

Book Nook



School of Journalism & Media Studies
Rhodes University, South Africa

The magic at Duna

Kendra Dykman

Duna Library plays host each week to a large group of excited primary schoolers from N V Cewu Higher Primary School. Under the guidance of Malwane Nortjie, the learners participate in a Nal'ibali reading club, Kamvelihle ("Bright Future"), where they improve their English and literacy skills.

Nortjie, the Duna Library assistant librarian, has been leading the reading club since around April this year. Tsepiso Nzayo, cluster leader for Grahamstown and the surrounding areas, has confirmed that there are roughly 45 students who attend this weekly get-together.

As a warm-up exercise and ice breaker, the children play games and sing songs. Then they get into groups, making books from the supplements provided by Nal'ibali in the Times Media newspapers. Sometimes they will read

together; at other times, one learner will volunteer to read in front of the whole group. It is a great learning experience and really builds the learners' confidence.

Lindelihle Manyathi, one of the learners, says the reading club makes them more fluent in their own and other languages.

"It gives us a better grasp of the school work," says Sinxolo Magopeni. Lindokuhle Kula says they learn the names of animals.

Apart from literacy and language skills, learners also gain life skills. "People don't laugh at us, they listen and have respect," explained Ayabulela January.

Mandlakhe Klaas, Nal'ibali Story Sparker for the area, says the clubs are increasing in number and growing in popularity. It is a fun and alternative environment for the learners to improve their skills – and they are eager to see others join them in the experience.



Duna Library provides pupils such as this one from Archie Mbolekwa Primary School, a place to do homework as well as read for enjoyment. (Michelle Cunliffe)



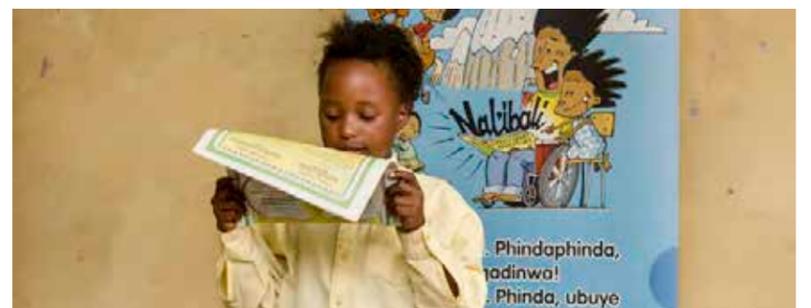
Tsepiso Nzayo, the Nal'ibali cluster leader for Grahamstown, leads the children in a game at Duna Library's reading group session. (Michelle Cunliffe)



Malwane Nortjie, Duna Library's assistant librarian as well as the reading group's leader, reads to pupils from N V Cewu Higher Primary School. (Michelle Cunliffe)



The pupils are encouraged to read out loud in order to build their confidence and fluency in reading. (Michelle Cunliffe)



The pupils, such as this one from N V Cewu Higher Primary School, are urged to read out loud from the Nal'ibali reading supplement. (Michelle Cunliffe)



Leroy and Rani are Sam's dogs. Leroy comes from England and even has a passport. (Tiffany Majero)



Playing with her dogs is not the only thing Sam does to keep fit. She also loves her Pilates class. (Tiffany Majero)

Catherine Baytopp

Joyfully and fearlessly reading

Most Grahamstown reading groups happen in libraries, schools and community centres and are aimed at encouraging reading for enjoyment and development of learning, reading and language skills. There are numerous groups in Grahamstown. A visit to the Ntsika High School reading group with Rhodes University English lecturer Sam Naidu shed some light on what goes on at a reading group and behind the scenes.

The reading group, started in July 2013, is something that the English department of Rhodes University has been working on for a while. Hosting pupils from grades 8 and 9, the group aims to develop the children's reading, English and interpretative skills.

The Ntsika High School reading group is a Friends of the Library (FOL) initiative, with assistance from the former Rhodes University Vice Chancellor Derek Henderson's donation towards libraries.

FOL decided to use the money to assist schools which did not have fully functioning libraries. Naidu, as a member of FOL was given the task of starting the group at Ntsika.

During the short time of considering whether anyone would arrive, Theo, one of the honours students filled me in on how he got involved. He mentions that for a while he wanted to get involved in community engagement through the English Department and when this opportunity came up he was very happy to help out. Creating links between Grahamstonians, especially between those with and without resources is an important function of such reading groups.

Eventually about 12 pupils trickle through the doors. They are split into two groups, Fearless and Joyful, and are given the poem they had been working on the previous week, *The Tikoloshe*. Each group starts by reading the poem and be-

ing reminded of what it means. Then, willing volunteers stand and act out the poem. This is met with great laughter as the girls play the old lady who has lost her son, and the boys play the white policeman who murdered him. There is much drama and some commendable performances, but the poem becomes a way that the pupils begin to understand South African history.

However, reading groups like this one are not easy to run as they seem. Speaking to Naidu, she mentions her concerns about developing relationships with the pupils. Many of them are shy of strangers and there is often a language barrier that becomes another obstacle to overcome. Naidu explains that, because they only see the children once a week and the group is voluntary, they must focus on making significant moves towards trust and enthusiasm for the reading group. In doing

this they hope to ignite the pupils passion for reading and developing their language. If they feel intimidated this may not be possible. According to Naidu, "There are many challenges, the most obvious being language, but the students and I feel that this is a very valuable project which benefits both parties – symbiosis being the ideal type of relationship for sustained community engagement." Every week is different—different children arrive, they behave differently and they expect different things from it. This can add to the challenge of running a reading group.

After reciting their own poems and showing off their pictures of the character they portrayed, two of the pupils sat down to discuss what such a reading group means to them. Sinxolo Duda a grade 8 girl says that reading groups are great for "broadening

their minds" and to help them develop language skills, especially English. Athenkosi Speelman, a young man, mentions that coming to these reading groups gets them off the street to do something constructive and he enjoys the fact that he can read, act and draw in a space where no one will laugh at him or judge him, which makes it different to the classroom. He enjoys the active participation in the reading group and says he wishes more of his friends would join the club.

Reading clubs like the one at Ntsika high school are becoming a valuable tool in children's education. Using resources like the Nal'ibali supplement and partnering with institutions like Rhodes University. Naidu says these relationships need to be sustainable and the work they do needs to go beyond library walls. Reading groups are not a once off thing, they take time, preparation, perseverance and allow the children to be active in their own education.



Sam Naidu is passionate about teaching and expanding the minds of the young people. (Tiffany Majero)

Viwe was very happy that she had friends. They played after school and on weekends. But she spent so much time with her new friends that she forgot to take care of Simba. He had food and water, but he needed more than that. Simba became sad and lonely because Viwe did not play with him.



When Viwe got back to school, all the children wanted to talk to her about Simba. They even invited her to join in their games. As the days went by, she made friends at school.



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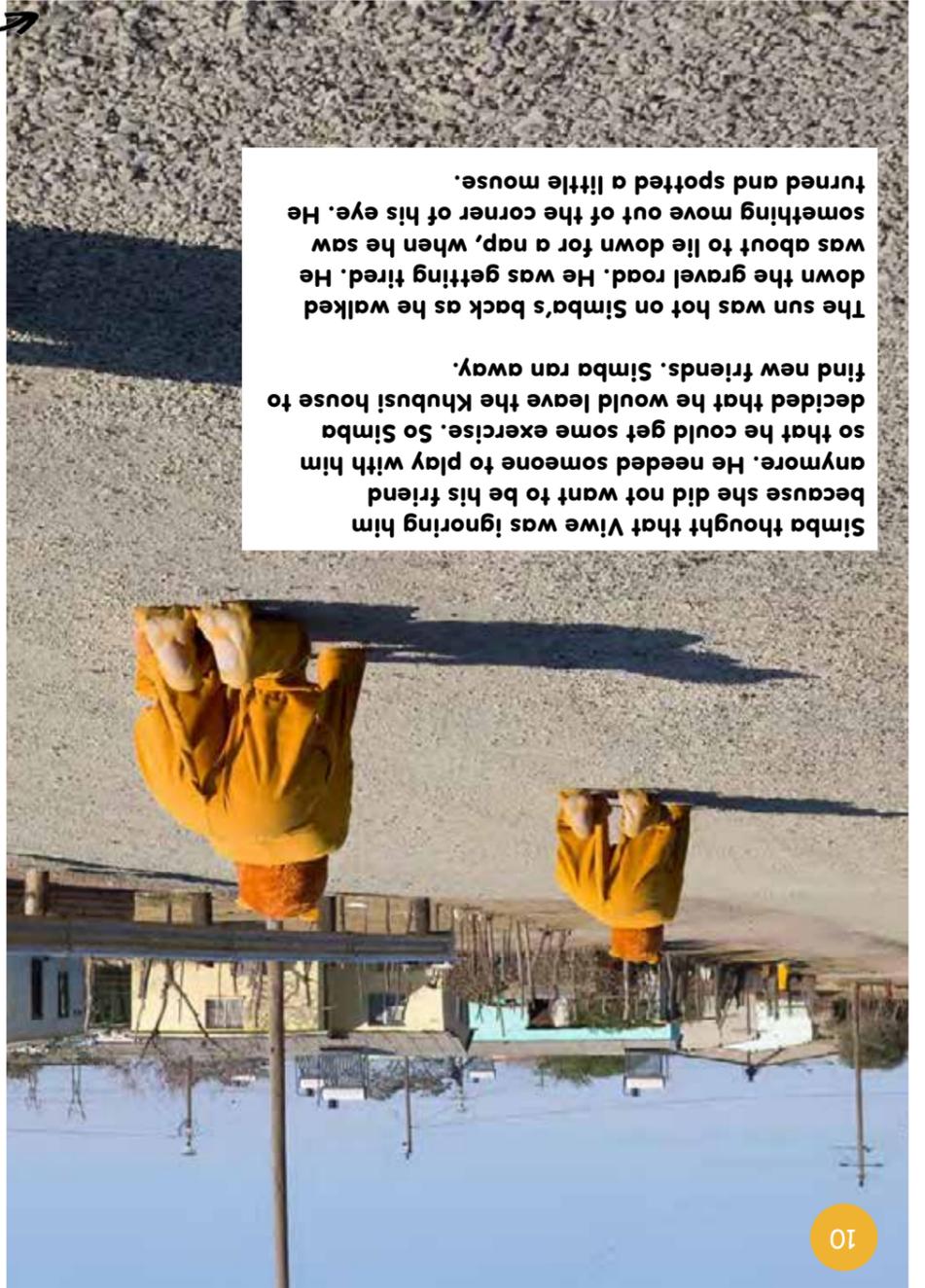
Created in collaboration with Landie Mngcambe and the Grahamstown Extension 9 Library Reading Group



Viwe and Simba played outside every day before and after school. One day, Simba followed her to school. When the other children saw Simba, they rushed over to pet him. "What's his name?" "How old is he?" "What does he eat?" they enquired. Viwe answered their questions, but then had to leave to take Simba back home.



Viwe lives in Extension 9. She is nine years old and attends CM Velleem Primary School. Mr and Mrs Khubusi are Viwe's parents. She has two younger sisters, Anesipho and Oyama. Viwe loves her family and often plays with her sisters, but longs for friends of her own age.



Simba thought that Viwe was ignoring him because she did not want to be his friend anymore. He needed someone to play with him so that he could get some exercise. So Simba decided that he would leave the Khubusi house to find new friends. Simba ran away. The sun was hot on Simba's back as he walked down the gravel road. He was getting tired. He was about to lie down for a nap, when he saw something move out of the corner of his eye. He turned and spotted a little mouse.



Together, Viwe and Simba walked back home to Kota Street. Knowing that she had made a mistake, Viwe took care to divide her time between her school friends and Simba.

Neither Simba nor Viwe were lonely or sad again.

Viwe's parents knew that she was having trouble making friends, so they discussed it and decided to let the dog stay. "You must make sure that you feed him and look after him. He is your responsibility," Mr Khubusi told Viwe, "He also needs a name." "I will call him Simba because he looks like a lion," Viwe replied. She finally had a friend to play with.



Viwe is new at her school. She has not made any friends yet, so she sometimes feels lonely. When the other children play games, she watches them and wishes that she could take part. But nobody ever asks her to join in, because they don't know her.



Luckily, Simba had not got very far as he was exhausted. Just as he began to think that running away was a bad idea, he heard Viwe calling his name. He ran towards her, and Viwe dropped to her knees and gave him a big hug. "I'm so sorry, Simba. From now on, I will make time for you every day," she said.

The dog greedily gobbled up the bread. "Hello boy," Viwe said as she stroked his soft coat. Viwe carried on walking home, but the dog followed her. "Where did this come from?" Mrs Khubusi asked when Viwe brought the dog home. "He followed me. Please can he stay?" Viwe pleaded.



One Sunday afternoon, as Mrs Khubusi was preparing supper, she realised that there was no bread and asked Viwe to go and buy a loaf from the shop. As Viwe was returning home, a brown dog started following her. She felt sorry for the skinny creature, so she fed it a piece of bread.

"Hello," Simba said, "Do you want to be my friend?" "Don't you have a human friend?" the mouse squeaked. "No. She has forgotten about me," Simba replied. "I'm very sorry for you, but I have to collect food for my family. You should walk for 5 minutes and turn left. There are lots of houses there. I'm sure you will find a friend," the mouse suggested. "Thank you," Simba answered, and followed the mouse's directions. Viwe arrived home. She went outside to feed Simba his supper, but he was missing. She asked around, but nobody had seen him.



Viwe walked down the road calling his name. The mouse saw Viwe and asked her if she was looking for a dog. "Yes. I don't know why he ran away," Viwe said. "I know!" the mouse declared, "It is because you did not play with him. Dogs need love and attention. You are like his parent. Even though your dog had food and water, he was lonely and felt unloved." "Oh no!" Viwe exclaimed as she realised her mistake, "Where could Simba be?" The mouse told Viwe which way Simba had gone, and she set off down the road again.



1. Landie Booi-Mngcambe gives an English lesson to grade 11 learners at Mary Waters Secondary School. Landie has been working at Mary Waters since July 2012. This is the first permanent teaching post that she has secured since getting her degree at Vista University in Port Elizabeth in 1996. Landie also runs a reading group with her Grade 11 class during their final lesson on Fridays, using the Nal'ibali materials. (Sarah Kingon)



2. Landie Booi-Mngcambe speaks to her students, answering queries that they have about their setwork book, *The Great Gatsby*. Landie has a good relationship with most of her students and a passion for working with children. Landie learnt to read through sharing a bedroom with a sister five years older than her while growing up. Her sister always read out loud, expected Landie to quiz her for tests and stuck all her notes on the wall where Landie taught herself how to read. Landie's father read a newspaper every day and this is where she learnt the importance of reading. (Sarah Kingon)

Leading through reading



3. Landie Booi-Mngcambe and her husband Stanley Mngcambe relax in each other's company after a long day at work. Their lounge area showcases a diverse collection of music which is their pride and joy. The couple have known each other since they were young, growing up together in the same township. (Sarah Kingon)



5. Landie Booi-Mngcambe volunteers each Wednesday afternoon at the Extension 9 Library where she facilitates a reading club for school-going children between ages 6 and 12 living in the surrounding area. She chose to start the reading club in order to improve the reading capabilities of these children, who would otherwise struggle with reading when they reach high school. (Sarah Kingon)



4. Landie Booi-Mngcambe helps Kamva Mize read one of the books he has selected. Kamva is seven years old and is currently in grade 1 at Ntaba Maria. It is difficult for Landie to give children individual attention as there are sometimes over 30 children who arrive, at the Nal'ibali reading club at the Extension 9 library, each of them of varying ages and reading levels. The Nal'ibali books, which Landie reads to the larger group, are often bilingual. This helps children to read in their own language while simultaneously grasping English. (Sarah Kingon)



Mandilakhe Klaas teaches pupils at Archie Mbolekwa Primary School about the justice system in South Africa. (Michelle Cunliffe)



Mandilakhe Klaas reads a book with the pupils of N V Cewu Higher Primary School in the Duna Library reading group. (Michelle Cunliffe)

Super Mandi, Archie's hero

Kendra Dykman

If ever you come across Mandilakhe Klaas, you ought to know that he is so much more than whatever he is doing when you meet him. If you are not already aware of his involvement in many aspects of his community, he is not likely to tell you, because he is such a humble man. It takes serious probing to find out just how busy and involved he is, and it is all for the benefit of the children.

Klaas (26) was born in Port Elizabeth and grew up in Grahamstown. He spent a few years schooling in PE, and it was there, in a multiracial school, that he learnt the importance of being literate in English. "We were watching this movie in English class, and this one kid stood up and I said, 'hey you, get out of the TV, we don't see', and everyone was laughing at that error. So I went home and told my mom that I don't belong there." He returned to Grahamstown where he completed his Matric.

After receiving his N5 Financial Management qualification from East Cape Midlands College, he got a holiday job as a cashier/retail associate. This new income tempted him to not return to his studies and he continued working there for three years.

Once his retail job came to an end, Klaas busied himself with coaching soccer to the learners of Archie Mbolekwa Public School in Rhini. When the opportunity arose for him to fill in for an English teacher at Archie Mbolekwa, Klaas grabbed it, even though he is not qualified to teach. "I don't like to be called 'teacher' because I am not there yet; I am still working towards it," Klaas explains. He has been volunteering at the school for 18 months, and this year he has been involved in teaching Life Skills,

Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences.

Klaas' compassion for the children is evident: though he does not get paid to teach, he insists that he will stay at Archie, ensuring the learners get the opportunity to learn. He runs the school library, opens it whenever he is available, and encourages learners to take out books. He makes sure the learners know that they have so many more opportunities if they can read and write English. "When you go for a job interview, they do it in... English," he prompts the learners.

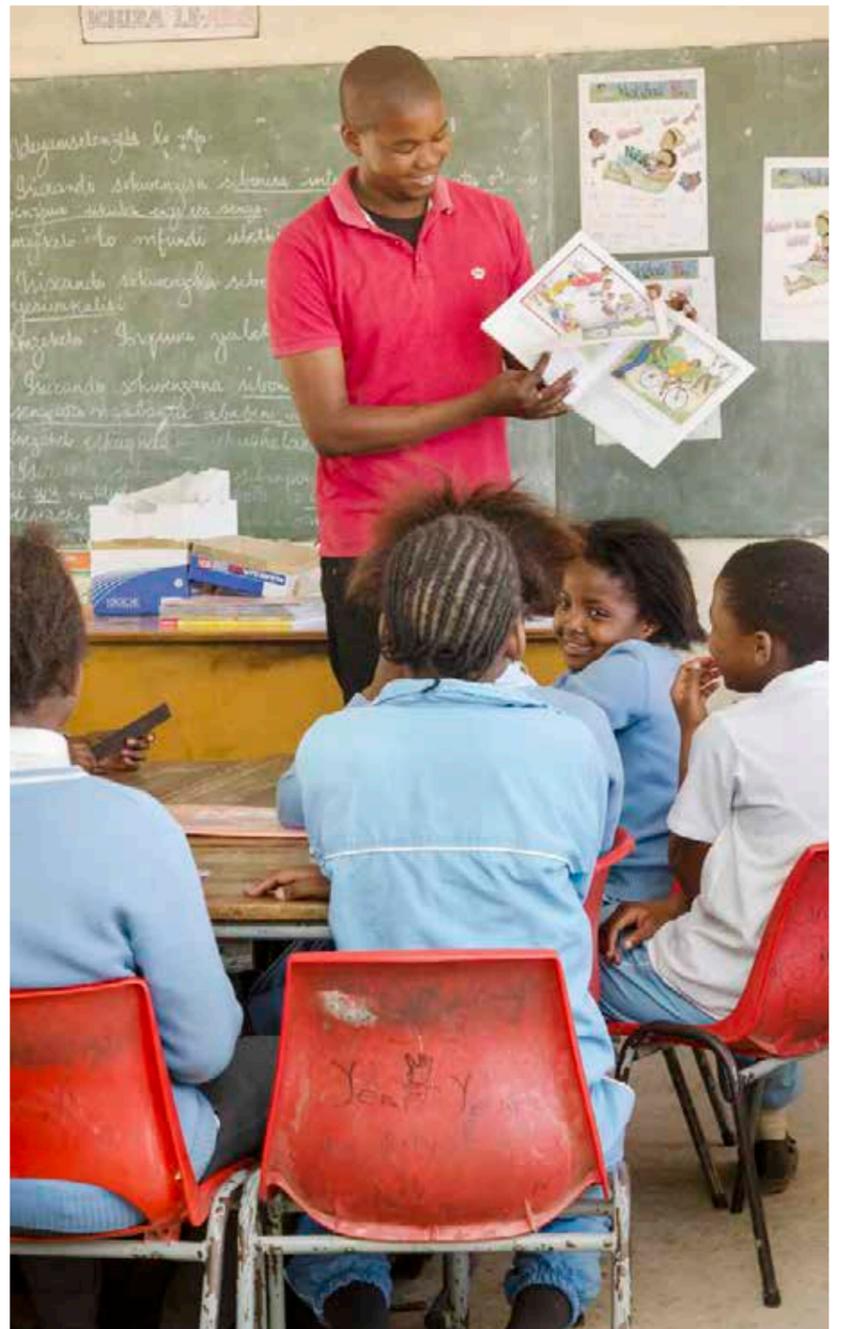
Klaas has always been an avid soccer fan. While he is a fan of Kaiser Chiefs, he says he supports soccer more than anything else. He plays for the Pioneers Football Club and has done so since he was eight years old. He hopes to get more involved with coaching, moving aside for the younger players to have an opportunity to get better. Klaas is the coach for Archie Mbolekwa's soccer teams, in conjunction with Yivani Newadi.

Newadi has been working at the school as a caretaker for 15 years, and is very appreciative of Klaas's assistance with the soccer coaching. Newadi explains what it's like working with Klaas. "I feel very happy having him coach with me because he is someone you can share your problems with, Newadi said, "he is quite a nice guy; even the children like him."

The children at Archie Mbolekwa are particularly enthusiastic about their weekly reading group, *Iinkwenkwezi zaseArchi*, which Klaas has been leading in conjunction with the Nal'ibali project since April this year. He encourages the learners to speak and read in front of the class. "It teaches us not to be scared," explains Ayabonga Nkampini, one of the group members.

Klaas has started a school newspaper and encourages learners to contribute. He is appreciated by those around him, and is making a positive impact in his community.

"What keeps me going is that if you wake up and go and help someone, for me that's enough," says Klaas.



Mandilakhe Klaas, the reading club leader, reads to pupils of Archie Mbolekwa Primary School and then asks them questions about the story to gauge their understanding. (Michelle Cunliffe)



Mandilakhe Klaas starts the reading club session with the song "One day, one day", which is about stirring imaginary porridge with different parts of the body. (Michelle Cunliffe)



Mandilakhe Klaas coaches soccer at Archie Mbolekwa Primary School and also plays soccer in his spare time. (Michelle Cunliffe)