels sorry for me! (She had read the book the previous year.) Everyone says it's a book about racism and if you've read one book about racism that you've read them all.

Alice is resistant to reading about 'racism', a view also expressed by a black pupil in an earlier year group who had said:

All of us know that there is something called racial hate. All of us know that it is still alive. All of us know that some people don't have it and some people do. That it is not only white hating black. Also black hating white. It's kind of boring.

Intimations of this reluctance to learning about racism in the classroom emerged from other pupils during the course of the project.

Thanusha, the second pupil in the sample to be reluctant to read the book, expressed her view of the matter differently. She resisted being coerced into reading the book, "I'm not looking forward to it because I don't like reading books I don't want to but I should".

It is clear from the girls responses that they identified that power in the society depicted in the book was vested in the hands of whites and that they treated black people badly. The idea of treatment of mistreatment related to skin colour was repeated in many responses.

Two pupils were concerned with how the book might end. Delia anticipated that, "hopefully there would be peace" while Alice believed that "in the end they all learn to live in peace and harmony with fellow people, no matter what colour".

Power and knowledge

The history taught in South African schools up to 1994 and even now in many schools, still largely excludes the experience of people of colour. Where it is included it is often written by whites. Despite meeting the criteria that history should acknowledge a "plurality of narratives linked to different groups and interests" (Jordan and Weedon

1995:551) it fails to take into account subject positions offered in these accounts and the impact of these on the identity construction of pupils studying the information. "The idea of reducing ignorance by increasing access to information" (Eyber, Dyer, Versfeld 1997:23) which confines itself to knowledge and the cognitive domain and its effectiveness in breaking down stereotypes needs to be explored.

Showing videos which provided pupils with background information on segregation in the American south and on apartheid South Africa would, I hoped, enable me to ascertain the extent of pupils' knowledge of these events and to examine whether young children:

... are not only able to understand, use and construct dominant ideologies but also to decentre and take part in the the deconstruction of these ideologies.

(Epstein 1993:326)

I also wanted to discover whether the girls showed signs of categorizing themselves and others by the notion of race (and/or colour).

Images of America during segregation

In order to contextualise the story pupils were shown the first part of the English Centre Video, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, featuring an interview with Mildred Taylor the author of the book. She describes her childhood and pupils are introduced to some of the characters and situations in the story.

After viewing the video pupils were asked to consider four questions in their groups and then respond personally in their reading journals.

- What have you learned about America?
- Can you suggest any reasons why Mildred Taylor did not learn about her family's and other black families' histories in school?

- For whom do you think she was writing?
- If you were able to advise South African writers of children's books what sort of books would you suggest they wrote?

I hoped to gain insight into pupils' awareness of the impact of segregation in American society and how they viewed the omission of the stories of black people from the histories taught in school. Pupils responded selectively to issues which concerned them and I will attempt to give a picture of their views drawn from those responses that dealt with the different issues.

Perceptions of American society

Those pupils who responded had largely been unaware of segregation in America or of the extent and impact of racism on the people. It seemed to come as a particular shock to the coloured pupils:

Derusha I always thought America was one of the civilized places with not as much racism as we had.

Zakeera I didn't know that America had racism and apartheid. I find it hard to believe that Americans (whites) were so cruel and that they treated blacks that way.

Amber I always thought that America was the only country that didn't have major apartheid.

Karen America wasn't known as a country with racial problems.

The girls' responses indicate that they reject discrimination based on race and they demonstrate an understanding and empathy with the oppressed in a 'racist' society such as that portrayed in the video.

The omission of black American history from the curriculum in schools

It is interesting to note that it was only white pupils who responded to this question in their journals and who identified the power of the dominant group to "define... what knowledge is" (Walkerdine 1985:207,208). They appeared to understand that it was whites who were writing the history and recognised that the omission of black American history had to do with the way in which people were valued in the society and this comes through clearly in their responses:

- Alice I think that the whites were dreadfully unfair to the black people. I think they didn't teach blacks about their history because they weren't important, the whites were.
- Heather Cassie did not learn about her history in school probably because the white people thought there was nothing to learn about and they weren't important.
- Joan They did not want the children to learn about racism in case they believed what the whites were saying and thought they were worthless.

Joan's reference to 'they' would seem to apply to black teachers and parents who wanted to protect pupils from the views held by whites. In this instance where the responsibility is placed on blacks for omitting their history, this pupil seems to be aware of the positioning of blacks in American history and how this might impact on the identity construction of black children in the society.

Other pupils either simply did not comment on this issue or seem to have misunderstood the topic and concentrated on giving their views on what it must have been like living under segregation under the heading of 'history'.

For whom was she writing?

There was general agreement amongst the girls that Mildred Taylor was writing mostly for white people in order to illustrate to them the pain and suffering that they caused black people. In addition it was felt that whites were generally ignorant about blacks and Taylor was attempting to inform them about black people and their lives and aspirations.

Anne. I think she wrote it for whites to show they were wrong and for blacks to give them courage. She also wrote it because we need to read more about blacks.

Zakeera, a coloured girl, clearly makes a connection between segregation and apartheid and draws attention to Taylor's possible anger.

Zakeera She wanted them to know what it was like to be living in the time of apartheid and what it was like for blacks. She was probably angry and wanted to express her feelings by writing the book.

Derusha also recognises Taylor's anger but she goes further in identifying the likelihood of her writing with the purpose of bringing about change in the society.

Derusha I think she was writing for the black and the white people and to get her anger out and tell people things like this used to happen and they must be aware about and change the attitude of people.

There is further a recognition among some of the pupils that the book was also directed toward blacks in order to raise their consciousness:

Thoko ... she wrote for the blacks to make them aware of the fact that they are being treated badly.

What kind of books should authors be writing?

All pupils seemed to feel that books should have a message and "teach people something". This idea was made more specific in the responses of some pupils "We should write about things we want to change" and about "our hopes for the future". Thanusha was concerned that "we should be writing about the good times not the bad. It's not like, I don't want to face reality but, face it, times change and people change, and it's all for the better". This view was reiterated by Litha who believed that we should "tell people to stop dwelling in the past and forgive each other". Pumla was the only one who felt that the history of struggle should be reflected in stories "we should be writing books about the struggle at different places".

It would appear from most of these responses that there is a strong drive toward nation building and a downplaying of the resentments and prejudices of the past. Therefore, while "researchers believe it is essential that young people become aware of the various traditions of struggle against oppression" (Eyber, Dyer, Versfeld 1997:43), it would seem that pupils in a mixed school find it more comfortable to suppress notions of racism and resistance.

Images of South Africa during the period of apartheid

One of the goals of the project was to explore whether pupils would make connections between events in the story set in America with events in South Africa's apartheid past. I was also interested in whether pupils would reveal an historical understanding of events in the present. As part of their history programme pupils were shown extracts from the Granada Television Company video *Apartheid*. Would pupils assent to positions prescribed for them through the hegemonic definitions of black and white presented during apartheid or would they show indications of deconstructing those definitions and understanding the dominant ideology at work? To what extent would they show signs of categorising themselves within the school context?

Pupils were asked to write down any thoughts and feelings which they had after viewing the video. Not all pupils carried out this task and my information is drawn from those pupils included in the sample who did respond.

Awareness of life under apartheid

For the most part white pupils indicated that they had been unaware of what life had been like during the period of apartheid. They interpreted it to be a period of conflict between black and white and expressed their disapproval of the behaviour of whites.

Anne I think that apartheid's are caused by stupid governments getting too big for their boots and start thinking that another race is inferior to them. I can't believe that they could think like that but obviously it did happen. To go as far as forced removals (forcing people to move out of houses that they had bought, or land they owned) is going too far.

Blacks aren't stupid, the colour of their skin hasn't sucked out their brain cells. Maybe white people are stupid seeing as they think such stupid things. Black people helped in the war, sacrificed because of the white man's cruelty. Some worked in mines and then when the white people came back wanting their jobs the managers fired them without even the recognition of their years of hard work. So now I ask myself.. Forced removals, lives lost, slavery, jobs lost, all done by the white man. Are whites really cleverer than blacks!!

Watching the video has drawn Anne's attention to the behaviour of whites who formed part of the dominant culture at the time and she is questioning the assumptions of superiority which she seems to have recognized as being in existence.

For white pupils there has been no noticeable change in their lifestyle with the lifting of apartheid laws. Coloured pupils, for whom much has changed, reveal a much more sophisticated understanding of what life was like under apartheid. Their use of

terminology indicates a greater political awareness of the past and sensitivity to the relations of power in the society.

Zakeera Apartheid is about white nationalism and racism. It's unfair how they treated the blacks just because of their skin colour. Whites had all the privileges and made use of the best facilities. Blacks were considered poor and were treated as outcasts. They stayed in squatter camps which was crowded and lacked all main facilities and harvest needed to live. They were treated severely and were robbed of their rights. They were forced to move out of their homes and sell their land for low prices. This was just accepted and people went on living their life.

The video aroused strong feelings among some of the pupils. Thanusha indicates her belief in the equality of all people.

Thanusha I really did not enjoy that movie because I hate seeing people suffer. It is so cruel to think our country could have been ruled by those evil men. I'm just so glad it's all over. I'd have hated to be enslaved by those idiots. They were so stupid not to realise that we are all equal.

Pamela identifies strongly with the oppressed and remains very personally involved with the issues raised by the video.

Pamela I was angry that whites did that to my people because I am coloured. I've always resented whites for that until I came to Acacia and found that not all whites are racists. I think there are people who want apartheid back. There are parties like the Freedom Front and the AWB who, if they had won the elections, would bring apartheid back. I was angry that people lost their land and homes just because the government wanted the land. I am angry at Dr Malan for thinking up the idea for apartheid. Even though he is dead now. I hope that he is burning with Satan.

Amber seems to be struggling to establish her own identity and to understand the assumptions underlying the view of coloured people expressed by a white politician in the video.

Amber I felt confused because in the video it said that coloureds were a mistake. But why? Whites came to Africa after the blacks were here for centuries. So who made them more important? Some of the excuses that were made afterwards were very poor and were just used to cover up their mistakes that they were ashamed of.

Pamela and Amber, although they question the use of categories and the resultant racism seem to allow themselves to be defined by the positions revealed in the video. Pamela admits to having found some children who are not racists at Acacia but both she and Amber do not find the information provided by the video empowering and they continue to position themselves as powerless in the relations of power in the broader society and in those existing in the school. If schools are to assist in the transformation of our society then it is important to recognise the limitations of providing information without allowing for the processing of that information at both the cognitive and affective levels.

It is once again interesting to note that few black pupils chose to respond to this line of questioning. Black pupils in a school such as Acacia seem to have been shielded from the effects apartheid had on blacks in the society. This seems to make it easier for them to reject the positions offered them in the video and to feel less resentment and anger towards the white girls. It needs to be added that this lack of awareness was not reflected by black girls interviewed in previous years. This may well be the result of the length of time these pupils had been in white schools, in many instances for their whole school lives.

The responses recorded by the pupils represent very strong feelings about the laws and practices of apartheid and there can be no doubt that all pupils reject racial discrimination. Delia, who views the period as having been a war says, "I am glad that the war is over and there is peace." Joan wished "those people were alive now and were able to see how we live now". Thanusha is "just happy those times are over" and Karen is "glad that apartheid was abolished and that we don't see as many racial problems that we used to". Pamela is not nearly so sure no one wants apartheid back and feels that it

is a matter of who wins the elections. Thoko expresses her gratitude for not having lived during those times. Overall there is a general sense of relief that those times are over and a belief that things have changed for the better.

The reproduction of racism in society

The text offered an opportunity to allow pupils to explore the way in which institutions in a society, such as a school, produce the unequal relations of power present in the society. The first passage for focussed writing (see Appendix 10) is set in a black school controlled by white authorities in a society in which whites had the power to "define meanings and to shape social values" to name others and to "represent the legitimate social world" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:13). Black teachers were expected to sustain and reproduce these relations of power.

Early in the book Miss Crocker goes to see Mary Logan (Mama) to tell her that Little Man and Cassie had refused to take their schoolbooks because of the labels inside. Both Miss Crocker and Mary Logan are black teachers of black pupils.

(English Centre Workbook see Appendix 10)

The two black teachers represent contrasting responses to this incident, the issuing of old school books rejected as no longer suitable for use in white schools and now stamped as being in poor condition and allocated for use by 'nigras'.

Miss Crocker allows herself to be defined by the situation and accepts the constraints which are placed on her freedom to construct herself. She acts out of her position of inferiority in relation to the authorities and concedes power to them in her gratitude for having any books at all and in her assertion that the children have to find out who they are. She attempts to survive in the society by becoming a party to the reproduction of these relations of inequality.

Mama on the other hand refuses to be defined in these terms. She is aware of the power of language to embody and perpetuate notions of difference and of the power of name-calling to reduce and dehumanize. She attempts to protect the children from the effects of name-calling and pastes over the labels in the front of the books. Through this act she defies the authority of the whites and risks her job.

I was concerned to discover whether pupils would be able to recognise the contrasting positions taken up by Miss Crocker and Mama and whose position they would endorse. Also whether they would show insight into the survival strategies used by the two women. In addition I was interested to discover whether they would demonstrate a sensitivity to the risks involved in challenging the existing relations of power.

Pupils were asked to explain the different attitudes of the two women in a short piece of writing in order to explore their perceptions of the assumptions underlying the attitudes of the two teachers.

Miss Crocker's attitude

Most pupils recognised Miss Crocker's acceptance of a position of powerlessness as expressed by Alice:

I think Miss Crocker's point of view is that because they hardly ever get books or text books to learn or read from so to her it must be a great privilege to for the first time receive books.

The responses of Delia and Heather show some insight into the risks involved in any action which might be interpreted as a challenge to the white authorities:

Delia Miss Crocker ... does not want to fight with the whites.

Heather Miss Crocker was also right because Mama would have have got into trouble.

It is interesting to note that most black girls see Miss Crocker's acceptance of her position of inferiority as a refusal to identify with the blacks who are oppressed by the system.

Zakeera finds this disturbing:

Miss Crocker has a no-nonsense attitude and it looks like she favours whites ... cares more about what whites think. She's probably afraid of offending them in case she gets into trouble and loses her job. She speaks all good things about whites as if she's one of them.

I do not understand her attitude. She's black so she should be on their side.

Pamela and Karen seems very aware of the reasons underlying Miss Crocker's behaviour:

Thanusha I think Miss Crocker is worried about what other people think and is afraid of what other people will do and say.

Pamela Miss Crocker is one of those people who want to keep peace between whites and blacks. Miss Crocker is a person who will surrender almost anything.

Derusha I think personally that Miss Crocker was being unreasonable, she's more worried what the whites say and think about her than the blacks.

They suggest that Miss Crocker defers to whites and accepts their view of blacks in her anxiety to ensure her survival. These pupils show a sensitivity and recognition of behaviours displayed in a situation where power is vested in the hands of a dominant group. One wonders to what extent this reflects these pupil's own experience in the school. They also make clear their disapproval of such a display of internalised oppression.

Zipho and Litha feel that by colluding with the white authorities she is reproducing a society which values blacks less than whites. Zipho reveals a recognition of the futility of such behaviours and an awareness that the authorities whom she is attempting to please will not protect her.

Zipho It seems as if she's trying to protect the government which does not really protect her. I am sure she's trying to make herself look good so if they ever come she can say I told you so.

Thoko She wants to be "the good person". She wants to show the whites that she is less important to them by doing whatever they tell her to do. On the other hand to others she looks as if she is being a racist.

Thoko's perception that Miss Crocker's behaviour might itself be interpreted as racist suggests an awareness of the complexity of situation and points to the difficulties faced by black teachers in white schools.

Mama's actions

Pupils seemed to recognise that the school system was discriminatory and were by and large supportive of Mama's efforts to protect the children from its impact:

Anne Mama feels that the children don't have to accept bad things so why should they have to see 'nigra' all the time. She also feels that nobody will ever hear about the books because nobody would ever bother to come to the school. Why should the children have to see nigra it's not their fault they were born black?

This last comment of Anne's is interesting as she seems to suggest that the only reason the children are disadvantaged is because they have been born black. She seems not to question the system only the children's misfortune at being born black in a racist society.

She minimises the risk of Mama's action by accepting Mama's view that no one will find out.

Alice Mama's point of view is that everybody's equal and just because they are black doesn't mean that they should be given the poor old second hand junk but also be provided with new facilities and she understands Cassie and Little Man's point of view.

Although Alice uses a similar argument "just because they are black" she carries it further indicating an understanding of the broader structures of inequality in the society and Mama's rejection of this position.

Zakeera and Amber believe that Mama is protecting the children from discovering how they are positioned in the society:

Zakeera She thinks that the children shouldn't know what's written on the cover.... They're just too young to understand what's going on.

Amber Mama thought that Little Man and Cassie were right not to take the books because she didn't want them to find out about the way blacks were treated by whites.

Karen detects an awareness of the underlying anger in Mama's behaviour and expresses her belief in the equality of all people revealing her positioning of herself in our changing society:

Karen Mama knows how the white people are and I guess she gets quite annoyed with it. I also think that she is fed up with the old tattered books they get and she feels that it is very unfair. Black people are not rubbish or anything that you can just give anything because all people are equal, no matter what their colour, race or language. I also think Mama really knows what is going on around her.

The last comment is interesting as it might suggest that Karen views Mama as a politically aware person. Derusha using different words expresses a similar thought; "she knew what she was doing".

Pumla and Zipho feel that she is making a stand for social justice in the society:

Pumla I think Mary Logan is right she is also a black she must stand up for them.

Zipho Mary Logan is trying to stand up for their rights.

In summary it is clear that pupil's responses to the attitude displayed by Miss Crocker differed widely. White pupils seemed most concerned with her attitude to the children and revealed little insight into the relations of power operating in the situation. Coloured and Indian pupils were very sensitive to the issue of power and Miss Crocker's deference to white authority. Black pupils also showed an awareness of her consent to the situation and her efforts to ensure her own survival. They had little faith that she would succeed in her efforts to appease the authorities.

In their responses to Mama's attitude white pupils recognised that she did not accept a view of either herself or the children as inferior and was protecting them from the imposition of such a view. They all supported her in her resistance to the authorities and the action she took to protect the children. The Coloured and Indian pupils reflected the same views as the white girls but perceived Mama as concerned that all persons in the society should have equal rights. Black pupils recognised her attempts to protect the children and raised the issue of the rights of individuals in a society in which relations of power are unequal.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CREATING THE SPACES

In the previous chapter the girls' views on the way in which 'institutional racism' operated in a school system was explored. In this chapter the text selected offered an opportunity to examine whether pupils would use the space created in order to tell their own stories. Should they do this then they themselves would remedy the 'omission' referred to as a form of racism (Chapter Three:page 34). In addition it provided the opportunity for them to explore their own positions without finding themselves fixed by perceptions of what their cultures might be. The promise held out by reader-response theory seemed to suggest that discussions around a text might show signs of becoming the 'borderland' referred to by Giroux (Chapter Three:page 36).

Cross-cultural friendship : constraints and possibilities

The second passage (see Appendix 11) selected for focussed writing is linked to the school context. It describes an incident when a bus carrying white pupils to school forces the black children off the road into a ditch. The children in the bus shout abuse at the black children and the bus drives on leaving them in a cloud of dust. Soon afterwards, Jeremy, a white boy, approaches the black children with a friendly smile. He gets little response from them and, through Cassie, we discover that, although he is white, he never takes the bus and also that he has been known to appear with red welts on his arms which are the result of his association with the Logan children.

The task set on this passage was aimed at finding out whether pupils reading the story would identify with the Logan children's experience of whites and approve their rejection of Jeremy's offers of friendship fixing him as a white in the wider relations of power in the society? Would they recognise Jeremy's efforts to break out of the constraints of his position and engage with them at an interpersonal level with the consequences that this

seemed to hold for him? What was their view of friendship between black and white in a society in which the relations of power were unequal?

I was interested to explore whether pupils identified any of the boundaries they felt might inhibit friendship between groups. Also whether they approved of Jeremy's attempts to be friendly and to what extent they empathised with Jeremy. The Logan children's rejection of Jeremy reflects a distrust of all whites who are identified as representatives of a system which oppressed blacks. Individual acts of friendship are unconsciously measured against a background of power relationships which advantages whites and which are likely to be reflected in their status as adults in that society. I was interested in whether the changes in the laws and social practices of the new South Africa would alter pupils' perceptions of the functioning of power as a determinant of friendship. Would pupils reveal insight into the Logan's wariness of Jeremy?

The pupils were asked to write their thoughts and feelings alongside the passage.

Insight into Logan's wariness of Jeremy

Carol and Delia seem to deal with the issue at an interpersonal level only and are critical of the Logan's rejection of Jeremy's offer of friendship. There is almost a hint that the Logan children should have been grateful to him:

Carol Why did they have to be so mean to Jeremy when they know that he never rides the bus. He was being kind to them and in turn they gave him the cold shoulder.

Delia I feel they should have spoken to Jeremy and should have been more polite. He was trying to be friendly towards them. He also didn't like the bus trying to get mud on the boys and Cassie. Cassie wanted to be nice but, I don't know why she didn't.

Jane understands that Jeremy is being identified with the white children in the bus but seems to suggest that he should not be held responsible for their actions:

Jane Jeremy was upset 'cause it wasn't his fault the whites were like that. The others were cross with Jeremy and felt that if he's a white then it must be his problem too.

Anne is the only one who reveals an understanding of the possible dangers involved in a friendship between a black and a white in a society in which the relations of power are unequal and there is resistance to such a crossing of boundaries:

Anne I feel strange when I read this because I feel they should be nicer to Jeremy and yet maybe not because it could be dangerous.

Joan identifies with Jeremy and condemns the circumstances which work against such friendships. She indicates that she would have resisted the pressures to conform and does not accept being identified with whites in the role of oppressors:

Joan I would have been like Jeremy making friends with the blacks, even if my parents wouldn't let me. That was a cruel and meaningless time.

Alice is much more forceful in the denial of such a positioning and is quite clear that she does not regard skin colour as a barrier to friendship and an adequate definition of identity for rejection. She also seems to hold the Logan's responsible for accepting the position of victims in the bus incident:

Alice I don't think it was kind of Stacy to have ignored Jeremy and I think that they shouldn't be upset because of a silly bus!!!

I think that they shouldn't of been mean to Jeremy!! He didn't do anything wrong, I mean so what if he's white and wants to be friends with blacks!!!!!!!!!!

Heather interprets the situation as one of reverse racism on the part of the Logans:

Heather I also feel sorry for Jeremy because it was not his fault and they are always complaining that the white folk think that something is wrong with them (their skin colour). So why are the Logan children thinking it is Jeremy's fault because he has the same colour skin as the children in the bus.

Thanusha understands the Logan's rejection of Jeremy and accepts that they identify him with the white children who have been insulting them:

Thanusha Being called names is bad it really is. I can understand Stacy's anger to whites. That's why he doesn't like Jeremy.

Although the other pupils are not as strong in their condemnation of the Logan's behaviour as the white pupils they, nonetheless, don't appear comfortable with the assumption that because he is white he is therefore bad.

The black pupils are very clear as to the reason for the Logan's rejection of Jeremy. In the words of Litha, "if one white person is horrible and mean then every single white person in the world is bad":

Zipho I feel sorry for all of them, especially Jeremy. He's trying to be so nice and friendly to all of them but seeing he's white they won't really let him get too close. I think I understand though, where they are coming from. Jeremy's people and friends are being nasty and cruel and I guess they don't want to get too close to him. All the black kids most probably feel very bitter and angry.

Their insight into the reasons for the hostility of the Logan's does not prevent them from feeling sympathy for Jeremy. It is interesting that Zipho is able to "feel sorry for all of them", this might suggest that she perceives them as trapped in a system which affects all of them.

To summarise, all the pupils seem to regret a situation in which the Logan's need to be wary of Jeremy and seem to feel some sympathy for him. The white pupils, with the exception of Anne, do not explore the implications of their identity as whites in a society which privileged whites. Although two very clearly refuse to be constrained by such an identity in the case of friendship across the colour line.

Insiders and onlookers : pupils' positions in relation to the text.

It seemed appropriate at this point to explore how pupils perceived their relationship to the text and how they inserted themselves into the text in order to interpret and use it as a mechanism for exploring definitions of themselves. According to Davies; "Stories provide the metaphors, the characters and the plots through which their own positionings in the social world can be interpreted" (1987:44). She suggests that we need "to analyse the way in which they provide a vehicle for children to discover ways of positioning themselves as a person" (1987:45). Through this analysis one might gain insight into "How the child relates to the text, inserts her or himself into the text, and thus how she or he interprets and uses the text" (1987:45).

In order to obtain insight into pupils' relationship to the text they were asked to answer the following question:

- Where do you feel you are when reading this passage?
- Are you inside the story with the particular characters, or viewing the events as an outside onlooker? Or does your position change? If so, how? (see Appendix 11)

Five pupils positioned themselves as characters inside the text:

Carol I feel as though I am the characters. I can feel Stacy's anger, Little Man's sadness etc. I feel as though it's a play and I'm the characters whenever they come on stage!

Jane I feel that I am inside the story with all the characters running from the whites in the bus and falling into the mud. I am also cross and angry at them.

Alice When I read the book I feel like I'm right there experiencing it for myself and how it's so tragic. I want to cry!

Some girls experienced themselves as inside the text but as onlookers to the events:

Joan I felt like I was there. I thought I was in the bus but I was sitting there quietly, without shouting out 'nigger'. I thought, like, getting up and shouting at them and saying "Stop that!"

Amber I feel as though I am in the book running away from the dreadful bus... Sometimes I want to comfort them and tell the driver what I think about him. Make the children apologise for singing the rude song... I would try to make people understand they are the same.

There were also those who were inside but who changed their positions during the reading:

Mary At the part of when the bus was swerving to try and get them off the road, I felt like punching one of those children and even more so the driver. At the place when the little girl got served before Cassie, I felt like shouting at that man to come serve me NOW! At school when they got the books with the front page I felt like telling the teacher to realise that they have feelings along with everyone else. At most other parts I was just reading.

Mary graphically describes her positioning of herself during events in the story. At times she completely identifies with a character, "serve me NOW!" and at others she reveals herself as an onlooker "they have feelings along with everyone else". Anne and Zakeera also find themselves shifting position as they read.

Anne I start off sitting with Cassie and her friends and I get soaking wet and muddy with them and then I see them from Jeremy's point of view.

Zakeera In some parts in the book I felt like I was there experiencing the anger and sorrow or joy and happiness. In the episode with the bus I felt like I was really there, like I was one of them. In many other parts I feel the same way. Then I come across parts in the book where I can't decide how I really feel. It is then when I feel like an onlooker, not feeling anything and the children are the ones experiencing anger, hurt, etc. In most cases I feel like I'm in the story, like I'm one of the characters.

All these pupils identify with the positions of the oppressed in the society. It is therefore possible to understand why white pupils should not identify their 'whiteness' as defining their position against their own experience of events in the text.

Among the black girls there were those who despite feeling that they were in the story expressed a strong sense of being invisible and spying:

Thoko I feel as if I'm part of the book. I'm involved with it when someone is crying and the same happens when they plan revenge. It's as if I'm part of that revenge. When I read I can actually picture what is going on, it's like I'm spying on them every move they make I see it.

Litha I feel as if I'm there invisible, but watching them struggle so hard and the white people making it even worse and not being able to do anything. I think I'm actually an outsider-looker 'cause as I said, I am not able to do anything but just being able to feel their pain as though it was happening to me. My heart aches for them because what's happening to them is similar to what happened here. Although I never experienced it I am telling you, I can't even begin to imagine what they through, only feeling it.

I find it interesting that these pupils, by contrast to the other pupils who identify with the Logans, seem to experience themselves as onlookers and do not position themselves as the victims of the treatment experienced by blacks in the story. Litha makes the connection between the events in the story and events in South Africa but she makes it clear that these events are not a part of her experience. It would seem that these pupils

are finding new positions for themselves in a changed society in which there have been shifts of power.

Cross-cultural friendship in a changing society

A conversation on friendship that pupils had during the interview at the end of the project fits into the narrative well here. The previous section has sought to provide some understanding of where pupils perceive themselves as positioned in a racist society and whether they accept their positioning by others. Friendship had emerged as an area of concern among pupils in previous years and I was interested to find out whether pupils were experiencing greater freedom in relating to one another or whether the divisions passed down from our apartheid history operated to fix their friendships in predetermined ways. I was also interested in whether there were indications that they were deconstructing these old boundaries and defining themselves in new ways.

I wanted to provide space for this issue to be discussed again under different circumstances. On this occasion the discussion was to be verbal and the pupils grouped according to racial categories. I deliberately rearranged the boundaries in order to explore whether this allowed for more sensitive explorations of relationships.

The incident drawn from the story used to stimulate discussion refers to an occasion involving Jeremy and his overtures of friendship to the Logan family. Papa tells Stacy that;

Maybe one day whites and blacks can be real friends, but right now the country ain't built that way.

(see Appendix 9)

I was interested in discovering to what extent pupils were influenced by their parents in their openness to friendship and what other constraints they might experience in relating

to one another. To what extent did changes in relations of power in the wider South African society impact on pupils positioning of themselves? Would the shifting relations of power be reflected in their perceptions of one another and to what extent would they reveal themselves as active agents deconstructing and constructing new and different relationships in the social context of the school and beyond?

In order to stimulate discussion I had provided pupils with a short passage quoting Papa's advice to Stacy as (cited above) and had asked pupils the following:

- What is your response to this statement?
- Do your parents guide you with regard to choice of friends?
- What friendship groups are their in Standard five?
- Have these changed over the years? (see Appendix 9)

A white perspective

Pupils recognised the ways in which borders could be erected around communities and that these borders, if contested, however innocently, might become the scene of bloodshed and violence. A view expressed was that because of the segregation laws and the tensions that existed between black and white, friendship between a white boy and a black boy would not be accepted by the white community and that it could even endanger Stacy's life:

Heather I think it was the segregation and black people were getting murdered by white people just because of what they said and Stacy might have been murdered just because he was friends with Jeremy.

Jane Maybe the father would think that Stacy had wanted to be friends with Jeremy ... was trying to be friends with a white person, maybe to look bigger or something. Maybe he would think that his son Jeremy, didn't really want to be friends and then come after Stacy.

In these responses Papa is seen to be protecting Stacy from reprisals for his friendship with Jeremy by members of the white community. He is also seen as protecting Stacy from a projected change in Jeremy. The expectation is that Jeremy would be unable to resist the pressure from his own community to become more like them in the realisation of his own status as a white in a racist society.

Heather I think that Jeremy might have turned on Stacy like his brothers did with TJ because they seemed to be big buddies and they gave him presents and everything and then they beat him up ... and his brothers might bully Jeremy into doing that to Stacy.

Jane I think that, even though Jeremy didn't want to end up being above Stacy, because of his brothers, he would have been influenced or something like that. Even though he didn't mean to maybe ... But maybe as his personality developed he could maybe ... then he wanted to be friends ... but ... I don't know ...

Two girls, Joan and Alice believe that Jeremy would remain a good friend to Stacy. Alice, who herself has a black friend, Annelise, who comes to her home and sleeps over (see both their references to their friendship), is the most positive about the possibility of borders being crossed and of a lasting friendship developing between black and white.

Alice I don't think that Jeremy would turn on Stacy because if you take the way Jeremy stuck up for Cassie when they were at the shop or when they were with Lillian-Jean, he actually stuck up for her so I don't think that he would because he is different from his father and his family.

A coloured and Indian perspective

The potential for violence in border crossing is also perceived by pupils in this group who express the concern that whites might react violently to such a friendship:

Amber Maybe they would go after Stacy or Jeremy because they are friends.

The way in which power in an unequal society creates borders around groups and defines which people belong in which group and how they relate to each other is explored by these pupils:

Pamela He thought later years when they were grown up, he thought they might think he's too big now to be friends with a black boy and he would just turn his back on Stacy and Cassie and all the rest ... To keep face ... he wouldn't want to show that he was a 'nigger lover'.

Amber It has got to do with reputation. If he walks hand in hand with a girl from a different race then people will judge him like that ... mustn't invite him here because he will bring her along and then she'll do something ... because they are used to whites being with whites and blacks being with blacks ...

As a group the perception was that Papa "was worried about what other white people would think" as this would play a role in the balance of power which was likely to emerge in the relationship as time passed. This raised the issue of whether Jeremy would be able to keep his relationship on an equal footing in the face of such pressure.

A black perspective

From the outset Thoko shared her view on the role of parents influencing the choice of friends: "My parents like say it's my choice... So it is actually up to me which friends

I should have". The pupils devoted very little time to discussing Papa's attitude to a friendship between Stacy and Jeremy but seemed to relate his warning to how they would respond to such a warning from their parents in the context of their life in school and society in South Africa today:

Zipho: "Well if my father said that to me right now I would say, it's all changed now, everyone is friends with everyone practically now. It's just that if you give them a chance, then everyone could be ... you know ... it's not black and white any more, Indian and coloured, it's ...

I think that he was trying to protect him because those days Jeremy's father could have been really angry with Papa for letting this happen... or something ... you know ... 'my kid ain't going to live with no nigger' you know and something horrible would happen. His father was just trying to make it easier on him.

After this comment of Zipho's in which she is quite clear that things are different now these pupils shifted their focus to friendship in the school in the South African context. These discussion are recorded in the next section.

Barriers to friendship in South African society

Discussions about friendship in the novel served very effectively as a stimulus for the pupils to reflect on their own life experiences and how circumstances both inside and outside the school impacted on their relationships with one another.

Language

This was an issue identified by white girls. Heather who is a new pupil at the school, having come from Cape Town, took up the discussion:

Heather I have also noticed that there is a big group of Xhosa girls in Standard four and five that sit outside, not all by themselves, but I mean there is a huge group of them that sit out there. But also there are some white and black children that do mix at Acacia.

All the Xhosa people, they normally ... they don't all the time ... but they normally talk in Xhosa and then some people think that they hear their names and then they feel very upset because they think they are talking about them behind their back.

Jane Because they do know English and we don't know Xhosa that well ... and they are more fluent in English than we are in Xhosa ...

Although Jane does not say it explicitly I think it would not be unfair to conclude that she is suggesting that there is a certain deliberateness in the use of Xhosa by these pupils. At the same time she does not explore the relationship of power that is implicit in white pupils not being fluent in Xhosa and Xhosa pupils being fluent in English. Alice, by contrast does not support the view that the Xhosa group is somehow an assertion of difference and power excluding whites, but sees it as a response based on fear of rejection by the dominant white group. In her response she equates skin colour with speaking Xhosa.

Alice I think that the reason why all those girls stick together, like stick to their own colour, is because they are still scared to adjust.

I asked whether this applied in standard five.

Jane Yes they are friends but sometimes they don't really want to be your friend because they want to stay together. They think because they are not the same as them they go to a different church, they have a different home, their situation and that, they don't want to be friends with each other. But most of the time the girls are really open.

Jane seems to be struggling with what she sees as a hypothetical possibility for separation which is somehow seen to take place 'over there' among 'them' and in this way seems to deny any involvement on the part of herself or the group to which she might belong or maybe she does not perceive herself as belonging to a group. This could be construed as an example of the 'invisibility' of 'whiteness' which is part of the hidden power of the dominant group. By taking itself out of the equation it does not allow for the same scrutiny of itself as that to which other responses are subjected.

In response to my question as to who the girls are that are open, I fall into the same trap by not turning the questions back on the girls in the group.

Joan Like Zipho and Thoko, the girls in our class, and Victoria and that. They are open to us and that. They are nice to us.

Joan seems to make a distinction between the girls she has been talking about and the girls to whom Heather referred in the earlier conversation because she continues:

Joan When they talk in Xhosa, as Heather said, I feel bad 'cause I do think that they are talking about me even though most of the time they are not. They are just talking ... they rather prefer talking in Xhosa than in English ... I am friendly with most of them but I think that they are just scared to come out and be friendly with you. I have tried to become friends with them but they just seem to not let you in.

Joan is able to reflect on her own responses and acknowledge that there may not be grounds for her thinking they are talking about her. By contrast to Joan's serious attempt to identify the power dynamics at work, Heather uses the 'no difference' argument to show quite forcefully how this may be used to avoid probing too deeply into issues that separate pupils from one another:

Heather I don't mind being friends with them. I find that there is nothing really different between us. Just because our skin colour is different. I mean someone could be purple and they could be very popular.

Carol who has been silent up to now draws attention to the fact that the conversation has been based on the white girls' suppositions about the behaviour of the Xhosa girls.

Carol I suppose so far we have been giving the opinions of what we think they are thinking but they might have their own ideas why they are sticking together because they might communicate better with their friends than they do with us.

She has identified the power of a group to define and explain the behaviour of others without allowing them a voice. It is interesting to note how little reflection there is by white pupils on their own behaviour as members of the dominant group in the school.

Commonsense and views of normality

In Chapter Three I suggest that members of a dominant group come to view their "responses as 'natural', the product of commonsense" (31). This attitude is reflected and questioned in the white girls discussions around friendship. In discussing friendship between black and white girls differing views are presented.

Anne If there is friendship I think it is very school orientated. You don't often see people...I know Alice has gone to Pumla's house, but it is more at school that you are friends than friendship where people go to houses. Maybe 'cause they live so far away.

Alice I disagree with Anne because my best friend, Pumla Vena, she's black, OK. Now her Mom and my Mom are very good friends and she has come to sleep at my house lots of times and when Pumla tells the black girls they all come up to me and say; "I don't believe Pumla. She says that she has

been to your house." And I say, "But it is true. "They all like 'Oooohh'.. they all like gasp. Really. I don't know why..... I don't know why they are so shocked.

None of the girls responded directly to Alice, but what she is possibly exposing is that black girls find it difficult to envisage friendships with white girls which include visiting them in their homes. It might be interesting to explore how they come to hold such a view. The issue reverts to the question of what is 'normal', who sets the norm and how do others unconsciously internalise these norms and become party to their reproduction both in the construction of their own identities and in the reproduction of the traditional friendship patterns of a once all-white school. Alice and Pumla have broken with this tradition but it does not seem that a new norm has yet been established and this is reflected in the responses of the other pupils.

Joan Mrs Foster I live near Zipho and I have always thought of asking her to come to my house and that sort of thing. But I don't know what we really do because we don't have that sort of friendship that you have with normal friends. As Alice said, I think that it is more a school friendship... I have only just become friends with her this year, very good friends, because I haven't been in her class since Standard two. That is when she first came and she used to be very quiet and now she has changed and she has become more friendly so she has actually ... I really enjoy her company.

Anne I am not saying that I would not invite someone to my house. I am saying that in general people don't invite. I don't think that most white people look at black people and say 'Oh she's different you know'.

From these discussion it would seem that should girls find a friendship develops between a white and a black girl, and they pursue it, then the school environment is an enabling one. In a different context such as one outside of the school environment in which the more traditional patterns of social relations familiar to white South Africans come into play - one of these being a view of what is 'normal' - then sustaining the relationship will be more difficult.

An interesting perception is that the development of friendship between black and white is seen by white pupils as the black girls becoming more open:

Jane The last couple of months I found that Zipho and Victoria and all them ... go to the movies with everyone now and they are more open these couple of months.

Skin colour and the Group Areas Act

These were issues which were identified by coloured girls as playing a role in patterns of friendship.

Pamela I think it is fine at the moment. I am friendly with Jenny and Christine, they are friends of mine. But when I came in Standard three I found that some people, they were snobby, kind of. They don't like to be your friend and I think I found out that it was the colour of my skin and what race I am. But it has been getting better, but sometimes I think that it is the colour of your skin.

Amber Mrs Foster they also judge you from where you stay ... They think that if you stay in the Northern Areas (Areas demarcated for coloured people in the apartheid years) you can't go out you can't do anything but it is not like that.

Zakeera Some white people you find it easy to be friends with them. Others like push you away if you want to be friends with them.

On being asked if she could give a reason for this she replied:

I don't know, probably your race. People often ask me where I live. I live in Gelvan Park and they ask like 'Where's that?' and all that. They think that it is out there in the rural areas, something like that. Northern Areas is where there is like lots of gangs and fighting.

Pamela Ya, because they also look at where you live. If you invite them to your house they ask you, "Where do you live?"
You say, "I live in Aspen Heights."
"And they ask, "Where's that?"
You say, "In Bethelsdorp."
"Sorry I can't come. I have got something else to do."
So it also depends on where you live because they think like ' the Northern Areas - Oh My Gosh! I will get killed or something. That is where they rape people and all that. So I think it depends on where you live.

Karen was one of the pupils who had started at the school at the beginning of the year and in her perception:

Some of us are - like - different and it wasn't easy - like - easy to - like - get to know people - like - everybody is friendly and everything but - like - there is still something missing.

These girls have drawn attention to one of the legacies of apartheid, the deliberate way in which legislation such as the Group Areas Act created physical borders around people in South Africa. This separation of people from one another led to cross-cultural friendship being difficult to sustain. In the case of the Northern Areas in Port Elizabeth this bordering and other factors erupted into violence during the riots in 1990. Events such as the riots and lack of knowledge of these areas and reports in the newspapers about gang warfare have led to the creation of an an image of these areas as unsafe. Persons unfamiliar with them would be influenced by these reports and be cautious about entering them. So once again the creation of boundaries around cultures marginalized those who were removed from suburbs in which they had traditionally lived and located them within their own group area in a separate part of the city.

Limits to pupils' positions

Black pupils needed no prompting to shift their focus from the novel to South Africa. Asanda and Melissa came to school in January this year (Standard five) while the other pupils have been in the school longer. It is interesting to bear this in mind when listening to their perceptions of relationships within the school and outside.

Asanda I think when I first started at a white school I was very scared because I didn't ... I was scared like I would speak something wrong to them ... or things like that. Then I went to Hogsback (a week long outdoor education camp arranged by the school) and I met ... everybody was very nice and I met new friends and now it's nice and I can have more friends ...

... Doing group work is very nice, you get to know friends and how do they feel about you as ... something like that thing we did there (Hogsback) writing ... your group writing about friends ... I like you because of this and this and that ... and being helpful to people and to each other.

Pumla I think Asanda is right because when I first came here in Standard four I was quite shy and all that stuff but that has changed because I know most of the people 'cause of being here longer. I find everybody OK.

Zipho I just want to say that lots of people have changed in Standard five. As you grow it changes, everyone does change. It's actually quite amazing how lots of people change ... You find lots of people have changed, even me, when we went to Hogsback, even though, I have been here longer than most black kids, I made more friends from Hogsback than any other camp. I think that as you grow older you notice everyone changes and most of the time in a nicer way.

In a reference to group work in the class Zipho says:

You know some people think, people judge people by the cover, ... they say 'Ag Lisa is a horrible person' but when you get to work with Pumla everyone totally changes. You see how nice Pumla can be.

There is a suggestion that black girls feel that they may have

defined by the colour of their skin and that they have experienced a need for acceptance by white girls. It would seem that these girls have found activities such as group work and environmental camps helpful in breaking down barriers.

Litha I was one of the first black kids to start in the school ... I didn't think about the racial thing or the black and white ... I only think about it now. Because when I started everyone was so open and they accepted me very well in their environment ... They still are friendly and they have accepted Asanda and everyone who started now. They have been friendly ... especially at Hogsback. People have changed a lot, I have been interacting with many people that I haven't interacted with in a long time.

Litha is referring to Hogsback as an experience which exposed pupils to one another over the period of a week during which time friendships could be made without the usual constraints of home and school.

I asked them if they went to parties and discos in order to explore out-of-school friendships.

Zipho What I find is that you know when white girls you know, OK, go to mainly the movies ... [laughs] ... not only the movies, when they go out for the night with other white boys they will never say; "You want to come?" No they feel, I think they feel awkward 'cause you are going to be the only black girl and you are going to keep quiet and sit there.

This was followed by some discussion about how mixing with boys changes things.

Zipho It all changes once again. Maybe it is because it's um only a girls' school. Probably its that. But if it was a co-ed school it would probably be different.

Melissa At Word of Faith, Mrs Foster, a white boy liked me. [Girls all giggle] ... His name was Michael.

Pumla And Jenny nearly fell down, she went 'A white boy!'

From Jenny's position of white privilege a boy/girl relationship in which the girl is black and the boy white is laughable. Her outburst is not intended to be hurtful. She is unable to question her own position of whiteness and appears to think that Melissa would understand why such a situation is so unlikely as to arouse her mirth.

Zipho I think that it's weird having a white boyfriend and everything. But you know, my mother and I tell each other everything, OK, and I can say to my mother 'Oh my goodness, he's cute even though he is a white guy. But I would never say I want him for my boyfriend.'

Zipho draws attention to the changes in patterns of relationship that takes place when boys become part of the socialising. She is sensitive to the way in which black girls are not included when white boys are to be present. The incident described by Melissa and Pumla regarding the boy Michael is very revealing of Jenny's resistance/denial of the possibility of relationships between boys and girls of different colours. This is borne out by a conversation which the white group had on the topic.

White girls also raised the issue of boy/girl relationships. They had been discussing what it had felt like to be white while they had been reading the book. Carol draws attention to the fact that in cities such as New York black people, such as dancers and rap singers, are looked up to. She goes on

Carol Girls go out with black men. You can find that here in PE as well and I can't argue with them in what to do. That is fine but to me, it doesn't seem right for white people to go out with black people. If it's friends it's fine, to movies ... I don't mind. But a girl and a boy that doesn't seem right to me. That makes you feel uncomfortable.

In the discussion that followed it seemed apparent that no one in the group would find it comfortable and the possibility of a mixed marriage was regarded as likely to be very difficult and children from such a marriage would be teased.

Alice I know about racism and everything and I treat black people the same but I can't imagine like Heather going out with like a black person 'cause I mean like that often causes a lot of disturbance and violence and everything. Because some people don't like it 'cause like say her parents won't agree with it so it also like causes a lot of disturbance.

It seems from this discussion that for these girls the borders around their group is still firmly in place when it comes to cross-cultural encounters of the sexual kind. Alice actually envisages "disturbance and violence" if this taboo is broken. It would be interesting to discover whether Zipho's feeling that things might be different in a co-educational school might be correct. This is a very complex issue as was revealed in the conversations around identity which Pamela and Amber had reported in the previous section. They were very aware of white and coloured disapproval in the case of cross-cultural friendship with black people. The introduction of boys into friendship and after school socialisation added a dimension which the girls had, in some cases identified, and with which they were beginning to engage.

Identity and subjectivity

According to Epstein (1993) "The development of subjective identities is both complex and important, ... They are formed through a combination of available discourses, personal experience and material existence". Identity was an issue which was of concern to some of the coloured girls. In their exploration of the friendship between Stacy and Jeremy, Amber turned the conversation into a discussion of group and personal identity and the allocation of power in South African society. Following on her earlier comment

about "whites being whites and blacks being blacks" she says "this was something like the coloured story":

Amber As they said in the video about apartheid they said that coloureds were mistakes but how could coloureds be mistakes if they are here?"

She is asking how, if she exists, can she be a mistake? This is a very painful question and it has been bothering her ever since viewing the video. (I wish I could claim to have helped her but at the time of writing I have offered little more than comforting words.) She is expressing a frustration which, in my view, is a source of hurt and anger troubling members of this community and even as I write that I sense a nagging in my mind - whose creation is a 'coloured community'? Is it not the continual definition as a separate group by others, first whites and now blacks, against which this struggle towards identity is being waged? Pamela articulates this sense of being the 'creation' of forces outside, forces which are neither willing to take responsibility, nor willing to accept into their own power structures their 'creation':

Pamela Coloureds can't help it that they are coloureds because some whites forced blacks to have sex with them ... [she giggles] ... so that is how coloureds were formed. Which means some of us are half white and half black ... so they can't be responsible.

Her use of 'they' is open to many interpretations. To whom is she referring? The blacks who were forced to have sex, the coloureds who were a result of that sex or the whites?

Amber In Maths we learn ... like fractions and it's ... if it's a half you always take to the whole one. But how come, with coloureds they are half white and half black? How come they don't become considered as whites? Why must they be considered as coloureds?

Pamela I totally agree with Amber because when Nelson Mandela was fighting for African's rights why weren't we classified as white? I mean we are half

white and half black so why wouldn't we be more white? So why weren't we classified as white? ...

Yes we were discriminated against as well. So why? We are basically white as well ... ya ... We are half way so why couldn't we be classified as white as well? That's my question. That's what I want to know. I have always wanted to know.

I then refer to work we have been doing on slavery and draw attention to the way in which white attitudes toward blacks during this period and later, rationalised in a variety of ways, was carried over to all people of colour.

Derusha And maybe also, as well, blacks and coloureds, they don't have as much power in society as well. Some people never knew what coloureds were, so maybe they thought that whites had the more power ... so that is why they classified the coloureds into the black nation.

Derusha would have been classified as an Indian and is a Hindu and seems to be able to distance herself a little from the discussion and identify the role of power in defining who people are. I share my perception of how the Khoikhoi and black people living in South Africa were subjected to similar attitudes as those directed toward slaves.

Amber Weren't the Khoikhoi and the blacks here before the whites came? So wouldn't the land originally be theirs?

Many of these pupils are members of families who lost their property when they were forcibly removed from South End in Port Elizabeth and who are now trying to reclaim this land. It had been reported in the press that a march by previous residents to South End had taken place and I mentioned this:

Karen My father went. Because they used to live in South End. My father and his mother and his father ... [laughs] ... because he wrote this book. I think he is still busy on it, about South End. He is pretty much part of it.

Just how inadequate an approach which only deals with adjusting curriculum content is, is made clear as these coloured pupils struggle to define themselves, trapped into a 'no man's land' in which power was first vested in the hands of the whites and now seems to be vested in the hands of the blacks. The urgency of the creation of spaces, in which 'race' is only one among many of the subject positions and not the dominant position in the construction of identity, is emphasised by this discussion. These issues are part of the lived experience of these pupils and we need to consider how to address them in the school context if schools are to fulfil the function of educating the whole child.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

The novel set in America during the time of segregation reflects a society in which whites hold the reins of power. In South Africa white people are in the minority and the new constitution

entrenches equal rights for all South Africa's people. I deliberately developed situations which might reflect a South African reality in order to establish whether these shifts in the balance of power were reflected in the girls' responses.

The third passage (see Appendix 12) selected for focussed writing dealt with issues of power in the society within the context of a shop owned by a white, Mr Barnett, who avoids serving the black children and serves whites instead. When challenged by Cassie as to why he is doing this he responds by asking "Whose little nigger is this?" Mr Barnett's behaviour reveals clearly the relations of power in a situation in which blacks do not have any economic power. But the positioning of blacks has historical roots and Mama tries to explain these to Cassie. I wanted to find out whether pupils would respond to an historical perspective and whether they would reflect this understanding in their responses to behaviours referred to in the text and in their own life experiences within the school context.

Pupils were asked to assume three roles, that of Mama during the time of the story, that of Cassie as a grandmother in 1996, and that of a mother in South Africa. In role they were asked to respond to specific situations and questions related to the situations.

Positions of power in society

In the first focussed writing they were asked to respond as Mama to the question from Cassie which reads: "Why did Mr. Barnett call me a "little nigger", Mama? Why did he make me wait so long? I was interested in discovering whether all pupils would recognise the dehumanising effect of name-calling and whether it would carry the same weight under changed circumstances. Some white girls dismissed the use of the term 'nigger' identifying it only as a name "white people call black people" while the coloured girls recognised its racist content.

Zakeera To white people, Cassie, that's what we're called ... It's a racist name but to them we're nothing. They don't care what they call us. Mr Barnett is one of those people. He doesn't want it to look like he likes or favours us 'niggers'.

'Nigger' is viewed by Thanusha and Pamela as a term which defines them as being different and Thanusha seems to recognise the way name-calling has the ability to distance:

Thanusha He doesn't want to be known as a lover of black people and it is true we are black and in their words they call us 'niggers'.

Amber also felt that, had he used any other form of address, he would have been seen to be favouring blacks by his customers. According to Karen "He thinks like most white people do - he thinks white people are more important".

Three black pupils, Asanda, Thoko and Melissa, attempted to explain the use of the word 'Nigger'. These explanations ranged from "because you are black", it "means black in a rude way", to a feeling from Thoko that he called her 'little nigger' because there were other white people in the shop and if he did not "do those things ... the white people

would have burnt him". The power of the community to demand and secure conformity to its racism is acknowledged by the girls.

Treatment of black customers

In response to the question as to why Mr Barnett had made Cassie wait so long, Mary attributed his behaviour to personal prejudice explaining that he didn't "understand that we are all the same". Karen elaborates on this view by saying that he thought that "white people are more important than us - he thought he was better - he didn't want to see black people for who they are".

Another view expressed by some pupils was that were he to serve blacks in their turn he might be seen to be favouring blacks. His behaviour was attributed to group pressure on him from the community which held racist views and expected him to display behaviours which privileged whites and discriminated against blacks.

The power of whites to put pressure on him was recognized as being economic as well as social. Alice and Delia said that he did "not want to lose his customers". A similar point of view is expressed by Anne, who speaking as a black says:

Anne He has got a business and reputation to keep. If he still wanna make money he got to serve them white people first and us blacks, well we just got to sit and wait 'cause there's nowhere else to go."

The perception that he was driven by fear of how he would be judged in his own community is mentioned by Litha, "he's afraid that if he was nice (polite) to you he could be an outcast". She says too that "Black people are worthless to whites" as they are not

valued in the society socially or economically. According to Melissa he could afford to be rude to black people because he didn't "want our money".

The power of name-calling

The second focussed writing task emerging from Mr Barnett's use of the term 'nigger' asked the pupils to:

Imagine that the story moves to 1996 and Cassie is now a grandmother. Her 9-year-old grandchild comes home from school furiously upset, saying some white children have called her a racist name

and to write Grandma Cassie's reply. I hoped to find out whether pupils recognised the historical shifts in power in the structures of the two societies and whether these changes had any influence on the impact of the power of language in the schools within these societies.

Most of the pupils referred to the fact that they, speaking as Grandma Cassie, had had similar experiences as children using this as way of minimising the impact of the name-calling. The grandchild was variously advised by Cassie to "ignore the fact", "Don't worry" and "Just take no notice".

Joan (as Cassie), said that she had been encouraged to stand up for herself as a girl and drew attention to changes in the society by saying that today "no one is allowed to call you that name," but she did not propose a course of action.

Heather and Alice displayed anger but felt powerless to take any action:

Heather I'm so angry and sorry for you but if I go speak to their parents it will cause a lot of trouble, more than there already is.

Alice Well all I can say is that it's downright ugly!! Now where is that telephone book? What they deserve is a huge earful. But then again my Mamasaid just let it be and of course revenge isn't the answer.

Anne tried to explain the behaviour: "Some whites still think that we deserve to be slaves..." None of the white pupils seem to be committed to changing the situation and Heather says; "It will probably be like that the rest of your life" while Jane believes that "One day it'll be alright". Despite all indications in the book that Cassie would grow up an active crusader against racism this is not reflected in any of these responses. They seem to consent to the position defined by 'nigger' and show little inclination to take action against it despite changes that may have taken place in the society.

Zakeera indicated a change in Cassie who now tries not to let things bother her. In this new and unlikely role of peacemaker she reminds her grandchild that "in God's eyes we're all equal and he loves us all the same and that is all that matters". Thanusha echoes this sentiment and says "you'll have to learn how to deal with it". This tone is picked up by Pamela who says white folks are like that and always will be; "If I could then I would talk to their parents but it would be useless because their parents are probably like them".

Karen sees some improvement in attitudes and feels there "are still a few people" living in the past but "hopefully it will pass". Derusha also lays the blame at the parents' door and is the only one who recommends any action "complain to your teacher she will understand".

I am not sure how to interpret the resignation of these pupils. The most hopeful interpretation I can put on it is that they share Zakeera's view that "we're all equal", and

therefore do not allow name-calling to position them or exercise power over them. Its use by whites seems to be attributed to ignorance and poor upbringing and its use diminishes the user rather than the recipient.

Amber is the only one who draws attention to changes in attitude and who is willing to take action:

Amber I think Cassie would be very angry because racism was not supposed to be in their country. I also think she will go to school and ask the child why she called her grandchild a racist name or consult with the child's mother about the situation.

Thoko, Zipho and Litha, speaking out of a black perspective, felt calling someone by racist names was an attempt "to make you feel worthless" and felt that the most effective way of dealing with the situation was not to succumb to this feeling:

Zipho They are just doing it to make you feel bad so don't fall into their game. Pretend they're not even there.

Litha Baby, you want to be a strong person then don't worry yourself about what other people think, as long as you love yourself, and remember fighting does pay.

They seem to be suggesting that only by consenting to being dehumanised by name-calling can it reduce the person being named. Thoko feels that even those doing the name-calling are "only satisfying themselves because they know it's not true". By refusing to take up a position defined by others the power of the other to define is denied and by the same token they are diminished and revealed as powerless.

Pupils appeared from their responses not to attach enough significance to name-calling to make an issue of it. It would be wonderful to believe that changes in the balance of power in South Africa's society have drawn the sting from racist name-calling and that this is reflected by the pupils' lack of passion in their response as Cassie.

South Africa 1996 : Changing positions of power

In the third piece of focussed writing the pupils were asked to:

Imagine the story moves to South Africa 1996. A nine- year-old Acacia girl goes home to her mother furiously upset, saying some children have called her racist names or she heard her name mentioned while Xhosa girls looked at her angrily." They were then asked to write the mother's reply to her daughter.

Respect for human rights

Where the American example seemed not have aroused strong feelings Mary responds fiercely to the South African example:

Mary Some children don't understand that everyone is equal, they don't see the inside of you, they look at the outside. One day I would like them to stay so long in the sun and get burnt so badly that they turn black, then they will see what it feels like.

Mary does not find the use racist names acceptable and would like those responsible to be punished.

Thanusha, Amber and Derusha responded to the 'racist' remark and all three felt the best course of action would be to speak either to the teacher or the principal - a clear message that the behaviour is not tolerated in the school. Zakeera identified with the same scenario:

Zakeera If they call you something or make racist remarks then they are very ignorant and also stupid. This is the New South Africa and under the new government everyone is equal. The only thing different about us is our skin colour but that shouldn't bother them and it shouldn't bother you either ... Maybe they're just jealous ... but remember we're all equal.

Zakeera is clearly aware of the changes which are taking place in the country and the implications these have for the power of racist name-calling which no longer reflects the subordinate position of any group in a constitution which rejects discrimination on any ground.

Asanda and Melissa felt that the teacher should be told about the name-calling:

Asanda I think her mother should go and speak to her teacher and the teacher can call those children and stop them.

Zipho seems to attribute the behaviour to a minority and advises:

Zipho You must never let people get you down. You must make a lot of friends so if you see that one of them is up to no good you can go to another friend. You must be able to say I don't really mind if they are making fun of me.

Litha supports this point of view; "there are many more people who want to be your friend" in her view. "Let them be mean and nasty, eventually the world will be nasty to them". In changed social relations the power of name-calling seems to lose its ability to negate identity and diminish an individual. It seems clear that these girls can choose from among positions and from among relationships and experience themselves as active agents in their choices.

Overhearing name in Xhosa conversation

The rest of the pupils responded to the second option in which the girl had heard her name mentioned in a Xhosa conversation. Anne and Jane did not question whether the

actual conversation had been about the girl. They encouraged an approach to the issue which took into account the historical background to black white relationships.

Anne You see some black people think that any and all the white people are responsible for slavery and apartheid. Even though that is not entirely true we shall just have to live with it.

Jane We don't know how their lives were, so you can't be upset with them you would also be upset if you knew what happened to them.

Alice felt that that did not give Xhosa girls the right to "talk behind your back" and that the situation should be discussed with the school head. Carol and Joan suggested checking that her perception of being spoken about was accurate and if proved true advised confrontation; "if you have something to say about me, say it to my face". Heather felt that if speaking to them failed then the teacher might be approached to speak to the class about "speaking behind each other's backs" which de-racialises the issue. This issue did not arouse the strong feelings expressed by Mary against 'racist name-calling'. This might suggest that the relationship between the Xhosa girls and other girls is such that their speaking Xhosa no longer presents the same threat as reflected in pupils' discussions three years earlier in conversations with the researcher.

Among the coloured girls Pamela recommended that the girl find out who they were talking about before jumping to conclusions. Karen felt that Xhosa-speaking girls might have some justification:

Karen Some black people still feel terrible about what happened a few years ago and I guess they are just trying to get back at whites for doing what they did. It is unfair that you get accused for something you have not done.

She shows an awareness of the way that events from the past could influence behaviour in the present.

Thoko was the only black girl who chose to respond to the second option. She advises; "Don't jump to conclusions....go and ask them what they were saying about you". She is suggesting that the assumption of being viewed negatively may be a dysfunctional response on the part of the person perceiving herself to be spoken about negatively.

Questioning positions of power

Finally, I wished to find out what pupils felt that they had learned from reading the novel and whether they felt that other pupils should read it. During my interviews with them I asked them to share their thoughts with me. I hoped to find out how pupils had found themselves positioned during the reading of the novel and how comfortable they were with these positions. In addition I was interested in whether pupils revealed evidence of refusing to be positioned by not identifying with positions offered them. I hoped to discover whether their responses showed any evidence that they had found a space in which, in the words of Greene, they:

... might present what they feel is peculiarly theirs to others, explaining it to other's, translating, exploring in the other's language, discovering what emerges as human, what can be shared.

(Greene 1993:11)

I also wanted to see whether, in this sharing, there were indications that pupils had broken with hegemonic definitions of themselves and were engaged in reconstituting their social world within the school.

Specific objectives of the session were:

- to establish whether they felt that we should read books which dealt with 'racism' and the past.
- to explore their views on whether they felt that issues such as 'racism' should be discussed in class.
- to find out whether in their view the reading and subsequent discussion was experienced as divisive or whether they felt it led to a better understanding of one another.

Responses were drawn from the discussions the pupils had when they were in racial groups.

Responses to the story

Without exception the pupils had enjoyed reading the book:

Joan I found that *Roll of Thunder* was a really, really nice book and I think that we should carry on reading those sort of books 'cause everyone seems to be so open ... You discuss people, what it used to be like in the olden days and what they used to be called and how they were treated. And so if we had a choice ... I would choose that we should read them.

Joan indicates that the discussion among the pupils around the book was a valuable experience in which everyone participated openly. Anne confirms this view.

Anne When I told my Mom that I was going to be reading a book called *Roll of Thunder* and what it was about she was quite worried. She thought that maybe people would, that black people would start getting cross and then a few days after we had been reading it and talking about it I told my Mom that, no, it was actually, that it opened people up and I think it did. I think we should go on about it because it might happen again and then we should know that we mustn't do it again. Like say, once, that our parents,

that generation is over, if we hadn't known about it, it might have started again.

I asked whether they would recommend that the other class of Standard five pupils read *Roll of Thunder*.

Delia I didn't really want to read the book either at the beginning. I thought that it was really boring but once I got into it I couldn't put it down and I think that they should read it. That five Bs should read it because then you understand about the past.

Alice's response is interesting as she was very resistant to reading the book at the beginning of the programme (see section on predictions).

Alice: I think that it is a really good book because at first I really did not want to read this book 'cause my sister said that it is so boring and everything. But, you see, like most people think that racism is just about whites and blacks being separate. But this actually opens your eyes and shows you how they were also treated and how it was back then. I think that you should carry on. Five B should also read the book.

Alice is conscious of the positioning of blacks in the story and shares her concern:

Alice But some people, some black people might not like the book you know, because it is about them and how they were treated.

The view that black girls might not enjoy the book was refuted:

Zipho I think we should have the book. I think that it is a great book.

Reading a book written by a black writer

A number of girls felt that it was important to get a black perspective on events.

Anne First I think it is good to read a book from a black person's point of view because it was written by a black person.

Alice I think that it is better to read a book from a black person's point of view because, if like *Roll of Thunder*, was from a white person's point of view they would have like made out blacks to be the enemy. Like say that stupid black person is doing everything wrong. I think that it is much better to read a book from a black person's point of view.

Heather If we white people carry on reading books from white authors then actually we are never going to know how black people feel because we are never going to be black in our lives. So, if we read a book as detailed as Mildred Taylor's books, she put all the feelings in it and everything, so we actually knew how black people feel and if you don't read books with black authors and authoresses then you are never going to know what a black person feels like.

There were those among them who felt that it was also important for black people as they would learn more about their history if it were written by a black writer.

Heather ... It was from a black person's point of view so the black people are also learning more about their history ... we are also learning about what we did ... white people if they read it and they think it is a very good book, they obviously won't go and do it to other black people because they thought the book was sad.

The importance of a view which speaks from actual experience is also mentioned.

Amber If a white person had written it they wouldn't have seen it as being so bad but if you see it from a person who actually was in that situation then it changes your outlook on the whole thing.

Jane ... none of us actually knew that, because in books and things they try to hide that away. They don't really want people to know about it but *Roll of Thunder* and books like that, they are very good to read and very interesting because they tell us about things that other people don't want us to know about.

These pupils seem to recognise the significance of who is writing about who and for whom which controls whose stories are told.

Reflections on identity

For some pupils it seemed to be important to hear how they were perceived by other pupils.

Carol I don't want to say anything really but it did open up like their opinion of white people and white people's opinion of black people.

This view is echoed by Asanda:

I think that we should open up at school so that we can know where do we stand - like - we can know that things have happened in the past.

These discussions reveal the pupils exploring what it means to be white and what it means to be black in the story. They appear to want to know how they are viewed by others and seem to have found this experience to have been important.

Zipho is much more introspective:

I think *Roll of Thunder* has made us recognise that 'I am black' and everything. Because you know I was in preprimary in Harvest ... and there

no one called you black or white or coloured and everything. ... I never recognised that I was really, not that I didn't know that I was black, but I never thought of it ... ya ... until I read the book. it is not in a bad way though. It is not that 'Ag no, I am black, what a horrible thing, I wish I was white or anything. It just made me recognise that I am black. Like, you know, I am what I am.

Zipho, in exploring this new awareness she has of herself, "I am black", does not appear to experience this recognition as in any way disempowering.

Attitudes to events in the story

I was concerned that the book might arouse feelings of guilt which might block understanding of the past and prevent movement into the future. But it seems that although some pupils did feel guilty it was a positive feeling that led to them wanting to bring about change:

Alice I felt guilty somehow. I actually wanted to cry. I actually wanted to go back and change everything.

Joan I never knew that racism was so bad in those days. I know that we have it these days. When I read *Roll of Thunder* I found that it was really interesting. I saw what the blacks felt like when that sort of thing happened. If we hadn't have read *Roll of Thunder* then I wouldn't have really understood the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, what and why they are doing this and what is the use of it.

Anne I felt bad because when we were talking about how black people were treated and I wished that, probably because of how I treat black people, I treat them as normal other person. So I wish they would have found out that there is nothing wrong with a black person. it's just the colour of the skin, during the time of the book.

It is clear from this discussion that these pupils all felt that they had gained in understanding from reading the book and from the group discussions around the book.

Pamela, a coloured girl, became personally involved with the events described:

Well actually when I read *Roll of Thunder* I got angry, plain and simple, I got angry. I mean how blacks were treated by whites, how Cassie was treated, how all blacks were treated. I just got angry, plain and simple.

Pamela had earlier shared her discovery that not all white people were racists despite her prior belief that this was so. It might well have been important for her to speak openly about her feelings and Amber makes this point in her comment about understanding the past:

Amber I think that we should be able to read *Roll of Thunder* because I like the phrase that refers to needing to understand the past in order to move into the future (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). If you don't understand why people are doing things then you will just think that they are being silly. Say now I called Zakeera 'Nigger' and to me it is just a word but to her it might mean something more because that time has passed. I mean we don't use it anymore.

Pamela It gave you a bigger view showing you that um ... America decided not to have anything to do with South Africa when we had apartheid but they had segregation. So why wouldn't they have anything to do with us? They were too superior.

In discussing the novel and its impact on them Litha had remarked that she had not thought about racism or 'the black and white' issue before reading the book:

Litha I still think that it was a good thing that we did *Roll of Thunder* because more people are conscious about it and they think about it even more. Yes - in a good way.

Melissa I think that when we read that book *Roll of Thunder* like it tells us what happened long ago and it teaches us something. It tells us that it has changed now because long ago there were those things that were happening about blacks and whites. So it has changed now.

Melissa distances the present from the events in the novel and stresses that things have changed.

Thoko ...some other black girls might not actually like bringing back the past... It might bring back some emotions like for some other kids. I don't feel anything. ... Its not our fault, you know, we couldn't help it. It's just things things happened long ago. So it's not exactly our fault.

Thoko also distances the present from the past and absolves the present generation from any guilt for the events of the past.

Zipho But you know, we can't really blame the white people who lived then. Because they thought it was right. Because their fathers said black people are bad you know. It's like when you a teaching are dog not to wee on the carpet. You can't say - the dog will wee if he thinks it's right. And if we leave him to do it ... the dog will go on weeing as long as he thinks that it is OK. Someone has to say NO! Do it outside. It is only like every now and then one person is different and says 'Hey guys, don't you think that what we are doing is wrong'- you know. But some people think 'Ag man, you know you are being nice to black people. What's wrong with you? You wanna be them?' You know.

This deconstruction of racism to its classic minimum, the behaviour of an untrained puppy, provides an insight into the possibility of pupils refusing positions which marginalise them and placing themselves firmly in the centre. Zipho also identifies that resistance may have small beginnings, even just the refusal of one person to go along with the crowd.

Pumla reminds everyone that the process of forgiving and forgetting is not going to be an easy one:

Pumla Mrs Foster, some people ... don't forget their past ... They get angry when they see it on the TV. They don't want to forgive them ... the other people hate whites and other people, who like whites, like maybe it never

happened to them. Like maybe those people who hate, it's because it happened to their parents long ago, their grandparents ...

Zipho I think we should talk about it, but to a certain extent. We shouldn't go overboard talking about what happened in the past because if we do dig too deep it will cause horrible things - not that it will start again.

Thoko It will be much harder to actually get into the new South Africa because then it will bring back like all the memories and then it will start all over again, trying to bring back the New South Africa.

Pupils dealt with the issues thoughtfully and sensitively and it seems appropriate to end with Zipho's words:

I think that book is a nice way in to it. It doesn't all just drop this whole load on you. It is just telling you how it was but in a nice sense and the way we have been discussing it in class its not that bad actually. It is not horrible you know. I can sometimes feel people looking at me as if 'you really went through that' and everything. But I don't really mind, it's actually awkward but it's OK ... If you are really into the book you can kind of be in that story as if sometimes you can be the character depending on what is happening in the book. You can be in that person's feet or you could be standing there listening or watching.

These discussions confirm the particularity of the reading transaction referred to by Rosenblatt (1985:100) and give support to the Storyteller Group's view that we need to provide pupils with visions of the future (Esterhuysen, cited in Newfield 1992:57). But it also provides evidence which demonstrates the importance of creating spaces for the exploration of events from the past in order to bring about that distancing from the past which allows the pupils to discover and take up the multiple positions offered in a changing society.

CHAPTER NINE

FASHIONING RATHER THAN FINDING CULTURAL CAPITAL

Education in South Africa is engaged in both a struggle over power and a struggle for meaning as educators take up positions among "different understandings of what it means to teach and to learn and different notions of what schooling is for and about" (Epstein 1993:9). The discussion document which outlines the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and which advocates lifelong learning, is currently a focus of debate about education at all levels in South Africa. In the foreword to the discussion document it is suggested that the development and implementation of the NQF presents "our nation with exciting opportunities to reconstruct and develop our current education ..." (National Qualifications Committee 1996:4). The NQF is a move towards outcomes-based education. It aims to redress the inadequacies of the previous Christian National Education and Bantu Education systems. These systems did "not promote the idea that people should think analytically, or be critical and creative" (Isaacman 1996:5). By contrast, lifelong learning encourages "learners to come up with new ideas and take control of their learning situations and their lives" (Isaacman 1996:5). In this concluding chapter I wish to draw attention to some possible ways in which the findings of my research might contribute to this refashioning of our educational attitudes and strategies.

The contribution of pupil's thinking

An 'outcome' is described as " ... having ideas, understanding things, knowing how to make decisions and how to solve problems and having good personal skills, like being able to communicate well, and many more" (Isaacman 1996:8). It would appear that the one of the ways to ascertain whether desired outcomes have been achieved would be to examine pupils' thinking. Certainly this was one of the objectives informing this particular study.

Despite calls for comments on the proposals in the discussion document, relatively little direct examination of pupils' thinking appears to have been undertaken during the course of current initiatives at reconceptualising education and curricula. This is not an exclusively South African phenomenon. Kincheloe draws our attention to the fact that "Few examples exist in the literature of curriculum research which make use of student perceptions of what they learned and what it means to them" (1991:105). My own research suggests that pupils' thinking may be a source of insight for curriculum planners.

Finn makes the point that:

Unless teachers explore children's thinking more widely, many will remain unaware that children do think about these issues and they will persist in believing curricular change to be unnecessary. Research evidence has a crucial role to play in assisting teachers to come to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of children's thinking.

(1990:16)

If teachers are to contribute to the debate it is important that they not only rely on their own interpretations, but also pay close attention to the interpretations of their pupils. By listening to their pupils, teachers may develop an awareness of the possibility of a wider variety of experiences and of ways of understanding the world, and so become more wary of the conscious and/or unconscious imposition of their own views as to what constitutes useful knowledge.

Debate surrounds the teaching of English. Teachers are questioning the efficacy and relevance of the approaches currently being used. In their confrontation with classrooms which reflect the complex and diverse nature of South Africa, teachers find that they can no longer rely on previous methods to achieve the same results. Developing language programmes which empower pupils to communicate effectively in our changed classrooms may benefit from the selection of texts which resonate with pupils' own experiences and which enable them to negotiate meanings. In this investigation pupils seemed to be encouraged by the text to look critically not only at their own society but also at

themselves and their functioning in the school community. This is surely a good preparation for functioning fully in any society and fulfils many of the criteria of the outcomes-based approach which is currently being implemented in our schools? Engaging pupils as active participants in their own learning minimises the possibility of indoctrination. In addition, reading about other cultures and sharing personal experiences related to the text removes the danger of direct teaching about culture and allows for a recognition of the changing dynamics of culture.

In Chapter Four I outlined the potential for reconstruction in and through literature and provided a rationale for exploring pupils' thinking through literature. I argued the case for a reader-response approach to the teaching of literature by summarising the claims made for the potential of this approach in our multicultural and multilingual classrooms. I drew attention to the Eurocentric bias in the selection of texts for pupils in South African schools and my consequent decision to select an anti-racist text written by a black writer. A close examination of the pupils' responses reveals that different individuals at different times did indeed provide evidence in their writing and in their talking of becoming agents in their own learning as they made connections between their own lives and the text they were reading. Despite a few reluctant starters, responses revealed the girls engaging with the characters and events in the novel at a depth and with an honesty which seemed unusual for their age group. Their responses fulfilled all the promises of a reader-response approach to a text dealing with issues of racism that were argued for in Chapter Four.

Selecting knowledge

In their discussions about the kind of books authors should be writing, pupils in the study displayed an awareness of the role of representation in texts. They recognised the importance of being exposed to a range of texts presenting differing points of view and they requested that such books be included in their reading programmes. Their arguments for such inclusions demonstrated their understanding of the importance of

reading stories from the perspectives of members of different cultural groups and of talking about different experiences in order to engage imaginatively in each other's lives. Reading about, and understanding, the past was felt to contribute to an understanding of the present and to minimise the likelihood of a repeat of the mistakes of the past. Anne commented, "... it is good to read a book from a black person's point of view because it was written by a black person". Heather endorsed this view:

- If we white people carry on reading books from white authors then actually we are never going to know how black people feel because we are never going to be black in our lives.

For pupils, literature may offer a less confrontational way of engaging with our apartheid past as it provides for both cognitive and affective learning. Ziphoh makes this point, "I think the book is a nice way to do it. It doesn't all just drop this whole load on you".

These pupils' understanding of the reasons why black American history was omitted from the curriculum in American schools reveals their insight into the role of power in the selection of material (knowledge) for presentation to pupils. They appear to recognise the processes of inclusion and exclusion which reflect the wider power relations in the society. They are able to reflect on these and make proposals to bring about the changes in curricula which embody the changing needs of a society in transformation.

Which stories come to be affirmed and legitimated should be open to exploration by pupils. Although this is an extremely difficult undertaking, it is imperative that it be undertaken if we are to ensure that each individual experiences a new and heightened sense of their place in local and national realities.

Sharing knowledge

Common-sense leads us to believe that "It starts with the revising of school books and curricula to remove racist poison and stereotypes" (Mail Guardian 1996:22). Corcoran, referring to various critics of reader-response theory, warns that "commitment to a plurality of readings is no guarantee that the classroom remains unmarked by privileged modes of analysis, privileged values and privileged ways of reading the world" (Corcoran 1990:143). Over and above the selection of texts, reader-response strategies and the knowledge and culture implicit in these, are the discourses of teaching and learning which frame the learning event:

If the focus is more squarely on the transaction between reader and text, then the classroom may take on the form of a reading-writing community which uses a range of texts and alternative forms of response and assessment.

(Corcoran 1990:153)

There is evidence in the openness of the discussions among the pupils in the study of a growing trust thus realizing the possibility of the classroom becoming a community of learners in which a variety of experiences, voices and languages meet and mingle as they join with others "in the naming and exploring of a common world" (Green 1993:12). This requires a pedagogy which recognizes that pupils can be agents in their own learning provided safe spaces are created in which they can critically engage teachers and other pupils as well as the "limits of their own positions as border crossers" (Giroux 1991:33). Much reader-response theory works towards an opening up of a dialogue between teachers and pupils "and a problematising of questions of authority" (Corcoran 1990:134).

Literature and storytelling have important functions in education as they provide the discourses and opportunities for dealing with experience by discussing it. This has implications for other subject areas as well. The mere inclusion of previously omitted information may become a form of tokenism which perpetuates the power relations of the

past if this new information is simply transmitted to the pupils. Amber and Pamela provide evidence of the bewilderment which accompanies such a presentation of new information. Teachers need to provide the discourses and opportunities for dealing with experiences by discussing them in order that pupils may deal with "subliminally felt experiences and learn to understand these experiences on a more conscious, critical level" (Sarup 1993:186,187).

Teachers should, in addition, consider approaches which combine an understanding of society with an understanding about individual subjectivities if they are to encourage pupils to take control of their learning and their lives:

A pedagogical framework with this aim in mind needs to place students actively at the centre of their own learning. Otherwise they are simply being offered one authorised version for another, ...

(Naidoo 1992:143)

Multiple identities

Despite the dominant culture in the school having the power to offer particular subject positions, pupils in the study showed signs of questioning these positions. It appears that the school might be seen to be becoming a 'borderland' in which pupils are finding the safe spaces in which they can cross borders and critically test the limits of their own positions. According to Davies:

Individuals, through learning the discursive practices of a society, are able to position themselves within those practices in multiple ways, and to develop subjectivities both in concert with and in opposition to the ways in which others choose to position them.

(1989:xi)

Through their responses pupils in the study reveal themselves at different times and in different situations as either being subjected to the definition of others or being active subjects taking up positions from which they can exercise power.

Common-sense positions presented as 'normal'

In general, the school culture at Acacia represents common-sense and its traditionally white, middle-class, voice speaks on "behalf of respectable, decent society" (Jordan and Weedon 1995:13). The 'norm' comprises the basic notions and values implicit in both the hidden and overt curriculum. It is in this context that the dominant view of the world came to identified with 'whiteness'. White, coloured and black pupils in the study show signs of questioning the concept of 'normal' and challenging the use of 'whiteness' as a cultural referent against which to measure different views of the world. In this context cross-cultural friendship is not viewed as 'normal' by all pupils. A view which is explored and challenged in discussions among pupils. This challenge is articulated clearly by Anne's question, "I am asking you, do you mean, that all black people aren't normal?" in response to Joan's statement that she and Zipho "don't have that sort of friendship you have with normal friends". The limits of their own positions are tested further in discussions around boy/girl relationships across the colour line. Many pupils are not yet ready to view these as 'normal'. They explore the social tensions which might result from such friendships but they also seem to have moved towards granting persons the right to choose for themselves.

'Normal' as representative of acceptable standards of living is explored. In response to questions from pupils in England regarding poverty, hunger, schooling and housing Thoko responds thoughtfully:

Actually it depends, because some people think OK like maybe we could think maybe if we don't still live in mud houses we could think that it's not normal and the people that live in mud houses could think that people live

in brick houses, like that is not normal, so it actually depends on what you think.

The idea that a 'norm' can only exist if it is consented to by all persons in the society is being suggested by Thoko. She seems to be questioning the right of a particular group to present its views of the world as standard.

Skin colour as a determinant of position

The culturally constructed nature of skin colour as a lens through which the 'other' might be viewed and defined either as oppressors or oppressed was explored in the study as pupils either accepted or refused the positions that skin colour offered them. The possibility of a school being a place in which stereotypes might be escaped is expressed by Zipho:

There we were just called children and I never recognised that I was really, not that I didn't know that I was black but I never thought of it ... ya ... until we read the book. It is not in a bad way though, it is not that ... ag no I am black, what a horrible thing, I wish I was white or anything. It just makes me recognise that I am black like - you know - I am what I am.

Some white pupils in the study also seem to be questioning stereotypical views as they are exposed to black people who do not conform to these views. Pupils participated in workshops led by Olusola Oyeleye, a Nigerian, living in England, who visited the school and Joan commented, "She didn't act like she was black" while Heather says, "I personally thought that she was a white person ... I didn't see her as black". Anne probes common-sense assumptions which define what 'black' is and says "We are back to what is normal. What is the normal way?". It seems to me that these pupils are decentering and deconstructing ideology as they explore subjectivity. This questioning is echoed by black pupils in the words of Zipho, "... it's not black and white any more, Indian and coloured, it's ...". In these discussions the pupils seem to be finding a

language of possibility through which they might break with the racial and cultural categories of the past and explore not only the "kaleidoscopic conditions of blackness" (Giroux 1992:14), but of skin colour *per se* and recognise its positioning as only one among the many available to them as they take possession of their multiple identities.

Not all pupils are able to escape being defined by the dominant culture. Amber and Pamela are coloured pupils who allow themselves to be subjected to definitions by others and take up the positions of powerlessness offered them. Despite questioning subjectivities in which they are defined as 'mistakes' and less than whites, they seem to experience difficulty in becoming agents active in creating new positions for themselves. Another border these pupils identify is that created by the designation of Group Areas, a legacy of apartheid which ensured that different groups were ignorant of one another's lifestyles and were unable to surmount physical separation in relating in friendship to one another. They still find themselves constrained and defined through their physical location in specific suburbs of the city.

All the pupils in the study appear to be struggling to deconstruct their own knowledge, particularly their own racist knowledge, and for this they need spaces such as those created through the work on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* to:

... understand how their perceptions, and those of their parents and grandparents before, reflect frames of reference within the society - how these are shaped by historical events ...

(Naidoo 1992:142)

Language as a determinant of position

The importance of learning language and speaking of Xhosa was identified by pupils as an area of tension. Lack of knowledge of Xhosa excludes non-Xhosa speakers from conversations in Xhosa and in some cases leads to the assumption of subject positions

which might not in fact be implied in the actual meaning of the conversation. But more important is the way in which recognition of languages other than English, in this case Xhosa, open up subject positions denied when Xhosa is not a part of all pupils' experience within the social relations of the school. Gloria Anzaluda says, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity - I am my language" (quoted in Giroux 1993:131). In response to workshops with Olusola Oyeleye the role of Xhosa in the emerging identities of the Xhosa pupils became clear. In the words of Litha:

English is not my real language, Xhosa is. But as I listened, I learned that I shouldn't forget my home language. I should actually be proud of it and not be ashamed. And those who can't speak English mustn't be ashamed

The Xhosa pupils' response to an interest in Xhosa language and culture demonstrated by the other girls is clearly reflected in the following comments made by girls in this group:

- Asanda ... when everyone came and said Asanda please can you sing that song I love it and can you teach me the words and do your Xhosa dance.
- Melissa At first you were afraid that people wouldn't like the Xhosa things and now you find that they do!
- Pumla It makes me proud because at least they can understand the Xhosa even if at first you tell it in English.

The multilingual nature of our classrooms could open possibilities for pupils to discover one another. Individuals who can respond with understanding to a variety of linguistic codes open up dimensions of being denied those who are unilingual. It also allows for a knowledge of the common world not possible when knowing one another and each others' worlds can only take place through the language of one group. It suggests that the additive approach to language learning, in which the language and culture of Xhosa-speaking pupils is maintained and developed, is achieving success in Acacia. In addition to the recognition and status which Xhosa gains, non-Xhosa speakers are able to expand their world through an understanding of the spoken Xhosa which surrounds them and

through their tentative entrance into another world as they try to communicate with Xhosa speakers in their own language. Crossing the border constructed by language may lead to a recognition of the ways in which perception is constructed through "linguistic codes, cultural signs, and embedded in ideology" (Kincheloe 1992:121)

Working toward transformation

This study is grounded in classroom practice. It explores an aspect of the dilemmas faced by ordinary teachers moving from an essentially monocultural to a multicultural teaching environment. It has been my intention, as a practising teacher myself, to address some of the problems faced by teachers in these environments as they come to grapple with the changes that have taken place. It would appear that for many teachers it is not a question of how they see racism but rather that they don't see racism. It seems to me that what is important is that teachers be encouraged to recognise the assumptions they are working on and that they be provided with the tools to uncover the forces that construct their own consciousness. They need the ability to step back from the world as they are accustomed to perceiving it; to recognise the possibility of there being multiple subjectivities and identities, and to be willing to explore the possibilities that emerge among, within, and between different zones of culture (Giroux 1993). This approach is informed by post-structuralist theory and postmodern thinking. It applies a critical constructivist ability to theorise and understand the "relations between persons and their social world and for conceptualising social change ... " (Davies 1987:xi).

From an ethnographic viewpoint

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the tentativeness of the conclusions I have attempted to draw. At this point it is worth recalling Rosenblatt's emphasis on particularity with regard to a reading event and remember that, inasmuch as subjectivity is precarious, contradictory and in the process of being reconstituted in discourse each time we speak,

so too are any reflections on the experiences of the pupils of Acacia. I am aware that these are the voices of a few girls responding to a specific text in a specific context partly constituted by their presence. Any changes in pupil composition, teaching approach, and historical setting is thus likely once again to produce as many individual responses as there are individuals in the study. This does not diminish the significance of the thinking and perceptions of the girls who formed this study, but rather emphasises the importance of the ongoing and changing nature of the stories which pupils tell and to which teachers should listen.

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APPENDIX 1

OPEN SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION FOCUS

No 7

January 1994

P O Box 24071 Claremont 7735

READING TOWARD RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION - ITS ROLE IN A MULTICULTURAL SCHOOL by Lesley Foster

INTRODUCTION - DIRECTOR

This issue of FOCUS gives an account of some experimental work being attempted at Collegiate Junior School in Port Elizabeth. Lesley Foster describes how reading and literature is being used to assist her pupils develop a greater sensitivity to the issues of multiculturalism.

She is to be commended for her enterprise in using a resource that is readily available to all teachers. What is especially interesting is the fact that even for those schools that have very few pupils from other cultural groups, using various forms of literature provides opportunities for helping children to consider stereotyping and other discriminating practices.

I feel certain that other schools and teachers could adapt this scheme to their own special circumstances, and I hope that this issue of FOCUS will encourage many teachers to do so.

J L STONIER

LESLEY FOSTER trained in the Transvaal and has taught in primary schools for many years. She is currently teaching at Collegiate Junior School, where she is a Head of Department.

"I became intensely angry, not only at the narrowness of my schooling, but at its complicity in perpetuating apartheid through not previously challenging my blinkered vision." (Naidoo 1992)

Lesley Foster writes:

These accusing words made me wonder what pupils in our open schools might say on reflecting on their school experiences.

Earlier, in an introduction to an anthology concerned with young people coming into social and political consciousness, Beverley Naidoo had expressed her belief in the potential power of literature:

"Literature has the tremendous quality of allowing us to engage imaginatively in the lives of others. It enables us to move beyond ourselves and our experiences. If we allow ourselves to respond to it fully, it can be a great educator. For those of us brought up monoculturally, literature which springs from outside our own boundaries can be a lifeline." (Naidoo, 1987)

As we struggle to understand and value each other in our new multicultural classrooms, it seemed to me that for both teachers and pupils, literature might offer us a lifeline, and so, in January 1993, at Collegiate Junior School for Girls, a literature-based reading programme was introduced to assist us in our move from a monocultural to a multicultural teaching situation.

THE AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

- To expose pupils to literature which would develop feelings of empathy and increase their knowledge of other cultures;
- To create safe, small-group environments, in which pupils could share responses, experiences and feelings;
- To engender a love of reading and stories and to provide the language, concepts and skills which would enable pupils to explore, analyse and challenge the texts they encountered.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme was structured in the following way:

- Pupils in Stds 2, 3 and 4 were divided into 5 groups per standard so as to provide 10-15 pupils in each group. (Staffing constraints allowed for only 4 slightly larger groups in Std 5). Each group was of a mixed ability and multicultural.
- Five teachers were available for each standard from 2 to 4, and four teachers for Std 5.
- Teachers who were interested, and who could spare time, were invited to develop and present a module from the previously selected reading material. (For example, a teacher could select a novel, or some folk tales, etc, and then prepare her module.)
- Each module was designed to be covered in 1 hour per week for 1 term (ie about 10 hours).
- Each teacher would present her module to 4 different groups in the same standard.
- This arrangement enabled each group to be exposed to 4 different literary forms, ie one each term.
- It was felt that this pattern would give the teacher time for thorough preparation and familiarisation of the material and the issues being explored.

Note: The groups in Stds 2, 3 and 4 each completed 4 of the 5 modules, whereas the four groups in Std 5 completed all 4 modules prepared for them.

FORMS OF LITERATURE TO BE COVERED IN MODULES

Novels, short stories, myths and legends, folktales, fairytales, plays, picture books and poetry.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Texts chosen were required to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- be representative of different cultures, eg myths, folktales, fairytales, and short stories drawn from different cultures;
- function as a mirror in which the reader's experience is reflected;
- function as a window through which the reader can engage imaginatively in the experience of others;
- deal with an issue which is likely to provoke a response from the reader;
- provide the possibility of recognising and creating new realities.

MODULE DESIGN

The teachers, who had previously participated in workshops on multicultural education and recognition of bias and stereotyping in texts, were required to select material which they themselves enjoy and which meets at least one of the above-mentioned criteria.

The material was then carefully examined and appropriate interactive activities devised. These may involve role plays, improvisations, hot seating (someone becomes a character from the story and answers questions put by the rest of the group), interviews with the author, etc. Activities are designed to involve all pupils in using language as much as possible.

EVALUATION OF MODULE

At the end of each module, teachers are asked to complete an evaluation form in which they record the following information:

- Literary form used - title and author;
- Concept or social issue dealt with;
- Talk-generating activities used;
- Whether work was undertaken in groups, in pairs or as individuals.

They are also asked to comment freely on the pupils' response to the material, their own feelings about the interactions that were generated between the pupils and the texts, and any details which might illustrate the points being made.

Frequent conferences were held with teachers in order to discuss problems and progress.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PROJECT - HOW IT WORKED IN STANDARD 5

The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynn Reid Banks was selected from the CED Reading List as an appropriate resource for the introduction of concepts and the practise of skills of critical analysis. This was undertaken outside the literature programme by the teacher of English to the Standard 5 class as a whole.

The following were examined:

- Points of view The story is told by Omri, a young White English boy;
- Stereotypes Cowboys and Indians, as depicted in Wild West films;
- Attitudes Omri's attitude toward the Indian changes during the story as he gets to know and understand him and his culture.

Once pupils had acquired the language to investigate and discuss concepts such as the above, they were divided into four groups (as only four staff members were free to work with the Standard 5 pupils). They then worked on the novels listed below, using their newly acquired skills.

The books used in the reading groups were:

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry: Mildred D Taylor
A Cageful of Butterflies: Lesley Beake

92 Queen's Road: Diane Case
Walkabout: James Vance Marshall.

PUPILS' VOICES

Pupils were asked to respond to a series of questions at the conclusion of the work on their novel. Their response to working in small groups was very positive.

They were asked to think about the ideas and images they had had about people and events before they had read the book and decide whether the story had changed their views in any way. They were also asked whether they would recommend the book for use in schools.

They enjoyed all but one of the chosen novels. I would like to allow them to speak for themselves. I have, therefore, quoted selected extracts from their written responses which reflect their perceptions of the programme.

Comments on working in small groups:

- You feel relaxed and you can speak openly.
- I would like to continue working in the reading group. I find it fun and exciting. I look forward to it all week, waiting for Wednesday to turn up.
- It is easier to open your heart and talk about your feelings.
- You meet people you wouldn't sit with at break.
- It has provided me with an opportunity to share my thoughts about books and to hear other people's thoughts about them. Sharing my thoughts with people has made me less shy than I was. We were also able to read more quickly.
- In a small group we have time to tell stories, which is a lot of fun. In these reading groups I have become very fond of reading. Before we were in these groups reading was boring for me.

Comments on the books read:

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

- I would recommend the book because children will become aware of our history, our mistakes.
- I see things differently now that I understand what Black people went through and the hardships they suffered.
- The story is a lot like what our country is going through at the moment. The people in our country are a lot like the people in the story. I think pupils should read the book to become aware of the past so that they can shape our future.

A Cageful of Butterflies

- I had thought that Whites always disliked Blacks and vice versa. In this story I learned the opposite. Kra (White woman) had gone to the Black village for help and in return she had taken Mponyane into her home.
- The book has changed my view of the world because now I see that Black and White can live and work together as they did in the story.
- A book about Black and White children, I think, is a very good idea. It shows how we can work together and that there is no difference, only on the outside. A book like this can show and teach us a great deal.

- My conclusion is that I think more of these books should be available. I think that, if we can learn more about Black people and they can learn more about us, we wouldn't have conflict. Black and White will have to join hands sometime or another, so why not start now?
- This book gives a picture of hope and understanding.

92 Queen's Road

- I identified with the girl in this story because my mother also got divorced when I was a baby. I also lived in a small house with lots of people and played outside in the streets as my grandmother had a small backyard. She was also always complaining. As Coloureds we were not allowed in most places. We hardly went anywhere except the beach at Christmas.
- I think that this is a good book for schools because now other cultures can understand why there is so much conflict and this book brings the message across very clearly.
- I can see things differently now, about the sixties. I never knew it was like that, when people had to live in different areas because of their colour. It has made me understand.
- The book has provided me with opportunities to share in experiences which I couldn't have in real life.
- It just makes you feel so angry because of what the different groups went through. Especially the children.
- The world is a big political problem, and if I and my friends don't help change the world we will all die very soon, and if we can learn how to make peace we will only then have a NEW South Africa.
- This book might not have changed the point of view of others, it certainly did for me!

Walkabout

This story, set in Australia, did not arouse positive responses. The consensus was that the book was boring and dull, and they would not recommend it. Some of the following concerns were raised:

- The girl in the story doesn't like the Black boy so the story might make people not like people with a different colour skin.
- Maybe some of the Black people won't like it because their feelings might be hurt.

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

We would like to develop booklets to accompany the texts used in the programme. These should contain historical information which could provide a background to the events and characters in the story. They should also contain suggestions for activities which might be used with the texts being studied. The Background Booklet on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* proved an invaluable resource.

A FINAL THOUGHT

"... all young people want to be able to read and discuss and write reflectively on the central issues of our varying cultural identities in this land. They want to be able to feel pride in their own ethnic origins as well as to examine the inequities of our society, in its history as well as in its contemporary concerns. They have social consciences which feel for the downtrodden and they want to be able to take a stand on the deeper moral values of our times. Literature allows this to happen. And in the reflection it offers on our national life and in the gasp of recognition with which such examination is usually greeted, comes the chance to leap off into a richer and more secure life." (Kable, 1992)

LESLEY FOSTER

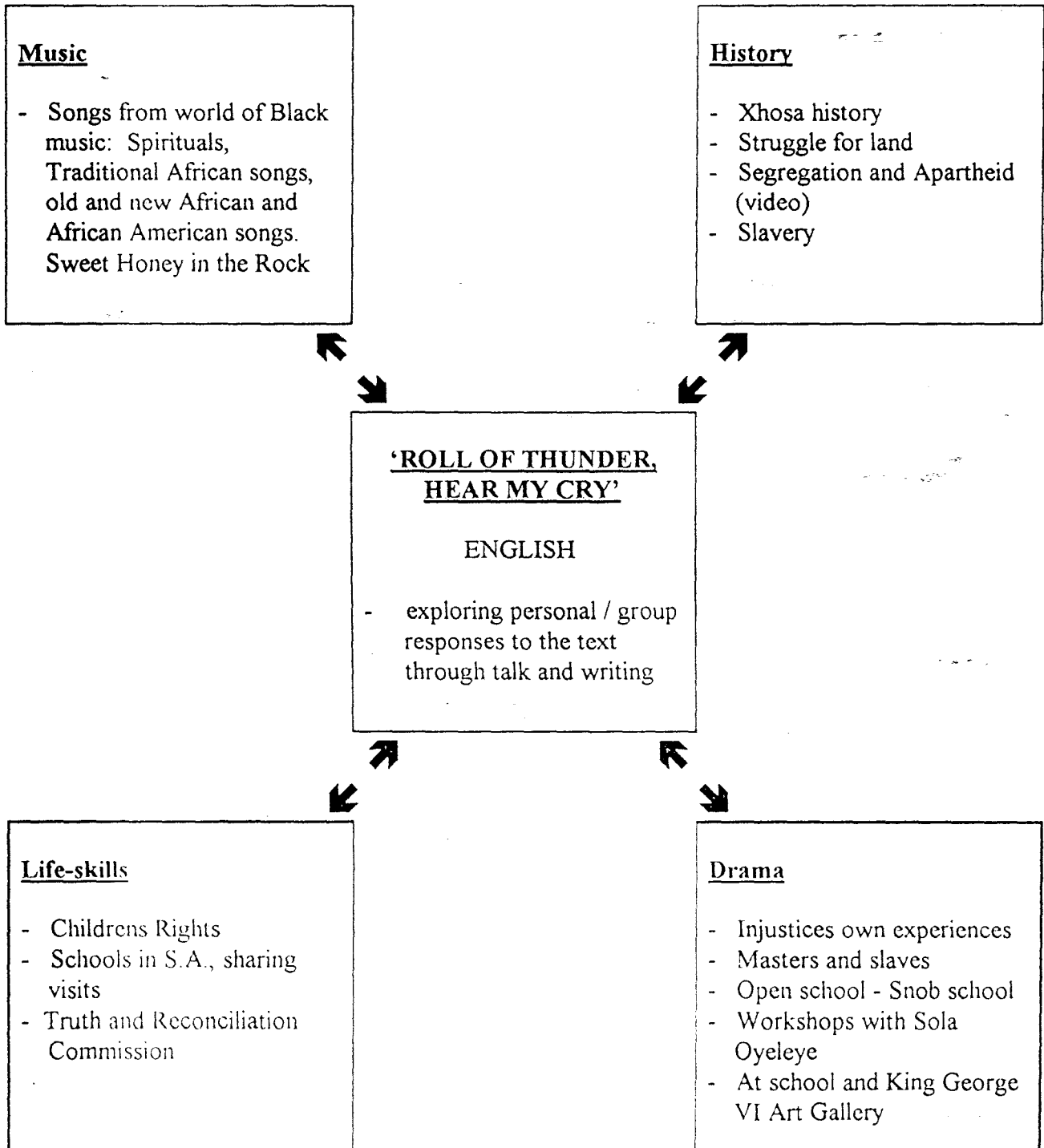
January 1994

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APPENDIX 2

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS WITH ROLL OF THUNDER, HEAR MY CRY



APPENDIX 3

Resources/activities accompanying *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*:

RESPONSE SHEETS AND FOCUSED WRITING

- character sheet (see English Centre, 1994)
- racism and resistance charts (see English Centre 1984)
- risks, and labels (Appendix 10)
- extract from Ch 3 on the bus incident (Appendix 11)
- extract from Ch 6 on Mama explaining about slavery (Appendix 12)
- script on 'A Meeting' (Appendix 17)

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

- background book on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (The English Centre, 1984)

DRAMA THEMES

- own experiences of injustice plus hotseating
- masters/slaves role-play
- friendly 'OK'/'snob' school role-play

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- viewing *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (The English Programme, 1989)
- viewing *Apartheid* (Extracts from Granada Television Programme date unknown)
- writing and drama/music/art workshops with Olusola Oyleye (both at school and with pupils from other schools at the King George VI Art Gallery)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- exchange of character assessments
- Truth and Reconciliation booklet
- audiotaped discussions on issues emerging from a reading of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Appendix 9)

READING JOURNALS

- individual reading journals

APPENDIX 4

RELATED ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING LIFESKILLS AND HISTORY TOPICS

Lifeskills

Conflict resolution

Pupils engaged in a role play (see Appendix 13) which enabled groups to experience privilege and oppression and to reflect on their experience and the justices and injustices involved. After discussing the issues which emerged out of this work session pupils were asked to complete the worksheet *Learning About Your Rights!* (see Appendix 14).

Education in South Africa

Working in groups pupils read extracts from *Molo Songolo* (see Appendix 15) and explored the differences that exist among schools as viewed through the eyes of pupils visiting one another's schools. Pupils were also given the opportunity to question a black teacher about the schools that she had both attended as a pupil and taught at before joining the staff of Acacia.

Visit by Olusola Oyeleye

Olusola, a Nigerian living and working in England, is a writer, director and performer who has over the last six years undertaken workshops with schools in Dorset (UK) through drama, literature, movement, music and visual arts. During her visit to Port Elizabeth she undertook workshops with pupils who formed part of the study. These pupils then joined with pupils from Emafini and Triomf schools to participate in workshops in the King George VI Art Gallery. Pupils wrote stories, poems and conducted an evaluation of their experiences of working with Olusola (see Appendix 16).

Music

Pupils listened to a selection of songs sung by *Sweet Honey in the Rock* described as: "A celebration of the roots, history and future of African-American culture" but also including songs from Africa. After listening to 'I Got Shoes' pupils were asked to create a poster proclaiming the equality of all human beings and celebrating the difference among them. They were asked to draw all kinds of people, wearing kinds of shoes, clothes, hairstyles etc. They could make a collage instead if they so wished, using pictures from magazines and newspapers.

Choice of high school

During lifeskills pupils, who had recently visited a high school and listened to pupils from

other high schools promoting their schools, role played school scenes depicting 'snob' schools and friendly 'OK' schools.

History

On the completion of the history module on 'The Struggle for Land' pupils viewed an extract from the video *Apartheid* produced by Granada Television Company. They were asked to write their impressions of the video in their journals. This module was followed by one on 'Slavery'. During the course of the module pupils read the story of the slave *Equiano* (Storyteller) and engaged in role plays involving masters and slaves and wrote letters to a newspaper in which they took a stand either for or against slavery.

In a module on 'Contemporary History' pupils studied the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Committee on Human Rights Violations had been conducting hearings in centres through the country for some six weeks before it sat in Port Elizabeth in May. Working in groups pupils were given the Storyteller booklet on the work of the Commission to read. They were given an extract from the booklet (see Appendix 17) and asked to consider the following statements and discuss their views on the matter:

- We need to understand the past to ensure these things will never happen again.
- We should forget about the past. Knowing about it doesn't help the process of reconciliation.

Pupils engaged in a role play in which they were members of the various committees comprising the commission and characters from the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. In role they told their stories, applied for amnesty or were awarded reparation or offer the possibility of being rehabilitated. Working in pairs they were asked to write the dialogue for a film scene (see Appendix 18):

APPENDIX 5

LITERATURE PROGRAMME

You'll be reading a number of novels this year and you should try writing down all the things that are going on in your head while you are reading. During work sessions we will be sharing what has happened to each of us while reading the book.

Here are some suggestions to set you thinking and writing:

1. Jot down any thoughts or feelings you have about the characters as you meet them and as the story progresses.
2. Does anything in the story remind you of things that have happened to you in your life? Sometimes we're very moved by an incident that reminds us of a personal experience. If you like, describe that personal association.
3. Is there anything in the story that is putting you off?
4. Are things the way they happen in real life?
5. List some questions that you would like to ask the author.
6. List questions that you would like to ask different characters in the story.
7. What interests you about the story? What does it say to you?
8. The story may be set in another country. Can you see any parallels between the events and events you know about in South Africa?
9. Did the story work for you? Say what you like (and perhaps dislike) about it.
10. Read the following extract and decide whether you would agree with it or not. Record your own feeling on the subject.

"As far as use in schools is concerned, I don't think I would recommend the books. They dwell on the divisions between people - the messages are harsh. We are at a different stage now in the relationship between black and white - and I believe the pupils in our schools need a different message. In other words a book like this may do more harm than good."

APPENDIX 6

Extract from *Teachers Creating Readers* by Bill Corcoran in Readers, Texts, Teachers.

To help you keep your reading journal here are some entries from a thirteen-year-old's response journal. You will also see the kind of comments you might expect from your teacher.

Two good questions. Can you guess the answers?

Chapter 2. What is the Man doing? Why is he coming? Zachariah, if she is called that, is a pretty smart kid. She knows what to do to survive, and is doing it well. She may be a bit vain, but we all are.

Good. You're the only one to wonder what the significance of the title is.

Chapter 9. How long are they going to survive? Will they have any children? Will John Loomis live? I am not going to guess what is about to happen, or what type of relationship is going to develop between Ann and John.

This book, changing the subject completely is very much like the one the Science Fiction (writer) John Wyndham wrote though I can't remember what it is called. Both books are about what happens after an atomic war and the rebuilding of earth.

See if you can remember. I'd like to read the Wyndham book. (The Chrysalids)

Imagine how Ann feels then!

Chapter 11. I now know who Edward was, and it is sickening to think of John Loomis killing him. I feel like throwing up. Edward had family and wanted to see if they were alive. It must have been a terrible quarrel. I'm now not so sure I want Mr Loomis to live. A murderer! how terrible. I want Mr Loomis to live for Ann's sake but for nothing else.

Chapter 26. So the book finishes as it started, but the people have changed. I hope Ann does find life, and I'm pretty sure she will. I don't hate Mr Loomis any more only feel terribly sorry for him and for his mistakes. Life is so precious, why must we always destroy it, maim it, or try to control it? I hope there never is another atomic war. Mr Loomis has now become a better man though the circumstances are terrible.

Better in the sense that his gratitude to Ann for saving his life prevails over his impulse to shoot her? When she leaves, she robs him of one thing he really wants, immortality, and he relinquishes that deliberately, if reluctantly.

APPENDIX 7

USE THIS PAGE AFTER
READING THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Read through these quotations from Chapter 1 and decide who said each one. Then fill in the chart below. In the second column, put the number of each statement next to the right person's name. In the third column, write down your first impressions of each character using not more than *three* words.

9. 'See, Miz Crocker, see what it says. They give us these ole books when they didn't want 'em no more.'
10. 'I don't want my book neither.'
7. 'And to all our little first grade friends only today starting on the road to knowledge and education, may your tiny feet find the pathways of learning steady and forever before you.'
- 12b. 'Maybe so,' said ... 'but that doesn't mean they have to accept them ... and maybe we don't either.'
1. 'Y'all go ahead and get dirty if y'all wanna ... Me, I'm gonna stay clean.'
11. 'In the first place no-one cares enough to come down here, and in the second place if anyone should come, maybe he could see all the things we need - current throwaways, desks, paper, blackboards, erasers, maps, chalk ...'
5. 'But I'll get my clothes dirty.'
6. 'Y'all jus' startin' school today?'
'Yeah,' replied Stacey.
'I wishin' ours was jus' startin', ' sighed ... 'Ours been goin' since the end of August.'
- 3b. ... 'If that's what you think, you don't know Mama.'
4. 'Well, since y'all don't seem to know nothin' ... maybe I ought not to tell y'all. It might hurt y'all's little ears.'
- 3a. 'Look on the bright side,' said ... 'Jus' think of the advantage you've got. You'll be learnin' all sorts of stuff 'fore the rest of us ...' He smiled slyly. 'Like what's on all them tests.'
8. 'I - I said may I have another book please, ma'am?'
... squeaked. 'That one's dirty.'

NAME	STATEMENT NUMBER	WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?
Cassie		
Stacey		
Little Man		
Mama		
Papa		
Miss Crocker		
T.J.		
Jeremy		

If you only knew the first chapter of this book, what would you think it was going to be about? Here is a list of words. Choose the three which you think are going to be *most* important.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| share-cropping | school |
| punishment | family life |
| resistance | conflict |
| the land | money |
| friendship | clothes |
| growing up | food |
| transport | life in the countryside |
| books | fear |

APPENDIX 8

RACISM...

Throughout *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* we are shown how black people are the victims of acts of violence and injustice similar to those described in the previous pages. These acts range from vicious murder to petty discrimination. Black people are constantly under threat.

The chart below is incomplete. The first column describes an act of violence or injustice. The second column gives the name of the person or people who suffer it. The third column says who is responsible for it. Complete the chart - and then add any more incidents you can think of within the story where black people are victimised.

1. ACTS OF VIOLENCE OR INJUSTICE

2. WHO SUFFERS?

3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Pupils are given fatty books

Mr Berry and his nephews

The Board of Education

The bus driver

Mary Logan

Kaleb Wallace & Harlan Granger

Attacked on the way back from Vicksburg

Mr Logan

T.J.

Cassie

Lillian Jean & Mrs Simms

RESISTANCE...

But black people in the story don't just accept these acts of violence and injustice: they try to find ways of resisting and fighting back. This is difficult and dangerous: they have to be careful and sometimes indirect in what they do.

Look back at the chart on the opposite page. Then, where you can, complete the last two columns below. The fourth column describes what black people in the story do to resist and fight back. The fifth column says what happens as a result of what they do. (You may decide that for some of the acts of violence or injustice on the chart there is nothing to put in these two columns.)

4. RESISTANCE OR REVENGE

5. THE CONSEQUENCES

Little Man and Cassie
refuse to take the books

The Logan children dig
a hole in the road

APPENDIX 9

ROLL OF THUNDER - ISSUES FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

HISTORY

Big Ma, Papa and Mama each convey to the children, through memories and stories a sense of their history (the story of Black Americans in America), a history which the author found denied or distorted in her own schooling.

Whose stories and histories do you hear about and read about at school? Think about the stories you hear in Assembly, stories in the books you find in the library, read in class or at home.

Would you like to change this at all?

FRIENDSHIP

In Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Jeremy brings a homemade flute for Stacey and a bag of nuts for the Logan family at Christmas. After Jeremy has left, Stacey questions his father about the possibility of allowing the friendship to develop. Papa firmly points out, however, that friendship across the colour line is usually not on an equal basis:

“Maybe one day whites and blacks can be real friends, but right now the country ain’t built that way”.

What is your response to this statement? Do your parents guide you with regard to choice of friends? What friendship groups are there in Standard 5? Have these changed over the years of your being together at this school?

LANGUAGE

In Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Mr Barnett asks of Cassie “Whose little nigger is this?”

If you were asked how we should talk about girls in the school, that is, should we recognise difference in the way we refer to girls?

“English is not my real language, Xhosa is. But as I listened I learned that I shouldn’t forget my home language. I should actually be proud of it and not be ashamed. And those who can’t speak English mustn’t be ashamed.” (Quote from evaluation of Sola’s workshop)

What language should we learn at school? How do you feel about girls speaking different languages at school? Do you think some languages are less or more important than other languages?

RISKS...

Although the black characters in the book want to fight back they have to be very careful not to risk even more serious danger. The two incidents described below illustrate this problem.

The labels

Early in the book Miss Crocker goes to see Mary Logan to tell her that Little Man and Cassie refused to take their schoolbooks because of the labels inside. Both Miss Crocker and Mary Logan are black teachers of black pupils. Part of their conversation is given below.

Miss Crocker, dismayed by Mama's seeming unconcern for the seriousness of the matter, thrust her shoulders back and began moving away from the desk. 'You understand that if they don't have those books to study from, I'll have to fail them in both reading and composition, since I plan to base all my lessons around -' She stopped abruptly and stared in amazement at Mama.

'Mary, what in the world are you doing?'

Mama did not answer. She had trimmed the paper to the size of the books and was now dipping a gray-looking glue from the brown bottle onto the inside cover of one of the books. Then she took the paper and placed it over the glue.

'Mary Logan, do you know what you're doing? That book belongs to the county. If somebody from the superintendent's office ever comes down here and sees that book, you'll be in real trouble.'

Mama laughed and picked up the other book. 'In the first place no one cares enough to come down here, and in the second place if anyone should come, maybe he could see all the things we need - current books for all of our subjects, not just somebody's old throwaways, desks, paper, black-boards, erasers, maps, chalk ...' Her voice trailed off as she glued the second book.

'Biting the hand that feeds you. That's what you're doing, Mary Logan, biting the hand that feeds you.'

Again, Mama laughed. 'If that's the case Daisy, I don't think I need that little bit of food.' With the second book finished, she stared at a small pile of seventh-grade books on her desk.

'Well, I just think you're spoiling those children, Mary. They've got to learn how things are sometime.'

'Maybe so,' said Mama, 'but that doesn't mean they have to accept them ... and maybe we don't either.'



In a short piece of writing try to explain the different attitudes the two women have - and then say who you think was right on this occasion.

APPENDIX 11

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Call

Extract from: Roll of Thunder, Hear My Call, Chapter 3 (40-41)

Write down your thoughts and feelings alongside this passage as you read it.

"Come on, man," T.J. persuaded. "Why stay up here waitin' for that devilish bus when we could be at school outa this mess?"

"Well . . ."

T.J. and Claude jumped from the bank. Then Stacey, frowning as if he were doing this against his better judgment, jumped down too. Little Man, Christopher-John, and I followed.

Five minutes later we were skidding like frightened puppies toward the bank again as the bus accelerated and barreled down the narrow rain-soaked road; but there was no place to which we could run, for Stacey had been right. Here the gullies were too wide, filled almost to overflowing, and there were no briars or bushes by which we could swing up onto the bank.

Finally, when the bus was less than fifty feet behind us, it veered dangerously close to the right edge of the road where we were running, forcing us to attempt the jump to the bank; but all of us fell short and landed in the slime of the gully.

Little Man, chest-deep in water, scooped up a handful of mud and in an uncontrollable rage scrambled up to the road and ran after the retreating bus. As moronic rolls of laughter and cries of "Nigger! Nigger! Mud eater!" wafted from the open windows, Little Man threw his mudball, missing the wheels by several feet. Then, totally dismayed by what had happened, he buried his face in his hands and cried.

T.J. climbed from the gully grinning at Little Man, but Stacey, his face burning red beneath his dark skin, glared so fiercely at T.J. that he fell back. "Just one word outa you, T.J.," he said tightly. "Just one word."

Christopher-John and I looked at each other. We had never seen Stacey look like this, and neither had T.J.

"Hey, man, I ain't said nothin'! I'm jus' as burnt as you are."

Stacey glowered at T.J. a moment longer, then walked swiftly to Little Man and put his long arm around his shoulders, saying softly, "Come on, Man. It ain't gonna happen no more, least not for a long while. I promise you that."

Again, Christopher-John and I looked questioningly at each other, wondering how Stacey could make such a rash promise. Then, shrugging, we hurried after him.

When Jeremy Simms spied us from his high perch on the forest path, he ran hastily down and joined us.

"Hey," he said, his face lighting into a friendly grin. But no one spoke to him.

The smile faded and, noticing our mud-covered clothing he asked, "Hey, St-Stacey, wh-what happened?"

Stacey turned, stared into his blue eyes and said coldly, "Why don't you leave us alone? How come you always hanging 'round us anyway?"

Jeremy grew even more pale. "C-cause I just likes y'all," he stammered. Then he whispered, "W-was it the bus again?"

No one answered him and he said no more. When we reached the crossroads, he looked hopefully at us as if we might relent and say good-bye. But we did not relent and as I glanced back at him standing alone in the middle of the crossing, he looked as if the world itself was slung around his neck. It was only then that I realized that Jeremy never rode the bus, no matter how bad the weather.

Please turn over.

Where do you feel you are when reading this passage? Are you inside the story with particular characters, or viewing, the events as an outside onlooker? Or does your position perhaps change? If so, how?

APPENDIX 12

Extract from Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Chapter 6 (96 - 98)

"But, Mama, it ain't fair. I didn't do nothin' to that confounded Lillian Jean. How come Mr. Simms went and pushed me like he did?"

Mama's eyes looked deeply into mine, locked into them, and she said in a tight, clear voice, "Because he thinks Lillian Jean is better than you are, Cassie, and when you —"

"That ole scrawny, chicken-legged, snaggle-toothed, cross —"

"Cassie." Mama did not raise her voice, but the quiet force of my name silenced me. "Now," she said, folding my hand in hers, "I didn't say that Lillian Jean is better than you. I said Mr. Simms only *thinks* she is. In fact, he thinks she's better than Stacey or Little Man or Christopher-John —"

"Just 'cause she's his daughter?" I asked, beginning to think Mr. Simms was a bit touched in the head.

"No, baby, because she's white."

Mama's hold tightened on mine, but I exclaimed, "Ah, shoot! White ain't nothin'!"

Mama's grip did not lessen. "It is something, Cassie. White is something just like black is something. Everybody born on this earth is something and nobody, no matter what color, is better than anybody else."

"Then how come Mr. Simms don't know that?"

"Because he's one of those people who has to believe that white people are better than black people to make himself feel big." I stared questioningly at Mama, not really understanding. Mama squeezed my hand and explained further. "You see, Cassie, many years ago when our people were first brought from Africa in chains to work as slaves in this country —"

"Like Big Ma's papa and mama?"

Mama nodded. "Yes, baby, like Papa Luke and Mama Rachel, except they were born right here in Mississippi. But their grandparents were born in Africa, and when they came there were some white people who thought that it was wrong for any people to be slaves; so the people who needed slaves to work in their fields and the people who were making money bringing slaves from Africa preached that black people weren't really people like white people were, so slavery was all right."

"They also said that slavery was good for us because it taught us to be good Christians—like the white people." She sighed deeply, her voice fading into a distant whisper. "But they didn't teach us Christianity to save our souls, but to teach us obedience. They were afraid of slave revolts and they wanted us to learn the Bible's teachings about slaves being loyal to their masters. But

even teaching us Christianity didn't make us stop wanting to be free, and many slaves ran away —"

"Papa Luke ran away," I reminded her, thinking of the story of how Great-Grandpa had run away three times. He had been caught and punished for his disobedience, but his owners had not tried to break him, for he had had a knowledge of herbs and cures. He had tended both the slaves and the animals of the plantation, and it was from him that Big Ma had learned medicines.

Mama nodded again. "That's right, honey. He was hiding in a cave when freedom came, so I understand." She was silent a moment, then went on. "Well, after a while, slavery became so profitable to people who had slaves and even to those who didn't that most folks decided to believe that black people really weren't people like everybody else. And when the Civil War was fought and Mama Rachel and Papa Luke and all the other slaves were freed, people continued to think that way. Even the Northerners who fought the war didn't really see us equal to white people. So now, even though seventy years have passed since slavery, most white people still think of us as they did then—that we're not as good as they are—and people like Mr. Simms hold on to that belief harder than some other folks because they have little else to hold on to. For him to believe that he is better than we are makes him think that he's important, simply because he's white."

- ◆ **UNDERLINE** a sentence in which Mama tells Cassie why Mr. Simms wants to think his family is better than the Logans.
- ◆ **UNDERLINE** a sentence in which Mama tells Cassie how white people made slavery "all right" - so their consciences weren't troubled.
- ◆ **WRITE** what you think Mama might have replied if Cassie had asked her the question below. Consider whether Mama will repeat the highly insulting term "nigger". If she does, remember to use speech marks around it to show it is not a word she would normally use herself:

Cassie: why did Mr. Barnett call me a "little nigger", Mama? Why does he make me wait so long?

Mama:

Mama:

- ◆ **IMAGINE** the story moves to 1996 and Cassie is now a grandmother. Her nine-year-old grandchild comes home from school furiously upset, saying some white children have called her / him a racist name. Write Grandma Cassie's reply. Read first in your documentary book about the Civil Rights Movement - pages 12 - 14. Try and feel her mood as you write.

Grandma Cassie:

- ◆ **IMAGINE** the story moves to South Africa 1996. A nine-year-old Collegiate girl goes home to her mother furiously upset, saying some children have called her racist names or she heard her name mentioned while Xhosa girls looked at her angrily. Read about the changes that have taken place in South Africa. Write her mother's reply.

Mother:

DOTS ON FOREHEADS

25:00

This is another drama exercise which develops the theme of the previous exercise. The same words of caution which apply to the previous exercise apply to this one.

- Ask the group to stand in a tight circle facing outwards. Everyone should close their eyes, and keep their eyes shut until the leaders asks them to open them again.
- The leader should have sheets of sticky dots in 3 different colours (red, blue and green in the example below). Stick a dot on the forehead of each group member, so that there are an equal number of group members with each colour dot.
- When everyone has a dot on their forehead, ask the group to open their eyes, face inwards, and get into groups according to the colour of their dots, but without talking.
- Once the groups have sorted themselves out, tell the groups to do exactly what s/he says.
- Ask the group with red dots to stand silently in the corner with their noses touching the wall — they must not move until told to. The group with blue dots should be invited to sit down comfortably on chairs. The leader may want to serve this group with orange juice, for instance. This group can give any order they want to the group with green dots, and the group with green dots must obey silently.
- After a few minutes, the leader should stop the groups and tell them that a terrible mistake has been made. In fact, the group with blue dots should be standing in the corner, the group with green dots sitting down, and the group with red dots obeying the group with green dots. Then continue as before.
- After a few more minutes, stop the group again and announce that another mistake has been made. In fact, the real situation should be the green dots standing in the corner, the red dots sitting down, and the blue dots obeying the red dots!
- Allow the exercise to continue for a few more minutes then bring to a close and discuss it:
 - ▲ How did each group feel when they were in each position?
 - ▲ Did they feel badly treated or angry? Did they enjoy giving orders?
 - ▲ Did they see the people in the other groups as friends or enemies?
 - ▲ Is it fair that one group of people can dominate another group in such a way? Which way of working would the group members prefer, dominating or co-operating?

SUMMARY

Scenario A
 RED DOTS : Stand silently in the corner with their noses touching the wall.

BLUE DOTS : Sit down and give orders to GREEN DOTS.

GREEN DOTS : Obey orders from BLUE DOTS silently.

Scenario B
 BLUE DOTS : Stand silently in corner.

GREEN DOTS : Sit down and give orders to RED DOTS.

RED DOTS : Obey GREEN DOTS silently.

Scenario C
 GREEN DOTS : Stand silently in corner.

RED DOTS : Sit down and give orders to BLUE DOTS.

BLUE DOTS : Obey RED DOTS silently.



LEARNING About your Rights!

Circle A

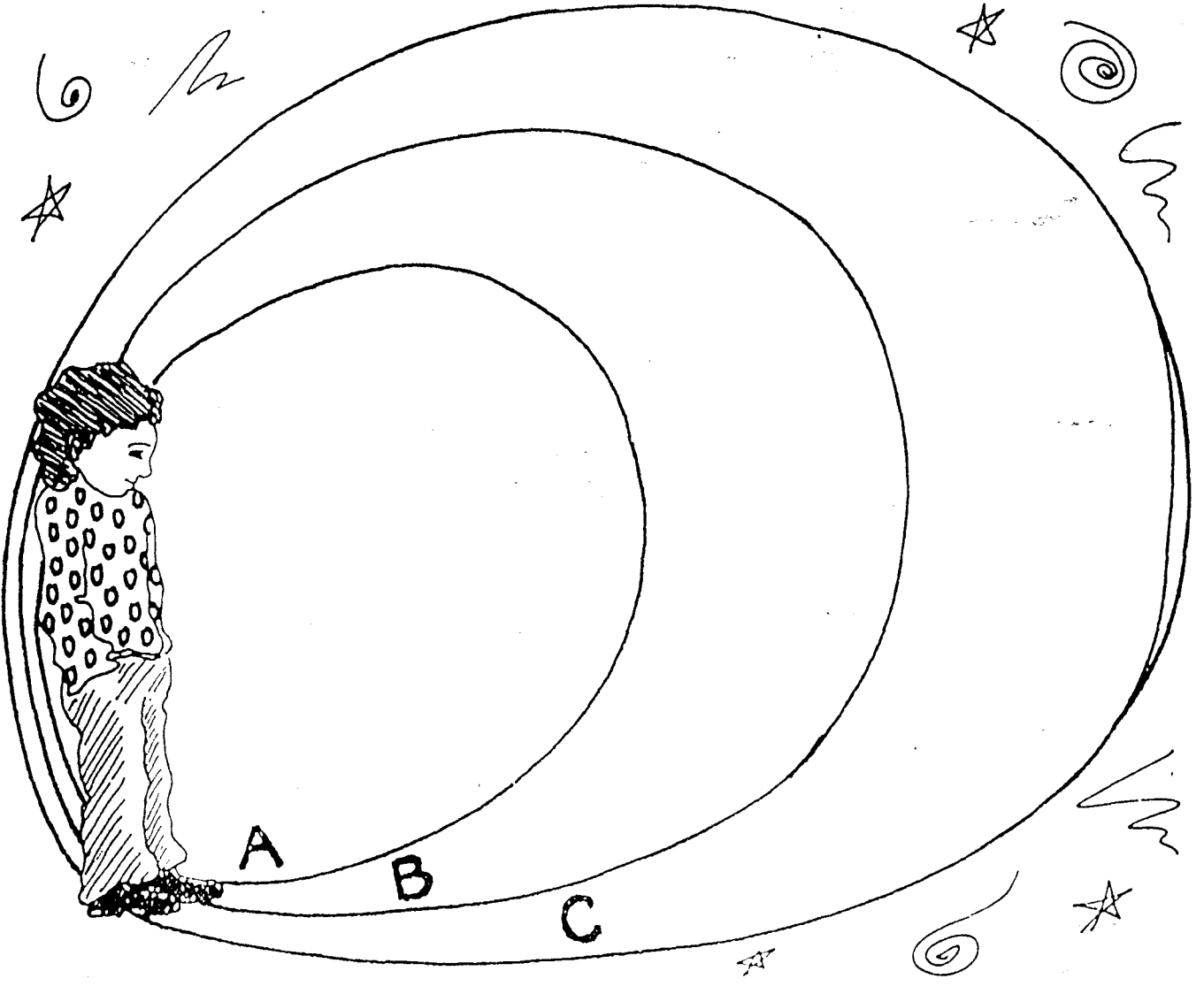
In this circle fill in those things that have happened to you that you didn't like.

Circle B

In this circle, fill in the wrong things that happen to children in our school.

Circle C

In this circle fill in what you think should be done to prevent children from being treated wrongly.



School with no textbooks.



Andile & Sonwabo from Stormando.

"My school, Stormando is very different from Ellerton. My school is not under the Department of Education, and Training and it is very poor. It is not built with bricks. There are not enough desks and we do not learn the way you do. We learn without books.

Education should be equal so that we all can be on the same level."

-Sonwabo

"My school is very different from other schools. We are a community school and we depend on the community. Our classrooms are ship containers. We have no furniture, stationary, reading or textbooks. Teachers at our school don't get any payment. We learn things without any answers in front of us. Other schools have many books, desks and have proper classrooms."

-Andile

Equal education for us all...

"I think education should be equal to all children. I visited a school in KTC and it looked terrible. It does not have a fence surrounding and children have no school uniform. Another school in Sea Point have so many things we don't have at our School."

-Badroenisa

"Ellerton has got things we do not have. They have a big swimming pool, music room a science lab and head prefect. Their library is bigger than ours. Their staff room is not in the office. Their playground is neat and clean. They have a room where the children can eat their lunch. It was very funny working with them."

-Iqbal

"Ellerton se gebou is soos 'n hospitaal. Dit is anders van ons skool. Daar is 'n swembad, park en oefensaal. Hulle biblioteek is groot. Ellerton het alles wat ons skool nie het nie."

-Nigel

"Ellerton is so big it looks like a hospital. It is very different to our school. The teachers and children are very friendly. The prefect who showed us around, she is called Nadine Ballot. Education should be equal so that all children can learn and do something in their lives."

-Wardah



Badroenisa, Iqbal, Wardah & Nigel from Morgenson.



Ellerton pupils at Morgenson Primary.

"There are many children. At Ellerton we have a little children. Their schools have very small classrooms with broken windows and their schools are very dirty. The one school we went to visit is in Guguletu. It is a squatter school. The children do not have equipment like science lab, shed, library, kitchen, TV, PT equipment or a pool. Education should be equal. We are looking towards a brighter future, but how can we have one when education still goes by the colour of the skin."

-Zehaad

"Education still goes by the colour of the skin..."

"The school we visited is different from my school because it is so big and it looks like a new school. The government give them books to read and write. But he did not give us books to read and write because we don't follow his dirty rules."

-Tembekile

I siphika yohluka ngokuba ayinayo i pool and iyakhiwe ngamazinki, sisikolo samatyotyombe, asikho phantsi korhulumente, akho mazinki aneleyo, indawo yokufundela ayonelanga. Isikolo sase Ellerton sihle sicocekile nangaphandle.

-Joyce

"We get the best..."

"Stormando is very poor and dirty. The school is overcrowded and the children stood outside to begin their assembly. The children obviously do not learn much due to the shortage of textbooks and the children don't seem to care.

Education is important if you need a job and to be respected."

-Gizelle

"I think that the school we visited were very different from our schools. For instance they don't even have a small swimming pool. They are very underprivileged and they have to deal with a lot from other races. In general, we get the best to offer, they don't. Education should be equal for all disregarding race or colour or age."

-Lauren



Joyce & Tembekile from Siphika.

'WE ARE NOT SAFE AT SCHOOL!'

Igama lam ndingu Thengwa amapolisa makayeke ukutshisa izindlu zabantu. Onotaxi mabayeke ukubalekela esiko lweni. Amapolisa mabeyeke ukunika uwebta izixhobo. uWebta makayeke ukuthatha abantwana bamke nabo. Amapolisa mabangabinecala abalithathayo. Mabakolelane onotaxi. Makuxuthwe izixhobo konotaxi. Makuyekwe itaxi kusetyenziswe ibhasi Irank mayiyeke ukuba secaleni kwezindlu nesikdo

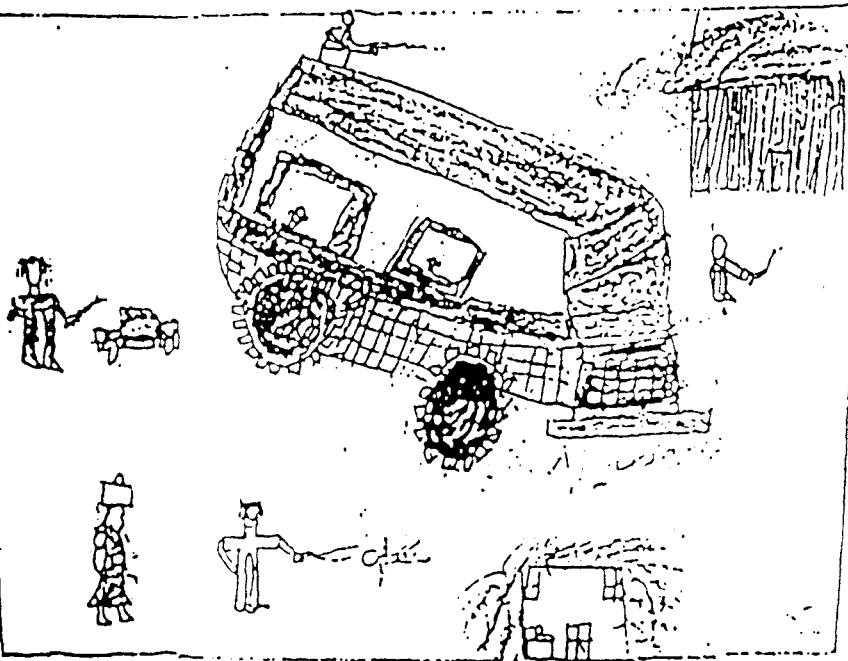
Children from John Pama Primary School and Mkhanyiseli Primary School in Nyanga started their first school term, caught up in the taxi violence. Unable to do school work, children and teachers fear being shot at or killed. Some children wrote and drew about their experiences of the taxi violence.

The war is killing us. We can not learn or do our school work. We are not safe at school. We are not safe at home. We are not safe in Nyanga, in KTC. We are not safe in the township. Siphokazi

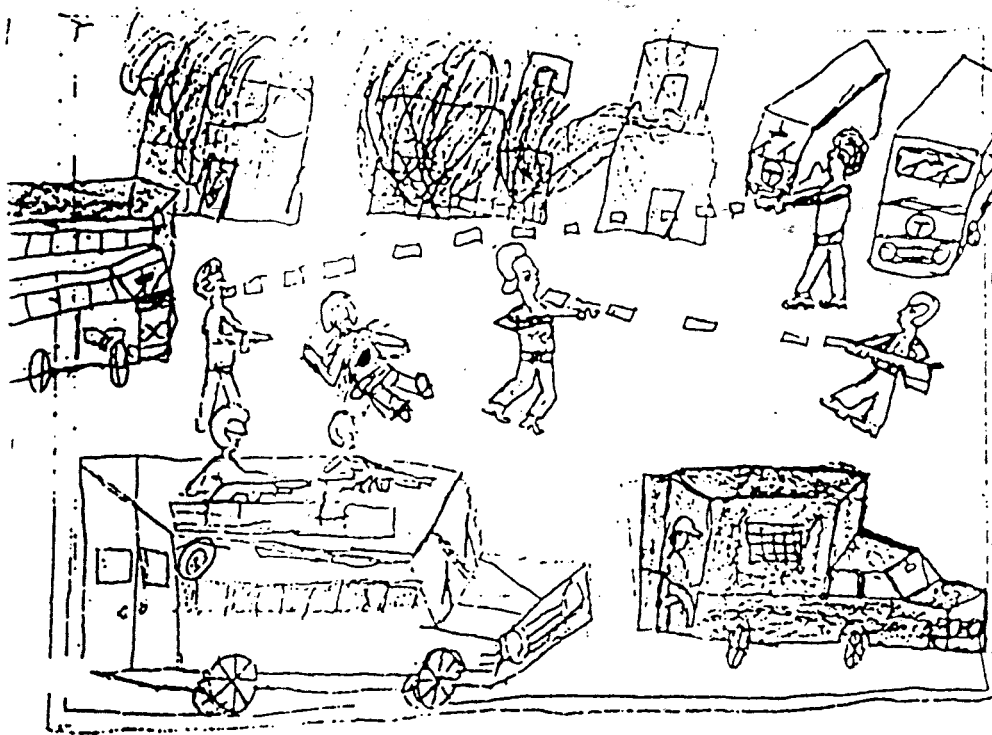
Umlo wonotaxi

Abantwana base John Pama nase Mkhanyiseli basiqale kakubi isikolo kulekota yokuqala kulo nyaka ngenxa yezidubedube ezithe zenziwa ngonotaxi apha. Ababantwana khangababekho ukwenza imisebenzi yabo yesikolo. Abanye abantwana ezi zinto zazisenzeka phambi kwabo, bezibona ngamehlo, onotaxi bebulalana.

The people run to school when the fighting starts. We are not safe at school. The police must not take sides. The taxi violence must stop. Their weapons must be taken away. We don't want taxis anymore because they kill people. They must look for other work. I wish there to be peace amongst our people. Contsana



Siyachaphazeleka thina bafundi apha esikoleni ngenxa yonotaxi abalwayo. Amapolisa ayasidubeka kodwa asiqhubi taxi. Mayiphela imibutho ebibini. ababantu babalekela apha luthi abafundi. Makuxuthwe izixhobo ebantwini nasebahlaleni. Maxolelane unotaxi Osanda Jonggo



Koëls kom reguit na ons toe!

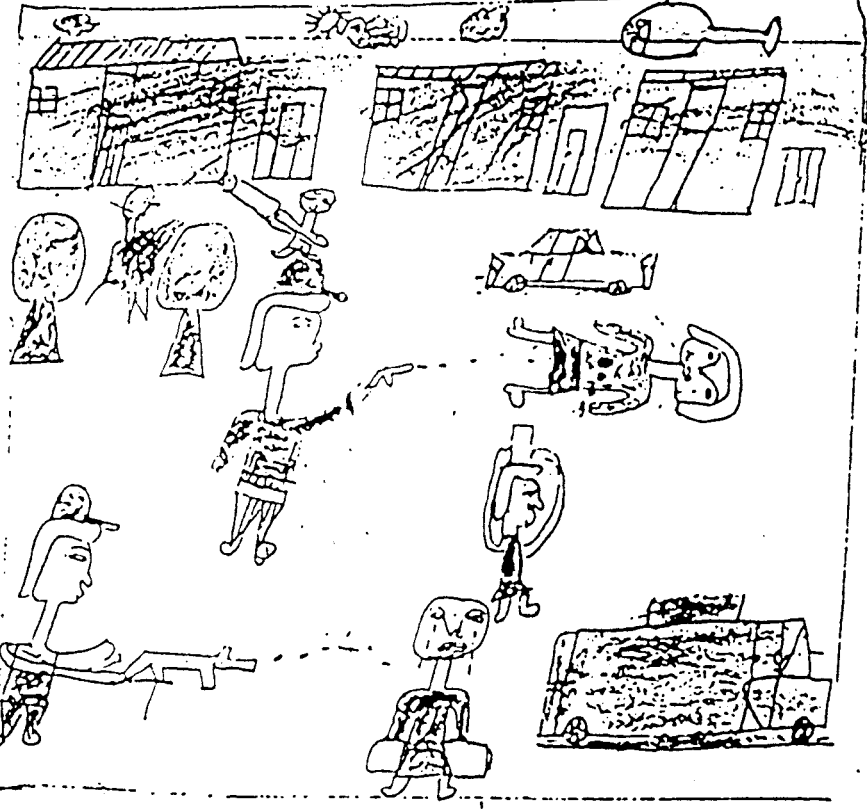
My naam is Nokuthula Javu. Ons skool is regoor die bus en taxi hawe. Wanneer die taxi stryd begin, kom hulle koëls reguit na ons skool toe. Hulle baklei met baie gevaarlike wapens tussen ons. Ons onderwysers het ons geleer om plat te val as die skietery begin.

Lewens in gevaar!

Leeringe van John Pama en Mkhanyiseli primêr skole is in die taxi geweld opgevang. Hulle skool werk lei daaronder en hul lewens is ingevaar. Sommige van hierdie leeringe het oor hulle ervarings geskryf en geteken.

Hayi imeto imbi sithi sizaqala ukufunda kusuke kulike ngoo-Nokuthula abanye bangena. Nalika gha esikolweni, siphume esikolweni kuba uba asiphumanga sakubeki phakathi. e k.t.c izindlu zabantu zitsha ngolohlobo.
ndiyaphela apha siphokazi Banga

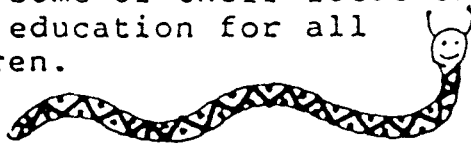
Die kinders by ons skool is baie bang as die skietery begin. Hulle hardloop die skool binne. Ons lewens is in gevaar. Die taxi geweld is nie goed vir ons nie. Ons kan nie ons skool werk doen nie.
Andile



It is difficult to learn because of the war. In K.T.C we don't sleep. Shots are being fired and our house burnt down. The police through tear gas at us. The fighting must stop.
Thabisa

Education for all children!

Ellerton Primary School pupils share some of their ideas on equal education for all children.



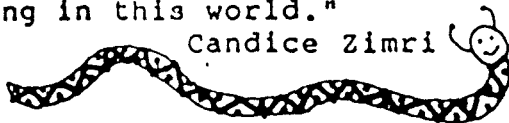
"Education should be equal for all children because none of them did ask to be born in the state they are. Proper education should be given to all for no charge. Children are children and they should be treated the same by everyone."

Candice Berman



"I think all children must get the same education, as we should all get a shot at becoming something in this world."

Candice Zimri



"If we take the children who are our future and teach them well the economic situation and the living standards will improve, which will improve racial relationships."

Nadine, Ballot



Zehaad and friends from Ellerton

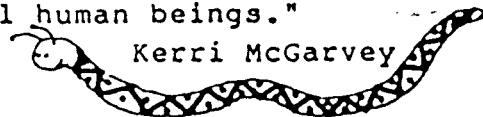
"Education should be equal for all children, because children all have a right to a good education, black or white. Our colour can't determine the quality of our education. By sharing our education we can share in friendship and trust."

Alice Gillham



"Education must be equal for all children because we are all the same but a different colour. Why should white people get educated and the black people get none. We are all human beings."

Kerri McGarvey



"Education should be equal for all children because just that their colour is different it does not mean they can't have the same teaching. Some whites also can't have the education like we have at Ellerton Primary School. The board of Education should provide equal education because if children don't get a good teaching they will never have a chance in life to make a good living."

Alexa Proctor

Ellerton pupil visits Stomando Madibela Primary School.

APPENDIX 16

EVALUATION OF OLUSOLA OYELEYE'S WORKSHOP - APRIL 30 1996

The following headings are simply there to help you reflect on the experience.

Cultures

Language - our own and that of others

Pictures

Music

Working in groups

Thoughts and Feelings - creating trust

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION is a body that has been set up by an Act of Parliament. It will be run by commissioners appointed by President Nelson Mandela. The commissioners will be people who are respected by all political parties and who have a high moral reputation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be made up of three committees:

- The Committee on Human Rights Violations;
- The Committee on Amnesty; and
- The Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation

The role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be to put together a complete picture of all the serious human rights violations that took place against South Africans between 1 March 1960 and the 5th of December 1993.

Serious human rights violations include the following acts:

- Murder
- Assassination
- Torture
- Disappearance/ Abduction

The Commission will only be concerned with these acts if they were carried out for political reasons.

Why did those violations happen? Who carried out those terrible acts? Who were the victims?

By understanding the past we will be able to move into a future where these things will never happen again.

The Commission is not about punishing or carrying out a "witch hunt", but about bringing about reconciliation. About building a new country together. We must move away from the past, but we must never forget.

The Commission will begin its work during the second half of 1995. It will run for about two years.

APPENDIX 18

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

THE MEETING - a film script

Imagine ... a girl like yourself ... (in South Africa) ... a girl - Cassie Logan ... (transported in time and space) meeting at a hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, OR at an airport (both of you are reading newspaper reports about events in South Africa), OR at a conference of Human Rights organised by the Mayor of Port Elizabeth, Mr Faku.

You strike up a conversation sharing knowledge and personal experience of lives in your respective countries.

Write the dialogue for a film scene in which you meet. (Background music. Set the scene - freeze everyone - move into your dialogue).

Think as deeply as you can about Cassie's character and about your values, beliefs and feelings so that the language and emotion is as real as possible.

Cassie's family lived under segregation, your family lived under apartheid. Reflect on your experiences as a family, in school, in friendships (Cassie / Lillean-Jean / Jeremy), in your community and city. Share your hopes for the future in each of your countries. How do you see yourselves as influencing that future?