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What Makes a Great Storybook?

Recommendations for Storybook Quality

REACH Initiative I South Africa
February 2018

Room to Read®

basic education
Department
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

WORLD BANK GROUP

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DBE Foreword

We encourage you to make extensive use of these recommendations...

These recommendations arose out of the Room to Read REACH Initiative funded by the World Bank, and the Consultative Workshop which was held in November 2017. The aim was to produce a 'best practice' document for storybook development and production in South Africa, and to examine areas of collaboration in this effort between government, NGOs, and the book publishing industry. This was the first-ever stakeholders meeting convened to discuss and dialogue on **what** makes a good South African storybook for early grades as well as to collectively create recommendations on **how** to develop a good South African storybook.

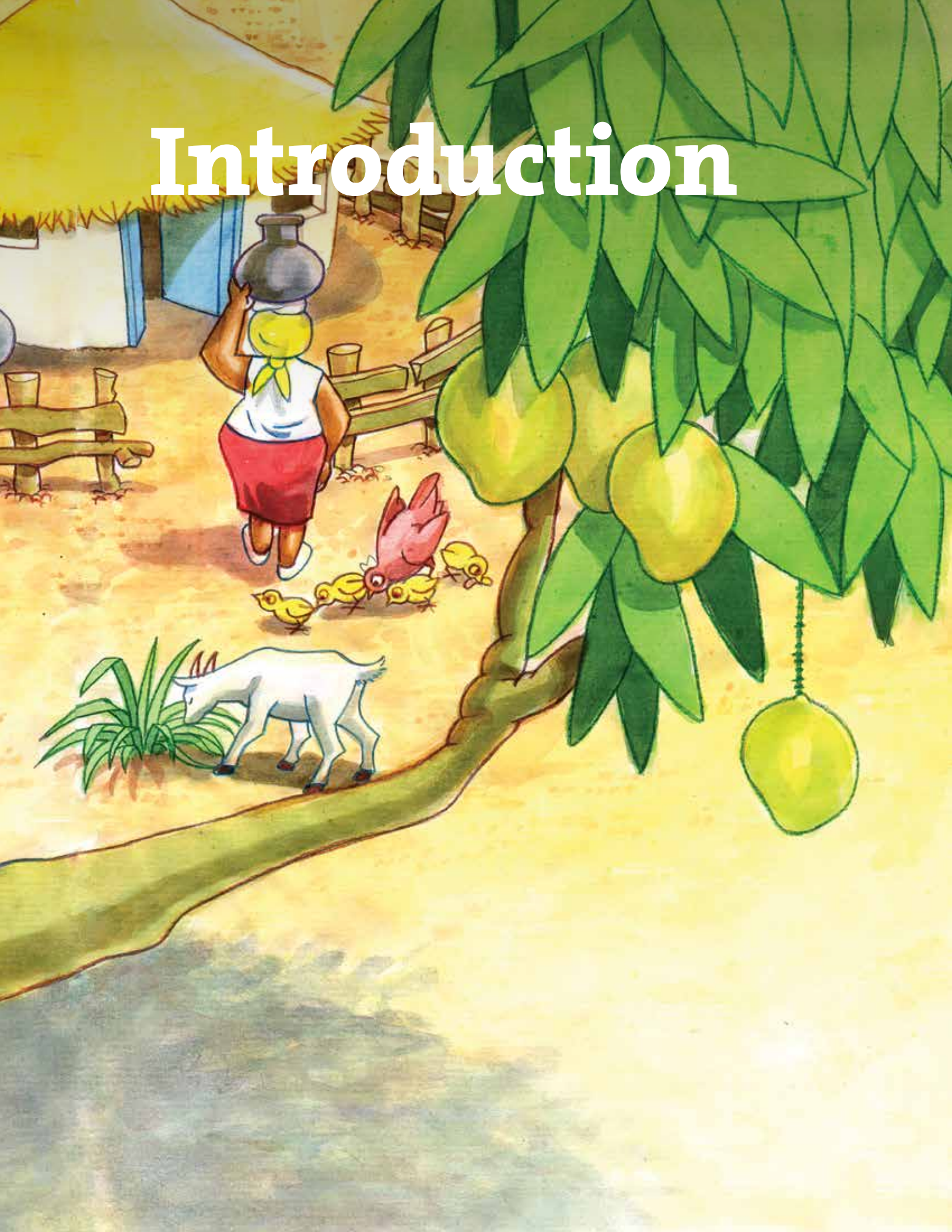
The REACH Initiative is a historical milestone in our quest to invest in our own indigenous languages, which to a large degree are underserved, to preserve our culture and heritage, and to decolonise our education system. It is in support of our Language in Education Policy and will strengthen the implementation of the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) Strategy. REACH is also at the heart of our flagship reading programme the Read-to-Lead Campaign, a four-year campaign to improve the reading abilities of all South African children and adults. The overarching vision of the campaign is that a reading nation is a leading nation. Improved access to high quality, high interest storybooks resulting from the REACH Initiative will give our children a strong foundation of literacy skills and a better chance of succeeding throughout their education. This will help break the cycle of poverty and help our children to be better equipped to realize their full potential.

These recommendations can assist publishers, NGOs, and all DBE stakeholders to recognize and create high-quality, high-interest storybooks in African languages. We therefore encourage you to make extensive use of them, both when you are developing children's storybooks and when you are selecting storybooks for your library collections.

Mr Hubert Manthanzima Mweli

Director General, Department: Basic Education, South Africa

Introduction



These best practice quality recommendations for children's books are a product of the public-private partnership of the REACH Project. They are intended for use by publishers during book creation, development, and production, as well as by purchasers and librarians for collection development.

The recommendations were derived from the REACH Consultative Workshop held from 27th November to 29th November 2017 at the Saint Georges Hotel in Pretoria. The workshop brought together representatives from government, the NGO sector, and commercial publishing (through the Publishers' Association of South Africa).

The REACH Initiative supports the existing government **Read to Lead campaign** and consists of three phases. Phase 1 involves the establishment of these recommendations, while Phase 2 and Phase 3 focus on production and distribution of children's books, respectively.

These recommendations were developed through a collaboration at the consultative workshop of:

- The Department of Basic Education;
- Other government departments like the Department of Arts and Culture;
- The Read to Lead Campaign and NECT;
- Provincial departments of education from Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo (which are the target provinces for REACH);
- NGOs, including Room to Read, Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, South African Institute for Distance Education (Saide), Puku, FunDza, Nal'ibali, Book Dash, and SAPESI Mobile Library Project;
- Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA);
- The University of South Africa.

Recommendations for the creation, development, and production of children's storybooks do already exist within organisations, institutions, and government departments. This effort, however, tries to bring these all together into one document and has built upon what was already in existence within the practice of the various stakeholders.

In developing the recommendations, the team focused on the quality criteria for the evaluation and selection of children's books. As a result, key quality categories for children's books were identified, as follows:

- **Diversity** – treatment of race, religion, gender, disability, class, rural-urban divide, etc.
- **Story Content** – plot, setting, characterisation, interest/excitement, length, etc.
- **Illustrations** – child appeal, perspective, focus elements, inclusivity, use of colour, etc.
- **Design** – text and artwork integration, choice of fonts, use of white space, etc.

Appendices for book creators also include:

- **Illustration process** — storyboarding, design planning, etc.
- **Production** – paper quality, binding, colour printing, format, etc.
- **Versioning** – avoiding word-for-word translation while keeping fidelity to the original story.

It is hoped that these recommendations will become a reference point for all the stakeholders involved in the creation, development and production of children's books in South Africa (and possibly beyond). Ultimately, it is hoped that the availability of the recommendations will help in the realisation of quality children's books in local languages for South African children.

What is a storybook?[1]

These recommendations are for **storybooks**, specifically for early grades or Grades R-3. It is important to note the differences between a children's storybook intended to be used for reading pleasure, and a reader intended to support a child's classroom learning.

Storybook: *A book intended to be used as an engaging read-aloud or an independent pleasure-reading book.*

- Storybooks engage the child through words and pictures to develop a love of the written word and of reading for pleasure and information.
- Extend a child's cognitive understanding of themselves and their world, to learning about things beyond their knowledge base and making them globally aware and astute.
- Reflect the child's lived experiences and affirm their emotional life on an intellectual, emotional, and socio/cultural level.
- Promote visual literacy through images. The best storybooks also have strong visual storytelling, or use of the pictures, to assist in telling a fuller, more interesting and detailed story.
- Encourage vocabulary development and promote language structure patterns and usage in speech and later in writing, including some unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Provide additional reading experience with a richer narrative and deeper understanding of vocabulary to support and progress what is learnt through levelled readers.
- Include design elements such as more interesting fonts and different spacing.

Reader: *A book with text written for the specific purpose of teaching the mechanics of reading.*

- Enjoyment of the story is important, but unlike storybooks, reader storylines are often neutral, simple in characterization, and unemotional in action. This keeps the child focused on learning to read, rather than processing emotional content.
- Text-to-image ratio is judged and planned, with beginning reader levels having scant text with large images which 'tell' the story for increased understanding. This changes as the reader levels increase, to include fewer images and more text. The increasing text and diminishing illustration number and size are calibrated to match the child's increasing tracking ability, fluency, and comprehension across the series.

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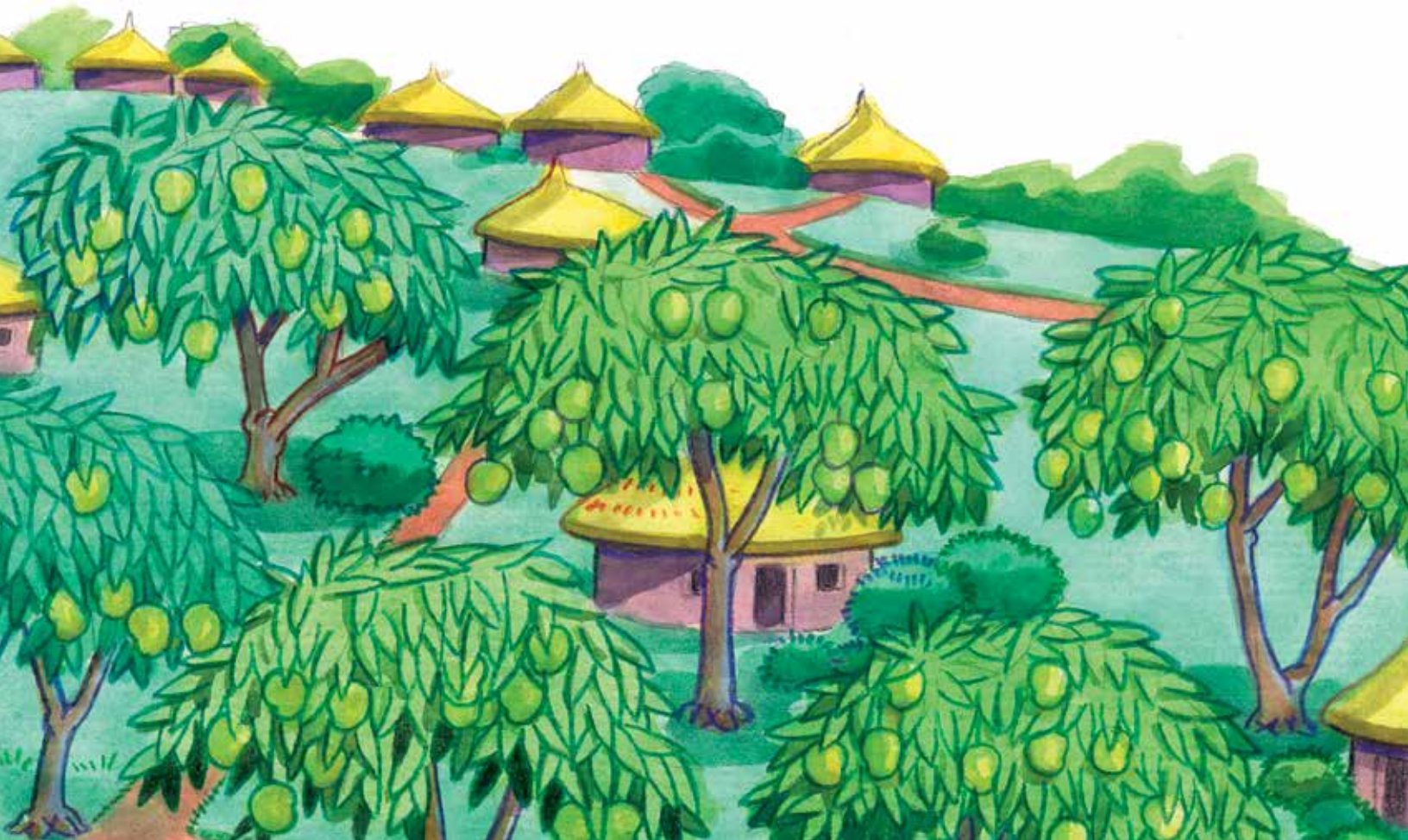
1 Particular thanks to Molteno Institute of for Language and Literacy for their work on definitions of storybooks and readers.

- Font and font size are also controlled, with larger font/text size in beginning readers and slowly decreasing.
- Text also always runs top to bottom and left to right, with no creativity in how the text is placed in order to primarily support a child's developing eye-tracking ability.
- Letter and line spacing, page counts, and punctuation are also tightly controlled.

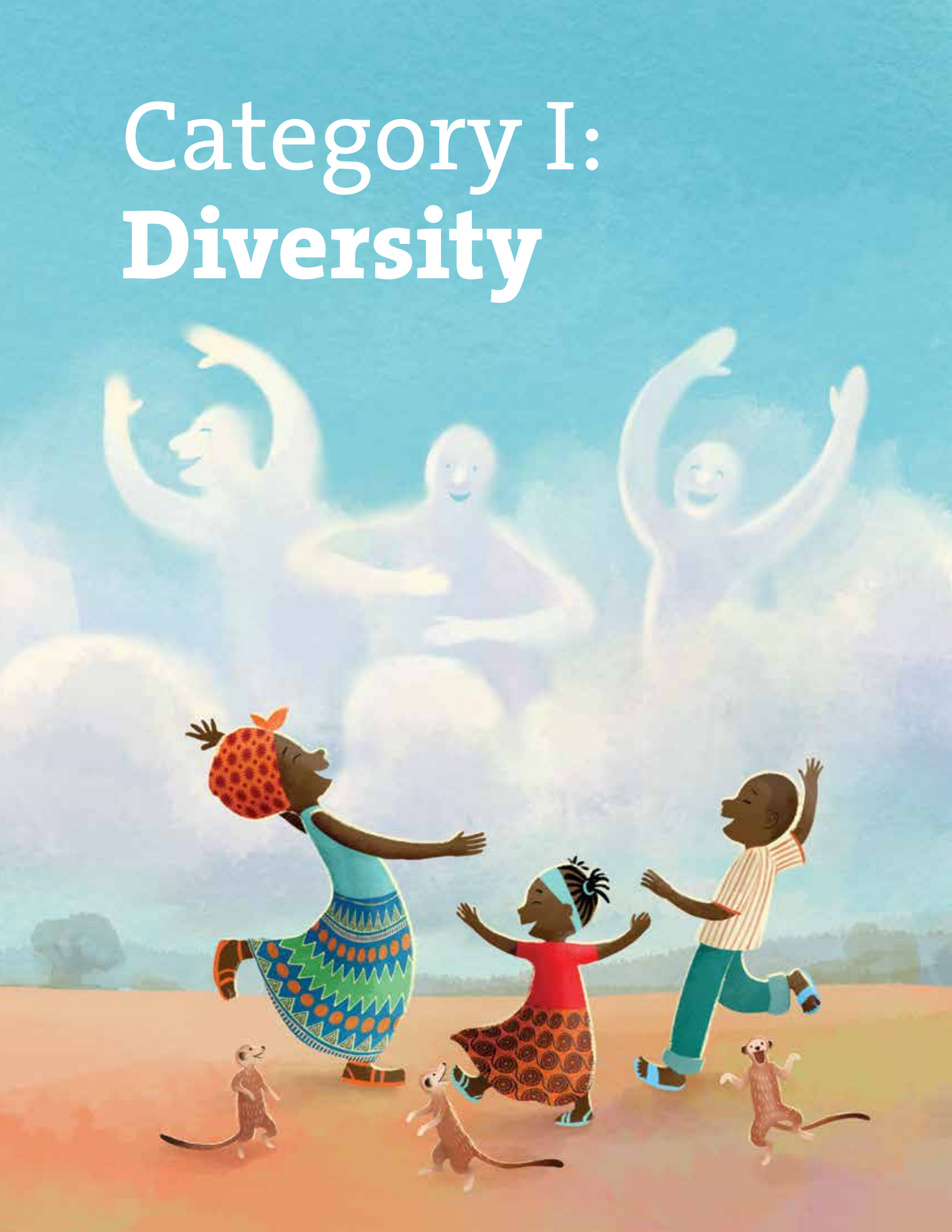
Levelling in Storybooks

Unlike the levels used in reader series, which are guidelines *during* the writing of the book, levelling of storybooks is generally done *after* the book's development. Storybook levels are meant to assist library managers in displaying books with progressively increasing levels of text. They are also meant to assist teachers in matching children with a book that has the appropriate amount of text for their reading level. Some storybooks may use a more nuanced levelling system for the story text, but most do not.

It is important to note that while a child's reading level sometimes matches his or her grade, that is not always the case. Thus, levels are NOT correlated to a child's grade but to the level a child can read on his or her own.



Category I: **Diversity**



"Imagine a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book."

– vision of We Need Diverse Books (www.diversebooks.org)

Diversity

Definition: Diversity refers to an obvious fact of human life – namely, that there are many different kinds of people. It encompasses individual differences (e.g., personalities, learning styles, thought and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability as cultural, political, religious/spirituality, mental health status, language or other affiliations).

This definition is underscored by an understanding that diversity drives cultural, economic, and social vitality and innovation. Indeed, decades of research suggest that intolerance hurts our well-being – and that individuals thrive when they are able to tolerate and embrace the diversity of the world. Thus, the concept of diversity encompasses recognition, representation, respect, and honouring of individual and group differences.

What is diversity in the children's storybook context?

Diverse children's storybooks promote diversity in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. They promote mutual understanding, and move beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual and group.

South Africa has an opportunity to disrupt what has been accepted as a norm in children's literature when it comes to diversity, e.g. most main characters being able white boys. We can represent black and coloured children as heroes, with desirable identities and *normal* lives like other children. Diversity can be embedded rather than be the focus: for example, the story does not have to be about an indigenous custom to feature a black child. Diversity also means celebrating indigenous knowledge and resources.

The aim of diversity in this context is to decolonise children's stories, and ensure that every South African child can find themselves on the pages of a storybook.

Not all types of diversity can be present in every storybook. However, an overall library collection should aim to contain books that represent all types of diversity, so that children who use that library can be exposed to both validating 'mirror' stories that reflect their own identities and circumstances as well as 'window' stories that introduce them to worlds and lives beyond their own cultures and countries.

In some cases, diversity does not mean excluding other racial groups, but affirming previously marginalised groups. For example, we may have an illustration with only black and brown children from various backgrounds to celebrate and affirm them. Or a story can include white children who may not be the heroes/heroines of the story.

Diverse children's storybooks promote diverse perspectives. They may celebrate cultural ideas or challenge cultural norms, as culture is not static.

Practical examples

1. Collections should not include patronizing or stereotyping representations.

- No group should be patronized, nor diversity added as an afterthought. For example, a story about a white child's birthday party at which one or two black children are seen in the background would not be considered diverse.
- No group should be stereotyped. For example, recently Kellogg's USA unveiled a new design for their Corn Pops cereal box. On the back, multiple corn pops were engaged in various activities at a shopping mall, and the only brown-coloured corn pop was the janitor. This promotes a unidimensional, stereotyped idea of the career possibilities for a black or coloured child.

2. Collections should include diverse language and celebrate linguistic diversity.

- A diverse collection of storybooks will include diverse use of language (e.g., official, dialect, etc.), and specific language will be based on the context of the story.
- Language should reflect the setting. This is especially true in dialects, especially if material is available digitally where different dialects from different settings can be captured in the stories.

3. Collections should reflect diverse settings of the country, rural settings, urban settings and peri-urban settings.

4. Collections should reflect diverse family types: nuclear, child/granny/female headed, inter-generational, etc.

5. Collections should include diverse artwork styles (e.g. fantastical, cartoon, realistic, comic book) and mediums (painted, digital, collage, mixed media).

6. Collections should include diversity in gender:

- Traditional gender roles be reversed to counter stereotypes (e.g. Girls as pilots and leaders, boys as nurses or in other caring roles, or men rather than women serving food).
- Authors should be from all gender groups, and their voices should be validated. For instance, women can write about science. Men can write about family life.

7. Collections should include a diversity of characters:

- Characters should not be used for political correctness, or only as props instead of playing a significant role in the story.
- Disabled characters can play an active role in the story; their disability does not need to be the focus. Instead, they can be 'embedded' in the story, with their disability incidental.
- Religion can be shared as a way of life for certain groups (e.g. a hijab-wearing girl can be a heroic roller skater in a story that does not focus on her religious background).

Examples of Diversity in Action

Below is a brief look at some representations of diversity, with examples.

POSITIVE

THE WHEELS ON THE TUK TUK: *These characters show the many different skin colours one might see in urban India.*[2]

2 Subhir Seghal, Surishtha Sehgal and Jess Golden, *The Wheels on the Tuk Tuk* (New York: Beach Lane Books, 2016).

EVERYONE SEES: *The girl protagonist of the book on the left wears glasses.*[3]
CLOUD PARTY: *One of the girls in the book on the right wears a headscarf.*[4]

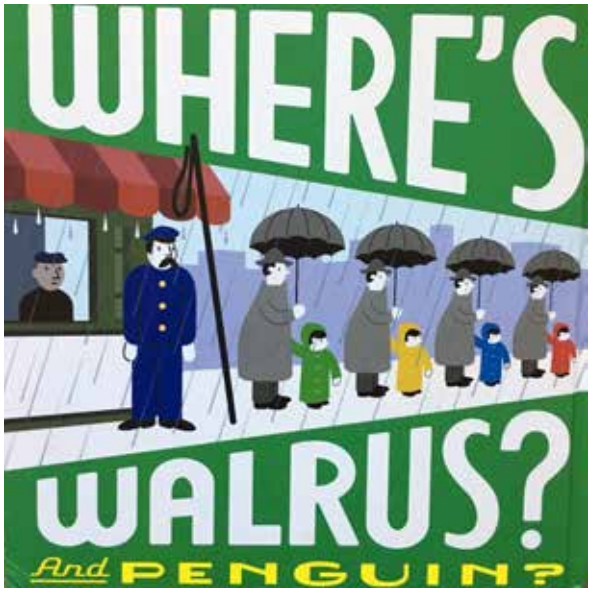
LOLA LA LOBA (LOLA THE WOLF): *Here is a story about a wolf-child who loves to read, who just happens to be in a wheelchair—it's not about her disability, but about her personality.*[5]

3 Room to Read and Shamim Ahmed, *Everyone Sees* (Dhaka: Room to Read, 2016).

4 Room to Read and Isuri Dayaratne, *Cloud Party* (Colombo: Room to Read, 2016).

5 Almudena Toboada and Ulises Wensell, *Lola La Loba* (Ediciones SM, 2008).

NEGATIVE



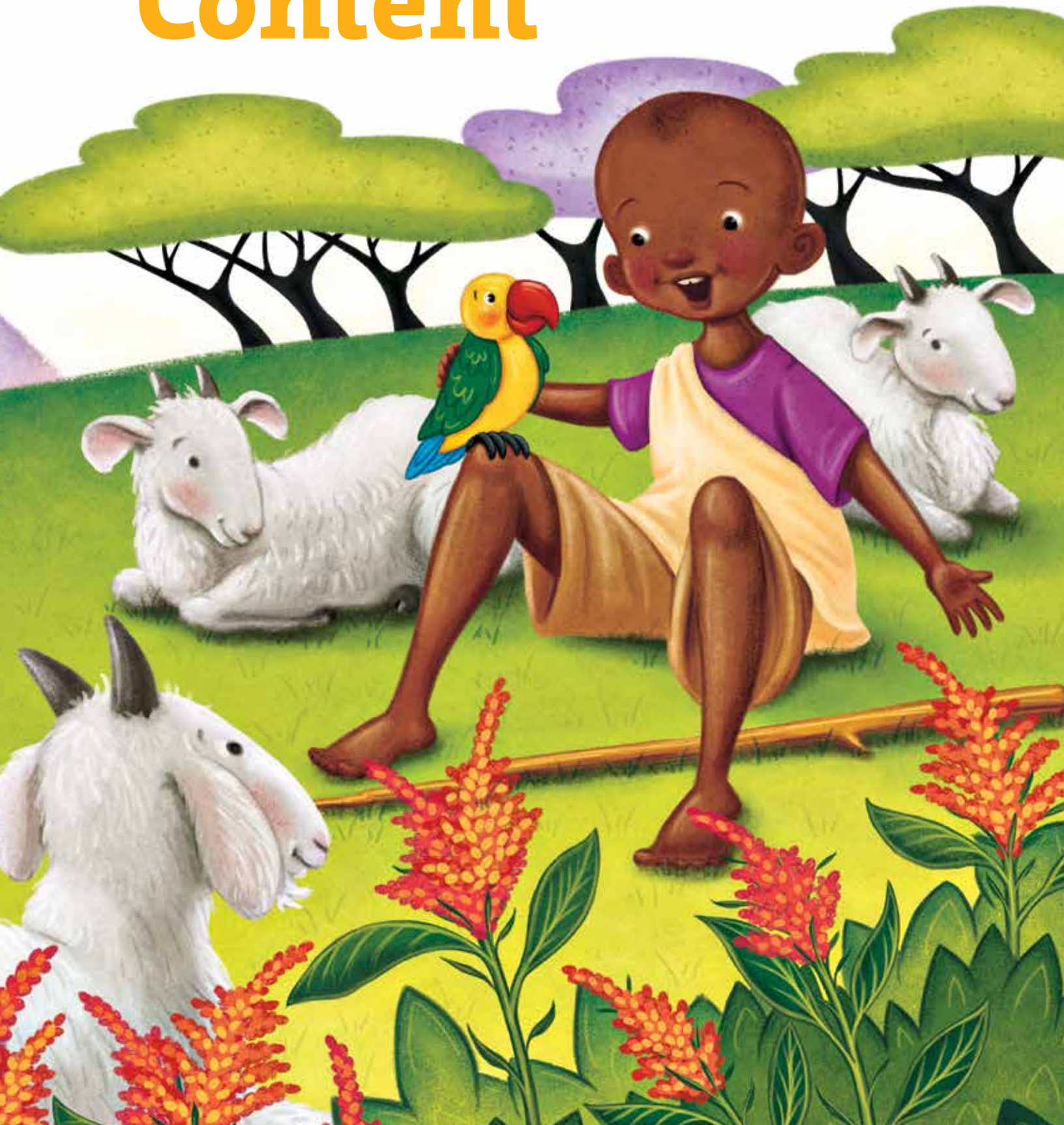
WHERE'S WALRUS? AND PENGUIN?: *In this picture, the active characters are all male. As well, they are all white—apart from the service person behind the kiosk counter.*[6]

NODDY: *Here, a lone black face has been added to an all-white cast as an afterthought.*[7]

6 Stephen Savage, *Where's Walrus? And Penguin?* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2015).

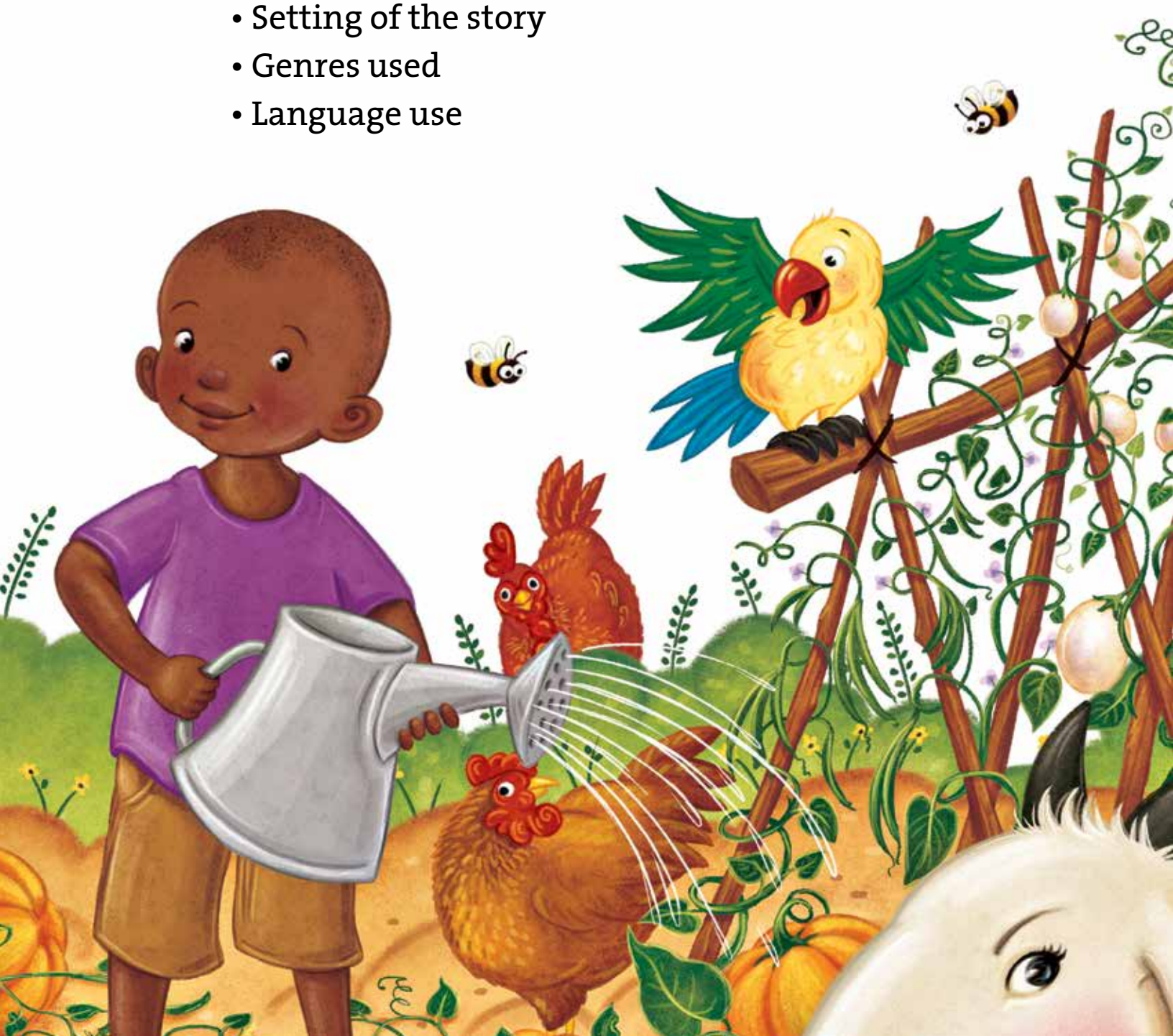
7 *Make Way for Noddy* (TV series; DreamWorks Classics).

Category II: **Content**



This is a broad category, encompassing many areas. Generally, it looks at the content of the storybook, exploring such areas as:

- Topic and theme
- Plot and structure of the story
- Characterisation
- Setting of the story
- Genres used
- Language use



Topic

Relevance and Suitability

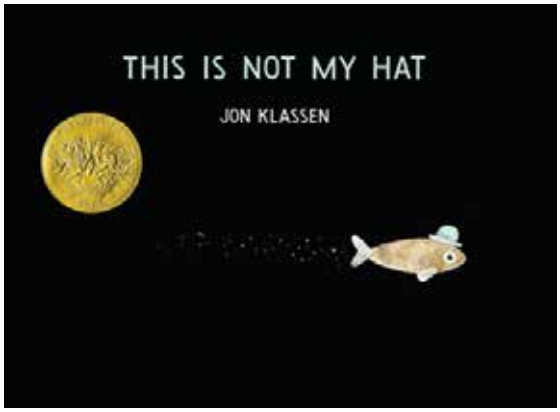
- Themes have been addressed under diversity in the previous section. However, for books to appeal to different types of readers, themes should at least be universal, for example, stories of friendship, loss, animals, having fun. The theme in a story is the underlying message and it is universal if all/most readers can relate to it.
- Stories should be suitable for different categories of South African learners, from diverse contexts and cultures, even though some readers may not immediately relate to the content. For example, in the story of Little Pea[8] the story addresses a little pea that doesn't want to eat his food and then he is coaxed into eating; he gets a reward – dessert. While this is a pea, many middle class, urban children in South Africa can relate to this and will be enchanted by a pea being treated like a child. However, an emerging reader from a poor, rural area on a school feeding scheme may not immediately relate to this theme, and would need some help to understand this.

- The topic or theme should be relevant and appealing to young readers, bearing in mind their social and cultural identity, noting that:
    - Culture is not stagnant
    - It is necessary to consider adaptability across cultures/languages for different versions of the book to be published in different languages.
- Stories should evoke the emotions of the reader, whether sadness or laughter or compassion, and so on. Often, children need stories to deal with the circumstances of their lives, which are often very difficult. Some stories could have suspense (or danger)

8 Amy Krause Rosenthal, *Little Pea* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005).

to encourage children to say, 'What will happen next?' or 'What if?' Note that different children with different life circumstances will respond differently to the same story so be mindful of this. If in doubt, try out the ideas on children from the target age group.

- The cognitive development of the child should be taken into account, for example, some highly complex stories with multiple storylines and characters might contain too much information to be processed by young children.
    - An example of something cognitively challenging for Grade R or 1 readers could be *This is Not my Hat*[9] where the fish proposes a lot of possibilities, using the 'if ...' construction. It may be appropriately challenging for older readers, and is often a read-aloud favourite.



    - In *Is Dedo Really Mad?*[10] the reader needs enough cognitive ability to determine that the villagers call Dedo 'mad' because they are not used to her behaviour, though she is not really mad.

- The range of stories should include both what young children know very well, as well as what they are not familiar with; i.e. a balance of mirror and window stories.

Morals vs Fun

- Stories should stimulate imagination; should be child-centred; should include opportunities for curiosity and learning, for laughter and fun. Different children have fun in different ways. It is usually the basis of the way the child relates to a book, and is often the 'hook' for engagement. Fun is personal and can include playfulness, humour, imagination, curiosity and can even foster creativity. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, in which children and their father go on a pretend 'bear hunt' as they walk through a variety of landscapes, is a wonderful example of stimulating children's imagination. They can go on a bear hunt along with the children in the story, making the actions and playing with language, which uses sound effects and rhythm.

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9 Jon Klassen, *This is Not my Hat* (Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2012).

10 Andrews Tawiah and Jesse Breytenbach, *Is Dedo Really Mad?* (Johannesburg: African Storybook Initiative, 2017).

- Stories must be enjoyable, not didactic; they do not necessarily have to teach anything (i.e. morals); they do not have to be message driven all the time. As Beverly Cleary states: "As a child I disliked books in which children learned to be 'better' children." A message should rather be lightly inferred and not boldly and pendantically stated. A story can avoid being teachy-preachy, instead making a bridge for conversation that can move South African communities forward.

- The concept of 'morals' can sometimes be quite limiting. The story does not have to explicitly state a moral. It could rather promote values, a sense of self-worth and growth; it should be nurturing. For example, in *Lara the Yellow Ladybird*[11], Lara learns that it is good to be different; she gets noticed and has many friends. In the story, when Lara paints her wings red she finds her life less enjoyable.

- The story could subtly help the child to process emotions which they may not be able to articulate in words. The story *Lost in the Dark*[12], where three friends get lost and are really scared, could help young readers to process the emotion of fear, especially when having to sleep in a dark room. The sadness of the mother in *Monkey and the Hunter's Wife*[13] when each of her babies dies comes out clearly in the pictures and the pitiful cry *kwi, kwi, kwi*. The boys are not condemned for playing with the baby monkey, but kindness and gentleness is modelled.

Dealing with Issues

- Stories should support inclusivity and the values of the Constitution, in particular, human dignity, the achievement of equality and equity and the advancement of human rights and freedoms and non-racialism and non-sexism.

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11 Catherine Holtzhausen, Martha Evans, and Nadene Kriel, *Lara the Yellow Ladybird* (Cape Town: Book Dash, 2016).

12 Sephora Mamosheledi Manasoe and Isaac Sikhakhane, *Lost in the Dark* (Pretoria: Room to Read, 2015).

13 Wesley Kipkorir Rop and Jesse Breytenbach, *Colour-In Monkey and the Hunter's Wife* (Johannesburg: African Storybook Initiative, 2014).

- Do not avoid issues that are pertinent to children of this age; consider how to portray them in a way that is not 'heavy'. Children can be critical thinkers: the 'message' can be subtle; the child will understand it. Social messages (like acceptance of differences) can be done through characterization and pictures, and it does not have to be what the story focuses on, for example, a story that wants to show inclusivity does not need to be all about a child in a wheelchair and how he/she overcomes the challenges; the child can be just a part of the story, dealing with the emotional challenge of losing a parent, for example, without expressly dealing with being in a wheelchair.
- Topics must encourage critical thinking and be creative instead of focusing on what adults think are 'relevant' or 'politically correct' topics; for example, children with disabilities are often portrayed as heroes. A story that would encourage critical thinking would be one that portrayed a child with disabilities as being a bit mean (perhaps because of being isolated). Readers could then decide if he was justified in being mean.

Culture

- Culture must be addressed through language and the story in a way that affirms the African child. Sensitivity to both language and culture, especially the way language is used, is needed.
- The cultural context, bearing in mind that culture is not stagnant, should be considered. Stories must not be contradictory to cultural beliefs and practices though stories can challenge beliefs and stereotypes. Content creators need to do thorough research and be mindful to not misrepresent culture, clothes, food, etc. It is important for stories to strike a balance between the respect for culture and a changing culture that challenges beliefs and stereotypes.)
- Plot, illustrations and experiences should showcase and represent marginalised cultures and communities but the story can be universal through appealing to emotions and to values.

- Content must not be patronising. All children should be celebrated in a positive light and communities must not be added to the content as an afterthought. *Just Like Me*[14] is a good example, where children's differences are noted but the focus is on their similarities.

Plot/Structure

- The plot should be interesting to young children, at the right reading level, and engaging.
- The most successful stories are usually those with a beginning, middle and end. The events are coherent and support the main idea or plot in the stories.
- Engaging story structures for older primary school children, usually showing all the five parts of a plot as shown here:

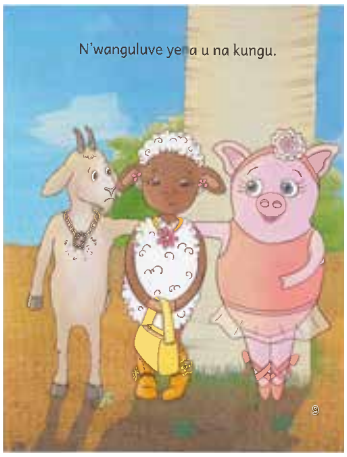
14 Mary-Anne Hampton, Hani du Toit, and Christian Jaggers, *Just Like Me* (Cape Town: Book Dash, 2017).

- The plot may not necessarily be 'real', but should be logically developed – can be make-believe that is believable, or nonsense that makes sense.
- Stories could have something unexpected, against the rules, or a 'twist in the tale'.

Characters

- Include characters that are appealing to the reader, for example research shows that young children enjoy stories about animals or other children similar in age to themselves. *The Green Apple*[15] and *My Beautiful Hat*[16] have characters who are fruit and animals but behave like children, which children find very appealing.

THE GREEN APPLE



MY BEAUTIFUL HAT

Setting/Context

- Stories need to have settings that are appealing to the reader. The choice of setting adds more meaning to a story. Setting refers to the place where the story takes place, e.g. the setting can be a city, a neighbourhood, a house, a school, etc. But setting also refers to time, i.e. when did it all happen? For example, was it during the night, during winter, during the Second World War, etc. Setting a story at night in an abandoned house, for example, creates a mood that immediately expands the effect of the story. *Lost in the Dark* is a good example of this, as the children would not have been as scared during the day.

15 Doreen Mojapelo, Ellena Nortje, and Riaan Coetzee, *The Green Apple* (Pretoria: Room to Read, 2016).

16 Catherine Ngwane and Jesse Pietersen, *My Beautiful Hat* (Pretoria: Room to Read, 2017).

- There should be a balance of urban, peri-urban and rural settings across a range of stories.
- The setting in certain stories that are meant to be realistic should be 'authentic', i.e. it arises out of and speaks to children's contexts and realities. For example, in the story of *The Princess and the Pea*[17] the details of the setting will not immediately symbolise wealth and royalty to an emerging reader from rural South Africa; only children who have been substantially exposed to books and television may relate to the pictures:

- On the other hand, in *Alone in the Forest*,[18] even though children may not be able to tell that the child is hiding in a big tree, they can see that the child is scared and alone, which is the impression the writer wants them to get:

17 *The Princess and the Pea* (presented by the Missoula Children's Theater Camp).

18 Gita Wolf, Andrea Anastasio, Bhajju Shyam, *Alone in the Forest* (Chennai: Tara Books, 2013).

- In *A Beautiful Day*[19], almost any child in South Africa would be able to relate to the setting.

- *Magozwe*[20] had to be worked on to make it a factual and unromanticized story about a street child. The stylised artwork helps with this, yet the setting comes across as authentic.

Genre

- Stories should include a variety of fiction (traditional tales, fantasy, science fiction, adventure stories, contemporary stories).
- Non-fiction: for example, a book telling the story or an African hero or a story featuring an amazing real scientific invention can also be included.

19 Elana Bregin, Lindy Pelzl, and Raeesah Vawda, *A Beautiful Day* (Durban: Book Dash, 2015).

20 Ursula Nafula and Wiehan de Jager, *Magozwe* (Johannesburg: African Storybook Initiative, 2015).

Language

- Appealing stories have interesting language use – rhyme, rhythm, repetition, onomatopoeia, word play (though keep in mind that rhythm and rhyme cannot be easily 'translated' to different language versions). An example is *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*[21] where the different things they go through make different noises e.g. grass makes *swishy swashy* noises and water makes *splash splosh* noises.
- Language level: lower levels will have few words and short simple sentences that can be depicted visually and higher levels will have more words, more complex vocabulary and more sentences. The sentences would tend to be complex.
- Sensitivity to both language and culture, especially the way language is used, is needed. Issues of dialects and standard language need to be addressed. The context of the story should guide what form of the language is chosen, for example, in urban contexts one could have urban dialects; in stories set deep in rural areas, "deep" forms of the language are more appropriate. Of course this also depends on the type and style of the story. In some cases, a more "standard" form of the language would be more appropriate.

21 Michael Rosen, *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1989).

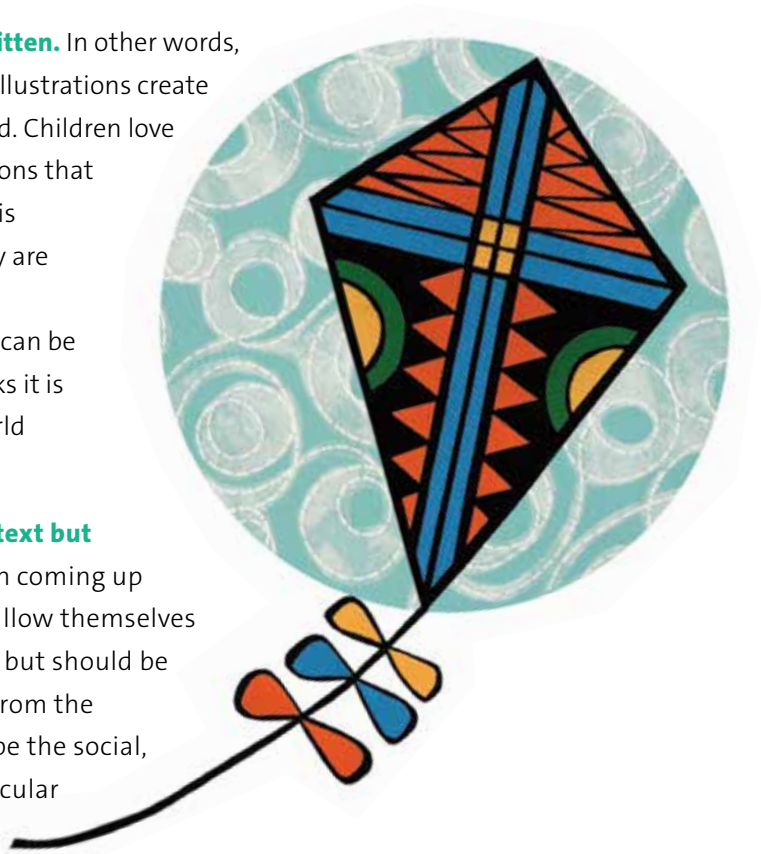
Category III: **Illustrations**

This category covers best practice for the treatment of artwork. It looks at the fundamentals of what critical areas/features must be kept in mind when developing and selecting artwork for a children's storybook.

1. Illustrations should assist with comprehension of the story

It has to be kept in mind that in storybooks, the artwork itself helps in telling the story. In other words, the story is told partly in words (text) and partly through illustrations. It can almost be said that the text provides the foundation, and the illustrations add the walls and the roof. Also keep in mind the following points:

- **Affirm the child for whom the story is written.** In other words, the environment and the world that the illustrations create should not be too alien to that of the child. Children love to see themselves (characters and situations that they can identify with) in books and so it is important to usually start with what they are familiar with, and move gradually to the unfamiliar. We fully recognise that books can be 'mirrors' or 'windows'. In the 'mirror' books it is vital that we speak to the child's own world through both text and illustrations.



- **Illustrations do not just come from the text but from the context too.** This means that in coming up with illustrations the artist should not allow themselves to be limited by the dictates of the text, but should be creative enough to also get inspiration from the context of the story as well, whether it be the social, physical or emotional context. The particular setting of a story (place and time) can add dimensions that are not necessarily captured in the text, and the illustrator needs to tap into this as well.

2. Child Appeal

Child appeal refers to that quality in an illustration that draws the attention of children. With drawings and presentation of characters, it is that aspect of an illustration that makes the children love the character and that makes them feel excited about reading the character's story.

- Children tend to love characters who look friendly and playful, and who display obvious emotions.
- It also helps if the characters are fellow children, or display engaging, child-like behaviour. The illustration below has child appeal because it looks innocent and playful. It also looks young, which means children identify with it more easily.

22

- Another element to keep in mind regarding child appeal is the use of exaggeration to create effect and humor. Humor is particularly needed in storybooks because research shows that children prefer storybooks that make them laugh.

23

22 Elizabeth Susha, *Sunzu the Lion Cub* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2016).

23 Ibid.

3. Perspective

Illustrations should use a variety of perspectives. This is important in order to vary the visual pace and interest of the story, and to make sure that all the different aspects of the story are shown.

Perspective refers to the angle of the 'shot'. A good illustrator is able to vary the perspectives of his artwork, using a variety of up-shots, down-shots, close-up and panorama. This does not only bring variety to the pages, but each shot serves a specific special purpose. For example, close-ups are excellent when showing emotion, while panoramic artwork is good for showing the setting.

DOWNSHOT[24]

UPSHOT[25]

PANORAMA[26]

CLOSE UP[27]

24 Trang Hunyh Nhu Tran and Le Thanh Xuan, *An Unforgettable Adventure* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2017).

25 Spike and Toyna Lewis Lee and Kadir Nelson, *Please Puppy Please* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

26 Deogratius Simba and Marco Tibosima, *The Adventures of Tururu* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2017).

27 Joachim Kahwa and Abdul Gugu, *Juma Anasoma* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2017).

Linked to this is the choice between spot art and full illustrations. A well-illustrated story should have good variety between spot illustrations, full illustrations and double page spreads. Below is a good example of the kind of contrast that can be built into a book's design through good use of spot art and full illustrations:

28

4. Appropriateness to Genre and Purpose

As has been discussed in the Content section, there are different genres that storybooks can use. The main categories are realistic fiction and fantasy. When illustrating a storybook, it is important to take into consideration the particular genre used in the storybook, because different genres call for different types of illustration. The examples below help illustrate the point:

REALISTIC ARTWORK[29]

FANTASY ARTWORK[30]

28 Trang Hunyh Nhu Tran and Le Thanh Xuan, *An Unforgettable Adventure* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2017).

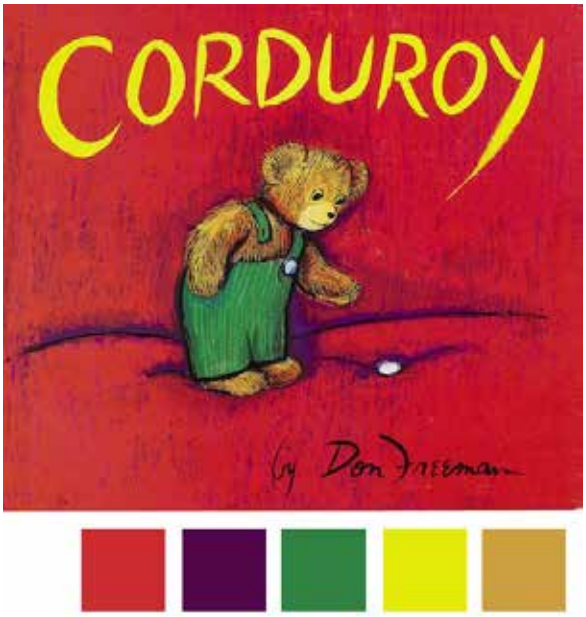
29 Room to Read and Dream Chen, *Rooster is Fast* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2016).

30 Joachim Kahwa and Abdul Gugu, *Juma Anasoma* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2017).

5. Use of Colour

It is essential that the colours to be used in illustrating a story are chosen with care (colour palette). The colours should work well with the story, and they should also work well together in creating harmony and contrast. Three important factors to keep in mind when choosing colour are:

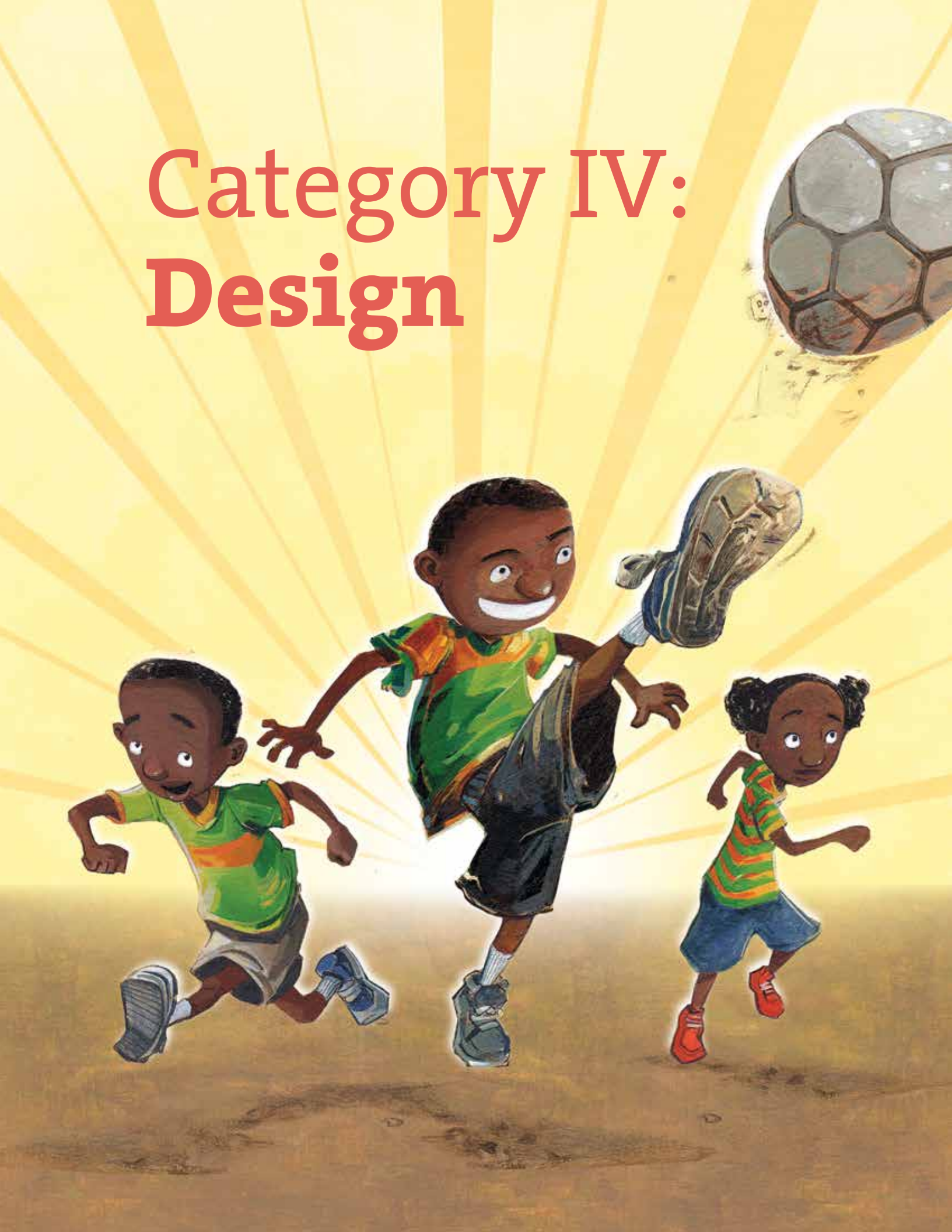
- **Mood:** The colours should match the mood of the story. If the story is a sad or scary, then it should use a different colour palette than a happy story.
- **Setting:** The setting of the story should also be considered when deciding on the colour palette. A summer story set in the forest would need different colours to one set in the city centre in winter.
- **Illustration Style:** Realistic illustrations are generally use colours that come from the illustrated objects in the actual world, while fantasy illustrations can be experimental with colour use, as the world of fantasy transcends the restrictions of everyday life.



[31]

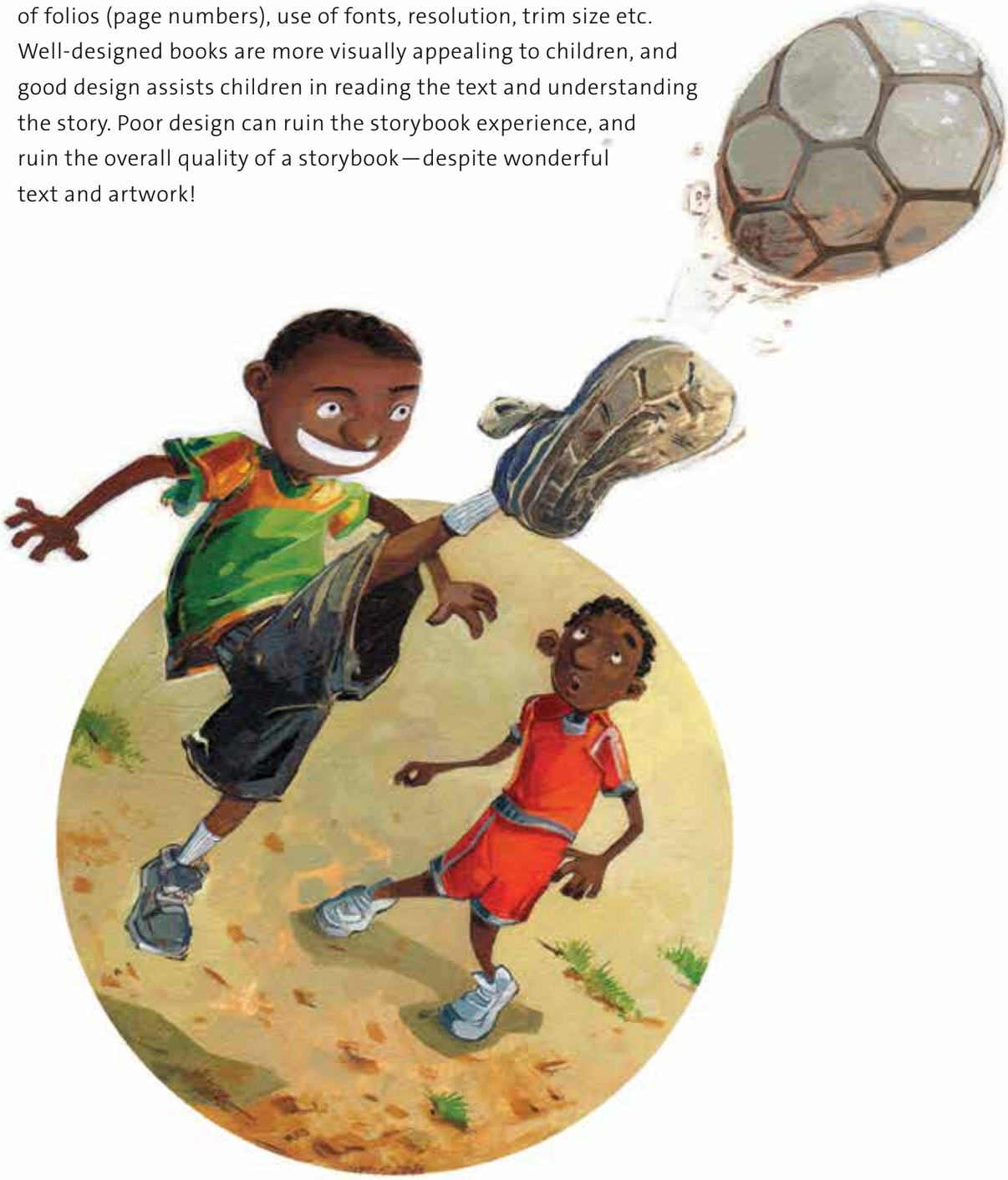
31 Don Freeman, *Corduroy* (New York: Viking, 2014).

Category IV: **Design**



Design is about how the text and the illustrations are laid out on the page. It is about the feel, look, and appeal of a collection of pages.

It is not only about illustrations and text, but also includes management of folios (page numbers), use of fonts, resolution, trim size etc. Well-designed books are more visually appealing to children, and good design assists children in reading the text and understanding the story. Poor design can ruin the storybook experience, and ruin the overall quality of a storybook—despite wonderful text and artwork!



Best Practices in Design and Layout

- **How artwork and text work together for visual storytelling:** The text and illustrations should work together to convey the story and push the plot forward. Good design helps to maintain interest and excitement through good management of the visual properties of each page and each double page spread. For example, there should be good variation between double page spreads and single pages, between full bleeds and spot art etc.

- **Font type and font size:** Children's books are sensitive to font type, especially books for early readers. The designer in their choice of fonts need to ensure that the font is clearly legible and easy to read, and is such as children are familiar with. For lower-level storybooks intended to assist with independent reading, font size should also be big enough so that each letter can clearly be seen and read and consistency in placement can be considered.

- **Gutter management:**

32

DO NOT *position elements on facing pages if they will meet awkwardly in the gutter. A common issue occurs when two separate single pages with similar backgrounds meet, as in the above example - these pages are actually two different scenes in the book!*

- **Use of white space:** A good layout leaves enough white page on the page to bring visual relief. They say white space provides the reader's eye with places to rest on. Careful use of white space also brings good balance onto a page - between the illustrations and the text.

- **Bleeds:** Management of bleeds is crucial in design, as some illustrations might get cut out during trimming of the book. The designer ought to work closely with illustrators and make them aware of the amount of space they have on the page, and how much space should be left for bleeds.

- **Production value:** The quality of the interior and cover paper, as well as the binding, should be considered. Low quality paper can easily rip, and staple bindings often result in missing pages when a book is frequently used. The cover of a storybook should be even stronger. Collection managers should consider these factors when purchasing books.

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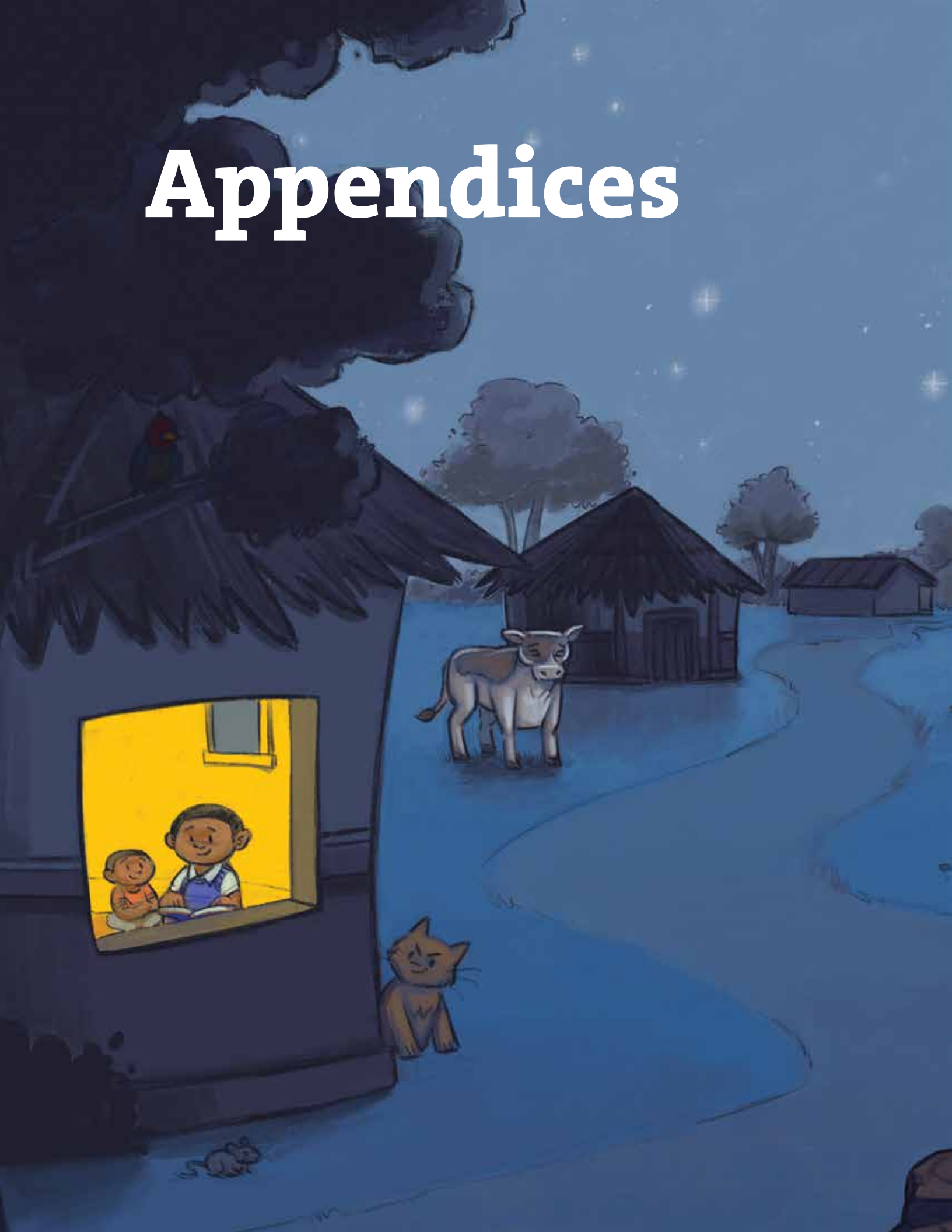
32 Justa Mlyauki, *Red Butterfly* (Dar es Salaam: Room to Read, 2016).

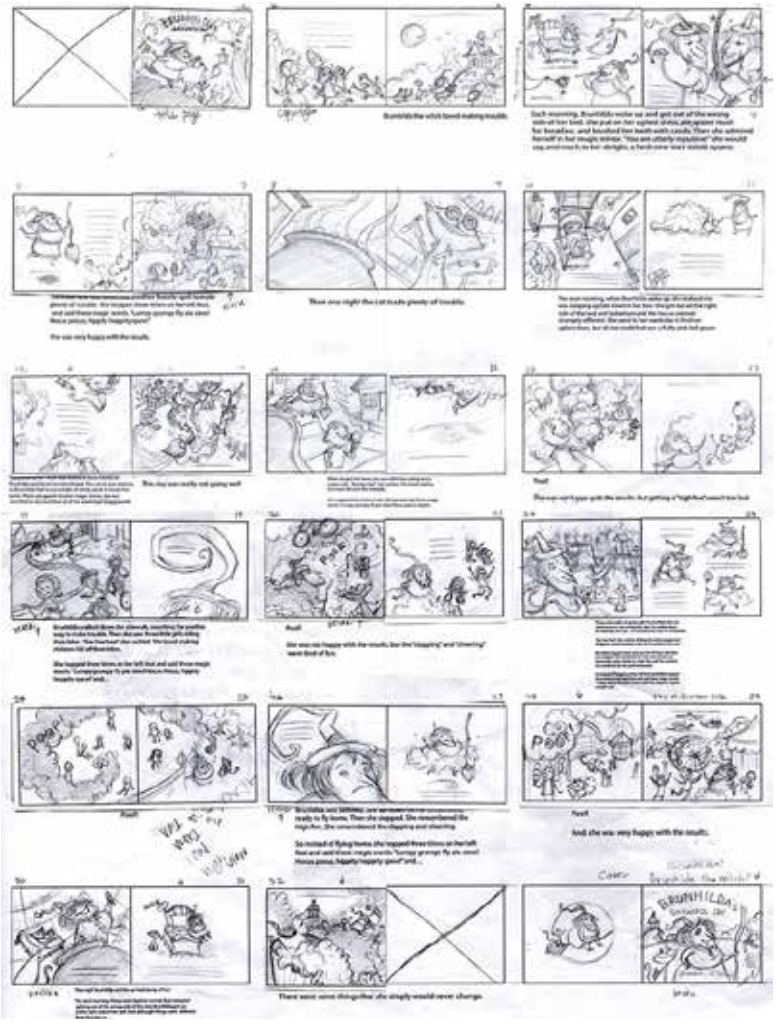
Appendices



Appendix I: Illustration Process

Storyboarding

It is important that illustrators do storyboards before they start the actual drawing. A storyboard helps the illustrator to visually plan the story, and have a sense of how each page and double page spread would look like. It will also help show the illustrator if they have used enough varying perspectives, and whether enough room for text on each page has been planned. Below is a storyboard from the book *Brunhilda*:[33]

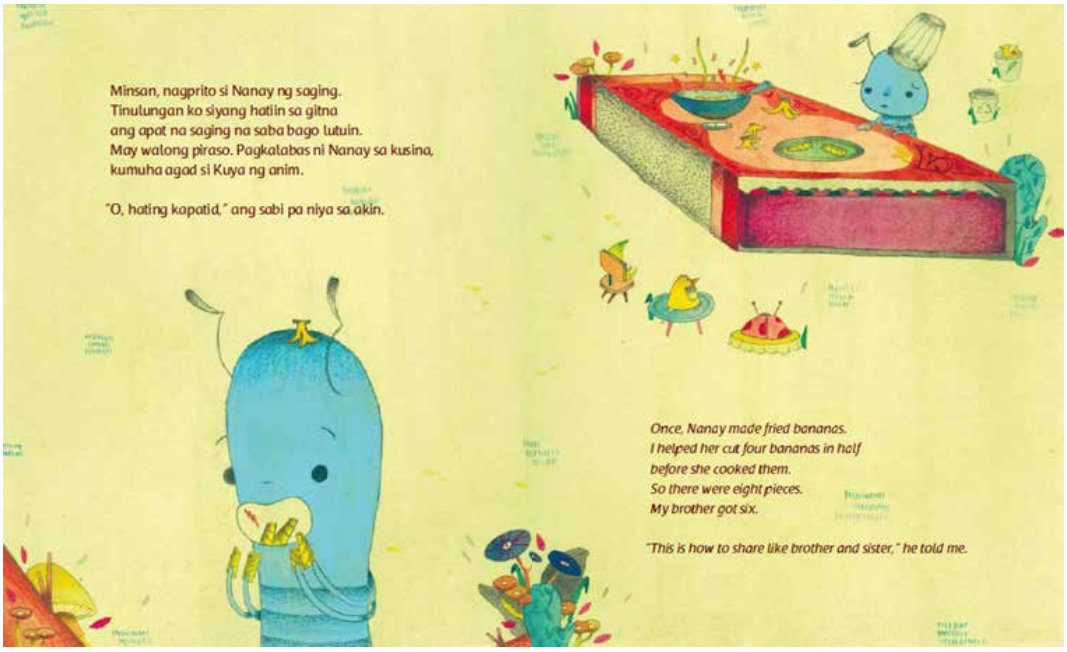


33 https://taralazar.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/brunhilda-storyboard.jpg

The example below where the illustrator did not leave space for text could easily have been detected at storyboard stage:

34

The next example below shows good planning for space for text, facilitated by storyboarding:



35

34 Author, *Title* (City: Publisher, YYYY).

35 Author, *Title* (City: Publisher, YYYY).

Drawing to size

It is important that an illustrator knows the trim size of the book before they start drawing. They must draw with the size/space available to them in mind.

It is also particularly important to leave enough bleed, otherwise important parts of the artwork might get cut when the actual page size are trimmed.

It is a good idea to try to involve the designer as early in the book development process as possible. Once the text of the story is finalised, it can be send to the designer who will consider the trim size of the pages and the font type and font size and make visual representations of how the pages will look with the text in. This can then be shared with the illustrator so that the illustrator works with a sense not only of the trim size, but also of how much competition there is for the space available on each page.

Appendix II: Versioning

South Africa has 11 official languages. In order to produce books for all the different languages, book publishers and developers usually develop a story in one language and then version it into other languages. Versioning has to be managed carefully because it has the potential of ruining a good story with direct translation. The aim of versioning is to stay true to the spirit, plot, and characters of the original story. The aim is to transpose it into a new context, rather than to write a completely new story. The versioned story must still be recognised as the same as the original, though in another language.

Versioning is different from translation. In versioning, you re-tell the story using the original story. Versioning can make books more difficult, it can either change the level or change the words. The process needs to be carefully handled, so it is best to plan for versions at the beginning of the book development process. In versioning, we avoid direct translations. When a language is translated to another one using word for word, in the end the words put together may not make sense in the new language.

Versioning uses target-audience translation, where the translated text is stated in a way that it is suitable to the target reader. This may also mean reducing amount of text to suit the target reader. Versioning is different to translation in the sense that most translations are word for word and end up being really bad. In versioning we mean that the story is told in a correct form of that language, capturing the gist of the story by avoiding direct translation. Illustrations do play a role because the target readers must be familiar with the setting and the illustrations used. If possible one may have to adjust the illustrations to suite the new readers; like replacing a tiger with a leopard for the South African reader since we do not have tigers in South Africa.

Examples of poor translations

- **Original English text:** *The beautiful girl was very happy.*
- **Sepedi translation, direct/word-for-word:** *Yo mobotse mosetsana o be a kudu thabile.* This is direct translation of each English word in the order of the English sentence. Put this way in Sepedi, the sentence does not make sense.
- **The correct version will be:** *Mosetsana yo mobotse o be a thabile kudu.* Sepedi starts with the noun and then the adjective, as opposed to English which starts with the adjective followed by the noun. Thus, the words 'very happy' change positions in Sepedi. Happy is *thabile*; very is *kudu*. Instead of saying *kudu thabile,* it is correct to say *thabile kudu.*

- **Another example is when translating from Sepedi to English:** *Seeta sa tate.*

Sepedi		**English**
Seeta	=	shoe
sa	=	of
tate	=	my father

Direct translation, incorrect: the shoe of my father
Correct version: my father's shoe

Criteria for selection

Versions work best in related languages. For example, versioning from one African language to another African language is easier when it is done through related languages. E.g the Nguni group (isiZulu, siSwati, isiXhosa), the Sotho group (Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana). Tshivenda and Xitsonga are on their own; i.e. the versioner should:

- Not simply be a translator; they must understand storytelling.
- Know both languages well; preferable they are original language speakers from place of origin of that language.
- Must understand nuance, humour and inference.
- Be able to bring the richness of the language across.
- Be sensitive to both language and culture, especially the way language is used.

It may be better to use versioners who understand a rural authentic language than urban versioners, whose language may have been influenced by other languages. The story and setting will determine the type of versioner to use. A setting that is urban may require the use of versioners who are familiar with urban life and surroundings. The same for a rural setting. Versioners must be familiar with the area so they can best depict what is found in a rural area. Publishers can access expertise in each linguistic community: translators, editors, lexicographers, story tellers.

Process

- Have training workshops for versioners to clear out any misunderstandings.
- It is important to involve all creators from the beginning. Versioners should be part of the developmental stage, so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the story.
- Emphasize the importance of research into the other culture when versioning.
- Authors, illustrators, editors, and designers must come together at some point in order to ensure collective understanding of the story and the process.
- It is important that the original writer works with the versioner to check the final version for appropriateness and to root out any taboos or offending phrases in the new language.

Discuss with the versioner:

- What should be versioned? How free is the versioner to change text? To change names, characters, or places to be more familiar to a different audience?
- Careful consideration should be taken before making changes.
- Changes should be positive rather than negative.
- How do we handle dialects in versioning (what children know vs what is standard).
- Should create, empower and enrich environment of difference.

Design from one language to the other

Length of text affects the book design, so it is advisable to create model text, and version, then layout the longest text. Figure out how to then fill the spaces which may be there after versioning. Some publishers create artwork in layers, with a text layer than can be changed. Plan for length of words and sentences in different languages, e.g.:

- Tshivenda: leading and diacritics
- Siswati and IsiZulu: long words
- Sepedi: generally fine, not long and very adaptable
- Xitsonga: also has longer words.

Appendix III: Production

Production here refers to the actual process of transforming the storybook into a physical product through printing. There are several quality points that need to be borne in mind when we are manufacturing the actual, physical book. These areas include:

- Quality of paper stock
  - **Interiors: (120gms and above)**: paper quality refers to the durability of the paper used to make the book. Paper below 80gms is usually not durable, and may get stained by the printer's ink. Paper above 120gms has good firmness, strength and longevity.
  - **Gloss Finish**: Displays the illustrations or images, colours and text more attractively and visibly.
  - **Cover board (300gms and above)**: similarly, to ensure durability, it is best to use thick board as cover. Lamination and gloss help with visual display and attractiveness, and with making the cover more resistant to the elements especially water.
- Quality of images in terms of resolution.
  - It is best to use 300 DPI as minimum. When scanning scans should be saved as PSD or TIF. Don't save as JPEG, PNG or PDF as that compromises the quality of the image.
- Binding:
  - **Pur Binding**: Perfect binding uses glue, so is stronger than staple binding. It is most suitable for frequent use, such as classroom use.
  - **Staple Binding**: can be used on lighter weight paper, and can also be suitable for both home and classroom reading. However, can loosen easily if handled roughly. Also not recommended for storybooks with more than 80 pages.

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Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

WORLD BANK GROUP

Room to Read wishes to thank the members of the reference group from the consultative workshop in November 2017 for their hard work and enthusiasm in developing these recommendations.