

Welcome to *Teaching early reading in
Africa – with African Storybook*

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Introduction

Welcome to the course *Teaching early reading in Africa – with African Storybook*. Over the next few weeks you will be introduced to active teaching approaches that you can use to teach early reading. You can study on your own or with a group of colleagues, and can practise new approaches in your classroom in a structured and supported way.

This course is for you if you are a teacher, student teacher or school volunteer – or if you just have an interest in how children learn to read.

We hope that this course will open up possibilities for teaching and give you the confidence to experiment with new approaches. The ideas and tools that it provides will enable you to become more expert in the field of early reading.

We are asking all participants to complete a [pre-course survey](#) to help us understand who is taking part in this course, your motivations and your expectations. Thank you for completing this.

What you will learn on this course

In this course you will explore early literacy, with an emphasis on active approaches to the teaching and learning of reading; you will consider how to make best use of your classroom; how to use and develop resources; and you will be introduced to some specific approaches to teaching reading.

You will have the opportunity to explore the African Storybook website and to select stories relevant to your context. You will be directed towards TESSA OER which explain some of the teaching approaches being suggested.

How will you learn on this course?

During the course you will be introduced to a number of tools and resources that you can download and use in your classroom. There will also be optional readings and links that you can use to deepen your knowledge and understanding of a particular topic.

Teaching early reading in Africa is 'learner-centred' in its approach (Schweisfurth, 2013). Therefore, the course:

- builds on your existing knowledge and challenging you to learn more
- provides activities aimed at motivating you and your teacher colleagues
- takes account of the different starting points you might have
- emphasises the importance of dialogue to support thinking and learning
- draws on examples relevant to your everyday life and to your role as a teacher
- promotes the learning of a range of skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity
- makes space for personal reflection and responses
- encourages you to work together and discuss the activities.

Your study notebook

You are asked to keep a study notebook for this course in which you can make notes on:

- ideas that may come to you when you are either studying or in the workplace, or at any other time
- your responses to particular activities
- notes about articles that you read as you go along
- notes about discussions you have had with others
- questions that occur to you while you are studying
- reflections on what you think or feel about your learning.

Your study notebook is personal to you and it should be useful to you. You may want to share parts of it with a friend or colleague. There are no rules for keeping a study notebook: some days you may write a great deal, and at other times only a little. However, you are advised to write notes in such a way that you can understand them later. This is because we see this course as a starting point for your professional development.

There are lots of practical ideas for you to try with your classes, and we hope you will keep practising the techniques that you learn. In this way, you will have a reference to the things you have learnt, even when you are away from a computer.

You can keep your notebook in a format that appeals to you and is easy for you to maintain – it could be an ordinary paper notebook or on a desktop or mobile device.

Working with others

This course can be studied by individuals working alone. However, it is a practice-focused course and many of the activities will suggest that you talk to a colleague or a group of colleagues about an idea or an issue. Learning is a social process; by presenting your ideas to others and listening to them in return, your learning will be enhanced and enriched. In fact, a very good way to maximise the opportunities of this course would be for a group of you in the same institution to work together on the tasks and activities.

There will be a number of opportunities for you to respond to text, video or images. You will be able to see our responses to activities by clicking on the 'Reveal discussion' button. They are not supposed to be a 'right answer' – instead, they are an opportunity for you to reflect on a possible response to the questions posed.

Some of the activities in this course involve teaching a lesson or working with children. If you are studying in the school holidays or don't have access to a class, you should make a plan for a lesson that you will teach when you have the opportunity. Alternatively, you could do or discuss the activity with other adults, or with your own or your neighbour's children.

Activity: How will you study?

(We recommend you spend about 20 minutes on this activity)

On your own or with a group of colleagues, plan how you are going to work on this course.

- When will you study?
- Will you be able to work as a group, or individually, meeting regularly to compare notes?
- Will you keep a conventional or an electronic notebook?
- What do you hope to get out of the course?

Being proactive in this way means that you are more likely to meet your study goals.

Course badge

The course is divided into six sections. We anticipate that each section involves four to six hours of study. In order to achieve the 'badge' for the course, you will need to:

- visit each page of the course
- complete the activities at the end of Sections 3 and 6, which involve uploading your response to an activity to the internet.

In order to achieve the badge you will need to be connected to the internet. However, you can download the content onto a laptop, tablet or smartphone and study offline if your internet access is unreliable.

This course has quizzes. These are not part of the assessment, but are instead designed to be formative and to promote discussion between you and your colleagues. There are no pass grades and you have two attempts at each question.

Who created this course?

TESSA is a network of Teacher Educators, at the heart of which is a bank of Open Educational Resources (OER) available on [the TESSA website](#). The OER cover the primary school curriculum and show teachers how to put theories about active learning into practice. Learning outcomes are for the teacher, meaning that the OER can support teachers and teacher educators.

African Storybook is an initiative of Saide, a South African NGO involved in open education projects across sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative responds to the challenge of a shortage of books in African languages with digital innovation that provides open access to locally created children's picture storybooks in more than 100 of the languages spoken in Africa. [The African Storybook website](#) is a growing collection of more than 4000 storybooks that can be read, adapted, translated, downloaded and printed. The website also offers publishing tools for users to create and publish their own storybooks.

Assumptions we have made in writing this course

Teaching early reading is demanding, and extremely important. Being able to read fluently will enable children to access all aspects of the school curriculum and give them the best possible chance in life. In order to write this course we have had to make a number of assumptions:

- That you will be teaching children to read in their first language, but that in the first five years at primary school they will make the transition to learning in English. You will therefore be encouraged to draw on the home language but also to introduce spoken English and English words where appropriate.
- That the term 'storybook' (which we will be using frequently) can refer to fiction and non-fiction. Young children can learn a great deal from accounts of daily routines and factual information.
- That although many of you may have experience of teaching early reading, you are new to online learning. We have tried to provide support where necessary.

You should now go to Section 1 of the course, '[What do you need to know to teach early reading?](#)'.

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Acknowledgements

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Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources:

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Section 3

Figure 3.1 and course banner: African Storybook – used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>; *Figure 3.2: Injangwe Yanjye Irihe?/Where is my cat?* (authors: Clare Verbeek, Thembanani Dladla and Zanele Buthelezi; adaptation: Martin Arabaruta, Tara Ocansey and John Mugabo; illustrator: Bronwen Heath; language: Kinyarwanda English; level: first sentences), © School of Education and Development (Centre for Adult Education) University of Kwazulu-Natal 2007, Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0; source <http://www.africanstorybook.org/>, original source <http://cae.ukzn.ac.za/resources/seedbooks.aspx>; *Figure 3.3*: Book Aid International – this file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic Licence](#); *Fig-*

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Section 4

Phonemic awareness video: © World Vision International.

Section 5

Optional reading: Chambers, A. (2011) *Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk with The Reading Environment*, The Thimble Press – the book includes a list of the different sorts of questions that you can ask children about books; *Figure 5.1*: © African Storybook Initiative 2014, used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Section 6

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Additional resources

Getting started on the ASb website: Omwana Omwagalwa (authors: Ritah Katetemera and Mulongo Bukheye; translation: Annet Ssebagala and Ritah Katetemera; illustration: Brian Wambi), courtesy of Saide, used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>; *Translating a storybook on the ASb website*: courtesy of Saide, used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>; *Stages of reading development chart*: images from *Chicken and Millipede* and *I enjoy doing storybooks* © African Storybook Initiative, used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>; image of girl: publisher unknown.

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