

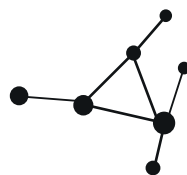
LEARNING UNIT

DECOLONISING LITERACY WITH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Working Group: Maseru

Authors: *Ba re e ne re Literary Arts*: Lineo Segoete, Zachary Rosen

CRITICAL LITERACY
STORYTELLING
CRITIQUING SCHOOL
MISSIONARIES
SHARING KNOWLEDGE
MASERU
LESOTHO
DECOLONIALIZATION
COLONIALISM



intertwining hi/stories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Maseru Working Group

Abstract

Addressees

Introduction

Activity 1: Meaning

Activity 2: Research

Activity 3: Storytelling

Activity 4: Phrasing and Bias

Activity 5: Vocabulary and Word Knowledge

Activity 6: Reliability of Information

ABOUT THE MASERU WORKING GROUP

The Maseru Working Group was formed by members of the organization Ba re e ne re Literary Arts. The group is interested in utilizing critical literacies as agents for creativity and critical thinking in Arts Education. The group has researched the life and legacy of the Mosotho writer, educator and activist Thomas Mokopu Mofolo (1876–1948) as well as the history of literacy education and its ties to religious conversion in Lesotho. Through its work, the group is dedicated to raising the level of Sesotho and English language literacy through creative writing in formal and informal contexts.

Ba re e ne re Literary Arts is an organization created to enrich the lives of the Basotho people in Lesotho by promoting increased literacy, creative writing and artistic exchange between creatives in Lesotho, Basotho outside of Lesotho and creatives from other cultures. Translated from Sesotho language, the words “Ba re e ne re” mean “They say it was said that...” This phrase is similar to “Once upon a time...” and is how many Sesotho folktales begin.

ABSTRACT

This Learning Unit is intended to provide activity plans for students or other learners in late primary to high school, though they can be shared with any group of people with moderate literacy skills. The activities may be used in classrooms or workshop settings and can be used to develop and enhance critical dimension of the literacy skills of learners. By this we mean, the activities encourage learners to identify and reflect on the biases encoded in textual and visual information.

Reference texts and item selections are intended to activate the archive, juxtapose the past and present and incite questions for the student. Through their participation learners will ideally improve their skills for analysing key details in reference materials and learn cues that support the breakdown of meaning. By exposing the positionality of information, learners will be in a better position to think critically about an item’s message and relevance.

ADDRESSEES

This resource has been developed as a tool primarily for educators and cultural workers in Lesotho. The age and experience of learners may vary, though the activities within this tool require moderate reading and writing ability.

INTRODUCTION

As educators operating through creative cultural production, we genuinely believe that the process of reducing and eliminating colonial influence from education relies on equipping students with cognitive competencies that allow them to map the orientation of their own thinking. It is common in Lesotho for students to mimic their teachers or memorise expected responses without consciously deriving meaning for themselves by recognising schema and nuance in texts. This leads to students who are competent in word recognition, but not in decrypting meaning in complex texts or reading between the lines. To counter this, we use texts and other items that reference aspects of Lesotho’s history so that students can learn to be aware of inconsistencies and highlights regarding representation, ethnography, narrative and origin stories, and juxtapose them to their own socio-cultural knowledge.

For these activities, reference materials/texts are considered to be: texts, folktales, traditional songs, historical literature, photography, other visual images, comic books, animation, nature, film, people, fashion, museums etc.

ACTIVITY 1: MEANING

1.1: Freewriting

Students pick a word or concept related to an identity, culture, history, or language (strictly centred on their local contexts). Have them do freewriting about that word or concept for 10-20 minutes. Freewriting is a style of writing in which one writes continuously without worrying about spelling or grammar.

When students have finished freewriting, ask the students to make comparisons between current and historical contexts for their chosen word/concept. Have the students break into pairs for 5 minutes and share with each other how the current and past contexts for their word/concept may differ. If time allows ask for volunteers to share with the larger group what word they chose and how the current and historical contexts may differ for their word/concept.

Next, have the students consider opposing views regarding the selected word/concept. Have them pick a position regarding some aspect of the word/concept and then support the position in creative form; through essay, folktale, poem, illustration, or any other imaginative expression or mode of storytelling. Allow students to volunteer to share their creative piece with the group.

SAMPLE CONSIDERATION OF A WORD/CONCEPT:

- ▶ Who can be considered Basotho in Lesotho?
- ▶ What are the national symbols of Lesotho?

1.2: Reading

From a source text, select an excerpt and encourage students to review it first, independently, and second, considering the social context of its source. This text may be current or historical.

Have students write down key ideas conveyed in the excerpt. Next, ask the students to consider the source text as a whole. Ask them about its purpose. Have students compare notes with another person to see how their observations and interpretations vary. Ask students to formulate opinions about the text based on their current personal knowledges/experiences and then summarize the key ideas of the text in a paragraph using their own words.

ACTIVITY 2: RESEARCH

2.1: Ask students to brainstorm an action done in daily life in a specific community environment. Have students investigate the history of the place where that action takes place using available information sources; community members, internet, published materials. Ask students to also relate their own knowledge and connection to the action and place. Instruct the students to use both background knowledges (investigative and personal) as a premise for producing creative work such as an oral presentation before the class, a comic illustration, a narration or an essay.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- ▶ What sources did you use to research the topic? Who are the producers of that information? Do you trust the sources? Why or why not?
- ▶ What are the ways knowledge is commonly shared about this topic? Through books, oral stories, other ways?

SAMPLE TOPIC: DIAMOND MINING AT LETŠENG DIAMOND MINE

- ▶ Have there been any changes in the community since mines were opened in the area?
- ▶ Are you happy about the way things are in the community even though mining takes place?
- ▶ What kind of development is fitting for a place that produces some of the biggest diamonds in the world?

ACTIVITY 3: STORYTELLING

3.1: Give each student the following instruction: Tell a story about the time you laughed at yourself, what were the feelings you were experiencing? What had happened? What is the best part of that memory?

The work may take the form of a song, a poem, a short story, letter, etc. Encourage the application of literary devices: satire, figures of speech, irony etc., with reference to socio-cultural usage.

3.2: Have students create their own storyline/narration, real or imagined, about morning routines, planting season, game season, animals, personal hygiene etc. Encourage students to place emphasis on the “why” and “how” of their stories.

ACTIVITY 4: PHRASING AND BIASES

4.1: Share a text with students and ask them to derive tone and intention from what they read.

- ▶ For tone, consider the mood of the author. Is the author of the text happy, passionate, angry, sad?
- ▶ For intentions, consider the goals of the author? Are they trying to convince you of something?

This will prompt students to critically engage with and decode waves of information they are exposed to in other aspects of their lives.

4.2: Compile multiple texts written about the same subject by different authors in order to demonstrate diversity of thought on a subject. Ask students to consider the factors that influence people’s interpretations about this subject. Ask students to pick and choose the text they agree most with. In groups, have students discuss the text they’ve chosen and its position by phrasing it in their own way (retelling).

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- ▶ What different biases or intentions may the various authors have?
- ▶ Share an example in which various texts use different words to refer to the same concept or alternative concept.
- ▶ Share an example of a topic you know people have many opposing views on.
- ▶ How do any images communicate alongside the texts?

ACTIVITY 5: VOCABULARY AND WORD KNOWLEDGE

5.1: By referencing a dictionary, guide students to think about word-sound structure, multiple meanings for some words and orthography (word conventions).

5.2: Written activities; based on their knowledge of the creation of word-derivatives (words that have been created from pre-existing words or new concepts as influenced by popular trends locally and globally), encourage students to create their own words in Sesotho.

5.3: Ask students to read an informational text and identify its key words. Then have them use the key words to tell a story about a particular life-skill of their choosing using creative devices such as: poetry, essay, song, or short story.

For example, in a text on war which has the following words: ambush, fortress, allegiance; a student could tell a story about a time they resolved a conflict between two friends.

5.4: Oral activities; Give students a set of five words to study and then later, call on them to give life to those words by reporting back to the group about the words' backstories, including their origins and usages.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

- ▶ Study the words: trauma, class, politics, geography, ethnic group, white supremacy, intersectionality, diaspora, pride, dabble, perception.

This exercises students' phonetic muscles, motivates usage in daily speech or classroom activity and allows them to teach their peers as well as learn how to listen effectively.

ACTIVITY 6: RELIABILITY OF INFORMATION

6.1: Ask students to write a passage about a leader they respect. This can be a community leader, sportsperson, celebrity, etc.

Students should consider the value of fact-based thinking for their writing. The aim is to teach them how to support their opinions and perspectives clearly and factually. This will allow them to cultivate the necessary skills for independent thinking that they can justify. To achieve this, students' work should be supported with verifiable information as much as possible.

On the next page is a basic template for the process of expressing clarity in student's engagement with texts.

<p>IDEA</p>			
<p>EVIDENCE</p>	<p>Facts</p>		
	<p>Statistics (where applicable)</p>		
	<p>Examples</p>		
	<p>Counter argument</p>		
	<p>Reflection: What else do I need to know/what don't I know?</p>		
	<p>Conclusion</p>		

SUGGESTED READINGS

The Catholic Church in South Africa – William Eric Brown

English Reading Book for the use of Schools in Basutoland (1877)

Sesuto & English Exercises – Khatiso ea Morija (1877)

Grammar e Nyenyane ea ba Ithutang Se-English (1901)

Lipaliso Tsa Sesotho: Buka ea Barutua – Morija Sesuto Book Depot (1943)

Morija Training College and Secondary School – Khatiso ea Morija (1937)

A History of Education in Basutoland – James Walton (1958)

Write Good English – Donald M Mcfarlan (1947)

A Practical Method to Learn Sesuto – E. Jacottet (1972)

Education in Lesotho – Lesotho Quarterly (April 1968: 15–22)

From Mission to church – J. M. Mohapeloa (1985)

'Makhonthe – Z. A Matšela (1971)

A Short History of Lesotho – S. J Gill (1993)

Qoaling – Rethabile Masilo (2018)

English Sotho Vocabulary – A Casalis (2011)

Sethantšo sa Sesotho – B Hlalele (2005)

Journal of Archaeological Science – Stephen J.Lycett (2015: 21–31)

Radical Pedagogy – V. M Muzvidziwa and M Seotsanyana (2002)

Unifying Southern African languages – The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (2003)