



## One Step at a Time

Author: Gregor Maqoma

Illustrator: Elizabeth Pulles

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The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award

Chapter Book Shortlist

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma knows he is different. He is a descendant from a royal chief who fought for justice. 'Happy' is his middle name. He has rhythm in his every step. He has big dreams! He follows his passions and chooses to dance despite growing up in turbulent and challenging times, and he is able to shine! Take this journey with multi-award-winning dancer and choreographer Gregory Maqoma as he reminds us that our dreams can take us on extraordinary adventures.

- Jacana Media

### 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

- Culture
- Family/Parents
- Community
- Growing up
- Determination
- Creativity
- Friendship
- History

### 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?*
  - *What do you like most about the cover illustration?*

- Explain that the title of the book is **One Step at a Time**. 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 do you think you might know about the boy on the cover?*
  - *What do you think might happen to the boy in this book?*
  - *Who might the boy meet during the story?*
  - *What do you notice about how the boy is moving on the cover?*
- 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 – What’s in a name?

- Read Chapter 1 to the children and ask them to share their responses.
  - *Why was Gregory’s mother impatient with him?*
  - *Why do you think Gregory’s father makes him practice saying **G-rrr-eg-orry!** and not **Glegory** or **Gwegory**?*
  - *What was the letter which Gregory finds difficult to pronounce correctly in his name? How does it make him feel that he finds this challenging?*
  - *What does it mean to have an African name? If you have an African name, what is it?*
  - *Why do you think Gregory called Rice Crispies “...**the talking breakfast food**...”?*
  - *Gregory dreamt of being an adult and being able to do whatever he wants to do. What do you dream of doing as an adult?*

### Chapter 2 – Stamping and stomping

- In Chapter 2 Gregory and Vincent learnt about gumboot dancing.
  - *Gregory explained to his mother that music makes him want to “...**stand tall like a tree, or scrunch up small like a snail...look at what my hands and feet are saying!**” Describe how your body feels when you hear music that makes you want to move.*
  - *Gregory and his friend Vincent went to watch the gumboot dancers. What do you know about gumboot dancers?*
  - *Watching the gumboot dancers gave Gregory **goosebumps**. What are **goosebumps**? What else can give people **goosebumps**?*
  - *Mr Makeba explained to Gregory and Vincent that gumboot dancing was used as a way to communicate without speaking in the mines. What other types of communication can you think of that do not use speaking?*
  - *Gregory found it scary that people were being treated so badly under apartheid laws. Mr Makeba explained “**Apartheid has made many unfair rules in South Africa**”. What unfair apartheid laws have you learnt about previously?*

### Chapter 3 – Trouble on the soccer field

- In Chapter 3 Gregory’s father came to watch him play in a soccer match.

- When Gregory says his father is coming to watch the soccer game, Vincent replied: **"Oh boy, I hope he behaves"**. Why do you think Vincent says this? What would it mean for parents or caregivers to **behave** when they come to watch a soccer match?
- Gregory's coach described the match as **"...a friendly match..."**. What does it mean for a sports match to be **friendly**?
- How do you think it feels to have to participate in sports which you do not enjoy?
- Why do you think Gregory **wished he could disappear** when his father shouted **"You're supposed to kick the ball, not dance with it!"**
- Have you ever had a moment where you wished you could disappear? Share with the class what happened?
- Gregory's father was **stiff and silent** as they walked home. What do you think Gregory's father's body language was communicating?
- Do you think it was fair of Gregory's father to make him wash the team's dirty socks? Why or why not?
- Gregory's father threatens to **knock his ears together** if he stands in front of the TV. What does it mean if someone says **"I'll have to knock your ears together"**? Is this how a parent should speak to their child? What could Gregory's father have said to him instead?

#### Chapter 4 – Cool moves

- In Chapter 4 Gregory gets his report card, learns some facts from Chappies wrappers and sees Michael Jackson on TV for the first time.
  - Gregory's **heart was thumping** as his father opened his report card. Why do you think Gregory's **heart was thumping**? What experiences have you had where you felt like your **heart was thumping**?
  - When Gregory went to the shop to get milk and bread, Mr Tshabalala gave him two Chappies. Gregory learnt some new facts from the Chappies wrapper. What facts did Gregory learn about the octopus, crocodile and giraffe? What interesting fact about an animal can you share with a friend?
  - Gregory was watching TV and saw Michael Jackson dancing. Why do you think Gregory was so excited to see Michael Jackson dancing? Why was it especially important to Gregory that Michael Jackson was black? Can you name any other famous black singers and dancers? Who is your favourite black singer and dancer?

#### Chapter 5 – A chief in the family

- In Chapter 5 Gregory's Gogo came to visit and shared some stories and family history with him.
  - Do you know the story of **Tselane and the Giant**? (Tselane was kidnapped by a giant and rescued by villagers who tricked the giant with snakes) If you know this story, share it with the class.
  - Why did Gregory's Gogo feel it is important for him to know more about African history, rather than British history? Why do you think the apartheid government did not teach children about African history?
  - Gregory's ancestor from the Eastern Cape has the praise name **Jongumsobomvu**.

- What does it mean to have a praise name? What does **Jongumsobomvu** mean?
- **Jongumsobomvu** was sent to prison on Robben Island. Who else do you know of who was sent to prison on Robben Island?
  - **Jongumsobomvu** dreamed of being back with his people and Gregory dreamed about being a dancer. What do you dream about for yourself?
  - Gregory's Gogo reminded him that "**It is what you think of yourself that is important...Not what others think of you.**" Why is it important to remember that it is what you think of yourself that is important, not what others think of you?

## Chapter 6 – The Joy Dancers

- In Chapter 6 Gregory explores different types of music and dancing.
  - Gregory's father enjoyed listening to **jazz** music. What do you know about **jazz** music? What other types of music can you name? What is your favourite type of music?
  - Why do you think Gregory's father did not want him to hum to the music he was playing?
  - Gregory's father **snapped**. What does it mean when someone **snaps**? What kind of behaviour would you expect to see from someone who has **snapped**?
  - Gregory's father told him to "...**stop prancing around...**". What does **prancing around** mean? Why do you think Gregory **prancing around** might make his father angry?
  - Gregory described feeling like "...**those puppets that move because they have strings that are pulled...when I hear music it feels like I have strings tied everywhere. I just have to move.**" What is the name for this special type of puppet? (a marionette) What song makes you want to dance?
  - Look at the illustration of the marching band on pages 56 - 57. What is a marching band? What instruments can you name from this marching band?
  - Gregory told Vincent, "**I'm going to teach the drum majorettes some new steps**" and asked him to help. What is a **drum majorette**? What fun dance move would you encourage a **drum majorette** to use?
  - Gregory and Vincent decided to start a dance group, **The Joy Dancers**. Do you like this name? Why do you like it or not like it? If you started a dance group with a friend what would you call it?
  - Gregory and his friends were practicing their dance steps when Gregory saw his father watching them. Why do you think Gregory worried his father was going to be angry? Were you surprised by Gregory's father saying "**My boy, you are a very good dancer**"? Why or why not? How do you think Gregory felt when his father said these words to him?

## Chapter 7 – No more apartheid

- In Chapter 7 Gregory's community was protesting to bring an end to apartheid.
  - What does it mean if a political situation has become **explosive**?
  - How do you think Gregory and his classmates felt when they heard explosions, shouting and screaming from outside?
  - Do you think Gregory's teacher did the right thing letting the class go home early? Why or why not?

- Why do you think Gregory's classmates teased him for running like a girl? Do you think Gregory made the right choice by running a different route and avoiding the bullies?
- The police used **tear gas** on the crowd. What is **tear gas**? What happened to the people who were sprayed with tear gas?
- Who kept Gregory and Vincent safe during the protest? Where is a safe place in your neighbourhood where you could go if you needed to?

## Chapter 8 – Moving forward

- In Chapter 8 Gregory's dreams of being a dancer started to come true.
  - Why do you think Gregory was so excited to see the advert in the newspaper for young people to try out for a dance school?
  - Why do you think when Gregory and Vincent got to the dance try out Vincent wanted to leave and said "**This is not for us**"?
  - What do you think the letters to Gregory and Vincent from the dance school said?
  - Gregory and Vincent were awarded a **scholarship** to the dance school. What is a **scholarship**? If you won a scholarship, what would you want it to be for?
  - Gregory and Vincent have been very successful in their dance careers and are known for their dance and **choreography** all over the world. What is **choreography**?

## Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Explore with your children:
  - Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked 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

- Share a [video of gumboot dancing](#) with your class. Ask your class to create their own dance which communicates a secret message.
- Use the non-fiction section of your school library to create your own Chappies Did you know? fact sheets with 3 questions and answers. Ask your children to share their new-found facts with one another.
- Research Gregory Maqoma's career with your class. *Where has he performed? Which productions has he choreographed and directed? Which dance theatres has he founded? Where is he now?*

**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