



# TESSA

**Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa**

## Teaching Pack No. 6

### Middle Primary

- Section 1 Literacy:** Reading and writing stories
- Section 2 Numeracy:** Ways to solve number problems
- Section 3 Science:** Classifying living things
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- Group work in your classroom
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## Literacy: Reading and writing stories

- 1 Hooked on books
- 2 Creating new beginnings and endings
- 3 Silent reading

**Key Question for the teacher:**

How can you use local games to help language learning?

**Keywords:** shared reading; creative responses; silent reading; beginnings and endings; stimulating interest

**Learning Outcomes for Teachers:**

By the end of this section, you will have:

- used shared reading in your reading to support developing readers
- used activities that focus on alternative beginnings and endings to stimulate interest in reading
- explored different ways to support silent reading (SSR) in your classroom

## Overview

Students are more likely to learn how to read successfully if they enjoy reading and read as often as possible. If you asked your friends what they enjoy reading, their answers might vary from newspaper sports pages to recipes, romantic novels, detective stories or biographies – or they might not read much at all! Like your friends, different students may enjoy reading different kinds of texts. They will respond to what they read in different ways. Your task is to motivate all the students in your class to read successfully and to enjoy reading. The focus of Activity 1 is preparing and teaching a shared reading lesson. The aims of this activity are to increase your confidence and skills as a reader and to get students 'hooked on books'.

# 1 Hooked on books

The kinds of stories and story-reading activities that students enjoy are likely to vary according to their age and their knowledge of the language in which the stories are written. Younger students and students who are just beginning to learn an additional language enjoy having a good story read to them several times – particularly if they have opportunities to participate in the reading. By reading a story several times and by encouraging students to read parts of the story with you, you are helping them to become familiar with new words and to gain confidence as readers. See the resource in the *Teaching Pack Additional Resources* on Using Storytelling in the Classroom.

## Teaching Example 1

When Jane Dlomo thought about her childhood in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, she remembered how much she had enjoyed her grandmother's stories. Two things stood out in her memory: firstly, how much she liked hearing the same stories over and over again and secondly, how much she and her brothers and sisters enjoyed joining in with the stories. Sometimes her grandmother asked, 'What do you think happened next?' Sometimes she asked the children to perform actions. Jane decided to make her reading lessons with Grade 4 students more like her grandmother's story performances. She also decided to experiment with activities that would involve students in sharing the reading with her and with one another. When she told her colleague Thandi about her decision, Thandi suggested that they work together to find suitable storybooks, practise reading the stories aloud to each other and think of ways of involving the students in the reading. Both teachers found that sharing the preparation helped them to be more confident in the classroom.

### Preparation for shared reading

Choose a story with characters and events that you think will interest your students.

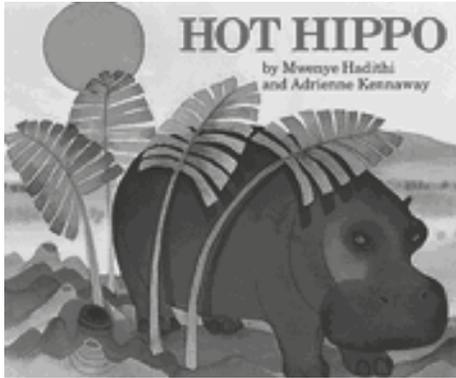
Think about any background knowledge that students will need in order to understand and enjoy the story. Decide how to provide this before you begin the story reading. For example, young students in some parts of Africa would be familiar with a hippopotamus, but in others they may not be, so before reading the story *Hot Hippo* you would need to find out what students know by asking questions like these:

Questions to establish background knowledge:

- What does a hippopotamus look like?
- Would you be frightened of a hippopotamus? Why, or why not?
- Where would you be likely to see one?
- What does a hippopotamus eat?

**First prediction question:**

- This story is called *Hot Hippo*. Look at the drawing on the cover. (The drawing shows a hippopotamus trying to shelter under some palm leaves.) What do you think the story will be about?



Note: While these questions refer to the story *Hot Hippo*, similar questions could be asked about animals, people, places or activities in relation to any story.

**Activity 1**

- Using the guidance on **Shared Reading** above, prepare work on other tasks for some students to do while you do shared reading with a group of 15 to 20. Establish any background knowledge about the topic of the story before reading it. As you read, show students the illustrations and ask questions about them. Use your voice and actions to hold students' attention. Invite students to join in the reading by repeating particular words or sentences that you have written on the chalkboard and by performing actions. At the end, discuss the story with your students.
- How did you feel about your reading of the story?
- Did students enjoy the story? How do you know?
- What can you do to develop your story reading skills?

**Questions to use with book readings – first, second and third readings**

Here are a few questions you could ask before reading a story with students and then examples of questions to ask when the reading has been completed. There are also questions after they have read the book another time or more.

**First Reading Session****Before reading**

1. Does the cover make you want to read this book? Why, or why not? What does the cover make you think the book is going to be about? How does it do this?
2. Tell me about what you see on the first page of the story.

**During reading**

Ask questions about the development of the story and how the words and pictures contribute to this development.

**After reading**

1. What did you like or dislike about this book?
  2. Is there anything that puzzled or surprised you about this book?
  3. Are there any patterns you have noticed?
  4. What is your favourite picture? Could you tell me what you see in this picture?
  5. Do you think the cover was appropriate (the right kind of cover) for what happened in the story?
  6. Do you find the words or the pictures more interesting? Do they tell the same story in different ways? Would the words still be good without the pictures? Would the pictures still be good without the words?
  7. Is the story told through the words, the pictures or both? Is it the same all the way through the book?
- 

## 2 Creating new beginnings and endings

The child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (1976) believes that if children find 'magic' in stories, they will really want to learn to read. He argues that if a child believes strongly that being able to read will open up a world of wonderful experiences and understanding, they will make a greater effort to learn to read and will keep on reading.

Sharing interesting stories with students is one way for a teacher to make reading a magical experience. Stimulating curiosity and imagination by encouraging them to create alternative endings (and sometimes beginnings) to stories and to share these with their classmates is another.

### Teaching Example 2

Mrs Miriam Muwai teaches English to Standard 6 in a Nairobi school. One day, she asked her students to think about the stories they had read with her and to tell her which story ending they liked best and which they found disappointing or unsatisfactory. She found they had different favourite stories. However, there was one story that most students didn't like because they didn't know what happened to three characters that 'disappeared' from it. Miriam asked them to suggest what could have happened to these characters and wrote their ideas on the chalkboard. Then she asked students to choose one of the three characters and to write an ending to this character's part in the story. She encouraged students to use their own ideas, as well as those from the chalkboard, and to include drawings with their writing. Then she reread the story to remind them of the setting, the characters and the main events.

Although Miriam asked students to write individually, she also encouraged them to help each other with ideas, vocabulary and spelling. She moved around the room while students were writing and drawing, helping where needed. She was very pleased to find that most of her students really liked the idea of being authors and of writing for a real audience (their classmates).

She noticed that they were taking a great deal of care with their work because their classmates would be reading it. In the next lesson, when they read each other's story endings, she observed that most of her 'reluctant readers' were keen to read what their classmates had written and see what they had drawn.

## Activity 2

- Write this short story or one of your own on your chalk board.
- Omit the title and the last two sentences.

### [Run for glory by Mark Northcroft (aged 12 years)] Omit

On and on he ran. His legs felt like churning acid. He could hear his pursuers closing in on him. He felt he could not keep this up much longer but he knew he had to. The footsteps were gaining on him. 'Faster! Faster!' he cried. 'I can't! I can't!' he answered. Somewhere deep inside himself, he found a sudden surge of energy. Now he knew he could do it. Suddenly a man approached him from out of nowhere. 'Now or never,' he thought.

### [He shot – low to the right. What a goal!] Omit

#### Notes

'His legs felt like churning acid' – This simile or comparison is not easy to explain but you could say that the man or boy felt pain in his legs as though he had a mixture of chemicals bubbling up in them. 'pursuers' – people who are following or chasing someone. 'surge' – a sudden, powerful movement. 'energy' – liveliness, capacity for activity.

#### Questions to ask students in preparation for writing an alternative beginning and ending to this story:

1. Who do you think 'he' is?
2. Where do you think he is?
3. What do you think is happening to him?
4. Who is 'a man'?
5. What other people might be part of this story?
6. What might have happened before this part of the story?
7. What might happen next?

Read the story with your students. Discuss any new words. Ask them to answer questions such as those above. Organise the class to work in fours – two to write a beginning to the story and two to write an ending. Each pair does a drawing to illustrate their part of the story. (This may take more than one lesson.)

Ask each group to read their whole story to the class and to display their drawings. Discuss with students what they like about each other's stories.

Finally, read the title and the last two sentences of the original story to your class. (They are likely to be surprised that it's about soccer!)

- Find another story to repeat the exercise.
  - How well did this activity work?
  - How did the students respond to each other's stories?
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### 3 Silent reading

Extensive or sustained silent reading (SSR) helps students become used to reading independently and at their own pace (which may be faster or slower than some of their classmates). The focus is on the whole story (or on a whole chapter if the story is a very long one) and on students' personal responses to what they read. SSR can be done with a class reader, with a number of different books that students have chosen from a classroom or school library, or with newspapers and magazines (if students can manage these)

#### Sustained silent reading

Developing sustained silent reading (SSR) in your classroom is important in encouraging your students to want to read and developing their reading skills. For SSR to succeed requires some careful planning ahead. You will need to gather together resources for your class or a group to read. These could be articles from newspapers or magazines, books, etc. You need to be resourceful to gather these and also to store them so they are not lost or damaged. If you have enough resources for your whole class, you could do SSR once a week at the start or end of the day. If you only have a limited number of resources, you could do it with one group each day and also work with your class to make more class books to read.

#### Questions to ask

These are examples of questions that could be asked about many different kinds and levels of storybooks, but you may prefer to ask students for just a brief comment.

1. What happens in the first part (introduction, beginning) of the story?
2. What happens in the middle part (where there are complications or conflicts in the story)?
3. What happens at the end (resolution)?
4. Is there a problem that needs to be solved?
5. What is the goal of the main character or characters?

6. What happens to the characters in the different parts of the story?  
What difficulties do they face?
7. Have similar things ever happened to you?
8. If their first attempt is unsuccessful, do the main characters get another chance to achieve their goal?
9. What happens to the characters at the end?
10. How do you feel about this story? Did it make you think about your own life or anyone else's? If so, in what way(s)?

### **Stimulating interest in reading stories: Keeping a reading record**

As students carry out SSR it is useful for them to keep records of the books they have read and to comment on what they did or did not like about them. It is also a way of seeing what breadth of material they are reading and the kinds of things that interest them. It tells you how much they are reading, especially if you encourage them to also include books, newspapers, magazines, etc. that they read at home or elsewhere. With newspapers and magazines, you may suggest they only add these when they read them regularly and say how often they read them. They may want to include articles from particular magazines.

Keeping a record must not become a bore, as this will put students off reading. Each record should only include the title and author and maybe publisher if you wish to add the book to the class collection (if you have a budget). The student could say if they liked the book and why, and if they'd recommend it to others to read.

The record could be a class one, where the title of each book in the library is on the top of a sheet of paper and every time someone reads this book they sign the list and put in a short comment. Another way is for each student to have a page at the back of an exercise book where they keep a list of the books they have read and every time they finish a book or give up on a book they make a comment next to the title and author. It would be useful if these entries are dated, so you can see how often they are finishing a book etc.

Once you have enough books and magazines for all the students in your class to read individually, you need to think about how to look after these precious materials. If you have, or could make (or get someone else to make), some shelves for one side or the back of your classroom, you could then display the books and magazines in order to attract students' interest. In an exercise book, write down the titles of the books and magazines so that you can keep track of them. At the end of each SSR period, watch carefully to check that students return the books to the shelf.

If you do not have shelves, then pack the books and magazines carefully into boxes. You may like to choose some students to be book monitors to help you distribute books from the boxes at the beginning of the reading period and to pack them away at the end.

### Collecting and displaying materials for SSR

If you need to start your own classroom library, the first requirement is to collect books and magazines. There are organisations that can help schools obtain books. Here are some useful contacts.

#### Africa Book Centre

**website:** <http://www.africabookcentre.com>

Kenya Publishers Association

P O Box 42767

00100 Nairobi

Longhorn Publishers

**website:** <http://www.longhornbooks.co.ke>

#### East African Educational Publishers

**tel:** +254 4451530/1/3

**email:** <http://sales@eastafricanpublishers.com>

**website:** [eastafricanpublishers.com](http://eastafricanpublishers.com)

Macmillan Kenya Publishers Ltd

Kijabe Street

P O Box 30797

00100 Nairobi

**tel:** +254 0 220012

**website:** <http://www.macmillan.com>

#### Kenya Literature Bureau

P O Box 30022

000100 Nairobi

**tel:** +254 244847

**email:** <http://customer@kenyaliteraturebureau.com>

**website:** <http://www.kenyaliteraturebureau.com>

#### Jomo Kenyatta Foundation

P O Box 30533

00100 Nairobi

For more information on SSR, the following website is also useful:

<http://www.trelease-on-reading.com>

Sometimes the embassies of foreign countries or organisations linked to embassies, such as the British Council, are able to make donations of books. Service organisations such as Rotary Clubs also collect and donate books.

If you cannot contact any organisation for assistance, then try asking colleagues and friends to donate books and magazines that their children or other family members have finished with. Some schools ask parents to help teachers to organise fundraising events and then they use the money that is raised to buy books.

### Teaching Example 3

A workshop was held in Naivasha, Kenya, to introduce teachers to sustained silent reading (SSR). It was explained that one of the main aims of SSR is to create a 'culture of reading' among students. Teachers were invited to participate in SSR and then to reflect on their experiences. Each teacher chose a book or magazine and read silently for 20 minutes. After this, they had ten minutes of discussion with three fellow readers about what they had read and how they responded to the text. When they returned their books and magazines, they signed their names in the book register and, next to their names, wrote a brief comment about the text.

These teachers decided that SSR is useful for developing concentration and self-discipline, for learning new vocabulary and new ideas and for providing content for discussions with other students. They thought their students would enjoy this activity and be proud when they finished reading a book. Some teachers decided to try this with a small group at a time and rotate around the class because they only had a few books in the class.

### Activity 3

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- Collect interesting books, magazines and stories that are at an appropriate level for your students. Involve students and community in collecting suitable texts or use books your students have made in class
- Set aside 15–20 minutes every day or three times a week for sustained silent reading. Ask students to choose a text to read silently. Read yourself as they read.
- At the end, if they have not finished their books, ask them to use bookmarks so they can easily find their places next time.
- Ask each student to make or contribute to a reading record. Every week, ask students, in small groups, to tell each other about what they have been reading.
- Move round the groups to listen to what students are saying. Check their reading records.
- Do students enjoy this activity and are they making progress with their reading?
- How can you help more?

## Numeracy: Ways to solve number problems

- 1 Listening to student's voices in mathematics
- 2 The essence of the problem
- 3 What makes problems easy or hard?

Key Question for the teacher:

How can you develop students' problem-solving skills using number problems?

Keywords: metacognition, differentiation, tasks, creativity, thinking about thinking, problem solving, number

Learning Outcomes for Teachers:

By the end of this section, you will have:

- used strategies to explore students' ways of solving mathematical problems
- distinguished between deep and superficial features of mathematical problems
- used techniques to develop thinking about thinking in your students

### Overview

Problem solving is an interesting way to develop your students' mathematical thinking. Students have to work out what calculations need to be done before they can find the answer. This means sorting the information given to establish what it is they need to find out and how to do it.

This will help them make explicit their mathematical thinking, and understand and recognise the deep features of a mathematical problem. You might find it useful to think of why problem solving is important. There are many different ways of solving mathematical problems.

## Why problem solving is important

### Problem solving:

- adds enjoyment and interest to mathematics lessons
- helps students gain confidence in their mathematical ability
- helps students see the interaction between mathematics and everyday life
- helps students value mathematical learning
- improves communication skills in mathematics
- develops the process of making and testing hypotheses
- develops abstract thinking

### Strategies for solving problems

- Draw a picture or diagram
- Make a table.
- Make a list.
- Look for a pattern.
- Guess and check.
- Say the problem in a different way.
- Look at all possibilities systematically.
- Work backwards.
- Solve a simpler problem with fewer variables.
- Explore the role of each variable in turn by fixing the others.
- Explore any previous similar problems.
- Look for the 'deep' features.

You may be surprised at how many other ways students find, other than the way you may have expected them to use.

## 1 Listening to students' voices in mathematics

'Thinking about thinking', or meta-cognition, is a powerful means for helping students understand and recognise the 'deep' features of particular kinds of problems, and how to solve such problems.

The first step towards such thinking is to give students the opportunity to talk about the problems they are trying to solve and how they are trying to solve them. When students are explaining their thinking, it is important to listen and not dismiss any ideas they have learned after undertaking some activities about time.

### Teaching Example 1

Nomonde in South Africa reminded her students that, when they go home from school, there isn't only one way to get home: there are many possible ways. Some are shorter, some longer, some safer, some more interesting. She told them it was the same with mathematics problems – there is often more than one way to get to the right answer, and looking at the different ways might be interesting.

Nomonde put the following questions on the board.

1. Siphso has 24 stones. He gives 9 stones to a friend. How many stones does he have left?
2. Thembeke eats 7 sweets every day. She has 42 sweets. For how many days does she have sweets?
3. The teacher buys 25 packets of crayons. There are 12 crayons in each pack. How many crayons does she have?

Next she asked the students to answer the questions using any method they liked. She gave her students ten minutes to answer the questions. She checked their answers and then asked one or two to explain how they worked out each question.

Nomonde listed these methods to find the answers and made a note of which methods were most popular. She reminded her students about the different routes to school.

### Activity 1

Try this activity yourself first, preferably with two or more colleagues. Then try it with your students.

Ask your students to try to answer Nomonde's three questions by working individually.

Split the class into groups of four or five and ask them to take turns to explain carefully to each other how they worked out their answers.

Next, ask the groups to make a list of the strategies used, then ask these questions:

- Did you all have the same answer?
- Did you all work it out in the same way?

How many different ways can your group find to work out a correct answer for each question?

List these on the board.

Explain how important it is to your students to try different ways to solve problems to help their mathematical thinking.

## 2 The essence of the problem

With any mathematical task or problem you set your students, there are 'deep' features – features that define the nature of the task, and strategies that might help solve it.

Almost all mathematics problems have these deep features, overlaid with a particular set of superficial features. As a teacher, you have to help your students understand that once they have recognised the superficial features, changing them does not have any effect on how we solve the problem. The strategies for solving a problem remain the same.

### Ways to help students solve problems

You can help your students become confident problem solvers by helping them to understand the importance of:

- reading the problem carefully to find the important parts;
- identifying the 'deep' features of a problem;
- deciding what exactly is involved;
- discussing and sharing different methods to solve the problem;
- testing out ideas;
- working alone and with others;
- being prepared to start again if there is a mistake;
- checking their work;
- asking other students or you for help when needed.

You can also help your students become confident problem solvers by:

- using contexts that are interesting to students when setting problems;
- making the classroom environment supportive so they can share ideas without fear of being laughed at.

### Teaching Example 2

Amma wrote this problem on the board:

In one family, there are two children: Charles is 8 and Osei is 4. What is the mean age of the children?

Some students immediately wanted to answer the question, but Amma told them that before they worked out the answer, she wanted them to look very closely at the question – at what kind of a question it was. Was there anything there she could change that would not alter the sum?

Some students realised that they could change the children's names without changing the sum. Amma congratulated them.

She drew a simple sum on the board ( $1+1=2$ ) and then said, 'If I change the numbers here,' (writing  $2+5=7$ ) 'it is not the same sum, but it is still the same kind of sum. On our question about the mean, what could we change, but still have the same kind of sum?'

Some students suggested they could change the ages of the students as well as the names.

Then Amma asked, 'Would it be a different kind of sum if we talked about cows instead?'

They kept talking in this way, until they realised that they could change the thing being considered, the number and the property of these things being counted, all without changing the kind of sum being done.

The students then began writing and answering as many different examples of this kind of sum as they could imagine.

## Activity 2

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Try this activity yourself first.

- Write the following question on your chalkboard:

Mr Ogunlade is building a cement block wall along one side of his land to keep the goats out. He makes the wall 10 blocks high and 20 blocks long. How many blocks will he need in total?

- Ask your class to solve the problem.
  - Check their answer.
  - Next, ask your students in groups of four or five to discuss together the answer and what can be changed about the problem, yet still leave it essentially the same so it can be solved in the same way.
  - Ask the groups to make up another example, essentially the same, so that the basic task is not changed.
  - Swap their problem with another group and work out the answer.
  - Do they have to solve this new problem in the same way?
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## 3 What makes problems easy or hard?

Problem solving can be adapted so that every pupil can contribute. For example, all students can discuss what makes a problem easy or difficult to solve. It can be the variations in the superficial features – for example, using large numbers, decimals or fractions rather than small integers – that often make a problem harder to solve.

Sometimes, setting a question in a 'context' can make it easier, but sometimes this can distract students from the deep features of the problem, so they may not easily see how they are meant to solve it.

When students begin to see the deep features of a problem, they can also begin to 'see through' the superficial features, so they recognise the underlying task. Students can then confidently tackle any task with the same deep features.

### Teaching Example 3

Agnes was working with her students on the topic of division.

She wrote three division problems on the board:

1. Kofi has 12 oranges, and 3 children. If he shares the oranges equally, how many should each child get?
2. Divide 117 by 3.
3. Amma has 20 Gp for travelling to work. She spends 3 Gp each day on a taxi. One day, she doesn't have enough money for the taxi. How many days has she travelled to work? On the day her money runs out, how much extra does she need for the taxi that day? You might like to use pretend paper coins based on real coins to help with this activity.

As part of this activity, you might like to use paper or real coins to help students work on mathematical problem solving

She asked students in groups of four to try to answer these problems together.

After ten minutes, Agnes asked her students which problems were easier or harder to answer. Together they made two lists on the board – 'things that make the problems hard' and 'things that make the problems easier'.

Agnes asked the groups to find how many different ways they could solve the problems they had been given. She said she would reward the group that found the most ways by displaying a 'maths champions' certificate, with their names on it, on the classroom wall.

### Activity 3

Make a list on the board of 'things that make the problems hard' and 'things that make the problems easier'.

- Ask your students, in groups, to write three questions of their own. They should make one question easy, one harder and one very hard.
- After ten minutes, ask the groups to swap the problems they have written with another group and to solve the questions they have been given by the other group.
- Ask the groups to report back. Were the 'very hard' questions really much harder than the 'easy' questions? What made the questions hard or easy? Revisit your lists on the board – is there anything students want to change or add now about making problems hard or easy?
- Ask them to make up problems for homework related to their local community e.g. about the number of trees, the cost of a taxi.
- Next day, share these in class and ask students to solve them.

## Science: Classifying living things

- 1 Collecting evidence of life around us.
- 2 Model making
- 3 Life cycles

**Key Question for the teacher:**

**How can you help students organise their observations of living things?**

**Keywords:** classify; model; life cycle; animals; plants; research; group work

**Learning Outcomes for Teachers:**

By the end of this section, you will have:

- collected and displayed real items in your classroom in a logical way to support your students learning about grouping living things
- use model building as a way of recording what your students know about different living things
- organised your students into pairs or small groups to undertake independent research projects on

### Overview

Students need to grow up respecting and caring for our natural world; ideally, we all need to be naturalists. A naturalist is interested, observant, curious and values nature – someone who is learning about and caring for their world all the time. They have a clear, ‘big’ picture in their mind of how things work in nature. New observations will find a place in their big picture.

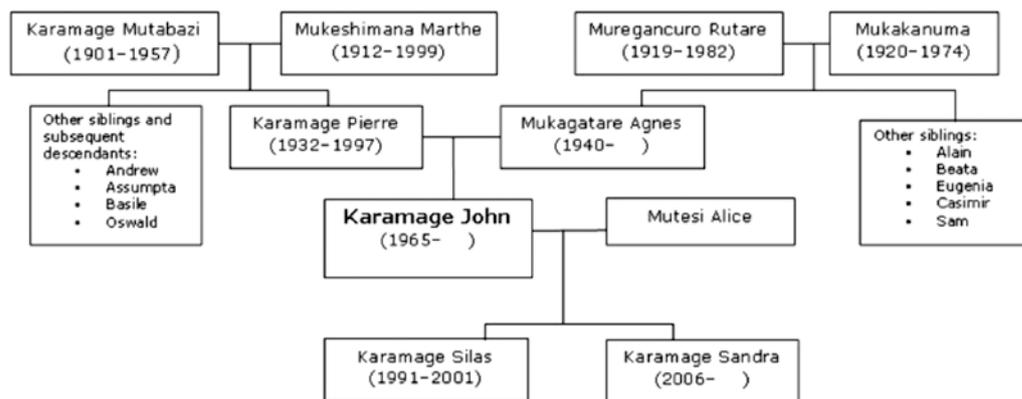
How do teachers help students achieve this big picture of how nature works? This section explores how you can help students organise and extend their knowledge about living things. You will bring real items into your classroom, organise displays, make models and undertake research with your students. When we find out something new, we fit it in amongst all the things we already know. We build up our own big picture (organising system) in our heads. That’s how the human mind works.

# 1 Collecting evidence of life around us

Think about how we organise our ideas of a family. We can represent this in a diagram called a family tree, where you place people where they belong in the big picture. An African family tree shows a typical family tree. You might like to create your own family tree to share with your students, or that of a famous person.

## An African family tree

This resource shows the family tree of the Karamage family.



This is how it is with biology. As a teacher, you need to help your students to build up a useful big picture of living things and how they are related. There is an agreed organising system that scientists have developed over years. The current agreed classification of living things shows how biologists organise living things into kingdoms and some of their subdivisions. A good way to start helping students organise their ideas about living things is to begin with items in your own environment – objects that students are familiar with and can easily investigate.

### Teaching Example 1

Amaka Ukwu's students in Nguru, Nigeria, were surprised to find two new tables in the class. Without saying anything, Ms Ukwu carefully laid out four self-standing cards in specific positions on the tables. 'Non-living' on the table to the left and 'Living', 'Plants' and 'Animals' on the table to the right.

Ms Ukwu gave the class five minutes to go outside and find different examples of non-living things. She talked about what they brought back and helped them to group similar things together on the non-living table.

Ms Ukwu deliberately checked that things like bone, wood, cardboard and paper were on the side nearer to the living tables. Why did she do that? Next, each student was given a small self-standing card and asked to draw any plant or animal on one side and write its name on the back. It must be different from anyone else's. The cards were brought to the front and sorted, displayed and discussed. Ms Ukwu ensured that like was sorted with like. (She had in mind the organising diagram from the Current agreed classification of living things but chose not to confuse her students by telling too much too soon.)

Ms Ukwu completed the lesson by asking the students to look at all the non-living things and divide them into those that were once living and those that were never alive. The students worked in groups and had lively discussions about many of the exhibits.

### Activity 1

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- Tell your students that they will be developing a display to show non-living and living things around them. Explain that it would not be right to display real animals and plants. They should not damage or kill anything living. Instead, rather like detectives, they should hunt for clues and evidence of any living thing – for example, feathers, droppings, leaves and seeds. Give students several days to bring in things for the display. Now talk about the groupings you will have (animals, plants and so on), what defines each group and where each item sits in the display. Students could then make labels for the display.
- In the next science lesson, choose six things from the display – three living and three non-living – and display them on another table.
- Gather your students round the table and ask them which of the six things are living and how they know this. By careful questioning and discussion you should be able to draw up a list of the seven characteristics of living things.

#### The seven common characteristics of all living things

When asked to think of the characteristics of all living things, most young children relate it to themselves and include things like needing to sleep, needing to keep clean, all die, need air, need to eat, all grow, all can be hurt or damaged, need friends, etc.

Accept and praise all their answers before you explain to them that scientists have come to agreement that the seven things that all living things have in common are the following:

- Nutrition
- Reproduction
- Growth
- Respiration
- Sensitivity
- Movement
- Excretion

We suggest you discuss each characteristic in turn with students. It is useful to clarify that the same basic things happen in plants and in animals but slightly differently. For example, with nutrition, plants manufacture their own food, whereas animals are dependent on eating plants or other animals. A further example is that more plants than animals can reproduce both asexually (without mating) as well as sexually (requiring pollination). It is only some of the more simple animals that can split into two or bud off new offspring; otherwise sperm and eggs are involved. But with both eggs and seeds there is an embryo that develops and germinates/hatches or is born. Let the children's interest and questions guide the discussion about each characteristic.

A good activity is to try to find evidence of these characteristics. For example, a leaf that shows evidence of having been eaten by some insect, or the owl pellets of skin, fur and bone found under a tree where an owl roosts (nutrition). Tracks, trails and ripples in water are evidence of animals moving (movement). Flowers that follow the sun, like sunflowers, or others that close/open at night, is evidence of plant movement. Then, clothes that no longer fit, shed skins of insect larvae and tree roots that crack paving are evidence of growth. Write each characteristic on the chalkboard and let students add notes or drawings to explain evidence they have found.

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## 2 Model making

Mathematics deals with patterns, so does art, and even in language there are patterns and structures. Thinking scientifically also involves looking for basic patterns. Think of your hands and feet. They have the same basic plan. They are joined to a limb by a joint (wrist/ankle), there is a flat part (palm/sole) and there are five jointed digits (fingers/toes) with hard nails on the upper tip.

Scientists group things by similarities and differences in the basic patterns of their structure or form. Students will enjoy looking for basic patterns in the plants and animals they know and find. One way to find out what your students observe about patterns in plants and animals is by asking them to make models. Talking about their models will help them make more detailed observations of the living things.

### Teaching Example 2

A teacher education session, teachers worked to plan more practical, hands-on science lessons that would help them see what children already knew and could do.

They explored the use of model making as a way to assess what children knew about something like the structure of plants. Then, after comparing each other's models and observing real plants more carefully, the students could choose to improve their old models, or make new ones to show new learning.



One of the teachers, Okoro Mohammed, demonstrated how she had used a cardboard box of scrap material (cloth, cardboard, paper, plastic, old tights, elastic bands, used containers etc.) as a resource for children to build models to show what they already knew about plants. She explained how much more detail the children had taught themselves after comparing each other's work and going out to observe plants more carefully. They included bark and buds, and finer details like leaf veins, or specific patterns of branch formation. Improving their models seemed to give the students a real reason to sharpen their observation and extend their understanding of plant structure.

### **Plant models**

Before this activity, ask your students to bring in scrap materials. Collect some yourself. Scrap materials might include: tin; cardboard; string; tape; straws; plastic bottles; fabric; paper; netting; wire.

**Step 1:** Divide your class into small groups of three or four students. Write the following instructions on the chalkboard or give each group an instruction card:

**Talk about what a plant looks like.**

**Then make models of the plants from the scrap materials.**

**Step 3:** Give your students time to plan and build their models.

**Step 4:** Ask each group to come to the front in turn and explain their model to the class.

### **How the lesson went for Okoro**

The plant models that the students made showed that they knew the basic structure of a plant, but they were not too sure of the details, like bark, side branches and where the leaves are on branches. She decided to let them look at plants outside and then return to their models and change or add to them. Her students had some knowledge of the terminology but not enough in English or their mother tongue, so they used a mixture of both. There were some plant parts they did not know the names of in either language.

To help students, she developed a lexicon (a small dictionary) to show which words the students knew to describe the parts of plants that they were familiar with: eg stem, leaf, bud, bark etc

(You might find it helpful to put up these words round your classroom and encourage the students to use them when talking about their models).

## Activity 2

- In many parts of Nigeria, entrepreneurs make a living by selling lifelike models of animals. We feel that all students are entitled to the chance to extend this natural desire to make models to help with their study of different animals. By asking children to make models, you will also be integrating science with technology and art. You can add to the classroom displays set up in Activity 1 by getting children to work at making models of different types of local animals like chickens, dogs or cows using appropriate materials.
- We suggest you organise the students to work in groups, three or four students in each group usually works well.
- You could organise your groups by mixing lower and higher achievers.
- Encourage students to bring in materials for their models. As they are building the models, move around the classroom, talking to the groups; with younger students ask them to name the parts of the animal they are modelling – paws, tails, ears and so on. With older students, ask questions about the shapes and functions of the different parts of the animals – how do they help the animal move? eat? keep warm? cool down? sense that predators are near?
- Think about how you could encourage your students to reflect on their work. Could you ask different groups to comment on the other group's models? Make sure you allow time for students to talk about their work and to improve it.
- Did this activity work well?
- Were you surprised by the detail of the students' models? Is the detail of the students' models accurate?
- What could be improved?
- Did it help students to see similarities and differences between animals?

### Pupil's Models of Animals from scrap



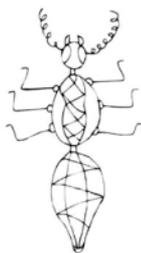
#### Lizard

From wire and beads - shows they know long flattened body - S-shaped posture - legs out to side wide mouth, nostrils, large eyes to side of head, no ears



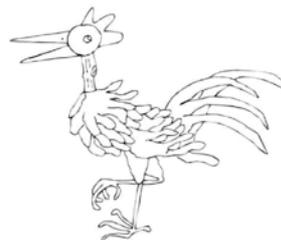
#### Frog

modeled from river clay, short, squat body, no tail, powerful back legs, webbed back feet, short front legs, no webs, wide mouth, nostrils, large protuberant eyes, smooth skin



#### Insect - Ant

Made from scrap wire  
3 body parts - head, thorax, abdomen  
3 pairs jointed legs, mandibles, large compound eyes  
characteristic elbow shape to feelers  
Waist between thorax and abdomen



#### Bird

Made out of clay, wire, cardboard wings with paper feathers and drawn eyes and nostrils, wooden stick for a neck.  
Most basic features of a typical bird shown.  
**NB:** Claw to back for gripping.

### 3 Life cycles

In this section we have been exploring patterns in living things. There is a basic pattern to the life cycle of all living things. There is fertilisation and development of an embryo in a seed/egg/womb. Then there is a process of birth/hatching/germination. Next comes feeding and growth through a number of stages. At maturity, the final stage of reproduction can take place and the cycle begins again.

#### Teaching Example 3

Mrs Aderinto gathered her class round her, held up a green bean pod and told the story of the life cycle of the bean. She used the words seedling, germination, growing and adult plant so that her students learned the correct words.

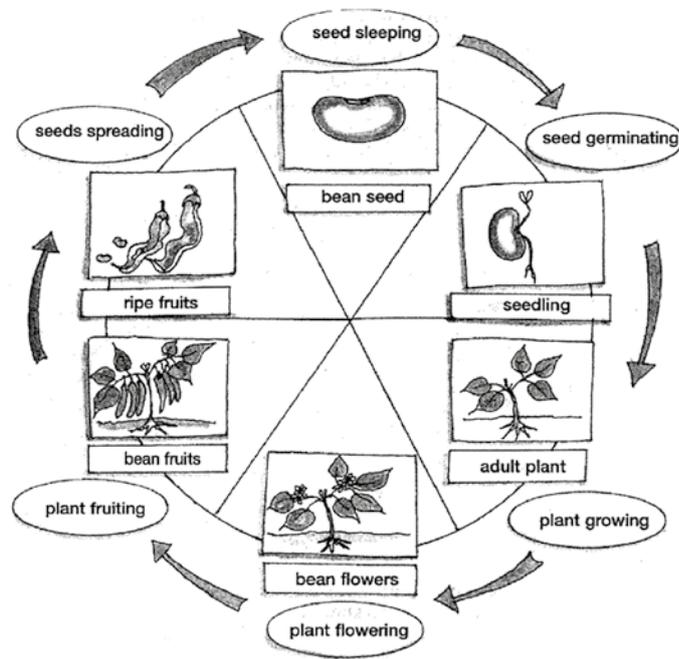
Then she divided her class into four groups: Groups 1 and 2 each had three pictures showing one of the stages in the bean's life cycle, Group 3 had the rectangular labels (describing the pictures) and Group 4 had the round labels (describing the steps in the life cycle story). The story wheel of a bean shows these labels and pictures.

Mrs Aderinto then drew a large circle on the board and divided it into six equal parts. She asked the group with the first picture to come and put it in the story wheel. She then asked what came next and asked the students to put in the next picture. When each part of the wheel contained a picture, she asked Group 3 to add their labels. Finally, Group 4 placed their labels in sequence on the story wheel and explained the steps to the class. She

finished by asking students to copy the story wheel and explain in their own words the story of the bean's life cycle – they could start anywhere on the cycle. Mrs Aderinto found this lesson worked really well with her students and they wanted to do story wheels for other plants and animals.



Story wheel of the life cycle of the bean



The story wheel is a useful tool because it:

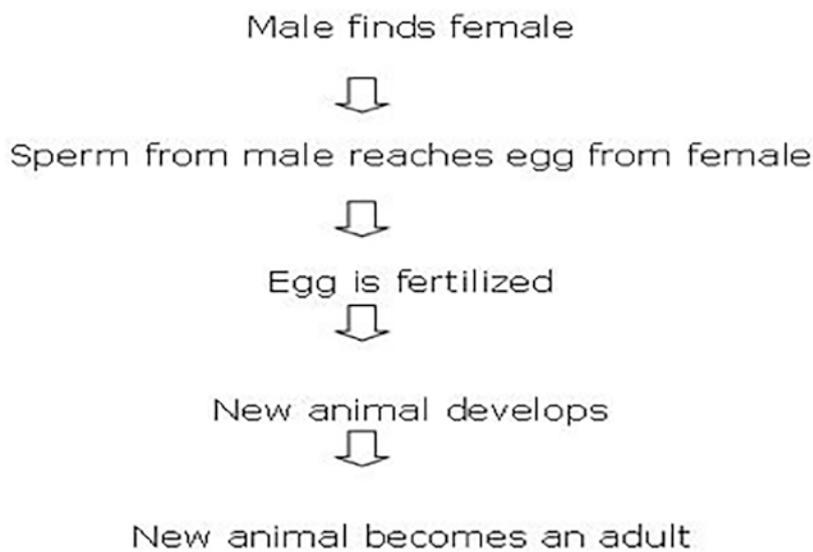
- shows the stages in the life cycle of plants;
- helps the students work from the known to the unknown, that is, from the children's stories to the pictures to the labels;
- provides the students with an organising diagram summarising the life cycle of any plant;
- shows the logical sequence of the stages in the life cycle.

It also shows the students that they can start the story at any place in the wheel and follow it through all the stages.

### Activity 3

- Organise your class into groups of three or four. With your students, make a long list of animals that can be found in your local environment. Write this list on the board or on a large piece of paper stuck to the wall.
- Ask each group to choose an animal from the list; try to ensure that no two groups choose the same animal. Suggestions include: grasshopper, butterfly, frog, turtle, mosquito, beetle, elephant, bird and fish.

- Give the class some basic guidelines for the work on life cycles; how long they have, what you expect from them and how they should display their work. For younger students, you would expect them to give you three/four pictures in the story wheel shape and to put some basic labels on the pictures such as egg, chick, adult, baby and to have the pictures in the correct order. Older students should be able to discover something about each of these five stages:



- They should draw detailed diagrams with clear labels and notes.
  - They should include the number of babies born together, the time for each stage and how the animal gets its food at each stage.
  - You will need to guide them so that they can work fairly independently with confidence. One way to help the students is to have a list of useful words on the classroom wall; they can then feel confident about spelling these words.
  - Encourage each group to start by recording what they already know about their animal. Then they should find out more by investigation, research and observation. Students might want to ask people in the community or to use books or the Internet if you have access to these.
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# Social Studies and Arts: Investigating how we used to live

- 1 Oral History
- 2 Written Records
- 3 Examining historical evidence

**Key question for the teacher:** How can you develop your students' thinking skills in history, using oral and written stories?

**Keywords:** evidence; history; thinking skills; interviews; questions; investigations

**Learning Outcomes for Teachers:**

**By the end of this section, you will have:**

- used oral history and documents to develop students' thinking
- planned and gathered out activities that help students gather and use oral evidence to find out about past events

## Overview

When we study history as part of social studies, we place a great deal of importance on the sources of evidence that can tell us something about the past.

There are two important ways of gathering evidence about the past – finding and analysing documents that record what happened and using oral history. Oral history is the gathering of people's stories about particular events. We can also look at objects, pictures and buildings from the past to find out more.

You can encourage your students to investigate documents and conduct oral interviews in order to help build their understanding of their own past. It is important to encourage students to ask questions and listen to each other's ideas, so they develop skills in assessing evidence and drawing conclusions.

# 1 Oral History

Teaching history does not only involve facts about historical events, but also the development of students' historical skills. As a teacher, you need give your students the opportunity to develop and practise these skills. The kinds of events you explore with your students will depend on their ages. With younger children, you will also take more of a lead in helping them find out and understand what happened. In this part, students will conduct oral interviews with an older family member or another member of the community. The aim of the interview is to find out how different their own lifestyles and interests are, compared with those of people in the past. By showing students how to conduct an oral interview, you can help develop important skills – being able to see the value of oral history and being able to listen.

We all have stories to tell, stories about our lives and special events that have taken place. We give our experiences an order and organise such memories into stories. These stories could, if collected together with other people's memories of the same event, allow us to build up a clearer picture of what actually happened. Your local community will be a rich source for exploring what happened at a particular event or what it was like to live there 20 years ago. Your students could investigate the Ugandan Civil War or some other more local event.

## What is oral history?

Oral history is not folklore, gossip, hearsay or rumour, but the real history of people told from their perspectives, as they remember it. It involves the systematic collection of living people's stories of their own experiences. These everyday memories have historical importance.

They help us understand what life is like. If we do not collect and preserve those memories, then one day they will disappear forever.

Your stories and the stories of the people around you are unique and can provide valuable information. Because we only live for so many years we can only go back one lifetime. This makes many historians anxious that they may lose valuable data and perspectives on events. Gathering these stories helps your students develop a sense of their own identities and how they fit into the story of their home area.

## How do you collect people's stories?

When you have decided what event or activity you want to find out about, you need to find people who were involved and ask if they are willing to tell you their stories. Contact them to arrange a time of day and tell them what you want to talk about and what you will do. You need to record what your interviewee says. You can do this by taking notes by hand or possibly by tape recording or video recording.

Having collected your information or evidence, it is important to compare and contrast different people's views of the same event, so that you can identify the facts from the interpretations that different people put on the same event. You could ask your students, in groups, to interview different people and then to write a summary of their findings to share with the rest of the class. These could be made into a book about your class's investigation into a particular event.

### Teaching Example 1

Every person has a history. Mrs Eunice Shikongo, a Grade 5 teacher at Sheetheni School on the outskirts of Windhoek in Namibia, wants her students to explore their own family histories by interviewing one family member. First, she discusses what oral evidence is, by encouraging students to share things they have learned from their grandparents. She asks them: 'Has what you have learned been written down?' Most agree that things learned in this way are not written, but passed on by word of mouth. Mrs Shikongo then explains that, by conducting an interview, students will collect oral evidence about what the past was like and will find out what a valuable source of evidence this can be. She helps them compile a list of interesting questions to use to interview their family members

#### Possible interview questions

Below are some questions to use with a visitor to find out about an event in the past or how they used to do things in the past. Areas you could explore include:

- growing food;
- traditional dress;
- traditional healing;
- building houses;
- education.

These three sets of starter questions will help you support your students in thinking of their own questions.

#### (1) Historical events

- What historical events took place when you were young?
- What did you wear when you went to a party or a wedding?
- Which event do you remember most?
- What do you remember about it?
- What happened? Tell me the story as you remember it.
- Who else was with you?
- Could I speak to them about this still?



(2) Games

- What games did you play when you were a child?
- How did you play these games?
- Who taught you to play these games?
- When did you play them? • Where did you play them?
- What other activities did you enjoy?

(3) Growing food

- What vegetables and fruit did you grow?
- How did you grow them?
- Where did you grow them?
- What tools did you use?
- What did vegetables cost at the time?
- Where did you buy them? Which ones did you buy?
- What else did you eat that you liked?
- Do you still eat these foods?

The students then add their own questions to the list before carrying out these interviews at home. The next day, they share their findings with the rest of their class. Mrs Shikongo summarises their findings on the board under the heading. Next, she asks them to answer the same questions about their own lives, and summarises this information under the heading 'Now'. She asks them to think about how their lives are different from the lives of their family members in the past. She then asks the students, in pairs, to compare 'Then' and 'Now'. Younger students write two/three sentences using words from the board. Older students write a short paragraph

Discuss with the whole class how life has changed since their parents and/or grandparents or other older people were children. Pose questions that encourage them to reflect on why such changes have taken place.

### Activity 1: Oral interviews about childhood

- First organise your students into pairs. Then tell them to think of some questions they can ask an older person about his/her childhood. Give the students time to think up their questions and tell them how long they have to do this task – maybe two or three days. If you have younger students, you could work together to make up three or four questions they could remember and ask at home.
- When they have asked the questions at home, ask the students to share their information with their partners.
- Then ask each pair of students to join with another pair and share what they have found out.
- Now ask each group of four to complete a table to show how life has changed.

Older Person	Me
I would travel to market by donkey	I travel to market by bus

- Discuss with the whole class how life has changed since their parents and/or grandparents or other older people were children. Pose questions that encourage them to reflect on why such changes have taken place. (Key Resource: Using questioning to promote thinking can help you think of the kinds of questions you need to ask to stimulate students. You could note some of these down before the lesson to remind you at this stage.)
- Make a list of the key changes on the board.

## 2 Written records

As well as using oral histories to find out about life in the past, you can use written records with your students.

### Teaching Example 2

Mr Kaguri is a teacher of a Primary 6 class in Kanungu district, Uganda. The anniversary of Ugandan independence is coming up and he wants his students to think about the events that led up to it and some of the things that it led to.

He sends his class to the library where they read up on the events. A daily newspaper, *The Monitor*, has just published supplements about the granting of independence on 9 October 1962. Mr Kaguri reads from these to his students to stimulate their interest. These articles contain profiles of the lives of some of the people who were involved. He divides his class into groups and asks each group to take one of these people and to research and then write a profile of that person on a poster, for display in the school hall. The poster must include how they were involved and what has happened to them since. Mr Kaguri's students then plan to present their findings to the whole school. Their posters are displayed around the hall and some of the students speak at the assembly.

**Ugandan independence: Background information / subject knowledge for teacher**

The first Europeans to visit Uganda were the British explorers John Hanning Speke and James Grant when they were searching for the source of the Nile in 1862. They were followed by Samuel White Baker and Charles George Gordon commanding Egyptian troops.

The Anglo-American explorer Henry Morton Stanley, welcomed by Kabaka Mutesa I (reigned 1852–1884), reported the king's eagerness to understand Christianity. Soon both Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries were working in Buganda. Within a decade the factions they created caused a civil war.

Once isolated, the region became, by 1890, a major object of the European nations' scramble for African territory. Britain, after securing German recognition of its rights, moved to secure Buganda. Frederick Lugard, working for the British East Africa Company, ended the civil disturbances, and his successors used the Bugandan army to help conquer the other kingdoms and tribes. By 1896, a British protectorate administration had extended its authority over most of the region, and the name Uganda was adopted.

Final details concerning the administration of Uganda were settled by a series of agreements in 1900, the most comprehensive of which guaranteed special status to Buganda, including the continuation of its social and political system. Britain's almost 70 years of rule in Uganda was thus a centralised European bureaucracy superimposed on a federation of kingdoms and tribes. This worked well until the independence movements of the 1950s, when Buganda demanded separation from Uganda. Only after Kabaka Mutesa II was exiled for two years in 1953 was it possible to proceed with developing a united government.

After much experimenting, a federal constitution was promulgated in April 1962. The Uganda People's Congress won the elections, and Milton Obote became prime minister. Independence was granted in October 1962.

**Events after independence**

Dissension continued, however, and in May 1966 Obote sent the army into Buganda and drove the Kabaka into exile. He then proclaimed a new republican constitution, which formally abolished the kingships, and became Uganda's first president of a unitary government. Bugandan recalcitrance, a fall-off in the economy, and charges of corruption led to an army coup in January 1971. Power devolved upon the army commander, Idi Amin, who began eight years of misrule. He increased the size of the army, eliminated his political opponents, and began a reign of terror directed at the people of Buganda, Obote's Lango people, and their neighbours the Acholi.

He also expelled approximately 70,000 Asians from the country. By 1978, Uganda was bankrupt, and the government was dependent on massive loans from Arab states friendly to Amin. Uganda went to war with neighbouring Tanzania in late 1978, and Tanzanian forces allied with Ugandan rebels drove Amin from the country early the following year.

Three provisional presidents served before elections under a new constitution were held in December 1980. Obote's party was successful, and he became president once again of a changed Uganda. Once thriving, the nation had become an economic disaster, with an inflation rate of more than 200%, no consumer goods, few jobs, rampant thievery, famine in the north, and no effective government in the countryside. In 1982, after Tanzanian troops had been withdrawn, anti-government guerrillas became active, and thousands of young men were arrested, suspected of being guerrillas. Thereafter, more than 100,000 Ugandans were killed or starved to death.

The constitutional government was overthrown in July 1985 in a coup by Acholi army officers; Obote fled the country and settled in Zambia. The new Acholi-dominated regime had little popular support, and quickly fell apart. After four days of fighting in Kampala in January 1986, National Resistance Army leader Yoweri Museveni took over the government.

Since Museveni's ascension to power, Uganda's economy has prospered. Foreign investment has increased and many Asian Ugandans have returned to open businesses. Museveni forbade the creation and activity of political parties, believing that parties would form along ethnic lines and further divide the nation.

The early 1990s saw an upsurge in terrorism in northern Uganda, the home of Museveni's political enemies. In the mid-1990s hundreds of Ugandan soldiers and civilians were killed in attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army, a Christian fundamentalist rebel faction led by a former faith healer. A new constitution was adopted in 1995 that established a democratic, though non-party, system of government.

## Activity 2

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- This activity is built on a visit to a museum, in this case the Uganda Museum, Kampala, but you could use a more local site or contact the education officer at the Uganda Museum as there may be materials available to schools where museum visits are not possible. (If it is not possible for you to visit a museum, you could also collect together some newspaper articles, pictures and books to help your students find out for themselves about an event.)
- Decide on a particular historical event that you wish your students to investigate during the visit to the museum (or in class if you have the resources) For example; here is a news report on the exile of Ugandan Asians in 1972.

### 1972: Asians given 90 days to leave Uganda

The Ugandan leader, Idi Amin, has set a deadline for the expulsion of most of the country's Asians. General Amin said all Asians who are not Ugandan citizens – around 60,000 – must leave Uganda within 90 days.

The military ruler's latest statement amended his original expulsion order two days ago when he said all the country's 80,000 Asians had to go. Asians, who are the backbone of the Ugandan economy, have been living in the country for more than a century. But resentment against them has been building up within Uganda's black majority.

### Expulsion surprises Britain

General Amin has called the Asians 'bloodsuckers' and accused them of milking the economy of its wealth. Up to 50,000 Asians in the former UK colony are British passport holders. In a broadcast, General Amin said he would be summoning the British High Commissioner in Kampala to ask him to arrange for their removal. The expulsion order has taken Britain by surprise. General Amin overthrew Uganda's elected leader in a military-backed coup last year but the British authorities had regarded him as a man they could work with.

Some British MPs have warned that letting more Ugandan Asians into the UK could raise racial tensions. They are urging the government not to take them in. MP Ronald Bell said Uganda's Asians had no real links to Britain. Mr Bell said: 'They were either born in India or have retained close connection with India. They have no connection with Britain either by blood or residence.'

Adapted from original source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

It is important that you focus the attention of your students on a particular event, especially if they are visiting a museum covering many years of the past.

Divide the class into groups, giving each a different issue or aspect of the historical event to focus upon.

Discuss what kinds of questions they might need to find the answers to as they read and look at the exhibitions (if at museum) or materials (if in school).

Back in class, ask the students in their groups to write up their findings on large posters. Display these in the classroom or school hall for all to see.

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### 3 Examining historical evidence

You can encourage your students to think critically about the validity and reliability of such evidence, and to compare oral testimonies of a historical event with written evidence of the same event. Investigating the similarities and differences in the two types of evidence provides an exciting learning opportunity for students.

#### Teaching Example 3

Mrs Kasigwa teaches social studies to Primary 6 at a small school in the Jinja district. Many of the families have older members who remember or were affected by the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972.

Mrs Kasigwa has invited two Asians, who have returned to the country, to speak about their experiences. They will come on consecutive days as they have businesses and have to arrange for other people to look after them.

Mrs Kasigwa warns her class that these two people were children, one a teenager and one younger, when they left – their memories will be different from those of their parents and from each other. Before the guests arrive, the students prepare some questions that they want to ask. Over two days, the visitors come and tell their stories. The students listen carefully and ask them questions. In the next lesson, Mrs Kasigwa and the class discuss the similarities and differences between the two accounts. They think about why the two visitors have different views on the events.

Mrs Kasigwa lists the key points that came out of their stories and also stresses that, when they were young, the journey to another part of the world might have been more exciting and less worrying than it would have been to their parents. She explains that while these oral histories may give students some understanding of the exile, they may not always be accurate, and the stories that different people tell may vary considerably. Mrs Kasigwa believes her class learned a valuable lesson in the uses and problems of gathering oral evidence of history.

#### Activity 3

- With your students, identify an important historical event (such as a local feud or uprising) that took place in your area in the past. If you can, find a short written text about it. You could use the news report in Activity 2 above.
- In preparing this activity, you need to gain an understanding for yourself (as a teacher) about what people in your community know about the uprising or event in question. These 'memories' are the oral stories that have been passed down from person to person. Identify some key people who your students could talk to at home or could come into school.
- Send your students out in groups to interview these older people. Ask the students to record ten key points made by each interviewee. (Make sure that students only go in groups and that they are safe at all times.)
- Back in class, ask your students to feed back their key findings.

- Ask each group to design a poster of the event, including the key events and using some of the visitor's comments to give a feeling of what it was like to be there.
- Display these in class.
- Discuss with your students whether they think they have enough clear evidence about what happened from the people they spoke to. If not, how could they find out more?

## Life Skills: Girls and boys

### 1 Investigating gender roles

### 2 Role plays

### 3 Discussing citizenship

**Key question for the teacher: How can you use interactive strategies to discuss gender issues?**

**Keywords: gender; roleplaying; single sex groups; questionnaire; local experts**

**Learning Outcomes for Teachers:**

**By the end of this section, you will have:**

- explored attitudes to gender through single-sex group work
- used reverse role play to highlight gender stereotyping
- used local experts and drama presentations to share ideas on gender issues

## Overview

There are certain behaviours in society that are often seen to be appropriate for either boys or girls, not for everyone. Some of these behaviours may negatively affect girls' and boys' self-esteem and aspirations, and not serve them well when it comes to learning in the classroom. Researchers note that girls are often shy of speaking up in class and sometimes fail to give answers even when they know them.

### Gender issues

- Gender describes those characteristics of men and women that are socially determined rather than biologically determined.
- Many of the students' reactions come from the way they have been socialised, which leads to an unconscious gender stereotyping.
- In the family, men are generally considered the heads, and decision-making is largely dominated by them.
- There are gender disparities in access to education, economic opportunities and health care.
- There is bias in favour of education for boys, coupled with issues of early pregnancy resulting in the high drop-out rate of girls from school.
- There are imbalances in employment by sector and sex. Within the agriculture sector, women are the major food producers.
- People are born male or female, but learn to be girls or boys who grow into women or men.

- People are taught what the appropriate behaviour and attitudes, roles and activities are for them, and how they should relate to other people. This learned behaviour is what makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.

### Issues in gender teaching

- Gender issues are sensitive and therefore rules should be strictly observed in order to ensure that discussion does not become just a fight between the girls and the boys.
  - You need to help both sexes appreciate the dilemmas and choices of the opposite sex.
  - It is important for students to understand how gender stereotypes are reinforced by behaviour in the family, in the school and in society.
  - You need to help your students develop strategies and skills to challenge unfair gender situations.
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## 1 Investigating gender roles

### Teaching Example 1

The teacher found the list of family rules from a previous lesson. She thought about how to explore the issues around the different treatment of boys and girls in the family and decided that drama would be a good method.

She organised the class into 'family' groups of different sizes, with students playing different family members. One group was only four people, one group was 11. She asked the groups to make up a play about a family to show how boys and girls are treated. She gave them the whole lesson to do this and went around each group to help and support them. She asked questions like 'So what would happen next?' 'How could you...?'

She asked them to bring in some items to help identify different people in the family and to rehearse their plays during break times. Over the next few lessons, each group in turn performed their play and afterwards the whole class discussed what they had seen. After watching all the plays and discussing them, they realised that girls had less freedom to choose than boys. They had a vote to decide whether this was fair, and the class agreed that boys and girls should be given equal opportunities and not be denied access to activities and work because of their gender.

## Activity 1

To help your students explore and explain their feelings concerning gender roles, this activity uses single-sex groups. Hand out the questionnaire here:

### Gender – what do you think?

You have ten minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Read each statement and draw a ring around the score to show how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

- 5 means you fully agree.
- 1 means that you completely disagree.
- If you really do not know, you can circle 3.

a	Boys are stronger than girls	1	2	3	4	5
b	Cooking is a girl's job	1	2	3	4	5
c	Girls don't have time to study because of their chores	1	2	3	4	5
d	Girls wake up before boys	1	2	3	4	5
e	At school, girls do more work than boys	1	2	3	4	5
f	Boys are more intelligent than girls	1	2	3	4	5
g	Education is more important for boys as they must support a family when they are older	1	2	3	4	5

- Each student shows their answers to their neighbour and they discuss.
- Organise the class into single-sex groups of between five and seven students.
- Each group prepares a list of all the different activities they do:
  - on schooldays;
  - at weekends;
  - during holidays.
- Groups present their list of activities – which you write on the board – making a list for girls and one for boys.
- Discuss the lists with the class. Ask about fairness. Ask why they think the activities are different.
- Ask the students to write an essay called 'How and why are girls and boys different from each other?' Ask them to include their own views. Younger children can draw pictures of activities they do and compare them with each other.

## 2 Role plays

Role playing can be a very powerful teaching and learning method – especially when dealing with sensitive topics in life skills or citizenship lessons. It is particularly useful when exploring issues of gender with your students. It can help students to speak more freely because they are talking about the behaviour of other people rather than their own behaviour.

It is important to explore where gender stereotypes come from. Students need to recognise when stereotypical behaviour is reinforced. Much of this happens in the family, but you may want to look at your own behaviour. Do you reinforce gender stereotypes in your classroom? Were gender stereotypes reinforced in your own family?

### Teaching Example 2

In this activity, we want you to prepare some role plays where the 'normal' roles are reversed.

#### Reverse role play: Mrs Seidu is late

Mr Seidu is busy cleaning the house. He is carrying the baby on his back because she will not stop crying. Annie, the five-year-old, is pulling at his legs because she wants something. Mr Seidu is obviously tired, but dinner is cooking on the small fire. He shouts at some older children outside to go and fetch more wood for the fire. He talks about his problems as he works. He is worried that there may not be enough food when his wife comes home from work at the council. Mrs Seidu arrives home.

She is a little drunk and she is angry that the dinner is not ready and the house is not clean. She shouts at Mr Seidu and they have an argument, then Mrs Seidu hits Mr Seidu and storms out of the house saying she is going to get her dinner somewhere else.

- Explain to your class about the activities and their purpose and about not laughing at people, but to think about the issues raised as they watch.
- After each role play, ask students to discuss, in mixed-gender groups, the following questions:
- What do you think about this situation?
- How did you feel when you were watching the role play, and why?
- What do our feelings show about how we see the roles of men and women in society?
- If the role play were the other way around, would you have felt differently?
- If you have younger students, you will need to make your role plays quite simple. Also, you may feel you need to guide their discussion afterwards, rather than asking them to discuss the questions in groups.

### 3 Sensitive work on gender violence

There are many forms of abusive behaviour and it is girls and women who are more often the victims. This does not mean that boys cannot also be abused; just that girls and women have tended to have had a more passive role in society, while males have been more dominant. If you are going to explore this area with your class, you will need to prepare very carefully and be able to support your students as some ideas may be very uncomfortable and challenging for them. You may also find that you uncover some incidences of abuse, and you must be prepared to support your students, sensitively and discreetly.

#### Gender violence

Studies from around the world show that gender violence is a major feature of school life for many adolescent students, especially girls. For girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, particular aspects of this violence include sexual abuse and harassment by older male students and male teachers, and, in the vicinity of the school, by 'sugar daddies' who seek sex in exchange for money or gifts. Boys as well as girls are exposed to regular verbal abuse and insults from both teachers and other students, and excessive corporal punishment from both male and female teachers. Boys too may be victims of sexual abuse.

Violent schools are breeding grounds for potentially damaging gendered practices, which remain with the students into adult life. Some may themselves become abusers. When school authorities fail to clamp down on gender violence, they send the message to students that it is a 'normal' feature of life. Failure by those in authority to investigate allegations and report offenders, lack of prosecution of teachers and others guilty of sexual misconduct, and lack of information for parents and students about their rights and available channels for complaints, allow such behaviour to continue unchecked.

Gender violence is a sensitive area to research because it involves sexual abuse, which is a taboo topic, one that we would prefer to ignore. Abuse of schoolchildren remains largely hidden because victims are reluctant to talk about their experiences to teachers and parents, and those in authority may find easy excuses for a lack of action. In Ghana, as elsewhere, people prefer to talk about abuse as being something experienced by others.

#### Girls are particularly at risk of violence and abuse because:

- women and girls occupy a subordinate status in society and are expected to be obedient and submissive – this makes it difficult for them to resist or complain;
- boys learn that masculine behaviour involves being aggressive towards females;
- girls who make allegations of sexual abuse by teachers and other men are often not believed;
- teachers often fail to take action against boys who use aggressive and intimidating behaviour towards girls;
- girls have fewer opportunities to earn casual income than boys, so poverty pushes some girls into having sex as a means of paying school fees or meeting living expenses. Engaging in transactional sex or sex with multiple partners increases the risk of HIV and AIDS.

**Gender violence includes:**

- sexual harassment and abuse;
- bullying, intimidation and threats;
- verbal abuse, taunts and insults;
- physical violence and assault, including corporal punishment and other physical punishments;
- emotional abuse (e.g. tempting someone into a sexual relationship
- under false pretences such as promises of marriage);
- psychological abuse (e.g. threatening to beat up a student or fail them in an exam).

The government of Ghana has made a concerted effort to increase enrolments at primary and JSS levels, especially among girls. The establishment of a Girls' Education Unit in the Ghana Education Service and the appointment of Girls' Education Officers at the regional and district levels to oversee improvements in girls' participation are significant developments. Despite these efforts, girls continue to be enrolled in fewer numbers than boys, and to have higher dropout rates and lower achievement. It may be that abusive and intimidating behaviour in schools undermines efforts to improve girls' participation.

There is an urgent need for a more coordinated, proactive and system-wide response to combat the problem of school-based abuse. The study revealed weaknesses in terms of linkages between the district education office and the national level response to violence and abuse in the school environment. A holistic approach is required, working with all categories of stakeholders, e.g. teachers, parents, students, government officials in education, health and social welfare, the police, child protection agencies and NGOs working with woman and children. The example of one head teacher's misconduct is informative, as it shows how difficult it still is for communities to gain redress, despite efforts to delegate powers of educational decision-making to regional and local bodies and to give political voice to the people through district assemblies and bodies such as school management committees.

**1. Schools should:**

- develop specialised curriculum inputs on abuse within a human rights framework, and provide gender-based training courses, workshops and materials for all teachers;
- provide students with gender awareness training to eliminate negative perceptions about girls and make boys aware of the negative impact of aggressive behaviour, e.g. through clubs;
- ensure that students receive information on child abuse, children's rights and protection through the life skills curriculum and other materials; ensure that they know how to report cases of abusive actions, whether to parents, teachers or adult relatives;
- teach life skills and Geography and Citizenship through methods that engage students in discussion and reflection on their own experiences. Skilled facilitators are needed;
- engage peer educators to visit schools to talk about sexual violence and other issues that concern students.

## 2. Head teachers and teachers

School head teachers are crucial in ensuring that students learn in a supportive environment. Less authoritarian schools are not necessarily ones with poor discipline. Strong leadership is key. Studies show that schools with high attendance and achievement are those where expectations of both teacher and student behaviour are high, where the school culture is supportive of both (and includes teacher professional development) and where regulations are enforced fairly and firmly.

### School head teachers can work with teachers to:

- create a student-friendly environment that is conducive for learning, by working with students, especially girls, supporting their personal development and protecting their rights;
- attach importance to gender equity in a whole-school approach;
- take effective action against cases of abuse and bullying in the school, confront the issues and deal with them as serious disciplinary matters;
- consider setting up a Student Council with student representation and involvement in decision-making;
- foster more trusting relationships between students and teachers. The research shows that students distrust their teachers and rarely confide in them;
- strengthen G&C teaching so that it engages students with the issues and develops understanding. A traditional didactic approach is not suitable. Allow space for reflection, analysis and open discussion of taboo topics. Life skills should promote consent, negotiation and consultation in adolescent relationships rather than power domination and control.

## 3. Parents

### Parents and carers should be encouraged to:

- listen to what children tell them and refrain from blaming girls when they make allegations;
- provide their children, especially girls, with basic school items;
- refrain from using abusive language towards children;
- show interest in their children's progress in school, monitor their attendance and discuss their education with teachers;
- refrain from entering into negotiations for compensation with teachers who have made their daughters pregnant.

Adapted from: *Gender Violence in Schools: Ghana 3 Newsletter March 2004*

### Teaching Example 3

- Mrs Yarboi's Primary 5 class had been working for some weeks on gender stereotypes and how they can negatively affect girls' progress in the classroom and in life. It had been a difficult time for Mrs Yarboi because the boys felt that they liked the status quo and did not see that it needed to be changed. She decided to get in some expert help and contacted a local NGO working in rural development projects in their town. She had met a lady called Amina who was their gender specialist.
- Amina came to the school and talked to the class about abuse. They identified that abuse can be mental as well as physical and sexual. Amina told the class of some stories of young people who had been abused by their parents, by other family members and even by people from their religious group. She also talked of ways in which these students had been helped and what organisations there are to help people. It made some of the students very upset that people can behave that way. During the talk, Mrs Yarboi noticed that two girls started crying. After the visit from Amina, Mrs Yarboi asked the two girls if they would like to go and talk to Amina and she made appointments for them. In the next lesson, Mrs Yarboi asked her students to write about abuse and explain their feelings about it. From this, she was able to see how much each student had understood and was able to see how they had reacted to the stories Amina told.

### Activity 3

- Having explored some issues about gender with your class, suggest to them that they share what they have found out with the rest of the school.
- Ask them how they could do this. Could they:
  - Produce a play?
  - Do an assembly?
  - Write an information book?
  - Write a poem?

You could do more than one if you have a large class. Students could choose which group they join.

- Once they have decided what they want to do, ask them to plan what to say and the best way to say it. Remind them to be sensitive to their audience and careful how they present their ideas.
- Give them time to draft or practise what they are doing. When ready, allow them to present their play, book, poem or assembly to the class for constructive feedback, so that they can make any changes before they do the real performance or presentation to the school.
- After the event, allow your students the opportunity to assess the impact of their actions.
- Think how you can support your students and build on this task.

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