

Candice Gerber

(GRBCAN002)

## **READING TAKES YOU PLACES:**

*A narrative exploration into Intermediate Phase English teachers' experiences with and orientations towards literature teaching.*



A minor dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education.

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2021

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Carolyn McKinney, for her guidance, scrupulous editing skills, and unwavering positivity in the face of my anxieties. I also wish to acknowledge the support of my parents and partner, without whom I would not have had the courage or the self-assurance to undertake this endeavor.

### **Compulsory Declaration**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date: 25/02/2021

The aim of this narrative study is to explore the development of five Intermediate Phase English teachers' literate habitus and its influence on their conceptions of literacy, and approaches to literature teaching and texts. Literate habitus (Gennrich & Janks, 2013) captures how a teacher's social background, personal, and professional experiences can play a role in how they negotiate literacy, texts and teaching. Drawing on new literacy studies and a sociocultural approach to literacy pedagogy, links are drawn between the development of each teacher's literate habitus, the conceptions they hold of literacy as autonomous, ideological, or some mix thereof (Gee, 2015), and their approaches to the teaching of texts. Luke and Freebody's four resources model (1999) was used to describe pedagogical choices advocated in the teachers' descriptions of their teaching. Practices involving critical and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Hall, 1998; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Janks, 2010; Clark & Fleming, 2019), were also traced.

Data was collected in the form of semi-structured narrative interviews with five Intermediate Phase English teachers from a variety of backgrounds, teacher education and teaching experiences. Analysis of their narratives through a combination of thematic and discourse analysis, shows the connections between each teacher's literate habitus, their conceptions of literacy, and their described approach to literature teaching. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the ways in which each teacher negotiated their own habitus, by either accepting, or attempting to adjust or disrupt it, had an influence how they perceived themselves as successful literature teachers. Notably, the Black participants in the study made the largest conscious effort to disrupt their habitus, as they were intent on providing their learners with access to literature learning that was more racially inclusive than their own narrated schooling experiences.

Additionally, common factors influencing literature teaching were identified across the interviews, including the use of reading aloud and activities encouraging learner ownership, text relatability, and curricular and institutional limitations on teacher agency. How each teacher chose to negotiate these factors differed, largely in alignment with their literate habitus and conceptions of literacy.

This study shows, therefore, that the ways in which a teacher's literate habitus is formed, entrenched, adjusted, or disrupted through their varying experiences plays a role in determining their conceptions of and approaches to literature teaching and texts, so much so that it influences the ways in which they negotiate the factors that exist in their classrooms, such as their perceptions of effective practices, the relatability of the text itself, or the restrictions placed upon their agency as a teacher.

|                                  |   |        |
|----------------------------------|---|--------|
| Acknowledgements and Declaration | _____   | i      |
| Abstract                         | _____   | ii     |
| Chapter 1                        | Introduction _____  | p. 1   |
| Chapter 2                        | Literature Review _____   | p. 6   |
| Chapter 3                        | Methodology _____   | p. 21  |
| Chapter 4                        | Data Analysis “With literature there’s no right or wrong answer” _____              | p. 29  |
| Chapter 5                        | Data Analysis “I tried my hardest to get them to put themselves on that ship” _____ | p. 50  |
| Chapter 6                        | Conclusion “It speaks to how teaching is a work in progress” _____                  | p. 71  |
| Reference List                   | _____   | p. 75  |
| Appendix A                       | Caitlin Interview _____   | p. 82  |
| Appendix B                       | Alisha Interview _____  | p. 99  |
| Appendix C                       | Agnes Interview _____   | p. 121 |
| Appendix D                       | Naiya Interview _____   | p. 135 |
| Appendix E                       | Sandra Interview _____  | p. 150 |
| Appendix F                       | Ethical Information Letter Example _____  | p. 169 |
| Appendix G                       | Consent Form Example _____  | p. 170 |

### **Reading takes you places:**

A narrative exploration into Intermediate Phase English teachers' experiences with and orientations towards literature teaching.

“There was a library teacher at my last school, she was a Zulu woman who said – she always used to say to the kids, *waves hand across the air as if holding banner* ‘Reading takes you places.’ She would walk around the library like this, *\*mimes walking around waving her hands in the air\** ‘Reading takes you places!’ She was lovely! *\*smiles\** And, for me, I felt like *\*gestures to herself\** I was the person who was taking these kids. I was the one who was finding the texts that would actually take these kids out of the reality that they have, especially since, for a lot of them, the reality of their life was not good. *\*holds out left palm as if offering something forward\** I was the one who was able to take these kids, especially the worst, most badly behaved kids from horrific homes, I was the person who could *\*mimes throwing a door open\** open that door and show them a different world. And not just show them a magical world, but show them that the world can actually be different for them.” (Alisha.44:57)

#### **1.1. Introduction**

The above quote, given by an Intermediate Phase English educator teaching in a low-income public school, emphasizes the impact that a single teacher can have on the ability of learners to connect with the subject material. The South African educational context is incredibly diverse, given the variation of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of teachers and learners, and resource availability present at schools across the country. Given this level of diversity, it is evident that a single curriculum document, advocating for a single approach to teaching practice across this multitude of educational contexts could not possibly provide equal access to each individual learner (McKinney, 2017). Indeed, it seems almost impossible to provide the same level of education to as diverse a group of learners in as diverse a context that exists in South Africa, which is where the ability of a teacher to work flexibly within a constraining curriculum becomes of the utmost importance. As an Intermediate Phase educator, myself, I found the practices and texts the curriculum document was advocating for simply did not work for the learners who were sitting in

front of me, specifically within the realms of literature teaching. I felt I knew those learners, I felt I knew what would work for them and, by implementing small changes where I could, I began to see improvements in the ways in which my learners responded to texts.

At that point in, I attributed that success to the practice itself, and conceived of this research as a way to explore the different practices teachers were using to engage their learners. Throughout the development of this study, however, I began to realise that the really interesting process at work began long before the teacher stood in front of the classroom and implemented their chosen practice, but rather that “personal experiences are linked irrevocably to practice. It is as if the teacher is her/his practice” (Goodson & Numan, 2002, p.272). The process of developing teaching practice is intensely personal and, while it seemed second-nature to me to implement literature teaching practice in the way that I did, this is only because it was a seemingly subconscious process submersed in a wealth of other variables, such as the way I viewed my learners, the way I viewed the text, and the way I viewed literacy as a whole. This study is, therefore, built around exploring these variables, their connections, and the ways in which they impact how a teacher describes their practices and their effectiveness. I believe that, by exploring this process, it will become evident that many of the practices that are employed in Intermediate Phase literature classrooms come about largely as a result of the teacher’s conceptions of literature, texts and their learners, as well as the choices they make in exerting creativity and agency within the constraints of the curriculum.

## **1.2. Rationale**

While there exists an abundance of literature which explores the teaching of English in creative ways which provide access to diverse learners by acknowledging and making use of the languages, beliefs and knowledge they bring with them in the Foundation and Senior Phases (O’Brien, 1998; Morrell, 2007; Vasquez, 2008; Exley, Woods, & Dooley, 2014; Lin, 2019), there is little to no research exploring this same field of inquiry in the Intermediate Phase. As an English teacher within the Intermediate Phase, it is my belief that this phase is a fascinating one in learner development as it is here where they really begin to be exposed to subject matter and ways of thinking that can challenge and inspire them. If this phase is simply viewed as a bridge between the Foundation and Senior phases and not an important developmental stage of learning in its own

right, we are missing an opportunity to instill values, passions, and methods of approaching the critical analysis of knowledge which could be incredibly valuable to the learner in the long run.

Furthermore, over the course of my years teaching English in primary schools I have observed that the teachers that are more likely to instill the kinds of mindsets and appreciation of subject matter discussed above, are the ones who do not allow themselves to be limited by the policy documents which they are required to follow. While teachers have little agency when it comes to the selection of the literature prescribed by the policy document and the methods by which they are required to assess learners' understanding of this literature (Department of Basic Education, 2011), they have agency within the classroom space that they themselves organize and the ways in which they choose to present and explore the text with the learners. It is in this classroom space that a number of factors, such as the prescribed text, the teacher's specific views regarding language, practice and policy, and the learners' specific backgrounds converge to determine not only the learners' understanding of the text, but their overall conception of language and literacy in relation to their own developing identities. If the prescribed text and the way it is presented is in complete juxtaposition to the learners' backgrounds, cultural beliefs, and understandings of the world, this could result in the learner either disengaging from literacy learning or, equally unacceptably, beginning to question and detach from the beliefs and understandings that previously formed part of their identity (Morrell, 2007). It is for this reason that the ways in which the teacher chooses to present the prescribed text and their chosen pedagogical strategies are of the utmost importance. However, if our goal is to understand the ways in which the practices employed by the teacher result in a noticeable and meaningful engagement from learners, it is equally important that we explore where these practices originate from; specifically, the teacher's interconnected beliefs regarding language, literacy, policy and pedagogy.

Finally, the choice to focus this study on the teaching of literature specifically, rather than on literacy teaching as a whole, came about as a result of my own experiences teaching English in primary schools. While I personally subscribe to the ideological view of literacy, in which "literacy is viewed in terms of concrete social practices and the various ideologies in which different cultural expressions of literacy are embedded" (Gee, 1996, p.181), unfortunately, this is not how the

teaching of language and literacy is structured in the curriculum. As a result of this, literacy skills are demarcated and divided into unquestioned but artificial separate categories such as literature, language/grammar and writing (McKinney, 2017) which are not particularly conducive to effective teaching or learning. The literature section is one of the few sections of the curriculum which allows for the exploration of interconnected language skills, where features of language, grammar, critical analysis, writing and reading all combine in the exploration of a single text. It is of the utmost importance, then, that the types of texts studied in this section are selected, not as a form of enforcing the dominance of certain linguistic ideals, but rather as an attempt to engage learner interest and expose learners to a variety of literacy practices and skillsets.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

Following the above discussion of the importance of understanding the impact that the prior experiences with and conceptions of literature of Intermediate Phase teachers have on their orientations towards literature teaching, my research will attempt to investigate the following questions:

- How do primary school teachers describe their experiences with literature and literature teaching in their personal and professional lives?
- What can these descriptions tell us about the ways in which they conceive of literature and literature teaching, and is there a discernable link between these experiences and conceptions and their described practice?
- What are some of the perceived limitations to effective literature teaching in primary schools, and how, if at all, do these teachers describe working within these limitations?

I wish to note that my intended research design was to explore teachers' narratives about their teaching experiences (through interviews) as well as their enacted practice (through classroom observation). The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns however made any kind of face-to-face data collection impossible, and precluded observation of teaching.

#### **1.4. Outline of Study**

The following chapter will contain an exploration of the theoretical concepts and existing literature relevant to this study, such as that of literate habitus, the different models of literacy and associated approaches to literacy teaching, as well as the ways in which these have been applied in prior research. Following a description of the methodological approaches and interview techniques made use of in the collection of data, the analysis of this will be divided into two chapters. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth description of each participant's literate habitus and the ways in which this influences their perceptions and approaches to literature teaching. Chapter 5 demonstrates the ways in which the literate habitus, as well as other factors, influences how teachers negotiate common elements affecting their practice. Chapter 6 concludes the study.

## **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

There are a number of theoretical concepts key to this study which will be discussed in detail below. Amongst these are the theories of the autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Gee, 2015), which outline the different ways in which literacy can be conceived of and understood by teachers; the development of literate habitus (Gennrich & Janks, 2013), which concern the ways in which teachers take up certain literature conceptions and practices based on their past and present circumstances; and the associated approaches to literacy teaching that generally result from these models (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

### **Conceptions of Literacy and their Associated Practices:**

In order to fully comprehend the tensions and relationships that exist between the conceptions of literacy and literature teaching that exist in policy, practice, and the teachers' personal approaches, one must first recognize the ways in which the concept of literacy itself has shifted over time. Historically, literacy and, by extension, literacy education, has been deployed as a means of social control (Graff & Duffy, 2008). Regardless of whether this control existed as a form of colonial, religious, or class dominance, the constructed link between literacy, civilization, and modernization has resulted in the commodification of literacy as a social tool and a symbol of upward social mobility to this day (Graff & Duffy, 2008). Ironically, despite the thoroughly social function literacy has served over the course of human history, literacy itself has, for the most part, been perceived as an autonomous entity which consists of fixed cognitive skills that are universally applicable (Gee, 1996). Historically, the literacy pedagogy which has been the most prevalent in literacy education has been shown to rely "almost exclusively on traditional definitions of literacy as a reified set of basic skills devoid of social context or political implications" (Larson, 1996, p.439). The implication here is that, regardless of the context in which literacy is being learned, literacy itself is defined by a set of demarcated skills, and these skills remain consistent across contexts and can be taught as such. This conception of literacy allows for the demarcation of a set of skills that can be exported, taught, and deployed in any society, in any country and in any

language throughout the world, regardless of the specific social or cultural contexts in which they occur.

This autonomous conception of literacy has been challenged by the development of the ideological model of literacy, which is shown to view literacy “in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded” (Gee, 2015, p.43). This suggests that, rather than consisting of a pre-ordained set of skills that are applicable in any context, literacy itself is variable, and the skills and practices required in order to count as ‘literate’ vary in accordance with the specific context in which those practices and skills are being applied. If one accepts the notion that literacy itself, as well as the various practices associated with literacy, manifest as a result of the particular social settings and worldviews from which they arise, it follows that literacy teaching exists as a form of socialization into a specific set of social practices and norms that have been deemed to be valuable and worthwhile to learn. Heath’s (2007) exploration of the literacy socialization practices of young children from different social class and cultural backgrounds further demonstrates that what is presented by policy and curriculum as a set of decontextualized skills are, in fact, the social practices of a single, elite group of society (Heath, 2007). By constructing these practices as the given norm, children who are socialized into practices and ways of being that differ from this norm are, upon entering the schooling system, positioned as deficient and having no foundational skills upon which their literacy learning can be built. These learners are then expected to make the effort to resocialise into practices that are alien to them and, in doing so “a student may be acquiring a new identity, one that at various points may conflict with the student’s initial acculturation and socialisation” (Gee, 1996, p.189). From the perspective of the ideological model of literacy, it is impossible, therefore, to separate literacy education from the social context in which it occurs, especially in a country such as South Africa, where a teacher may encounter learners from a variety of linguistic and social backgrounds in a single classroom. Should a teacher ignore these varying social contexts, the practices that evolve therefrom, and the implications these have for how they approach literature teaching, it is likely that certain practices will continue to be valued over others, thus continuing the cycle of linguistic marginalisation that has been prevalent throughout the history of literacy education.

The prevalence of the autonomous conception of literacy in the South African curriculum document results in a specific set of teaching practices being advocated for that align with and support the definition of literacy as a set of fixed skills that are applicable regardless of context (Bua-lit Collective, 2018). From this viewpoint, it follows that literacy education would consist of the direct teaching of these skills and that this skills-focused pedagogy could be implemented world-wide, regardless of context, with similar results. Contrary to this skills-based pedagogy, from the ideological perspective the aim of literacy teaching is “to help children to get meaning from print; therefore, reading instruction should focus on meaning and should emphasize functions of language” (Street, 2013, p.53). If the functions of language and literacy are seen as being primarily social and defined by social contexts, which, from the ideological perspective, they are, then it follows that literacy teaching needs to be situated within a social context as well. In doing so, learners are not positioned as either having or not having literacy skills, a deficit approach which has been shown to be a result of the autonomous conception of literature (Larson, 1996; Bloome & Green, 2015), but rather, through the process of acknowledging and working within the social contexts that they are situated, learners are positioned as being “active in drawing on prior knowledge to construct meaning.” (Hoffman, 2016, p.20). It is evident, therefore, that the conception of literacy held by a teacher, be it autonomous, ideological, or a hybrid of these, has clear implications for the practices they choose to employ in their classroom when engaging in literacy teaching.

However, one cannot simply ignore the importance of exposing all learners to the dominant literacy practices that are valued in terms of upward mobility in society as, in doing so, one further marginalizes and increases the gap between those whose literacies are valued and those whose literacies are not. From the viewpoint of the ideological perspective, therefore, rather than providing access to these dominant forms in ways that devalue and erase other cultural practices and discourses, “what is needed in the classroom is pedagogy [...] that gives mastery of English, together with its critical view as a global language. Education needs to produce students who understand why linguistic diversity is a resource for creativity and cognition” (Janks, 2004, p.35). In addition to this critical approach to literacy teaching purported by Janks, Gee approaches the concept of negotiating different socialized literacy practices in the classroom by describing these

practices as consisting of design grammars which are specific to different semiotic domains (Gee, 2008, p.137). While each semiotic domain may not be viewed as equal as a result of existing social hierarchies and power dynamics, the design grammars which allow for the construction and reception of meaning in the different domains are viewed in their essence as being equally complex and of equal value (Gee, 2008). Furthermore, Gee suggests that authentic learning can be achieved in the classroom if the learners' existing design grammars and knowledge of different semiotic domains are made use of through a process called networking. In order for this process to result in authentic learning, "learners must be willing and motivated to engage in extended practice in the domain in such a way that they take on and grow into a new socially-situated identity, an identity that they can see as a fruitful extension of their core sense of self" (Gee, 2008, p.145). It is evident, therefore, that both Janks and Gee advocate for the acknowledgement of the value of what specific knowledge learners bring with them of different social and cultural domains.

Notably, some theorists believe a distinct difference should be drawn between the ideals of access and equity, suggesting that the ways in which learners' linguistic and cultural resources are framed in the classroom can, in fact, reinforce the dominance of certain language and literacy practices. According to the theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy, it is important therefore that we view the practices that learners bring with them not as a means to an end, in this case, the development of dominant English literacy practices, but rather as having value in their own right (Paris & Alim, 2014). One of the integral aims of this movement is to "extend the previous visions of asset pedagogies by demanding explicitly pluralist outcomes that are not centered on White, middle-class, monolingual, and monocultural norms of educational achievement" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p.95). This suggests that true, meaningful acknowledgement of the diverse ways of thinking and being that learners bring with them should not only be used to provide access to dominant practices, but should be framed as important approaches that learners employ in the negotiating of different linguistic worlds, a valuable skill in today's global context. In terms of literature teaching, by encouraging learners to use their specific social knowledge and skills, they are more likely to engage with literature in a way that provides them additional resources in the form of the dominant practices they are being exposed to, but does not devalue or attempt to ignore the value of the practices they already have. Janks' (2004) position additionally advocates for a critical

approach to this process which makes learners aware of the underlying social dynamics which influence the practices that are constructed as valuable by society. An awareness of these dynamics paired with the valuing and acknowledgement of the cultural practices and knowledge they bring with them can allow learners from non-dominant backgrounds access to dominant literacy practices and semiotic domains without compromising the specific cultural and linguistic identities they have developed within their social spheres.

It is evident, therefore, that any discussion of teachers' approaches to teaching literacy in primary school classrooms must acknowledge that these approaches are, in fact, grounded in the teacher's conceptions of literacy which, themselves, contain implications for the ways in which learners' knowledge, backgrounds and social contexts are valued and included in the classroom. In a country like South Africa, in which learners' social, racial, and economic contexts are incredibly varied as a result of historical (and current) marginalisation, the ways in which these contexts are addressed or ignored in the literature classroom could, therefore, have a severe impact on the ability of learners to engage with the skills, practices, and texts, they are introduced to, thus having an overall impact on the success of their learning through and about literature.

### **Teachers' Literate Habitus**

Following this discussion of the different ways in which literacy and, therefore, literature teaching, can be conceived of and how this, in turn, impacts upon enacted practice, it is important to consider how these conceptions are developed. Bourdieu advanced one idea of how this occurs through the theory of habitus, which is described as a “distinctive, class, culture-based and engendered ways of ‘seeing’, ‘being’, ‘occupying space’ and ‘participating in history’” (Carrington & Luke, 1997, p.101). Habitus is further described as a means of connecting the physical being with the social world (Carrington & Luke, 1997, p.101), which suggests that the ways in which a person is socialized into certain conceptions, ways of being, and social spaces has a direct influence on the ways in which they behave in certain spaces. In terms of pedagogy, Bourdieu's theory of habitus has not been seen as limiting teachers to deterministic practices that they are unable to change as a result of their habitus, but rather can be made use of as an “analytic tool with which to locate

such practices in sociological contexts for critique and debate.” (Carrington & Luke, 1997). This suggests that the detailed exploration of a teacher’s habitus allows one to develop an understanding of where their orientations to text and literacy originate, as well as the ways in which they negotiate their practices.

The notion of habitus is expanded further by Gennrich and Janks (2013) into the idea of literate habitus, which is explained as being, “rooted in our early family life and [...] structured by our past and present circumstances. Operating below the level of consciousness, habitus then structures our actions and our dispositions, including our involvement with and dispositions towards literacy” (Gennrich & Janks, 2013, p.457). This suggests that the circumstances in which teachers were brought up, such as their social class upbringing, their socialization into literacy practices and their experiences with literacy at home and at schools, impact upon the conception of literature they develop which, in turn, has a subconscious effect on their actions in the classroom. These actions are not unalterable, however, as research is emerging in the field of literate habitus that attempts to show how a persons’ habitus can be disrupted, allowing them more agency in adjusting their practice (Gennrich & Janks, 2013). In her work with pre-service teachers in South Africa, Gennrich (2016) determined that, “literacy teachers need experiential, hands-on opportunities to read, write and analyse genres of texts different to those they usually work with and in ways that are unlike the familiar, established and entrenched pedagogies they use and know for an awareness of the possibilities these hold to be imagined” (Gennrich, 2016, p.8). Botha & Hendricks (2019) came to a similar conclusion in their exploration of the literacy acquisition narratives of language teachers in the Northern Cape, in which they discussed the importance of “exposure to change and difference, sometimes in life and sometimes in the imagination, through texts, written and spoken” (Botha & Hendricks, 2019, p.19) in disrupting habitus. They further claimed that teachers who were exposed to a variety of teaching contexts different to those they had experienced as a learner were greater able to disrupt their subconsciously learnt habitus and act with agency to transform their practice (Botha & Hendricks, 2019). This suggests the disruption of established practices through the exposure to a variety of contexts, texts, and experiences in the field of teaching, can result in more imaginative and diverse practices.

This is not to say that the disruption of literate habitus is a requirement in the development of effective teaching practice. The process of taking up elements from the ways in which a teacher was taught or been exposed to various traditional and oral practices has been shown to be valuable in teachers' development of productive practices (Gennrich, 2016; Botha & Hendricks, 2019). However, exposure to limited literacy practices or text-types results in the teacher's inability to expose learners to a variation of practices and ways in which to interact with literature and text and, as a result, does not provide adequate access to the range of skills and practices required to engage meaningfully with literature (Luke & Freebody, 2003). It follows that effective practice requires an evaluation of one's own literate habitus in order to take up the elements that are valuable, while not being limited to these, through exposure to a variety of literacy practices and texts.

This exposure on its own, however, has been shown not to be enough to shift entrenched habitus. Rather, it is increased exposure combined with the conscious desire to affect change in one's own practice that is required. Gennrich & Janks (2013) describe this process as follows, "change is only achieved by conscious effort and practice together with the ability to recognise and inhibit old ways of being" (Gennrich & Janks, 2013, p.457). Therefore, in order for a teacher to be able to enact change within the realm of their own practice, they need to be exposed to a variety of conflicting conceptions, texts, and practices, recognize their own limitations as determined by their literate habitus and apply conscious effort in order to disrupt it and develop new ways of being. The concept of literate habitus, how it is formed, and the methods by which it can be disrupted, are important to consider in the exploration of literature teachers' narratives. As a result, this study will attempt to add to this body of research by exploring the literate habitus of Intermediate Phase English teachers in order to analyse their orientations to text and literature teaching, as these may provide insight into the practices they choose to employ and the perceived effectiveness thereof.

### **Associated Practices for Teaching Literacy**

In order to draw a possible link between teachers' literate habitus, conceptions of literacy, and the ways in which they enact practice in the classroom, it is necessary to explore the prominent theories

surrounding the teaching of literacy to children. Luke and Freebody (1999) set out to develop a model of literacy learning and application that did not attempt to itemize various linguistic practices in terms of their ‘correctness’ or ability to be applied universally, but rather attempted to describe the various ways in which literacy practices are employed in various contexts. This model, which they termed the four resources model, is described as

“a road map to understanding, guiding and scaffolding the acquisition of literate practices, one that requires that you read and analyse, weigh and balance students’ diverse practices and capacities, a range of curriculum and pedagogic possibilities. It requires that you continually engage with and examine the broad repertoire of practices and events emergent in the new and changeable economies, cultures and institutions that we inhabit” (Luke & Freebody, 2003, p.6).

This model, therefore, attempted to synthesize the varying range of roles that a reader engages in when interacting with texts, roles that cannot be applied universally, but that shift and intersect in accordance with the context in which they are employed.

The four roles set out by this model are that of a code breaker, which references the skills and practices required to decode the physical elements of the text, a text participant, which relate to the comprehension skills with which the reader extracts the meaning of the text, a text user, which involves developing an understanding of the purpose of the text, and a text analyst, which is concerned with the readers’ critical understanding of the construction of the text within specific social contexts (Luke & Freebody, 2003). An important aspect of this model is the idea that these roles can, and should, be employed simultaneously in order for the reader to be considered efficient. As it pertains to teaching literacy, this suggests that, when reading at school, learners should be given the space to “play all of these four roles and draw on all four sets of resources” (Bua-lit collective, 2018, p.8). Numerous studies have shown, however, that, as a result of strict testing regimes being employed in schools, the teaching of literacy and literature has been reduced to focusing primarily on the skills required to decode and extract ‘pre-determined’ meanings from texts to the detriment of the other two roles of the reader (Jewitt, Jones, & Kress, 2005; Kapp, 2004; Maybin, 2013; Schmidt, 2013; Bua-lit Collective, 2018). Not only has this emphasis on the code breaking and text participant roles been shown to limit learners to literal, functional reading that is situation-specific and ignores more abstract levels of literacy (Bua-lit collective, 2018;

Kapp, 2004), but it also “limits children’s prospects to recipients or consumers of texts, which is a passive role inadequate for rapidly changing societies in need of critical citizens” (Bua-lit collective, 2018, p.9). Limiting literacy pedagogy to decoding and narrow comprehension skill thus impedes learners’ access to literacy skills that are imperative in the modern world.

Within the current South African policy document, however, there has been shown to be little promotion of the four resources model in literacy education in the curriculum (Hoadley & Reed, 2013; Bua-lit collective, 2018; Cairns 2020). The focus of the current CAPS curriculum on decontextualized subject knowledge, skills, and assessment (Hoadley & Reed, 2013) would suggest that the literacy and literature practices advocated for in the curriculum document are entirely concerned with the learners’ development of the text decoding and participant roles, and do not give any weight to practices which involve a critical analysis of a text. Indeed, in their exploration of the weight given to English skills and knowledge in the university education of pre-service Intermediate Phase teachers, Bowie and Reed (2016) found that only one of the five universities examined included literature or working with texts as being a part of the content knowledge the pre-service English teachers were required to be exposed to (Bowie & Reed, 2016, p.114). It is evident, therefore, that the four-resource model has not been taken up by the curriculum, and is, therefore, not adequately present in teacher preparation or classroom literacy pedagogy, resulting in a focus on decoding and limited participant skills rather than all four roles required for the development of critical reading practices.

In terms of literature teaching, it follows that focusing on ‘schooled’ texts that promote the use of code breaking and comprehension skills over the other two roles has a similar effect. In the UK, Maybin (2013) demonstrated that the use of what was deemed ‘unofficial’ texts by the school, as they were not in line with the texts used to promote code breaking skills, allowed for the learners to develop comprehension techniques more effectively than when limited to only working with ‘schooled’ texts. Maybin (2013), concludes her study by explaining that,

“comprehension techniques are not an end in themselves, as they sometimes appear to be in official activities, but are used by children in the context of an intense emotional, moral and humorous engagement with texts. This engagement drives their response, which

includes a critical sensitivity to language and form, expressed especially through the revoicing” (Maybin, 2013, p.65).

This finding was reinforced by Schmidt (2016), who advocated for the use of multiple text-types in the classroom to promote “strategies that enable [learners] to sift, analyse, interpret and comprehend all sorts of messages, stories and information in a variety of media and genres” (Schmidt, 2013, p.311). Thus, the focus on code breaking roles of literacy in the classroom and the ‘schooled’ texts that promote them, can be detrimental to the learners access to literacy skills, specifically in the literature classroom, as this emphasis not only ignores the more active reading roles and the skills that arise therefrom, but also fails to properly engage learners in literature reading altogether. As a result, the ways in which teachers make use of texts and the literacy practices they promote are all the more important to consider, as these play a role in allowing learners to access texts and literacy skills in ways that are either passive and situation-specific, or active, abstract, and critical.

## **2.2. Review of Literature**

When it comes to the exploration of effective literacy teaching, one cannot ignore the impact of teacher agency and identity, both personal and professional, in the implementation of policy and practice. Numerous studies have demonstrated the influence the teacher’s worldviews can have on practice (Goodson & Choi, 2008; Goodson & Numan, 2002; Mendelowitz, 2010; Furlong, 2013; Bell, 2016) with some going so far as to claim that a teacher’s beliefs and conceptions can be “far more influential in determining teachers’ decisions and behaviours than knowledge.” (Furlong, 2013, p.70). This influence has been shown to be even more predominant in situations in which teachers are presented with conflicting ideas in policy and learned practice, resulting in them relying on their own experiences, conceptions of language and literacy, and beliefs to mediate competing ideologies in the field of education (Kennetz, Litz, Riddlebarger, Tennant & Dickson, & Stringer, 2020). As a result of this constant negotiation, “many teachers have eventually begun regarding themselves as experts, guided by a set of beliefs in accordance with which they try to conduct their classrooms.” (Kennetz et.al., 2020, p.84). In addition, in their exploration of teacher agency in the classroom, Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson (2015) showed that “teacher agency is highly dependent upon the personal qualities that teachers bring to their work” (p.636). It is

evident, therefore, that the personal and professional experiences, knowledge, and beliefs that a teacher brings with them plays a role in determining the level of agency they enact in their practice.

However, recent studies have theorized that, in addition to this personal factor, context and situational conditions play a role in determining the level of agency a teacher enacts in the classroom. This suggests that agency itself is not an innate quality, but rather comes about as a result of the interplay between a teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and the context in which they're teaching (Biesta et.al., 2015; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). In their study on the conditions which constrain and enable teacher agency in South African Schools, Long, Graven, Sayed, and Lampen (2017) demonstrated how teacher agency in the classroom can be obstructed by the curriculum and testing regimes which, in turn, results in teachers being labelled as complicit in the failure of those regimes. This suggests that the interplay that exists between the curriculum, schooling contexts, and the teacher's beliefs and knowledge is what results in the agency enacted by the teacher in the development of their practice. It follows, therefore, that a comprehensive exploration of literature teaching in primary schools requires an examination of the teachers' worldviews, beliefs and conceptions of literacy, as these have been shown to be the key component in mediating conflicting expectations from varying schooling contexts, parents, the curriculum, and Education department.

It is here where the use of narrative histories becomes a relevant tool in the exploration of teacher identity and agency. In the field of education, narrative history research has largely been used to explore the ongoing formation of professional identities in pre-service teachers (Rodgers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006; Furlong, 2013; Park, Rinke & Mawhinney, 2016), as the use of personal narratives has been shown to "provide an important means of making explicit previously unexamined and tacit beliefs and preconceptions of student teachers: a touchstone for student teachers and researchers to explore their teacher identities and lay theories" (Furlong, 2013, p.69). In addition, an in-depth and critical analysis of the personal history given by the teacher allows researchers to "see the interactive dynamics between teacher professionalism and the beginner [teacher's] upbringing, educational background, initial commitment, immediate workplace as well as the wider social historical contexts" (Goodson & Choi, 2008, p.7). This suggests that the use of

narrative histories allows for an analysis of the many intersecting elements of teacher identity and experience which is congruent with the characteristics of literate habitus discussed above. Studies have unpacked the influence of many different aspects of identity, such as cultural capital, habitus, literacy and language socialisation, policy, and social context on the practices deployed by teachers (Goodson & Choi, 2008; Goodson & Numan, 2002; Furlong, 2013; Bell, 2016; Park et.al., 2016), and the appropriate analysis of a teacher's narrative history ensures the investigation of each of these elements. Thus, narrative history analysis allows for a critical exploration of the elements of professional and personal identity that impact on teacher practice, without essentialising teacher agency by attempting to trace its origin to any singular aspect of identity. This study is, therefore, concerned with exploring teacher's personal narratives as these narratives, in conjunction with the teacher's own perceptions of their specific learners, schooling contexts and conceptions of effective literacy teaching, are key in the development and deployment of specific practices for teaching literacy.

While this study is particularly concerned with the teachers' perceptions of effective literature teaching in their classrooms, it is still necessary to give an overview of what is widely considered to be valuable and effective practice in literature classrooms. In terms of language teaching, numerous researchers have demonstrated how the inclusion and utilization of the linguistic resources learners already have through practices such as translanguaging and trans-semiotising, not only allows them easier access to new discourses, but also positions learners as resourceful, resulting in increased confidence, motivation and identity performance in the language classroom (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016; Lin, 2019). While these studies focus on the use of English language teaching as a whole, it follows that practices such as these could be equally valuable when applied to literature teaching. In terms of practices that have been advocated for specifically with regards to literacy teaching, the critical approach to literacy is one which has been shown to yield results in allowing children access to dominant discourses in texts while simultaneously encouraging the application of more diverse and critical ways of thinking surrounding the text (Alim, 2010; Janks, 2010). Researchers such as Hall (1998), Vasquez (2008), and Exley, Woods, and Dooley (2014) have demonstrated how the use of critical pedagogies in their early grade classrooms have allowed learners of young ages to interrogate the ways in which

texts are constructed and how these constructions can be challenged by the applications of different world views. Furthermore, these studies have demonstrated how positioning learners as interrogators of texts who bring knowledge of their own that is valued and realistically applied to the real-world problems that arise from the text, resulted in a palpable engagement, motivation and participation from the learners that was unmatched by more standard literacy activities (Hall, 1998, p.11). While critical literacy studies have more notably been pursued in the Foundation Phase, a key tenet of the practice is tailoring themes and activities around the specific learners' backgrounds and interests, which suggests these practices could be equally effective in Intermediate Phase literacy classrooms. It is important to note, once again, that the inconsistency of resources, both physical and linguistic, that exist in classrooms in South Africa, make it difficult to claim that these practices could be implemented across the country with equal effectiveness and to similar outcomes. It is for this reason, and the reasons discussed above, that this study is concerning itself with the practices described by the teachers as being effective in their experiences, whether these practices are borne from their views on a variety of issues, how they intersect with the prescribed texts, and how this influences motivation and response in learners from diverse backgrounds. This focus on an intersection of variables will hopefully allow this study to describe in detail the ways in which teachers begin to develop their practices based on their perceptions and experiences in a variety of teaching contexts.

With the focus of this study being on the experiences and perceptions of teachers in the literature classroom, one cannot discount the importance of the text choice itself. Following the above description of the ways in which inclusive practices that value and make use of the cultural backgrounds learners bring with them allow for learners to access literature learning in more effective ways, it would also follow that the texts that are made use of in the classroom should be equally culturally relevant and inclusive. Kibler and Chapman (2019) describe the use of culturally relevant texts as being “beneficial for all students, but this is an especially promising practice for culturally and linguistically diverse youths” (p.741). The use of culturally relevant texts in the classroom has been shown to not only be productive in encouraging reading and increased participation in classroom discussions and group meaning-making activities, but also results in easier comprehension and increased fluency in reading (Tatum, 2000; Ebe, 2010; Dodge &

Crutcher, 2015; Clark & Fleming, 2019; Kibler & Chapman, 2019; Clark, 2020). It is important to note that, in their description of culturally relevant texts, Clark and Fleming (2019) made a clear distinction between traditional texts and culturally relevant texts, stating, “it is critical to consider contemporary events, situations, and settings that reflect and tap into children’s daily experiences. CRTs offer multiple opportunities for children to connect aspects of their everyday lives with facets of the text in order to enhance comprehension” (p.24). This suggests that, while the learning of traditionally cultural folktales is important, these texts are not necessarily relevant in the ways that would make them easily accessible to learners, which appears to be a hallmark of a culturally relevant text. While most of these studies originate from the North American context, they all explore areas in which the learners are primarily from diverse racial and linguistic backgrounds, such as African American or Latino/a communities (Tatum, 2000; Ebe, 2010). These contexts, while differing from the South African context this study is investigating, do still share the elements of linguistic and racial diversity, as well as the inequalities and prejudices that occur as a result of the historical marginalisation of racialized communities. It would appear, then, that one of the key methods by which literature learning can be made more accessible to learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds is to ensure that the texts they are learning from are culturally relevant to them.

While it cannot be contended that the content of the texts themselves and the ways in which learners feel represented, mis-represented, or under-represented in that text, have a huge impact on their conceptions of self and constructions of their identities in the world (Moje, Luke, Davies, & Street, 2009), equally important are the ways in which the texts are presented and engaged with. Lloyd (2016) shows in her study of literature teaching in a no-fee Cape Town high school that, even when a text is selected that is a seemingly relatable representation of the specific learners’ social and cultural worlds, the ways in which the text is handled by the teacher can still promote the norms and values of dominant groups of societies (Lloyd, 2016, p.5). The findings of Lloyd’s study showed that, although the selected text lent itself to meaningful engagement that resonated with the learners’ experiences, “neither the reading and discussion of the text nor the questions in the writing task afforded the learners the opportunity to explore those aspects of the text that could have been meaningful for them, especially in ways that could develop them as critical readers who

are learning how to challenge dominant power relations” (Lloyd, 2016, p.5). Similarly, in their study on the use of culturally relevant texts in Latino/a classrooms in the US, Kibler and Chapman (2019) propose that, for these texts to be successful, “teachers may need to gain deeper understandings of themselves, their students, their students’ families and neighborhoods, and their communities at large” (p.744). Additionally, some studies have claimed that, through the use of specific pedagogies, learners have been able to relate strongly to and engage with texts that, historically, do not share the elements of culturally relevant texts (Pike, 2003; Youssef, 2009). Youssef (2009) found that his learners at a historically Black university in the US reacted more positively to Western classical literature through a process of “revision and adjustment where students are able to gain proximity to the learning material, identify it with their own experiences, revisit the material, and develop a sense of ownership of the products they create” (p.31), resulting in the learners themselves expressing that they related more to this material than to the examples of African-American poetry that could be said to be more culturally relevant to that specific group of learners (Youssef, 2009, p.29). It is apparent, therefore that, while one cannot discount the importance of text selection and representation in literature, the overall effectiveness of the text in providing access to the learners in a non-exclusionary manner still rests to a large extent with the teacher and the ways in which they choose to present and engage their learners with the text.

## **Conclusion**

As this review of prior literature demonstrates, there are many elements that can contribute to the practices engaged in in the literacy classroom such as the exercising of teacher agency within constraints, the practices associated with the education of a diverse learner base, and the selection of culturally, relevant texts. Through the use of the theories of literate habitus, conceptions and orientations towards literacies, and associated models of literacy, this study aims to provide a thorough exploration of these elements in the narratives of Intermediate Phase English teachers in the literature classroom.

### 3.1. Research Design

Following the traditions of qualitative research methods in the development of detailed understandings within social contexts (Cresswell, 2007, p.51), this study will take the form of a narrative study that explores the life histories of Intermediate Phase English teachers. Narrative research is made use of to explore the experiences of the participants involved, and is generally concerned with, “the events that have happened in people's lives and the way in which people have responded to these events within a particular context” (Bold, 2012, p.6). Given that this study is attempting to describe the backgrounds of teachers and explore the ways in which their lived experiences and conceptions of literacy influence how they describe their literature teaching practice, the use of narrative history is appropriate as it allows for a full, descriptive exploration of the elements of the teachers’ lives that may play a role in influencing their practice. Furthermore, the application of an experience-centered approach to narrative research, which shifts the focus of the study from the events that occurred in the teachers’ lives to the ways in which they make meaning of these events in context (Bold, 2012), will allow this study to delve into the literate habitus of the teachers in order to fully examine the ways in which they conceive of and teach literature.

As a result of the narrative focus of the study, the primary source of data is in the form of semi-structured interviews with five Intermediate Phase English educators. Interview data has been shown to be particularly valuable in the exploration of peoples’ life histories and the ways in which they respond to and develop particular conceptions of the world based on their prior experiences (Bold, 2012). Given that a large portion of this study is concerned with the development of teachers’ literate habitus (Gennrich & Janks, 2013) and the ways in which these are formed, adapted, and disrupted through personal and professional experiences, it follows that interview data would be the most effective in examining the relationships that exist between the teacher’s experiences with, and conceptions of literature teaching. Semi-structured interviews are described as being “generally organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other

questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s” (DiCicco-Bloom, 2006, p.315). Thus, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allows for a detailed narrative driven by the teacher’s recollections and ideas in a way that is evoked through the researcher’s questions, rather than limited by them. Similarly, when performing an interview study, the researcher analyses the data inductively, developing theory based on what exists in the system, rather than the other way around (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). The use of interviews therefore allows for the exploration of the elements actually present in the teachers’ narratives, rather than relying on a selection of themes prior to the collection of the data and driving the participant towards these through structured questioning. While it cannot be said that interview data provides a reliable description of the actual teaching practices that are being employed in the classroom, it has been shown to be effective in exploring “the relationships among educational practices [...] and considerations such as social order, work, individual differences, human and cultural development, and so on.” (Freebody, 2003, p.2). In this way, interview data is valuable to this study as it allows for the exploration of the relationships that exist between the teachers’ experiences, orientations towards literature, and the ways in which they describe their practices.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

As discussed above, the primary source of data examined in the study is that of semi-structured interviews with five Intermediate Phase Educators. The inclusion of five participants was chosen as it allowed enough time in which to ensure an in-depth interview with each participant, which could then be analysed in close detail, while still providing a large enough pool in which to identify common, emerging themes as well as outlying themes, and to compare and contrast these across participants’ accounts. I attempted to interview a range of Intermediate Phase teachers from varying social and racial backgrounds, age groups, and levels of experience in the study. This variance should allow for a detailed analysis of the experiences and orientations which affect each teacher’s habitus, as well as the possibility of studying how the presence and impact of these vary or remain the same for multiple participants from diverse contexts. Four of the five teachers were practicing teaching at the time of the interviews, while one teacher, Agnes, had taken a one-year sabbatical from teaching to pursue her Honours degree. The breakdown of the participants interviewed for the study is as follows:

| Teacher    | Gender | Age      | Race     | Home Language/s   | Grades Taught | No. of Years Teaching |
|------------|--------|----------|----------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Caitlin | Female | Late 20s | White    | English           | Grades 4-9    | 4 years               |
| 2. Alisha  | Female | Late 20s | White    | English           | Grades 5-6    | 8 years               |
| 3. Agnes   | Female | Late 40s | White    | English           | Grades 4-6    | 22 years              |
| 4. Naiya   | Female | Mid 30s  | Black    | isiXhosa/English  | Grades 7-9    | 10 years              |
| 5. Sandra  | Female | Late 20s | Coloured | Afrikaans/English | Grades 4-7    | 5 years               |

It should also be noted that, while an effort was made to include a male Intermediate Phase English educator in the study, I was unable to contact any possible participants of this nature. Given the overall ratio of far fewer male to female educators in the Intermediate Phase however, (Zanetti, 2014; Moss-Racusin, 2016) this lack of representation is not one that should have any bearing on the overall reliability of the study.

The original proposal for this research included a practical element, in which, following the interviews with the teachers, the researcher would observe a number of their literature lessons in order to trace possible relationships between their literate habitus and their resulting practices in the classroom. However, as a result of the 2019 Coronavirus outbreak, the closure of South African schools, and the university's limitations on data collection that were in effect up to October 2020, this practical element could no longer be included. As such, this study had to be redesigned to allow remote data collection in the form of online interviews rather than face-to-face meetings, which would have been preferred. In addition, the participants were selected remotely, through the utilization of email and social media. Despite this, I attempted to move beyond my close circle of teacher friends, and the resulting pool of participants consisted of only one participant that I had known well prior to the interview, two participants that were distant acquaintances, and two participants that I had never met prior to the interview. Considering that interviews are often viewed as a co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Andrews, 2013), this relative distance between the participants and myself should allow for any rapport developed during the interview to be centered primarily around the teacher's experiences in the literature classroom rather than any other personal or social connection.

Each interview was conducted remotely through an online video call forum, as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions on social contact in place at that time. With the informed consent of the participants, both the video and the audio of the interviews were recorded onto my device and transcribed by myself in a detailed fashion, with specific care given to the description of non-verbal indicators of meaning, such as gestures and glances, alongside the verbal transcription. Although these non-verbal indicators are not analysed in the study in the traditional sense, as might be done in classroom observational data (Cresswell, 2007), they were felt to be of particular value to the interviewer through the conveyance of additional information important to the construction of overall meaning in the narrative. According to Blommaert and Jie (2010) “interviews, like every form of human interaction, always have a metalevel. It is not just what people tell you, but also how they tell it that requires our attention” (p.43). The inclusion of this metalevel of communication in the way the data is transcribed allows for a more detailed account of the teachers’ narratives, especially considering the remote nature of the interviews, as it allowed for the consideration of whole-body sensemaking, which makes use of action modes of meaning rather than just the spoken (Tyler, under review). During the interviews themselves, while not being in the physical presence of the participants, the ways in which the teachers made use of gestures, glanced around the room, or even shifted in their chairs, conveyed to me important signals regarding the issues being discussed, and, in my opinion, these signals are just as emphatic in their written form as they were in the physical interview.

The extracts contained below, which contain Agnes’ recollections of reading aloud as a young child, demonstrate the effectiveness of the chosen method of transcription. The first extract contains only the transcription of the audio, with no non-verbal indicators;

“um, I can clearly remember being the person who read out loud in class because I could. So, it was – everybody else was, ‘huh – uh – um’ on the words and it would be, like, ‘Oh, for God’s sake, can I just read, please?’” (Agnes.04:30)

This in comparison with the same extract transcribed including non-verbal indicators, denoted in italics and contained between asterisks;

“um *\*stares off into the distance and pauses for a long while\** I can clearly remember being the person who read out loud in class because I could. *\*laughs\** So, it was – everybody else was, *\*mimes stuttering while holding a book\** ‘huh – uh – um’ on the words and it would be, like, *\*rolls eyes and mimes putting up her hand\** “Oh, for God’s sake, can I just read, please?” (Agnes.04:30)

The clear sense of frustration conveyed in the second extract is highly valuable in the analysis of the teachers’ literate habitus as it clearly indicates the way in which she correlates fluent reading-aloud with competence and status. These emotions, and the implication thereof, are not so clearly conveyed in the first extract and, it is for this reason that I have transcribed the non-verbal data in this way throughout.

The table below indicates the transcription conventions made use of when transcribing the data.

| Convention        | Meaning  |
|-------------------|--|
| –                 | Brief pause in speech.   |
| ?                 | Rising inflection towards end of speech indicating either a question or uncertainty. |
| !                 | Increased emphasis or volume.  |
| “Wow”             | Indicates the teacher is quoting/relaying something said to them by a third party.   |
| [school’s name]   | Anonymised identifying information.  |
| <i>Italics</i>    | Indicates the title of a book or text.   |
| <i>*italics*</i>  | Gestures / non-verbal indicators.  |
| {audio breaks up} | Inaudible section of audio due to technical difficulties.                            |

### 3.3. Ethical Considerations

The interviews with the teachers occurred via whichever remote platform the teacher was most comfortable with (Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp Call etc.) and each interview was recorded onto the interviewer’s device. All audio and visual recordings were taken with the full written consent of each of the participants, and saved and labelled under pseudonyms to protect the teachers’

identities. Similarly, within the study itself, the teachers will be referred to by pseudonyms, and any learners, lecturers, or schools they refer to by name will be omitted or altered in order to ensure anonymity. The participants were provided with an information letter which detailing the interview process and the ways in which their confidentiality would be protected, as well as a consent form in order to provide informed consent. Blank copies of these documents have been provided in the appendices for reference. These documents as well as details of the ethical considerations taken place by this study were submitted to the ethics committee, which provided the study with ethical clearance (code RZKYUM001).

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Due to the fact that this study makes use of one data source and contains no other observational elements, it is imperative that the analysis of each interview is particularly robust and thorough. In order to ensure a rich exploration of the data, the interviews were analysed through a combination of thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis. Thematic analysis is described as being primarily used to “identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants’ lived experience, views and perspectives, and behavior and practices” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p.297). As this study is particularly interested in the links that exist between a teacher’s experiences, beliefs, and behaviour surrounding literature teaching, it follows that thematic analysis is an appropriate tool in identifying and analysing these elements as they exist within the interview data. The process of thematic analysis was achieved by first becoming familiar with the data through the act of transcription, a process which is essential in thematic analysis as it allows for more rigorous coding of the data in order to identify the themes that could be read most prominently (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Following this, the data was coded around the following five areas; the teachers’ conceptions of literature, the teachers’ conceptions of teaching, the teachers’ conceptions of their learners, the teachers’ conceptions of texts, and the teachers’ descriptions of their own practices. Following the identification of these codes several themes were identified as being key to the analysis of the data, namely, the teachers’ personal histories and orientation towards literature and texts, the teachers’ descriptions and perceptions of their teaching practices as influenced by their orientations, the teachers’ perceptions of text reliability, and the enacting of teacher agency.

As thematic analysis is concerned with patterns and relationships (Bold, 2012), these themes were analysed first within each interview in order to develop a rich exploration of each teachers' literate habitus and the elements of their backgrounds and personal and professional experiences that resulted in the formation or disruption of this habitus in their teaching practice. Following this individual analysis, the elements of their experiences that influenced habitus and practices were compared to that of the other teachers in order to discover whether any relationship existed between the ways in which each teacher's habitus was formed and/or disrupted, and the factors and experiences that had an influence on this process. It is here where features of discourse analysis come into play in the analysis of the data, as interview data is dependent upon a rich analysis of the ways in which the participant constructs a narrative of their experiences and orientations through their speech (Andrews, 2013). In their exploration of the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to literacy education research, specifically with regards to classroom research, Rogers and Schaenen (2014) described this process of analysis as being "especially characterized by an interest in the properties of real language by users in context, a study of action and interaction, an interest in the nonverbal aspects of communication, and a focus on the social and cognitive aspect of interaction" (Rogers & Schaenen, 2014, p.122). With regards to educational research, this suggests that Critical Discourse Analysis is not only interested in the ways in which power relations and meanings are conveyed through discourse practices in the classroom (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; Rogers & Schaenen, 2014), but also in the ways these are reinforced through non-verbal gestures, like the ones included in this study in the transcription of the data. This inclusion is imperative in developing an analysis that does not simply look at the events that the teachers are describing, but the ways in which they describe them in terms of specific word choices and contextual clues, as these can provide insight into the teachers' personal orientations and conceptions. In addition, this shifting of focus to include not only what the teachers say, but how they say it as well, is congruent with the experience-centered approach to narrative research as discussed above (Bold, 2012).

The following data analysis will, therefore, start with an exploration of each teacher's background, beliefs, and personal and professional experiences in order to fully explore the development of

their literate habitus, before examining their described practice and the elements that they perceive to have the greatest impact on these. This analysis will attempt to shed greater light on the ways in which these teachers develop practice in order to enact agency in their teaching of literature and the factors they describe as having an influence on this process.

“With literature, there’s no right or wrong answer”  
(Naiya.23:45)

The analysis of the data has been divided into two chapters. In this chapter, a description of each teacher’s narrative history will be given, specifically as it pertains to their literature experiences in their personal life, and their schooling, and professional lives. This description will be used to develop an understanding of the ways in which the formation of their literate habitus informs their current relationship with literature and literature teaching. Finally, this chapter will analyse the descriptions the teachers give of their teaching practices, as well as their perceptions of what counts as successful practice, in order to determine to what extent their literate habitus and conceptions of literacy have an impact on their approach to literature teaching.

#### **4.1. Personal Histories and Orientations towards Literature and Texts**

One of the preeminent features of the data was the connection that could be drawn between the participants’ social backgrounds, past experiences with literature in their own lives, and their orientation to literacy and texts as a teacher. As an introduction to each teacher, I begin with a quote that I feel captures the essence of their narratives, before moving on to the descriptions of their social class backgrounds, upbringings, and conceptions of literature and texts. Later, these will be applied to their descriptions of their approaches to literature teaching in order to ascertain the possible influence their literate habitus has on their teaching.

##### **Caitlin**

“So, [teaching literature] was a really scary experience for me, because I really did not know how to teach it. So, kind of, all the knowledge I was getting was from people who had been teaching – uh – beforehand, just to try and get their views and opinions on how I should teach it. Um – but I never really got a clear answer, so it was really difficult.” (Caitlin.07:22)

Based on the ways in which Caitlin describes her upbringing in a nuclear, religious household with access to amenities, such as being able to frequently purchase her own books and going on family trips to the beach and other holiday destinations (Caitlin.02:01; 02:48; 03:23), it is evident that she was raised in a suburban, middle-class home. When addressing her socialization into reading, Caitlin discusses how her parents read to her as a young child, but they themselves only read on particular occasions, such as on holiday, not in “an everyday sort of way” (Caitlin.02:01). As she grew older and found herself in control of her own reading habits, Caitlin describes falling into a similar pattern as her parents, specifically taking the time to read when it was assigned to her at school, or as a holiday activity, but “on normal days, like, I wouldn’t go home and read a book” (Caitlin.03:23). Having fallen into this pattern, Caitlin goes on to recount how an encounter with a specific series of books as a teenager sparked her enjoyment of reading as an everyday activity, stating;

“I actually connected so well with this – this author and just her characters and I – um – absolutely loved reading. That’s when I started reading at home, so, like, staying up late and reading those books and really enjoying them.” (Caitlin.03:23)

The connection that she describes having with this series of books appears centered around their portrayal of experiences that were similar to the ones she was having as a teenager (Caitlin.05:50). Interestingly, this theme of relatable experiences seems to mirror those that appeared in the types of books her parents would read to her as a young child, which she describes as being very “family-oriented” (Caitlin.00:49), which would probably have seemed very familiar to her. Upon entering university, however, she recounts how her passion for reading “completely died” (Caitlin.03:23) as a result of the pressure to read academic articles in a critical manner with a focus on decoding and annotating (Caitlin.43:51). This, she reports, has resulted in her no longer reading for pleasure to this day (Caitlin.04:34), but rather in specific circumstances, like she describes her parents having done.

As a result of the experiences described, Caitlin has seemingly developed a conception of literature which sees it as demarcated in terms of purpose. Her parents’ reading habits, which appear to have highly influenced her own, conceive of reading for pleasure as an occasional activity, consigned to particular situations and contexts, such as ‘beach reading,’ a type of reading which exists entirely

separately from the more structured types of reading one does for learning purpose, like the ones she engaged in at university. This view of literature, demarcated along the lines of purpose and occasion, is apparent in the ways in which Caitlin approached teaching literature to primary school learners, as will be shown later in the chapter, as she often describes her lessons as being entirely focused on the structural elements of the text (Caitlin.27:54), while any reading activities centered around the content of the text or any enjoyment thereof, are only engaged in as additional activities (Caitlin.40:25). This not only suggests a possible connection between the personal experiences teachers have with reading and texts throughout their lives and their overall ideological orientation towards literature and text, but also reveals the impact these have on the teachers' literature teaching practices.

## **Alisha**

“And you’re just standing there going, *\*mimes looking down at a book in her hands and put on a monotonous voice\** “The boy went here blah, blah, blah.” *\*gestures to herself with both hands\** Because my experience was, like – the only experience I’d actually had of it was being a student *\*throws left arm out as if to indicate something far away\** in a classroom at school. [...] Um – and it meant – it meant that *\*gestures to herself by placing her hand on her chest\** I had to do a lot more work – um – when I taught a lesson like that, but it paid off in the end. And I almost realized that my teaching changed – that I had to stop *\*holds up left hand as if to stop someone\** and explain things a lot more than my teachers would have at school.” (Alisha.20:08)

Alisha’s description of her upbringing, including the access she was allowed to literature in many formats, such as through purchasing, going to the library, and electronically, as well as the ways in which she contrasts her recollections of growing up with that of her underprivileged learners (Alisha.00:27; 02:35; 20:08), suggest that she, like Caitlin, comes from a middle-class background. When asked about her literacy socialization, Alisha recounts being surrounded by reading from multiple sources and in multiple contexts, describing her young life as follows;

“So, my – my parents have always loved to read, especially my father. He would always have books and he reads like crazy, and he’s – he likes books so much that my mom could

never get enough from the library at one time [...] So, like, I grew up in a home where *\*counts on her fingers\** my parents read to me before bed – um – with my – my friends at school, *\*gestures as if to indicate a large group\** they all were readers, which encouraged me as well.” (Alisha.00:27)

Not only did she find herself encouraged to read from multiple fronts, but the practice of reading, rather than being an individual endeavor, became primarily a social activity for Alisha, with her describing frequent familial discussions surrounding their favourite reading materials, which resulted in exposure to a mix of genres as a result of recommendations from her friends and family (Alisha.02:35). Upon reaching high school, however, Alisha found herself “less interested, in that I was bored, and it was such a *\*makes the shape of a box with her hands\** rigid, structured way of doing things that I wasn’t actually interested in reading.” (Alisha.00:27). This loss of interest in reading could be as a result of the lack of inclusion of the social practice of reading that she had become accustomed in her personal life, an interpretation that is supported by the fact that, upon entering a learning environment that was more social when studying English Literature at university, she found her passion for reading returning as a direct result of the enthusiasm shown by her lecturers (Alisha.00:27). In addition, she describes the method of learning literature at university to be centered around the students developing their own ideas about the books and then sharing and validating those through discussions and debates;

“So, like, *\*waves left hand as if to indicate a group of people\** we had to read it, we had to understand it and then, in the lectures it was, like, *\*flicks hands in the air in an excited manner, then mimes pointing to different people\** debates! Like, “OK, you sit on that side, you sit on that side. What do we think? Get into groups, write an essay, discuss it!” (Alisha.09:01).

This practice of social reading and learning continued through the study of her PGCE which, following the frequent absences of her lecturers, she described as being, “more like a *\*makes a circle with both hands and gestures as if the circle is moving and changing\** collaborative study between us [the students]” (Alisha.09:56). It is evident, therefore, that a thread runs through Alisha’s literature experiences, one which demonstrates her affinity for a collaborative and social practice approach to reading.

As a result of these experiences, Alisha's orientation towards literature and texts seems to be that, in order to develop a meaningful understanding of a text, it is imperative to start from a place of engagement and enthusiasm. This orientation is made evident through her description of her literature teaching practices, in which she describes the importance of engagement as follows;

“I always try and, sort of, *\*makes a circular gesture with both hands\** create the atmosphere for them before we actually get into the story.” (Alisha.31:15)

Furthermore, she views literature as more ideological, seeing the structural aspects of literature as being accessed through pleasurable reading (Alisha.16:33), not through separate reading practices, as described by Caitlin. In addition, Alisha makes use of social practice as a key element in her practice, making use of plays and debates wherever possible to include that social element in her teaching. (Alisha.35:02) This demonstrates the impact that her experiences with social literature learning that focused on shared meanings and engagement had on her beliefs on what literature is, how it is learned, and her practice in the classroom.

## **Agnes**

“It's so difficult because basically I want to be able to sit with each child and – and go over it from start – from scratch, but there's no time to do that, *\*leans forward\** and who's to say that my way of doing it is the right way of doing it? *\*laughs and shrugs\** I've, you know, I've never officially been trained in how to teach literature. So, *\*shrugs\** ja. Where do you learn that? *\*laughs\**” (Agnes.21:03)

Agnes's description of her upbringing suggests that she grew up in a lower middle-class household to the previous two teachers, given that her parents were separated, her father was not heavily involved in her upbringing, and she attended a local public school that was not as well-resourced as the previous teachers' schools (Agnes.01:10; 03:43). Agnes describes many of her literature practices growing up as more individual, even before she could read, recalling, “there were lots of *\*nods for emphasis\** books in my house. [...] Picking it up and *\*mimes paging through a book\** having a look – before I could read, even, I remember paging through Richard Scarry”

(Agnes.01:10). This doesn't necessarily imply there were no social practices around reading when she was young, but rather that the practices that made an impression on her were primarily individual. As she grew up, learned to read, and attended school, she vividly describes developing a competitive approach to reading;

“I clearly remember being so *\*nods head for emphasis\** chuffed with myself having learnt to read so fluently and I was so chuffed to be able to sit on the mat [...] and [there was] this little girl sitting next to me, who was a very good reader as well, – and I was determined *\*holds up one finger emphatically\** I was going to be a better reader than her.”  
(Agnes.01:10)

Her competitive drive, along with the ways in which she classifies her parents in terms of the text types they pursued (Agnes.03:43) suggests a level of status attributed to what and how one reads. This is further acknowledged in her description of her attitude to reading in high school, as she asserts, “I can clearly remember being the person who read out loud in class because I could. *\*laughs\** So, it was – everybody else was, *\*mimes stuttering while holding a book\** “huh – uh – um” on the words and it would be, like, *\*rolls eyes and mimes putting up her hand\** “Oh, for God's sake, can I just read, please?” (Agnes.04:30). In addition, Agnes describes her schooling and university experiences as being very skills-focused (Agnes.06:29), which suggests she was taught to teach literature in a way that foregrounded the learners' skill level, and the texts they were assigned to read were chosen based on which skills they needed to practice.

This heavy focus on skills in her education background, combined with the personal status attributed to fluent and skillful reading in her own life, suggest an autonomous conception to literacy that views literature learning as synonymous with skill-development. While acknowledging the importance of reading for pleasure as a child (Agnes.43:47), she herself describes the types of reading done in her own life as “clearly demarcated” (Agnes.05:42) and often in her interview, equates literature teaching with the teaching of skills, relegating pleasurable reading activities to additional time (Agnes.15:06), in a similar manner to that of Caitlin. This is indicative of a demarcated view of literature in line with the autonomous orientation to literacy as

addressed in the theory, in that it is evident Agnes views both literacy and literature as consisting of separable, demarcated skills that can be taught and employed as such regardless of context. This is evident in her apparent focus on skills, which comes through in her described practice in the classroom, as well as the ways in which she describes her learners, frequently referring back to their skills levels, for example, “their level of reading was *\*nods for emphasis\** quite poor – um – their spelling was atrocious” (Agnes.15:06). The constant referrals of the skills levels of her learners throughout the interview (Agnes.15:06; 18:51; 21:03; 24:27; 35:50) reinforces the idea that the structural aspects of literature learning are the ones that, in Agnes’s perspective, are the most important when it comes to literature education.

## **Naiya**

“For me, mostly, my passion lies in the work itself. For me, teaching is this interesting thing that changes all of the time. That’s ever-changing. And I can put together the perfect lesson, and it’ll work perfectly for this group of kids. And then, next year, I use that exact same lesson for a different group of kids, and it falls on its face, and I have to go back and rework it. So – so, teaching is this thing that I have to, like, rework, and re-adjust , and – and re-perfect all the time. Every time. So, it challenges me all the time, it’s perfect all the time, it’s a mess all the time, and I love that.” (Naiya.12:40)

While Naiya’s family were originally from the rural Eastern Cape, her descriptions of her upbringing in terms of access to books in many formats and her attending Model C schools which she describes as being mostly White spaces, suggest that she, too, is from a middle-class social background (Naiya.01:00; 08:23; 20:38). Naiya begins by describing her reading habits growing up as a very personal endeavor, recounting,

“so, my parents didn’t read to me, but I do remember having a lot of books around. My mom signed up to, like, this book club thing that would send me all kinds of books about snakes, and animals, and stories, and so on. [...] I would go to the library, and I would take out books, and I would read books, and so on.” (Naiya.01:00)

One of the key recollections she has of reading at all ages, is the lack of familiar context she experienced as a Black South African reader. She recalls, “what I do remember is that – for me, context was – was my struggle. [...] The context was America, where, at Christmas, it snowed, and there were Christmas trees, and gifts were exchanged and that wasn’t – that wasn’t a context that I was living” (Naiya.01:00). This idea of representation of familiar contexts in literature is particularly interesting, as it becomes clear throughout Naiya’s interview that this idea of a familiar context is multi-faceted, having to do with more than just her race;

“And – and, funny enough, for me, Black stories that I read before were very much like, the struggle. It was all about, like, the struggle, and apartheid, you know? Once in a while, you just want to read just a normal South African story, when they refer to Louis Botha [Avenue in Johannesburg] and you know what they’re talking about.” (Naiya.04:47).

This is not to discount the importance of race in familiar literature contexts, as Naiya recalls reading about a South African context from a White perspective as part of her high school literature studies and feeling that to be an unfamiliar context in its Whiteness, despite the fact it was set in a recognizable geographical context (Naiya.02:17). It appears, therefore, that for Naiya, the context that a person brings with them when reading a text results from an intersection of their experiences based on numerous factors, such as geographical location, physical appearance, and relatable experiences. The lack of recognizable contexts in her reading is a theme that runs clearly through Naiya’s experiences with literature and, no doubt, has an effect on how she perceives literature and literature teaching in the present. When addressing her reading practices as an adult, Naiya describes her constant reading for school as a teacher to be a deterrent to reading in her own time, saying, “I read for a living. So, when you’re saying, ‘Do something for you,’ reading is not on the top of my list to do” (Naiya.04:47). That said, she describes a lot of the reading she does to prepare to teach as personally fulfilling, becoming visibly excited when discussing certain texts and authors (Naiya.31:13). The fact that she takes pleasure from reading that falls within the realm of work preparation suggests that her orientation towards literature is not, in fact, separable based on context and situation as was the case with Caitlin and Agnes, so much so that she does seek out pleasurable reading in her own time, having already done so in a way that fulfills her personally at work.

This conception of literature as a personal endeavor based on the context that the reader brings to it, results in an orientation that views literature and literature teaching as more ideological, not rigid or demarcated. This is evidenced by the importance she places on one's personal opinions when reading a text, describing literature as "easier because it's [...] open to discussion and I'm open to be wrong or right. Like, there's no – like, with literature, there's no wrong or right answer" (Naiya.23:45). She expands this notion by describing her classroom as a "learning hub" (Naiya.40:59) going on to say, "we're all there to provide our two cents worth. Um – of course, I'm that one that probably knows the most, but I'm not there to tell you everything that I know. Otherwise, I'm just a university lecturer." (Naiya.40:59). While it could be suggested that this orientation may, in some part, also be influenced by the fact that the majority of Naiya's teaching experiences have been with older high school learners, at which point, by her own admission, "the focus is more on the content than it is on the structure, and the rules" (Naiya.23:45), her application of similar principles of literature teaching to her older primary school learners suggests that her conception of literature is resultant from more than simply the age group she has the most experience teaching.

## **Sandra**

"I wish that I had had better teachers, and that they taught me to love literature, because I think that it does – it's a complete *\*clenches her fist and then opens it wide\** opening up of different worlds to an individual. Like, there are some students that I've come across – and I think it's only because of their reading that they are so excellent. And I think that, just because they have this *\*holds her hands on either side of her head\** broad understanding, because they've been doing this from such a young age, and the parents have done it right, they have this relatability to everything that they learn." (Sandra.46:20)

Sandra's description of her limited access to books as a child, as well as her experiences feeling inadequate in her schooling experiences based on the differences in literacy socialization she experienced compared to her peers (Sandra.04:57; 07:30; 46:20), suggest that, like Agnes, Sandra

comes from a lower/middle class social background. As a child, Sandra describes being surrounded by traditional literacy practices such as reading aloud in class, that she, as a result of her Coloured accent, did not feel she could adequately participate in. When asked about literacy practices in the home, she responded,

“I hated it growing up. Um – my mom used to read to us when we were kids, and she used to read to us when we – when she was pregnant with us. And she believes that this was very good for us, but I – *\*holds both hands up to her head and then brings them away\** I felt a disconnection with literature, just because of the experiences I had. [...] I felt like I was very – I was put on the spot a lot, or I felt not confident reading in front of others, in case I *\*gestures as if taking something from her mouth\** pronounced a word differently because of *\*waves hands around her body as if to indicate a number of surrounding things\** my accent, my background, or the different language that were spoken at home. (Sandra.04:57 – 06:49)

This perceived failure in the realm of what could be termed more traditional literacy skills resulted in Sandra rejecting those practices and pursuing reading practices that were more social and included less ‘traditional’ texts. As a younger child, she describes seeking out reading activities that revolved more around group storytelling, recounting, “despite not reading, I was between *\*holds hand above her head\** an older group of my family and *\*holds hand below her head\** a younger group of my family. So, I would read to the younger group and be told about literature by the older group” (Sandra.04:57). Although these practices involved less text interaction than some of the early practices described by the other teachers, Sandra admitted to finding these activities helped in her schooled literacies, specifically in the areas of vocabulary and creativity (Sandra.04:57). This eschewing of standard literacy practices continued into her university years, with her confessing to developing a system of reading, annotating, and sharing academic articles with her friends in a way which allowed her to do less actual reading while still engaging with the content (Sandra.09:05). This demonstrates her ongoing practice of seeking out less-traditional, social means of interacting with texts in order to avoid the sense of failure she felt when faced with traditional reading practices as a child. In terms of her current reading practices, Sandra admits to reading primarily more short-form material such as pamphlets and internet articles (Sandra.04:27),

as well as non-fiction literature which discusses themes of morality and ethics (Sandra.09:05). This predilection is reflected in her orientation towards teaching as a whole, as she describes one of her goals is to teach learners that, “you’re going to come across other people that you don’t understand, that are, maybe, different from you, and the only thing that you can do is be accepting of them and make them feel comfortable” (Sandra.24:11).

This suggests that Sandra’s orientation towards literature and texts stems primarily from her own negative experiences and perceived failures as a child, with her admitting, “I didn’t want to teach literature and have kids face the same experiences as me, especially with pronunciation.” (Sandra.43:24). Thus, her orientation towards literature is one which is based in morals and ethics and shared through social practices and less traditional texts. This ideology is apparent in her description of her teaching, specifically in schools where she is given freedom to teach whichever texts she chooses in creative ways, with her choice to expose the learners to more ethics-based texts and interactions, such as the principles of different beliefs systems like Hinduism and Greek mythology (Sandra.13:07). In addition, her in-depth knowledge of her learners’ interests demonstrated throughout her interview (Sandra.21:21; 24:11) as well as her attempts to include these interests in her teaching of literature (Sandra.24:11) suggest that she does not want any learner to feel excluded in the way she experienced in school.

### **Personal Histories, Conceptions, and Literate Habitus**

Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from the above explorations of the teachers’ backgrounds and literacy upbringings, specifically with regard to the theory of literate habitus. According to Bourdieu’s theories on social and cultural capital (Carrington & Luke, 1997), the similarity in literate habitus, familial upbringing and social class that exists between the majority of the teachers should have resulted in a similarity in their conceptions and approaches to literacy and literature teaching. However, from the above analysis, it would appear that this is not the case, which supports the hypothesis suggested by Gennrich and Janks (2013), that a person’s earlier literate habitus can, in fact be disrupted by their later experiences. Furthermore, it would appear that Caitlin, Alisha, and Sandra, in particular, not only had congruent familial and social

upbringings, but, in addition, experienced similar trajectories in their early teaching careers, with all three of the teachers beginning teaching in under-resourced, public schools which primarily catered to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Following the theoretical supposition that a disruption of habitus can result from experiencing contexts that are different from the ones in which a person is familiar (Gennrich, 2016), the fact that each of these teachers' first experiences with teaching were in contexts that were far removed from the middle-class, well-resourced backgrounds with which they were familiar, suggests that these teachers had their literate habitus disrupted through similar experiences and events.

Despite this, these teachers appear to have developed differing conceptions of literature, and, as a result, their perceptions of effective practices in the literature classroom vary greatly as well. What this suggests is that the formation and disruption of a person's literate habitus is far more agentic than originally supposed, supporting the supposition that a change in habitus can only be achieved through "conscious effort and practice together with the ability to recognise and inhibit old ways of being" (Gennrich & Janks, 2013, p.457). Alisha demonstrates this idea that conscious effort is required to subvert ones embedded habitus, explaining "I almost realized that my teaching changed – that I had to stop *\*holds up left hand as if to stop someone\** and explain things a lot more than my teachers would have at school. Because we would have been reading at home, and our parents would have discussed things over the dinner table with us and all that" (Alisha.20:08). Following this realization, Alisha describes experiencing more success in her literature teaching, thus demonstrating the conscious effort required to disrupt her habitus in order to develop ways of working within a context that is different from the ones with which she was previously familiar. It would appear, therefore, that when it comes to the formation or disruption of a teacher's literate habitus as it pertains to how this impacts upon their conceptions and approaches to the teaching of literature, there are more elements at work than simply the teacher's literate habitus as shaped by their backgrounds and social class.

Additionally, while the teachers interviewed all broadly belonged to a similar social grouping, issues of racial difference appeared to have a greater impact on their literate habitus and, consequently, on the ways in which they conceived of and approached the teaching of literature,

than their shared social class. This may not be surprising, given the debates on the appropriacy of the category of social class in South Africa, and the often over determining power of racial positioning as a result of historical racial categorisations (Soudien, 2004). Both Naiya, who is isiXhosa speaking, and Sandra, who identified as Coloured, professed that they intentionally attempted to teach English in a more inclusive manner with the explicit goal that their learners would have different experiences with English learning than they did at school. This is demonstrated by the way in which Naiya describes her advocacy for code switching as follows, “when I was a child going to Model C schools, and I was told to speak only English, [that] was absolute nonsense” (Naiya.20:38). Sandra expressed a similar sentiment, saying, “I didn’t want to teach literature and have kids face the same experiences as me, especially with pronunciation” (Sandra.43:24), resulting in her expressing her primary goal in teaching as being one which focuses on inclusion (Sandra.24:11) This conscious element of their practice was not as strongly alluded to by any of the other teachers, all of whom were White.

Furthermore, both Naiya and Sandra, the only Black participants, made use of frequent profanity such as “bullshit” (Naiya.20:38) and “shitty human” (Sandra.24:11) specifically when referring to the ways in which they felt their experiences as English learners were lacking. The use of profanity, which was absent in all of the White teachers’ accounts, telegraphs the emotional response that Naiya and Sandra feel when calling out the ways in which they were subjected to racial microaggressions around accent and code-switching in their English classrooms growing up, and highlights their desire to disrupt this through their own teaching practices. According to McKinney (2011), many ex-model C schools tend to position their learners against an ‘ideal subject’ who is White and middle class (McKinney, 2011), a positioning that is evident in both Naiya Sandra’s accounts. Interestingly, McKinney goes on to show that the rejection of this positioning is possible, but only in cases in which the teacher “is willing to position herself as a learner, and her learners as knowers, in strategic moments and is able to acknowledge the partiality of her own knowledge about the world” (McKinney, 2011, p. 19). While Naiya and Sandra describe no such disruptions occurring in their own schooling career, as teachers, they both report going to great lengths to position their learners as knowers in the classroom (Naiya,40:59, Sandra,24:11), evidencing their desire to disrupt the cycle of class and racial positioning that they were subjected to in their own

lives. This suggests that an entanglement of race and social class exist within Naiya and Sandra, however the impact of social class upbringing on the formations of these teachers' literate habitus and their conceptions of literacy was less present than that of race, and how these teachers were positioned as learners as a result of their race, accent, and linguistic backgrounds. In addition, the way in which both teachers actively voiced their intentional disruption of this positioning through their own teaching practice aligns with the earlier supposition that conscious effort to effect agency on the ways in which they teach literature can have a significant effect on their literate habitus, more so than any deterministic feature of their upbringing, such as social class.

#### **4.2. Described Practices:**

Due to the fact that this study focuses on interview data rather than observational data, any claims made regarding the teachers' practices are solely based on what will be referred to as their 'described practice,' rather than their enacted practice. These practices will be analysed in terms of their perceived effectiveness and how the teachers described and reacted to the responses of their learners to certain practices, as the teachers' perceptions of what counted as successful and unsuccessful practice in the classroom sheds even more light on the impact their literature orientation has on their teaching.

#### **Skills-Focused Practice**

From the above description of the teachers' personal orientations, one of the trends that featured most often was how, as a result of their at home and schooling experiences, Caitlin's and Agnes' conception of literacy appeared to be in line with that of the autonomous model described by Gee (2015) as evidenced by their separation of different types of literacy as being either 'for learning' or 'for pleasure.' The rest of the teachers, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra appeared to view literacy from the ideological standpoint, as evidenced by their emphasis on the importance of a variety of teaching practices. These views on literature were identified as one of the key elements that influenced the focus of each teachers' literature teaching practices, with the teachers who viewed literature teaching from the autonomous standpoint tending towards more skills-focused practices,

while the teachers who held a more ideological view of literature teaching finding themselves attributing more focus to learner engagement with the text.

When it comes to what is being referred to as the skills-focused approach, as described mostly by Caitlin and Agnes, the skills in question are not only language skills, but include variants of ‘book knowledge’ as well as the comprehension skills that the learners are required to engage with when reading the text. It would appear, then, that this approach advocates strongly for learners to master the skills of code breaking and text participant in terms of the four-resources model (Luke & Freebody, 1999), while neglecting to address the roles of text user and analyst. For example, Caitlin details the process whereby she introduces a novel to her learners by analysing the title, cover page, and blurb with the learners and having them break down “what could this mean for the book” (Caitlin,27:54). It is evident then, that, prior to even opening a book, the most important thing for the learners is to be practising the analytical skills required for assessment. Following this introductory lesson to the novel, Caitlin describes her reading practice as follows;

“Starting at Chapter 1 – um – and then, as we’re reading, starting to, just, ask questions that we – we’re gauging understanding of the novel. So, like, ‘Who are some of the first characters that we’ve met, who do we think the main character is – um – where is the setting, what is the plot so far,’ [...] then, as we start reading more and more – um – trying to look more at, like, language and – um – like, maybe, ‘Why are there inverted commas here – um – how should I be reading if there’s an exclamation mark,’ – um – all those sort of things.” (Caitlin,27:54)

From this description, it is apparent that Caitlin’s teaching practice is not only focused on skills learning but, in addition to this, the different skills themselves are delineated and addressed in separate chapters of the text, a further demonstration of her predilection towards an autonomous, demarcated view of literature. Caitlin acknowledges the skills emphasis in her teaching as a conscious one, saying, “when they write that assessment [...] if I haven’t taught them the language and how to answer the question properly or – or how to construct a sentence – um – then I – I feel like it’s almost useless that I taught them the literature” (Caitlin,19:29). This statement could be interpreted as an admission that the skills-focus in Caitlin’s practice is more as a result of necessity for assessment purposes in an under-resourced school, however, Caitlin goes on to describe

making use of similar practices in better funded schools with learners who are, by her own judgement, very good readers (Caitlin.15:32). This indicates that the skills-focus element of her practice with an emphasis on the developments of code-breaking and text participant roles is a consistent one, and correlates to the autonomous view she holds of literature, as discussed above.

Agnes's demonstration of the skills-focused approach to her practice is slightly different to Caitlin, as, in Agnes's experiences teaching Intermediate Phase learners, she has always had a teaching assistant who would remove the learners from the class in groups and "she would test them on their – um – comprehension skills, she would explain the nuances of *\*moves hands back and forth as if to go between two objects\** the comma, and the full-stop and the question mark, and, you know, a lot of gram – grammatical explanation as well." (Agnes.15:06). As a result, in her interview, Agnes refers often to the fact that she does not actually do any literature or reading lessons with the learners, making statements like, "I don't think I've ever [taught literature] in the last four years, to be perfectly honest" (Agnes.28:06) and, "It's such a big part, and I'm missing out on that as a teacher" (Agnes.28:06). Interestingly, despite her fervent assertions that she does not get to teach literature, Agnes does refer to interacting with texts in her classroom with her learners, sometimes through English grammar/language skills lessons, such as those on Parts of Speech (Agnes.24:27), and other times through additional reading activities for pleasure (Agnes.07:36). The implication here is that, to Agnes, the only lessons that 'count' as literature lessons are those which directly address reading skills, such as fluency, comprehension, and grammar/language. In this way, Agnes's approach to literature teaching similarly emphasizes the development of code-breaking and text participant roles of the reader, while viewing activities that could aid in the development of text user and analyst roles as, in her opinion, not necessarily counting towards literature learning. This is made more apparent in Agnes's response when asked about the value of teaching literature, in which she replied;

"You know, when you, you have a Grade 4 child – he came to me for – for tutoring. And this child couldn't read. He literally could not read. He did not know any of the rules"  
(Agnes.18:51)

Her inability to separate the idea of 'literature' from 'reading skills' demonstrates the strength of Agnes's skills-focused approach to literature teaching in that it becomes evident that these two

concepts are, from her perspective, inseparable. As a result, Agnes does not view herself as having experience teaching literature, as she has rarely had the opportunity to teach these skills herself, despite the fact that she has engaged in group reading and even the analysis of texts in terms of descriptive language. It would appear, then, that Agnes's skills-focused approach has a very rigid view of what skills qualify as reading skills, and any other engagement with texts, while acknowledged to be important in general terms, is entirely separate from literature teaching.

From this exploration of Caitlin and Agnes's described practice, it is evident that these two teachers, who showed the most inclination towards a demarcated, autonomous view of literature, have both carried this orientation through to their practice, which they describe as being decidedly skills-focused. For these teachers, a clear line is drawn between the skills that are important in the classroom, that of code breaking and making meaning of the text through text participation, while practices which would allow learners to develop text user and analyst roles are seen as not contributing to the literacy skills which are valued in their classrooms. While both Caitlin and Agnes did refer to making use of reading practices focused on enjoyment and engagement in their classrooms (Caitlin.40:25; Agnes.43:47), the key difference in approach between their use of these practices and the engagement-focused practice is whether engagement formed an essential element of their everyday literature teaching practices or simply an additional one, as permitted by time and resources. Caitlin's acknowledgement that she allows learners to read for pleasure occasionally, "when they have a decision or when they have a choice where they can sit in the class" (Caitlin.40:25), and Agnes's recollection that she only has time for that kind of reading "half-an-hour at the end of the day, or fifteen minutes at the end of the day" (Agnes.43:47), indicates that any practices that center around engagement are not a part of their everyday practice. Caitlin and Agnes's consistent separation of these practices from the skills-based ones, as well as the conception of the activities that focus on engagement and more abstract analysis as secondary, suggest an approach to teaching literature that is predominantly focused on the teaching of skills and the development of only the first two roles of the reader, that of a code breaker and text participant.

## Engagement-Focused Practice

Unlike Caitlin and Agnes, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra appeared to hold a more ideological conception of literature, which did not make as clear distinctions between reading for different purposes. The practices of these teachers, therefore, did not emphasize the learning of skills as the key component, but rather strove to have the learners engage in and develop an understanding of the text in conjunction with the more structural aspects of the text. It would appear, then, that rather than delineating which reading roles carry weight in the classroom as determined by which skills are identified by the teacher as being necessary to learn, these teachers allow for the development and deployment of all four roles of the reader, code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. Alisha describes this focus in her own practice as follows;

“I always try and, sort of, *\*makes a circular gesture with both hands\** create the atmosphere for them before we actually get into the story. Because if you just start re – reading it’s, like, *\*waves both hands around her head\** there’s too much. So, I’ll try and create the atmosphere, and explain the setting, and get, like, a mood going so they can sort of *\*taps on her head with both hands\** get a picture in their mind. I will always read it to them first, and, as I read it to them, I’ve read the story before, so I will *\*curls left hand into a fist as if to grasp a point\** focus on things that I know are important for them to learn.” (Alisha.31:15)

While also including didactic elements in her practice, evident in the way she emphasizes the things that are, from her perspective, important, in this extract, Alisha demonstrates one of the key tenets of her practice; that learners should be actively engaged with and enthused by the text, as this will allow for them to understand and apply various skills and practices in a meaningful, holistic manner. Sandra describes developing a similar approach, saying;

“without telling them what the text was about, I would start doing things from the text. Like, if, in the story, *\*holds up hand as if giving an example\** this girl did a lot of yoga, whatever, it would be introduced. [...] And this, I found, really helped, because [...] they are doing *\*indicates to herself\** themselves, what is happening in the story so they – it makes it even more relatable, like, my world and *\*moves hands upwards, away from herself\** the literature world, kind of thing” (Sandra.36:33).

While Sandra's example takes place at a better resourced school which allowed her the freedom to include more artistic, creative tasks than Alisha describes making use of, both of these examples demonstrate the ways in which these teachers attempt to place their learners in 'the literature world,' directing the focus of the learning on the text itself, rather than any skills applied to the text.

The focus of these teachers' practices, however, does not foreground learner engagement to the detriment of structured learning. Rather, the focus on engagement ensures that learners are able to understand and place themselves within the text, before bringing in various language and content knowledge they are meant to work with through the text. The skills that are learnt are, therefore, done so through the process of pleasurable and engaged reading of text, as demonstrated by Alisha's statement, "I kind of feel like they can learn their grammar through reading" (Alisha.16:33). This suggests that, as a result of the holistic view of literature to which these teachers appear to prescribe, engagement with the text and structural learning do not occur separately from one another, but rather, through engagement-focused practice, can be achieved simultaneously. In addition, this allows for learners to deploy multiple reading roles, rather than simply focusing on decoding the text and building a single-layered understanding of the text. Alisha describes this practice by saying;

“they learn the *\*waves right hand in a circular motion, as if to encompass a group of things\** other aspects of English through reading, through hearing the spoken word as well. Um – I also feel that it gives them a chance to, not time out, but be transported out of wh – whatever they are doing [...] with the other subjects as well, you're able to, sort of, link back to it.” (Alisha.18:11)

This demonstrates an important element in the engagement-focused practice in that the structured learning and the engagement are happening at the same time, thus supporting the more ideological view of literature these teachers fit into. Indeed, Alisha even goes so far as to say that this type of reading practice can even be integrated into other subject teaching (Alisha.18:11), a practice which Sandra recalls making use of as well (Sandra.13:07), which indicates the extent to which their fully holistic orientation towards literature has impacted their practice.

Naiya yielded slightly different results when it came to this data set, possibly as a result of her experiences primarily with older primary school and high school learners. Regardless of this, she appeared to support the engagement-focused practice in the many examples given of her teaching, describing the use of discussion and interaction with all elements of the texts, including the structural (Naiya.40:59). In addition, when discussing her teaching, she states, “but that’s, like, the world that we’re living in, we can’t have English in isolation, you know?” (Naiya.20:38) While this statement was used to justify her use of translanguaging when teaching literature in the classroom, this further demonstrates the core of the engagement-focused practice, that many aspects of English learning can be achieved through reading, and that the teaching of literature need not separate the practices of learning skills and reading for enjoyment.

As the analysis of the above data shows, there exists an apparent link between the autonomous/ideological views of literature the teachers bring with them as a result of their past experiences and the ways in which they reconcile the learning of skills and the engagement with the text in the classroom. The ways in which Caitlin and Agnes approach literature teaching suggest an emphasis on the decoding and semantic skills necessary to becoming a code-breaker and text participant, to the detriment of more critical and analytic skills required by the other two reading roles. As discussed earlier, this emphasis on what is referred to as ‘school literacy’ can result in shallow engagement with the text, resulting in learners becoming passive readers (Bua-lit Collective, 2018). Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra, however, not only reported using elements of each role of the four-resource model in their teaching practice, but did so in a way which attempted to make use of the various resources and skills in a holistic manner, rather than by separating these elements into separate learning activities. This would suggest that, out of the five participants, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra were more likely to encourage critical awareness and analysis skills in their learners, as well as allowing their learners more access to the texts being taught, allowing for more effective literature learning and engagement.

Thus, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which a teacher’s literate habitus, as informed by their personal and professional experiences, can become entwined with their conceptions of literature and literature teaching. While these conceptions and habitus are formed through early socialization

as well as later experiences, the data clearly indicates that these are not uniform across social class, as demonstrated by Naiya and Sandra, who actively attempt to disrupt their class socialization as a result of their racial identities. This indicates that the ways in which teachers conceive of literacy as well as their own experiences can, in turn, have a reflexive effect on their literate habitus, either reinforcing it, notably in the cases of Caitlin and Agnes, whose described conceptions and practices in the literature classroom are extensions of the autonomous, skills-focused ways in which they experienced literature growing up, or disrupting it entirely, in the cases of Naiya and Sandra, who consciously diverged from the ways in which they were taught literature at school and university in order to provide more supportive environments for their learners. Alisha, rather than disrupting her literate habitus entirely, found herself adjusting it as a result of being exposed to a teaching environment that was far removed from the schooling environment she was familiar with, thus developing ways of adjusting her practices to suit the various teaching contexts she was exposed to. This indicates that, while all five teachers are doing so in different ways, they are all interacting with and reacting to their literate habitus and conceptions of literature and literature teaching as a result of their experiences. Furthermore, when considering the descriptions of the teachers' approaches to literature teaching and the practices made use of in their classrooms, it is evident that their conceptions of literacy, be they autonomous, ideological, or a combination of the two, have an influence on the core focus of their practice, as well which roles of the reader the learners are exposed to. It is evident, therefore, that the development, disruption, and adjustment of a teacher's literate habitus through the experiences they have in the classroom has a marked effect on their developed practice and the ways in which they approach literature teaching and texts.

“I tried my hardest to get them to put themselves on that ship.”

(Alisha.38:24)

Following Chapter 4, which describes and analyses the ways in which a teacher’s experiences, literate habitus, and conceptions of literacy can influence their described practice, this chapter explores additional elements that were identified as having an influence on literature teaching practice. The ways in which the teachers describe negotiating these elements, which include the ways in which the teachers conceive of effective practice, their views on text relatability, and their ability to exercise agency in the classroom, provide valuable insight into the development of teacher practice in the literature classroom.

### **5.1. Perceptions of Effective Practices**

Despite the differences in focus in the teachers’ practices, interestingly, there were two practices that were mentioned in some form by every one of the five participants as being effective in the classroom, namely, activities which allowed the learners to take ownership, and reading aloud to learners.

#### **Learners Taking Ownership**

As discussed in the earlier review of literature, practices which allow learners to take ownership of and utilize their own knowledge and resources were shown to be particularly effective in literacy education (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016; Lin, 2019). Congruently, in this study, these types of activities were mentioned by every single teacher as one of the more effective ways to engage the learners’ interests. One of the simplest ways described by the participants to allow learners to take ownership of their own understandings of the texts was through discussions. Caitlin described discussions as being incredibly effective, saying, “they were also very interested in – um – just debating the points and discussing the book. Like, ‘No, you’re understanding this incorrectly, I don’t think that’s what Chinua Achebe was trying to say.’ [...] and it was really starting to make sense to them and they could bring their own points of view and

– and argue different points” (Caitlin.36:16). She also described allowing the learners to go and research and present their research on the author before reading the book. Notably, Caitlin only recounted using these activities with her older learners, admitting, “so, like, my younger kids, I’ll often do the research and present it to them” (Caitlin.27:54). Similarly, Alisha advocated very strongly for the use of debates, but added that these worked especially well with her Grade 6s, while her younger learners required slightly less freedom in their discussions saying, “I usually give them a lot of guidance. *\*nods for emphasis\** Because I know that, if I don’t, they will just run amok with the story and usually they lose the plot completely.” (Alisha.36:55) This would appear to correlate with the fact that Naiya primarily uses discussions for all her literature teaching (Naiya.40:59) and is able to do so as she teaches mostly older primary and high school learners. The implication made here is that, while discussions and debates are effective in allowing older learners to take ownership of their understanding of the text and engage with it in meaningful ways, this practice is less effective with younger learners who require less more guidance.

As a result of this, some teachers described using additional methods to allow the younger learners to take ownership of their understandings of the texts. Alisha recounts introducing a text that her younger learners needed to be familiar with for an assignment;

“So – um – I started the lesson by explaining to them that this was a long time ago, but they need to just draw a picture of what it would have looked like them being on a ship. So, I got them to all draw themselves on a ship. And they could all *\*mimes holding up something and showing it around\** show it to each other and all that. [...] so, I tried my hardest to get them to put themselves on that ship. And I got them to share their experiences of what it would have been like on that ship in the freezing cold and – um – who are they there with on the ship, and they could *\*gestures with hands as if talking with a group of people\** share their understanding of it, and how they pictured it as well.” (Alisha.38:24)

By allowing her younger learners to take ownership of how they pictured the scene and share that with their classmates, Alisha enabled the learners to develop an understanding of the text that she claimed was very effective when it came to their assessment, saying, “I could see things *\*mimes reading a piece of paper\** in the answers that they had that showed that they’d really understood the story [...]and they almost spoke from personal experience” (Alisha.38:24).

Thus, taking ownership of the text allowed her younger learners to understand and work with the text in a more effective manner. Additionally, the importance that Alisha places here on understanding the story reinforces the emphasis she places on meaning-making, rather than on grammar or superficial recall of facts. Similarly, Sandra, who had been given the freedom to design elements of the curriculum around her learners' interests, allowed her learners to become involved in the teaching process, recounting, "when we did Ancient Greece, [one of the learners] was the TA [teaching assistant], and she and I would switch roles, because she, just – *\*shakes head and waves both hands\** her knowledge far exceeded mine" (Sandra.24:11). Not only does Sandra actively make an effort to acknowledge her learners as knowers in the classroom, she also allowed her younger learners freedom in how they chose to represent the text after reading through different art styles, a method she describes as effective in allowing her learners to relate to the literature (Sandra.36:33). These accounts of the various ways in which teachers have allowed for learner ownership in the literature classroom, and the learner responses they recall experiencing, suggest that, to some extent, many of the teachers found success in allowing elements of learner ownership into their practice. Thus, similar to the findings of various researchers (Vasquez , 2008; Exley, Woods, and Dooley, 2014), this data demonstrates the effectiveness of allowing learners to develop their own understandings of the text, as well as positioning learners as having knowledge in the classroom, thus enabling learners' access to the required texts. Furthermore, the use of these practices by Alisha and Sandra resulted in them experiencing an increase in motivation and engagement from the learners, similar to that described by Hall (1998) who advocated for the use of such pedagogies over more standard practices.

While each of the participants described having a level of success through the use of critical pedagogies which allow elements of learner ownership, interestingly, a variation occurred in which Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra described using these practices as part of their everyday literature teaching, whereas Caitlin and Agnes made use of these practices mainly as additional, pleasurable activities for the learners, after they had completed other work. Agnes recounts reading a story to the learners at the end of the day, and allowing the learners to lead the discussions, saying, "So, that was great, because then – um – if they raised a question, 'Ah, but what happens if -' and then

he would be able to say, *\*waves hand as if waving away something unimportant\** ‘Oh, don’t worry, it’s fine.’ [...] So, it was lovely to have that interaction as well” (Agnes.30:13). This example demonstrates the ways in which these methods can be successful, however, it also reinforces the conception of the skills-focused practice held by Caitlin and Agnes. Agnes’ use of the phrase ‘as well’ in the above extract further enforces the idea that these are additional to what she considers to be literature teaching. Despite their self-described successes making use of these practices, the fact that these practices are centered primarily around learner engagement does not contribute to the learning of decoding skills and, therefore, are not perceived by the teachers as legitimate literature practice. This implies that practices which make use of learner ownership, while acknowledged by all of the participants to be effective, are not necessarily valued or applied in the same ways by all the teachers.

### **Reading Aloud to Learners**

Similarly, the perception and application of reading aloud to learners varied between the five teachers’ accounts. While reading aloud to learners was mentioned by all the teachers as being made use of in ways which engaged the learners effectively (Caitlin.31:58; Alisha.31:15; Agnes.24:27; Naiya.40:59; Sandra.07:30), it was not valued or applied in the same way by all the teachers. The distinction made here was that, in their descriptions of reading aloud, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra described the benefits of the practice as follows;

“They do enjoy when I read more, because, obviously, I read faster – um – and when they read it’s quite slow. [...] So, I try to read more – and *\*waves her left hand towards her ear\** it’s also good for them to hear the words being spoken, if it’s words that they don’t understand.” (Alisha.31:15)

“So, when we get to the first quatrain or the first stanza, then I reread it with the *\*makes air quotes\** ‘appropriate’ tone and the ‘appropriate’ pronunciation.” (Naiya.40:59)

“And I felt like they liked [being read to], just because it connected with their age group and it taught a lesson.” (Sandra.07:30)

In each of these examples, it is clear that each of the teachers are advocating for the use of reading aloud as it is effective in exposing the learners to many aspects of literature learning, including skills such as understanding tone, pronunciation, and vocabulary in context, in addition to recognizing it as a valuable practice in the ways in which it engages the learners with the text. This in contrast to the ways in which Caitlin and Agnes discuss reading aloud;

“[Reading aloud] kind of, like, gets their interest, but I feel like it’s not improving their ability of reading which is the – \* *gestures with both hands as if to balance on scales* \* the other problem.” (Caitlin.34:50)

“I didn’t have that opportunity to sit with the children and read. The only time I got – ja, the only time that I got, if they were lucky, half-an-hour at the end of the day, or fifteen minutes at the end of the day.” (Agnes.43:47)

Once again this demonstrates the dichotomy between Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra, and Caitlin and Agnes, with the first group viewing reading aloud to their learners as a practice which is valuable in its ability to engage the learners as well as allowing them to develop their skills at the same time, while the second group appears to perceive practices that engage learners, such as reading aloud, as existing separately to practices which actively promote the learning of reading skills and, thus, not as useful in promoting these skills in the literature classroom. It is evident, therefore, that even in the cases where there is agreement among the participants as to which practices are effective, the teachers’ varying orientations to literature and the subsequent focus of their practices, result in differences in the ways these practices are perceived, valued, and applied in the classroom.

## **5.2. Perceptions of Text Relatability**

One indicator of a successful literature lesson, as defined by the teachers interviewed, was the level of suitability of the text to the learner. The terms ‘relatable,’ ‘relevant’ and ‘appropriate’ were used seemingly interchangeably by the teachers to indicate the extent to which their learners could successfully engage with a text. What the data shows quite clearly, however, is that the conception of what makes a text relevant for primary school learners differs greatly between the five teachers interviewed, and that these conceptions were seemingly based, not only on the teachers’ experiences of which texts were successful in the classroom, but also on which texts they related

to most strongly when they were younger. This indicates, once again, that a teacher's literate habitus plays a role in influencing the ways in which they conceive of and approach 'effective' literature teaching, in this case, when it comes to their perceptions of successful texts. As a result of their differing experiences, the teachers held differing views on which texts the learners would relate to and, interestingly, often experienced successes and failures with different types and genres of texts based on their own assumptions and beliefs. This indicates a similar finding to earlier studies (Pike, 2003; Youssef, 2009; Lloyd, 2016), which suggest that text selection in and of itself is not the only important factor in effective literature teaching, but rather the ways in which that text is presented and worked with in the classroom are crucial.

### **Relatability as Defined by the Concrete**

One of the ways in which some teachers worked with the notion of relatability was by looking through the lens of the learners' physical or material experiences with the world. This seemingly limits them to relating to texts that bear some resemblance to their own lives, with that resemblance being confined to superficial features. Caitlin describes her experiences with an unsuccessful text as follows;

“I think - straightaway I think of my Grade 7 lesson, we read the book *Journey to the River Sea* [...]and I don't know if, then, it had to do with – um – the character was not African. He was very much like a little boy on a boat in a foreign country and I – I just – I don't think they enjoyed the content of the book. I don't think they could, like, really relate to it.”  
(Caitlin.38:17)

She goes on to explain that she had far more success with a book called *I am David*, which followed the life of a boy on the streets describing it as “more, like, suitable to the child?” (Caitlin.17:25). Given that the learners she was teaching at this point were, by her own description, from a “very bad part of Joburg” (Caitlin.14:05) this suggests that, to Caitlin, the relatability of a text is primarily defined by the similarity it holds to the concrete experiences and circumstances of the learners. Interestingly, Caitlin describes the books that she was attracted to most in her own life, as being ones that she could relate to on the level of concrete or material experiences, such as the ones which explored the issues that she herself was dealing with as a teenager from the point of view

of a character that she could see herself in (Caitlin.05:50). It could be said, therefore, that Caitlin's conception of what her learners relate strongly to is based on her own experiences growing up and her assumption that her learners would connect to texts in a similar manner as she did, possibly as a result of her entrenched habitus.

Caitlin's conception of text relatability as reliant on concrete experiences is echoed by Agnes in her explanation of relatability;

“But, it's very difficult to find texts that they can contextualise. That means something to them. [...] It has to be a part of their everyday life, their everyday *\*makes a circle in the air with both hands\** experiences for them to understand it, or even want to begin reading.”  
(Agnes.23:00)

It is evident, therefore, that to Caitlin and Agnes, concrete relatability is a key factor in the ability of learners to relate to a text. In addition, both Caitlin and Agnes admit to having difficulty in engaging their Black and Coloured learners in texts that included characters that did not share their race (Caitlin.38:17; Agnes.23:00), leading to the assumption on both teachers' parts that these learners could only engage with texts that included characters that shared their race. This further demonstrates the limitations of the conception of text relatability, as this misconception of text relatability as being confined to the concrete has been shown to be incongruent with the principles of culturally relevant texts (Clark & Fleming, 2019).

### **Relatability as Defined by the Abstract**

The second group of teachers, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra, conceptualise the idea of text relatability in a slightly different manner to the first group. While relatability is still dependent on the learners' recognizable experiences, these experiences are not limited to the concrete and include more abstract concepts, such as emotional and thematic relatability. Alisha describes an instance of being surprised by her learners' ability to engage with a text that was seemingly unrelated to their lives as follows;

“And I said to them, *\*smiles widely\** ‘What about *King Arthur* interests you guys?’ Like, kids who come from, like, *\*waves left hand as if to indicate the general area\** these areas here, and they – they – *\*shrugs\** ja! It’s, like, unrelated to – to their lives. And they – they said, ‘No’ [...] they almost saw themselves as – as *\*closes right hand into a fist\** the hero who had been banished into, like, another kingdom, which is what *King Arthur* is, and they saw themselves as the person who came and pulled that sword out of the stone. And *\*closes both hands into a fist and brings them together\** they were the ones where they came from nothing, but they became these, like, victorious people who were able to, like, rule a kingdom. And in their minds, that was, like, – they saw that as them.” (Alisha.25:55)

Following this experience of realizing that her learners had the ability to relate to texts on a more abstract level, Alisha goes on to describe experiencing great successes with other texts that were similarly seemingly non-related to her learners’ lives, but accessible to them, nonetheless (Alisha.38:24). This acknowledgement of the learners’ ability to insert themselves into a narrative that is mostly unrecognizable to them on a concrete level indicates Alisha’s recognition of her learners’ imaginative capabilities and the ways in which these are valuable in the literature classroom. Sandra similarly acknowledges the ways in which her learners relate to texts, recounting;

“we did, like, stories of Krishna, and whatever. [...] the lessons he put – it was very relatable for them. And how he conquered the monsters, and what the monsters mean, and what it means in their life.” (Sandra.13:07)

By actively drawing comparisons between the monsters the characters were facing and the learners’ lives, Sandra was able to aid them in engaging with and relating to the text on a more abstract level.

Naiya describes this ability to relate to a text on an abstract level as being as a result of recognizable “human conditions” (Naiya,37:08). Naiya goes on to explain her conception of relatability as being multilayered, saying;

“we learn about – learn about story-telling, we learn to put ourselves in other people’s shoes, to be able to feel what they feel, to be able to – to – to sympathise, to understand what they

were thinking, what they may be going through. Um – and we may – we may either relate to it in the sense that, ‘Oh my gosh, I’ve been there.’ Or we would relate to it in the sense of, ‘Oh my gosh, I didn’t think of it that way’” (Naiya.25:35).

Here, Naiya introduces another interesting facet of relatability; that learners can relate to a text on multiple levels, be they physical or abstract, and that exposure to texts that they relate to in different ways is an important exercise. In many ways, Naiya appears to view her role as a literature teacher to expose her learners to different contexts that they relate to in different ways in order to broaden their view of the world. Alisha touches on this as well, discussing her role as a literature teacher in the following manner;

“I was the one who was able to take these kids, especially the worst, most badly behaved kids from horrific homes, I was the person who could *\*mimes throwing a door open\** open that door and show them a different world. And not just show them a magical world, but show them that the world can actually be different for them.” (Alisha.44:57)

What Naiya and Alisha are suggesting here is that the ability to relate to a text in an abstract manner is not an exercise that is automatic in their learners, rather that they actively have to help the learners to see themselves in the text, through the ways they present, describe, and discuss the text with the learners (Alisha.38:24; Naiya.32:49). This suggests that, to Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra the relatability of a text is, in fact, negotiable, and is not something that is fixed. To Caitlin and Agnes, relatability is limited to the concrete aspects within the text that the learners can relate to and, as a result, the text itself is seen as having a fixed relatability dependent on its content. By acknowledging that a text can be made more relatable through the practices the teacher uses in the classroom, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra are suggesting that they are able to bring certain texts to the learners in ways in which they are able to relate to in an abstract manner.

This is not to say that, as a result of their more flexible view of the relatability of texts, the second group of teachers believed they were able to make any text relatable to their learners. On the contrary, each of these teachers recounted occasions in which they were unable to engage the learners in a text regardless of how they attempted to develop the learners’ ability to relate to the text (Alisha.42:15; Naiya.37:08; Sandra.13:07). The analysis of the data simply indicates that the

teachers who believed that text relatability was limited to concrete experiences and, therefore, could not be negotiated in any way, tended to not attempt practices that could encourage other forms of relatability and, thus, had experiences which supported their views of relatability as fixed. The teachers who maintained a view of relatability as a more abstract ideal were more likely to attempt to aid their learners in relating to texts that were seemingly irrelevant to them and, in doing so, experienced successes in these areas more often.

### **Other Factors Contributing to Relatability**

Additional factors contributing to the relatability of the text were identified by most of the teachers, regardless of their conception of relatability as being rooted in physical experiences or more abstract connections. The first factor was that of language, with Agnes explaining, “Because it’s not their true first language, the readers that they’re given – um – it’s sometimes very difficult for them to understand what the reading is about” (Agnes.15:06). This idea that language can be a barrier to relatability is touched on by the rest of the teachers as well, with each of them describing situations in which their ability to engage the learners in the text was impeded by their need to make the language more accessible to the learners. An example of which is Caitlin’s account of introducing Shakespeare to her learners;

“I also found it just really difficult just to be able to take such olden-day English and then, kind of like, tell the kids what’s happening. So, it was almost like I ended up translating line-for-line constantly.” (Caitlin.10:15)

Many of the teachers identified the issue of language as being a barrier to learners relating to texts as being particularly prevalent in schools in which the learners are already at a disadvantage when it comes to English, given that it is not their first language (Caitlin.15:06; Alisha.20:08). While this language barrier likely presents complications in many areas of English teaching, it is acknowledged by the teachers to be of particular concern in literature teaching, as the prescribed texts are often older texts, and many schools do not have the resources to replace them with more recent publications (Alisha.23:08; Agnes.23:00; Sandra.35:35). Alisha acknowledges this as an impediment to her teaching, saying, “there are, like, *\*gestures with hands as if to indicate a small stack of something\** four different texts and they’ve been there for the last thirty-five years and –

they're things like *Jock of the Bushveld*, and *The BFG*, and it's all the same stuff that we would have read at school and *\*throws left hand over her shoulder\** that our parents probably would have read at school as well" (Alisha.23:08). Sandra echoes this sentiment, going so far as to claim that she has never had success teaching a prescribed text due to the fact that, "these old-school ways of, 'Hoorah, Hooray,' never [grasps them]" (Sandra.35:35). This suggests that language exists as a barrier to relatability, not simply in terms of words that are not in the learners' vocabulary, but more so as a result of the language being inaccessible as it is not recognizable to the learners as the kinds of English they speak. For learners who already have a barrier to the literature as English is not their first language, this double barrier could restrict their ability to relate to, or even simply understand, the text in a way that completely impedes their access. The relatability of the language within the text could, therefore, be said to be significant, as negotiating the unfamiliar language of a text, while attempted by some of the teachers to varying levels of success (Caitlin.10:15; Alisha.38:24; Naiya.37:08), was shown to require far more effort on the part of the teacher than negotiating the relatability of the content.

Another factor identified by many of the teachers, was their own level of engagement with the text. Alisha states outright, "I also find that if I can't engage with it, *\*shakes head\** then the kids have lost it already" (Alisha.44:15), a sentiment expanded on by Naiya in relation to a poem she had to teach, in which she found, "I struggled to engage with that poem, therefore, I struggle to teach it, therefore, they struggle to engage with it" (Naiya.37:08). While Alisha and Naiya were the only teachers to consciously identify their level of engagement as a factor which contributed to the learners' ability to engage with the text, the other teachers' descriptions of their interactions with texts that they were teaching suggest a similar pattern. An example of this can be noted in Caitlin's response to a question about relevant texts, in which she states;

"I do think it would be more important to, maybe, introduce more, like, African literature – um – whereas, like, Roald Dahl, although I think Roald Dahl is awesome, because, I mean, he is, like, an iconic – um – author and, like, a really good author to learn about and his stories are really fun and interesting. The kids love *Matilda* and – um – all the characters in *Matilda*." (Caitlin.21:43)

In this extract, Caitlin begins as if she wants to contrast *Matilda* to African literature in a way which would demonstrate the importance of African literature to the learners. However, rather than committing to this statement and, in doing so, highlighting the negative aspects of teaching *Matilda*, she pivots, describing the elements of the text and its author that she believes makes it a suitable text. The positive evaluations in the adjectives such as “iconic,” “fun,” and “interesting” suggest that what she is expressing here is a personal affinity for the work of Roald Dahl, one which would definitely have played a role in how she presented the text to her learners, who she described as enjoying and relating to the text positively. It would appear, then, Caitlin’s enjoyment of and engagement with the work of Roald Dahl could well have played a role in how the novel *Matilda* was received by the learners. Ultimately, this may have contributed to the learners’ ability to engage with a text that, it is implied, Caitlin believed they possibly should not have been able to access as easily as a more superficially relatable text. This suggests a possible link between the teachers’ level of engagement with the text and the ability of the learners to access and relate to that text, a link which appears to suggest that teacher engagement and interest in the text plays a role in influencing how the learners relate to it.

In summation, this analysis is not attempting to suggest the factors discussed above are the only ones which influence relatability, or even do so in a consistent manner. In fact, there exist a host of other factors which could influence the learners’ ability to engage with a text, factors which shift on a day-to-day basis, such as the moods and emotions of the teachers and learners involved. Indeed, it is acknowledged by many of the teachers that their successes and failures in teaching a text can sometimes appear to be entirely at random with Caitlin admitting, “I don’t think any text would be appropriate for all the learners” (Caitlin.21:43). Rather, what the data suggests is that there are certain factors, such as the language-use in the text, the teachers’ engagement with the text, as well as the teachers’ perceptions on what makes a text relatable and whether that relatability is negotiable, that have been shown to have an impact on the ways in which the learners are able to access the text.

### 5.3. The Exercising of Teacher Agency in the Classroom

Throughout the interviews, it became evident, both through their direct statements, as well as through the manner in which they spoke, that many of the teachers did not feel themselves to be experts in the field of literature teaching, often downplaying their own knowledge and experiences, and expressing levels of nonconfidence in their practices. Considering the backgrounds of the teachers interviewed, as well as the literature which supports teachers' reliance on their own experience and knowledge over curricular prescriptions (Furlong, 2013; Kennetz et.al., 2020) this finding was felt to be of particular interest.

In order to properly examine the teachers' self-positioning in relation to their knowledge of literature teaching, as well as the perceived successes and failures they have experienced in exercising agency in the classroom, it is first necessary to give an overview of the teacher training each of the five participants received. Of the five participants, Caitlin had the highest degree of qualification, having achieved a five-year Honours degree in Education. Sandra achieved a four-year Bachelor degree in Education, while Agnes attended a teaching college. Finally, Alisha and Naiya each achieved a one-year PGCE degree following their completion of an English-focused three-year degree. It is interesting to note that, while Caitlin and Sandra attended the same university at the same time, studied the same degree, and describe this education in a similar manner (Caitlin.07:22; Sandra.43:24), they subsequently developed radically different approaches to literature teaching as discussed above. Alisha and Naiya, however, present differently, with their similarities in teacher training resulting in, not only a similar conception of literacy as ideological, but remarkably congruent notions on the importance of learner engagement in teaching literature, as well as the necessity of providing the learners with exposure to different contexts through different texts (Alisha.16:33, 44:57; Naiya.25:35, 37:08). Agnes, however, describes her college-based teacher training as being decidedly skills-focused, saying, "it basically taught us the then-reading skills" (Agnes.07:36), which does, in fact, align with her autonomous conception and skills-based approach to literacy education.

When one considers these differences and similarities from the perspective of literate habitus, it would appear, then, that the actual method of teacher training that the teachers were exposed to did not have as much influence on the construction of their conceptions and approaches to literature teaching, as how they responded to, and what they decided to take up from this training. This is supported by Sandra's explanation her experiences as a teaching student, where she recounts, "I had a little blue notebook, and I wrote in there all the different ideas that [the lecturer] would give of her experiences teaching in primary schools and that really worked when I was teaching" (Sandra.11:22). This in contrast to Caitlin, who attended the same university studying the same degree at the same time, who describes meticulously going through the pre-reading, during reading and after reading activities with her learners with little deviation (Caitlin.27:54) because that is how she was taught to teach literature. Sandra does mention being taught this process, but describes taking up different aspects of it as needed (Sandra.13:07), rather than rigidly sticking to the system she was taught. It is evident, therefore, that how a teacher is taught to teach has less of a deterministic effect on their teaching approaches, rather it is their conscious decisions of what to take up from this training that can lead to differences or similarities in approach between teachers with similar training.

### **Teachers' Self-Positioning in Relation to Literature Knowledge**

When asked directly whether they felt adequately prepared when entering the classroom as a new teacher, not a single one of the five participants admitted to feeling confident or knowledgeable in their first years of teaching, despite the fact that all of them had undergone some form of academic preparation. Despite having achieved an Honours degree in Education before starting teaching, Caitlin confessed that it was "a really scary experience for me, because I really did not know how to teach [literature]" (Caitlin.07:22). As a result, Caitlin sought out more experienced teachers "to try and get their views and opinions on how I should teach it" (Caitlin.07:22). Similarly, Sandra recalled how she would write down the practical tips she received from a specific lecturer regarding her time in the classroom and found that that, more so than the theory she was taught, those ideas "really worked when I was teaching." (Sandra.11:22). While Alisha and Naiya do not recount seeking help from more experienced teachers, they both refer in some way to the value of practical experience in the classroom, with Naiya particularly advocating for "learning how to

teach while you're teaching," (Naiya.08:23) as she felt that doing her degree while simultaneously teaching at an NGO prepared her more adequately for teaching. It would appear, therefore, that in the classroom, practical experience, rather than training and academic preparation, was considered by the participants to be the deciding factor in what constituted an effective teacher. Notably, the teacher with the most experience in the group, Agnes, extended this notion of experience further, expressing the opinion that "teachers should be forced to change schools after ten years because *\*shakes head\** you get so stuck in your ways and you don't get to see the *\*waves both hands in the air as if to mimic an explosion\** dynamite that's out there, the other systems that work." (Agnes.11:04) Rather than reducing the importance of experience in the classroom, this suggests that experience on its own is not the most valuable asset for an effective teacher, but rather a variety of experiences in a variety of contexts, which supports Gennrich and Janks' (2013) work on the disruption of literate habitus.

Interestingly, it appears as though the feeling of being ill-equipped to teach literature in the classroom as a young teacher has, for some of the teachers interviewed, never entirely dissipated, despite the fact that participants interviewed ranged in their experience from four to twenty-two years in the classroom. When it comes to the subject of literature teaching, the data suggests that many of the teachers interviewed have never really progressed beyond the mindset of a beginner teacher in terms of both their confidence level, and their perceptions of their ability in the classroom. Caitlin and Agnes, in particular, seemed to express an immense frustration with their inability to teach literature in a manner they deemed effective. When asked to reflect on particular instances in which she experienced success in teaching literature, Agnes often reverted to shorter, terse responses, such as "I don't think there's any right way to do it, I really don't" (Agnes.43:47) and "I struggled. I really, really struggled *\*shakes head and shrugs\**" (Agnes.24:27). These responses, coupled with her tendency to shake her head, shrug, and, at times, throw her hands in the air as if at a loss, seem to indicate her feelings of hitting a roadblock in her teaching, where nothing she has tried has worked. This resulted in her feeling inexperienced and unknowledgeable in her field, as supported by her statement, "who's to say that my way of doing it is the right way of doing it? [...] Where do you learn that?" (Agnes.21:03).

Similarly, Caitlin recalls her intense frustration at her inability to engage her learners in a literature lesson, saying, “It was a very *\*rubs hands together as if in frustration\** frustrating lesson because, like I said, half of them were, like, falling asleep and the other half didn’t have their books there and it was just, like, they didn’t really care about this lesson” (Caitlin.38:17). Subsequently, she confessed to a feeling of relief at having, at her second school, a team of experts to plan her lessons for her, allowing her to rely solely on their experience and knowledge, rather than her own which she feels is inadequate. This is supported by her statement, “that has helped me quite a lot, because those people are very much, like, specialists in designing resources, so, like almost, like, textbooks? But it’s our lesson plans. So, that’s helped me quite a lot – um – to maybe teach literature in a more, accurate way?” (Caitlin.07:22). The use of the word ‘accurate’ here further reinforces the idea that, in Caitlin’s mind, there is a clear right and wrong way to teach literature, and hints at her underlying fear of failure to teach ‘correctly’. While the other three teachers do not directly address their uncertainties in teaching literature in this way, they do make mention of feelings of inadequacy, with Naiya admitting, “I still think that I do fumble quite a lot. [...] *\*sighs\** I wish I could sit in someone else’s literature lesson to steal some ideas because I don’t – I don’t always think that I’ve got it right.” (Naiya.15:30). Similarly, Sandra uses the word “dystopic” (Sandra.43:24) to describe her feelings of teaching literature at the school at which she experienced the most difficulties. In addition, both Naiya and Sandra were distinctly uncomfortable when asked to reflect on their experiences at schools where they were unable to achieve success in teaching literature. When asked to describe a lesson in which she felt she was not able to teach literature at an adequate level, Naiya exclaimed, “Oh, shit” (Naiya.36:52) and Sandra gave short, single sentence answers, which, in comparison to her incredibly lengthy, detailed recollections of the other schools at which she has taught, telegraph a certain level of discomfort and nonconfidence. Indeed, the unwillingness of Naiya and Sandra to delve into the details of their perceived failures at literature teaching are particularly stark in comparison to the levels of confidence with which they discussed the other interview topics.

While this downplaying of their own skills and knowledge may be attributed to a sense of modesty in the presence of the interviewer, as alluded to by Naiya in her statement, “even if I’m being humble, there’s no way I can say, after nine years of teaching, that I haven’t improved since year

one” (Naiya.45:40), the data does suggest a correlation between the level of agency the teachers were given in the classroom, and their level of voiced confidence in their own abilities and knowledge, which will be unpacked further in the section below.

### **Restrictions on Teacher Agency**

The literature on teacher agency suggests that the level of agency enacted by the teacher in the development of their practice comes about as a result of the interplay between the teacher’s personal and professional beliefs, experiences, and knowledge, and contextual and environmental factors (Biesta et.al., 2015; Priestley et.al., 2015). As such, a number of common factors were identified by the teachers as restricting their agency, however, differences existed in the way the teachers allowed these factors to inform their practices.

When it came to teaching literature, the over-prescribed curriculum, lack of time, and shortage of adequate resources were identified by all five teachers as restricting their agency. Agnes stated, “the curriculum is just so blinking full *\*shakes head and shrugs\** you can’t fit anything in.” (Agnes.15:06), a sentiment which is repeated often throughout her, and other, interviews, some examples of which are as follows;

“so, I feel like it’s time consuming, which I’m finding really difficult. Um – because if you – when you teach literature it’s, like, this whole book and then it’s, like, we don’t have time in class to now read this entire book together and then you’re trying to read the whole book together because if you send children home to read the books themselves, then half of them have read it. *\*rolls eyes\**” (Caitlin.18:12)

“So, unfortunately, what I’ve been exposed to is that ‘Those are the books, that’s what you have to read to your kids. *\*moves both hands in a large circular motion\** If you want them to all have a book and read.’” (Alisha.23:08)

“There’s something wrong there. [...] I have a feeling that it comes from the curriculum being too full.” (Agnes.18:51)

In terms of resources, some teachers admitted to feeling the provided texts were inadequate but, given the circumstances at the school, they could not justify printing large amounts of new texts to distribute to the learners, should they wish to deviate from the prescribed reading (Alisha.23:08; Agnes.24:27). It would appear, then, that, within under-resourced, public schools specifically, the impediments to teacher agency when teaching literature are numerous. The teachers who identify themselves as exercising agency within these constraints, primarily Alisha and Sandra, confess to having to not only make use of their own time and monetary resources to do so, but often times, completely ignore the prescriptions of the curriculum in terms of time management and teaching methods. Alisha recounts, “I must admit, I used to – *\*moves left hand in circular motion as if to point to a group\** instead of doing a class reader, I used to, with my last seven years, *\*gestures to herself\** I’d find a book of my own. So, I’d go to the *\*gestures with left hand as if to pick up or take something\** SPCA or I’d go online and I’d find books that I could possibly read to my kids” (Alisha.23:08). Sandra describes a similar practice, saying, “what I did find worked, was I scrapped everything in their curriculum, and I brought in a bookshelf, and I went to – I think CNA – not CNA – um – Exclusive Books used to have an annual sale where everything was less 75%. And you’re going to this big warehouse, and you fight everybody, and you basically get the books, the posters, the stuff that you want. [...] And I found that their reading improved far more than anything that I taught them in the curriculum” (Sandra.13:07). In addition, Sandra describes creating her own resources and activities instead of using the curriculum-approved textbooks (Sandra.13:07), while Alisha admits to ignoring the strict time restrictions of the curriculum to pursue literature teaching in a more engaging and effective way (Alisha.31:15). The link between the amount of agency exercised in the classroom and the teachers’ confidence levels is evident, with Alisha being one of the only teachers to describe herself as successful in teaching literature specifically to underprivileged learners, saying, “And, for me, I felt like *\*gestures to herself\** I was the person who was taking these kids. I was the one who was finding the texts that would actually take these kids out of the reality that they have, especially since, for a lot of them, the reality of their life was not good” (Alisha.44:57). This in comparison with Caitlin and Agnes, who were allowed the least amount of agency in their literature classrooms, with both teachers having a separate teacher, or group of teachers, planning their literature lessons for them, (Caitlin.07:22), and even executing these lessons (Agnes.15:06), and who both expressed the least amount of confidence in their own abilities, as discussed above.

The conclusion that one might draw from this data then, would be that an effective literature teacher is one who is confident in their own skills and exercises creative agency in literacy teaching regardless of the restrictions placed upon them. Placing the onus on the teacher, however, to work within and, in some cases, against the system that is meant to regulate and assist them in planning and executing their lessons, seemingly resulted in a drain on the teachers' monetary, time-related, and emotional resources that could not be sustained for very long. Naiya, who was allowed a fair amount of agency in terms of curriculum and resources, explains,

“there’s amazing literature out there, but – but the lazy – *\*sighs\** I’m not going to say lazy because we’re – teachers are not lazy. We just – we don’t have the time. We – we don’t have the time. So, I will read a book and I’m like, ‘Oh my gosh, this is a phenomenal novel!’ But to read the – to read the book and to put together the material to teach the book sufficiently is just so much.” (Naiya.28:40).

This data suggests that, even in the areas of the curriculum where agency can be exercised, the lack of resources, time, and even energy on the part of the teacher impedes their creativity and agency in text choice. The mention of the word ‘lazy,’ though immediately retracted by Naiya, demonstrates the narrative that exists within teachers that it is their job apply their own time, resources, and money, to execute effective literature teaching, and any failure to do so is as a result of their failure as a teacher. She goes on to reinforce this idea by saying, “So, what do I do? I slide back and I teach – and I teach Shakespeare, because Shakespeare has all the material in the world” (Naiya.28:40), placing the responsibility to find and teach literature that the learners might find more engaging firmly on herself. Sandra describes the strain of exercising agency within the government system as impacting the way she interacted with learners as a teacher, saying, “I felt like I needed a complete change in curriculum, [...] because I was becoming really, really strict and cold in the government school system. Like, I was very ruthless” (Sandra.21:21). It would appear therefore, that the act of exercising agency in a system that tends to constrain agency when it comes to literature teaching, was not a sustainable practice and resulted in considerable strain on the teachers involved. It should be noted that four of the five teachers (Caitlin, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra) who described themselves working in under-resourced schools under significant restraints of agency, resources, and time, eventually left to pursue teaching jobs in wealthier, better-

resourced schools (Caitlin.14:05; Alisha.12:53; Naiya.15:30; Sandra.13:07), regardless of the levels of success they experienced teaching literature at their initial schools. While none of the participants directly identified this as the reason for their leaving the under-resourced schools, many of them admitted to feelings of exhaustion, fatigue and, as discussed above in the case of Sandra, continued strain on their relationships with the learners. It would appear, then, that even the teachers who were encouraged by positive results from their agentic practices, could not continue this practice indefinitely.

In conclusion, not only can links be made between a teacher's literate habitus and conception of literacy, and how they approach literature teaching, but these play an additional role in influencing how these teachers negotiate factors present in the literature classroom, such as their perceptions of effective teaching, text relatability and restrictions to their agency. This means that, while the above factors were present in each of the teachers' narratives as having an influence on how they approached literature teaching, the ways in which each teacher responded to these elements differed. This is evidenced by the fact that, while every single teacher identified reading aloud and practices which involved learner ownership as being effective in engaging learner interest, three of the teachers, Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra viewed these activities as integral parts of their everyday practice, while Caitlin and Agnes viewed them as additional practices which did not count in their idea of formal literature teaching. This difference is interesting when one considers that, following the analysis in the previous chapter, Caitlin and Agnes were shown to have developed an autonomous conception of literacy as a result of their literate habitus, which resulted in a move towards more skills-focused teaching practices. This indicates that, once again, their literate habitus and conceptions of literacy is having an effect on their described practice, as it influences the practices they perceive to be valuable. Similarly, the ways in which Caitlin and Agnes related to literature growing up influenced their views on text relatability as being concrete, while Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra conceived of text relatability in a more abstract manner. Finally, when faced with similar restrictions on their agency in the classroom, Caitlin and Agnes were unable to move beyond their entrenched habitus and, as a result, voiced little confidence in their own literature teaching abilities, despite their qualifications and years of experience. Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra, however, made a conscious effort to adjust their literate habitus and, in doing so, were able to work

within and against these restrictions in ways that resulted in a higher level of voiced confidence in their teaching abilities. Thus, the ways in which the teachers negotiated common elements affecting their practice differed as a result of their experiences, conceptions of literacy and willingness to adjust their habitus, and this, in turn, had a marked effect on their perceptions of themselves as successful literature teachers.

“It speaks to how teaching is a work in progress.”  
(Naiya.45:40)

This study attempts to develop an understanding of the factors that impacted five Intermediate Phase educators’ perceptions and development of practice in the literature classroom. This was achieved through a thorough analysis of their discourses surrounding their backgrounds, personal and professional experiences, and conceptions of literature and texts. The analysis of these discourses allowed for a rich exploration of the teachers’ literate habitus, as well as demonstrating the ways in which teachers respond to their literate habitus when confronted with experiences that differed from what they had become accustomed to. Notably, Caitlin and Agnes were not able to disrupt or alter their habitus when confronted with restrictions to their teaching, such as an overfull curriculum, lack of resources, and learners who came from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds than themselves, which led to a sense of inadequacy in their descriptions of their own teaching. Alisha, who came from a similar socio-cultural background to Caitlin and Agnes, was able to adjust her habitus to suit the teaching context she found herself in, and expressed a perceived level of success on this front. It is possible that her ability to do so came as a result of her ideological socialization into literature, as compared to Caitlin and Agnes, whose experiences were largely skills-focused and autonomous. This significant difference that occurred between Caitlin and Agnes, and Alisha, Naiya and Sandra clearly demonstrated the link between their literature conceptions and their approach to practice, with the autonomous conception resulting in a more skills focused approach to practice which emphasized decoding and lower-level participant means of engaging with texts (Gee, 1996; Bua-lit Collective, 2018). It is evident, therefore, that the formation of literate habitus and the conceptions of literacy and literature teaching practices that result therefrom play a significant role in the ways in which these teachers approach literature teaching. While this study would have been strengthened by the inclusion of observation of the teaching practices described, due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of data collection, this was not possible. Thus, there exists, the possibility for expansion in this area.

Despite the differences in literate habitus, conceptions toward literacy, and resulting approaches to practice that were identified between the five teachers, three factors influencing the teachers' approach to practice were identified as being common throughout their accounts. These factors consisted of effective practice, text relatability, and restrictions on their agency in the classroom. What is interesting about these factors is that, while each teacher addressed them as, in some way, playing a role in their approach to literature teaching, the differences that existed in the way each teacher perceived of and negotiated these factors resulted in them having varying experiences in the classroom. When it came to effective practice, each of the five teachers identified the use of activities that involved learner ownership and reading aloud to learners as being successful in engaging learner interest. A variation occurred, however, between Caitlin and Agnes, who viewed these as additional practices that did not qualify as proper schooled literacy practice, and Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra, who actively made use of these practices as part of their everyday approach to literature teaching. As a result, Caitlin and Agnes did not express having any success in literature teaching, despite making use of these practices, while Alisha, Naiya, and Sandra were able to employ these practices in a way which allowed for critical and inclusive literacy learning (Hall, 1998; Alim, 2010; Janks, 2010), as well as the development of all four roles of the reader (Luke & Freebody, 1999). This demonstrates that, while teachers can have congruent experiences in the classroom, such as making use of these approaches and identifying the positive results they yield, how teachers perceive of these practices influence how they are valued in the classroom and, as a result, the overall influence they have on the effectiveness of literature learning.

The importance of how a teacher perceives and chooses to negotiate the elements that influence their practice is evident in the analysis of the other factors as well. While all of the teachers identified the ability of the learners to relate to the text as being a key factor in the success of a literature lesson, how each teacher conceived of text relatability appeared to carry more weight than the content of the text itself. Possibly as a result of their own experiences growing up, both Caitlin and Agnes viewed the relatability of a text as fixed and concrete, based on its content. As a result, when faced with a text that they believed their learners had no concrete relations to, they were unable to aid the learners in engaging with the text. Alisha, Naiya and Sandra, however, appeared to hold a view of text relatability as being more negotiable and based around abstract

concepts, following the features of culturally relevant texts (Clark & Fleming, 2019). As a result, they described being able to help their learners to develop abstract connections to texts that they did not share many concrete relations to, thus experiencing success with a greater variety of texts.

The ways in which teachers responded to common institutional and curricular restrictions on their agency yielded similar results, with those who did not enact any agency in the face of restrictions describing lower levels of success in their literature teaching, while those who found ways to enact agency within similar constraints described higher levels of success. This demonstrates that, congruent with the literature (Biesta et.al., 2015), agency is not necessarily an innate feature of one's personality, but comes about as a result of a person's personal and professional experiences, as well as conscious effort, much like the adjustment of literate habitus. Another key feature that arose was how closely linked agency was to the confidence levels of the teacher, with those who chose not to deviate from their prescriptive curriculum, Caitlin and Agnes, expressing very little confidence in their literature teaching abilities, despite the fact that they had the highest levels of education and experience respectively out of the group of participants. Thus, one of the strongest claims this study can make is that teachers require a level of trust from the curriculum and their institutions in order to enact agency in the development and adjustment of their literature teaching practices. This not only allows them to disrupt and adjust their literate habitus to suit varying teaching contexts, as discussed above, but also results in higher levels of confidence in the teachers, as well as higher levels of described success in the classroom.

In summation, this research shows that there are a host of factors at work that influence teachers' perceptions of and approaches to literature teaching in Intermediate Phase classrooms and developing an understanding of these factors allows for the identification of areas in which teachers can be aided to improve their practice. What this study highlights, however, is that, equally important are the ways in which teachers choose to negotiate and respond to various elements acting upon them in the development of their practice, as it is here where their literate habitus is applied, adjusted, and disrupted in ways that are conducive to effective literature teaching within different teaching contexts. Prior to this study, I had believed that the key factor in effective literature teaching was tailoring teaching practices and texts to the specific learners involved,

through the use of critical practices and culturally relevant texts (Hall, 1998; Janks, 2010; Clark & Fleming, 2019). While these have been shown to be significant in this study, it is evident that the ways in which teachers perceive of and negotiate literature, teaching practices and texts play an equally significant role in their success. It is evident, therefore, that a teachers' literate habitus, the experiences and conceptions they have that inform that habitus, and the ways in which they choose to adjust or disrupt that habitus significantly influences not only how they approach literature teaching, but also how they negotiate the factors that exist in the classroom that have an impact on their teaching. This also plays a role in how they respond to the successes and failures they experience in the classroom and, as such, this study demonstrates the impact the teachers themselves have on the effectiveness of literature learning in Intermediate Phase classrooms.

- Andrews, J. (2013). “It’s a very difficult question isn’t it?” Researcher, interpreter and research participant negotiating meanings in an education research interview: Participants negotiating meanings in an education research interview. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 316–328.
- Alim, H. S. (2010). Critical language awareness. In Hornberger, N. H. and McKay, S. L (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education*. (pp. 205-231). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bell, H. (2016). Teacher knowledge and beliefs about grammar: A case study of an English primary school. *English in Education*, 50(2), 148–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eie.12100>
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M. & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching*, 21(6), 624-640. DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325
- Blommaert, J. & Jie, D. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: a beginner’s guide*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters
- Bloome, D. & Green, J. (2015). The Social and Linguistic Turns in Studying Language and Literacy. In Pahl, R. (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies*. (pp. 19-34). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315717647>
- Bold, C. (2012). *Using narrative in research*. SAGE Publications
- Botha, L. & Hendricks, M. (2019). Identity, Agency and Imagination in Literacy Acquisition Narratives of Northern Cape Teachers. *Education as Change*, 23(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/3488>
- Bowie, L. & Reed, Y. (2016). How much of what? An analysis of the espoused and enacted mathematics and English curricula for intermediate phase student teachers at five South African universities. *Perspectives in Education*, 34(1), 102–119. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v34i1.8>
- Bua-Lit Language and Literacy Collective. (2018). How are we failing our children? Reconceptualising language and literacy education. <http://www.bua-lit.org.za>.

- Cairns, D. (2020). *The “four resources model” in South Africa: An analysis of an in-service teacher training intervention for literacy at foundation phase level and its uptake by teachers at a Cape Flats school*. M Ed Thesis, University of Cape Town, Faculty of Humanities.
- Carrington, V. & Luke, A. (1997). Literacy and Bourdieu’s Sociological Theory: A Reframing. *Language and Education, 11*(2), 96-112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500789708666721>
- Clark, A. (2020). Cultural relevance and linguistic flexibility in literature discussions with emergent bilingual children. *Bilingual Research Journal, 43*(1), 50–70.
- Clark, A. & Fleming, J. (2019). “They Almost Become the Teacher”: Pre-K to Third-Grade Teachers’ Experiences Reading and Discussing Culturally Relevant Texts with their Students. *Reading Horizons, 58*(3), 23–51.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis, *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 297-298. DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613
- Creese, A. & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal. 94*(1), 103-115.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011). National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Intermediate Phase, Grade 4 – 7. Pretoria: Government Gazette. Department of Education (DoE).
- DiCicco-Bloom, C. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education, 40*(4), 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>
- Dodge, A. & Crutcher, P. (2015). Inclusive Classrooms for LGBTQ Students: Using Linked Text Sets to Challenge the Hegemonic “Single Story.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 59*(1), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.433>
- Ebe, A. E. (2010). Culturally relevant texts and reading assessment for English language learners. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts, 50*(3), 5.

- Exley, B., Woods, A. and Dooley, K. (2014). Thinking Critically in the land of princesses and giants. In Pandya et. al. (Eds.), *Moving Critical Literacies Forward: A new look at praxis across contexts*. (pp. 59-70). London and New York: Routledge.
- Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education interaction and practice*. SAGE Publications
- Furlong, C. (2013). The teacher I wish to be: exploring the influence of life histories on student teacher idealised identities. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(1), 68–83.
- Gee, J. (1996). ‘Orality and literacy: From ‘The savage mind’ to ‘Ways with words’ In Maybin, J. (Ed.), *Language and literacy in social practice* (pp. 168-192). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters/The Open University.
- Gee, J. (2008). Learning in semiotic domains; A social and situated account. In Prinsloo, M., & Baynham, M. (Eds.), *Literacies, global and local*. (pp. 137-149). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co.
- Gee, J. (2015). The New Literacy Studies. In Pahl, R. (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies*. (pp. 35-48). Taylor and Francis.
- Gennrich, T. & Janks, H. (2013). Teachers’ Literate Identities. In Hall, K., Cremin, T., Comber, B., & Moll, L. C. (Eds.). (2013). *International handbook of research on children's literacy, learning and culture* (pp. 456-468). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gennrich, T. (2016). “I got content with who I was”: Rural teachers’ encounters with new ways of practising literacy. *Reading & Writing (Cape Town, South Africa)*, 7(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v7i2.109>
- Goodson, I., & Choi, P. L. (2008). Life history and collective memory as methodological strategies: Studying teacher professionalism. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(2), 5-28.
- Goodson, I., & Numan, U. (2002). Teacher's life worlds, agency and policy contexts. *Teachers & Teaching*, 8(3/4), 269-277.
- Graff, H.J., & Duffy, J. (2008). Literacy Myths. In Street, B.V., & Hornberger, N.H. (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 2, pp. 41-52.)

- Guzula, X., McKinney, C., & Tyler, R. (2016). Language-for-learning: legitimising translanguaging and enabling multimodal practices in third spaces. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 34(3), 211-226.
- Hall, N. (1998). Real literacy in a school setting: Five-year olds take on the world. *The Reading Teacher*, 52(1), 8.
- Heath, S. B. (2007). 'What no bedtime story means: Narrative Skills at Home and School'. In A. Duranti (Ed.). *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader*. (pp. 343-363). Oxford: Blackwell,
- Hoadley, U., & Reed, Y. (2013). *Curriculum : organising knowledge for the classroom* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Oxford University Press: Southern Africa.
- Hoffman, M. (2016). Emerging Reading and the Social Practice Turn in Literacy: Still Becoming a Nation of Readers. *Journal of Education (Boston, Mass.)*, 196(3), 19–25.
- Janks, H. (2004). The Access paradox. *Literacy Learning: The Middle years*, 12(1), 33-42.
- Janks, H. (2010). *Literacy and Power*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Jewitt, C., Jones, K., & Kress, G. (2005). English in classrooms: only write down what you need to know: annotation for what? *English in Education*, 39(1), 5–18.
- Kapp, R. (2004). "Reading on the Line": An Analysis of Literacy Practices in ESL Classes in a South African Township School. *Language and Education*, 18(3), 246–263.
- Kennetz, K., Litz, D., Riddlebarger, J., Tennant, L., Dickson, M., & Stringer, P. (2020). Placing elementary-school teachers at the vanguard of modernisation: language use and emergent identity among English-medium teachers in the UAE. *English in Education: Multilingualism and English*, 54(1), 74-92.
- Kibler, K & Chapman, L. (2019). Six Tips for Using Culturally Relevant Texts in Diverse Classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(6), 741–744. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1775>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009) *InterViews – learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage
- Larson, J. (1996). Challenging autonomous models of literacy: Street's call to action. *Linguistics and Education*, 8(4), 439–445. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0898-5898\(96\)90020-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0898-5898(96)90020-0)

- Lin, A. (2019). Theories of trans/languageing and trans-semiotising: implications for content-based education classrooms. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(1), 5-16.
- Lloyd, G., (2016). 'Are we teaching critical literacy? Reading practices in a township classroom', *Reading & Writing* 7(1), 1-6. [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/rw. v7i1.97](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/rw.v7i1.97)
- Long, C., Graven, M., Sayed, Y., & Lampen, E. (2017). Enabling and constraining conditions of professional teacher agency: the South African context. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 14 (1), 5-21.
- Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (1999). Further notes on the four resources model. *Reading Online*, 1-4.
- Luke, A. & Freebody, P. (2003). Literacy as engaging with new forms of life: The 'four roles' model. *The Literacy Lexicon*, 51-66.
- Maybin, J. (2013). What counts as reading? PIRLS, EastEnders and The Man on the Flying Trapeze. *Literacy (Oxford, England)*, 47(2), 59–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12005>
- McKinney, C. (2011). Asymmetrical relations of knowing: pedagogy, discourse and identity in a de(re)segregated girls' school. *Journal of Education*, 51, 29-51.
- McKinney, C. (2017). *Language and Power in Post-Colonial Schooling: Ideologies in Practice*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Mendelowitz, B. (2010). The elusiveness of imagination: A case study of five teachers' conceptions and enactments of imaginative writing pedagogies in Gauteng classrooms. *Unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand*.
- Moss-Racusin, J. (2016). Backlash against male elementary educators: Backlash against male educators. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 46(7), 379–393. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12366>
- Moje, E. B., Luke, A., Davies, B., & Street, B. (2009). Literacy and Identity. Examining the Metaphors in History and Contemporary Research. *Reading Research Quarterly*. 44(4), 415-437.

- Morrell, E. (2007). *Critical Literacy and Urban Youth: Pedagogies of Access, Dissent, and Liberation*. New York: Routledge.
- O'Brien, J. (1998). Experts in Smurfland. In M.Knobel & A.Healy (Eds.), *Critical Literacies in the Primary Classroom*, (pp. 13-24). PETA.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.9821873k2ht16m77>
- Park, G., Rinke, C., & Mawhinney, L. (2016). Exploring the interplay of cultural capital, habitus, and field in the life histories of two West African teacher candidates. *Teacher Development*, 20(5), 648-666. DOI: 10.1080/13664530.2016.1202312
- Pike, M. (2003). The canon in the classroom: students' experiences of texts from other times. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(3), 355–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270305529>
- Priestley, M., Biesta, G.J.J., & Robinson, S. (2015). Teacher agency: what is it and why does it matter? In R. Kneyber & J. Evers (Eds.). *Flip the System: Changing Education from the Bottom Up*. London: Routledge.
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & Joseph, G. (2005). Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 365–416. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543075003365>
- Rogers, T., Marshall, E., & Tyson, C. (2006). Dialogic Narratives of Literacy, Teaching, and Schooling: Preparing Literacy Teachers for Diverse Settings. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(2), 202–224. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.2.3>
- Rogers, R., & Schaenen, I. (2014). Critical Discourse Analysis in Literacy Education: A Review of the Literature. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 49(1), 121–143. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.61>

- Schmidt, C. (2013). The question of access and design - Elin and Hassan walk the line of the four resources model. *Education Enquiry*, 4(2), 301–314.  
<https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v4i2.22075>
- Soudien, C. (2004). Constituting the class’: An analysis of the process of ‘integration’ in South African schools. *Changing class: Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa*, 89, 114.
- Street, B. (2013). Literacy in Theory and Practice: Challenges and Debates Over 50 Years. *Theory Into Practice*, 52(1), 52–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2013.795442>
- Tatum, B. D. (2000). The complexity of identity: “Who am I?” *Readings for diversity and social justice*, 2, 5-8.
- Tyler, R. (under review). Transcribing whole-body sense-making by non-dominant students in multilingual classrooms. Unpublished manuscript, University of Cape Town.
- Vasquez, V. (2008). *Negotiating Critical Literacy with Young Learners*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Youssef, L. (2009). A Matter of Relevance: Teaching Classics in the 21st Century. *College Teaching*, 58(1), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567550903252819>
- Zanetti, F. (2014). Male educators in parental representations, among stereotypes and change: care professionals, nature or nurture? *Ricerche Di Pedagogia e Didattica*, 9(3), 77–100.  
<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/4642>

| INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT |     | Caitlin  |
|----------------------|-----|--|
| 00:35                | CG: | So, I wanted to start by getting a little bit of your background. So – um – the first is, like, what are some of the experiences and memories you have of literature growing up? Like, did your parents read to you, what are your first kinds of memories surrounding this?   |
| 00:49                | T1: | Ja, so, I think if I – think about that – um – so my first memories are very much, like, bedtime stories, so – um – especially my dad used to – um – we had these cute bear books. I'm actually not sure where they are, I wish I knew, but it was all about – I think his name was Papa Bear. The book was called <i>Papa Bear</i> , and it was all about Papa Bear and his life experiences. And it was a whole series of books on Papa Bear – um – and it was very family orientated about him and Mama Bear and the – the two Baby Bears. Um – and so, I remember growing up reading those and they – they were quite funny kid's books with – with – um – very cute pictures. Um – so that's my first memory. And then I also remember – my parents always having, like, a child's Bible – um – with pictures and big words and them reading that to us and then me trying to learn to read it. So those are, like, my really early, like, childhood memories of reading – was those two, like, books distinctly. |
| 01:51                | CG: | And in terms of, like, your parents and the examples they set, like, did you often see them reading, or was reading something they exclusively did with you?   |
| 02:01                | T1: | No, I didn't often see them reading to be honest. <i>*shakes head*</i> No, it wasn't like – a – a read – no, I didn't often. The only time I would really see, like, my mom read would be when we went on holiday. When we were on the beach, for example, then she would read on the beach. Um – but in an everyday sort of lifestyle, no, she – she never really read. And my dad neither.   |
| 02:23                | CG: | What about when you moved on and you started school, do you feel like your views on reading changed? Like, a lot of kids, they like reading with their family, but as soon as they get to school, they start to see reading as a work, work, work, thing and they stop enjoying doing that as, like, a side thing. So how did you feel about literacy at that point?   |
| 02:48                | T1: | So, when I reached about Grade 5 – um – that's when reading, like, really pushed off for me. So, then it was like the books, like the <i>Famous Five</i> and – um – <i>The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe</i> and those type of books and – um – if we finished our work early or – um – if we wrote, like, tests and you finished early, you could always read your book and I loved that.  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | So, there I found, like, a series of books that I really loved, and so, from there I started to read a bit more. Um – and then I don't know if you want me to go into, like, high school?   |
| 03:21 | CG: | Yes, ja, absolutely.  |
| 03:23 | T1: | So then, so that was primary school, more like <i>Famous Five</i> , <i>The Lion</i> , <i>the Witch and the Wardrobe</i> , and during that, like, time in school I was given to read actually helped me to enjoy reading and then on holiday I would often read. But on normal days, like, I wouldn't go home and read a book. Um – and then, when I hit high school, I – um – I kind of lost reading. Like, I never really had anything that I enjoyed reading and – um – then, funnily enough, one day we went to the shops, and it was during school holidays and Cum Books was having a sale. And – um – I picked up a book called <i>Christy Miller</i> . So, it's – um – it's called <i>The Christy Miller Series</i> . And – um – it's a whole range of books written by this author, and I actually connected so well with this – this author and just her characters and I – um – absolutely loved reading. That's when I started reading at home, so, like, staying up late and reading those books and really enjoying them. Um – and then, from there, when I went to varsity, that's when my passion for reading completely died. |
| 04:32 | CG: | <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 04:34 | T1: | <i>*laughs*</i> No, like literally, completely died! Um – so, like, I enjoyed doing the readers we did, obviously, in our English modules. Those were always interesting and a little bit weird, you know, we had very – I'm sure you remember – weird genres. Um – but, like, I would read those, but – I – since then, I've never really read for pleasure. Like, even now as an adult, it's very seldom. Like, maybe if I go on holiday and I'm on the beach and, you know, I have nothing else really to do, then I'll read, but – <i>*shakes head*</i> In my general life, it's not – it kind of put me off reading, at varsity.   |
| 05:10 | CG: | I know, I totally understand. So, my partner the other day picked up my copy of <i>Zoo City</i> and started reading it and, like, I remember thinking, I feel like that is a kind of book that I would have liked if I hadn't had to have done it for university, you know?   |
| 05:25 | T1: | <i>*nods vigorously*</i> Yes, like if it was for pleasure! Definitely, I do agree. And, you know, I've still got those as well.   |
| 05:32 | CG: | Ja. OK, can I ask you – can I go back to, like, you went into Cum Books, and you found this series of books. So, like, Cum Books is a religious bookstore, so was the interest, like, related to your religious outlook on life – were they specifically religious books? Religious fiction, that kind of thing?  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 05:50 | T1: | <p>Um – ja. So, the – the author is – <i>*sighs*</i> I wish I could remember her name. Um – I’ve still got the books, so I would be able to maybe, when I see them, I could tell you. Well, no, they’re actually packed away now that I’m thinking about it. Um – so the author is actually – um – a missionary, and it very much – this whole series of books was based on teenagers and – um – all the issues they would deal with in life. So, kind of, like, <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> boyfriends, drugs, sex, alcohol. It was all very much, like, friends, peer pressure. So, it was very much relevant for a teenager and – uh – I think that’s why I connected so well. And, obviously, in between, our main character – uh – was very much a Christian girl meeting all these different people. And – um – so it did have that religious outlook. But it was also about, just, all the life lessons that were kind of, like, taught in this book. Well, <i>*makes a circle in the air with her hands*</i> in these series of books.</p>   |
| 06:48 | CG: | <p>That’s great, I really like that idea of it being relevant to you as – as a child. OK, so – um – we’ve kind of touched on your adult life, and your literacy practices now. Um – so let’s move on to, like, your teaching of literature and, specifically, your teacher training. So, like, where and how did you learn to teach literature and, more importantly, do you believe that this training adequately prepared you to actually teach literature in the classroom?</p>   |
| 07:22 | T1: | <p>Uh – no. To some extent, mostly no, I would say. So, for example – um – my first job was teaching – um – higher primary, so, the first teaching job I got was teaching Grade 7, 8, 9, and 10, English. And – um – when I was – when I had to teach Shakespeare, for example, to my Grade 8’s, 9’s and 10’s, <i>*lifts right hand in exasperation*</i> I almost had a heart attack because I actually had no idea how to teach Shakespeare, or his novels – or his plays, rather. Um – so, that was a really scary experience for me, because I really did not know how to teach it. So, kind of, all the knowledge I was getting was from people who had been teaching – uh – beforehand, just to try and get their views and opinions on how I should teach it. Um – but I never really got a clear answer, so it was really difficult. I kind of, just, took it as it came. Um – so, Shakespeare in general, his plays I found really difficult to teach because I really didn’t have that knowledge on how to teach it. <i>*shakes head*</i> Um – but then when it came to other novels – um – for, like, my Grade 7s, for example, I would kind of use experience from, like, how we were taught at varsity. So, kind of, like, how we were expected to go home and read a novel. Or, like, we would read pieces and then, like, focus on specific, like, parts. Like, what was <i>*pinches the fingers of her right hand together*</i> the main purpose of – of teaching this book. Um - so, I tried to do that. Um – and then now, at my new school, it’s really helpful because we have what we call a Learning Design Team. So, they are people and their – their sole job is to make – um – learning packs, basically,</p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>your lesson plans. It helps a lot! To take that stress away of – um – not knowing how to teach something, or, to get to all of the content. And so, they make – um – actual lesson plans for us. So, we don't have to worry about that part. And so, that's really helped me, especially with the literature side of things, because then they'll be like, "OK, in this lesson, when focusing on this book, you should maybe read, like, Chapter 1, 2, and 3 with your kids, do it in group work, do partner work." <i>*points in the air with her right hand, as if giving instructions*</i> Um – and then, we're focusing on – um – vocabulary today, and there would very much be, like, dictionary work. And so then, that has helped me quite a lot, because those people are very much, like, specialists in designing resources, so, like almost, like, textbooks? But it's our lesson plans. So, that's helped me quite a lot – um – to maybe teach literature in a more, accurate way? If that makes sense?</p>  |
| 09:58 | CG: | <p>Can I ask, specifically when it came to Shakespeare, where were you finding your difficulty in teaching that came from? Was it the material itself, was it your experience, your knowledge of the material, was it the kids not relating to the material? Could you – was it everything?</p>  |
| 10:15 | T1: | <p>So, I think probably a little bit of everything. So, firstly, like, the kids had no interest really – um – at the start. As we got into – into the play – um – so, for example, I know <i>Othello</i> my kids absolutely loved because they could kind of relate to it, about, like, money laundering and, like, someone, like, wanting a pound of your flesh if you – if you did something, like <i>*gestures in the air with right hand*</i> wrong to them. Um – and so, as I tried to make it more relevant to their lives, then they started enjoying it. But the original – um – idea of doing Shakespeare, the kids absolutely hated. And there were obviously some kids that I never got through to with Shakespeare. So, it was definitely that. Um – so, it was definitely them not having any form of interest or excitement towards it. Um – and then I also found it just really difficult just to be able to take such olden-day English and then, kind of like, tell the kids what's happening. So, it was almost like I ended up translating line-for-line constantly. So, it was almost like I was rewriting this whole play or going online and finding someone who had, kind of, written this whole play over again in normal English, or like modern-day English. Um – and that was also, like, the biggest challenge. Um – and then my knowledge – I had done most of the Shakespeare books in high school myself, but obviously as a student, not as a teacher, which was a very different experience, so that gave me quite a lot of anxiety.</p> |
| 11:41 | CG: | <p>Absolutely, I recently had an experience where I had to teach <i>Peter Pan</i> to Grade 4s and, like, in addition – because I was teaching at a very poor school – in addition to this being</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | their second language, like, I don't even think an English kid living in London today could understand <i>Peter Pan</i> , so now there's like several layers of separation for these kids.  |
| 12:00 | T1: | <i>*nods*</i> Because you're trying to, like, undo all these different layers just to explain this book and it makes it difficult – definitely.   |
| 12:06 | CG: | Cool. OK, so let's move on a little bit to talking about your teaching history. Could you talk me through – now, obviously, you do not need to tell me the names of schools, I would prefer you didn't for ethical reasons, but if you could give me, kind of, ideas of the different schools that you've taught at and their backgrounds and, like, their learner base and that kind of thing? So, like, poorer schools, richer schools, public, not public, the languages of the kids, that kind of thing. So, if you wouldn't mind just telling me where you've taught, how long you taught there, that kind of thing?   |
| 12:38 | T1: | OK, perfect. So – um – my first school. I started there in – let me just quickly <i>*counts on her fingers*</i> – in 2016. So, I taught there 2016 and 2017. Um – no, just wait <i>*counts on her fingers*</i> No, sorry. It was 2017 and 2018. So, 2017 and 2018, for two years I worked at a school – um – it is a private school, but most of our kids got bursaries to be there and most of them were township kids, so, from, like, Soweto. Um – and – so, the type of child I had, although it was a private school – um – it was a very different type of private school, because the type of kids I was getting were not really, like, very wealthy kids. Although we did have a mix, because some kids were paying to be there and – um – their family did have money to send them to a private school. Um – but it was very much <i>*gestures with both hands as if to balance on scales*</i> half-half. So, like, half having this bursary to be there – um – not very well-off children, and then this half where – um – mom and dad have paid for them to be there. Um – and, ja, so I taught there for two years and I taught the four grades, so, like, Grade 7, 8, 9, and 10 English. So then, I don't know if you want any more info on that school? |
| 14:01 | CG: | Maybe later, if it comes up, but that's fine for now.   |
| 14:05 | T1: | Oh, and it was in a very bad part of Joburg as well. Um – so, a very poor part of Joburg. Um – and then, my second school that I'm currently teaching at, I taught there last year and then, this is my second year at the school. And it's very much more of a wealthy – um – wealthy income. It's also a private school. Um – although our school prides themselves in being a private school, but being an affordable private school. So, its not one of those very, very expensive private schools. They're trying to – that's kind of, like, their motto or their goal, to try and have a private school that's affordable. But – um – the type of kid, or caliber of  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | child I'm getting – um – is a very much more well-off child then at my old school. Um – and it's in Sandton, so, it's – the area is also a very different area and so the type of children and families you're dealing with are – are much more well-off.   |
| 15:02 | CG: | OK, interesting. How you find the specific challenges of teaching to these learners being different? So – sorry, that was a horribly-worded question! So, like, if you think about these two different schools, the poorer area, the wealthier area, the more bursary, township child, the more well-off child, what specific challenges did you have in teaching both of these groups? How are these challenges different? Or the same?  |
| 15:32 | T1: | Um – <i>*pauses for a long time*</i> so, it's very difficult. I think, maybe – um – the children I have now probably appreciate books more. Almost like they see the value of books more. Whereas, at my first school, I don't think they really did. Um – so it was almost, like, constantly emphasizing, like, how you look after a book, and, like, why it's so important that we're reading a book. Um – so, I think that was a huge difference. Um – I'm trying to think if there was anything else, really. <i>*pauses for a long time*</i> I feel like my learners at this school enjoy books more than at my old school. I feel like it's – obviously not all of them, that's a generalization, but – I – I think the majority enjoy it more at this school than they did at the old school.  |
| 16:22 | CG: | Can I ask about the types of books prescribed at your previous school versus now? Are they very similar in terms of the kinds of books that were in the curriculum?   |
| 16:35 | T1: | So, for example, we're doing – so, the Grade 4s now at my school that I'm at now, we're doing <i>Matilda</i> and a book called <i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i> . Uh – so, obviously <i>Matilda</i> 's quite a classic book – um – from Roald Dahl. And <i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i> is very much a fantasy fiction type of book. Um – whereas at my old school, the novels were, kind of like, relevant to the type of child in some kind of way. So, we read a book called <i>David</i> and it was all about David being on the streets and, just, his life. Um – and then I can't remember the other one I read at my old school. Um – so, they were – so, both of them were teaching more, like, life lessons and then we – we eventually taught a book called – um – <i>Journey to the River Sea</i> , which is more of a fiction. |
| 17:22 | CG: | I read that when I was a kid.   |
| 17:25 | T1: | Oh, did you? <i>*laughs and nods head*</i> My kids were struggling, again, with the language at the old school with that one. Whereas the <i>David</i> book and the other one, which I can't remember now – um – they were more, like, suitable to the child? Like, almost, like they   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | could relate to them better. Um – so, ja, those were more or less the genres and how they’re different.  |
| 17:46 | T1: | Sorry, do you mind if I, just – <i>*spends a few moments adjusting computer setup to a more comfortable position*</i>  |
| 17:57 | CG: | OK – um – in general, how do you feel about teaching literature as opposed to other aspects of the English curriculum, like compared to teaching grammar or writing or like parts of speech?   |
| 18:12 | T1: | Um – so, I feel like it’s time consuming, which I’m finding really difficult. Um – because if you – when you teach literature it’s, like, this whole book and then it’s, like, we don’t have time in class to now read this entire book together and then you’re trying to read the whole book together because if you send children home to read the books themselves, then half of them have read it. <i>*rolls eyes*</i> And then you ask them to only read two chapters and then like – like your readaholic child comes back, like, having read the whole novel and wanting to, like, tell everyone what happened. And then you get that child who just doesn’t care or, mom and dad think it’s not important and then they haven’t even read, like, one chapter out of all the chapters you’ve asked them to read. Um – so, I think time is, like, a huge problem with literature. |
| 19:00 | CG: | That’s interesting what you’ve said now, about how they go home and it’s basically how the parents feel impact on what they do. Whereas, you don’t expect that, like, with grammar, you send them home with a grammar activity, the parents are going to be, like, “You’ve set this, we’re going to do this, it’s part of learning,” but reading’s not the same. So, how about you, how important do you think the teaching of literature is to primary school learners? Do you think it’s an important aspect of the curriculum?  |
| 19:29 | T1: | So, I’m not going to lie, I do think it often takes a backseat. So – um – <i>*coughs*</i> excuse me. A lot of the time, content knowledge parts of English will take preference over my literature part of the – the curriculum. Um – just because, it’s almost like, when they write that assessment – which sounds terrible – or that exam – um – there’s – it’s going to be very much comprehension-type questions based on the literature. But if I haven’t taught them the language and how to answer the question properly or – or how to construct a sentence – um – then I – I feel like it’s almost useless that I taught them the literature, to some extent, because they won’t even be able to answer it properly if I haven’t focused on the other aspects of English. So, a lot of the time, it does take that back seat.  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 20:16 | CG: | OK, that's interesting. Um – what about in an ideal world, where you have the time for everything? What do you think the intrinsic value of literature teaching is, if it has any?  |
| 20:26 | T1: | I think it does have value. So, I think it definitely helps with creativity. Um – so, like, just to use your imagination and I know a lot of my kids that do love reading, it's very much exciting that it's – something <i>*waves right hand in the air*</i> completely different to their reality or places that they've never been to or people they've never met. So – um – I think it gives them a lot of knowledge on the world, in general. And then, I definitely think it helps them also with their language. So – um – their spelling – um – trying to figure out words in context, those type of things. So, I do think it's a – a valuable skill to have.  |
| 21:04 | CG: | Ja, but, as our schooling exists right now, impossible to teach?  |
| 21:10 | T1: | <i>*nods and laughs*</i> Pretty much, ja!   |
| 21:14 | CG: | OK, so – um – now I want to talk about the kinds of, like, texts you teach currently at your school. Are you allowed any freedom in selecting the texts or are they selected for you?   |
| 21:27 | T1: | Uh – they're selected for us. So, we're a Cambridge school and, ja, the texts have been prescribed for us.  |
| 21:36 | CG: | OK. And what are your feelings on the appropriateness of the texts for the learners?  |
| 21:43 | T1: | <i>*pauses for a long while*</i> Um – I don't think it's necessarily that – I don't think any text would be appropriate for all the learners. Um – I do think it would be more important to, maybe, introduce more, like, African literature – um – whereas, like, Roald Dahl, although I think Roald Dahl is awesome, because, I mean, he is, like, an iconic – um – author and, like, a really good author to learn about and his stories are really fun and interesting. The kids love <i>Matilda</i> and – um – all the characters in <i>Matilda</i> – um – so, ja, so that's – ja, so, I think it's difficult. And then, <i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i> – so, what I like is that <i>Matilda</i> 's more, like, based on – like they can, kind of relate to it, because it's a schooling system, and – um – they experience that every day. And, I mean, even at some point my kids are like – they compared our principal to Ms. Trunchbull the one day, so this was terrible! <i>*widens eyes*</i> So, my principal walked in to come and observe a lesson, and my kids are, like, “Oh, Ms. Trunchbull, Ms. Trunchbull's just arrived!” <i>*places her right hand over her mouth*</i> So, I, like, almost died of embarrassment. I was, like, “oh, –“ and she, like, rolled her eyes and I was, like, “Oh my gosh.” Um – so I think they can relate to it. And, then, what I do like about <i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i> is – um – it's more fiction-based. So, I think that it quite nice, to have the two different genres. <i>*gestures with both hands as if to</i> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <i>balance on scales*</i> But I do think it would be nice if we could have more, like, African literature. Like, something more relevant, if that makes sense, to the children.   |
| 23:16 | CG: | That's great. OK, so we've touched on this a little bit, but, like, what kinds of texts do you find the learners respond to most enthusiastically? So, like, I'm specifically looking at – you've kind of touched on this already, I think. So, what aspects of these texts do you believe contribute to their effectiveness? So, does this go back to the whole – the relativeness, and they can see themselves in the text, they can apply it to their lives' kind of thing?  |
| 23:47 | T1: | Definitely, I think that is important. So, for some kids I think they like that – um – where they can relate to it. I know a few of my other kids where they love, like – um – these very, like, <i>*waves right hand in the air*</i> fantasy type stories where it's very, like, out of this world. Um – <i>*shrugs*</i> because they just want to, like, get out of reality, so, for them, that's more interesting.   |
| 24:09 | CG: | That's interesting. And, can I ask, specifically for your previous school with the less advantaged kids, you obviously said it was difficult to teach them literature altogether, they didn't really see the value of reading, they didn't really know how – like they hadn't been socialized into the act of reading. Were there any times where you were teaching them a specific book or something where it really connected with them in that moment? And where do you think that came from?  |
| 24:38 | T1: | Um – <i>*pauses for a long while*</i> So, yes, I'm trying to think now – um – Chinua Achebe. <i>Things Fall Apart</i> . So, I was teaching my Grade 10s, and – um – a lot of them could relate really well to that book, and they were just, like, <i>*raises eyebrows*</i> “Wow!” It really sparked, like, this interest and love for that book. Um – so, that was really, like, a “Oh, wow.” Like, it was really nice that they could have debates about it – um – they could really connect so well to that book and – and the lessons and the situations in the book. So that was definitely a moment where I was like “Oh, wow, they really, like, they really connected with this book” and it's like a “Oh, wow” moment. |
| 25:22 | CG: | OK. That's great! And what kinds of text did you find challenging to present to the learners? We've already spoken about the Shakespeare for the older learners. For the younger learners? What aspects of the texts make them challenging for the kids?  |
| 25:39 | T1: | I think it's the English. I think a lot of our learners really struggle with – um – understanding words. So, they come across these big words and either they completely lose interest, or they read the word and they have no idea what the word means. <i>*crosses arms*</i> And instead of trying to figure it out in context, like we're trying to teach them – um – they kind of end up  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | not knowing what they're reading about. So, I think language is a huge, huge part of it. And then, I don't know if technology also has something to do with it? So, almost like – um – like, for example, <i>Matilda</i> , a lot of them will be, like, “Oh, but I've watched the movie!” So, it's almost like they – like, what is the point of reading the book if I can just go and watch – watch the movie.   |
| 26:20 | CG: | Absolutely! I didn't think that this would be a thing! So, I'm teaching a student online at the moment, she's a Grade 8 student and she hated reading. So, I started doing reading with her and I did <i>Coraline</i> with her and she loved it. So, then I kind of thought maybe – you know those John Green novels? I thought that would be great for her age group, so I gave her <i>Paper Towns</i> and she was like “I saw the movie” and she, like, doesn't want to read it, ever.  |
| 27:07 | T1: | <i>*nods*</i> Sho, it's interesting, hey?   |
| 27:10 | CG: | Ja, very much so. OK, so, now I want to actually talk about how you teach literature. And when I say, “How you teach literature” I'm not talking specifically – well, I am, to a certain extent, talking about, like, group work, class reading. But I'm also looking, like, in-depth into that. So, specifically, how you explain things, what – um – resources you use, kind of, like, what activities you give them. I know you said a lot of this is planned for you, but I'm sure there are some spins you put on it as well. So, what is your approach?   |
| 27:54 | T1: | So, I think, when we first start a novel, it's always very important that we look at the title and – um – so, we discuss, “OK, if the book's called <i>Matilda</i> , what is Matilda? Is that a name, is that a place?” Um – what – look at the title and try and figure out what information or hint is the title giving us about what we're going to read about. Um – and then we very much look at the cover of the book, so, the pictures, the colours – um – the fonts. So, we look at what's on the front cover of the book. We then – um – we try and make – um – like, think about what could this mean for the book. So, there's a picture of a girl on it, who could this girl be? Um – if she's outside, why do we think she's outside? Then we try and look at the colours, how do we think they, like, link, why would the author have used those colours on the – on the front page of the book. Um – and then we usually – um – I try and make the kids identify, like, the author and the illustrator and we, like, go over again “Oh yes, who is an author” again, what is an author, what is an illustrator, so going over those. And then we go to the back of the book and I'll try and, like, help them remember what is the back of the book called and we'll be like “Oh yes, it's a blurb.” Um – and then to, like, read the blurb and <i>*holds up arms in a questioning manner*</i> “Oh, so, do we think we would enjoy the story based on the blurb?” and then, kind of, like, have a chat about it. Then, partners or as a class, |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>discussing do we think we're going to enjoy this book or do you think you're going to enjoy this book based on what you've read on the blurb. And then, again, what is the purpose of a blurb – um – if you go into a bookshop and you want to choose a book, or a library, you would then, obviously, <i>*holds up her right hand, then turns it around*</i> look at the back. Um – and then, from there, we would then – um – sometimes I would get them to, like, research the author a little bit more. So, to maybe find out and I – I often point out to them, you know, be careful when you're reading because an author might have, like, a specific point of view and that could rub off on you. So, like, you want to, maybe, find out more about this author, what type of person are they, what have they gone through in their lives, because that will affect their writing. Um – and just so you're reading this book, kind of, like, with an open mind. Um – so, either – so, like, my younger kids, I'll often do the research and present it to them. With the older kids, I would often get them to research a bit on the author and then tell me about the author. Um – so that would be, like, one of my first lessons – or the first lesson. And then – um – from there, it's very much, starting at Chapter 1 – um – and then, as we're reading, starting to, just, ask questions that we – we're gauging understanding of the novel. So, like, "Who are some of the first characters that we've met, who do we think the main character is – um – where is the setting, what is the plot so far," – um – those type of questions. Um – so, I'd usually start off asking more of those type of questions in Chapter 1. Um – and, then, as we start reading more and more – um – trying to look more at, like, language and – um – like, maybe, "Why are there inverted commas here – um – how should I be reading if there's an exclamation mark," – um – all those sort of things. Trying to figure out, OK, if I don't know what a word means, how can I, kind of, figure out what it means. Um – so, things like that. And sometimes we would read, like, a few chapters, like three chapters, and afterwards say, "OK can you build me a character map after that? So, draw a picture of a character and then tell me everything you've learned about those main characters so far." Or – um – "what can you tell me about the setting so far?" Where are the different settings of the book, or if it's one setting, describe that setting, or find words that describe that character or that setting. Um – so that would very much be – um – the way I would teach literature.</p> |
| 31:48 | CG: | <p>Can I ask, specifically when you're reading in class, how does that happen? Do you read to them, do get them to read it, is there, like, quiet reading, or is it a mixture of all of it?</p>   |
| 31:58 | T1: | <p>It's kind of a mixture. So, we'll have a mixture of – um – I would usually start off by reading as a whole class, just to gauge their, like – grab their attention. So, I would read to them with expression and excitement. Um – almost just, like, grab them in. Um – I would usually – so,</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>sometimes I would do a whole class reading. Also, it depends on time. <i>*shrugs*</i> So, if I'm running out of time, I really need to get through a few chapters, then I'll read to them. Um – or just to get them back on track. Um – we also do silent reading where it's like, <i>*gestures as if to point to a learner*</i> “OK, I want you to read this chapter by yourself.” Um – and then sometimes in those situations, I would then call up kids individually and then have them come and sit by me, and read to me. So, I can hear their reading skills and help them with – um – their understanding and, you know, trying to teach them to break up words that they can't say or read. Um – we'll then also have situations where I – um – put kids in groups. And usually I would put them in groups based on their reading ability. So, like, my lower-achieving readers would be together, my middle, and then my high-achieving learners. Um – just so they don't get frustrated with one another. And then the - the slower readers, obviously – um – will read much slower and they'll need – need more assistance, but at least they can help one another. So, that's really nice, because they'll be, like, “No, no, no, no, that's not how you say it! Remember, you break it up.” So, they'll kind of help each other. Um – whereas my, like, higher achieving learners will just, like, fly through it. Um – and discuss more the content. And then, my middle achieving learners are kind of, like, the in-between. So, we will – I kind of, like, will use all three. So, we will - in-class, individual reading and then group reading.</p> |
| 33:41 | CG: | <p>So, obviously all learners are different, but, like, if you had to talk about generalising, which of those, kind of, different reading strategies do you think the kids enjoy more or respond to the most?</p>   |
| 33:58 | T1: | <p>Hmm. <i>*pauses for a long while*</i> Well, it's difficult because the ones – my high-achieving learners when it comes to reading, they'll read the book much quicker. And so, it's almost like their interest is captured for longer. So, like, they'll read it and they'll be on this, like, <i>*makes a rolling gesture with her right hand*</i> roll, like, “Oh my gosh, this is happening,” so they'll read more and more, and they can read faster so they get to the end quicker. Whereas my – my slower learners, or my – my children that really struggle with reading – um – they'll often lose interest because, <i>*shakes head*</i> either they don't know what the hell they're reading, like, they don't understand the language. Or, I don't know, because Suzy reads just as badly as I do, I don't know what Suzy's reading. So, it's almost like a – they kind of, like, lose interest, I find.</p>   |
| 34:45 | CG: | <p>So, would you say that reading to the lower level learners usually helps them more?</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 34:50 | T1: | <p><i>*nodding*</i> Definitely, yes. That kind of, like, gets their interest, but I feel like it's not improving their ability of reading which is the – <i>* gestures with both hands as if to balance on scales *</i> the other problem. Ja – um – and then my middle achieving learners – um – most of the time they also enjoy reading quite a bit, because they – they're getting there, they'll get stuck now and then, but obviously they won't read it as fast, but they're not as slow, they're kind of in the middle. So, there is that enjoyment, I would say.</p>   |
| 35:19 | CG: | <p>OK! So this question I really like, but it requires you to think a little bit. I want you to think about one lesson, so, a single lesson – a literature lesson that you believe went really well. Obviously, as a teacher you can tell, today, it was amazing, the kids were there. Today, I don't know what happened, they weren't there, you know? So, I want you to think of a literature lesson that you believe the children really enjoyed, it went really well and I just want you to talk about what was the magic, kind of, quality that happened that day? Why were they specifically engaged, how could you tell they were engaged?</p>   |
| 36:16 | T1: | <p>So, I would – I think I would go back to that Grade 10 lesson on <i>Things Fall Apart</i>. Um – so, that day was just – we were getting – we were quite far into <i>Things Fall Apart</i> and – um – the Grade 10s were really, just, starting to understand the social context of the book and, kind of, relating it to their own lives and they all had, like, different points of view they could argue that they were, like, very interested in what was being spoken about. And so, it was kind of, like, each of them were taking it in turns to read to the class, because - it was for older kids, I would often do that, like, going down the rows where each child would read a page. And – um – especially my high-achieving learners, they were – or even my low-achieving learners – they were also very interested in – um – just debating the points and discussing the book. Like, “No, you're understanding this incorrectly, I don't think that's what Chinua Achebe was trying to say.” Or, “This is what he's trying to do” or, “What is going on in this society, is it right or is it wrong?” And it was – um – that day was just so nice because we were <i>*moves right hand horizontally as if to show length*</i> so far in the book and it was really starting to make sense to them and they could bring their own points of view and -and argue different points and so, that's a lesson that would definitely stand out to me as going well.</p> |
| 37:30 | CG: | <p>Great! Oh, that's such a great example. Thank you so much. Um – can you still hear me? Sorry, your video is going a little crazy, but I can still hear you.</p>  |
| 37:39 | T1: | <p>Yes, you've also gone a little bit fuzzy, but I can still hear you.</p>  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 37:42 | CG: | OK, great, as long as we can still hear each other! OK, so, I want you to do the same thing for me, cast your mind back to a lesson, but I want you to think of one that went the other direction, one that truly was unmanageable or didn't get through to them or did not go particularly well and I want you to think about the same kind of things. Maybe, why it didn't go so well, the learners didn't respond in a way that you thought they would and, maybe, what you think, kind of, contributed to that?  |
| 38:17 | T1: | So, I think - straightaway I think of my Grade 7 lesson, we read the book <i>Journey to the River Sea</i> and - um - I was actually getting so angry because - um - we were also quite far in the book and, most of them were either leaving their books at home, or, kind of, didn't know where the book was. And then they were trying to share, but they didn't really care about sharing and then, like, half of them were, like, falling asleep on the table and - um - the other half were, like, listening but not really interested, like, not really wanting to read. Um - so, that was, like, a terrible lesson for me. And it was almost like there was no excitement or energy, no matter how much I was trying to, like, make the book come alive to them or, like, trying to elicit, like, conversation on the book. Um - and I don't know if, then, it had to do with - um - the character was not African. He was very much like a little boy on a boat in a foreign country and I - I just - I don't think they enjoyed the content of the book. I don't think they could, like, really relate to it. And, I don't know, I think it just became boring to them. It was a very <i>*rubs hands together as if in frustration*</i> frustrating lesson because, like I said, half of them were, like, falling asleep and the other half didn't have their books there and it was just, like, they didn't really care about this lesson. |
| 39:28 | CG: | This was at the first school you taught at?  |
| 39:30 | T1: | <i>*nodding*</i> Yes, yes.   |
| 39:31 | CG: | OK! So, we're getting through this! OK, so, my last question is how have your literature teaching practices, or even your views and beliefs on literature teaching changed over the course of your, like, experiences as a teacher?  |
| 39:48 | T1: | I think it's probably gotten better. So, I think I have a better understanding on how to teach literature and how to make it exciting and - um - just trying to, like, like I said, to make more of a conversation out of the reading - um - or bring the reading to life. So, I think I've gotten better at it as time has gone on. I have a better understanding of how to teach it to the kids.   |
| 40:11 | CG: | OK, cool! So, that's all the questions I had written down here, is there anything else you remember or can think of you want to tell me about or ask me about?   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 40:25 | T1: | <p>So, I would say, maybe just something interesting? Um – at my old school we never had, like, a reading corner or anything. Whereas, like, at my new school, I have a reading corner in my class. <i>*smiling largely throughout*</i> And – um – the way we got those books is that, last year we had an Entrepreneurs Day – the Grade 4s had an Entrepreneurs Day – and – um – when we were having a discussion on how we could spend our Entrepreneurs Day – because we kind of have, to some extent, an open reign on what we buy – we bought books! So, my Grade 4s and I last year – all my books in my class at the moment, in my little library – um – are all from my Grade 4s from last year. We actually had a Book Fair come, so we had this Book Fair before Corona times, they would come – sho, I’d say maybe, like, three times a year? And – um – they literally come to your school and set up for a week or, like three days they’re there. And – um – and that’s where we bought our books. So, literally, took my Grade 4s down, we had a discussion beforehand about what we want to use our money for. Books came up as the thing, which was really nice because we didn’t have any books in our class. And – um – then, ja, we literally went to this fair in the - the hall and I said to my kids, “Look at the books, when you really like one, bring it to me, I’ll write down the name and the author – the title and the author, and then from there, I’ll make the final decision.” And by the end of that, it was, like, I literally had, like, two or three pages of books that my kids wanted me to buy with that money. Um – so, that was really nice. So, it just showed me that there was this excitement for reading. Um – and then even now, this year, with a new set of – um – Grade 4s, they’ll often – I’ll get a few kids who’ll often, when they have a decision or when they have a choice where they can sit in the class, they’ll happily – like, I have a little, like, <i>*makes a vertical gesture with her right hand*</i> space rocket that we’ve made out of cardboard. And they’ll like, literally go and sit in the space rocket and choose a book, with a pillow and – um – there’s a few of them that just, like, love that space.</p> |
| 42:27 | CG: | <p>Hmmm – OK, that’s so interesting that they took ownership of that project, that’s really cool. I think I’ve got everything I need, there’s one thing I’m kind of interested in you maybe going into detail about – and that’s your reading habits now. I know we’ve spoken about this already, but I’ve been thinking about it and you said, kind of, your reading passion died at university? And you said your reading passion for fiction died at university, do you have any idea why that might be? Was it, possibly, the huge extent of other reading you had to do?</p>  |
| 43:03 | T1: | <p>So, for me, I think the main thing was that you – you know, they always used to use that saying ‘You read for your degree?’ And I, kind of, really felt that was so true. So, like, the five years of study, like, my degree and then my Honours degree, that was literally, like, all</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | I was, like, forced to do and I had to do it, there was no, like, choice. So, like, to pass, I kind of had to read all these, like, terribly long articles by all these people. And then – um – I kind of, like, always <i>*mimes making notes*</i> highlighted and make little notes – so, annotate. And – um – I just think I did so much of that, like, now when I see reading it’s almost like, “Oh no, I’d rather – I’d rather not.” And then I do read, because of the way I annotated at varsity, I find it very difficult not to annotate a book now.   |
| 43:50 | CG: | <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 43:51 | T1: | <i>*smiles widely*</i> Which is so silly! So, like, I’ll read something and I’ll be like, “no, I think I might forget this character, let me, like, circle the person’s name in pencil.” It’s, like, <i>*waves hands in the air in exasperation*</i> – no! Or, I’ll look up a word that I’m not sure of and then, like, I want to write the word in the book and it’s – it’s almost become like its work. It’s not – it’s not something fun. Um – so, ja.   |
| 44:13 | CG: | No, I absolutely understand. Like, that whole thing about, like media literacy and reading against a text. And it’s just like, I want to sit down and enjoy a book and I’m reading it and I’m like, “I wonder what this author wants me to think...”  |
| 44:23 | T1: | <i>*laughs and nods*</i> Ja! We become so critical of books because you can’t actually just sit and enjoy it. Exactly, no, definitely.  |
| 44:37 | CG: | Ja! And – can I ask, this might be a personal question so feel free not to answer if you don’t want to! But, like, what is your literacy environment like now? Like, in your house, do you own a lot of books, do you only own the books from varsity? Um – and do you see that changing if you ever have your own kid? And why?  |
| 44:57 | T1: | Um – so, at the moment, my husband and I got married in December and we’re in an apartment. So, there’s no – no, there’s not really any books here. <i>*frowns and shakes head*</i> No, besides my books from work with the kids, no. Um – and then at my dad’s house, all my varsity books, my teenage books. Um – there are a few adult books that I either started reading or I’ve never actually read. Um – so, ja – so, very different just, I think, because of space, in general. Um – and when I have kids, definitely, that would be something I would see as important. So, I definitely want to, like, read every single day. Um – or read before bed and – um – to have a lot of kid’s books. So, that would definitely be important to me. |
| 45:47 | CG: | Can I ask why?  |
| 45:49 | T1: | I think because it’s such an important part of childhood. Like, <i>*smiles*</i> to be able to think back and to have these nice times of connecting by reading. Um – and I also can see the difference in my, just from my teaching – um – kids who do read at home or do have books  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>– um – how much more knowledge they have in general. Just, most of them can read better, they have better vocabulary – um – they’re quite creative. So, I think it’s educationally and socially it’s really important.</p> |
|--|---|

| INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT |     | Alisha  |
|----------------------|-----|---|
| 00:10                | CG: | So, basically, I just wanted to start by getting your literature background. So, the first thing we can talk about is, maybe, some of the significant memories and experiences you had with literature, reading, writing, growing up at home? So, like, did your parents read to you, that kind of stuff?   |
| 00:27                | T2: | OK, so, my – my parents have always loved to read, especially my father. He would always have books and he reads like crazy, and he’s – he likes books so much that my mom could never get enough from the library at one time <i>*gestures with both hands as if holding a large stack of books*</i> because she had to try and get, like, – I think you could take out seven books for a week and that wasn’t enough for my father. Because he, like, – he reads like this. <i>*clicks fingers in quick succession*</i> So, eventually, when Kindles came out, they were like, <i>*claps hands together*</i> “OK, like, this is the thing.” My cousin put thousands of books on and it really helped. So, like, I grew up in a home where <i>*counts on her fingers*</i> my parents read to me before bed – um – with my – my friends at school, <i>*gestures as if to indicate a large group*</i> they all were readers, which encouraged me as well. And as soon as I started to go to school, obviously they encourage you to read, but, like, <i>*makes an uncertain gesture with her hands*</i> going to senior primary and then high school, it actually put me off reading. It made me less interested, in that I was bored, and it was such a <i>*makes the shape of a box with her hands*</i> rigid, structured way of doing things that I wasn’t actually interested in reading. <i>*shrugs*</i> Um – but it wasn’t until I reached university that I actually got, like, that <i>*waves hands in the air*</i> enthusiasm back. So, – um – doing an English degree, I was – they, literally, like, the first week were, like, <i>*gestures as if to point to someone*</i> “Come on, you’ve got to read this book before next week Friday.” And I was, like, <i>*places hand on chest and gasps*</i> “At school it took us six months to get through one Shakespeare and now I’ve got to read <i>Macbeth</i> before next week Friday!” <i>*smiles widely*</i> So, I think my enthusiasm came then when I saw certain lecturers who were so <i>*clutches hand in a fist*</i> excited about the book that they were trying to teach us, that it actually made us enthusiastic about it too. So, – so it’s – it’s almost, like, <i>*waves arm in the air in a sweeping motion*</i> my parents got that enthusiasm for me – my parents and, like, being around my friends, more than school did it for me. School didn’t really make me enthusiastic about it at all. But – but, ja, that’s <i>*makes circular motion*</i> |

|      |     |  |
|------|-----|--|
|      |     | <i>with her hands</i> * kind of like how I got excited about reading books and teaching books as well.   |
| 0224 | CG: | Can I ask you about your personal interests, like, what kind of books did your parents read to you when you were little, how did that evolve into later on and, like, kind of what books stimulated you?   |
| 0235 | T2: | Ja, so – um – we’ve always been interested, like, more – my parents have always read whatever they have, but my dad specifically has always been interested in things about the world. <i>*makes a circular gesture with her left hand*</i> So, historical fiction type stuff? And I think, his talking to me about those books encouraged me to read similar books. So, books where it almost, like, <i>*makes a pinching motion with her left hand as if moving something along a timeline*</i> takes you back to a different time and teaches you something about the world and a different time. And <i>*gestured to herself with an open palm on her chest*</i> that’s the type of book that I absolutely love. So, something that will actually <i>*gestures with both hands as if to move something in a horizontal motion*</i> transport you into a different world and not necessarily, like, <i>*waves hands in the air in a mystical manner*</i> magic stuff but, like, just where you can, like, actually learn something about history from the book that you read. And you’re, like, <i>*makes a pinching motion with her right hand*</i> planted in that world. And that’s the type of thing that – although, my dad did get to a stage where he was running out of books and read <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> all my Shakespeares, like, <i>Dracula</i> and <i>Frankenstein</i> and all that, but, the type of thing my parents have always read have always been <i>*gestures forward as if to pin something in front of her*</i> based in some kind of truth. And I think that’s what I, sort of, <i>*gestured to herself with an open palm on her chest*</i> took from them as well. Um – ja, <i>*draws a line in front of her with her right hand as if to indicate a journey*</i> that’s the kind of book that I enjoy reading and we – we’ve always had <i>*makes circular motions with both hands as if indicating an ongoing movement*</i> discussions about stuff that’s going on in the world and I think that’s what made me interested as well. Ja, so that – <i>*shrugs*</i> that’s the type of novel that I’ll read. That I’ll generally enjoy reading. <i>*gives a thumbs up*</i> |
| 0351 | CG: | OK. And, you touched on this a little, but your literature life today? It sounds like you have a rich reading life still?  |
| 0359 | T2: | <i>*nods*</i> I do. So, when I was at school, <i>*moves right hand horizontally in the air in a negative motion*</i> I didn’t read as much. And I know I was supposed to do it for, like, book reviews and all that, but you, kind of just, found the books on the shelf and you, like, <i>*mimes writing in</i>   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>her hand*</i> wrote down the author and all that. <i>*smiles*</i> And because I lost that enthusiasm for doing it, it was easier to just sit and watch TV, <i>*points at her chest in an accusing manner*</i> which I know is really terrible, it's what I encourage my kids <i>*gestures as if to place her right hand firmly down*</i> not to do now. But I think I read more – I've read more since I've left school <i>*holds right finger and thumb apart as if to show a unit of time*</i> than I did the whole way through my school career. And it's – it's because I started to understand what you can get from a book a lot more. Um – so, I do read quite a bit. I read – <i>*makes a sweeping gesture with her right hand*</i> every weekend I read, and I try to read in the afternoons as much as I can. But I literally, like, <i>*points with right hand for emphasis*</i> Saturday morning I will start reading and I become <i>*holds both hands around her head as if to encase it*</i> totally enveloped in it and that evening I'm, like, <i>*turns whole bods and looks around, waving her arms as if in surprise*</i> “Oh! The weather's changed! Like, I need to make dinner,” type thing. So, I do read a lot, but it's all very similar type of books. It's very much <i>*points forward with her right hand*</i> historical fiction is what I enjoy reading. <i>*laughs*</i></p> |
| 04:55 | CG: | No, I also I – I read a lot now, but at the same time I kind of feel like I'm in a rut, when I was younger, I read everything and now I've kind of, like, found a niche.   |
| 05:05 | T2: | <i>*nods*</i> Yes! Yes, exactly.   |
| 05:07 | CG: | Can I ask, does your partner read a lot?   |
| 05:08 | T2: | <p>He does. So [my husband] – [my husband]'s grown up reading huge amounts of books, to the point where, when he was in Grade 3, his mother was called in because the teacher was worried about the fact that he was spending so much time reading and the books that he was reading was, like, <i>*makes a sweeping gesture with her right hand*</i> too advanced for him. So, - um – but he's, like, he's read the whole <i>Harry Potter</i> series, like, <i>*waves right hand in the air*</i> four times. He's a – he loves to read. When I met him, like, <i>*gestures with both hands as if grasping something tightly*</i> it was difficult to get a book out of his hands. So, I think that – <i>*holds right hand up with palm facing upwards*</i> that's probably an encouragement as well, because I met him when I left school, as well, and he loves to read, which probably <i>*indicates toward herself with both hands*</i> encouraged me to read more as well. So, ja. <i>*nods*</i></p>  |
| 05:45 | CG: | That's very cool. Um – so, I'm really interested in now – because you didn't study teaching straight away, you studied English, right?   |
| 05:53 | T2: | <i>*nods*</i> Ja.  |
| 05:54 | CG: | So, can you talk about your university experiences, how you had to read within the sphere of your degree, and did you have, like, a PGCE training after that?  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 06:03 | T2: | <p>Ja, so, I did an English degree – <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> I did a three-year English degree with a media degree as well. Which – um – so, <i>*brings both hands together, palms down, as if joining them together*</i> it was, like, a joint degree, which was actually quite interesting because you got to use, like, the English – <i>*closes right hand into a fist as if to contain something in it*</i> like, the more classical thing of, like, literature and writing and all that, as well as <i>* closes left hand into a fist as if to contain something in it and holds both fists next to one another*</i> media, which is very much journalism and writing in that way. So, it matched up quite – quite – quite – well. So, the – sorry, my dog’s just getting in here <i>*laughs*</i> Um – so, ja – so, I did an English degree and, when I finished my three-year English degree, <i>*gestures as if to place her right hand on top of something*</i> I then did a PGCE on top of that. My PGCE literally did nothing for me at all. <i>*moves left hand horizontally in the air in a negative motion*</i> It was literally <i>*clenches left hand as if holding something up*</i> a piece of paper in my hand. But my love of reading and English and all that was definitely developed in my three years at UKZN. And, I know that sounds strange at UKZN, but the English department there was just <i>* makes a sweeping gesture with her left hand *</i> spectacular! <i>*smiles widely*</i> And they really, like <i>*moves forward in her seat as if to indicate excitement*</i> went out of their way to make it interesting and exciting for you. So, ja, my PGCE training was literally just to get a piece of paper. Like, sometimes the lecturers weren’t even there. So, <i>*gestures to herself with her left hand*</i> my experience with teaching and all that actually has nothing to do with the qualification that I took. Being thrown in the classroom, really!</p> |
| 07:17 | CG: | <p>So then, can I ask, when you were studying your English slash media studies – so, if you were doing a book, like a Shakespeare, or whatever, can you talk me through how they did that with you?</p>   |
| 07:32 | T2: | <p>OK, so – they usually chose a <i>*gestures as if holding something in both hands*</i> specific section that we’d have to look at. So – um – for example when we did <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, <i>*holds left hand up with palm facing upward*</i> which you’d think is quite a basic one you do in high school and all that, but they did and then <i>*moves right hand over open left hand*</i> what you had to look at was – um – like, our entire section just of that <i>*gestures with both hands as if holding a large box*</i> was not <i>*holds right hand horizontally in the air and mimes going down a list*</i> going through every single line like we would’ve done in h – h – high – high school, but they would teach us before and say <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> “OK, so – um – is this a romance, or is it a tra – tra – tra – sorry about my stutter – tragedy.” And those were the two things we had to look at. <i>*holds right hand up with the palm facing forwards, then does the same with the left*</i> Romance. Tragedy. That’s it. You need to know</p>   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> who the characters are, what the plot is. You need to know all the background information. <i>*holds both hands back up in the air, palms facing forwards*</i> And we looked at those two and we discussed that against the book, and then <i>*brings both hands down as if to indicate finality*</i> your final essay was writing that. So, every book that we did was specifically – they would choose some over – like, <i>*waves her right arm in the air as if to cover something*</i> umbrella idea about it. And everything else in that book <i>*pats her chest with her left hand as if to indicate to herself*</i> you would have to learn yourself. Um – and they just honed in on <i>*points forward with her left hand*</i> one section of it. So, is this book a romantic book? Is this book a historical book? Um – is, like – oh! <i>*raises her right hand as if remembering something*</i> The one that was quite interesting was, “Was <i>Dracula</i> a horror, or was it, like, a sexual book?” Which I thought was, like, quite fun to think about.</p>  |
| 08:48 | CG: | Oh, I love that, I’ve reread <i>Dracula</i> like three or four times.  |
| 09:01 | T2: | <p><i>*smiles widely*</i> I know, I know! So, like, <i>*waves left hand as if to indicate a group of people*</i> we had to read it, we had to understand it and then, in the lectures it was, like, <i>*flicks hands in the air in an excited manner, then mimes pointing to different people*</i> debates! Like, “OK, you sit on that side, you sit on that side. What do we think? Get into groups, write an essay, discuss it! Come up – up – up in front.” <i>*claps hands together as if to hurry someone along*</i> “Talk about your point! Do you think <i>Dracula</i> was a horror?” And give all the points obviously and going back and quoting the book. So, you had to know the book really, really well. But that’s kind of how it was taught to me, which meant that basic thing of just <i>* holds right hand horizontally in the air and mimes going down a list *</i> going through every single line and, like, <i>*puts on high pitched, monotonous voice*</i> “What do you think this means?” <i>*mimes raising hand like a student*</i> “I think it means this.” <i>*puts on harsh voice and points accusingly*</i> “No! You can’t write that in your essay!” – was something that, like, that’s a high school thing.</p> |
| 09:40 | CG: | So, like never going beyond understanding, sort of thing?  |
| 09:43 | T2: | <i>*nods*</i> Exactly. Just <i>*move sideways in her chair in an excited manner*</i> make it interesting and exciting.   |
| 09:46 | CG: | OK. So, I know you said your PGCE was useless, but did you – was there any kind of attempt to teach you how to teach literature in PGCE at all?  |
| 09:56 | T2: | Um – I’ll – I’ll just give you a background of what I had as a lecturer – or who I had as a lecturer, rather. <i>*smiles and covers face as if embarrassed*</i> But, like, the one day he didn’t pitch up so he sent me a message – OK – and he said to me that – um – <i>*waves left hand in a</i>  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>disinterested manner</i>* “Please – here are the notes for today’s class, can you please teach the class.” So, that’s the type of thing I had. So, as a lecturer, I got nothing from him, but there was an attempt to understand the teaching of English and li – lit – literature in a classroom – um – <i>*waves both hands as if to indicate a group of people*</i> amongst the students. We used to discuss as a group and, I think there were only about eighteen of us in my class and they were all from <i>*waves right hand in a circle as if to indicate a large space*</i> different parts of the w – world. <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> There was a girl from Cameroon, Nigeria and all that, and we all would sit <i>*waves right hand as if to indicate something behind her*</i> without the lecturer because he was never there. We would sit and go through the course work we had been sent to try and approach different ways and say <i>*gestures with right hand as if handing something out to a group of people*</i> “OK, this lesson, how would we teach this? This lesson, how would we teach this?” So, it was more like a <i>*makes a circle with both hands and gestures as if the circle is moving and changing*</i> collaborative study between us – um – more than someone lecturing us during my P – PGCE. Ja, so.</p> |
| 11:01 | CG: | So, that’s very interesting!   |
| 11:05 | T2: | <i>*shakes her head and laughs*</i> Not that helpful!  |
| 11:06 | CG: | No, it is! No, it’s hugely helpful! Some very interesting things about – so, I’ve interviewed teachers who’ve had the same kind of education I had, the full four years, and it’s very interesting the different, kind of, focus that yours had. Um – what I do want to ask is, do you believe that any of your experience at university, be it in the English degree or in the PGCE, adequately prepared you to teach literature specifically?  |
| 11:32 | T2: | Um – I think my English degree definitely prepared me to <i>*leans forward and pinches fingers of left hand together as if to hone in on a specific point*</i> understand the different aspects of – of a text. <i>*gestures as if to count on fingers*</i> Looking at the background, the setting – um – um – the sort of, like, social background of the characters and going in depth and that. The PGCE, as I say, <i>*rubs hands together thoughtfully*</i> gave me the – the preparedness to be able to stand in front of a classroom and how to deal with teaching it, <i>*moves both hands together as if to demonstrate shakiness*</i> like, very basically. Like, <i>*puts on monotonous voice and points with her left hand*</i> “Read through the text, do this,” and all – all that. But I think my English degree is what really gave me the enthusiasm to sort of <i>*gestures outwards with both hands as if to throw something out*</i> project that and impart that on the kids. So, I don’t – I don’t think that I was adequately trained for the teaching I eventually started doing for the last seven years – maybe in a different school? <i>*smiles widely*</i> But I wasn’t adequately prepared   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>to teach Grade 5 <i>*clasps hands together and interlaces fingers*</i> in the schools that I've taught. Ja, I think that came through experience. <i>*laughs*</i></p>   |
| 12:31 | CG: | <p><i>*laughs*</i> I wouldn't be surprised! OK, so, now, if you wouldn't mind taking me through your teaching background? Um – obviously, ethically speaking, it would be better if you didn't give me any school names, but rather, kind of, like, describe the schools you taught at, how long you were there, the backgrounds of the kids, their social upbringings?</p>  |
| 12:53 | T2: | <p>So, I've taught in three – three schools. <i>*points to the first finger on her right hand*</i> The first school, I was there for two years – um – the school had money and a lot of resources, but the children didn't. So, the type of kids I had came from, sort of, like, township-type homes, where the parents were absent. When parents came for interviews – um – it usually took about four attempts to get them to pitch up for the in – in – interview and all that. Not usually through their own fault, <i>*gestures with both hands in the air for emphasis*</i> usually just because they had been at work for twenty-four hours and they couldn't get there. Um – and – ja, so – so the staff were very willing to help them and all that, but just – just nothing at home. Literally living in shacks <i>*gestures at the clothes she's wearing*</i> with their uniform, and coming to school each day with the same uni – uniform. Um – and – it – it was, like, <i>*gestures as if to weigh something up*</i> differentiated, because a lot of the kids came from nice homes, but no one of, like, extreme wealth. <i>*shakes head for emphasis*</i> So, no background of education at home and the only access – the only, sort of, <i>*makes cupping gesture with both hands as if to grasp onto something small*</i> literature or reading or any learning that they really had was at school. Um – <i>*points to the second finger on her right hand*</i> and then my next school that I went to, I was there for five years, similar thing. A lot of the kids were a little bit wealthier than the first group and – but the same thing. The parents weren't, sort of, around to help them. Um – the parents tried a lot and I don't know if it was <i>*gestures with left hand as if to mark down a timeline*</i> sort of, as the years went on the parents are – more able to do things? Talking of, like, - ja, the way that socio-economic stuff was going. Like, they were able to do a lot more for their kids but still, we did most of the education. So, we – we did most of the reading and – and the help. <i>*holds two of the fingers on her right hand in her left hand*</i> For both schools that I taught at so far, they've both been – um – first language – well, the majority of them were first language isiZulu speakers learning <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> first language English. And learning everything in first language English. So, that's where my issue's been for the last seven years. <i>*points to the third finger on her right hand*</i> And then, the school that I'm currently at, they come from – not wealthy homes, but good homes where the parents have the money to help them. Although I've only been there for <i>*throws hands up in</i></p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>exasperation</i>* three months before the lockdown, so – I think the majority of the experience I can talk to you about has been over the last seven years, because this – this – this school is different. They love reading, the parents read to them, we read to them in class and there’s – there’s a lot more <i>*gestures forward with left hand as if to offer something*</i> access to books. Whereas my last seven years, <i>*shakes head*</i> there’s been no access to books. Um – they can get books at school, but you’re only allowed to take out two. So, <i>*points finger of right hand onto palm of left hand for emphasis*</i> their ability to read and their interest in reading is, like, <i>*shrugs*</i> “Who cares about reading when you can’t even, like, eat at night? Or when you only get home at 6 o’clock because that’s when the taxi can take you back home?” So – so, ja, that’s where my main experiences come – come – come from.</p>  |
| 15:48 | CG: | <p>OK! So, that’s very interesting. Could you, I mean, you’ve touched on it generally, on the language barrier and that kind of socialization thing. So, if you were to categorise your specific challenges teaching to the kids you’ve had in these contexts? Would it mainly be, the language and the socialization and the parents at home working with them?</p>   |
| 16:18 | T2: | <p><i>*nods*</i> Ja, ja.</p>   |
| 16:19 | CG: | <p>OK. Thank you! So, now, just in general, how do you feel about teaching literature as opposed to teaching other aspects of the English curriculum? Do you believe it’s similar, different?</p>  |
| 16:33 | T2: | <p>Ja, so, I enjoy teaching <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> books and reading so much more than everything else. I enjoy writing as well, but the problem I find with writing is that – um – if the kids don’t have a <i>*makes a horizontal motion with her right hand*</i> base to work from, especially kids who come from a home where you only speak Zulu or Shona, for them to write in English is very hard. So, they’re not writing at the level that they should be writing for their grades, so I do find that’s quite hard. And they – <i>*holds both hands up as if to encompass something large and then bring it down to something small*</i> they’re experience is so small that, literally, they can talk about their home, soccer and school. <i>* makes a horizontal motion with her right hand as if to draw a line*</i> That’s it. So, that’s quite a difficult thing to try and teach. <i>*points with left finger into the palm of her right hand*</i> Grammar I just find is boring. <i>*smiles*</i> And I – I kind of feel like they can learn their grammar through reading. So, I think the more they read, the more they can do that. So, for me, literature, I much prefer it. Because I can really – <i>*nods head for emphasis*</i> I’m quite crazy in my classroom, I do jump around a lot and all that. And I find with literature it gives me a chance to do that, to try and <i>*waves both hands in a circular motion as if trying to get something moving*</i> get them excited and enthusiastic! And I find that they <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> enjoy it a lot more. When they</p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>know <i>*claps hands together once*</i> when there's, like, a story coming or – <i>*moves left hand down vertically as if to indicate a list*</i> even if it's a story before questions or anything, <i>*flicks both hands in a popping motion*</i> they're immediately excited because it's something different and it's a world that they can, sort of ,like, <i>*moves both hands forward as if to mime moving through something*</i> get in – in – in to, which makes the lesson better. So, I much prefer it to the other aspects. <i>*chuckles*</i> Grammar, I just – <i>*throws hands up as if in exasperation*</i> I – I hate it. <i>*laughs*</i></p>   |
| 17:58 | CG: | <p>That's very interesting! So, talking about that – if you were to talk about the value of teaching reading, or the value of teaching literature in the classroom – what value do you think it holds?</p>   |
| 18:11 | T2: | <p>Ja, so, I think for kids who don't have the access to it, I think <i>*gestures as if to count on fingers*</i> firstly, it gives them a chance to be exposed to it. So, because they – because they don't have books at home or reading at home, or their families don't encourage it, it's their <i>*holds first finger of her right hand in her left*</i> one chance to be able to read or to hear a story. <i>*continues to count on fingers*</i> Um – I also feel that, as I said earlier, they learn the <i>*waves right hand in a circular motion, as if to encompass a group of things*</i> other aspects of English through reading, through hearing the spoken word as well, Um – I also fell that it gives them a chance to, not time out, but be transported out of wh – whatever they are doing. And – so, this is something that, unless it's done at home, school is the place where it does <i>*moves both hands up and down emphatically*</i> g – g – get done. And I know it's more of a <i>*moves right hand across in a sweeping motion*</i> structured way of doing it and it does – because of the way we have to teach it, it gets – it gets them to, sort of – um – understand the parts of the words <i>*opens and closes right hand while moving it along horizontally, as if to capture a number of small things*</i> and the – because we're there to teach it. Because, if they're sitting at home with a book and they're reading, <i>*extends left hand with palm facing upwards as if to make a point*</i> even if they come from a home where they're lots of books at home, there's a lot of stuff that they read over that they <i>*shakes head for emphases*</i> don't understand and there's no one to help them. Whereas, in a classroom <i>*pinches fingers of left hand together as if to indicate an enclosed space*</i> it's a structured environment where you can actually go over that – that – that, like, the – the difficult stuff. So – <i>* moves both hands up and down emphatically*</i> and I think you can help them to – um – <i>*gestures with both hands as if to bring something from outside in*</i> with the other subjects as well, you're able to, sort of, link back to it. So – you can, sort of, <i>*moves right hand horizontally along in a wave motion*</i> interconnect their reading through all the subjects that you teach. So, <i>*throws hands up and contorts face into a worried expression*</i> I hope that makes sense! <i>*laughs*</i></p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 19:44 | CG: | <p>No, that's excellent! That's incredible. I love that. OK – um – so, if we spoke about the specific background of your learners, obviously, in your first two schools, you spoke about teaching mainly isiZulu and Shona kids – um – do you believe that that, kind of, changed your teaching style and how you presented the text?</p>   |
| 20:08 | T2: | <p><i>*raises both hands into the air emphatically*</i> One hundred percent! Um – because of the way we were taught at school, when I went onto my first classroom, I was, like, <i>*gestures with both hands as if summing up something simple*</i> “That’s how I’m going to teach it too!” So, I’m going to <i>*brings left hand down in a vertical manner as if to indicate a list*</i> read through the story with them, and <i>*waves with her right hand as if indicating to a group*</i> the kids can all read and then we’ll answer some questions and then everything will be fine! But then I <i>*brings hands to her chest and then away from her body as if presenting herself*</i> stood in front of my first class, <i>*brings left hand across in a vertical motion as if to indicate a large group*</i> all isiZulu speakers, I think there was one – one little Shona boy, and I start to read, and the first few words, they’re, like, <i>*mimes raising hand like a student*</i> “What does that mean?” Or you start to see them doing this, like, <i>*places head in her left hand and mimes falling asleep*</i> falling asleep, because they don’t understand what you’re reading! And you’re just standing there going, <i>*mimes looking down at a book in her hands and put on a monotonous voice*</i> “The boy went here blah, blah, blah.” <i>*gestures to herself with both hands*</i> Because my experience was, like – the only experience I’d actually had of it was being a student <i>*throws left arm out as if to indicate something far away*</i> in a classroom at school. Purely because, in my PGCE, we didn’t do a lot of pracs or anything. So, I think it was like two and a half months of pracs. So, when – I think <i>*gestures with both hands as if to put something down*</i> being in the classroom with these kids, I developed ways of teaching it and engaging with them in a way that, sort of – <i>*holds out both hands*</i> matched the interest that these kids had. Because of the fact that they’re kids who, like - like, they’re whole <i>*makes a circular gesture with both hands*</i> world is a lot – um – not smaller, but it’s centered on the same stuff <i>*interlaces fingers together to make a small circle with her hands*</i> because they don’t understand <i>*throws left arm out as if to indicate something far away*</i> what’s going on out there in the world, because some of them don’t have TV at home, and all that. So, it became a thing where, this text, you <i>*scrunches both hands into fists and brings them close to her body*</i> really had to engage them with it, otherwise they were lost. So, even if the content was stuff that they didn’t understand or couldn’t relate to, I had to make it really interesting. And that’s – that’s when I started to learn that I had to <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers – slightly more emphatically than usual*</i> use accents, and I had to jump around the classroom,</p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>and I had to dress up, and I had to get them to become a part of the story that we read. Um – and it meant – it meant that <i>*gestures to herself by placing her hand on her chest*</i> I had to do a lot more work – um – when I taught a lesson like that, but it paid off in the end. And I almost realized that my teaching changed – that I had to stop <i>*holds up left hand as if to stop someone*</i> and explain things a lot more than my teachers would have at school. Because we would have been reading at home, and our parents would have discussed things over the dinner table with us and all that. Whereas, these kids, their parents <i>*gestures with hands for emphasis*</i> don't discuss things. They don't discuss the world. So, I felt like – <i>*holds both hands parallel to one another and moves them horizontally as if along an imaginary line*</i> like I had to change my teaching to suit these kids. I definitely changed it <i>*waves right hand in circular motion*</i> completely. And <i>*holds hands far apart as if to indicate a large distance*</i> over the last seven years I've changed it <i>*brings left hand closer to right in small intervals*</i> every single year as I go with the different kids that I have in my classroom as well. To match their personalities and all that, you have to sort of, like <i>*gestures with both hands with palms facing down*</i> suss them out. <i>*laughs*</i> But ja, I definitely – I definitely had to change. Ja.</p>  |
| 22:47 | CG: | <p>Oh, that's so great! Exciting. OK, so, now, we're going to talk about the texts themselves. So, over the course of your different schools you've taught at, how have the texts been selected, were they prescribed to you? Or were you allowed any kind of freedom?</p>  |
| 23:08 | T2: | <p>So, my first two years in my first school they didn't have many books and the books that they do have – <i>*pauses thoughtfully*</i> actually, my second school, as well, was the same. There was an old cupboard <i>*makes the shape of a large cupboard with her arms*</i> and they were, like, <i>*gestures as if pointing to various sections in the cupboard*</i> “Those are the ones for Grade 5, those are for Grade 4s, you can go and choose what you want.” And there are, like, <i>*gestures with hands as if to indicate a small stack of something*</i> four different texts and they've been there for the last thirty-five years and – they're things like <i>Jock of the Bushveld</i>, and <i>The BFG</i>, and it's all the same stuff that we would have read at school and <i>*throws left hand over her shoulder*</i> that our parents probably would have read at school as well. And they haven't updated them. So, for me, I would – because a lot of the work that was prescribed, we had to try and use those books to <i>*makes brief linking motion with her right hand*</i> connect it in. But I must admit, I used to – <i>*moves left hand in circular motion as if to point to a group*</i> instead of doing a class reader, I used to, with my last seven years, <i>*gestures to herself*</i> I'd find a book of my own. So, I'd go to the <i>*gestures with left hand in a pinching motion as if to emphasise points as she speaks*</i> SPCA or I'd go online and I'd find books that I could possibly read to my kids. Unfortunately, <i>*holds up left hand with the palm facing upwards, as</i></p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>if to indicate another side of an argument*</i> if they don't have a book in front of them, I would either have to <i>*mimes handing something out*</i> pass the books around – um – so they could each read a passage, which means some other kids in the class get a bit bored. Or we would just have to use those prescribed texts. Um – because – not – not that the school didn't want them, <i>*gestures outwards with both hands*</i> but because the schools didn't have the money to <i>*claps hands together*</i> continuously buy <i>*mimes holding a large object in her arms*</i> a set of, like, thirty books. So, unfortunately, what I've been exposed to is that “Those are the books, that's what you have to read to your kids. <i>*moves both hands in a large circular motion*</i> If you want them to all have a book and read.” Ja.</p>   |
| 24:44 | CG: | <p>OK, ja. And, so, through this experience, can you think back and tell me, is there any particular text you found the kids responded really well to? And, if so, what do you think it was that made it particularly appropriate?</p>   |
| 24:58 | T2: | <p>OK. So, there's one that really stands out in my mind and it was a Grade 6 class about two years ago. Um – I found <i>King Arthur</i> and – um – it was a <i>King Arthur</i> <i>*lifts left hand for emphasis*</i> but, like, not – not written at an adults level, it was written at a kids level, but I was the one <i>*mimes holding book*</i> with the copy of that book. And I started to read this book on, like, a Friday afternoon to my class and I thought, <i>*shakes head and sighs*</i> “They've been so badly behaved all week They – they're going to fight me on this! They're going to be so bored.” And I was, like, <i>*shrugs*</i> “I'm just going to try it.” And my kids were so engaged! They were like <i>*sits up straighter, leans forward and stretches out both hands as if to indicate connection*</i> on the edge of their seats, like, listening. And I stood in front and I was <i>*waves arms around crazily and moves head side to side as if ducking*</i> changing my actions and all of that – really engaging with all that. And the bell rang and the whole class were, like, <i>*leans forward and grips the arms of her chair*</i> “No! Keep going, keep going!” And I said, <i>*throws left arm out as if indicating to a door*</i> “But you've got to go home!” And it was – it was so interesting because <i>King Arthur</i> is something that these kids have <i>*holds up both hands and waves them as if confused*</i> no understanding of!</p> |
| 25:55 | CG: | <p>There's no connection!</p>  |
| 25:55 | T2: | <p>Like, <i>*holds right arm stretched out as if to indicate something far away*</i> England! And – I asked them after we finished it. I said, <i>*holds up both hands and waves them as if confused*</i> “What about this book interested you?” Because on the Monday morning they were, like, <i>*leans forward, grips the arms of her chair and nods her head enthusiastically*</i> “Are we gonna finish it? Are we gonna finish it?” And I said, <i>*holds both hands up as if to low someone*</i></p>   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>down</i>* “No, we’ve got to do our Maths and all that. Maybe this week Friday.” And they asked me <i>*brings palms of hands together multiple times*</i> every single day. And I said to them, <i>*smiles widely*</i> “What about <i>King Arthur</i> interests you guys?” Like, kids who come from, like, <i>*waves left hand as if to indicate the general area*</i> these areas here, and they – they – <i>*shrugs*</i> ja! It’s, like, unrelated to – to their lives. And they – they said, “No” – they love to, sort of – <i>*brings palms of her hands together slowly*</i> um – they almost saw themselves as – as <i>*closes right hand into a fist*</i> the hero who had been banished into, like, another kingdom, which is what <i>King Arthur</i> is, and they saw themselves as the person who came and pulled that sword out of the stone. And <i>*closes both hands into a fist and brings them together*</i> they were the ones where they came from nothing, but they became these, like, victorious people who were able to, like, rule a kingdom. And <i>*touches her right hand to her head*</i> in their minds, that was, like, – they saw that as them. And <i>*smiles widely*</i> it was really interesting to hear from a story that’s so unrelated to their lives, how it was – they could actually relate to the person who came from nothing and was – like, wrong was done to them and now they’re able to be – they’re able to <i>*throws both hands in the air*</i> rule a whole king – king – king – kingdom. And, ja, so, that was something that they absolutely loved. <i>*raises right hand and mimes scanning through something*</i> As I went through it, I had to explain things, because a lot of it had, like, old English speech and all that, which I had to try and – and explain. But they – <i>*shrugs and smiles*</i> they seemed to really enjoy it. And that’s one that’s definitely always stood out in my mind.</p> |
| 27:35 | CG: | So beautiful. Was it the Michael Morpurgo version, or – ?  |
| 27:38 | T2: | No, it was actually, like, <i>*mimes holding a book*</i> a kid’s version. Um – it came from – they had a – it’s one of their textbooks. And with the textbook, there’s, like, a reader. And I just picked up the reader and opened that page and tried to – to read it. I could actually tell you what it is – I think it’s like the Platinum Reader for Grade 6. Ja.  |
| 28:02 | CG: | Wow, that’s so cool. I love that. Um – on the converse side, can you think of any specific texts that you’ve found particularly challenging to present to the learners?  |
| 28:16 | T2: | <p><i>*smiles and leans forward*</i> Ja, so – they – because of the syllabus, they love us to teach folk tales. And stories of Africa and all that. And, I know it sounds very strange, <i>*shakes head slowly*</i> but they hate it. They hate stories of people sitting around the bushfire – um – stuff that you’d think they’d resonate with. But like, stories of – like, <i>*makes pinching motion with her left hand as if to indicate a specific area*</i> out in Africa in a mud hut, and, like, people in loincloths hunting, and <i>*waves both hands in the air slowly as if in a magical way*</i> the</p>   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>mythical stuff about the spirits and all that. Because a lot of the books we've had to read have been, like, folk tales and their exams <i>*moves her right hand away from left in a branching motion*</i> come from that. So, <i>*brings both hands down in an emphatic motion*</i> we have to read this and the folktales for Grade 4, 5, and 6 are a big thing. And <i>*clasps hands together*</i> I've battled with it because I read it to them and I'm almost, like – they should understand this because a lot of them go home to the farm, and they believe in the ancestors, and that's a big thing. But <i>*waves left hand in a small, circular motion as if to indicate the beginning of something*</i> as soon as I start to read it, you can just see their face, like – <i>*rolls her eyes and mimes looking around in various directions as if bored*</i> Because it's not interesting for them. Um – I don't know if it's because they <i>*brings the side of her right hand into her right palm multiple times*</i> hear so much about it, constantly, from <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> family, from our school syl – syllabus that – it's actually become kind of, like, it's boring. Whereas, maybe when they read something like <i>King Arthur</i>, they're like, <i>*gasps*</i> "It's so different, I want to know what goes on here, it's, like, a different world." But they do seem to – they don't – well, maybe not my school now, but we haven't got to that point yet because of lockdown, but for my last two schools, it's definitely been the one thing I absolutely battled to teach because, no matter how I try to engage them, <i>*gestures as if to count on her fingers*</i> they either know everything that's going on and they know how the story's going to end because it's stuff that they see constantly, or they just sit there and they're completely bored – um – because they hear about it constantly. So, <i>*shrugs*</i> ja. I – I can't think of a specific text, but it's <i>*opens palm of her left hand emphatically*</i> whenever I've tried to teach anything to do with African folktales or stories of Afr – Afr – Africa.</p> |
| 30:22 | CG: | For both those first two schools?  |
| 30:22 | T2: | <p>Yes. Ja, ja. So, whether it's the people, or whether it's, like, animals that can talk as a folktale <i>*shakes head*</i> they're not interested in it at all. Ja, and they always say "But animals can't talk. Why are we learning this? Animals can't talk!" <i>*chuckles*</i> So, it's very difficult to explain the folktales and the tradition being passed down and all that, they – ja, it's – it's – I think it's just boring for them because they hear it <i>*nods head emphatically*</i> constantly from Granny and all that.</p>  |
| 30:51 | CG: | <p>Wow. OK, so now I want to move on to talk about your specific practices. A lot of this is, kind of, retalking about things we've mentioned before, but specifically looking at the things you do. So, if I were to ask you – you're planning a literature block at school, like, you know you have this amount of time, you know you have this text, how do you go about that?</p>  |

31:15

T2:

OK, so – um – whenever I’m talking about this, I’m talking about Grade 5 and 6 because those are the two Grades that I’ve taught often. So – um – what I will do is – a teacher once introduced *Macbeth* to me at school by – introducing it by saying, *\*sits up in her seat and sways side to side\** “So, there was this young, handsome guy and he was about to go to university.” And we were all, like *\*smiles, leans forward and grips the arms of her chair\** “Ooh! What’s this book about?” And then she *\*mimes handing someone something\** brought *Macbeth* out, OK. So, she tried to make the story real for us and something that, as high school girls, we could relate to. So, that’s what I try to do with my class. So, *\*holds left hand up, palm facing upwards\** if we are about to start a book or a piece of writing, I always try and, sort of, *\*makes a circular gesture with both hands\** create the atmosphere for them before we actually get into the story. *\*places one hand on top of the other palms down, rubs hands together and then interlaces her fingers\** Because if you just start re – reading it’s, like, *\*waves both hands around her head\** there’s too much. So, I’ll try and create the atmosphere, and explain the setting, and get, like, a mood going so they can sort of *\*taps on her head with both hands\** get a picture in their mind. I will always read it to them first, and, as I read it to them, I’ve read the story before, so I will *\*curls left hand into a fist as if to grasp a point\** focus on things that I know are important for them to learn. And so, I’ll read through and I’ll stop and I’ll explain this and I always encourage them to raise their hand if we’re *\*gestures with both hands as if to indicate a large block of text\** midway through, because, if they wait till the end, *\*shakes head\** these kids are in Grade 5 and 6, there’s no way they’re going to remember *\*mimes pointing at something\** in paragraph two they didn’t understand that word, or they don’t know what’s going on. So, I try my hardest to get them to – um – actually stop me so can explain things. But I try to focus on things that are very important for them. Um – and things that I think they’ll find interesting, as well, to explain sort of, like, the background of it. Um – *\*waves left hand as if going down a list\** I’ll read through it and I always, as I said, I read through it with, like, accents, and I walk around the classroom and I *\*leans forward and mimes staring intently\** look at their faces and I *\*still leaning forward, mimes waving her hands around someone else’s head\** try and engage them with it and – um – and I try and get them to put themselves *\*mimes bringing something far away into herself\** in the story. I look ridiculous, but it works. It definitely works. *\*laughs\** And, so, I’ll go through the whole story and I’ll often get them to – um – so, *\*mimes holding a small object\** if it’s a short piece, I’ll get them to read bits back. If it’s a *\*mimes holding a large object\** whole book, then I try to break it down so they can each read because it’s good for them to read as well, and to hear the words said. *\*indicates to herself\** They do enjoy when I read more, because, obviously, I read

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>faster – um – and when they read it’s quite slow. They’ve got to <i>*mimes moving her head and hand horizontally along very slowly*</i> stop and think about the word, which means <i>*gestures as if to indicate a large group*</i> the other kids get bored. So, I try to read more – and <i>*waves her left hand towards her ear*</i> it’s also good for them to hear the words being spoken, if it’s words that they don’t understand. Um – and then – um – ja, so, if it’s got questions at the end, then, obviously, I will reread the story, but if it’s just a book, obviously, I won’t <i>*waves right arm along horizontally as if to indicate a long distance*</i> reread the whole book again with them, but I’ll go through it. But I do try my best to engage them and <i>*point to her left palm with the fingers on her right hand*</i> place them in the situation and say, <i>*waves hand far from her body as if placing herself far away*</i> “If you were there, what would you do next?” And we break. <i>*draws a short line with her left hand to indicate a break*</i> And we have a discussion about it. So, my biggest thing is trying to engage them in the text. <i>*shrugs*</i> Ja, that’s, kind of, how I try to teach it, ja. <i>*holds hand up apologetically*</i> Sometimes I go over time or, in an hour, we stop and I’m, like, <i>*pulls a guilty looking face*</i> and I haven’t actually reached the point where I need to reach, but <i>*waves her hand in an arc*</i> next lesson we’ll do it. So, ja, I – it’s – it’s very much about engagement and creating the <i>*waves hands around her head in a dreamy manner*</i> atmosphere around the book before I start to teach. And that often takes a long time.</p> |
| 34:40 | CG: | <p>OK. If I were to ask you about – um – so, say you’re reading a novel or, like, a smaller text, what kinds of activities are they required to do after the text? Like, obviously some character studies or comprehension questions and stuff like that, but do you ever put in your own activities to do with the text?</p>  |
| 35:02 | T2: | <p><i>*nods*</i> Ja, so – it – it – it depends on the lesson and how much time we have because everything is so prescribed. <i>*waves hand along as if to cover a large area*</i> Um – I’ve always tried to dedicate <i>*holds two fingers up to indicate a small amount*</i> an hour of my week where we specifically do reading. If it is a text which is prescribed, and there are questions afterwards, or – um – like, draw a picture of this, or – then obviously we have to do that. But I like – my favourite thing is to do a debate, especially with the Grade 6 kids. So, <i>*holds hand horizontally as if to segment something*</i> even if it’s halfway through a text, I like to, actually, just stop the text completely, <i>*mimes directing people to different areas of the room*</i> get into groups, and we debate a situation – um – but that could be my university stuff coming out there. <i>*smiles*</i> Um – I – I love to set questions for them afterwards – um – because, whether we like it or not, things have to be structured in schools, so I do set questions for them which gets them to <i>*mimes writing*</i> write about the story as well. Um – a lot of stuff is <i>*mimes going</i></p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p><i>back and forth with her hands</i>* verbal, but I try my hardest to relate to – sort of, like, <i>*holds up right hand with extended fingers as if grasping at something*</i> tie the text in with the work that we’ve been – been doing. I love to do a play. <i>*sits up straighter and waves hands to indicate excitement*</i> So, if we do have time, on a Friday afternoon, I will get them to break up and they can actually act out the whole story. So – um – ja, that’s – but that, obviously, is for more relaxed stuff. If it’s a short story that you then have to answer questions on for a test, obviously it’s taught in a slightly different way. Because you can’t give them as much information, so – so, ja. I – I try my hardest to engage them with a text afterwards by doing <i>*mimes counting on her fingers*</i> plays and debates and – ja.</p>   |
| 36:39 | CG: | <p>OK. And, like, so if you’re doing the plays or debates, how are they structured? Do you give them topics or is it something they are completely taking ownership of? How much, like, guidance do you give them?</p>  |
| 36:55 | T2: | <p>I usually give them a lot of guidance. <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> Because I know that, if I don’t, they will just run amok with the story and usually they lose the plot completely. So, I will try and make sure that before the lesson, I’ve actually got something written out, because they need to see <i>*gestures with right hand as if going down a list*</i> a structure. And explain that <i>*points to different areas*</i> “Choose your characters.” So, these will be the characters. Even if they don’t hand that in, it’s just something for them to focus on. But everything I do is <i>*brings both hands down emphatically*</i> very structured. Which I hate. I’d love to give them the freedom, but with the discipline issues that I’ve had especially, and <i>*gestures to her head*</i> the way that the kids’ mind’s work, it’s, like, <i>*reaches out quickly with her hands in multiple directions*</i> racing off to soccer outside. You’ve got to constantly, like, <i>*brings both arms back close to her chest*</i> bring them back, put them in a box, and say, <i>*leans forward and holds out arms*</i> “Guys, this is what we’re doing for the next twenty minutes.” So, I do try and prescribe most of what I do. Ja. They’re very creative, <i>*nods*</i> they will just run with it, but that’s why I have to reign them back in a bit. <i>*laughs*</i> But ja, ja.</p> |
| 37:50 | CG: | <p>That’s great. OK, so – um – you’ve given me an example already, kind of, with the <i>King Arthur</i>, but I’d like if you could maybe give me another one? So, if you cast your mind back over your teaching experience and you think about a specific lesson that you remember going really well, like, the kids were incredible engaged, an you talk me through what happened in that lesson, what you did, how you knew the kids were engaged, and what you think contributed to the success of that particular lesson?</p>   |

38:24 T2:

OK. Um – we had to read a – so, it was actually a novella, so it was a lot shorter *\*holds up two fingers close together\** – um – it was prescribed to us, about Titanic. And it was the story of a little girl on Titanic, which is very weird for a school in Africa, but anyway. And now. But, ja. *\*shrugs\** So, this text was prescribed to us, and we all had to read it because we knew that there were tests coming *\*moves left hand in a horizontal motion as if to cut up a line into segments\** after this based on this work. And I thought, *\*nods head emphatically\** “My goodness, there is no way that we are ever going to get this done.” OK, and I thought, “They’re absolutely going to hate it, how are they going to relate to some little girl *\*holds right arm far away from her body\** in 1912?” So – um – I started the lesson by explaining to them that this was a long time ago, but they need to just draw a picture of what it would have looked like *\*holds up pinched fingers of her right hand\** them being on a ship. So, I got them to all draw themselves on a ship. And they could all *\*mimes holding up something and showing it around\** show it to each other and all that. And it was a few weeks before we had testing time, so I knew that I *\*gestures with both hands in a circular motion as if working through something\** had time to engage them with it. And I then, actually – um – I started to read it, *\*moves left hand down slowly\** but, as soon as you start to read, they speak about, in that particular book, it was about *\*mimes ticking off a list on her fingers\** the Captain, and the dates, and blah blah blah blah blah...So, 1912, *\*holds her head in her hands\** how can they get their mind around that when they were born in, like, 2006? So, *\*laughs\** – so, I tried my hardest to get them to put themselves on that ship. And I got them to share their experiences of what it would have been like on that ship in the freezing cold and – um – who are they there with on the ship, and they could *\*gestures with hands as if talking with a group of people\** share their understanding of it, and how they *\*moves hands around her head\** pictured it as well. And I got them to all close their eyes. *\*waves hand as if to indicate a group of people\** And then I read the story with their eyes closed for the first bit, just so they could – and I left a few things out, like the stuff that would have complicated it a bit more. And – so, they were all able to imagine it. *\*smiles\** But when I closed – so, when I said, *\*closes hands and then opens them slowly\** “Everyone, open your eyes,” they opened their eyes, and you could see they excitement on their face, when they’d actually been *\*moves hands in a circular motion for emphasis\** imagining themselves on this ship, freezing cold, with things – like, with everything that was going on. And it meant that, when I continued to read the story to them, they – *\*draws a line in the air with her left hand\** you could see the whole way through, because I’d almost set up that they were on the ship, as I read through it, they imagined themselves – everything I read about it, they imagined themselves on that ship. And they

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>engaged with the story so well that, when we actually did the assessment that came afterwards, I could see things <i>*mimes reading a piece of paper*</i> in the answers that they had that showed that they'd really understood the story, they understood what was go – go – going on, and they almost spoke from personal experience. <i>*smiles widely*</i> Um – so, ja, it – it was just that, like, <i>*brings her hands together slowly*</i> pausing for a while before I dive – dive or dove or whatever it is – into the story. Um – I – I, sort of, got them in the story first. Because I knew that the Titanic is something that is so far from their realm of understanding – um – I just tried to make it as real as I could for them and they – they were <i>*mimes raising her hand excitedly*</i> putting their hands up and going, <i>*mimes leaning forward in her chair and placing both hands down*</i> “No, Ms. H, wait, wait. So, are you telling me that this happened, then this happened!?” And I’m, like, <i>*gasps and leans back slowly*</i> I knew that they were actually excited and they actually engaged with it. So, <i>*nods*</i> ja.</p>  |
| 4:50  | CG: | That’s beautiful. I love that.  |
| 4:53  | T2: | I’m glad. <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 4:55  | CG: | <p>OK! Now, the opposite end of the spectrum, can you give me a similar example – cast your mind back – of a lesson that went in the entirely opposite direction? You know, when you’re teaching and you know that, just, “Oh my gosh, this is just the flattest lesson I’ve ever given.” Can you give me an example and explain why you think it bombed?</p>   |
| 4:215 | T2: | <p><i>*nods and laughs*</i> I actually have a very good example! It wasn’t just – it wasn’t, like, <i>*holds hands wide apart*</i> a full story, it was – it was <i>*holds two fingers close together*</i> quite a short story, it was like a three-page story. And it was in Grade 5. And it was a story about – it was actually linked to a poem – um – it was about a, like a mythical creature. And it was a mythical creature where this guy had to go into a forest and – and like, it ended up – <i>*looks away thoughtfully*</i> and it had a name, it wasn’t <i>The Jabberwock</i>, but it was similar to that. And I started to read it. This animal had, like, a green head and, like, yellow feet – <i>*holds up hands in frustration*</i> I wish I could actually find the story. But – um – <i>*laughs*</i> I’ll have to look for it. But – um – and as I started to read, the descriptions of the animal <i>*waves left hand back and forth continuously*</i> just went on and on and on and on. And as I looked at the kids’ faces <i>*rests her chin in her hand*</i> I was, like, “I actually can’t teach this.” <i>*shakes head*</i> They – they – they’re completely lost, they cannot imagine it, the description is just going on and on and on. And they want <i>*moves her left hand along horizontally in a quick motion*</i> fast-paced. They want, like, <i>*points her finger forward*</i> “That’s the character, what happens to the character and – the end!” And the story just went on and on describing what the forest looked</p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | like, what the animals looked like, and there wasn't, like, an exciting background story <i>*raised left arm as if in confusion*</i> for a Grade 5 kid, who's, like, ten or eleven years old, to actually enjoy. And, I must admit, by the end of that lesson, I looked at them and I was, like, <i>*brings hand across as if drawing a line*</i> "There's no way." Like, they cannot relate to this, it's not happening fast, and I just realized – thank goodness there were no assessments from it – but I realized it was a lesson that had just completely fallen flat. <i>*gestures to herself and shrugs*</i> I – I actually couldn't be creative with it! Like, I tried to draw <i>*mimes drawing on a board*</i> draw the animal on the board, to try and get them to at least see the animal in the forest, and the description was so long <i>*throws left hand up as if to give up*</i> I couldn't even draw the animal.   |
| 44:08 | CG: | So, it's almost like it was over-described? Their imaginations and yours were, like, hamstrung into a little box.  |
| 44:14 | T2: | <i>*throws hands up into the air in frustration*</i> It was too much for us! Like, <i>*puts one hand to her chest and throws the other out as if to indicate towards the class*</i> me as an adult, them as a kid, neither of us could actually engage with it. And I also find that if I can't engage with it, <i>*shakes head*</i> then the kids have lost it already. So, ja. One of the worst! <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 44:29 | CG: | OK. So, we're coming towards the end here, so I'm going to ask you, like, a concluding question. If you had to think about your teaching experience where you started to where you are now, if you were to, like, sum up the ways that you feel like you've developed and changed as a teacher – that was horrible worded.   |
| 44:52 | T2: | <i>*laughs*</i>  |
| 44:52 | CG: | So, the changes you've made to your teaching – um – and how did these changes come about?  |
| 44:57 | T2: | OK, I did write something down, so <i>*checks her notes*</i> let me see. Because I thought what I wrote was quite good. <i>*laughs*</i> So, let me try and find it. Oh, yes of course! Ja! So, <i>*leans forward excitedly, smiling widely*</i> I've kind of touched on it already so, when I wrote it down, I was, like, – ja. So, my whole teaching experience has been very strange because of the fact that I've been teaching first language English to second language English speakers, but, what made – what has actually made me so excited about my entire experience, <i>*holds her hands up with her palms pressed together*</i> is that I have been the sole person who has been able to encourage these kids to actually enjoy reading. And there was a library teacher at my last school was a Zulu woman who said – she always used to say to the kids, <i>waves hand across the air as if it is a banner</i> "Reading takes you places." She would walk around the library like this, <i>*mimes walking around waving her hands in the air*</i> "Reading takes you places!" She |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>was lovely! <i>*smiles*</i> And, for me, I felt like <i>*gestures to herself*</i> I was the person who was taking these kids. I was the one who was finding the texts that would actually take these kids out of the reality that they have, especially since, for a lot of them, the reality of their life was not good. <i>*holds out left palm as if offering something forward*</i> I was the one who was able to take these kids, especially the worst, most badly behaved kids from horrific homes, I was the person who could <i>*mimes throwing a door open*</i> open that door and show them a different world. And not just show them a magical world, but show them that the world can actually be different for them. And for me, that was – that’s always been extremely important. Even in my school now. It’s – it’s, like, as a teacher <i>*holds both hands to her chest*</i> who teaches literature and reading and all that, you are the person – you are the person who’s able to help these kids to go out of the reality that they’re in. And when you see the excitement on their faces when they’re reading a book, or when you’re reading it to them, you start to realise that <i>*gestures as if turning a lever in her head*</i> their mind is working and it – it’s not just a sponge that’s absorbing things, but they’re imagining that world, and they’re imagining themselves in that world. And that, for me, is why I love to teach it. Um – ja. And especially at my first two – two schools, their having no access to it, I was the person who could give them that access to reading, and gave them the access to stories and a different world. And I think, for me, that sort of <i>*makes a circular gesture with her left hand*</i> sums up the experience of teaching lit – lit – literature. So, ja. If that makes any sense? <i>*laughs*</i></p> |
| 47:26 | CG: | No, it’s beautiful. Honestly, you sound like such a great teacher to have.  |
| 47:34 | T2: | <i>*laughs*</i> I hope I am!  |
| 47:40 | CG: | No, like, the way you talk about starting with the atmosphere and being in a text and then understanding coming from that, like, it’s beautiful.  |
| 48:00 | T2: | <p>That’s always been my – the reason why I hated it at school. Because they were so <i>*brings left hand down in a definitive motion*</i> structured and, “This means this! Make sure you know this for when you’re doing a comprehension” and all that. But we have to go back to what school is. School is not just about the structured stuff, school is about actually helping these kids develop as humans in the world. And, for me, that’s the most important thing. I think it could be because of the schools I’ve taught at and I think if I had started in a school like I’m in now, I don’t think my – my understanding of it would have been the same. But I’ve, like, - because of my teaching experiences, I’ve literally <i>*mimes lifting something upwards*</i> been more of a social up lifter, than just a teacher of, like, grammar. So, I think that’s sort of what’s</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | – what’s – what’s made my teaching the way it is today. <i>*shrugs and smiles*</i> And I love it! I know I make a lot of mistakes, I can promise you, I make a lot of mistakes. |
| 48:53 | CG: | Oh, everyone makes a lot of mistakes.   |
| 48:54 | T2: | But, <i>*shrugs*</i> I try. I try. <i>*laughs*</i>  |

| INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Agnes                |  |
| 01:00                | CG: So, what are some of the significant memories or experiences that you have with literature growing up? Did your parents read to you, what kind of books, what was the literacy environment like?   |
| 01:10                | T3: Um – I actually don't have much recollection. I know that there were lots of <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> books in my house. So – um – Richard Scarry was always there and I always – he was one of my favourites as a little person. Picking it up and <i>*mimes paging through a book*</i> having a look – before I could read, even, I remember paging through Richard Scarry. And then, <i>*makes a circular motion with her finger as if to move onward*</i> as I got older, I was able to <i>*mimes as if to point to individual words*</i> read what it was, and I was always so intrigued at how clever his books were. Um – so, he was a big part of my childhood memories. Um – for reading myself, I picked up reading quite quickly. So – and I also started school a little bit younger than you guys – well, I say 'you guys' and I don't know how old you are, but – <i>*laughs*</i> in my day, <i>*laughs*</i> we started school when we were five, if our birthdays were – um – up until the end of May. So, I started school when I was five and I know that I picked up reading quite quickly and I was very chuffed with myself. In fact, it was something we had to write about for [our lecturer] in one of our modules last year <i>*smiles*</i> – um – where I clearly remember being so <i>*nods head for emphasis*</i> chuffed with myself having learnt to read so fluently and I was so chuffed to be able to sit on the mat – it was my turn to sit on the mat, and we were – you know you <i>*mimes working eagerly*</i> sat there working, and you waited for your turn, and you eventually got to sit on the mat. And there was a crowd of us, and this little girl sitting next to me, who was a very good reader as well, – and I was determined <i>*holds up one finger emphatically*</i> I was going to be a better reader than her. You know, it's amazing that the competition had already started there, you know? It's like – it's crazy. But – um – and I gave it my all. <i>*holds up left hand as if to indicate a great effort*</i> And then, the teacher asked me questions about what I had read and <i>*shakes head*</i> I didn't have a fricken clue. Because it was all – to me, it was about the fluency <i>*moves left hand along in a smooth line*</i> and the pronunciation, I and hadn't taken <i>*brings both hands down for emphasis*</i> anything I was reading in. And I was mortified. And – and, to be honest, I've never seen myself as a quick reader, but I think my mom was a very quick reader, so I always compared myself to her. But |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | recently, my daughter, who is a quick reader, had said to me <i>*widens eyes as if in surprise*</i> “But you do read quickly, you just got through that whole book in a day!” You know? <i>*laughs*</i> And it’s, like – that never occurred to me. And I think, with reading academic literacies, you do have to read quickly and to absorb quickly. So, that helps, ja.   |
| 03:33 | CG: | And you mentioned your mother? So, when you were growing up, like, was your mom and your dad, were they big readers? Did you often see them reading, or not so much?  |
| 03:43 | T3: | Um – my dad was more a – my parents departed each other when I was very young, so I’m going to focus more on my mom because I didn’t see much of my dad. But he was more a magazine reader, you know? Um – but my mom – definitely literature. Ja, she loved her books. <i>*nods head for emphases*</i> And it was always, you know – never academic anything. She wouldn’t read up on psychology or anything like that. So, it was fantasy more than anything.   |
| 04:12 | CG: | Oh, I get that. So, you spoke about your experiences in the younger grades at school. Um – as you got older, are there any significant memories of literature in school? I mean, often times you find kids who are avid readers, they get to later primary school and high school and they kind of lose that completely?  |
| 04:30 | T3: | No. I’ve always enjoyed reading. I think it was a good escape for me to be able to just disappear into a book. I – I’m not the kind of person who would’ve taken a book to the beach, <i>*shrugs*</i> although I have every now and then, but – um <i>*stares off into the distance and pauses for a long while*</i> I can clearly remember being the person who read out loud in class because I could. <i>*laughs*</i> So, it was – everybody else was, <i>*mimes stuttering while holding a book*</i> “huh – uh – um” on the words and it would be, like, <i>*rolls eyes and mimes putting up her hand*</i> “Oh, for God’s sake, can I just read, please?” <i>*laughs*</i> You know, very impatiently, just wanting to read to get it out there. So, no, <i>*shakes head*</i> my reading never declined really. It was when I had kids, you know, you get very tired when you have children, that reading is not – <i>*laughs*</i> it’s not an option! So, that’s when it petered off. But I found that, this year, with not having to teach, I’ve had lots of time to read, which has been really good. |
| 05:26 | CG: | That’s interesting. And when it came to your higher education at university – obviously, you’re doing your Honours, do you find that’s changed the way you read for pleasure, or are you able to clearly demarcate, this is reading for school, and this is reading for pleasure?   |
| 05:42 | T3: | Oh, no, definitely clearly demarcated. Ja. <i>*shakes head*</i> I mean, I’m not into academic literacies, you should see my writing, it’s shocking. <i>*laughs*</i> But I – I’m not into it, but I find it so interesting that I want to read it, but I have to really get myself going and it – <i>*holds up left hand with fingers pinched together*</i> it has to be an interesting topic for me to sit down and   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | really get into the nuts and bolts of a piece of academic literacy. But for reading for pleasure, <i>*shakes head*</i> I'll gladly sit and read anything, you know? <i>*smiles widely*</i>  |
| 06:15 | CG: | Oh, that's good. So, I'm jumping around a little bit, as I think of things – um – do you remember how you were taught books and reading and literature at school at all? I mean, you mentioned briefly having to read aloud, do you remember any other practices?   |
| 06:29 | T3: | Ja. Um – I do remember – is it reading lab? They had – I think it's reading lab, and then we had these little <i>*mimes with both hands as if to indicate a cabinet*</i> um – like, folder thing that we had in front of us that had our words in. Um – and then you had to put your words <i>*mimes holding up a card in both hands*</i> into a folder. So, you had to learn your words. And then, the teacher would say, <i>*makes linking motion with her fingers*</i> “OK, make a sentence.” So, we – I remember that quite clearly. Um – then I also remember, as I said, the reading lab which was – if you were finished your schoolwork, you went to go and grab a card, they were all very well organized, and then you read the little story and you did the activity. Sometimes it was a comprehension, sometimes it was language-based, sometimes <i>*mimes mixing something together*</i> a combination of both. Um – ja, that was junior school though, high school there was – <i>*shakes head and shrugs*</i> it was pretty much just read out loud for marks, you know? Or read this text to study.  |
| 07:21 | CG: | Interesting. OK, and then if I were to ask you about your teacher training? Um – did you go to any kind of university to study education or something else? Basically, where and how did you learn to teach literature?   |
| 07:36 | T3: | Oh – um – I went straight – well, I had – um – I was quite late in getting into – I went to college. And – but, like, when I was twenty. So, there were a couple of years between school and studying. And then we had – there was didactics? Um – so, that was a big part of teaching us how to teach English. And it – it basically taught us the then-reading skills. <i>*shakes head*</i> I can't remember what they were. Because I taught Foundation Phase first. I didn't teach Intersen straight away. Um – so, that was basically just learning how to teach children how to read and then also the importance of speaking the language and – like, a couple of the things that I can remember is you must never underestimate the mind of a child. They know far more than what their poor, little brains – <i>*points to herself*</i> we perceive their poor, little brains to have learned. Um – and the other thing was – um – what – I can't remember which lecturer it was, but I can just remember them saying, “Don't ever correct a child when they're asking you a question.” So, if a child asks you a question and their – their language use is wrong, you first speak to them about the question and then <i>*gestures with both hands as if moving down a list*</i> say, “This is |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>how we should've worded it," you know? Other than that, <i>*shakes head*</i> I actually don't really remember much about how I was taught to teach literature, apart from just enjoying reading. And enjoying books, and getting the children to love them. So, in my first years of teaching, there were <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> a lot of books in my classroom all the time. And I always invited the children, if they were finished work, instead of giving them a sheet of paper, <i>*shrugs*</i> which seems to be the new norm, and saying, "Go and draw," I would say, "Let's go and get a book." And, <i>*mimes pointing at a child*</i> "Why don't you read to this one?" And, you know, just to inspire reading in each of the children, and just listen to each other. Whereas, these days, from what I can see <i>*shakes head*</i> – I don't know if I'm wrong, Foundation Phase teachers just seem to say, "Oh, just get a piece of scrap paper and do whatever you feel like doing," and that blows my mind. I mean that's just lazy teaching. <i>*laughs*</i></p> |
| 09:52 | CG: | <p>OK. So, if you kind of cast your mind back to your first few years of teaching, do you believe that the training you had at college adequately prepared you to teach literature?</p>  |
| 10:02 | T3: | <p><i>*shakes head firmly*</i> No. No. <i>*laughs*</i> I don't think there was any – you know, just – I can remember the didactics training, but it was more about the – the – um – I can't think of the word – you know, the actual, almost, <i>*mimes air quotes*</i> 'box set' that you were using to teach English at the time. It wasn't – it wasn't how to teach English or literature or to read, it was more about the approach that was being used at the time.</p>   |
| 10:37 | CG: | <p>OK. So that covers your personal history, we're going to move on now to your teaching experiences and all that. If you could start by giving me kind of, like, a timeline of your teaching experiences? How long have you been teaching, your movement between the different phases and schools and things like that? Obviously, for ethical purposes, you don't need to mention the names of the schools, but if you could give me an idea of the areas and the backgrounds of the different places you were teaching?</p>   |
| 11:04 | T3: | <p>OK. I started in '98 at our local school. So that was straight out of teacher training college. Um – and the terrible thing was, I went to that school as a junior school child. And I did a lot of my practicals at that school as a student and then I taught there. So, you have a very warped idea of what is <i>*sighs*</i> the norm and what's out there because it's all you've seen. And I personally think that that's the worst thing – I personally think that teachers should be forced to change schools after ten years because <i>*shakes head*</i> you get so stuck in your ways and you don't get to see the <i>*waves both hands in the air as if to mimic an explosion*</i> dynamite that's out there, the other systems that work. Anywho, <i>*laughs*</i> then – um – we went overseas. So, I was teaching in the UK. Um – I did a lot of day teaching. You know, a day here and a day there,</p>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | substitute teaching. Um – and then I did have a class for a year, and then another class for a term. So, there was that.  |
| 12:07 | CG: | And was this still in the Foundation Phase?   |
| 12:09 | T3: | Um – ja, there was a lot of cross-over. So, ja, because I was qualified to teach it all, it was, just <i>*shrugs*</i> wherever they put me. Um – and then back here, I had children. So, I did supply work, substitute teaching – um – very, very little full-time work. It was only when my kids got a little bit older – so – so, after about ten – ten years, that I started doing longer stints. And then I did a little private school in – um – Sun Valley for six months. Grade 4 now. And that’s when I pretty much <i>*moves left hand across as if to start a new section*</i> started carrying on with Intermediate Phase. Um – and then some more – um – just, in and out – a week here, seven weeks there, two weeks here. Um – and then four or five years ago, I started teaching – um – full-time at <i>*nods head for emphasis*</i> my local school again. So, back to square one. <i>*laughs*</i> And, ja <i>*shrugs*</i> now we’re here. Um – I took a year off to do my Honours full-time because I just <i>*shakes head*</i> couldn’t see teaching and – <i>*shrugs*</i> I can’t handle it. I don’t know how people do it. |
| 13:25 | CG: | Oh, I can relate to that. So – um – the school that you were at – so, the school you started with and then finished with, if I can put it like that, when you were teaching there the last couple of years, that was Intermediate Phase again, right?   |
| 13:49 | T3: | Yes, yes.   |
| 13:50 | CG: | And what kind of school is that? Public, private?   |
| 13:55 | T3: | A public school.  |
| 13:56 | CG: | OK, a public school. And the language background of the kids? Are they all first-language English speakers?   |
| 14:01 | T3: | Um – not all of them. They are majority coloured children. So, yes, first-language English and very little Afrikaans. Um – but there are – um – a lot of children – I would go so much as to say a third, who are not first-language English speakers. Um – ja. I’m just trying to think of the dynamics of my class. If I had thirty-six children, you’d say six of them were – so a sixth of the school. Let’s take it to a sixth, not a third, <i>*laughs*</i> were not first-language speaking.   |
| 14:41 | CG: | Great. And the last few years you stayed at the same grade level, 5 and 6?  |
| 14:47 | T3: | I did 5 for two years and 6 for two years. So, finished in 6.   |
| 14:50 | CG: | OK, great. Thank you. Um – so, if I were to ask you about teaching English as a whole, how do you feel about teaching literature specifically, as opposed to teaching the other aspects, like grammar and writing?  |

15:06 T3:

There's no focus on it. It's *\*shrugs\** – you know, teaching reading, there's absolutely no focus on it at all. There's no time for children, especially down here – well, I think it's – it's time restraints, because they have to have an allocated sports hour-and-a-half, because the children don't stay after school. Because they don't live here, they live further away. Like, a good *\*shrugs\** twenty-minute drive away. So, they're taxied in if they want to be at this school. Um – so, because of that, they don't have the travel allowances that would allow the other children to stay at school after school to do extra-curriculum – extra-curricular sport. Um – and because of that, we lose an hour-and-a-half of teaching time. And that cuts into everything. So, ordinarily, I would've had half an hour in the morning where I would've said, *\*nods head\** “Books are out,” and then walked around, had a look at who was reading, spoken to them about their books, and – and, you know, at the same time you're doing your admin and whatever. So, in the ideal world, *\*laughs\** um – but, ja, it didn't happen, so it made it very difficult to have – um – any contact time with individual children about their reading. And for reading for assessment, they were sent off to *\*shrugs\** my classroom assistant – well, the grade assistant would take them out and read with them. And she was very good, I was very fortunate to have her because she would test them on their – um – comprehension skills, she would explain the nuances of *\*moves hands back and forth as if to go between two objects\** the comma, and the full-stop and the question mark, and, you know, a lot of gram – grammatical explanation as well. Because it's not their true first-language, the readers that they're given – um – it's sometimes very difficult for them to understand what the reading is about. So, they're level of reading was *\*nods for emphasis\** quite poor – um – their spelling was atrocious. *\*shakes head and shrugs\** I think I probably had ten kids in a class who could spell well. *\*nods for emphasis\** And that's out of thirty-six children. You know, which is shocking. Um – and it – the interesting thing, actually – I was just remembering one of the girls, she was an avid reader. *Harry Potter* nut. And she couldn't spell. And that is one thing that I have never *\*shakes head\** encountered in teaching. Because, as far as I've known, *\*nods head for emphasis\** children who read a lot are good spellers. This child couldn't spell. *\*shakes head\** It was the darndest thing. *\*laughs\** Ja. But I did miss out on the interaction of *\*points finger downward for emphasis\** teaching children to read. I missed it a lot. It was, you know – in my mind, it's a part of your *\*makes a large circle in the air with both hands\** overall teaching. You're reading all the time; these children are reading to learn. Um – so, they should be able to read. And you should have an allocated time on the mat, *\*widens eyes and pauses for emphasis\** where you can have groups of children who are listening to each other and learning from each other and learning from you. Even in the Intermediate Phase. I found it *\*shakes head\** shocking, the lack of mat time for both

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | English and Maths. <i>*shrugs*</i> But there's just no time. And just – as we said earlier, the curriculum is just so blinking full <i>*shakes head and shrugs*</i> you can't fit anything in.   |
| 18:37 | CG: | Fantastic. OK, well you've touched on this a little bit, I don't know if there's anything you want to add, but – um – what do you think the intrinsic value of teaching literature to kids is? You spoke a little bit about, like, the spelling and that kind of thing, is there anything else you'd want to add to that?  |
| 18:51 | T3: | Um – I don't know – I don't know if I'm misunderstanding you, but – um – you know, when you, you have a Grade 4 child – he came to me for – for tutoring. And this child couldn't read. He literally could not read. He did not know any of the rules. Look, English is an incredibly difficult subject to learn but, by the time you get to Grade 4, you should know about 'fairy e.' You should know that 'e' and 'a' makes 'ee' You should know that 'c' and 'h' makes 'ch.' So, how do you get to Grade 4 not knowing those rules of reading? And, if you don't know those rules of reading, how are you going to learn your text that you have to read to learn from? Um – I personally think there's something wrong – <i>*shakes head and holds up arms as if to ask a question*</i> and I – I can't figure out where it is, because I obviously never researched into it. But there's something wrong. There's something wrong there. Why can't the children spell? Why can't these children read fluently? I understand that obviously you're going to have your – your dyslexics and your – you know, all of those other issues, but there's something wrong. And I'm intrigued by it. Um – I – I have a feeling that it comes from the curriculum being too full. |
| 20:30 | CG: | Interesting. OK, so you've had so many varied experiences in teaching, it's very interesting. Um – so, if you had to think about the specific challenges you've faced teaching literature to kids, and the different contexts you've been in, how were those challenges different? And how did they affect your teaching and how you approached teaching?  |
| 20:59 | T3: | Um – ooh. <i>*sighs then laughs*</i>   |
| 21:01 | CG: | It's a big question!   |
| 21:03 | T3: | Ja, it is! There are, you know, it – <i>*sighs*</i> I think you just have to go slowly. Um – you have to have the time to do that. And then, if you don't have the time to do that, you need to organize somebody to take over your class so that <i>*points to chest*</i> you can do it the way that you feel will work. Um – if – if I've had an assistant who's able to sit with the children so that I can take another child aside and – and show them, <i>*draws a horizontal line with her finger*</i> “this is this,” and, you know, almost go back all the way to the beginning? So, it's almost like I become a tutor again. Um – <i>*sighs and interlaces fingers*</i> it's so difficult because basically I want to be able to sit with each child and – and go over it from start – from scratch, but there's no time   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | to do that, <i>*leans forward*</i> and who's to say that my way of doing it is the right way of doing it? <i>*laughs and shrugs*</i> I've, you know, I've never officially been trained in how to teach literature. So, <i>*shrugs*</i> ja. Where do you learn that? <i>*laughs*</i>  |
| 22:17 | CG: | That's so interesting. I mean, you're saying the same thing that who have had five/six years of formal training in a university with methodological theory are saying. It's quite interesting, that.  |
| 22:30 | T3: | Ja, ja. That is interesting.  |
| 22:35 | CG: | OK. So – um – I think these next few questions, you can focus mainly on your last few years of teaching primary school in South Africa. I would like to know a little bit more about the texts that you've had to teach? Are you allowed any freedom in selecting the texts, or are they mostly prescribed?   |
| 23:00 | T3: | Um – we were never really prescribed – um – texts to read. Obviously, the curriculum dictates that you must have – um – a magazine article, and an advert, and a comic, an all of that. So, that was probably my only restriction. Um – we were fortunate enough to be able to have E-Classroom, so we could find texts from there, but a lot of the time, they weren't appropriate for our children. So, very restricted. Like, what are – <i>*shrugs*</i> what are this class – culture. I'm not saying class because it's definitely – it's a very specific culture, the Coloured culture. They don't want to know about <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> , you know? But, it's very difficult to find texts that they can contextualise. That means something to them. It's very, very difficult. Um – and – and if it doesn't mean something to them, then they can't figure out what's the point of this – they struggle to understand it. They really do. <i>*shakes head*</i> It has to be a part of their everyday life, their everyday <i>*makes a circle in the air with both hands*</i> experiences for them to understand it, or even want to begin reading. |
| 24:20 | CG: | Ja, OK. So, what kinds of texts have you found that they do understand, that does mean something to them?   |
| 24:27 | T3: | It's very difficult. It really is. So, the kind of stuff you're looking at is, like, song lyrics from songs they – they are going – they're experiencing at the time. So, pop culture songs. Um – I found that worked a lot. Especially with – um – um – I can't think of the word. Similes, metaphors, stuff like that? Ja. Um – to be perfectly honest, nothing worked. Nothing that I could find was appropriate for them. So, going online with E-Classroom, I mean, there's so many websites that are available to teachers, even the ones that you subscribe to. Never mind the free ones, you know? There's very little that is appropriate to their lifestyles. Um – so, I – I didn't. <i>*shrugs*</i> I struggled. And every time you'd thought you'd found something, then you'd have half the class, like, <i>*mimes gazing off into the distance with a blank expression, then throws up</i>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p><i>both hands as if in confusion</i>* “I don’t know what you talking about!” And the poor teaching assistant, who used to do the reading with them, would often come back and say, <i>*shrugs and shakes her head*</i> “These kids don’t understand this! They don’t know what this is.” So, then it’s difficult for her to teach understanding and comprehension – um – of – of a reading text. And it’s difficult when a lot of the words are nonsensical to them. So, ja. I struggled. I really, really struggled. <i>*shakes head and shrugs*</i> I don’t think I ever – ever did. Apart from the songs and pop culture. <i>*leans forward and widens eyes*</i> There was one book – oh, it was – honestly, every teacher should read this to their kids. It was called <i>Mellow Yellow</i>. And it’s about a little street kid who lives in the city of Cape Town. Um – and they sucked that up. <i>*shakes head for emphasis*</i> They couldn’t get enough of that story. And it was just me reading to them. But that was <i>*points finger emphatically*</i> their lives. You know? Not the street kid part. But he spoke their language, you know? He would <i>*waves her arms around enthusiastically*</i> flout out really Coloured colloquialisms. <i>*laughs*</i> That was hysterical to read! Because you don’t get to read that in a book usually. So, that they could read. Imagine if I could get that as their reading text? You know? But you can’t. I can’t go photocopy thirty-six copies of that and say, <i>*mimes handing something out*</i> “Here,” because you’re not allowed to, you know? <i>*shrugs*</i> The school can’t afford to buy the – the seventy-two copies that you would need for them to be able to read. So, book reviews were <i>*shrugs shoulders*</i> a nightmare! Because you can’t trust that they’ve read anything that they’ve gotten out of the library. They were lucky to have a library as a resource. But a lot of the children, not being avid readers, didn’t take out relevant books. And if they did, they would take out a book that was five pages long. And – you know? So, it was very difficult to – um – enthuse them about reading. And I’m not quite sure how you can do that when you are under-resourced.</p> |
| 27:37 | CG: | <p>Yes. A common problem. OK, so, just – this question, it’s kind of a broad one, how do you approach teaching literature to your primary school class? So, if you have a book or a text that’s prescribed and, you know, we have to get through this for assessment, or whatever, what are the steps, what are the strategies, how do you present it?</p>  |
| 28:06 | T3: | <p>Wow, I – um – I just – I don’t think I’ve ever done that in the last four years, to be perfectly honest. Ja. Um – it’s always been – um – there – there are readers available. So, I think it’s because my assistant has always done the reading, that’s what I’m saying. It’s such a big part, and I’m missing out on that as a teacher. And she wasn’t a qualified teacher. So, it’s difficult for me to <i>*makes gesture as if balancing scales*</i> judge what she’s actually doing in her reading classes. But she would go out, <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> she would – um – she would hand out readers according to their level. She would do – take their reports from the year before and see</p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>if they were <i>*moves hand vertically as if to indicate different levels*</i> below average, average, above average, or top, and split them into groups. And then she would call them out during an English lesson, they would all go out in their group, they would <i>*mimes handing something out*</i> get a reader that was appropriate to their level, that she had decided. Again, pathetic readers that had nothing to do with anything that these children experienced – um – and then she would get the children to read, and then she would check their understanding of the text that they’d read. She’d also go through, like, you know, the way – how the comma works, and how we use our voices if there’s an exclamation mark or a question mark, and coaching fluency – coaching with fluency and understanding. And – and they were exposed to, probably <i>*pauses*</i> forty-five minutes a week. Each child. In a group. Um – ja – so, the readers were <i>*shrugs*</i> what we had. There wasn’t anything else.</p>  |
| 29:56 | CG: | <p>OK, great. I – I’m interested in this <i>Mellow Yellow</i> book that you were discussing. So, you say you just read the book to the learners? There were no other activities you did around it, or questions, or discussions, it was just reading to the kids?</p>   |
| 30:13 | T3: | <p>Well, we did speak about it. Because it was such an interesting <i>*shakes head for emphasis*</i> storyline. Um – there was a, you know – ja, you can’t not discuss it, it was just such a lovely book. <i>*laughs*</i> And it enthused a child in the class to go and get the other copy out of the library, and he read it finished before we as a class had finished it. So, that was great, because then – um – if they raised a question, “Ah, but what happens if –” and then he would be able to say, <i>*waves hand as if waving away something unimportant*</i> “Oh, don’t worry, it’s fine.” He was one of those top-notch kids who knew he wasn’t to spoil the – what do they call it? Spoilers, hey? <i>*laughs*</i> So, he was very good like that. So, it was lovely to have that interaction as well. And to have the discussion around this character. “What do you think is going to happen next?” And, “Oh my word, this poor child, do you think he’s going to make it?” And, who – you know – like, <i>*waves hands in the air as if indicating many different ideas*</i> and – and it was – it’s quite scary at some points, where they – he ends up being quite ill. And you could see the anxiety, <i>*gestures with hands as if to pull something apart*</i> the tension in the classroom. So, then that would get discussed. Ja, no, I’m not the kind of person who would just sit and read a book to a class. <i>*shakes head*</i> It’s just - <i>*laughs and mimes squeezing something*</i> you have to get some juice out of it! <i>*laughs*</i></p> |
| 31:24 | CG: | <p>OK! And if you had to pinpoint the specific themes that you thought really resonated with the kids in those discussions? I mean, you spoke a little bit about, like, the illness and their anxiety to know what was happening next. It sounds like they were really invested in the story and invested in the world.</p>   |

31:49 T3:

Absolutely. I was just thinking, they – they did worry about – you know, there was a lot of discussion about having to live on the streets and how terrible it must be. So, it was really good for them to get a little bit of realism. Because these kids all live in a different world. They think that there’s no such thing as living on the street, you know, and not being able to find food. So, that was one aspect that we looked at. The other aspect was definitely an emotional factor. Um – how – *\*nods head as if to point to different people\** how would you feel if this was you, how would you feel if that was you. And also – um – there’s that whole – um – because in the story, there’s Mellow Yellow and there’s *\*points with her arm outstretched as if to indicate something far away\** a wealthy family. And there’s that whole thing, like, *\*moves hands in a circular motion as if creating a web\** “Oh, imagine how he must have felt going to this wealthy person’s house, and here he is living on the street, and this guy’s got everything. He’s got money and a car and a dad and a mom,” you know? Um – there was a lot of that discussion about how it must feel. So – um – putting a – point of view, you know? Putting themselves in other people’s shoes. And that’s definitely something that I did a lot of with my children because it is something that – um – who is it? Piaget? That says that they can’t do it. But I think that it needs to be trained into them. *\*nods for emphasis\** And I think that they need to stop for a minute *\*holds up both hands\** and think about what it feels like to be in somebody else’s shoes. Because they’re so busy *\*waves hands around her head in a dreamy fashion\** living in their little dream world, that they can’t for a minute perceive what it’s like. So, a lot of it – a lot of my teaching – *\*shrugs\** like, for instance, History. So, when you’re teaching about the San, and the Khoi, and the first African farmers – what did it feel like for the San when they were just expected to hand over their land to these first African farmers? So, there was always a lot of discussion about our literature that we were reading – um – even in Math. *\*shakes head\** I mean, *\*shrugs\** it’s ridiculous, but you have to read in Math. And the stories – problem solving. It was always about, “Let’s break it down, let’s think about what this person actually has.” So, it puts everything into perspective. Um – I think it’s very important for children. And that’s why it’s so difficult for them to understand texts like *Black Beauty*, you know? They – how can they possibly understand that? They can’t put themselves into that perspective, they’ve never even watched the movie, let alone lived in that era. And for us, you know, historical novels are interesting, and they paint such a beautiful picture. But these children are never exposed to anything like that. It’s literally PlayStation, and phone, and Netflix. *\*shakes head\** So, they don’t have that *\*holds up hands with fingers pinched together\** perspective to be able to understand *Black Beauty*. And, yet, it was one of the texts they had to read, one of the books, you know? *\*sighs\** So, ja. I think it’s very, very important to be able to put yourself in that person’s point

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | of view and feel what that person is feeling. And that's <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> what a lot of the conversation that came up while I was reading that particular novel.  |
| 35:07 | CG: | That's incredible. Thank you, that's such a good explanation. OK, well, we're actually almost all the way through. I have one question left that I'd like you to give some thought to. I just want you to think about your beginning teaching and where you are now. And how your practices and beliefs, specifically when it comes to teaching literature and reading, – how has that changed over the course of your years of teaching? And where did those changes come from?  |
| 35:40 | T3: | <i>*leans back and laughs*</i> That's quite a tricky one because Inter – from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase.   |
| 35:48 | CG: | I think it's an interesting perspective though!   |
| 35:50 | T3: | <i>*laughs and sighs*</i> Ja, it is! Because you realise how messed up it is down there! And ja, you just get to see <i>*shakes head*</i> how much needs to change, and how much isn't working, and it's not working. So, <i>*sighs*</i> it's kind of like I want to go all the way back to policy development, to the schools and say, "Don't teach this! You don't have to teach this. It doesn't work. It's not working." You know? We need to figure out a way that we can get around the curriculum, so that – don't quote me on that! <i>*laughs*</i> But we do, we really do. We need to figure out a way that we can get around the curriculum so these children are – um – better able to read, better able to spell. Um – better able to <i>*widens eyes*</i> enjoy a text. But where do you get the text from? Um – um – I was going to say something else as well. Um – ja, I think – I can't remember, but I think – um – I would definitely change the way that I was teaching reading in the Foundation Phase. Definitely. But I don't know what the curriculum dictates at the moment. <i>*shrugs*</i> I mean, it's been a long time since I've sat down and worked with the Foundation Phase. And then – oh, that's what I was going to say. The sadness of it all, is that you'll have a brilliant teacher – absolutely phenomenal teacher, who has these children writing ten-word sentences in Grade 2. And that's by themselves, through reading and shared teaching, and – um – what do they call it when the whole class will write a story on the board together? |
| 37:34 | CG: | Shared writing?   |
| 37:36 | T3: | Is it shared writing? So, she – you know, she's just amazing. She's phenomenal. And these children can spell big words when they get to their – I mean, if you look at their test, their spelling assessment – ridiculous words that are on there, that some of the teachers struggle to spell. And, yet, <i>*slaps the palm of her hand on her knee*</i> these children can spell it. So, how is she doing it? And then, the sadness of it all is they will move up one year, and it's all lost. It's  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>lost. It's there somewhere but, because your next teacher isn't as brilliant as this teacher, it kind of, like, all slips through the grates. And I'm sure, as you know, with children, you have to remind them all the time. Especially with our curriculum being so full, you have to have a constant reminder of your rules and your – um – exceptions, and <i>*shakes head*</i> whatever, whatever – every year, in order for them to be able to remember it. And that's purely because they are expected to learn too much. They should literally only be expected to learn English, Afrikaans, or another language if that's what they want, and Math in the Foundation Phase. Because – ja, you can't – you cannot possibly expect these children to retain the stuff that they're learning. There's too much. And I know Gelman has said, you know, there's – in order to go from a core domain into a non-core domain, you have to have an expert to help you. And you have to be learning this stuff all the time and perfecting it, and it's going to take you ten years. So, if you've got seven subjects being rammed down your throat at the same time, how can you become an expert in anything? So, that's – ja. I must say, my English course has really helped in understanding. And the Math course as well, you know. Just understanding how children's brains work and where the stuff-up is! <i>*shrugs*</i> And it's so clear. <i>*laughs*</i></p> |
| 39:42 | CG: | <p>What's really interesting to me is – is, like, your criticisms of the curriculum, and the way some teachers are able to work around that and actually have their kids do exceptionally well, even though the curriculum itself, having been designed for the whole country, cannot possibly work for every learner. There's, like, a magic element there that brings it all together, and – like, that's one of the things I'm interested in looking at, where that magic comes from. I think, as you said, the teacher, in a situation, being there, and being able to expose these kids to something that just the curriculum is not able to.</p>   |
| 40:20 | T3: | <p>Do you not think, maybe, coming from home as well? Do you not think –um – that – I don't know if you remember Heath in your time – ja, she's just phenomenal, <i>*shakes head*</i> I mean, the amount of research that she did – ja, it's just phenomenal. And – and – ja. <i>*shrugs*</i> I think that's where it is. So, you know, like, my own children – um – [my daughter], who's now eighteen, <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> she wanted to learn to read when she was three. She literally – she said, "Mom, you must teach me words." <i>*shrugs*</i> So, I would write words down because that is how I was taught to teach. You write the word down, and – and you read it to me. And, personally, I think it is the best way still. <i>*raises both hands*</i> Because <i>*laughs*</i> they just recognize the patterns, you know? And then – so, she's been reading for – for years. And also – then my son came along, and he's shown signs of dyslexia. So, that same teaching style didn't work. He couldn't, for the life of him, even at this age of five, and six, and seven – he could not read those words. And that's not because he's stupid, because he is of – of superior intellect,</p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | but <i>*shrugs*</i> he just couldn't. So, as you say, if the parents are able to help, and support, is it enough? <i>*laughs*</i> Is it enough, especially when you have children with those reading issues.  |
| 41:46 | CG: | That's interesting.   |
| 43:47 | T3: | You know – um – when I was at my school – that was very close <i>*laughs*</i> – um – they sent us on – on a couple of courses. And the more I look at Vygotsky, the more I realise that it's pretty much his approach to <i>*shrugs*</i> just childhood development. But – um – it was called Thinking Skills, and – um – there was also, like, a whole lot of the growth mindset, and Duckworth's blah-di-blah, and Debono's blah-di-blah whatever, but there was so much in – <i>*nods for emphasis*</i> in reading and writing. And – and it was all about that enthusiasm. That inspiring each other to love reading. So that children are inspired to read. And <i>*shrugs*</i> the more you're inspired to read, the better you get at it. Um – so, ja. And I think that that is what I've found particularly difficult when I was teaching down here because I didn't have that opportunity to sit with the children and read. The only time I got – ja, the only time that I got, if they were lucky, half-an-hour at the end of the day, or fifteen minutes at the end of the day. If they could sit down and shut up long enough. <i>*laughs*</i> But you – <i>*shakes head*</i> you know, with thirty-six kids in a class, it's difficult to coordinate them all to clean up the classroom, write down their homework, and sit down and listen. Very difficult. So, – it's a strange book, but one of the kids gave me <i>Esio Trot</i> by – by Roald Dahl. So, I read that to them at the end of the day, and they would love it. They would sit, like, <i>*waves her head back and forth and puts on a high voice*</i> "Shut up! Sit down and shhhhh!" You know? And, again, it was – you know – that whole discussion that evolved from the reading of the text that they loved. So, ja, I agree. I – I – <i>*shakes head*</i> I don't think there is any right way to do it, really, I don't. And there's all these programs in place, and I – and I guess there's a lot of research into those programs, <i>*shakes head*</i> but there's too much going missing. <i>*shrugs*</i> There's just too much going missing – falling through the grid. |
| 45:56 | CG: | OK, so there's one more thing that I – I vaguely forgot to – I mean, I can make assumption, but I wanted to ask you straight up. So, obviously, your ideal way would be reading to the kids. When you are reading to the kids, how do you do that? Voices, actions, what is the way?  |
| 46:13 | T3: | <i>*nods head slowly for emphasis*</i> Oh, the whole works. The toot! They laugh hysterically at me because every character has <i>*throws out arm theatrically*</i> a different voice, then there's the, <i>*raises both arms*</i> "Duh, duh, duuuuuuh!" Drama! You know? I'm – I'm a dramatist. There's – children laugh at me when I walk into their classroom because they think I'm completely nuts, and that <i>*shrugs*</i> flows through my reading as well. You have to. <i>*laughs*</i>   |

**Disclaimer:**

Naiya's online interview took place during a storm on the interviewer's side and, as a result of that, the video was frozen for a large portion of the interview. Where gestures were discernable, they were included in the transcript. Similarly, there were instances where the audio connection was interrupted, and a few words in a sentence were inaudible. In most instances, the meaning of the overall sentence remained clear, in which case the interviewer did not interrupt the participant to request clarification. On the few occasions where the inaudible audio made the participants meaning unclear, clarification was requested by the interviewer. All instances have been denoted in the transcription by the insert: *{audio breaks up}*

| INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT |     | Naiya  |
|----------------------|-----|--|
| 00:44                | CG: | So, the first thing I'm interested in is some of the significant memories and experiences you have of literature and reading when you were growing up? Like, did your parents read to you, were there lots of books around, what was that like?  |
| 01:00                | T4: | Um – so, my parents didn't read to me, but I do remember having a lot of books around. My mom signed up to, like, this book club thing that would send me all kinds of books about snakes, and animals, and stories, and so on. So, I did have access – I did have access to books. And I also went to Model-C schools, so – and I – I'm the generation of kids that were encouraged to go to the library, so I would go to the library, and I would take out books, and I would read books, and so on. But I – what I do remember is that – for me, context was – was my struggle. So, I read American books, or English books. The context was America, where, at Christmas, it snowed, and there were Christmas trees, and gifts were exchanged and that wasn't – that wasn't a context that I was living. So, I – I couldn't relate to that, you know? Um – ja, ja. That's my memory of reading. |
| 02:02                | CG: | That's cool. And – um – what about when you, you know, went to school – primary school, high school, what about the texts you were exposed to there? Do have any memories or thoughts about them?  |
| 02:17                | T4: | Not really. Again – and – and these are opinions that I have in retrospect. So, in the moment, I didn't think that. But – but looking back – again, I repeat, context. Like, they – I think we did <i>Shades</i> in matric, which was a South African novel, but, again, it was a White context. Um – we didn't do novels that provided a Black context. They were either European or an American context, or it was – if it was South African, it was very – a very White context. I didn't read stories with Black people – people like me.  |
| 02:58                | CG: | OK, and how do you think that – um – affected your enjoyment or pleasure for reading? Is that something you did at that age, or did it discourage you at all?  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 03:11 | T4: | <p>I don't think it made me stay away, but it – it – but I was very much like, “Oh, so that's just the way it is.” I didn't – I didn't think – it's only now that I'm reading more and more South African novels. I mean, the – the – the kids that are writing – the Black kids that are writing South African novels, were me. You know, they got tired of reading novels that didn't have Black people in them, that didn't tell Black stories, so they became the change, you know? Um – so, just – you – you – you grow – it's also, like, if you think about TV as well, like, TV – I – a lot of the programs that I watched, that I come back to and I watch now again, like Dawson's Creek, for example. Like, I watch Dawson's Creek now, and I'm, like “There were no Black people.” I watched – I watched movies that I enjoyed when I was a teenager and I'm like, “There are no Black people!” Like – like, there's no representation. And, at the time, it seemed normal. Like, we watched <i>Bold and the Beautiful</i>, we watched <i>Days of our Lives</i>, there were no Black people! There was like – ay, there was like one Black person. And – um – it – it is the norm, so we never questioned it. I was never, like, “Where are the Black people?” It's just the life – the context we were used to. That's what I was used to. So, it didn't seem out of the ordinary.</p>   |
| 04:38 | CG: | <p>So, like, you were saying nowadays you're reading a lot more Black literature, specifically South African literature, can you remember at what point in your life that started becoming available to you? Like, how did you access those texts?</p>  |
| 04:47 | T4: | <p><i>*shakes head*</i> It can't be more than five years ago. It cannot be more than five years ago. Um – and I only – also, you must remember – I don't know if it's just me, as an English teacher, but we don't read for fun! Like – like – an English teacher does not read for fun. Therefore, I very seldomly buy books in general. Because I don't read for fun. I read essays to mark them. I read novels to prepare to teach them. Um – so – so, reading for fun, like – like, someone was saying – I was talking to a friend yesterday, and I was, like, “Ja, I force myself to read,” and she was, like, “Ja, but you're an English teacher, how can you - ?” And I'm, like, “We read for a living!” Like, I read for a living. So, when you're saying, “Do something for you,” reading is not on the top of my list to do. And – and there are English teachers, even in my department, that read for fun. Like, – <i>*laughs*</i> they read because they enjoy it. Like, oh my gosh, I must be the exception of the rule. Um – so, it was only recent. And – and, funny enough, for me, Black stories that I read before were very much like, the struggle. It was all about, like, the struggle, and apartheid, you know? Once in a while, you just want to read just a normal South African story, when they refer to Louis Botha and you know what they're talking about. Where they refer to Sandton Square, or, “I went to buy – mom went grocery shopping at Spar.” You know what I mean? Like, those kinds of contexts? It's so exciting to</p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | read – for me, I enjoy it for that, if nothing else. Where there’s reference to – to – to Yeoville, and there’s reference to William Nicol, and I can imagine it in my mind, not from my imagination, but from actually being there. I know what William Nicol looks like, I know what Monte Casino looks like, I know what my Spar looks like, what my Pick n Pay looks like. So, when they refer to a Pick n Pay, or they refer to a Spar, when they talk about <i>Generations</i> . Every Black person watches <i>Generations</i> ! You know what I mean? At some point in their life, they watched <i>Generations</i> . So, referring to those types of contexts.   |
| 07:24 | CG: | And what’s interesting is that there’s like, cultural meaning from those things as well. Like, if someone shops at Spar versus someone who shops at Woolworths, that already tells you something about them that, if you didn’t know the context, you wouldn’t pick up.   |
| 07:40 | T4: | Exactly. Exactly. So – um – in terms of teaching, you’re right. In terms of, – if I was teaching the novel, I would say, “What does it say about these people if they shop at Woolies?” And they know that certain people – I don’t even shop at Woolies. I can afford to, but I just don’t. I don’t shop at Woolies. <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 08:04 | CG: | <i>*laughs*</i> And that says something! Awesome, OK. So, like, now, if you wouldn’t mind getting into, like, your background a little bit in terms of teacher education? So, like, where and how did you learn to teach? Did you do the PGCE, did you do the B Ed, how did you get into teaching?  |
| 08:23 | T4: | OK, so, I studied at the University of Pretoria. I did a degree in English and my plan was to go into – I didn’t actually have a plan. But now I tell them. <i>*laughs*</i> In – in the spirit of <i>The Road not Travelled</i> . You know in <i>The Road not Travelled</i> he says – he says he’ll tell them he had it all figured out, but he didn’t have it all figured out. Um – so – so, what I tell people – my intention when I was studying English was to go into broadcasting. I knew that I wanted to work with people – um – I just didn’t know what that would look like. I didn’t think I wanted to be a writer; I didn’t think I was good enough to be a writer. So, I never entertained that. Um – I also never entertained teaching because my mother was a teacher in the Eastern Cape. And she was a Department of Education teacher and she didn’t want – she didn’t want those kinds of difficulties for me. So, she discouraged me from being a teacher. So, it’s not, like – she says – when she tells the story now, she says she forbade me, but I don’t remember it like that. I remember – I remember being discouraged to, and therefore, I didn’t entertain the idea. But I don’t think she would have entirely stood in my way if I’d said I wanted to go into – to go into teaching. Um – so, anyways, I studied – so, I did a degree in English. And – um – so, then I was going to go into copywriting, and a friend of mine’s uncle had a company |

|      |     |  |
|------|-----|--|
|      |     | <p>that had copywriters. And he was, like, “I’ll definitely give you work.” Long story short, it never materialized. Ended up being home for two years, and an auntie who lived next door to us was an Insurance Advisor for ABSA, so she gave me a job as a Personal Assistant, just for the time being. Literally, because I wasn’t working. Um – so, I worked with her for – well, I worked for her for about a year and three months. And at – at which point my mom softened up to me being a teacher. And she was just, like, “Because there is no other option, do it.” And so, I got a teaching post at an NGO school here in Johannesburg, and they took me with just my degree. That was the other fortunate thing. I tried to apply in the Eastern Cape for, like, temporary posts, but, like, public schools especially, won’t look twice at you if you have a degree. They’ll look at you if you have a B Ed. But if you have any other degree, if you have a BSc, if you have a whatever, they won’t look twice at you. Um – so, I – I’m sure a lot of my application letters are sitting in a lot of offices where people have not read them. Do you know what I mean? So – um – so, this NGO school took me with just my degree, and my mom said, “Take this with both your hands.” She was like, “I will pay for a post-grad for you, you just need to do it while you’re teaching.” Which was the other blessing, because I could – could learn how to teach while I taught. Like, so, that was the benefit of it. When I started, obviously, I had no idea. I just knew that I knew English, and I knew from how I analysed poetry and literature at varsity, how to analyse poetry. But, at the same time, I was doing my post-graduate education, which had those academic subjects on how to teach. So, I was learning how to teach while I was teaching. And, as a result, I actually advise people to – to – to go that route if they’re going into education, as opposed to doing a B Ed. Because you’re learning how to teach while you’re teaching. Um – ja, so eventually I got my post-grad. So, I really – I qualified – I only qualified as a qualified teacher three years into being a teacher.</p> |
| 1213 | CG: | <p>Can I ask – this is a really interesting perspective you have, in terms of learning how to teach. So, like, when it comes to teaching literature and texts specifically, do you believe the things you were learning in your PGCE adequately prepared you when you were in the classroom? Was there a lot of overlay? Or do you think, like, they were two separate worlds, and if you didn’t have the experience at the same time, you wouldn’t have learned as much?</p>  |
| 1240 | T4: | <p>Um – so, I think, for me, what worked in my favour, is the passion for it. So, I discovered that I have a passion for teaching, I love to teach. And I love how – besides – a lot of people, when they say they’re passionate about teaching, they’re usually passionate about the kids. And yes, I am passionate about the kids. But – but – but, for me, mostly, my passion lies in the work itself. For me, teaching is this interesting thing that changes all of the time. That’s ever-changing. And I can put together the perfect lesson, and it’ll work perfectly for this group of</p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>kids. And then, next year, I use that exact same lesson for a different group of kids, and it falls on its face, and I have to go back and rework it. So – so, teaching is this thing that I have to, like, rework, and re-adjust , and – and re-perfect all the time. Every time. So, it challenges me all the time, it’s perfect all the time, it’s a mess all the time, and I love that. It keeps – it keeps it interesting. And that’s why I thrived like that – learning how to teach as I – as I teach. Um – what I found the post-grad – um – the post-grad program – what I found was that it gave the implication, like, teaching is perfect from beginning to end. Like, if you just have this perfect lesson plan, you’ll be the perfect teacher. That’s bullshit. Absolute nonsense. Um – <i>*laughs*</i> like, it’s really – it’s really a skeleton – and it’s good to walk in with a plan, but you could get to that class and have to throw that entire plan out the window, and work from scratch. You know? And I don’t – and I don’t think the PGCE taught me that. It – it didn’t teach me that. And I learnt, luckily, because I was doing my PGCE while I was teaching. Um – it’s constant trial and error. So, I don’t – I don’t think a PGCE – I haven’t seen the B Ed curriculum, so I’m really guessing – I don’t think the Bed adequately prepares you for teaching. But I hear that a lot of Bed degrees, they’re – they’re doing practicals much sooner. As – as soon as first year. I think that’s the best thing they could do. They – they have to do practicals – stat doing practicals as soon as possible.</p> |
| 15:06 | CG: | <p>OK, great. So, now let’s talk about your teaching experience. Can you just give me, like, a general outline, like a timeline, how long have you been teaching English? Maybe, talk me through the kinds of schools you’ve been at? You don’t have to give me their names, for ethical reasons, but, like, the public, the private, the resources, the backgrounds of the kids, and what grades, that kind of thing?</p>  |
| 15:30 | T4: | <p>OK. So, I started teaching in January 2011. Um – and I was at an – an NGO school. So, this school is – was completely funded. So, an example is one company gave the school a million, and they will – they will use it where it’s necessary. There were six schools – there are six schools across the country and, so this one company would say, “We’ll give you a million,” and then they allocate it according to which school needs it. Whereas, another company will say, “OK, we’re going to take this school, and we will completely fund this school.” Um – whereas, another company will say, “Well, we’ll fund you – we’ll fund fifty kids,” right? The kids themselves didn’t pay – didn’t pay school fees. Um – they just bought uniforms and – um – they were from Alex. But they were, like, the cream of the crop. <i>*makes cupping motion with both hands and mimes pulling something gently towards her*</i> Like, in theory, they were the cream of the crop. So, they – they got tested and they came in, like, being some of the best. Um – there were – there were resources available, but what I’m finding with English</p>  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>more and more, because – like, I started at an NGO school and now I’m at a top – I would say, probably a top ten school in the country. Top ten, if not top twenty, school in the country. But the principle is the same, they don’t use textbooks. So, I’ve never – I’ve never taught English with a textbook. I’ve always had to find my own resources, or make my resources from scratch. Um – so, that’s been, like, a common thread throughout the schools that I’ve been in, I’ve always had to make stuff up, or find comprehension online, or – I’ve always had to – um – start, like – like, make exams from scratch. Do you know what I mean? Um – I can’t – I can’t <i>*audio breaks up*</i>– past papers. Ja – um – so, I started at that NGO school, I was there for three years, and then I moved on to – it’s a private school, but it’s, like, bottom-tier of private schools. Less expensive than other private schools. And I was there for six years. Again, no textbooks. Um – the resources were a little – a little – I don’t know. I wouldn’t say the resources were better. I don’t know, I don’t know. Like, – like, – like, that resource word is a tricky one. And I – and then, I started – and then this year, beginning of this year – so, I was there for six years. And then I just started now at this top-tier – um – type school. Again, no textbooks. Um – things are sort of made up from scratch. Ja, but at this point, I’m used to it so it’s not – for me, it’s not a bad thing. It – it’s just the way it is in the English department. Especially if you’re doing, like, a brand-new novel. Or, like, a South African novel, where there is no backup material. Like, you have to – you have to make the stuff from scratch. So, ja.</p> |
| 18:47 | CG: | <p>The school that you’re at currently, in terms of learner base – so, you said your first school was a lot of township kids, but they had to be tested to get in the school. So, then I assume those kids have very different language backgrounds, a lot of them were home-language Zulu speakers or multilingual and stuff like that?</p>   |
| 19:02 | T4: | <p>All of them.</p>  |
| 19:05 | CG: | <p>So, what about the school you’re currently at?</p>  |
| 19:10 | T4: | <p>At my current school?</p>   |
| 19:13 | CG: | <p>Yeah.</p>   |
| 19:15 | T4: | <p>So, I don’t – like, I’m still new, so I don’t know the exact numbers. There is a percentage of kids that are scholarship kids. Like, I know, in my one class, there is a child that’s from Alex, but even that child, I’m pretty sure he also got tested to get in because he’s relatively eloquent. Like – like, he’s well spoken. He delivers – like, the material, the type of work he delivers is pretty good. He’s not – he’s not disadvantaged academically at all. Um – so the kids that I teach now are predominately, like, White, Italian, or Portuguese. Um – there are – there are</p>  |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p>Black kids – so, a lot of them are first-language speaking. Which is – which is a completely new – um – experience, because the last two schools, like, all – my classes were all Black. I taught – I think, at my previous school, I taught one White kid. One. One. Um – and the rest were Black. Um – so, ja. That was that.</p>   |
| 20:22 | CG: | <p>So, specifically moving from, like, Alex kids to completely, almost the opposite, how do you feel that changed your teaching of literature? Or did it at all?</p>   |
| 20:38 | T4: | <p>Um – OK. So, - so, moving to the – so, I kind of moved up, right? I started at the – at the Alex, with the Alex kids and stuff, and I moved up to a better school, but the kids are still very much Black, still live in the township, in Soweto, or whatever. Still Black in a lot of regards. And then I moved to this school where it’s predominantly White. Um – I don’t – um – I – I see myself now as a provider of – of black context. Like, to – to the White kids. So, to the current kids. Because, at times, I’ve made certain comments – and also being able to speak vernacular in the English classroom, for example. And some of the – some of the White boys felt a little bit uncomfortable about that, and I was, like, “With banter, it’s fine.” Obviously, it’s English, so we talk – but we need to understand we live in a South African context. So – so – so – so, that principle of saying to a child, “They must speak English as much as possible to be more proficient in English,” is also absolute bullshit. Because we know the more languages that a child learns before the age of thirteen, the more intelligent they are. That’s a fact. That – that – that’s studied. So – so, that principle, when I was a child going to Model C schools, and I was told to speak only English, was absolute nonsense. So, I encourage code-switching <i>*shrugs*</i> because it’s good. It’s good for us. And also, we’re South African. And – and in South African, there are eleven languages. And I am an English teacher who is Xhosa! Do you know what I mean? Xhosa is my mother language, it’s my mother-tongue. Therefore – therefore, when I get angry with these kids – <i>*laughs*</i> when I get angry, <i>*gestures as if to show something leaving*</i> the English walks out, and then – then I blurt out things in Xhosa. And a lot of the time – sometimes they’ll go, “Yoh, mam.” Even the Black kids who are, like, Sotho, will go, “What did you just say?” And then I have to translate it, you know what I mean? But that’s, like, the world that we’re living in, we can’t have English in isolation, you know? Um – ja, so – so, I feel like a lot of the time, I provide quite a bit of the context, especially for the White kids. The Black kids have learnt to conform at these schools, so they don’t necessarily talk about the Black context. Um – they’ve – <i>*shakes head and shrugs*</i> which I understand as well. Like, when you walk into a White space, you kind of have to be White to make the other White people comfortable. Like, that is the reality. Um – <i>*laughs*</i></p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | so, ja. That's been my experience so far, but I've only been there for eight months. And five months {audio breaks up} online. <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 23:30 | CG: | So – um – as an English teacher overall, how do you feel about teaching literature as opposed to other aspects of the English curriculum, like grammar or writing? Um – is it easier, is it more difficult, how do those compare?  |
| 23:45 | T4: | Literature is easier because it's discuss – it's discussed. It's open to discussion and I'm open to be wrong or right. Like, there's no – like, with literature, there's no wrong or right answer. Um – we use the phrase, "It can be argued," a lot. <i>*laughs*</i> Um – so – so, there's rarely – there's rarely any wrong or right, whereas, with language, it can get very, very technical. Um – and its even stuff that I need to go and study before I go and teach the stuff a lot of the time. There's certain – there's certain aspects of language that – that I – like, I can teach apostrophes now without prepping, but other things, like your comma splice for example, I would have to go and do some brushing up before I actually – um – talk about it. And also, obviously, some of the things that have been changed about the English language, for example. Like, no longer say 'he/she', you would say 'they' – um – gender-neutral pronouns and stuff. And – and – and learning what the principle is that – you know, that principle changes from school to school. So, language is definitely, definitely much more difficult. Um – but I'm also lucky that I've taught and IEB schools – so, this is my seventh year at a IEB school and, at an IEB school, the focus is more on the content than it is on the structure, and the rules, and the – and the – the sto – the, like – there's a very small percentage that – like, in Grade 11, we don't really teach language, at all. Um – so, ja. So, literature, definitely, is better. |
| 25:19 | CG: | That's great. And what do you think the value of exposing kids to literature is? In terms of, like, why do we read a novel, why do we read a play? Do you think there's value in introducing these to children?  |
| 25:35 | T4: | <i>*shakes head*</i> So much value. So much value. Like, we learn about – learn about story-telling, we learn to put ourselves in other people's shoes, to be able to feel what they feel, to be able to – to – to sympathise, to understand what they were thinking, what they may be going through. Um – and we may – we may either relate to it in the sense that, "Oh my gosh, I've been there." Or we would relate to it in the sense of, "Oh my gosh, I didn't think of it that way." So, I think it's very important. I – I'm marking an email that – um – my Grade 8s had to write in response to a novel. So, they had to write and email to – to the author. And some of the things – well, that was one of the options. And <i>*shakes head*</i> some of these kids said some amazing things, like – like, "It related to me because I also lost a friend," you know?   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>Um – “So, I really felt it and the lesson that I learnt is that it’s important to let things go.” Those are - <i>*gestures with hand as if to grasp something from the air*</i> those are such beautiful, big life lessons that – that we can learn from reading someone else’s story that can be completely different from our own story. But we still understand – we still understand that lesson of, “Oh, I need to let certain things go,” or, people aren’t – aren’t always entirely perfect. They can be good, they can also be bad, they can’t be – you know, like – like, the novel that we did, this little boy – it’s called <i>My Sister Lives on the Mantlepiece</i>. We did it with the Grade 8s, and one of the things that we spoke about was the fact that the dad drinks a lot because he’s mourning the loss of his daughter, but he still has two other kids that are still alive. And he’s not looking after them at all because he’s always in a drunken stupor. Like, always. And so, the – the conversation that we had, we were, like, “Is he a bad person? Does that make him a bad person?” And to talk about the fact that he’s not a bad person, he’s just extremely sad and this is how he’s coping with it. So, you don’t need to simplify in those situations. And, even at the end of the novel, the dad, he stopped drinking – he didn’t stop drinking completely and suddenly everything was perfect, he drank less. And he became a little bit more attentive. And this boy just realizes that things don’t have to be perfect to be good. You know? And – and so we have conversations about that as well. Understanding that our parents are carrying a lot. And – and – um – a person can have some bad qualities, but a person isn’t entirely good or entirely bad. It can be more of the one or more of the other, you know? So, life isn’t like that, children learn these life lessons from literature.</p> |
| 28:16 | CG: | <p>That’s beautiful. Wow, thank you so much. Um – OK, if you think about, like, across your entire teaching experiences, from the beginning till now, what specific challenges jump out at you about teaching literature in the different contexts that you’ve been? Like, what are the big problems you’ve had introducing these kids to different texts?</p>  |
| 28:40 | T4: | <p><i>*long exhale*</i> I wish writers – I wish writers would put together materials for how to teach what they write. So, there’s amazing literature out there, but – but the lazy – <i>*sighs*</i> I’m not going to say lazy because we’re – teachers are not lazy. We just – we don’t have the time. We – we don’t have the time. So, I will read a book and I’m like, “Oh my gosh, this is a phenomenal novel!” But to read the – to read the book and to put together the material to teach the book sufficiently is just so much. <i>*shrugs*</i> So, what do I do? I slide back and I teach – and I teach Shakespeare, because Shakespeare has all the material in the world. Um – do you know what I mean? So – so, I – because I’m a pioneer for the South African novel – not even, like, African. Like, African novels are great, but can we start at home? Like – <i>{audio breaks up}</i> such an advocate for South African novels, I wish that our South African writers would –</p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | would actually provide us with – and actually one of my favourite { <i>audio breaks up</i> } – finished reading a book of hers and, at the end, she’s got discussion questions. And they’re perfect for if you want to use them in class. And I don’t even mean, like – we don’t have to use them exactly like that, I can look through them and rework them. It can be a good jumping board for me to put together a worksheet of some kind. We just need something! But now we’ve just got the novel and, like, that’s it. And no, like, material. Um – so – so, I think for me, that’s the biggest challenge for teaching literature. is that – people are – people write stuff, but they don’t give us, sort of, the teaching materials. It doesn’t even have to be teaching material, like, “This is what I was thinking when I put together the character, this is what I was thinking when I put together the structure of this poem.” Like, stuff like that would be so helpful because, once you have that together, it can give me a jumping board and <i>*mimes writing frantically*</i> I can start to put together the worksheet. You know, to do the stuff. |
| 30:53 | CG: | That’s interesting. Sorry, you broke up there a little bit in the middle, I’d really like to get the name of that writer that you mentioned? Could you say that again for me, please?   |
| 31:00 | T4: | Mohale Mashigo. Let me just see – it should be on my laptop.  |
| 31:05 | CG: | It’s fine, I got that, I heard it that time, so I’ll be able to write it down from the recording. Thanks!   |
| 31:12 | T4: | She wrote – so, she wrote <i>The Yearning</i> ? A novel called <i>The Yearning</i> ? She wrote – um – a collection of short stories – I forget that you’re recording. <i>*laughs*</i> She wrote a collection of short stories called – um – <i>Intruders</i> . She wrote the story to a Black comic strip called <i>Kwezi</i> . She’s amazing! <i>*holds both hands on either side of her head to indicate excitement*</i> She’s <i>*holds her head in her hands*</i> – oh my gosh, she’s amazing. And – so, what I read now is a – is a novel – I don’t know if you know <i>Beyond the River</i> about the Black and White guy that canoe together?  |
| 31:47 | CG: | That sounds familiar, but I don’t think I’ve read it.   |
| 31:52 | T4: | They wrote – they wrote a bibliography and they adapted it into a film. Um – and Mohale Mashigo was asked to do a novelization of it from the Black guy’s perspective, and I just finished reading it now. And at the end of that novel, she’s got, like – like, discussion questions at the end. And we’re – and – and – and, at our school, we’re going to do the film in Term 3, so I need to find a way to <i>*moves hand as if twisting something*</i> work this into – into teaching.   |
| 32:24 | CG: | So, this is a good question following that. So, you’re obviously allowed a lot of freedom in selecting the texts that the learners work with. And you’ve spoken now about accessibility to  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | tasks, but, like, what – how else do you go about selecting texts? What do you look for in, like, a good poem, or a good novel, or a good comprehension short story?  |
| 32:49 | T4: | I think – it varies from school to school. It really varies from school to school. So, I know that, at our current school, they try to – selection of novels is really about exposing the kids to other contexts that are different to theirs. So – so – so, that’s what we strive for. More often than not, as a department, we decide. So, like, a teacher – like, they’ll say – like, and they’ll cycle the novel for, like, three years. The same way that the matrices do. Um – and a lot of it is, like, “Are there any good books that you’ve read?” Like, “Does anyone have any suggestions of books that you’ve read that you think would be really, really good?” Um – ja. It has a lot to do with that, but a lot of it also has a lot to do with what’s popular. I mean, <i>Coconut</i> is, like – is, like, the flagship story now that – that every school is doing. Um – ja. So – so, I think the biggest thing is exposure – is exposing kids to other contexts and trying to apply that to the South – like – like, with the Grade 9s, we did a novel called <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> . And it’s set in America, it deals with Native Americans living on the reservation. And so, while it’s looking at an American context, often I was, like, how does this apply to us as South Africans? Like, you know what I mean? Like, they call him – they call him a Red Apple because, on the outside, he’s a Red Indian, on the inside, he’s White. What’s the South African equivalent? And that’s a coconut, right? So, ja. |
| 34:32 | CG: | Interesting. OK, and if you think about the kinds of texts you’ve had to teach, what kind of text in terms of genre, or content, or theme, or whatever, did you find the learners responded to the most enthusiastically? If you had to think about something that the kids were really, like, “Wow,” for?  |
| 34:54 | T4: | Kids really respond to narratives by kids their own age. So, - so, if the story – so, if this is a story of a fourteen-year old, and they’re fifteen. Do you know what I mean? Um – so – so, that – <i>*holds up hand vertically as if to indicate a level*</i> stories about their peers. So, it doesn’t matter where the person comes from, they – if – if – or if the person is a girls and you’re a boy, they don’t care about that, they care about – <i>*holds up hand with pinched fingers*</i> they engage with – um – with – um – this person is the same age as me. That’s – that’s what they engage – or around the same age as me. So, if you tell them, for example, “Romeo and Juliet, how old were they?” Juliet was thirteen, wasn’t she? So, when you tell – when you tell these kids that Juliet was thirteen, they’re like, <i>*opens eyes wide*</i> “Oh my gosh!” And – and – and – and they’re the first to go, <i>*shakes head violently*</i> “What do they know about love? Juliet is thirteen, she’s in Grade 7, mam! They don’t know anything!” Do you know what I mean? So, ja. So, they relate to that, they relate to, “Is this person my age?” Ja.   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 36:12 | CG: | And, on the flip side – um – what kinds of texts in terms of genre, and theme, and content, have you found particularly challenging to represent to the learners? Is there anything that they really just had trouble connecting with?   |
| 36:31 | T4: | It really varies. It really – <i>*sighs*</i> it – it’s one of those cases that I say that I teach this novel this year to this group of kids, and they engage with it, and I teach it the next year to another group of kids, and they don’t engage with it.   |
| 36:49 | CG: | OK, well in that case can you give me a specific example? Think back to, like, a specific lesson, a specific text, a specific group of learners -  |
| 36:53 | T4: | Oh, shit.  |
| 36:54 | CG: | – and tell me what went wrong? What happened? What went wrong?   |
| 36:58 | T4: | <i>*long pause*</i>  |
| 37:04 | CG: | <i>*laughs*</i>  |
| 37:04 | T4: | I’m thinking! <i>*laughs*</i>  |
| 37:06 | CG: | You’re welcome, take your time!  |
| 37:08 | T4: | <i>*long pause*</i> What I do think, though, is that sometimes I struggle to connect with it. If I don’t connect to the – to – to the work, the kids are not going to connect to the work. Um – but if I’m passionate about it, my passion – um – a lot of people say this about me, that my – my disposition is infectious. So – so, like – they – they – it’s contagious. So, they get as excited as I get about something. And sometimes they’ll chirp me, and they’ll go, “Oh my gosh, you’re so extra,” and I’m like, “Must I calm down?” And they’re, like, <i>*waves both hands in the air as if to stop someone*</i> “No, please don’t.” <i>*laughs*</i> So – so, the examples that I can think of, it’s not that the – it’s not that the text was – was difficult. It’s whether or not I engage with that text. And I can think of that with – I think there was a poem called <i>Odyssey</i> . And it was just – it was just more complicated than it needed to be. And it was – it was just old school. And it was a matric sonnet, and I remember – I remember sitting in the staff room with one of the other English teachers who was, like, a stand-in, and we were sitting, and we were – she was teaching me, like – we were – she wasn’t teaching me. We were discussing it. It was one of those things – you know when you’re, like, “This is my interpretation of it, am I right?” And then she’s, like, <i>*gestures as if balancing scales*</i> “Ja, you know, I think you could be right, but it could also –” and, like, we’re taking notes, and we’re – you know? So, I struggled to engage with that poem, therefore, I struggle to teach it, therefore, they struggle to engage with it. You know? That’s the only example – it’s never really – <i>*shakes head*</i> I mean, Shakespeare you can adapt to modern day whenever you want. Um – European novels you |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | can adapt to South Africa whenever you want because the feelings, we can relate to. Like jealousy, and sadness, and all of those feelings, you can relate to. Those are human conditions. Um – but if I’m not engaging with the content, they’re going to struggle.   |
| 39:08 | CG: | That’s very interesting. And it obviously works on the flip side as well? So, if you have a novel, or a poem, or a text that you’re really passionate about, the kids, kind of, build up on that?   |
| 39:20 | T4: | <i>*nods*</i> Ja, ja.   |
| 39:21 | CG: | Can you give me an example of a case where that happened?   |
| 39:23 | T4: | <i>*sinks head into hands*</i>  |
| 39:24 | CG: | Just the name or, like –  |
| 39:27 | T4: | So, Romeo and Juliet. Um – one particular novel I loved teaching was <i>The Giver</i> . Um – love teaching that. I really enjoyed that. But I also enjoy futuristic novels, like – I like – I love novels that look at us in two hundred years’ time and see what kind of people we are in two hundred years’ time. Um – I enjoyed teaching <i>Oryx and Crake</i> . I actually taught that for the first time now, during online school. Um – ja. But that – that’s also futuristic. Um – so, a lot of it has a lot to do with what it is that I engage with. I really enjoy futuristic novels. Um – and I don’t mind Shakespeare. Like – like, Shakespeare can be really good. But, like I said, I think - I think the advantage of Shakespeare is that there is material for days. People have been doing ‘Shall I compare thee to a summers’ day’ for decades, so there are – there is material for days, and days, and days. <i>*holds fingers to her temple*</i> I can teach that off the top of my head, like, sitting here. I can teach it. Um – ja. |
| 40:33 | CG: | OK. So, if I were to ask you a little bit more about the nuts and bolts of your teaching? So, you have a novel, or you have a poem, or a text to teach, how do you, in the classroom, do that? How do you introduce that, do they have to read predominantly on their own, do you read to them at all? I know it differs between grades and age groups, so if you can talk me through the younger kids you teach, primarily?  |
| 40:59 | T4: | So, I – um – I don’t like doing all the talking in the classroom. I feel like, if I do all the talking in the classroom, then I’m not doing it right. So – so, my structure, if I’m doing a poem, I will – sometimes – sometimes I will read the title and who the poem is about – ag, <i>*shakes head*</i> who the poem is by. And then I’ll have – and then I’ll have a spontaneous, like – I’ll either have people volunteer, so, literally, just start reading the first stanza, and then the next person just starts reading the next stanza like that. <i>*makes rolling motion with her forefingers*</i> So, we’ll do it like that. Um – and then, I – I know that pronunciation is usually difficult. And it’s  |

|      |     |  |
|------|-----|--|
|      |     | <p>difficult, like – like, rhyme, and rhythm, and stuff, is difficult, so then – then what I do is, we talk about the general structure of the nov – of – of the poem. Like, so – like, with sonnets, for example, it’s got fourteen lines, this is the rhyming scheme and then we divide it up, “What’s the first quatrain, what are they talking about?” So, when we get to the first quatrain or the first stanza, then I reread it with the <i>*makes air quotes*</i> ‘appropriate’ tone and the ‘appropriate’ pronunciation. And then I go, “OK, let’s unpack.” So, there’s a lot of repetition in terms of how we’re – how we’re reading the actual poem. So, then I’ll say, “OK, let’s unpack. What are they saying in this poem?” Because also, I strongly believe that – I don’t believe that I’m the one that knows everything. I’m just the one that’s the best prepared because I obviously went through the poem prior and I did it in detail. And that’s actually my struggle at this affluent school, is that they’re happy to sit and wait for me to give them all the answers. And <i>*shakes head*</i> I don’t work that way. I don’t work that way. Um – I – I’ve got some of the answers, but I’m – I’m happy to sit back and let you fight over it, and then either affirm you are right, or go, “No, it’s actually – that’s not actually the case.” And I’m also happy to go, “I don’t actually know. I’m going to go find out, and then I’ll come back, and I’ll tell you guys.” So – so, I treat my classroom like a learning hub. So, we’re all there to provide our two cents worth. Um – of course, I’m that one that probably knows the most, but I’m not there to tell you everything that I know. Otherwise, I’m just a university lecturer.</p> |
| 4325 | CG: | <p>OK, so it seems, from what you’re saying, a lot of how you teach literature comes from discussions, and arguments and, kind of, like, ideas. How do you, if you’re reading a novel as a class, obviously your kids get to know you, and they get to know that they can just jump in with an idea or a theme. Do you often prepare questions and stuff to get a discussion going, or do you find you don’t really need to do that, you just kind of have an open forum?</p>  |
| 4354 | T4: | <p>It varies. So – so, <i>Oryx and Crake</i> I started – I was teaching for the first time this year, so I did have access to discussion questions for those days where you’re, like, “I’m not feeling – I’m not feeling like the <i>Gangsta’s Paradise</i> type teacher, the phenomenal teacher,” so, I just refer to those questions. And I – and I’ll read through them, and I’m, like, “OK, so we can discuss this and this and this,” you know? And then sometimes we’ll read, and it’ll trigger a certain discussion point. Um – with online school, what I was doing a lot of, was – I was doing pre-recorded videos, where I would sit and I would – I would discuss – I would discuss that chapter in a video. And then what I – what I learnt to do – this took time, but what I learnt to do, was to say, “Watch the video, and then we’ll call in on a Google Meet, and you’re going to tell me what stuck out for you.” Right? So, a child will go, “Oh, this stuck out for me,” and then another boy will go, “Ja, actually me too.,” “Oh, actually not me,” and then that starts,</p>   |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | like, a – like, a conversation and – and – you know? Um – those are – those are my – my prouder teaching moments. <i>*laughs*</i>   |
| 45:11 | CG: | <i>*laughs*</i> That’s great! So, we’re actually coming to the end, you’ve given me some – some great responses. Um – so, my final question is more to do with, kind of, like, a reflection into yourself. So, if you were to think about where you were when you started teaching, and where you are now –   |
| 45:29 | T4: | <i>*sighs, rolls eyes, and laughs*</i>  |
| 45:30 | CG: | – how – are there any big ways that you feel that your literature teaching practices have changed? And how did they change, and why did they change?  |
| 45:40 | T4: | <i>*long pause*</i> I don’t – I think I still have a lot to learn in terms of teaching literature. I still think that I do fumble quite a lot. Um – I – I don’t think I have reached the perfect ‘this is how you teach literature,’ um – I do often feel like - <i>*sighs*</i> I wish I could sit in someone else’s literature lesson to steal some ideas because I don’t – I don’t always think that I’ve got it right. Um – but I – I think that it speaks to how teaching is a work in progress. So, I – I probably have improved in leaps and bounds – um – but I still – I do feel like I still have a lot to learn. Um – certainly – certainly, there’s no way I can say – there’s no way, even if I’m being humble, there’s no way I can say, after nine years of teaching, that I haven’t improved since year one. That – that would be – that would be absolute nonsense. I – I definitely have improved, but I think that there’s always room for improvement. Um – like, you – like, also just getting down the pre-reading thing. Like, at – at this school, they spend a lot of time on the pre-reading and – and – and pulling in contexts from outside of the novel – real-life contexts. Um – sometimes politically charged contexts, which I’m still learning to reach to. Um, ja. But I – I think that it has – ja, so, I - so then, I guess I would say that it – it has changed in that sense? That I’ve learnt – I’ve got more of a structure than I used to? And I use more outside contexts than I used to. Um – ja. But I do – I do still find myself, that I – that I’m prone to teach – especially, like, poetry, I’ll teach it like line for line. And – and I think that goes back to the first kids I taught, if we did Shakespeare, they didn’t understand Shakespeare. There was no context for them, you know? So, I tend to teach line for line, what does the poem mean. |
| 47:50 | CG: | Ja, like a translation.   |
| 47:53 | T4: | <i>*nods*</i> Ja.   |

| INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT |     | Sandra  |
|----------------------|-----|---|
| 04:42                | CG: | So, the first bit of the interview is, basically, just talking about your experiences with literature. So, can you tell me, what are your significant memories or experiences that you had of literature growing up?  |
| 04:57                | T5: | So, <i>*clasps hands together and leans back*</i> I hated it growing up. Um – my mom used to read to us when we were kids, and she used to read to us when we – when she was pregnant with us. And she believes that this was very good for us, but I – <i>*holds both hands up to her head and then brings them away*</i> I felt a disconnection with literature, just because of the experiences I had. Like, being taught to read – um – people would push the phonics and, if I got something wrong, there would be a lot of laughter. <i>*leans back and shakes head*</i> So, I didn't like reading as a kid. I didn't like reading into my early teens, I didn't like reading as an adult. But <i>*leans forward and smiles*</i> I was very fortunate to have great teachers, and I was very fortunate to be very competitive <i>*brings hands away from her body firmly*</i> and want to prove that I was worth something in my peer group – so, in school. So, I pushed myself, or I would be very good at my creative writing, despite not reading that much. Um – <i>*rests her chin on her interlaced fingers*</i> I tended – um – what I would tend to do was read, like, a lot of internet articles, I like to read pamphlets, I like to read menus, I like to read <i>*leans back and holds up hands as if confused*</i> anything except and actual book! Um – unless it has lots of pictures, or it was a specific genre, or unless I was really, really into it. So, I struggled to find a genre I liked, and I think that this is what kids do as well. And really <i>*shakes head and rolls eyes*</i> I was put off reading just by how everyone was like, <i>*puts on soft, high voice*</i> “Oh, I read fifty books!” And then you have to make a list, and then you get little stars, and I was, like, “This is not enjoyable because now it's a race and a competition, and I'm not going to win because – ” <i>*gestures with her hands as if to indicate something is missing*</i> ja. And also, with my accent, and growing up with different languages – um – I was forced to learn, like, different synonyms and – my age group, I think I was lucky. Because, despite not reading, I was between <i>*holds hand above her head*</i> an older group of my family and <i>*holds hand below her head*</i> a younger group of my family. So, I would read to the younger group and be told about literature by the older group. And then I kind of fell in the middle where I was lazy, didn't do that, but, listening to them, my vocabulary became quite <i>*sways her head side-to-side*</i> – I nearly said quite good. Is that right? |
| 06:46                | CG: | Yes, that would be fine! <i>*shrugs as if to indicate it is unimportant*</i>  |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 06:49 | T5: | <p><i>*laughs*</i> So, my vocabulary, like, increased and got better, and, with the younger ones, <i>*mimes passing something down*</i> I was able to put that on them as well. And that, kind of, made me feel, like, by the time I got to varsity, that's when I think I started reading and understanding the impact of literature for children. But myself, <i>*shakes head*</i> I don't think that I had the best experience with reading. I felt like I was very – I was put on the spot a lot, or I felt not confident reading in front of others, in case I <i>*gestures as if taking something from her mouth*</i> pronounced a word differently because of <i>*waves hands around her body as if to indicate a number of surrounding things*</i> my accent, my background, or the different language that were spoken at home. So, ja.</p>  |
| 07:20 | CG: | <p>Cool. So, like, when your mom was reading to you when you were little, and even, like, when you were older and reading to the little kids and having the older kids tell you stories, what kind of books was – were being mainly shared?</p>   |
| 07:30 | T5: | <p>So, for the younger kids, you know, it was definitely, like, <i>*smiles and raises eyebrows*</i> [my university lecturer]-type stuff. <i>*laughs*</i> The before reading, and the during reading, and the after reading. With the characters and <i>Aesop's Fables</i>, and all the different storybooks, and <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i>, and the general children's books. And I felt like they liked that, just because it connected with their age group and it taught a lesson. So, the general reasons why literature works in those younger groups is, like, it teaches something. Um – <i>*waves hands around her body as if to indicate a number of surrounding things*</i> it shows them that there's a development, there's characters, there's a plot. Um – and then, with my older cousins, I would tend to hear a lot about, like, <i>*waves hands around her head*</i> these fantasy worlds that they were reading about. And this would inspire, like, where we hung out, and what we did. Like, my cousins were very into <i>Dungeons and Dragons</i>, and they were very into, like, <i>Lord of the Rings</i>, and, like, I – my one cousin had, like, <i>*holds hands far apart as if to indicate something large*</i> this book set of almost twelve books, and it was just this adventure series of this character. And he would always talk about it, and I didn't pay attention, but he would describe, like, how this character would <i>*gestures as if it indicate something very tall*</i> go to the mountains and fights a dragon, and then goes to the lake and fights the water nymph, or whatever. <i>*laughs*</i> And, like – those kind of stories, I think he related to, just because it was an escape for him? Um – like, growing up in his family, it was two boys, and he had to be the rough and tough one. <i>*mimes moving away from something with her hands*</i> But he would escape to this adventure land all the time, and he loved that. He's actually gone on to become a doctor and read many Medical Journals, which is just boring as hell. <i>*laughs*</i></p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 08:50 | CG: | Well, ja. I wanted to ask you about that as well? Because, obviously, you went to university, and you had to read all those articles. How did you find those impacted your view of reading? Did you see them as a very separate thing, reading these long articles and reading anything else?   |
| 09:05 | T5: | <p><i>*shakes head*</i> I did at the time. At the time I felt very, like, immature about the entire thing. I think I was in a different space in my life. <i>*smiles*</i> So, myself and [my friend] would often each read an article, <i>*laughs*</i> and then we would <i>*moves her hand vertically down as if to indicate a list*</i> summarise it or paraphrase it, <i>*covers mouth as if embarrassed*</i> and then we would send it back to each other. And teach each other off that – off the summary. So, that – at that point, I don’t think that I – I appreciated the reading process, nor did I absorb enough. But when it came to, maybe my third or my fourth year – and I think, even just toward the end of the second year, I definitely changed my perspective and it wasn’t about, <i>*rolls eyes*</i> “Oh, I have to do this pre-reading, I have to do that,” it was, “What am I learning from it?” And, from there, like, different theories have stuck with me, like the theory – I can’t even remember – <i>*points to her head and smiles*</i> it’s stuck with me! But the theory of – um – when a lady’s pregnant, and <i>*moves her hand as if along a timeline*</i> the different stages of her pregnancy. We did that with one of the docs, and I forwarded that to so many of my pregnant friends, about, like – <i>*points forward excitedly*</i> oh, it’s the attachment theory. The attachment theory. And – um – different curriculum development, <i>*waves hands in a circular motion*</i> things interested me which we – we did with [lecturer’s name] I think it was. And – um – made me want to go into curriculum development, but I just haven’t had, right now, the opportunity, nor the chance. So, I do think it’s – it sits with me now that I’m a bit older, and a little bit more mature where, back then, it definitely didn’t. And I think that could also be just because I didn’t read as much as I should have when I was a kid. Could be that. But I don’t feel like I appreciated that. Although, <i>*points forward*</i> the literature that we did in our English course, like <i>*lists on her fingers*</i> Arundhati Roy’s <i>God of Small Things</i> went on to be one of my favourite books. And I mean I – I still have my university copy. My friends got it – and all my friends <i>*mimes writing*</i> write in it like we all – like, it’s, like, sacred to me. Um – <i>Zoo City</i> was another one that I liked. <i>*shrugs*</i> Those kinds of things stuck with me, and the stories stuck with me enough to, like, make me go and read, like, <i>Sapiens</i>, and <i>Homo Deus</i>, and <i>The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying</i>, and <i>Four Corners of the Sky</i>, and like different, you know, types of literature? But I also find that if it doesn’t <i>*touches her pinched fingers to her temples*</i> – if it doesn’t immediately interest me, it’s not going to – it’s not going to stick.</p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| 11:07 | CG: | That's interesting. OK so, let's talk about your university experience a little more. Um – so, like, the question is where and how did you learn to teach literature? And do you believe that adequately prepared you for the classroom?  |
| 11:22 | T5: | <p><i>*leans forward*</i> I don't think it prepared me for the classroom. Definitely didn't. But I think it was the type of school that I was – that I was in as well. But – um – I definitely learnt how to teach literature from – there was a blonde lady, and she was – she was our English course coordinator, I think it was first year. And she did the fairy tales, and all of that. <i>*raises both index fingers*</i> She – I wrote down the notes from her. [Lecturer's name] something, I think. So, I had a little blue notebook and I wrote in there all the different ideas that she would give of her experiences teaching in primary schools and that really worked when I was teaching. Like, <i>*makes a big square with her hands*</i> make a map and show the kids, like, “These are the characters, this is the plot. Where are they going?” And, like, connect it all together. That helped me when I was teaching at the hippie school, and we taught mostly with books and drawing. So, they had to replicate their stories at art, and that helped, like, a lot. Um – and then the other one was definitely, as much as I hate to say it, [my lecturer]. <i>*touches her fingers to her temples*</i> Like, [my lecturer's] before reading, during reading, and after reading helped with the kind of schools that I was given, but not in the hippie school where I was at. Because they were very, very advanced kids, and it was just a different kind of education. But when I was teaching at [my first school], that kind of learning for – <i>*gestures as if holding something large*</i> the amount of children that you have, and for the amount of time that you have, and for trying to impart something meaningful, that method kind of worked.</p> |
| 12:46 | CG: | OK. So, ja! So, now let's talk about our teaching experience overall. So, if you could just take me through, from the beginning, how long you've been teaching, the different schools you've taught at? And, like, there various backgrounds. So, you've already kind of gone into that but, in terms of, like, the kids.   |
| 13:07 | T5: | So, when I was teaching at [my first school], I was first employed to take the additional class that didn't fit into the timetable because there were just so many children. So, then I was teaching them <i>*lists on her fingers*</i> English, Afrikaans, and Mathematics. So, my English and my Afrikaans, although it was mostly already planned, there was a lot of literature involved. But I found that it was very, very inadequately taught. So, we had limited times, CAPS was overprescribed at the time. <i>*moves her hand vertically down as if to indicate a list*</i> It would tell you what you needed to do. And I found that, a thirty-minute lesson, I would sometimes be doing a listening activity based on the book, but it wasn't anything that promoted the children's understanding of why they were reading the book, or what the book meant, or what  |

the story was even about. They were just reading for the sake of, like, just listening and saying the words. But if I asked them questions, *\*shrugs\** they didn't retain anything. They didn't understand why they were reading this, and it was, like, the most boring lesson for them. And me coming into that as, like, a – a brand-new teacher and having a thirty-minute lesson with, like, forty kids, and they've all got to read, *\*holds her head in her hands\** it was just not possible. Like, *\*laughs\** it was just impossible. Um – and then, like, they would – they'd section off another thirty minutes for a writing activity based on the book. But if you ask the children to write about it, they tend to replicate the answers of what they've read. So, then they – they – their creativity is restricted because they're not writing about this world that they think it – that they are thinking of, they're writing about a world that they read about. *\*holds out arm as if to indicate something far away\** So, in that way it was hard for them to, like, make comparisons or change things, because it's kind of, like, just a copy-and-paste version of what they already read. So, I found that, there, the resources were really terrible, the curriculum restricted the children. I found that there was a very big lack of creativity – um – the children themselves were quite difficult, a lot of them hungry, or have learning disabilities, or bad situations at home, and they're coming to this lesson and it's boring. I didn't feel like it was sufficient at the time. For English and for Afrikaans. Um – *\*raises both index fingers\** what I did find worked, was I scrapped everything in their curriculum, and I brought in a bookshelf, and I went to – I think CNA – not CNA – um – Exclusive Books used to have an annual sale where everything was less 75%. And you're going to this big warehouse, and you fight everybody, and you basically get the books, the posters, the stuff that you want. So, I would get, like, books with treasure maps in it, and CDs, and there would be a CD player in my class, and *\*makes a big square with her hands\** there would be a place for them to pin the map, or whatever. And that would encourage them to take books out and read it. And I found that their reading improved far more than anything that I taught them in the curriculum. But then, also, the lazy children very much suffered because *\*holds hand up over her head\** they were not on that level. I mean, with forty kids, there's only so many you can interest. So, with them, it would still be that prescribed method of the writing activity, and the little grammar exercises, but very, very insufficient to, like, broaden their idea of literature or, like, any kind of skill from the literature. Whereas where I taught at [my second school] – so, that was Grade 5 at [my first school], and then I did two years of that. Oh, and then I taught Grade 6 at [my first school] as well. I taught them English for a year. And they were phenomenal. A lot of those children would read their own books, like – but very, like, *\*laughs and indicates to herself\** the same books we would read. Like – um – what is it called now – *Goosebumps*, and

*Sweet Valley High*, and whatever. So, knowing that that was their interest, I moved my library from Grade 5 *\*mimes lifting something up\** up to Grade 6, and those same books still stuck. So, they liked the treasure maps and all of that, and they – they kind of got a bit more creative, and I did find that that improved their vocabulary. But, still, I felt that the curriculum, again, restricted them. So, what I would pull out of the curriculum were the grammar exercises. I'd create my own stories, where it's more of a, like, workbook? So, it's still the same [lecturer] style – the before, during, after reading, but there's more activity for them. There's more time to grapple with concepts, and think of things, and play with the language, et cetera. Um – I don't know if you remember – she made us do, like, this unit conceptualization map, like, *\*draws a square in the air with her hands\** booklet. And we had to create an entire – so, I basically did that. Um – and the kids loved it. And then, when I taught at [my second school] – oh my God, it was such a nightmare. *\*shakes head\** Because they had no curriculum. So, I was given eight kids – *\*nods head\** ja, I was given eight kids in Grade 5 – in Grade 5, and they were like, *\*waves hands around her head in a dream-like fashion\** “OK, we're this hippie school. We are – we – we teach via, like, not worksheets and written method, but, like artwork, and exploration, and experimentation.” And – and I'm, like, “That's all good and well, until you ask them to study for something.” *\*laughs\** And then they freak out. *\*holds up hands as if confused\** They're just kids! And you're, like, “Now I'm going to test you on this,” and they're like, *\*touches her fingers to her temples\** “But I have nothing to go back on, and I've forgotten that because it was just a conversation.” So, as much as that was fun in promoting confidence, in helping them be able to speak, in helping them feel comfortable, and just creating, like, wholesome human beings, it still didn't prepare them for that admin side of life. So, now any piece of paper gives them *\*holds up hands as if stressed\** heart failure. Um – so, again, I brought my library to [my second school] and they loved it. Because their school library was just *\*waves hands as if throwing something in the air\** chaos. It was a mess of just everything together. I mean, some of the literature in there was, like, Boones & Mills, the children were taking that home and bringing it back because it's inappropriate. *\*nods and laughs\** Yeah! Encyclopedias – like, all messed up. Um – so, then, the principal was, like, to me, “You need to create a curriculum for this class.” So, myself and the Grade 4 teacher at the time had *\*makes linking motion with her hands\** collaborated, and she had already set up a curriculum. So, they had their books, like, *The Secret Garden*, and, like, – um – um – what is it? David – *I am David*, and, like, stuff like that. And they – *\*leans forward and rolls her eyes\** they hated it. They absolutely hated it. But then, when I asked them to bring in something that they liked, they couldn't. So, there was *\*holds up one finger\** one girl in my

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>class that liked to read. But even though she read so much, she's – um – <i>*looks up with a thoughtful expression*</i> I don't think she's autistic, but she – she was never diagnosed. When one of my colleagues – when she – she worked with her, she said it was a thing where <i>*waves her hand in front of her face*</i> she almost can't see the colour because of the text on the paper. So, if you put a – <i>*mimes placing something over something else*</i> a red film over the book, she can read the words properly. So, that affected her spelling and it would seem like she's dyslexic, but she's not. So, <i>*shakes head and closes eyes*</i> she was a very difficult child. But she would read all the time. Like, <i>The Black Seahorse</i>, and she'd bring me these books about princesses, and whatever. So, I could very easily tell what they were into. So, when we designed the curriculum to fit the school, we said that the whole first term, the theme – no, there were four terms, and each term had two blocks. And each block had a theme. So, my first theme was Ancient India. And so, we did, like, stories of Krishna, and whatever. And then <i>*gestures as if covering a large space*</i> we designed an entire artwork of, like, Krishna stories, and whatever. And that helped them because there was, like, this adventure path that they were following of Krishna's journey and, like, the lessons he put – it was very relatable for them. And how he conquered the monsters, and what the monsters mean, and what it means in their life, going though, like, this – <i>*makes a rolling gesture with her hands*</i> because I had a child that was, like, trans – not transgender, but gender – gender neutral. Or – <i>*looks away thoughtfully*</i> ja. So, they didn't want to be called 'him' or 'her,' but 'they.' And then the mom wasn't about it. So, she really related a lot. Or <i>*makes air quotation marks*</i> 'he' really related a lot to the Krishna stories and – um – then the other one was – um – Ancient Greece. So then, we did the whole twelve – <i>*moves hand as if along a timeline*</i> Twelve Tasks of Hercules. And then there was another one. <i>*pauses and touches her finger to her chin thoughtfully*</i> We did the whole – there was so many that we did. <i>*shakes head and smiles*</i> But, ja, we basically had to choose a theme and then prescribe stories and teach stories. Even with my – um – with my Mathematics block. So, after Ancient India, we did Geometry, and I wasn't just allowed to teach Geometry as <i>*makes a block with her hands*</i> a Maths block. I had to use stories to incorporate it. So, I used the stories of Sinbad, and then, from there, we looked at angles of the ocean, like – well, not angles of the ocean, but we created <i>*holds up arms to show different angles*</i> angles on our picture of the ocean, where Sinbad had gone, what he had done, and where this adventure took place. And I felt that that helped them understand angles, and symmetry, and fractions a lot easier. Because <i>*shrugs*</i> that's what I taught during that block.</p> |
| 21:00 | CG: | <p>That's great! Wow. I love it, I don't even have to ask all my questions, you just start talking, and ticking off all the questions that I haven't yet asked. It's great! Um – so, this second school</p>   |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
|              | <p>that you were at, what were the kids like there, did they come from a little bit more wealthy homes, in terms of diversity, where they a little bit more – very white and middle-class?</p>   |
| <p>21:21</p> | <p>T5: <i>*nods and smiles*</i> Yes. Yes. So, the first school that I taught at was majority Black students and there was a lot of – like, underprivileged, and there was a lot of, like – um – a lot of underprivileged children, there was a lot of abuse, there was a lot of, like, assault. Like – um – there were a lot of dangerous situations, even at the school. Like, <i>*smiles and slaps her knee*</i> one time, there was a gunman and the alarm went off. And they were like, “OK, cool. If [the principal] comes on to the intercom and she says ‘This is [principal’s full name],’ and she says her first name, it means to absolutely not do whatever she tells us to do next.” And that situation actually happened at the school, we were, like, being hijacked as a school. Um – <i>*smiles and shakes head*</i> and I had mentally ill children that I had to try and <i>*brings both hands down as if to subdue something*</i> keep calm in a classroom. And the one’s trying to get out the window, and the other one’s trying to go through the door. <i>*places head in her hands and shakes it, while still smiling*</i> and it was just a nightmare. Um – and then, fast-forward to the next school, I felt like I needed a complete change in curriculum, I needed a change in diversity, I needed a change in <i>*waves arms for emphasis*</i> discipline. Um – because I was becoming really, really strict and cold in the government school system. Like, I was very ruthless – the children loved me, but they feared me. Like, when I can past, they were just, like, “That’s Ms. L,” you know? <i>*laughs*</i> And then, they – they’d hide what they’re doing. <i>*shakes head*</i> I didn’t have that at the next school. I had one <i>*holds up one finger*</i> class of Grade 5s, there were eight children in that class. These were the kids of, like, politicians, and actors, and musicians, and whatever. So, there’d be a lot of, like, events at the school where you have to interact with the parents, or you have to go on house visits and stuff. So, that led me to having an au-pair family last year that took care of me. They had three kids, and them – again, there, my literature journey would increase again, because of Miranda and her interest in anime and Japanese literature. Which, still, I found useful in improving her grammar, and improving her knowledge of, like, how stories work. Um – there was Julia, who’s only into, like, <i>My Little Pony</i>. But then, the other thing that she’s into that’s weird, is that she’s got two books about <i>*holds thumb and forefinger far apart*</i> this thick of all the Feminists – or the great Feminists in history. Frida Kahlo and – <i>*laughs*</i> like, these Chinese soldiers that died at war, like, these French Feminist – I don’t know – groups. Like, she just has all these crazy facts. So, that, again, I would use – and now I’ve forgotten all of it – but that I would use to teach her more about literature. Or that kind of literature. And then, the opposite would be Lucio, who is very into <i>Minecraft</i>. So, we would use all the <i>Minecraft</i> books, and the <i>Minecraft</i></p> |

|       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
|       |     | <p>stories, and he would create his own stories in his own worlds. Um – but then, at [my second school] – <i>*smiles and rolls her eyes*</i> what was the question again? <i>*laughs and covers her face with her hands*</i></p>  |
| 23:51 | CG: | <p><i>*laughs*</i> You – you’ve kind of covered it actually. But – but I just asked you about the background of the kids at [your second school.] But now that you’re talking – and you can carry talking about wherever your mind takes you and touch on this as you go – but, the specific challenges you had teaching at [your first school] versus at [your second school.]</p>   |
| 24:11 | T5: | <p><i>*widens her eyes and leans forward*</i> Ooh, oh my God. So, at [my first school] I felt that the curriculum restricted the children. The curriculum was so, so restrictive, it didn’t cater for the fact that there were children of different needs, with different backgrounds, with different skills. Like, I would have a child at [my first school] who owned a PlayStation and he had his own room, and the background – and then that same classroom, I would have a little girl who would be in a shack at night, <i>*lists off on her fingers*</i> no electricity, her father’s burnt her little sister with oil – um – she had <i>*points to different areas on her forehead*</i> drops on her head, like, ugly marks on her head from the water that would drip in from the roof all the time, and it actually f – messed up her skin. And she’d have marks from, like, the rats biting her, and her books would always be dirty, or she wouldn’t have the resources – her clothes would be dirty and mouldy. So, just the – <i>*gestures with hands as if weighing on scales*</i> the difference in cultural capital of those two kids, and trying to get them on the same level and – and try and bring the literature to that level, when I have the one child who understands things on an exceptional level, and the other one who has <i>*draws a horizontal line with both hands*</i> no understanding that this kind of concept even exists in the real world – was quite a challenge for me. Um – but then, at [my second school] <i>*waves finger as if to make a point*</i> the parents restricted the children. <i>*touches her fingers to her temples*</i> The parents – oh my God, it was the most stressful year of my life. So, at [my second school] <i>*laughs*</i> those parents were super involved, like, I try to – I mean, these kids are ten/eleven years-old, and there’s a non-binary child in my class. Non-gender conforming – Helena. And – um – the parents are, like – I can’t teach a sexual curriculum. So, I was, like, “Cool, I’m going to get somebody in to teach them about, like, different things in the curriculum.” So, I got this chick, Rosaline, who was studying Drama and whatever at Wits. And so, she was, like, my student, I was, like, mentoring her a little bit, and I was explaining to her, like, “These parents are very hectic.” So, we did a lot about conflict management, conflict resolution, she touched on what makes us different, and we talked about race and gender, and we talked about, like, financial status, and whatever. And the kids really understood it, and they loved it. The go home and tell their</p> |

parents, *\*pauses and touches her fingers to her temples\** and their parents have a problem with the fact that Rosaline used the word ‘penis.’ And I’m, like, *\*holds her chin in her cupped hands\** “Well, let me tell you, I – like, I teach these kids all year round, I spend all the time with them. They are not innocent. *\*claps hands together\** I promise you they have spoken about a penis before. I have heard it in my classroom, I have heard it on the playgrounds, I have heard it from the younger kids, it’s not that big of a deal. Do you want them to be misinformed and uneducated about it and fear it, or do you want them to have that knowledge at the correct age, so that they understand what they’re dealing with?” So, I felt like the parents – even though this is a bad example – I felt like the parents really restricted the kids in that way. Like, at times, when we did the Krishna practices, I had – I had a very mixed group of children. I had *\*lists off on her fingers\** one child who was Greek and, like, Indian. So, that was Adriana. She was Greek, and her dad was Indian. So, he used to like *\*draws her hand up her upper arm\** Buddha tattoos, and the Sanskrit writing, and, like, very *\*places her hands by her head and points them forward\** forward-thinking about the Krishna practices But then, I would also have, like, Jewish children in the class, I had Helena. And she was gender non-conforming – you know the parents *\*gestures with hands as if weighing on scales\** are still juggling with that concept. Um – and then I had Miranda, who – she takes on *\*gestures to her face\** a masculine persona, but she likes to be addressed as female, and her mom’s very aware of it. And that was the au-pair family I had. And then, *\*holds up one finger\** I had one boy in that class, Alec, who hated everything the entire year, because everything was centered around the girls. Um – and then, I had Iris, who was just – I don’t know how to explain Iris. She was just an energetic ball of fun. Her parents were fine with anything. And then I had Regan, whose parents were extreme, and then Cassandra, whose parents were very conservative, and also extreme, and those two would *\*makes an X motion with both her arms\** clash all the time. And that would affect the dynamic of the entire class, the friendship groups, the parents’ connections, and then it would always seep into *\*lists off on her fingers\** the curriculum, it would seep into the children’s books. If I said something in one child’s book, like, “You’ve done so well, I’m proud of you,” then they would be, like, *\*slaps her hand down and leans forward\** “We saw, when we were at her house, that in the book you said you’re so proud of her, and that was after four weeks of improvement. Now, Iris was improving for six weeks, and you hadn’t done that.” So, they would, like, not only try and control what was being taught in the curriculum, they would control how I was responding to the kids and giving feedback, they would control – like, at different times, they were encouraged to come into the classroom and give us talks, or, like, you know, be involved in the curriculum. So, I invite them to, like,

a baking day – well, the cooking day, we did Indian curry – the theme was Ancient India. So, we made a vegetarian Indian curry *\*raises both hands\** because the school was, like, no meat, you know, very veggie, and green, and recycle everything. Um – *\*laughs and slaps knee\** um – and so, like, I invited the parents, but they would just be so overinvolved. They’re, like, “You really shouldn’t be using this kind of potato,” and I’m, like, *\*raises both hands in frustration\** “Honey, I paid for this out of pocket. The school didn’t pay for this, OK?” *\*laughs and gestures to herself\** I’m feeding these eight kids! Um – ja, man, so, like, they would just have *\*holds her hands to her temples\** their opinion constantly, and it would limit the kids and what the kids wanted to do. To the point where, I think, Helena – um – that was my non-binary child. So, she’s female, but identifies more as a male, likes to play with the boys, *\*gestures to her body\** dresses completely as a boy, if you saw her, you’d think she was a boy. But she doesn’t like to be called anything but Helena. And – um – her mom was, like, *\*shakes head and puts of a high pitched, refined voice\** “I was exactly the same when I was younger.” *\*raises hand\** This is [the mother’s name], she’s really – she’s – I think quite a famous actress in South Africa now? She does, like, a whole lot of productions. *\*waves both hands in the air as if to indicate moving on\** Anyway – um – so, she was, like, “I was exactly the same, I was a tomboy, you know, that will never change. But then, immediately I got my period, and I changed, and I switched on, and I was into boys and, you know, I started dressing in skirts and making my hair long.” And I was, like, “That could be the case for Helena.” *\*raises hands as if conceding a point\** “Fine. But, right now, this child is asking me to say ‘he,’ and, with the suicide rate in the country, I’m not going to call her ‘she’ if she asks me to call her ‘he.’” Because what she wants is acceptance, and this is a safe space for her to be whatever she wants. *\*shrugs\** And I’m going to teach the other kids that acceptance is the way in which we need to move forward. Like, she’s not asking me to address her as a do, and every time she does, bark, and I must accept that. Like, it’s not – it’s not like that. You need to teach the other kids as well, that you’re going to come across other people that you don’t understand, that are, maybe, different from you, and the only thing that you can do is be accepting of them and make them feel comfortable. That’s it. *\*shrugs\** Just don’t be a shitty human. Um – and so, then, [the mother] would kind of give Helena all these hero books, and, like, the princess, and the prince, and they save each other, whatever. *\*holds up both hands\** But Helena’s artwork, and what Helena liked to read was demons, and monsters, and – um – like, all these adventure stories. She loved Greek Gods. Like, to the point where, when we did Ancient Greece, Helena was the TA, and she and I would switch roles, because she, just – *\*shakes head and waves both hands\** her knowledge far exceeded mine. Like, she knew every single Greek God, she

knew which monster they faced, which battle it was called, and if it was a task of Hercules or not and, like, whose father was related to this story, whatever. Um – so even with Icarus and Daedalus, she told that story to the class. And she – she – when – the story of the Minotaur, she drew this whole Minotaur situation, and she did an entire castle with a maze and the Minotaur underneath. And she explained it to the kids quite well for trying to explain – well, the wife fucked the bull and – *\*laughs and covers her eyes\** She – she did well. Just – I felt, like, she – she was fine. But her mom was restricting her in literature, in her life, in every part that she could. Even with Antony, like, Antony liked to read, but he didn't like to read English books. He liked to read, like, Maths textbooks. Because *\*mimes writing on a board\** the more he did his Math, and the more he got it correct, and gave it to me, and submitted it, and was correct, the better he felt. So, *\*mimes passing many sheets of paper around\** he just kept on submitting Maths shit to me, and then I would have to keep on showing this child, *\*leans forward and rolls eyes\** “Yes, you're good at Math, I get it. Please stop, like, giving me things to mark!” *\*leans back and laughs\** Um – but all of them very different, because then there would be Miranda and Iris, and their anime – like, their anime would really influence what styles they wore and whatever. Also, the books and stuff they read. It was very – girls with, like, this cutesy dress, and they're very, like, *\*huddles into herself\** frail, with the elbows – the shoulders like this, and the big ass eyes, and, ja. So, that really influenced them, where Regan – *\*shakes head\** I couldn't get Regan to read. Um – Cassandra could read, Cassandra could read about horses, and Cassandra was very interested in animals. So, what she liked to read was lots of stories about animals, or saving animals, or doctors, or this orangutan, like, – um – what was his name? Chantek the orangutan. So, I used to give her articles about that. Or, like, the green children and stuff like that. *\*nods\** That's what she liked. Like, factual-based, but still touches your heartstrings. So, the green children were these kids – um – do you know about them? It's – it's – so, they came out of, like, nowhere, they were *\*gestures to her whole body\** completely green. And then, eventually, the brother died because he hadn't, like, acclimatized to the food, and he was really ill and – and they kept on saying they came from this river that didn't exist from this place. And the girl went on to survive, and get married, and be socialised into normal culture. But *\*shrugs\** they were literally two green children that just popped out of nowhere. And she loved that. And then she also loved – um – what was the other one I was telling you about? A second ago? *\*slaps her knee\** Chantek the orangutan. So, that was about this scientist who raised this orangutan so that he could speak, and he was able to solve puzzles, and, like, barter with money. And – um – unfortunately, he became a danger, because the people in the community were like, “Cool, he can buy things, he can let

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | himself out of his cage, he can speak, what if he hurts somebody, or he takes something, or he wants something? Because he scares little children?” So, they put him in a zoo – um – with other orangutans, and he just became super depressed, and he did eventually die. But any time anyone would visit him, he would sign to them, <i>*mimes sign language*</i> “Please, take me away from the orange monkeys. I’m not an orange monkey, I’m an orange human.” And she loved that, she loved those kinds of stories. Um -  |
| 34:06 | CG: | So, like – sorry, can I interject a second? So, what’s really interesting is, you’re talking about the second school you were at, and how, because you had so few children, you were able to go in and say, “I know exactly this kid’s interests, and I know exactly that kid’s interests,” and what to give them and stuff like that.   |
| 34:20 | T5: | Yes.   |
| 34:24 | CG: | In your first school, obviously, it was a completely different situation. Um – were you ever able to find any kind of literature that resonated there with the majority of the kids?   |
| 34:36 | T5: | <i>*shakes head*</i> Not really. It was – and, this is where Hooked on Books was, like, a good – kind of – thing to bring in, because it did spark their interest. So, the library would stock those kinds of things but we didn’t have access to the kind of numbers we needed in order for children to enjoy those books. I mean, in a – in a school of a thousand-and-something kids, Hooked on Books does those six books. And it’s <i>*holds up six fingers*</i> six books between these thousand children, and they’ve all got to, like, scramble for them. <i>*shakes head*</i> It never worked. And the books would always be destroyed, or would not come home, or damaged. <i>*shakes head*</i> We never got to engage with the kids or, like, understand what they wanted. And those that I did, it was either because I would spend time with them outside of school, or during an extra-curricular activity, not because they were, like, sitting in my classroom and I had those thirty minutes to engage with them. Not at all. |
| 35:20 | CG: | OK. And what about prescribed texts and things like that?  |
| 35:26 | T5: | They never, ever, ever <i>*waves hand firmly*</i> – I have never come across a prescribed text that was interesting or fun to a child.   |
| 35:34 | CG: | And why do you think that was?   |
| 35:35 | T5: | I think it’s outdated, for one. Very outdated. Um – it’s not, like, the level of humour that they have now. The level of humour – I mean, if you just – even if you just turn on an app and you look at the TikTok videos, these things are not going to interest the children. Like, you need something a bit more fast-paced, a bit more <i>*moves hands backwards and forwards in a</i>   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | <p><i>dynamic manner*</i> – something that’s going to grasp them. <i>*makes a clasping motion*</i> And these old-school ways of, “Hoorah, Hooray,” never does. Ja, and that’s <i>*laughs*</i> how it is.</p>   |
| 36:01 | CG: | <p>That’s interesting. OK, so – I’m very interested, because you’ve got two very different schools. So, say you’re teaching a literature block, how do you go about introducing a text, and teaching a text, and reading a text, what was your actual practice in the classroom?</p>   |
| 36:33 | T5: | <p>OK, so, at [my second school], because there was a lot of movement and experimentation, we would start – without telling them what the text was about, I would start doing things from the text. Like, if, in the story, <i>*holds up hand as if giving an example*</i> this girl did a lot of yoga, whatever, it would be introduced. So, with [my second school], we didn’t have, like, <i>*makes air quotations*</i> ‘subject blocks.’ We had, like, morning circle time, then we had main lesson, <i>*makes a large square with her hands*</i> which was two hours long, then we had, like, Maths, Afrikaans, isiZulu, whatever. So, then, my main lessons would be Mathematics, and main lesson. And, in the main lesson, you can do anything, but you must incorporate <i>*lists off on fingers*</i> movement, you must incorporate a story, you must incorporate music, you must incorporate – like, basically, anything. So, if we were doing, like, the literature block of Krishna – which we did – we would start doing what Krishna did. Like, we would do the whole – our circle time, when we discussed our feelings for the day, or <i>*gestures with her hand over her shoulder as if to indicate something that has passed*</i> what we had reflected on yesterday, what we learnt yesterday, and <i>*moves her hand to point forwards*</i> what our goals are for the coming week – um – our intentions. Then, <i>*holds up thumb*</i> we would also do yoga. We would also do, like, the whole – um – what was it called now? Where you <i>*cups her hands and brings them forward*</i> light the candle and you offer blessings. And they would say why they were doing it. So, they weren’t offering to a <i>*makes air quotations*</i> ‘God’ or a deity, they were just doing the practice. And understanding why Hindu people do this, and what the discipline is behind it so they relate more to the characters. And this, I found, really helped, because <i>*holds up thumb*</i> one, the stories are already relatable; <i>*holds up second finger*</i> two, they are doing <i>*indicates to herself*</i> themselves, what is happening in the story so they – it makes it even more relatable, like, my world and <i>*moves hands upwards, away from herself*</i> the literature world, kind of thing. Um – and bridging their everyday knowledge, and their school knowledge, and prior knowledge, et cetera. So, that, as well as drawing it out. So, whatever the things – when I did tell the story, then, after that, they would have to create an artwork. So, what they remember from the story, what <i>*places her hands around her head*</i> they’ve retained from the story. It could come in any form, like Regan would always have, like, a <i>*brings hand across in a horizontal line*</i> a cartoon strip-type vibe, where Adriana</p> |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | would have <i>*makes a large square with her hands*</i> just this one scene, and all the characters in the scene, and you could kind of understand what was happening. Um – and then, from there, they had to write, like, <i>*brings her hand downward as if making a list*</i> either a summary, or a continuation of the story, or what they thought was going to happen the next day. Um – what else did we do? So, then we also ate like Indians, and, one day, we dressed like the Ancient – um – the Ancient – not Ancient Indians. Like, we had – um – some people from a monastery – like, one of the Indian monasteries come through, and they taught them not to <i>*holds hands up with palms facing forwards*</i> put their feet up like this because it’s swearing at the monks. So, it was, like – you just incorporate every part that you can of the story to make the literature relatable. And I found that that made them want to know more about Krishna, want to know more about Ancient India. So, then we started studying the principles of karma, moksha, samsara – um – dharma, atman – um – and, like, the soul. And so, those things also helped them understand why Krishna was seen the way that he was, and why, in the Hindu religion, he was so important, and then we were like, “What is your atman, what is your moksha, what is your samsara, what do you think your karma is?” And brought that relatability into literature. And I think that’s what was lacking at [my first school]. |
| 39.35 | CG: | Ja, so, like, an integration of – of all aspects of the literature.  |
| 39.38 | T5: | <i>*smiles and wags finger*</i> It’s a lot of work! Even for eight children, it was <i>*throws head back*</i> a lot of work.   |
| 39.42 | CG: | Oh, I’m sure. It sounds like an incredible amount of work. OK, so, I know this isn’t, probably – you don’t want to talk about it because it’s not a great representation of your best practice, but – OK, literature lesson at [your first school]?  |
| 39.55 | T5: | <i>*smiles and groans*</i> So, a literature lesson at [my first school] was – some days we would have <i>*holds up two fingers*</i> two English lessons, and that’s only a thirty-minute lesson. So, in that time, I’m expected to either teach something – so, <i>*lists on fingers*</i> I have to teach a language portion of that literature, I have to teach a writing lesson, by the end of the week. <i>*holds hands a distance apart*</i> So, within that week, only one-and-a-half hours, in total, was for the literature. <i>*shakes head*</i> It wasn’t a lot to have <i>*lists on fingers*</i> every child read, it wasn’t a lot to have them fulfill an activity, with the grammar, with writing something creative. With sustaining anything. So, I found that it was definitely the [lecturer’s name] method of, “What does this look like? What do we see in the picture? What do we think is going to happen?” And then the during reading activity – so, the actual reading, asking of questions – and then the after of the <i>*brings her hand downward as if making a list*</i> follow-up questions,  |

|      |     |  |
|------|-----|--|
|      |     | <p>like a comprehension-type thing. But then also, trying to – to bridge <i>*lists on fingers*</i> the listening, and the speaking, and the language practices. And I just found, like, it was – it was boring. It was boring for them, it was boring for me. I hated doing it, so they hated doing it as well. There were just too many of them, so they didn't feel like there was a connection to the story at all. Like, I think the one class – I need to try and remember the book that we did. Um – I honestly can't. But it was also part of that <i>English for Success</i> textbook – that was also used. My God, <i>*looks away and shakes head*</i> it was just awful. That's the best way I can put it. <i>*raises both hands in the air, then brings them down firmly*</i> Whatever book we did use, it was very much a, "Analyse the picture, try and predict what's going to happen," and then the during reading activities of, <i>*makes robotic motions with her arms and puts on a monotonous voice*</i> "What's happening, who's in the story, where are they, what are they doing, why are they doing it," that whole cycle. And then the after of the, "What happened, what would you do if you were –" and then you would have to <i>*brings her hand downward as if making a list*</i> follow the Bloom's taxonomy. So, the easy questions – so, this would force the kids to pass in an exam, even if they shouldn't, and showed no under – no understanding. Because it was just <i>*makes a circle in the air with her hands that she gradually brings down with each point*</i> recall, and understanding, and then the – what is it? Synthesis and – that's the last one, create is the last one. Evaluate, and – um – evaluate and – ummm –</p> |
| 4:55 | CG: | Analyse?   |
| 4:57 | T5: | <p><i>*smiles and points finger forward*</i> Analyse and evaluate. And then create and synthesise. So, that would be, like, the biggest portion, and it was, like, "What would you have done?" Or, "What do you think about this? Is this factual, and why would you say so? Correct the statements." And I didn't feel like it taught them anything. Like correcting the statement, later they – <i>*shrugs and throws her hands in the air*</i> they – they don't – they don't know what they read. There – there's no connection to it, there's no, "Oh, this character really sat with me because –" where, my kids at [my second school] would be, like, <i>*gestures to her chest*</i> "I feel like Krishna on the playground because I have that boisterous side, and now, I'm stealing this, like when Krishna stole the milk, or whatever." Like, and we had – we had that, where they had to play a game where <i>*moves two fingers around each other, as if to indicate a chase*</i> they chased each other, trying to steal the milk. And that was super relatable for them. <i>*shrugs*</i></p>  |
| 4:38 | CG: | And – ja, you can do that because you –  |
| 4:39 | T5: | Have the time!   |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| 42:40 | CG: | – have the time.   |
| 42:42 | T5: | Ja, and you have – you have <i>*throws both hands up in the air*</i> little kids, so you can!  |
| 42:44 | CG: | Ja. Um – how old were your [second school] kids?   |
| 42:48 | T5: | My [second school] kids were between ten and eleven. Except Regan, she was the youngest. And <i>*widens eyes and shakes head*</i> ooh, the most immature. But, <i>*nods*</i> she – she was still very bright.  |
| 42:59 | CG: | OK, so I think we’re actually coming towards the end now. I mean, I know I didn’t ask all of the questions, but you basically covered them. Great, so I have one more question left, if you don’t mind. Like, a reflective one, so you’re welcome to take some time. Basically, I just want to know, how have your view on literature teaching, and your practices, and stuff like that, changed since you started? And what, kind of, made those changes come about?  |
| 43:24 | T5: | OK. Um – OK, so my view of literature has definitely changed. So, as a child, I hated it, I didn’t want to – I didn’t even want to be a teacher. I didn’t want to teach literature and have kids face the same experiences as me, especially with pronunciation. Um – and, with the whole – the way that I say something, or the way that my sentences sound. I mean, it got – it was refined, after a while, but I didn’t feel comfortable exploring my literature – um – my journey in literature? At a younger age. But then, when I was a teacher, I could definitely see the impact on my students. Not <i>*shakes head*</i> – not at [my first school]. At [my first school], I felt, kind of, the same dystopic, “This is just a prescribed, systematic thing. It’s boring. They have to do it.” Um – but my varsity – <i>*gestures to herself*</i> my personal varsity experience was good for literature for me. Although, I would never read the book during the course – um – I would sit through every lecture, and listen to <i>*waves her hands on either side of her*</i> all the answers, and what happened. And then, <i>*mimes holding a book*</i> when I read the book, right before the exam, I felt like everything had just jumped at me. And it was, like, immersed in it, and I was very interested, and I was, like, “Oh, that’s what [my classmate] was saying, about whatever, whatever, whatever. Oh, that’s what [my friend] meant.” And then, like, it would stick with me. And, so, then, when I was teaching at [my second school], I felt that the kids had the exact same thing where, if we were doing an entire literature block, and we were immersing ourselves in the culture, and we were talking about the different characters, and we were having the same practices, and making ourselves the same as the main character in some ways, there’s that relatability. And that changes the way that we view literature. And it changes the way that I read now. Because I’m, like, “How is this relatable to me? How does this fit in with my life, how is this –” It makes you, kind of, introspect, as well as, like – not just on a |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       |     | microscopic level, but a macroscopic level. Like, “What is affecting me in this way, like it is with this character?” And I think that was the difference between [my first school] and [my second school]. And that’s definitely shaped me now. But – um – <i>*slaps the palms of her hands in her legs*</i> as an ESL teacher these past six months, literature has very much become a thing of – <i>*shakes head*</i> it’s not about the story, it’s about, “You can say the words, and you can pronounce them and <i>*holds both thumbs up*</i> great!” <i>*laughs and covers face with her hands*</i> Ja, it’s not the same.  |
| 46:05 | CG: | There are different expectations! OK, I have just one more question. We’re going to go back because I missed a question, but it’s also a nice, summing up question. So, I want to know, what do you think the point of teaching literature, and books, and stories, to kids is? Do you think there is a point?   |
| 46:20 | T5: | I do. Um – I wish that I had had better teachers, and that they taught me to love literature, because I think that it does – it’s a complete <i>*clenches her fist and then opens it wide*</i> opening up of different worlds to an individual. Like, there are some students that I’ve come across – and I think it’s only because of their reading that they are so excellent. And I think that, just because they have this <i>*holds her hands on either side of her head*</i> broad understanding, because they’ve been doing this from such a young age, and the parents have done it right, they have this relatability to everything that they learn. And so then, they keep on <i>*mimes pulling things into her head*</i> putting it back in, and then when they reflect it, they put it back out, it just – it makes sense to them, it makes sense when they’re speaking, and it – <i>*nods head for emphasis*</i> it shows. Where, with me, I’m still very – um – I’m not confident with the way that I string my sentences together. I sometimes still use the wrong words, or the wrong form of the word – um – so, ja. I think it – it affects the confidence levels? Am I answering this question correctly? |
| 47:15 | CG: | <i>*shrugs*</i> There’s no correct answer, it’s your opinion.  |
| 47:17 | T5: | <i>*leans back and laughs*</i> Yeah, so that. Um – can we start the question again? Just so I can – <i>*laughs*</i>  |
| 47:25 | CG: | OK, so, the question was, what do you think the point of teaching literature and books to kids is?   |
| 47:30 | T5: | OK, so, I think that the point is basically to get them to understand the moral, or to have a relatability to the character. To understand – um – real-world situations, but in a – is it in – in a fictional way. So, <i>*holds arm far away from herself*</i> this is what happened to this character, and they can learn something from it and apply it to their own life. <i>*shrugs*</i> Ja, I think that –   |

that's mostly the point. But it also does help them with *\*lists on fingers\** their language practice, it does help them broaden their knowledge, it does help them expand, and understand different cultures, different religions, and have that acceptability – um – and that open-mindedness. It's – yeah, it's a way to bridge worlds, for sure. I think that – um – I have a lot to learn now, moving to this International school, *\*touches her fingers to her temples\** and trying to teach children from all over the world one book. Very interesting to have perspectives from all around the world, and see how that – how that affects things, *\*shrugs\** and if that changes my opinion of what literature means.

My name is Candice Gerber and I am currently involved in doing my Masters dissertation in Education at the University of Cape Town. My primary area of interest is the teaching of literature in Primary School classrooms and I would greatly appreciate your participation in this study. The research aims to explore how the knowledge and creativity a teacher brings with them into the classroom impacts on the practices they choose to use to teach literature in the classroom.

While there exists a vast body of research which maligns the state of literacy in the country, there is very little research which explores the specific practices being used in the classroom and how these allow or do not allow learners to engage with the texts they are required to study. It is my belief that the success of literacy teaching is largely dependent on the life histories, experiences, knowledge and creativity of the teacher in how they choose to present these texts to the learners.

Should you choose to participate in this study, I would like to interview you regarding your beliefs and approaches to literature teaching in your classroom. The interview process will be conducted remotely, take 1-2 hours and can be conducted in two sessions, should that be more suited to your schedule. Should you consent to being interviewed, but would rather not have the interview video recorded, you can request that the interview take place telephonically. The interview questions are primarily concerned with your personal history and experiences with literature and literature teaching as well as how these impact upon your teaching practices and strategies. In addition to the interview, I would also like to request permission to include any photographs or copies of teaching resources or planning that factor into the interview discussion.

Participation in this study is voluntary and, should you choose to be involved, confidentiality of both yourself, your learners, and the school at which you teach is guaranteed. In the final research paper, all participants in the study will be referred to using pseudonyms. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any point.

If you are interested and consent to being a part of the study, please fill in the permission slip below. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research, please feel free to contact me at [candicegerber11@gmail.com](mailto:candicegerber11@gmail.com).

Yours sincerely,

Candice Gerber

**Teacher Consent Form****Literature Teaching in Primary School Classrooms****I consent to:**

|   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| <b>1.</b> Being interviewed.  |            |           |
| <b>2.</b> Having the interview audio and video recorded.                            |            |           |
| <b>3.</b> Having photographs or copies of relevant documents included in the study. |            |           |

I understand that participation in this study is on a fully voluntary basis, my confidentiality will be protected at all times, and I have the right to withdraw consent at any time.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Name:      |  |
| Signature: |  |
| Date:      |  |