

How to use *English Alive 50:*

a commemorative anthology of writing by South African high school students

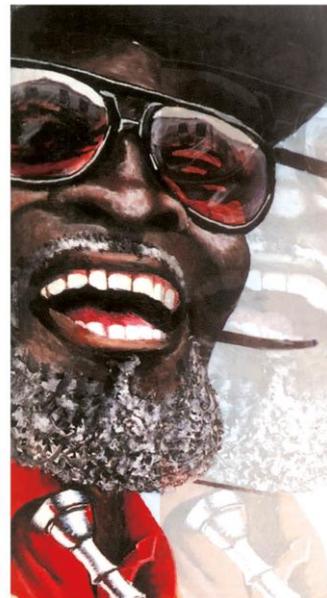
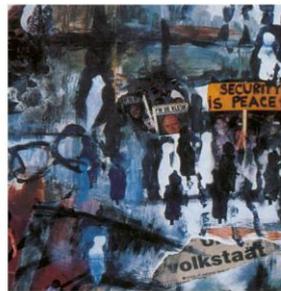
in the classroom

Robin Malan



English Alive 50

fifty years of writing by South African high school students



Compiled by Robin Malan

In October 2016 Pearson SA published the above anthology, which I compiled. I was one of the founding editors of *English Alive* in 1967, and I am pleased, fifty

years later, to be looking back over the fifty editions of *English Alive* and selecting 230 pieces of writing spanning those years.

There are several things to be said about fifty years of *English Alive*:

The first is that *English Alive* is a national project of the **South African Council for English Education (SACEE)**, and the production of the annual anthology has been in the hands of SACEE's Western Cape branch.

Second, it is astonishing that a completely independent and unsubsidised literary journal of high school writing should have lasted fifty years, without a single break in production.

Third, viewed chronologically, the pieces in this fiftieth-anniversary anthology give a fascinating overview of what was happening in and to South Africa over those momentous fifty years, and how South Africa's young adults reflected and reacted to their lived reality.

Fourth, it is completely remarkable how many people first published in *English Alive* went on to become established professional writers: poets, playwrights, novelists, short story writers, non-fiction authors, editors and journalists. In the anthology there are notes on contributors who have achieved in literary and related fields. Far too many to mention here in full, but here's a sample of just 20 names:

Jeremy Cronin, David Lan, Jeremy Gordin, Elaine Unterhalter, Heather Robertson, Kelwyn Sole, Hedley Twidle, Helen Moffett, Duane Jethro, Siphokazi Jonas, Karen Jeynes, Jon Keevy, Nicholas Spagnoletti, Henrietta Rose-Innes, Shaun Johnson, Shaun de Waal, Karen Jennings, Nadia Davids, Amy Jephta, Megan Hall ...

Among ex-*English Alivers*, there have been three Olive Schreiner Prize winners, two Ingrid Jonker winners, Commonwealth Prize, Caine Prize, Sanlam Prize, Percy Fitzpatrick Prize, MER Prize, *Sunday Times* Alan Paton Prize, SAFTA Prize, M-Net Prize, and first-place in the English Olympiad.

Pearson SA has not only sponsored the publishing of this 240-page anthology but has printed 2 500 copies to go to as many schools, gratis. No copies will be sold. SACEE branches throughout the country have been drawing up lists of schools to approach with these gift copies. If there is a teacher reading this whose school has not received an invitation to acquire a copy, please email your details to englishalive@iafrica.com and we will arrange for a copy.

What SACEE wants is for the anthology to be used in classrooms throughout the country, both as stimulus for fruitful classroom discussion but also as a trigger for students' own imaginative writing.

To this end, the rest of this article is devoted to a number of exercises and suggestions of uses to which the anthology can be put in the classroom, in the hope that teachers and students will find them stimulating and fulfilling.

The exercises appear in no particular order.

To facilitate the use of the anthology, SACEE and Pearson have agreed that no restrictions will be placed on photo-copying the relevant pages from the anthology. The book will also be made available as an pdf for free download from the Pearson website.

Italics are used at the beginning of each exercise (and sometimes later as well) to indicate the size of group or number of students appropriate for the exercise. Maximum value is gained from exercises of this sort when the group is small and the discussion is therefore intimate and congenial for all sorts of students.

To assist teachers who may not have much experience of handling literary exercises of this sort – usually small-group work – some suggestions are offered. These are given in boxes marked ‘*Teacher involvement*’.

I have also added a few ‘extended exercises’, involving more time and effort than can be contained within normal class activity – extra-mural, outside-of-class-time presentations. I am sure the services of the Drama Teacher could be called on for assistance with these.

How to use *English Alive 50* in the classroom

That’s old history!

In *groups of four*, read aloud all the following poems, each person reading two poems.

~ Using your joint knowledge of South Africa’s last fifty years, match each piece of writing in the left-hand column with the year in which it was published in *English Alive* (given in a jumbled order in the right-hand column):

I Malet Warden: Our garden (page 21)	1986
Anthony Shaw: There were riots here (page 39)	1994
Matthew Walton: Untitled (‘Soweto ...’) (page 55)	1972
Cathy Boshoff: Written during the State of Emergency (page 79)	1995
Karen Schlebusch: Madiba (page 112)	2000
Simon Bothner: The new South Africa (page 105)	1968
Jared Licina: The Millennium and beyond (page 140)	2009
Jessica Ilunga: Immigrants (page 183)	1977

~ ‘Poetry should not be about public or political or social events; it should be about the personal lives of individuals.’ – What do you think about that statement? Discuss this in your group.

~ Choose two of these poems where the writers have adopted different tones of voice. Together, define the tone of voice used in the two poems. How does it affect your response to the two pieces?

All come together as a class for a feedback session. Let the teacher lead this by telling you what s/he heard being discussed in each group.

Teacher involvement:

Move about from group to group, listening in to their discussion.

If they are getting the dates hopelessly wrong, try to nudge them toward the right year.

In the discussion, don't allow one person to overwhelm the others; direct a question away to another person in the group.

Help them understand 'tone of voice' by giving obvious everyday examples, e.g. 'Don't do it that way, that's wrong!' vs 'Maybe you can think of another way to do it.'

In the feedback session, pull all their various threads together to form a coherent discussion.

Love is a many-splendoured thing – or is it?

You can do this exercise *all together as a class*. Listen to the teacher read these seven short pieces of writing about love:

Elizabeth Spilhaus: **To Philip** (page 21)

Beryl Gendall: **Love** (page 53)

Margot Pienaar: **That ... love issue** (page 69)

Raymond Moleli: **Goodbye** (page 128)

Jaco van der Merwe: **Love poem of a dumped jock** (page 148)

Lee-Ann Rhoodie: **You and I** (page 163)

- ~ Do they all have the same tone (or tone of voice, if you like)?
- ~ Can you describe the different tones in which they are written?
- ~ Are they all what you would call 'love poems'?
- ~ Which are and which aren't?
- ~ Which is your favourite, and why?
- ~ Which do you like least, and why?

Teacher involvement:

You will need to prepare and rehearse the poems before reading them to the class. It is never a good idea to read something aloud without some preparation, e.g. you need to know where to take a breath!

You can ask the bulleted questions, or perhaps have them written on the board before the class, so that the students can have them in mind as they listen to the poems.

So, what's so funny, eh?

Divide the class into *four groups of equal size*, and call them A, B, C and D.

~ Sit in small tight circles around the hall or outside or (if no other venue is available) in the classroom.

~ Appoint three readers in each group (call them 1, 2 and 3), and give them a minute to prepare to read the following pieces.

~ Reader 1 reads Piece 1, Reader 2 reads Piece 2, and Reader 3 reads Piece 3):

Group A: 1 Michele Freind: **busstop** (page 32)

2 Laura Menachemson: **Can you relate to lentils?** (page 57)

3 Daliso Chaponda: **Little Black Riding Hood** (page 124)

Group B: 1 Trevor Lubbe: **the burglar** (page 33)

2 Robert Silke: **Early-morning Clifton** (page 114)

3 Gladys Kisela: **Mrs van Tonder in her pink pantoffels ...** (page 197)

Group C: 1 John Bradley: **Poetry wrighting** (page 9)

2 Lee Pope-Ellis: **Speeding 'fine'** (page 132)

3 Aliyah Rachel Rainer: **A little over-exaggerated** (page 190)

Group D: 1 Laurie Scarborough: **Ballet** (page 184)

2 Dave Bryant: **Drunk** (page 145)

3 Matthew Dalby: **The letter** (page 109)

~ When you have read all three pieces, decide as a group which you think is the funniest, and what makes it funny – is it the situation itself, or the way it is written, or both?

All come together as the full class for a feedback session. Each group reads their 'funniest' piece, and tells why they think it is funny.

Teacher involvement:

Through each stage, move from one group to another, guiding the discussion when necessary. If they seem stuck, help them along.

Elements of humour:

- ~ physical slapstick
- ~ something unexpected happening: irony
- ~ satire: criticising by making us laugh at people's silliness, unkindness, stupidity
- ~ verbal wit: where the fun lies in the language used, and the way in which words are placed.

In God's name ...

This is an *individual, solitary exercise*. Read these six poems which are all about religion in one way or another:

Jeff Peires: **Regenerate not us, O Lord ...** (page 12)

G E S Lishman: **God** (page 26)

Susan Rosenberg: **Christians?** (page 37)

Atholl Murray: **Circus** (page 102)

Andrew Auld: **Only this nail** (page 116)

Oliver February: **Dear God** (page 189)

In each case, decide the following:

- ~ What is the tone of voice of the speaker?
 - ~ Is the speaker attacking? accusing? questioning? approving? applauding?
- Explain your response.
- ~ Choose any one piece, and comment on how the piece is put together, constructed, written.

Teacher involvement:

If this is given as homework, mark each piece, being very sensitive to each student's individual views; be careful not to impose yours!

If classwork, students work quietly on their own, and the teacher wanders up and down the aisles, available to any student who asks for help.

Some 'I' pieces of writing

Divide into *groups of six*.

~ Each person in the group takes one of the following six pieces:

Sheena O'Connell: **I'm just Sheena** (page 80)

Lauren A Appel: **I am me** (page 168)

Tshepo Mashigo: **Who am I?** (page 178)

Tim Hardwick: **I am me** (page 201)

Bonheur Nfurayase: **I am who I am** (page 210)

Aneeb Hendricks: **Be yourself** (page 215)

~ Each of you rehearse reading your piece on your own – aloud, but quietly, so as not to disturb anyone else.

~ When you are all ready, each read your piece to the other five.

~ Say whether you like the piece or not, and whether you think it is well-written or not.

Teacher involvement:

Move from group to group, guiding where necessary. As the groups are large, there is no real need for a full feedback session.

Instead, set homework, to be done on a single sheet of paper: each student to write her/his own 'I am me' piece, being as honest and frank as possible.

When these pieces are handed in, read through them all, without making any marks on the paper. Without making any comment about their quality, pin, say, ten of them on the classroom noticeboard for everyone to read at their leisure.

In the next lesson, ask the class which they liked and why.

Since when is 'gay' a swearword?

This starts off as *an individual exercise*. Read this paragraph on your own:

Some gay young people have a hard time coping with prejudices that still persist in our society. Some people still apply a stereotype of what a gay person is. Check yourself:

~ Do you have such a stereotype of what a gay person is?

~ Do you know any gay people?

~ Do they have their own individual personalities or do they all fit the stereotype?

If you are gay:

- ~ Are you out to other people?
- ~ If not, do you join in and pretend-laugh at the anti-gay jokes?
- ~ Or do you try to counter people's stereotyping of all gay people?

When you have digested that, come together *in groups of four*. Appoint a facilitator from among the group, and let the facilitator ask the above questions of the group. If you are gay, you may be ready to come out to these three people, but you don't need to feel obliged to – you can continue your pretence to be straight.

After a brief discussion, let each one quickly prepare one of these four pieces. When you are all ready, read the pieces *in this order*:

- 1 Emma Mostert: **He can never know** (page 178)
- 2 Jessica Mugambe: **Eight letters. Three words.** (page 216)
- 3 Ben Albertyn: **No chicken's apology** (page 211)
- 4 Tim Hardwick: **I am me** (page 201)

Now try answering these questions in your group of four:

- ~ Which is the most sympathetically written, and why do you say that?
- ~ Which is the most sensible, and why?
- ~ Which piece gives the position or the dilemma of the young gay person best, most effectively? Why?

Come together as a class for a teacher-led discussion.

Teacher involvement:

Handled sensitively, this could lead to a very worthwhile class discussion. Lay down the ground rules beforehand:

- ~ No bad-mouthing
- ~ No accusations or outing of anyone
- ~ No belittling anyone
- ~ No defending bigotry with further bigotry

Talking about women

On your own, read these two pieces with the same title:

- Kathleen Dey: **A woman's place** (page 68)
Hannah Fagan: **A woman's place** (page 221)

Then get into pairs, and exchange your thoughts about the two pieces, especially concerning these three issues:

- ~ How different are they in content?

- ~ What does each say about a woman's place?
- ~ What do you like or dislike about the way each of them is written?

Teacher involvement:

It is a matter of reading the two pieces carefully yourself, and then moving among the pairs, and directing their thoughts if they are straying down non-productive paths.

You could have a class feedback session, in which the various threads the students offer can be pulled together into a coherent summing-up.

Death before birth?

Individual work:

- ~ Read these two poems:

Karabo Bogoshi: **Down the birth canal** (page 135)

Samantha Solomons: **Requiem for a young poet** (page 129)

- ~ Establish what a 'requiem' is. Google will help you.
- ~ What exactly is going on in these two pieces? Write a careful analysis of each, in a little less than a page.
- ~ What do you imagine might have prompted these poets to tackle these issues in this way?

Teacher involvement:

Students could hand in their analyses in class. Without identifying the writers, read a few at random to the class, and discuss the issues raised in each. Make it clear that the aim is not to be critical of the writers but to debate the issues raised. Perhaps you could then privately read all the pieces, and offer a brief comment of encouragement. I wouldn't give these pieces marks. Remarks, but not marks.

Family matters!

Divide the class into *four groups of equal size*, and call them A, B, C and D.

~ Sit in small tight circles around the hall or outside or (if no other venue is available) in the classroom.

~ Appoint three readers in each group (call them 1, 2 and 3), and give them a minute to prepare to read the following pieces.

~ Reader 1 reads Piece 1, Reader 2 reads Piece 2, and Reader 3 reads Piece 3):

Group A: 1 David Lan: **A sad and tired fire** (page 11)
2 Wilhelm L Hahn: **That Wednesday morning** (page 19)
3 Trevor Lubbe: **the burglar** (page 33)

Group B: 1 Debbie Lansdowne: **'Meet my folks'** (page 54)
2 Peter Terry: **Extract from: Wandering thoughts of an unhappy Minstrel** (page 21)
3 Carolyn Esser: **You weren't there** (page 110)

Group C: 1 Sunita Ramjee: **Perfect moment** (page 94)
2 Sinalo Dlanga: **Phone call** (page 187)
3 Caitlin Tonkin: **How do you find me?** (page 191)

Group D: 1 Salma Khan: **TADA – Teenagers Against Daddy's Aspirations** (page 204)
2 Ben Albertyn: **No chicken's apology** (page 211)
3 Simon Pickering: **The screaming bush** (page 156)

When you have finished all three readings, check if there was something you didn't catch and, if so, ask the reader to re-read. After that, discuss the following, perhaps with the reader leading the discussion in each case:

There are so many things that could be said about family.

~ What does each of these three pieces say about family?

~ Do they image good/bad, working/dysfunctional, happy/unhappy families?

~ How has the writer tackled the subject-matter? Is it fair? Is it funny? Is it realistic?

~ What comments do you want to make about the quality of the writing?

After the discussions, *come together as a class* for a teacher-led feedback session. The teacher will ask each group to offer, say, two important points about family that emerged from your discussion.

Teacher involvement:

Move around from group to group, listening in to their reading or discussion. You should be a sympathetic unobtrusive presence: do not take over the discussion and 'teach'. This is their session, not yours.

But, whatever you do, don't see these group sessions as an opportunity to sit at your desk and catch up on some marking, or

prepare for your next lesson ... that's not doing your job. Your focus must be with the students in this particular exploration of writing.

You will lead the general feedback session, as indicated above. Try to link the various points made, so that the session has a satisfying coherence, rather than disparate items left dangling and therefore not a fulfilling session. Students should leave feeling they've got their teeth into something and made some sense of it all; you should help them feel that by your pulling the threads together.

This land is our land

In pairs, read these three very different pieces of writing:

Faisal Kaka: **African touchdown** (page 72)

Simon Pickering: **The screaming bush** (page 156)

Kelda van Heerden: **Untitled** (It was one of those ...) (page 158)

Talk to one another about the following things:

- ~ How strong an impression of the African countryside, the wide-open veld, do you get from each piece?
- ~ From your possibly superficial knowledge of Europe, could any of these pieces be set in a European country? Which piece, and why? Or none, and why not?
- ~ In each of the three pieces, to what extent has the writer found the right way to communicate the sense of 'Africa'?
- ~ Would any or all of these pieces lend themselves to being filmed? Why or why not?

Then, *all come together as a class* for a teacher-led feedback session.

Teacher involvement:

This is quite a sophisticated assignment, so you may be kept busy as you move among the pairs. Try to assist the students to focus on:

- ~ the kind of landscape: is it lush with vegetation or arid and dry, well-contoured or flat
- ~ the atmosphere created: dreamy? stifling? changeable as the location changes?
- ~ the kind of vocabulary used by the writer; even the kind of sentences

Lead the feedback session around these issues. Don't dismiss anyone's opinion out of hand. Explore what it is they are wanting to say. Positive feedback is what is needed, though it should not be unthinking: if you say everything everyone says is 'Brilliant!', that ends up being unproductive.



Getting to know you

A solitary exercise. Silently read through two of the longest pieces in the anthology:

Stephen Walker: **Mbuso** (page 82)

Phuluso Mawela: **Phuluso – my story** (page 223)

Write a long paragraph about each of the following:

- ~ By the end of the story, how well do you know the name-character? (You could look up the word ‘eponymous’, even though you’re not likely to use it often.)
- ~ What sort of a personality does the *writer* seem to have, in your opinion?
- ~ Could the effectiveness of the story have been achieved if it were shorter? In other words, has the writer matched the form to the content, the ‘how’ to the ‘what’?

Teacher involvement:

Don’t sit at your desk, doing other work. Quietly wander up and down the aisles, being available to students who may want to ask you something about the stories. That means that you need to be familiar with the two pieces before setting this exercise!

Get the students to hand in their paragraphs – perhaps in the next lesson, having finished them off as homework. Read through their work. Perhaps call upon a few students to read their work to the class (always ask them if they would like to; don’t make them!). Refer to them as ‘among the more interesting’ responses, not ‘the best’.

In this case, don’t worry too much about the correctness of language, spelling, punctuation, and so on. You’re after what the student has *thought*.

Where to from here?

Work in pairs. In each of these two pieces, a young woman does something extraordinary.

Each take one of these pieces and read it to your partner.

Kelda van Heerden: **Untitled** (It was one of those ...) (page 158)

Marianne Thesen-Law: **Untitled** (I cursed my mother ...) (page 206)

- ~ Engage one another in a conversation about what is right and what is wrong about the action that the young woman takes.
- ~ Does either character arouse your sympathy for her dilemma?
- ~ Take an imaginative leap: what would you have done in their situation?
- ~ Has the writer made sense of what she does?
- ~ What about the writing interests you?
- ~ Take another imaginative leap, and answer the question posed at the head of this section. If you feel like it, write the next chapter in the story of one of the two young women.

Then *come together as a class* for a teacher-led feedback session.

Teacher involvement:

Listen in on as many of these conversations as possible. Get an impression of the quality of the students' appreciation of the two pieces of writing.

Lead a general feedback by asking many members of the class to give a response to one of the questions posed.

This should give a range of opinions/thoughts/attitudes. Use this to indicate to students how wide-open writing can sometimes be to differing responses and reactions.

In the next lesson, ask if anyone did write the 'next chapter'. Ask if they would like to read it to the class, or if they would let you read it to the class.

All to do with writing

Get into *groups of eight*, and then *divide into four pairs*, called A, B, C and D. Pair A works on task 1 below, pair B works on task 2, C on 3, D on 4:

Pair A Task 1: Read:

Chris Honey: **Poetry ain't easy** (page 137)

Ross Hofmeyr: **Toolbox** (page 136)

These two poems relate to poetry in general. Between the two of you, decide to what extent you agree with the thoughts these two poets have about poetry.

Pair 2 Task 2: Read:

Catherine Belling: **His coy mistress replies** (page 67)

Jan van Zyl Smit: **To his university's Transformation Forum** (page 122)

Use Google and your poetry anthology to do the detective work to discover the poem these two pieces allude to. An allusion is a reference, here in literature, to a previous work by somebody else. When you have found the original poem and poet, read the poem. How clever have Catherine Belling and Jan van Zyl Smit been in creating their 'versions'?

Pair 3 Task 3: Read:

Katie Stofberg: **1795-1821** (page 227)

The birth and death dates of an English poet. Use Google and any other reference books to find out as much as you can about this young poet. What was he trained as? What was his one burning ambition? Where did he die, and why there? Where, specifically, was he buried? Whom did he leave behind?

Pair 4 Task 4: Read:

Jesse Stevens: **Charlotte** (page 226)

Google 'Charlotte novelist' and see what comes up. Put together a brief 'potted biography' of this writer. Then write very brief notes on the other writers mentioned in Jesse Stevens's piece. Do you like his treatment of his subject-matter? Why or why not?

All come together as a class for a teacher-led feedback session.

Teacher involvement:

Listen in on as many pairs as you can. Let them make their own discoveries: don't short-circuit the exercise by spoon-feeding them the answers.

In the feedback session, depending on the size of your class, ask as many of the pairs as possible to give the others a brief account of their task and how they worked on it.

For homework, ask the class to go through the other tasks, i.e. the ones they did not work on in class. Then quiz them in the next lesson on what they found out.

What makes a short story a short story?

As a class, listen to the teacher go through the following:

The great South African short-story writer and critic Professor Njabulo Ndebele says a short story needs the following elements:

~ a setting: it must take place somewhere, even if that is inside a character's mind
~ conflict: a clash of wills, personalities, ideas, ideologies, leading to a climax and a resolution

- ~ credible characterisation: the people must be believable in what they say and do
- ~ a narrative point of view: who is telling the story; what kind of narrator is operating?
- ~ language that is true, accurate and appropriate to its context
- ~ time: over what period of time is the story told? and how is time manipulated?

One further point about the short story to consider is this. Is a 'personal memoir', a recounting of something from the writer's life, also eligible to be called 'a short story'?

Now *divide into four groups*. Each group appoints three people (call them 1, 2 and 3) to read the three prose pieces allocated to them. Then, after you have heard the three pieces, decide which qualify as 'a short story'.

Group A:

- 1 Errol Lai King: **Jigsaw** (page 173)
- 2 Sharon Green: **The audition** (page 177)
- 3 Amy Jephtha; **The affair at Number 14** (page 165)

Group B:

- 1 Francis de Satgé: **The Interahamwe of Mbekweni** (page 194)
- 2 Christian Botha: **Talk circled about the room** (page 219)
- 3 John Diseko: **Having come this far, there is no turning back** (page 126)

Group C:

- 1 Caryl Perfect: **The farrowing of the pig** (page 98)
- 2 Andy Foose: **To tell a story** (page 59)
- 3 Dan Pillay: **Tuesday morning in the city** (page 69)

Group D:

- 1 Charles Rom: **Of cabbages and kings** (page 13)
- 2 Gregory Booysen: **Dogs of war** (page 192)
- 3 Onele Mfeketo: **The betrayal** (page 142)

Then *come together as a class* for a teacher-led feedback session.

Teacher involvement:

For the lead-in initial section of the exercise, be sure you are familiar with Njabulo Ndebele's thoughts about the short story. See 'Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction' in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (COSAW, Fordsburg, 1991, p. 31; reissued by University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006); see also p. xi ff. in the Introduction to *Being Here: modern short stories from southern Africa* compiled by Robin Malan (David Philip, Claremont, 1994).

In the feedback session, ask each group to give a consolidated account of their thoughts about their three pieces of writing and why they applied the label 'short story' and/or why they did not.

Of course, encourage them all to read all the other pieces of writing in their own time.

Extended Exercises

These are only a few examples. Teachers will be able to find any number of other, similar possibilities by flipping through the anthology and spotting useful connections or juxtapositions between pieces and suggest them to students as the raw material for imaginative work involving acting, art, dance, movement, music, singing. Teachers can offer to pop in on rehearsals and give a guiding hand, but the exercises are eminently suitable to student-devised and –directed work.

Family

In *groups of eight*, re-look at the pieces collected under ‘family’:

David Lan: **A sad and tired fire** (page 11)

Wilhelm L Hahn: **That Wednesday morning** (page 19)

Trevor Lubbe: **the burglar** (page 33)

Debbie Lansdowne: **‘Meet my folks’** (page 54)

Peter Terry: **Extract from: Wandering thoughts of an unhappy Minstrel** (page 21)

Carolyn Esser: **You weren’t there** (page 110)

Sunita Ramjee: **Perfect moment** (page 94)

Sinalo Dlanga: **Phone call** (page 187)

Caitlin Tonkin: **How do you find me?** (page 191)

Salma Khan: **TADA – Teenagers Against Daddy’s Aspirations** (page 204)

Ben Albertyn: **No chicken’s apology** (page 211)

Simon Pickering: **The screaming bush** (page 156)

Select a number of these pieces and devise a presentation weaving the pieces (or extracts from them) into other genres, e.g. dance, music.

When it makes up a satisfying all-round representation of ‘the family’, give it a punchy title and show it to the rest of the class, or even to another class who may have worked on the same material.

Men in uniform

In *groups of about six*, use the following pieces as the basis for an *all-male* (or *all-female*) presentation in acting, dance and song.

Arrange the material to provide switches in mood and intensity. Don't shy away from comedy.

- ~ Archie Swanson: **Mapuza – the police** (page 43)
- ~ Lee Pope-Ellis: **Speeding 'fine'** (page 132)
- ~ Ian Duncan-Brown: **Thoughts on service** (page 35)
- ~ David Montgomery: **Moment of truth** (page 65)
- ~ G Madikiza: **I have fears** (page 86)
- ~ Richard Leibbrandt: **Homecoming** (page 90)

Love

In *groups of eight*, re-look at the pieces collected under 'Love is a many-splendoured thing':

- Elizabeth Spilhaus: **To Philip** (page 21)
- Beryl Gendall: **Love** (page 53)
- Margot Pienaar: **That ... love issue** (page 69)
- Raymond Moleli: **Goodbye** (page 128)
- Jaco van der Merwe: **Love poem of a dumped jock** (page 148)
- Lee-Ann Rhoodie: **You and I** (page 163)

Select a number of these pieces and devise a presentation weaving the pieces (or extracts from them) into other genres, e.g. dance, music.

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Street encounter

In *a group of about six*, re-read:

- ~ Dan Pillay: **Tuesday morning in the city** (page 69)

This is almost written in dialogue form already. Adapt it slightly to make a short play. Cast it appropriately (Indian boy, white American girl, white and black policemen, etc.), and direct it imaginatively, with suitable sound-effects and music,

Show it to the rest of the class. If they like it, develop it some more, and give it a wider showing.

Final words

From the above exercises, it is clear how crucial it is for both teacher and students to be engaged with, actively involved in and committed to these explorations into writing by the students' peers.

I stress again that the teacher must be *inside* the students' work with them, especially the group work, and should not absent herself/himself and 'leave them to it'. I have heard of some teachers who even physically leave the classroom and go and have a cup of tea in the staffroom. That's iniquitous. And unprofessional.

There is a huge amount of insight and experience to be gained from this kind of work. Teachers learn about how their students engage with one another and grow in their respect for one another's opinions and feelings. With goodwill all round, teachers will learn to grow in their respect for their students.

The small-group situation is helpful to the more retiring students, battling with issues of self-esteem or confidence: it is much easier to read to three people sitting close to you than to stand at the front of a full classroom and read so that even those in the back of the room can hear you. Also, the able student can be valuable in helping others not quite so well endowed.

Entered into fully and with commitment, this kind of work is a win-win situation for all!

[ends]

[5 385 words]