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Declaration

I, **Zanele Mathebula**, declare that this research titled ‘Towards poetry as a decolonial strategy in teaching a sensitive & controversial past in post-apartheid South Africa’ is my own work. This study has not been submitted to any university. I have acknowledged authors where I have used their work.

Signature:  **Z. Mathebula**

Date: 31 January 2025

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Dedications

I dedicate this masters report to my late mother Christina Ntombizodwa Mathebula; I am really proud of her for introducing me to the ‘pen’ and I got married to it. I love saying this a lot because my mother was the one who introduced me to education from creche. I dedicate this to her because she was an amazing mother and still an amazing ancestor. From being told that Wits University is not for poor kids to getting degrees at that same institution. Ndza khensa ngopfu N’wa Mathebula for everything you have done for me and for loving me unconditionally and supporting me.

I also dedicate this research project to my sisters, my nephews and niece. One day you all will understand the reason why I studied until this far. Most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to myself, Zanele you did it! A shy girl from a disadvantaged background finally did it. You are an amazing history and English teacher; you strive for greatness. You use creative forms of pedagogy to deliver knowledge, and you do it well. I am very proud of you, and I know it was not an easy journey, but you did it. To those kids who look up to me, including my younger siblings, you can achieve way more than I did and always believe in yourself. You are amazing and you can do it! It is possible because you are the one who can determine your future.

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Most importantly to my mother who has left me physically but not spiritually *ndza khensa*. Thank you so much N'wa Mathebula for everything you have done for me, and I know I have gained a powerful ancestor in you. To my dad who would always keep motivating me to push myself even when I wanted to give up, thank you papa.

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Abstract

The following research seeks to explore the potential use of poetry as a decolonial strategy in teaching sensitive and controversial topics of post-apartheid South Africa. Addressing the gap in decolonial approaches to history education through, drawing on the concept of decolonial theory as a theoretical framework, this study examines how carefully selected poetry can empower marginalized voices, challenge dominant and colonial perspectives, and contribute to a more inclusive history curriculum. The study's objectives include exploring the potential of poetry to contribute to decolonising history teaching, through assessing its role in empowering marginalized voices, and being able to understand poetry's potential for encouraging critical thinking in the classroom. This study poses questions based on the various challenges of using poetry as a decolonial teaching strategy, such as choosing poems that represent diverse voices and perspectives of historically silenced people. Additionally, this research investigates how, by analysing selected poems and curriculum content, poetry can evoke learners' emotions, address the complexities of colonial-apartheid histories, and empower marginalized voices. Using a qualitative approach involving document and textual analysis, selected poems and curriculum materials were analysed. Key findings suggest that poetry can effectively connect learners to complex historical contexts, helping to address emotional challenges and create spaces for dialogue. Furthermore, this research focuses on emphasising the need for decolonial pedagogies in addressing post-apartheid historical complexities and argues for the potential of carefully selected poetry in creating a history classroom that allows for inclusive engagement.

Keywords: Poetry, History Education, Post-apartheid South Africa, Marginalized Voices, Sensitive Topics in History, Decolonial pedagogy, and Inclusive Classroom.

List of Acronyms and Terms

Acronym	Meaning
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
FET	Further Education and Training
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis
ANC	African National Congress
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
OBE	Outcomes Based Education

Below are terms that I use throughout the study and I acknowledge that race is a social construct. The social construct was made around coloniality. Coloniality was built to privilege those who were classified as White and dehumanise those who were classified as Black. Race is deeply intertwined with coloniality and then the definitions below are made within the understanding of that social construct.

Black people: African people who have been historically marginalised and excluded in South Africa.

White people: Group of people who were classified through social construction of race and benefitted from racial privileges during colonialism and apartheid in South Africa.

Eurocentric: It is a perspective that is rooted in colonialism and prioritises Western knowledge system and marginalised non-Western Knowledge system.

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Chapter 1 Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

The history classroom in South Africa is a critical space that should allow for the exploration and analysis of our sensitive and controversial past. When dealing with a painful history there is a need to transform the traditional way of teaching history, which normally involves narrative storytelling (Hoque, 2018). In addition, this traditional way of teaching in South African history classrooms is frequently caused by a lack of resources, and a content heavy curriculum. These issues are part of the broader legacy of colonial-apartheid education policies that continue to influence contemporary teaching environments (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Many schools, especially in historically marginalized areas, still lack adequate textbooks, technology, and other essential materials, limiting teachers' ability to engage students with diverse and interactive resources; “these issues have serious implications for effective teaching and learning” (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019, p.1).

The curriculum is often from the perspective of a European lens, which simplify the complex histories of African people and leave little room for deeper discussion (Bertram et al., 2021). Furthermore, it tends to concentrate on facts which come from the colonial-apartheid era education systems (Dollie et al., 2020; Maluleka, 2023c; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) that aimed to control knowledge and keep colonial ideas in place. Accordingly, African histories were often left out or misrepresented to support colonial-apartheid rule (Bertram et al., 2021; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). As a result, even with the post 1994 changes in education, the South African history curriculum still carries these colonial influences, so that teachers find it challenging to create a space that truly reflects South Africa's diverse and complicated history (Maharajh et al., 2016; Maluleka, 2023c; Maluleka & Iaga Ramoupi, 2022).

Presenting history as facts, which tend to be from only one point of view (Dollie et al., 2020; Maluleka & Iaga Ramoupi, 2022), rather than as constructions and narratives (Wineburg, 2010), results in a content bias that prioritizes certain groups while marginalizing others. Godsell (2024) express that “Post-apartheid South Africa is still plagued by many legacies of the brutal apartheid system, as well as legacies of the colonial domination in which apartheid was rooted” (p.78). Kros (2010) has shown how teachers still use rote learning and reading through the textbook in the history classroom, which proves that there is need for a different approach in teaching history to

help learners think critically and allow for diverse perspectives (Adeyinka, 1989; Boadu, 2015; Oppong, 2009).

In this study I investigate carefully selected poetry as a decolonial strategy to challenge dominant perspectives and strengthen marginalized narratives and voices. The focus is on identifying three poems and relating them to three CAPS history curriculum topics. Two of these poems were written during colonialism but have a resonance with issues spreading into the apartheid era. The third one was written during the period of apartheid. Three topics from the CAPS history curriculum have been chosen which cover issues of race and apartheid, and I will consider how the poems could be used in teaching these topics. This will explore the use of poetry as a decolonial strategy to allow for moving beyond more traditional history teaching methods. This traditional teaching method is colonially influenced (Kros, 2010), and is also influenced by Bantu education, the official education system during the apartheid era, specifically for Black South Africans. I argue that poetry as a decolonising strategy can challenge colonial-apartheid views and create a dynamic and engaging educational setting, and foster critical thinking (Furman, 2005; Msila, 2013).

However, poetry as such cannot transform the teaching of history; it takes specific kinds of poems, and specific teaching methods, to make it work. There are different legacies in poetry: a legacy that continues to teach coloniality through poetic structure and content, and a legacy that uses poetry as resistance and rebellion (Lorde, 1985; Mashile, 2017). It is the latter legacy I intend to investigate. Lorde (1985), argues that poetry is not an indulgence, but rather a fundamental tool for survival, creativity, and self-expression, particularly for women and marginalized voices (Mishra, 2025). Poetry is powerful because it allows us to see and understand ourselves more clearly. Through poetry, feelings that were once silenced become powerful motivators for revolutionary ideas (Lorde, 1985). In this research report I will explore the different and intersecting dynamics of the above.

1.2 Problem statement

Traditional ways of teaching history, where learners mainly memorise facts, only relying on rote learning textbooks, does not encourage learners to think critically (Hand, 2008). This traditional, teacher centred approach usually results in learners adopting their teachers views, and agreeing with what is being taught without critiquing the content (Boadu, 2015). This teaching method is

often more prevalent in under resourced schools, further increasing inequality in education. Maluleka & Iaga Ramoupi (2022) mention that the textbooks used by teachers often promote dominant narratives, neglecting the experiences of the marginalized. This limits the learners' understanding of these aspects of society.

Moreover, research shows that, when learners are not challenged during lessons, they become less actively involved and stop engaging in the classroom, resulting in the learners finding the subject uninteresting (Boadu, 2015). Historical education during the period of colonisation and education in mission schools was mainly based on Euro-Western ideas and did not develop critical thinking skills (Maluleka & Iaga Ramoupi, 2022). The consequence of this emphasis on is that individuals that went through this schooling have a biased historical perspective and an underdeveloped capacity for critical analysis of their own history. It is ironic that the tools that empower critical analysis across diverse historical narratives, which originated within a Euro-Western context, are denied to the marginalised. By integrating these skills in ways that value local perspectives, learners can develop a more detailed understanding of their own histories.

The study explores the use of poetry as a teaching tool which aims to teach history in a way that includes diverse perspectives and encourages learners to critically engage with history as a subject. The main aim is to encourage critical thinking, even when it results in controversial views and the challenging of conventional perspectives. In relation to poetry, this means choosing poems that can challenge embedded ways of thinking from learners. Poetry that can invite diverse voices by exploring different themes that learners can engage with, which can provoke thought and they can be exposed to a wide range of viewpoints.

1.3 Rationale and Motivation for the study

As a history teacher in South Africa and an African historian, I have studied the subject in my high school years, and as my major in my university years. As a learner I have always been interested in how teachers teach history. This interest started in high school, and I had two history teachers who taught the subject in different ways, which affected the learners' attitude towards the subject. One teacher relied only on the textbook as our main source material. The other teacher went beyond the textbook and even introduced videos in his classroom. We would be introduced to a topic through watching videos from activists and, before we started with the content, we would already have an idea of what had happened. This was a motivating approach to teaching history; I

remember when we were supposed to do topic 4: “Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980” in grade 12 and before we could start our history teacher let us watch two videos. The one video that stood out for me was a video of Bantu Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, speaking about the movement. This was important as we had a sub-topic of “The challenge of Black Consciousness to the Apartheid state” in topic 4. We would be asked questions, where our opinions were acknowledged, and this critical engagement with the content was far more interesting than the textbook-based approach that was used in my previous history lessons.

When I became a student at Wits School of Education, my history lecturer used music and poetry to teach, which deepened my love for history, and I told myself that I will use music and poetry in my history classroom. Hence, it became my research topic in my honours “Using Music and Poetry to Decolonise History Teaching”. During my years as a student teacher, I used music to teach, and my learners were shocked and excited at the same time because I surprised them with a new approach that contrasted with traditional textbook-based lessons. As a tutor at Wits School of Education, I continued to use this method, and it was not a surprise to the students because their lecturer, Dr Sarah Godsell, uses poetry in her lessons. I witnessed students who previously found history boring or uninteresting become drawn to the subject and reconsider their decision to drop it. Some expressed how they want to continue with the subject as their major. I believe in having various forms of teaching history because, as a teacher, it allows you to challenge your learners in the classroom.

There are two reasons for conducting this study. Firstly, to recognise South Africa’s traumatic and painful history, more specifically the apartheid and colonial era, and how this era still impacts the history classroom in different ways. These histories form an important part of the history curriculum and are painful to teach (Robinson, 2024). History is a painful subject (Godsell, 2019), it needs careful planning and must be taught with sensitivity and care. In addition to addressing the legacy of apartheid, it is crucial to acknowledge the enduring impact of coloniality, as it shapes South Africa's past, and its present socio-political landscape (Kurtz, 2010). Due to this sensitive and controversial past, new pedagogical approaches are needed to teach this difficult history (Maluleka, 2023a), which informs our painful present. The following study aims to contribute to the development of an inclusive, engaging and decolonised approach to history education, through exploring the use of poetry in the classroom.

Secondly, this study investigates how poetry can provide insights to better understand historical events and concepts. Using it in the classroom can also make learning more relevant to learners, who will be able to engage and make connections with the past better through a different, and creative form of writing (Furman, 2005; Godsell, 2019; Müller & Kruger, 2022; Zembylas, 2018a). Through integrating poetry and history, this research investigates how poetry can enable learners to understand the subject and challenge the content (Pellegrino, 2013). Poetry can show various perspectives or delve deeply into one perspective from an individual and personal point of view. This can help to understand the experiences of a marginalised person who had been silenced and ignored (Mishra, 2025; Msila, 2013).

1.4 Aims and Objectives.

- To investigate whether specific poems have the potential of being used as a decolonising tool for teaching history in the South African classroom.
- To unfold how poetry can contribute to fostering a better understanding of historical narratives.
- Analysing how selected poems can be used as tools to decolonise the way South African history is taught by challenging the dominant narratives and viewpoints that were taught.
- Investigating the potential role of poetry as a decolonial tool in teaching the sensitive and controversial South Africa's past in the post-apartheid era.

1.5 Research questions

1.5.1 Main research question

In what ways can carefully selected poems be used as a decolonial strategy to teach the painful, sensitive, and controversial past in post-apartheid South Africa?

1.5.2 Sub-research questions.

- What kind of poems can be used as a decolonial teaching strategy in the history classroom?
- How can poems be linked to CAPS documents in a way to support the teaching of history in a decolonial way?

1.5.3 Outline of Chapters

The structure of this research report is arranged into seven chapters, that will be presented in the following manner:

1.5.3.1 Chapter One

In this chapter the focus is on the introduction of the study. It discusses the problem statement, rationale, aims and objectives of the study, research questions and the outline of the chapters.

1.5.3.2 Chapter Two

This chapter contains reviews of both local and international literature. This review is structured outlined in the following manner:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 History of pedagogy
- 3 Decolonising pedagogy
- 4 Poetry in the history classroom.
- 5 The development of the CAPS history curriculum
- 6 Conclusion

1.5.3.3 Chapter Three

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework used in the study. It includes the introduction to, and explanation of decolonial theory.

1.5.3.4 Chapter Four

This chapter outlines the methodology of the project. It explains the use of qualitative approach to gather and analyse data involving document and textual analysis, using poems and CAPS topics which make the study empirical. No human participants were included in this study.

1.5.3.5 Chapter Five

In this chapter I analyse the data of the study, namely the selected poems and the CAPS topics. The poems I will use are: *My country* by Rollie Reggie, *Black and white* by an author only known as M G and *First day after the war* by Mazisi Kunene. The CAPS topics used are: Topic 3: “Ideas of race”, Topic 5: “Apartheid South Africa- how unique was Apartheid” from the grade 11 history curriculum and Topic 4: “Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980” from the grade 12 history curriculum.

1.5.3.6 Chapter Six

This chapter’s focus is on the discussion of the data of the project, relating it to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. I will explore the integration of the three poems, “*My country*”,

“Black and White” and *“First Day After the War”* within the context of the Grade 11 and 12 history curricula. Finally, the limitations of the study are highlighted which opens potential areas for future research that could further explore the impact of poetry in educational contexts.

1.5.3.7 Chapter Seven

This chapter outlines the conclusion of the project, where I will summarise the key findings of my study. Additionally, I will engage in a critical reflection on the process of writing this thesis, detailing my personal and academic journey throughout this study. This reflection will highlight the challenges faced, the growth experienced, and the insights gained during this process of writing this masters research report.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study and aims to investigate whether carefully selected poems have the potential of being used as a decolonising tool for teaching history in the South African classroom. Therefore, it aims to unfold how poetry can contribute to fostering a better understanding of historical narratives. In addition, in the chapters of the study there will be more discussions that are theoretical that will address the research questions. This study seeks to contribute to the development of an inclusive, engaging and decolonised approach to history education, through exploring the potential use of poetry in the classroom.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review chapter, I will cover the sections of literature focusing on important themes for this thesis: History pedagogy, Decolonising pedagogy, Poetry in the history classroom (poetry as a decolonial strategy and poetry as a teaching strategy-as both colonising and decolonising) and the development of the CAPS history curriculum. I am including the CAPS history curriculum in the literature chapter to examine the framework within which history education operates in post-apartheid South Africa.

2.2 History Pedagogy

In this section the focus is about the discussion of history pedagogy, and then, specifically, the teaching of painful, sensitive, and controversial topics in the history of South Africa. It particularly explores the challenges history teachers encounter when teaching traumatic, painful topics like apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa.

Pedagogy, according to McGregor (2012), refers to strategies and principles used in the process of education. Newfield & Maungedzo (2006) define pedagogy as a “teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to a full and equitable social participation” (p.73). Pedagogy is not merely about transmitting facts, but goes beyond and creates an environment where learners can remember and understand what is being taught in a meaningful way (Freire, 2018; Shahjahan et al., 2022). Freire (2020) critiques traditional education models and he advocates for student-centred approach that is dialogical.

History, defined as the study how past actions shape today and tomorrow, judge those changes (Ndlovu et.al., 2018 & Åström Elmersjö, 2024), is taught in ways across the world, but there is often a fall back on rote learning (Kros, 2010). Rote learning as a dominant form of history teaching produces learners lack critical thinking and analytical skills. Thus, learners struggle to engage with the content. Seixas and Peck, (2004), argue it is history education’s job to teach students to be critical historical thinkers. Teachers should teach for understanding and improve historical thinking skills (Peck & Seixas, 2008). Lévesque (2008) argues Canadian students should be encouraged to engage with primary sources so they can construct their own historical interpretation. Lévesque (2008), in order to foster critical historical thinking, I argue that incorporating poetry has the

potential to connect learners with the historical events, as well as allow them to think critically because they will be encouraged to analyse and express their voices.

According to Seixas (2006), the focus should be on historical thinking rather than rote memorization of facts. Critical thinking needs to be taught to students so they can recognize bias in the content (Seixas, 2006; Seixas, 2017). Wineburg (2010) continues the debate by emphasising the importance of historical thinking in teaching history, which requires students to question sources and engage in empathetic reasoning. Incorporating poetry as a teaching tool has the potential to help learners emotionally engage with the past in a meaningful way, and to open discussion and debate. Meaningful debate will allow learners be critical, and hear different voices in the history classroom. Clark's (2009) focus on history education in Australia and Canada argues that relying on facts only in the history classroom could turn students away from the subject because they do not have a critical historical engagement (Dryden-Peterson & Robinson, 2024).

Teachers construct sources that they think are legitimate of historical knowledge that shapes students understanding of the past (Dryden-Peterson & Robinson, 2024). Furthermore, teachers presented apartheid as a distant past, disconnected from current inequalities (Dryden-Peterson & Robinson, 2024). Decolonising the way history is taught, especially when teaching controversial and sensitive topics like apartheid involves, among other things, moving away from rote learning (Kros, 2010), to critically engage with the content (Dryden-Peterson & Robinson, 2024). Rote learning according to Kros (2010); Todd & Mason, (2005), often disengages learners from the emotional and human aspects of history, reducing complex narratives to mere facts and dates without any deeper reflection on the lived experiences of individuals affected by historical events. This disconnection can lead to an inadequate understanding of sensitive topics, such as apartheid, where the pain and trauma of the past are not explored. By integrating carefully selected poetry into the classroom (Godsell, 2019), history teachers can create a more transformative learning environment where the pain and trauma of the past are not only discussed but also felt and understood on a deeper level thus progressing decoloniality.

Due to the complexity of history's epistemology makes teaching it problematic, especially with multiples objectives like fostering critical thinking (Åström Elmersjö, 2024). Teaching history is difficult especially when teaching the controversial and sensitive topics like apartheid; it is challenging for South African history teachers as it is painful and might trigger both learners and

teachers (Robinson, 2024). Engelbrecht (2008) mentions in his article that, after 1994, there was a debate about including sensitive history in textbooks, and whether the sensitive past should be learned in schools. Teachers face emotional challenges when having to teach painful and traumatic historical topics such as slavery (Glanvill-Miller, 2017). Despite these challenges, Wassermann (2011) argues that it is necessary to teach controversial topics to be able to understand history. By confronting uncomfortable truths, learners can question assumptions about history (Robinson, 2024) and society, which can lead to deeper critical engagement with current social issues (Pace, 2021). Some of the teaching challenges include teachers understanding of the subject and the way they teach it to avoid creation of obstacles in teaching (Åström Elmersjö, 2024).

Despite these challenges that teachers encounter, according to Dollie et al. (2020), open discussions on topics that can be triggering and sensitive are beneficial. Maluleka (2023) introduced the ‘silent conversation’ method into the history classroom when teaching controversial topics. The ‘silent conversation’ is an activity where learners express their views through writing without having to share them verbally. Other pedagogical proposals have been suggested to use or encourage open-ended and empathy-developing teaching approaches as well as explicitly teaching students how to use enquiry skills, and to have discussions, reflecting on themselves and others (Kello, 2016).

The literature engaged with asserts that rote learning is critiqued as it is seen as making learners to not engage with the content. Teaching painful histories is accompanied by emotional and practical challenges (Åström Elmersjö, 2024; Robinson, 2024), including teachers’ fear of triggering trauma or conflict in the classroom. Poetry can be seen as a good teaching strategy to help connect learners with the historical events, instead of relying solely on the textbooks learners will engage with the content and question it.

2.3 Decolonising Pedagogy

This section explores the concept of decolonising pedagogy, examining how educational practices and curricula can be transformed to not only challenge but dismantle colonial power structures, and foster a more inclusive learning environment that promotes diverse perspectives. Lopes & Stará (2023) argue that decolonial pedagogical approaches aim to challenge traditional power structures in education, promoting more inclusive and participatory learning environment.

Decolonisation is described as a political and territorial project (Morreira et al., 2020), that calls into question the colonial situation (Maluleka, 2023c), it requires challenging and critical engagement with colonial violence.

Maldonado-Torres et al (2023) argue that decolonial pedagogy challenges the colonality of justice within liberal settings. Decolonising pedagogy is rooted in critical theories such as Frantz Fanon (1963) and Paulo Freire (1996). Fanon (1963) highlights how colonial education oppressed colonised people both culturally and psychologically through devaluing their knowledge and identities. Whereas Freire's (1996) concept of 'pedagogy of the oppressed' emphasises that education should be a tool for liberation, where learners actively engage with, and challenge oppressive systems. However, there is a commonality between critical and decolonial theory in that they share a goal of dismantling oppressive power structures, though each approaches it differently. Furthermore, Zembylas (2018b), highlights some of the critique of Freirean theory that, despite the focus on liberation I mentioned above, it is rooted in western thought, making it less suitable for addressing the specific needs of decolonisation. Critics like (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2021) argue that the Freirean theory and critical pedagogy fail to address fully the role of White settler colonialism in shaping the education system, societal structures, and even "the language and tools used in critical pedagogy" (Zembylas, 2018b, p.404). Other critics, like Ellsworth (1989), challenge the Freirean-based promise of transformation, and its assumptions as to the means of constructing knowledge, that ignore the unequal power relations that happens between the teacher and student (Zembylas, 2018b).

McGregor (2012) describes decolonising pedagogy as an approach that aims to assist learners understand how colonialism and its implications shaped and influenced the world. Omodan & Diko (2021) argue for ubuntu pedagogy as a decolonial pedagogy, which seeks to challenge Eurocentric hegemony in education and empower marginalised communities. Building on this idea, they further argue that we can understand this world "through a critical lens where knowledge production lies outside of Eurocentrism, thus acknowledging local politics within educational contexts" (Omodan & Diko, 2021, p.96). This liberatory pedagogy approach (Freire, 1996; Jackson, 2007) challenges the traditional western perspectives that have dominated the education system. The goal of decolonising pedagogy is to recognise and rectify the inequalities in the curriculum and the overall structure of education that had marginalized and excluded a wide range

of social, cultural and historical perspectives (McGregor, 2012). Elaborating on this, Zavala (2016) argues that the goal of decolonising pedagogy is to dismantle colonial influences in education by employing interconnected strategies that aim to restore and validate marginalized narratives, promote healing, and reclaim cultural identities and spaces. These strategies use a holistic approach that not only addresses historical injustices, but also fosters a transformative and inclusive educational environment.

Drawing on Zavala (2016), when pedagogy is decolonised it allows all diverse learners to have their own perspectives, and their own knowledges to be acknowledged and represented. In these decolonised pedagogical approaches, poetry is suggested as one effective method to engage diverse learners and represent their perspectives and knowledge. McGregor (2012) states that, in order to challenge the dominant construction of history, decolonising pedagogies must be used in history education to dismantle the Eurocentric narratives that have traditionally shaped historical knowledge. This would allow learners and teachers to analyse and deconstruct the controversial past in a way that gives agency to colonised people. Additionally, decolonising pedagogy fosters teaching and learning that is relational (Shahjahan et al., 2022), which will emphasise building meaningful connections between teachers, learners, and the knowledge being taught.

Zavala (2016) argues for the strategy of reclaiming in decolonial education and defines reclaiming as “a strategy in decolonial education projects that involves recovering who people are (their cultural identities), their practices, and their relation to place (land, cosmos). It is a generative praxis that brings ancestral knowledges together with local, endogenous knowledges in the development of decolonial spaces” (Zavala, 2016, p.5). This strategy is important in my research because it focuses on bringing voices of the previously marginalised through poetry.

In post-apartheid South Africa’s context, adopting a decolonising framework through the use of poetry with its emotive and reflective qualities, facilitates a more personal and communal engagement with the past, encouraging learners to connect with history on an emotional level (Godsell, 2019). It serves as a medium for storytelling that resonates deeply with the oral traditions inherent in many African cultures, thereby promoting a culturally relevant pedagogy that is inclusive (Godsell, 2019; Shahjahan et al., 2022). This approach thereby facilitates to the broader goals of reconciliation and decolonisation in education.

In conclusion, when we teach sensitive and controversial topics like apartheid there is a need to change the teaching approach. Decolonising pedagogy seeks to transform educational practices and curricula to challenge colonial power structures, promote inclusivity, and validate diverse perspectives and knowledge systems (Lopes & Stará, 2023). Rooted in critical theories like those of Fanon and Freire, it emphasises on dismantling of Eurocentric narratives and uses education as a tool for liberation that have historically marginalized non-Western perspectives (Freire, 1996; Jackson, 2007). Decolonising pedagogy also highlights the importance of meaningful connections between teachers, learners, and their knowledge which creates an inclusive environment that values, and respects diverse cultural identities and experiences (Shahjahan et al., 2022).

2.3.1 Poetry in the history classroom

This section focuses on discussing the dual role of poetry in the history classroom, examining how it can serve as both a colonising and decolonising tool, while also considering its potential as a decolonial strategy.

According to Godsell (2019) poetry creates a world that is “layered and carefully constructed” (p.14). The author continues to emphasise that this approach “will work effectively to decolonise or teach history” (Godsell, 2019, p.20). Poetry can do a variety of things, some colonising, some decolonising therefore, there should be a form of criteria for selecting the specific poems that can be used effectively in history lessons. Somers (1999) highlights that the guidelines for the selection of poems must make sure of historical arguments. The criteria that is important to me is the one stated by Godsell (2019) where she explains the guidelines for using poetry in history classrooms. Godsell (2019, p.22) argues that selected poems must “connect with historical arguments; engage with historical thinking; be compelling; connect with issues relevant to learners; writer positionality; and mostly reflect content from CAPS” (ibid, p.22).

Teachers can use poetry to challenge their learners to think critically; to see connections and relationships (Somers, 1999). Most importantly, incorporating poetry into the history classroom can make the subject more engaging, meaningful, and memorable for learners (d’Abdon, 2016a). By using poetic language, with its vivid imagery, and emotional expression, poetry can help learners connect with historical events and figures on a personal level, fostering a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the past. Somers (1999) points out that, through engaging with the nuanced language and symbolism, well selected poetry can affect learners on an emotional

level which fosters more meaningful discussions. It may well inspire learners to engage in deeper discussions, and share their perspectives, articulate their understanding, and listen to the diverse interpretations of their peers. This process not only helps to explore different viewpoints but also deepens their critical thinking and analytical skills. Poetry has a deep connection to human engagement not only with others but with the world (Creely, 2019).

While poetry can play a significant role in decolonial teaching contexts, it can be used as a colonial teaching tool. Poetry can either challenge colonial ideas or support them. When poetry reinforces colonial narratives, it often romanticizes or justifies the colonial past, ignoring the oppression and violence inflicted on colonised people. Using colonially oriented poetry, can reinforce colonial ideas as well as promoting its dominant narrative. An example of colonial poetry reinforcing colonial narratives is the poem written by Rudyard Kipling “The White Man's Burden” (Mantyk, 2021). This poem shows how poetry can be used to justify colonialism, which tends to support power imbalances and perpetuate stereotypes, through the reinforcement of colonial narratives (Mantyk, 2021). “*The White Man's Burden*”, written in 1899, proposed that white people were obliged to civilize those who are non-white (Denson, 1999). The poem’s imperialistic ideals are evident in stanza 1, line 1; “Take up the White Man’s burden —” and stanza 3, lines 2-4; “The savage wars of peace / Fill full the mouth of Famine / And bid the sickness cease;” (Mantyk, 2021). This type of poem can be colonising as Kipling portrays the colonisation process to bring progress and prosperity to colonised territories, disregarding the violence and exploitation often associated with colonial rule. Using these types of poems that perpetuate colonial views will have a colonising influence.

Because of this, I argue that, for poetry to be decolonising, it must be carefully selected. Supporting this assertion, Manathunga et al. (2022), states that poetry forms a “powerful vehicle for speaking back to colonial power” (p.3), and Keet (2014) states that decolonisation means the “undoing of colonialism”. Specifically, Godsell (2019) states that carefully selected poems that link with historical arguments can be extremely effective in supporting the CAPS curriculum both in content and skill development. When selecting the poems there should be a criterion that considers the relevance to historical periods like colonialism and apartheid, as well as what voices and perspectives are being brought to the fore, while still maintaining the meaning and which considers whose history and whose voice is in the poem.

In the decolonising context, using poetry is seen as a powerful tool because it is empowering and can convey emotions (d'Abdon, 2016a). Newfield & D'abdon (2015) argue for poetry that can assist learners to connect with their experiences and feelings which, in turn, fosters empowerment and confidence (Mishra, 2025). By using poetry, learners can listen deeply to different perspectives and have a better understanding of the past (Mishra, 2025). In this thesis I have carefully selected poems to engage with the themes I have mentioned in this section, themes like connection and power imbalance. These poems can serve as tools to help learners explore their own narratives and histories while fostering an understanding and reflection on the perspectives of others.

As Godsell (2019) argues “Poetry creates a world and invites people to find themselves in that world” (p.14). This will encourage learners to connect and engage with the content and to unlock their potential through discovering themselves in historical and present contexts. Despite the different challenges that might be encountered when implementing these changes, one way that can be suggested to transform the teaching approach is through using poetry. In post-apartheid South Africa, using poetry as a decolonial strategy in teaching involves incorporating the voices of marginalized groups (Mishra, 2025), such as black South Africans, indigenous communities, and those who were oppressed under apartheid. These voices share stories of resistance, resilience, and survival, highlighting the personal and collective experiences of injustice and struggle. By incorporating poetry into the classroom, teachers can challenge the dominance of Eurocentric narratives, which often present history from the perspective of the colonisers or the ruling class. Using suitable poetry, learners can engage with the trauma and resistance experienced during apartheid in a way that Western historical texts may not fully capture. This thesis explores poetry being used in the history classroom as a decolonial tool, because poetry has the potential to foster inclusivity and different perspectives, and can help with painful conversations. Godsell (2019) argues that poetry serves as a powerful tool in voicing sensitive topics, as it acknowledges and embraces the complexity and pain of the past. Strategies such as poetry, help foster emotional engagement (d'Abdon, 2016b; Furman, 2005), particularly in contexts like post-apartheid South Africa.

2.4 The development of the CAPS history curriculum

This section focuses on the three different curriculum reforms that were implemented in South Africa from the end of apartheid through 2011 (which is used till the present date). I will explain

the three curriculums introduced into the South African educational system: Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The purpose of including this discussion is to highlight how the colonial legacy embedded within the South African education system has persisted across all three of these reforms, and thus why decolonisation of pedagogy in the history classroom is necessary. This section will elaborate on when and why they were implemented, why they each did not work and were superseded and what was done to change the curriculum.

Dollie et al. (2020) state that the development of the CAPS history curriculum is important as its aim was to try move away from its colonial influences and reshape the educational landscape. South Africa transitioned to a democratic country in 1994, and there have been different efforts made to change the education system through numerous educational reforms. There were three curricula that were put into place in South Africa, the OBE (1997), NCS (2007) and CAPS (2012) (Maharajh et al., 2016). The aim of these educational reforms was to try to undo the imbalance and inequalities in the South African education system, which were put in place by the apartheid government (Maharajh et al., 2016). “Since 1994, South Africa has experienced a great deal of educational transformation. This has been necessary because of the situation inherited by the first democratic government” (Plessis & Mbunyuza, 2014, p.211). This transformation is particularly evident in the history classroom, which now asserts to address and redress the historical injustices and biases entrenched during apartheid. However, as I will show, the history curriculum still maintains a colonial lens in many topics.

2.4.1 The three curriculum reforms

As mentioned above, there were three curriculum developments that were put into place in South Africa between 1990 and 2011. The first one was OBE that was introduced in South Africa in 1997 (Botha, 2002; Mdhlalose et al., 2022). Its implementation was to emphasise the skills and competencies that students should achieve by the end of their education (Mazabow, 2003). To this end, it was focused on skills rather than content. Mdhlalose et al. (2022) continue to argue that the OBE curriculum used a learner centered approach. However, this curriculum did not work because teachers struggled with the new methods due to inadequate training and resources. There were difficulties with assessment because the focus was on continuous assessment, which was hard to manage and standardise, and the emphasis on outcomes often led to neglecting the in-depth

coverage of content (Botha, 2002; Maodzwa–Taruvunga & Cross, 2012). These challenges led to the cancelling of OBE and the introduction of the NCS in 2007.

The goal of the NCS was to streamline the curriculum and make it more manageable, coherent, and content-focused while still retaining some of the positive aspects of OBE curriculum (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2012). However, despite efforts to address these challenges within the NCS, the need for further refinement of the curriculum became evident. The NCS could not fully resolve the issues from the OBE curriculum, leading to further calls for curriculum reform leading to the formation of the current curriculum CAPS, which was introduced in 2012 (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2012). Pinnock (2011) cited in Plessis & Mbunyuza (2014) highlights that “the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is not a new curriculum, but an amendment to the NCS Grades R–12. It therefore still follows the requirements of the same process and procedure as the NCS Grades R–12” (p.212). This is because the implementation of the CAPS curriculum was aimed at addressing the shortcomings of the NCS. The aim was to simplify and clarify the curriculum structure, making it more accessible and practical for teachers and learners (Ramatlapanana & Makonye, 2012). Unlike the previous curriculum, the CAPS curriculum is adjusted to focus on *what* teachers teach and not *how* teachers teach (Pinnock, 2011). While CAPS has addressed many of the practical encounters teachers faced under the OBE and NCS curricula, it is used and accepted in schools. However, there remain ongoing discussions about its effectiveness and the areas for further improvement. Additionally, there are still problems with the CAPS history curriculum that must be addressed.

2.4.2 The CAPS history curriculum

The formation of the CAPS history curriculum was a very important step in trying to achieve educational reforms, especially for under-resourced schools (Maharajh et al., 2016). CAPS is more focused on prescribing specific content and outcomes at each grade level (Plessis & Mbunyuza, 2014). Whereas, OBE took a learner-cantered approach, focusing on the outcomes or goals that learners should achieve, the NCS prescribes specific content (Mdhlalose et al., 2022).

Previously, history was used by colonial rulers as a tool to control people, by means of a one-sided, Eurocentric, perspective that maintains unfair power dynamics in South African society (Dollie et al., 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Some argue that the CAPS still reflects these imbalances, shaping contemporary educational frameworks. Therefore, there are still important

changes that should take place (P. Du Plessis, 2021). While the reason for forming the CAPS history curriculum was to, *inter alia*, deal with historical injustices, it still struggles with the legacy of Eurocentric perspectives (Maluleka, 2021).

The CAPS history curriculum acknowledges the controversial aspects of South Africa's history by engaging with different narratives and creating space for empowering learners to acquire more knowledge about their history (Mahabeer, 2018). However, there have been minimal efforts made for decolonisation to take place within the CAPS framework, raising the need for a more extensive improvement (Dollie et al., 2020; Lebeloane, 2017).

In 2015, the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) was established by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to investigate the proposed implementation of history as a compulsory subject in schools (Ndlovu et al., 2018). The development of the History curriculum in South Africa, particularly the proposal to make it a compulsory subject, was aimed at ensuring that learners gain a thorough understanding of the country's past, with the aim of enhancing national identity, addressing historical imbalances, and encouraging learners to connect historical events with current issues, so as to foster a more informed and engaged society. According to the ministerial task team members, the CAPS curriculum's content has been organized in a way that separates South Africa from the African continent and the world (Ndlovu et al., 2018).

2.5 Conclusion

The education system in South Africa is impacted by the end of the colonial and apartheid era. During the colonial era when formal education was introduced in South Africa, its aim was to spread racial hierarchies which was extended and intensified during the apartheid period (Heydenrych, 2016). The education system of South Africa is still influenced by colonialism, even after the end of apartheid. Though people fought against oppression during apartheid, the effects of colonialism remain strong.

Using poetry in education can help address these lingering issues. Poetry allows for a deeper and more personal exploration of South Africa's difficult history, encouraging conversations and understanding that challenge old, dominant views and includes perspectives that were previously ignored (d'Abdon, 2016b; Godsell, 2019; Somers, 1999). The lasting effects of apartheid laid a foundation that must be addressed if the process of decolonisation takes place in the South African

education system. The colonial and apartheid structures still have influence (Maluleka, 2021), reflected in the biased curriculum and the approach to teaching which then creates a need for new pedagogical approaches. The literature suggests that, as part of these new pedagogies, poetry can be used to centre marginalized voices and challenge dominant narratives that were put into place by colonial structures (d'Abdon, 2016b; Manathunga et al., 2022).

When integrating poetry into the history classroom, one is required one to understand that it can be both colonising and decolonising. Meaning as it has a dual nature, poetry can reinforce colonial ideologies as well as be a tool of resistance, a decolonial tool. In order to be decolonising poetry needs to be a means of reclaiming indigenous voices, challenging colonial narratives, fostering critical consciousness, and creating spaces for healing and empowerment through the affirmation of cultural identities and historical experiences that have been marginalized or suppressed (Manathunga et al., 2022; Mishra, 2025; Newfield & Byrne, 2020). This is why Godsell (2019) criteria is very important when selecting poetry in the history classroom. In this study, poetry is used as a decolonial tool, challenging colonial narratives and creating an open supportive space to learn about sensitive issues. It enables critical thinking, not only through connecting learners with historical events, but also by connecting them with the different life worlds of the poets through emotive and expressive forms.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

In this research project I work with decolonial theory as my theoretical framework. I draw from academics such as Aníbal Quijano (2000), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) Walter Mignolo (2007) and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) who argue for the significance of decolonial thinking. Quijano (2000), maintains that coloniality still persists as a fundamental part of modernity, as colonial rule created systems that prioritize European ways of knowing and being, while marginalizing the perspectives of indigenous communities. This is because it is associated with creating new ways of understanding and being in the world in response to continued coloniality. Coloniality is defined as the lasting patterns of power, knowledge, that was enforced by colonialism that continue to shape global hierarchies, identities, and systems of knowledge even after the end of formal colonial rule. It influences the way of thinking and being that needs to be revealed because it is hidden (Mignolo, 2007, 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Decolonial theory emerged as a response to the ongoing effects of coloniality. This chapter begins by defining decolonisation and decoloniality, then concludes by showing how it has helped me understand the research I am working with.

3.2 Defining Decolonial Theory

Decolonial theory is a broad and varied field, I selected it as the theoretical framework to interpret the data of this study because it seeks to dismantle and challenge colonial legacies. De Lissovoy (2010) defines decolonial theory as being “concerned with confronting, challenging, and undoing the dominative and assimilative force of colonialism as a historical and contemporary process, and the cultural and epistemological Eurocentrism that underwrites it” (p.280). The chosen theoretical framework is specifically powerful in relation to education, as it challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies and advocates for pedagogical practices (De Lissovoy, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Using decolonial theory as a theoretical lens allows me to understand historical education as a means to challenge and dismantle colonial narratives, thereby fostering a more inclusive and accurate representation of the past in post-apartheid South Africa, in a way that critiques Eurocentrism and seeks to reclaim and centre indigenous knowledge systems, voices, and practices that have been marginalized or suppressed (De Lissovoy, 2010).

There is a difference between decolonisation and decoloniality. According to Wanda Nanibush, decolonisation means challenging and unlearning the main ideas of colonialism, such as Eurocentrism and the various forms of oppression, such as racism, and understanding that colonisation is the theft of land and liberty from Indigenous peoples (Mignolo & Nanibush, 2018). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) continues to elaborate on Maldonado-Torres's definition that decoloniality is the process of breaking down power structures and knowledge systems which either originated or were reinforced in the modern/colonial era. For my project, this means addressing how the history curriculum can perpetuate Eurocentric narratives and using poetry as a decolonial strategy to center marginalised perspectives, voices, and lived experiences within the curriculum.

The terms colonialism and coloniality are different. Colonialism is defined as the “direct territorial appropriation of another geo-political entity, combined with forthright exploitation of its resources and labor” (McClintock, 2023, p.88). Maldonado-Torres (2007) argue that “colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism” (p.243). In the context of education, Quijano (2000) cited in Fúnez-Flores (2024) and Mignolo & Bussmann (2023) ,argues that the coloniality of power is that global social orders, racial hierarchies, and the production of knowledge that are still influenced by colonial power structures. This influence is evident in curricula that prioritize Western epistemologies while marginalizing indigenous knowledge. Mamdani (1998) states that the stories of ordinary people that suffered under colonial-apartheid political, economic, epistemic, ontological, and educational discrimination continue to be ignored after democracy and are still overlooked in the political history sections of school curricula. To address this, my project will focus on using poetry to highlight and validate the personal and social histories of individuals who suffered under colonial-apartheid regimes, offering a decolonial strategy that challenges the dominant political narratives in post-apartheid South African education.

Fúnez-Flores (2024) points out how decolonial theory, as advanced by Quijano, helps us question the educational institutions, especially the many ‘truths’ that were taught. It lets us dig deeper into hidden truths, while challenging the Eurocentric views ingrained in our education system. This

theory acts as a lens for understanding how coloniality still influences what we learn and how we think. In my project, it allows me to approach the teaching of South Africa's difficult history after apartheid in a more balanced and thoughtful way, considering marginalized perspectives and experiences. In the South African educational context and my focus, this theoretical approach is about challenging coloniality and its influence in the history classroom. Through using a decolonial lens to think about history teaching and using poetry in the history classroom my focus is on creating room for marginalized narratives. This approach challenges dominant historical perspectives and empowers learners to “learn to read historical texts with a critical eye” (Bertram, 2008, p.174).

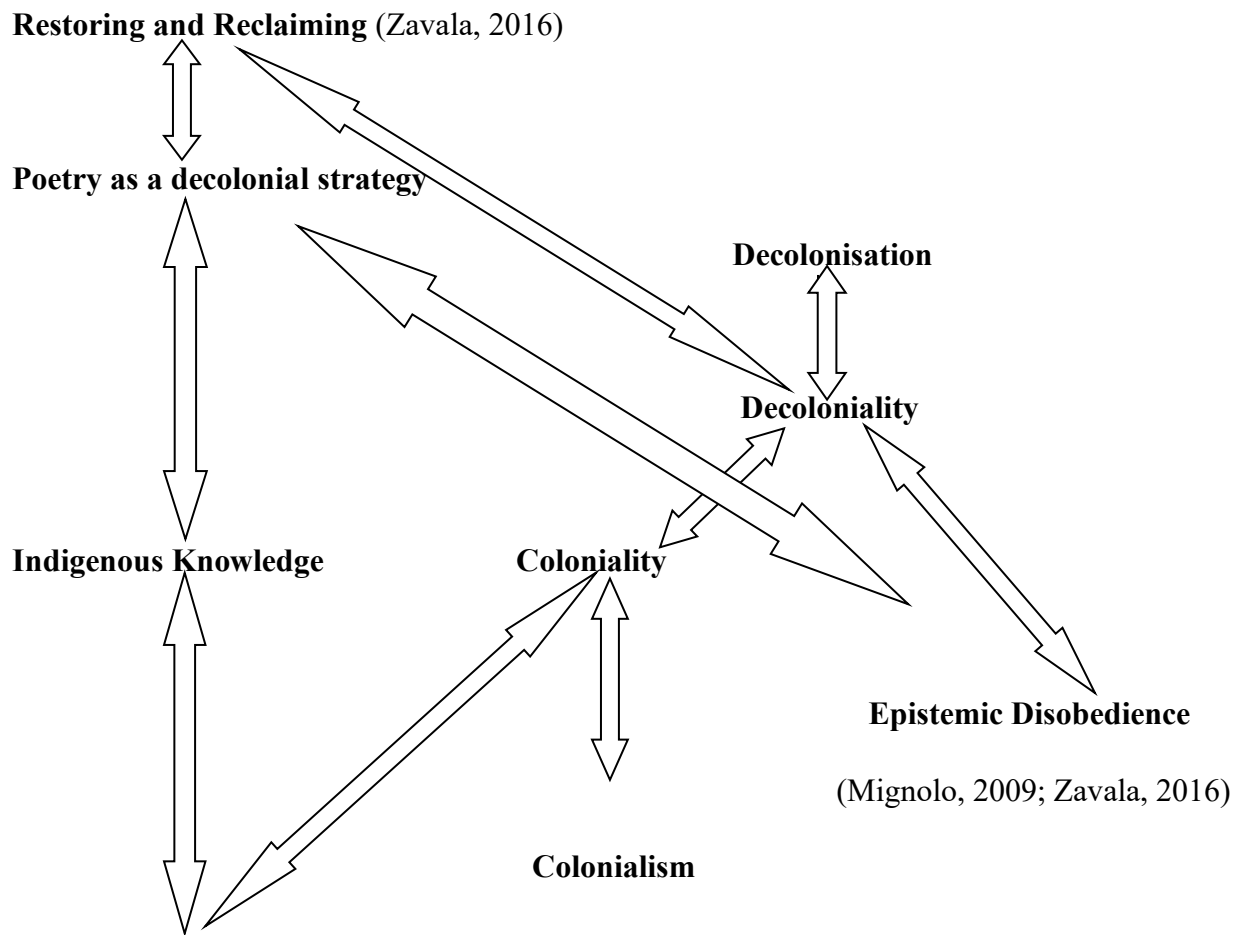
Moreover, decolonial theory as the chosen theoretical framework understands how modes of knowing and knowledge production are affected by coloniality, highlighting the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production (Mignolo & Bussmann, 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This theoretical framework calls for the prioritizing and recovery of the voices and knowledge of the previously colonised people (De Lissovoy, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). By creating an inclusive environment in which poetry from diverse cultural backgrounds is shared and discussed, enabling learners from all racial groups to engage with the poems and diverse perspectives, thereby promoting mutual understanding and decolonising the classroom narrative. One of the key ideas of the impact of colonial schooling is the disruption of indigenous knowledge (Heleta, 2016, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, 2017). This disruption is caused by imposing western perspectives and values in the education space, whereas indigenous knowledge is often marginalized in favour of Eurocentric curricula. The poems I have chosen use Eurocentric poetic forms but are intentionally combined with themes and narratives rooted in indigenous knowledge, in order to highlight and challenge the marginalization of indigenous perspectives. This study aims to utilize poetry as a decolonial strategy in post-apartheid South Africa to counter the disruption caused by the imposition of Western perspectives and values in education, thereby giving prominence to marginalized indigenous knowledge over Eurocentric curricula. Poems can be part of indigenous knowledge when they reflect the culture, history, and experiences of indigenous people, helping to keep their traditions and beliefs alive.

This theoretical approach will enable learners to have variety of perspectives in relation to past events as it encourages them to look at history through a decolonial lens to reclaim and restore ,

indigenous histories and ways of knowing which had been ignored (Mukavetz, 2018). Linking this to decoloniality means that this teaching method promotes an understanding which challenges the dominant narratives and highlights marginalized voices and experiences.

In decolonial theory there is a further concept that Mignolo proposes, namely epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009). In order to engage with epistemic disobedience by decolonial scholars such as Quijano (2000) and Mignolo (2009) is to delink from dominant Euro-Western thinking. Epistemic disobedience, as argued by Mignolo (2009), relates to poetry in that carefully selected poetry can serve as a medium which rejects Western epistemic dominance and embraces alternative, marginalized knowledge systems through its expressive and often rebellious nature (Lorde, 1985). Hlatshwayo (2019) proposed to use epistemic disobedience “to re-claim and re-centre African Philosophy, in particular, ethnophilosophy and nationalist-ideological philosophy” (p.66). Hlatshwayo (2019) argues that de-linking is starting to re-centre other perspectives, moving away from the intense foregrounding of Euro-American paradigms, moving away from western thought. This argument introduces a theoretical framework of decoloniality, which emphasises the necessity of de-linking from Western thought and re-centring alternative perspectives, which serves to contextualize the use of poetry as a decolonial strategy in teaching the sensitive and controversial past of post-apartheid South Africa, acknowledging that while poetry is used in this context, it can also be viewed as a form of imposed Western knowledge rather than inherently indigenous. While it is true that poetry also forms part of a western canon, I use poems that were written by Black South Africans who were marginalised and had no voice to express their grievances and used poetry to share their experiences. Epistemic disobedience through poetry involves challenging the Euro-Western thinking because these specifically selected poems written by black South Africans promotes a more inclusive understanding of the history of South Africa. Through these poems there are voices of the marginalised telling their story unfiltered with no influence by the Euro-Western thinking.

Below is a diagram that shows the concepts I draw from decolonial theory:



Decolonial theory

Figure 3-1 - Concepts I draw from decolonial theory.

This diagram shows the key concepts that I draw from decolonial theory as applied to my work. Decolonial theory guides this process, encouraging epistemic disobedience to challenge dominant knowledge. The central idea of decolonial theory connects to various concepts, such as decolonisation, decoloniality, colonialism, and coloniality. In this diagram I show how these ideas are interrelated, and how they inform the use of poetry as a decolonial strategy, which includes

reclaiming and restoring Histories, and epistemic disobedience in my project. The process of reclaiming and restoring histories emerges as a means of resisting these colonial structures. This structure reflects how decolonial theory critiques colonial legacies and supports the incorporation of marginalized perspectives in education.

The theoretical framework I have chosen tries to assist in rewriting history in the sense that it allows for various voices to be heard in the history classroom while trying not to reproduce colonial historical narratives, through emphasising the crucial role of carefully selected poetry in achieving this goal. Heleta (2016), points out that reshaping knowledge creation creates a shift in the ways that information is produced and shared but also fundamentally influences pedagogy by altering how knowledge is imparted and acquired. This means moving away from narratives that could reinforce colonial viewpoints and biases especially in the context of teaching about South Africa's sensitive and controversial past. By challenging dominant narratives, introducing poetry has the potential to foster a more critical and inclusive understanding of history that recognises and creates a platform for marginalized voices and perspectives. In the poem about race (black and white) the focus is on accessing the decolonial ideas about dehumanisation of indigenous people, a concept highlighted by (Fanon, 1963b). The other poems (first day after the war) uses the idea of coloniality of being, which refers to the ways colonialism shapes individual's sense of self and existence (Maldonado-Torres, 2007b), whereas (my country) is about cultural resistance and reclaiming identity.

In conclusion, decolonial theory provides a transformative framework for reimagining education in post-apartheid South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). By addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism, including coloniality, Eurocentrism, and epistemic injustice, this approach challenges dominant historical narratives and empower marginalized voices. Through the integration of these concepts, education becomes a tool for dismantling colonial structures, promoting justice, and envisioning a more equitable and decolonised future.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This research is empirical, in the form of document and textual analysis. The empirical work will be qualitative involving document and textual analysis. Qualitative research often involves methods that produce textual findings rather than numerical results (Sanjari et al., 2014). The qualitative method is used by researchers to understand and explain the meanings of various parts of human life. This way, they can interpret people's experiences by being part of human activities (Sanjari et al., 2014). Pulla & Carter (2018) explain that the objective of qualitative research is that of investigating specific problems or phenomena in relation to particular places, circumstances, or people. Qualitative research was used for this study to gain a deeper contextual understanding of how poetry can serve as a decolonial strategy in teaching sensitive and controversial aspects of post-apartheid South African history.

4.1 Research paradigm

In this project I used a decolonial paradigm to frame my study. Dastile & Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) used a decolonial paradigm to challenge colonial legacies in various domains of knowledge and power. A decolonial paradigm engages with diverse perspectives and centres on critical engagement and emancipation, where the researcher aims to either reflect, critique, or reveal prevailing power structures to deconstruct any Eurocentric notions prevailing in a research context (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). This paradigm encourages the questioning of existing power structures, and it enables the critical exploration, reflection, and the evaluation of multiple dimensions and voices. So, for this study, I chose this decolonial paradigm as it provides a critical framework for re-examining and restructuring educational curricula to be more inclusive and reflective of South Africa's diverse historical and cultural contexts, thereby addressing both current issues and the historical forces that shaped them. Mahabeer (2018) used a decolonial paradigm to highlight the need for a shift in how the curriculum is conceptualized and developed in South Africa, so that it will move towards a more inclusive and locally relevant educational framework. The paradigm does not only focus on addressing the current issues but also on the historical forces that gave rise to them (Bilgin, 2023). Dastile (2013) argues for an African-centred decolonial paradigm by challenging Western-centric perspectives, reclaiming African voices and knowledge, and addressing the effects of colonialism.

4.2 Research approach

Qualitative and empirical research approaches will be used for this research, with the empirical part from document analysis. This study will be empirical in a sense that I will use poems that speak to specific topics in the history CAPS curriculum, and I conduct a document analysis of three poems and three CAPS curriculum topics. In this research I am investigating how poetry can be a decolonising tool, and I am looking at how poems speak to everyday experiences in a historical context, mainly concerning racism, discrimination, and segregation. Through a systematic analysis of the poems, I will identify themes that emerge from the language and content. For instance, in the poem *my country* words like: “why is it, my heart is full of sadness” (line 8), “days of freedom are over” (line 12), “my country is no longer mine” (line 11). These words show themes of loss. Words like “I love you well” (line 1), “In my heart you’ll ever be dear” (line 32), show themes of love and affection.

The poem *black and white* I found words like: “the blackness of the changing night, is part of shining day” (line 5), “God did make creation right with black and white to stay” (line 7-8), these words show themes of unity. Words like: “to be black is curse you say” shows themes of racial oppression.

In the poem *first day after the war*, words like: “songs of a wedding party” (line 1), “eyes of freedom” (line 5) show themes of joy and celebration. “We said, ‘it is the first day after the war’” (line 8) themes of liberation and freedom. The theme of unity is shown in the words “we held hands with a stranger” (line 14).

The type of qualitative document analysis approached used in the study combines content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis allows me to focus on the CAPS content and identified themes. This analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts images and messages within the text (Krippendorff, 2018). Thematic analysis it is a method of developing themes (Morgan, 2022), enables me to focus more on reading of the CAPS topics and the themes in the poems. This study will not involve any human participants. I will analyse three poems using Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (Anderson, 2007), as examples that teachers might use in their history classroom, to argue for poetry as a decolonial teaching tool in the classroom. The poetry taught will be learner centred as it will align with the content of the curriculum and allow for learner’s perspectives. I will create lesson plans for each topic in my discussion to show how poetry can be used as a

decolonial strategy in the history classroom. According to Milkova (2012), a lesson plan is a teacher's map which shows what will be learned and how it will be done effectively during class time. Each lesson plan has to have objectives that are identified and learning activities however, "does not have to be an exhaustive document that describes each and every possible classroom scenario. Nor does it have to anticipate each and every student's response or question" (Milkova, 2012, p.39). The teacher's goals and objectives as well as means to accomplish them are provided by the general outline of a lesson plan (ibid). I will develop three lesson plans which will provide a detailed structure for how the poems can be implemented in the classroom.

4.3 Purposive sampling

Bertram & Christiansen (2014) define sampling as a method of selecting a set of individuals or units from a larger population in a study. In qualitative research purposive sampling is widely used (Etikan et al., 2016; Given, 2008; Palys, 2008). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to make theoretically informed decisions about what to include in the study based on specific criteria to meet the needs of the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The sample used for this study was purposive because I have specific criteria for the selection of poems and CAPS topics, thus only a few poems and CAPS topics were chosen.

Specific types of poems were selected for this study, the criteria being that they were written during colonialism and apartheid, and that they align with the chosen topics from the grade 11 and 12 history CAPS curriculum I wanted to investigate. I chose the three specific CAPS topics because I am investigating the teaching of the sensitive and controversial past in post-apartheid South Africa. Each chosen poem relates directly to one of the CAPS topics. As stated in the literature review that the criteria that for using poetry in history classrooms. In her table this is the criteria for poems to be suitable:

Tabel 1: Guidelines for using poetry in history classrooms (Godsell, 2019, p.21-22)

Criteria	How to identify	Linking to CAPS content & skills
Connect with historical arguments	The poet implicitly or explicitly makes reference to	Either the content or the concept

	historical events, or current events with historical tracing. The poem in itself is historical (not written in the last decade) and so needs to be read, as in language class, within its historical context	of the poem link to CAPS content e.g. – turning points in apartheid, the exile struggle in the 1980s, slavery in South Africa, TransAtlantic slave trade. Further than this poems engage or exemplify different historical arguments on the topic.
Engage historical thinking	Each poem chosen offers a particular perspective: this engages historical perspectives, and in some poems presented as examples in this article, multiple perspectives are shown. It is likely that other key historical thinking skills such as continuity and change, cause and effect, and ethical thinking will be engaged. Each poem is also, in itself, a piece of evidence, linking to working with evidence.	The CAPS document calls for the following skills: Engaging multiple perspectives. Drawing information from multiple sources. Recognising that there are multiple perspectives in history and recognising why there are these multiple perspectives. Engaging the representations of past in the present.
Be compelling	This is subjective and depends on the teacher and the class. It needs to be compelling to the class, so one method could be to ask students for favourite poems or themes. If the teacher finds it compelling and the class does not, this in	Learners must understand why there are different perspectives, and be able to have focused and constructive debate about the issues that emerge in the poems, substantiated by other historical evidence. If the poems are not compelling students will not be

	itself could be a discussion on historical perspective and generation.	motivated to debate.
Connect with relevant items for students	Linked to the above, this speaks to who and where your students are. The poem should both speak to them, and open up worlds for them to find themselves in	This speaks to an interest in and enjoyment of the study of the past. This is easier if the sources used are relevant.
Writer positionality	In terms of decolonisation, and shifting the gaze, poems that perpetuate a Eurocentric view, where students cannot find themselves or find themselves belittled, are not helpful. This is why the explosion of particularly black women writers in South Africa makes poetry an interesting methodology to explore right now.	Rather than a CAPS concept, this speaks to a CAPS aim. Developing an interest in and enjoyment of the study of the past is one of the key aims of history. This is more easily realised if students see themselves represented in some sources, or some teaching aids brought into the classroom. Poetry provides potential for centring previously marginalised voices and narratives.
Connect with content from CAPS	For poems to be effective the teacher and students must be able to link them to the content and skills in the CAPS curriculum, as laid out in column three.	This addresses historical knowledge called for in CAPS as well as historical thinking skills.

The goal is to provide teachers with poetry that not only aligns with the curriculum but also sparks meaningful dialogue in the classroom, encouraging critical thinking and personal reflection. In my research, I focused on analysing three poems in relation to the CAPS curriculum and analysed them through Thematic Content Analysis (Anderson, 2007). The three specific topics in the curriculum I chose are:

- From the grade 11 CAPS curriculum - Topic 3: *Ideas of race* and Topic 5: *Apartheid South Africa- how unique was Apartheid*.
- From the grade 12 CAPS curriculum - Topic 4: *Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980*.

The poems I used are; *My country* by Rollie Reggie, *Black and White* by an author only known as M G, and *First day after the war* by Mazisi Kunene. The first two of these poems were written in 1926 and 1936 respectively, during the colonial period, before apartheid. The intentional selection of these poems. is to speak to concepts that formed the foundation on which apartheid was based. The one poem that was written during apartheid is a positive view of the future, in counterpoint to the dark space of South Africa in the 1980's.

While there is a wide collection of well-known anti-apartheid poets, but I chose these one because I wanted to take relatively unknown poets who draw from their colonial experience and show that they can still provide useful insights into racially segregated South Africa, despite the lack of information about their sexuality or gender. The early poems show themes of segregation which are relevant to the chosen topics from the CAPS curriculum in the 21st century these poems show distinct voices that shed light on the lived experience of Black people in South Africa during that specific time period, particularly the issues of race and segregation during this era.

I chose to focus on two topics from the grade 11 history curriculum and topic 4 from the grade 12 curriculum. Topic three, *Ideas of race*, explores the historical background of the concept of race that fundamentally underpinned the legacy of colonialism and Apartheid, and understanding its complex racial ideas. When analysing the topics *Ideas of race*, and *Apartheid South Africa - how unique was Apartheid?* from in the grade 11 curriculum, I am aiming to understand how the history of race concepts and of apartheid are taught in South African schools. I want to grasp the complex ideas behind these topics, how race influenced colonialism and apartheid, and what made apartheid

in South Africa distinct. I am also interested in exploring new ways, like using poetry, to teach these sensitive subjects in a more inclusive and decolonised manner.

The focus of topic five, *Apartheid South Africa - how unique was Apartheid?* is to question the uniqueness of the era and its formation. This topic explores the system of discrimination that characterized Apartheid and how it violated human rights, and the resulting social injustice. The connection between these two topics it is because they are both important in representing South Africa's controversial past and its racial ideologies that were implemented during the colonial and Apartheid period.

Topic four from the grade 12 history curriculum focuses on the *Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980*. The aim of this topic is to show the resistance to Apartheid that took place, and how it is a continuation from the previous topics.

4.4 Data analysis

The qualitative data analysis in this research will adopt a Thematic Content Analysis approach, as Anderson (2007) explains that TCA is a qualitative data that is descriptive presentation and is based on extracts from the texts in order to give expression to the communality of voices. The use of TCA is a useful resource for data analysis in qualitative research, because it allows researchers to systematically identify and analyse recurring patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data, thereby providing rich insights into complex phenomena (Frieze et al., 2018). For my research this means that I will focus on the themes and content from the poems and topics and analyse them. According to Joffe & Yardley (2003) a theme refers to a “specific pattern found in the data one is interested in” (p.57).

I will use document analysis to analyse the CAPS topics chosen and thematic content analysis on the poems. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a way of looking at different kinds of documents both printed and online, and understanding them. It involves carefully examining and interpreting information to understand what it means, and to gain knowledge. Using this technique, I will analyse the three chosen topics in the curriculum. This process includes going through the material, reading it thoroughly, and understanding the material to interpret its meaning (Bowen, 2009). Multiple readings and interpretations were conducted to ensure that the poems were accurately reflecting its contributions to the curriculum, this was done through identifying

themes (thematic analysis). Each poem was analysed in relation to the curriculum topics, drawing connections between the poems and the topics from the history CAPS curriculum. In each poem themes were identified through the language used and relating to the CAPS history topic they can be used to teach. Each poem shows use of meter (rhythm) and the language used is a form of resisting colonialism and apartheid. The poets used figures of speech as their writing style which shows a way of portraying their message. In 'my country' the poet uses metaphor in line 6 "Land of charms and gladness" to describe the country and also uses personification in line 13 "Is it through this, then, my heart doth pine" to express their emotional pain. In 'black and white' the poet uses irony in line 1-3 "To be black is a curse you say, For God has deigned it so; A greater lie ne'er came man's way" to challenge racist stereotypes that being black is associated with evil things. In 'first day after the war' the poet used personification in line 5-6 "Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom! She woke us up with a smile saying" to personify freedom. Imagery was also used in this poem as the poet creates a vivid picture of celebration in line 1-2 "We heard the songs of a wedding party, we saw a soft light".

The poets writing style are about reclaiming and celebrating their own culture. The disadvantage might be that the poems are written in a foreign language not in an African language however, I can argue that this might be because the poets wanted to be heard and for their poems to make it to publication they need to be in English. In this thesis, reliability was achieved by following a systematic approach to data analysis. This means that different themes were categorized that emerged from the poems in relation to the curriculum topics.

4.5 Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

In this section, I outline the steps taken to ensure the credibility and rigor of the research, adapting concepts of trustworthiness, validity, and reliability to fit the nature of the study. Golafshani (2003) argue that "reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm" (p.604). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is regarded as a crucial aspect that ensures the integrity and credibility of the study. Adler (2022) mentions that to ensure the relevance of a study, all research must be trustworthy.

Trustworthiness is explained as the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality and credibility of a study (Adler, 2022). In qualitative research, trustworthiness is achieved through strategies such as triangulation, and member checking (Adler,

2022; Gunawan, 2015). To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed triangulation, comparing findings from the poems and curriculum topics with insights from existing research on the educational value of poetry. Trustworthiness in this project was established by analysing the selected poems' relevance to the grade 11 and 12 history CAPS curriculum, ensuring they accurately reflected their contributions to the curriculum. Patton (2001), cited in Golafshani (2003) “advocates the use of triangulation by stating ‘triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods’ ” (p.603). In this study triangulation was also used to enhance validity. This involved comparing the findings from the poems and topics with insights from existing research on the educational value of poetry. “Triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” (Golafshani, 2003, p.603). By corroborating the findings of the study with established knowledge, the validity of the conclusions was strengthened.

Validity, in the context of research, focuses on the extent to which a study accurately measures what it claims to measure or examine. It assesses the credibility of the research findings and conclusions. Validity in this conceptual study is as outlined by (Gunawan, 2015: “validity can be achieved by the rigorous application of method or technique” (p.11). The types of poems that were selected in this study were based on their relevance to the chosen curriculum topics, also the poems potential to enrich learners' understanding of these themes. Also, by employing strategies to enhance trustworthiness and validity, this study provides a credible analysis of the intersection between poetry and the history CAPS curriculum topics.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Although this research has no human participants, there are ethical issues to be considered. This research report that advocates methods for teaching the controversial past through poetry may raise ethical concerns, such as the risk of re-traumatization or causing the learners to experience unintentional suffering. This must be considered is suggesting methodologies to teachers so that they will approach this strategy with sensitivity.

Researchers face ethical challenges in all stages of the study (Sanjari et al., 2014), thus, I need always to be careful with the poems I select, because the primary ethical considerations lie in the presentation of the chosen poems, possible interpretations and the potential impact on learners. This is still conjecture as I have no proof of how learners would react, though, in my literature

review the use of poetry to teach was recommended. Furthermore, my work has been approved by the Wits School of Education Ethics Committee (2023ECE38M).

Chapter 5 Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to investigate whether specific selected poems have the potential of being used as decolonising tools for teaching history in the South African classroom. Therefore, this chapter aims to demonstrate how poetry can be used to teach sensitive and controversial aspects of South Africa's past, specifically focusing on topics of race, apartheid, and civil resistance. This chapter contains a critical analysis of the data collected for this research report.

5.2 The three poems: My Country; Black & White; The First Day After the War (Couzens & Patel, 1982; Kunene, 1982).

5.2.1 My Country

My Dear Country – I love you well.

In my heart your welfare is uppermost;

Thoughts of thee, make my heart to swell

With zeal, and this thought foremost

To serve you well.

Land of charms and gladness,

Land of mountains and plains.

Why is it, my heart is full of sadness

And tears gush like drops of rains?

Oh, to serve you well.

Is it because my country is no longer mine,

Is it because days of freedom are over;

Is it through this, then, my heart doth pine?

Ah! that such days should pass for ever!

Still I love you well.

Each corner and nook was dear to me,
Each rivulet and hill-top a pleasing sight,
These were echoes of innocence to me,
These which, today, are a sorrowful plight.

Can this quench my love?

Sorrowful! aye – sorrowful and dreary,
Because no longer a black man's country,
Natal, my country, my heart is aweary,
Tears scar my cheeks because of my country.

I love you well.

Here and there poor whites claims you,
My country – leaving Native helpless.
Here and there cotton planters claim you,
My country – leaving Natives hopeless.

All appear to love you.

My country, I love, I love you well,
In my heart you'll ever be dear,
Thoughts of thee make my heart to swell.
To you let all our hearts be near.

We love you well.

By: Rollic Reggie ¹*Ilanga Lase Natal* 12 February 1926

¹ Background: "Ilanga Lase Natal" is a Zulu-language newspaper that was founded in 1903 and became a prominent publication, particularly for the Zulu-speaking community. The title translates to 'The Sun of Natal' in English. This publication is important because during apartheid, publications like "Ilanga Lase Natal" served as crucial platforms for expressing the perspectives and concerns of the Black communities, those that were marginalized and oppressed. These newspapers provided a space for discussions on cultural, social, and political issues, often in the face of censorship and restrictions (*"Ilanga Lase Natal,"* 2023)

Before analysing the poem, I need to contextualise it by giving a brief outline of the historical period in which it was written. In 1926, South Africa was under British rule and racial segregation was spreading, (Dubow, 2009), The country was divided into provinces. Natal, one of these was historically significant as it was one of the four original provinces established in 1910 when the Union of South Africa was formed, “with its own white people government in 1910, the country was still regarded as a colony of Britain till 1961” (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p.1). Natal had a diverse population, including Zulus, British settlers, and Indian immigrants who came as indentured labourers (Lieven, 1998). At that time, Natal played a significant role in South Africa due to its strategic location, its economy, and its cultural and political dynamics. This meant the land in Natal was increasingly being occupied by colonisers. This encroachment of settlers into Zulu lands meant that it was also the site of significant conflict, particularly during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 (Lieven, 1998).

The Native Land Act of 1913 Hall (2014), had already restricted land ownership for black South Africans, and tensions were rising between different racial groups. The poet's concerns about the country's political situation stems from this context of racial inequality and the erosion of freedoms for Indigenous peoples. The poet starts having questions about his country in the sense that what he is feeling is it based on what is happening in his country politically. The land is no longer allowed to belong to him, and people like him. In the section below I will first explore the poem briefly and relate it to the criteria for a poem to work as a decolonial teaching tool. I will then conduct thematic analysis to extract themes from the poem.

“Is it because my country is no longer mine,” stanza 3, line 1. This shows that the type of questions the poet has are informed by the way Black people were treated; he feels like he no longer belongs. His heart longs for things to go back to how they were before the days of freedom were over, the days before colonisation, or the pre-colonial era (Devenish, 2005). The poet seems to believe that things will go back to his “normal,” and he will forever love his country, as in stanza 3, line 5 “Still I love you well”, this implies commitment despite the impact of colonialism.

This poem meets the criteria outlined by Somers (1999) and Godsell (2019) for selecting poetry to teach historical content. The poem engages deeply with the historical narrative of colonialism and racial oppression in South Africa, reflecting the emotional and social impact of these events on the Indigenous population. The poem passionately expresses the poet's deep love for his country,

emphasising a profound connection to the land. This connection serves as a backdrop to explore themes of land-loss due to colonisation, as the poet mourns the loss of his country's ownership and freedom. The type of love the poet expresses is without limitations. It is the type of love that is true, pure, and everlasting. This is evident in the first stanza, when the poet says, “My Dear Country – I love you well.” The fact that the poet refers to his country as “my dear” shows the deep connection the poet has with his country, and the affection he feels toward it. The country is particularly important to the poet, and this is evident in the second line, first stanza “In my heart your welfare is uppermost.” Based on the poet, country refers to his home at the time of colonialization, Natal represents not just a geographical location but a complex interplay of social, political, and cultural dynamics. This proves that the love that the poet has for the country has a special place in his heart because of its importance. As highlighted in the first stanza, line 2 shows a strong concern for how the nation is faring during colonisation. Topic 5: Apartheid South Africa – how unique was Apartheid? can be taught using this poem. Some of the key themes in this topic include racial oppression, legislation, and policies as well as the historical context of apartheid.

Using TCA on this poem I identified the following themes:

5.2.1.1 Themes:

I identified four themes in the poem, which are all interlinked: Connection, Love and Affection, Racial Oppression, and Loss. Each theme will be unpacked thoroughly below.

5.2.1.1.1 Connection: “My Dear Country”

The theme of connection in the poem serves as a touching entry point for teaching sensitive topics in South African history classrooms, fostering empathy and understanding of the profound personal and societal impacts of historical injustices. The poem reflects on the deep connection the poet has with his country. Learners might connect to the theme on a personal level enabling them to feel the emotions of the poet. Through a decolonial lens, readers are invited to critically reflect on the historical impacts of colonialism and the importance of acknowledging and honouring Indigenous connections to the land. Also, it emphasises how colonialism disrupts this connection, imposing new boundaries and ownership that alienate the native population from their homeland. There is a sense of personal connection that is strong and unbreakable. We see this in stanza 7 line 1 and 2 “My country, I love, I love you well / In my heart you’ll ever be dear”. This shows the

strong connection he has with his country; how he is affected so much by the loss of his country to colonisers.

When the poet talks about the land, the poem shows a connection to the natural, cultural, social and political aspects of the country. The poem captures the complex nature of national identity and belonging, while also shedding light on the enduring legacies of colonialism and the ongoing quest for decolonisation and justice.

“Each corner and nook was dear to me” stanza 4 line 1. This stanza and line shows the poet expressing the beauty of the land and a connection that is deep, even though currently getting weaker, it will never break. In stanza 3. “Is it because my country is no longer mine,” this line suggests a feeling of alienation or displacement. The poet seems to imply that their country has changed in ways that make it feel unfamiliar or unwelcoming to them. Stanza 3 continues “Is it because days of freedom are over;”. Here the poet speaks of the loss of freedom that their country once enjoyed. “Is it through this, then, my heart doth pine?,” the poet uses the word ‘pine’ referring to suffering with longing as he questions whether their sadness and sorrow stem from these changes and losses in their country.

5.2.1.1.2 Love and Affection: “My country, I love, I love you well”

This theme of love and affection in the poem might connect with learners through offering them an opportunity to engage with history on a personal and emotional level to foster critical thinking and empathy. The theme in this poem multiple times when the poet expresses his deep affection and love for his country. The poet’s choice of words shows how he loves his country, stanza 1 line 1 “My Dear Country – I love you well”. This affection underpins a form of resistance against colonial domination and a wish to reclaim their land from colonial powers that seek to erase the identity of the Indigenous people. The poet’s continued reference to “*my* country” (emphasis added).

The fact that his country is “dear” to him also shows that he has so much respect for it. He wishes only the best for his country; he wishes for peace and spreading nothing but endless love and affection in his country. A feeling of truly caring for Natal is highlighted by the poet as he emphasises loving Natal, despite its injustices that could impact his relationship to the land “can this quench my love?” stanza 4 line 5. This makes this relationship extremely powerful. “Land of charms and gladness” stanza 2 line 1, shows that the poet experiences Natal as a beautiful land and

that its beauty spreads joy and magic. This line emphasises not only the beauty of the land but how the poet profoundly embraces the land. The poet believes that this land should be kept pure and always cherished. There is a contrast between this idealistic view of the country and the brutal reality of its socio-political situation at the time. This poem expresses a love that goes beyond just admiration for the natural surroundings as the poet mentions the beauty of the land.

The poet uses the theme of love and affection as a poetic means to grapple with the multiple challenges of colonialism. A deep sense of connection to the land is directly linked to the themes of love and affection, while he mourns having this connection destroyed.

5.2.1.1.3 Loss: “Is it because my country is no longer mine”

The theme of loss in the poem serves as a heartfelt reminder of the emotional impact of colonialism, illustrating how personal and national identities were disrupted and shattered, by the dispossession of the land. This realisation can effectively teach today’s history learners about the human consequences of the injustices of colonialism, leading into apartheid. Learners might connect to this theme as it reflects the how the poet’s strong emotional bond with his country was severely wounded during the colonial period, with its significant social changes (Devenish, 2005). Throughout the poem the poet keeps expressing his love for his land and how the change seems to be dispossessing his people of that land. As the poem continues there are elements of the poet struggling with the realisation that his country has changed, and that the land is no longer his. This makes him very sad as it would no longer seem like his own; that he would feel like an outsider as the colonisers took over his land. He experiences a shift from a period when things were like they are described in the poem to one where the freedom he had has disappeared; where the "days of freedom" are being ended. The poet seems to be drawing the poem into a bigger period than just his own life.

The theme of loss is evident in the poem as it was written during colonialism the period when Union of South Africa existed (Thornton, 1995), when there was extensive dispossession of land from Black Indigenous people. The poet expresses this loss of land in stanza 3 line 1 and 2 “Is it because my country is no longer mine / Is it because days of freedom are over”. These lines emphasise the emotion of land loss, when he questions whether his country still belongs to him. and whether the days of freedom are over, extends his feeling to the loss of freedom in their own homeland (Maylam, 2017). Stanza 4 line 1-4 “Each corner and nook was dear to me, / Each rivulet

and hill-top a pleasing sight, / These were echoes of innocence to me, / These which, today, are a sorrowful plight”. The word innocence is important as it highlights the situation before colonial plunder, when the people lived in harmony with nature and had a respect for the land and its resources. Furthermore, the mention of innocence contrasts with the injustices of colonialism. Indigenous peoples were often depicted as "savages" or inferior to the colonisers, yet it was the colonisers who brought violence, exploitation, and destruction to these lands (Oliver & Oliver, 2017). The innocence spoken of in the poem serves as a reminder of the resilience and dignity of the Indigenous peoples who lived in harmony with their surroundings before the arrival of colonial powers (Devenish, 2005). This stanza shows that the poet’s relationship with his country was pure and now because of the changes and challenges experienced these spaces that were dear and special to him are filled with sadness and loss of innocence due to colonial plunder.

The theme of loss in the poem conveys a complex emotional journey felt during the transformation of South Africa after colonialism and apartheid. The poet discusses his emotional journey and the various emotions connected with his homeland. It is deeply touching to look at how the poetry combines love for their country and missing the good days that were lost. There is sense of the loss of history, of land and of belonging as the land was taken from Black people for the White people to take control.

5.2.1.1.4 Racial Oppression: “No longer a black man’s country”

The theme of racial oppression in the poem allows teachers to sensitively teach their learners about the enduring impacts of systemic discrimination and the struggles for equality in the history of South Africa. Learners might connect to the theme of racial oppression in this poem, it because it shows how Black people were treated during colonialism in South Africa and that they no longer felt at home in their own country. Stanza 5 lines 1 and 2 “Sorrowful! aye – sorrowful and dreary, / Because no longer a black man’s country”. These lines express the fact that the poet feels sad that the country is no longer owned by Black people. Dubow (2009) asserts that “South Africa is a country of black men, – and not of white men. It has been so; it is so; and it will continue to be so” (p.7). The lasting impact of colonialism in the historical background of South Africa played a huge role in the issue of racial oppression (Maylam, 2017). relating to this, the poet expresses the profound experiences associated with racial oppression. This theme looks at the poet's description of the land as a happy place where wonderful things were experienced, that has now been taken

away. So, this has profound social and political consequences on the lives of its people. It highlights the ongoing struggle for justice, equality, and liberation in the face of historical injustices.

Racial challenges and inequality were common in South Africa at the time this poem was written. The poem does not explicitly mention colonialism, but its themes, especially those of racial oppression, resonate deeply with the experiences of Black South Africans during the apartheid era (Kurtz, 2010), shedding light on the origins of the pervasive racial challenges and inequality that characterise South African society up to the present day. Just as in the period of colonialism, during apartheid Black individuals were subjected to systemic oppression, denied basic rights, and forcibly removed from their homes and communities (Maylam, 2017).

5.2.1.2 Conclusion

The poem “*My country*” was written as response to colonialism that was taking place at the time. Even though the poem was in 1926, it remains relevant today, as it reminds us of the effects of colonialism in South Africa. It does this through emotions of connection, love, loss, devotion, and longing. It is these emotions that I hope learners will relate to when they learn about apartheid. This experience will probably be strongest with those who have experienced racism. “*My country*” is a very powerful poem which shows the complex emotions endured during the painful history of South Africa. It is a useful poem for testing the use of poetry as a decolonial strategy to teach sensitive and controversial history topics in post-apartheid South Africa.

The relationship between this poem and topic 5 in the grade 11 history CAPS curriculum, will be dealt with in more depth in Chapter 6.

5.2.2 Black and White

To be so black is curse you say,
For God has deigned it so;
A greater lie ne’er came man’s way,
To toss him to and fro.

The blackness of the changing night,
Is part of shining day,
For God did make creation right
With black and white to stay.

By: ²M G ³ *Bantu World* 21 March 1936

In the section below I will first explore the poem briefly and then relate it to the criteria for a poem to work as a decolonial teaching tool. I will then conduct thematic analysis and extract themes from the poem.

To summarise the historical context in which the poem was written, 1936 was a pivotal year in South Africa's history, characterized by the entrenchment of racial segregation, economic challenges and recovery, and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism (Dubow, 2009). With the passing of the Representation of Natives Act (10 July 1936), South Africa saw significant changes in land distribution and governance. This act removed the limited voting rights of Black South Africans in the Cape Province, replacing them with a powerless Native Representative Council (Loveland, 1999; South African Round Table Group, 1936). As stated by Beinart & Delius (2014) "The Natives Land Act of 1913 was a key example of the segregationist and racist legislation that fixed discriminatory foundations in South African law" (p.667). The Act increased the land allocated to Black South Africans from 7% to 13%, still far less than needed, and established the South African Native Trust to manage these areas (Beinart & Delius, 2014). These laws were part of a broader strategy to entrench racial segregation and economic disparity, setting the stage for the formal apartheid system to be introduced in 1948.

This poem meets the criteria for teaching history through poetry as outlined by Somers (1999) and Godsell (2019) and discussed in chapter 2, as it addresses the historical issue of racial

² The author was only identified by these initials in the *Bantu World* publication, so there was no way of tracing it back to who the author was. Also, they may have preferred to stay anonymous for safety reasons.

³ Background: "Bantu World" was a newspaper established in 1932, primarily catering to Black readers. It was one of the few publications that addressed issues affecting Black communities during the apartheid era. Bantu World played a significant role in fostering a sense of community and unity among Black South Africans. It covered news, features, and cultural content relevant to Black readership. Importantly, it became a platform for voices that were often silenced by the apartheid government, advocating for social justice and equality (*World (Newspaper) - NMF Archive*, n.d.).

discrimination. In this poem, the poet challenges the claims of the colonisers that being Black is a curse. He emphasises that being Black is not as the colonisers' claim; it is not a curse deigned by God, stanza 1 line 1 and 2 "To be so black is a curse you say, / For God has deigned it so". In the contrary, the poet argues that God values Black and White people equally, stanza 2, line 3 and 4 "For God did make creation right. / With black and white to stay." This message can lead to meaningful classroom discussions about historical and contemporary racial issues. Its thought-provoking content helps students see history in a new light, as the poet encourages acceptance and appreciation for both Black and White people. During colonialism Black South Africans were seen as less valuable than White people (Kurtz, 2010).

Even though this poem was written before apartheid, it still addresses current important racial concerns that carry through apartheid, and into post-apartheid South Africa. It mostly speaks against racism between both Black and White people and emphasises that we are all the same and created by God. By doing this it also highlights the depth of racism, that being Black is seen to have such negative connotations. Topic 3: Ideas of Race can be taught using this poem. This poem talks about unity and does not discriminate against anybody. I believe that the concept of decolonial love, as discussed by Davids (2019) and Maluleka (2023), would fit well with this poem.

5.2.2.1 Themes:

Through TCA, I identified two themes in the poem, which are interlinked: Racial Oppression and Unity. Each theme will be unpacked thoroughly below.

5.2.2.1.1 Racial Oppression: "To be so black is curse you say"

The theme of racial oppression is evident in the poem because the claim that being Black is a curse is challenged in this poem. As argued by Kurtz (2010), blackness is stigmatized and deemed inferior, and this poem reflects the colonial imposition of racial hierarchies. In abyssal thinking, Western thinking (de Sousa Santos, 2007), everything from the north is seen as perfect or pure, and this way of thinking aims to silence one group of people. The poem challenges this colonial narrative that dehumanizes Black people, calling it a "greater lie" in line 3 of stanza 1. It also confronts the myth that blackness is inferior by claiming that both Black and White are necessary elements in God's creation. Lines 3 and 4 of stanza 2 read, "Because God did make creation right / with black and white to stay," state this.

While the poem was written in 1936, before apartheid was formally introduced, racial tensions were already deeply rooted in South African society, as colonialism functioned through racial oppression. Learners might connect to this poem because they could see how apartheid affected people. Most importantly, by experiencing the side of the story from voices that were marginalised. The poem could be considered an introduction to the movements rejecting racial oppression in South Africa, such as the African National Congress (ANC), which had already been formed and was active at that time.

5.2.2.1.2 Unity: “With black and white to stay”

The theme of unity in teaching sensitive topics like apartheid in post-apartheid South Africa's history classrooms serves to emphasise the inherent interconnectedness and equality of all people, regardless of race, with the intention of promoting reconciliation and understanding among diverse communities. This theme might be somewhat difficult in calling for unity within oppression, considering how radical it would have been in 1936 for a Black person to argue equality of Black and White people, which was an act of resistance in itself. The theme of unity is highlighted in the poem, and advocates for inclusivity and emphasises that every individual needs to be treated the same as they are equally important. Line 5 and 6, “The blackness of the changing night, / Is part of shining day” shows that we are part of each other, irrespective of ethnicity. This theme is important and relevant to the ongoing discussions around race taking place in post-apartheid South Africa, as apartheid may have ended but people are still trying to cope with the historical consequences of racial segregation. The poet's reference to God creating both White and Black people as equals has relevance to the present debates about national identity, as Henrard (2002) states that South Africa is actively working towards unified national identity

"For God did make creation right" emphasises the notion that God's plan included both Black and White as equally important. When regarding the poet's use of God to justify his argument, it is worth consideration that this “God” can be any God based on people beliefs and rituals. In the context of that time, the poem's promotion of racial identities and acceptance, aligns with the ANC position on non-racialism.

5.2.3 First Day After the War

We heard the songs of a wedding party.
We saw a soft light
Coiling round the young blades of grass
At first we hesitated, then we saw her footprints,
Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom!
She woke us up with a smile saying,
“What day is this that comes suddenly?”
We said, “It is the first day after the war”.
Then without waiting we ran to the open space
Ululating to the mountains and the pathways
Calling people from all the circles of the earth.
We shook up the old man demanding a festival
We asked for all the first fruits of the season.
We held hands with a stranger
We shouted across the waterfalls
People came from all lands
It was the first day of peace.
We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon.

By: Mazisi Kunene ⁴*The Ancestors & the Sacred Mountain* 1982

In this section I will first explore the poem briefly and relate it to the criteria for a poem to be used as a decolonial teaching tool. I will then extract themes from the poem.

To summarise the political situation in South Africa when the poem was written in 1982, South Africa was under the apartheid law which intensified racial segregation and discrimination against the Black majority, while the White minority held power (Kurtz, 2010). Maylam (2017) states that

⁴ Background: Mazisi Kunene in 1982 published the book titled *The Ancestors & the Sacred Mountain*. It is the collection of poetry that was written and released since his return from a long period in exile and he re-settled in KwaZulu-Natal. His second publication was called *Anthem of the decades* and it was in English, which could be roughly described as an account of Zulu cosmology, equally an impressive and multi-faceted text.

the country faced growing internal resistance from anti-apartheid movements, international condemnation and sanctions, economic challenges, and an involvement in regional conflicts. The government maintained control through strict security measures and state repression. Political divisions within the ruling National Party (Oliver & Oliver 2017), reflected the pressures against apartheid, setting the stage for the eventual dismantling of the system in the early 1990s.

The poem imagines a day on which a large mass of people, including the poet, celebrate the end of the war; the war against apartheid and racial oppression. Therefore, the poem envisages a victory which has not yet occurred, showing a power of strong hope. In line 9, when the poet mentions people rushing out to fill the "open space", he is calling on the rest of the world to join them in this new era of peace, it depicts exactly what the title describes. The poem expresses a vision of a better future, based on inclusion and equality. In South Africa today it could be called "Ubuntu" (Kamwangamalu, 1999), which is unity. The poet uses "we" to impart a sense of togetherness right at the start of the poem.

This poem relates to Topic 4: "*Civil resistance in South Africa 1970s and 1980*". The poem was written during this period, and has relevance to the section "*the beginning of the end*" (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011), when people started to imagine freedom in the near future. Topic 4 can be taught to learners using this poem.

As with the previous poems, this one meets the criteria for teaching poetry in a historical context, as discussed above and developed by Somers (1999) and Godsell (2019). The poem captures the emotional and cultural significance of the possibility of the end of Apartheid. It vividly describes the themes of Joy and Celebration, Liberation and Freedom, Unity, and Connection to their Ancestors. This imaginary moment is central to understanding the impact of apartheid and the importance of the anti-apartheid movement. The poem's perspective offers learners a personal and fantastical view of this significant period, making the historical narrative compelling and relatable. By presenting the aftermath of the struggle in a poetic form, it opens new dimensions for learners to appreciate the emotional depth and cultural resonance of the dark space of the 1980s, where the end was almost unimaginable, and this pushed the poet to conjure it as a form of hope. Moreover, the poem can stimulate discussions and interpretations, fostering a deeper engagement with the complexities of history. Incorporating this poem into the history classroom can thus make the subject more meaningful and memorable, aligning with the educational goals set by the criteria.

Using TCA on this poem, I have identified the following themes:

5.2.3.1 Themes:

I identified four themes in the poem, which are all interlinked: Joy and Celebration, Liberation and Freedom, Unity, and Connection to their Ancestors. Each theme will be unpacked thoroughly below.

5.2.3.1.1 Joy and Celebration: “We heard the songs of a wedding party”

The poem opens evocatively in line 1 “we heard the songs of a wedding party”, as the first thing encountered after the war has ended. Weddings are a symbol of celebration and union, so the wedding here seems to symbolize a new spirit of joy and celebration in this country. This line uses the symbol of a bride to describe South Africa and the wedding shows the start of a new life for the country. Line 2 and 3 “We saw a soft light / coiling around young blades of grass” continue the metaphor of renewal and growth and the reaction of the news from people is to call for a festival to celebrate their peace. From a decolonial point of view, this imagined celebration is not just a moment of happiness, but a profound reclamation of cultural and social identity. The most important emphasis in the poem is that it is imagining this hope in a very dark time. The 1980s in South Africa was notoriously violent and repressive, even containing two states of emergency. It must have been extremely difficult for Black people to have deep faith in the future and to imagine victory when everything seemed so hopeless. This is shown in line 4 “At first we hesitated”, which suggests a moment of doubt and uncertainty. This hesitation implies the difficulty of believing in a positive outcome when the past (and the present) has been filled with hardship.

Line 13, “We asked for all the first fruits of the season” symbolises the expression of gratitude from God and the Ancestors for their blessings. The act of asking for the first fruits represents the Black people's desire to express gratitude for their newfound freedom. “Ululating to the mountains and the pathways” line 10 emphasises the joy people would be experiencing as they will celebrate the new democratic chapter when it arrives.

5.2.3.1.2 Liberation and Freedom: “We said, ‘It is the first day after the war’ “

The themes of liberation and freedom in this poem serve as a beacon of hope and resilience in teaching sensitive topics like apartheid in today’s history classrooms. It emphasises the transformative power of overcoming oppression, reclaiming identity, and celebrating newfound freedoms. This theme is underscored by the phrase “the first day after the war” in line 8, which

marks a new era of freedom and the end of oppression. Lines 4 – 5, “At first we hesitated, then we saw her footprints, / Her face emerged, then her eyes of freedom!”. For the poet, and the people he included in the poem, the freedom could only be imagined, because at the time the apartheid regime was cracking down on any resistance. However, there was international resistance, boycotts, and internal mass resistance (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). The poem suggests that, despite the suffering, this resistance gave Black people hope for freedom.

Lines 6-7, “She woke us up with a smile saying, / ‘What day is this that comes suddenly?’”. These lines show the people’s disbelief about their suddenly gained freedom. The poet’s use of personification of freedom continues, comparing it to a mother awakening her children. South Africa under the oppression of apartheid is represented as a long sleep, awakened by freedom.

Line 8, “We said, ‘It is the first day after the war.’” The poet identifies the “we” as the people who were involved in the fight for freedom. Apartheid is compared to war since both are unjust and result in the loss of innocent lives. There were many emotions during the war which includes fear, anxiety, anger, resentment, hope and resistance especially from Black people.

In line 9, “Then without waiting we ran to the open space”, the poet expresses that they are now free to connect with others, freed from the restrictions of the legal, educational, public services, political restrictions during Apartheid. Line 12, “We shook up the old man demanding a festival” The “old man” refers to the elderly who had endured apartheid for years and were still in shock because of the arrival of this day that they had been longing for. A festival is demanded because they need to celebrate their freedom.

5.2.3.1.3 Unity: “We held hands with a stranger”

The theme of unity in the poem serves as a powerful message for reconciliation and healing after conflict, illustrating how diverse communities can come together to celebrate peace, fostering a shared identity and collective memory. Unity is a central theme in the poem as it illustrates how people can come together. This theme learners can connect to it as it shows the importance of being united, no one is superior or inferior to the other. Line 14 “We held hands with a stranger” suggests the coming together of Black and White, who were strangers under apartheid which separated people on the basis of their skin colour (Kurtz, 2010). In line 11, "Calling people from all the circles of the earth" shows that people already wanted to be united and wanted the exiled peoples to return. this could also speak to the international resistance to apartheid. Line 15-16 “We shouted

across the waterfalls / People came from all the lands” emphasises unity and that they were eager to share the news with everyone now that the restrictive barriers were gone symbolised by the “waterfalls”. The fact that people from neighbouring countries responded positively to the request despite being divided during the apartheid era shows of unity, this refers to the international support for this anti-apartheid struggle. The importance of this imagined unity in the aftermath of conflict, projects an inclusive vision of peace, and this theme is crucial in showing how peace can bring people together.

5.2.3.1.4 Connection to their Ancestors

The theme of connection to their ancestors in the poem can help to teach sensitive topics like apartheid by showing how people draw strength and identity from their history and heritage. This perspective emphasises the decolonial notion of honouring Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural continuity; it honours those who fought against oppression but are no longer amongst the living. The final line of the poem reflects a deep connection to the past and respect for the ancestors. "We saw our Ancestors travelling tall on the horizon" in line 18, suggests that the peace is not only for the present generation but also honours those who came before and pays tribute to those who had died during the fight against apartheid. This line shows that the hope of freedom and peace that ancestors had is now fulfilled and shows a core aspect of IKS. IKS emphasises the importance of ancestral knowledge and honouring the ancestors and their contribution to fighting for freedom. The use of “tall” symbolises the pride and dignity of the ancestors who endured the struggles and sacrifices of previous generations, are now able to stand upright, proud, and free; they can celebrate their victory.

Further to the notion of honouring those who have fallen in the struggle, is the spiritual relationship of the people with their Ancestors. In the Xitsonga culture,⁵swikwembu or spirits of the ancestors play a vital role in the lives of their descendants. As Africans who believe in ancestors, we know that if our Ancestors are happy, it means good things are coming our way. The ancestors are present and real (Kopytoff & Calhoun, 1981), the ancestors presence is acknowledged in the poem, where they express their acceptance and support of what has happened, and ultimately finding peace and rest from the oppression they endured. They are relieved and “travel tall “in the spirit world with

⁵ Swikwembu means Ancestors in Xitsonga and Amadlozi in IsiZulu.

pride.”. By acknowledging their ancestors this theme becomes an expression of IKS because the poem not only celebrates peace but also the reclamation of indigenous knowledge that was suppressed by colonial systems. It also represents a continuous culture of indigenous people.

5.3 Conclusion on the analysis of the three poems

All the poems *My Country*, *Black and White*, and *First Day After the War* explore issues of racial oppression, connection, and unity. In a history classroom, these three poems can be used to discuss race and apartheid, even though the poems were written before and during Apartheid. In fact, the use of poems from before apartheid can show how deep are the roots of racial oppression. a prominent part of the curriculum. In these three poems, the voices of the poets present the opportunity of humanising the history of the colonial and apartheid eras. In a history classroom, learners might be able to discuss and gain deeper insight into the individual narratives behind broader social challenges. These poems can help learners grasp the emotional impact of discrimination and how different people respond to it, opening complex aspects for discussion.

Reggie’s (1926) poem “*My Country*” critiques colonialism's impact on identity and belonging. By expressing love and sadness simultaneously, Reggie challenges colonial narratives that erased indigenous ownership and identity. The poem calls for a reclamation of cultural heritage and an acknowledgment of the ongoing struggle against colonial legacies. M G’s poem *Black and White* affirms the equality and beauty of blackness alongside whiteness, disrupting colonial racial hierarchies. It challenges colonial narratives that devalued African identities and promotes a vision of unity based on inherent human dignity. Kunene’s poem *First Day After the War* celebrates African resilience and the reclaiming of cultural identity after conflict. It highlights the importance of ancestral wisdom and communal unity in resisting colonial oppression and reclaiming cultural autonomy.

All three poems challenge colonial narratives that devalued African identities, histories, and cultures. Each poem calls for a reclamation of cultural identity and a rejection of imposed racial hierarchies, promoting narratives that affirm the beauty, dignity, and resilience of African peoples. By integrating these poems into the history classroom, I argue that teachers can create an engaging and meaningful learning experience, encouraging learners to explore and interpret historical events through personal and emotional experience.

5.4 CAPS Curriculum Excerpts

In this section, there will be an analysis of the three topics from the CAPS curriculum for grades 11 and 12 history. Here, I will use document analysis framed by a decolonial paradigm to critically analyse the topics. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is important for researchers as it creates room for them to find themes, patterns, and trends in social and historical events. It involves systematic evaluation and interpretation of documents. Later, I will use this analysis to show how the poems may be fruitfully used to teach these sections.

In the section below I will briefly explore each of the three topics, namely: “*Ideas of race*”, “*Apartheid South Africa - how unique was Apartheid?*” and “*Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980*” I will use thematic analysis on the topics to systematically identify and interpret patterns within the texts to better understand the representation of historical events and their implications.

5.4.1 Analysing topic 3 from the grade 11 history CAPS curriculum.

HISTORY GRADES 10-12	
PHASE: GRADES 10-12	
TERM 2: GRADE 11	
Topic 3: Ideas of Race in the late 19th and 20th centuries	
What were the consequences when pseudo-scientific ideas of Race became integral to government policies and legislation in the 19th and 20th centuries? Background and focus This topic the theories of race and eugenics that were widespread in the 19th century, how these ideas developed and how different countries applied them. The unscientific bases on which these theories rested have been discredited by modern genetic research: there are no racial differences between people. The theories were a social construct. The danger of these theories when they became part of what was accepted as common sense knowledge, or accepted wisdom, needs to be highlighted: prejudice, stereotyping, loss of dignity, dehumanising of people and their use to justify colonialism, discrimination and genocide on the basis of race in many parts of the world. Notions of race were applied in different ways, as the two case studies illustrate. We consider whether Australia applied eugenics policies towards indigenous Australians. Eugenics focuses on 'breeding the best with the best'. In Australia there was a policy of assimilation, of 'breeding out blackness' in what were then termed 'half-caste' children. In Germany, on the other hand, racial laws and eugenics policies were intended to achieve a racially pure German master race. This raises issues of how 'nation' is defined: Who belongs to a nation and who is excluded? By which means are some people excluded? Theories and practice The following are included in this section: • notions about the hierarchies of race in the 19th century; • explanation of eugenics: positive (family planning) and negative eugenics (selective breeding); • modern understanding of race: human genome project; and • practices of race and eugenics in the USA, Australia, Namibia and South Africa (broad overview). Case study: Australia and the indigenous Australians The following are included in this section: • background: the colonisation of Australia; • race theories in Australia in the early 20th century: debates around 'racial suicide and racial decay'; • white immigration policies and children from Britain sent to Australia after the Second World War; and • the stolen generation: treatment of 'mixed race' children: Dr Cecil Cook and A.O. Neville - assimilation programmes for 'breeding blackness out'. Case study: Nazi Germany and the holocaust The following are included in this section: • Hitler's consolidation of power from 1933 to 1934; • Nazi racial ideology: drawn from colonial anthropologists in Namibia and eugenics in the USA; • The creation of a racial state in Germany: - defining the German nation in relation to the 'other'; and - applying racial and eugenics laws and policies - purifying the nation; • Groups targeted by the Nazis: - Jews, Roma and Sinti (gypsies), dark-skinned German people; and - Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, and trade union leaders, Jehovah's Witnesses and thousands accused of 'asocial' or criminal behaviour, as well as homosexual people; and • Choices that people made: - perpetrator, bystander, resister, rescuer and the nuances between them - can a perpetrator be at the same time a rescuer; what makes a bystander become either a perpetrator or a rescuer?; - responses of persecuted: exile, accommodation and defiance; - from persecution to mass murder: the Final Solution; - the creation of labour and extermination camps; and - forms of justice: the Nuremberg Trials.	

Figure 5-1- Topic 3: Ideas of Race in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.21)

The Grade 11 CAPS history curriculum includes a crucial topic titled “*Ideas of Race in the late 19th and 20th centuries*” (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011), which focuses on the historical background of the concept of race.

Topic 3 concentrates on the theme of ideas about race that were spreading during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This topic explores the impact of racial theories and eugenics during this period that have been proven wrong by contemporary genetic research. It looks at the ideas that were formed and how they were used by different countries, and highlights how these ideologies influenced government policies worldwide, leading to prejudice, discrimination, and even genocide. Case studies on Australia and Nazi Germany illustrate these concepts in action (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). Taking these false beliefs as being true resulted in genocide "prejudice, stereotyping, loss of dignity" (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.21) as well as providing cover for discrimination and colonialism. The poem "Black and White" strongly opposes the negative portrayal of blackness the first stanza line 1-3 "To be so black is curse you say, For God has deigned it so; A greater lie ne'er came man's way", pushing back against the eugenic ideologies prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries, where racial hierarchies were used to justify discrimination and segregation. It challenges the racial hierarchies.

In this CAPS topic, the themes of scientific racism and slavery are explored, as the use of pseudoscience to categorise races and promote ideas of racial superiority and inferiority, often influenced by the principles of eugenics. These themes relate to the ones in the poem "Black and White". They speak to the hierarchies of race and its impact of racial theories on government policies. The theme of racial oppression in the poem challenges the notion that being black is a curse and asserts the inherent equality of all races. Most importantly, this theme ties into the topic focus on the pseudo-scientific ideas of race and their application in government policies. It highlights the social construct of race and its divisive consequences. By emphasizing the natural equality of black and white, the poem reflects the rejection of discriminatory ideologies and promotes an inclusive understanding of humanity.

Using a decolonial paradigm, the CAPS topic integrates the principles of decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015), to links the historical analysis of race to contemporary issues, helping learners understand the continuity and changes in racial dynamics. This can involve examining current racial inequalities, discrimination, and efforts to restore social justice. By making the connections between the historical and current issues, the curriculum can empower learners to engage with and address ongoing challenges in their society. Most importantly, using the poem "Black and White"

in the history classroom when teaching this topic can help to discuss how race has been socially constructed and misused to uphold systems of oppression. The poem can be used in the classroom to challenge learners to rethink racial divisions and to explore how race was constructed as a tool of control. It allows learners to understand how these theories were used to dehumanise and justify colonialism and segregation.

5.4.2 Analysing topic 5 from the grade 11 history CAPS curriculum.

HISTORY GRADES 10-12
PHASE: GRADES 10-12 TERM 4: GRADE 11 Topic 5: Apartheid South Africa 1940s to 1960s How unique was Apartheid? Background and focus This topic is connected to Topic 3. When learners answer the question about the uniqueness of Apartheid, they should discuss segregation policies that are outlined in this section. Apartheid, however, was a policy that economically benefitted white South Africans at the expense of black South Africans. The labour movement at the time emphasised class rather than race, but the National Party overwhelmingly wanted to replace it with the term 'race'. In overcoming Apartheid, there needs to be an understanding of the strategies of resistance by South Africans, drawn from various and diverse social movements (for example, Gandhi's movement, CPSA, the trade unions of the 1940s and 1950s, the Unity Movement, street committees and indigenous culture of collective co-operation). The strategies include passive resistance, non-cooperation, consumer boycotts, stayaways, strikes, civil disobedience and the formation of alliances. These strategies are also seen within a broader world context of resistance to inequality and insufficient civil rights. This section includes: • Introduction - the global pervasiveness of racism and segregation in the 1920s and 1930s; • Segregation after formation of the Union: - 1920s and 1930s - how did segregation lay the foundations for Apartheid?; - segregation policies in the 1930s and 1940s (broad overview); • National Party victory 1948: - what was Apartheid?; - how did Apartheid differ from segregation?; and - why did the National Party adopt the policy of Apartheid?; • legalising Apartheid - the creation of the Apartheid state, including the laws against multi-racial labour unions and the banning of the Communist Party in South Africa; • overcoming Apartheid - the nature of internal resistance to Apartheid before 1960; • from petitions to the Programme of Action - orientation towards mass mobilisation; strengthening the ANC by forming alliances; • how this resistance was part of a wider global resistance to racism, the erosion of human rights and civil liberties; • the response of the Apartheid state: repression in the 1950s; • what was the impact of the Sharpeville massacre?; • armed conflict; • Rivonia Trial (1964) and its consequences (resistance driven underground); • review - 'Apartheid' becomes an international word; putting South Africa within a broader world context in relation to the uniqueness of Apartheid.

Figure 5-2 - Topic 5: Apartheid South Africa (1940s to 1960s) (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.24).

This topic not only addresses the system of apartheid, characterized by severe racial discrimination and human rights violations, but also encourages learners to question its uniqueness and its historical and global contexts.

The legacy of British and Dutch colonisation played an important role in the development and maintaining of the racist laws and customs that underpinned the apartheid era in South Africa. As Lebeloane (2017) puts it that during colonisation “Whites arrived, explored and settled in the country” (p.1). After colonialism, the situation worsened leading to the apartheid era with policies aimed at total racial segregation and the associated violations of human rights. Even though apartheid has ended, its effects are still present in post-apartheid South Africa (Özler, 2007). In this topic, racial segregation, the resistance movement and discrimination are the central themes, including the laws that segregated public facilities, communities, and schools.

The curriculum explores the distinct aspects of apartheid, including its historical roots in segregation policies, the ascension of the National Party, and the laws enforcing apartheid. It also looks at the different forms of resistance, such as passive resistance and mass mobilization (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011). Looking at the CAPS curriculum from a decolonial approach (Mahabeer, 2018), would involve interrogating the power dynamics that are inherent in the way historical narratives are constructed and acknowledging the voices and experiences of marginalized groups who were most affected by apartheid, “creating space for Indigenous ways of knowing and being” (Manathunga et al., 2022, p.5). Furthermore, it discusses how the resistance against apartheid was part of a global struggle against racism and inequality. However, it does not show how apartheid connected with other types of colonial oppression.

The poem “*My Country*” highlights the theme of connection to the land, which was central to apartheid policies that denied black South Africans rights to their own land and freedom to live as they wished. The themes in the poem link directly into topic 5, particularly in the exploration of how apartheid laws and policies disrupted the lives of Black South Africans, more so in their relationship with their land and culture.

Additionally, the poet goes into the themes of love and affection, and loss comes into play as he sorrowfully reflects on his country becoming a place where he no longer belongs, line 11 “Is it because my country is no longer mine” and line 22 “Because no longer a black man’s country”.

This could allow a deeper exploration of the emotional and material impacts of apartheid's racial separation policies even though the poem was written during the colonial era. This poem can support the curriculum's discussion of segregation and of the resistance movements, where learners can critically assess how apartheid disrupted the lives of black South Africans on multiple levels. By discussing the poet's emotional response to the oppressive system, learners can explore how apartheid segregated not only communities but also their hearts and minds, intensifying the deep sense of loss conveyed in the poem. Learners may also feel these emotions and gain a deeper insight to the significance of this loss.

The poem can be used in the history classroom to discuss the personal impact of Apartheid on individuals and communities, bringing a human face to the historical events. In the topic, there is a section of internal resistance which links to the poet's desire for justice, mirroring the resilience of those who fought against apartheid. The apartheid policy was challenged through various movements that proved Black people wanted to restore and reclaim their power. As Zavala (2016) states that reclaiming involves recovering who people are in terms of their practice, cultural identity and relation to the land. The poet's unwavering affection for the land despite its altered state line 15 "Still I love you well" and line 32 "In my heart you'll ever be dear", symbolizing a commitment to reclaiming and restoring what has been lost. This perspective can encourage learners to explore how love for one's country can persist even in the middle of a systemic oppression, and how this love gives strength for resistance and the desire for justice.

5.4.3 Analysing topic 4 from the grade 12 history CAPS curriculum.

PHASE: GRADES 10-12
TERM 2: GRADE 12
Topic 4: Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980
What was the nature of the civil society resistance after the 1960s? Background and focus We continue studying the narrative of resistance to Apartheid that we began Grade 11. As this period was also covered in Grade 9, the focus here is on the Black Consciousness movement and the ideas of Steve Biko. The events of 1976 should not be covered in-depth, but as part of the debates around the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement on pupils in schools and, in particular, on the Soweto uprising. The Soweto uprising is not studied in full here, because it was covered in Grade 9. The pressure on the Apartheid government in the 1980s links the wide-ranging internal resistance with the anti-Apartheid movements outside of South Africa. Introduction (not for exam purposes) • Nature of the Apartheid state in the 1970s and 1980s; and • Opposition - underground, in prison and in exile. The challenge of Black Consciousness to the Apartheid state This section includes : • The nature and aims of Black Consciousness; • the role of Steve Biko with the emphasis on his ideas and writing (personal complexes are confining; people empower themselves); • Black Consciousness Movement (BCM); • Black Consciousness was at first perceived by the government as in accord with Apartheid theories of 'own affairs'; the challenge posed by the ideas of Black Consciousness to the state; • The 1976 Soweto uprising (not the events but the debates about whether or not the students were influenced by Black Consciousness thinking); and • The legacy of Black Consciousness on South African politics. The crisis of Apartheid in the 1980s Government attempts to reform Apartheid • Contradictions of Apartheid emerge; the pass system breaks down; labour movements become more powerful; the economy is dependent on black labour; • The 1982 urban Bantu Authorities Act - attempt to give more power to local councillors in the townships; the tricameral system. Internal resistance to reforms: • Growing power of trade union movement from 1973 - black workers rediscover their power of labour; rapidly growing membership; political alliance formed with communities and liberation movements; and • Response to Botha's 'reforms' - new methods of mobilisation; labour's 'rolling mass action'; mass civic action to make the country ungovernable (role of civics, UDF, Mass Democratic Movement, End Conscription Campaign and Black Sash). International response • International anti-Apartheid movements ; - Anti-Apartheid movements in Britain and Ireland; - Activities of the movements: sports boycott; cultural boycott; academic boycott; consumer boycott; disinvestment; sanctions; release Mandela campaign; role of the international trade unions; and - Support for the anti-Apartheid struggle in Africa - frontline states (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The beginning of the end: • The South African economy in trouble: South Africa felt the bite of international sanctions, disinvestment as well as boycotts that coincided with internal mass resistance.

Figure 5-3 - Topic 4: Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980 (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.21)

Topic 4 focuses on the resistance to apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s, a crucial period in the history of South Africa, marked by significant uprisings and the mobilization of various movements opposing the oppressive regime. In this topic, the themes of student activism and international solidarity are discussed. The curriculum explicitly states that “the events of 1976 should not be covered in-depth, but as part of the debate around the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) on pupils in schools”, “The Soweto uprising is not studied in full here, because it was covered in Grade 9” (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.29). This emphasises the need to focus widely on the underlying themes and important events that contributed to the resistance movement.

At that time, the BCM aimed to restore Black identity and dignity. By empowering individuals to reclaim their humanity, the BCM challenged not only apartheid laws but also the cultural and psychological legacies of colonialism. This had a huge influence on the Soweto uprising because its ideas inspired learners to reject Bantu education and demand dignity. Applying a decolonial lens here, indicates that learners were fighting for a decolonised education because the uprising can be seen as resistance to earlier colonial education systems which were designed to entrench the racial hierarchies that were expanded during Apartheid, it was specifically a move against Afrikaans.

The poem “*First Day After the War*” is an ideal poem relating to topic 4, particularly regarding to the BCM. The curriculum highlights the key role of the BCM in promoting self-awareness and collective solidarity among Black South Africans, challenging both the oppressive state and internalized racism. The poem’s emphasis on themes of Joy and Celebration, Liberation and Freedom and Unity. The description of the new world after the war line 15 “It was the first day of peace” symbolises freedom can be used to reflect on how the ideas of BCM, provided a vision for a new post-apartheid future. The poet’s imagery aligns with the hope of liberation movements and serves as a contrast to the harsh realities of the apartheid state. The theme of liberation and freedom, and unity in the poem mirrors the collective efforts of the BCM along with other resistance movements to unite the oppressed against apartheid.

The theme of liberation and freedom aligns with the civil resistance movements in the 1970s and 1980s, where black South Africans, inspired by the ideals of BCM, began to reclaim their independence and identity. Line 6-7, “She woke us up with a smile saying, ‘What day is this that

comes suddenly?’’ echoes the themes of liberation, freedom and transformation that were central to the BCM's philosophy. Through decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015), this awakening in lines 6-7 symbolises a reclaiming of agency and a rejecting of colonial mentalities that diminished blackness and power. This poem as a decolonial teaching strategy can be used to teach this topic because learners will be able to learn about the power of unity and the vitality of reclaiming cultural identity as a form of resistance.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed three poems: *My country*, *Black and White* and *First Day After the War* as well as three topics from the grade 11 and 12 CAPS history curriculum. This analysis shows that these poems and topics complement each other and could be used to teach the topics. A decolonial lens was applied in this chapter to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data presented through the various themes. In the discussion chapter below, I will argue that “*Black and White*” can usefully be deployed to teach the “*Ideas of Race*” topic, because it questions fundamental ideas about race. The poem “*My Country*” can usefully be deployed to teach the topic “*Apartheid South Africa (1940s to 1960s)*”, because although it was written during the colonial era, it questions a fundamental idea about apartheid. Lastly, in the discussion chapter, I will argue that the poem “*First Day After the War*” can be useful in teaching the topic “*Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980*”, because it questions a fundamental idea about the ending of apartheid.

Chapter 6 : Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presented an analysis of topics from the grade 11 and 12 history CAPS syllabus and of the three selected poems. This discussion chapter explores the integration of the three poems, “*My country*”, “*Black and White*” and “*First Day After the War*”, within the context of the selected Grade 11 and 12 history curricula. In this chapter I concentrate on how these selected poems can form valuable decolonial tools for teaching sensitive and controversial topics. I investigate how poetry can challenge colonial views when integrated in the classroom. The connection between the poems and the topics will be discussed, as well how to apply those poems in the history classroom as a decolonial pedagogy.

6.2 Linking Poems to CAPS curriculum topics

As I argued in the literature review chapter, the type of poems selected must align with specific criteria. I chose three poems that align with the criteria as pointed out by Godsell (2019) and Somers (1999). I also created three lesson plans which involves integrating poetry into the history classroom.

6.2.1 “Black and White” by M G and Topic 3: Ideas of Race in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The poem explores the theme of racial oppression and can directly connect to the key concepts in the topic such as racial theories and eugenics. The poet’s resistance to the fact that being “black is a curse” stanza 1 line 1, aligns with the decolonial view of challenging oppressive racial beliefs (Dollie et al., 2020). It makes it decolonial as it critiques the racial belief that is rooted in discrimination and inequality. My theory states that reclaiming marginalized identities is crucial in decolonial efforts to dismantle the epistemological dominance of colonial narratives (Mukavetz, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Zavala, 2016). Teaching this poem in relation to topic 3, offers a humanizing approach to the racial history and emphasises the lived experiences that were shaped and influenced by these ideas. The poem's rejection of racial oppression and its call for unity enhance the decolonial emphasis on decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015) and the dismantling of colonial legacies in knowledge and power structures.

The language used in the poem is important in decolonisation as it challenges dominant narratives and the stereotypes. It also empowers students to think critically about the power dynamics of language and its impact on the society. In the poem line 3 “A greater lie ne’er came man’s way” the poet uses these words as a way to critique the idea that was being conveyed about being black is a curse. Furthermore, as the poem as elaborated above challenges the idea of race as a curse, which is an argument that connects to the widespread belief in racial hierarchies during the 19th and 20th centuries. Line 1 “To be so black is curse you say”, directly engages with the racial prejudices where darker skin was often viewed as inferior, as seen in racial theories from the 19th and 20th centuries. This can help learners to understand the dehumanizing effects of these pseudo-scientific ideas on people’s perceptions of race. The theme of racial oppression is shown in the poem as it reflects the eugenics, which was concerned with “breeding the best with the best” (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2011, p.21) and often focused on eliminating so-called undesirable traits. This theme outlines how eugenics policies were grounded in racial prejudice and racial theories were not only accepted as scientific fact but became integral to laws and policies that perpetuated segregation, discrimination, genocide and used to justify, control reproduction.

A detailed lesson of how this topic can be taught using the poem is shown below.

Lesson Planning for History: Template

Class: Grade 11

Topic: Ideas of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries

Sub-Topic: Theories and practice of race

Previous Lesson: The impact of the Second World War

Time allocated: 45 Minutes

PURPOSE: At the end of the lesson learners will be able to understand ideas and theories of racial classifications

Learners will be able to: use the poem through analysing it as a reflection of resistance to racial prejudice.

Learners will be able to: explain how pseudo-scientific ideas of race influenced societal structures, government policies, and legislation during the 19th and 20th centuries, leading to widespread discrimination and systemic oppression. They will engage in debates concerning the race theories.

Learners will be able to: interpret the poem as a way to show the ideas that were presented that racial differences are socially constructed.

KEY QUESTION:

What were the theories and practices of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries?

SKILLS/HISTORICAL THINKING

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The issue of race has led to multiple historical events. Learners will gain the skills that allow them to have a discussion that highlights on the importance of pseudo-scientific racial theories which its focus is on how they led to discrimination, colonization, and genocide. Most importantly, working with the poem and analysing how it challenges the ideas of racial hierarchies.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE: A discussion on the causes of the rise of eugenics and racial theories, which includes not only the socio-economic but the political factors that supported these ideas. The consequences, such as colonialism, discrimination, and genocide will be highlighted.

VALUES & ATTITUDES

Encourage learners to always perpetuate equality and justice, as well as respect for social justice and equality.

Learners should also value the importance of knowing the history of race, so that they can be more critical and conscious of the inequalities, racism, that is taking place.

Learners will have deeper understanding why they must honour and value who they are.

Encourage learners to consider how these historical ideas of race continue to influence societies today.

LESSON STEPS:

<u>Part of lesson</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Teaching and Learning Strategies</u>	<u>Time allocation</u>
Introduction: includes hook and recap	I will start reviewing the previous lesson and then introduce the topic that I am about to teach through using a hook. The hook will be presented by me (teacher), to make learners eager to learn more about the topic and poem. When presenting the hook, the teacher will be standing in front of the learners. Hook: I will firstly, show them a white paper and a black paper. “These are papers, right? Yes, I have a black one and a white one, but they are papers, right?”. Then shows a black jersey and a white jersey. “These are clothes, right? Both of them are in different colours but they are clothes correct?”. This is a black cat, and this is a white cat. “These are animals, right?”. This is a black Mercedes-Benz and a white Mercedes-Benz. “These are both cars, right?”. Most importantly, we have a black person and a white person. “They are both people, right?”. Tell me why does colour matter? Why is it used to separate people, that are actually meant to live together in harmony. Why is being different a crime? Why is it a curse? Why do I have to be murdered because I do not look like you? -After the hook I will tell learners that we will use poetry in our lesson.	Teacher leading the lesson.	5 minutes
Introduction of new material	I will introduce the lesson by presenting PowerPoint slide to show and outline the key principles of the topic. The PPT will be based on the idea of race and showing its theories and practices in the late 19th and 20th centuries. I will open a platform where we all discuss as a class how they understand the concept of race.	Teacher and learner engagement.	15 minutes

Guided practice	I will hand out the poem to the learners; “<i>Black and White</i>” by M. G. They will read it twice to highlight themes they find. We will discuss the themes of scientific racism and slavery as explored in the topic. The use of pseudoscience to categorise races and promote ideas of racial superiority and inferiority was often influenced by the principles of eugenics. These themes relate to the ones in the poem. They speak to the hierarchies of race and its impact of racial theories on government policies. The theme of racial oppression in the poem challenges the notion that being black is a curse and asserts the inherent equality of all races. After, then I will ask questions which are about the poem: -What themes did they find in the poem? -How does the poem relate to the topic. -What emotions does the poem evoke? I will ask the above questions to ensure that my learners are using their critical thinking skills. These questions will open discussion and by engaging with them, learners will be encouraged to practice epistemic disobedience by challenging dominant historical narratives and exploring marginalized perspectives, which aligns with the principles of decolonial theory and promotes a critical examination of coloniality within the educational context. Thereafter, they will present their discussion. Throughout the discussion I will be scaffolding the learners, this is to ensure that their points are clear.	Individual reading time.	10 minutes
Independent practice	I will arrange learners into pairs. Using the same poem but now each team will share ideas with their partners and write them down. In their pairs discussion they need to share ideas about how the poem critiques and reflects on the pseudo-scientific racial theories of the time. They will further discuss the aspects of the poem that might	Pair work and class discussion.	10 minutes

	reflect resistance to the dehumanizing effects of the race theories as outlined in the content, for instance looking at the eugenics, segregation, and colonialism. These questions will guide my learners in this independent practice as they share their views. Once everyone is done discussing with their partners then they will report back to class for a wider discussion. I will encourage them to share so they all get to hear different points from their classmates. Most importantly to see if the poem helped deepen their understanding of the human impact of these racial ideologies. Also, how pseudo-scientific ideas of race were challenged in the poem and relates to the impact of racial discrimination.		
Conclusion: Summary and link to purpose	I will conclude by highlighting the key concepts of the lesson. This will be done through drawing back from the class discussion bringing the voices of my learners out when I summarise the topic. I will explain in my conclusion that as I have elaborated in the lesson that the topic concentrates on the theme of ideas about race that were spreading during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The impact of racial theories and eugenics during this period was explored. The poem then strongly opposes the negative portrayal of blackness which pushes back and challenges the racial hierarchies. The poem is against the eugenic ideologies prevalent in the 19th and 20th centuries, where racial hierarchies were used to justify discrimination and segregation. To conclude, the use of this poem in teaching this lesson allowed for discussions about the ideas of race and how it has been socially constructed and misused to uphold systems of oppression. Learners through	Recap from the teacher.	5 minutes

	pair work they were challenged to think about racial divisions.		
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6.2.2 “My Country” by Rollie Reggie and Topic 5: Apartheid South Africa (1940s to 1960s).

Topic 5: “*Apartheid South Africa (1940s to 1960s)*” talks about the Apartheid era and its systemic racial segregation and discrimination. The poem “*My Country*” by Rollie Reggie provides a detailed personal and emotional lens through which learners can explore the impact of colonialism and apartheid, and its complexities of the historical period (Seroto, 2018). Through TCA Anderson (2007), asserts that the poem showed these themes; Connection, Love and Affection and Loss. The theme of racial oppression aligns with the content because it focuses on oppressing people based on their race. The poet's expression of love for his country is highlighted in the first stanza “my dear country – I love you well.” and the sadness due to colonialism mirrors the broader narrative of displacement and loss experienced by Black South Africans under apartheid.

The theme of love and affection, and loss is presented strongly in the poem as the poet expresses deep love for the country, but this love is linked with the theme of loss as it expressed with sadness and sorrow due to the loss of freedom and the effects of segregation. This ties directly to the concept of segregation and the legal implementation of apartheid as outlined in the curriculum. Showing how apartheid left Black South Africans affected through segregation policies that were aimed at making Black people inferior, the system wanted to control and divide them. It highlights, how under apartheid, Black South Africans were isolated from their own land, even though they deeply loved it. By framing this love and affection, and loss within a decolonial lens, the poem critiques the colonial structures that have disrupted the relationship between Black people and their land, which then engages in epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009), by reclaiming (Zavala, 2016), silenced narratives and emotions.

The poet uses figure of speech like metaphor in the poem as the language that creates an image of the emotional impact of colonialism and apartheid on Black South African. The section discussion segregation policies in the 1920s and 30s lay the groundwork for the implementation of apartheid. While the poet expresses his sadness for his country reflects the emotional strain of segregation and apartheid took on Black South Africans who were also deprived of their land and rights. This

connects directly with the legalising of apartheid and the loss of political, social and economic freedom for the black majority. The repeated line 10 “Oh, to serve you well”, contrasts with the sorrow that comes from the country being no longer his line 22 “Because no longer a black man’s country”, which highlights the emotional burden of colonialism/apartheid. The country that was once home to all, where Black South Africans had freedom, agency and connected with their land was now segregated, stripping them of their rights and land. The poet’s sorrow symbolises the collective grief felt by the Black people oppressed under apartheid. The adoption of apartheid by the National Party, wanted to maintain white supremacy making Black people inferior. Discrimination in terms of race determined their rights and access to facilities. Laws were meant to restrict their movement and taking away their freedom. These apartheid laws affected the lives of Black South Africans, more so the land dispossession and the pass laws. Now, the land that was seen as the “land of charms and gladness” line 6, was now seen as the land of oppression.

In the 1950s, when resistance movements, like the ANC beginning to shift towards mass mobilisation and alliances in response to the injustice, the response from the apartheid state and repression was violence and exiles, leaving Black South Africans traumatised. This elaborates on the resistance movement theme from the topic and links to the theme of loss as Black people mourn their people during these protests. Looking at the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, where the state’s brutal response to peaceful protests left many in mourning, much like the poet’s sorrowful tears.

The themes of love and affection, and loss can be used to allow the learners an in-depth understanding of the emotional and human consequences of apartheid. The poem can help them connect the emotional and political experiences of Black South Africans during the colonialism/apartheid era. The love the poet expresses in the poem can be viewed as a form of resistance.

The opportunity to better understand colonial complexities along with their impact on South Africa is provided by the poem through its exploration of national identity. By employing epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009), the poem can serve as a powerful tool to challenge colonial narratives, offering a platform for marginalized voices and enabling learners to engage with the complexities of national identity shaped by colonialism. The poem can thus be used to encourage a discussion on the effect colonialism has had in shaping national identities, as well as the continuous struggles for justice and decolonisation (Subreenduth, 2006). The teacher can relate

this poem with topic 5 through discussion the effect of apartheid policies on lives of the people especially that of Black people. “*My country*” can be used as a starting point for learners to explore how South Africans were living in their country before colonisation and the kind of hardship they encountered in their own land. The teacher can also encourage learners to consider how poetry served as a voice for those who suffered under colonial-apartheid. The literature indicates that teachers can allow a more engaging and meaningful learning experience (d’Abdon, 2016a), by encouraging learners to explore and interpret historical events through a personal and emotional lens. This discussion can help learners to understand the broader human experience behind historical events. I have provided a more detailed analysis in the lesson plan outlines below showing how can the topic be taught in a history classroom with the topic of Apartheid in South Africa 1940s to 1960s.

Lesson Planning for History: Template

Class: Grade 11

Topic: Apartheid in South Africa 1940s to 1960s

Sub-Topic: Policies of apartheid

Previous Lesson: Segregation after formation of the Union

Time allocated: 1 Hour

PURPOSE: At the end of the lesson learners will be able to analyse legislation used to separate White and Black people:

Learners will be able to analyse policy and legislation implemented by the government in order to separate White and Black people.
They will have a deeper understanding of the apartheid system in terms of oppression, discrimination and use poetry to understand the impact of apartheid on a personal level while fostering critical thinking through reflective writing and group discussion.
Learners will be able to argue against the implementation of apartheid with substance and meaning.
Learners will be able to draw connections between the poem’s emotional message and relate it to the realities of Apartheid.

KEY QUESTION:

Why did the National Party adopt the policy of apartheid, and how does the poem reflect its emotional and social impact on Black South Africans?

SKILLS/HISTORICAL THINKING

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

-Learners will develop this skill by assessing the extent to which apartheid was and still is, significant when studying South African history.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE: What are the consequences of apartheid on Black people.

VALUES & ATTITUDES

Why is it important to stand up against injustices, like those faced by Black people during apartheid?
How can we contribute to creating a more just and equitable society?

Why are attitudes and values critical to be aware of social issues.

What is the value African history and people who played significant roles in contributing to the freedom we have today as a country.

LESSON STEPS:

<u>Part of lesson</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Teaching and Learning Strategies</u>	<u>Time allocation</u>
Introduction: includes hook and recap	This is the first part of the lesson where I use a hook to draw learners' attention to the lesson. The hook will incorporate the poem. I will perform a monologue to my learners. Thereafter read the poem to them. Hook: (Voice shaking). I had a home. It wasn't much, but it was mine—ours. I can still hear the	Teacher will give brief overview of the lesson and read the poem once aloud.	10 minutes

	laughter, the singing and the voices of my family. I can still hear her folktales, and I can still taste her food. I can still hear his jokes...(laughing) I was happy. I was at peace. Then...(Pause) they came. They took that happiness away from me. They said it was the law, their right. I had none. They forced me into a place they chose. It wasn't just a house they took. It was a home...our home. They took our sense of belonging, our pride. (Pause to think). But it was home, they came to our home and invaded our peace. Took away our freedom, our independency. (Pause...raises voice). But they never took away our memories, our love for our home. Why do I have to fear for my life because of how my skin looks? (Pauses, looks around). Now, I stand here, a stranger in our own land, crying, begging and fighting for a place that was ours. OUR HOME! Then I will recap the previous lesson's main points linking them with the content of this lesson.		
Introduction of new material	This stage aims to introduce new content knowledge that learners will acquire by the end of this lesson. Here, I will introduce the poem "<i>My Country</i>" by Rollie Reggie and explain to my learners that poetry is important because we get to hear voices of the marginalised. I will allow learners to read the poem twice to highlight important themes and relate them to the topic of the day.	This part will be completely inclusive. Meaning everyone in the classroom will participate so that we have a meaningful lesson.	20 minutes

	The main themes they should focus on are: -Connection to the land: this is important in this topic because black South Africans were denied the right to their own land and freedom. This theme links to the apartheid laws and policies that were put into place to disrupt the lives of black people. -Love and Affection: the poem shows the strong love the poet has with his country which relates to black people fighting against apartheid to regain their country. They fought for what they loved. Reclaiming and restoring what was forcefully taken away from them. The poet's unwavering affection for the land symbolizes a commitment to fighting and reclaim what they lost. -Loss: the apartheid racial segregation policies made black people to feel foreign in their home and they have lost their identity. These themes are very important and will connect to the broader topic of apartheid, as well as in exploring the reliance. Showing that love can give strength for fighting against oppression and for freedom. Next thing that learners will do is to try to free write and answer the question. The question will be: <i>How does the poem reflect the emotional experience of living under apartheid?</i> Here my learners will have to relate the topic and the poem through expressing their thoughts using the themes.		
Guided practice	This is the stage where learners are given opportunity for a class discussion regarding content	I will instruct learners to report back to class.	10 minutes

	knowledge they learned. This is because I aim to deliver an inclusive epistemological access. In this guided practice learners will engage in a class discussion which will be centered around the themes of loss, love and affection and connection to the land. These are themes that are found in the poem and topic. The goal of this discussion is to link the emotional responses in the poem to the experiences of black South Africans under apartheid. Learners will be asked to think about how the poem shows the reflection of the lived experiences of black South Africans during apartheid. Ask these questions to make them think: <i>Why does the poet mourn the loss of his country, and how might this be linked to the policies introduced by the National Party after 1948?</i> I will end the discussion by asking learners to reflect on how the poem contributes to the overall understanding of apartheid. Ask them this question: <i>In your view, how does the poem serve as a form of resistance during apartheid?</i>	During this class discussion, I will be facilitating so that I ensure that learners do not move out of topic as they discuss.	
Independent practice	Learners will be instructed to work in groups to do this activity. I will ask them to read the poem again by now they know the themes. They need to focus on those themes as they answer the questions: -What does the poet express about their love for their country? How does this love contrast with the sorrow and sadness they feel? What do you think causes the poet's sorrow? -How does line 11 "Is it because my country is no longer mine?" relate to	This stage will be dominated by learners writing a reflection about the implementation of apartheid. Here, I want to hear their voices as they reflect. This is important because I used poems that were written by people who lived under the colonial-apartheid era and now I will be	10 minutes

	the impact of apartheid policies on black South African? Explain how these lines might reflect the loss of freedom and land under apartheid. - Connection to the land theme: How does the poet describe the relationship between the land and the people? After learners have answered the questions in groups, they will take a moment to reflect on their answers. At the end they will write a reflection where they reflect on this question: <i>How does the poem reflect the emotional and social impact of Apartheid on black South Africans?</i>	asking learners to write and reflect about apartheid, who did not experience it but learned about it (post-apartheid era). This activity is encouraging critical thinking. Thereafter, we discuss it.	
Conclusion: Summary and link to purpose	I will recap questions of key topics addressed in the lesson. I will summarise how the poem showed the personal side of apartheid that was not present in the content. This connects to epistemic disobedience, as we challenge the Eurocentric historical narratives presented in the curriculum and make space for the marginalized, lived experiences of individuals who suffered under apartheid. Conclude by making them aware that through our discussions, relating themes from the poem and topic illustrated how important it is to not only depend on what the curriculum say but challenge it, critically engage with it.	Summary from the teacher to bring learners back to the main discussion.	10 minutes

6.2.3 “First Day After the War” by Mazisi Kunene and Topic 4: Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980.

The poem imagines a day on which a large mass of people, including the poet, celebrate the end of war. This poem can play an important part in the topic of resistance to apartheid as it can show learners that, through decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015), they can understand on a deeper

level the lived experiences of Black people and resistance against oppression during the apartheid period. When this poem is integrated into the history classroom, it invites learners to explore the resilience and agency of marginalized Black people. History teachers can foster critical thinking and empathy (Bertram, 2008; Furman, 2005; Godsell, 2019) among learners, empowering them to engage with the complexities of apartheid history from diverse perspectives and amplify voices that have been silenced or overlooked. The poem and how the poet expressed the voices of the marginalised.

The teacher can start by introducing topic 4 and the poem in the history lesson and then have discussion questions which relates to the poem. Questions like how does “*First Day After the War*” portray the imagined ending of the apartheid regime? The poem can also be related to the key events like the Sharpeville Massacre, Soweto Uprising that took place in South Africa. Most importantly, the poem is about hope in the depths of oppression and speaks to it. It is important because it helps learners to emotionally connect with the struggle against apartheid and understand the motivations behind civil resistance. Fúnez-Flores (2024), points out that decolonial theory highlights the importance of reclaiming marginalized histories, and by using this poem the teacher can engage learners with alternative perspectives, challenging dominant Eurocentric narratives and fostering a deeper understanding of apartheid's struggle through diverse voices. The teacher can relate the poem with topic 4 through discussing how Black people fought the apartheid system and how they imagined their first day of freedom in those difficult times. There was always hope for a new beginning.

The poem shows themes of joy and celebration, liberation and freedom, and unity, they connect to the themes of civil resistance in the CAPS curriculum. The theme of liberation and freedom represents the imagined hope for freedom and change after years of oppression, just like how black people felt after the rise of the BCM and the growing resistance of the apartheid regime. This theme also involves speaking of “...her eyes of freedom!” line 5 and awakening line 6 “She woke us up...”, which is similar to how Steve Biko and the BCM encouraged Black people to empower themselves and reject the mental oppression of apartheid. It also links to the theme of student activism that is present in the CAPS curriculum which shows forms of resistance that the youth took to reject the education system. Just as the poem conveys themes of liberation and freedom, it resonates with Mignolo (2009) concept of epistemic disobedience, where the oppressed reject

colonial mentalities and reclaim their power and identity, which relates to the BCM encouraging Black people to view themselves as agents of change and challenge the oppressive system.

Unity is another theme found in the poem, and it is described in the poem that people were coming together and celebrated which shows the theme of joy and celebration. This reflects how groups like trade unions and community organisations worked together in the 1970s and 1980s to fight apartheid, meaning people came together during apartheid to end it. In line 16 “People came from all lands”, the poet shows unity across the world relates to how the international community supported South Africa’s fight against apartheid through the boycotts and sanctions. This illustrates the theme of international solidarity found in the CAPS curriculum. The calling of people from “all the circles of the earth” line 11 is similar to the way international communities especially trade unions and anti-apartheid activists in countries like Ireland, Britain and in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) united to support South Africa on their resistance to the oppressive system.

The poem elaborates more on the imagined hope for freedom and provides a symbolic reflection on the civil resistance against apartheid. The language that the poet uses is imagery and freedom is portrayed as a woman which is a figure of speech (personification). In addition, to give an in-depth discussion about the topic and poem I have provided a lesson plan below that shows how can the poem play a role in teaching this topic.

Lesson Planning for History: Template

Class: Grade 12

Topic: Civil Resistance in South Africa 1970s to 1980.

Sub-Topic: Challenge of Black Consciousness to the Apartheid state

Previous Lesson: South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s

Time allocated: 1 Hour

PURPOSE: At the end of the lesson learners will be able to evaluate the reliability of arguments presented in historical debates:

Understand the historical context through having a solid understanding of the events that led to the Black Consciousness Movement.

Understand the connection between BCM and the growing resistance to apartheid in the 1980s and Use the poem to connect the emotional and symbolic aspects of resistance.

KEY QUESTION:

In what ways did Black Consciousness challenge the apartheid state?

SKILLS/HISTORICAL THINKING

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Learners will get to know the significance of the Black Consciousness Movement.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE: Learners will understand that the consequences of Black consciousness movement sparked broader social change, inspiring activism, and challenging discriminatory norms. It encouraged marginalized groups to fight for their rights, shaping the course of history.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: How do you think the Black consciousness reflects the broader social and political tensions of its time?

VALUES & ATTITUDES

One of the attitudes learners will adopt is to cultivate empathy, compassion and understanding by putting themselves in the shoes of those who fought for freedom., and to understand the struggles faced by marginalized communities.

Equity is one value learners will develop, implying that they will recognize the importance of treating all individuals with fairness and respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or background. Understand that everyone deserves equal rights and opportunities.

The second value learners might develop is to appreciate the significance of fighting for justice and standing up against discrimination. Understand that justice is a fundamental right for all members of society.

LESSON STEPS:

<u>Part of lesson</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Teaching and Learning Strategies</u>	<u>Time allocation</u>
Introduction: includes hook and recap	The lesson will start by an overview of the previous lesson. Since they have already learned about Apartheid and how it was implemented it will be easier for me to introduce my lesson. My learners will watch a video of Steve Biko, then I will ask my learners what stood out for them (first five minutes). In the chosen video for the hook, Steve Biko explains the aim of the BCM.	I am using a video here as my strategy. The class discussion is part of it, but the hook is the video.	10 minutes
Introduction of new material	I am going to introduce the topic and explain to the learners the significant role poetry played in anti-apartheid activism, how poetry expressed resistance and hope for freedom for the marginalised. I will provide an overview of BCM and how it empowered black South Africans fostering pride and resistance against apartheid. Thereafter, I will give them the poem by Mazisi Kunene “ <i>First Day After the War.</i> ” This poem will be introduced as a form of reflection of the BCM central themes of liberation and freedom and unity. Through the use of this poem while introducing this topic, learners will get to understand how poetry was a form of resistance, and the poem will help them understand the emotional and psychological liberation that the BCM aimed to inspire.	Teacher using PowerPoint to explain her content of the day and the poem.	15 minutes
Guided practice	I will group my learners in groups of four. Each group must analyse the poem and discuss. Some of the questions they need to consider when analysing: Why would the end of apartheid feel like a “war” has ended? How can this poem link to apartheid more specifically the Black Consciousness Movement. What powerful message is the poem trying to convey	Group work	10 minutes

	especially about the future after Apartheid? Also, consider the video they watched of Steve Biko talking about the movement.		
Independent practice	Learners would have finished discussing the questions and sharing them with the class. I will then divide them into two groups. This is where I want them to have a debate. The debate question is ‘does <i>First Day After the War</i> suggest that the spirit of unity and liberation seen in the BCM played an important role in ending apartheid?’. Learners will have to start by re-reading the poem again and highlight other important points they find in their analysis. They will then discuss its themes of liberation and freedom, unity, and the emotional impact of newfound freedom. Thereafter, they will briefly recap the BCM and its significance in civil resistance. This includes focusing on the key role of the BCM in promoting self-awareness and collective solidarity among Black South Africans, challenging both the oppressive state and internalized racism. After the debate, there will be a discussion on how the poem illustrates the emotional aspects of liberation and freedom. I will ask learners to consider how this poem can influence or reflect historical movements of the civil resistance, as well as what it meant to write a hopeful poem in such a dark time.	Group work then class debate. Learners will also need to reference the poem to strengthen their argument.	15 minutes
Conclusion: Summary and link to purpose	I will summarise the lesson. In my summary I will conclude by putting an emphasis on the role of the BCM in shaping internal resistance and using the poem to show the emotional aspects of liberation, which led to the imagination of freedom. This	Recap from the teacher.	10 minutes

	poem as a decolonial teaching strategy can be used to teach learners about the power of unity and the importance of reclaiming cultural identity as a form of resistance.		
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6.3 Restating research aims and main research question.

One of the central aims of my study was to investigate whether specific selected poems have the potential of being used as a decolonising tool for teaching history in South African classrooms. The literature indicates that carefully selected poems can be used for this purpose. Kros (2010) argues for moving away from rote learning with the intention of decolonising the way history is taught. This requires critical engagement with the content being taught and, most importantly, to foster inclusivity and uncover different perspectives to help with painful conversations. Godsell (2019) argues that poetry serves as a powerful tool in voicing sensitive topics, as it acknowledges and embraces the complexity and pain of the past.

The literature indicates that teaching history is difficult, especially when teaching sensitive topics (Bertram, 2008; Godsell, 2019; Hasan, 2013; Teeger, 2015). It is particularly challenging for South African history teachers. Glanvill-Miller (2017) states that teachers face emotional challenges when having to teach historical topics that are sensitive and traumatic. My findings show that carefully selected poetry can be powerful because the poems can show potentially complex emotional responses that align with the chosen CAPS topics. In the three poems analysed, the voices of three individual's, present the opportunity of humanising the history of the colonial and apartheid eras.

In line with my main research question, my analysis suggests that there is a possibility that using carefully selected poems to teach sensitive, past in today's South Africa opens space for inclusivity and different perspectives in the classroom when carefully selected poetry aligns with the topic being taught. Each poem I selected meets the criteria for teaching history through poetry, as outlined by Somers (1999) and Godsell (2019). Somers (1999) highlights that the guidelines for the selection of poems needs to make sure of historical arguments, whereas, (Godsell, 2019) guidelines empathises: "Connect with historical arguments, Engage historical thinking, Be compelling, Connect with relevant items for students, Writer positionality and Connect with content from CAPS" (p.21-22). The selected poetry addresses the issue of decolonisation because

it has a criteria that ensures that chosen poetry will allow for decolonial engagement in the classroom.

The literature indicates that teachers can utilise poetry to challenge their learners to think critically, to see connections and relationships (Somers, 1999). Most importantly, incorporating poetry into the history classroom can make the subject more engaging, meaningful, and memorable for learners. Poetry has a deep connection to people's engagement with the world and each other (Creely, 2019). In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, adopting a decolonising framework through the use of poetry can be a powerful tool especially when engaging with the past. Poetry with its emotive and reflective qualities, encourages learners to gain deeper understanding as they connect with history on an emotional level (Godsell, 2019). It serves as a medium for storytelling that resonates deeply with many African cultures, promoting a pedagogy that is more inclusive and culturally relevant (Godsell, 2019; Shahjahan et al., 2022).

6.3.1 Conclusion

I investigated poetry as a decolonial teaching tool when integrated with the curriculum. The main theory I used is decolonial theory, De Lissovoy (2010) emphasises that decolonial theory is aimed at questioning, addressing, and undoing the domination of the impact of colonialism and colonality. Decolonial theory can be used to transform the way history is taught within the classroom, particularly when the poems "*My country*", "*Black and White*" and "*First Day After the War*", are used to explore more deeply into topics from the CAPS history curriculum

I have shown that the use of poems can promote understanding, question and address the impact of colonality by giving voice to marginalized perspectives, reclaiming indigenous identities, and challenging the colonial narratives that have historically silenced and oppressed colonised people. It seeks to challenge the Eurocentric views that support colonialism, it works towards decolonisation in the history classroom.

6.4 Limitations

The limitation of the study is that the researcher's only analysed a specific set of poems. Consequently, conclusion drawn may not apply to all poems and all historical periods. Different poems could offer a variety of perspectives and may be effective. However, the key points made

in this thesis would apply to all poems selected through the specified criterion. As Godsell (2019) puts it that “Not all poems will work effectively to decolonise or teach history” (p.20).

Furthermore, as I could not locate history high school teachers that use poetry in their classrooms, I could not observe the application of my proposals to see the interactions between learners and teachers, neither could I discuss the design and implementation of lesson plans. This lack of practical, pedagogical engagement means that the study's findings are theoretical and may not translate well into educational settings. The absence of direct feedback from the teachers and learners further limits the study's applicability and relevance to actual teaching and learning experiences. However, as the poems I chose were carefully selected through criteria that were used throughout my thesis, I believe that they stand a good chance of being effective as a learning tool.

6.5 Recommendations

Addressing the limitations pointed out, future researchers should test these proposals in a history classroom to get empirical data. This will involve designing lesson plans based on the selected poems, observing how learners engage with the material and how teachers deal with the topics using the poems. Feedback should be collected through classroom observations and interviews from both learners and teachers. By doing so, researchers can evaluate the practical effectiveness of their study, identify any gaps or areas for improvement, and get a deeper understanding of how poetry can be best taught and appreciated in educational contexts.

Furthermore, they should experiment with a variety of poems to test in the classroom. By gathering a wider range of poems that meet the criteria for selection, it will increase the validity of the data that is being investigated and enable a more detailed understanding of how themes relate to the topics taught. This will also allow diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences to be heard. This study provided the foundation for future empirical work to be built on, that would provide a more comprehensive and grounded basis for conclusions, enhancing the study's relevance and impact.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed and showed the importance of using poetry in the history classroom to teach sensitive controversial topics. The arguments developed in this thesis were linked to the aims of the study and the literature discussed. Most importantly, the discussion revealed that the integration of “*My country*”, “*Black and White*” and “*First Day After the War*”, into the Grade 11 and 12

history classroom of post-apartheid South Africa offers a unique and transformative approach to teaching sensitive historical topics.

I have concluded based on my work that poetry can indeed be a decolonial strategy to teach the painful, sensitive, and controversial past in today's classrooms. I argue that these three poems can help learners to engage on an emotional level with the historical events and to understand them in a deeper level through the viewpoints presented in the poetry. This aligns with the objectives of a decolonial approach looking at counter/storytelling, healing, reclaiming approach (Zavala, 2016).

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This study has explored the possibility that poetry can be a powerful decolonial strategy for teaching South Africa's painful sensitive and controversial history to learners in today's history classrooms. It has examined how poetry can be used to complement the way history is taught, by using poetry as a decolonial tool. Through this teaching approach, voices that were previously silenced can be heard, which allow for the challenging of historical' colonially oriented narratives, that were dominant. Poetry can help learners to understand the complex history of South Africa and can assist teachers in teaching controversial and sensitive topics. Uniquely, poetry opens a door to the emotional and personal insights that textbooks might miss. It brings alive themes like loss, racial oppression, dispossession and the resilience of hope, making historical events more relatable. Teachers can use poems to discuss sensitive topics like apartheid, by choosing works that explore resistance and show what happened during the period, of oppression. The poems like *"My country"*, *"Black and White"* and *"First Day After the War"*. can help, learners to not only learn about history, but also to develop critical thinking skills. It also encourages empathy and thoughtful discussion, making it a powerful tool for teaching difficult subjects with sensitivity and depth (Furman, 2005; Godsell, 2019). Learners will also relate with the poems as they are written by Black people who were marginalised.

Some of the challenges that history teachers experience when teaching sensitive topics like apartheid have been explored in this study. The criticism of the "both sides of the story" approach is criticised by Teeger (2015) who argues against avoiding the less-complex version of the history just to promote peace in the history classroom. Teachers should go deeper when exploring such topics and not give merely a basic overview but create a detailed understanding of historical events. There is a need to move away from a single story, and to break away from Eurocentric perspectives that dominate the education space (McGregor, 2012). This requires teachers to go beyond what is presented in the curriculum to create an inclusive learning environment that allows learners to question what they are taught. Poetry can help to achieve this as it opens space for learners to critically engage with the content. Furthermore, it differs from other sources by fostering critical engagement through its use of language, imagery, and personal narratives, thus inviting deeper reflection and empathy on complex historical and social issues. It is also unique in that it provides the emotional context to the events; it gives insight into the feelings of the poets and, by

implication, all the marginalised. As Godsell (2019) points out that poetry creates a world that invites learners to find themselves in that world. Thus, through poetry, there is potential for allowing learners into a world where they can deeply connect with the emotions, experiences, and perspectives of others, often silenced voices, which in turn encourages them to critically question the content being taught.

Poetry should not only be treated as a literary form but as a teaching tool that can be used to encourage decolonisation and to assist in healing the wounds from the effects of colonisation and apartheid (Seroto, 2018), and allow for inclusivity. Within the framework of decoloniality, poetry can be used as a tool to create a world that values and respects everyone's humanity and furthers healing pedagogies (Davids, 2019; Zavala, 2016). Poetry is a genre full of emotions, and so supports this emotional engagement, as it can create an open space for discussion which will allow the learner to critically engage with the topic. Poetry, in this context, serves as a useful method for including indigenous perspectives in teaching and learning as well as reimagining pedagogies for learners' engagement and emotional engagement within a decolonised education space (Maluleka, 2023b; Newfield & Byrne, 2020).

To conclude the study, based on the analysis presented in the discussion using poems "*My country*", "*Black and White*" and "*First Day After the War*", in a history classroom in current day South Africa is a unique way to examine traumatic painful, sensitive and controversial historical topics. By including these poems in the lessons as teaching tools and connecting them with the CAPS topics it will help learners to better understand colonial and, apartheid history as well as be able to challenge the narratives around them. In this way, when learners challenge the content, it helps learners to share their perspectives, so they are learning from each other.

As I have shown it in my research, poetry can encourage learners to think critically and connect emotionally with history on a deeper level, which is why it is potentially beneficial to use it as a decolonial strategy. Despite the study having limitations, it shows important insights on how poetry can be used as a decolonial teaching approach. For future research, I would suggest implementing this in a classroom to observe if it is effective. Then to use a variety of poems and for creating a wider exploration of decolonial teaching. In conclusion, I have used these three poems as examples, limited it to these few because of the scope of a master's study. Nevertheless, they were

specifically chosen and proved to be a good fit in creating room for decolonisation to take place in the history classroom.

7.1 Critical Reflection

Throughout writing this thesis I encountered challenges because my initial plan was to have an empirical study with participants. I wanted to go into a history classroom and see how teachers teach using poetry. However, I could not get teachers who use poetry in their history classes. Despite that, what I enjoyed the most was writing my thesis. It came with a lot of stress and comments because it is interesting. I believe in poetry being a decolonial tool, and my thesis strengthened this belief.

In my academic journey I have always been interested in discovering how history teachers could move away from rote learning and be able to challenge their learners. I always wanted new ways to teach history “because history textbooks are often perceived as boring or dull” (Sliwka, 2008, p.61). I discovered a lot throughout writing this thesis and, most importantly, the fact that history pedagogy can be decolonised. I urge teachers to try using poetry in their classrooms so they can see whether it works or not. We can move away from rote learning (Kros, 2010), and find that history is not a boring subject. We can challenge learners to be critical and allow for diverse perspectives. When poetry is integrated into the history lesson it can well allow for personal engagement and inclusivity. Our learners will be able to think outside the box.

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Addendum



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2023ECE38M

PROJECT TITLE

Towards poetry as a decolonial strategy in teaching a sensitive & controversial past in post-apartheid South Africa.

INVESTIGATOR

Zanele Mathebula

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

Wits School of Education

DATE CONSIDERED

10 July 2023

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally.

RISK LEVEL

No risk.

EXPIRY DATE

Date of submission of the Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

29 August 2023

CHAIRPERSON

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mbokane", written over a horizontal line.

Dr Batseba Mofolo-Mbokane

cc: Dr Sarah Godsell

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.



Signature

Date 29 / 08 / 2023