

The adventures of Themba and Bizza

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 Book 1: The Seven Mthombothi beads
 Book 2: The enchanted country
 Book 3: Bizza's revenge
 Book 4: The golden sceptre

By Dingani Ngobeni

SADTU Education specialist the four-part series of books, entitled *The adventures of Themba and Bizza* present a new and interesting approach to African stories. The stories are presented in such a way that once you start reading the first page of book 1, you become interested to find out what will happen on the next page. The stories are appealing to readers irrespective of the age group.

The books are funky and attractive. For young readers this will be a plus factor as these books are so colourful. The pictures used throughout the books make them accessible to the readers who are interested in pictures. These pictures also follow the narrative. As a result, these stories are a must-read for everyone.

The series promotes multiculturalism and multilingualism. For example, there are Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Venda and other Nguni languages used in the series. The language is presented in a non-formal way. As a result, *isotizial* and the way language is used in the townships and villages is captured well. Thus, readers can relate to most of the issues being raised in these books.

The series also addresses the issue of the rural and urban divide by showing the challenges faced by a village person who comes to the city for the first time, and the challenges faced by a person who comes from a city entering a village set-up for the first time. The cultural shock experienced can be used as an educational experience for everyone.

Religious diversity is also promoted in the series. For example, African religion is brought into the picture by highlighting the

rituals that are performed. The series does this in a way that is free of bias and prejudice. It clearly indicates that African religion is not equivalent to witchcraft. The role of music in African culture is also highlighted, showing that people sing when they are celebrating, praising or mourning.

The series encourages young people to dream. It does this by showing that where there is a will there is success. Young people should have confidence and believe in themselves. They must also be prepared to take responsibility for their actions before taking calculated risks. It shows that through dedication, commitment and hard work anything can be achieved.

Honesty is highlighted as the fundamental virtue when dealing with adults and peers. This will ensure that one is greatly respected.

Democratic governance is also addressed in the series. For example, the use of *legotla* to resolve disputes and carry out a mandated position bears testimony to this. Gender issues are also highlighted showing both men and women as successful. This affirmation can go a long way when dealing with gender mainstreaming in the present context. Showing both men and women achieving great things in positions of responsibility is the way to go.

Respect for the environment is also promoted and appreciated in the series. The series also touches on the aspect of bullying, showing that bullying of whatever nature and form is wrong.

It addresses issues pertaining to indigenous knowledge systems by clearly indicating that, despite the lack of formal education, people through creative artistic expression and the ability to interpret events, were able to understand the environment and everything around them.

Schools that want to encourage learners to read must buy this series. It will ensure that



learners develop the culture to read. This will go a long way in addressing the problems such as the low literacy rate among our learners as captured by the systemic evaluation report of 2003.

• These books are published by Mthombothi Studios at a price of R79,95 (including VAT). For more information write to PO Box 1167, Southdale, 2135, Johannesburg
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SARA: A LIFE ORIENTATION AND HIV/AIDS EDUCATION COURSE FOR GRADES 4-9



The SARA course has been endorsed by Patricia de Lille, who has the following to say about the material:

'It is widely acknowledged that HIV/AIDS poses one of the greatest challenges to our new democratic Africa. In so many ways it threatens to tear at the very fabric of the society that we are all trying to build. In confronting this challenge, it is important that the messages of prevention gets to be heard by everyone in our country, most especially the youth. This message must not only be heard though, but must translate into people changing their behaviour. This behavioural change is the key, and it is for this reason that I endorse this HIV/AIDS Education Course. I believe that it speaks to children in their own language and will bring about the necessary change in their behaviour and attitudes. It also doesn't make the mistake of concentrating solely on HIV/AIDS, but situates it within a wider social context. All in all, I believe that this course will go a long way in educating our youth on the realities of South African society and empower them to respond to its challenges in an informed manner. In so doing it is protecting the future of our country and the foundation of our democracy.'

Patricia de Lille, MP



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Tragedy of Timol revealed

October 27 marked the 33rd anniversary of the tragic and never adequately explained death in detention of Ahmed Timol. Now an exhaustively detailed book on the subject, written over a number of years by Timol's nephew, Imtiaz Cajee, is in the final stage of preparation.

Timol was arrested at a police roadblock near Johannesburg on October 22 1971 with his political collaborator and friend, Mohamed Salim Essop, and he suffered violent death five days later — with Essop hospitalised after being assaulted.

Timol's body was found after a fall from a window at what was then known as John Vorster Square police headquarters with severe bruising and marks all over his body, strongly suggesting torture. Police claimed that the "Indian had jumped", i.e. committing suicide by throwing himself from a window on the 10th floor during heavily-guarded interrogation sessions.

There was a world outcry about Timol's fate under what the *Cape Times* (29 October 1971) called the "intolerable system" of detention, with the newspaper noting that, by then, more than a dozen detainees had died while in jail. Subsequently the numbers rose dramatically.

After local and international pressure mounted on the South African government to investigate, an inquest was held. A magistrate concluded that Timol, who was a committed Muslim and communist, was afraid of a lengthy jail sentence, and stated that communists were told to commit suicide rather than betray their organisation. Those who were active in the SA Communist Party at the time strongly deny that this was the case, and hold that it was a security police ploy to mask the torture and murder of detainees being held incommunicado.

Imtiaz Cajee, whose mother was Timol's sister, and who remembers his uncle as a caring figure in his family, has been researching Timol's short life, which ended before he was 30. Cajee, who plans to launch his book in January 2005, comments: "I have done extensive research on the life of my beloved uncle. I have interviewed many of my uncle Ahmed's closest friends, including Essop Pahad, now Minister in the Presidency and his brother, Aziz Pahad, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ronny Kasrils, Minister of Intelligence.

"I have obtained detailed information from many sources, including other detainees who were severely tortured after Timol's arrest. Salim Essop, who did not testify at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has, for the very first time, spoken about his gruesome ordeal in this book. Timol's late mother, Hawa, my grandmother, testified at the TRC hearings in April 1996. Significantly, none of the policemen involved in the Timol case applied for amnesty and some are still alive. The book will reveal the remarkable life of a dedicated underground cadre who was totally committed to non-racism and freedom for his country, and who was knowingly prepared to return to South Africa from training abroad to pay the ultimate price in order for us to achieve our freedom. He is undoubtedly one of the heroes of our nation."

• The book will be published by STE Publishers