

**CULTURAL IDENTITY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF
BOSIGO AS SETSWANA PICTURE BOOK**

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Afrika, my children, Lesego and Obakeng, my parents, Florence and Isaac and all my brothers and sisters.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to highlight requirements of a picture book for children as well as to investigate references to culture and identity in a book suitable for children.

In this study, *Bosigo*, as an example of a picture book for children, was evaluated. The same text, *Bosigo*, was used to explore the ways in which concepts, such as *culture* and *identity*, form part of the text.

Attention was given to the plea of various authors that books for children, particularly Batswana children disclosed room for improvement. These authors' concerns regarding the quantity of books available to Batswana children, were also highlighted.

Guidelines, as set by Norton, were applied to examine whether the requirements of a picture book were met when the book, *Bosigo*, was developed. According to Norton's theory certain questions should be asked when selecting a good picture book. These theories were furthermore refined by means of an exploration of basic art principles. As a result of this study it was found that *Bosigo* as picture book does conform to some of the requirements of a picture book suitable for children.

Working definitions for terms such as *culture* and *cultural identity* were obtained from investigations into the work of various scholars, especially Hofstede's concept regarding *levels of culture*. It was established that the concept of cultural identity is represented in the picture book *Bosigo*. Furthermore, it was concluded that *Bosigo* as a picture book has succeeded in representing diversity in culture, thus giving rise to a change in perception regarding the stereotypical representation of cultural differences in society.

In a nutshell, it may be suggested that the book, *Bosigo*, has in many ways answered the pleas of various authors that the quality of books for children, particularly Batswana children, should be improved.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Contextualization

Literature should be valued in our homes and schools for the enrichment it gives to the personal lives of children, as well as for its proven educational contributions. Huck and Young (1989:8) mention that literature can be viewed as a powerful tool which can be used to build or destroy a nation. According to this statement books need to be of a high standard. According to Norton (1991:44), literary researchers view children's literature as a viable vehicle for studying social values and changing attitudes. Snyman's (1983:12) answer to "Wat is kinderliteratuur?" ("What is children's literature?") is that the concept refers to books that are suitable for children. "Suitable" in this sense may imply that such books should answer to the needs of children in terms of being informative, interesting and significant.

Jansen (1988:89) arrives at the conclusion that "the values reflected in South African literature are more often than not, those of a divided society". It is our opinion that this state of affairs should be prevented in children's books in the aim of building a new South Africa. For this reason it would be necessary for children's books to present various aspects that are important to children, such as their needs, race, cultural background, social background and religion. If these aspects were to be conveyed negatively in, for example, books prescribed to children in the school context, such books would probably have a negative influence on the children's development and identity.

The new Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system implemented in schools from 1997 has since shifted the approach in education in South Africa from content-based education to outcomes-based education. The aim of OBE is to equip all children with knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to contribute to their own success, as well as the success of their families, community and the nation as a whole. It is believed that these objectives can be achieved by developing a culture

of learning and reading, especially by utilizing new prescribed literature books that are now available for all cultural groups. The need exists to reiterate the importance of these books being of a high standard. *Bosigo* (1999), is one of the books that were published by S. Dichabe and R. Malimabe, as part of the Fofelang Godimo series, and was found to be an excellent example to be used in a study of this kind.

Books and their content have to change to keep up with reality and the changing society of our country. Many things have changed in our country since 1994. These changes have to be reflected in books prescribed in schools. With regard to elements that ought to be included in books Huck and Young (1989:6-8), present the following statement:

... our ideas about what should be included have changed through history, definitions vary from culture to culture, from critic to critic and from reader to reader. In this book we think of literature as the imaginative shaping of life and thought into forms and structures of language.

It is thus suggested that the above mentioned elements, such as history, culture and literature can be viewed as vehicles for developing the ways in which we view the world around us.

Totemeyer (1988:97) is of the opinion that "... it is time a new kind of children's book emerged to meet the challenge of a new, non-racial South Africa in which interpersonal and interracial understanding will, we hope, prevail". Jansen (1988:92) also confirms this issue by saying that "... writers should prepare our children for a class free South Africa".

Setswana children's literature has been in existence long before the picture book. This possibility is reflected in the following statement by Norton (1991:44):

Long before the recorded history of humanity, family units and tribes shared their group traditions and values through stories told around the campfire. On every continent around the globe, ancient people developed folktales

and mythologies that speculated about human beginnings, attempted to explain the origins of the universe and other natural phenomena, emphasised ethical truths, and transmitted history from one generation to the next.

This rich source of oral literature should have been put to use in the creation of children's picture books, but unfortunately this does not seem to be the case. The majority of books were of a dull nature without colourful illustrations or multicultural characters and settings.

In the past children's books in African languages have always left much to be desired. Picture story books in Setswana have always been limited. The greater number of picture books that were available at schools and local libraries were books, translated either from English or Afrikaans, or translated from languages besides Setswana. Most of these books were written in a way that was not considering the needs of the Motswana child at all. In most of the books that you find, the culture of the Batswana was treated with little respect, or this culture was not acknowledged at all. Such books do not play any role in creating cultural awareness, neither do they develop or enhance the culture of the Batswana child. These prescribed books often were the only books read by Batswana children because of the lack of books of a higher standard in their own language. As a result of the unavailability of "better" books, or the unaffordability thereof, the content of these books was all they were exposed to. The sadness of the entire issue is reflected in the concerns highlighted, as well as the questioning of issues by Van der Westhuizen (1999:136), when she asks:

Hoe kan daar in Suid-Afrika die regte boeke op die regte tyd aan kinders en tieners gegee word, wat hulle tegelykertyd trots maak op 'n eie individuele kulturele identiteit, maar ook binne Afrika-konteks die ubuntu-beginsel van samewerking en mededeelsaamheid laat uitleef?

(Freely translated: How can it be made possible to provide children in South Africa with the appropriate books at the appropriate time, i.e. books which

would make them proud of an own cultural identity, while at the same time assisting them in living up to the ubuntu principle of co-operation and sharing, within the Africa context?)

As reflected in *Bosigo*, books for children generally comprise of two basic mediums, text and illustrations, to convey messages. Pienaar (1968:79) states that: "Teks en illustrasies vorm 'n eenheid, en sonder 'n goeie teks, wat ook die verhaal daarstel, kan geen prentboek slaag nie". (*Freely translated: Text and illustrations form a unity. Without a good text, regardless of what the story is about, no picture book can succeed.*)

Huck and Young (1989:240) indicate that the picture storybook conveys its messages through two media, namely the art of illustrating and the art of writing. Both these aspects, illustrations and writing, are present in *Bosigo*. In order to arrive at a better understanding of the elements that ensure "good" quality of a picture book, certain questions posed by Norton, were found to be of value. The following questions presented by Norton (1991:167) will be implemented in this investigation and will serve as a guideline for investigations into the book *Bosigo*:

- Are the illustrations accurate, and do they correspond with the content of the story?
- Do the illustrations complement the setting, plot and mood of the story?
- Do the illustrations enhance characterization?
- Do both the text and illustrations avoid stereotypes of race and sex?
- Will the plot appeal to children?
- Is the theme worthwhile?
- What is the purpose of sharing this book with children or recommending that they read it?
- Are the author's style and language appropriate for the children's interests and age levels?
- Are the text, the illustrations, the format, and the typography in harmony?

In accordance with Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:259) when they state that "... words and images work actively together to create the book's impact", it may be accepted that the last question from the list of questions Norton asks, is already in a way answered. The harmonious interaction of words and images is what contributes to the success of a picture book.

Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:259) continue by calling the attention to the following:

... the dynamic relationship between word and image involves a variety of techniques: the enrichment of the understanding through detail; the creation of effective impact both through the use of words and through the use of pictorial design including style and color [sic]; the presentation of different perspectives and points of view in the text and illustration; and the ironic interplay between the two.

The above-mentioned facts further illustrate the importance of both text and illustrations. It is thus of the utmost importance to investigate both aspects simultaneously, paying attention to visual elements, such as space, colour and contrasts apart from evaluating the text as such. After the text has been explored, the illustrations will be evaluated according to the guidelines of Norton. The following visual elements, according to Lacy (1986:2-13), will also be taken into consideration in this evaluation:

- Line
- Colour
- Light and dark
- Shape
- Space

The evaluation of the text and illustration may possibly serve as guidelines that may be used by future authors of books to save an author the humiliation of having his work turned down, or publicly criticized.

Another aspect that has also come to light during this investigation, is the importance of culture and cultural identity. These are important factors, which highlight who we are, and where we come from. Such aspects should be included in books for children in order to convey a sense of being to the next generation. According to Hicks and Gwynne (1994:46) culture is defined as all the things people think, do, say and make, in other words, their ideas, behaviours, language and artefacts.

Children do not always see the importance of cultural identity, and related information has to be included in their education. Identity, in philosophy, means sameness as distinguished from change or difference. It has been a term of interest to philosophers chiefly in connection with (1) the problem of identity, (2) the problem of universals, and (3) the law of identity in logic (Anon, 1992:743).

Fundamental changes are occurring in the political, socio-economic and educational spheres in our country. Du Plessis (1992:ii) states that, amidst all of these changes, the South African child has to establish and enhance a cultural identity of its own. During the course of this study it became apparent that the culture of people like the Batswana has to be promoted by all possible means. The picture book is in this instance an important vehicle for conveying culture-related information to children. It should, however, be kept in mind that traditional culture may, as time passes, change and be transformed. The book, in other words, may thus become part of a dynamic process of reflection and change. It may be stated that a book should present us with an image of a culture, time-bound and relevant for its time. It is thus of importance for *Bosigo*, as a picture book, to be time-bound and relevant for its time.

As proved by various authors, it may be concluded that books for children have to be of a high standard, serving as a vehicle for education, and even change. Various problems regarding this statement have come to light during the investigation and can be summarized as follows.

1.2 Problem statement

According to the above-mentioned argument, the following questions can be asked:

1. What constitutes a good picture book?
2. What is meant by the concepts culture and cultural identity?
3. How is cultural identity represented in *Bosigo* as picture book?
4. Does *Bosigo* conform to the requirements of a picture book?
5. How does *Bosigo* contribute towards cultural perceptions of individuals and societies?

1.3 Objectives

The objectives are directly related to the questions above and efforts will be made to determine

1. what a good picture book is;
2. the meaning of the concepts *culture* and *cultural identity*;
3. whether *Bosigo* conforms to the requirements of a picture book;
4. in what ways cultural identity is represented in *Bosigo* as picture book; and
5. how *Bosigo* contributes towards cultural perceptions of individuals and societies.

1.4 Hypothesis

Traditional books for Batswana children were unattractive in content and appearance. *Bosigo*, due to its relevant content and attractive pictures / illustrations, has changed this perception and, in addition, has changed the stereotypical representation of cultural differences in society.

1.5. Method

The features and requirements of a picture book will firstly be surveyed and then the question regarding culture and cultural identity will be clarified. Secondly, a literary survey of the terms *culture* and *cultural identity* will be undertaken in order to arrive at a better understanding of these concepts. Different views on culture and cultural identity, from a variety of authors, will also be considered. These investigations will prove to enrich an evaluation of the book *Bosigo*, and any other picture book for that matter.

A structural analysis of *Bosigo* will then be conducted to determine what features and requirements a typical picture book should abide by. In conclusion, it will be summarized what *value* *Bosigo* as picture book reveals and in what ways, if any, the book can be seen as a medium for conveying concepts of *culture* and *identity*.

1.6 Proposed chapter outline

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, problem statement, aims and objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

The requirements of a picture book.

CHAPTER THREE

Bosigo as a picture book.

CHAPTER FOUR

The characteristics of culture and identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Culture and cultural identity in *Bosigo*.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REQUIREMENTS OF A PICTURE BOOK

2.1 Introduction

Even though there is much information with regard to picture books, the focus of this chapter will be on the value, the structure and the evaluation of a picture book. The picture book, because of its unique blending of illustrations and words, is considered a genre apart from any other kind of literature (Cianciolo, 1981:1).

It may be suggested that in this era of OBE, picture books can be classified according to the following categories: an alphabet book and concept book under the umbrella term, "literacy books"; a counting book under "numeracy books," and books that teach children about nature and life in general, may be found under "life skills books". Most of the values found in these books are usually present in OBE books. The following subsection will constitute a brief investigation into the concept of value of a picture book.

2.2 The value of a picture book

The term *value* may have various meanings for a variety of people in terms of standards and principles. When applied to picture books, *value* most probably refers to the usefulness or merit of the book, or the satisfaction obtained when 'reading' through a specific book.

According to Norton (1991:166), the books included in the genre of picture books have many values in addition to pleasure. Furthermore, Norton (1991) is of the opinion that the following values, manifesting in picture books, play a very important role in children's development:

Rhythm, rhyme, and repetition in nursery rhymes stimulate language development, as well as auditory discrimination and attentive listening skills in young children. Alphabet books reinforce the ability to identify letter/sound relationships and help expand vocabularies. Concept books enhance intellectual development by fostering understanding of abstract ideas.

The above-mentioned books generally combine illustration with text. One would like to consider that text and illustration are of equal importance. On the other hand, wordless books might encourage children to develop their observational skills, descriptive vocabularies, and abilities to create stories characterized by logical sequence. Furthermore, illustrations found in picture books stimulate sensitivity to art and beauty, whereas the well-written picture story book encourages children to appreciate literary style.

Green (1988:45-50) suggests a variety of categories which should be considered in a child's education and is of the opinion that all of these categories of books are of equal importance to the child's development. The categories are listed below:

- Picture books that give children a feeling of emotional security.
- Picture books that nurture the child's curiosity, that satisfy the child's needs to know.
- Picture books that nurture the child's inner world of imagination.
- Picture books that give children a sense of family.
- Picture books that help break down stereotype thinking.
- Picture books that give children a sense of competence.
- Picture books that nurture the child's sense of wonder at the natural world.
- Picture books that give children a sense of history.
- Picture books that introduce children to other countries and cultures.
- Picture books that introduce children to literature.

In addition to the above-mentioned features, Grobler (1988:126) indicates that Wietzman *et al.* concentrated their research on the socialization of pre-school learners through picture books, because they believed firstly, that picture books can be considered a vehicle for the presentation of societal values to the young child; secondly, that, through books, children learn about the world outside their immediate environment; thirdly, that children's books reflect cultural values; and fourthly, that these stories provide children with clear instructive messages about normative behaviour. These four aspects seem to capture the essence of what should be contained in children's books, because both the value and the requirements of a picture book are reflected. As a result this viewpoint may be used as a yardstick for the production of a good picture book.

It might be argued that, according to the above-mentioned elements as stated by Norton, a child who is not well developed, whether physically, mentally, emotionally or any other way, most probably will become a threat to the society. It might be suggested that by not complying with the "norms" of the society and specifically the "norms" of the close confines of the family, a child may become the proverbial black sheep of the family. In terms of the school environment he/she will most probably become a regular culprit. Furthermore, in the work place, he/she might be viewed as unproductive. Eventually, such persons will most probably give up trying and resolve to criminality.

It should be acknowledged that some categories of books are not necessarily beneficial to the development of the child, but what has become clear during this study, is that a strong need exists for a picture book that is educating, interesting, of high standard and well- structured.

2.3 The structure of a picture book

Although a picture book can be exciting and colourful, the need still exists for basic structural harmony, which will probably feature mainly in the text of a children's book. Although Cianciolo (1981:6) is of the opinion that there is considerable room

for personal and individual response when deciding about the worth and beauty of the illustrations and text of picture books, one should bear in mind that many authors follow basic literary guidelines when compiling a picture book.

Glazer and Williams (1979:22) state that the following elements are commonly used and are basic to all literature:

- Plot
- Setting
- Characterization
- Theme

Although the value of such a framework is not denied, it is also acknowledged that the uncompromising following of such a formula might limit the chances of individual response when deciding about the worth and beauty of the art and text of a picture book.

The following views by Georgiou (1969:64) can be cited as a good summary to outline the structure of a picture book:

Very often a picture book as a whole can be a work of art. Its fine pictures are in harmonious agreement with its fine text. A handsome page is further enlivened with clean, clear type suitable for the eyes of a young child. Paper and binding, also contributes [cit] to the artistic quality of a picture book. And it is when these visual art factors fuse together that a picture book of distinction is born.

From this quote, it becomes clear that the structure of a picture book involves much more than only the successful application of the basic literary elements. On the contrary, the harmonious interaction of illustrations and text, the legibility of the text, the 'suitability' of the illustrations placed with the text and even the paper it is printed on, all contribute to a successful structure. The following subsection will explore on what terms quality of a picture book can be evaluated.

2.4 Evaluation of a picture book

In the sections above, various elements came to light that might give clues as to what specific guidelines are needed in evaluating a picture book. A basic framework is needed to summarize the general criteria for a 'good' picture book as investigated in the previous subsections. Four criteria, as set by Georgiou (cited in Cianciolo 1981:5), seem to review the above-mentioned elements regarding the selection of a picture book of distinction. These norms are:

- Excellence in overall literary quality.
- Excellence of execution of story elements.
- Excellence of presentation for intended audience (children).
- Excellence of pictorial interpretation of story elements.

In addition to the criteria suggested by Cianciolo (1981:5), Norton (1991:167) indicates that the following questions may help in selecting high quality picture books for children:

- Are the illustrations accurate, and do they correspond to the content of the story?
- Do the illustrations complement the setting, plot, and mood of the story?
- Do the illustrations enhance characterization?
- Do both the text and illustrations avoid stereotypes of race and sex?
- Will the plot appeal to children?
- Is the theme worthwhile?
- What is the purpose of sharing this book with children or recommending that they read it?
- Are the author's style and language appropriate for the children's interests and age levels?
- Are the text, the illustrations, the format, and the typography in harmony?

With regard to all of the above questions, the most relevant aspect of all is probably whether the book, in its totality, appeals to children in general. The fact that children are the intended viewers and readers, is of the utmost importance. Norton

(1991:167) may have this in mind when she suggests that children's own evaluations when selecting picture books to share with other children, should be considered.

It is also acknowledged that children will not generally be in the position to set criteria or to judge a book. Some children may rely on their parents or educators with regard to choosing good picture books. Unlike children, parents or educators might have expertise in applying additional criteria, such as the evaluation of artistic elements, when choosing a good picture book. In such instances, responsibility is shifted to the parents and educators.

Furthermore, the responsibility of the writer and illustrator is also critical. In terms of presentation for an intended audience (children), it may be suggested that the illustrator not only put into visual form what the words say, but also use the illustrations to add excitement and humour to the text.

In order to arrive at visual excitement, various elements should be considered. Colourful and well-drawn pictures usually attract children's attention. On the other hand, these illustrations should be structured and placed in "appropriate" positions in order to be "successful". Lacy (1986:2-13) mentions the use of the following artistic elements to bring about a sense of balance in picture books:

- Line
- Colour
- Light and dark
- Shape
- Space

An attempt will be made to evaluate some of the illustrations in the book, *Bosigo*, in terms of the above-mentioned artistic elements.

Line in general is descriptive and provides a sense of movement. According to Lacy (1986:4), line records what artists see and is used to express their impressions of fluidity, vigour, or subtlety. Line is clearly defined in the many colourful pictures in the book *Bosigo*. For instance, on page 49 in *Bosigo* (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999), a picture is portrayed of a flower pot. Thick lines are applied to enhance the beauty of the contrasting red and green colours.

When elaborating on colour, Lacy (1986:4-5) calls attention to the fact that pigments have the ability to absorb, transmit, or reflect light to create a visual illusion. Nodelman (1996:233) adds by saying: "The mere fact that objects are in colours that stand out gives them weight". It can also be suggested that colour plays an important role in encouraging reading, because it gives the text an aesthetic look. It may be suggested that there is not much difference in the characteristics of both colour and light and dark as artistic elements, because they both are prompted by the preferences of the artist. On the other hand, light and dark areas in illustrations, may be an attempt by the artist to create a specific mood, for example, dark colours for a melancholic mood and lighter shades for a more joyful touch. In *Bosigo* the mysteriousness and serenity of night-time is reflected in the darker illustrations on pages 2-15. On the other hand, a lighter atmosphere is created through the depiction of bright colours on, for instance, pages 21-37.

Lacy (1986:5) is of the opinion that shape is two-dimensional in pictures as opposed to the three-dimensional form in sculptures. She furthermore indicates that shape can be thought of as created by an artist's use of line, colour, and value.

Lacy (1986:5) defines the artistic element "space", as an element "into" a picture, and the illusion may be deep, shallow, or flat. She elaborates that uses of line, colour, light and dark, and shape are combined to create space as an artist's perspective that becomes the audience's viewpoint. In the book, *Bosigo*, space and depth are created through various illustrations that depict different scenes. The children playing in the school yard, for example, are placed in front of a building

that seems to represent the school and class rooms (see p. 16). The buildings in the background are depicted smaller, to create a sense of depth and space. This may be a distinct intention of the illustrator to create an environment or setting, but also to place the attention on the children playing in the foreground. It is nonetheless acknowledged that the use of these elements may differ from illustrator to illustrator, and from writer to writer. Everyone has his / her own intentions and style of writing and illustrating.

The above-mentioned elements, together with the various questions and guidelines studied in the sections above, reveal the importance of having some kind of framework for the evaluation of children's picture books. It is often empirical for any writers and illustrators to have a guide or criteria that can save them the humiliation of having their work turned down or publicly criticized. For instance, it is said, in the *Fair Lady*, that parents in South Carolina are trying to have Harry Potter's books banned from schools on the grounds that they contain descriptions of death and violence, and that "Harry-horror" practises wizardry (Fitz-Patrick,1999:18). Furthermore, in the newspaper *Beeld*, Gerhard Wegner, a priest from Windischgarsten in Austria was quoted: "Ek vrees vir die kinders se siele" (2001:3). (*I fear for the children's souls.*)

2.5 Conclusion

It may be stated that this chapter constitutes an important part of the entire study. Conclusions were made that may be a valuable stepping stone for the study in question.

Even though there may not exist a stipulated formula with regard to the writing and selecting of a good picture book, it may only seem fair that children should be familiarized with basic evaluation skills, in order to fuel their love for reading throughout their lifetime. There may be some writers who can accomplish that, but only if they know the value, the structure and the guidelines applying to evaluating a good picture book. Furthermore, for the author to come up with a book that will

encompass the needs of children and, at the same time, rectify the mistakes of the past, even more extensive knowledge regarding the requirements of a picture book is needed. The author should not only be in touch with standards of literary excellence, but should also be sensitive to contemporary social, cultural and political concerns.

Like any other genre, the children's picture book may be judged by the standards of literary excellence. Therefore, the questions posed by Norton (1991:167) will be used as a guideline in the evaluation of *Bosigo* as a picture book in Chapter Three. Once the book task has been accomplished, the other factors that complete a good picture book, for example, line, colour, light and dark, shape and space will fall into place automatically.

CHAPTER THREE

"BOSIGO" (NIGHT) AS A PICTURE BOOK

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, Norton's theory will be applied in an evaluation of the book, *Bosigo*. The emphasis will especially be placed on the questions Norton asks when selecting a high quality picture book. The evaluation will be conducted in concurrence with the investigation into the artistic elements, as identified by Lacy (1986:4-5). Before the questions are asked, a short summary of each of the stories in the book will be provided. Thereafter, a conclusion and outcome of the questions will be presented.

3.1.1 Summary of the stories

3.1.1.1 "Bosigo" (At night)

The story is about what generally occurs "at night" (*bosigo*). It is about nocturnal animals that are active at night and some that are not. The moon and the stars depict the night. A picture of sleeping children is also reflected. Throughout the story, the emphasis is placed on the fact that it is night.

3.1.1.2 "Go senka tsala" (Looking for a friend)

This is a story about children at a school. One of the children is a newcomer at the school. The plot is set through a depiction of play time at the school. A new pupil is standing alone, whilst all the other children are playing happily together. She looks at her hands and her shoes, probably to see if there is anything wrong with her. She is waiting for the others to notice her presence, but all in vain. Eventually, one girl (Modiegi) gets closer to her. This makes her feel at ease.

3.1.1.3 "O ka natha" (You can have a bite)

This story is a continuation of "Go senka tsala" (Looking for a friend). Immediately after making friends with Modiegi, the new girl feels at ease and begins to mingle with the other children. They take out their lunch boxes, and because the newcomer

does not have any food, she moves away. Eventually one boy calls her and offers her something to eat.

3.1.1.4 "Go bona dilo mo loaping" (Seeing things in the sky)

The story is about children lying on the ground, looking up at the sky, and pretending that they see particular things. The patterns of the clouds in the sky give the impression of different animals and other things, like a dress and a tree, manifesting above them. They turn the recognition of shapes into a game, whereby they have to guess what the pattern of the cloud resembles.

3.1.1.5 "Bosigo jo bo lefifi" (A dark night)

The Moleko family is sitting in the living room watching television when the electricity trips because of the strong wind. Mrs. Moleko leaves the room to fetch a candle and matches and lights the candle. Boitumelo indicates that she likes the candles. The granny too tells them that she grew up using candlelight as a source of light. The children request that their granny tell them a story. She asks them to first brush their teeth. Then she commences by telling them a story about a boy and a girl who were staying in a hut on the top of a mountain. The picture of the hut, a boy and a girl is reflected opposite the text, to indicate the type of a hut the granny is referring to.

3.1.1.6 "Go senka phaposiborutelo e e itumedisang" (Looking for a pleasant classroom)

The story is about a little girl at the school who is not happy about her class teacher and most of the things going on inside her classroom. Her wish is that she may move to Dipuo's classroom because the learners there are always happy. There are crayons to do colouring with, there are flower pots, they always sing, and the teacher remembers their birthdays.

3.2 Norton's questions

Norton's questions will next be discussed and applied in an evaluation of the picture book, *Bosigo*.

3.2.1 Are the illustrations accurate, and do they correspond to the content of the story?

In some instances the illustrations do correspond with the text. The illustration of the trees being blown by the wind, the portrayal of the night, sky and the moon, are all elements that reflect precisely what the text denotes (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:2-3).

Certain ambiguities can be recognized when responding to Norton's questions, as stated in Chapter Two, and applying them to an evaluation of the picture book in question; *Bosigo* (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999). It may be stated that some of the illustrations do not conform to the accompanying text. For instance, on page 1, the picture, according to the illustrator and the writer, represents the "night". A reader on the other hand, might see the illustration as a decoration because it is very small and "contained". A general perception might be that the word "night" can be associated with "fear" and "enormousness", because darkness fills the sky. For this reason the illustration might have been more successful if it had covered the page.

On page 4, the writer poses a question: "Who is sleeping here?" (Ke mang yo o robetseng fa?). A child reader might not realize the figure of speech used by the writer. He or she may be investigating the illustration in search of a person to whom the question refers, but instead the child reader comes across a group of animals, as portrayed on the page. On that very page the writer indicates that "the" horse is sleeping here (pitse e robetse fa), but instead a picture of "two" standing horses is portrayed. He further points out that a dove is sleeping on a branch (lephoi le robetse mo kaleng). Instead the picture portrays two doves sleeping on the branch. Furthermore, on the same page the writer indicates that a

pig is sleeping there (kolobe e robetse fa), but instead, a picture of a dog is portrayed. The writer uses a figure of speech once more on the next page. The child reader might be confused as to whom the writer is referring, because the only picture that depicts an animal in a sitting position, is that of the cat. The verbal text on page 6 contradicts what the picture portrays. The verbal text poses a question: "A dikokwana di robetse?" (Are the chicks sleeping?), but, on the other hand, the picture portrays full-grown chickens.

Furthermore, on page 9, there is a contradiction between the illustration and the text. The text is referring to the following fact: "Tlhapi e a robala" (The fish is sleeping), but the related illustration portrays the picture of two fish, showing no signs of sleepiness. (The wide open eyes of the fish, and the active movement of the water are proof enough in this case.) The words "robala" (sleep) and "ngwedi" (moon) may refer directly to one thing: "night". On the other hand, the text clearly states "go setse go le motshegare" (it is day) and "even the moon has gone to sleep" (le ngwedi e ile go robala) (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:15). In this case, the illustration does not correspond to the text on the same page (p.15), because the illustration still portrays the moon and the night. It would have been more appropriate if the illustration included the rising sun.

The latter example could also be justified by following Norton's (1991:187) statement in which she comments that "in all well-written picture story books, the illustrations and narrative complement each other; children cannot deduce the whole story line merely by viewing the pictures." In other words, if there were no words to explain or narrate what is taking place on that page, the reader would have interpreted what is depicted by the illustrations, as reflecting "night-time".

The same principle applies to the flowers portrayed on page 10. The text may imply that the flowers are also sleeping (e le tsona di a robala), whereas the picture portrays brightly coloured, wide awake flowers. The illustration on page 17 reflects what the text is narrating. The new learner is standing aloof from the other children. This may mean that the new learner has not yet made any friends at the school. The implication brought about by the phrase: "Bana botlhe ba itumetse" (All the

children are happy) on page 16, might be misleading to the reader. When shifting the attention from the verbal text to the picture, the portrayal of children playing happily and one child standing alone, reflecting sadness on her face, might be telling a totally different story. The story is a continuation of "Go senka tsala". Immediately after making friends with Modiegi, the new girl feels at ease and starts mingling with the others. They take out their lunch boxes, and because she does not have any food, she moves away. Eventually, one of the boys calls her and everyone offers her something to eat.

It may be suggested that, on page 28, the illustration and the text are in collaboration. The illustration depicts exactly what the text is describing. This is an advantage for children who may not be able to read. The use of words on page 26 might give rise to the impression that the collaboration is still not perfect. The words, "heela, boa" (you, come back), may not correspond to the action as carried out by the boy. The appropriate phrase might have been "heela, boa tsaya o je" (you, come back, have this and eat).

In some instances the illustrations do correspond with the text. The illustration of the tree being blown by the wind, the portrayal of the night, sky and the moon, are all elements that reflect precisely what the text denotes (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:2-3).

In terms of the illustration on page 40, it might be suggested that the Moleko family is expecting a visitor. This is not the case according to the verbal text. All the actions that the text is referring to, i.e. the tripping of electricity, the switching off of the lights, and the switching off of the Television, are not reflected in the picture. Rather, the picture portrayed on page 41 might be appropriate in this instance. It would have been more appropriate if the pictures on both pages were presented on one double-spread.

It may be suggested that the author has succeeded in using the title in accordance with the text, because most of the illustrations used in this instance, depict what the text is narrating. On page 54, an illustration depicting a teacher, holding a stick,

indicates that the teacher is hitting the boy with a stick over the head. This reflects exactly what the text communicates. On page 55, the text is describing the filthiness of the classroom, which may be clearly observed in the illustration. The illustration on page 60 might be confusing to the readers, because it portrays a girl waving her hand. On the other hand, the words in the text may suggest that the girl is trying to attract the attention of the educator, hoping she agrees to her request to move to another classroom - "e kete a ka dumela" (hope she agrees).

3.2.2 Do the illustrations complement setting, plot, mood of the story?

When going through the stories in this book, it becomes clear that not all of the illustrations complement setting, plot, and mood. In some instances the author seems to have failed to create a sense of continuity and logic with regard to the setting.

This becomes evident, for instance, on pages 1-8 and page 10, in which the pictures should portray the night time outside in the veld. What becomes confusing is that the setting is changing from the veld, the river, the inside of a house, to the outside of the house, and back inside the house. The type of trees portrayed on a double spread (pp. 2-3), may be wild trees, which suggests that the setting is the veld. On the other hand, the type of fencing portrayed on page 10, is typical of that found in suburbs. The tame animals and chickens, present on pages 4, 5, 6, 12 and 13, might suggest that the setting is outside a house on a farm. This may leave the reader with a feeling of confusion regarding the overall setting of this book.

It goes without saying that, on pages 16-17, the events are taking place at a school. The buildings portrayed seem to contain classrooms and the children in uniform are playing inside, what is possibly, the school-yard. These elements viewed as a whole, create a sense of playtime at a school (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:16-29).

The content of "*Bosigo jo bo lefifi*" (A darker night) (pp. 38-46), insinuates a setting somewhere in an urban area. The type of house in which the Moleko family is

staying, is of contemporary style, because it is furnished with a chimney, which leads to the understanding that there is a fireplace in the house. The house is furthermore equipped with modern furniture and also a television. The fact that the electricity tripped (p. 40) is suggestive of the fact that the Moleko's house is provided with electricity.

The plot in the story: "Go senka phaposiborutelo e e itumedisang" (Looking for a pleasant classroom), can be easily determined by the events taking place in these very pages. During playtime at the school, various events take place amongst a group of school children. The plot consists of a new pupil standing alone, as well as a group of children playing happily together. Eventually, the girl is noticed by another important character in the plot, Modiegi, who makes her feel at ease. One of the boys is also a noteworthy member of the plot, because he is the first one to offer the girl a piece of bread.

Lukens (1999:54) highlights the fact that even in a simple plot, each character has a part to play. In fact, the more elementary the story, the more confusing it is to have irrelevant characters. In compliance with Lukens (1999:54), the illustrations in "Go senka phaposiborutelo e e itumedisang" (Looking for a pleasant classroom), complement the setting, the plot and the mood of the story. The plot and the mood are integrated. There may be no mood without plot and *viceversa*.

3.2.3 Do the illustrations enhance characterization?

Norton (1991:189) remarks that one way of a picture book to develop characterization, is by means of its illustrations. Various factors are noted in the book, *Bosigo*, that are in compliance with this statement of Norton's.

On page 53 in *Bosigo*, the text, for example, refers to a child who feels unhappy in her class. No reason is given as to why she is sad, but by merely looking at the illustrations, it can be inferred that she is unhappy about the fact that her class teacher is using a stick. Names, especially "telling" names, according to Nikolajeva

et al. (2001:82), may add to our understanding of a character. When referring to page 20 the author is reverting to Modiegi (the name meaning *the delaying one*). She has delayed to make friends with the new pupil, as her name indicates. The following phrases on page 19, confirm this notion:

A leta, a bo a leta (she waited and waited)

O letile monyebo (she is waiting for sweet nothing)

Nikolajeva and Scott (2001:83) further indicate that pictures naturally have a superior ability to convey the spatial position of the character, and especially the natural spatial relationship of two or more characters, which often reveals their psychological relationship and relative status. On page 20 of *Bosigo*, Modiegi is noticed approaching the new pupil with a smile. This indicates that Modiegi has taken action and that there is a prospective relationship between the two girls. It is thus noted that, by means of illustrations, characterization can be enhanced.

3.2.4 Do both text and illustrations avoid stereotyping gender and race?

Throughout the book, *Bosigo*, and especially between pages 16 and 37, it is apparent that both sexes, boys and girls, have no problems playing with each other. On page 57, the female educator is carrying a stick, something that has been associated with the stereotypical male educators in the past. Furthermore, on pages 16 and 17, children of different races are observed playing together harmoniously. It goes without saying that the text and illustrations in this book avoid the stereotyping of gender and race.

3.2.5 Will the plot appeal to children?

This text should be easy for a child reader to identify with, because it is divided into short stories. It is a general perception that the concentration span of children is very short. In this regard, the brief, contained nature of the stories in this book, makes it ideal for the child reader.

The events in each story are sequentially arranged to capture the attention of children. The events under the title "Go senka tsala" (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:16), for example, deal with a group of young people who are playing in a school yard, as well as a new pupil, who is standing aside in isolation. The story line and illustration contribute in creating curiosity in knowing what is going to happen to the new pupil. It systematically guides the reader towards a satisfying end. This new pupil is lonely throughout the story, even when everybody starts eating. Ultimately the children make friends with the pupil and offer her a piece of bread to eat.

Norton (1991:188) emphasizes that the characteristics of both the shorter picture story books and the children who read or hear the stories, place special demands on plot development. She, furthermore, goes on to say that, because many of these books are designed to be shared with, or read by young children, who have short attention spans, the plots are usually simple, clearly developed and quite brief.

When focusing on the plot of a short story, for instance "*Bosigo jo bo lefifi*" (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:38), and before even dwelling on the contents of the story, curiosity is provoked into thinking about scary things that happen at night. This is probably as a result of preconceived ideas regarding the mysteriousness of the night, manifesting in the minds of most children. This arouses in the reader the desire to go on reading, and to seek for the answers that are automatically formulated in the mind's eye of the reader. The author might be holding back unintentionally, and this keeps the child reader in suspense. The reader's attention is drawn to the text until the story comes to an end.

Furthermore, Moleko's family, for example, is peacefully watching television at home, when suddenly the lights go off. This encourages the reader to proceed reading in anticipation of finding out what the Moleko's will do in the dark. On the following page (40), the Mother of the house takes the matches and lights the candles. This becomes more interesting to the rural child reader, because it is often

something rural children are familiar with and can easily identify with. In this case, the urban child reader is probably kept in suspense, and is anticipating what will happen next (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:39-40).

Another instance of suspense is reflected in the text (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:44) when the children ask their granny to tell them a story. The author only provides the reader with the first part of the story, which, in this instance, will provoke suspense and curiosity in knowing how the story carries on to the end.

3.2.6 Is the theme worthwhile?

Lukens (1999:56) highlights the fact that some stories for young children are both humour-filled and rich with a variety of themes. On the contrary, it may be stated that most of the stories for young children with diverse and didactic themes, are used for the purpose of education. It will be a futile exercise to write a text that is not educative. This statement is supported by Nodelman (1996:155) when he asserts that children's literature would not exist at all if children were not viewed as inexperienced and in need of knowledge. He continues by indicating that children's literature is almost always didactic.

In the evaluation of the story, "Go senka tsala" (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:16), it may be deduced that the text includes multiple themes. "Treat other people with compassion" is more than likely one of the themes. This becomes apparent in the story when one boy gives a new pupil bread to eat, because she did not bring her own.

In justification of the example provided in the latter paragraph, Norton (1991:195) is of the opinion that "... loving relationships are popular themes in books for young children". This may be an important vehicle for developing socialization skills in children.

3.2.7 What is the purpose of sharing this book with children?

The book, *Bosigo*, deals with the introduction of literature to children. The author of this book has compiled the words in an interesting rhythmic pattern.

For example on page 1:

Ke *Bosigo*. (It is night.)

Ke mang yo robetseng? (Who is sleeping?)

Ke mang yo o sa robalang? (Who is not sleeping?)

In the assessment of the values of picture books, according to Norton (1991), and as reflected in Chapter Two, it may be concluded that the rhyming sound made by the underlined words in the above written paragraph, will stimulate the children's language development, as well as their auditory discrimination and attentive listening skills.

The large colourful illustrations depicted in this book, might contribute in stimulating sensitivity to art and aesthetics. Furthermore, as in traditional folktales, these stories have lessons that can be taught to children. These are only some of the reasons why this book should be shared with children.

3.2.8 Are the author's style and language appropriate for the children's interests and age levels?

Children in general should have no difficulty in understanding the use of language in the book, *Bosigo*, because the author has used a simplified verbal and pictorial information system. On pages 2 and 3 of this book, for example, the author provides the reader with a double-spread illustration that can be easily interpreted, without even reading the words. On the other hand, repetition of the words make it easier for the child reader to comprehend the text. An example of this is as follows on page 2:

A phefo e robetse? (Is the wind sleeping?)

Nnyaya, phefo ga e a robala. (No, it is not sleeping.)

Phefo e a foka. (The wind is blowing.)

3.2.9 Are the text, the illustrations, the format, and typography in harmony?

In *Bosigo*, the words do not communicate the content of the illustration. As previously stated, the following two sentences on page 1, for example, do not correspond to the picture as illustrated on the page:

Ke mang yo o robetseng? (Who is sleeping?)

Ke mang yo o sa robalang? (Who is not sleeping?)

What, on the other hand, is reflected in the illustration, are the moon and the stars. It will be difficult for the children who cannot yet read for themselves to associate the text with the pictures. For them it might only mean that it is night, and nothing else is happening. It would have been easier for them to comprehend if there had been a picture of somebody sleeping, or of somebody who is not sleeping, for that matter.

The above-mentioned example gives rise to the assumption that, in some instances, there is no harmony among the text, illustrations, typography and the format, in some stories in this book. For instance, on page 1 of *Bosigo*, the author refers to the fact that "it is night" (go *bosigo*). He continually reminds the reader that it is night, by asking the following questions on page 1:

Ke mang yo o robetseng? (Who is sleeping?)

Ke mang yo o sa robalang? (Who is not sleeping?)

If we revert to the picture accompanying the words, there is no relationship. The picture does not reflect any sleeping person.

It is possible that the disconnection between the text and the picture may insist upon the reader's undivided attention to the story. The reader will probably be curious to read on, in anticipation of discovering who the sleeping person is and where the person is sleeping.

3.3 Conclusion

A summary of each story in the book, *Bosigo*, was supplied in an attempt to address Norton's questions, as well as to evaluate the relevant artistic elements in each story. This was done in order to arrive at the answers to the question: "What constitutes a good picture book?"

In the light of the examples discussed in this chapter, it has become apparent that there are some flaws in the stories, however, not in terms of the communication of the message to the reader. According to Pienaar (1968:79), as indicated in Chapter One, text and illustration form a unity. The investigation into the book, *Bosigo*, however, reflects a different observation. It has become clear that the illustrations are rich in colour, but they are not accurate. This may cause confusion and minimize the interest of the reader with regard to reading this book.

The writer may not have succeeded in enhancing characterization in relation to illustrations, because most of the illustrations, as previously mentioned, express the opposite of what is referred to in the text. In some instances the writer has successfully portrayed the characters through their body language and facial expression. On page 57, for example, the facial expression of the boy is suggestive of the boy's fear of the educator.

The writer may have succeeded in doing away with issues of race and gender stereotypes. The text effortlessly reflects the status quo and the racial tolerance in South Africa. The manner in which the plots in the different stories are handled, allows children to explore the possibility that racial tolerance allows young people to

meet and learn from each other. This experience, in turn, makes literature enjoyable for young people.

In addition to the above-mentioned statement, Webster *et al.* (2001:2) indicate that students enjoy literature best from their own cultural point of view and are able to enter into literature from their own culture(s) more successfully than students from other cultures. This notion will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

4.1 Introduction

Before we are able to evaluate culture and identity in Setswana children's literature in general and in *Bosigo*, this chapter will facilitate an investigation into different definitions of various intellectuals, in an attempt to arrive at a working definition for the term *cultural identity*. In the first instance, definitions of the terms *culture* and *identity* will be explored separately. The two relevant definitions will then be fused and contemplated as one term, *cultural identity*.

The link between literature and culture has always been apparent in children's books, although some cultures were not acknowledged as to the same degree as others. Setswana books may be counted amongst those whose cultures were given less attention. For instance, most of the Setswana books were translated either from English or other languages. The culture reflected in these books is unlikely to reflect the Batswana's traditional norms and values. This situation may have been prompted by a lack of books in African languages, Setswana included. Totemeyer (1988:87) confirms that South African children's literature, for a long time, has been written by whites, for whites.

Hofstede (1991:5) is of the opinion that culture is learned and not inherited. This is only one of the reasons why a dire need exists for children's picture books in Setswana. If translating such books is considered, it must be executed with accuracy in order to avoid any distortion of information. If done inaccurately, it may be detrimental to the reader's knowledge of his/her culture. Before before conducting an investigation of how culture fits into literature, it is necessary to establish what cultural identity is.

4.2 Cultural identity

4.2.1 What is culture?

The definition of "culture" differs from nationality to nationality and from language to language. Merafe (1993:31), for instance, defines the term *culture* as representative of the following:

Lefoko le, *setso* le raya selo sa kwa o tswang teng, ke gore selo sa botswana batho. (The word *culture* means something of origin, meaning, something from people's origin). The word *culture* (*setso*), is formed by the verb 'go tswa' (originate / comes from) (my italics and translation).

Furthermore, Merafe (1993:31) states that the things that we say and do, come from somewhere, and this somewhere is the build-up of culture. According to Bohannan (1980:942), *culture* is a term used by social scientists for illustrating the way of life of a certain group of people. In everyday conversation, the word *culture* may refer to activities in fields such as art, literature and music. In addition, he highlights the fact that: "... culture includes arts, beliefs, customs, inventions, language, technology and traditions" (Bohannan, 1980:942). In the current debate on "culture", many voices have challenged the notion of "culture" itself, presenting it as a "perilous" idea (Wierzbicka, 1997:17). Not every person adheres and follows his or her culture as was generally done in the past. This occurrence is especially relevant in the affluent areas. Hence, there are structures, like the Pan South African Language Board, within the framework of which attention is paid to protecting the indigenous languages, and this may assist in restoring culture. Various conferences have been held on the subject in South Africa and internationally. A valuable conference, with the main theme being "Cultural diversity in Africa: Embarrassment or opportunity?", was hosted by the Department of Philosophy at the Potchefstroom University in 1991. At this conference, the important issue of cultural diversity and how it may be handled, was raised.

Hofstede (1991:5), cites two meanings of culture, namely "culture one and culture two". He refers to "culture one" as "civilization" or "refinement of the mind". "Culture two", in his opinion, is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment. This environment is where culture is determined. He further indicates that culture is learned and not inherited (Hofstede, 1991:5). The fact that culture is not inherited, may be true, but that it is learned, lacks corroboration due to various reasons. The word *learned*, according to Branford (1987:426), means "...having much knowledge by study; showing or requiring learning (learned book); concerned with interests of learned persons (a learned society)". Considering Allen's views, it is suggested that "primitive" people had no culture, because they had no means of studying, or they simply could not read. This is not acceptable, especially when one considers the views of social scientists, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter. Bohannan's (1980:942) definition of culture, as mentioned above, states that culture illustrates the way of life of a certain group of people. This definition seems more relevant and may correlate better with issues regarding identity.

4.2.2 What is identity?

The *Complete Word Finder Dictionary* (1991:740) defines the word *identity* as referring to the quality or conditions of being a specified person or thing. It may be suggested that identity is embedded "deep inside" every person. It is someone's choice to be identified with whatever he/she prefers. Whether it be with someone or something, remains to be seen. That is why, these days, we have people imitating their heroes, either by carrying out the rituals, following the same norms and values as their heroes, or by the way they talk, walk, write, sing or dress.

Batswana people, for instance, do not allow a pregnant woman to be in the same room as a terminally ill person. Whether they know the reason for the illness, or not, they still follow the conventions of the granny or uncle (their heroes) who used to abide by beliefs of this kind..

In support of this, Hofstede (1991:7) remarks that cultural differences manifest themselves in several ways. He mentions *symbols*, *heroes*, *rituals*, and *values* as terms used to describe manifestation of culture. He furthermore emphasizes the following:

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning that is only recognized by those who share the culture. Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behaviour. Rituals are collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are considered as socially essential. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side and deal with the following antagonisms:

- evil vs. good
- dirty vs. clean
- ugly vs. beautiful
- unnatural vs. natural
- abnormal vs. normal
- paradoxical vs. logical
- irrational vs. rational (Hofstede 1991:7).

William Bloom, as quoted by Segers (1997:268), concludes that identification is an inherent and unconscious behavioural imperative in all individuals. He further says:

Individuals actively seek to identify in order to achieve psychological security, and they actively seek to maintain, protect and bolster identity in order to maintain and enhance this psychological security, which is a *sine qua non* of personality stability and emotional well-being.

Billig (1995:7) summarizes by saying: "Identity in common talk, is something which people have or search for".

Human beings are cultural beings. They obviously belong to a particular cultural group and they carry with them their identity since birth. Therefore, they need not search for identity. People have a tendency of (purposely) losing identity due to circumstances. Most of the Batswana people, for instance, did not want to be identified with their fellow people as they had no power over anything. Today the situation is quite the opposite. Their power and confidence are gradually increasing, as a result of the eradication of apartheid.

Segers's idea of identity as a construction, as quoted by Huntington (1997:272), blends well with the above-mentioned paragraph. He states that "... we know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against".

4.2.3 What is cultural identity?

Practically, cultural identity means identifying oneself with one's culture. The manner in which the Batswanas, for example, perform their rituals during certain ceremonies, depicts their culture. During a funeral, for instance, there is part of a cow's meat that is not supposed to be eaten by women. It may be suggested that by adhering to that practice, you identify with it.

According to Segers (1997:272), cultural identity has often been regarded as a range of characteristics that are unique to a particular culture and "innate" to a specific people. In abstract terms, cultural identity is the internalised cultural consciousness – identification with a distinct concept of reality, accepted by virtue of participation in it.

4.3 Characteristics of Cultural Identity

Segers (1997:272) defines the formal characteristics of cultural identity as "facts", figures that can be found in statistical handbooks concerning a particular country, or an ethnic group. These factors determine, to a great extent, the programming of

the mind of a given society, and vice versa. Segers (1997:272) furthermore provides the following examples of such facts:

... the total number of citizens of a country, the size of the country, the gross national product, average income, percentage of unemployment, the number of museums, the number of books produced, the genres, the ratio of 'native' to translated books.

Hicks and Gwynne (1994:46-48), refer to the following six characteristics of culture that will first be discussed:

- Culture is collective
- Culture is compulsory
- Culture is essential for social life
- Culture is integrated
- Culture is dynamic
- Culture is unique to humans

4.3.1 Culture is collective

In the investigation into the characteristics of culture, it becomes evident that not everything that an individual thinks, does, or makes, can be considered a part of that person's culture. The reason for this is that culture is collective. This means that members of a group share various influences from various cultures. For this reason, an idea of an individual cannot be taken as a cultural fact, unless it is something unanimously agreed upon by other members of the same culture.

4.3.2 Culture is compulsory

This characteristic explains in a nutshell that individuals who wish to get along successfully, have no option but to take their society's culture into account in their dealings with others. This simply means that if you are part of the group you have to succumb to what is practised by it.

4.3.3 Culture is essential for social life

Hicks and Gwynne (1994:47) evaluate the third characteristic by indicating that culture is not shared, only when the members of a group feel like cooperating; it is essential for people's very existence as members of the group.

4.3.4 Culture is integrated

In explanation of the fourth characteristic, Hicks and Gwynne (1994:47), indicate that Tylor, in his use of the word *whole*, recognized the thorough integration of different aspects of any culture, for example, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by mankind.

4.3.5 Culture is dynamic

In explaining this characteristic, which is the fifth one, Hicks and Gwynne (1994:47) use an example of a car engine. They explain that both cultures and car engines are dynamic; they constantly change rather than remain static. They furthermore point out that even a small change to one of the parts of an engine may cause the whole engine to operate differently. Likewise, a change in one aspect of culture may produce much broader cultural changes.

In compliance with the latter statement, and when considering the Batswana culture today, some aspects of the original culture seemed to have been lost, due to the influence of western cultures. This is especially evident in the way they dress. The conventional way of dressing up has made way for a modern, western way. Hicks and Gwynne (1994) confirm this inclination when they state that "... western cultures began spreading their influence to all corners of the world around 1500".

4.3.6 Culture is unique to humans

With regard to this characteristic, culture is unique to humans, Hicks and Gwynne (1994) explains that, at present, the behaviour of non-human creatures is not considered as cultural. In accordance with Hicks, in this instance, non-human creatures are animals, and animals do not have customs or traditions like human beings. Bidney, as quoted by Turaki (1991:126), supports Hicks when he says: "Man is the measure of culture and society".

On the other hand, Hofstede (1991:10) speaks about the different levels of culture. He cites the following levels as examples:

- A national level according to one's country (or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime).
- A regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation level, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups.
- A gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy.
- A generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children.
- A social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession.
- For those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level, according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization.

In addition to what Hofstede has pointed out as different levels of culture, the following salient aspects may be emphasized:

For those who are unemployed, being pressurized by their culture (a woman's place is in the kitchen) e.g. women (mostly illiterate, rural and

black), are still subjected to the old cultural manner of running their lives. Because of being illiterate, they have no choice, but to succumb to what their husbands and in-laws are instructing them to do. It does hit the professional ones too during the ritual occasions, such as funerals or weddings, whereby as a "Makoti" (daughter-in-law), the woman is expected to see to it that cooking is done and everybody has been given food, irrespective of the number of people present at that occasion.

These levels highlight the uniqueness of the culture of each community, and this uniqueness becomes especially evident through literature. Totemeyer (1988:394) supports the latter statement when he indicates that some admiration for the culture and mythology of Afrikaans can be found in early Afrikaans juvenile literature.

Hofstede's levels of culture will be used to examine the manner in which culture fits into literature, with great emphasis on "the five dimensions of national cultures" (Hofstede, 1991:12). Under these characteristics, Hofstede (1991:11-15) tables down the origins of mankind and "his" culture, and how the smaller tribes integrated into larger societies to eventually construct what is called, a nation. He furthermore highlights that the concept of common culture applies more to societies than to nations. He comments about the following as strong forces that further integrate the nations that have been in existence for some time:

... one dominant national language, common mass media, national education system, a national army, a national political system, national representation in sports events with a strong symbolic and emotional appeal, a national market for certain skills, products, and services (Hofstede 1991:15).

What Hofstede highlights in the latter paragraph, may be true for other countries, but as for South Africa, much still needs to be done in order to integrate the different nations. Various nations are still clinging to their own ethnic beliefs. It may be envisaged, that the forces, as indicated in the latter paragraph, may probably

represent dimensions, only when globalization takes the upper hand, for they too can be measured relative to other cultures in their own "imagined world".

Hofstede (1991:14) defines dimension as an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. He furthermore indicates that the following four basic problem areas, as defined by Inkeles and Livinson (1969:447), represent dimensions of cultures:

... firstly, the relationship to authority; secondly, conception of self, in particular, in terms of the relationship between individual and society, and the individual's concept of masculinity and femininity; and thirdly, ways of dealing with conflicts, including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings.

4.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded that culture and identity go hand in glove. Through identification of oneself, people may realise their culture. The process of identification takes place in our everyday lives, either unconsciously, as indicated by Bloom, or consciously. The difference in this case may be perpetuated by age, because when you are born in a household in which certain customs and traditions are being followed, it will probably be more difficult to change when you are a grown-up.

It is imperative to realize how most of the aspects, as highlighted in this chapter, relate to the aspects of today's social life. All these may be better explained and comprehended through literature. It may also be stated that literature mirrors people's everyday lives. This statement is confirmed by Segers in the following comments:

It is impossible to investigate the 'complete' cultural identity of a particular community. The best one can do is to select and investigate some elements that are supposed to form a central part of it. Children's

literature and its reception offer an excellent opportunity to construct basic elements of the cultural identity of a certain nation or group, based on literature's ability to represent important aspects of a particular community (Segers 1997:274).

The dimensions of culture, as referred to by Hofstede (1991:14), will be discussed in the following chapter. This investigation will be conducted in collaboration with some of the stories from the picture book, *Bosigo*, in order to illustrate how dimensions of culture can be recognized.

CHAPTER 5

CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN “BOSIGO”

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on Hofstede’s levels of culture, with greater emphasis on a national level in terms of one’s country, as it will blend well with the changes that are presently taking place in South Africa.

5.2 Cultural identity in Setswana literature

Due to the fact that different nations do not practise their culture to a full extent, as was done in the past, it might be detrimental to the new generations, because they might know little or nothing about their culture, unless it is recorded in literature. This is qualified by Segers’s (1997:275) statement when he explains that “... literature and its reception offer an excellent opportunity to construct basic elements of the cultural identity of a certain nation or group, based on literature’s ability to represent important aspects of a particular community”.

Through literature, children get the opportunity to read, see, learn and identify with their culture, and acquaint themselves with the basic elements of their cultural identity. *Bosigo* (1991), for example, is a book that can teach the children about the games that children from other cultural backgrounds play, and about the ways in which children from other cultural backgrounds behave. On page 16, for instance, a picture is portrayed of children playing rugby, a game traditionally known to be played by white men. They are also playing soccer, a game that is conventionally known as a black man’s sport. Furthermore, a white boy is seen playing hopscotch, which is traditionally popular amongst children in white communities. Lately, the time for playing games is being invaded by TV, and this simply implies that these games will be lost to the children. This is a strong possibility, unless they are

incorporated in children's literature and interested children become aware of these games.

Nodelman (1996:117) is of the opinion that if we know something about historical events or about the traits of a specific culture, we may become aware, and take pleasure in seeing, how texts relate to the time and place in which they were written, and also, how these circumstances can throw light on the texts. He furthermore indicates that we may develop a better understanding of literature by learning something about the culture or period of history in which it was produced. We shall then also develop a better understanding of a culture or period of history by reading literature it produced.

The book *Bosigo*, may serve as a good example in this instance, because it was produced when the education system of South Africa shifted from content-based, to outcomes-based education. The following dimensions, as indicated in Chapter Four, will be applied in the following sections, in order to arrive at a better understanding regarding the application of the theory.

5.3 Relation to authority

The evaluation of *Bosigo*, illustrates how different nationalities relate to authority. A Motswana boy, for example, will not blatantly complain to the teacher after she hit him with a stick on the head. This is probably because Batswana children in general, grow up knowing that they should not question an elderly person about the manner in which he or she administers discipline. Instead, a Motswana child will probably silently think about how they all are usually scared when their teacher moves around with a stick in his or her hand (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:54).

On the other hand, in *Bosigo*, a girl of colour is complaining assertively that it is her birthday, but that her teacher does not even remember the birthdays of the pupils (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:56). Unlike black people (Batswanas in this case), people of colour grew up knowing their rights as humans, for instance, if it had

been a white child who was hit with a stick on the head, he might have taken further steps against this teacher for he would have known that corporal punishment is not allowed in schools.

Hofstede (1991:5) is of the opinion that what one does with one's feelings, for example, how one expresses fear, joy, observation and so on, is modified by culture. In *Bosigo* (p. 54), the little boy seems to be keeping quiet when the teacher hits him with a stick. This may indicate that the boy was probably brought up in a cultural environment whereby children are supposed to take whatever punishment is inflicted on them by their elders.

5.4 Conception of self, in particular

5.4.1 The relationship between the individual and the group

Dichabe & Malimabe (1999:16) refers to a new girl at the school, who is keeping a distance from the other children. It becomes difficult to conclude whether the little girl is keeping a distance due to the fact that she is new at the school, or whether her actions are modified by culture.

What also seems problematic is to clarify from which nationality she derives. If she were a Motswana, she might have been depicted mingling with the other children, because the Batswanas usually do not keep their distance. This becomes evident on pages 39 and 43 in the way the Moleko family is comfortably sitting in the living room and in the dining room. The size of the house is also being visualized by the grandmother, on page 46, and the impression is created that space might not be much of an issue with the Batswana people. In everyday life, black people (Batswana included) are being observed standing close to each other in, for example, bank queues. White people, on the other hand, generally stand far from each other. This might insinuate that they need space. The personal space of the Batswana is much smaller, because they usually live in smaller houses and dwellings. They normally travel by taxi and most of the time the space is very

crammed. White people, on the other hand, often stay in sizable houses and usually commute alone in cars.

5.4.2 Masculinity and femininity

Hofstede (1991:16) is of the opinion that if we recognize that within each society there is a man's culture which differs from a woman's culture, it helps to explain why it is so difficult to change the traditionally allocated gender roles.

The latter issue might not have the same meaning in terms of what Dichabe and Malimabe (1991:54) is suggesting to the readers, because the illustration portrays a woman as the teacher. This might insinuate that traditional gender roles may easily be changed. Grobler (1988:13) emphasizes that sexism has flourished in literature (picture books, school readers, general fiction, comics and text books), for many, many years. She further indicates that at present, one of the most important things children are taught at school (by means of the unseen curriculum and the hidden messages in their books), and which they cannot easily unlearn, is that males and females are different and unequal.

Dichabe and Malimabe (1999:19) might differ from Grobler (1988:13) in this regard, because boys are featured playing games with girls. Although it may be a cliché that different genders stick to different games, e.g., boys usually play soccer, and girls usually play netball, in this instance, they are all playing the same game.

5.5 Ways of dealing with conflicts, including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings

Dichabe and Malimabe (1999:54) depicts a boy who is very obedient towards his teacher. Even when his teacher hits him on the head with a stick, he manages to control his anger. He does not openly show his feelings. Instead, he is probably silently thinking about how scared they all become, when their teacher moves around with a stick in her hand.

This boy's behaviour might have been a result of the code of conduct that is prescribed by that particular school, but then again, the fact that culture might be playing a huge role cannot be ignored. It is known that, long ago, Batswana children were taught to respect their elders. Even if the elderly person had been wrong, their culture expected of them not to judge their elders and not to indulge in an argument with them. They were supposed to remain quiet and rather suffer from within.

Ntsime *et al.* (1993:24) remarks that: "Maphelo a Batswana le ona a laolwa ke meila" (The Batswana's way of life is governed by traditional beliefs) and also indicates that: "Ditumelo tse tsa bogologolo di ne di tshegeditswe tota. Mongwe le mongwe o ne a tshwanetse go di ithuta" (These old beliefs were really being adhered to. It was a must for each and every one to learn about them.). The reaction of the boy is advantageous to him in the sense that he managed to avoid conflict between himself and the teacher. Maybe if the boy would have said something to show his dissatisfaction about his teacher, she would have taken him to the school manager, and the parents would have been called. The episode might thus have caused a huge conflict.

The illustrator of *Bosigo* has successfully portrayed the emotional feelings of the characters. On pages 50-51, children are depicted laughing and singing happily together. On page 53, the children are portrayed as being unhappy. This might be reflected by the sad expression on their faces. One of the children cannot control her anger, she says that their classroom upsets her; she wishes to be in another classroom (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1999:53).

It may be stated that culture is playing a role in this case, too, because the people of colour grew up under the guidance of their confident and assertive parents, who know their rights and who will not stop at anything to get what they want.

5.6 Conclusion

In the evaluation of Hofstede's levels of culture, particularly the dimensions used to determine whether references to culture and identity are present in *Bosigo*, it becomes clear that the author has, up to a certain extent, been realistic, because he describes the situation as it currently is in South Africa. The words, "to a certain extent", are being used in this regard because some of the issues, such as the nationality and race of the characters, may not be clearly communicated to the readers. The readers might have to guess whether a certain character is a Motswana, or English person, by associating them with their actions or behaviour. The given names bring about a sense of confusion, because the majority of names derive from the Setswana language, whilst some of the characters may not be Batswana.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In conclusion, it is imperative to find out whether the objectives, as set out in Chapter One, are being reached by looking into what constitutes a good picture book, and how cultural identity is represented in *Bosigo* as a picture book.

6.1.1 What constitutes a good picture book?

The following requirements of a picture book, as established by Norton, were successfully answered (refer to Chapter Three for examples):

- The illustrations are accurate, and they do correspond to the content in some of the stories.
- The illustrations complement the setting, plot, and mood of the story in most of the stories.
- Both the text and illustrations avoid stereotypes of race and sex.
- The plot does possibly appeal to children.
- The author's style and language are appropriate for the interests of children and their age levels.

Although indicated otherwise in the hypothesis, the following limitations were identified (refer to Chapter Three for details):

- The text, the illustrations, the format, and the typography are not always in harmony.
- The names given to the characters are not always suitable, as white children, for example, are given Setswana names (p. 27).

The picture book, *Bosigo*, mirrors the improvements achieved in children's books. It has covered most of the requirements beneficial to children.

The following aspects are important, according to the norms of today:

- Minimization of translation (indigenous language used)
- A sense of reality (the text reflects what is taking place at present)
- The book promotes human values (children of different races are reflected as diverse, not as white and black children)

In a nutshell it may be stated that the appeal made by concerned writers, as alluded to, in Chapter One, is being adhered to in the picture book *Bosigo*.

6.1.2 How is cultural identity represented in Bosigo as a picture book?

After assessing the book, *Bosigo*, it can be concluded that, as far as culture is concerned, there is more to it, than meets the eye. Given the history of South Africa, together with recent dramatic changes that have, and are still taking place in this post-apartheid era, it may be boldly suggested that *Bosigo* is amongst the books that are making a mark, as far as the culture of South African children is concerned.

The above mentioned statement can be coupled with Jenkins's opinion when he highlights the fact that the writers of South African children's books, at the end of the twentieth century, continue the tradition of creating South African literature. He furthermore indicates that they depict black and white teenagers of today at the very first painful stages of getting to know and understand each other (Jenkins 1993: 1).

The text, *Bosigo*, mirrors exactly what Jenkins is referring to. As is indicated by the examples of culture, provided in the previous chapter, culture is undoubtedly reflected in this book, although it is reflected differently, because of the various racial groups represented in the book.

Hofstede (1991:7) speaks about symbols, heroes, rituals, and values as ways in which cultural differences manifest themselves. The above mentioned manifestations are reflected in Dichabe and Malimabe (1994:14), in, for example, the manner in which the little girl is wearing her hair. The style of hair may symbolize her nationality. Black people, lately, wear their hair in a natural way, as a means of keeping their identity.

Names, too, play an important role as far as the Batswana people are concerned. The name Modiegi, means "delay". The new pupil waited a long time before the other pupils made friends with her. After a while, the girl called Modiegi went up to the new pupil and smiled at her. She took her time before she tried to befriend her and for the same reason the sentence "gongwe Modiegi e tla nna tsala ya gagwe" (Modiegi might befriend her) (Dichabe & Malimabe, 1994: 20) was used.

The huts illustrated on pages 5 and 46, reveal the nationality of the people that live in those houses. The Batswana, for example, built their huts with mud, whereas the Zulus built their huts with reed and long grass. As far as the values of the people are concerned, the little boy and girl on page 44 are telling their granny to read them a story. Batswana people, generally, find it wrong for children to speak to their elders in a blunt manner. It is usually regarded as a sign of disrespect. A child is always expected to use the word "please" (kopa) when asking for something. The two children in the story should have said: "Re kopa o re tlotlele naane Nkoko" (Could you please tell us a story, Granny?)

Although it is every nationality's prerogative to preserve its culture, it goes without saying that South African children are stuck in a multicultural society. *Bosigo* is an answer to many pleas forwarded by different writers. Totemeyer's (1988:80-88) concern is that "... in a country where race and ethnicity have become the cornerstone of an ideology of human separation, resulting in estrangement between the children of the country and alienation from one another, a literature is necessary which may contribute to bridging these gaps". Although the necessary, and

beneficial aspects of culture are represented in the picture book *Bosigo*, some limitations were also discovered.

6.2 Limitations

The Batswana culture is not well represented in the book *Bosigo*. This can be detrimental to the new generation, because they may learn little, if anything at all, about their culture through reading this book.

Those who are still living in the rural areas, and those who are still rooted deeply in their respective cultures, will lose interest whilst reading the book, because it does not cover all the aspects of a Motswana culture. Purves's work provided strong support for the hypothesis, because he is of meaning that one's culture helps shape one's literary response. In the same regard, Baker is of the opinion that students are more eager to enter into work that supports their own cultural beliefs and assumptions.

Given the fact that researchers discovered that students are more likely to assimilate information that is congruent with their cultural background and more likely to misinterpret or ignore information that is inconsistent with, or contradictory to, their cultural background, it is going to be difficult for today's writers to decide what route to follow. This is mainly because there are many interrelations among different cultural groups and it goes without saying that contemporary books must accommodate a variety of cultural groups.

Although certain limitations do exist, *Bosigo*, due to its relevant content and attractive pictures/illustrations, has changed the perception regarding Batswana literary books of the past. The change has been evoked, not only in terms of the appearance of *Bosigo*, but also because a deliberate attempt has been made to change the stereotypical representation of cultural differences in today's society.

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ANNEXURE A THE PICTURE BOOK, *BOSIGO*

The picture book of *Bosigo* is included to be used by anyone reading the mini-dissertation. Look in the pocket at the back of the mini-dissertation.

**ANNEXURE B ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE PICTURE
BOOK, *BOSIGO***

AT NIGHT

Fly up!

Reader

S. Dichabe

R. Malimabe

Content:

At Night

Looking for a friend

You can have a bite

To see things in the sky

A dark night

Looking for a pleasant classroom

At Night

Page 1

It is night.

Who is sleeping?

Who is not sleeping?

Page 2

Is the wind sleeping?

No, the wind is not sleeping.

The wind is blowing.

Page 3

Is the moon sleeping?

No, the moon is not sleeping.

The moon is shining.

Page 4

Who is sleeping here?

The horse is sleeping here.

The goats are sleeping here.

A pig is sleeping here.

A dove is sleeping on the branch.

Page 5

Who is sitting here?

It is a cat.

The cat is not sleeping.

The cat is watching the moon.

Page 6

Are the chicks sleeping?

Yes, they are sleeping.

A mouse is not sleeping.

Page 7

Where is the tortoise sleeping?

It is sleeping inside its shell.

Page 8

Is the snail sleeping?

No, the snail is not sleeping

It is eating.

Page 9

Can a fish sleep?

Yes, it sleeps.

Page 10

Can flowers sleep?

Yes, they too can sleep.

Page 11

Are the ants sleeping?

No, they are looking for the food in the cupboard.

Page 12

Is the tick sleeping?

No, it is biting the dog.

Page 13

Is the dog sleeping?

No, it is looking for a tick.

Page 14

Who sleeps here?

You and I sleep here.

Page 15

It's already day.

Even the moon has gone to sleep.

Page 16

LOOKING FOR A FRIEND

Page 16

It is play-time.

All the children are happy.

Some of them are speaking.

Some of them are playing.

Page 17

A new pupil is standing alone.

She has no friend.

Page 18

She looks at her hands.

She looks at her shoes.

Page 19

She waits and waits.

She waits for a smile.

But the other pupils do not see her.

Page 20

Modiegi comes closer to her.

Modiegi smiles.

And the new pupil smiles.

Probably Modiegi will be her friend.

YOU CAN HAVE A PIECE

Page 21

Mpho, Kabelo and Lerato are eating their sandwiches.

What is on the sandwiches?

They all opened their sandwiches.

Page 22

Mpho has fish paste on.

Kabelo has only butter.

Page 23

Lerato eats bread with nothing on.

Page 24

The new pupil has nothing.

Page 25

She moves away from them.

The other pupils are looking at her.

Page 26

Thank you. I am very hungry indeed.

Hey, come back.

Do you want some bread?

Page 27

I am Lerato.

I am Kabelo.

I am Mpho.

I am Thato.

Each one of them gives her a piece.

Page 28

Let me show you that I can stand on my hands.

Page 29

Ijaa! Ijaa! Ijaa! Ijaa! Look at Thato.

I also know how to tumble.

TO SEE THINGS IN THE SKY

Page 31

We are lying down on our backs.

We are looking at the clouds.

Page 32

I see a girl.

Can you see her long dress?

Page 33

I see a horse.

Can you see its long tail?

Page 34

I see a tree.

Can you see its branches?

Page 35

I see a big snake.

Can you see its big mouth?

Page 36

I don't see anything.

I see clouds only.

Page 37

Ao!, said all of them.

Don't you see the flowers in the sky?

Page 38

A DARK NIGHT

Page 38

The wind is blowing.

(The trees are blown towards the direction of the wind.)

Page 39

The Moleko family is having supper.

They eat bread and soup.

They are watching television.

Boitumelo and Kagiso are lying down in front of it.

Page 40

The electricity goes off.

The lights go out!

The television turns black.

Page 41

Mother takes the candles and the matches.

They light the candles.

Page 42

The wind was blowing outside.

The trees were blown.

Page 43

I like candles.

Boitumelo sits on her mother's lap..

Page 44

Yes, I grew up with them (the candles) too.

We didn't have electric lights.

"Tell us a story," Granny.

"Yes," said Boitumelo, "tell us a story."

Page 45

It is in order..

Get into your beds and I will tell you a story.

But you must brush your teeth first.

Page 46

Are you ready?

It is said that once there was a girl and a boy.

They stayed in a hut on top of the mountain...

LOOKING FOR A PLEASANT CLASSROOM

Page 48

I wish I were in Dipuo's and others' classroom.

Their classroom is full of pleasure.

There are pictures on the walls.

Page 49

And there are crayons and lots of paper.

They draw anything they like.

There are even pot plants.

Page 50

You usually hear children singing.

Page 51

They play joyful games.

It is filled with happiness and laughter.

Page 52

Their teacher remembers their birthdays.

Page 53

I wish I were in Dipuo's and the others' classroom.

Our classroom makes me angry.

Page 54

Our teacher likes to move around with a stick in her hand.

She hits us with a stick on our heads.

We are always scared.

As for the walls, they are empty.

There are no pictures.

Page 55

Just look what the floor looks like!

There is much dirt.

Page 56

It is my birthday today.

Our teacher does not remember our birthdays.

Page 57

Hey, you!

Our teacher does not even know our names.

She only points at us with her finger.

Page 58

I would like to be in the classroom where Dipuo and the others are.

Page 59

I'll go there tomorrow. When I arrive I will say, "Teacher, can I be in your classroom?"

Page 60

I hope she agrees.