



Literacy a skill needed in today's world

COMMENT



ZELDA BARENDIS

LITERACY is an essential skill needed to participate in today's world.

Despite efforts to promote literacy, Eric Atmore's (2013) study on early childhood development in South Africa reminds us of the infrastructure challenges many of our schools face.

There is no running water or electricity, poor sanitation, dilapidated buildings, huge teacher/learner ratios, lack of nutrition, under-qualified teachers, as well as inadequate institutional capacity and funding.

Additional data from the Department of Basic Education (2008) reveals that low levels of literacy may also be exacerbated by a lack of libraries as only about 7% of our schools have functional school libraries.

Moreover, some of our learners have no books at home or in the classroom.

There is a scarcity in the availability of books in African languages, and the books that are available, are inappropriately levelled.

This harsh reality raises two key questions: How will we ever nurture learners who can read with confidence?

How can we nurture learners who will read for pleasure and realise that reading is the gateway to knowledge? On World Book and Copyright Day (April 23), it's important to point out that literacy knowledge and skills lay the foundation for reading and writing in all academic tasks.

Every day we find ourselves reading signs and symbols, a text message, a schedule, a map, a food label, or a textbook.

Thus, reading is required to fully function in our society.

Many young learners cannot read well enough to expand their knowledge of the world.

This situation is especially distressing since G Reid Lyon's (2002) research on reading development, reading difficulties, and reading instruction shows that the majority of learners can in fact learn to read regardless of their backgrounds.

The focus on learning to read and on developing learners' literacy levels is high on the agenda as the 2016 Pirls (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) results revealed that 78% of South African learners cannot read

with comprehension. What we often fail to acknowledge is that reading is an action while learning to read is a process – a process dependent on foundational skills such as phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

These foundational skills are crucial components of an effective reading programme needed to enable learners to develop into proficient readers who are able to comprehend.

An effective reading programme would not necessarily have to address each of these skills simultaneously, but would rather do so systematically and explicitly, considering learner levels and progression.

In addition, learner context is also a determining factor when considering the reading reality in South Africa. This should be considered when developing and choosing intervention programmes.

A "one-size-fits-all" approach to reading and literacy interventions is merely an example of the tail wagging the dog. Simply put, an effective reading programme must provide learners with a wide variety of experiences that relate to several important foundational skills of reading.

An example of such a programme could be the I CAN READ programme.

This is a community engagement project where pre-service literacy teachers facilitate the teaching of phonics for word building to foundation phase learners.

In this programme, students teach and develop learners' phonic knowledge and skills.

Phonics, a foundational literacy skill, is also a method of instruction that teaches learners the systematic relationship between graphemes (letters and letter combinations) in written language and phonemes (individual sounds) in spoken language as well as how to use this relationship to read and spell words.

In this way, learners are taught how to decode words which is an integral skill for word recognition and word building.

In essence, this programme is explicit and systematic as its structure is reliant on the phonics learning programme in the school.

There are neither scripted lesson plans, nor scripted activities. The only script is the outcome that "by participating in the programme, learners must know and apply grade-level phonics and develop word analysis skills to decode words."

To ascertain if learners can apply their grade-level phonics, they also participate in collaborative story writing.

This process draws on the learner's natural ability to tell stories and – with careful facilitation – is used to produce stories written by learners for learners.

Not only are learners afforded the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills, but they are granted an opportunity to draw on and discover their potential whilst being inadvertently centred in an affirming space.

The I CAN READ programme has led to the culmination of a graded anthology consisting of stories written by foundation phase learners for their peers.

Learners were able to recognise every word in every story and could relate to the vocabulary used in the story – an invaluable asset-based approach to systematically working towards the goal of reading, which is to comprehend.

As we observe another World Book and Copyright Day, let's also remember to use this day to not only share stories, books and foster a love for reading, but also to reflect on what we can do to promote and improve literacy in South Africa.

Dr Barendis is a Foundation Phase lecturer and programme leader in the Department of Curriculum Studies at Stellenbosch University.

LETTERS

Email ctletters.co.za (no attachments). All letters must contain the writer's full name, physical address and telephone number. No pen names.

Historic buildings destroyed by fire

AS I write this letter, I am extremely upset and disheartened. I have no knowledge of the details except for photos on social media about the fire that has destroyed one of the most historic buildings and restaurants in the country, Rhodes Memorial Restaurant.

I have often written to the City of Cape Town which claims it spends over R600 million a year putting out fires.

I have asked in my emails to the City, and Table Mountain National Park, as well as letters to the press previously, why they can't have effective video surveillance as most of Cape Town is flat and smoke can be seen from 30km or more away.

From Bloubergstrand there are social media photos taken hours before the fire was out of control, people showing off about the incredible weather and one can see smoke rising in the vicinity of Groote Schuur and Devil's Peak.

Surely the money spent annually fighting fires would allow for investment to have been readily available to ensure building of fire brigade stations at more strategic areas around our City, thinking back as well a couple of weeks ago, to the devastation in Stellenbosch.

I ask the City if it will assist in rebuilding this iconic structure. Not only is it a popular tourist attraction, it also employs many local and foreign workers.

I ask the City and SANParks too, was this fire due to vagrancy, arson, delay in deployment of firefighters or a lack of resources?

There have been strong rumours in the press in the past that fire fighting is big business and helicopters are delayed with the hope of gaining better monetary returns.

I would hate to believe such and it is disconcerting, but they have been around and where there is smoke, there is fire.

AGI ORFANOS | Blouberg

Strategy must consider needs of the homeless in City

WHILE the helicopters are circling and the devastating fire continues to rage on the slopes of Table Mountain, it would be prudent to take a step back from the smoke and ash and explore the issue of homelessness in the city.

One could argue that homelessness has been a contributing factor to the blaze that wreaked havoc this week.

If reports are correct, the initial fire began from a small fire deserted by a vagrant near Rhodes Memorial.

Reports have also claimed that one man (who lives on the mountain) has been arrested in relation to starting additional fires. The issue of homelessness in and around the city has worsened over the past few years and has been aggravated by the economic consequences of Covid-19.

This is not an issue the City can afford to ignore any further.

Urban and natural environments in and around the city are being threatened daily by the environmental degradation that

homelessness inevitably brings. A small, green area near the Claremont station has also been destroyed by regular fires started by homeless people who have occupied the space for months.

The grass has been razed, beautiful trees burnt, stripped and litter piled high.

The urban areas adjoining are also threatened by potential fire damage, but nothing is done. So much has been lost in the past few days – historic buildings, historic manuscripts, homes and livelihoods. Thousands of students have been uprooted and the trauma to the university community after just having reopened is immense. The environmental damage is enormous and has no price tag. This needs to be a warning sign to City councillors and provincial authorities that they need to come up with a co-ordinated strategy to deal with homelessness.

The strategy needs to take into account the humanitarian needs of the homeless community but also the natural heritage of Cape Town and its urban areas which are at risk.

HELEN MACDONALD | Rondebosch

Firefighters saved us

I LIVE in the upper reaches of the City Bowl, in the suburb of Oranjezicht, close to the base of Table Mountain.

The recent fire that swept through the UCT campus, then spread westward along the mountain, posed a threat to my neighbourhood and an even greater threat to three of the adjoining neighbourhoods, whose residents were forced to evacuate.

The many firefighters "on the line", did a magnificent job of fighting the fire throughout the day and night, without help from the usual fire suppression helicopters, grounded due to high winds and poor visibility.

By dawn of the second day, the winds had died and soon, the morning silence was broken by the distinctive "whop, whop" of many choppers hauling buckets of water from the Gardens reservoir to Table Mountain and returning, in a continuous circuit.

This "sound of music" continued throughout most of the day, with many of the choppers flying directly over my apartment block toward the mountain in less than one-minute intervals. Quite a show!

Whether on the ground or while airborne, firefighting is a hazardous business and those so engaged are true warriors and heroes.

We residents of the City Bowl owe them a huge measure of gratitude for saving our neighbourhoods – and our lives.

Hats off to the firefighters for their great courage and fortitude.

BILL CONSTANTINE | Oranjezicht

Amazon move a thumbs up for City

IT IS a real vote of confidence in the Cape province's economy to see that Amazon has announced that they will be establishing their headquarters in the City of Cape Town.

The City of Cape Town has been pushing for foreign investment and job creation through that foreign investment.

This is an endorsement of everything that the City is trying to do with regard to job creation.

It is amazing to see that this could lead to over 10 000 permanent jobs.

MICHAEL BAGRAIM | Highlands Estate

Modise's words carry weight

BARBIE Sandler (Cape Times April 21), Amen and AMEN again on your remarks regarding Thandi Modise. Keep it up!

FRANS LE ROUX | Paarl

SUPERQUICK CROSSWORD 1005

Entries must reach Contest Editor **SUPERQUICK 1005**, Top of the Times PO Box 11, Cape Town 8000 or e-mail toll@inl.co.za by midday on Wednesday. The first correct entry drawn wins R100, the next three R50 each. Winners are announced next week. **NOTE: Please include your postal address and contact number with your entry.**

ACROSS

- 1 What the whistle may be for, though you say no (6)
- 4 Beats the ass playing, talking about an hour (8)
- 10 Avail yourself of it, Luis having gone off key (7)
- 11 Such a charge as is made for the use of a name? (7)
- 12 Is it a day at the end of June? (4)
- 13 Many people go by it (6,4)
- 16 Pour with rain: a terrible racket (6)
- 17 Job for a religious organisation (7)
- 20 With what's tantamount to a right turn, the vessel has come about (7)
- 21 Tie the half-sister outside (6)
- 24 Battle medical science hasn't yet won? (3,4,3)
- 25 Song having a come-back: a foreign song (4)
- 27 Playing bowls with the rich? (7)
- 29 Lit up and in a bad temper (7)
- 30 Laugh and sing about a murder (8)
- 31 Go to it a couple of times, then stop (6)

DOWN

- 1 Collects, when the golf is over (6,2)
- 2 "Quite good but too pale?" (5,6)
- 3 Cutting a piece of paper (4)
- 5 A member of the staff and mother hid outside (4-4)
- 6 Manage to apply (10)
- 7 She may be on the run (3)
- 8 Put away the woman and the man (6)
- 9 He's wicked to shut the doctor in the room (5)
- 14 Again, but not now (7,4)
- 15 Corot isn't a surrealist artist (10)
- 18 Early wear! (8)
- 19 As ordered, scored (8)
- 22 Turns on and is surprised by (6)
- 23 "The hook," you say, "is a mistake" (5)

- 26 The former model (4)
- 28 It's half a mile to "The Duck and Cat" (3)

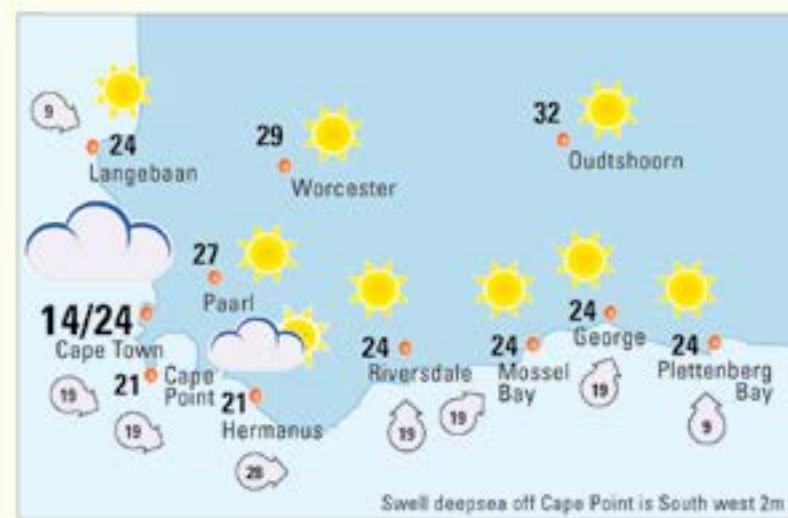
SOLUTIONS TO 1004:

Across: 1 Residue. 5 Grasp'd. 9 Limes. 10 Saturnine. 11 Isobar. 12 Cheeta'hs. 14 Greta. 15 Spot to eat. 18 Pondering. 20 Slack. 22 Striking. 24 Marina. 26 Readiness. 27 Exact. 28 Prevent. 29 Settler.
Down: 1 Rolling up. 2 Someone. 3 Disparage. 4 East. 5 Get through. 6 Agree. 7 Private. 8 Dress. 13 Assignment. 16 Testament. 17 Take after. 19 Narrate 21 Abigail. 22 Scrap. 23 Knife. 25 Asps.

WINNERS TO CROSSWORD 1004

R100 – Joy Robber
R50 – Susan Titterton; Chris Murison; Richard Wilson

WEATHER OUTLOOK



Outlook for Cape Town
Saturday: 15/21 High level clouds. Wind SW 9km/h.
Sunday: 15/20 Cloudy. Wind SW 9km/h.
Monday: 15/20 Light rain, 30%. Wind S 19km/h.
Tuesday: 15/20 Cloudy. Wind SSE 28km/h.

Outlook for George
Saturday: 14/22 Fog, partly cloudy. Wind S 9km/h.
Sunday: 14/21 Cloudy. Wind S 9km/h.
Monday: 14/20 Cloudy. Wind SSW 9km/h.
Tuesday: 13/18 Cloudy. Wind S 9km/h.

National Min/Max temps

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Bloemfontein | 12/23 | Stellenbosch | 11/20 | Pretoria | 16/28 |
| East London | 18/25 | Worcester | 14/21 | Richards Bay | 16/25 |
| Grahamstown | 12/23 | Worcester | 14/21 | Richards Bay | 16/25 |
| Johannesburg | 12/23 | Pietermaritzburg | 13/23 | Springbok | 16/25 |
| Kaptein | 16/25 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |
| Kimberley | 12/23 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |
| Monrovia | 16/25 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |
| Norwich | 12/23 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |
| Polokwane | 12/23 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |
| Upington | 12/23 | Worcester | 14/21 | Worcester | 14/21 |

International Min/Max temps

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Atlanta | 8/16 | London | 2/10 | New York | 6/11 |
| Buenos Aires | 11/24 | Los Angeles | 12/21 | Paris | 9/13 |
| Frankfurt | 11/23 | Madrid | 28/21 | Perth | 16/28 |
| Hong Kong | 22/28 | Nairobi | 19/27 | Rio de Janeiro | 16/28 |
| Johannesburg | 12/23 | New Delhi | 28/21 | Sydney | 12/21 |

Yesterday's Reading

| | | | | | |
|------------|-----|-------|----|------|----|
| Barometer: | 759 | Noon: | 19 | 6pm: | 19 |
| Humidity: | 76 | Mid: | 19 | Mid: | 19 |
| Temp: | 19 | Min: | 12 | Max: | 19 |

At Cape Town International Airport:

| | | | | | |
|------------|-----|--------------|----|------|----|
| Barometer: | 759 | Mid: | 19 | Mid: | 19 |
| Humidity: | 76 | Min: | 12 | Max: | 19 |
| Temp: | 19 | Wind at 6pm: | 19 | | |

First Quarter: 20 April
Full Moon: 27 April
Last Quarter: 3 May
New Moon: 11 May

UV Levels: High

Tides - Table Bay

| Today | | Tomorrow | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| High: | 08:27 - 12:50 | High: | 08:17 - 12:41 |
| Low: | 06:35 - 18:09 | Low: | 07:38 - 18:48 |
| Sunset: | 07:15 | Sunset: | 07:16 |
| Sunrise: | 18:13 | Sunrise: | 18:12 |
| Moonset: | 18:38 | Moonset: | 18:33 |
| Moonrise: | 02:43 | Moonrise: | 02:51 |

Best time to fish
Sunday
High: 09:00 - 14:21
Low: 06:18 - 20:24
Sunset: 07:16
Sunrise: 18:11
Moonset: 17:27
Moonrise: 02:00

Storage levels 12th April 2020-2021

| Capacity Ml | 2020 | 2021 | |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Berg River Dam | 120 010 | 87.5% | 73.5% |
| Dundas Dam | 35 517 | 97.2% | 80.0% |
| Swartkops Dam | 31 762 | 97.0% | 52.0% |
| Tweeds Dam | 400 198 | 52.5% | 75.0% |
| Yuin Dam | 164 095 | 53.3% | 63.2% |
| Waldersdam | 58 644 | 52.5% | 68.0% |
| Total Storage | 886 271 | 58.7% | 71.2% |

Report fires to the fire and Emergency Services on (021) 480-7700.