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CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS SERIES

Edited by Hilary Janks

Language, Identity & Power



Hilary Janks

Materials for the Classroom



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Language, Identity & Power

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Hodder & Stoughton

A MEMBER OF THE HODDER HEADLINE GROUP

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FOREWORD

The languages that we speak are a mark of our identities. If I tell you that my mother tongue is English, that I learnt some Yiddish from my grandparents, that I was taught to read Hebrew, and that I studied Afrikaans and French at school, you can probably work out a great deal about my history. Although English is my home language, I do not speak the same variety of English as my parents. I learnt to speak in the same way as my friends at school because I identified with them. As a result, I have a South African accent that I am proud of. In *Language, Identity and Power* we will explore the ways in which identity is bound up with language.

I will suggest that we do not have a single, unified, uncomplicated identity but that we all have a number of different social identities and that these sometimes clash with or contradict one another. Imagine that you identify with the children in the street where you live but that your parents have sent you to a fancy school – you might have different ways of being and behaving at home and at school. You may even speak different languages in those different identities. This is a common experience of many South African students in the non-racial schools. This way of thinking about identity is very helpful because it shows us that our identities are social. They connect us to the social contexts in which we live. Our identities are ways of belonging in those contexts.

Often social forces control who can belong in different contexts. Because of our history, South Africans understand this very well. In this workbook we will examine the role played by language in including and excluding people from groups. We will also look at how people use language to name groups. Where these names are a way of oppressing people, we will see how people have renamed themselves and given themselves new and positive identities.

We will play with society's rules for using language in order to see whose interests they serve and what happens when people break them. Because this book is about language, identity and power it is important to think about whether everyone in society has the same language rights and whether everyone has to obey the same rules.

I hope that *Language, Identity and Power* will increase your awareness of what you are 'allowed' to do with language in your different identities and that it will help you, together with others, to shift the boundaries of what is possible.

Hilary Janks

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS (CLA)

This workbook is part of a series called *Critical Language Awareness*. All the workbooks in the series deal with **the relationship between language and power**. This relationship is not obvious and so the materials attempt to raise awareness of the way in which language **can** be used and **is** used to maintain and to challenge existing forms of power. There can be little doubt that power matters, both to people who have it and to those who do not. This series will try to show that because there are connections between language and power, language also matters.

In any **unequal relation of power** there are top dogs and underdogs. How people get to be on top in a society has to do with what that society values. It may be age or maleness or class or cleverness or a white skin. It is easier for those who have power to maintain it if they can persuade everyone in the society that there is nothing unnatural about these arrangements, that things are this way because that is the way they are meant to be.

If people **consent** to being powerless then the people in power need to use less **force** (armies, police, punishments) to maintain their power. Convincing and persuading people to consent to society's rules is often the job of families, religions, schools and the media. All these social institutions use language and it is largely in and through language that meaning is mobilised to defend the status quo.

But **language is also used to challenge the status quo**. By refusing to consent and by working together people can bring about change. What makes CLA 'critical' is its concern with the politics of meaning: the ways in which dominant meanings are maintained, challenged and changed.

When people use language to speak or write, they have to make many choices. They have to decide what words to use, whether to include adjectives and adverbs, whether to use the present, the past or the future, whether to use sexist or non-sexist pronouns, whether to join sentences or to leave them separate, how to sequence information, whether to be definite or tentative, approving or disapproving. What all these choices mean is that written and spoken **texts are constructed from a range of possible language options**.

However, not all the options are linguistic – many **texts are a combination of verbal and non-verbal elements**. Students are asked to think about the non-verbal choices such as photographs, pictures, gestures, graphs, which affect the meaning of texts.

Many of the choices are **social choices**. Every society has conventions which govern people's behaviour, including their language behaviour. There are social rules controlling who should speak, for how long, when and where, and in which language. There are social norms for polite and impolite forms of speech; there are taboo words and topics. These unwritten **rules of use** govern what a speech community considers **appropriate** language behaviour.

These **social norms are a good indication of power relations** as many of them reflect the values of the people or groups in society who have power. This is particularly true when different groups do not have equal language rights. Here is an obvious example. Where teachers have more power than their students, they can call their students what they like. They can use first names or surnames only, or even insulting names that they have made up. Students, however, have to call teachers by their surnames and a title such as Mr or Ms; some students even have to call their teachers 'Sir' or 'Mistress'.

We forget that these rules of use are **social conventions** – they start to look natural and to seem like common sense. We forget that they are human constructions. It is easier to remember this when we compare the rules of different speech communities. Some groups think that it is rude to look a person in the eye when you speak to them. Other groups believe the opposite. Neither is more natural than the other. Both are conventions.

Critical Language Awareness emphasises the fact that texts are constructed. Anything that has been constructed can be **de-constructed**. This unmaking or unpicking of the text increases our awareness of the choices that the writer or speaker has made. Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected. Awareness of this prepares the way to ask **critical questions**: Why did the writer or speaker make these choices? Whose interests do they serve? Who is empowered or disempowered by the language used? We hope that students will also ask these critical questions about the workbooks in the series.

What the series hopes to do is to teach students how to become **critical readers**. Critical readers resist the power of print and do not believe everything they read. They start from a position of strategic doubt and weigh texts against their own ideas and values as well as those of others. This is not opposition for opposition's sake. If CLA enables people to use their awareness to contest the practices which disempower them, and to use language so as not to disempower others, then it can contribute to the struggle for human emancipation.

Hilary Janks

SUGGESTED METHODS FOR TEACHERS

I believe that students learn by talking and writing about new ideas. Often they do not know what they know until they have tried to put their ideas into words. In large classes it is impossible for everyone to talk to the teacher, and students often benefit from telling a friend their feelings and ideas. The friend gives them feedback that enables them to revise and change their opinions before committing themselves to a final answer.

1. To achieve this students need opportunities to:
   Work in pairs with the person next to them. Pair work is easy to organise and it makes everyone in the class speak to some other student.

   Work in groups (from 3 to 5 students).
   The teacher can give groups the same task or different tasks. For example if the students are working on an exercise, different groups can be asked to do different questions or all the groups can be asked to do the same questions. The teacher should keep track of what the groups are doing by
   - moving from group to group to listen to the discussion
   - seeing that all group members contribute
   - asking each group to make notes and sometimes to hand in written answers.

2. **Groups and pairs should report back to the whole class.** If the groups did different questions, they have the responsibility of explaining their answers to the rest of the class so that ideas can be pooled. If they did the same questions, not all groups need report back in order to compare their answers.

3. **Teachers should try to establish a spirit of co-operation rather than competition.** Students should be encouraged to help each other and to share what they know.

4. **Students should be encouraged to listen to one another,** especially during report backs. They should decide whether or not they agree with what the other person is saying. They should also be taught to make notes when their fellow students are speaking.

5. **It is a good idea to allow students to work in their mother tongue** to give them an opportunity at the start of the group work to understand the ideas. Because group work is followed by some spoken or written presentation in the medium of instruction, what is important is that by the end of the group work students are able to express their ideas in the language of the classroom.

6. **Students should also do individual work at school and at home.** This gives them practice in using the medium of instruction and encourages independence.

7. **Both group and individual work should sometimes be written.** In large classes it is not always possible to read everything that students write. Teachers should check students' books regularly to see that they are doing the work and that they understand the lessons. Some exercises should be marked carefully. Students need teachers to respond to what they are trying to say. It is also possible to go over exercises in class and to teach students how to check their own work.

8. **Some activities can be done in less depth than the workbook suggests.** Sometimes the workbook includes more than one activity on the same idea or concept. If the students grasp the idea with the first exercise, the teacher should feel free to do the related exercises more quickly (say with a brief read through) or not at all. Different students in the class can do different exercises in more or less detail according to their needs.

9. **Some activities can be done in more depth than the workbook suggests.** If the class gets really interested in something the teacher should encourage students to find similar examples in newspapers or magazines which they can bring to class for additional discussion. Teachers and students should devise their own exercises.

10. **Teachers and students should constantly relate the issues and activities in the workbooks to their own lives and experiences.** The workbooks are only a starting point for the exploration of the language and power issues that they raise, and lessons should not simply stick to the book.

11. **Teachers should help students to apply ideas in these workbooks to all their school subjects.**

12. **Teachers can make the ideas less abstract for the students** by encouraging them to do the research, the collages and the drawings as well as the dramatisations, debates and discussions suggested.

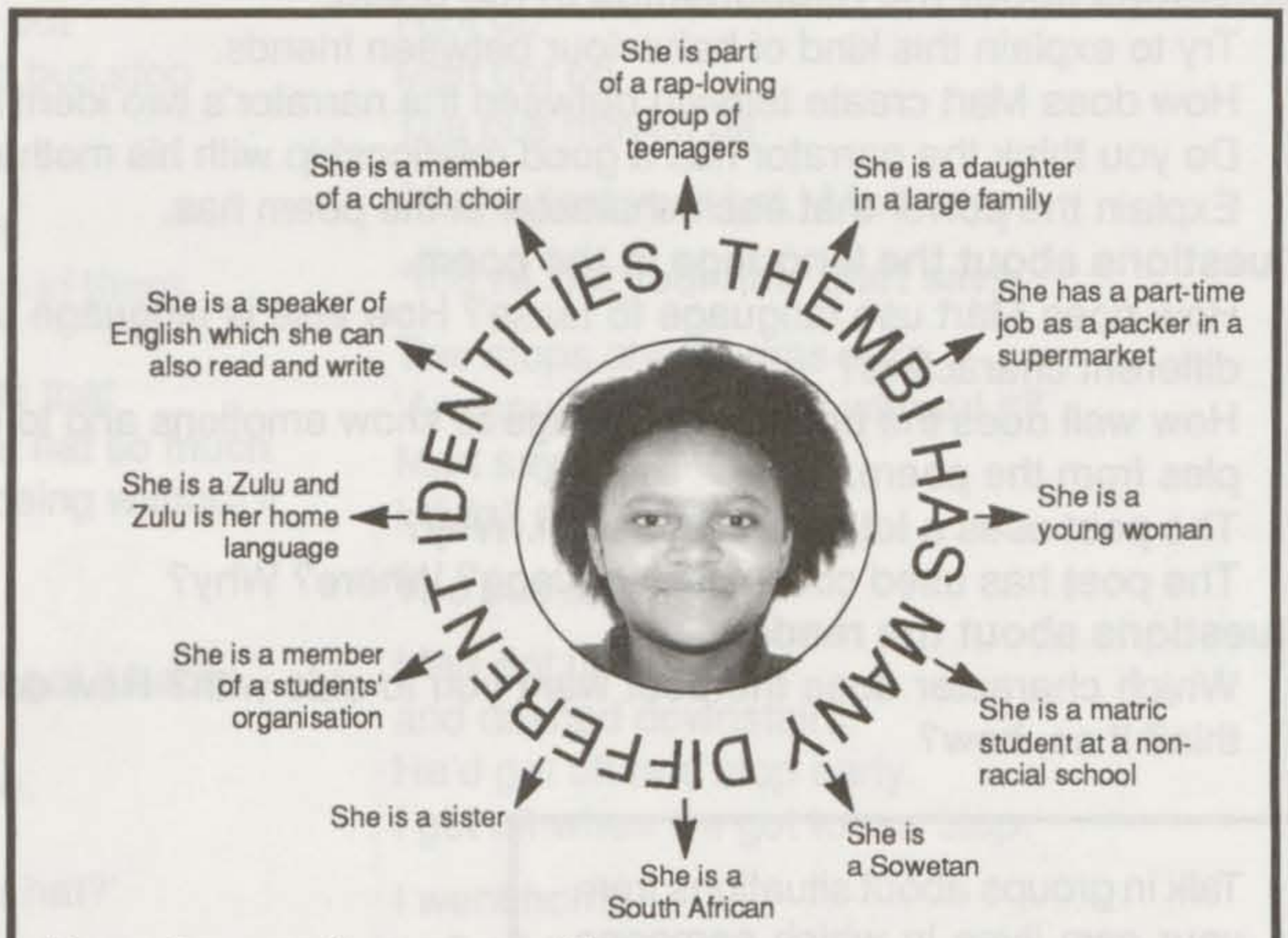
13. **Teachers should facilitate class discussions.** The workbooks deal with real and sensitive issues. Teachers need to help students to listen to one another and to try to understand the different histories and positions that other people in the class speak from. We need to hear other people and not try to convert them to our way of thinking.

14. **It is important to vary the approach used.** Different people learn in different ways. By varying the method, the teacher gives all the students a better chance of learning in ways that suit them best.

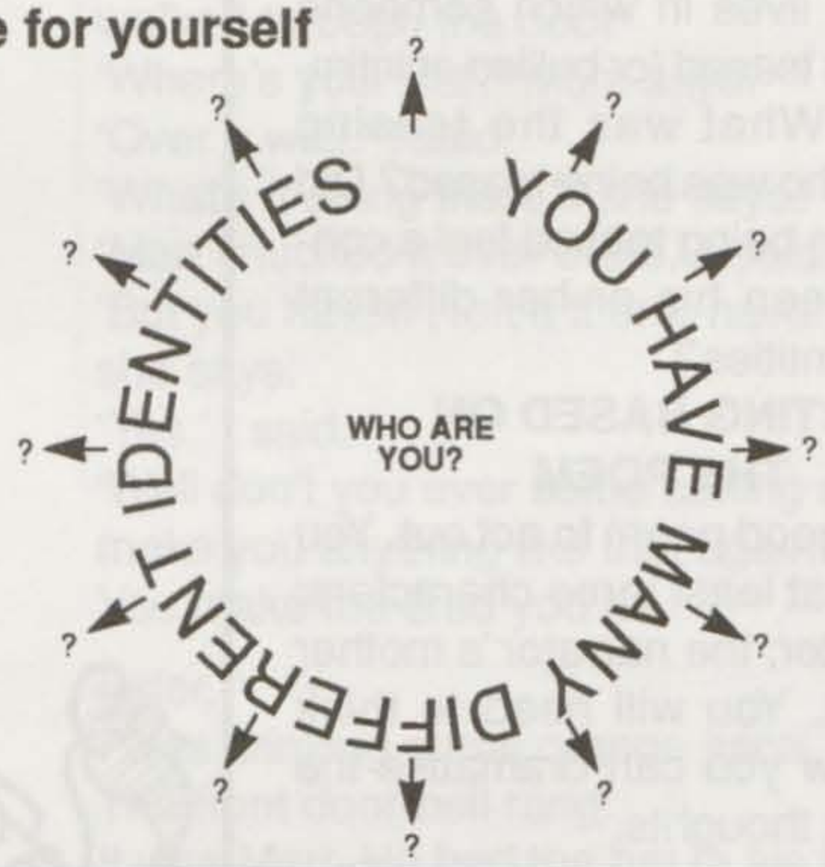
H Janks

MANY GROUPS – MANY DIFFERENT SOCIAL IDENTITIES

We all belong to many different groups. Any one person has a number of different social identities. For example a man may be all of the following: son, husband, uncle, father, worker, English speaker, Gujarati speaker, Moslem. Each of our identities gives us social rights as well as responsibilities.



Now do one for yourself



Sometimes Thembi finds that her different identities clash. For example at school and in her student organisation, she learns about equal rights for women. At home she is expected to behave as a traditional Zulu daughter and to help her mother serve the men.

Can you give examples of conflicting demands made by your different social identities? Can you give examples from other people you know? In which of your identities do you feel powerful? In which do you feel powerless?

You could also find examples based on characters from literature.

POWER BETWEEN FRIENDS

Read Michael Rosen's poem on the facing page. In the poem the boy who tells the story is the narrator. He has two different social identities that we can see in the poem. Can you find them? He has to sort out the conflict between these social identities when deciding how to behave.

Questions about the relationships in the poem.

1. Try to explain this kind of behaviour between friends.
2. How does Mart create tension between the narrator's two identities?
3. Do you think the narrator has a good relationship with his mother or not? Give your reasons.
4. Explain the power that each character in the poem has.

Questions about the language in the poem.

5. How does Mart use language to tease? How else is language used to show the power of the different characters?
6. How well does the poet use language to show emotions and to create suspense? Find examples from the poem.
7. The poet uses a lot of direct speech. Why?
8. The poet has used colloquial language? Where? Why?

Questions about the reader

9. Which character does the poet want you to side with? How do you know? Does he achieve this? If so, how?

Talk in groups about situations from your own lives in which someone was being teased (or bullied or intimidated). What was the teasing about? Who was being teased? Did the person being teased feel a conflict between his or her different social identities?

ACTING BASED ON THE POEM

This is a good poem to act out. You will need at least three characters: the narrator, the narrator 's mother and Mart. You will need to think about how you can dramatise the narrator's thoughts.
You may prefer to act out one of the situations from your own experience.



Statements for you to discuss.

- Teasing makes us think about our social identities.
- Teasing is a way of getting power over someone.
- Silence is a way of getting power over someone.
- Writers can get power over readers by getting them to side with a character.

Mart was my best friend
I thought he was great,
but one day he tried to do for me.

I had a hat – a woolly one
and I loved that hat.
It was warm and tight.
My mum knitted it
and I wore it everywhere.

One day me and Mart were out
and we were standing at the bus stop
and suddenly
he goes and grabs my hat
and chucked it over the wall.
He thought I was going to go in there
and get it out.
He thought he'd make me do that
because he knew I liked that hat so much
I wouldn't be able to stand being without it.

He was right –
I could hardly bear it.
I was really scared I'd never get it back.
But I never let on.
I never showed it on my face.
I just waited.
'Aren't you going to get your hat?'
he says.
'Your hat's gone,' he says.
'Your hat's over the wall.'
I looked the other way.

But I could still feel on my head
how he had pulled it off.
'Your hat's over the wall', he says.
I didn't say a thing.

Then the bus came round the corner
at the end of the road.

If I go home without my hat
I'm going to walk through the door
and mum's going to say,
'Where's your hat?'
and if I say,
'It's over the wall',
she's going to say,
'What's it doing there?'
and I'm going to say,
'Mart chucked it over,'
and she's going to say,
'Why didn't you go for it?'
and what am I going to say then?
what am I going to say then?

The bus was coming up.
'Aren't you going over for your hat?
There won't be another bus for ages.'
Mart says.

The bus was coming closer.
'You've lost your hat now,'
Mart says.

The bus stopped.
I got on
Mart got on
The bus moved off

'You've lost your hat,' Mart says.

'You've lost your hat,' Mart says.

Two stops ahead, was ours.
'Are you going indoors without it?
Mart says
I didn't say a thing.

The bus stopped.

Mart got up
and dashed downstairs.
He'd got off one stop early.
I got off when we got to our stop.

I went home
walked through the door
'Where's your hat?' Mum says.
'Over a wall.' I said.
'What's it doing there?' she says.
'Mart chucked it over there,' I said.
'But you haven't left it there, have you?'
she says.
'Yes,' I said.
'Well don't you ever come asking me to
make you anything like that again.
You make me tired you do.'

Later,
I was drinking some orange juice.
The front door-bell rang.
It was Mart. He had the hat in his hand.
He handed it to me – and went.

I shut the front door –
put on the hat
and walked into the kitchen.
Mum looked up.
'You don't need to wear your hat indoors
do you?' she said.
'I will for a bit,' I said.
And I did.

RULES FOR SPEAKING

In the poem we saw how the narrator chose to remain silent when his friend threw his hat over the wall. Part of learning a language is learning when to speak as well as how to use the language when we do speak. Dell Hymes, a linguist, called this 'communicative competence'. In addition to learning how to make grammatical sentences, children also learn how to make appropriate sentences. Dell Hymes said:

> "Children acquire competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner."

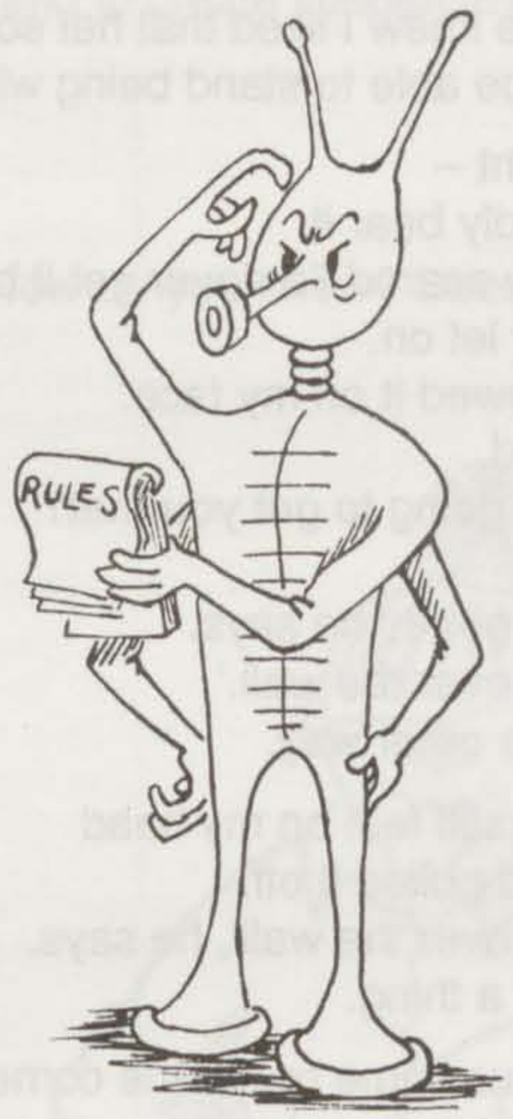
We learn these rules of use by growing up in a society which teaches us how to behave appropriately according to its rules. These rules are not written down but our family, our friends and our teachers make it clear to us how they expect us to behave.

RESEARCH PROJECT

You should work on this project in pairs or small groups.

Write down for a visitor from another planet, all the rules for talking or not talking in your school.

These rules should be based on careful observation of the different aspects of school life: different lessons, school assembly, speech days, sports events, meetings and so on.



1. It is worth discussing how these rules help to form our social identities. You can do this in pairs or with the whole class.
2. **BREAKING THE RULES FOR SPEAKING**
   - Now write down all the ways in which people break these rules.
   - Write down reasons why people break the rules.
   - Write down some of the consequences of breaking these rules.
   - Do you think that breaking rules can lead to changing rules?
3. If rules help to form our social identities what does breaking rules do to our social identities? What difference does it make to our identities if we break rules on our own or in a group? What difference does it make if we break rules by mistake or on purpose?
4. A man named Garfinkel conducted an experiment in which his students deliberately broke some of these rules to study people's reactions. For example they might answer the phone and say 'who's speaking' instead of 'hello'. You might like to try this to see what happens. Be careful not to break rules that get you into trouble. Have fun garfinkeling!

CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING

We have just looked at the rules for speaking and not speaking in your school. We have not yet looked at the rest of 'communicative competence': what to talk about, with whom, in what manner. In the rest of this workbook, these issues will be raised.

What is clear is that to be a member of a community, you need to understand the community's 'rules', including its rules for speaking. These rules help to create **a common identity** for members of the community. How far you have to follow the rules and how far you are allowed to break the rules differs in different communities.

There are also groups within communities – and the different groups all have **different identities** with more or less different rules.





COMMON IDENTITY

In groups or pairs, think about your own school. Look at its traditions, and motto. Also look at the words of your school's songs and warcries. How does your school create an identity for itself compared to other schools? Does your school try to make its students proud to belong to it? How?

DIFFERENT IDENTITIES

Think about the students in your school. How have they divided themselves into different social groups? Can you identify them by the things they do? By the way they dress? By the language they use? How else can you identify them? How easy is it to get into one of these groups? What do you have to do to get into a group?

For discussion

Why do most people need to be members of a group?
What kinds of groups do the people you know belong to?
What can happen when somebody decides not to belong to a group?

LANGUAGE AND BELONGING

There are many ways in which language helps to establish and maintain groups and group identity. In order to understand this pick one of the topics on this page and use what you know from your reading, your own experience and from television to give concrete examples.

How does slang mark different groups off from one another?

How do different groups use language differently?

Give examples of family stories that create a sense of belonging.

How do religions use language to create a sense of belonging?

How do different languages in S.A. divide people into different groups?

Discuss the ways songs and their words create a sense of belonging. You can include anthems.

Look at these three slogans, identify the group that uses the slogan and show how the slogan has been used to unify a group of people. Slogans also show who is not part of a group either because they choose not to belong or because they have been excluded.

Unity is strength.

Amandla! Awethu!

An injury to one is an injury to all.

Power can be gained by unifying people and by establishing a group identity based on the things they have in common.

Power can also be gained by separating people who together could resist and by excluding them from important groups.

THE POWER OF A GROUP

The following extract comes from *The Wave* by Morton Rhue. The book is based on a real incident in a school in California. A history teacher designed an experiment to help his students feel the power of belonging to a movement. Can you work out the nature of the experiment from this extract? Which section of history do you think the class was studying? Can you predict what happens?

Mr Ross turned to the black board and underneath the 'STRENGTH THROUGH DISCIPLINE' from the day before, he added 'COMMUNITY'.

He turned back to the class. 'Community is the bond between people who work and struggle together for a common goal. It's like building a barn with your neighbours.

A few students in the room chuckled. But David knew what Mr Ross was saying. It was what he'd thought about yesterday after class. It was the kind of team spirit the football team needed.

'It's the feeling that you are part of something that is more important than yourself,' Mr Ross was telling them. 'You're a movement, a team, a cause. You're committed to something.'

'I think we ought to be committed all right,' someone mumbled, but the near-by student hushed him.

'Like discipline,' Mr Ross continued, 'to understand community fully you have to experience it and participate in it. From now on, our two mottoes will be, "Strength through discipline" and "Strength through Community". Everyone, repeat our mottoes.'

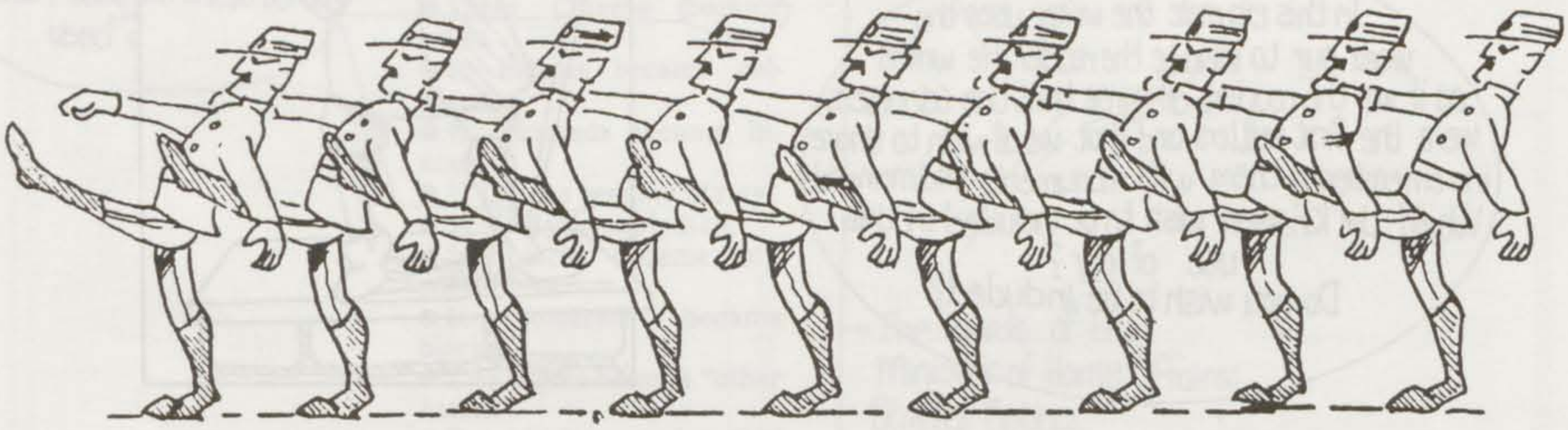
Around the room, students rose beside their desks and recited the slogans: "Strength through discipline, Strength through Community.'

A few students, including Laurie and Brad, did not join them, but sat uncomfortably in their chairs as Mr Ross had the class repeat the mottoes again. Finally Laurie rose, and then Brad. Now the entire class stood beside their desks.

'What we need now is a symbol for our community,' Mr Ross told them. He turned to the board and after a moment's thought, drew a circle with the outline of a wave inside it. 'This will be our symbol. A wave is a pattern of change. It has movement, direction and impact. From now on, our community, our movement will be known as The Wave.' He paused and looked at the class standing at stiff attention, accepting everything he told them. 'And this will be our salute,' he said, cupping his right hand in the shape of a wave, then tapping it against his left shoulder and holding it upright. 'Class, give the salute,' he ordered.

The class gave the salute.

You should try to read this book.



Questions for you to discuss

1. Do you know of any similar symbols or salutes?
2. How does Mr Ross use language to create a sense of group identity?
3. What does Mr Ross mean by 'community'?
4. Find the word 'community' used in South African newspapers. Bring the newspaper articles to class and try to work out the meanings for 'community' in these articles.
5. Find evidence in the passage to show that some people are uncomfortable with what Mr Ross is asking them to do. How easy is it for individuals to resist a powerful group?

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Everybody has certain groups that they are proud to belong to or would like to belong to. There are also groups that they do not identify with, that they do not wish to be part of.

Write down all the social groups that you would not like to be identified with and write down why.

Very often when people use language, they include us in what they say even when we do not wish to be included. This can be quite a good indication of power. A good place to look for examples is in the use of the pronoun 'we'. **Sometimes people using the pronoun 'we' feel that they have the right (or the power) to speak for somebody else as well as for themselves. It is important to question their right to speak for others.** Who the person speaks on behalf of may be one other person, a family, a school, or even a whole country.

Here is an example

Our Monuments and Memorials

The first settlers

People often wonder what Jan van Riebeeck would say if he could see the Cape of Good Hope today. From the small victualling station nestling at the foot of Table Mountain, the Dutch settlement has developed into the sprawling city of Cape Town. The arrival of Van Riebeeck in 1652 marks the beginning of the modern chapter of South African history – and everywhere there are reminders of those early, trying times ...



In this example the writer uses the word our to include the reader. He writes as if we the readers all agree that the colonisers were the first settlers and that we all wish to share in remembering them with monuments and memorials. Would the Khoisan wish to be included in this use of our? Do you wish to be included?

When 'we' is used in this way it is called 'inclusive we' because the speaker includes the listener. Look for examples of **inclusive we** in newspapers, magazines and in your textbooks. Explain how the writer speaks for the reader. What is the reader supposed to agree with?

What can we do if we find ourselves part of a group that we do not wish to identify with? One possibility is that we can try to leave the group. Can you think of other possibilities?

LEAVING A GROUP

Read the passage first, then answer the questions.



1. During the apartheid era, how did the state decide who belonged to what group?

2. Try to find out how the government decided who could be reclassified, that is changed from one group to another.

3. What is a chameleon? Why has the reporter used inverted commas?

4. Why did the changes need to be official?

5. What effects do these words have on readers?

6. What do the words chameleon dance suggest about people changing colour?

7. How are these verbs used? Why are these verbs used?

8. Explain the use of small and capital letters. Do you agree with it?

9. Explain the significance of the last two lines.

1985 had at least 1 000 'chameleons'

Political Staff

PARLIAMENT — More than 1 000 people officially changed colour last year.

They were reclassified from one race group to another by the stroke of a Government pen.

Details of what is dubbed "the chameleon dance" were given in reply to Opposition questions in Parliament.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Stoffel Botha, disclosed that during 1985:

- 702 coloured people turned white.
- 19 whites became coloured.
- One Indian became white.
- Three Chinese became white.
- 50 Indians became coloured.
- 43 coloureds became Indians.
- 21 Indians became Malay.
- 30 Malays went Indian.
- 249 blacks became coloured.
- 20 coloureds became black.
- Two blacks became "other Asians".
- One black was classified Griqua.
- 11 coloureds became Chinese.
- Three coloureds went Malay.
- One Chinese became coloured.
- Eight Malays became coloured.
- Three blacks were classed as Malay.
- No blacks became white and no whites became black.

The Star reporter's words

10. Show how the words of the reporter make us laugh at the words of the minister. Use your answers to questions 3-6 to help you.

The words of the Minister of Home Affairs: Stoffel Botha.

11. Why do you think these people wanted to change from one group to another?

RENAMING THE GROUP: CHANGING ITS IMAGE

All groups do not have the same amount of power. Powerful groups often oppress other groups and deny them opportunities to develop fully as human beings. A result of this is that powerless groups often lose pride in their group identity. We saw on the last page that 'No blacks became white and no whites became black'. Clearly it is not always possible to change out of a group. What is possible, is to change the way members of a group see themselves and their group identity; to change their image of the group.

The Black Consciousness movement is a good example of how it is possible to change the way people feel about the group they belong to.

"Biko: I think that the slogan 'black is beautiful' is serving a very important aspect of our attempt to get at our humanity. You are challenging the very root of the black man's belief about himself. When you say 'black is beautiful' what in fact you are saying to him is: man, you are okay as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being. In a sense the term 'black is beautiful' challenges exactly that belief which makes someone negate himself. ...

Judge: Now why do you refer to you people as 'black'?

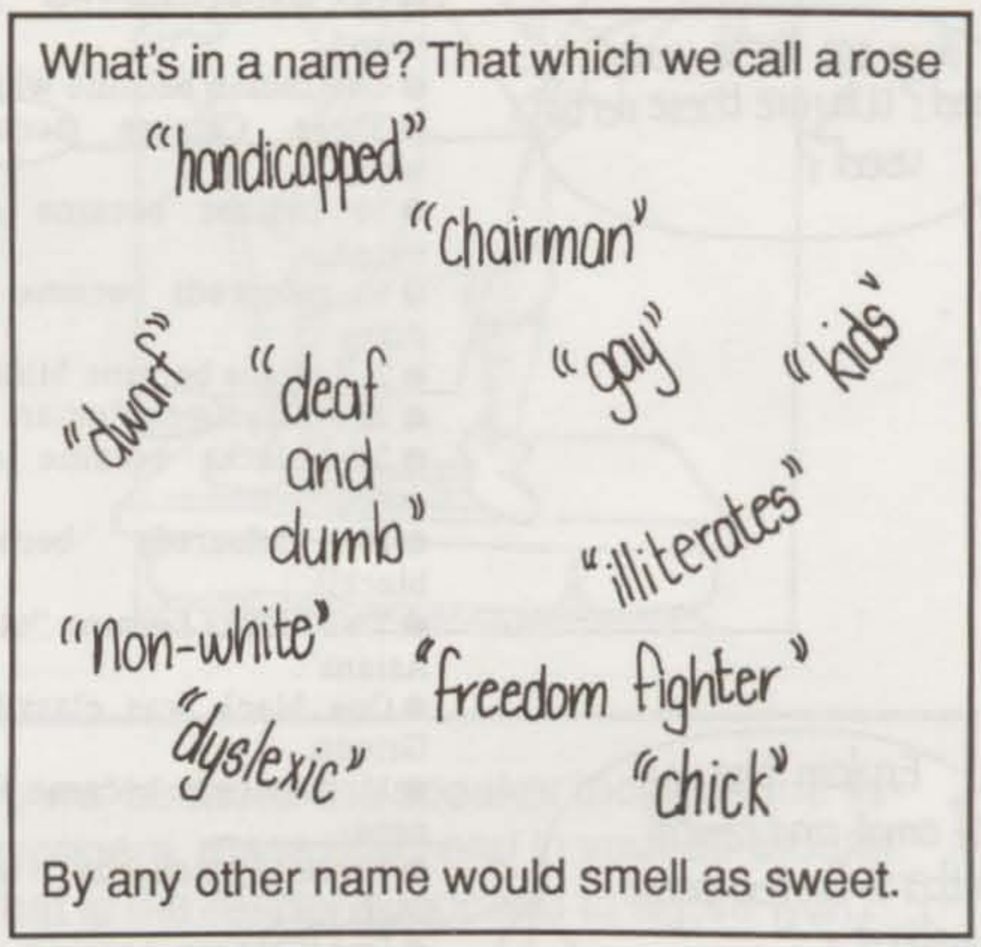
Biko: Historically, we have been defined as black people, and when we reject the term non-white and we take upon ourselves the right to call ourselves what we think we are, we choose this one precisely because we feel it is most accommodating."

Steve Biko. SASO/BPC Trial, May 1976.

The Black Consciouness movement helped people to 'rename' their blackness as something valuable and this changed the way people thought and spoke about themselves.

Examine the following sets of groups and decide which group in the set has the most status and/or power. In your own community? In South Africa? Also decide which group has the least power and/or status.

1. Men, women
2. Managers, workers, owners
3. Adults, teenagers, children, old people
4. Bisexuals, heterosexuals, homosexuals
5. Teachers, students, parents



Give examples of attempts made by disempowered groups to change the way language about them is used. Show how they have **renamed** themselves.

CHANGING THE POWER OF THE GROUP

If we are part of a group that has very little power we can try

- to leave the group
- to construct the group more positively
- to fight for the group to have more power.

People have found ways of challenging the power that other people have over them, often by working together.

Here are some examples: The Women's movement, workers forming unions to bargain with employers and to organise strikes if necessary, consumer boycotts to protest against high food prices, school SRCs.

Can you think of other specific examples of people getting together to change situations which they believe disempower them?

POWER

We have talked quite a lot about power so far in this workbook. Because there are many different forms that power can take, I think that it is a good idea to stop and think about the different ways that some people have power over other people. It is also a good idea for you to think about your own power or lack of power in different situations. When do you feel that you have power? What does it enable you to do? What power do you want to have that you do not already have?



In small groups talk about the different kinds of power that people have. Think about ways they have of **forcing** people to do what they want. Also think about ways they have of getting people to do what they want them to do by **persuasion.**

NOW YOU ARE READY TO MAKE A COLLAGE

Cut out as many pictures as you can, from magazines and newspapers, that show or suggest the different kinds of power that you have talked about. Your discussion will help you to choose pictures. In looking for pictures you may also decide to add to your discussion. When you have finished cutting out your pictures stick them on to a large sheet of paper so that they completely cover the sheet. The collage looks more interesting if some of the pictures overlap.

STICK YOUR COLLAGE ON THE WALL AND EXPLAIN IT TO THE REST OF THE CLASS

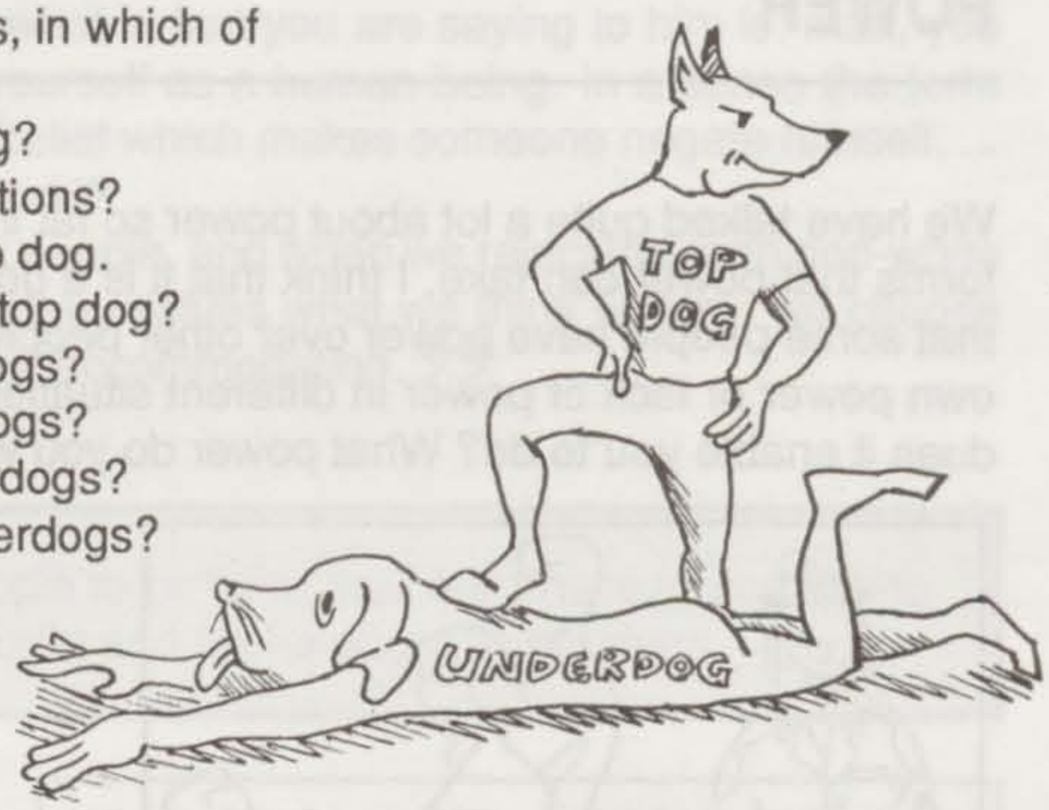
NAMING GROUPS AS DOMINANT OR SUBORDINATE

In order to discuss power differences between groups in society, it is useful to have some terminology. I will call groups that have power **dominant groups** or **top dogs** and groups who have less power than the dominant groups, **subordinate groups** or **underdogs.**

The expressions 'top dogs' and 'underdogs' come from the sport of dog fighting. The losing dog is called the underdog and the winner is called the top dog. These expressions may be used for people. I will use 'top dog' to refer to a person who belongs to a dominant group and I will use 'underdog' to refer to a person who belongs to an oppressed group. People are usually not top dogs or underdogs in all their different identities. For example, a Basotho may be oppressed at work on the grounds of his race, his language and his skills. In his community he may be dominant because of his gender, his literacy and his age.

In pairs think about your own lives:

1. Given that we all have many different identities, in which of your identities do you feel like a top dog?
2. In which identities do you feel like an underdog?
3. Who is the top dog in your family in most situations?
4. Name a situation in which someone else is top dog.
5. Among your friends is there competition to be top dog?
6. In your school how do students become top dogs?
7. In your school how do teachers become top dogs?
8. How do the top dogs you know treat the underdogs?
9. How do the top dogs you know talk to the underdogs?



Read the poem by Michael Rosen.

CHIVVY
Grown-ups say things like:
Speak up.
Don't talk with your mouth full
Don't stare
Don't point
Don't pick your nose
Sit up
Say please
Less noise
Shut the door behind you
Don't drag your feet
Haven't you got a hankie?
Take your hands out of your pockets
Pull up your socks
Stand up straight
Say thank you
Don't interrupt
No one thinks you're funny
Take your elbows off the table
Can't you make up your own
mind about anything?

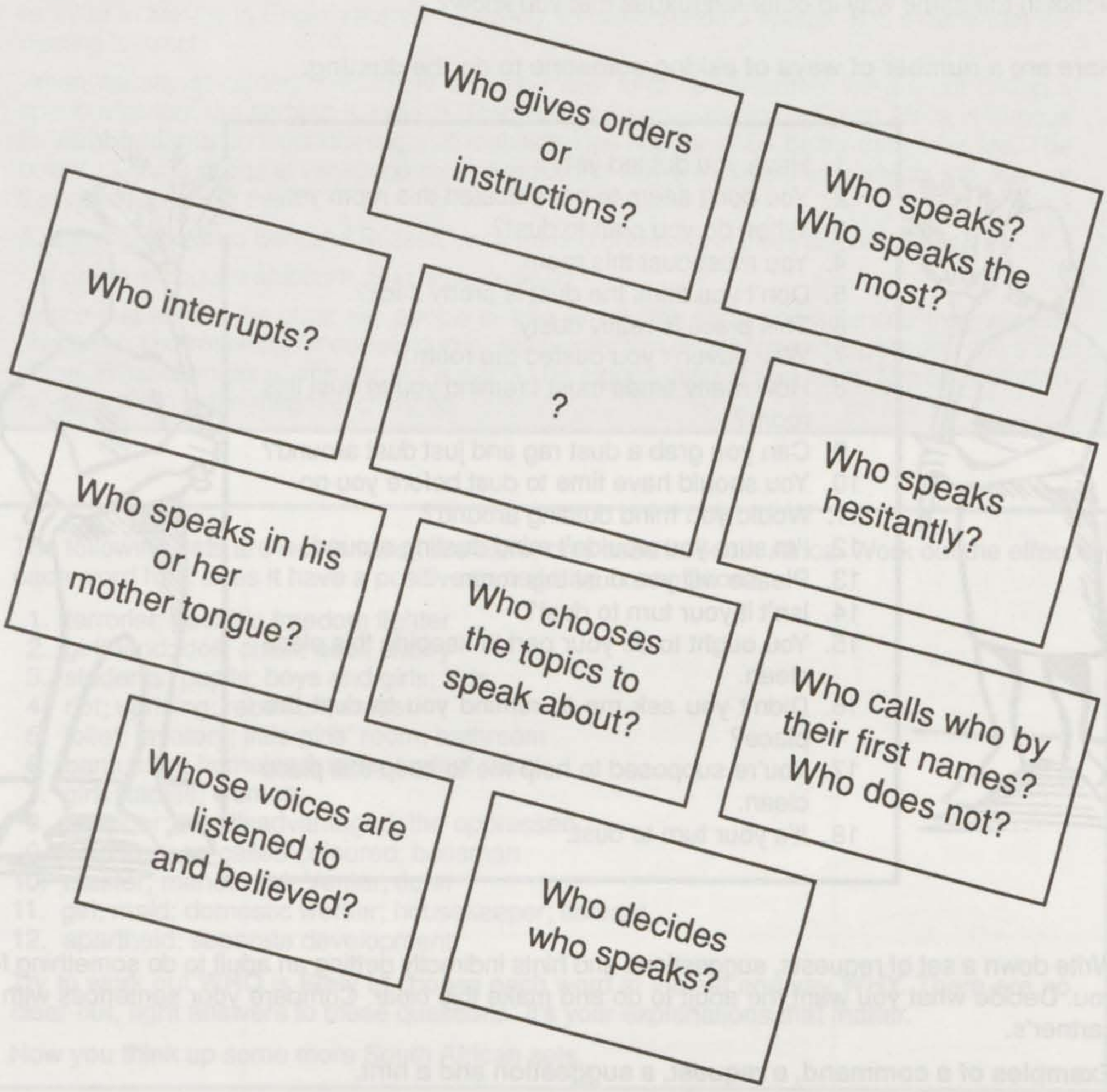
How does the language used by the grown-ups in this poem show that they are the top dogs here?

How are your identities formed by the way adults use language when they speak to you? How are your identities formed by the way you use language when you speak to adults?

Now write your own poem and begin with the following first line: Students say things like... If you prefer you can write your own poem about grown-ups. Begin with Parents say things like... or Teachers or Politicians...

UNEQUAL RIGHTS FOR USING LANGUAGE

Here are some questions to help you think about the different ways top dogs and underdogs might use language. Base your answers on careful observation of people you know.



- Do these rights for using language belong to people as individuals or as members of social groups that have power? Do they have language rights because of their personalities or their social positions or both? Give examples from your observations.
- Can you think of any other inequalities in people's use of language? Did you notice any other inequalities when you were observing people you know?
- How do **your** different social identities affect your language rights?

DIRECTNESS, INDIRECTNESS AND POWER — UNEQUAL RIGHTS

Differences in power between the speaker and the listener affect decisions of how direct or indirect to be. In English when we speak to people with more power we tend to be more hesitant, more indirect, less sure. When you have done the exercises on this page try to decide if indirectness works in the same way in other languages that you know?

Here are a number of ways of asking someone to do the dusting.



1. Have you dusted yet?
2. You don't seem to have dusted this room yet.
3. When do you plan to dust?
4. You must dust this room.
5. Don't you think the dust is pretty thick?
6. This place is really dusty.
7. Why haven't you dusted the room?
8. How many times must I remind you to dust this room?
9. Can you grab a dust rag and just dust around?
10. You should have time to dust before you go.
11. Would you mind dusting around?
12. I'm sure you wouldn't mind dusting around.
13. Please will you dust this room.
14. Isn't it your turn to dust?
15. You ought to do your part in keeping this place clean.
16. Didn't you ask me to remind you to dust this place?
17. You're supposed to help me to keep this place clean.
18. It's your turn to dust.



Write down a set of requests, suggestions and hints indirectly getting an adult to do something for you. Decide what you want the adult to do and make this clear. Compare your sentences with a partner's.

Examples of a command, a request, a suggestion and a hint.

You must dust this room. (command)
Please will you dust the room. (request)
You could dust the room. (suggestion)
This room needs to be dusted. (hint)

Observe your own use of language.

- How direct are you? When? With whom? When are you most indirect?
- How is your directness or indirectness related to your different social identities?

(To help you to think about this: are you equally direct in your identities as student; daughter/son; brother/sister; etc?)

NAMING AND POWER

We saw on page ten that language plays an important role in constructing different 'names' or identities for ourselves or others. On the opposite page we saw that we can 'name' things directly or indirectly. In English there is a saying: to call a spade a spade. This means that the naming is direct.

When we say *tri-cameral* parliament and we mean *tri-racial* parliament we are not calling a spade a spade: the naming is indirect. The Nationalist government in South Africa is famous for **euphemisms**: indirect naming that makes things appear to be better than they are. The power to name things is very important because the way we name things affects the way we think and feel about them.

A philosopher called Bertrand Russell, once named obstinacy in three different ways.

I am firm. You are stubborn. She is pig-headed.

Notice that he and the other two people all had exactly the same characteristic: they were all obstinate. The meaning or **denotation** of the words *firm*, *stubborn* and *pigheaded* stays the same. What changes is whether this is said to be a good thing or bad thing. The **connotation** or value given to the meaning changes.

The following sets are words which are commonly used in South Africa. Work out the effect each word has: does it have a positive or negative connotation?

1. terrorist; guerilla; freedom fighter
2. girlfriend; doll; chick; nooi; cherry
3. students; pupils; boys and girls; kids
4. riot; uprising; rebellion; unrest
5. toilet; lavatory; little girls' room; bathroom
6. bantustan; homeland; independent state
7. girls; ladies; women
8. the poor; the disadvantaged; the oppressed
9. coloured; so-called coloured; boesman
10. master; meneer; Mr Venter; John
11. girl; maid; domestic worker; housekeeper; servant
12. apartheid; separate development

Try to work out **WHO** is likely to choose each word in the set and say **WHY.** There are no clear-cut, right answers to these questions. It's your explanations that matter.

Now you think up some more South African sets.



For writing

Write down all the connections you can find between naming/ renaming and identity and power.

UNEQUAL NAMING: THE GULF WAR 1991

Find out what you can about the Gulf War. Who was fighting whom? Why? Who were their allies?

1. Think of all the purposes of creating double standards for us and them.

2. What effect does the word we have on the newspapers' readers?

3. What effect does the word they have on the newspapes' readers?

4. What do these words mean?





THE ENGLISH	THE IRAQIS
(Read across from left to right)	
We have	**They have**
Army, Navy and Airforce	A war machine
Reporting guidelines	Censorship
Press briefings	Propaganda
We	**They**
Take out	Kill
Suppress	Destroy
Eliminate	Kill
Our men are	**Their men are**
Boys	Troops
Lads	Hordes
Our boys are	**Theirs are**
Cautious	Cowardly
Confident	Desperate
Knights of the skies	Bastards of Baghdad
Loyal	Blindly obedient
Brave	Fanatical
We	**They**
Precision bomb	Fire wildly at anything
George Bush is ...	**Saddam Hussein is ...**
At peace with himself	Demented
Resolute	Defiant
Statesmanlike	An evil tyrant
Assured	A crackpot monster
Our planes	**Their planes**
Fail to return from missions	Are shot out of the sky

5. Compare these two metaphors

6. What does resolute mean?

7. Show that this is a euphemism and find another euphemism.

8. What is a fanatic?

9. Throughout the Gulf War the West portrayed Hussein as evil and mad. Why?

All the expressions above have been used by the British Press in covering the war so far.

Guardian Weekly, 3 February 1991.

10. What effects does The Guardian achieve by collecting and presenting this language to its readers?

NAMING THE ENEMY AS BAD

In *The English and the Iraqis* we saw that very often the British army was doing the same thing as the Iraqi army. For example: the British 'take out', 'suppress', 'eliminate' or 'neutralise' the enemy soldiers. All these words mean 'kill' and 'destroy' but do not say so directly. This indirectness makes them less harsh. The Iraqis do 'kill' and 'destroy': no **euphemism** is used. The words chosen for both sides often have the same meaning or **denotation**. It is the **connotations** that are different: positive for the British and negative for the Iraqis.

In groups work out your own us/them comparison. Use the same denotations for both sides, with positive connotations for us and negative connotations for them. Decide who **we** are and who **they** are. For example:

students/teachers
men/women
workers/managers

Here is an example of a comparison worked out by students on an education project in 1991.

Activists	**Liberals**
We are confident	They are arrogant
We organise	They discuss
We mobilise	They discuss
We protest	They petition
We are evicted	They are moved
We go into exile	They emigrate
We claim power	They talk of power sharing
We transform	They reform
We are in the struggle	They struggle
We work with the people	They work for the people
We use defence units	They have neighbourhood watches
We boycott	They prefer to stay at home
We chant and toyi-toyi	They sing and dance
We go on hunger strike	They go on diet

Write your own definitions

Denotation is .....

Connotation is .....

Euphemism is .....

NAMING ONE ANOTHER

In some schools students call their teachers Ms van der Merwe or Mr Ayob. In other schools they even call their teachers 'Sir' or 'Madam' or 'Mistress'. Teachers, however, call their students by their first names or by their surnames only. Sports commentators often call men by their surnames (McEnroe, Agassi) and women by a familiar form of their first names (Steffi and Chrissie). When naming practices are not equal, we can see that there is a difference of power at work.

Collect examples of unequal naming practices from the media: newspapers, magazines, radio and television and pin them up on a wall in the classroom.

Read the poem opposite and answer these questions:

1. Why is the poem called a 'South African dialogue'?
2. Who do you think 'Kleinbaas' is?
3. A South African would have no difficulty working out the race of the speakers. Decide how you would explain this to a foreigner.
4. What language clues are there to show that none of the speakers is English-speaking?
5. What does the poet want the reader to think about naming practices in South Africa?
6. How do these naming practices affect the social identities of the different characters in the poem? Who do they empower? Who do they disempower?
7. Have naming practices between employers and employees in South Africa changed since this poem was written?
8. Find examples of indirectness in the poem.



SOUTH AFRICAN DIALOGUE

Morning Baas,
Baas,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
I must come and tell
Baas that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy says,
Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas if
Baas don't use
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas

Tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas says,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell
Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here.

Thank you
Baas.
I'll tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas says,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell
Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas.
Goodbye Baas.

Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas says,
I must come and tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell

Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas Kleinbaas.

Baasboy,
Tell Baas Ben that
Baas Kleinbaas says,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see me
(Kleinbaas)
Baas Ben must come and
See me (Kleinbaas) here.

Thank you
Baas Kleinbaas,
I'll tell
Baas Ben that
Baas Kleinbaas says,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas
Baas Ben must come and
See Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas Kleinbaas.
Goodbye
Baas Kleinbaas.

Baas Ben,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
I must come and tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas
Baas Ben must come and
See Baas Kleinbaas there,
Baas Ben.
Baas Ben,
Baas Be-ne …
Baas Ben
Goodbye
Baas Ben.

Motshile wa Nthodi

LANGUAGE, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND POWER

I hope that this activity will help you to bring together all your ideas on language, social identity and power. You need to understand the connections between these three concepts.

In groups of eight choose any social identity that interests you. Then divide into two groups of four to make two different

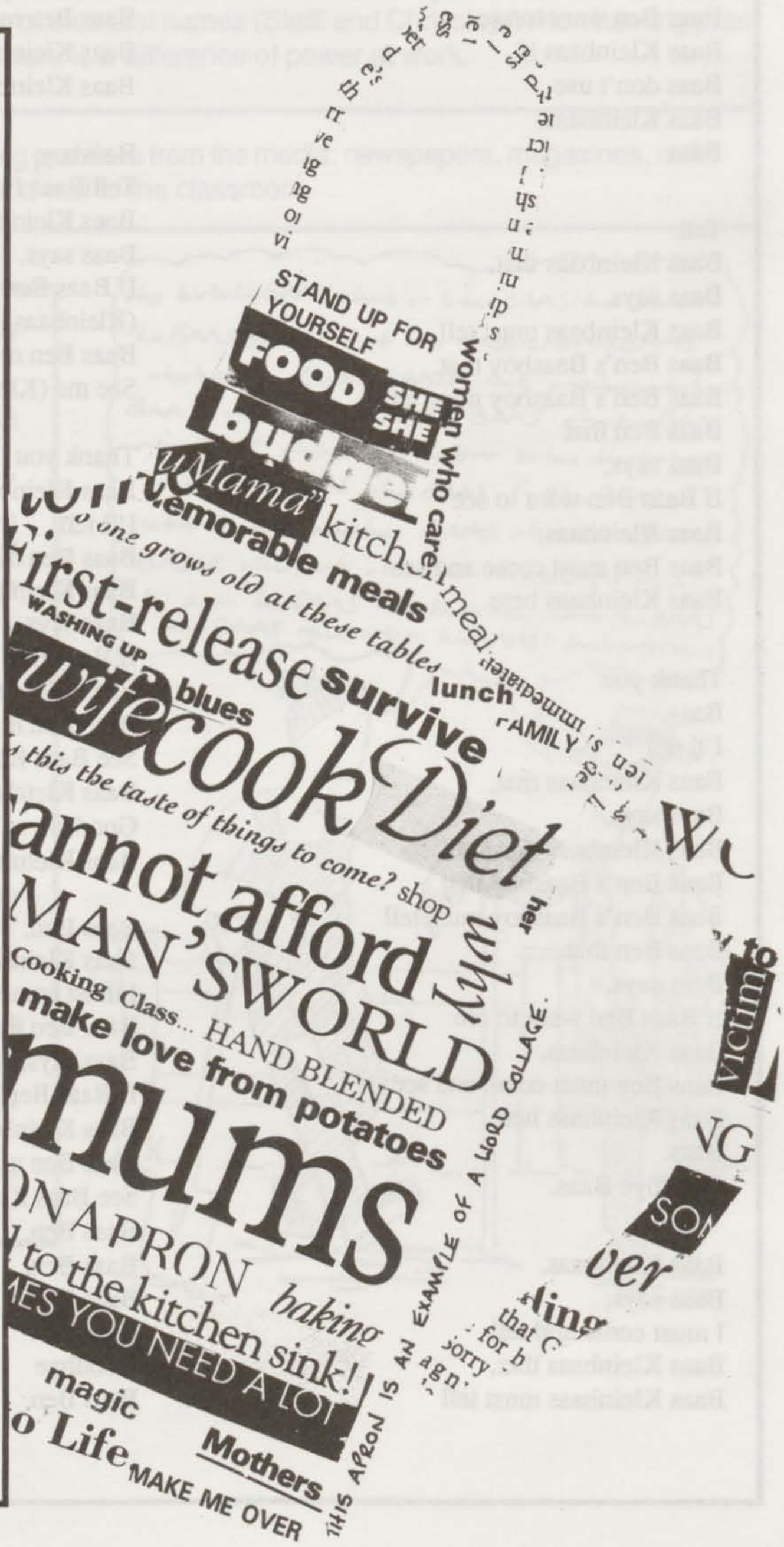
WORD COLLAGES

Decide in your group of four how to **name** this social identity. You may wish to name it in a conventional way or you may wish to **rename** it. Cut words out from magazines or newspapers which fit the social identity that you are constructing. Arrange these words on the page so that they form a shape that other students can recognise. There should be a connection between the shape you choose and the meaning you are constructing.

Return to your groups of eight to compare the two different namings. Look for similarities and differences. Consider whether the social identity is named as powerful or powerless, as valued or not in the two collages.

SHARE YOUR TWO COLLAGES WITH THE REST OF YOUR CLASS

Use them to talk about the relationship between language, social identity and power.



USING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT TO READ TEXTS CRITICALLY

Let us apply what we have learnt about language, social identity and power. These questions will help you to read the texts on the following pages critically. You should be able to use **all of them** on any text, however not all the questions will be equally useful for all texts. The bubbles show which questions are specially useful for particular texts on the next two pages.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF TEXTS

Language

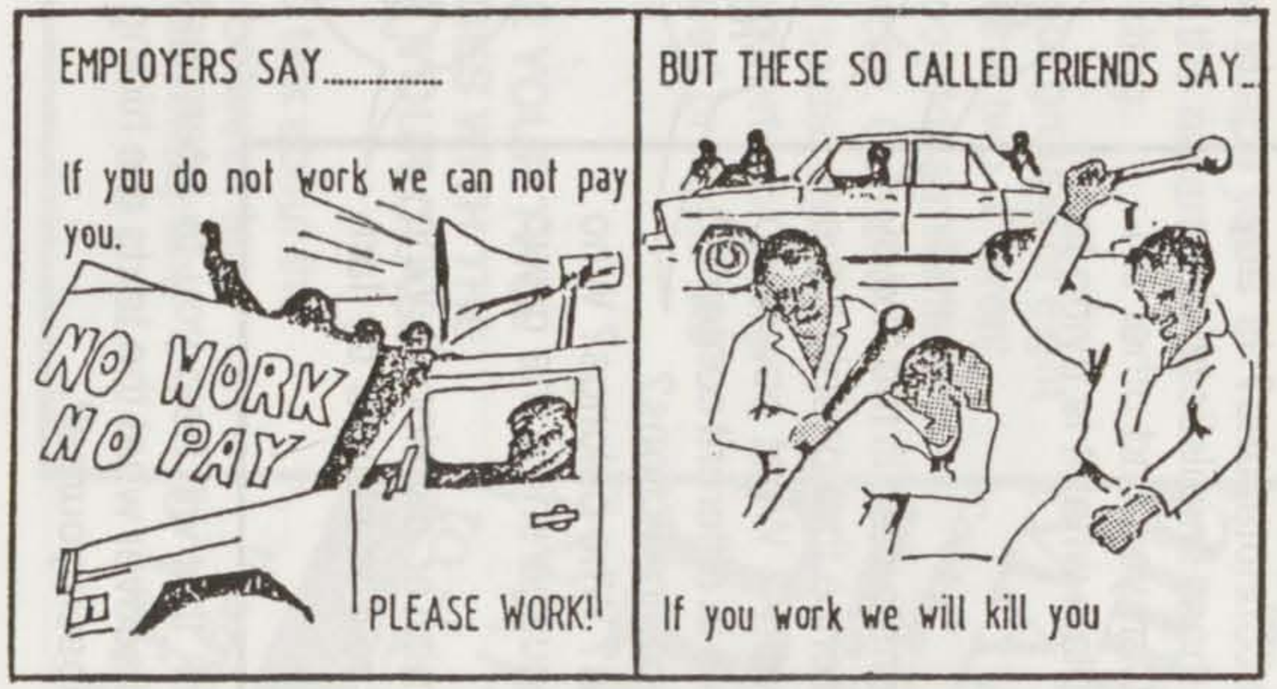
1. **Is there any evidence in the use of language that someone is either dominant or subordinate?** (See texts 1, 2 and 3.)
   You need to look at things like:
   1a Who speaks? How much? For how long? About what? (Text 2)
   1b Who is silent? Why?
   1c Are naming practices equal?
   1d Are there signs of hesitancy or indirectness?
   1e What language (English, Venda, Xhosa, Afrikaans) is used? (Texts 1 and 3.)
2. Are the rules for appropriateness followed? If not how are they broken? What are the effects? (Text 2)
3. Look at the use of 'we'. Is it inclusive or exclusive? What can we learn from our examination of this pronoun? (Texts 1 and 2 and 3.)
4. Is there any 'us/them' language? Who is constructed as good or bad? What power is at stake? (Look at texts 1 and 5.)
5. Do the words selected by the writer or speaker have positive or negative connotations? Is any euphemism used? How do these linguistic choices affect relations of power? Can you find other evidence of renaming and explain what it is trying to achieve? (Text 1 tries to rename)

Social Identities

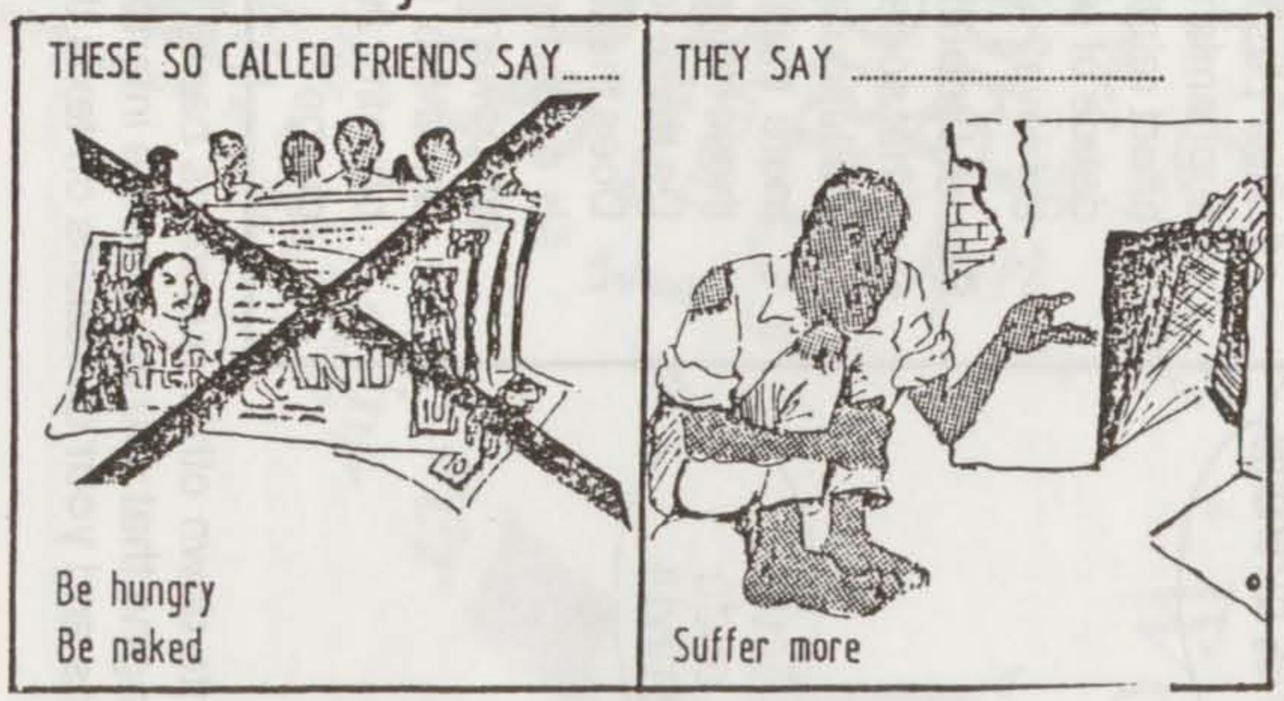
6. What social identities are constructed in the text by the language? Is there evidence that people have more than one social 'identity'? What power do these different identities have in different contexts? Do these identities lead to contradictions? (All the texts)
7. Does the text create groups? Who belongs? Who is excluded? Does the language show the group as powerful or powerless? (Texts 1 and 5 3 and 4.) (Texts 4+5)
8. Does the text construct unity or divisions? Who benefits from this? What role is played by language? (All the texts)

Write down other questions based on this workbook that will help you to interrogate these texts. Imagine that you are a police interrogator trying to discover what the texts are hiding. Try my questions and **your** questions on texts that you have chosen yourself.

1. Our so called friends tell us not to work but they don't care about the money we lose



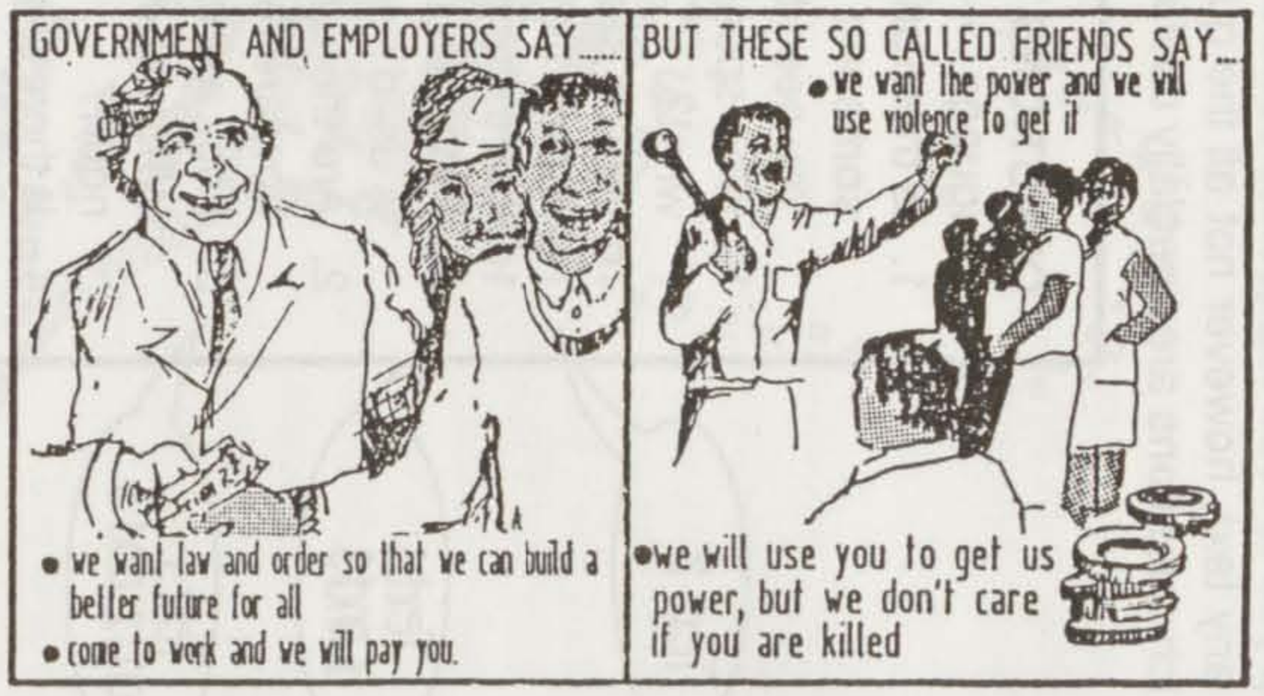
2. They use threats and necklaces to destroy our freedom to work and earn money.



3. These so called friends use violence to destroy people, our towns and our country



4. They have lied to us and used us to hit at those who do care about us.



Pamphlet distributed anonymously in Soweto

TEXTS TO INTERROGATE

2.

It happened in Durban. I telephoned a booking office for a train ticket to Johannesburg.

'Could you please reserve a seat for me on the Wednesday night train to Johannesburg?' I asked.

Booking Clerk: Certainly, sir, will you hold the line a minute?

Me: Yes.

BC (after a while): Are you there sir? I'm afraid the Wednesday train is fully booked, sir.

Me: What about Thursday morning?

BC: I'll go and see, sir. Will you hold on again?

Me: Yes.

BC: Are you there, sir? Yes, I can put you on the Thursday morning train. What is the name, sir?

Me: Nathaniel Nakasa.

BC: Did you say MacArthur, sir? Could you spell it please?

Me: N-A-K-A-S-A, Nakasa.

BC: What nationality would that be?

Me: African.

BC: Damn it! Why the hell didn't you tell me in the beginning that you are a native?

Me: I'm sorry, sir, I didn't …

BC: Shut up! Jy lieg!

3.

Out into the world, embarking on a career, today is the most important time in our lives.

Because, starting today, we have the power to enrich our future. The power to make things happen. To get what we want, when we need it.

We at Old Mutual know this to be true, because we help people to turn their plans into reality. Through the present and future benefits of assurance.

We'd like to help you make the most of your life, every step of the way.

OLD MUTUAL

4.

Dr Allan Boesak has always been regarded, in ANC circles, as something of an individualist. It should come as no surprise, then, that his first choice was not a BMW. He opted, instead, for the Continental charm of a R150 000 turbo Lancia Thema. The turbulent priest from Carnarvon has developed a taste for silk ties, expensive suits, good food and fine wine over the past few years.

Picture the scene before the ANC's march to Parliament to protest against VAT earlier this year: An alarm clock rings in a half-million-rand Bishop's Court house. Allan Boesak rises and dons a well-cut crushed silk suit and a painted silk tie. After breakfast, he drives off in his Lancia. Perhaps he calls someone on his car phone.

Then he marches off at the head of an ANC throng, and at Parliament he calls for a tax which takes from the rich and gives to the poor. Journalists, being a cynical lot, could not help observing that the turkeys seemed to be voting for Christmas.

Being a priest and now an ANC office bearer is unlikely to have left Dr Boesak independently wealthy. So who foots the bill?

Boesak's PA, Norman Michaels, told *The Argus* that "certain benefactors" had helped the doctor buy his house. "Everybody has the democratic right to live where he or she chooses," Michaels told journalists. "To buy in a white area seems to be the right sort of financial decision. There is a greater supply and a greater choice."

Exactly. Who'd want to live in a township if they could afford a move to the suburbs.

5.

My parents kept me from children who were rough

STEPHEN SPENDER

My parents kept me from children
who were rough
Who threw words like stones and
who wore torn clothes.
Their thighs showed through rags.
They ran in the street
And climbed cliffs and stripped by
the country streams.
I feared more than tigers their
muscles like iron
Their jerking hands and their knees
tight on my arms.
I feared the salt coarse pointing of
those boys
Who copied my lisp behind me on
the road.
They were lithe, they sprang out
behind hedges
Like dogs to bark at my world. They
threw mud
While I looked the other way,
pretending to smile.
I longed to forgive them, but they
never smiled.

READING 'LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND POWER' CRITICALLY

1. What identities does this workbook construct for students and teachers?

2. What identities does the writer create for herself?

3. Does the writer present herself as more powerful than the teachers and students?

4. Find examples of the writer naming or renaming and discuss them critically?

5. Do you think the writer's language is appropriate for a textbook or not? Give examples.

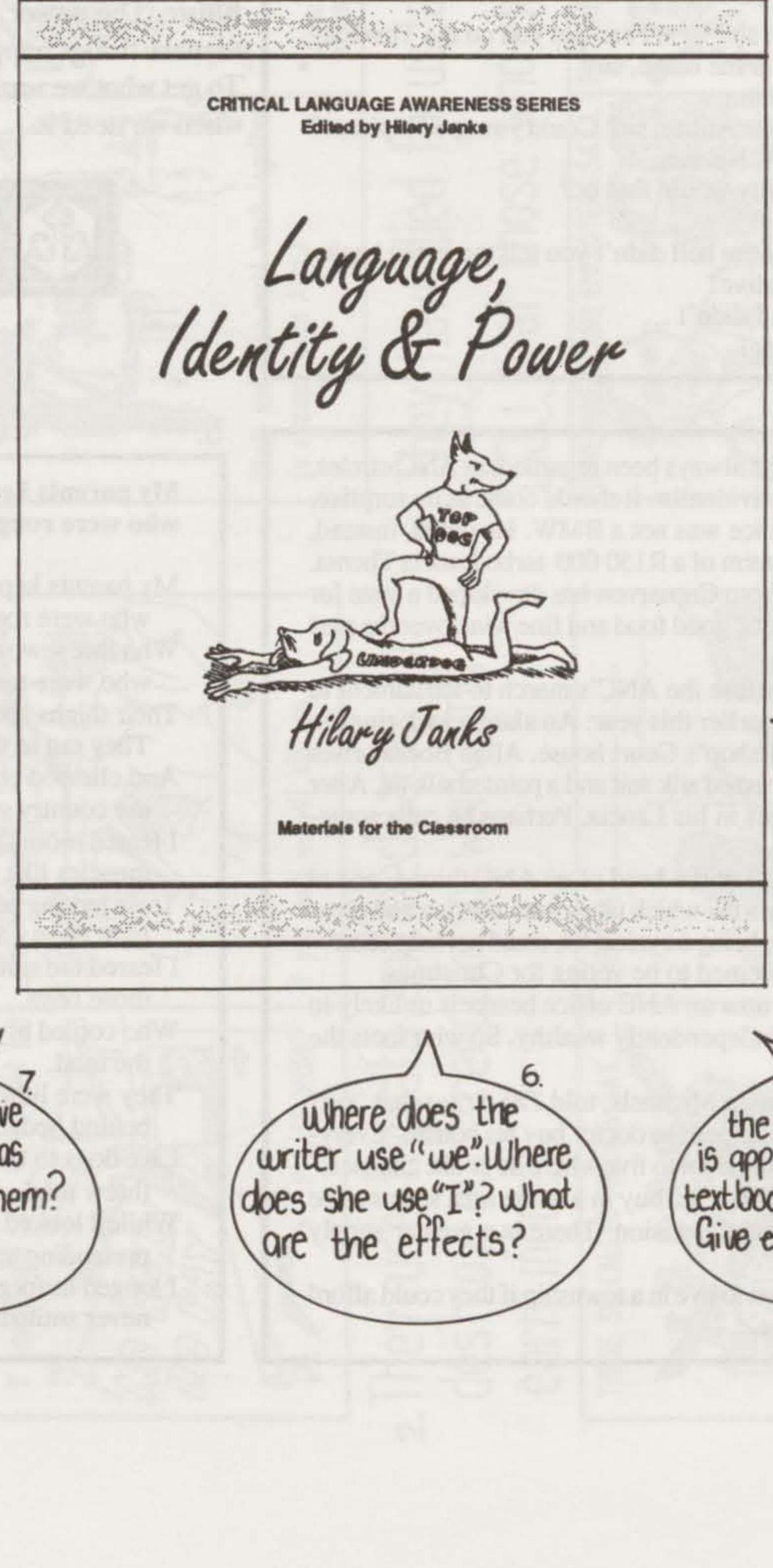
6. Where does the writer use "we". Where does she use "I"? What are the effects?

7. Find examples of positive or negative connotations. Why has the writer used them?

8. What is the writer's view of the relationship between unity and power? Division and power? Does she unite or divide her readers?

9. List all the different groups referred to in this workbook.

10. Ask as many other questions as you can to interrogate this book.





Hilary Janks qualified as an English teacher in 1972. She taught at a private school which gave her the freedom to experiment with ideas that were not readily allowed in state-controlled schools. She also worked for a year at an inner-city London comprehensive school, where her students taught her to support Tottenham Hotspurs.

Since 1977 she has worked in teacher education, preparing teachers to teach English to mother-tongue speakers of English as well as to speakers of other languages. She is particularly interested in language teaching methodology and language policy. She helped to formulate the draft proposals for People's English in 1986 and contributed to the NEPI language commission in 1992.

Her main area of teaching and research is the relationship between language and power and in how an understanding of this relationship can be taught at all levels of formal and non-formal education.

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Other titles in the Critical Language Awareness Series:

Languages in South Africa by Janet Orlek
Language and Position by Hilary Janks
Language and the News by Peter Rule
Language, Advertising and Power by Stella Granville
Words and Pictures by Denise Newfield

All the writers in this series are teachers who are interested in the relationship between language and power. They have worked together with their students or other teachers to produce a workbook. I would like to encourage students and teachers to construct their own Critical Language Awareness materials and am willing to consider publishing complete workbooks as part of the series. There are so many ways of exploring language and power that the series must necessarily remain open ended.

The writers and I would also welcome constructive suggestions on how to improve the published workbooks.

Series Editor

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