



The Legend of Mamlambo

Author: Charles Siboto

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The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award
Chapter Book Shortlist

Amiah hates moving. What was her mother thinking, moving them away from Cape Town to this strange little town in Joburg South? Meeting Teedo, a strange kid with even stranger conspiracy theories, doesn't make her feel any better. However, after getting to know him and the rest of the group, she quickly realises there might be some truth to his crazy claims. Something strange really is going on in Spookfontein, as the other kids call the town, and it has something to do with the water tower. Could the legend of Mamlambo, the snake-like water goddess, actually be more than just a story?

- Penguin Random House South Africa

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop text comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Friendship
- Belonging and identity
- Independence
- Perseverance
- Courage
- Loyalty

Before reading the story

- Open the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage the children to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
 - *What do you notice about the cover illustration?*
 - *What does the cover illustration make you think about?*
 - *How does the cover illustration make you feel?*

Created by The Otto Foundation

- What do you like most about the cover illustration?
- Explain that the title of the book is **The legend of Mamlambo**. Ask the children to share their thoughts on the book cover.
 - What kind of book do you think this is going to be, based on the title?
 - What is a **legend**?
 - Have you ever heard of **Mamlambo** before? What have you heard?
 - Who do you think **Mamlambo** is?
 - Who do you think the four children on the cover might be?
 - Where do you think the setting of the book is? What makes you think that?
 - What do you think might happen to the children in this book?
- Read the back cover blurb to the children. Explore how they might change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
 - How does reading the blurb change what you think might happen in the story?

Reading aloud discussion points

Chapter 1: #NewHoodWhoDis?

- What is a **new 'hood**?
- **Amiah** calls the mountain **the stupid mountain**? What is the correct name of the mountain?
- Why does **Amiah** call her mother **Dreshni**?
- Do you think that **Amiah** is fair to her mother when she complains about her? What would you say to **Amiah** if she was your friend and she called you to complain about **Dreshni**?
- In this chapter, **Amiah** briefly mentions **all the stuff that has happened** and says: **It had been good and then, suddenly, it wasn't and here we were**. What do you think has happened?
- **Amiah** considers herself to be **adaptable**. What does it mean to be **adaptable**? Do you think she is **adaptable**? Give reasons for your answer.
- **Amiah** describes their new house as **a bit rundown but cosy**. Give some ideas about what **Amiah** and **Dreshni** could do to make the house nicer.

Chapter 2: Meeting Teedo

- Does Amiah's mother trust Amiah to take care of herself? Why or why not?
- What did Amiah first notice about **Teedo** when she saw him outside the fish-and-chip shop?
- Close your eyes for a few moments and imagine a fish-and-chip shop that **looks good and smells even better**. What smells can you imagine when you think about a fish-and-chip shop?
- When **Teedo** introduces himself to Amiah, he says: **"Everyone calls me Teedo"**. What is his real name?
- At first, Amiah is not too friendly with **Teedo**. How would you respond to meeting a stranger? Would you immediately tell them your name and where you live? Why or why not?

- Amiah is quite a sarcastic character. Do you think you would like to be her friend if you met her? Why or why not?
- What does Amiah ask that makes **Teedo** seem uncomfortable?
- **Teedo** has a nickname for Springfontein. What is it?
- **Teedo** says that he tries to **be cool with everyone and mind his business**. What does this mean?
- What are the **official explanations** for the earth tremors and lightning storms? Does **Teedo** believe the **official explanations**? How do you know this?
- What word does Amiah use to describe **Teedo** and what he has told her about Springfontein? (Weird)

Chapter 3: Weirdness Ensues

- What has happened in the two weeks since Amiah met Teedo outside the fish-and-chip shop?
- Why do you think Amiah does not go to school while her mother goes to work?
- Why is Amiah excited? What is she receiving and how will it help her to **get out and live**?
- Do you think Amiah is feeling better about the move and her mother? Why do you think this?
- What is a **water tower**? What is Teedo's reaction when Amiah tells him she wants to explore the **water tower**?
- Amiah feels annoyed when Teedo tells her that she shouldn't explore the **water tower**. What does this tell you about Amiah's character?
- What does Teedo tell Amiah about the **water tower**?

Chapter 4: Rampai

- Who is **Rampai**?
- Have you heard of **Mamlambo** or a similar mythical creature? What does **Mamlambo** look like and do in the stories you have been told?
- Why does Teedo think that **Rampai** understands the **strange things that happen in this neighbourhood**?
- What was Teedo's introduction to the **dangers in this town**? Describe what happened.
- What is **imphepho** and how is it used to protect against **bad spirits**?
- **Rampai** appears to take the children, especially Teedo, seriously. Is this the reaction you would expect from an adult in this situation? Why or why not?

Chapter 5: Information

- What is the first thing that Amiah noticed about **Romario**?
- Rampai scolds Teedo for the way he greets his friends. Why do you think he does this? How do you think he would expect Teedo to greet his friends?
- What is your first impression of **Romario**? Why do you think this?
- **Romario** explains: **We help people with monster problems and monsters with people problems**. What do you think the **monsters** are?
- What word does Teedo use for **a storm that causes a lot of damage**?
- Rampai explains: **By herself, Mamlambo is simply a force of nature, she isn't good or bad**. What needs to happen in order for Mamlambo to become bad?

- The group decide that they need to **get intel**. What do you think **intel** is short for? What does it mean to **get intel**?
- Do you think **Hannah** is a nice person? What kind of things does she say and do to make you think this?
- Even though Amiah thinks that the group is **weird**, she is drawn to them. What do you think she likes about them?
- What does this expression mean: **These kids didn't let the grass grow under their feet**.

Chapter 6: Uphills and Locks

- Amiah is aware that this is not a normal situation and that the other children are saying and doing strange things. Why do you think she stays with them anyway?
- What does it mean to be **in a pinch**?
- Who does Amiah think are the troublemakers of the group?
- Do you think Amiah felt surprised at how easy it was to climb over the fence and into **Spring Water's** property? Explain your answer.
- What is a **bolt cutter**? Teedo reaches into his backpack and **casually pulled out a bolt cutter**. What does this tell you about Teedo and his friends?

Chapter 7: The Caretaker

- Something happens that makes Hannah turn pale. Even Romario begins **muttering to himself under his breath**. Why do you think the friends are suddenly so nervous?
- In what way does what is happening feel like Cape Town to Amiah?
- The darkening sky **looked ominous**. The word **ominous** describes a sign that something unpleasant and harmful is about to happen. Have you ever been in a situation that seemed ominous? How did it make you feel?
- When the three children are confronted by the caretaker, **Matume**, Hannah feels **conflicted between running away and staying with her friends**. She stays and tells **Matume** that Teedo is up the ladder. What does this say about Hannah's character?
- What is the **entirely crazy** thing that Amiah notices as they reach the gate?
- When does the storm stop?

Chapter 8: Matume

- Why does Amiah feel frustrated?
- When Teedo mentions Mamlambo to Matume, his **face twitches slightly and then he frowns**. What does this reaction tell you about what he does or does not know about what is happening with the water tower?
- What does **some things are better left alone** mean? Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give an example of a situation where the better thing to do was to ignore it or forget about it.
- What does a **scowl** look like? Turn to a classmate and show them a **scowl**. How does a person who is **scowling** feel?

Chapter 9: Around Back

- What kind of person is Romario? What makes you think this?

- The five senses are: sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. Romario explains that Teedo has a **sixth sense**. What is a **sixth sense**? What is Teedo's **sixth sense**?
- Do you think Amiah likes Teedo as more than a friend? Why do you think this?
- What is special about Teedo? How is this connected to the friends' search for Mamlambo?
- Amiah thinks: **If you had common sense, this is the time that you leave this whole thing alone and go home.** She thinks this in **Dreshni's voice**. Why does this thought have her mother's voice?
- If you were Amiah would you stay or go home? Why?
- What strange event happens that makes the friends feel **terrified**?
- Describe how the children are hearing Mamlambo's voice.

Chapter 10: Mamlambo

- Hannah and Amiah have a very different reaction to Teedo and Romario when Mamlambo begins to talk to them. Describe their different reactions. Does this fit with the way you understand and know the characters? Why or why not?
- Explain what **telepathy** means by using examples from the story.
- What other names is Mamlambo known by?
- What is a **tentacle**? Amiah describes the feeling of Mamlambo in her head as having **tentacles**. How does this description help you to understand how Amiah is feeling?
- Mamlambo says to the friends: **These are not shallow waters that you are attempting to swim in.** What does she mean by this?
- Why does Amiah wish that Matume would appear again?
- What does it mean to hold something **hostage**?
- Amiah refers to Mamlambo as a **monster** and then immediately changes her wording to **mystical being**. Why do you think she is suddenly worried about the words she is using to describe Mamlambo?

Chapter 11: Unpacking

- Amiah is very aware of **how normal everything looked**. Why do you think she notices this?
- What does **it's a vibe** mean? Is being **a vibe** a good thing or a bad thing?
- Do you think Springfontein is a safe place to live? Why or why not?
- Amiah seems to finally understand that monsters are real. How can you tell that the other three friends have dealt with similar situations before? What does Hannah say that shows they have previously tried to ask grown-ups for help?
- Why does Romario **jokingly** say: "**Don't drink the tap water**"? Explain the joke.
- Do you think that Hannah's father is involved in the mystery in some way? Give reasons for your answers.
- Romario tells Amiah about a missing girl. What neighbourhood did she go missing from?
- What is **Street Fighter**?
- Hannah's house is **in the nicest part of Springfontein**. What does this tell you about Hannah's family and her father?

Chapter 12: Teedo

- Teedo is **brooding**. What does **brooding** mean?
- What kind of relationship does Teedo have with his mother?

- Why did Hannah approach Teedo and Romario the first time? Did they believe her story immediately, or did they think she was lying?
- What does it mean to be **stalked**? Who is **stalking** Hannah?
- **Gayle** and the bird are revealed to be **the witch's familiars**. What does this mean?
- The word **swindle** means to trick or cheat. Does this give you a clue about what kind of person Hannah's father is? Does it make you think that he is involved in the Mamlambo problem?

Chapter 13: Dinner with Mom

- Amiah's **mind was just as messy as her bedroom**. What do you think this means? Why do you think Amiah feels this way? Have you ever felt this way? How did you try to sort out your thoughts and make good decisions?
- Why is Amiah surprised to hear her mother call her for dinner?
- Amiah is excited to hear her mother's news about Spring Water. Do you think she is interested in how her mother is enjoying work? Or does Amiah have another reason for wanting her to talk about work?
- Who is **Mr Fischer**? How does Dreshni's boss describe **Mr Fischer**?
- Why do you think Dreshni wants to meet Amiah's friends?

Chapter 14: Romario

- **Tonight was the night!** What are the friends planning on doing?
- Amiah feels the **opposite of excited**. What feeling is the **opposite of excited**?
- Amiah needs to **pull herself toward herself**. What does this mean?
- Why does Teedo have a new backpack? What happened to his old backpack?
- Romario tells Amiah that he was born in Brazil but moved to Springfontein as a baby when his **dad landed a gig at Spring Water**. What does **landed a gig** mean?
- How did Romario get his name?
- How do Romario's interests differ from his father's interests?
- Teedo calls Romario a **tech wiz**. What does it mean to be a **tech wiz**?
- The friends often tease one another. Do you think the teasing hurts their feelings? Is it okay to tease friends and family? Why or why not?

Chapter 15: Spring Water

- When the friends get inside the Spring Water's gate, they find it is **deserted**. Choose a word that explains what **deserted** means: busy, empty or dusty.
- How is the office park belonging to Spring Water different to the actual water plant?
- Why do you think Teedo wanted to do the investigation after sunset?
- What is a **CCTV camera**? What plan did Romario make to ensure the friends do not get caught by the **CCTV cameras** in the building?
- Amiah thinks Romario's plan to get around the **CCTV cameras** is **rubbish**. Why does Amiah think this?
- Do the friends know what they are looking for? What do you think they should be looking for? What clues would you try to find if you were in the office with them?
- What happens that changes the whole plan?
- When the friends realise that the men are holding a child, the **grim reality hit like a tidal wave**. What is the **grim reality**?

Chapter 16: The Ritual

- Why do you think Amiah has changed her mind about **creeping quietly**?
- When the friends peek through the door and see the scene in the room, Amiah thinks: **It looks like something out of a horror movie, wishing she was watching one and not actually being in one**. How do you think Amiah is feeling at this moment?
- The friends learn that the men have struck **a deal** with Mamlambo. Do you think that the people of Springfontein would approve of the deal with Mamlambo if they knew about it? Why or why not?
- Was it a surprise when Hannah's father's identity is revealed? Why or why not?
- Do you think that Hannah should be judged for her father's actions?
- How does Mamlambo's heart affect the children? Does it affect the grown men in the same way? Why do you think this is?

Chapter 17: Unbound

- This chapter is titled **Unbound**. What does **unbound** mean?
- Mamlambo explains that she **has to take this child's mind** and that she **can't help it**. How does this make you feel about Mamlambo?
- When Hannah's father sees her, he doesn't go after her. What did you expect Hannah's father to do? Why?
- Teedo sprays Hannah's father with **pepper spray**. What is **pepper spray**? Describe what it might feel like to be sprayed with **pepper spray**.
- Mamlambo usually takes children's minds. However, she seems to listen to and obey Teedo. Why do you think this is?
- How can Teedo and his friends free Mamlambo? What do they need to do?

Chapter 18: Teedo 2.0

- Describe how the friends rescue the girl. How do you think the friends were feeling after rescuing the girl?
- Earlier in the story, Romario told Amiah about a girl who went missing in **Towerby**. Do you think Elizabeth is that missing girl? Why or why not?
- Hannah finds out that her father is alive, but has been doing bad things. How would you feel if you were Hannah?

Chapter 19: To the Tower

- What does it mean to have a **heart-to-heart**? Why does Amiah feel bad that there is no time right now to have a **heart-to-heart** with Hannah about her dad?
- How has Romario fixed his bike?
- Amiah realises the importance of learning Dreshni's phone number. What happens to make her think that she should memorise it?
- Romario thinks that Elizabeth's kidnappers used **chloroform**. What is **chloroform** and what does it do?
- While Teedo is on the phone with the police, Romario tells Elizabeth what to say to them once they arrive. What instructions does he give her? What part of the mystery has been solved?

- Amiah thinks Springfontein feels **sinister** at night. What does **sinister** mean? Do you think the only **sinister** thing happening is the Mamlambo mission? Why or why not?
- Does Mamlambo know who Hannah is? What does she call her?
- Mamlambo explains why she cannot **knock Matume out**. What does it mean to **knock someone out**? Why can Mamlambo not **knock Matume out**?
- What does Romario mean when he says: "**Cool, now we're all admins of the mental WhatsApp group.**"?

Chapter 20: Inkanyamba

- Why is Amiah curious about Spring Water's weak security?
- Matume appears suddenly, as if he knows something is happening. How do you think he knows this?
- How do you think Amiah feels as Teedo, Romario, and Hannah all fight to keep Matume off the ladder?
- Mamlambo appears out of the water as a **massive serpent**. What animal can you compare a **serpent** to?
- Amiah hears a **warm, pleasant voice in her head**. How is this voice different from the voice she heard before? What do you think has changed?

Chapter 21: Mother of Waters

- Summarise the events from when Teedo, Romario, and Hannah fight with Matume to when Amiah wakes up.
- Amiah meets Mamlambo for the second time. How is Mamlambo different this time?
- Why is it a good thing that Mamlambo will stay in Springfontein?

Chapter 22: Teedo 3.0

- Do you think it would be fair for Hannah's mother to be angry with her? Why or why not?
- What do the police find when they search the Spring Water offices?
- Hannah finally explains what she saw in the video of her father. Describe what was in the video.
- How do Hannah's friends comfort her?
- Do you think that Amiah and Teedo feel the same way about each other? Why do you think this?
- Why does Teedo say **thank you**? Who or what is he thanking? Why does he feel thankful?
- Would you be happy to have a strong connection to the spiritual world like Teedo? Why or why not?

Epilogue

- What is an **epilogue**? (the concluding section at the end of a novel that brings a closing to the story)
- Amiah feels nervous starting at her new school, but she has an advantage. What is it?
- What words does Dreshni use to describe the weather on the night the friends freed Mamlambo? What does it tell you about how the friends and even the police are describing the events of that night?

- Why is it significant that Amiah is sitting next to **Gayle Ntaka**? How does this ending make you feel?

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Explore with your children:
 - Who would you rather be in this story, Amiah, Teedo, Hannah or Romario? Why?
 - What do you think will happen next for Amiah?
 - Do you think that there are more mysteries for the Spookfontein Rangers to solve in Springfontein?
 - What did you like or dislike about this story?
 - Has anything that happened in this book ever happened to you?
 - What is something you have learnt from this story?
 - If the author asked you what could be improved in the book, what would you say?
 - What would you tell your friends about this book?

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Brainstorm the various locations mentioned in the story with your class. Ask them to draw a map of Springfontein. They should include at least four locations on their map.
- Watch this YouTube video with your class: [Mamlambo: Goddess of the River](#)
 - How does learning about the origin of the myth of Mamlambo help you understand the book, The Legend of Mamlambo, better?
 - How is Mamlambo in the video different to the way that Mamlambo is described in the book?
 - The video explains Aphrodite (Greeks) and Venus (Romans) and compares them to Mamlambo. Discuss how their stories are similar and what they represent to people.
- Brainstorm with your class about how Gayle Ntaka became a witch's familiar. Ask your class to use the ideas shared to write a paragraph about Gayle Ntaka's story. Ntaka

Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.

CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

Listening and speaking

Grade 4

- Predict what a text could be about
- Identify characters
- Name characters correctly
- Listen for main message and specific details
- Describe events
- Identify specific details
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Express feelings in relation to events
- Express thoughts and feelings about a story/characters/setting or theme of a text
- Relate to own life experiences
- Answer oral questions based on the text
- Participate in group discussions
- Take turns to speak
- Share ideas, opinions and participate in the discussion
- Ask relevant questions
- Keep to the topic
- Maintain discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 4

- Pre reading: Make predictions for the title and cover of the text
- Predict from title and discuss related themes/content
- Make predictions
- Identify and explain central events
- Identify and comment on the plot, setting and characters
- Discuss characters
- Give reasons for the actions of characters
- Give and explain own feelings about the text
- Express emotional response to text read
- Identify and discuss values in the text
- Use reading strategies: Make predictions and use contextual cues
- Use contextual cues to make meaning
- Discuss message/moral of the story
- Reflect on text read
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Use reading comprehension strategies: Visualisation and making connections
- Determine the impact of visual techniques
- Discuss new vocabulary from the text
- Understand vocabulary

Listening and speaking

Grade 5

- Make predictions
- Describe events
- Identify and explain cause and effect
- Comment on social, moral and cultural values
- Ask critical questions
- Express and justify own opinion with reasons
- Use information from the text in response to questions
- Identify main ideas and specific details
- Identify central idea, plot, setting and characters
- Relate text content to own life
- Discuss and give own opinion
- Express thoughts and feelings about the storyline
- Participate in group discussions
- Ask relevant questions
- Justify own opinion
- Maintain discussion
- Take turns to speak
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 5

- Pre reading: Predict from title and pictures and discuss related themes/content
- Comment on choice of pictures in text
- Share ideas and offers opinion using speculation
- Use reading strategies: Contextual clues and prior knowledge
- Discuss characters
- Give reason for actions of characters
- Discuss the central idea, plot, characters and setting
- Discuss cause and effect in the story
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express own feelings and opinion
- Identify and explain how central events and characters relate to own life
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Discuss new vocabulary from text

Listening and speaking

Grade 6

- Predict what will happen in a story
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Identify themes
- Discuss characters
- Discuss plot, conflict and setting
- Discuss messages in text
- Discuss responses to text
- Discuss social, moral and cultural values in text
- Relate ideas to own life experiences
- Ask relevant questions and respond appropriately
- Stay on topic
- Explain logically
- Interact positively during group discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 6

- Pre reading: Make predictions based on title and/or graphics and related themes/content
- Make predictions about the text
- Ask questions about the text
- Make inferences about the text
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify and explain the central idea
- Interpret and discuss the text
- Discuss plot, theme, setting and characters
- Discuss suspense and twist
- Critically discusses cultural and social values in the text
- Relate events and characters to own life
- Show understanding of the text and relationship to own life
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express emotional response to texts read
- Identify different perspectives
- Give own perspective based on evidence in the text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Invent or describe preferred results or endings

Listening and speaking

Grade 7

- Make predictions from cover page and blurb
- Confirm predictions
- Identify main and supporting ideas
- Make inferences
- Share ideas and experiences to show understanding of concepts
- Share ideas and opinions
- Identify characters
- Identify main and supporting ideas
- Use appropriate language
- Answer questions

Reading and viewing

Grade 7

- Make predictions
- Make connections
- Identify key features of a text such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, theme and message
- Discuss main ideas and themes
- Discuss fact or opinion in text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words
- Infer meaning and conclusions
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify formal/informal language in the text
- Answer questions based on text