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# INVESTIGATING A MULTIMODAL, GROUPWORK APPROACH TO POETRY TEACHING IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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This research report is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education by coursework and research report.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is the product of my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

_____ 31 July 2015

Signed Date

## ABSTRACT

This report explores the ways in which meaning is constructed, adapted or altered as Grade 9 English Home Language learners redesign the meaning of a poem multimodally in the English classroom in a state secondary school in Johannesburg. A unit of poetry work was designed to explore how learners, working together in groups and independently of the teacher, 'shift' across and within modes in the process of redesigning meaning. An array of prescribed poems chosen from official sources – one selected per group – which served as a foundation for designing and creating multimodal artefacts and ensembles, was set as primary texts. The main purpose of this report, then, is to determine how meaning is constructed in learners' responses through their products and presentations in a pedagogic approach that is informed by both multimodality and multiliteracies. The two core concepts in this report – *design* and *modes* – are recognised as significant concepts in analysing learners' multimodal artefacts in this chain of semiosis and compared with the characteristics of the original 'poem on paper'. A multiliteracies pedagogy and multimodal artefact design are used to provide the Grade 9 learners the support to 'unlock' their potential and encourage resources to emerge from which they can construct meaning in innovative ways.

Since the learners work collaboratively in groups to redesign the meaning of a poem multimodally, findings suggest that this strategy fostered the interaction of ideas, learner activity and engagement and learner verbalisation of ideas. Learners' ideas were developed, articulated, clarified and transformed within the groupwork discussion and were made visible in their multimodal artefacts. Learners' final products in the chain of semiosis were of good quality. In the process of *redesign*, as agents of meaning making, learners used semiotic resources and the integration of modes to represent their poem multimodally. The words themselves had to be extracted from the poem, *redesigned* and represented in another form or mode.

Finally, this pedagogy demonstrates that it is possible for learners to be active designers of meaning while remaining within the prescriptive parameters of the relatively recent Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum.

Learners were able to successfully *reshape* and *resemiotise* the primary text into other modal artefacts, which one could taste, smell, touch, see or hear.

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# Contents

DECLARATION ..... ii
ABSTRACT ..... iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... v
LIST OF FIGURES ..... ix
LIST OF TABLES ..... ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ..... 1
1.1 Research topic ..... 1
1.2 Rationale ..... 2
1.3 Research aims and research questions ..... 5
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 7
2.1 Theoretical framework ..... 7
2.1.1 Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to learning ..... 7
2.1.2 Multimodality ..... 9
2.1.3 Mode ..... 10
2.1.4 Multiliteracies pedagogy ..... 11
2.2 Literature review ..... 12
2.2.1 International research studies ..... 12
2.2.2 South African research studies ..... 14
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ..... 17
3.1 Research design ..... 17
3.2 Research context and participants ..... 18
3.3 The planned unit of poetry work ..... 18
3.3.1 Pre-teaching ..... 18
3.3.2 Teaching ..... 19
3.3.3 After teaching ..... 19
3.4 Data collection techniques ..... 20
3.4.1 Field work observations and researcher's journal notes ..... 20
3.4.2 Collection of learners' products/artefacts ..... 21
3.4.3 Video recordings of multimodal presentations ..... 21
3.4.4 Learner questionnaire after the learner presentations (See Appendix B3) ..... 22

3.4.5 Focus group learner interview ..... 22
3.5 Data analysis methods ..... 22
3.6 Ethical considerations ..... 25
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS ..... 26
4.1 Introduction ..... 26
4.2 Pre-teaching ..... 26
4.2.1 Analysis of learner questionnaire 1 (see Appendix B1) ..... 26
4.2.2 Discussion on the findings of learner questionnaire 1 ..... 29
4.3 Teaching ..... 29
4.3.1 GROUP 1: Poem – 'Inside my Zulu Hut' by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali ..... 30
4.3.2 GROUP 2: Poem – 'A Football Praise Poem' (anonymous) ..... 38
4.4 Construction of artefacts ..... 39
4.4.1 Presentation of artefacts ..... 41
4.4.2 GROUP 3: Poem: 'Change' by Charlotte Zolotow ..... 42
4.4.3 Construction of artefacts ..... 43
4.4.4 Presentation of artefacts ..... 45
4.4.5 GROUP 4: Poem: 'Dear Diet' by Christopher Byrd Hickman ..... 45
4.4.6 Construction of artefacts ..... 48
4.4.7 Presentation of artefact ..... 50
4.4.8 Group 5: Poem: 'Leisure' By William Henry Davies ..... 51
4.4.9 ORAL WORK (Discussion of poem's meaning and notes made) ..... 51
4.4.10 Construction of artefact ..... 53
4.4.11 Presentation of artefact ..... 55
4.4.12 GROUP 6: Poem – 'Dear Ancestor' by Anonymous ..... 56
4.4.13 ORAL WORK (discussion of the poem's meaning and notes made) ..... 57
4.4.14 Construction of artefact ..... 58
4.4.15 Presentation of artefact ..... 59
4.4.16 Group 7: Poem – 'Sea Fever' By John Masefield ..... 59
4.4.17 Construction of artefacts ..... 61
4.4.18 Presentation of artefact ..... 61
4.5 After teaching ..... 63
4.5.1 Analysis of learner questionnaire 2 ..... 63
4.6 Discussion on the findings of questionnaire 2 ..... 67

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION ..... 69
5.1 Learners working together in groups to construct meaning: ..... 69
5.2 Redesigning of the poem ..... 70
5.3 The relationship between multimodal- and multiliteracies-based pedagogies and CAPS. ..... 70
5.4 Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions, using critical and creative thinking, have been made. ..... 70
5.5 Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community. ..... 71
5.6 Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively. ..... 71
5.7 Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. ..... 71
5.8 Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes. ..... 72
5.9 Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others. ..... 72
5.10 Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation. ..... 72
5.11 Limitations: ..... 72
5.12 Recommendations: ..... 73
REFERENCES ..... 74
APPENDICES ..... 78

## LIST OF FIGURES


Figure 4.1: Group 1's poster of 'Inside my Zulu Hut' 32
Figure 4.2 : Group 1's poster of the inside of 'Inside my Zulu Hut'– inner view 33
Figure 4.3 : Group 1's poster of the inside of 'Inside my Zulu Hut' 35
Figure 4.4: Group 2's notes on 'A Football Praise Poem' 39
Figure 4.5: Group 2's construction of a makarapa 40
Figure 4.7: Group 3's redesigned artefact for 'Change' 43
Figure 4.8: Group 4's artefact for 'Dear Diet'. 49
Figure 4.9: Group 4's Presentation for 'Dear Diet' 50
Figure 4.10: Group 5's notes on 'Leisure' 52
Figure 4.11: Group 5's poster of 'Leisure' 53
Figure 4.12: Group 5's model of a 'robot' man 54
Figure 4.13: Group 6's constructed artefact – a 'tombstone' 58


## LIST OF TABLES


Table 3.1: The different modes, their composition and description. 23
Table 4.1: A summary of Group 1's PowerPoint presentation 36
Table 4.2: Group 4's response to questions in the ANA 2014 exemplar 46
Table 4.3: Group 5's dialogic relationship between the linguistic and the visual image 55

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research topic

This report explores the ways in which meaning is constructed, adapted or altered as Grade 9 English Home Language learners redesign the meaning of a poem multimodally in the English classroom. A unit of poetry work was designed to explore how learners, work in groups independently of the teacher, 'shift' across modes to make meaning of the poem and how they redesign meaning to represent the poem multimodally through multimodal artefacts and/or presentations. An array of prescribed poems chosen from official sources, one selected per group, which served as a foundation for designing and creating multimodal artefacts and ensembles, was set as primary texts. The main purpose of this report, then, is to determine how meaning is constructed in learners' presentations and products in a pedagogic approach that is informed by multimodality and multiliteracies. The two core concepts in this report – *design* and *modes* – are recognised as significant concepts in analysing learners' multimodal artefacts in this chain of semiosis and compared with the characteristics of the original 'poem on paper'. Multimodal pedagogies and multiliteracies are the relatively new research approaches that provide learners the support to 'unlock' their potential and encourage resources to emerge from which learners can construct 'meaning' in innovative ways.

Each group – there were seven groups of five learners – chose a poem. 'Inside my Zulu Hut' by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, 'A Football Praise Poem' (anonymous), 'Change' by Charlotte Zolotow, 'Dear Diet' by Christopher Byrd Hickman, 'Leisure' by William Henry Davies, 'Dear Ancestor' (anonymous), and 'Sea Fever' by John Masefield were taken from official sources, namely Lloyd et al.'s (2013) 'The English Today Grade 9 Learner's Book' and the 2014 Annual National Assessment (ANA) exemplar for Grade 9s (Appendix A). The written text (the poem) was printed on a page so that the group could read and engage by means of discussion to analyse the poem. Mayfield (2012) claims that a poem on paper not only requires the meaning makers to see, but to read and decode the words as well. The learners, in their groups, decided upon the poems themselves, since they thought these poems had the potential to be transformed into drawings, presentations and other artistic assemblages. In this way, the findings that arise from the study may be useful not

only for the teaching and learning of poetry in an educational environment, but also *outside* the walls of the school – in an everyday context.

## 1.2 Rationale

This study is rooted in my experience as an English educator for the past 15 years. The past six years' full-time employment at a government school in the north of Johannesburg, South Africa, is of particular relevance to the study. My experience has led to a thorough understanding of how learners react to and engage with poetry in the classroom. The study took place in a co-educational school in which English is the medium of instruction. As a language teacher of English at Home Language level, I have noticed that for many of my learners, English is not their mother tongue. It is their second, third, fourth or fifth language. The school draws its learners from surrounding areas, which include a nearby township, as well as middle class and affluent suburban areas. The complex demographics result in the classes being extremely diverse and the learners, who are learning an additional language, come from multilingual backgrounds. Within the multiliteracies framework, the London Group (NLG) (1996, 2000) maintains that 'schools must now service linguistic and cultural diversity' (68).

> The multiplicity of communication channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches (NLG 1996:60).

The NLG sees diversity as a classroom resource that is just as powerful as a social resource is in the formation of new civic spaces and new notions of citizenship. There is a cognitive benefit for all children in a pedagogy of linguistic and cultural pluralism. For this reason, a classroom environment, namely a Grade 9 class that I teach, was selected in which diversity exists across various levels, and the sample was heterogeneous.

In the South African educational context, English is the dominant language chosen as a medium of instruction in many of the institutions even though these institutions are allowed to select any one of South Africa's 11 official languages – Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Archer and Newfield (2014: 2) claim that this poses a

problem for South African learners whose mother tongue is not English. Multimodality has the pedagogic potential that many South African researchers, both established and new scholars, have identified as the 'application' to support monolingual approaches to meaning making. Multimodality creates the 'space' to 'challenge, rethink and remake educational practices in complex and diverse transitional educational contexts such as South Africa, in which both teachers and students are understood as designers of meaning' (Jewitt in Archer & Newfield 2014: xvi). It is the relatively new path that provides learners the support to 'unlock' their potential and encourage resources to emerge.

In my experience, I have seen that secondary school learners are often apathetic towards prescribed literary works – particularly in the genre of poetry. Poetry is 'rarely popular with pupils' and has lost its position of significance in English classrooms (Fox & Merrick in Newfield & Maungedzo 2006: 71). This inevitably leads to dismal results in the poetry sections of school-based assessment tasks. Many learners feel that poetry is a futile exercise, making it complex for teachers to highlight the theme(s), use of symbolism, language or emotional 'intent' (Gordon 2008: 224). In his book 'The Problem with Poetry' (1991), Richard Andrews suggests that ineffective teaching and learning practices in the classroom may be the cause of learners' ambiguous responses to poetry questions or a total disregard for the underlying meanings or values that poems inculcate in the school curricula.

There is no right or wrong way of teaching literature – especially poetry.

> The teaching of literature is never easy, but it is impossible without the personal, thoughtful and honest interpretations and comments from the learners themselves. Unless they learn how to understand a literary text on their own, they will not have learned much. Teachers often need to restrain their own interpretations and ideas of literary texts, and allow as much learner participation as is reasonable. Interpretation is not about right or wrong. It is about searching for what is meaningful to the reader (CAPS 2011: 11).

Multimodal research practices that have been conducted in the English classrooms in South Africa have been highly innovative and interesting (Newfield 2013, Newfield & Maungedzo 2006, Newfield & Stein 2000, Stein 2003, 2008, Stein & Newfield

2006). The multimodal practices remain at the margins of mainstream classroom practice because only a minority of teachers utilise them as ways of learning. This research then is different in two ways: 1) the past research has been done under the old curriculum – either in the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum, Curriculum 2005, or the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). The Grade 9s selected as research participants for this report are engaging in a revised curriculum called CAPS, implemented for the first time in 2014, the year that this data was collected 2) CAPS has not been used as a 'playground' to foster multimodal practices, hence I attempt to work with the revised curriculum in a multimodal way. Reed (2014: 220) claims that CAPS is prescriptive and I believe this poses a challenge for multimodal practices in the classroom since it may be time consuming.

CAPS was implemented in Grade 10 at the beginning of 2012, followed by Grade 11 in 2013. It reached its final implementation in 2014 for Grade 9 and Grade 12 learners. It aims to produce learners that are able to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (CAPS 2011: 5)

This study draws on the above aims, since poetry learning according to CAPS involves looking at the figurative use of language; of the way sentences, verse lines and poems as a whole are presented; of the choice of image, rhythm, pace and, sound; of the emotive feelings that such images generate (CAPS 2011: 25). Learners demonstrate the aims through solving these aspects by analysing poetry multimodally. These aspects enhance the understanding of the intended message of the poem. The implementation of the CAPS at secondary schools motivated my interest in how aspects of the curriculum could assist in adopting an innovative and more effective approach to teaching poetry. I have been introduced to the area of multiliteracies and multimodality in my critical literacy coursework and feel that this approach has theoretical importance for the recent implementation of CAPS. This investigation is a learning journey for me in an uncharted terrain of designing and analysing multimodal responses to a task. It is important to mention here that although this pedagogy is clearly not original in the academic sense, it is original in the context of CAPS and for Grade 9 learners.

### 1.3 Research aims and research questions

This research aims to explore the shift away from passive learning to independent learning. In this way, learners have greater 'ownership' of the designed unit of poetry work. The use of collaborative groupwork, independently of the teacher, will allow the learners the opportunity to participate and demonstrate their problem-solving skills, as these activities would be learner-centred and not teacher-centred. Small groups enhance co-operation and allow for individual achievement through group incentives when each member is equally accountable for some part of the group's achievement. Webb (1998: 22) stated that groups that use a high degree of explanation are most likely to achieve. Groupwork gives learners the opportunity to engage independently and make meaning of poetry with their peers. The aim is to provide the learner with a way into an understanding that enables them to base interpretations on definite evidence whose discovery they can actively participate in. In the context of this research, the use of groupwork makes space for diversity to come to the fore.

This study explores a variety of multimodal texts in the same way that Newfield and Maungedzo (2006) considered a range of artistic modes to mobilise poetry in the

*Thebuwa* project. The concepts of *design* and *mode* assist in explaining how learners use their semiotic resources and how they integrate modes to produce multimodal artefacts in the chain of semiosis. It is necessary to then determine what resources and which modes enable richer understandings of the poem, and why.

My research questions are thus:

**How do learners respond to a multimodal, groupwork approach to poetry teaching in the English classroom?**

How do learners redesign meaning to represent the poem multimodally?

How do learners work together in groups, independently of the teacher, to make meaning of a poem?

The next chapter provides a framework and theoretical lens of the theories that underpin this multimodal research study.

# CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Theoretical framework

In order to provide a framework for the teaching intervention as well as to provide a theoretical lens for data analysis, this research is located in the following areas of enquiry:

1. Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to learning;
2. Multimodality; and
3. Multiliteracies pedagogy.

### 2.1.1 Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to learning

The socio-cultural or Vygotskian approach to learning provides a useful framework for understanding collaborative learning and practice with groupwork. In Brodie's article (2011) four characteristics of a Vygotskian approach to peer collaboration are identified.

First, the article states that Vygotsky argues that all activity is socio-culturally situated. This means that the context, in this case the English classroom, can enable or constrain the actions, understandings, goals and attitudes of learners and the development of meaning in small groups. Second, the learners' actions and meanings not only create the context for their activity, but they create, sustain and transform one another. The third characteristic is semiotic mediation. This is a way in which contexts and people transform each other. In other words, this is a way symbols are used when communicating and interacting in a group and are internalised to form a basis for cognitive development. The last characteristic is that the cognitive development is intrinsically connected to social and emotional development.

Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) provides a 'space' for cognitive social and emotional development. It is a space where learning and

development occur in interaction with a more knowledgeable other (MKO). The MKO could be a peer, a teacher or some other support system, such as the internet. The ZPD is the gap between what a learner can do alone and unaided, and what can be achieved with a MKO. In this context, this was significant to my research because learners were required to work independently of the teacher, with their peers, in groups, and were allowed to research the poem at home via the internet. This then set up a ZPD where learners could develop cognitively, socially and emotionally, hence improving their learning and meaning making to poetry. Vygotsky (1978) maintains that children progress through ZPD in their cognitive development. The knowledge immediately within their grasp is positioned in their ZPD. The child's mind develops as a result of some interaction with other people or in conjunction with peers or a support system. This is what this research attempts to do when learners work independently in groups.

Rogoff (1990) is a neo-Vygotskian who examined how individual thinking processes relate to the cultural context and how the social interactions of children provide guidance, support, direction, change and impetus for development. She draws heavily on the theory of Vygotsky and refers also to that of Piaget in her discussion, thus keeping both the social environment and the individual in focus. In Vygotsky's perspective, joint problem solving occurs between partners, whereas in Piaget's view, individuals work with independence and equality on each other's ideas. Vygotsky believes that effective social interaction is joint problem solving with guidance by a MKO. For Vygotsky, ideal partners are not equal, but the inequality is in skills and understanding rather than in power. For this reason, interaction with either adults or peers can bring about cognitive growth. In contrast, Piaget felt that children's discussions with adults are unlikely to lead to cognitive restructuring because of the unequal power relations between adults and children. Only when children are able to discuss problems as equals are they likely to take into account new ways of thinking. This research attempts to see these new ways of thinking in the learners' multimodal artefacts through the semiotic resources they extract to *remake* and *redesign* meaning as they shift to and within modes.

### 2.1.2 Multimodality

Kress (2000) argues that ‘no text can exist in a single mode’ and that all texts are always multimodal although a particular mode can dominate (187). The term ‘multi’ therefore suggests that ‘modes never occur by themselves but always with others as ensembles’ (Kress et al. 2005: 2). A ‘mode’ is defined by Jewitt (2003: 83) as a ‘means of communication or representation, which is realised in different materials and transmitted via different media such as speech, writing or music’. Consequently, a multimodal approach to meaning making ‘provides a fuller, richer and more accurate sense of what language is and what it is not’ (2).

This theory has significance for my research because it encourages one not to adopt the conventional word-bound way of making meaning in poetry and it constitutes a new way of conceptualising how meaning can be made in present-day classrooms. It encompasses a combination of various social semiotic modes such as speech, writing, action, gesture and sound, as resources to represent or make meanings. Learners draw on whatever semiotic resources they need to interconnect and communicate their meanings with others.

Multimodal pedagogy connotes a shift – from learning and construction of knowledge being passive and static to one which enables humans to be active, interconnecting beings that make and remake meanings in their world. For Kress (2009) sign making equals meaning making and meaning making equals learning. Sign making occurs everywhere: in and out of school; across all school subjects and in all learning environments. It arises out of our interest at a given moment (Kress 2000). In the domain of a classroom, learners and teachers are continuously creating signs. Sign making is culturally and socially situated, hence it is never neutral. Meaning is always made and read in culture (Stein & Newfield 2006). Writing or reading words is what matters in the English classrooms, but according to Stein and Newfield, teaching and learning go beyond just reading and writing. They maintain that learning and the construction of meaning occur through a variety of modes, not just reading and writing.

### 2.1.3 Mode

In the context of this study – a Grade 9 English Home Language classroom – modes manifest in the different texts that learners interact with. It is these modes that help to develop curriculum knowledge and 'pedagogic practices that lead to learning'. For the concept – *mode* – I took inspiration from Newfield's theory of 'transmodal moments' in the semiotic chain. The transmodal moment can be described as a period of 'multiple translations and transformations' between modes in a chain of semiosis, during which meanings are re-articulated or redesigned (Newfield 2015: 270). The 'chain of semiosis', on the other hand, involves tracking the process and movement of meaning making within a sequence of texts, which are linked in theme or topic, either closely or remotely. Since the texts are seen as moments of 'fixing' or 'punctuations' in the transmodal semiotic chain (Newfield 2015: 275), they can be analysed in terms of their modes and semiotic qualities (Kress 2005: 13). One text is compared to another to reveal transformations of meaning. In this context, this is relevant because this research attempts to open up a 'space' for learners to develop and improve their learning in the genre of poetry, as well as to track the 'transformations' of meaning in the semiotic chain. The modes have been 'reconfigured' by Cope and Kalantzis (2009: 178) which would make learning powerful in a number of ways. These are modes available for students' use: 1) Written language; 2) Oral language; 3) Visual representation; 4) Audio representation; 5) Tactile representation; 6) Gestural representation; 7) Representation to oneself; and 8) Spatial representation.

The range of modes recognises that individuals display a dominant literacy, which is one in which they may be more comfortable in than another. It may be their preferred mode of representation – what is easier for them or what they are good at. A pedagogy which restricts learning to one isolated mode will continually advantage some types of learners over others (Cope & Kalantzis 2009). Although not synonymous, the concept of multimodality is closely linked to the concept of multiliteracies and vice versa.

### 2.1.4 Multiliteracies pedagogy

The multiliteracies approach has evolved since 1996. In that year a group of academics met in New London, USA, and argued that the world was changing and hence a new educational response to literacy was required. Subsequently, the term 'multiliteracies' was coined as a new approach to a literacy pedagogy as a result of new communication practices. The term multiliteracies refers to a broadening of a monolinguistic and monocultural approach to include multimodal textual practices – combining written, oral, visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes – and literacies that are culturally inclusive (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). It thus challenges the traditional, autonomous mode of literacy that continues to dominate in the South African school system.

#### Design

The theory of multiliteracies has relevance to my research because it proposes a concept – *design* – that generates meaning making. According to Cope and Kalantzis (2009), the multiliteracies approach not only highlights the need to develop learners' literacy skills to access new forms of work through learning the new language of work, it also aims at creating the kind of learner who is an active designer of meaning with a 'sensibility open to differences, change and innovation' (175). A multiliteracies pedagogy is transformative as 'it builds on notions of design and meaning-as-transformation', which results in cultural dynamism and diversity (184). There are three aspects to the design process – available design, designing, and redesigned – that are relevant to this research, because the concept 'design' relates to my first research question. The NLG (2000) refers to the 'design' process as the transformation and transduction of available designs. Transduction refers to a change in mode and a possible shift in meaning (Newfield 2013). Transformation refers to a 're-ordering of elements within the same mode, leading to a change of the semiotic object' (Kress 2010: 129). The world we live in today has already been designed. Thus, what already exists is coined as 'available designs'. Designing is the process whereby the existing or available resources are construed and transformed into a new representation that is of interest to the designer. Due to this, there are signs of the original/existing resources that can be seen in the new representation/design but it never involves a repetition of the available design. Every

moment of making meaning involves the transformation of the available resources of meaning. The process from available design to designing is transformative, reshaping what already exists, but it can never be completely original (Kress 2000). In the redesigned stage, the design is 'transmodalised' (Newfield 2013) or recognised in another mode and material such as a three-dimensional artefact. It is in this sense that we are truly designers of our social futures.

The pedagogic imperative for multiliteracies in Cope and Kalantzis (2009) is to design learning experiences with multiple text types in which learners develop strategies for reading the new and unfamiliar. Differences of language, culture and gender must not be barriers to learning success. Learners must now learn to be active and effective members of teams or groups and must learn to speak the language of the mainstream. This research involves collaborative groupwork where learners will be required to work together, despite their differences, to make meaning of a poem.

## 2.2 Literature review

In this section I attempt to look at previous studies that scholars (both established and new) have investigated. The publication of 'A pedagogy of multiliteracies' by Cope and Kalantzis and the NLG in 1996 is what set many scholars off on a journey. It opened a 'porthole' for rediscovery and created new opportunities in the educational context. Key figures such as Gunther Kress, Carey Jewitt, Len Unsworth, and Van Leeuwen are voices in texts that provide a foundation to the work that South African scholars undertake.

### 2.2.1 International research studies

Kress et al. (2005) argue that the role of the book in the English classroom has 'waned', if not collapsed, with a shift to more complex images and simpler texts. This does not mean the 'death of the book', it simply means that teachers must adopt a more flexible and expansive view of literacy, which is what this research seeks to do. It is for this reason that a learning experience ('space') is created to develop strategies for reading the new and unfamiliar. In 'Literacy in the New Media Age' (2003), Kress states that it is no longer adequate for educators to treat literacy, or language, as the main or sole means for representation and communication. There

are other, equally applicable modes that may be a worthwhile endeavour to explore the affordances and constraints of these modes in an educational setting. These modes are discernible in the different texts that learners interact with. The shift in modes that occur between consecutive texts impact on the ways meaning and identity is constructed. The implications of a multimodal pedagogy and multiliteracies for the teaching and learning of poetry, as well as the trajectory of these 'transformations', will be the focus of this study.

Learners were required in my research to use multimodal ways which involved the use of digital technology and media in making meaning to the poem because they were born into a world of information technology and they would prefer to rather multitask than focus on one thing at a time. They feel comfortable and see information technology as an integral part of their lives. Teachers and schools need to understand the nature of this generation and adopt teaching strategies that work with them; otherwise, students will feel bored and learning will be minimised. One way to engage learners in the classroom would require teachers to 'assimilate technology into their classrooms because teachers today form the primary obstacle to learning in a way learners want to' (Reilly 2012: 10). Unsworth (2008) claims that teachers do not feel comfortable or confident when it comes to the use of digital technology and multimedia and Sanders and Morrison (2007) explain:

> The main barrier to implementing such teaching is likely to be not the learners but the educators, there seems reluctance among many educators to move away from traditional teaching methods or radical departure from a system that has worked well for a long time (87).

Reilly (2012) finds this reluctant attitude unfortunate because for learning to occur, teachers need to update their teaching strategies. With the new digital age we are now living in, teachers may find it difficult and complicated to master the use of digital technology in the classroom, hence they may be more resistant to new approaches to literacy teaching (Tan & Mcwilliam 2009; Unsworth 2008). The texts of Peachey (2009), Sharma and Barrett (2009), and Unsworth (2008) offer teachers a framework for including technology in their classrooms for developing literary understanding and literacy teaching.

### 2.2.2 South African research studies

Teachers are central to classroom change: teacher education and teacher development programmes need to enable teachers who teach English as a subject and use it as a medium of teaching and learning to extend their subject knowledge in relation to multimodality and multimodal texts, and their pedagogical knowledge in terms of how to use multimodality to improve students' learning (Stein & Newfield 2006: 17–18)

In light of the above quote, I took inspiration from some of our own South African researchers who have played a key role in introducing and implementing the development of multimodal approaches to education. Since the late 1990s, the leaders – Pippa Stein and Denise Newfield – of the Wits Multiliteracies Group, showed an interest in the Visual Literacy Foundation Course offered at the university. In their view, the course was an example of a multimodal pedagogy in what was then the emerging field of multiliteracies. Stein and Newfield verified that what the lecturers were doing with their students was an example of multimodal teaching and learning. A growing interest in the area of multimodal approaches emerged among the members of the Wits Multiliteracies Group and the academic staff at the university.

Multiliteracies and multimodal pedagogy are 'universal' phenomena. These two innovative approaches to representation, communication and interaction go beyond the verbal or linguistic to explore the multitude of ways we communicate: through images, sound and music, gestures, body posture and the use of space.

Stein and Newfield (2000), find the concept of multiliteracies particularly appealing as it challenges the traditional, autonomous model of literacy that dominated the South African school system. Newfield and Maungedzo (2006) illustrate this shift through an intervention that draws on the use of multimodal pedagogies to revitalise the genre of poetry at the Lamula Jubilee High School. Their objective was to steer away from analysis, which they viewed as the mainstream approach to teaching and learning of poetry in South Africa. They 'open the English curriculum to a range of cultural and linguistic knowledges and practices' by modalising poetry in various ways. One of the most successful artefacts of the intervention was 'the Thebuwa

cloth' which draws on learners' histories and identities in poetry. The Thebuwa study, based on a three-year poetry project in a second-language English classroom in Soweto, tracks the transmodal chain of semiosis through phases of reading poems and writing stories about them in English, researching and reciting praise poems in the home languages, embroidering maps on pieces of cloth and writing modern-day poems in English. The study traces the lines of semiotic movement that led to the publication of the first poetry anthology by township youth to come out of South Africa. One of the strengths of multimodal pedagogies is that they acknowledge the limits of language and offer learners a wider base for representation (Stein 2003:95). 'Accessing learners' repertoires and interests' (Andrew 2011) as in the case of Xoxisa in 'The Pen Talks my Story' (Harrop-Allin 2014) are potential starting points for teaching and learning. The study tracks the process of playing an oral storytelling game, Xoxisa, by young girls, who engage and use a variety of modal resources. While the project that Newfield and Maungedzo conducted is worth looking at to help future researchers in a similar field, what was found to be lacking in the intervention which I find relevant for my research is the use of technology. Brown & Czerniewicz (2008) explore the affordances of technology to support learning and the use of it in everyday life. Through their case study research on South African university students' social and academic communication networks, they found that technology is central to students' lives and that South African institutions need to encourage and develop students' use of technology to support learning. The use of technology for teaching and learning may be one way of enabling students to take an active role in their learning, to communicate it creatively, to learn to work together with others and to link their learning with their existing concerns and interests. While the multimodal research projects that have been conducted in South Africa have been useful in our context of diversity and democratic change, they are isolated and sporadic works. It is for this reason that multimodal practices still remain at the margins of the classroom.

Salaam (2014) suggests that a design curriculum be created for learners. She designs the transmodal learning process of students who are studying jewellery design, moving through the phases of the process and culminates in the final stage of the making of the item of jewellery. She argues that learners would be more effective designers if they had an understanding of the design process, the

affordances and the constraints of the various resources used in making meaning. The salient points in the design process occur when there is a change across modes or changes within the same mode. Reed (2014) states that teachers need to be committed to the concept and process of design in their own design of teaching activities in order for learners to 'engage intellectually, artistically and technologically with design in multimodal text creations' (Smith & Kimber 2009: 73). Extracts from the reflections of 10 postgraduate 'teacher-learners' on designing, presenting, and assessing multimodal responses to a task in Reed's (2014: 220) case study suggest that when a teacher or learner takes 'ownership' of his or her task, there is enhanced engagement, which results in improvement in learning.

In view of Reed's suggestion above, this research project uses CAPS as a 'playground' to allow the Grade 9 learners to take 'ownership' of the unit of poetry work designed to engage them 'intellectually, artistically and technologically' foregrounding the concepts *design* and *modes.* Reed claims that multimodal representations are 'time consuming' and may 'pose a challenge' in context in which teachers work with large number of learners in a class and are expected to 'conform within the prescriptions of a rigid' and recently introduced CAPS (2012). This project takes on this challenge and attempts to explore how learners respond to a designed unit of poetry work in a multimodal way within the 'prescriptions' of CAPS.

The aims of CAPS (as explained in Chapter 1) can be aligned with the multiliteracies framework because it will allow the learners the opportunity to participate and demonstrate their problem-solving skills collaboratively in groups. Multimodal pedagogy and multiliteracies attempt to push the boundaries of CAPS further, beyond its prescriptions, because CAPS does privilege the linguistic mode.

The next chapter highlights the plan and process in which the unit of poetry work unfolds.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research design

The aim of this research was to investigate learners' responses to a unit of poetry work over a period of approximately four weeks as part of the Grade 9 English Home Language curriculum. I played a dual role – I was the teacher in the class but observed the learners with a researcher's eye. The unit of poetry work was designed in such a way that it was embedded in the Grade 9 English Home Language curriculum. In doing so, I wished to improve my understanding of how arranging the learners in groups could enhance engagement and learning in a multiliteracies and multimodal pedagogy approach to poetry.

This project was empirical classroom-based research and, as I researched my own practice, it was practitioner research. Practitioner research is an empowering and developmental tool for teachers. 'It offers teachers the chance to systematically investigate and continuously learn from their practices and come up with ideas and conclusions that enrich their understandings of their practices and enhance their teaching' (www.edfutures.net). The research design that best suits my purpose is a case study approach using a qualitative methodology.

The case study approach is 'an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection' (Cresswell 2008: 476) where being 'bounded' means being unique according to place, time, and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). The case study approach is therefore ideally suited to this type of classroom-based research. In this case, the unit of poetry work, its context and effects would be the 'bounded system', and the Grade 9 learners' responses and teacher-researcher observations would give rise to the 'extensive data collection'.

As a teacher and researcher, I faced a challenging task of inhabiting two roles. First, as a teacher, I gave instructions to the learners informing them of what needed to be done at the beginning of every English period for four weeks. I also carried out the unit of poetry work which will be described shortly. Second, as a researcher, I investigated the phenomenon as it happened and worked towards developing a

thorough understanding of students' engagement in all its forms. The case study approach describes the unit of poetry work in this study which 'can be used as an evaluative tool' (Toloi et al. 2011: 21). It helps me to identify, understand, analyse and suggest complexities for further investigation (Stake 2000).

## 3.2 Research context and participants

I conducted my investigation at the school where I teach. It is a state secondary school in a north-eastern suburb of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The school draws its more than 1,200 learners from a nearby township, and from middle class and affluent suburban areas. The Grade 9 English Home Language class that I have selected for this study, though, consists of 35 learners – whose mother tongue is mainly not English. From previous discussions in class, I was aware that most of them had access to television, the internet, social networking sites, radio and cell phones. Since 'exposure' to digital technologies contributes towards my learners' creative responses, I allowed them to surf the internet for information and visuals on their poems and do PowerPoint presentations in the classroom.

## 3.3 The planned unit of poetry work

The outline of the proposed unit of poetry work is provided below. Although the unit of poetry work was preset, I allowed for opportunity for slight adaptation in redesigning it when considering the learners' responses in the questionnaires which they had to complete before the unit of work began. This flexibility further allowed me, as a teacher-researcher, some space for unexpected issues that arose and hence required changes to be made to subsequent lessons. The unit of poetry work took approximately four weeks of lesson time.

### 3.3.1 Pre-teaching

**Step 1:** Learner Questionnaire 1

Before the commencement of the unit of poetry work, a questionnaire on learners' past experiences of reading and writing poetry was given to them. This gave me some insight into to how learners felt about poetry in general as well as in the English classroom. The questionnaire was given to the learners to complete

approximately two weeks before the unit of poetry work to enable learners' attitudes and feelings to inform aspects of it. See Appendix B1 for the questionnaire.

### 3.3.2 Teaching

**Step 2:** Introducing the unit of poetry work

In order to start the unit of poetry work, I informed the learners both orally and in writing of the work. Learners were then given clear instructions, at the beginning of each lesson, of what was expected of them. Class discussion did arise from learners wanting to know or confirm something about the unit of work. An instruction page was given to each group (See Appendix B2) regarding the process of the work.

**Step 3:** Self-selected groups

I used groupwork as a strategy for the unit of work. I randomly selected seven learners. Each one in turn selected four learners to be in their group. This gave me seven groups, each comprising five learners. Each group was given a list of poems from official sources – each group had to collaboratively decide on one poem of their choice. Subsequently learners were required to independently work together to make meaning of the poem.

**Step 4:** Learners' products – artefacts and presentations

Learners were then required to independently produce a redesign of the poem they had to study. They were allowed to use resource tools such as their textbooks, dictionaries, the internet and a handout (See Appendix B3).They were given a week to complete this task. Using the instruction sheet, the groups then completed and presented the poem to the class in the selected modes.

### 3.3.3 After teaching

**Step 5a:** Learner Questionnaire 2 (see Appendix B4)

A short questionnaire was given to the learners after their presentations. The questionnaire gave a clear insight into learners' experiences of working in groups and the meaning making of a poem.

**Step 5b:** Focus group learner interviews

Seven learners (one from each group) were randomly selected for the focus group interview. There was room for more participation and expression of the unit of poetry work in the focus group interview than the limited responses in the questionnaires.

### 3.4 Data collection techniques

A variety of methods was used to collect data. Fard (cited in Toloi et al. 2011: 106) claims that qualitative research methods are formed to assist researchers 'to understand human beings and their social and cultural living beds' and to 'grasp the phenomena from the views of participants'. The data collection was from my journal and field work notes, learner questionnaires, focus group learner interviews, photographs of learners' artefacts and the video recordings of the group presentations. The primary data for this research came from the artefacts, and all other data collected formed the secondary data.

Although the fieldwork was structured around the unit of poetry work, the data-gathering process began before the teaching of poetry and extended beyond it. The unit of poetry work took approximately four weeks but together with the pre-teaching learner questionnaires and the post-teaching focus group learner interviews, the fieldwork took three months.

#### 3.4.1 Field work observations and researcher's journal notes

I was mindful that I had to play a dual role as teacher and researcher in the process. I set up the research project as a researcher, implemented it as a teacher, and reflected on it as a researcher. Both roles were active throughout the unit of poetry work and I shifted from one role to the other. I was the teacher in the classroom but observed with a researcher's eye. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), observation is a way for the researcher to see and hear what is occurring naturally in the research site. This observation was written in my journal at the end of each period/day. The journal and fieldwork notes assisted me at a later stage for a personal perspective and reflection.

I used these notes to capture both description and interpretation of key moments of classroom discussion and interaction. The journal and fieldwork notes were useful in

pointing to which classroom moments were significant for the research and helped me to understand the social behaviour of learners interacting in their groups, including teaching and learning and the relation to the content and pedagogy of the unit of poetry work.

### 3.4.2 Collection of learners' products/artefacts

'Artefacts', according to Knobel and Lankshear (1999: 93), are 'traces' or 'products' used by research participants, or relevant to the problem area being studied'. The *redesign* of the poem in this project undoubtedly brings with it the production of a variety of multimodal texts, for example photographs, drawings, posters, two- and three-dimensional models and performance. These artefacts are used as my primary data and are collected and analysed in terms of their design, and the constraints and affordances of the use of modes. The artefacts are my core data since they answer the research questions and come from the teaching process of the poetry activity involving learner engagement in the classroom. All other collected data – learners' notes, questionnaires and the transcript of the focus group interview – formed my secondary data.

### 3.4.3 Video recordings of multimodal presentations

The presentations by the learners in their groups were video recorded. Since the unit of poetry work required the use of various modes (visual, spatial, oral, gestural, tactile, etc.), it was crucial to video record to capture the significant key moments because some were in concrete form, such as body motion in dancing or dramatisation, and so forth. This type of data collection is 'useful for validation', as it 'document(s) nonverbal behaviour and communication and can provide a permanent record' (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 363). I watched all the learner presentations in order to select critical moments and key interactions for description, transcription and/or still photographs. All group presentations were video recorded, though only the ones I have consent for are analysed.

### 3.4.4 Learner questionnaire after the learner presentations (See Appendix B3)

The second learner questionnaire is based on peers' presentations/artefacts and groupwork. The types of responses give me an indication of how the groupwork led to making meaning of the poem.

### 3.4.5 Focus group learner interview

I interviewed a randomly selected group of seven learners, one from each of the seven groups. The interview consisted of a limited number of open-ended questions. See Appendix B5 for the proposed questions for the post-teaching focus group interview. The focus group interview was audio taped. A digital voice recorder was placed in a stationary position in front of the learners, either on a desk or on the teacher's table. This position ensured that the different voices would be picked up on the voice recorder. I listened to the recorded interview and transcribed it.

I sought to facilitate a discussion of each question among the participants loosely allowing the interviewees to discuss events that were important to them, thus providing opportunities to share their responses and insights with me in a less formal context. Patton (1983: 205) claims that the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their understandings in their own terms. This allowed me to understand the situation from the perspective of the interviewees and allowed me to make conclusions in my findings in the poetry activity process. The interview took about 35 minutes and took place after school. The focus group interview was transcribed in its entirety.

## 3.5 Data analysis methods

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) there is no 'one right way' of analysing data; data can be analysed in a number of ways. I used multimodal methods of collecting data, which ranged from the written and the visual to the audio-visual. The methods which I used to analyse the data were determined both by the form the data took and by the research questions which it was intended to address.

In Chapter 4 I outline learners' texts encountered and produced in the transmodal chain and what the teacher and learners did with the texts – their internal and external semiotic actions. Between each link in the chain is a transmodal moment of

modal redesigning through continuous observation, groupwork discussions, posters, 3D artefacts, PowerPoint presentations, role plays and learners' responses to questionnaires and interview questions.

I will attempt to uncover what effect these transmodal moments had on learners' interpretation of texts by using the two core concepts in this research study: 1) *design* in the multiliteracies theoretical framework and 2) *modes* in the multimodal framework. Using these two concepts I look at how learners shift modes and develop meaning in the process of design.

**The process of design:** the design elements used in learners' artefacts are identified and commented on.

**Available design:** the available meaning-making resources; patterns and conventions of meaning.

**The designing:** the process of shaping emergent meaning, which involves representation and recontextualisation. This never involves a repetition of available design. Every moment of meaning involves the transformation of the available resources of meaning. Reading, writing, drawing, performing, movement, gestures, tasting, smelling, seeing and listening are all instances of designing.

**The redesigned:** The outcome of designing, something through which the meaning making has remade itself, a new meaning-making resource.

Learners' artefacts are examined by the choice of mode and the affordances and constraints of the mode.

**Table 3.1: The different modes, their composition and description.**

| Modes | Component | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Written and oral = linguistic meaning | Vocabulary, metaphor, structure, delivery, modality | Words, video, speech, listening |
| Visual meaning | Colour, perspective, | Mood, emotion, cultural significance, depth, dimension, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | vectors | point of view, positioning, setting, still or moving image |
| Audio meaning | Voice, meaning, sound effects | Electronic, own voice, natural speech, electronic or composed music, selected and created sound |
| Gestural meaning | Behavioural action, sensuality, body control, emotion, kinesics | Gestures, creating an atmosphere, positioning and movement, conveying feelings, body movements to communicate, clothing, |
| Spatial meaning | Ecosystems, geographical, architectural | Interaction of all components, layout and landscape, construction, composition, organisation |
| Tactile meaning | Sensory | Taste, touch, smell |

(Adapted from Cope & Kalantzis 2009:178).

Here follows a layout of the data analysis process implemented in this study:

**Pre-teaching** – Learner questionnaire 1

**Teaching** – Groups 1–7 under the following headings:

- Introducing the written text
- Oral
- Constructed artefacts
- Presentation of artefacts

**After teaching** – Learner questionnaire 2

## 3.6 Ethical considerations

I obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education, the school itself and the parents and learners of the relevant class, since the research is classroom based. I was as transparent as possible from the outset about the aims of my research with research participants to ensure that I obtained informed consent from them. I informed participants of their right to privacy and confidentiality and that the identities of the school and the learners would be protected. I made it clear to the participants that although everyone participated in the unit of poetry work because it was part of the English Home Language curriculum, their responses and artefacts and the video recordings of their presentations would not be used for research without their consent. The learners who did not give consent for the research involved received no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participants were otherwise entitled but still participated in the unit of poetry work. All participants completed the questionnaires and the participants selected for the focus group interview were informed that it was voluntary.

I obtained an ethics protocol number from the University of the Witwatersrand's Ethics Committee.

# CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## 4.1 Introduction

The unit of poetry work that was designed for the learners followed three stages: pre-teaching, teaching and after-teaching. In the pre-teaching stage, questionnaire 1 (see appendix) on learners' past experiences of reading and writing poetry was given to them. In this section I analyse the responses in questionnaire 1 from the learners before the poetry teaching activity. It must be made clear that although this questionnaire does not directly answer the research questions of this report, it does seek to find out if the claims made in the rationale section of this report still prevail or not – i.e. whether learners have an apathetic attitude towards poetry and if poetry is still 'rarely popular' in the English classroom.

## 4.2 Pre-teaching

### 4.2.1 Analysis of learner questionnaire 1 (see Appendix B1)

There were nine questions in questionnaire 1. The data revealed the different positions from which learners viewed poetry.

**Questions 1–6**

Questions 1–6 were associative, incomplete and open-ended questions designed to elicit the learners' thoughts and feelings on reading and studying poetry. Fourteen out of 35 were negative responses, 12 were positive responses and nine were ambivalent responses.

Fourteen out of 35 learners' responses to question 1 were either ambivalent or they found poetry to be predominantly difficult or boring. Below are some examples.

Studying or reading poetry is like

> looking at a blank page. When someone talks about poetry I immediately think of something else as I am not such a big lover of poems. (Learner 1)
>
> learning a foreign language (Learner 3)

> something which you have to work hard on (Learner 4)
>
> driving to Durban for 6 hours with nothing to do (Learner 11)
>
> boring (Learner 14)

Nine out of 35 learners' felt that studying or reading poetry is like a short story.

> breathing or seeing the world through another person's eyes (Learner 20)

Twelve out of 35 were positive responses. These learners viewed poetry as:

> trying to feel what the poet was going through when writing the poem (Learner 24)
>
> expressing your feelings in the form of words (Learner 26)
>
> listening to music with no beats which appeals to the heart (Learner 28)
>
> learning about a person's feelings and how they see the world (Learner 31)
>
> reading one's emotions or feelings but most of the time metaphorically (Learner 33)

**Questions 7 and 8:** Poetry in and beyond the classroom.

Fifteen out of 35 learners responded with a 'no' to question 7 on whether reading, writing or listening to poetry took place outside school. Eleven wrote poetry either for themselves or for their friends, expressing feelings of excitement, inspiration, stress or boredom. Five learners listened to poetry in the form of rap music, in songs or the lyrics of a song and four learners read poetry only if they had written it or Googled it.

In response to question 8, 17 of the responses were negative – learners did not enjoy poetry at school because they found it to be either boring or difficult. Twelve out of 35 learners enjoyed poetry in school because they liked to find the message behind the poem or they enjoyed the poem if they found it meaningful. Six responded with a 'sometimes' because it depended on whether or not they liked the poem.

**Question 9:** The teaching of poetry in the classroom

I categorised question 9 into four categories:

Explain how you were taught to understand and analyse a poem in your English class. Refer to your Grade 7 and Grade 8 years to answer this question.

Category 1: Use of SIFTS method (SIFTS stands for sense, intention, form, tone and structure.)

Category 2: Read, identify rhyme schemes and figures of speech and answer the questions

Category 3: Read each line and interpret it

Category 4: Unable to remember

Eleven out of 35 learners responded that they had been taught the SIFTS method when analysing poetry.

> In Grade 7, we just read through the poems and identified the rhyme scheme. In Grade 8, we read through the poem and analysed it using the SIFTS method. (Learner 30)

Nineteen learners wrote that they had to read and read again until they could find the rhyme scheme and the figures of speech, and then had to answer the set questions that followed.

> In Grade 7 and 8 we were given poems and we were told to read it, then the teacher will read the poem to us and we had to follow and after that we got questions. We read the questions and poem again and we were asked to answer the questions. (Learner 22)

> We read the poem as much as possible until we understand it. We search for rhyme schemes and figures of speech. (Learner 34).

Four out of 35 learners stated that the teacher analysed the poem for them line by line, and if not, they had to do it themselves. One learner could not remember how poetry was taught in his Grade 7 and 8 year in the English classroom.

> We were told to read each line and say what it means, then at the end put everything together like a puzzle. (Learner 23)

### 4.2.2 Discussion on the findings of learner questionnaire 1

Questions 1–6 are based on learners' attitude towards poetry. Fourteen out of 35 learners in question 1 responded that studying or reading poetry was 'difficult' or 'boring'. This means that poetry teaching in the classroom still remains 'rarely popular' with some learners and this is likely to contribute to their apathetic attitude towards it. (Gordon 2008).The data in questions 7 and 8 reveals that there are more learners that enjoy poetry outside school than in school. Does this mean that they write poetry outside the classroom because they find poetry in school 'boring' or the poems they study at school 'difficult'? From the responses in question 9 of questionnaire 1 it appears that teachers in the English classrooms are teaching poetry according to CAPS (2011) specifications, that is: rhyme scheme, figures of speech, tone and so forth. However, the data shows that traditional ways of teaching still continue to dominate the classroom despite the many attempts through research and changes in the curriculum. CAPS (2011) states that 'line by line analysis of any text is destructive', yet responses to question 9 reveal that teachers continue to do so in the hope that learners will have a better understanding of the poem (10).

## 4.3 Teaching

The unit of poetry work produced learner responses in a range of modalities, from analysing the written text to performance, demonstrating their variation and range of meaning making. This section aims to compare the various learner responses – going group by group – which provides a better understanding of the transformations or shifts across modes within the design process.

There were two phases in the unit of poetry work (Appendix B2). The first phase required the learners in their groups to select a poem, then discuss and analyse it. Once they had done that, they had to begin with phase 2, in which they were given free space to do something unconventional and without restrictions, to come up with innovative ways of redesigning the poem. What interested me was to see what they were going to do with that free space since the linguistic mode has always been the dominant mode cultivated in the South African school curriculum. The challenge for

each group was to transform their discussion and analysis of the poem, when they worked in groups independently of the teacher, into multimodal artefacts and presentations. Learners were given one week to practise and plan their presentations during class time and thereafter had to showcase their artefacts and presentations in 10 minutes in class. I did not want to teach the poems to the class, I wanted them to make meaning through a process of *researching* and *rediscovery* (Bruner 1991). Different modes of communication communicate different messages.

The seven groups inhabited modes differently and used the resources of each mode in different ways. I show how the different learner responses from each group, using an integration of modes, produce meaning making in an attempt to answer research questions 1 and 2 of this report.

In this section, data is presented chronologically – as the design of the unit of poetry work unfolds during teaching and learning – and arranged under the following headings:

Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)

Oral work (group discussion of the poem's meaning and notes made)

Construction of artefacts

Presentation of artefacts

The purpose of the above sequencing is to show the shift across modes in the semiotic chain as learners in their groups attempt to make meaning of the poem.

### 4.3.1 GROUP 1: Poem – 'Inside my Zulu Hut' by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

Group 1 selected the poem 'Inside my Zulu Hut' (Appendix A1). The poet is a black South African who in the poem reminisces about his childhood Zulu hut, which brings warmth and comfort to him. The use of a flashback technique is adopted – from the present to the past and back to the present – to give the reader a personal description of the inside of his Zulu hut in his childhood days. The possessive pronoun 'my' in the title suggests the poet's strong subject position because it is his

hut that is mentioned in the poem. First he describes the hut, then he goes on to mention the contents of the hut – what he used to sleep on and what he used to cook his porridge. Words relating to food such as ‘calabash’; ‘millstone; ‘sour milk’; ‘foaming beer’; and ‘porridge’ reveal that it holds value in his childhood memories thus bringing back the warmth he felt for his Zulu hut. The imagery used in ‘Inside my Zulu Hut’ is uncomplicated as learners are easily able to identify in their notes the different figures of speech. The use of simple diction in the poem makes it easy for the learners to understand the poem’s overall meaning: its theme, tone, setting and form. Poetry does not necessarily need to be abstract, complicated or confusing. On the contrary, poetry can be about the most commonplace and simple things in life, which ‘Inside my Zulu Hut’ reveals.

**ORAL WORK (group discussion of the poem’s meaning and notes made)**

Group 1 consisted of five girls. One learner (Learner 8) in group 1 was absent the day the groups had to choose a poem. Learner 8 was not derailed by this, and my observation was that Learner 8 worked the hardest in the group to produce a successful presentation. She was the driving force motivating the group to come up with creative ideas to showcase their choice of poem.

Learner 4 in the group did say in questionnaire 1 that poetry is something ‘which you have to work hard on’ but in the interview stated that that working in groups was

> more fun than we usually did. Now we get to hear different opinions and views from people and it’s not just your opinion like we are used to doing. It’s nicer because you get to relate to your friends, it’s not just alone, and it’s not that boring as we usually do it. (Learner 4).

This means that Learner 4 enjoyed working in groups because sharing ideas helped lessen the workload and she did not have to work as hard as she is used to doing. The group used the SIFTS method to analyse ‘Inside my Zulu Hut’. The notes of their analysis together with other information were placed onto a USB and were projected onto the screen in a form of a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix A15). The intention was for the rest of the class to see, read and learn about Mtshali’s poem. A selection of words extracted from the poem were written under the sub-title ‘vocabulary and background’ and next to each word came the definition of that word.

‘Millstone’ (line 6) was defined as a heavy stone for grinding corn; ‘riempies’ (line 12) as an Afrikaans word for leather strips; ‘calabashes’ (line 7) as an empty, dry fruit bowl for holding liquids; and ‘rafters’ (line 13) as wooden beams in the roof. Once these clarifications were done, the group seemed confident enough to begin their analysis.

In slide 4 of their notes in the PowerPoint presentation the group identified the form of the 19-line poem as free verse because there was no rhyme scheme. Figures of speech and imagery were easily recognised because of the simple vocabulary usage**.** In their notes the first two lines of the poem, ‘It is a hive without any bees’ was identified as a comparison which was a metaphor. The inside of the hut was described as a beehive. ‘Sleeping grass mats’ (line 9) was recognised as a bed and ‘wooden head rests’ (line 10) as a pillow. ‘Inside my Zulu hut’, I found, was certainly not lacking in imagery for my learners to reinterpret and remake into multimodal artefacts and assemblages. They identified the tone as a happy one because they felt that the poet felt a lot of positivity, happiness and joy when he thought of his childhood days. These elements are reflected in the poster that group 1 constructed in response to the written form of the poem.

**CONSTRUCTION OF ARTEFACTS**




**Figure 4.1: Group 1’s poster of ‘Inside my Zulu Hut’**

Group 1's poster of 'Inside my Zulu Hut' is not just a visual interpretation of the poem, it is also linguistic (title), and spatial (layout and 3-D effect). Learners showed the ability to redesign the meaning into other modalities. The meaning was transferred into a drawing of a Zulu hut and arranged spatially so that it made sense. Learners took elements from the written text and 'transformed' the elements visually to exhibit their response to the poem. The drawing of the sun, a cloud and the blue sky in the background are natural elements that highlight the poet's childhood memory of his hut in its natural setting.




**Figure 4.2 : Group 1's poster of the inside of 'Inside my Zulu Hut'– inner view**

Once the flaps/doors of the poster were opened, the reverse side of the flaps/doors could clearly be seen. The group had taken lines 1 and 2 of the poem – *It is a hive without any bees* – and represented it on the reverse of the flaps. The yellow and green honeycombs are representative of these lines.

The learners drew the contents mentioned in the poem – a three-legged pot (line 17) with blackened smoke (line 14) rising into the air, a calabash (line 7), a clay pot (line 8), a millstone (line 6), a sleeping grass mat (line 9) and a wooden head rest (line 10). Words become visual elements of art, and these in turn become resources for the meaning maker. Two pieces of cut paper painted brown on the outside form flaps or doors and serve as the opening of the hut. The three-dimensional poster was constructed by using two pieces of A3 cardboard glued together to make it into an

A2 poster so that it could be large enough for the rest of the class to see. This addition to the poster – the 'door' – transformed it into a three-dimensional form.

In terms of the multiliteracies framework for design, the above textual product may be described as follows:

**Available design:** the written poem**,** coloured paper, glue, paint, wax crayons, scissors, colour pencils

**The designing:** a picture of a beehive from the media was used as a guide to create the inside of the flaps or doors of the hut and elements from the poem were extracted and drawn as a plan for a three-dimensional poster. Two pieces of A3 cardboard were glued together to form an A2 poster. The title of the poem, 'Inside my Zulu hut', was written in different colours of paint below the hut. The bright yellow sun and a white cloud are drawn against the blue sky.

**The redesigned:** The material mentioned above was transformed into a multi-coloured and insightful three-dimensional poster. The drawings of the elements mentioned in the poem and the cut pieces of paper used as flaps or doors were transformed into a Zulu hut. The detail was a visual, verbal and spatial poster reflecting group 1's understanding of the written poem.

This brings us to the Group 1's next transmodal journey – their presentation.

**PRESENTATION OF ARTEFACT**

Group 1 used a number of modes (visual, gestural, linguistic [written and oral], audio, spatial; tactile, multimodal) on the same poem in their presentation. Learner 8, dressed in a Zulu traditional outfit and adornment, gave her audience an insight into the pinned poster on display. The audience was in awe because they were looking at a white girl (Learner 8) wearing a Zulu traditional attire. In the interview a learner commented that she liked Group 1's presentation because it was 'impressive'. Upon further questioning, she commented that she liked the idea of Learner 8 in a Zulu outfit. This verifies Stein's (2008) work where she explores how multimodal pedagogy can reconnect linguistically disenfranchised learners – through the use of performance, semiotic artefacts, visual representations and so on. She argues that

multimodal pedagogy enables the assertion of student identity, cultural practices and community to enter the school context in ways that are important for literacy and teaching (2003). This is clearly seen in Group 1 as learners bring their cultural experiences and identity into the classroom context. While Learner 8 explained the poster presentation, Learner 13, also attired in the Zulu traditional wear, quietly played the drum (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The hand gestures in laying the drum showed us that Learner 13 was familiar with this instrument. This means that Learner 13 draws on her semiotic resources to *reshape* and *redesign* the poem into a design that is of interest to her. By bringing to centre stage her cultural identity, race and culture became a meaningful symbol of communication.



**Figure 4.3 : Group 1's poster of the inside of 'Inside my Zulu Hut'**

The traditional wear and the drum, which is an African musical instrument, are symbols of Zulu culture. This gave the learners in the class a higher level of comprehension of the poem 'Inside my Zulu Hut' – through a visual interpretation of the written poem. The playing of the drum by Learner 13 was used as a sound that linked together the poster talk. In this transformation, she draws on the resources of her culture, her history and the moment of the present to shape her performance. This supports Luke's (2005) point that teachers now have to deal with 'epistemological diversity' in which learners bring to class 'complex, multiple and blended background knowledges, identities and discourses constructing identity and practice' (35). The remaining three girls in the group did a PowerPoint presentation

once Learner 8 and the drum player (Learner 13) had finished. The learners were very skilful in operating the computer as they presented their PowerPoint of 12 slides (Appendix A15) to the class. Each of the three girls read or demonstrated what was on their allocated slide. The information and visual imagery on the slides revealed that the learners did research on the internet and their notes from the group analysis of the poem were also shown on screen. This tells us that learners in this group were self-reliant, informed and discerning users of technology for the task they had to present.

Below is a summary table of the PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix A15) that Group 1 presented, revealing that modes are interrelational and interchangeable.

**Table 4.1: A summary of Group 1's PowerPoint presentation**

| | | Modes |
|---|---|---|
| Slide 1 | Title, poet's name, the name of the book in which the poem can be found and the names of the learners in the group | written, colour, visual |
| Slide 2 | The written text of the poem 'Inside my Zulu Hut' | written, visual, colour |
| Slide 3 | Understanding and background: vocabulary and summary of the poem | written |
| Slide 4 | Questions and answers | written |
| Slide 5 | SIFT analysis | written |
| Slide 6 | A picture of the exterior of a Zulu hut | visual, colour |
| Slide 7& 8 | Two pictures from different angles of the interior of a Zulu hut | visual, colour |
| Slide 9 | What's inside? Close-up pictures of clay pots | visual, written |
| Slide 10 | Close-up pictures of wooden headrests | visual, colour |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Slide 11 | Images of the poet: Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali | visual, colour |
| Slide 12 | A ‘thank you’ note | written, colour |

Drawing on the multiliteracies framework for design, Group 1’s presentation may be described as follows:

**Available design:** cultural clothing, drum, laptop, screen projector, make-up, USB

**The designing:** the cultural clothing and the sound of the drum were used to portray elements of Zulu culture. The research from media and notes that group 1 produced in their group discussion was saved onto a USB.

**The redesign:** All the abovementioned material was transformed into a performance and PowerPoint presentation. Group 1 used a wide variety of modes to perform and display a presentation – gestural, written, oral, visual, spatial, audio and tactile.

The potentialities and limitations of modes referred to by Kress (2012) as ‘affordances’ and ‘constraints’ are significant here. This means that, although it may be easy to express, represent or communicate meaning with the resources of one mode, it may be more difficult with another set of resources. In the case of Group 1’s transmodal journey, three of these ‘sets’ are prominent: the multicoloured three-dimensional poster and their meaning-making tools, which include paper, glue and paint; the dress-up performance, which, together with the drumming, showcases the traditions of a Zulu culture; and the PowerPoint presentation, with the accompanying information, imagery and notes to transfigure the poem to a new design. I believe that Group 1 is the group that most clearly demonstrates the advantage of the visual mode, above the seemingly monomodal poem on paper, simply because the vibrant 3D poster, the colourful cultural Zulu attire, and the insightful PowerPoint presentation in colour is so semiotically ‘dense’ and expressive.

### 4.3.2 GROUP 2: Poem – 'A Football Praise Poem' *(*anonymous)

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

Similar to 'Inside my Zulu Hut', 'A Football Praise Poem' (Appendix A2) of which the author is unknown, is set in a South African context. The use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' used in line 1 and throughout the poem shows us that the poet, like Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, is a South African. 'We come from Soweto' (line 1) further informs us that the poet comes from a 'township' (line 4) called 'Soweto' (line 1). Whereas Mtshali refers briefly to his culture in his poem, the unknown poet places the well-known sport soccer in the spotlight. This eight-stanza poem with 37 lines is a simple work. The poet praises soccer. Because of the love for the sport, it is played almost anywhere – on 'waste-grounds', in 'cafes', 'garages', 'shops', and on 'street corners'. Participants' problems are forgotten when they play soccer. Despite their poor socio-economic background, their determination gets them to watch the 'Final Cup' at the 'Orlando Stadium'.

**ORAL WORK (group discussion of the poem's meaning and notes made)**

Unlike Group 1 (the all-girl group), this group consisted of a mixture of girls and boys – two girls and three boys. This group love the sport soccer because they could do nothing else but play soccer every opportunity they had when they were on the field practising for their presentation. I had to constantly intervene to see whether constructive work was being done.

Group 2 used the SIFTS method to analyse 'A Football Praise Poem'. Figure 4.4 shows the notes of their analysis.

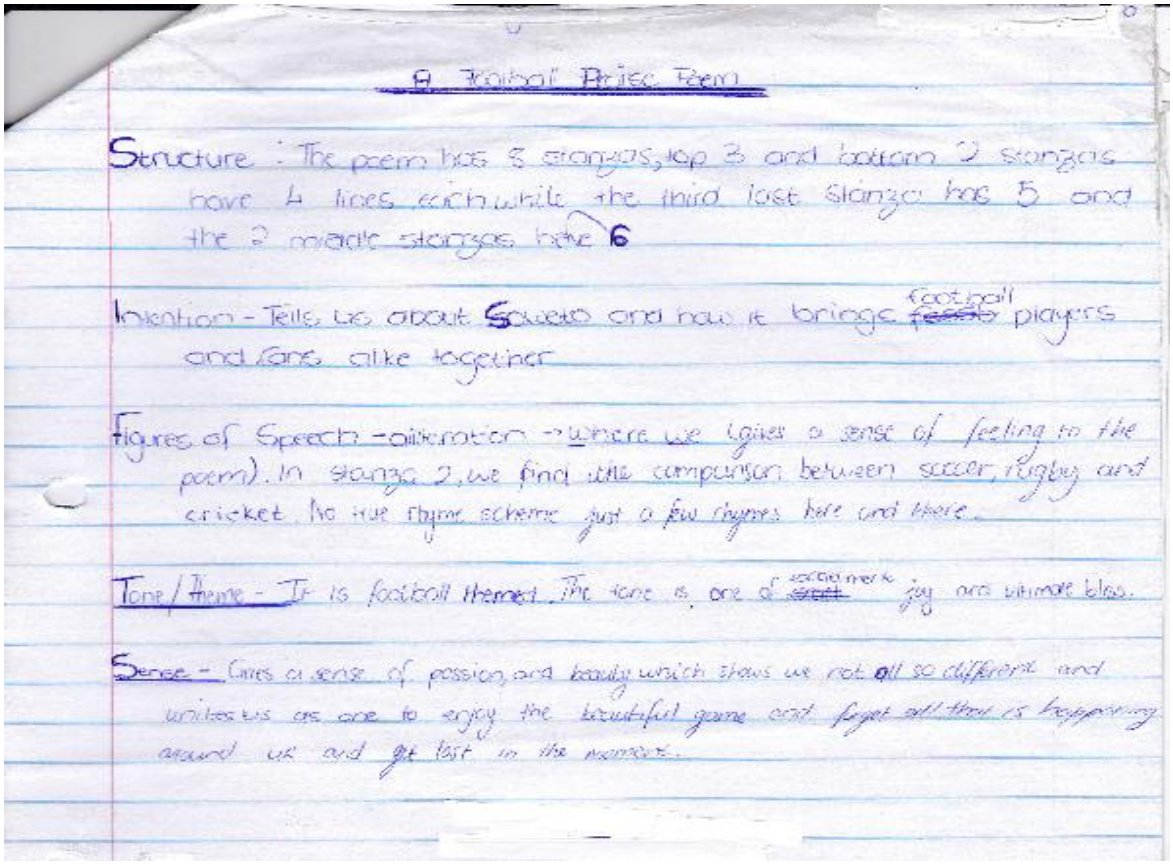



**Figure 4.4: Group 2's notes on 'A Football Praise Poem'**

Figure 4.4 is in verbal mode. Although it is restricted to the linear directionality of words and sentences, the notes clearly show Group 2's understanding of the poem – the structure, intention, setting, tone and sense.

## 4.4 Construction of artefacts

**Group 2 constructed an intricately designed artefact – the makarapa. It is a South African term given to a hand-cut and hand-painted mining helmet worn by sports fans. The man credited with making the first makarapa is Alfred Baloyi, a South African Kaizer Chiefs fan. He came up with the idea, in 1979, after watching a man at a game being hit on the head by a flying bottle (Google). Over the last few decades the designs have become more elaborate.**

**Figure 4.5: Group 2's construction of a makarapa**

shows the makarapa that Group 2 presented as their artefact.




**Figure 4.5: Group 2's construction of a makarapa**

> The makarapa is too perfect, I thought. I questioned the learner responsible for it. The reply was that she helped her uncle, who is also her neighbour, to make the makarapa. She claimed to have done the paint work and the writing on the artefact (Teacher's Journal).

It incorporates the visual mode – which one can see only – and the tactile mode – which one can feel with one's fingers – as well as the spatial mode – the 3D effect. I believe that Group 2 wanted the audience to 'feel the excitement of the game'.

The writing, 'est … 1970' on the makarapa gives insight as to when the football team 'Kaizer Chiefs' was established and the writing 'Amakhosi*',* accompanied by a picture of a lion's head above the word, is a vernacular word and Kaizer Chiefs' nickname. The logo of Vodacom, a red circle, above the man's head and on his shirt indicates that Vodacom is the company that sponsors the team.

In terms of the multiliteracies framework for design, the above textual product (Figure 4.4) may be described as follows:

**Available design:** mining helmet, paint, paintbrush, scissors, cardboard, plastic pipe, glue, whistle.

**The designing:** a picture from the media was used as a guide and the learner's assistance from her uncle helped create a plan for the three-dimensional artefact. The mining helmet was painted in colours of yellow and black. These are the colours of Kaizer Chiefs. Drawings and writing were either cut and pasted onto the helmet or painted directly onto it.

**The redesigned:** the abovementioned material was used to design an elaborate and colourful model. The plain white mining helmet was transformed into a makarapa. The use of visual, spatial and tactile modes on the makarapa revealed the enthusiasm, effort and creativity in its construction.

The redesigned artefact – makarapa – was used in the next transformation – the presentation.

### 4.4.1 Presentation of artefacts

Learner 12 recited the poem while the other four learners dribbled a soccer ball to one another. Learner 14 wore the makarapa on her head, and both girls (Learner 14 and Learner 21) wore black capes labelled 'Black Label Cup'. Supporters of Kaizer Chiefs wear these capes during a soccer match. A sound was produced when the learner blew into the mouthpiece attached to the makarapa. The use of the audio and gestural modes helped generate the buzz/noise that usually occurs at a football match. A video clip of a football match was shown to the class on the projector screen. From my observation, the class enjoyed the clip of the game and they contributed handsomely to the cheerfulness and noise of the game. Altogether, a combination of modes – gestural, tactile, audio and linguistic – was used to display the love and unity of a soccer game. The modes maintained by this group relate directly to the sense of the poem: the passion and happiness one experiences when playing football. The concept of 'transduction' (Kress 2005) comes to mind here, as Group 2 appears to have 'remade' particular meanings in their shift from poem to presentation. Transduction refers primarily to externally visible semiotic action – such as writing being remade as drawing, speech or bodily action. Group 2's re-imagining of 'A Football Praise Poem' was a 'transmodal redesigning' (Mavers 2011), where form and meaning were remade in response to learners' interests. This suggests that a shift across modes may have lead to the 'loss' of certain meanings – or at least an

alteration or adaptation to suit the group's interest or 'agency'. While Group 2 may have made their own meanings from 'A Football Praise Poem', I believe that the notes (Figure 4.4) show their understanding of the poem.

Echoing Rogoff (1990), children play an active role as participants in their own development. They need structure and even demand the assistance of those around them in learning how to solve problems of all kinds. This is exactly what the learner responsible for the makarapa did – claim the assistance from her uncle who is also her neighbour.

### 4.4.2 GROUP 3: Poem: 'Change' by Charlotte Zolotow

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

Similar to the previous two poems, 'Change' (Appendix A3) did not present many problems in terms of learner comprehension – the overall content was grasped easily. It is an 18-line poem with no fixed structure and no rhyme scheme, and the length of lines varies. The repetition of words and phrases gives the poem its rhythm. Unlike 'Inside my Zulu Hut' and 'A Football Praise Poem', the poem 'Change' is not written by a South African – the poet is an American, Charlotte Zolotow. The poem is simple and straightforward. Each stanza uses imagery of a particular season – summer (stanza 1), autumn (stanza 2), and winter (stanza 3). The use of the personal pronoun 'I' emphasises the theme in which Zolotow includes herself when she implies that people change just as seasons do.

**ORAL WORK (group discussion of the poem's meaning and notes made)**

This group consisted of girls only – like Group 1**.** If I had to single out a group in the course of this unit of poetry work that was most playful during the discussion, this one would be it. This group was not interested in the analysis of the poem. They had to be reminded constantly to focus on the work at hand. Chazden and Ball (1999) suggest that a teacher should intervene if the discussion is moving away from the desired focus. I wrote in my journal that ...

> Group 3 is very playful. They claim the poem is easy to understand, they know what to do for their presentation and they will do it at home. (Teacher's Journal)

There were no notes from this group; I believe the written mode was of no interest to them and they therefore shifted across to a mode that did appeal to them – the visual mode. This, it seems, offered them an opportunity to explore dimensions of the poem which they could not explore in language.

### 4.4.3 Construction of artefacts



**Figure 4.6: Group 3's redesigned artefact for 'Change'**

Figure 4.6 reveals an understanding of the central theme of the poem – seasons. Each drawing is linked to a particular stanza. From top left in a clockwise direction, drawing 1 represents stanza 4 (spring); drawing 2 stanza 1 (summer); drawing 3 stanza 2 (autumn); and drawing 4 stanza 3 (winter).

In terms of the multiliteracies framework of design, Figure 4.6 may be described as follows:

**Available design:** four box lids, wax crayons, white and blue coloured paper, pencil, glue

**The designing:** images of the different seasons from the media are used as a guide to make the drawings. The A4 paper was glued onto a box for stability. A pencil was used to outline the drawing. Wax crayons were used over the pencil lines to draw the different images of trees.

**The redesigned:** the material mentioned above was transformed from a 2D poster into a 3D poster once the drawings were glued onto the boxes. The construction of the artefact reflected a visual and spatial mode displaying Group 3's understanding of what trees would look like in the different seasons.

What is most remarkable about this group is the difference in the attitude towards meaning making; whereas the discussion and analysis of 'Change' was not taken seriously, the construction of these drawings, although quite close to the written text (poem), is quite insightful. The learners were able to transform the written mode of the text into a successful visual and spatial artefact.

Group 3 motivates its choice of colours in the drawings. The colour green is profound in the first two drawings, representing the seasons spring and summer. The third drawing is filled with colours of brown and orange creating a dying and almost lifeless atmosphere to symbolise autumn and the fourth drawing with its bare branches has a dominating blue background depicting the coldness of winter.

> Colour is a mode … It is thus one of the 'available resources' for design sufficiently as a mode, and able to be integrated into the discourses of the domain practice. (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001)

Hence, if colour is a mode, it can be argued that the other art elements on the drawings – line, form, tones and texture are modes as well, since they can also function as semiotically articulated forms of communication. In the drawings, Group 3 certainly combines the resources of colour with these other modes. The lines, form, textures and tones in Figure 4.6, as modes, have different 'features' and can communicate different meanings (MODE, 2012).

Each drawing is in the form of a tree where the lines are either thick, thin, light or dark, drawn to shape and represent leaves and branches of a tree. The group orchestrates these to bring the message across most effectively and it is therefore through the combination of these different modes that we are able to distinguish the different seasons of each drawing.

### 4.4.4 Presentation of artefacts

The link between Group 3's artefact and the presentation was not as strong as one would have expected. The drawings were placed on a chair for the class to see while a song titled 'Seasons' was played to the class.

Group 3, being the most playful, did not do much in their presentation. The mode that stood out here was the mode of sound. The learners just stood in front of the class and allowed the music to play on while the class listened to it and looked at the drawings.

However, similar to Group 1's three-dimensional artefact, what is most striking in these drawings are the potential in the use of colours. Colour is used as a resource for making signs, a phenomenon explored by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001): that is, it is the signifier-material (the form, the material) which is used to carry the signifieds (the 'meanings') of sign makers. Colours in Figure 4.6 are the signifiers used to depict the different seasons. I believe the colour mode afforded Group 3 the potential to redesign the meaning of 'Change'.

### 4.4.5 GROUP 4: Poem: 'Dear Diet' by Christopher Byrd Hickman

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

In its written state, 'Dear Diet'*, (*Appendix A4*)* was not as easy as the other poems. The title is an apostrophe – an address to someone or something. The word Dear in the title implies that Diet is being addressed. This is a 34-line poem with eight stanzas – longer than the other selected poems.

The regular rhyme scheme and the enjambment give the poem its angry and confused tone, creating a mood that the speaker is tired of fighting with 'hunger'. The speaker gives an account of his personal experience. With the poem's opening rhetorical question (a question that expects no answer) in line 1– 'Why is it so hard to stay on my diet?' – the sense of the poem is immediately identified. The first potential 'constraint' that I could identify was Hickman's advanced vocabulary; the learners in the group were puzzled by words such as 'Achilles heel' (line 17), George Zimmerman Sinner (line 12), Darth Vader (line 25), Ralph Nader (line 24), and Anne

Hathaway (line 8). It was only after I provided them with clearer insight into some of the words, as well as their own research, that they could determine and identify the form, rhyme scheme, imagery, tone and theme of the poem. These advanced concepts, however, were not incorporated in their multimodal artefacts. This reveals that Group 4 ‘migrates from print to multimodality, erasing those parts of the [poem] they are not interested in to focus on what most impresses [them] and what [their] transmodal choices allow or facilitate’ (Newfield 2013).

**ORAL WORK (discussion of the poem’s meaning and notes made)**

The poem ‘Dear Diet’ was taken from an ANA exemplar 2014 paper set for Grade 9s. Group 4 consisted of four boys and one girl. From my observation, the boys in the group listened to the girl in their group. She took the lead by delegating different duties to the members in her group. Below are the questions that were in the ANA exam paper and Group 4’s team effort in responding to the questions.

**Table 4.2: Group 4’s response to questions in the ANA 2014 exemplar**

| Questions | Group 4’s Answers |
|---|---|
| Questions 1-4 are multiple choice questions.<br><br>1.1 Identify the theme of the poem<br><br>1.2 The unifying idea/concept of the poem is?<br><br>1.3 Identify the tone of the poem<br><br>1.4 What is the feeling or emotions in this poem? | 1.1 A- struggling to diet<br><br>1.2 A- struggling to diet<br><br>1.3 A- anger<br><br>1.4 A- anger |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2.1 How does the poet view diets?<br><br>2.2 What message is the poet giving the reader?<br><br>2.3 What is the poet's view of dieting? | 2.1 Kids are not interested in diets<br><br>2.2 To eat healthy and stop eating junk<br><br>2.3 People do not watch what they eat until they are overweight/ affected by illnesses such as high blood pressure. |
| 3. Identify the figures of speech/idiom:<br><br>3.1 'If hunger and I were keeping score'<br><br>3.2 'eating like an Antarctic seal'<br><br>3.3 'fatty food'<br><br>3.4 'throw in the towel'<br><br>3.5 'you're like an annoying baby'<br><br>3.6 'I'm feeling as round as the earth's'<br><br>3.7 'morning meal' | <br><br>3.1 metaphor<br><br>3.2 simile<br><br>3.3 alliteration<br><br>3.4 idiom<br><br>3.5 personification<br><br>3.6 simile<br><br>3.7 alliteration |
| 4. Explain the literal and figurative meaning of:<br><br>4.1 '… my Achilles heel' | <br><br>4.1 Literal: The myth of …<br><br>Figurative: Food is a weakness to his |

| | |
|---|---|
| | diet |
| 4.2 ‘throw in the towel’ | 4.2 Literal: To physically release the towel |
| 4.3 ‘winner’ | Figurative: To admit defeat |
| | 4.3 Literal: to be a champion |
| | Figurative: a success/brilliant idea |

Table 4.2 represents the learners’ answers to the questions found in the ANA exemplar 2014. Learners had to do the work from the exemplar as homework in preparation for the ANA 2014. It is here that they came across the questions to ‘Dear Diet’ and decided themselves to use it in their discussion and analysis of the poem. Group 4 was stuck on question 4 and needed assistance on identifying the literal and figurative meanings. While I was explaining the myth (Achilles heel – line 17) to Group 4, the others in the class also wanted to hear. I then explained the myth to the whole class. From my observation none of the learners in the class knew the myth about Achilles heel. Their eager eyes showed their interest in it. I was glad this occurred because I believe I had equipped the whole class, especially Group 4, with the knowledge that would enable Group 4 to be active designers of meaning in ‘Dear Diet’. After I had given them the literal meaning of ‘Achilles heel’, they had to then find the figurative meaning – how is food like Achilles heel for the poet? Once that was done, Group 4 seemed to have had no problems in analysing the poem.

### 4.4.6 Construction of artefacts




**Figure 4.7: Group 4's artefact for 'Dear Diet'.**

Figure 4.7 is a poster that Group 4 created as a visual interpretation of the poem. Images of food, both healthy and unhealthy, were pasted onto the board. There is information all over the board relating to dieting. The modes identified in Figure 4.7 are a combination of linguistic, spatial, visual and colour. These modes are interrelated to produce an enlarged A2 poster of good and bad eating habits. The images pasted on the poster assist the reader to visualise the information in the written text. This reminds me of Cope and Kalantzis' (2009) claim that 'written language is not going away. It is just becoming more closely intertwined with the other modes …'. (182).

In terms of the multiliteracies framework of design (available design, the designing and the redesigned) the way in which Figure 4.7 was created may be described as follows:

**Available design:** the green, orange, red and blue cardboard, pictures of food, glue, scissors, blue ink pen, black Koki pen and information from the media.

**The designing:** The four A3 cardboard sheets were pasted together to form an A2 - sized poster. The title 'Dear Diet' was written in large black font at the top of the poster. The information of healthy and unhealthy eating habits was handwritten on all four cardboard sheets and was supported by various pictures of food pasted either above or alongside the written text.

**The redesigned:** the outcome of the 'redesigned' stage was that the poem was remade into a two-dimensional poster. The enlargement was also evidence of remaking, which was useful in the classroom for easy access for the learners who wanted to see and read the poster.

### 4.4.7 Presentation of artefact



**Figure 4.8: Group 4's Presentation for 'Dear Diet'**

Group 4 presented something no other group did – a dessert made of healthy ingredients (yogurt and fruit). In their presentation – the final 'point of fixing' (Kress, 2005) in this semiotic chain – we see how the group has transformed the poem's initial meaning to truly make it their own.

According to Schreiber (2014) the primary function of poetry is to encourage readers to *re-visit* and *re-evaluate* their perceptions of life and the world, to ponder, to critique and to question those social constructs that dictate one's daily interactions with people and the environment.

The redesign of the written mode to a tactile mode undertaken by Group 4 not only re-visited and re-evaluated this transformation from 'passive' reading to the active redesigning of 'Dear Diet', but afforded them 'substance' to the text, making it real and relevant to their interests and life experiences. The idea behind the making of the dessert was to show that one does not need to starve or stay hungry, but through creative ways can stay on a diet and not be hungry.

The affordance of the tactile mode calls to mind the phenomenon of *synaesthesia* – when one stimulus, such as a sign or image, triggers another, such as taste, smell or sound. This means that the meaning of the poem is re-semiotised or 'reshaped' into another form (from written to tactile mode) which the 'viewer' can taste, smell, touch, see, or hear (Kress, 2003).

I believe that the shift across modes may have lead to the 'loss' of certain meanings – or at least an alteration to suit the group's 'interest'. However, while Group 4 may have made its own meanings from 'Dear Diet', this has not subtracted from their understanding of it.

### 4.4.8 Group 5: Poem: 'Leisure' By William Henry Davies

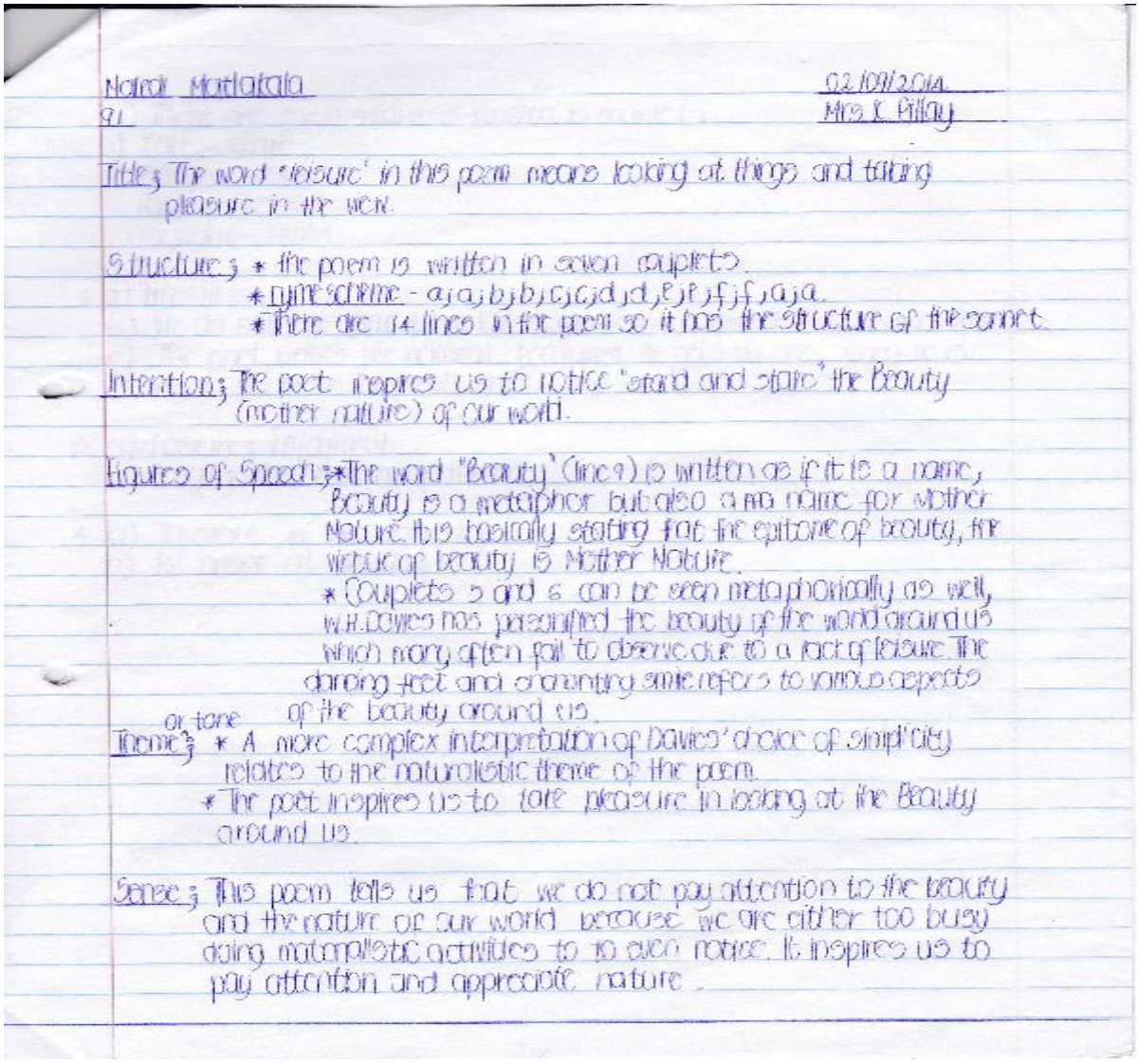
**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

Group 5 selected the poem 'Leisure' (Appendix A5). The title gives the idea that man must relax and view the things such as nature around him. With its 14 lines, seven couplets and regular rhyme scheme, Davies in 'Leisure' reminds the reader to make time to appreciate nature. He takes a strong subject position in the poem by stating that 'we' must take as much time as cows and sheep do when grazing to enjoy nature (line 4). Davies personifies 'Beauty' by it giving human qualities of 'her' and 'they' to represent Mother Nature. He refers to this life as 'poor' (line 13) because it is sad to learn that 'we' are so busy with our lives that 'we' make no time to appreciate something as beautiful as nature that is all around us.

### 4.4.9 ORAL WORK (Discussion of poem's meaning and notes made)

Similar to Group 4, there were four boys and one girl in group 5. The girl (Learner 26) had been absent, like Learner 8, the day the group had to select a poem. On her return to school, she discovered that the poem her group had chosen was 'dry' and 'boring', and she could see 'no action in it'. Nevertheless she continued to analyse the poem together with her group.

Davies' simple diction in 'Leisure' enabled Group 5 to have a rudimentary understanding of the poem.


Naledi Matlatala
9I

02/09/2014
Mrs L Pillay

Title; The word "leisure" in this poem means looking at things and taking pleasure in the view.

Structure; * the poem is written in seven couplets.
* rhyme scheme - a;a; b;b; c;c; d;d; e;e; f;f; g;g.
* there are 14 lines in the poem so it has the structure of the sonnet.

Intention; The poet inspires us to notice "stand and stare" the Beauty (mother nature) of our world.

Figures of Speech; *The word "Beauty" (line 9) is written as if it is a name, beauty is a metaphor but also a name for Mother Nature. It is basically stating that the epitome of beauty, the virtue of beauty is Mother Nature.
* Couplets 5 and 6 can be seen metaphorically as well, W.H. Davies has personified the beauty of the world around us which many often fail to observe due to a lack of leisure. The dancing feet and enchanting smile refers to various aspects of the beauty around us.

Theme or tone; * A more complex interpretation of Davies' choice of simplicity relates to the naturalistic theme of the poem.
* The poet inspires us to take pleasure in looking at the Beauty around us.

Sense; This poem tells us that we do not pay attention to the beauty and the nature of our world because we are either too busy doing materialistic activities to to even notice. It inspires us to pay attention and appreciate nature.

**Figure 4.9: Group 5's notes on 'Leisure'**

Figure 4.9 is the by-product of the social relations established among the members of Group 5. It is their notes showing the SIFTS method analysis of the poem 'Leisure'. It was surprising, though, to note that Group 5 was able to identify the structure of 'Leisure' as a sonnet because of its 14 lines. Secondary school learners often react negatively to the teaching of prescribed works by Shakespeare (Metzger, 2002; Milburn, 2002).There was no moaning from their side, probably because they realised that their poem is not a Shakespearean text, and the 14 lines of a sonnet is as far as they need to go. The thorough understanding of the poem revealed in the notes (Figure 4.9) indicates the good social relations and teamwork in this group that led to the improved knowledge production.

### 4.4.10 Construction of artefact



**Figure 4.10: Group 5's poster of 'Leisure'**

The bright colours in Figure 4.10 were eye catching. The poster displays an integration of spatial, visual and linguistic modes. Group 5 explained the poster to the class and informed them that the bright colours were to show the beauty of nature. Fresh, colourful flowers were glued onto the poster, sending the message that man must pay attention to nature. Group 5 had thus captured the mood and the feeling of Davies's poem in the poster – the lack of appreciation towards nature. In the centre of the poster is the handwritten text of 'Leisure'. No matter how hard one tries to shift from the traditional written mode, it still seems to appear in some form or the other. Except for the dominance of the colour mode, there is very little shift in meaning here.

In terms of the multiliteracies framework of design, Figure 4.10 may be described as follows:

**Available design:** white paper, paint, the poem, glue, fresh flowers, pen

**The designing:** a white page was cut and painted orange. This orange paper is pasted in the middle of an A3 white cardboard in which one of the learners wrote the text of the poem in her handwriting. There is blue paint swept across the top of the A3 page to give it its sky and green splashes of paint at the bottom of it to represent grass. Fresh flowers are glued onto the 'grass' and the orange paper.

**The redesigned:** the outcome of the ‘designing’ stage was the text was remade, in that colour was used to distinguish the beauty of nature.

In terms of the design framework some change can be identified in Figure 4.10; however, this change is limited.

Group 5 also made a model –of a ‘robot’ man. Pieces of brown cardboard were cut, glued and taped to design this model. The eyes, nose and mouth were drawn on the face with a black Koki pen and the title ‘Leisure’ was written across the ‘body’ with the same pen. The model was placed on a desk and displayed for the class to see while the poster was pinned to the board. A blue-and-black cellphone was placed against the model’s ‘ear’. Man is too busy (probably on his cellphone) to look in any other direction and observe the beauty around him – which is what the theme/message of ‘Leisure’ is all about.




**Figure 4.11: Group 5’s model of a ‘robot’ man**

In terms of the multiliteracies framework for design, the above textual product (Figure 4.11) may be described as follows:

**Available design:** brown cardboard box, glue, black Koki pen, scissors, Sellotape, cellphone.

**The designing:** a visual from the media was used as a guide to create a plan for a three-dimensional model. The brown cardboard was cut and glued together to form a model. A black Koki pen was used to draw the facial features on the model and the name of the poem ‘Leisure’ written across the ‘body’ of the ‘robot’ man model.

**The redesigned:** all the above-mentioned material was transformed into an intricate model of a robot. It was not a replication of a visual, it was three dimensional. The cardboard was transformed into a 'body' of a 'robot'. The detail was a spatial and visual model reflecting Group 5's creativity and innovation.

### 4.4.11 Presentation of artefact

Mayer (2008) contends that students learn more deeply from a combination of words and pictures than from words alone. Group 5 displayed a PowerPoint presentation in which pictures accompanied every couplet in 'Leisure'. The group members took turns to read the couplets from the screen and in doing so allowed the rest of the class to look at the visuals accompanying the couplets.

To further outline the dialogic relationship between the linguistic and visual modes, I present the lines from 'Leisure' alongside Group 5's choice of images.

**Table 4.3: Group 5's dialogic relationship between the linguistic and the visual image**

| Lines from the poem 'Leisure' | Choice of images |
|---|---|
| We have no time to stand and stare (line 2) | -a scientist/ astronomer wearing a white coat and looking through a telescope at the elements in space. |
| And stare as long as sheep and cows (line4) | -two sheep and a cow grazing together on a meadow. |
| Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass (line 6). | -two separate pictures of a squirrel holding a nut in its hands.<br>-night time with stars in the sky |

| | |
|---|---|
| Streams full of stars, like skies at night (line8)<br><br>No time to turn to Beauty's glance (line 9)<br><br>We have no time to stand and stare (line 14) | -a garden full of flowers<br><br>-another image of a man staring into a telescope and looking into space |

'Leisure' is a simple poem both in its form and diction. Group 5 was creative enough to use technology to present a variety of presentation modes, which would help learners to perceive that it is an easier way to learn and pay attention, thus improving learning performance; in particular for lower-achieving students (Chen & Fu 2003; Moreno & Mayer 2007; Zywno 2003).The visual nature of writing on screen, combined with the dominance of image, served to restructure the text (Jewitt 2002). Information is reorganised across the screen to produce information.

### 4.4.12 GROUP 6: Poem – 'Dear Ancestor' by Anonymous

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group's selected poem)**

Similar to Hickman's poem ('Dear Diet'), this poem 'Dear Ancestor' (Appendix A6) also makes use of apostrophe in the title. In this case the poet is addressing his/her ancestor. It is a short poem in length in comparison to Hickman's lengthy 34-line poem. 'Dear Ancestor' has five stanzas. The second and fourth line rhymes in every stanza, which contributes to its galloping rhythm. The poet takes a strong subject position ('I' – lines 6 and 7) and speaks directly ('you' – lines 7, 8, 9 or 'your' – line) to his or her ancestor. The poet claims that the date and the name of the ancestor on the tombstone is 'chiselled out' (line 3) on the once 'polished' and 'marble stone' (line 4). The use of the present and past tenses are mixed throughout the poem by the use of the verbs 'stands', 'neglected', 'chiselled', 'reaches', 'was', 'exist', 'are', 'contracts', 'beats'. Like 'Inside my Zulu Hut', the poet reminisces about his/her past

– the poet is living in the present but thinks of his/her deceased ancestor. The poet feels connected to the ancestor because the poet is a relative (‘cells’, ‘flesh’, ‘blood’, ‘bone’ – lines 9,10,11).

### 4.4.13 ORAL WORK (discussion of the poem’s meaning and notes made)

It was revealed in the interview that this group had social relation problems. There were five learners – three girls and two boys. They started off well but it seemed that working for two weeks with one another became tedious for some of them. One of the boys (Learner 2) stated in the learner questionnaire 2 (Appendix B2) that a girl in his group (Learner 25) was ‘too bossy’; everything had to be done her way. He did not like this at all. On the other hand Learner 25 claimed in her interview that he was too lazy, hardly contributed to the discussion, and when they had planned to meet to shoot a video of their role play, he did not come. They went ahead with the role play, leaving him out. Once the boy realised he was left out of the role play, he may have felt insecure and had to do something to show his worth. He then made the model, which they had discussed early in the phase 2 process. Once again, like many of the other groups, they adopted the SIFTS method to analyse ‘Dear Ancestor’. Their notes showed a clear understanding of the poem.

### 4.4.14 Construction of artefact




**Figure 4.12: Group 6's constructed artefact – a 'tombstone'**

Figure 4.12 was similar to the construction of artefacts by groups 1, 4 and 5 in that their artefacts were three dimensional. The word 'tombstone' was *extracted* from line 1 of 'Dear Ancestor' and redesigned into another mode – a three-dimensional model. This supports the point made by the NLG that 're-production and re-contextualisation is never simply a repetition'. Transformation is always new use of old material, a rearticulation and recombination of the given resources of available design (NLG 1996, 2000).

**Available design:** the available meaning-making resources were the text of the poem, black paint, polystyrene, foil, black paper, scissors, glue and a box lid.

**The designing:** the box lid was covered in foil and used as the base of the 'tombstone'. The polystyrene was cut, painted in black paint and shaped in the form of an arch. It was then glued to the box lid to form the shape of a tombstone. The letters 'R.i.P' were formed with foil and glued onto the polystyrene.

**The redesigned:** The outcome of the designing phase is a new meaning-making resource in the form of a 'tombstone'. The detail was a perfect spatial and visual model reflecting Group 6's spatial creativity.

The affordance of the colour black on the model is a mode that is used as an available resource to create the designed 'tombstone' model. Group 6 motivates

their choice of colour – black is associated with darkness, evil, gloom and in this case death. The ancestor has been dead for a long time. The letters ‘R.i.P’ on the ‘tombstone’ clearly reveal that Group 6 has knowledge of the meaning of the abbreviation .

### 4.4.15 Presentation of artefact

The ‘tombstone’ model was placed on a table in the front of the class. The four learners, leaving Learner 2 out, did a role play. Learner 2 stood aside and watched his group members perform. They were dressed in clothing that was not the school attire and acted out a scene as though they were visiting their ancestor’s ‘tombstone’ at the graveyard. The ‘mother’ (Learner 15) and her ‘family’ were at the graveyard. The scene unfolds as the mother tries to get her two stubborn daughters (Learners 25 and 29) to visit their ancestor. Once the mother finally gets her daughters to stand in front of the ‘tombstone’, they say a prayer.

The role play (modes: audio, gestural, colour, tactile, visual, linguistic) reveals the strong message of ‘Dear Ancestor’ which is: do not forget your ancestors because it is through them that ‘our blood contracts and beats a pulse’ (line 11). The two stubborn daughters give us an insight as to how young people of today are so disrespectful and have no time towards their elders and/or ancestors – ‘neglected and alone’ (line 2). They need to be told or shown what to do in a firm way. What I found to be surprising, though, was the choice of clothing for this role play. The three girls wore dresses, which for me is a sign of respect for the deceased. This may, however, not be true in other cultures.

In Group 6’s construction of artefact, there is clear indication of transformation and not the amount of replication seen in 4.11.

### 4.4.16 Group 7: Poem – ‘Sea Fever’ By John Masefield

**Introducing the written text (i.e. the group’s selected poem)**

The title ‘Sea Fever’ (Appendix A7) is appropriate because the fever consumes the poet. So much so that he yearns to pursue his desire, that is, to return to the sea, something that will give him the satisfaction and a great amount of pleasure. With its

extensive use of imagery, ‘Sea Fever’ is a three-stanza poem with a regular rhyme scheme that gives it its consistent rhythm. The poem has a first-person narrator. The inclusion of the personal pronoun ‘I’ that occurs in almost every line of ‘Sea Fever’ gives the poet his strong stance as the narrator. Masefield writes from his experience. He has travelled extensively on the sea and uses that experience as inspiration for his poem ‘Sea Fever’. There is a strong sense of the yearning and urgency that the poet feels towards the sea. The repetition of the conjunction ‘and’ throughout the poem serves to highlight his enthusiasm.

**ORAL WORK (Discussion of the poem’s meaning and notes made)**

Group 7 consisted of four learners since the fifth learner was frequently absent – and in this case the absenteeism was two weeks long, which was the full duration of the completion of the planned unit of poetry work. The four learners in Group 7 were three girls and one boy.

It was observed that this group worked well. On two occasions I found them laughing and making a din. Upon questioning, I discovered that they were playing a game – ‘rock, paper, scissors’ – to work out who would play the roles in their presentation.

> Group 7 played the ‘rock, paper, scissors’ game to determine the character roles for their presentation. I am quite pleased at that. They seem to be working well as a team. (Teacher’s Journal)

It is clear here that learners do bring their everyday practices into the classroom if they are given the opportunity. The ‘rock, paper, scissors’ game helped in their decision making.

Group 7 learners enjoyed working in this group. Learner 31 stated in the interview:

> I liked the activity because ever since we started doing poetry in the primary school, we were given boundaries where we just read the poem and the teacher would explain it to us and she would analyse it for us and that’s where it would end, but with this activity, we were allowed to go over those boundaries ... we were allowed to do almost anything as long as it showed what we understood of

the poem and I think that that was much more fun than anything I have done before.

In comparison to Group 3, Group 7 did not enjoy analysing the poem. Although they attempted to use the SIFTS method, and they did discuss the poem, I observed that it was just one learner (Learner 20) who made notes regarding 'Sea Fever'. From the notes I was able to determine whether or not the group understood the poem. They were able to determine the structure, form, rhyme scheme, figures of speech and theme of the poem. However, many of the rich images were not analysed. It may have been overlooked because once they knew what the poem was about they began writing a script for their role play. Similar to Group 4, this group omitted those parts of the poem they were not interested in to focus on what most impressed them and what their transmodal choices allowed or facilitated (Newfield 2013).

### 4.4.17 Construction of artefacts

Group 7 did not construct a poster or a model like the other groups did. It was not compulsory for them or any of the other groups to do so. Since Group 7 found the analysis part of the activity 'annoying', this could have been the reason nothing was constructed. Since posters are mainly made at school (Stein 2003), this effort may have been boring for them. The shift from the written text to performance seemed to be a better option for the group.

### 4.4.18 Presentation of artefact

Group 7 displayed an exemplary performance of theatrical role play in which the four learners took turns to act out. The theme in 'Sea Fever' – the yearning of the poet to return to the sea – is recruited to create a new design: performance. Their choice of performance draws on the resources of spoken language, space, gesture, movement, intonation, technology, audio and vocalisation. The use of these resources allows for the transmodal shift from the written mode to performance.

Learner 1 played the role of Oceana – the reaper of the sea. Learner 2 was Pacifica – the guardian of sailors at sea. Learner 3 was the narrator, and Learner 4 was Captain Smith. The narrative shifts between narrator and characters in the two scenes. The first scene starts with the captain on the dock getting ready to go to sea

and two sailors (played by Learner 1 and Learner 2) who are passing by assisting him. They question the captain's return to the sea. The captain responds by telling them how beautiful and peaceful the sea is and that he must go back. They depart. The narrator (Learner 3) informs the audience that the captain is at sea for three days. The captain is alone when he suddenly sees two women alongside him. He is shocked and starts to question them. Oceana and Pacifica introduce themselves to him. While the conversation is taking place, an image of the sea is displayed on the projector screen with the sound of sea gulls crying and waves crashing and breaking onto the shore. After some time, Oceana asks the captain to sit and relax because he looks very tired. He does so but falls asleep and dies. This is a twist I was not expecting, because this is not what finally happens to the poet in the poem. This proves that the performance is made to 'serve (one's) own desires, fantasies and interests in the semiotic chain' (Stein 2003: 115). In this chain of meaning making, certain meanings have been discarded or altered. This phenomenon, known as *slippage* (Stein 2003) is discernible in Group 7's performance, in which they create a different ending to the poem – the death of the captain.

Throughout the performance their voices were dramatic – they pleaded, shouted, whispered, used a full range of vocal tonal variation to communicate the words and actions of the characters. Group 7's performance exemplified a multimodal form where the integration of modes – language, space, gesture, movement, intonation, technology, audio and vocalisation – depended on each other for plot, expression, characterisation and space in performance, rather than modes being used singly. The learners displayed their skills, knowledge and design abilities across different modes.

The class enjoyed the performance and rewarded Group 7 with loud applause. I, on the other hand, was quite curious at the combination of the visual of moving waves and the audio/sound effects played in scene 2. I wished to learn how that was done and so I asked Learner 31 in the interview.

> (Learner 24) did that ma'am. On the computer there's a moviemaker icon where you can put the picture there and then add the sound to override the picture and I think that's what he did because when I asked that is what he said on how he did it.

Stein verifies the above use of sound effects in Group 7's performance by stating that where in posters and models the sound gesture is lost/disappears, performance gains it instead (Stein 2003).

In terms of the multiliteracies framework for design, Group 7's performance may be described as follows:

**Available design:** clothing, laptop, projector screen, audio, voice, paper, pen

**The designing:** paper and pen were used to write out a script**.** Learners memorised the script and projected the words of the script through their voices. They were dressed in plain clothes. An audio of the sound of waves and a visual image of the sea were projected onto a screen through the use of a laptop.

**The redesigned:** all of the above-mentioned material was transformed into a group performance. It was not a replication of the written text of the poem.

Group 7 showed the ability to choose and shape available resources and demonstrate how they develop various modes in performance through an 'orchestration of meaning through selecting and configuring modes' (Jewitt 2009: 15). It is the interaction between the modes that is significant for meaning making.

## 4.5 After teaching

### 4.5.1 Analysis of learner questionnaire 2

Learner questionnaire 2 (Appendix B4) was given to the learners after the completion of the unit of poetry work in an attempt to obtain a clearer insight in answering research question 2. It consisted of 11 questions designed to reveal how learners worked in groups and, independent of the teacher, made meaning of their choice of poem.

When it was time to get learners into groups at the start of the unit of poetry work on the first day, I wrote in my notes:

> When I asked the seven randomly selected learners to select their group members, there was a huge hype. Learners shouted across the room to their

> friends to come over. I had not taken into account that although the class consisted of 35 learners, which meant that there were 7 groups of 5, some learners were absent during the course of the unit of poetry work. Two learners refused to work in groups. However, in phase 2 of the poetry activity, these two learners teamed up with the frequent absentees to form a group. I gave the class time to select their group members because I wanted them to be happy and comfortable with their choices, also taking into account that they would be working with their peers for the next four weeks. (Teacher's Journal)

Question 1 was an associative and open-ended question. This question was designed to allow learners to write down how they felt about working in groups during the poetry activity.

Thirty-three of the learners loved working in groups. They found it fun and it helped them improve their understanding of the poem.

Below are some examples:

Working in groups is

> much easier because it cuts the work load and we can learn things from each other. (Learner 20)

> because our poem was 'Inside my Zulu Hut' and what made it easy was that one of our group members is a Zulu and she understood it quite well and she made us understand more about the poem. (Learner 33)

> productive, because we all worked together. (Learner 13)

In response to the above comments, it would seem that learners preferred working in groups because their ideas and thoughts were discussed in the interaction, thus making their task easy to analyse or answer.

The two learners that did not like working in groups were the 'good' performers. They felt that groupwork was 'risky' (Learners 25 and 4) because not everyone would do

what they were supposed to do and ‘most times people sponge off other people and get free marks’ (Learner 30).

Question 8 is linked to question 1. It asked learners if there was anything that they did not like about working in groups. Thirty out of 35 learners claimed that working in groups was fine. Two out of the remaining five learners stated that people are lazy and they take advantage of the strongest person in the group. Three learners said that they would have preferred the teacher to have chosen the groups/poem.

> Our groups should be chosen for us so we don’t work with friends only. (Learner 4)
>
> The teachers should arrange the groups because most people tend to choose their friends. (Learner 31)
>
> Ma’am could choose groups for us and choose the poem for us. (Learner 21)

Learner 14 thought differently to the above three learners. Her response to question 8 as well as in the focus group interview was that grouping themselves was to learners’ advantage because they understood each other and could communicate well. If there was a problem they could solve it during their lunch break when they were together.

> Ma’am, it was good that we worked in groups and with our friends because there are people that do not get along in class and we will end up fighting, so it was better this way because although sometimes they are lazy and don’t want to do work but like we can solve it during break when we are together. (Learner 29)

Question 2 prompted a yes or no answer and question 3 requested an explanation for the response to question 2. Thirty-one learners out of 35 stated that working in groups helped better their understanding of the poem because they could share their opinions and come to a common summary and analysis of the poem. From my observation and from the learner notes, I believe this is true.

Twenty-five out of 35 learners in question 4 welcomed the idea of working in groups independently of the teacher.

> We felt independent and we put in as much effort and hard work as we could to prove that we were independent. (Learner 16)
>
> I felt happy because we could now surprise her with what came to our minds. (Learner 15)
>
> found it awesome and exciting because it was up to us to make it fun and there weren't much rules...(Learner 11)
>
> I felt good because sometimes it is better to work with independence as you can learn more and correct your mistakes. (Learner 12)

The remaining 10 learners had been surprised when they heard that they had to work in groups without the teacher's assistance.

I felt that it could be difficult but if we put effort, we could do it (Learner 4).

> I was shocked. (Learner 9)
>
> I was scared at first but it turned out well. (Learner 19)
>
> I was a little bit scared but once we started to do the work, I knew our group was gonna do well. (Learner 24)

The response to question 5 about what was their first attempt to make meaning of the poem were categorised as follows: Six learners discussed ways of making a poster, four out of 35 learners first read the poem out aloud before analysing it, one learner claimed to have done research first, and the remainder of the learners immediately began analysing the poem using the SIFTS method.

Questions 6 and 7 were similarly designed to questions 2 and 3. Thirty-one learners responded with a 'yes' to the unit of poetry activity being different to the way they have studied poetry before. Here are examples of a few responses:

> In this case we used video interpretations, more visual aids, physical interaction, audible interpretations and all this was prepared as opposed to simply reading and writing the analysis of the poem. (Learner 26)

> The way I studied it before was boring and plain because it was individual but groups make you understand the poem. (Learner 27)

> We had to make something out of this poem, so it was the changing point. (Learner 20)

> Because usually we would just read the poem and the teacher would force the meaning of the poem to us even though we would still not understand. (Learner 18)

Thirty-two learners responded to question 9 with a 'yes'. This meant that they would like to learn poetry in this way. Three learners responded with a 'no' answer, two of whom did not give an explanation. The third one said that it was 'too much of work and energy' (Learner 35).

The learner that did not like working in groups said in the focus group interview that the new approach was a very good idea because

> We were given the chance to think out of the box and to express how we feel and understand about the poem. (Learner 8)

For question 10, 33 learners liked the other group presentations and artefacts. The two learners that disliked the other group presentations said that it was not fun or interesting. When asked for suggestions in question 11, 33 learners said that everything was perfect. Two learners suggested that a bigger environment should be used in future.

### 4.6 Discussion on the findings of questionnaire 2

It was evident that most of the learners had gained from having to solve the problem of analysing their poem. The groups were successful in demonstrating a clearer understanding of the poem they had studied. According to Rogoff, peer interaction fosters exploration and imagination, which leads to insightful solutions to unforeseen problems. Peers most often motivate one another and channel the choice of activities (1990:188). Only when children are able to discuss problems as equals are they likely to take into account new ways of thinking (Piaget 1972). The group discussions enabled learners to come to an understanding of the ideas they had

about the poem, which then resulted in the plans for the next phase of the unit of poetry work.

It was observed that many groups reverted to the traditional way of analysing the poem because almost every group did so line by line using the SIFTS method and provided their interpretation of the poem much as their teachers had done in the past. This is possibly what learners believe is required by the school as it is the type of behaviour that was modelled by teachers previously.

# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Poetry is a valuable tool for thought (Graves 1992). However, teaching the genre is a challenging experience to many educators. It is on the basis of this challenge that I investigated what happens when learners are given the opportunity to be creative and innovative, allowing them to experience learning poetry in ways that are most comfortable for them.

To determine how learners respond to a multimodal, groupwork approach to poetry teaching in the English class, a way of engaging learners in a poetry activity was sought. The written text was analysed to find its meaning and thereafter compared to the learners' notes, multimodal artefacts and presentations to determine what meanings were reshaped and re-semiotised into another form which one could taste, smell, touch, see or hear. In the semiotic shift from poem to the construction and presentation of multimodal artefacts, the meaning maker had to identify gaps in the original text, and confront these gaps using suitable means – representational resources and practices – to construct new and relevant meanings.

How learners in groups worked together to construct these meanings of the poems and how they redesigned the poem multimodally are the fundamental questions posed in this report.

## 5.1 Learners working together in groups to construct meaning:

It was found that learners, in their groups, collaborated and discussed their thoughts and ideas, which determined and gave sense to the answers or to analysis that may have been unclear. Almost every group used the ways they had been taught poetry in the past, such as the SIFTS method, to analyse the poem. The group discussions enabled learners to come to an understanding, both in terms of the ideas they had about the poem (this is seen in their notes) and for the plan that provided the foundation for the next phase and the discussion it engendered. Pens, paper and the written text, used to make notes on the poem, were their tools for making meaning. Through the group discussion a ZPD was established that enabled learners to progress in their cognitive development. Learners' ideas were developed, articulated, clarified and transformed within the groupwork discussion and were made visible in their multimodal artefacts. The groupwork approach did succeed, because the

quality of learners' artefacts was higher than anything they had produced before. This verifies Vygotsky's claim that the child's mind develops as a result of some interaction with other people or in conjunction with peers or a support system.

## 5.2 Redesigning of the poem

The second phase of the unit of poetry work was a transformed and formalised version of the first, which had established a common idea of what the learners were talking about. Ideas in the groupwork discussion were made visible. In this process of redesign, as agents of meaning making, learners used semiotic resources and the integration of modes to represent their poem multimodally. The words themselves had to be extracted from the poem, redesigned and represented in another form or mode, such as the three-dimensional 'tombstone' model that Group 6 produced, or the contents mentioned in 'Inside my Zulu Hut' that was transformed into visual images displayed in a three-dimensional poster and PowerPoint presentation, and so on. The transmodal journey undertaken by my Grade 9 English Home Language learners not only transformed their passive reading to active 'remaking' of poetry, but afforded them an outlet to be creative and innovative and to make the poem real and much more relevant to their interests and life experiences – so much so that the unit of poetry work inspired some learners to write poetry (Appendices A8–11).

## 5.3 The relationship between multimodal- and multiliteracies-based pedagogies and CAPS.

In the process of applying the multimodal pedagogy and multiliteracies approach in the designed unit of poetry work, I believe that I was at the same time demonstrating all the aims required by CAPS (see Chapter 1). The designed unit of poetry work in this research project succeeded in demonstrating all the aims in the following ways:

## 5.4 Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions, using critical and creative thinking, have been made.

This was done in the two phases of the unit of poetry work. For example, in the first phase the learners had to make meaning out of the poems that they chose before they could redesign the poem. It involved learners solving problems constantly as they worked in groups. They had to figure out the themes, figures of speech, tone, message, rhyme scheme and answers to activities. Phase 2 required learners to

solve the problem of converting information acquired about their poem into a multimodal artefact such as posters and 3D artefacts.

### 5.5 Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.

This research report focused on learners working in groups. In the two phases of the designed unit of poetry work, learners needed to work effectively as members of a team. In most cases this was effective, but this required careful planning of the part of the teacher.

### 5.6 Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.

In order to complete any of the tasks successfully in the research project learners needed to organise and manage themselves and the activities responsibly and effectively. In fact, in the case of groupwork in general, learners who took over leadership roles had to manage not only themselves but also the members of their group effectively in order to complete the group task.

### 5.7 Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.

This type of activity was required in the two phases as it is a basic requirement of the multiliteracies pedagogy. Before learners can begin the process of shaping emergent meaning that involves representation and recontextualisation, they must collect the necessary information. The representation and recontextualisation process of necessity requires the analysis, organisation and critical evaluation of the information collected. This never involves a repetition of the original information collected or 'the available design'. Every moment of meaning involves the transformation of the available resources of meaning. The process of redesigning was not seen in phase 1 as learners mostly carried out their line-by-line analysis of the poems using the SIFTS method and reproduced them exactly as they had done in the past. However, in phase 2 it can be clearly seen that information was transformed in this way to produce the multimodal artefacts. These artefacts are good examples of how meaning making has remade itself and a new meaning-making resource has been produced.

### 5.8 Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

In each of the two phases, in order to redesign the available design into the redesigned, learners communicated using visual, oral and written presentation. This can be seen in all the artefacts produced by the learners in the research.

### 5.9 Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others.

Science and technology in the form of the computer was used in the posters, PowerPoint presentations and role play. The multiliteracies approach requires the use of technology in order for learners to keep up with the pace of 'fast capitalism'. Learners who created three-dimensional models also made use of technology to create their models.

### 5.10 Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Allowing learners to work as members of groups or teams on multimodal tasks provides a problem-solving context which is not in isolation. Learners are able to understand that the world is a set of related systems because not only do all the members of the group have to contribute in order for the project to succeed, but the technology they employ must function effectively. For the project to be successful, learners had to understand the relationship between the systems involved as part of the problem-solving exercise.

On the basis of the data collected in this research project, multimodal pedagogy and multiliteracies may be said to support learners in the genre of poetry.

### 5.11 Limitations:

Multimodal practices have much to offer, though it is time-consuming due to the large size of classes and extensive time required for making the artefacts – three-dimensional models – as well as performances and presentations. However, seeing that CAPS does not leave much room for creativity due to its prescriptions, the problem can be alleviated through learners working in groups so that there will be fewer presentations and thus more time.

### 5.12 Recommendations:

With this study, I attempted to provoke interest in the nature of learners' creative responses and to contribute to the study of multimodality; and in so doing, to encourage the 'inner workings' of the semiotic shift within and between modes and a deeper understanding of the semiotic resources that learners bring to formal educational settings. Though CAPS is intended to improve teaching and learning, its success depends largely on the teacher to create learning experiences that develop strategies for reading the new and unfamiliar in the classroom. Since I believe that multimodal practices remain on the margins of classrooms, I suggest that greater effort must be made in ensuring that teachers adopt creative and innovative ways of teaching poetry (Cope & Kalantzis 2009) to allow for cognitive thinking and creativity, and that they should be 'flexible' (Kress et al. 2005) so that learners can engage in meaningful ways when reading or studying poetry. This study challenges educational institutions and teachers to allow for informal and effective learning in the classroom. If these ways of learning are encouraged, multimodal practices could be beneficial to students' learning and to their potential success.

Finally, in our multimodal groupwork approach journey, we have witnessed first-hand the effect of the transmodal moment on learners' interpretation and responses to poems, and how English Home Language learners become agents of meaning making to produce two- and three-dimensional artefacts, role play and PowerPoint presentations based on their choice of poems. I found the relationship between language and the affordances of the visual mode most interesting, as it seems to offer endless opportunities, and would like to conduct further research on this concept in future.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A1

**Inside my Zulu hut**
By Oswald Mbuyiseni

It is a hive
Without any bees
To build the walls
With golden bricks of honey.
A cave cluttered
With a millstone,
Calabashes of sour milk
Claypots of foaming beer
Sleeping grass mats
Wooden head rests
Tanned goat skins
Tied with riempies
To wattle rafters
Blackened by the smoke
Of kneaded cow dung
Burning under
The three-legged pot
On the earthen floor
To cook my porridge.

**APPENDIX A2**

**A Football Praise Poem**

We come from Soweto,
From South of the border
And West of the sunshine,
A Township for workers.

It's where we play soccer,
The game of the people,
More flowing than rugby,
Much faster than cricket.

We pass with the right foot
And shoot with the left foot,
Control with a knee-bounce
And head from a corner.

On waste-grounds and playgrounds
With stones for the goalposts,
At cafés and garages
Shops and street corners
We practice our flick-kicks
And think of our disci:

The Chiefs and the Swallows,
The Bucs and Black Aces,
Bucs, Birds, Chiefs or Swallows:
Does the name really matter?
They're all our game's heroes,
The pride of Soweto.

Forget for the moment
The spectre of poverty,
The tsotsi and killings,
The rape and the violence,
We're marching in thousands

On Orlando Stadium
To see the Cup Final
With whistles and banners
To cheer on the winners.

So applause for the players,
Both losers and winners,
As we play multi-racial:
Black "Saints" and White "Sinners"

**APPENDIX A3**

**Change**
By Charlotte Zolotow

The summer
still hangs
Heavy and sweet
With sunlight
as it did last year.

The autumn
still comes
Showering gold and crimson
as it did last year.

The winter
still stings
Clean and cold and white
as it did last year.

The spring
still comes
like a whisper in the dark night.

It is only I
who have changed.

**APPENDIX A4**

**DEAR DIET**
by Christopher Byrd Hickman¶

Why is it so hard to stay on my diet
Dear hunger, why can't you just be quiet
Your like a annoying baby on a plane
Driving me bonkers and insane

My fatty food desires bother me throughout the day
Making me having an internal war with myself
Struggling not to grab the tasty donuts off my shelf
So I can stay slim like Anne Hathaway

Throughout breakfast, lunch, and dinner
I'm striving so hard to eat like a winner
Fighting my cravings to stay thinner
But after one cookie, I feel like a George Zimmerman Sinner

After my morning meal
I'm slowing starting to feel
Excess food looking more and more ideal
Then I give in, eating like an Antarctica seal
Because damn you food, you're my Achilles Heel

Then after I eat my lunch
And many golf balls have been hit
I start having a hunch
That some more food won't hurt a bit

Three power bars and cups of gold fish later
I'm feeling as round as the earth's equator
Fatter than the political activist Ralph Nader
Bringing unbalance to the food force, like Darth Vadar

If hunger and I were keeping score
He'd be winning ten to five
Because I'm struggling to stay alive
In this violent intestinal internal war ¶Because food has got me surrounded on all corners
Forcing me to give in to my taste bud enemy foreigners
So feeling as fat as a Cow
This war with hunger right now
Is over, I quit and throw in the towel

**APPENDIX A5**

Leisure
by William Henry Davies

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this is if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

**APPENDIX A6**

Dear Ancestor
By Anonymous

Your tombstone stands among the rest;
Neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiseled out
On polished, marbled stone.

It reaches out to all who care
It is too late to mourn.
You did not know that I exist
You died and I was born.

Yet each of us are cells of you
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse
Entirely not our own.

Dear Ancestor, the place you filled
One hundred years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
Who would have loved you so.

I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot,
And come to visit you.

**APPENDIX A7**

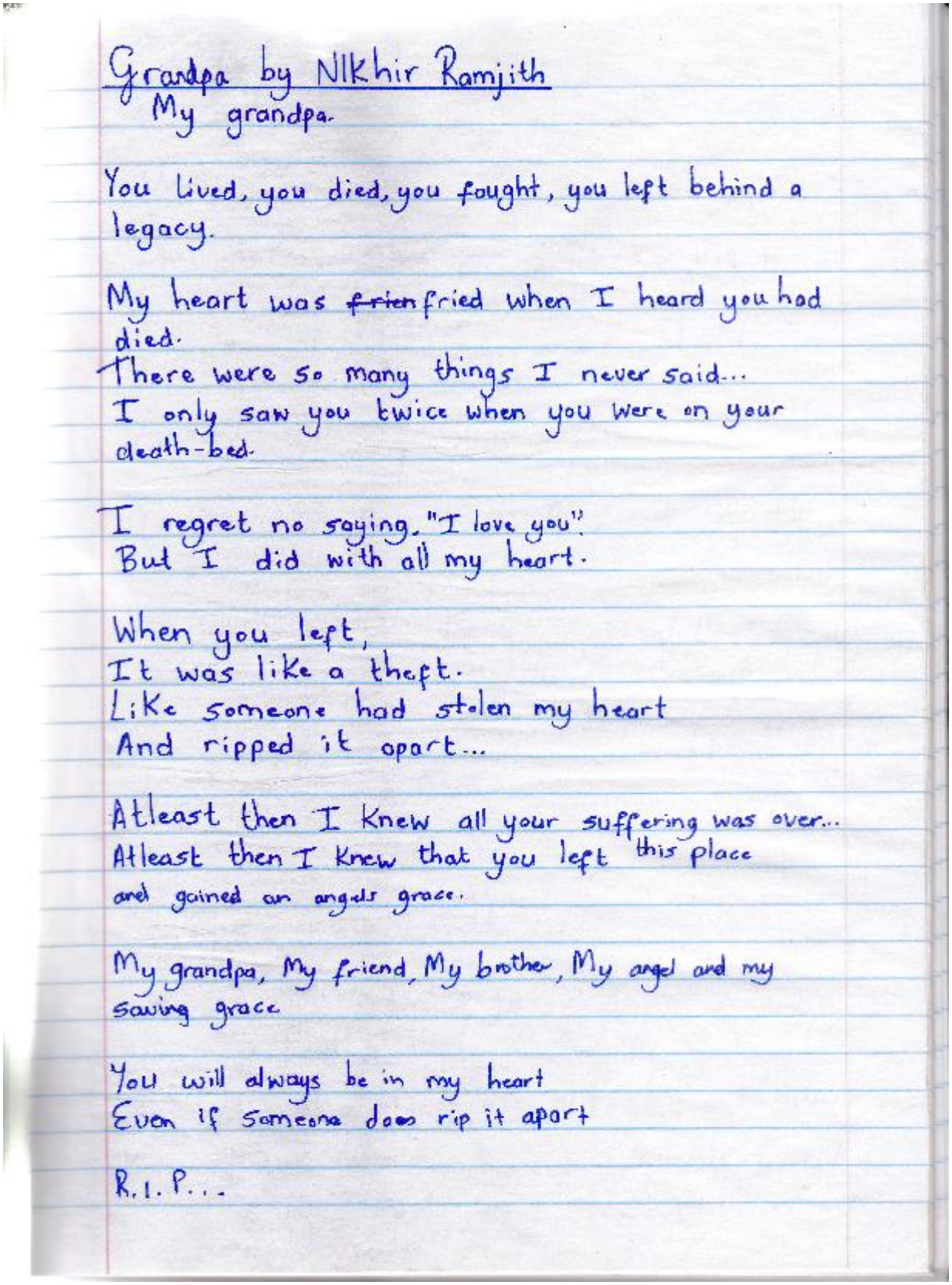
**Sea Fever**
By John Masefield

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like
a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

**APPENDIX A8**



Grandpa by Nikhir Ramjith
My grandpa.

You lived, you died, you fought, you left behind a legacy.

My heart was ~~frien~~fried when I heard you had died.
There were so many things I never said...
I only saw you twice when you were on your death-bed.

I regret no saying "I love you"
But I did with all my heart.

When you left,
It was like a theft.
Like someone had stolen my heart
And ripped it apart...

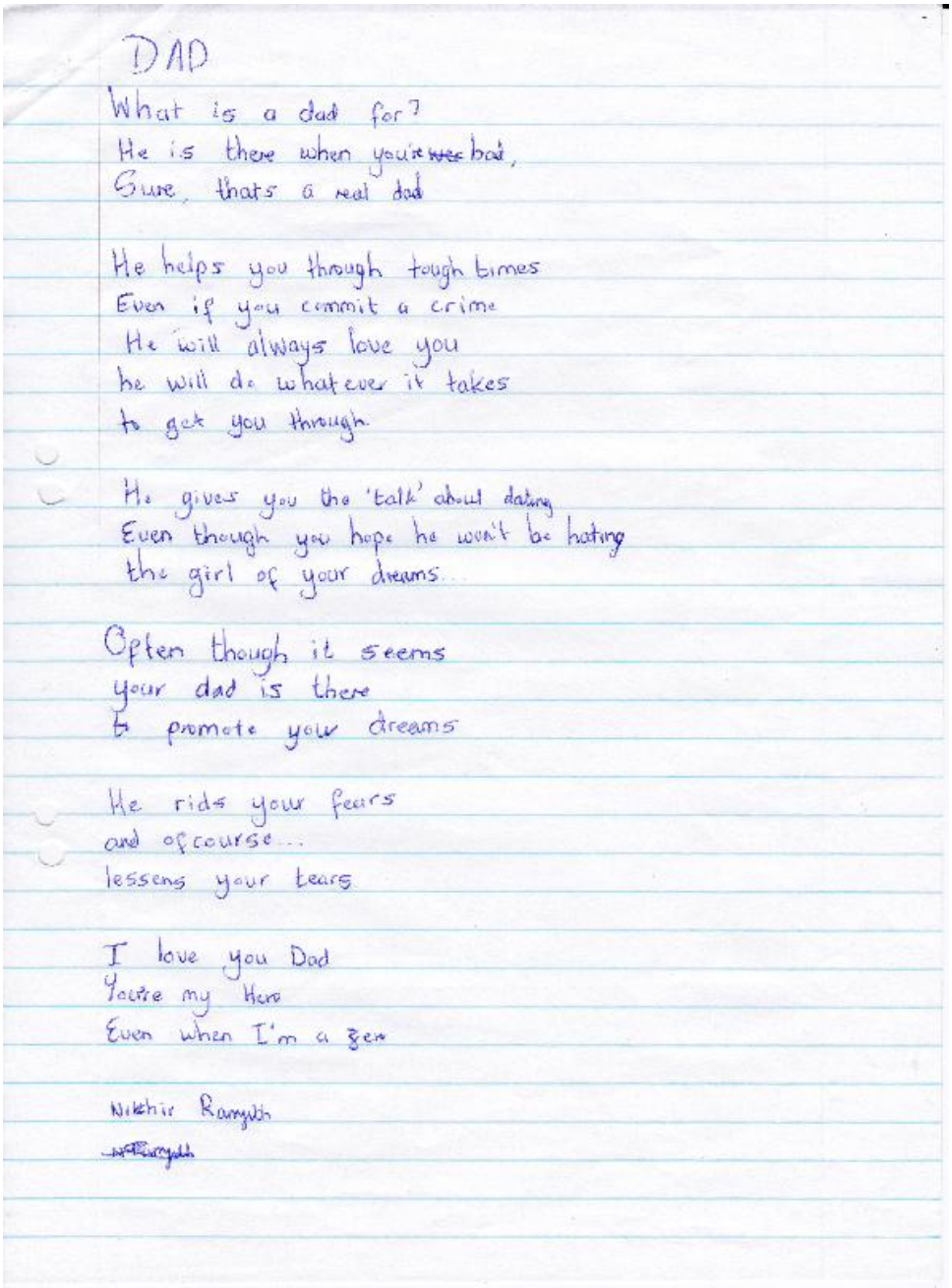
Atleast then I knew all your suffering was over...
Atleast then I knew that you left this place
and gained an angels grace.

My grandpa, My friend, My brother, My angel and my saving grace

You will always be in my heart
Even if someone does rip it apart

R.I.P...

**APPENDIX A9**



DAD

What is a dad for?
He is there when you're ~~wee~~ bad,
Sure, thats a real dad

He helps you through tough times
Even if you commit a crime
He will always love you
he will do whatever it takes
to get you through.

He gives you the 'talk' about dating
Even though you hope he won't be hating
the girl of your dreams.

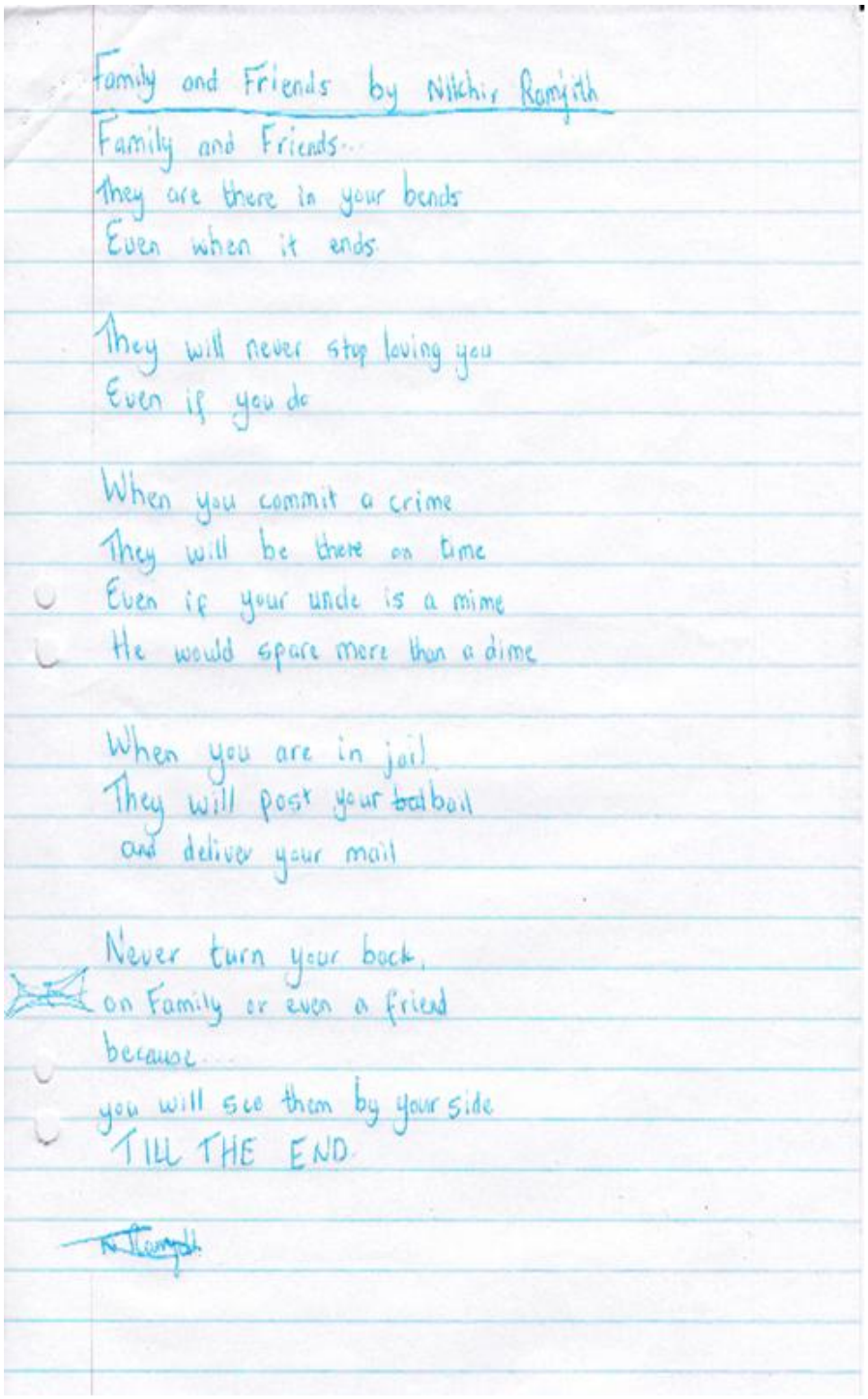
Often though it seems
your dad is there
to promote your dreams

He rids your fears
and ofcourse...
lessens your tears

I love you Dad
Youre my Hero
Even when I'm a zero

Nikhil Ramjith
~~Nikhil Ramjith~~

**APPENDIX A10**



Family and Friends by Nitchir Ramjith

Family and Friends...
They are there in your bends
Even when it ends

They will never stop loving you
Even if you do

When you commit a crime
They will be there on time
Even if your uncle is a mime
He would spare more than a dime

When you are in jail
They will post your ~~bail~~ bail
and deliver your mail

Never turn your back,
on Family or even a friend
because
you will see them by your side
TILL THE END.

~~N Ramjith~~

**APPENDIX A11**

# Inside My Zulu Hut

By: Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali
Page: 8
English Today Grade 9 Reader
Members: Kutloano, Mamello, Uhone, Gabriella and Stephanie
Grade: 9.1



Activity 1

1. In the first 5 lines of the poem, the poet uses two metaphors. To what two things does he compare the hut?
   First, he describes the hut to a hive without any bees and second, he describes the walls to have been built with golden bricks of honey.

2. Explain the pattern of sounds that the poet uses in lines 5,7 and 8. In line 5, the poet uses alliteration.
   In line 7 and 8, the poet uses diction to give a literal description of the contents of the Zulu hut.

3. The poet has chosen a lot of words to do with food. Quote 6 words or phrases from the poem that has to do with food. "with a millstone" "cook my porridge"

4. Why do you think the poet chose food words to write about his childhood home?
   He chose food words because food was clearly something that holds value in his childhood memories.

5. Read lines 9 and 10 again and describe how the words are related in those lines.
   The head rests and sleeping mats are related because sleeping mats can be used as mattresses and the head rests can be used as pillows, which are both used for sleeping.

6. Do you think the poet was negative or positive memories about his childhood home?
   Explain your answer. Positive, because the tone of the poem tells us that he was indeed happy.

## Inside My Zulu Hut

It is a hive
Without any bees
To build the walls
With golden bricks of honey.
A cave cluttered
With a millstone,
Calabashes of sour milk
Claypots of foaming beer
Sleeping grass mats
Wooden head rests
Tanned goat skins
Tied with riempies
To wattle rafters
Blackened by the smoke
Of kneaded cow dung
Burning under
The three-legged pot
On the earthen floor
To cook my porridge.









Analysis:
S
•19 lines
•One paragraph
•Free verse poem
•Sentences basically follow each other throughout the poem
I
•To give a description of the contents of a Zulu hut.
F
•Comparisons (metaphors)
•Alliteration
•Imagery
•Literal and figurative meaning
T
•The tone I think is happy

## Understanding/Background:

Vocabulary:
Millstone: a heavy stone for grinding corn
Calabashes: empty, dry fruit bowels for holding liquids
Tanned: made into leather
Riempies: Afrikaans word for leather strips
Rafters: the wooden beams in the roof
About the poem:
Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali is a very popular and well-known South African poet and lecturer. He writes in both English and isiZulu. This poem is a simple description of the home that he lived in during his rural childhood.
In some ways, the poem gives a description on how people created shelter without the help of the government or charitable organisations or even the use of modern technology.
Word choice and imagery in poetry:
In this poem, the poet chose related words, and carefully built a picture of the hut. His words help us imagine exactly what is inside. His words also help us imagine or understand his feelings when he remembers the hut.

## Exterior



## Interior



- Headrests







## Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali









## What's inside?

- Claypots







Thank you! ☺

**APPENDIX B1**

## Learner Questionnaire 1: Past Experiences in poetry reading and writing

Please fill in information in the spaces provided.

Name: _____

Grade: _____

**Pre-amble**

Good Day. I have invited you to complete this questionnaire so that I can understand your experiences, attitudes and feelings about poetry. This is not for marks and I'd like you to be honest in your answers. Please note that if you feel uncomfortable about answering a certain question, you are free not to answer. Remember that this questionnaire is voluntary and you may therefore stop at any point in the questionnaire.

1. Studying or reading poetry is like ...

_____

_____

2. When someone talks about poetry I immediately think...

_____

_____

_____

3. My strongest memory of reading a poem is...

_____

_____

_____

4. My favourite poem is....

_____

5. If I were to write a poem it would be ...

_____

_____

6. The last poem I remember reading was ...

_____

7. Do you ever read, write or listen to poetry outside school? If yes, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

8. 1 Do you enjoy poetry at school?

_____

8.2 Give a reason(s) for your response to question 8.1.

_____

_____

_____

9. Explain how you were taught to understand and analyse a poem in your English classroom.
Refer to your grade 7 and 8 year to answer this question.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank You for your time and assistance.

**APPENDIX B2**

## Instructions to Groups

**These instructions will be given orally and on paper. You may use your textbook ('English Today'), your dictionary, the internet, the handout given to each group and any other relevant resource tools to assist you in understanding and analysing the poem.**

**The unit of poetry work is in two phases:**

The objective of this poetry activity is to explore your creativity and come up with new ways (modes) of making meaning to your poem.

**Phase 1:**

1. Each group will be given a list of poems.
   Choose one poem from that list.
   You will be given one week to understand and analyse the poem independently within your group.

2. You may allocate duties within your group, e.g who will be able to do the research on internet, or who will do the printing, or who will draw, or who will bring the relevant pictures, or who will do the Powerpoint presentation for the group, etc.

**Phase 2:**

3. This will be done in preparation for your group to present to the class the following week.

4. You will be allocated 15 minutes for your group presentation.

5. Tip: Identify the strength of each learner in your group and use that strength in designing your poetry presentation.

## APPENDIX B3

**Poetry Handout/ Toolbox**

1**. Imagery** - words, phrases and sentences which create images in our minds such as similes, metaphors, personification.

2. **Literal** (as opposed to **figurative**) - the plainest, most direct meaning that can be attributed to words e.g. Nicky's boyfriend broke his leg. ( The accident actually occurred).

3. **Figurative** (as opposed to **literal**) - words or phrases used in a non-literal way to create a desired effect; literal texts often make concentrated use of figurative language (e.g. simile, personification, metaphor) E.g. Nicky's boyfriend broke her heart.( This means she is heartbroken).

4. **Mood** – atmosphere or emotion in written texts; it shows the feeling or the frame of mind of the characters; also refers to the atmosphere produced by visual, audio or multi-media texts.

5**. Rhyme**- words or lines of poetry that end with the same sound including a vowel e.g. laugh and half.

6.**Rhythm**- a regular and repeated pattern of sounds e.g slow or quick paced.

7. **Theme** – the central idea or ideas in a text; a text may contain several themes and these may not be explicit or obvious.

8. **Tone** – quality and timbre of the voice that conveys the emotional message of the spoken text. In the written text, it is achieved through words that convey the attitude of the writer. The tone one may be described as friendly, sombre, sharp, sarcastic, ironic, angry, humorous, praise, etc.

9**. Figures of speech**-
**Simile** : is a direct comparison that always contains the words as or like e.g. He is as wealthy as Bill Gates.
**Personification**: gives human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract ideas e.g. the clouds looked down and wept on the drought-stricken earth.
**Metaphor**: A metaphor is a comparison without the use of as or like e.g. He is Bill Gates(They are both rich).
**Onomatopoeia:** uses words that imitate and reproduce real-life sounds and actions e.g. The sky exploded with a crash, bang and a hissing of fireworks.
**Alliteration:** is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. It often highlights the expression of movement e.g. Football fever fuels fans

10. **Diction** ( Word Choice) – the poet's use of words creates a mood/ atmosphere and sets the poem in its correct time and place(context)

**APPENDIX B4**

## Learner Questionnaire 2: How was meaning made in a group without the teacher.

I understand that I do not have to complete this questionnaire.

Signed: _____

I understand that the information collected from this questionnaire is confidential and will only be used by the researcher. My name will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher.

Name: _____
Grade: _____

## Questions:

1. Working in groups is ... _____

_____

2. Did working in groups better your understanding of the poem? _____

3. Explain why or why not. _____

_____

_____

_____

4. How did you feel or react once your teacher told you that you and your group must work together without her assistance or input ? _____

_____

_____

5. What was the first attempt your group took in making meaning of the poem?

6. Was it any different to the way you have studied poetry before? _____

7. If yes, how so? _____

8. Is there anything you did not like about working in groups that you would like to mention?

9. Would you like to continue learning poetry with this new approach?

10.What do you think of the other group presentations and artefacts?

1O. What would you suggest that should be done differently?

Thank You for your assistance and Time.

**APPENDIX B5**

## Focus - group student interviews

This interview will take approximately 35 minutes long.

*Possible format and types of questions:*
Questions will be adjusted to suit issues which emerge during poetry activity.

**Pre-amble**

Good afternoon. I have invited you to participate in this interview to hear more about your opinions, attitudes and feelings about the unit of poetry work that took place recently in your English lessons; and to understand more about where you are coming from and why you think and feel the way you do. This is more of a discussion than an interview and I'd like you to feel free to raise issues that you find relevant along the way. Please note that if you feel uncomfortable to answer a certain question, you are free not to answer and remember that this interview is voluntary and you may therefore stop at any point in the discussion/interview.

1. What do you think about the new approach that was used to make meaning to poetry?
2. How would you describe the learners' response/participation to the unit of poetry work?
3. Do you think working in groups help better your understanding of the poem?
4. Mention some of the problems that you or your group encountered?
5. How did each of your groups work together to produce the artifacts and the presentation?
6. Was the unit of poetry work similar or different from your past experiences to poetry teaching in the English classroom? Explain.
7. What would you suggest that should have been done differently?
8. Before we end the interview /discussion, is there anything you would like to say?

Thank you for your valuable time and patience. I sincerely appreciate it. I wish you well in your studies and may you have a safe travel home.

**APPENDIX B6**

TRANSCRIPT OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

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| Teacher | Good Day. I have invited you to participate in this interview to hear more about your opinions, attitudes and feelings about the unit of poetry work that took place recently in your English lessons; and to understand more about where you are coming from and why you think and feel the way you do. This is more of a discussion than an interview and I'd like you to feel free to raise issues that you find relevant along the way. Please note that if you feel uncomfortable to answer a certain question, you are free not to answer and remember that this interview is voluntary and you may therefore stop at any point in the discussion/interview.<br>( All the participants nod their heads in agreement).<br>Okay, let us begin with the first question. |
| Teacher | What do you think about the new approach that was used to make meaning to poetry? Nikhir? |
| Nikhir | It was quite fun because we got to learn more better and we got to make use of our talents and it was fun. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Nikhir. You said that you got to make use of your talents, in your group what were some of the talents in your group? |
| Nikhir | Eh, everyone in the group did something for the presentation. Eh, Cameron made a model, Jesse, Sheldon and I did power points and Naledi made a beautiful poster. |
| Teacher | So, in other words, you like working with technology such as the computer. |
| Nikhir | I'm mostly into powerpoints and music and I like to mix music but mostly the computer. |
| Teacher | Thank you so much for that Nikhir. Nosipho, let's hear your response. What do you think about this new approach to poetry? |
| Nosipho | Well, I must agree with Nikhir, it was way better and fun… |
| | Interruption (Intercom Announcement) |
| Teacher | Sorry about the interruption, Nosipho. You may continue. |
| Nosipho | As he said we could do powerpoints which was more in depth, more detail about the poem. |
| Teacher | Okay,in Nikhir's case his group used their talents. In your group what did you do in your group? |
| Nosipho | Well, we wanted to build something but there were some group members who were absent and so I did a poster in my group. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Nosipho. Gabriella? |
| Gabriella | Hmm, I think it was more fun than we usually did. Now we get to hear different opinions and views from people and it's not just your opinion like we used to doing. |
| Teacher | When you say 'your' opinion, do you mean the teacher's opinion? |

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| Gabriella | Yes ma'am, now it's nicer because you get to relate to your friends, it's not just alone, and it's not that boring as we usually do it. |

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| Teacher | Thank you so much and your group? I can't quite remember now, what did your group do for the presentation |
| Gabriella | We did a powerpoint, a poster and hmm it was actually two posters. |

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| Teacher | Thank you so much for that Gabi. Mpho? |
| Mpho | I liked the activity because ever since we started doing poetry in the primary school, we were given certain boundaries. ..(Interruption- intercom announcement) |
| Teacher | Once again, I apologise for the interruption. Mpho, please continue. |
| Mpho | (Tries to remember what she was saying) |
| Teacher | You were saying something about your primary school and the way… |
| Mpho | Oh yes! (Remembers). Since primary school, when learning poetry we were given certain boundaries where we just read the poem and the teacher would explain it to us and she would analyse it for us and that's where it would end, but with this approach, we were allowed to go over those boundaries- we were allowed to do powerepoints, we were allowed to do almost anything as long as it showed what we understood of the poem and I think that that was much more fun than anything that I have done before. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Mpho that was an excellent response. I appreciate it and your honesty as well. Okay, Latorla? |
| Latorla | Ma'am, it was fun because we were able to make it visual and instead of reading it from our books, we could understand what other people thought of the poem. |
| Teacher | Okay, good. What was your poem? I mean the title of your poem? |
| Latorla | "Dear Diet' |
| Teacher | Oh, yes! 'Dear Diet'. It was your group that brought food? |
| Latorla | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | Whose idea was that? |
| Latorla | We just talked about it and we … |
| Teacher | It was a joint/group effort, right? |
| Latorla | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Latorla. Mbali? |
| Mbali | Ma'am, I thought it was really exciting because we could all share our views and come up with one conclusion and we could all do different things like powerpoints, like Nikhir said, and bring things that relate to our poem and I really enjoyed working with the other members. |

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| Teacher | I noticed that the learners really enjoyed your group presentation, not with the visuals but with the acting- they found it very humorous. |

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| Mbali | Yes ma'am. ( others nod in agreement)<br>It was a play. |
| Teacher | Yes, it was a play and it was quite humorous and also the fact that you all wrote your own poems relating to the poem you all chose. |
| Mbali | Yes ma'am. We decided to do a very funny short play about how trees were made and how a little princess stumbled upon a seed and she accidently poured water on the seed and a mystical tree grew. So, we thought it would be fun to do something like that and Itumeleng and I just decided to write our own poem relating to the poem that we chose-'everything changes', the trees, how they grow… |
| Teacher | Thank you, Mbali. We really enjoyed the play. The learners laughed and found it funny. Siyabonga, what do you think about the new approach? |
| Siyabonga | I thought that it was a good idea because we could explain our understanding of the poem in our own terms because like we had to do it on our own. |
| Teacher | (interrupts him) Sorry, just stop there for a second. Now you are a new student here, you are here for the first time at Midrand High School as a grade nine student. Is that correct? |
| Siyabonga | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | So tell me, how were you taught poetry in the previous school and was this new approach any different? |
| Siyabonga | Usually, our teacher used to read the poem and she would put us in pairs and she would say that we should do a still life to show our understanding of the poem but that eventually got boring and we still wouldn't understand the poem. Yes ma'am, that is what she usually did. |
| Teacher | And this time, this approach that you did? |
| Siyabonga | I liked it more than what I did in my previous school because I now could do what I wanted to do to explain the poem. |
| Teacher | Oh okay I see. Good , excellent. Njabulo? |
| Njabulo | I think, actually, it was a very good idea because we were given the chance to think out of the box and to express how we feel and understand about the poem. |
| Teacher | Okay, thank you. I think your group presentation was quite nice. Your group built a tombstone? |
| Njabulo | Yes, ma'am and we also shot a video but we had a problem with the formatting when we tried to play it in class. |
| Teacher | Okay, Is it still possible for me to get that video? |
| Njabulo | Yes, ma'am, I can arrange for it. |
| Teacher | Yes, I remember now. It couldn't play on the laptop because it required another format. |

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| Njabulo | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | Okay, thank you so much Njabulo. Learners that was the end of the first question. The second question is how would you describe the learners' response/participation to the unit of poetry work? I am not going to ask each one now, anyone can respond. Yes, Mpho, you would like to say something? |
| Mpho | Yes, ma'am. I think that the class presentations were very nice because Stephanie's group, well Stephanie was dressed in a traditional wear and it was quite impressive ...(Teacher interrupts) |
| Teacher | Why? |
| Mpho | …because she is white and she was dressed like a Zulu girl, and Mbali's group drama was quite funny and everyone was laughing and it was quite enjoyable, and Latorla's group was also nice because they made a point and everyone was hungry and they were looking at the food ,and Nikhir's group – their powerpoint was different because the others just had powerpoints but Nikhir's one had music , different pictures, he showed us different images and it was quite fun because we kept looking at the images and the music made it even more interesting and kept us concentrating on it. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Mpho for that. I would also like to add that your group did 'Sea Fever', right? I liked the part where you had the background of the ocean where the moving waves and the sound effects that went with that picture- that was amazing. How did you get that picture and sound together? |
| Mpho | Tumelo ,in our group, did that mam. On the computer there's a moviemaker where you can put the picture there and then add the sound to override the picture and I think that's what he did because when I asked that is what he said on how he did it. |
| Teacher | That was quite creative. I did try to figure out how that was done.<br>Okay, the third question- do you think working in a group help…<br>(interruption- bell rings). ( Teacher repeats the question)<br>Would you have been able to do your presentation individually, would you have been able to do what you did here? |
| | (Siyabonga raises his hand) |
| Teacher | Yes, Siyabonga? |
| Siyabonga | I think it's better than working alone because you have more time to do the task that you have to do and less stressful when the learners participate because then you can do something more productive and more creative in a group than alone. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Siyabonga. Okay, going back to Gabriella's earlier response. The phrase 'two heads are better than one', in my opinion you became more creative in the group because everyone put their heads together and came up with the presentation. So I guess working in groups does have its good and bad moments. Gabriella, give me some positive things about working in groups? |
| Gabriella | Ma'am, for my group it was negative and positive because me and Stephanie, we are both creative and then the others are lazy.<br>(Teacher interrupts) |
| Teacher | But you got the others to do something, right? |

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| Gabriella | Yes, eventually. |
| Teacher | That's good because some learners are lazy but when they work with hard-working learners like you and Stephanie then they eventually come on board by contributing or doing things in the group. Okay, thank you Gabriella. Next question, question 4- Mention some of the problems that you or your group encountered?<br>(Njabulo raises her hand) Njabulo? |
| Njabulo | My group ma'am, when we were suppose to shoot the video, two of our group members did not show up. |
| Teacher | And what were their reasons? |
| Njabulo | Darin said that he had things to do with his parents, going out or something like that but I remember it being a very lame excuse and Alexander, I'm not quite sure. I can't remember his excuse but they both didn't show up so we had to shoot the video ourselves and did it without them. |
| Teacher | Oh okay, just remember I would like to see that video. |
| Njabulo | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | Anyone else, about the problems you encountered?<br>So there are some lazy learners and you did experience difficulties in getting them to do the presentation but at the end you all pulled together and did produce something as a group.<br>(Siyabonga raises his hand)<br>Yes, Siyabonga? |
| Siyabonga | We had the problem of some learners being stubborn. They didn't want to hear other people's ideas and they just wanted to do what they wanted to do. They didn't want to think out of the box. |
| Teacher | And that's not good because you need to hear other people's opinions because your version might be completely wrong or different so it's nice to hear what other people think. Okay learners, the next question is how did each of the groups work together to produce the artifacts in the presentation? I'm talking about the models for example in Njabulo's group they made the tombstone , and they did the powerpoint. How did you all get the learners in your group to do that? Anybody? (Gabriella raises her hand) Yes, Gabriella? |
| Gabriella | Well, in our group we identified what our strong points are and then we said to Stephanie that she's good at powerpoint so she should do that and I'm good at making posters so I did that and if you are good at talking then you should talk. |
| Teacher | Okay, that's excellent , so you got all the strengths of each learner and that is how you allocated a duty or task to them. |
| Gabriella | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | Anybody else that did something similar to what Gabriella and her group did? (Mpho raises her hand) Yes, Mpho? |
| Mpho | When we were talking, first of all we didn't know what to do and Lesego kept telling me that I got more talent than anybody else so let's do something that I'm good at and I said okay and she also said that Tumi and I like drama so why don't we do a play? I said okay but a play about what? And then we came up with ideas together and then said I should write the script and Tumi will help with the |

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| | presentation and Lesego will help with the script and say why don't we take this part out or this is too long and so on. |
| Teacher | So she helped with editing the script? |
| Mpho | Yes, ma'am. |
| Teacher | So that's good because Tumelo's strong point was technology and the powerpoint presentation and you with writing a script.<br>Okay, that's excellent. Anybody would like to add anything else to that? About how you all managed to produce your scripts, sorry not your scripts but your artifacts and presentation.<br>(Njabulo raises her hand).<br>Yes, Njabulo? |
| Njabulo | Mam, hmmm in my group, Bridget is very technical, she was the one who made the video, she edited it, she added music to it although we weren't able to show it but I believe it came out very nice. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Njabulo. The next question, 'was the unit of poetry work similar or different from your past experiences to poetry teaching in the English classroom? Okay, say yes or no and give me a brief explanation. Was it different to your past experiences in poetry teaching?<br>We did discuss it in some of the other questions but can we just very quickly go over it again.<br>(Siyabonga makes a gesture to respond).<br>Yes, Siyabonga? |
| Siyabonga | It was similar to my previous experiences but this was way better and more challenging than, let me put it this way, the older way. |
| Teacher | Thank you, Siyabonga for your honesty. Anybody else?<br>(Latorla indicates that she wants to answer).<br>Yes, Latorla? |
| Latorla | Ma'am, it was different because in primary school they would just read us the poem and we had to answer the questions.<br>(Teacher interrupts) |
| Teacher | Mbali, I see you are shaking your head , does that mean you agree with Latorla? |
| Mbali | Yes, ma'am, I agree with Latorla ma'am because like we had to analyse the poem alone ma'am, we couldn't hear or see the ideas of the other people had because we did not know whether our analysis was wrong whereas the groups knew how to analyse the poem and everything. I t was hard because we couldn't understand the poem alone, so it was much easier to work together. |
| Teacher | … than individually. Okay, Nosipho, where you nodding your head and agreeing with Mbali?<br>(Nosipho nods her head).<br>So you are agreeing with Mbali.<br>Okay, tell me learners what would you suggest that should be done differently? |
| Nikhir | More presentations |
| Teacher | More presentations? |

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| Nikhir | Like more models, building stuff. |
| Teacher | Anybody else, any changes? If you were the teacher, what would be the changes that you would like ?<br>(Latorla indicates).<br>Yes, Latorla? |
| Latorla | Mam, it would have been nice if each one of us had the poems so that we could follow what the group in front was doing? |
| Teacher | Okay, yes because I gave one copy of the poems to each group.<br>Yes, thank you for that, your suggestion is noted.<br>Is there anything else you would like to say about this entire poetry activity? This approach of doing poetry.<br>(Gabriella raises her hand).<br>Yes, Gabriella? |
| Gabriella | We must make it possible that we do poetry this way now because like the way we were doing it was so boring and like if we had to do it, we just do the SIFTS method and we just copy our friend's work. Now we had to do it and go all out and make our models. It's like more interactive because everyone gets to do it and have fun.<br>(Teacher interrupts). |
| Teacher | And not only that, but each and every one of you have shown that the poem you chose you remember it so well, do you agree?<br>(Learners agree by nodding their heads or saying yes ma'am) |
| Mpho | Yes, ma'am, Gabriella is right because usually in poetry a lot of people when the teacher says we are doing poetry the learners would like say "argh, no" and they would start moaning and complaining but then now I actually saw people smiling and they had fun and were actually paying attention. Others were not falling asleep like they usually do in class and it was very nice.<br>(Latorla raises her hand). |
| Teacher | Yes, Latorla? |
| Latorla | Ma'am, it was good that we worked in groups and with our friends because there are people that do not get along in class and we will end up fighting, so it was better this way because although sometimes they are lazy and don't want to work but like we can solve it during break when we are together. |
| Teacher | Yes, that is a good suggestion. Thank you so much learners for participating, for your valuable time, your patience. I do sincerely appreciate it and I wish you all well with your studies. Thank you once again. |
| Siyabonga | You are welcome, ma'am. |
| Learners | (in unison)Yes, ma'am. |