

The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom

By

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Supervisor

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I Flora Dewa (18256300) declare that the thesis titled **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
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- Informed consent/assent,
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- Data storage requirements.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.



F Dewa

November 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents and to my two children. To my mother, Mrs Eusabia Dewa, your fervent prayers, love and encouragement strengthened me through and through. I also dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, Mr Mordecai Dewa who could not live to see this work, but he is the inspiration behind my interest in studying literature for the classroom: as a teacher himself, he read many books to us and recited many poems so beautifully that I became attracted to literature at a young age. To my children, Nenyashadzashe Jameson Bere and Miriam Tinovimbanashe Bere, you are the foremost drive behind this study. I always derive energy and zeal to work from your miraculous presence in my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study endeavoured to refine and broaden the academic conceptualisation of the subtext in classroom literature and to address the dearth of literature on empirical field studies pertaining to the subtext of literature in English for the classroom in Zimbabwe. The subtext is conceptualised in this study as the literary elements in the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), that become subtextual as soon as they elicit a personal, collective, emotional and psychological response from the reader. The subtext in literature is crucial as its latent themes influence the manner in which stereotypical images are transferred to and perceived by learners and teachers in the classroom. However, existent research has focused on desk analyses of isolated themes in selected texts and, therefore, learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes have remained a neglected area. Thus, this study breaks new ground through this field study. The units of analysis include Advanced level (Grade 12) Literature in English learners' and teachers' perceptions of and responses to one of the prescribed literary texts in Zimbabwe, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), a novella written by Valerie Tagwira.

The study was conducted in the Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe, as an exploratory single case study design, which enabled me to conduct an in-depth study of the subtext of literature in English for the classroom. The participants were teachers and learners from the Groove High School, Advanced Level class of 2018-2019. The following research questions were asked to expand the knowledge and understanding of learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of the text: What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?; What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?; and What shared/common experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?

Data were analysed through an eclectic theoretical framework that comprises of literary theories (postcolonialism and psychoanalysis), reading and learner-centred theories and approaches (Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, Reader-Response approach) and African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK). The methodological approach comprised a fusion of participatory art-based methodologies in the form of learners' individually crafted poems and the drawing of symbols, which were based on the written poems (poem-drawings), and conventional qualitative methodologies (semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis).

My main finding in this study was that in the Zimbabwean context, the Hunhu/Ubuntu practice – the capacity in an African context to express interconnectedness, common humanity and communal responsibility (Nussbaum, 2003) – is diminishing in the economy and in society in general because of the over-emphasis on individualism, but Hunhu/Ubuntu was present in the learners' and teachers' intergenerational experiencing of the set-text and of literature in general. My unique contribution is that this study has revealed that the studying of literature represents an intergenerational experience. Crucially, learners and teachers are living human bodies that are connected to a literary body, which is the set-text to which they responded. Literature does not only provide access to language, but also to the experiencing of intergenerational memory that is closely influenced by the environment. Therefore, it is recommended in this study that it is imperative for classroom practice to engage methods and strategies of literary analysis that evoke learners and teachers' individual and collective memories.

NOTE: In Zimbabwe, Literature in English is studied as a separate school subject, which is distinguished from English Language. Throughout the study, a capital 'L' will be used to designate the school subject Literature/ Literature in English. A lower case 'l' will be used to refer to literary texts and to literature in general.

Key words: Subtext, constructivism, art-based methods, intergenerational memory, trauma, literary body, collective unconscious, triggers.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING



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To Whom It May Concern

This is to confirm that Dr Gerhard Genis (staff number: 91321124) edited the thesis, *The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom*. I am also the supervisor for this study.



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CHAPTER ONE

STUDY INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Background and context of the study

Subtext is a concept in literary studies and theory that refers to the implicit or latent thematic, symbolic and psychological meanings that are embedded in literary texts, which may have been consciously or subconsciously conceived by the writer and the reader, and which may become explicit or manifest in the reader's responses (Genis, 2018:viii-ix, 186-187). The terms epi-poetics (Genis, 2019) and poetic bodies (Genis, 2020; 2021) are also used to conceptualise the subtext. Language, the psychologic and physical body or experience of the writer and reader, and the environment interact to create meaning in texts.

Earlier conceptualisations of the subtext include Schraw's (1997:436) postulation that the subtext is "implicit thematic interpretations that run parallel to the explicit surface-level meaning of the text". Other researchers concur with this and postulate that subtext is "a text of hidden and latent meanings" (Wineburg, 1991:498); and "the [subconscious] pressure behind the words" (Pinter, 1960:665). White (1995:194) defines subtext as "the underlying meaning or intention of a line of dialogue".

This study conceptualises the subtext of literature in English for the Zimbabwean classroom as the literary elements in the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), that elicit a personal, collective, emotional and psychological response from the reader. Subtextual is therefore an all-encompassing and overarching schema that includes textual (explicit) themes such as child abuse, race and gender that prompt psychological responses from the reader. These latent perceptions of the reader become manifest in her explicit responses to the textual themes. Therefore, the textual themes become part of the subtext as soon as participants integrate them in their personal, communal and psychological lives. The concrete, explicit or textual themes trigger latent psychological and intergenerational perceptions in participants that they share explicitly in their responses. The living human bodies (learners and teachers) interact with the literary body (the set-text) through language, which represents their memories and emotional responses to the text. Subsequently, as soon as the participants express how

textual themes influence their specific private situations, their private lives or the lives within their communities, the themes become part of the text's subtext.

The nature of reading is such that the reader discovers meaning embedded within text and each reader brings his/her subjective experience to a text (Ali, 1994; De Vos, et al 2011). Therefore, each individual constructs her own version of reality when interacting with a text (Ali, 1994). In light of this, the teacher and learner participants in this study consciously and unconsciously formed certain preconceived ideas about the themes in the text, which may be likened to the individual and collective unconscious of Carl Gustav Jung (Adamski, 2011). Their responses were activated or triggered by subtextual literary elements, symbols, metaphors, and figures of speech in the prescribed text, which are closely aligned to the Psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1953). These symbols reflect deep-rooted perceptions and even traumas that are inherent in society and as I indicate, in Zimbabwean society as well, where a myriad of political, historical, economic and religious factors bred Othering. The latter concept links to the postcolonial theory of Edward Said (1978). The concept of Othering points to objectification of individuals, which is revealed in textual and subtextual allusions such as xenophobia, and religious, gender, racial, class, and sexual orientation stereotyping (Sawant, 2012:7). These themes characterise the relationship between binary opposites: the subject (superior, masculine, strong) and the Other (inferior, feminine, weak). To understand the subtext/object binary in the context of the Zimbabwean classroom, it is vital to first locate and explain the place of Literature in English in the Zimbabwean school curriculum.

1.2.1 Literature in English in the Zimbabwean school curriculum.

The Zimbabwe school system comprises a thirteen-year preparatory course, which is divided into seven years at primary school level and six years at the secondary school level (ZIMSEC, 2017). The initial level comprises grades one to seven. In Grade 7, learners sit for the first National Examination in five subjects, but adult literature is not included. At this initial level, pupils are exposed to children's literature in the form of picture books and short stories from as early as Grade 1. The level of difficulty of prescribed literature increases as the learners progress through the primary school classes. Literature for the classroom includes the outcome of improving the comprehension and library research skills at Grade 5 level .

At the secondary school level, the Zimbabwean curriculum offers a range of learning areas (subjects) categorized as Arts, Sciences and Commercial, and Practical subjects. Literature in English is among the subjects offered by the Arts field. The study of Literature in English as an examinable subject, which is not part of English Language, begins as early as junior secondary school (Grade 8). Literature in English is offered due to a myriad of reasons. The

Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) aims to develop critical literary analysis skills, encourage the development of higher order thinking and creativity (Dass, 2013), develop intellectual skills and problem-solving skills, and impart moral values (Ubuntu) and cultural values through the syllabus (ZIMSEC, 2017). These assumptions on the benefits of literature are supported by Eagleton (1985), who postulates that close engagement with literary texts not only develops aesthetic sensibilities in the reader but also inculcates values and morality.

Literature in English in Zimbabwean schools is divided into five categories: poetry; Zimbabwean literature; African, Caribbean and African-American literature; English literature and World literature (ZIMSEC, 2017). The learners read a wide variety of literature that is classified as three major genres: poetry, prose, and drama. During the examination, learners are expected to respond to various written texts that are derived from diverse historical epochs and cultural contexts. My study focuses on a novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, which provides for a Zimbabwean context to explore the subtext of literature in English for the classroom. I selected the novel because it is rich in subtextual themes and is, therefore, relevant for the study. Moreover, due to time constraints, it was not possible for me to explore all the prescribed genres, (poetry, drama, prose) in one study. Focusing on one genre allowed for an in-depth study, which is a characteristic of case study research, which I employed for this study.

Text analysis marks the larger part of classroom activity in the subject, Literature in English. 'Text' today refers to both traditional print and the new computer-mediated interaction on digital screens (Nordquist, 2018). Furthermore, text is an umbrella term, which does not only refer to written discourse (Rhiney: 2010), but also to other aspects such as culture as text (Geertz, 1973) and social life as text (Ricouer, 1971). In an educational context, text also encompasses pictures, videos, patterns of thought, gestures, classroom instructions, classroom reprimand, rules and verbal conversations or communication (Nordquist, 2018). My study focuses on print text within the classroom context because the learner participants only read and interacted with print text.

By reading the written text, learners encounter the author's direct voice, and the literal, plainly exposed messages carried by the plot. However, through text analysis and discussion, latent messages surface, which learners deduce from their understanding of the text and that stem from their personal and shared experiences (Genis, 2019:76-83; Genis, 2020:15-16). These constitute the 'subtext' of Literature in English. This study reveals the meanings that surfaced in the prescribed text, which the participating learners and teachers personalised to their own individual and shared experiences and circumstances.

Learner and teacher responses to and perceptions of the literary elements raised in the text, the questions they asked concerning textual allusions, and their explicitly communicated and implicitly implied responses and perceptions of the text during classroom discussions of the set-text, revealed aspects and themes of the subtext of Literature in English. It is against this background that this study explored learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the subtext of Literature in English for the Zimbabwean classroom.

1.2.2 Schools in Zimbabwe

Schools in Zimbabwe are classified under various categories, for example, Private-owned schools; Government-sponsored schools; Religious/Mission schools; and Private colleges. Mission schools are administered by various Christian denominations, for example, Catholic schools, Anglican schools, Methodist schools and Adventist schools. Schools are also classified as Boarding and Day schools and as Single-sex and Mixed schools. All schools are expected to offer inclusive multicultural education regardless of their status or classification. Government schools constitute the largest number of secondary schools in the country and in Mashonaland East Province, where this study took place. Schools range from well-resourced with exclusive facilities to poorly funded and under-resourced. At the time of this study, the Goromonzi District in Mashonaland East Province included a total of twenty-two secondary schools and only one Private school, located at the Provincial Headquarters. Most Mission schools in the province are Catholic-owned schools. The literacy rate for Mashonaland East was a high 96% in 2012 (ZimStat, 2012).

Most schools follow the local Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) syllabus whilst others, especially Private schools offer the Cambridge syllabus. The latter is out-of-bounds for many learners because these schools charge high fees. A wide range of subjects are offered in all these schools. Literature in English is studied from form one (Grade 8), the first secondary school grade, as a subject separate from English Language.

1.2.3 Location of the study

Groove High School was purposively selected as the site where the research questions would be answered. Groove High School is a government boarding school in the Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. It is a peri-urban school, which is situated at the periphery of the Harare Metropolitan Province (Capital City). Its 1 450 learners (in 2019) come from various provinces of the country and from the local farming community in which it is situated. Though the learners herald from diverse provinces, characterised by diverse indigenous languages, the school's official languages are English and Shona. The detailed description and map of the research

site are provided in Chapter Four. In the next section, I explain my rationale and motivation for studying the subtext of Literature in English for the high school classroom.

1.3 Rationale and motivation for the study

The rationale and motivation for studying learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes and experiences of literature for the classroom stemmed from personal, professional, conceptual and scholarly reasons. On a personal level, justification and motivation for this focus were based on my interest in high school literature in English, which developed over the sixteen years I spent as a high school Literature teacher. My Master's degree (2015) focused on teenagers' responses to a novel. As I was conducting the research, I noted the dearth of literature on empirical field studies pertaining to texts studied in the classroom. I also realised that there were no empirical field studies on the subtext of literature in secondary schools in Zimbabwe and beyond, despite the significance of the subtext as an aspect of literary study.

My theoretical and conceptual rationale was based on the understanding that literature for the classroom is crucial for learners' critical and analytical skills development. Therefore, it was imperative for research to explore learners' perceptions of and responses to texts prescribed for classroom study. The rationale, thus, stemmed from my understanding that there was a need to explore how the texts prescribed for classroom study impact on the lives and personal development of learners.

On the academic scholarship level, there is need for research that contributes to the existing but limited body of literature in English for the classroom and in particular, the subtext of literature for the classroom. The few published studies that were conducted on set-books studied in the classroom in Zimbabwe were desk-based research, which focused on general thematic aspects of the texts. This made it imperative to expand the knowledge and understanding of learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of literary text by conducting field research into how learners and teachers experience, interpret and respond to the subtext of literature in English at high school level in Zimbabwe.

Moreover, research carried out in other contexts, regionally and internationally, focused on isolated subtextual themes. For instance, Greenlaw (1994) [Canada the United States]; Latha (2002) [South Africa] and Gachari (2012) [Kenya] investigated isolated aspects of the subtext in their respective contexts. Although they provide insight into some subtextual themes, the relevance of their case studies remains contextualised to where the studies were conducted, thus it was worthwhile to explore the concept from a Zimbabwean perspective. Therefore, the prevailing knowledge gap contributed to my interest to explore the perceptions of subtextual

themes and experiences of learners and teachers in the high school classroom in Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe.

Additionally, available research employed conventional research methods, mostly the questionnaire and interview methods. This study engaged a fusion of conventional methods and participatory art-based methods, to elicit deeper insights and to engage the participants personally and autonomously. Moreover, by employing an eclectic theoretical lens, which fuses literary theories (postcolonial theory and psychoanalysis), learning and reading theories and approaches (Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, Reader-Response approach) and African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK), this study informs other studies of literature for the classroom and of the influence of the subtext on classroom readers of literary genres. It also enables a deeper understanding of the concept, subtext and makes literary analysis more meaningful and beneficial to teachers and learners.

1.4 Study purpose and focus

My research efforts focused on expanding the knowledge and understanding of learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of literary text by investigating how they experience, interpret and respond to the subtext of Literature in English at Advanced Level (Grade 12) in Zimbabwe. The study focused on how the subtext influenced learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. This study was also aimed at contributing to the limited body of literature on the subtext of literature for the classroom. By using an eclectic theoretical lens, the study could inform other studies about the influence of the subtext on classroom readers and enable a deeper understanding of the concept of the subtext in order to make literary analysis more meaningful to learners. In light of the rationale and motivation, and the purpose and focus of this study, the following guiding research questions were generated.

1.5 Research questions

In view of the identified gaps in research, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1.5.1 Main research question

How and why does the subtext influence learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text?

1.5.2 Secondary questions

1. What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?
2. What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?
3. What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?

1.6 Synopsis of research design and methodology

The process and procedures engaged in answering the research questions for this study were planned and clearly organised. These consist of the chosen research paradigm, the research approach, the research design, the selection of participants and research site, data generation and collection methods and data interpretation. I discuss the research design and methodology in Chapter Four. The following section outlines the research design and methodology.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

My study was shaped by the nominalist philosophical paradigm, which holds that an individual names or constructs her social reality (Maree, 2016, Cohen, et al, 2001). The interpretivist epistemology was embedded in the nominalist ontology and adheres closely with the constructivist theoretical framework of the study. I identify interpretivism and constructivism as different terminologies that name a similar paradigm and use the terms interchangeably throughout this study. The interpretivist paradigm observes that there are multiple realities and that the researcher personally executes the fieldwork through the "close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories" (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). In view of this, the interpretivist paradigm best suited my study, whose rationale included closing the research gap created by the absence of field research on literature for the classroom and on the subtext of Literature in English for the high school classroom. Moreover, Okeke and Van Wyk (2015) propose that interpretive data are based on the participants' constructions of meaning and on the production of rich, varied and detailed data from multiple perspectives through different sources and analysis methods. These characteristics lend support to the researcher in striving for validity.

1.6.2 Research approach

The qualitative research approach suited the interpretive research paradigm adopted for this study to explore learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes and experiences of a prescribed text. In Creswell's (2014) view, qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a phenomenon. My choice of the qualitative approach was guided by my philosophical worldview and conceptualisation of the nature of knowledge: my ontological view of reality as socially constructed and named, and my epistemological view of knowledge as an interpretive process. Thus, in light of the proposition by Okeke and Van Wyk (2015:215) that "the principal function of qualitative research is to understand the subjective meanings that individuals make of situations in their lives", the qualitative approach was relevant for my study, which is anchored in literary analysis, wherein the participants' subjective interpretations of a text are central. Moreover, Mack et al (2005), argue that qualitative research "is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions", behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations. This approach suited my exploration of culturally-specific individual and shared experiences of the participants in light of their interpretations and perceptions of the prescribed text.

1.6.3 Study design

This research employed an qualitative exploratory single case study. A case study is defined by Rule and Vaughn (2011:171), as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" from the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon. Thus, my study investigated the influence of the subtext (the phenomenon) on the perceptions and responses of Advanced Level learners and teachers to the prescribed study text, using one unit of analysis (participants): Advanced Level learners at Groove High School. The investigation focused on an aspect of the school (case) with learners as key informants.

I employed a single case study based on the understanding that a case study "should be an intensive study of a single unit, a spatially bounded phenomenon, observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period" (Gerring, 2004:342; Willis, 2014). Therefore, the design best suited my in-depth study of subtextual experiences of a unit of high school learners and teachers within the bounds of a school term. A case study also allows for multiple data-gathering techniques (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008), which include interviews, focus group discussions (conventional methods), drawings and poetry (art-based methods), which my study merged to form an in-depth understanding of the case.

1.6.4 Sampling of participants and site

The purposively sampled participants in this study comprised 27 participants: the 2018-2019 Literature in English Advanced Level learners (24) and teachers (3) at Groove High School. As postulated by Gibson and Brown (2011), purposive sampling aims to “select possible research participants because they possess characteristics, roles, opinions, knowledge, ideas, or experiences (or whatever else) that may be particularly relevant to the research”. I particularly or purposively chose the Advanced Level Literature in English class because these learners studied the selected text relevant to my study. Secondly, in purposive sampling, specific instances (samples) are chosen deliberately to select participants that will yield the most relevant and detailed data, which are information-rich (Yin, 2016). For this study, I specifically wanted to determine the perceptions of subtextual themes of classroom readers of the text. Therefore, the selected participants were relevant because they studied the selected text for my study and were subsequently able to provide the relevant and rich data.

A research site is selected because it comprises some feature or process in which the researcher is interested (Silverman, 2013). In light of this proposition, I chose Groove High School because the school offered the local syllabus, the Zimbabwe School Examination Council syllabus, which included the chosen text for this study. This allowed me to explore the perceptions of Zimbabwean learners and teachers of a relevant literary text within a Zimbabwean (local) curriculum context.

1.6.5 Data generation and collection

For this qualitative study, data were both generated and collected. This is based on the premise that qualitative researchers do not merely collect data, but they also generate data (Mason, 2002). The argument is that as researchers engage in qualitative research they are actively involved in data generation, which are not ready-made. For instance, “the qualitative interview follows a conversational mode” (Yin, 2016), during which the researcher is not an objective observer, but a subjectively immersed co-constructer of knowledge. Thus, in this study qualitative data were generated through interactive physical conversational engagements with participants during face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. Other data generation methods included document analysis of the already existing data in the published prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006) and the learners’ individually unpublished crafted poems and poem-drawings. As postulated by Creswell (2005), case study research consists of a rigorous data collection process through several sources/methods. Therefore, this study employed traditional or classical and conventional qualitative inquiry methodologies (semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups and document analysis),

which were blended with participatory methodologies, particularly art-based methods (poem writing, and poem-drawings). These methods were chosen in line with the purpose of the study, the eclectic theoretical framework, which consists of educational and literary theories, and the research paradigm of this study.

1.6.6 Data analysis and methods

My study employed qualitative data analysis anchored in the interpretivist epistemology that aims at establishing “how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their attitudes”, feelings, perceptions, values, knowledge, understanding and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:109). This study comprised of qualitative data that were transcribed and analysed through inductive thematic and content analysis. Given the subjectivity of literary perceptions, I found thematic analysis appropriate for identifying the diverse views of the participants in the discussions. Consequently, I employed thematic analysis to analyse interview and focus group data. I used content analysis to analyse document (the novel) and art-based data (poems and poem-drawings). This is based on Nieuwenhuis’s (2016) observation that analysis of the message addresses the manifest content (visible and obvious elements) whilst analysis of the meaning involves interpretation of the underlying meaning or the latent content, i.e., the subtext. For the process of data analysis, I used the five-cycle phases proposed by Yin (2016) namely: compiling the raw data; disassembling individual data sets into smaller fragments/codes; reassembling the data fragments into groups, categories and themes; interpreting the reassembled material; and concluding. These steps were relevant for meaning generation and data analysis.

1.6.7 My researcher position and role

My position in this study is that of teacher and educational practitioner. I carried out research at an educational institution (a school) as an insider-outsider researcher. I was an insider given my familiarity with school and classroom processes, with Literature in English as a subject, with teaching Advanced Level Literature in English in Zimbabwe and with the prescribed text. I was an outsider, as I had no direct personal connection with the participating school or the particular group of research participants. Furthermore, the research site was not familiar to me. I had never visited Groove High School before, and the learners and teachers (my research participants) were unfamiliar to me. The commonality I shared with the participants was acquaintance with the ZIMSEC syllabus, and knowledge of the subject Literature in English’s expected outcomes in Zimbabwe, the prescribed text and general classroom practices of the Zimbabwean Advanced level course. Therefore, I cannot describe myself as a complete outsider. As proposed by Hayfield and Huxley (2014), a researcher can

simultaneously be an insider and an outsider, a description that I view as befitting my researcher role in this study. For these reasons, I cannot claim that I was completely neutral, though I remained ethical and ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of my study.

The researcher's position and personal experiences are important in a study since these aspects influence the researcher's view of the phenomenon studied. Researchers' interests in particular topics and their reasons for conducting research are often related to their personal experiences (Tang, 2007). These may lead to biased assumptions, perspectives, values, conclusions and dispositions towards the investigated phenomenon, which the researcher is required to identify and reflect on prior to the inquiry (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015), to enhance objectivity. In this study, there was the possibility of researcher bias during data collection and analysis due to my familiarity with teaching Literature in English and the set-text used in this study. However, I conducted self-reflection during the study to achieve researcher objectivity, neutrality, transparency, and reflexivity in reporting the findings in the study. I also engaged methodological triangulation and member checking and kept an audit trail.

Researcher status is also relevant during data collection (Corbin-Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). My status as a researcher-teacher (insider) increased the participants' trust and built rapport, resulting in them becoming more engaged with the research, subsequently, leading to richer and more authentic accounts. I also used the advantages I had as an insider-outsider researcher (Saidin and Yaacob, 2016) to gain as deep an understanding as possible of learners' and teachers' perceptions of the subtext of the prescribed text, by probing and exploring the topics more discursively (Gibson and Brown, 2011:6).

1.6.8 Structure of the thesis

This study consists of seven chapters. In Chapter One, I introduced and provided an overview of the study. I provided the background and context of the study by unpacking the concept, subtext. I also described the position of Literature in English as a subject in the Zimbabwean School Curriculum. Furthermore, I explained the rationale and motivation for exploring learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of the set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the purpose and focus of the study and the significance of the study. The chapter also highlighted the overview of the research methodology employed, my role in this study and the participants and location of the study.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the available literature in two sections. In the first section, I discussed the importance of literature, and I situated my study within research-based literature that relates to the concept, subtext. I also explored the views of other critics on the set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. In the second section, I presented a review of literature on theory-

based literature by discussing the theories that constitute the theoretical framework for this study.

The review of literature continued in Chapter Three, where I framed the study theoretically. In this chapter, I conceptualised the eclectic theoretical framework that comprises of literary theories (postcolonialism and psychoanalysis), learning and reading theories and approaches (Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, Raeder-Response approach) and African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK). I concluded the chapter with a discussion of the Constructivist Subtextual conception of meaning, which is the theoretical linchpin of this study.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the research methodology I used in answering the research questions for this study. The chapter consists of a discussion of the interpretivist research paradigm, the qualitative approach, single case study design, the selection of research site and participants, the qualitative data generation and collection approach and the qualitative research methods and data analysis.

In Chapter Five, I presented the findings of the study. The findings were presented as the themes that emerged from the data analysis. There were three distinct themes: Individual triggers, (2) shared/common triggers, and (3) participants' perceptions of subtextual themes. Each theme was characterised by relevant sub-themes, which were clearly presented. I then discussed the relevance of the findings in Chapter Six, based on each theme as presented in Chapter Five. The chapter discussed relevant aspects that were revealed during the research and explained how the findings related to the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework and the literature review. I also discussed the similarities and contradictions between my findings and the existing literature on the concept, subtext and on the interpretation of the set-text. I also highlighted the new insights that emerged from the findings of my study.

In Chapter Seven, I concluded the study by discussing the perspectives provided by the literature and my own findings and interpretations. I also presented conclusions based on the research questions of the study and positioned the findings within the theoretical framework of the study. I outlined the limitations of the study and explained the implications of this study for classroom practitioners, for curriculum developers and for future research. The chapter ended with a final conclusion for the whole study.

1.7 Conclusion

In this first chapter, I introduced the study on learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of and responses to a set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). The chapter included the background and context of the study, explained the rationale and motivation for exploring the subtextual experiences of learners and teachers, and outlined the purpose and focus of the study. It also included the research questions, and my position and role as researcher in this study. Finally, I provided a synopsis of the research methodology that I employed in answering the research questions and provided a summary of the overall structure of the thesis. The next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I provided the background, context, purpose and focus of this study. In this chapter, I review the literature on the research topic, which is divided into two sections. Section A situates my study within research-based literature that relates to the concept, subtext, which is the core aspect of my study. In Section B, I present a review of literature on theory-based literature from which I build my theoretical framework for the study. Crucially, this section reviews the literature on the topic to establish relevance and validity. In Section A, I discuss the importance of literature in the classroom and in education at large.

SECTION A: UNDERSTANDING SUBTEXT

2.2 Unpacking the concept

In Chapter One, I provided a conceptualisation of the concept, subtext. I referred to Schraw (1997:436) who describes subtext as “implicit thematic interpretations that run parallel to the explicit surface-level meaning of the text”. These implicit thematic, symbolic and psychological meanings may become explicit or manifest in the readers’ responses (Genis, 2018:viii-ix, 186-187; 2019; 2020).

The subtext-schema in this study relates to the literary elements in the set-text that elicit a personal, emotional and psychological response from the reader. Textual allusions in the set-text like the abuse of women, violence, forced migration and displacement become subtextual as soon as the participants make them personal to their lives. Therefore, as soon as the participants express how these textual elements and themes trigger their responses to and perceptions of their specific private situations, their private lives or the lives within their communities, the themes become subtextual or part of the subtext. Consequently, the participants’ responses to the textual elements become subtextual responses and perceptions when they personalise the themes to their circumstances. These themes are identified as triggers in this study, and they are discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Crucially, this chapter grounds my conceptualisation of the subtext through a discussion of the relevant literature.

2.3 Why literature for the classroom

I articulate the place of literature in the Zimbabwean school curriculum in Chapter One. In this chapter, it is imperative to explain the role and function of literature for the classroom and how it affects society. Since my study is anchored in literature, it is worthwhile to start by articulating the role, goals, benefits, importance and relevance of literature to educational outcomes and to society.

Literature plays a critical role in implementing the goals of education and its importance for wider society cannot be underestimated (Gachari, 2012). Literature entertains and instructs readers (Santwani, 2018), thus, providing them with certain values, messages, and lived-life themes. In a study to investigate learner attitudes to literature in Norway, Finsrud (2017) observes that learners who participated in the study indicated that literature is important for their education, their personal development, their appreciation of different cultures, their understanding of society, and empathising with other people's behaviour. The United States Common Core State Standards Initiative, cited in Ferrero (2011:25), states that through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, learners gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images. Eagleton (1985) observes that close engagement with literary texts not only develops aesthetic sensibilities in the reader but also inculcates values and morality. This view is also propounded by other researchers, who suggest that literature promotes cultural and intercultural awareness (Van, 2009), which is commensurate to globalization (Tayebipour, 2009) by addressing universal concepts such as love, hatred, death, and nature (Maley, 1989).

In a study to determine the perspectives of learners on the relevance and importance of Literature as a school subject in Singaporean secondary schools, Dass (2013) found that nearly all the participants acknowledged a high functional element of literature in contributing to the increased proficiency in the English language. This high proficiency in English is vital in the global communication system, where English is an international language of communication. The study also commended Literature for encouraging the development of higher order thinking skills and creativity. What is crucial about Dass's (2013) study is that the views of the importance of literature came from the learners themselves, a scenario that renders relevance to the classroom study of literature.

Greenlaw (1994:295) proposes that the central aim of textual study is to help learners understand who they are and how they can improve themselves; it enhances not only "their own lives but the lives of others as well". Additionally, literature allows learners to reflect on their lives and to "question, interpret, connect and explore" the world around them (Langer, 1997:607). Learners and society, therefore, stand to benefit from textual study.

Within broader society, literature has influenced some renowned political and societal figures who have produced literary works. For example, the Senegalese leader, Leopold Sedar Senghor promoted negritude, African music and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) through poetry. The former United States president, Barack Obama wrote *Dreams from my father*. It is a frank autobiography, which suggests that throughout his life, he has turned to books as a way of acquiring insights and information from others, and as a means of breaking out of the bubble of self-hood, power and fame (Michiiko, 2009). The late South African president Nelson Mandela's biography, *No Easy Walk to Freedom* (1965), which comprises of his speeches, letters, and transcripts, reveals the values of visionary leadership; racial, ethnic, and class inclusivity; accountability; inclusive democracy and exemplary personal behaviour by leaders. Mandela's leadership during apartheid personified these values. The late Zimbabwean Vice-president, Simon Muzenda recited his popular Shona poem, '*Nehanda Nyakasikana*', which incited and inspired many Zimbabweans to appreciate poetry. The poem, which was originally written by Solomon Mutsaers appears in his Shona epic novel, *Feso* (1956). It denounces social injustice and oppression. Muzenda was arrested and detained for reciting the poem during the Smith regime (Chronicle, 2016); he continued to recite the poem at public gatherings after independence, as a constant reminder to Zimbabweans of the war against oppressive colonial rule and social injustice. All these works by prominent political figures reveal the power of literature as a communication tool, as a rich source of information, and as a conduit of history that is beneficial to learners.

In many countries, societal groups and political spheres, literature has been viewed as either having the destructive influence of brainwashing its readers into negative social behaviour such as the destabilisation of governments or as a carrier of positive ideas implementable in toppling unjust governments. Consequently, many writers have been exiled for producing 'sensitive' works, for example, the Kenyan writers Ngugi wa Thiongo and wa Mirii; the Zimbabwean, Chenjerai Hove; and the Nigerian, Chinua Achebe. Most of their post-colonial works carry messages that expose governance crises in their respective countries. Nyambi (2013) indicates that writers are accused of a lack of patriotism, even of national or racial betrayal if their texts question the official narrative. Therefore, in and outside Africa, writers have resorted to the use of pseudonyms in their works, for example, Eric Arthur Blair wrote his allegorical and politically charged novella, *Animal Farm* (1945) under the pseudonym George Orwell for fear of victimization by the government of the day for his opposition to totalitarianism. Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is a postcolonial masterpiece in which he adopts the pseudonym "Kangani" in describing a chaotically and corruptly run West African state; this state is portrayed through his satirisation of political corruption, social injustice, ill-administrative policies, and neo-colonialism (Kalpaklı, 2013). These writers'

victimisation or fear of it evidences that literature is considered a powerful threat by some political structures. This also reveals the capability of set books to conscientize learners about diverse aspects of their existence. It is, therefore, imperative for research to investigate set books selected for classroom literary study.

The overall significance and motivation behind literature for the classroom is summed up by Ghosn (2002), who propounds that literature for the classroom provides for learning motivation and a meaningful context for language learning, and that it enhances academic literacy and critical thinking skills. It also serves as a dynamic change agent: good literature deals with aspects of the human condition and can contribute to emotional development. Furthermore, it fosters positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes. Khatib (2011) perceives enhancing critical thinking through the study of literature as the cornerstone of education, particularly at advanced levels of education. It prepares learners not to take texts for granted but to attempt to unravel the hidden agenda of texts, which relates to the subtext of literature.

Sumalatha (2004) suggests that set books can either build or destroy aesthetic attitudes in readers, and these readers include learners. Literature displays a writer's philosophy, which is woven into the text, consciously or unconsciously (Santwani, 2018) and this philosophy can positively or negatively shape the reader's way of thinking. This view echoes the proposition by Magosvongwe and Nyamende (2015), that writers depict literary elements according to their personal understanding of their lived cultural, economic, historical, and social experiences. This makes vital the need for educational research in Literature that investigates the set books prescribed for study in schools to safeguard learner attitudes towards life; to ensure that positive value systems are cultivated in learners; and to ensure the positive realisation of educational outcomes.

This section has revealed the importance of literature in education; its social role in instruction and entertainment; and its influence on society through the dissemination of values, history, and knowledge. In the next section, I discuss the concept, subtext, and its link to aspects of the curriculum.

2.4 The subtext and the curriculum

One cannot sufficiently research the field of education, particularly the classroom, without alluding to the curriculum that informs it. Set literary books are part of curriculum materials used in schools (Gachari, 2012). Therefore, research should investigate literature and learners' perceptions of and responses to it to "provide valuable data to review and [to] refine current practices and [the] curriculum at large" (Dass, 2013:292). In the introduction to his paper on *Takadini*, a novel set in Zimbabwe, Tagwirei (2012: 4) retorts, "What makes *Takadini*

important is the position it has held in Zimbabwe's education system". The novel was part of the literature set books for the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) level in Zimbabwe. His paper reveals that the text acquaints young learners with knowledge of African cultural and traditional values and practices. It also informs learners about the marginalisation of Africans in Western discourses, and the marginalisation of women and albinos, which African literature can re-inscribe. In *Takadini*, the writer seeks to re-dress misrepresentations of the African past, traditions and cultural beliefs and, therefore, this text should be included in the classroom.

This is echoed by Greenlaw (1994: 315), who postulates that literature anthologies should be assessed to determine their suitability for classroom use. Moreover, texts do not necessarily have meaning in themselves; individuals and groups [teachers and learners] acting in their various capacities, determine the meaning of text. This meaning, which is not fixed, remains open to interpretation and individual perceptions, which form part of the subtext (Tagwirei, 2012:2). Thus, the literary genres studied in the school classrooms should be carefully selected.

Mutekwe and Maropeng (2012:1) explore manifestations of gender insensitivity in the Zimbabwean School Curriculum. Gender insensitivity breeds the subtextual themes of stereotyping, marginalisation, and bias, and is characterised by undertones of superiority and inferiority rooted in aspects of masculinity and femininity respectively. Their study observes that many patriarchal values and ideologies are embedded in the Zimbabwean curriculum, which includes Literature in English, and these "tend to polarize the education and career aspirations of pupils as boys and girls" (Mutekwe and Maropeng, 2012:1). Their view is confirmed by Tagwirei's (2013) investigation of gender responsiveness in a selection of English set books, which constituted the literature component of the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) syllabus from 1980-2001. His findings indicate that the government's efforts to introduce young readers to the world of literature through ZJC novels were biased against women; the subject matter, characterisation and the language used in these literary texts perpetuate the socialisation of boys and girls in specific gender roles and identities, which subsequently cultivate gender stereotypes. Tagwirei (2013) recommends a gender-sensitive curriculum. In line with his recommendations, gender sensitisation of the curriculum formed the basis of the Zimbabwean updated curriculum (2015-2022), aimed at the revolutionisation of the "colonial" education system the country had been using since independence (Zivave, Shoko and Mazuruse 2020).

In their exploration of gender representation in Zimbabwe's updated 'O' level Family and Religious Studies syllabus, Zivave et al (2020) observe that the colonial school curriculum was gender biased, segregatory and promoted stereotyping in society. Furthermore, their

exploration of the new and revolutionised curriculum (2015-2022) revealed that there is continued gender bias in textbooks. They recommend that the updated Family and Religious Studies 'O' level syllabus should offer a career path that is gender inclusive by removing all references to stereotypes of women and by enhancing their self-awareness, selfhood, and self-identity in all sectors of society (Zivave et al, 2020: 318). This reveals that gender stereotyping has remained an area of concern in the Zimbabwean curriculum, even after the 'breakaway' from the colonial curriculum. Gachari (2012) indicates that in Kenyan, there have been numerous calls for a gender-responsive curriculum and the selection of gender-sensitive texts in the curriculum. Latha (2002) observes that South African classrooms have become multicultural after 1994; subsequently, curriculum developers should model guidelines that challenge cultural stereotypes that are based on sex, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, language and gender. Gender stereotypes expose the link between the subtext, the curriculum and the teachers and learners' perceptions of the prescribed text.

Literature is a vehicle through which these subtextual issues can be investigated and addressed. In Spivak's view, it is important to note that "literature can be our teacher as well as our object of investigation" (Spivak, 2003: 23). Similarly, Signell (2016) views English as promoting globalisation, understanding, and increasing cultural awareness. Signell (2016) proposes the adoption of a postcolonial canon of literature for the Swedish upper secondary English classroom to meet the multicultural aims of the curriculum. In his view, a postcolonial canon of literature is a "positive and advantageous way of meeting curriculum goals and promoting understanding of cultural diversity within Sweden". Consequently, literature may create a more culturally responsive world. This view is echoed by Hartwiger (2010), who draws no distinction between the classroom and the world and claims that what transpires in the classroom has a lasting impact on what happens in the world. Thus, curriculum developers should prioritise culturally-inclusive classrooms to pave the way for a more culturally sensitive world.

This section has discussed the concept, subtext, in relation to the English literature curriculum. It has identified some of the subtextual traces within curricula from diverse contexts. In the next section, I discuss postcoloniality in relation to classroom literature and situate the set text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* within the postcolonial canon of literature.

2.5 Postcoloniality and classroom literature

In this section, I discuss the significance of a postcolonial conceptualisation of classroom literature, as well as the importance of postcolonial literature for the classroom. The set text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), through which the concept of subtext is investigated, is a

postcolonial novel. Subsequently, throughout this study, the subtextual experiences of the participants are examined within the postcolonial context and its relation to classroom literature.

Greenlaw (1994) proposes a postcolonial conception of high school multicultural literature for learners; this will allow learners to interpret meaningfully the textual representations of dominant and subaltern cultures in their set texts. This is echoed by Signell (2016), who argues that because education facilitates social integration into society, teaching postcolonial literature in upper-secondary schools in multicultural Sweden could bridge cultural gaps and promote tolerance. Furthermore, postcolonial theorising is required in the English literature classroom in Canada if Canadian students are to understand why Canada is described as “a liberal democracy with a colonial heart” Brydon (2004). Through this postcolonial conceptual lens, my study examines the impact of subtextual traces on the learners’ interpretation and perceptions of the selected prescribed text in a Zimbabwean context.

Mapara (2007) articulates the importance of teaching postcolonial literature in the upper secondary school in Zimbabwe. He highlights the important link between history and literature in the classroom; literature is a carrier of history, since historical evidence comes in the form of documents, which include literary texts. The subject Literature, like History, addresses issues like politics, the economy and religion. According to Collingwood, (1994:314), cited in Mapara (2007), history is crucial for self-knowledge. He adds that for Africans, it entails acknowledging the existence of colonialism, neo-colonialism and corruption. These aspects cannot be fully reflected in history texts since colonialism affected regions differently. These phenomena can best be captured and illustrated by fiction, which reaches readers on a more integrated personal level; therefore, the teaching of postcolonial literature is vital, especially as a complementary field to history studies.

Latha (2002) acknowledges the importance of the study of postcolonial literature in multicultural South African classrooms. She observes that the classroom study of postcolonial literature requires the development of critical and cultural literacies. Her study focuses on a South African classroom analysis of the postcolonial novella, *So Long A Letter* (1981) by Mariama Ba. She indicates that critical and cultural literacy skills are vital in the South African classroom, especially in the study of postcolonial fiction, which is often characterized by subtextual subjectivities and hybrid identities.

Her recommendation is supported by Liyong (2018), who laments the death of African indigenous literary forms and genres, as many African writers embrace and write in Western forms and languages – a scenario that demonstrates hybridity. Nel (2011:102) holds that

language is not merely the medium or conduit that allows for the verbalization of a culture's conceptual world: members of that culture are born into a conceptual world, which has already been structured linguistically. To this effect, Chigwedere (2015) alludes to the debate within the African literary establishment over the use of the former colonial masters' languages in creative writing. She cites two sides to the debate; writers that include wa Thiong'o and Chinweizu lament the side-lining of African languages. wa Thiong'o (2009:65) describes this as being made "invisible, literary wise, buried under the weight of European languages". Other African critics and writers such as Achebe and the Zimbabwean, Chinodya embrace the use of European languages in African works of art. Achebe (1975) indicated that he had no other choice but to use the language that had been given to him. It is, therefore, critical to assess the impact of the use of the English language on learners in communicating the post-colonial Zimbabwean message and agenda in the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*.

Many writers in postcolonial states write on behalf of the subaltern groups (women, children, subordinated masculinities, and in some cases opposition political parties). A fundamental facet of marginality and subalternity is the aspect of stereotyping, a broad phenomenon that has raised debate and discussion among literary critics. Chi Cheung (2016:674) observes that gender stereotypes still exist and remain a symbolically weighty binary in the psychic landscape of Hong Kong. In her desk analysis of two Hong Kong primary English textbooks, she observed that gender stereotypes and differential gender representation exist in learners' texts.

This view is supported by Muleka's (2012) desk-based study of the portrayal of girl characters by Kenyan writers; he observed that Kenyan writers of children's books, written in English, reproduce society's stereotypes about girls. The cultural stereotypes include gender-related stereotypes such as passivity, docility and subservience, which are also evident in the set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Stereotypes in the set-text are also embodied in aspects of gender bias, representation of character and gender roles, unequal representation of male and female characters, and the use of gender insensitive language. If experienced in the classroom, these stereotypes can cause female learners to feel inadequate in relation to male learners; the ideology of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority affects female learners' self-esteem (Pillay, 2017). Classroom experienced stereotypes can influence female learners to conform to these stereotypes and can lead to lower grades than their male peers. This view is supported by Muleka (2012), who states that stereotypes may impede the social, mental, and emotional growth of girls, making them appear 'naturally' weaker than their male counterparts.

Identity is culturally derived, it is nurtured, and not a biological or natural construct (Osborne, 2015). Research in epigenetics indicates that gender-related identities are not a result of 'natural' influences which originate from sexed bodies, but rather, gender is a social construct that exists to regulate and police behaviour by fulfilling "certain legitimating and exclusionary aims" (Osborne, 2015; Butler, 1999: 5). My study explored traces of these subtextual aspects in the prescribed text and within the broader perspectives and activities of the Literature in English classroom in Zimbabwe, as these relate to the teachers and learners' perceptions of the prescribed text (See Chapter Five and Chapter Six).

The postcolonial period in Africa has been rocked by distortions of historical fact, which are born of the desire by post-independence leaders to cover up their failed governance. This scenario has seen the new type of dominant discourse, akin to that of the colonial master; post-independence state politicians mount nationalist, patriarchal, and 'patriotic' discourses (Mangena, 2015) aimed at distorting historical truth. Some of these distorted discourses are carried in history textbooks and other reading materials developed and used in the classrooms. Crucially, literary texts could stand as subversions of dominant versions of history, as these focus on the disillusionment with independence and critique abusive power and corruption (Altijani and Omer, 2019). Most postcolonial novels, like *The Uncertainty of Hope* are rich founts of both historical fact and the lived experiences of people, and, significantly, are of local and national significance. It was, therefore, vital for my study to examine the learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the lived experiences of the society portrayed in the text. This includes their subtextual experiences of the text.

In this section, I have discussed the significance of a postcolonial conception of high school literature, the importance of teaching postcolonial literature in the high school classroom, the value of cultural literacies in the analysis of postcolonial literature and the importance of curbing cultural stereotypes in the study of postcolonial literature for the classroom. In the next section, I discuss the importance of understanding representations of psycho-disturbances and their relevance to the study of literature in the classroom and the subtext.

2.6 Representations of psycho-disturbance in literature

It is important to note that individuals' experiences have a bearing on their psychic state. Some of the challenges affecting societies have an impact on the individual as well as the collective society. Concepts that relate to an individual's psychic disturbance include trauma, stress and madness. According to Oppenheim (1889), trauma refers to a state of corporeal and mental changes following an unexpected physical and /or psychical shock. Wald (2008) explains that trauma designates an event or experience that is so intense that the subject is unable to

respond adequately to it and, subsequently, suffers from long-lasting, post-traumatic psychic symptoms. Some of these post-traumatic symptoms can manifest in the individual or collective behaviours of learners in a classroom. Through literary study, some of the traumatic experiences of characters in study texts can trigger the learners' memories of their own experiences (Jung, 2003).

Effective text reading, which is a transaction between the text and the reader, evokes the reader's own feelings, attitudes, associations, ideas, memories or images (Rosenblatt, 1978; Kadir, Tengku and Vengadasamy, 2012). In this regard, through the transaction, readers' emotions can be triggered by the text. Consequently, personal connections are made, whereby readers relate themselves to the story characters or to the story in general (Flint, 2016). The evoked emotions and memories can subconsciously store individual or collective traumas, fears and anxieties, which manifest as the reader transacts and interacts with the text (Jung, 2003; Jung, 1961). Writers' fictional representations can affect the real-life experiences of the readers, especially through psychological connections. For instance, the experiences of violence of the characters in a text can evoke memories of the reader's past violent encounters. In the set text, Gari's constant abuse of his wife, Onai, triggered participants' memories of personally inflicted or witnessed acts of violence. These revived memories constitute the readers' (learners and teachers') subtextual experiences and perceptions of the set text, which my study explores.

Hashish (2015) carried out desk-based research on the subtext of British playwright, Harold Pinter's *The Room* (1957). Her study focused on the discreet, the unspoken, and the indirect themes in both language and characterization. Hashish discovered that the protagonist, Rose's hurtful past, violent childhood and fear that her past may be exposed or that an abuser may track her down (her environment) could be among the reasons for the protagonist's tragic character (her psychological body). Therefore, the environment has a direct influence on the existence of particular bodily traits (Neill, 2017); additionally, behaviour is partially formed by early life experiences, which are shaped by certain environmental cues, of which stress is the most researched (Osborne, 2015). My study, being classroom centred, analysed these subtextual aspects and themes in the set text's characters and in how the learners and teachers perceived and responded to these subtextual aspects.

2.7 The individual and collective person in literature

According to Klein (1952), the individual's psychic self grows from somatic existence, and the unconscious is the subject's way of representing or symbolising bodily experiences. Farley (2014:7), cited in Stearns (2017), describes "the unconscious as a visual site of memory", that

which may not be verbal, but can be expressed through symbols, such as drawings, poetry, play, and other artistic acts of representation (Stearns, 2017). Thus, by using poem writing and drawings, this study captured some of the knowledge, which learners could not express vocally and verbally but which manifested in their symbolic representations.

Apart from being a storehouse for an individual's repressed desires, Jung (2003: 87,93, 113) viewed the unconscious as an attic space for the collective or transpersonal unconscious, which Ackerman (2018) explains as "a level of unconscious shared with other humans that is made up of latent memories [and archetypes] from our ancestors". From a postcolonial perspective, Hirsch (2012:5), summarises the personal, collective, and cultural trauma that postcolonial subjects experience as "postmemory" or the "structure of inter-and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience". For instance, Zimbabwe is characterised by a long history of war and violence, which includes a brutal liberation war; subsequently, some postcolonial works carry representations of violence. The set text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, depicts violence at both a personal level through a harsh patriarchal system and at national level through punitive government policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and Murambatsvina. These oppressive measures by the post-colonial government have re-triggered collective colonial experiences of poverty, suffering, homelessness and displacement, all of which are catalysts to trauma. Thus, it was imperative to examine the shared experiences amongst the learners and teachers, which connected them to their larger society, and wherein the community is linked with the ancestral world through time, space and action (Newfield and Bozalek, 2019; Genis, 2020:6).

Mugubi (2012) examined the archetypal child character in six post-emancipation, Caribbean novels to determine the child's position in that society and her role as a literary agent. Mugubi (2012) concludes that the child character in Caribbean fiction emerges as a metaphor for ethicalness through which the world can be humanised; additionally, Caribbean children's literature should be read as allegories in which the child characters epitomize a type of person at a particular moment in their history. This hints at the transgenerational epigenetic inheritance of trauma marks or archetypes of trauma (Bloomfield and Hanson, 2015). Mugubi describes the child character as an effective symbol and archetype for inquiring into not only the plight of the child but also the racial, class, and gender disparities and struggles (subtextual ills) in the Caribbean during the enfranchisement (post-slavery) and colonial periods. Mugubi (2012: i) reiterates that "through a prudent exploration of a child's psychological makeup, the authors delineate the child as a powerful agent through which other themes such as poverty, police brutality, alienation, religion, and politics are surveyed". My study examines the effect

on the participants' perceptions of and responses to these postcolonial and transgenerational subtextual triggers brought about by the themes in the set text.

In this section, I discussed the aspects of individual and collective identity as it manifests through symbolic representations. In the next section, I analyse the set text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*.

2.8 Analysis of The Uncertainty of Hope

2.8.1 The writer

The writer of the set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Valerie Joan Tagwira, was born in Zimbabwe's Gweru town, in the Midlands Province, and she grew up in nearby Redcliffe, in the same province. She attended Monte Casino Secondary School in the Mashonaland East Province and proceeded to St James High School in Nyamandlovu. She joined the University of Zimbabwe's Medical School and graduated in 1997. She had studied at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and worked as a gynaecologist in the United Kingdom before she returned to teach and work at Harare Hospital. She works as an obstetrician and gynaecologist in Harare and lectures at the University of Zimbabwe in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Tagwira has a noticeable interest in health-related and developmental issues that affect women. Her first novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), "won the National Merit Awards (NAMA) in 2008, in the Outstanding Fiction Book category. Her short story 'The Journey' was published in the Caine Prize Anthology of 2010, and 'Mainini Grace's Promises' was published in *Women Writing in Zimbabwe*, and was translated into Shona for the anthology, *Mazambuko*" (The Patriot, 2017).

The Uncertainty of Hope was written when she worked in England, and during which she returned home twice a year. In an interview with Pambuka News, Tagwira confirmed her novel's preoccupation with Zimbabwe's constant deteriorating living conditions and with women's position therein; this triggered her feminist stance:

"When I initially started thinking about writing, I had a desire to do something different, something creative, and because I'm something of a 'mild feminist' at heart, I always knew that I would write something featuring strong female characters. Writing about contemporary Zimbabwe was a natural choice because I am very much attached to 'home', and I travel back quite frequently. At each visit, it strikes me how the living standards are deteriorating, and at each visit, I never imagine that things can get any worse, but they do, and people still survive. I was particularly concerned about how women deal with the challenges that are thrust upon them". (Tagwira 2007)

Her writings are centred on female protagonists, whose existence is characterised by socio-economic challenges and the theme of survival in oppressive conditions. As observed by

Nyambi (2014b), Tagwira has consistently focused on engaging literature creatively in the articulation of serious socio-economic issues concerning Zimbabwean women in the post-2000 “crisis” decade. Her two short stories ‘The Journey’ and ‘Mainini Grace’s Promise’, present female characters as victimised and maltreated women, who are caught up in various forms of affliction, and who attract sympathy from the reader. Her first novel, *Uncertainty of Hope*, on the contrary, depicts strong-willed female characters, who challenge patriarchal notions of the ‘woman’s place’ at the levels of the family, the economic system, and the nation (Nyambi, 2014a:40).

2.8.2 The genre: Synopsis

The novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006) has been diversely described and classified by critics and researchers due to its varied depiction of the Zimbabwean situation. It is set in the tumultuous, post-independence Zimbabwe of 2005, and is classified by Nyambi (2013) as “post-2000 Zimbabwean literature”. Mangena (2017:56) describes it as “a feminist text that portrays female victimhood in the context of a failing postcolonial state”. The novel represents the lived experiences and resilience of ordinary people in negotiating, responding to, and coping with the main political crisis, and various micro-crises engendered by the former (Mlambo, et al 2015:50). Nyambi (2014a) describes the text as “a complex archive, and an alternative to the government narrative of the 2005 urban slum clearances” that mainly addresses the experiences of women entangled in an unstable economic and political situation.

The 363-page novella centres on the life of a female protagonist, Onai Moyo, a married, market trader and her friend and neighbour Kate Nguni, a fellow market trader, and forex dealer. They live in the Joburg Lines area of Mbare, a high-density suburb in Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare. Onai’s husband, Gari, is an irresponsible and perpetually abusive drunkard and shameless womaniser who ignores all family responsibilities and physically abuses her constantly. Onai faces many dilemmas in her roles as wife, mother, breadwinner, and “ordinary Zimbabwean living in the harsh times of 2005, when hyperinflation, queues for scarce commodities, and the deathly effects of the misguided Operation Murambatsvina colour the hopelessness of a once prosperous nation” (Kubatana.net). Despite being denied access to formal employment by her manipulative husband, Onai fends for her children under the glaring ills of a country rocked by corruption and economic decline a decade after independence: massive price hikes, food shortages, dwindling health services, the HIV and AIDS scourge, and general urban squalor. Onai’s burdens worsen at the death of her husband; culture demands that she marries her late husband’s brother, Toro. Her refusal to oblige forces her to join the multitudes of suffering and homeless Zimbabwean urban dwellers, who are displaced

due to the ill-planned Operation Murambatsvina of 2005. Due to the operation, most residents, especially in the high-density suburb, Mbare, were moved to over-crowded and unsafe dwellings, and some were forced to migrate to South Africa and other neighbouring countries. Onai takes her children to her parents' rural home after which she goes back to the city to reassert herself despite the odds. Through the lives of the Mbare people, the writer provides an insight into a wide cross-section of Zimbabwe's ordinary people, who are faced with growing afflictions imposed on them by a myriad of factors, such as Murambatsvina, ESAP and subsequent hyperinflation, and general economic distress.

The Uncertainty of Hope was also commended by renowned Zimbabwean novelist, poet, and dramatist, Charles Mungoshi for its artistry in the execution of themes that many writers would find daunting. It is a novel through which "Tagwira pays tribute to a wider spectrum of the not-so-fortunate people of Zimbabwe, and a story that makes a deep gut-slash across today's Zimbabwe, at different levels of its people's lives" (Mungoshi, 2007).

2.8.3 Thematic concerns and subtextuality

In this section, I discuss the thematic concerns of the text, as posited by various literary critics. From these concerns arose the subtextual themes and aspects, which form the core of my study. As the participants interacted with and reflected on the text, their responses and perceptions of the thematic issues raised in the text triggered their subtextual responses. It is, therefore, imperative to discuss the thematic concerns of the text.

To understand the thematic aspects of the text, it is necessary to situate the text within the Zimbabwean literary canon. As proposed by wa Thiong'o (1972), "Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society." The novella, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, qualifies as Modern African literature, which addresses colonial and postcolonial concerns; it is situated within the postcolonial epistemology and theory and "its prolificacy makes it a paragon of postcolonial literature" (Babatunde, 2019: 13). Considering that literature mirrors the human condition, Modern African literature depicts the harsh and inhuman condition of poverty, misery, political oppression, economic exploitation, the demise of African traditional values, and diverse forms of injustices encountered by the majority of African societies. This discourse is classified as postcolonial discourse and it focuses on tracing the impact of imperialism from the inception of colonisation to the present day (Brydon, 2000, cited in Altijani and Omer, 2019). Crucially, postcolonial African writers express the changes experienced by the former colonies within the fields of culture, politics and religion; additionally, they reflect on the current state of post-independence and its challenges (Altijani and Omer, 2019).

One of the major thematic concerns of the novel is the aspect of human migration. As postulated by Nyambi (2014b), the economic adversities of post-2000 Zimbabwe made exile a breakout strategy for citizens to escape from problems prompted by “a dysfunctional economy, dwindling job opportunities, and incessant shortages of basic consumer goods”. This view is supported by Chiumbu and Musemwa (2012), who suggest that the “most visible manifestation of the Zimbabwean crisis was a wave of outmigration from the country”. From the beginning of the crisis in Zimbabwe, a large number of Zimbabweans immigrated to Europe, the US, Australia, South Africa, Botswana and other parts of the world. Sadly, Pasura (2010) indicates that “Zimbabwe’s greatest export is its human resources”. As early as 2001, it was already evident that outbound migration was high, as people drifted from their home country in search of greener pastures. *The Uncertainty of Hope* mirrors the difficult conditions that forced many Zimbabweans to abandon the motherland (Chivizhe, 2016).

The dysfunctional economy was among the chief push factors in the period, which saw a massive exodus of Zimbabweans into the diaspora. According to Khan (2010:9), cited in Nyambi (2014b), the economic collapse was the major cause for Zimbabweans crossing into neighbouring countries like South Africa. The collapse of the economy is perceived by Chiumbu and Musemwa (2012) as a result of both internal and external factors, some of which have roots in the colonial past. Among the external factors is the World Bank’s initiative, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). This caused Zimbabwe’s economic collapse, through the removal of government health, education, and food subsidies. It also precipitated the increase in commodity prices and retrenchments (Mlambo, 1997; Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012). However, ESAP also generated the growth of the informal economy, as this sector sells and markets cosmetics, spare car parts, basic commodities, etc. It provided alternative means of survival for many Zimbabweans regardless of class, gender or age. In the text, the mushrooming Siyaso industry and the Mbare Musika market stall where the protagonist Onai and many other women sell vegetables bear evidence to the informal market growth. However, the ailing economy could not sustain the whole population, which led to physical and psychological trauma. Notwithstanding, in response to the various crises and traumas caused by the harsh economy, Zimbabweans devised many survival strategies, among which was out-migration. People settled and worked outside the borders of Zimbabwe or became nomadic cross-border traders (Mrs. Hondo, and Maya in the text) or workers (John, a cross-border truck driver in the text).

The relentless socio-economic crises of post-independence Zimbabwe resulted in many people yearning for better living conditions and forced them to flee the country. Chiumbu and Musemwa (2012) describe migration as an aspect that characterises both colonial and post-

colonial Zimbabwe, though there was a surge after 2000. The new migration trend included more women and young people than it had earlier. Historically, economic migration was associated with men, who left their wives and children to do manual work, especially on South African mines and farms.

As evidenced in the text, out-migration has positive and negative features, for both the immigrant and those they leave behind. Mbiba (2012) postulates that the remittances from the diaspora “have helped to keep Zimbabwe’s economy afloat”. This view is also supported by Raftopoulos (2009:223), who states that “in 2006 it was estimated that half of the families in the two major cities in Zimbabwe were receiving remittances from workers in the diaspora.” Currently, many families live on forex sent by their family members from all over the world. In the text, Chanda’s wife and others work and send money home to their families and spouses for economic purposes like house construction. Though Chanda lavishes the money carelessly on women, the reality remains that his wife sends foreign currency from the UK. The country also benefits from foreign currency brought in by mobile cross-border workers, similar to John in the text who is a cross-border truck driver. Though John engages in illegal forex exchange, the reality remains that cross-border workers contribute to the circulation of foreign currency within the economy. Some of the nomadic cross-border traders like Hondo and his wife have improved their livelihoods by selling groceries and wares imported from South Africa. In the text, Hondo’s wife tells Onai that they returned

“from South Africa. We went to buy some goods for resale... anything to raise a bit of money. Otherwise, we won’t be able to pay school fees for our children next term”.
(Tagwira, 2006:85)

The novella also addresses another push factor in the human movement across the Zimbabwean borders in the post-2000 period. The unpopular Operation Murambatsvina attracted worldwide condemnation, due to its harsh execution. Operation Murambatsvina or ‘Restore order’ was a brainchild of the then government of Zimbabwe that instigated the demolition of ‘illegal structures’ by armed police officers and bulldozers in all the cities of Zimbabwe. Barrister (2007), cited in Chivizhe (2016) observes that Operation Murambatsvina resulted in the “displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, the destruction of homes, businesses, and property, widespread loss of livelihoods, and injury”. As witnessed in the text, frightened residents were forced to demolish their property, and those who did not do so fast enough or offered resistance were beaten by the police. The execution of the operation was as harsh and violent as its timing, considering that it was carried out during the cold winter. This reinforces the perception that it was politically driven, as a stern retribution, punishment, and warning to “urban dwellers due to their increased support for the opposition party, (the then Movement for Democratic Change, MDC)” (Mangena, 2017).

Among the many consequences of Murambatsvina is the destruction of the home, in both its literal and its allegorical sense, subsequently, forcing multitudes of homeless Zimbabweans to desert the country. Due to the demolitions, many Zimbabweans lost their cultural roots, their homes, their families and their sources of livelihood and consequently they no longer felt attached to their homeland. Chivizhe (2016) confirms that African society views a home as a representation of personal pride, as signifying the worthiness of an individual or family, and that it constitutes a sense of belonging to society. This view is supported by Barrister (2007), who posits that the forced removal of people from their homes bears negative connotations, which include the physical abuse of people, as they unwillingly relocate. Furthermore, the people's connection with their homes has spiritual and cultural implications, as some bury their family members where they live. Consequently, the destruction of homes led to increased emigration of Zimbabweans, who felt both physically and psychologically displaced. In the text, Hannah tells Onai that after the demolitions, her husband left for South Africa and that she plans to relocate to the rural areas. She stresses that "I no longer have the strength for this [...] I'm homeless, I have no money, and my child has stopped going to school" (Tagwira, 2006: 211). Hannah feels that she no longer belongs; she is physically and psychologically traumatised by the triple loss of a husband, a home, and an income after the demolition of her Mbare market stall.

Those who escape the country into forced exile after being rendered homeless by Operation Murambatsvina also face various challenges, as they strive to survive on foreign ground. The loss of identity, which starts with the destruction of the home stays with the victims as they enter the diaspora. They suffer challenges such as failure to fit in, which result in psychologically driven feelings like nostalgia. This is echoed in the confession of the protagonist in Bulawayo's *We Want New Names* (2013):

"If I were at home I know I would not be standing around something called snow that was preventing me from going outside to live life...maybe me and Sbho and Bastard and Chipso and Godknows and Stina would be out in Budapest, stealing guavas. But then we wouldn't be having enough food...There are tough times, though, that nonmatter how much food I eat, I find the food does nothing to me like I am hungry for my country, and nothing is going to fix that." (Bulawayo, 2013:153)

Despite the suffering that characterises life back home, it remains the immigrant's home, to which they feel spiritually and physically attached. It is the same situation for Tariro, the young female doctor in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, who abandons her studies in the UK and chooses to return to work in her homeland despite the nauseating conditions in the healthcare system. Tariro confesses to having experienced racial prejudice, demeaning verbal insults, and social alienation in the UK. What is common in most of the confessions of diasporas, is a sense of alienation that is coupled with the harshness of immigrant life. The cold snow alluded to by

Bulawayo's protagonist, Darling, represents the multitudes of physical and psychological adversities and traumas encountered by immigrants, such as racism, cultural hybridity, language inflexibility, and the subsequent literal and metaphorical loneliness. Immigrants' experiences of loneliness and seclusion, discrimination, and exploitation are echoed by Chikwawa's nameless protagonist in *Harare North* (2009). He likens himself to a wandering dog when on the streets of London:

"I am feeling like umgodoyi – the homeless dog that roam them villages scavenging until brave villagers relieve it of its misery by hitting its head with a rock. Umgodoyi have no home like the winds. That's why umgodoyi's soul is torn from his body in rough way. That's what everyone wants to do to me, me I know". (Chikwawa, 2009: 226)

As observed by Ndlovu (2012:114), the nameless protagonist represents many immigrants whose existence in the diaspora is characterised by feelings of being "unhoused, exposed, homeless and vulnerable as umgodoyi", the stray dog. Tagwira also experienced a burning longing for home when she was in the UK and when she wrote *The Uncertainty of Hope*. The novel captures details of her home country, and not that of England, where she lived at the time. One could conclude that Tagwira used the novel-writing process to keep her psychologically close to home.

Apart from out-migration, Operation Murambatsvina also left long-lasting, indelible marks on the psyches of its victims; it emitted physical and psychological violence. Many victims suffered from trauma by experiencing psychological violence. In her report on the impact of the demolitions, Tibaijuka (2005) states that the traumatic effects of the operation will "be felt for many years". In Bulawayo's novel, *We Need New Names* (2013: 64-65), Darling experiences persistent nightmares following the Murambatsvina ordeal. She narrates that

"Even if I want to sleep I cannot because if I sleep the dream will come, and I don't want it to come. I am afraid of the bulldozers and those men and the police [...] I dream about what happened back at our house before we came to Paradise. I try to push it away and push it away, but the dream keeps coming like bees, like rain, like the graves..." (Bulawayo, 2013: 64-65)

Darling's dreams are representative, and they reflect a troubled subconscious that keeps recreating images of violence, which cause insomnia and sleepless nights. According to Tibaijuka's (2005) conclusions, the operation has transgenerational implications, as many victims will be haunted by the trauma for generations to come.

In the set text, Tagwira captures the effects of the operation on the psyche of the Zimbabwean people. For instance, when Onai is forced to demolish her shack, Mangena (2017: 62) indicates that she does this with an obedience, which transcends into subtle resistance, an act that "provides her with an opportunity to deal with all her sources of stress":

“She struck with a forceful blow against all the Gari of the world and against everything that threatened her existence. She groaned and swung the axe into a higher, wide arc. [...] she pressed on with the sole mission of destruction. She cried about her miserable life with Gari. She cried about the food shortages. She cried about the market that had been closed, leaving her without a livelihood. Out of the corner of an eye, she glimpsed Sheila’s forlorn, hunched figure and wept for all the people who had suddenly become homeless. She cried about the poverty that had left her crushed and hopeless about everything that rendered her powerless, everything that held her in chains... The force of her blows caused the wood on the axe handles to splinter, piercing her palms. She did not feel it. She was beyond physical pain”. (Tagwira 2006: 143)

Onai represents the victims of the harshness and violence of imposed homelessness brought about by Murambatsvina; she emotionally ‘crushes’ these injustices as she demolishes her shack. She suffers psychological violence which is harboured within her and which she unleashes during the demolition of her house. She is bitter with patriarchy (Gari/men), the government (that condemns citizens to homelessness), and ill-conceived economic policies (poverty), in which she feels trapped, “... *everything that held her in chains.*” (Tagwira 2006: 143). Onai realises that her children have been corrupted by the events following the demolitions, Gari’s death, and the harshness of the temporary family separation. When her two daughters, Ruwa and Rita engage in an argument, Onai remarks that “*the events of the last few months had changed them all.... Even sweet, docile Rita was now beginning to stand up to her older sister!*” (Tagwira 2006: 361). After experiencing a series of traumatic events at a young age, Rita also harbours psychological violence, which she unleashes at the slightest provocation.

Mangena (2015) classifies Tagwira’s *The Uncertainty of Hope* as part of Zimbabwean texts that offer an alternative to the state’s misrepresentation of Murambatsvina. There have been government efforts to justify the destruction of property and shelters in Zimbabwe: “Operation Murambatsvina confirms the big gulf that now exists between those in charge of the state and the citizens” (Chitando, 2015:223). Instead of concentrating on the ill-economic outlook of the country at the time, the authorities embarked on the much-detested exercise, destroying homes and shelters before putting in place alternative accommodation for the displaced populace. Some of the participating learners and teachers were victims of the operation and were affected by its aftermath. It was, thus, imperative to determine how they perceived the operation and how it influenced their perceptions of the text.

Another thematic concern of the text is the aspect of class differentiation, which roots lie in the colonial, Separate Development policy that guided the administration of the then Rhodesia. As postulated by Makumbe (2003), Zimbabwe, like many other ex-colonies, “inherited a racially divided socio-economic system” at independence. The British Rhodesian administration had maintained “separate schools, clinics, hospitals, and other social amenities

for whites and blacks” (Makumbe, 2003) . At independence, more blacks drifted to the towns, where most of them inhabited suburbs that had been allotted to poor blacks by the colonial administration. The novella captures this class differentiation in the representation of Mbare’s over-crowdedness, filthy sewage-strewn roads, and shoddy infrastructure viz a viz Belvedere and Borrowdale. Belvedere is characterised by affluence and elegant infrastructure. Onai’s upward social mobility is illustrated by spacious and rich Borrowdale, where her

“workshop was a large, airy room... its windows opened into a garden flooded by the morning sun and the bright colours of summer flowers: white and purple petunias; deep orange geraniums, and others with which Onai was unfamiliar”. (Tagwira, 2006:360)

Another thematic concern of post-independence African literature is the failure of most post-independence African governments to deliver on their promises to the people. In policy statements, politicians had promised to build governments based on equity; promised to be devoted to end the ills of mass poverty, disease, and ignorance; envisioned to end racial segregation; and endorsed laws for the betterment of the quality of life for their peoples (Altijani and Omer, 2019). These politicians failure is vividly captured in Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963):

“Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie”. (Fanon, 1963:166)

Most African citizens realised that independence had ushered in new adversities: intolerance, poverty, corruption, abusive power, and untold neglect and disillusionment. Mainly through the portrayal of Mbare, *The Uncertainty of Hope* addresses the issues of poverty, squalor, and neglect which run through the writer’s depiction of the economic outlook of the country. Tagwira describes Onai’s family situation through symbols of poverty and wretchedness in the novel. The contents and furniture in Onai’s house pronounce poverty: “a black and white television set is her most prized possession”; the home is ‘secured’ by a “rickety metal gate”; blankets are threadbare; and a “wobbly, lopsided wooden table serves as eating-place” (Tagwira, 2006:1). The picture of poverty permeates society, as most lodgers live in shacks; half of the Mbare suburb lives in slums and shacks, and children walk to school barefoot in ragged uniforms (Tagwira, 2006).

There is evidence of neglect in Mbare given the presence of potholed roads, the growth of shantytowns, the scores of ragged beggars and street children, and burglars out on the

streets. These detailed descriptions present signs of a society that has fallen prey to squalid survival. This depiction by Tagwira also paints a picture of an unequal society that suffers due to a myriad of political and economic factors. The novel clearly characterises the post-independence situation as one rocked by pessimism and abject disillusionment, especially in the psyches of the neglected and marginalised populace. Poverty, squalor, and neglect result in physical and psychological wretchedness in many post-independence African societies. They are also common postcolonial themes in African literature. Subsequently, this study contributes to the literature on subtextual postcolonial themes and their impact on learners and teachers' perceptions.

The novella also presents the theme of inadequate amenities and the subsequent threats to socio-economic and health services. As posited by Mangena (2017), Onai's frequent journeys to the hospital illustrate the crumbling service-delivery system. During her first hospital visit, there is mention of fuel shortages. Furthermore, John (husband of Onai's friend, Katy) spent "three of his leave days in a long queue in Harare city centre... most of the tower lights were faulty... the vehicle kept dropping into out sized pot-holes". On their way from the hospital, Onai, Katy and John witness people who due to "the prevailing transport problems, coupled with the inability to pay the ever-increasing fares, most of them preferred walking to work" (Tagwira, 2006:13-17). Mangena (2017) adds that the health system is also ailing. At the government hospital where Onai is admitted on several occasions, there is no running water. Moreover, there is also a short supply of life-saving medicine such as anti-retroviral drugs. Sheila who is HIV-infected eventually dies while on a long waiting list (Mangena, 2017). These themes are evidence of the neglect and failure by the city fathers to look after their people.

The novel also addresses the thematic aspect of patriarchy, which is vividly revealed through the experiences of most of the female characters who survive against the odds in society. According to Chitando (2015:216), Tagwira contests the negative representations of women in Zimbabwean literature: "earlier writers portray women as helpless victims of patriarchy". However, the women in *The Uncertainty of Hope* are proactive and assertive. Chitando (2015) alludes to the literary discourse on African life having been male-dominated because women have been absent in many facets in patriarchal societies. She blames this on the existence of various patriarchies that converged in compromising the position of women. In her view, colonial, rural, missionary, and indigenous patriarchies all conspired in controlling women (Chitando, 2015; Hungwe, 2006). The patriarchies left a legacy of regarding women as weak and of requiring male protection:

"Colonial patriarchy placed emphasis on men as breadwinners and gave men a privileged status in towns and cities. Rural and indigenous patriarchy created the myth

that women who ventured into urban areas were loose and dangerous. Missionary patriarchy communicated the idea that responsible women were housewives. The net effect of these patriarchies was to domesticate women and to suggest that women could not be regarded as serious economic actors". (Chitando, 2015: 217)

Largely, these negative perceptions of women have persisted, but Tagwira's novel challenges these cultural notions. She does this through her presentation of characters like Emily, who is a capable, reliable, responsible, and competent female doctor, and Faith, who is a University of Zimbabwe law student. Both women are employed in occupations that are considered as male preserves. In this regard, Tagwira seeks to break cultural stereotypes and create space for women collectively to challenge the cultural restrictions imposed on them in patriarchal societies, without fearing prejudice.

Nyambi (2014a) posits that women are economically marginalised in Zimbabwe. He traces this back to the social, economic, and political structures fashioned by colonialism, which strengthened the engrained, male-centeredness of Zimbabwean society. According to Nyambi (2014a), the exploitation of agricultural land and mines by the colonial system resulted in the misuse of native males' physical strength. Capitalist paid labour eroded the natives' dependence on subsistence farming, in which women played a role.

This view is supported by Chitando (2015), who argues that "during the Industrial Revolution, men left home to work in the industries for a wage, while women stayed home, concentrating on taking care of dependants and unpaid domestic tasks". She also contends that male wage labour and migrant labour relegated women to the position of "dependants and appendages of men" (Chitando, 2015:218). Paid labour made African males the pivotal source of the family's livelihood, and they assumed a superiority similar to their white masters. Females were relegated to domesticity and their economic dependence entrenched their patriarchal disempowerment, which led to a myriad of related stereotypes. This scenario bred the discriminatory gender-based and socio-economic trend that Tagwira opposes through characters like Onai, who rise above the restrictions imposed by patriarchal-designed codes of cultural conduct.

Cultural codes of conduct instigate gender stereotyping and prejudice that pervade the narrative in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. These include stereotypes of passivity, subservience, dependency and helplessness that are part of the socialisation of a (supposedly) 'true' African wife (Chitando, 2015; Nyambi, 2014a). The colonially bred female dependency stereotype could be the force behind the oppressive attitudes of men like Gari; he perpetually denies Onai a chance to formal employment and destroys her sewing machine, to make sure she remains a housewife. The novel also carries a culturally driven notion that women cannot succeed in

life without men; Toro and Chipso believe that Onai has to be inherited by Gari's brother, lest she brings other men into the family home. There is also the stereotypical notion that marriage defines 'true' African women; Onai remains in an abusive marriage due to fear of the stigma associated with divorce. In Zimbabwean society and the society of the text, men are perceived to be always correct in their decisions and women, who are outspoken and vocal in their marriages, are labelled and treated with little respect. Maya, a vocal market and cross-border trader, who supposedly beats her husband, is regarded with contempt because she challenges patriarchy, (the status-quo) (Chitando, 2015). The expectation is that women must be docile and subservient even in situations that threaten their wellbeing. Even amongst themselves, women have certain stereotypical attitudes. For example, Onai is contemptuous of Emily during their encounter at the hospital, as Onai doubts that Emily is a capable medical doctor. She, as well as society, does not have faith in a female doctor. Historically, some occupations were classified by gender, a scenario, which has remained ensconced in patriarchal Zimbabwean society; this theme stirred heated discussion among the mixed group of learners in this study, the majority of whom were female (See Chapter Five).

As postulated by Mangena (2017), women's choices in patriarchy are circumscribed. At Gari's death, Onai's chances of attaining freedom are thwarted by the re-invention of her struggle, as culture demands that she should be inherited by Toro, along with the rest of Gari's property. Onai is labelled a renegade when she refuses to stay with Toro (Gari's brother) under the traditional tag, 'Nhaka' (inherited wife/possession). Her refusal to be inherited culminates in destitution, as she (together with Gari's orphaned children) is thrown out of the family house. Toro's attempt to inherit Onai together with the house objectifies Onai. In essence, she is considered a possession left behind by Gari, which requires the protection and guidance of Toro (Mangena, 2017). Onai's situation in the novel exposes the objectification of women. Patriarchal society in most cases trivialises the position and role of women, who are classified as children. In the novel, Onai, the protagonist is loyal and faithful to her abusive husband, Gari, whom she remains married to despite advice from her friend Katy to leave him: "do you want us to take you out of this house in a coffin?" (Tagwira, 2006:6). Although she is aware of the dangers associated with the violence meted out by Gari, Onai was socialised to view marriage as respectable. Thus, she remains married and Gari continues to treat her as a possession (Chitando, 2015). Women, together with children, are regarded as minors who cannot function without men.

The novel also addresses gender-based violence and abuse, especially of the subaltern groups (women and children), which is a popular theme of women writers in post-independence Africa. Onai is the epitome of gender-based abuse and violence. She suffers

various forms of gender-initiated violence, especially in her private space. Her marriage to Gari is characterised by physical and psychological violence, which is gender-based. As observed by Naidoo (2016), the violence in Onai's domestic life appears to be cyclical, and the text confirms it: "She knew the routine well enough... there was always hell to pay" (Tagwira, 2006: 9). In the opening chapter, her hand is fractured when she is beaten up by Gari after burglars stole their black and white television set. When Gari returns home drunk after the burglary has occurred, he accuses Onai of conniving with her 'boyfriends' to steal the set. Onai also suffers psychological violence. For instance, Gari abuses her verbally: "You are a whore! *Uri hure!*" (Tagwira, 2006:9). Obscene name-calling and demeaning behaviour are common forms of psychological violence that Onai endures. "The word 'hure' carries a more humiliating connotation and is more demeaning than the English equivalent, whore" (Naidoo, 2016). Gender-based violence, which includes physical violence, name-calling and verbal abuse damages the heart, mind, and soul, thereby affecting a woman's sense of self.

These gender-based abuses and stereotypes are challenged by Zimbabwean female writers such as Tagwira, who seek to give agency to their female characters. This is described by Chitando (2012) as a rejection of female powerlessness. According to Mangena (2017:57), patriarchy-enforced silence is broken when women writers write about patriarchal dominance; about masculinised nationalist history that glosses over women's existence and identities; about issues affecting women; and about issues that are considered taboo. As posited by Nyambi (2014a:41), Tagwira's Onai is an epitome of female struggle, whose "journey to self-actuality is a model journey for the struggle of women against patriarchal oppression". Onai resiliently engages various survival strategies in her fight against gender-based, social, and economic abuse that threatens her existence. After Gari (patriarchy) denies her formal employment, she resorts to market vending. When the stall is destroyed by Murambatsvina (the state), she resorts to street selling and door-to-door sales. When she loses the house to Toro (patriarchy) on Gari's death, she heads for the rural area with her children. She returns to the city, where she maintains strategic alliances with other women such as Katy and Emily and joins a support group (Kushinga Women's Organisation). She eventually connects with Tapiwa Jongwe (through Faith), who offers her employment and accommodation. Through Onai's journey, it is evident that characters in the text carry hope, determination, resilience, a positive mind-set, and optimism (Mlambo, et al, 2015). Moreover, through the struggles and survival strategies adopted by the likes of Onai in the text, Tagwira challenges Afro-pessimism. The latter emphasises weakness, victimhood, fragility, and an inability to act positively for survival; it also downplays ordinary people's capacity and resilience to survive and adapt to new situations and to change their cultural identities (Mlambo, Kangira and Smit, 2015).

This section has identified some of the thematic concerns of the set-text, through the lenses of literary critics. It has also revealed the importance of my field-based analysis of the text, as the existing literature on the topic is desk-based studies. This section has also revealed how Onai and other female characters in the novel survive abject poverty, and gender-based violence. Just as much as the economic landscape of the day victimises her in multiple ways, so does the patriarchal system. As a vendor, she suffers the pangs of Murambatsvina state violence; as a citizen, she experiences the wrath of the economic crisis of the day and as a wife, she is trapped by her husband's abuse. Mungoshi (2007) perceptively observes that male and female characters' abuse of Onai forces her to follow her own destiny.

2.9 Conclusion

In the first section of Chapter Two, I review the literature concerning the phenomenon of the study, the subtext. I explain the importance of literature as a school subject and link the concept, subtext, to aspects of the curriculum. Furthermore, I clarify the relationship between the main components of my research questions and classroom literature. I then discussed literary critics' views of *The Uncertainty of Hope* to situate subtextuality within the set-text. In the next section, I review theory-based literature that is applicable to this study.

SECTION B: THEORIES INFORMING THE STUDY

2.10 Introduction

In Section A, I discuss the research-based literature that relates to the concept, subtext, which is the thematic linchpin of my study. This section presents a review of theory-based literature that is relevant to my theoretical framework. Four aspects are addressed in this section. First, I consider theory in general, its importance, and its role in this study. Second, I explore literary theory and in particular its relevance for this study. Third, I examine literary theory's significance as a pedagogical tool. Considering that the study centres on the subtextual responses and perceptions of participants to a literary text, it is worthwhile to discuss literary theory and its relevance in research. Lastly, the theories that constitute the eclectic theoretical framework of this study are discussed separately, to allow for a clearer understanding of each.

2.10.1 What is theory in research?

Diverse ideas have been raised by scholars and critics on what constitutes theory, and it is worth discussing these propositions. It appears that the definition of theory depends on several factors, which include the researcher's particular discipline and the purpose of the research.

From an English studies perspective, Kusch (2016) defines theory as “the study of the underlying assumptions we make about the nature of language, authors, readers, texts, human subjectivity, narrative, aesthetics, power, culture and other major elements of literary production and reception”. In essence, theory makes literary study structured and logical. Theory allows researchers to interpret themes and to link them to other contexts, rather than just describing them (Casanave and Li, 2015). This suggests that without a theoretical lens, the researcher is tempted to narrate or describe artificially the important aspects of a study such as their research findings; theory allows the researcher to conduct a probing and critical discussion of their findings, which situates their study within the context of works in their field. In other words, an atheoretical study stands epistemologically isolated and rootless. Conversely, a relevant theory opens new insights and broadens understanding of a phenomenon (Anfara and Mertz, 2006).

As implied by Kumar (2014), theory refers to “the organisation of knowledge and the formation of a system of thought, which, with time, becomes acceptable among a group of people, scholars, practitioners, and society as a whole”. This implies that without theory, knowledge becomes fragmented, loosely grown, and difficult to comprehend. For this reason, my study adopts a condensed system of thought comprising of various systemically interwoven theories in constructing knowledge that is organised.

2.10.2 The role and purpose of theory

In every discipline, good research is that which is informed, guided and organised by theory. Research is characterised by the abstract (theoretical) and the concrete (empirical) and classified by Sunday (2014) as thought statements and observational statements respectively. However, these statements remain scattered, meaningless pieces of information unless drawn together in a theoretical and conceptual framework (Grant and Osanloo, 2014). These views suggest that theory plays the role of organizing, arranging, and giving meaning to research ideas, as was the case in this study.

Grant and Osanloo (2014: 12) indicate that theory-driven thinking and acting are vital in aiding “the selection of a research topic, the development and framing of research questions, the conceptualization of the literature review, the designing of the study approach, and the selection of relevant methods”. This suggests that theory informs the whole study and assists the researcher in crafting and developing appropriate research questions, which subsequently aid in the harvesting of relevant and credible data. Conversely, atheoretical research causes the researcher to gather data that are incredible and to draw invalid conclusions. Thus, theory maps, shapes and directs the research path, as was the case with my study.

In my study, I used educational and literary theory systematically and systemically. Subsequently, theory saturated my entire research design. Theory guided me to craft the research topic, to refine the goals of my study, to justify my research, to develop realistic and relevant research questions, to conceptualise my literature review, to select appropriate methods, and to identify potential validity threats to my conclusions (Maxwell, 2004). I used literary theory to analyse the prescribed literary text and the literary works created by the learners (the poems and poem-drawings). In the next section, I discuss literary theory and its relevance as a pedagogical tool. Thereafter, I discuss the theories that constitute the eclectic conceptual framework that undergirds my study.

2.11 Literary theory

The term literary theory has been defined in many ways by various critics. Brewton (2016) identifies literary theory as “the set of concepts and intellectual assumptions for explaining or interpreting literary texts”. This suggests that meaningful text interpretation does not occur in a vacuum but has to be anchored in theory. Nwadike and Onunkwo (2018) state that literary theory is the articulation of a theoretical framework or conceptual tool that is relevant for an informed appreciation of works of literature. Thus, literary theory should direct or guide the critical study of works of literature if there is to be effective literary criticism. Kusch (2016) suggests that literary theory includes “schools of thought and a set of abstract and philosophical writings that assist the researcher in choosing her approach to a literary text; literary theory concerns itself with the conceptualisation of literature and its function in the world”.

Thus, theory selection in literary study is a product of many variables. Literary theory formulates the relationship between author and work, and it offers varying approaches for understanding the role of the historical context in interpretation as well as the relevance of linguistic and unconscious elements of the text (Brewton, 2016). There are various schools of thought or literary theories that are associated with particular historical contexts: Feminism, Marxism, New Historicism, and Postcolonialism are poststructuralist schools of thought or literary theories. These poststructuralist theories are commensurate with 21st-century thinking in various fields, including education (Brewton, 2016). In the next section, I expose the relevance of literary theory to pedagogy in general and to my study in particular.

2.11.1 Literary theory as a pedagogical tool

It is worth noting that most poststructuralist literary theories promote fundamental goals of 21st-century pedagogies such as “critical pedagogy, cognitive learning, and social cognitive learning” (Yaqoob, 2011). As mentioned in the previous section, these poststructuralist literary

theories include postcolonialism and psychoanalysis, which form part of the eclectic theoretical framework or lens that informs this study.

As postulated by Knapp (2004) cited in Yaqoob (2011), the contemporary age requires a shift in focus from what texts mean to what students think about them. To this effect, literary theory as a pedagogical tool engages the principles of modern approaches to learning in nurturing the cognitive processes of learners into active learners who are capable of connecting the classroom with the world beyond or outside the school (Wang, 2014; Yaqoob, 2011). From this perspective, literary theory is viewed as a tool that engages readers (learners) in the meaning-making process. It enables them to view literature as part of a larger context that exists outside the text and classroom. Consequently, they are enabled to read and understand a text by connecting with their social and cultural realities and institutions (Yaqoob, 2011; Baker, Macgaw and Peterson, 2007). Literary theory opens the learners' eyes to the reading of literature as a meaningful and worthwhile activity in which they are co-creators of the text.

Yaqoob (2011) stresses that literary theory as a pedagogical tool relates to the principles of critical education, experiential learning, and social cognitive learning. It also encourages learners to generate new and innovative meaning from texts by utilizing their real-world experiences and their beliefs. It is upon this understanding that my study adopted an eclectic theoretical lens, which fuses literary theory and educational theories and approaches (critical pedagogy) in making this study meaningful. These literary and reader-oriented learning and reading theories and approaches are discussed in detail in the next section.

2.11.2 Learning and reading theories and approaches

This section addresses the educational (pedagogical) theories engaged in my eclectic theoretical lens. Given my learner-centred philosophy, and my participants (learners and teachers) being African, I conceptualised a learning-centred eclectic theoretical lens through which I employed Constructivism as a mirror of Indigenous Knowledge systems. This explains why I discuss Constructivism and the Reader-response approach alongside Indigenous Knowledge.

2.11.3 Constructivism

Given that many educational theories today advocate learner-centred practices, my theoretical lens is rooted in Constructivism. It is a learner-centred theory that provides theoretical support for today's educational research and teaching practice (Wang, 2014). Constructivism holds that learners bring their prior experiences to the classroom, which in the southern African context, Mawere (2015) identifies as Indigenous Knowledge (IK). The African participants in

this study constructed knowledge through their culture; their African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) is stored in diverse cultural-literary forms that include stories, songs, folk drama, myths and folklore (Kaya & Seleti, 2013).

Olusegun (2015:67) describes constructivism as a learning theory grounded in psychology. Constructivism explains how people acquire knowledge and learn, and therefore, applies directly to education. Its basic tenet is that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. From an African Indigenous Knowledge perspective, learners extract understanding from their personal experiences, their understanding of local conditions, and what they have learned from their respective communities, which is culturally specific knowledge (Mawere, 2015). This hints at the subjectivity that characterises meaning-making, which is also a central characteristic of literary analysis, in which this study is anchored.

Proponents of constructivism observe certain basic principles of knowledge construction. These include that learning is an active experience; that the perceptions held by learners about the subject and topic taught form part of their learning experience; and that learning is socially and culturally rooted (Fernando, et al, 2017). These constructivist notions of learning have their origins in the work of theorists such as Dewey (1929), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1962), and Piaget (1980), with the likes of Von Glasersfeld (1989) and Perry (1992) being renowned for putting forward various tenets of constructivist theory for instructional designers (Olusegun, 2015). According to Von Glasersfeld (1989), cited in Fernando et al, (2017:110), “Knowledge is not passively received but actively received by the cognising subject; and the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organisation of the experiential world, not the discovery of ontological reality.” This identifies the learner as an active participant who takes the responsibility for learning, and this compels the teacher to take cognisance of this as she facilitates learning.

Social constructivism emphasises the importance of the cultural background of the learner throughout the learning process, as this background aids in shaping the knowledge and the truth that the learner creates, discovers, and attains during the learning process (Wertsch, 1997). The learner’s background is constituted by diverse aspects of contexts and the environment. These include the physical and psychological environment, the socio-cultural context, relationships (family and interpersonal) as well as the linguistic environment.

Another constructivist concept propounded by Wang (2014:797) is that “Knowledge is not an objective existence independent of the cognitive subject (human beings) but is an active construction in understanding the outside world”: a construction that results from social interaction, which occurs in a specific environment. This is echoed by Baker, McGaw and

Peterson (2007:3), who argue that despite knowledge being personal and individual, learners construct their knowledge through their interaction with the physical world, collaboratively in social settings and in a cultural and linguistic environment. In this regard, there is a need to consider the effect of social interaction on the learners' behaviour and their emotional states (Wang, 2014).

The constructivist approach, therefore, highlights the subjective nature of the construction of knowledge. This claim is particularly relevant for the social sciences through which the student studies the actions and interactions of human beings in areas such as politics, economics, society, culture (Fernando et al, 2017), and literature. In literature, the constructivist approach is implemented through the engagement of reading and learning theories and approaches that elicit the learners' subjective and at times hidden desires (Kim, 2001). These theories and approaches include the Transactional Reader-Response Theory (TRRT), and the Reader-Response Approach (RRA).

2.11.4 Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response Theory

This study adopted tenets of Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response Theory (TRRT) (1978) in analysing the responses and perceptions of the Advanced Level learners and teachers to the selected study text. The TRRT theory of literature is concerned with the ontology of a literary text in which the reader is integral to the text as an ontological value (Mohammed, 2013:84). This view is echoed by Iser (1974:1), who opines that "a literary text can only produce a response when it is read." TRRT in literary theory conceptualizes a literary text as incomplete and which attains its completeness only when it is read.

It is important to note that the TRRT was introduced as a reaction to earlier theories that viewed the position of the reader in literary analysis from a more passive perspective. It is therefore important to understand how the earlier literary theories and approaches viewed the role of the reader in making meaning from literary texts. From the late 1930s through the 1950s, New Criticism was the dominant literary theory. Its proponents assume that meaning exists solely in the text and that it can only be deciphered by a competent literary critic, who possesses concise analytical skills. The approach stresses the close reading of the text, detailed textual analysis, and the correct interpretation of the author's message through the lenses of expert critics (Cuddon, 1991; Gachari, 2012). The intellectual status and personality of the writer; relevant historical events; the social, socio-cultural, political and cultural circumstances of the text; and other extrinsic implications (Bressler, 1994) are not considered important in affecting the text. In essence, this approach views meaning as derived from within the text as a sole artefact of meaning. New Criticism considers the role of the reader, the

author's background and intentions, and contextual and historical details stemming from prior knowledge as unimportant in determining the meaning of the text (Robinson, 1997).

Another theory from which the TRRT differs is Formalism, which also rejects the reader's role in the creation of meaning. DiYami (1995) indicates that its main tenet is that a literary work is independent of readers and their recreation of it. Formalists believe that a literary work should be understood and analysed in isolation. The theory discards aspects involving the reader's psychological substance, such as feelings, emotions, perceptions and ideas, and it regards the reader's reality as irrelevant in establishing the literariness of a text. Due to its insistence on the form and manner through which literary texts achieve their effects (meter, rhyme, rhythm, structure etc.), Formalism established the scientific basis of accuracy for the study of literature (Gachari, 2012).

Overall, both New Criticism and Formalism are theories that are concerned with discovering the intrinsic worth of literary devices and texts. The critic pays particular attention to the formal features of the text, for example, style, structure, and genre, and determines how these work together to bring about literary effects. A formalist reading of poetry, for instance, focuses on rhymes, structure, rhythms, and cadences, without establishing its cultural or political context. Moreover, the theory does not consider the diversity of readers in terms of gender, race, class, and culture or community knowledge. However, these aspects play a crucial role in determining the meanings each reader derives from a text. Therefore, I disagree with both the New Critics and the Formalists' view of literature. It is reader differences that influence the varied reader responses to literature, which are shaped by factors such as exposure to and experiences of literature. As a result of the shortcomings of these theories, the Transactional Reader-Response Theory came into eminence as a reaction to the New Criticism and Formalist trend of disregarding the experiences and the role of the reader in creating meaning of a literary text.

TRRT proponents claim that the text comes alive only through the readers' active participation and interaction with literature and that text is dependent not only on the author, but also on the reader's interpretation (Kashikar, 2018). It is the reader, who with the help of his reading experience gives meaning to the text. The reader creates the text as much as the author does. Iser (1974) cited in Kashikar (2018) developed the phenomenological analysis of the reading process. He defined literary text as a product of the writer's intentional act, which in part controls the reader's response. A literary text consists of certain gaps or indeterminate elements. These gaps or indeterminate elements in the text must be filled in by the reader with the help of his creative participation. In essence, Iser views meaning as not hidden in the

text; it is the result of a very subtle interaction between the reader and the text. Therefore, meaning resides in both the reader and the text.

However, reader-oriented critics disagree on whether a text has an objective existence or not. On one hand, critics such as Louise Rosenblatt (1978), Wolfgang Iser (1978), and Hans Robert Jauss (1982) underscore the fact that meaning is created through a transactional process between the text and the reader; conversely, Norman Holland (1970), David Bleich and Stanley Fish (1980) theorise that the text's meaning is created solely by the individual reader.

Rosenblatt (1978: 23) views the text "as an object of paper and ink until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols". It is the reader's responses to the text that create meaning from the inkblots through what Rosenblatt views as a transaction between the reader and the text. Iser (1978: 275) theorises that the convergence between the reader and the text is what brings the literary work into existence. In his view, this convergence will "always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader". He identifies the artistic (author-oriented) and aesthetic (reader-oriented) poles in any literary work through which meaning is negotiated. Thus, meaning can never be imagined solely by the reader or generated alone through the text but rather meaning is generated through the active process of reading.

Jauss (1982) uses the term "horizons of expectations" to describe the socio-cultural norms and assumptions that mould a reader's interpretation of any literary work in a given historical moment. For Jauss, a literary text is linked to a historical past and, therefore, any interpretation and meaning are tied to the prevailing cultural environment. Instead of the literary work standing alone, Jauss underscores the fact that a literary work depends upon the reader to assimilate and actualise the text.

The other group of RR theorists, (Norman Holland, David Bleich, and Stanley Fish) view meaning and interpretation as exclusively a construction of the reader regardless of the influence of the text. According to Holland (1980), a reader's engagement with a text creates an identity platform where he brings his unique expectations, fears, and wishes derived from the text through what is termed DEFT: defence-expectation-fantasy-transformation. Holland applied these psychoanalytic concepts to describe the response of the reader. He argued that the reader's response is a product of trans-active engagement between the fantasies projected by the author in the text and the unconscious desires and defences of the reader. The material of the text is a "projection of fantasies" that constitutes the "author's identity", while the reader's response is made up of unconscious desires, expectations, and satisfaction

that constitute the reader's identity. This identity is achieved when the reader fully expresses his drives and through these, arrives at an interpretation, which is a re-creation of his psychological processes (Kashikar, 2018:405).

David Bleich (1975; 1978) argues that the readers' interpretations are experience-oriented. In his view, the sources of the readers' interpretations lie in the personal responses aroused by the text, whereby the text conjures specific personal reactions and memories of personal relationships and experience. Bleich also refers to linguistic articulation or naming and identification as the symbolization of experience: "interpretation is a symbolization motivated by the demand that the knowledge thus symbolized be explained or converted into a more subjectively satisfying form" (Sadjadi, 2017). Bleich's approach refutes the existence of one objective "truth" that can be obtained in a text: it proposes that meaning comes from response to literature within a social context.

Fish (1972), just like Holland (1980) and Bleich (1975), theorises that meaning is created by the reader independently of the text. But unlike the others, he argues that the ideal reader is an 'informed' reader, who has linguistic and literary competence. For him, readers have different interpretations because meaning is a creation of the reader and not the text. Similar to Rosenblatt, who argues that the interpretation of any reader is espoused by a shared cultural milieu, Fish (1972) fuses in the term "interpretive communities" that determine how a text should be understood. In his view, knowledge is not always objective but conditioned by the social context in which one resides. This suggests that the meaning created by the reader is constrained within the dictates of the interpretive community, which establish the agreed-upon standards of interpretation.

Despite the different perspectives on whether meaning is exclusively a creation of the reader or a synergy between the reader and the text, the theorists collectively agree on the importance of the reader in constructing meaning. Each theorist provides an understanding of how meaning is created by the reader through active engagement with the text. My study is in harmony with the position that meaning is created through a transactional process between the text and reader during which the reader, with her past experiences, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions, interacts with the perspectives in the text, and meaning is determined as the result of this transaction (Ali, 1994: 290). Thus, reading, according to this approach, is a reflective and creative process and meaning is self-constructed (Amer, 2003) within a specific social context.

It is imperative to discuss the RR approach as it relates to the interpretation of meaning in the classroom, wherein this particular study is anchored. According to the TRR theory, there are

two types of responses that all readers have to a text, which are the Efferent and the Aesthetic responses. My study adds the Indigenous response. As proposed by Rivara and Colbrese (Nd), Efferent responses are fact-oriented and may require readers to answer questions from the literature, draw conclusions, and generate opinions. Conversely, Aesthetic responses are more personally and emotionally derived and may require readers to communicate aspects such as what they felt, how something may have appeared and what was interesting in the text. This study, being classroom-based, considered both types of responses, with emphasis placed on Aesthetic responses within an indigenous African context. This was done in respect of the aim of RRA: to encourage learners to respond to the text and express their ideas, opinions, and feelings freely. As a researcher, I respected the view that learners should realize that the main concern is not “What they understand” but “how they feel” and that the teacher should accept “multiple interpretations” to a text rather than just one “correct interpretation” (Rosenblatt, 1995; Amer, 2003:68).

The RR approach and perspectives of the TRR theory have been used by various other researchers, with interesting implications for their findings. For instance, Zainal, et al, (2007) engaged the RR approach in a study to determine students’ opinions regarding the use of literary journals in improving their responses to and understanding of literary texts. The participants consisted of 65 undergraduate students taking English Literature courses at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, University of Putra, Malaysia. The findings revealed that giving learners a voice through literary journals enhances their critical and autonomous learning. Zainal, et al, (2007) observe that the TRR theory has evolved in the literature classroom through many practical applications such as role-play, drama, letter writing, and literary journals, to encourage students to interact with the text and to draw individual responses from it. This approach has shifted the focus towards a critical appreciation of the text.

The RRA is crucial to my study in that it emphasises the importance of readers’ conscious and unconscious conception of the subtextual meaning. Proponents of the RRA believe that “some elements of the text are indeterminate, and their meaning must be worked out by the reader” (Habib, 2005: 728; Mohammed, 2013:84), both as an individual and as a member of a social group or community. However, the RR approach is western-oriented, and I found it imperative to connect it with African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) since my participants were African (indigenous) readers whose perceptions of an indigenous text were interpreted from within an indigenous context (AIK).

Ali (1994) describes the (RRA) as rooted in Constructivism, as each individual constructs his/her version of the story when encountering a text. Kim (2001) further proposes that the

meaning readers make of texts is primarily based on their social backgrounds as well as personal experiences, which are influenced by the specific socio-cultural context or environment. The African participants in this study interpreted their world both as individuals and as members of their communities according to the indigenous cosmology (Genis, 2020; 2018). The diversity in learner responses to the selected text supported this proposition (see Chapter Five).

2.11.5 African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK)

The construct, Indigenous Knowledge (IK), has been defined by Mawere (2015) as a set of ideas, beliefs, and practices of a specific cultural milieu that has been used by its people to interact with their environment and other people over a long period. Semali and Kincheole (1999:3) identify indigenous knowledge as indigenous people's ways of knowing or creative and dynamic ways in which residents of a particular locality have understood themselves in relation to their natural environments. Therefore, IK is defined as a dynamic process through which people of an area come to understand themselves in relation to their natural environment; additionally, it is how people organise folk knowledge, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives (Ned, 2019: 34; Semali and Kincheloe 1999). Kgari-Masondo (2018) alludes to indigenous epistemology as the knowledge of life, philosophy, beliefs, traditions, culture, and language of a community.

In essence, IK is the knowledge that is peculiar to a particular cultural group or community, and through which they are identified. In the case of African societies or communities, knowledge is orally passed down transgenerationally in various cultural forms (folk stories, songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, poetry and myths); visually through arts, such as San paintings, writings, craft (Genis, 2019), cultural rituals and dance; practically through various practices and the artefacts associated with these practice; and spiritually through dreams and visions from the ancestors (Shava, 2018:36). As such, IK creates a vivid link between the living and the dead. Each living generation carries the responsibility of imparting this knowledge to succeeding generations. Thus, as argued by Ned (2019:35), IK does not only lie in the hands of an individual, but it is also carried and produced collectively, and is regarded as a heritage to be passed on for practical and survival purposes.

This transgenerational cultural link is also explained by proponents of Epigenetics, who observe that certain human characteristics unique to particular communities, including moral traits, are determined by cultural contexts and these characteristics are generally heritable (Neill, 2017). Epigenetics is the study of heritable changes in intergenerational gene expression due to environmental triggers without causing changes in the underlying DNA

structure (Genis, 2019). Epigenetics is used as a theoretical lens through which the interaction of language (literature), the body (writer and reader), and the environment is studied (Genis 2019). Epigenetics proponents argue that the environment, in its broad sense (physical, social, political, historical and cultural) directly influences the particular psycho-cultural traits across generations. These transgenerational traits manifest in readers' responses to literary texts through cultural-specific textual markers and triggers: metonyms, metaphors and symbols (Genis 2020; 2019), which are identified and described as subtextual triggers in Chapter Five of this study.

A fundamental aspect of AIK is that it hinges on the belief that each person is because the other person is, or each person exists because the other person exists (Mwangi-Zake, 2009; Gumbo (2015). As such, the young are taught respect, responsibility and unity, aspects which are embodied in Ubuntu/Hunhu. The latter is conceptualised by Khoza (2005) as the African value system of humanness or being human; a worldview characterised by the values of sharing, compassion, communalism, and related predispositions. Gumbo (2015) posits that knowledge is not value free; it cannot be divorced from the cultural and value systems of indigenous societies. It is, therefore, imperative to integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) in the interpretation and analysis of literary texts in the multicultural classroom. According to Kante (2004), cited in Kaya and Seleti (2013:37), the inclusion and interfacing of indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge systems within the curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks will help to prepare students and learners for the adult world (Kante, 2004). Consequently, my study integrated African Indigenous Knowledge systems (AIK) and western knowledge systems, so that the participating learners and teachers could incorporate their beliefs, values and spirituality in their analysis of the set-text, through their personal responses, poems and symbols.

Participants in my study are part of the African native community, which relies on oral tradition as a channel through which knowledge is exchanged. As such, memory plays a crucial role in the way recipients of AIK absorb and in turn, share knowledge. The next section discusses the literary theories for this study that assisted in revealing the perceptions and sensory responses by the participants.

2.12 Literary theories

Various literary theories are part of the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study. These literary theories contributed to the understanding of the subtext in literature and its influence on the participants' emotive and psychological responses and perceptions of the set-text. These theories relate specifically to the contextual significance of reading literature

(postcolonial theory, Said, Bhabha and Spivak), and to the psychological significance of responding to literature (Jung and Freud).

2.12.1 Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once or are now colonies of other countries (Lye, 1998). Important to note is the proposition that postcolonial literary discourse deals with the act of colonization and the traumatic residue it left behind even after the formal colonies' independence; these psychological and subtextual traces are evident in the literary works of both the colonisers and the colonised (Mugheri, et al 2016:6). Postcolonial theory's goal is combating the residual effects of colonization on cultures. It deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies, focusing largely on subtextual themes such as cultural differences, sexual orientation, double identity, and identity crisis that saturate the works of postcolonial writers today; these texts form a considerable part of the literature in English for the classroom in former colonies (Sawant, 2012), including Zimbabwe.

The geographical area of postcolonial study is wider than any other discipline in literature, consisting of writings from around the world (Sawant, 2012). This is elaborated by Bertens (2007:195), who remarks that "Writing in English from the former colonies has proved itself as vital and as important as literature written in England itself; we now usually speak of literatures in English rather than of English Literatures". Notably, this shift in the writing centre has also been embraced by curriculum developers in determining the literature that should be studied in the former colonies. It is no longer the literature of the colonisers at the core, but world literatures blended with that of the colony (Bertens, 2007), as in the case of the Zimbabwean curriculum, which is characterised by the study of literature in English.

Like any other literary theory, postcolonial theory has its roots in the works of its founding proponents and their followers. The theory emerged in the 1970s and Edward Said is credited as its founding father; disciples include Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987); Homi K. Bhabha (1994); and Frantz Fanon (1986).

2.12.2 Said's Orientalism and Othering

The concept of 'Othering' inscribes many subtextual themes and concepts such as gender stereotyping and class and racial disparity. Edward Said's concept of the 'Other' constitutes the very heart of postcolonial theory (Roy, 2008). Said's work *Orientalism* (1978) has been credited for establishing postcolonial theory. The book depicts the imbalance between the West and the East by highlighting the perceived superiority of the West over the East (Sawant,

2012). Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” (the inferior object) and (most of the time) “the Occident” (the superior subject), (Said, 1979:2), with the West holding a low opinion of the East. Said’s theory of postcolonialism is based on what he considers the false image of the Orient or the East that has been fabricated by Western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators since Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt in 1798 (Hamadi, 2014:1).

In his support of Orientalism, Boehmer (2005:79) states, “always with reference to the superiority of an expanding Europe, colonised peoples were represented as a lesser human, less civilized, as child or savage, wild man, animal or headless mass”. As postulated by Hamadi (2014), Said observes that colonial texts have depicted Indians, Africans, Palestinians, and other indigenous peoples as the Orient, the ‘Other’, in juxtaposition with ‘Us’, the Occidental. These texts are highly biased, depicting the Orient as the irrational, strange, weak and feminized “Other” as opposed to the rational, familiar, strong and masculine West. Said believes that residues of colonialism are persisting in the form of chaos, coups, corruption, civil wars, and bloodshed which permeate most ex-colonies (Hamadi, 2014).

Carter (2004) adds that one of the most lasting aspects of colonization has been the imposition of binary thinking, which she describes as referencing all forms against the self, generating alternative versions of sameness, and effectively defining the terms in which the Other is allowed to exist. The imposed binary thinking continues to haunt ex-colonies and their literature and is evident in the existence of binary oppositions such as man/woman; white/black; positive/negative; subject/object; and civilized/uncivilised. This confirms the view that discourse and culture of the former imperial power have left an undeniable scar on the psyche of the colonised. This marred psyche is vented out in the literature produced by the ex-colonies through diverse genres. For instance, indigenous literature has copied the Western forms and has forsaken its literary heritage (Liyong, 2018). It has opted for the Western literary form and language instead of using its rich genres of art and literature to celebrate the potential of indigenous African literary expression which could, according to Liyong (2018) determine the course of world literature.

The subject and the other as binary opposites are part of the subtexts in the literature in English in the ex-colonies, including Zimbabwe, and the text (novella) which I chose for this study. This Othering links closely with the objectification of indigenous bodies and was analysed as reflected in the participants’ perceptions of and responses to the text.

2.12.3 Spivak's Subaltern

Gayatri Spivak is a postcolonial proponent, whose popularity stems from her work, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, (1987), which includes the essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Subaltern is a military term that Spivak uses to denote the indigenes' lower rank, the marginal status of women, and the literature exploring it (Sawant, 2012). Spivak largely focuses on the exploitation, marginalization, and underestimation suffered by women in society, especially in patriarchal societies. She emphasises the prevalence of various hierarchies, which existed within the colonised world (Roy, 2008). Crucially, she widened the scope of the term subaltern to include the literature of marginality and the suppressed groups of society (Sawant, 2012).

Thus, the Subaltern does not only concern the marginalisation of women, but also includes all groups of society that are considered weaker, inferior, and peripheral to the West. This marginalisation breeds subtextual traces such as Othering in literature, which my study explored in the Zimbabwean context.

2.12.4 Bhabha's Hybridity

Homi Bhabha, another postcolonial theory proponent, raises the question of cultural identity in his book, *The Location of Culture* (1994) that contributed significantly to postcolonial criticism (Sawant, 2012). Bhabha is known for his concept of hybridity, which is the cross-fertilisation of identities and ideas because of colonialism (Roy, 2008).

Bhabha describes the native peoples who were taught the English language so that they could work for the British authorities as "mimic men – who learn to act English but do not look English or are accepted as such – to be Anglicised is emphatically not to be English" (Bhabha, 1994:87). This mimicry results in social ills such as identity crisis, psychological breakdown (as referred to in Frantz Fanon's work as well) and alienation with the concomitant recurring subtextual themes in postcolonial literature in English. My study investigated the prevalence of hybridization as an aspect of the subtext and how this was perceived by the learners and teachers.

2.12.5 Psychoanalysis and Psycho-social theories

2.12.6 Freud's Psychoanalysis

Freud (1953) has been dubbed the father of psychoanalysis, which gave birth to psychoanalytic criticism, a literary genre of interpretation. Freudian psychoanalysis identifies two parts of the human psyche: the conscious (what one is presently aware of) and the

unconscious (the part of the psyche where conflicts and traumas are repressed). In psychoanalytical literary analysis, these two parts are represented by the text (the conscious) and the subtext (the unconscious made conscious). As such, a work of literature or art can mirror the psyche or biographical experiences of the author, which can trigger those of the readers (i.e. the learners and teachers) or can be shared by the readers (i.e. the learners and teachers). This renders important the Reader-Response approach (RRA) to literary analysis, which allows learners to interact with and interpret texts based on their personal experiences. This study explored the existence of these experiences or subtextual representations in *The Uncertainty of Hope* in the Zimbabwean classroom, and how they affected the classroom responses to the genre.

Jarvis (2011:293) reiterates that the key concept underpinning psychoanalysis is the 'unconscious', or 'id', which Freud himself defined as "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality" (Freud, 1953:328). Eagleton (1996) further postulates that the unconscious condenses a whole set of images into a single 'statement' (metaphor) or it 'displaces' the meaning of one object onto another associated with it (metonym). This is supported by Jakobson (1956) who identified two primary operations of human language: metaphor (condensing meanings together), and metonymy (displacing one onto another). These subtextual metaphors and metonyms were identified in the learners' and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the text.

2.12.7 The Collective Unconscious of Jung

Carl Gustav Jung (1961) was a psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology. He identified two main levels in human personality – the level of consciousness and unconsciousness. The unconscious is divided into two categories – the personal unconscious, which consists of subliminal and suppressed contents, and the collective unconscious, which is formed by instincts and archetypes that are symbols, signs, and patterns of behaviour and thinking inherited from our ancestors (Jung 1961; Adamski, 2011:563; Bloomfield and Hanson, 2015; Hanson, 2015:440).

Psychoanalytical critics following Jung have mapped patterns in the literature of pairs of archetypes or universally recognized symbols stored in the collective unconscious (Ireland, 2006). As postulated by Adamski (2011:64), archetypes are imprinted in the psyche and connect us with our ancestors; they are what our kind has learned over generations and that which is inherited from ancestors in the phylogeny.

Frantz Fanon is another foundational figure in the postcolonial discourse, whose revolutionary works on the psycho-social effects of colonialism on both the colonised and the coloniser have

impacted on postcolonial studies today (Roy, 2008). As postulated by Bhabha (2004:xiii), cited in Kane (2007:353), the transcendent, timeless quality of Fanon's work serves as a blueprint for conceptualizing the social inequalities that are proliferating under (corporate and national) global aspirations and impositions of the 21st century. Thus, Fanon's work has a universal impact on society and has been linked to globalization.

According to Fanon (1986), colonization can produce an inferiority complex among the colonised that can lead to a desire to be white, extreme self-hatred, passivity in the face of colonial oppression, and a host of debilitating mental illnesses (Mondal, 2012). According to Hanson (2015:440), psychosocial stress, which is caused by racism, has a direct impact on the mental and physical health of the next generation as epigenetic marks are conceivably passed through matrilineal ancestors to the next generation. Fanon refers to the black man as "phobogenic" – inheriting and passing on phobias from generation to generation (Fanon, 1986:154). These phobias can be described as psychological conditions (traumas) existent in the black man, which manifest in diverse ways in the literature. This study explored the subtextual phobogenic traces and triggers as they were expressed in the selected study text and perceived by the learners and teachers in the Zimbabwean classroom.

2.13 Conclusion

It is against the above concept-based literature and theory-based literature that my study sought to investigate learners' and teachers' responses to and perceptions of the study text and how and why these were influenced by the subtext of the set-text. The theories that guide this study are anchored in the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and culturally specific. The socio-cultural background of the reader (learners and teachers) is important in shaping the knowledge and truth that they create. This background consists of the readers' identity as part of a historical past, present and future, which consciously or unconsciously shapes their worldview and their interpretation of texts and that is based on either their individual or collectively inherited patterns of behaviour and thinking. In the next chapter, I articulate the theoretical framework that undergirds my study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Condensing the theoretical framework for this study

In the literature review chapter, all the relevant theories are discussed in detail. In this section, the theoretical framework or lens is conceptualised as a combination of the various theories appraised in the prior chapter: the theories are merged into an eclectic theoretical framework, which informs this study, bringing forth a subtextual web of interpretation. Therefore, this chapter conceptualises my understanding of a theoretical framework, its relevance, and purpose and explains how I developed the eclectic lens that undergirds my study.

3.2 What is a theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is a fount from which all conceptualisation for a study is drawn. Grant and Osanloo (2014) define a theoretical framework as the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study. This foundation is built through a synthesis of purposively selected theories that underpin the researcher's thinking about their study and reality. The researcher also has to form an in-depth understanding of the particular concepts and meanings of the theory and has to select the concepts that suit her specific study. In this regard, the theoretical and conceptual framework is supposed to demonstrate the knowledge and authority of the researcher (Casanave and Li, 2015).

3.3 Purpose of a theoretical framework for this study

As I mentioned earlier, meaningful research cannot take place in a vacuum. Research has to be anchored in theory and this applies to my study as well. Subsequently, I need theory to serve as spectacles through which to view the world or reality (Sitwala, 2014). I need a theoretical framework as the "blueprint" for the entire study (Grant and Osanloo, 2014), which also acts as a guide on which to build and support my study.

The theoretical framework sets the itinerary of a study from the formulation of the research topic until the conclusions and recommendations are drawn. Maxwell (2004) observes that theory serves the function of informing the whole design of a study. For instance, my goal formulation for this study was guided by my theoretical framework, which aided the articulation

of the problem statement, and the overall rationale of my investigation: identifying the perceptions of subtextual themes of learners and teachers of a selected set text.

My selected theoretical path also aided me in formulating realistic and relevant research questions for my study (Maxwell, 2004). All the research questions for the fieldwork were based on specific theoretical standpoints within my chosen theoretical framework or lens. Considering the broad and subjective nature of literature and literary analysis, I required a theoretical framework to serve as a foundation to anchor my literature review (Grant and Osanloo, 2014), as well as to align my research questions with the reviewed literature. In this case, the theoretical framework helped me to demonstrate that the propositions from my study are not the product of my instincts, but rather corroborate with facts obtained from previous researchers. Moreover, in light of the reviewed literature, the theoretical framework aids the reader to follow, assess and understand my standpoint as well as my contribution to new knowledge.

A well thought out and properly developed theoretical framework helps a researcher to select appropriate methodology and research methods for a specific study. The theoretical framework guided my selection of data gathering methods, which yielded relevant information required for my investigation of perceptions of subtextual themes of teachers and learners. Moreover, the theoretical lens also assisted me in identifying the various trends in subtextual studies, thereby allowing me a deeper understanding and a wider conceptualisation of the subtext. In essence, my study required a conceptual framework that would allow me to obtain relevant data to analyse the subjective perceptions of subtextual themes held by the participating learners and teachers. Analysis of the data also had to be guided and focused through a theoretical framework that allowed the categorisation of findings in a meaningful and organised manner, for easy understanding by the reader. Thus, a theoretical framework allowed me to form a deeper understanding of my topic and made the study focused, organised and credible.

3.4 The theoretical framework that undergirds my study

This study is guided by an eclectic fusion of educational theories and approaches (Constructivism and Reader-Response), which are merged with African Indigenous Knowledge, and literary theories (Postcolonial theory and Psychoanalysis). The eclectic lens also borrows, though to a limited extent, from Epigenetic studies. Throughout this study, epigenetics is closely connected to AIK, in that both consider intergenerational memory construction as part of social experience. This eclectic theoretical lens assisted in identifying the diverse and multi-layered perceptions of subtextual themes of learners and teachers of

the prescribed text. This section conceptualises the inter-relationships of the chosen theories and concepts in evoking the subtextual responses and perceptions of learners and teachers to the selected text.

It is imperative to explain why I adopted an eclectic theoretical lens for this study. Firstly, this study is based on a classroom field study (case study) and is anchored in the learning and teaching of Literature in English (school subject). It was subsequently necessary for me to adopt educational (reading) theories and approaches which inform the pedagogical aspect of this study. The learning and teaching of literature are embedded in the literary analysis of a selected set text, a scenario that requires literary theories to help guide the analysis of the text. Given that my participants were African learners, living in an African cultural context, I found it necessary to merge Western educational theories and reading approaches with the African Indigenous Knowledge construct.

My eclectic theoretical framework is rooted in the constructivist tenet that knowledge and meaning construction is a social construct that embeds experience as a group phenomenon. This brings into play the aspect of my African participants' background and culture; their community that consists of the living and the dead has a bearing on the knowledge and truth that they create, discover, and attain – the Indigenous knowledge – in the learning process (Wertsch, 1997). Thus, the participants' social environment influenced their reading and understanding of the literary text and their perceptions of its subtextual themes. These perceptions were closely associated with their intergenerational memory, as postulated by AIK and Epigenetics.

The eclectic theoretical framework for my study is based on the premise that literary meaning-making is subjective and is primarily based on a reader's social background and experiences (Kim, 2014), both as an individual and as a member of a community that shares intergenerational memory (Genis, 2019; Mawere, 2015). Central to these guiding principles is the premise that meaning-making is the result of a transaction between the reader and the text (Ali, 1994). Through the transactional process, the reader conceives meaning at the conscious (explicit; literal; plain) as well as the subconscious (subtextual; implicit) levels. Figure 3.1 represents my conceptualisation of how individual readers conceive meaning both consciously (explicitly) and unconsciously (subtextually).

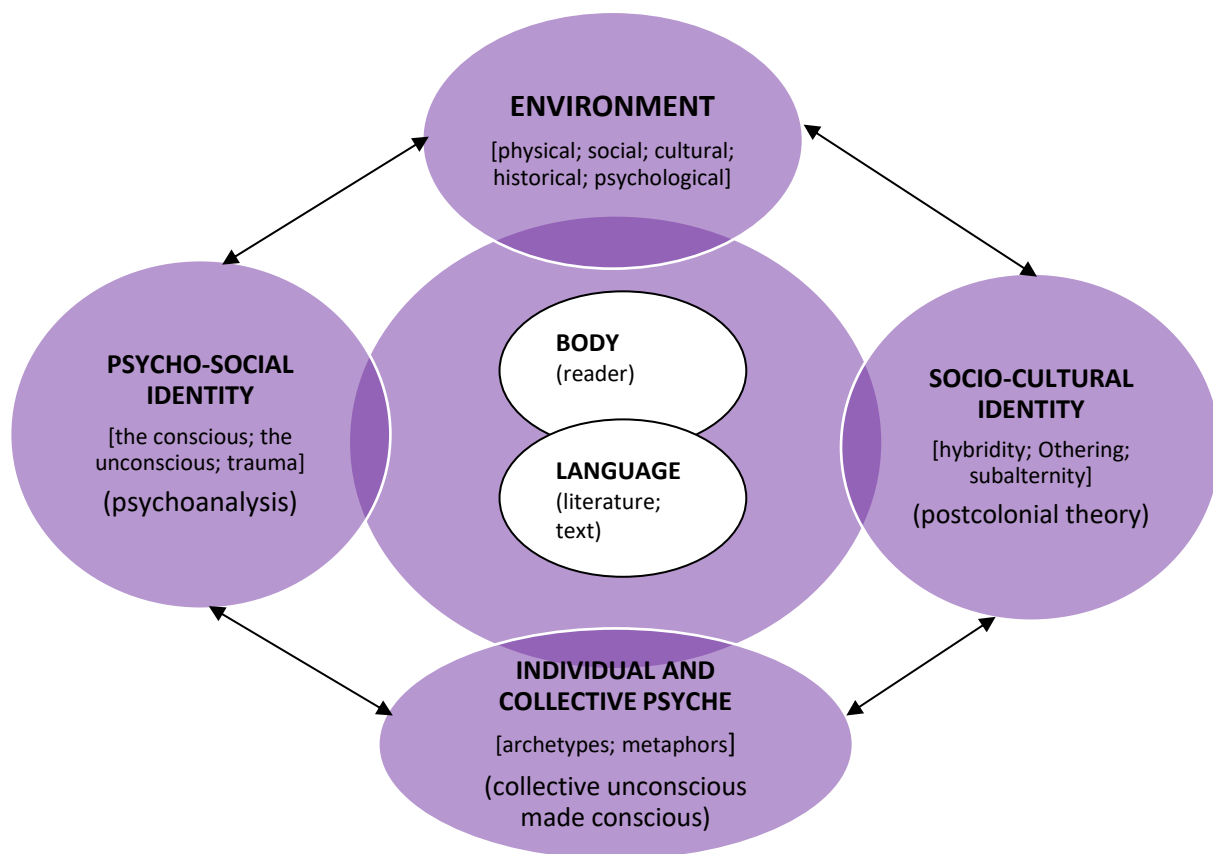


Figure 3.1: The Constructivist subtextual conception of meaning

Figure 3.1 illustrates the subtextual conceptualization of meaning, as a transactional process where the reader is an integral part of the construction of the ontology of a literary text (Mohammed, 2013). At the core, the reader, or the body, in her physical, psychological and socio-cultural states interacts with language (literature/text). In the transactional process, the reader's understanding of text or meaning-making is influenced or guided by diverse environmental conditions.

The reader's interpretation of language (the text) is influenced by the historical environment. As proposed by Jauss (1982), each text is linked to a historical context and historical events (Genis, 2018; 2019). In light of this, the conception of meaning by the reader is guided by the historical circumstances that inform the plot of the text, as well as the historical context of the reader. The historical context of the text has to be considered to prevent a scenario where the text's analysis becomes decontextualised. This underscores the engagement of the postcolonial theory in this study as a guiding literary lens in the analysis of the selected text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* that focuses on the post-independence historical context in Zimbabwe. Central to the postcolonial perspective is the aspect of socio-cultural identity from whence subtextual concepts such as hybridity, Othering, and subalternity stem. These

concepts harbour subtextual themes such as double identity, race, class, and gender disparity, which influence the meanings the reader(s) (learners and teachers) derives from the text.

The historical environment also influences both the writer's and the reader's shared psychological experiences which are stored in their collective unconscious (Jung, 1961). The shared intergenerational experiences are reflected in the reader's psycho-social identity which is characterised by various aspects involving human substance such as fears, inherent traumas, unconscious desires, feelings, and emotions. These psychoanalytical aspects constitute part of the subtext in literature in English.

Through a postcolonial conception, the reader is exposed to diverse socio-cultural aspects and social constructs of the reader's, the writer's, and the fictional characters' historical environment which could have a direct bearing on the reader's identity and experience, such as cultural stereotyping. It is important to note that postcolonial constructs that include cultural stereotypes and archetypes influence the social, mental, and emotional identity of the reader and fictional character, thereby affecting the psychic or psycho-social identity of the reader and/or the character in the text. The resultant consequence could be the resurfacing of certain memories in the reader, such as traumatic experiences or other subconsciously existent psycho-social wounds. These traumatic experiences are also triggered by certain cues or stressors that are manifested as stress in the psychological environment (Osborne, 2015).

From a postcolonial standpoint, postcolonial subjects can experience cultural trauma (Hirsch, 2012; Chigwedere, 2015) because of various variables, some of which are intergenerational. These inherent and inherited cultural traumas connect the individual to their larger society, which, as mentioned earlier, consists of both the living and the dead. The cultural traumas are encompassed in postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, subalternity and Othering. These result in psychosocial as well as bodily ills, which characters in a text can exhibit, such as psychological breakdown, identity crisis, and suicide. These ills may be represented in archetypes or primordial images of loss in both the literary text and in the response by the reader (Jung, 2003: 94; Genis, 2019; 2020). Worth noting is that the cultural traumas exhibited by characters in a text may trigger those of the reader or can be shared by the reader. These were manifested in the participants' responses to the text in Chapter 5.

3.5 Conclusion

The subtext is a broad concept where diverse aspects whether psychologically or environmentally conceived, converge to exhibit individual and collective traits and identities. The three aspects that include language (literature), the body/reader (both physical and psychological embodiment), and the socio-cultural-historical environment are inextricably

interwoven in this subtextual study and were analysed as reflected in the participants' responses to the set text. Language, body, and environment draw together these aspects in a subtextual web of interpretation. The effect of the subtext on learners and teachers' responses to and perceptions of a selected text was examined through various research methods, which are discussed in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the theoretical stance of my study. This chapter is aimed at discussing, in detail, the whole process and procedures engaged in answering the research questions for my study. It comprises the research design, research methodology, and research methods employed in this study. The study is guided by the interpretive paradigm and assumes a qualitative approach that informs the case study design and that shapes the choice of my research methods. The research design determines the target population, sample, research site, research instruments, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation procedures as well as quality assurance and ethics procedures. This research design is justified by my ontological and epistemological assumptions, which are shaped by my theoretical framework and interpretive research paradigm. I describe the research paradigm first, followed by the qualitative research approach and then the methodology, and lastly, quality assurance and ethics.

4.2 Research paradigm: Interpretive

A research paradigm is a scheme or action framework for answering research questions or choosing procedures when carrying out research (Cohen and Manian, 1995). A research paradigm shapes a researcher's epistemological stance during his or her research. It is the philosophical underpinning and philosophical frame of reference that a researcher holds on the nature of reality as well as on "how the researcher can know and understand that reality" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). I subscribe to the nominalist philosophical interpretation of the paradigm, which holds that an individual names or constructs her social reality; therefore, my study adopted the interpretive paradigm, which some authorities have identified as the constructivist paradigm. Creswell (2014) defines constructivism as closely related to interpretivism. My study identifies this as different terminologies that name a similar paradigm and uses the terms interchangeably throughout this study.

Given (2008) postulates that interpretivist approaches focus on the meanings ascribed to events, places, behaviours and interactions, people, and artefacts. As suggested by Okeke and Van Wyk (2015), interpretive data are based on the participants' constructions of meaning

and produce rich, detailed information from multiple perspectives. Thus, the interpretive researcher generates varieties of data through different sources and analysis methods to strive for validity. I, therefore, chose the interpretive paradigm because of its qualitative approach that aims at gaining in-depth understanding through multiple realities. Multiple realities allowed me to uncover varied perceptions and responses from the participants about diverse aspects of the subtext of Literature in English for the classroom, in Zimbabwe.

According to Given (2008), interpretivist approaches “depend upon the researcher’s involvement with the study’s participating community since meaning emerges both through interaction among participants and between the researcher and the participants”. Within the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher personally executes the fieldwork through “close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories” (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). Through these stories, the participants can describe their views of reality and this process enables the researcher to understand the participants’ subjective actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

My choice of the interpretive paradigm was also driven by a desire to work within the social science spectrum, which calls for a relevant paradigm within the social sciences field. Within this paradigm, researchers do not aim to predict what people will do, but rather describe and understand how people make meaning of their actions (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). Describing and understanding is a hallmark feature of the interpretive research paradigm: understanding and generating knowledge on subtextual experiences of learners and teachers was the purpose and focus of my study, it was therefore imperative for me to adopt an interpretive paradigm.

The interpretivist approach to research is also undergirded by the notion that people’s behaviour is context-dependent (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). For this reason, I chose the interpretive paradigm that is “concerned with understanding a phenomenon in a specific context” (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). The paradigm further stresses that multiple realities are bound by multiple contexts and that these realities can only be understood in a relevant context. As such, the paradigm was relevant in providing an appropriate framework for understanding the participants’ (teachers and learners) subtextual experiences and perceptions of a set text within their socio-cultural context.

4.2.1 Application of interpretivism to the study

The interpretive research paradigm was applied to this study through its ontological and epistemological conventions. The two assumptions are based on what knowledge/reality is (Ontology) and how we know (Epistemology).

4.2.1.1 Ontological assumptions

Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm denies the existence of an objective reality and views reality as dependent on the perspective of the individual and influenced by the process of observation (Henning, et al, 2004). The paradigm “recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning” (Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Baxter and Jack, 2008). Thus, according to the paradigm, research “results are not out there waiting to be found or discovered by the researcher, but they are created through the interpretation of data” (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

The Interpretivist ontological stance that we name our reality (nominalism), also indicates that reality and the individual who observes it are inseparable and, subsequently, there exist multiple realities in any given situation (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). Therefore, these multiple perspectives lead to the multiple meanings of data (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). This interpretive ontological stance is conceptualised thus by Denzin, (2010: 271): “Objective reality will never be captured. In-depth understanding, the use of multiple validities, not a single validity, a commitment to dialogue is sought in any interpretive study.”

4.2.1.2 Epistemological assumptions

The interpretive epistemological paradigm centres on knowledge being socially constructed and reality being subjectively constructed by the individual (Searle, 1995; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). The interpretivist stance also minimises the social distance between the researcher and those participating in the research; the researcher interacts with them and even lives with the participants for a considerable length of time (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). According to interpretivism, the researcher interacts with the participants as she obtains data and the inquiry benefits and changes both the researcher and the participants’ perceptions of their reality (Coll and Chapman, 2000).

4.2.2 Criticism of interpretivism

Within the interpretive paradigm, data collection and analysis are “time-consuming, and the findings may be influenced by the researcher’s agenda” (Okeke and Van Wyk, 2015). This hints at researcher bias, which is associated with the active immersion of the researcher in

the entire research process. Those who criticise the paradigm on this basis cite researcher bias in the processes of data collection and the interpretation of findings. Apart from the reality that bias can occur in any other research or within any other paradigm, I also endeavoured to maintain a degree of trustworthiness of this study. For instance, I went through the processes of sampling, data generation, data analysis, data interpretation, and findings presentation in a scientific manner and with rigour and honesty.

The interpretive research paradigm has also been criticised for the lack of generalisability of its findings. This stems from the idea that the paradigm focuses on understanding a phenomenon in a specific context. This criticism is disputed by Gibson and Brown (2011), who posit that interpretive research aims to produce “thick description, and nuanced understandings of social practices and situations that capture the details of contexts”. This often takes priority over an attempt to relate findings to broader contexts. Moreover, the criticism does not lessen the trustworthiness of this study because I did not intend to generalise the findings; the purpose was to understand the subtextual responses of learners and teachers in a specific context.

Thus, like any other research paradigm, the interpretive research paradigm has received considerable criticism. However, the interpretive paradigm is the most suitable approach where study depth, flexibility, and rigor are required and thus, my study adopted it despite the levelled criticism. The next section describes in detail the research approach of this study, which is the qualitative approach.

4.3 Research approach: Qualitative

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research; scientific research consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a research question by systematically using a predefined set of procedures in collecting evidence, and in producing findings. These findings are not determined in advance and are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study, in that they contribute to understanding human nature (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey, 2005). Qualitative research shares these characteristics.

Qualitative research, which is informed by the Interpretivist research paradigm, embraces subjectivity and emphasizes understanding, interpretation, and making meaning from phenomena within a context (Cousin, 2002). Okeke and Van Wyk (2015) further postulate that “the principal function of qualitative research is to understand the subjective meanings that individuals make of situations in their lives”. Therefore, the qualitative approach is relevant for my study, which is anchored in literary analysis, wherein the readers’ subjective interpretations

of a text are central. My study explores the diverse ways by which the learners and teachers experienced the text and the subsequent meanings they derived thereof. Subsequently, I chose the Qualitative research approach for this study, to understand how and why the subtext influenced the learners and teachers' responses to and perceptions of the text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*.

Mack et al (2005) posit that “qualitative research also seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population”, and “it is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions”, behaviours, and social contexts of the participating populations. It is worth noting that in qualitative practice, gaining a rich and composite understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes antecedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other settings or populations (Mack, et al, 2005). This view is shared by Gibson and Brown (2011), who observe that the aims of qualitative research are generally defined as the construction of meaning and the understanding of the intricacies of peoples' lives or frames of reference. This approach also reflects on the role of the researcher in the generation of data. My study, which adopted the qualitative research approach, was focused on understanding the concept of the subtext, from the perspective of a specific population, that is, the 2018 Advanced level Literature in English class at Groove High School.

4.3.1 Strengths of qualitative research

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide rich “textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue” or phenomenon; crucially, it provides information about the “human side of an issue, that is, the often-contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals” (Mack, et al 2005). This attribute is also observed by Kumar (2011:103), who posits that “the main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover, and clarify situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people”. Considering this proposition, it was the most relevant approach to adopt for my study whose major focus was the subtextual experiences and perceptions of learners and teachers of a study text. These subtextual experiences and perceptions were revealed through the participants' memories, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and emotions, which are evident in the data I obtained for this study.

Kumar (2011) observes that the “power gap between the researcher and the participating population in qualitative research” is small because of the informality in research procedure and context in which data are collected. This is elaborated by Creswell (2014), who postulates that “qualitative researchers tend to collect data at the site where participants experience the

issue or problem under study”, i.e. the natural setting. The researcher’s hands-on participation in the field is a significant feature of qualitative practice: the researcher personally gathers data by talking to the participants face to face, and by observing their behaviour within their context over a period of time. This makes the researcher the key instrument in the information gathering process. Importantly, the researcher’s key responsibility and the close interaction with participants in their natural context make qualitative data collecting a popular research process that is driven by an attempt to gather accurate data, and subsequently, to produce more reliable findings. This is seconded by Gibson and Brown (2011), who observe that the contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces. For this study, I personally gathered data of the perspectives of learners and teachers without employing questionnaires or instruments created by other researchers.

Creswell (2014) posits that the qualitative approach is merited if a phenomenon or concept needs to be explored and understood because of limited research on the topic. A major feature of the research problem, which prompted this study, is the lack of attention given to the concept, subtext, within the parameters of classroom learning and teaching of literature. No research aimed at understanding the subtextual experiences of learners and teachers of a literary text has been carried out in Zimbabwe, thus, the scenario warranted a qualitative approach to my study to explore the concept.

Researchers’ training and experiences also influence their choice of approach. For example, individuals who enjoy writing in a literary way or conducting personal interviews may gravitate to the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, if your interest is studying values, beliefs, understandings, perceptions, and meanings, then qualitative study designs are more appropriate as they provide for epistemological flexibility. Being a practitioner in the Arts and Literature discipline and with my study being anchored in literary study, the Qualitative approach that observes the subjectivity of human experiences and perspectives, which can be independently sought through strategies such as personal interviews, was suitable for my study.

4.3.2 Shortcomings of qualitative research

The qualitative approach is criticised for allowing the researcher too much flexibility, which makes room for researcher bias. Kumar (2011) exposes several factors that make bias imminent in qualitative practice. These factors include study designs that are too flexible and emergent; designs, which are often non-linear and non-sequential in their operationalisation; the selection of participants through an open frame of inquiry; the flexibility of the parameters of the scope of a study; and the flexible and evolving nature of research methods and

processes. In short, Kumar (2011) posits that most qualitative designs are not structured and sequential, resulting in too much flexibility and a lack of quality control that make it difficult to determine researcher bias. I curbed researcher bias by keeping a thorough audit trail comprising of detailed data collection and analysis procedures as well as member checking at the collection stage; I allowed participants to listen to audio recordings of interviews and focus group discussions to ascertain the accurate capturing of their contributions. These measures to curb bias are explained in Chapter One, where I detail my role as researcher as well as in the trustworthiness section of this chapter.

Another major criticism levelled against the qualitative approach is its lack of generalisability of findings (Maree, 2016). As I mentioned earlier, this criticism is not relevant if one considers the purpose of a study. Generalisation is not always a key outcome of a study. In most cases, qualitative research focuses on understanding a phenomenon in its unique context, and not on the generalisability of findings. My study aimed at understanding the subtextual experiences of learners in a closed context and generalisability was not a hallmark. Besides, literary analysis is subjective, therefore, generalisability is impossible to achieve.

4.4 Research methodology

Research methodology is the practical execution of the research process or 'how' the research design is implemented (Kumar, 2014). According to Given, (2008), research methodology consists of the assumptions, postulates, rules, and methods that form "the blueprint or roadmap that researchers employ to render their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and/or adaptation". It also allows them to choose the relevant research methods. Constituent components of research methodology for this study include aspects of research design (sampling, research methods, data analysis, and quality assurance measures), which I discuss in detail in the subsequent sections.

4.4.1 Study design: Exploratory single case study

Punch (2011:62) identifies a research design as "all the issues involved in planning and executing a research project, from identifying the problem through to reporting and publishing the results." Punch (2011) suggests that a research design comprises four main elements: the strategy; the conceptual framework; the question what will be studied/answered; and the tools and procedures for collecting and analysing empirical data. There are various types of research designs and the researcher's choice of design depends on her research paradigm and approach. Some designs such as the case study design cut across paradigms and approaches, though these retain exclusive properties within each paradigm. A case study is

defined by Rule and Vaughn (2011:7), as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”. Case study research is described by Creswell and Poth (2018), as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information” and reports a case description and case themes.

There are various types of case studies with distinguishable characteristics, and which serve distinct research purposes, though some borrow from each other, and some converge in some respects. I will start by explaining types of case studies as propounded by Baxter and Jack (2008). The *Explanatory* case study explains causal links that are too complex for a survey or experimental strategies to determine. The *Exploratory* case study explores situations in which the interventions being evaluated have no clear or single set of outcomes. The *Descriptive* case study describes the characteristics of the phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. The *Multiple* (collective) case study explores differences within and between cases, to replicate findings across cases. The *Intrinsic* case study is intended to comprehend the case undertaken because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. The *Instrumental* case study is used to accomplish something other than understanding a situation and provides insight into an issue or helps refine a theory: the case is of secondary interest. It facilitates the understanding of something else. Crucially, the researcher must keep in mind the purpose of the research when deciding on a case study type.

Exploratory and descriptive studies usually lean “toward the qualitative and inductive, whereas explanatory studies are more often quantitative and deductive” (David and Sutton, 2011: 165-166, Willis, 2014). This study, which adheres to a qualitative approach, employed an exploratory single case study design.

Gall and Borg (2003:436) describe a case study as “the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon.” In this regard, I investigated the influence of the subtext (the phenomenon) on the Advanced Level learners and teachers’ perceptions of the prescribed study text by using one unit of analysis (participants) – the Advanced Level learners and teachers at Groove High School. I employed an exploratory case study, which also converges in some respects with an instrumental case study. Stake (1995:11-12) indicates that the latter focuses on “an aspect, concern, or issue of the case, and not on the case in its entirety”. In this regard, the study focused on the perceptions of the subtext within the confines of the Advanced, Literature

in English classroom and not within the context of the whole school. The investigation focused on an aspect of the school (the case) with learners as key informants. According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions. This is my rationale for choosing a case study design, which is anchored in the major question: How and why does the subtext influence learners and teachers’ perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text?

A case study design is also suitable when a researcher wants to consider contextual conditions because he/she believes these are relevant to the phenomenon under study, or if “the boundaries are not clearly set between the phenomenon and context” (Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008). My study sought to explore the influence of the subtext on the perceptions and responses of Advanced Level learners and teachers to a prescribed text. I chose a case study because the case with the embedded phenomenon was the perceptions of subtextual themes of Advanced Level learners and teachers to a prescribed text. I could not consider the case without the context, that is, the school (Groove High School) and more precisely, the classroom. It was within the walls of the school and in particular, the classroom that the study of the text was undertaken, and where meaning was perceived by the learners and teachers. My research would not have yielded relevant findings on learner and teacher perceptions of subtextual themes if I had not considered the context.

My choice of a single case study was influenced by several factors, which included time-constraint considerations and the need for particularisation and not generalisation. As there was no need for replication, I found it unnecessary to engage in a multiple case study. My decision is supported by Gerring (2004:342) and Willis (2014), who posit that a case study “should be an intensive study of a single unit of analysis or spatially bounded phenomenon, which is observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period”. My study was not intended for comparative purposes but was mainly aimed at gaining “thick, rich descriptions of the case through an exploration of the phenomenon within a closed setting” (Rule and Vaughn, 2011). Moreover, Kumar (2011) posits that the underlying premise in sampling is that a relatively small number of units of analysis should be selected in a manner that they represent the study population. This provides – with a sufficiently high degree of probability – for a true reflection of the sampling population that is being studied.

4.4.2 Strengths of a case study

Case studies are “intensive descriptions and analyses of an individual, event, group, or community” (Okeke and van Wyk, 2015), which best suit “individual researchers because it allows one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth” (Bell, 1993:8). Depth of research

is an important feature of case study research, which stems from an intensive investigation of an instance, focusing on “complex relations within the case and the wider context “ surrounding the case (Rule and Vaughn, 2011).

A case study also opens doors for the use of multiple data sources. This strategy enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008), whereby “potential data sources may include, but are not limited to documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artefacts, direct observations, and participant observation”. The data gathered through the multiple sources are merged or converged in the analysis process. Baxter and Jack (2008:12) indicate that each data source is “one piece of the puzzle with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon.” Merging the pieces aids in strengthening the findings as well as building a greater understanding of the case. My study employed interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis (identified in this study as conventional methods), drawings, and poetry writing (identified as art-based methods). My study fused these methods thereby paving the way for a rich study that is based on the triangulation of data, which “reinforces the validity of the conclusions drawn” (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

However, qualitative interpretive methods and case studies are not exclusive to qualitative research (Merriam, 1991; Yin, 2003). These methods can accommodate a variety of disciplinary and philosophical perspectives on the nature of research and can be used to test a theory or build theory, may incorporate random or purposive sampling, and could include quantitative and qualitative data (Merriam, 1991; Baxter and Jack, 2008). An outstanding quality of case study research is that within case study research, the researcher can collect and integrate quantitative survey data, which enable a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

4.4.3 Shortcomings of case study design

Due to the case study’s flexibility, which allows for the engagement of multiple data sources, it is prone to challenges such as the collection of overwhelming or even irrelevant amounts of data. Subsequently, there is a need for the researcher to bring some order to the data collection process (Baxter and Jack, 2008). For my study, I minimised the data overload and the collection of irrelevant data by employing an interview guide. Furthermore, in some cases, I repeated interview questions and used probing techniques to keep participants focused on the area of interest.

Given the possible employment of multiple data sources in a case study, there is also the temptation to treat each data source independently and to report the findings separately, as well as being distracted by the mounds of interesting data that are superfluous to the research question (Baxter and Jack, 2008). I curbed these pitfalls by merging data according to my propositions, which I derived from the main research question and the sub-questions of this study. Constantly returning to the propositions enabled me to maintain my focus. Baxter and Jack (2008) further suggest that to understand fully the findings, they should be compared to the relevant published literature to situate the new data in pre-existing data schemas. Accordingly, I modelled my propositions in compliance with the relevant literature that I reviewed in Chapter Two. Additionally, the data were interpreted in relation to my research questions, and through the lens of my theoretical framework.

The most common criticism of a single case study concerns the inter-related issues of methodological rigour, researcher subjectivity, and external validity; it is argued that the use of the case study absolves the author from rigorous methodological considerations (Willis, 2014). The absence of systematic procedures and methodological guidelines for case study research is what Yin (2009: 14-15) cited in Willis (2014) identifies as the greatest concern of this study design. However, this criticism has largely been refuted and proven as misguided by many contemporary case study practitioners who have increasingly sought to clarify and develop their methodological techniques and epistemological grounding (Bennett and Elman, 2010: 499-500, Willis, 2014). My study has also been complimentary to the latter research due to my detailed exposition of my interpretive epistemological stance and my qualitative approach. This chapter also explains comprehensively the methodological techniques that I employed in this single exploratory case study research.

In response to the levelled criticisms, Zuker (2009) cited in Nieuwenhuis (2016) argues that “rigour is a central concern in case study research”, and additionally, despite the replication obtained in multiple case studies, “using more than one case may dilute the importance and meaning of the single case”. Furthermore, there is no consensus among proponents on whether case study research should be based on single or multiple cases (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This stance substantiates my employment of a single case study. The next section discusses the sampling of the research site and the research participants for my study.

4.5 Sampling of research site and participants

This study employed purposive sampling, whereby participants were selected because they were likely to generate useful data for the study (Patton, 2002). In purposive sampling, specific instances (samples) are chosen deliberately to select participants that will yield the most

relevant, detailed and information-rich data (Yin, 2016). Purposive sampling is described by Gibson and Brown (2011) as the process of selecting research participants based on their relevance to the research. A sample is a part of a whole or population and a population is the group of interest to the researcher in relation to the study question (Given, 2008). A sample is a smaller group or subset of the population with characteristics that are representative of the total population, as defined by Cohen and Manian (1995). The sample for this study was selected because it was only possible for the study to cover a part of the whole in detail, rather than the whole population (Ogula, 2005). For this study, the target population comprises all Advanced Level learners and teachers in Zimbabwe while the sample is made up of 27 participants: the 2018-2019 Literature in English Advanced Level learners (24) and teachers (3) at Groove High School (pseudonym).

As postulated by Gibson and Brown (2011), purposive sampling aims to select research participants who possess characteristics, roles, opinions, knowledge, ideas, or experiences that may be particularly relevant to the research. I particularly or purposively chose the Advanced Level Literature in English class because these learners studied the selected text for my study. Secondly, I specifically wanted to explore subtextual experiences and perceptions of classroom readers of the text; therefore, the selected participants were relevant. The text has been reviewed and critiqued by renowned critics. Within this context, I set out to determine the perceptions of young readers, which had not been studied before but are a relevant contribution to the field of literature. Moreover, my study is anchored in the field of education, therefore, I needed to select participants in the respective field.

Purposive sampling entails the choice of a research site based on factors such as accessibility and convenience. I purposively selected Groove High School for the study because it is easily accessible because it is situated in an area with good access roads, a factor that made my visits to the research site easy. The study site is the location where the research takes place. Study sites may include institutions such as clinics, hospitals, schools, and university campuses, and just like a case, a site is selected because it comprises some feature or process in which the researcher is interested (Silverman, 2013). For this reason, I chose Groove High School because the school offers the local syllabus, the Zimbabwe School Examination Council syllabus, which includes the chosen text for this study. This allowed me to explore Zimbabwean learners and teachers' perceptions of a relevant literary text within a Zimbabwean (local) curriculum context.

I also chose Groove High School for this study because it is a co-educational school, which enabled me to explore perceptions of both male and female participants. This allowed me to

generate data that are gender-sensitive and to obtain a wide range of data and perspectives through gender-balanced lenses, thereby rendering a balance to my data.

Moreover, Groove High School is a non-denominational government boarding school with an inclusive multicultural and a broad mix of socio-cultural, tribal, religious, and economic groupings from the urban and rural divide of Zimbabwe, as evidenced in Table 4.1. This enabled me to explore the perceptions of participants from diverse backgrounds.

For this reason, it is necessary to conceptualise multiculturalism because it affects my study. “Multiculturalism is a state in which human beings with ethnic, cultural, and religious differences live together in mutual respect and understanding” (Portera, 2011; Muchenje, 2014). Multiculturalism expresses the view that “society is enriched by preserving, respecting, and even encouraging cultural diversity” (Longley, 2019). This recognition of cultural diversity is characteristic of plural societies, such as Zimbabwe with a population consisting of indigenous Africans, non-Zimbabwean Africans (from neighbouring Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique), Asians, Europeans, and Coloureds (Muchenje, 2014). All these groups are accommodated in the Zimbabwean school system, which largely aims to be inclusive and multicultural. To pave the way for adequate cultural interaction within the walls of the school, learners are taught to appreciate cultural diversity and differences as strengths and not weaknesses, and as a source of social enrichment rather than as a disability or social problem (Lemmer, Meier and Van Wyk, 2006; Muchenje, 2014, Mapuranga and Bukaliya, 2014). Thus, in the Zimbabwean multicultural environment, learners from diverse ethnic groups (Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Shangaani, etc.) occupy the same learning space. In that space, a complex micro-culture is created, consisting of unique individuals from a variety of cultures, each bringing with him/her a distinct set of beliefs, values, and experiences. Importantly, common values are developed from those individual traits, and it is the common ones that are celebrated to maintain cultural interaction in the classroom.

This multicultural environment characterises Groove High School and the Literature in English class. My study elicited the individual cultural traits through the individually composed poems and poem-drawings whereby learners (participants) expressed their personal experiences of the text, which defined their identities, thereby generating a rich understanding of the perceptions of subtextual themes of the learners (participants). This stems from the reality that readers of a text have a closet full of socio-political and cultural dresses from which they draw upon to construct meaning in their socioeconomic and politically constructed communities (Agbemabiese, 2007). Thus, each learner (participant) understands the text from the point of view of their respective community/society. Thus, the data I collected from the poems and

poem-drawings were characterised by this diversity and subjectivity in meaning-making, thereby making it rich data. This emphasises the rationale for my selection of the research site.

4.5.1 The research site

Groove High School was purposively selected as the site where the research questions would be answered. As mentioned earlier, Groove is a government boarding school in the Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. It is a peri-urban school, which had 1 450 enrolled learners in 2019. The learners come from various provinces of the country and from the local farming community in which it is situated. Though the learners are drawn from diverse provinces, characterised by diverse indigenous languages, the school's official languages are English and Shona.

Zimbabwe comprises ten distinct provinces: Harare Central; Mashonaland East; Mashonaland West; Mashonaland Central; Midlands; Bulawayo Metropolitan; Matabeleland South; Matabeleland North; Masvingo and Manicaland. The 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe organises government at the national, provincial, and local levels. Provinces are governed by provincial administrators and within provinces there are districts. At the district level, there are district administrators and districts comprise of councils and wards. The councillors are elected on a political party basis, and they represent the affairs of their respective wards alongside Members of Parliament who are also elected on a political party affiliation basis, to represent their respective constituencies. Provincial and metropolitan councils make up the provincial tier while the local tier of government is constituted by urban and rural local authorities (Chigwata and Visser, 2018). Urban local authorities are established to manage and represent the affairs of people living in urban areas, whereas rural local authorities govern rural areas.

The provincial headquarters of Mashonaland East is in Marondera, which is the central provincial town. There is a total of nine districts that are demarcated and within these districts, there are twenty-three constituencies. Groove High school is in Mashonaland East Province. Figure 4.1 is a map of Mashonaland East Province drawn on district lines and illustrating district boundaries, the locations of district offices, and the Provincial Headquarters office.



Figure 4.1: Map of Mashonaland East Province

Source: Environmental Management Agency (EMA) (2021)

According to information released by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat, 2012), Mashonaland East Province covers a radius of 32, 230 square kilometres with a total population of about 1,344,995 people; Goromonzi District has a total population of 224, 987; the majority of people in the province live in Goromonzi and the rural population of the province stands at 13.5% whilst the urban population is at 86.5% according to the last population census in 2012.

The province is mainly inhabited by the Shona people, with many Shona dialects characterising and distinguishing the inhabitants. For example, the Zezuru, Karanga, Budya and Manyika are Shona dialects spoken within Mashonaland East. There are also other people of African ethnic origin (47% from Malawi and 40% from Mozambique), most of whom are employed at mines and on farms. People of non-African ethnic origin make up 0.3% of the population (ZimStat, 2012). An explanation for the large percentage of Malawians and Mozambicans in the province is the two major roads that link the country to Mozambique and Malawi, which run through the province. The Harare-Mutare road is conjoined to the Forbes

border post while the Harare-Nyamapanda road leads to the Nyamapanda border post, which makes it easy for Mozambicans and Malawians to access Mashonaland East. However, most of the Malawians owe their presence to the colonial times through the Federation of the then two Rhodesias, (Zimbabwe and Zambia) and the then Nyasaland (Malawi). The Malawians' ancestors arrived in Zimbabwe and were employed at various white-owned businesses, and especially in mines. Most Mozambicans flocked into Zimbabwe as refugees during the Mozambican civil war of the late 1980s. The people in the catchment area of the participating school are mainly Zezuru-Shona, though the farming area that borders the school is characterised by people of diverse linguistic and cultural identities since they are drawn from various parts of the country to work on the farms. Thus, the province is a hub of multicultural identities, a concept that is discussed in the section on research participants (4.5.2).

Socioeconomic activities in the province include mining, for example, the Metalion Gold mining at Arcturus Mine and Granite rock mining at Mutoko. Agriculture is also a distinct feature of the province with tobacco farming and maize production dominating the rich red soils of the Marondera area. The northern part of the province consists of the Mutoko and Murehwa districts, and are ideal for vegetable farming, for example, the harvesting of tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and varieties of leafy vegetables. According to ZimStat (2012), 67% of the employed people in the province are in agriculture-related occupations.

4.5.1.1 Schools in Zimbabwe

Schools in Zimbabwe are classified under various categories, for example, Private-owned schools; Government-sponsored schools; Religious/Mission schools, and Private colleges. Mission schools are administered by various Christian denominations, for example, Catholic schools, Anglican schools, Methodist schools as well as Adventist schools. Schools are also classified under Boarding and Day school categories as well as under Single-sex and Mixed schools. All schools are expected to offer inclusive multicultural education regardless of their status or classification. Government-owned schools constitute the highest number of secondary schools in the country and in the Mashonaland East province. Schools range from outstandingly well-equipped ones with exclusive facilities to poorly funded and ill-equipped ones. At the time of this study, the Goromonzi District included twenty-two secondary schools out of which there was only one Private school, located at the Provincial Headquarters. Most Mission schools in the province are Catholic-owned schools. Groove High School is a government owned mixed boarding school.

There is an extended curriculum with most schools pursuing the local Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) syllabus whilst others, especially private schools offer the

Cambridge syllabus, which is out-of-bounds for many learners because these schools charge high fees. A wide range of subjects are on offer with Literature in English being studied from form one level (the first secondary school grade) as a subject separate from the English Language. The literacy rate for Mashonaland East was at a high 96% in 2012 (ZimStat, 2012).

4.5.2 Research participants

A researcher must give a thorough description of their research participants because their background experiences influence their subjective responses during the study. As stated earlier, the target population for my study comprises all Advanced Level learners and teachers in Zimbabwe while the sample consists of 27 participants: the 2018-2019 Literature in English Advanced Level learners (24) and teachers (3) at Groove High School. A total of twenty-four learners and three teachers were engaged in individual interviews while twelve purposively selected learners were tasked to explain their poems and their poem-drawings during the individual interviews. Four focus groups of six learners each were randomly created to discuss their experiences and perceptions of the target set-text.

For purposes of this study, certain biographical details of the participants were important since the study centres on their perceptions of and their responses to the text, and these were influenced by their background. For instance, their interpretations of the set text were shaped by their socio-cultural background, since the text centres on the existential circumstances of the characters in the novel, which has a similar Zimbabwean setting. The participants' family background and status also influenced their perceptions of family relationships in the text, which addresses matters of the family in a similar context. Their gender had a bearing on their responses to the gender relationships prevalent in the text. The environmental factors such as the physical and social environments of the participants also influenced their responses to the text. These and many other biographical attributes of the participants were crucial in shaping their responses to the text, thereby contributing to their perceptions of subtextual themes of the text. To this effect, learners and teachers' responses to the text were influenced by their biographical circumstances. Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 summarise the significant biographical attributes of the participants. The tables are arranged according to the role of the participant.

Table 4.1: Learner biographical details

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Role	Childhood dwelling	Current dwelling	Family status
Ahab	Female	Learner	Urban High density Busy Noisy Communal	Rural Small community Quiet Unfriendly Poverty	Second born Father late Staying with mother Single mother Four children

Kuku	Female	Learner	Urban High density Noisy Busy Communal	Urban Ghetto Noisy Hustling Individualistic Crime Unemployment Poverty	Third born Intact family Four children Parents entrepreneurs
Dassy	Female	Learner	Rural Communal Farming Generosity	Rural Individualistic Hustling Crime	First born Four children Father late Staying with grandmother Single mother Mother works in a shop
Fanty	Female	Learner	Urban Middle-density Minimum activity	Urban Middle-density Hustling Business mindedness	Firstborn Intact family Both parents Pastors Parents entrepreneurs
Bella	Female	Learner	Peri-urban Quiet Resort area Individualistic Boring Small community	Peri-urban Quiet Resort area Boring individualistic	Last born Intact family Five children One boy One girl married One niece
CP7	Male	Learner	Urban High density Communal Busy Friendly Hustling	Urban Low density Quiet Individualistic Boring Secluded	Firstborn 4 children Intact family
Deon	Female	Learner	Urban Friendly Communal Crime Quiet	Urban Low density Quiet Individualistic Crime Unfriendly	Last born Intact family Five children Four siblings employed 1 sibling married
Benco	Male	Learner	Peri-urban Quiet Individualistic Crime Unfriendly Boring Closed community	Peri-urban Quiet Individualistic Crime Unfriendly Boring Closed community	1 st born Intact family Mother teacher Stay mother's workplace Father entrepreneur Three children
Tafadzwa	Female	Learner	Urban Quiet Low density Individualistic Boring	Urban Quiet Boring Individualistic	First born Father late Staying with mother Mother accountant Single mother Three children
Maggie	Female	Learner	Urban Medium-density Busy Crime	Urban Medium-density Individualistic Quiet Crime	First born Intact family Four children Mother teacher Father lawyer
Tyra	Female	Learner	Urban Quiet Friendly Communal	Urban Quiet Individualistic Boring Unfriendly	First born Parents live in SA Parents working Staying with grandmother Visits parents on vacations
Kartel	Female	Learners	Rural Communal Busy Friendly No crime Tolerance	Rural Individualistic Unfriendly Patriarchal Conservative	First born Intact family Farmers Four children

Zee	Female	Learner	Urban High density Busy Noisy Communal Unity Friendly Crime	Urban High density Noisy Individualistic Crime Hustling Unemployment Poverty	First born Parents live in SA Stays with grandmother One cousin (boy)
Tata	Female	Learner	Rural Friendly Generosity Quiet	Rural Friendly Busy	Third born Intact family Four girls
Kudzie	Female	Learner	Rural Friendly Communal Conservative Crime	Rural Noisy Crime Alcoholism Drugs Unemployment Idleness	First born Intact family Three children Mother entrepreneur Father police officer
Miracle	Female	Learner	Urban Friendly Generosity	Rural Small Farming community Accommodative	Second born Father late Single mother Mother unemployed Poultry project School fees challenges Four children
Kante	Male	Learner	Rural Closed Quiet Friendly	Rural Closed Quiet Friendly	Polygamous family Father has 2 wives Six children Two wives leave separately First wife Five children Mother second wife One child Mother teacher
Hassan	Male	Learner	Urban Communal Friendly Generosity	Urban Quiet Individualistic	Second born Parents divorced Staying with mother Father provides Three children Sister is late
Rody	Male	Learner	Urban Hustling High density Crime unfriendly	Rural Individualistic Secluded housing Unfriendly Crime	First born Parents divorced Staying with mother Single mother Mother nurse Four children
Jessie	Female	Learner	Urban Quiet Friendly	Urban Anti-social Individualistic Boring	Fourth born Intact family Five children One boy married
RP	Male	Learner	Urban High density Busy Noisy Crime Individualistic Boring	Urban High density Crime Unfriendly Hustling Drugs Individualistic	First born Father late Staying with mother Single mother Mother teacher Two children
Vy	Female	Learner	Urban Low density Quiet Boring Old people	Urban Quiet Friendly Old people	Last born Intact family Four children Happy family
Tamuda	Male	Learner	Urban Low density Quiet	Urban Low density Quiet	Second born Parents divorced Staying with mom

Vuyo	Male	Learner	Boring Individualistic	Peaceful Individualistic Detached	Single mother Three children
			Urban High-density Noisy Boring	Rural Individualistic Peaceful	First born Parents divorced Mother entrepreneur Father Bank Manager Two children

Table 4.2: Teacher biographical details

Pseudonym	Gender	Childhood dwelling	Current dwelling	Experience & history	Qualifications & Specialty	Text selection rationale
Martin Mupeti	Male	Rural Farming Conservative Liberation war Communal	Rural School community Quiet Closed Individualistic Busy	26 years 5 schools Literature & Language	BA General Graduate Diploma in Education (English and Literature)	Availability in bookshops Familiar setting
Kupakwashe	Female	Farm place Busy Noisy Crime Disorganised Communal	Rural School community Quiet Closed Individualistic Busy	8 years 2 schools Language & Literature	B Ed Literature	Availability in school Affordability Familiar setting, themes, plot Female writer
Robert Farai	Male	Urban High density Ghetto Noisy Crowded Busy Communal	Rural School community Quiet Closed Individualism Busy	19 years 2 schools Literature	BA General Graduate Diploma in Education (Literature)	Availability in school Zimbabwean literature more accessible to learners Familiar setting, themes, plot

As shown in Table 4.1, the learner participants in this study comprised sixteen female and eight male participants. Of the 24 learner participants, twelve were from broken families: five had divorced parents, five had deceased fathers and two learners' parents lived and worked in South Africa. Fifteen of the participants were urban dwellers and nine were rural dwellers. Seventeen of the learner participants resided in westernised and non-communal, hostile communities, some of these were characterised by hustling and unemployment. Nine learners lived in crime-infested communities. All these aspects, which also characterise the lives of the characters in the text, influenced the learners' responses to and perceptions of the text and shaped their subtextual experiences.

Table 4.2 shows that there were two male and one female teacher participating in the study. The three teachers came from the rural school community, which is quiet, closed, and communal, though they all grew up in diverse, but communal communities. They all hold degrees in Literature and their selection of the text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* was influenced

by its availability in the school, its affordability by the learners and that its setting, plot and themes relate to the learners' life worlds. All these biographical attributes contributed to the participants' responses to and perceptions of the set text.

4.6 Research methods: Data collection instruments and procedures

The purpose of a case study is to examine the participating individuals, programmes, or processes; furthermore, case studies include an intensive process of collecting the research data through several sources/methods (Creswell, 2005). This study blended traditional or classical conventional and qualitative inquiry methodologies (semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups and document analysis) with participatory methodologies, particularly art-based methods (poems writings, and poem-drawings). Figure 4.1 represents the data collection process in respective order.



Figure 4.2: Data collection process

As shown in the data collection process summary above, data collection started with the learners writing poems (individually), which invoked how they felt about/perceived/responded to the prescribed text. After writing the poems, they identified all the themes/topics/aspects in their poem and drew pictures or symbols that represented these themes/topics/aspects. Poem writing and poem-drawing were conducted first because I wanted to elicit the learners' raw perceptions (untainted by the interview discussions). This was followed by the researcher analysing documents (which included the poems and poem drawings). This was done so that I could use the views obtained from the documents as probes during the interview discussions, thereby enriching my findings. The next step was to conduct four focus group discussions with twenty-four learners (four groups of six participants each) so that I could obtain deeper insights from the debates and arguments as the participants shared their views. Last, the individual interviews with twenty-four learners and three teachers enabled participants to air views they had not managed to contribute during the group discussions. During the individual interviews, the learner participants were tasked to explain their poems and poem drawings and to compare their explanations with the researcher's interpretations, thereby further enriching the study. Considering the subjective nature of the literary analysis, this methodological triangulation using various methods was necessary to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. In the next section, I discuss the art-based methods that were employed in this study.

4.6.1 Art-based methods

Arts-based research is a term coined by Elliot Eisner in the 1980s. (Barone and Eisner, 2012:xii) define it as “a process that uses the expressive qualities of [artistic] form to convey meaning”. It is also used to pursue understanding (Gioia, 2014). The purpose of art-based research is enhanced understanding through the communication of subjective realities or personal truths that can occur only through works of art (Barone, 2012). My study engaged the art process by using poems composed by the learners and their subsequent poem-drawings. I employed the ‘write-draw-talk’ style/approach: write (poem writing) – draw (poem-drawing) – talk (individual interview). The engagement of art-based methods in my study was, among other factors, driven by an observation by Newfield and Maungedzo (2006) that “semiosis, or meaning-making, takes place in a range of modes, such as the visual, actional, sonic, gestural and verbal, and in the multimodal integration of a range of modes, rather than in language only”. Through poetry and drawings, the learners presented their personal experiences of the novel in a multimodal way, which enabled the production of a multimodal understanding of and response to the novel.

Multimodality is defined by Kress (2009), as a theory that looks at the many different semiotic modes that people use to communicate with each other and to express themselves. A mode is defined as a “semiotically articulated means of representation and communication”, or a socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning-making, for example, images (Kress, 2000:185; Kress, 2009). Multimodality attempts to bridge the “inadequacy of current theories of meaning and communication to account for the increasingly complex contemporary communicational landscape, both inside and outside classrooms” (Kress 2000:153-4; Kress, 2010). It also promotes the inclusion of more concrete material or artefacts, and sensory and bodily practices into teaching and learning (Newfield, 2011), in the areas of language, literacy, and literature.

According to Given (2008), Arts-based social research is identified by two goals. Firstly, it includes the “communication of subjective realities and, secondly, the vigorous interrogation” of a common-sensical way of comprehending the social world; importantly, it enhances and generates multiple meanings. Thus, the employment of art-based methods was befitting for my study, which is anchored in the interpretive paradigm that observes the existence of multiple realities.

My constructivist research philosophy seeks to be learner-centred rather than teacher/adult-centred. Thus, writing poems and poem-drawings enabled the learners (participants) to guide the research, thereby creating room for richer data, which I might not have solicited from the

participants through conventional data collection methods and through the traditional monomodal classroom approach to literary study, which focuses on language. Moreover, as proposed by Newfield and Maungedzo (2006), contemporary societies, which are culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as globalised, should prioritise the negotiation of both cultural difference and semiotic variety in education. This can be achieved through the development of learner agency rather than subjection, by “utilising a range of semiotic modes in classrooms and by opening classrooms to local and indigenous knowledge” (Stein and Newfield 2004; Newfield and Maungedzo, 2006).

A hallmark of qualitative inquiry in which my study is anchored, is that researchers focus on understanding the meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue, and not on the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or that writers express in the literature (Creswell, 2014). In this light, composing original poetry and personal drawings allows learners to develop an authentic voice and lends them autonomy, which is key in the process of developing an opinion about a text’s meaning. As proposed by Newfield and Maungedzo (2006), this engagement stimulates imagination, enjoyment, and learning. It also promotes the development of the learners’ sense of agency and voice, helps learners to “develop an engaged enjoyment and appreciation of poetry” and reinforces “creative and critical thinking” (Blake, 2009: 28). This synthesises the view that the making of meaning in human life occurs through a range of modes rather than in language only.

4.6.1.1 Poem writing and poetry text analysis

According to Stein (2004), poetry reflects the subjective experience of the individual, and for learners, “poetry offers unique and interesting ways to express themselves” and to find their unique voices and perspectives. Young (2007:50) perceives poetry as capable of helping “to build verbal communication skills, tap into the power of expression, make personal connections to texts and build analytical thinking skills.” By allowing participants to compose personal, original poems, a researcher reinforces the notion that there are many ways to understand an author’s message, thereby rendering value to the participants’ “freedom to think independently and their ability to transact with texts aesthetically” (Roebuck, 2015).

For this study, all twenty-four learners were tasked to write individual poems based on their personal experiences of the study text (novel). By composing original poems, the participants were linguistically, verbally, visually and emotively presenting their experiences of the text. The poems were written as a weekend exercise to allow them enough time to represent their thoughts. All the participants had already read the text, and their ‘understanding’ of the text had already been scaffolded by the teachers by the time the exercise was given to them,

therefore, there was no need to wait for them to read the text first. Crucially, the creative poem-writing and poem-drawing activity allowed learners to express their own understanding of the text free from the constraints of an enforced teacher and classroom interpretation.

The written poems were analysed, to identify the sub-themes and to make notations of recurrent themes. Afterwards, I discussed the poems with twelve participants whose writing I had found to be the most intriguing. I analysed twenty-four poems composed by the learners by way of identifying, examining, and evaluating the techniques (poetic devices) and tools (imagery) employed by the creators of the texts (learners) (Klein, 1996). In the analysis, I considered the themes derived, the structure of the poem, the diction, and the overall style and tone of the poem to establish the learners' subtextual conceptualisation of the text.

Crucially, these poems represent the textual bodies of the participants' experiences and perceptions of and responses to the text and contain the subtextual traces. The emerging themes were coded, categorized, and themed, in line with the research questions.

4.6.1.2 Poem-drawings

In art-based inquiry, drawings communicate complex messages in rich ways, and they are lasting artefacts that can be used to give voice to participant messages (Theron, et al. 2011). Drawings "are constant and permanent fixtures that can be reviewed, and additional meanings are gained with each viewing" (Huss and Cwikel, 2005).

Twelve learners with the most insightful poems were asked to draw symbols of the themes that they identified in their poems. This graphical representation of the themes mirrored their perceptions of subtextual themes. This was followed by scheduled semi-structured individual interviews through which the twelve selected participants explained both their poems and drawings (as explained in the section on interviews). In this way, I was engaging participants collaboratively in making meaning of what they wrote and drew by engaging them in interpreting the messages that their artwork conveyed. This process links closely with multimodal meaning-making. Newfield (2011:7) indicates that "multimodality enables cognitive, social, and affective participation by expanding the semiotic space of the classroom and by reconstituting children as *sign-makers*. This entails that learners are no longer solely copiers and recipients of information, but *designers* of meaning – they are capable of making their own signs to represent and communicate meaning".

These drawings also have a psychoanalytical significance. They are signs, symbols or images of the learners' implicit perceptions that are made explicit (Jung, 2003: 81, 92-94,113). The

creative act of poem writing and drawing serves as conduit through which these unconscious images are released and made conscious (Jung, 2003: 94). This is evident in the findings based on the poem writing and drawings (Chapter 5).

4.6.1.3 Strengths of art-based methods

As supported by Parrott (2019), “the data from the in-depth qualitative interviews in this research along with the use of poem-writing and poem-drawings encouraged multimodal meaning-making. Multimodal methods allow the researcher to study drawings/signs as part of data gathering and meaning-making”.

Drawings undertaken as part of the qualitative methodology “provide pictures or semiotic materials containing a rich source of data when accompanied with explanation as part of the in-depth interview” (Parrott, 2019). As mentioned in the ‘Art-based methods’ section of this chapter, I employed the ‘write-draw-talk’ approach whereby the participants (learners) wrote poems, drew symbols to illustrate their poem messages and during the face-to-face interviews, the purposively selected twelve learners explained their drawings along with their poems. This lessened the possibility of misrepresentation of participant messages by offering the participants a voice and authority over their symbols. Subsequently, the poems and rich drawings illuminated a “fascinating wealth of data” (Parrott, 2019).

Through drawing, an individual pours out feelings she would not easily share during face-face exchanges. Drawing triggers deep soul-searching, by acting as a catalyst for participants to articulate /pour out feelings that have been implicit and difficult to convey (Zuboff, 1988). Thus, another hallmark of drawing as a method is that it offers an opportunity to access material that may be suppressed and repressed by the conscious mind (Edgar, 1999; Horne, et al, 2017). Given that my study is based on subtextual experiences of the participants, it was worthwhile for me to elicit their deep, subjective, intrapersonal, and emotional responses to the text, expressed through individually composed poems and poem-drawings.

4.6.1.4 Weaknesses of art-based methods

Like any other data collection method, art-based methods have their limitations. Silverman (2014) posits that the meaning of a sign is never fixed. Jung (2003: 89) also refers to this slippery signification of the sign or symbol: “a symbol is the intimation of a meaning beyond the level of our present powers of comprehension”. This observation can present both a shortcoming and a strength of symbols as data collection tools. On the positive side, the flexibility in attaching meaning to drawings offers the reader the opportunity to interpret the

message through various means, thus, paving the way for attaching multiple meanings to one object. This makes the object a rich source of meaning. On the other hand, the flexibility offers room for limitless interpretations, which can lead to misinterpretation of the participants' intended meanings. I minimised this limitation by employing an integrated approach whereby the participants wrote their poems, drew symbols to illustrate their poem messages, and explained their poem-drawings verbally in a face-face fashion during the individual interviews. My interpretations were guided by the participants' own interpretations.

4.6.2 Conventional methods

According to Ulin et al (2005), observing, interviewing, and managing group discussions, aided by careful note-taking (field notes) and transcriptions, are the basic methods of qualitative science; these methods are referred to by Marshall and Rossman (2006:97) as “the staples of the diet”. This study relied on a fusion of conventional methods (semi-structured individual face-face interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions) and art-based methods (poetry-writing and poem-drawing). These methods complement each other through triangulation. These multiple data sources were engaged to render credibility to conclusions (Maxwell, 2005) so that possible limitations of one method were compensated for by the strengths of a complimentary one (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

4.6.2.1 Semi-structured individual face-face interviews

Generally, an interview is considered as “a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions, and behaviours of the participants” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:92). Vierra and Pollock (1988) define an interview as a guided conversation between researchers and the participants. It is, therefore, important to note that interviews are characterized by oral communication and direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Yin (2016) proposes that the goal of “qualitative interviewing is to get to the heart of the matter as subtly as possible”. Wilkerson (2007:30) terms this “accelerated intimacy”.

For this study, twenty-four learners and three teachers were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. I asked biographical questions intending to understand the background from which participants' perceptions stemmed. For instance, these questions included where and how they grew up and information on their family background. There were also textual analysis-based questions included, to get deeper individual insights on the study text and specifically the learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes. A total of twenty-four learners and three teachers were interviewed through a set of semi-structured questions. Thereafter,

twelve learners were requested to explain their prior-prepared poems and their poem-drawings that were based on their perceptions of and responses to the text.

The general interview guide approach was used to create an environment, which made participants feel that they were engaged in a more relaxed inquiry, subsequently making them more forthcoming (Yin, 2016). Interviews were conducted by the researcher, personally, in a face-to-face mode. I employed open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. Where necessary, probing questions were asked for purposes of elaboration, clarity, and emphasis to confirm the information provided by the participants. There were two sets of interview questions, one for the teachers and the other for the learners.

4.6.2.2 Advantages of the semi-structured face-to-face interview method

Qualitative semi-structured questioning enhances face validity due to the flexibility of the questioning technique, which allows the researcher to ask the same question in varied ways to ensure the participant's full understanding of the question. The interviewer is also able "to probe the interviewee to elaborate on an original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee" (Hancock, B; Ockleford, E and Windridge, K, 2009). Apart from being able to probe the research participants for more information on particular points, the researcher can also explore the topics more discursively than in structured approaches. This facilitates probing "topics that may emerge that were not included in the interview schedule" (Gibson and Brown, 2011). This emergence of new topics aids in strengthening the data obtained as well as providing new insights that the researcher may have missed.

As postulated by Yin (2016), "...the qualitative interview follows a conversational mode, and the interview itself will lead to a social relationship of sorts, with the quality of the relationship individualised to every participant." This feature is also evident in semi-structured interviewing due to its flexibility which allows the interviewee to be more unrestricted in their responses than during a strict interview process.

Another significant quality of semi-structured interviewing is that the researcher is "usually more flexible in the way the interview schedule is used. For example, the researcher can vary the order of the questions according to the natural flow of conversation" (Gibson and Brown, 2011). This helps in calming the mood and making the participant more comfortable and subsequently more forthcoming with information. The essence of correct qualitative in-depth interviews is that the "participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it" (the emic perspective), and not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective) (Gibson and Brown, 2011:6).

Gibson and Brown (2011) posit that in semi-structured interviews, “analysis can be a lived aspect of the data gathering process and not just a pre-formulated strategy”. Researchers perform their analysis during their interviews, working through ideas with their research participants, and “improvising their data as an analytically mediated outcome” (Gibson and Brown, 2011). Generation of data is an analytic activity whereby the researcher does not passively extort information from the participants but is him/herself an active participant in the construction of the discourse that constitutes the data for analysis. In short, analysis is not separate from the activity but is rather a feature of it (Gibson and Brown, 2011).

Moreover, qualitative data collection is accompanied by analysis, and features of semi-structured interviewing such as the ability to probe, shifting between topics and modifying the original interview guide are analytic choices (Yin, 2016). This allows the researcher to begin their analysis at the collection stage, which makes the collected data more relevant and, thus, easier to work with during the final analysis process.

4.6.2.3 Shortcomings of the semi-structured face-to-face interview method

Generally, interviewing is characterised by shortcomings that include the ambiguity or vagueness of questions, which could subsequently lead to wrong interpretations by the participants, thereby jeopardising the outcomes of the study. To curb this, my interview questions were phrased and simplified to the specific level of the participants; where necessary, questions were repeated, and sometimes accompanied by illustrations so that participants clearly understood what was expected of them. I also summarised the major points raised by the interviewee at the end of each session to confirm their contributions.

4.6.2.4 Focus group discussions

Focus groups are described by Morgan (2008) as “a form of qualitative interviewing that uses a researcher-led group discussion to generate data”. A focus group discussion is an in-depth interview with a group of participants who influence each other through their answers regarding the ideas and contributions during the discussion, and they are stimulated with comments or prompts by the moderator (Freitas et al, 1998). Fundamental data produced through focus groups are the transcripts of the group discussions and the researcher’s reflections and annotations thereof (Freitas et al, 1998).

For my study, four groups of six learner participants each were formed from the total sample of twenty-four learners. Teachers were not part of the focus group discussions because I intended to collect data that were not teacher-controlled. Groups were kept relatively small to

enable all group members to actively participate in discussions as well as to accommodate individuals who are shy to venture opinions when communicating in large groups. This was done to gather rich, “in-depth qualitative data about a group’s perceptions, attitudes, and experiences on a defined topic” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:96), and to generate as many themes as possible on the topic. Group members were randomly selected in multiples of six, starting from the first learner on the school’s alphabetical class list.

A discussion guide was prepared before the group discussions to ensure the logical flow of the conversation around each topic area and to keep the discussions focused (Mayoux, 2015). Some of the responses, which the facilitator could capture during discussions, were recorded in a focus group summary sheet from which main themes were identified. All group discussions were audio-recorded. The transcriptions were used with the facilitator’s field notes and annotations for in-depth data analysis. This was done in the bid to capture all relevant details of the discussions, thereby rendering authenticity to the data collected. The questions for focus group discussions were based on the textual analysis of the prescribed text that was used as conduit to determine the perceptions of subtextual themes of the learners.

4.6.2.5 Strengths of focus group interviews

The focus group interview is advantageous in that discussion is focused on a specific topic, and participants engage in discussion with each other rather than with the researcher/facilitator (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Moreover, there is room for participants to build on each other’s ideas and comments thereby providing in-depth views that cannot be attained from an individual interview. As participants discuss, debate and argue, unexpected comments and new perspectives can be explored which subsequently add value to the study, as was the case in my study. Thus, Nieuwenhuis (2016:96) proposes that “focus group interviews produce data rich in detail that is difficult to achieve with other research methods.”

Morgan (2008) posits that like individual interviews, focus groups can be modified in a variety of ways to suit an equally wide range of purposes. They can thus be used for exploratory research, where the participants are relatively free to discuss the topic as they see fit, or they can be used in a more structured fashion, where the interviewer or moderator takes a more active role in controlling the issues to be discussed. For my study, I was controlling the flow of discussion, especially considering that my participants were participating in research for the first time. The participating learners sometimes lost focus and strayed into issues about the study text that did not relate to the research question or research focus. Therefore, I had to prompt them to stay focused.

By bringing together people who share a similar background, focus groups create the opportunity for participants to engage in meaningful conversations about the topics that researchers wish to understand (Morgan, 2008). Moreover, the group effort produces concentrated amounts of data, and the “synergy of the group has the potential to uncover important constructs which may be lost with individually generated data” (de Vos, et al, 2011:373). In this study, participants (learners) had a common contextual exposure by attending the same Literature in English class, and by having read and studied the same set text on which my study was based.

4.6.2.6 Limitations of focus group interviews

Like any other data collection method, focus group interviews have limitations. Nieuwenhuis (2016) propounds that the information collected through focus groups may be compromised through subjective group processes. These include the domination of the discussion by “the more outspoken individuals, groupthink, and the difficulty of assessing the viewpoints of less assertive participants” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:97). Moreover, focus groups are based on the researcher’s interests, and this gives the researcher a potentially too large role in determining how the conversation will proceed (Morgan, 2008). Kumar (2011) and Morgan (2008) posit that the moderator/researcher should only play a directive role during focus groups by assuring that the conversation stays focused on the research topic. I minimised the domination of discussions by individual participants of the groups by explaining the ideal characteristics of group discussions before each session. These include the importance of having varied and divergent opinions, and the value of having every participant’s view heard. I also emphasised that the value of literary analysis does not lie in having the best answer but rather in building a strong argument/case around one’s opinion. Considering this, I curbed groupthink by ensuring that every participant’s opinion was heard and that discussions ensued in an atmosphere akin to robust debate.

Another criticism levelled against focus groups as a method is that focus group samples are typically small and may not be representative” (Nieuwenhuis (2016). However, Kumar (2011) is of the view that a focus group should be neither too large nor too small as this can impede upon the extent and quality of the discussion. To this effect, I considered that the size of the group should be congruent with the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. For my purposes, a big group would have impeded the quality of the discussion and, subsequently, the information collected. This is due to the subjectivity of meaning-making associated with literary analyses, which lead to diverse opinions amongst readers of the same text. It was, therefore, imperative for me to keep groups relatively small (six participants per group) to gather rich and relevant data.

4.6.2.7 Documents

Given (2008) states that “a document is a text-based file that may include primary data (collected by the researcher) or secondary data (collected and archived or published by others) as well as photographs, charts, and other visual materials”. Documents are defined by Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:49) as “written or printed material that may be official, public or private, published or unpublished” and can serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Creswell (2014) comments that documents are a valuable source of rich information.

Unofficial or unpublished documents that were assessed as primary sources in this study comprise the learners’ poems and drawings that are based on their perceptions of selected aspects of the text. These responses include their perceptions of subtextual themes. At the end of the data gathering process, I scanned the poem-drawings to form a text database for use in the analysis process.

Published documents that were analysed include the set text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, which was analysed as a secondary source along with critical works, journal articles and other literary responses to the text to corroborate the evidence from the field study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The analysis of these secondary sources forms part of the literature review (Chapter Two).

4.6.2.8 Strengths of document analysis

The documents were also important as a source of information to formulate interview questions (Creswell, 2014). These texts allowed me to adjust the interview guide to address aspects and themes that had emerged from the poems and poem-drawings. Document analysis preceded individual interviews, which allowed me to formulate prompts during discussions to address relevant themes raised in the poem-drawings. This assisted in comparing the perceptions of the respective participants to those of others. Document analysis, therefore, enabled methodological triangulation that enhances the validity of my study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

4.6.2.9 Limitations of document analysis

Some of the criticisms levelled against document analysis include selectivity, unfair treatment of authors, misinterpretation of authors’ ideas, selective interpretation to suit the researcher’s argument, and poor organisation and integration of information collected from the documents (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). I attempted to curb these perceived limitations by supporting participant views with quotations, in-vivo coding where possible, and citing participant contributions

verbatim. Furthermore, I analysed secondary documents using a clearly defined pattern (evident in my literature review section), which is characterised by titled segments which address specific aspects of the text and the research purpose and question. The use of document-generated information as a source for interview questions facilitated the integration of document information with the data-generation process. Additionally, asking the participants (interviewees) to explain their poem-drawings helped to curb misinterpretation of the meanings.

4.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:154). It is also identified as “summarising and presenting project results in a way that communicates the most important features” whereby at the end of analysis “the big picture” is established (Hancock, Windridge, and Ockleford, 2007: 24). However, it is important to note that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing iterative (non-linear) process whereby data “collection, processing, analysis, and reporting are intertwined” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016) and cyclical. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) warn that we should never collect data without substantially analysing the data simultaneously. Activities that include taking down field notes and verifying them by reviewing them at the end of each day while fieldwork is still ongoing provide opportunities to tighten data collection and mark the beginning of data analysis. This section of my study addresses the analysis process. This takes place once all data have been gathered and are ready for convergence that produces one coherent report on the phenomenon.

My study employed qualitative data analysis anchored in the interpretative epistemology that aims to establish “how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon. This was done by analysing their attitudes”, feelings, perceptions, values, knowledge, understanding, and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:109) of the selected text through their responses. This process is rooted in the eclectic theoretical lens that undergirds my study and in the underlying propositions of my research questions.

I started the arduous process of analysing the transcription of data which mostly comprised of audio-recorded individual interviews and focus group discussions. I did a manual speech-to-text transcription of all the interviews by way of partial transcription; I captured verbatim participant views that related to the study and summarised the rest. This was done following a suggestion by Gibson and Brown (2011) that transcription involves deciding what is relevant to the analytic purposes of the project and emphasising relevant features of the data. I transcribed the recordings separately and independently and generated chunks of data

(transcripts) that represented the separate perceptions of individuals. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) describe data transcription as the process of taking notes and converting these into a format that will facilitate analysis. Gibson and Brown (2011) describe a transcript, as a “mode of representing data that has been gathered” whilst Bertram and Christiansen (2014) refer to a transcript as a written document that reflects what was said during an interview, in a lesson, etc. In essence, data refer to material that has been collected or generated in the course of the research, while transcription is the process of rendering that data into a new representational form. Through transcription, researchers represent or re-present the data that they have gathered. Re-presentation draws attention to the fact that transcripts are not ‘neutral’ but are analytically guided versions or renderings of data, thus, they are data presented in a new, analytically focused way.

Various types of qualitative analysis are employed depending on factors such as the rigour and procedure that the researcher follows; the type of data at their disposal; how the data were collected and ordered; what needs to be extracted from the data; and the lens and angle (paradigm) through which the researcher approaches the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016: 110). “Thematic analysis refers to the process of analysing data according to commonalities, relationships, and differences across a data set whilst the word ‘thematic’ relates to the aim of searching for aggregated themes within data” (Gibson and Brown, 2011). Miles and Huberman’s “cross-case analysis involves a description of how to code” and analyse “themes across cases of data” (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Gibson and Brown, 2011). Narrative analysis is directed towards working out and working through discursive themes across interviews (Mishler, 1999; Emerson and Frosh, 2004). Hermeneutic “genre analysis is orientated towards the comparison of data sources, to compare communicative actions and the basic structures of social action” (Knoblauch and Luckman, 2004). Discourse analysis encompasses ideas, statements, or knowledge that are dominant among sets of people at a specific time (Punch and Quancea, 2014: 245). “Content analysis refers to any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” through themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). These approaches come from very different analytic starting points and have distinctive aims and disciplinary affiliations, but the general interest in generating themes is the significant commonality that they share.

I used inductive thematic and content analysis to analyse the transcribed qualitative data. The main purpose of inductive analysis posited by Nieuwenhuis (2016) “is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data”. The inductive analysis also entails that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; these emerge from the data and are not imposed on the data collection and

analysis process (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017). I used thematic analysis to analyse interview and focus group data. Given the subjectivity of literary perceptions, thematic analysis was appropriate for identifying the diverse views of the participants during the discussions. I used content analysis to analyse document data (poems) and drawings as proposed by Nieuwenhuis (2016). Content analysis was applied to coding student drawings. Analysis of the participants' messages as contained in the artefacts or poems revealed the manifest content (visible and obvious components) whilst analysis of the deeper meaning involved the interpretation of the underlying meaning or the latent content (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), i.e., the subtext. Considering this proposition, I found content analysis as an appropriate approach for analysing the document and art-based data (poems and poem-drawings).

Various scholars have proposed guideline steps for qualitative data analysis, though there is no consensus-driven prescription to the process. It is up to researchers to follow a path that best suits their purposes. Wolcott (1994) describes the process as involving three elements: description, analysis and interpretation. Creswell (2014) suggests that researchers should analyse qualitative data through steps that range from the specific to the general and through multiple levels of analysis. He proposes a hierarchical approach that builds from the bottom up, though the researcher is reminded that the stages are interconnected and are not always to be visited in the presented order. These stages involve raw data gathering; preparing data for analysis; reading through data; coding data; identifying interrelating themes/descriptions; and interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions. Yin (2016) presents five cycle phases of analysis, namely: compiling; disassembling; reassembling; interpreting; concluding. Though I adopted Yin's five-cycle path in analysing my data, I also referred to guidelines by Wolcott (1994) and Creswell (2014), which are discussed above. Crucially, these proposals all have one outcome: a coherent report of the phenomenon under study.

My data analysis process began with compiling raw data, which comprised of organising and formally arranging all notes and transcripts by type. This entailed arranging individual data sets of the interviews, focus groups, and documents, (which included the poems and poem-drawings data), separately and independently. I proceeded to read through and disassemble the compiled individual data sets which entailed breaking these down into smaller fragments or codes, starting with documents, poems and poem drawings, then individual interviews, then focus groups, in this respective order. I proceeded to reassemble and array the fragmented data units, which entailed combining the sets into different groups and sequences through categories and themes. I then moved on to interpretation using the reassembled material, which entailed the creation of a new and coherent narrative. In the next section, I explain the steps I took in analysing the data.

4.7.1 Partial verbatim transcription of individual interviews and focus group data

Yin (2016:185) warns that the “absence of a universally accepted analytic routine makes qualitative research vulnerable to criticisms of selectivity and bias”. Therefore, analysis procedures should be thoroughly executed. As such, I took rigorous steps during the analysis process to ensure trustworthiness. As explained in the data collection section, I collected interview data by using an audio voice recorder. Therefore, the first step in analysing the data was to transcribe the data from speech to text, with non-verbal cues woven into the transcriptions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The audio recordings were characterised by volumes of raw data, which required careful and rigorous sifting because some of these did not suit the purpose of my study. Moreover, some factors made my participants, especially the learners stray from the research focus on their responses to the research questions. These factors included their lack of experience in participating in interviews and research. It was the first time the participants took part in a research project and, subsequently, some of them lost track of the research focus on some occasions. Although I endeavoured to keep the interviews focused, there were many irrelevant data identified. For that reason, I chose to do a partial transcription. I inductively identified relevant themes emerging from the data and transcribed these verbatim. I summarised the less relevant data and disregarded irrelevant aspects. This process helped in saving time and avoiding unnecessary information overload.

4.7.2 Reading through the data to gain a general sense

After transcribing the data, I read them carefully, reflectively, and severally to get a general impression and understanding of the data. This was a vital step in my study considering the nature of my research focus, which is anchored in literary study and the subjectivity that characterises it. Moreover, a researcher must familiarise herself with the data before venturing into the analysis. As advised by Lochmiller and Lester (2017), I went through the individual data sets several times. I reflected on key messages that stood out; claims or statements that related to my research focus and my theoretical framework; claims or perspectives of the participants that converged or diverged from one another as well as those that differed from my assumptions of the phenomenon.

4.7.3 Analysis of document and art-based data

The documents that were accessed for this study included the learners’ poems and poem-drawings as well as the text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. The latter was analysed as a secondary source along with critical works and journal articles on the text. I analysed the documents using content analysis; I examined the documents for information on the learners’ perceptions,

responses, and experiences of the text and paid close attention to explicit and implicit subtextual meanings they attached to the text. I analysed all the poems and poem-drawings separately first, to obtain a personal understanding of them, before reading the participants' expositions of their poems and poem-drawings. The personal analysis of the poems and poem-drawings was accompanied by making reflective notes and comments.

4.7.4 Reflective open coding

After developing a general sense of the data, I proceeded to code reflectively the data. Nieuwenhuis (2016:116) describes coding as a process of dividing or "marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or unique identifying names". Henn et al (2006:202) define coding "as a process for which there are no rules, merely guidelines" and Yin (2016) also posits that there is no fixed routine to the disassembling (coding) process. This suggests that coding is subjectively done, and each researcher codes their work in accordance with the type of data at their disposal and their specific area of focus.

Reflective coding is described by Lochmiller and Lester (2017) as coding that harmonises with the conceptual or theoretical framework; addresses the research questions and leads the researcher on an analytic pathway, for example, towards the construction of categories. I found it imperative to employ reflective coding, considering the general subjectivity of literary responses and the diversity of participant perspectives of the same literary text. I used a coding frame to guide me in the coding process, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2016). The frame comprises three columns, labelled *Reflective notes*, *Transcription of interview*, and *Codes*, in that respective order. The coding process involved identifying and highlighting text; noting reflections or other remarks in margins; sorting and sifting through data to identify relationships and distinct differences; affixing codes (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017) and labelling them in varied ways. Where necessary and for purposes of clarity, authenticity and credibility, in-vivo coding was done, that is, capturing the actual word or phrase used by the participant (quote). After assigning codes, I proceeded to the reassembling stage.

4.7.5 Arraying codes into categories and themes

At the arraying stage, the disassembled items (codes) are combined into different groups and sequences, and the data are depicted in diverse forms, for example, graphically in lists or tabular form (Yin, 2016). A "category is a group of content that shares a commonality" (Krippendorff, 1980; Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

At this stage, I used the identified codes to provide descriptions of participants and their perceptions of subtextual themes. Categories and themes were formed by converging similar

codes from across the individual data transcripts. The coded data were classified under code topics. After identifying code topics, I found the most descriptive wording for the topics and turned them into categories. I reduced the total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other and then I drew lines between the categories to show interrelationships. The next step was to make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category. Thereafter, I assembled the data material belonging to each category in one place, thus, forming themes, ready for a preliminary analysis. These themes appear as the “major findings in qualitative studies and are often used as headings in the findings sections of a dissertation or thesis” (Creswell, 2014). I followed this approach in my thesis. The themes display the multiple perspectives of participants and are supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.

4.7.6 Data interpretation

After the theme development, I proceeded to interpret the research findings. Interpretation in qualitative research can take many forms. It could be “adapted for different types of designs and is flexible to convey personal, research-based meanings” (Creswell, 2014). Creswell proposes that interpretations can be done through such dimensions as lessons learned, which could be the researcher’s interpretation. This entails that the inquirer brings to the study her culture, history, and experiences. The researcher forms meaning that is derived from a comparison of the findings with information gleaned from the literature or theories. As mentioned earlier, my interpretation was largely informed by an eclectic theoretical framework, the existing literature, the purpose and focus of the study, and the research questions. My interpretation was based on my understanding of the findings regarding learners and teachers’ subtextual responses to and perceptions of the study text.

4.8 Quality assurance measures

The ultimate test of the worth of a qualitative study is whether people trust the findings sufficiently to act on them (Mishler, 1990; Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). This entails the trustworthiness of a study, which is a measure of utmost importance in qualitative research.

4.8.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined by Lochmiller, Chad, and Lester (2017) as the degree to which data collection, analysis and presentation of findings are presented in a thorough and verifiable manner. Trustworthiness comprises of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

4.8.2 Credibility

Credibility refers to the congruency of findings with participants' reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The researcher should "represent the realities of the research participants as accurately as possible and must provide assurances in the report that this obligation was met" (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittler, 2013).

For this study, I ensured credibility, mainly through member checking, (respondent validation) during data collection by allowing willing participants to listen to the audio recordings at the end of an individual interview and focus group discussion. Subsequently, participants could confirm if their contributions were accurately captured. I also summarised the key points raised by the interviewee at the end of each interview session. I also employed inductive thematic analysis, which included in-vivo coding to ensure credible interpretation of participants' experiences. This is in line with Krefting (1991:215) and Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) who posit that "qualitative research is considered credible when it presents accurate descriptions or interpretations of human experience so that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the description".

4.8.3 Dependability

Dependability relates to consistency (Treharne and Riggs, 2015) or the possibility to replicate similar findings with the same participants in a similar context (Klopper, 2008; Yin, 2011). This is difficult to achieve in qualitative research which deals with human participants and human behaviour which is far from static. Human beings change over time and according to context and are characterised by multiple realities (Yin, 2014). Considering that qualitative studies focus on understanding the uniqueness of human behaviour in different settings, it is difficult but unnecessary to engage replication in a qualitative study. However, this does not deter qualitative researchers from attempting to achieve a substantial and subjective degree of consistency and research rigour.

I enhanced dependability by keeping a thorough audit trail (participants' information, methods of data collection, detailed field notes, and tape and video recordings), detailed field notes, and methodological triangulation. Gibson and Brown (2011) posit that triangulation can be useful for checking the trustworthiness of different sources of data (e.g. how accurate a data source is) or for examining the same phenomenon from different points of view. I employed five data sources (face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, poem writing and analysis, and poem-drawings) for purposes of cross verification. For instance, through the focus group discussions, I gathered an overview of participant perceptions which

was followed up with semi-structured individual interviews. Thus, collectively obtained perceptions were compared with individual sentiment and experience. Gibson and Brown (2011:14) further emphasize that triangulation should be applied to “gain detailed understandings of research settings, practices or participants”, and should not be used to verify the findings of one method with another.

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013:137) indicate that the clearer your outline and justification of research procedures, the greater is the degree of dependability of your work. I enhanced the dependability of this study through the detailed and thorough description of the entire research process, its design, and data collection procedures and processes.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define confirmability as “the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not by researcher bias, motivation, and interest. I ensured confirmability by keeping an audit trail, comprising of participants’ information, methods of data collection, detailed field notes, and tape and video recordings for review by other researchers (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), if need be. The audit trail allows any observer to trace the progression of the research step by step via the decisions made and prescribed procedures (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Triangulation was employed to curtail such shortcomings as intrinsic bias. I also enhanced confirmability through thorough, verbatim transcription of interview data from speech to text. I did it to make sure that the transcribed text was in harmony with the audio-recorded text.

I also enhanced confirmability by engaging inductive thematic data analysis and interpretation whereby the emerging themes were obtained from the participant data and findings were grounded in the actual data (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017), rather than being imposed on the data before data collection and analysis. For instance, I used in-vivo quotes in my data interpretation to ensure the reproduction of actual text. Moreover, I also organised all the data and saved these in a backed-up, retrievable format and location so that if for any reason the findings of this study were questioned, this data would be available for verification.

4.8.5 Transferability

“Transferability is the applicability of findings in other contexts or the ability to generalise from the findings to larger populations” (Klopper and Knobloch, 2010). Nieuwenhuis (2016) suggests two strategies that can be adopted by qualitative researchers to increase transferability. He prescribes a thick description, which entails “that the researcher provides a full purposeful account of the context, participants, and research design so that readers can

make their own decisions about transferability” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The second strategy is thorough purposeful sampling so that participants represent the entire population in terms of the phenomenon or context being studied. Though generalisability is not a hallmark of qualitative research, I enhanced the transferability of this study. I generated rich descriptions of participants, the sampling strategy, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis, and interpretation to enable other researchers to transfer the findings to other settings. Transferability, however, is difficult to achieve, given the subjective nature of literary analysis. Research ethics is another aspect of quality measures required in social science investigation.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Israel and Hay (2006) cited in Gibson and Brown (2011) prescribe “an orientation to research ethics as an integrated aspect of research practice that concerns every feature of research”. It is important to observe that “professional bodies provide ethical guidelines for researchers to follow in the design and conduct of their research. The general aim is to protect the integrity of research participants and other interested parties, including the researcher. Other aims are to maintain professional research standards, promote public confidence in research, and minimize legal risk” (Gibson & Brown, 2011).

4.9.1 Institutional approval

Yin (2016) postulates that before entering the field to collect data, a researcher needs permission to collect data in “private” places such as schools and hospitals. In this light, the research was carried out per the ethical code of research practice. I sought the required permissions before venturing into the field.

“Research nearly always needs to pass through an ethics committee before it can go ahead” and this entails the “completion of a formal ethical review through the host research institution (i.e. the institution to which the researcher is affiliated or where they are to carry out their work)” (Gibson and Brown, 2011). To this effect, I sought ethics clearance from the University of Pretoria’s Ethics Committee, through which I obtained an approval letter.

I thereafter approached the Mashonaland East Provincial Education Office in Zimbabwe to obtain clearance and permission to enter Zimbabwean schools as per research protocol and procedures in Zimbabwean schools. I was cleared and given an introduction letter from the Provincial Education Director (Appendix B), which permitted me to proceed to the school of my choice within the respective province.

I proceeded to Groove High School (pseudonym) in Mashonaland East Province, where I presented the principal with the letter of permission to carry out research at any school of my choice within Mashonaland East Province. The school principal indicated that the Provincial Office's approval was sufficient, and I was allowed to carry out my research in the school.

The principal explained to me that since the school is a boarding school, the parents' consent would be obtained through the Zimbabwean Boarding Schools indemnity system. Therefore, the parents were not required to sign the consent forms. I was instructed to report to the Head of the Arts Department (HOD) for the duration of my research journey in the school.

4.9.2 Informed consent

As postulated by Mack, et al, (2005), informed consent is “a mechanism for ensuring that individuals understand what it entails to participate in a research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate”. The HOD introduced me to the three Literature in English teachers, who were to be part of my research participants. After a thorough briefing on my research intentions, expected procedures, and issues of guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, the teachers scheduled an introduction and information session with their learners. At the sessions, I verbally and through the information letter (Appendix F) introduced my research and explained the research protocol, consent and ethics procedures to the learners. .

4.9.3 Voluntary participation and trust

During the introduction session (Appendices C and F), I made it clear to the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary. Furthermore, they were informed that they could withdraw from the study during any stage of the research, without falling victim to prejudice or victimisation.

4.9.4 Safety in participation

During the introduction session, I informed the participants of the benefits of taking part in this study. I added that a possible publication of the findings would provide an opportunity for the sharing of information with a wider community of literary critics, academics, students, and policymakers, which could improve the value of and teaching of Literature in English. I also explained that the responses of participants in this study would enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to learners and teachers.

Throughout the data collection period, I endeavoured to ensure that participants were not exposed to any undue physical or psychological harm. I remained honest and committed to the initial research programme throughout the research process.

4.9.5 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

I explained to the learners that I would protect participants' anonymity and keep research data confidential (Cohen and Manion, 1995). I informed participants that they had the right to privacy and the right to refuse to participate; the right to refuse to be interviewed; or to provide any kind of documentation. I also endeavoured to ensure privacy by asking participants for permission to audio-record interviews and focus group discussions before the commencement of the discussion session. I also explained they had the right to listen to the interview audio recordings for confirmation of accuracy.

For purposes of anonymity, I requested that all participants introduce themselves to me and partake in all tasks using pseudonyms of their choice throughout the research period. At the end of the introduction and information session, all participants registered their pseudonyms. I stressed to the participants that if they were required to submit any documents to me for purposes of the study, these had to carry their pseudonyms and not their actual names. The aspect of confidentiality was crucial especially during focus group discussions as anonymity was practically out of the question since the learners already knew each other. I emphasised that the contributions made during the discussions were not supposed to be disclosed and that all participants were expected to respect the privacy and anonymity of each other. I also explained to the participants at the onset that the results or findings of this study would not be used for any purposes outside this study. I also explained that the data would be kept safely and stored in digital format at the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria, as was indicated in Appendices C and F. At the end of the research process, the audio recordings and the collected data were handed over to my supervisor for safekeeping as per the University of Pretoria Postgraduate Committee's research policy.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the research design, research methodology and data collection procedures, research site, the participant sample, data analysis and interpretation, trustworthiness measures, and ethical considerations. The research design determined and informed the whole process. The study was rooted in the interpretive/constructivist research paradigm and in a qualitative research approach. The case study design comprised purposive sampling and a fusion of conventional qualitative data gathering methods and art-based

methods. Inductive thematic and content analysis was employed in analysing and interpreting the data. Quality assurance comprised credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Then followed an exposition of the ethics measures. The following chapter presents the research findings, which were reflectively compiled, using the research design and methodology, the literature, the research question and the theoretical lens as a frame of reference.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, the methodology chapter, I discuss and justify the methodology and the qualitative methods that I used in answering my research questions. I also explain the quality assurance measures that I employed to ensure the trustworthiness and the ethics of the study. In this chapter, I present the findings of the study, which were based on a qualitative exploratory single case study. My study aimed to explore and understand how and why the subtext influences the responses and perceptions of learners and teachers of a prescribed literary text. This was in relation to a Constructivist conceptualisation of subtextual meaning, guided by an eclectic fusion of educational theories and approaches (Constructivism and Reader-response), which I merged with African Indigenous Knowledge and literary theories (Postcolonial theory and Psychoanalysis). Based on the existing literature, it was found that no empirical field study on an analysis of the subtext of literature for the classroom in Zimbabwe has been undertaken; furthermore, most of the studies carried out in other contexts employed conventional research tools or methods in their studies. Therefore, my assumption was that this study would provide new insights into the subjective perceptions of learners and teachers by incorporating art-based methods, which elicit an aesthetic and personal transaction with a text. Given this, my study sought to answer one main research question and three subsidiary questions, which are the focus of this chapter.

5.2 Research questions

5.2.1 Main research question

How and why does the subtext influence learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text?

5.2.2 Secondary questions

1. What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?
2. What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?

3. What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?

There were three major findings of this study, which are organised and presented under the following central themes:

- a) Individual triggers
- b) Shared/Common triggers
- c) Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes

Table 5.1 below is a summary of the themes and sub-themes that arose from the findings of the study.

Table 5.1: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Theme 1: Individual triggers Sub-theme 1.1: Psychological triggers Sub-theme 1.2: Emotional triggers Sub-theme 1.3: Physiological triggers Sub-theme 1.4: Environmental triggers Sub-theme 1.4.1: Physical environment Sub-theme 1.4.2: Social environment Sub-theme 1.4.3: Cultural environment
Theme 2: Shared/Common triggers Sub-theme 2.1: Historical experiences Sub-theme 2.2: Intergenerational and transgenerational experiences Sub-theme 2.3: Socio-political experiences
Theme 3: Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes Sub-theme 3.1: Gender Sub-theme 3.2: Postcoloniality Sub-theme 3.3: Economy Sub-theme 3.4: Socio-political disposition Sub-theme 3.5: <i>Midungwe</i> Sub-theme 3.6: <i>Wenera</i> Sub-theme 3.7: Socio-cultural distress Sub-theme 3.8: Religion and beliefs Sub-theme 3.9: <i>Hunhu</i>

The two groups from which data were collected include 24 Literature in English, Advanced Level learners and three subject teachers. These two groups are identified as ‘learners’ and ‘teachers’ and their specific pseudonyms are used to refer to particular participants in both groups. The interview guides for the two groups revealed differences and similarities in the responses to the interview questions. For this reason, I presented the findings from the two groups separately, starting with the findings from the learners.

In this chapter, I begin with the presentation of the findings under each theme and sub-themes, which I closely link to the main research question, the secondary research questions, and the theoretical framework of the study. To elicit a deeper understanding, I present a summary of each theme at the end of the respective theme presentation. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

5.3 Theme 1: Individual triggers

Themes 1 and 2 both address the ‘why’ part of the main research question, **How and why does the subtext influence learners and teachers’ perceptions and responses to the prescribed text?** Themes 1 and 2 are based on the triggers or determinants of the participants’ subtextual experiences of the text: the aspects that influence the subtextual responses/experiences of the participants. Theme 3 is based on the participants’ subtextual experiences of the text; It addresses the ‘how’ part of my main research question. Theme 1 specifically relates to the individual triggers, whilst Theme 2 focuses on the common/shared triggers. Theme 1 corresponds to the second secondary research question of this study: **What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers’ views of the prescribed text?**

For themes 1 and 2, I present the findings from the learners and teachers jointly, and I identify the learners with the ‘L’ tag and the teachers with the ‘T’ tag.

Table 5.2 summarises the triggers/determinants, which were recorded for purposes of clarity and deeper understanding of the participants’ biographical backgrounds and not for statistical purposes.

Table 5.2: Individual triggers summary

Status	Divorced parents	Deceased parent(s)	Parent(s) in diaspora	Intact family	Ghetto dweller	Low & Medium density dweller	Rural dweller	Westernised community dweller	Crime-ridden area
Number	5	5	2	15	7	12	8	19	10

Table 5.2 reveals that 12 of the 27 participants came from broken families. These represented the Learners. Considering that the group comprised a total of 24 learners, it means that half the learners came from broken families. Tamuda, one of the learners confirmed that

when I look at my class, you will find that more than ten of us have parents who are divorced, and families are broken. My closest friends and most people that I interact with have their parents divorced. (Tamuda.L.5:30)

The data revealed that many learner participants' perceptions of the text were influenced by their family status. The above table also reveals that participants resided in westernised communities where Hunhu/Ubuntu broke down and 10 out of 27 participants resided in crime ridden areas. The table also reveals that the participants were from mixed physical environments, which explains the diverse responses to the writer's presentation of the Belvedere/Mbare binary (discussed in detail in Theme 3). However, there was agreement on issues such as poor amenities provisions, gender disparity, and *Hunhu*.

5.3.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Psychological triggers

For this study, Psychological triggers are conceptualised as traumatic experiences that evoke underlying fears and anxieties of both the participants and the characters in the text. These mainly centre on aspects of traumatic memory and the subsequent impact of these experiences on individuals (Cuncic, 2020).

Divorce and family violence are among the psychological triggers, which influence the participants' responses to the text. Gari's violent actions as an abusive father and his tense relationship with his wife, Onai, reminded Tamuda of his own parents' divorce and triggered him to despise spousal abuse and the abandonment of women by husbands. He stated that his parents were divorced and Gari's violence in the text reminded him of his situation. The relationship between Gari and Onai led to a greater understanding of divorce:

my parents are divorced... The situation in the text keeps me reminded of my situation ... [I] never had a thorough understanding of how divorce comes to be, but the text gave us insight into the way things can be sour between a couple to a point where divorce becomes inevitable, especially when we look at the abuse Onai suffers and the way she's so broken. Though I cannot testify to any abuse during the time my parents were still together, but I can imagine a woman being abused. In the text, Gari the husband isn't there for Onai, his wife and the absence of a man in a woman's life bores me to the bone. Even in real life when a woman is abandoned, we can see that she's torn, she's damaged. (Tamuda.L.5:28)

Hassan was also haunted by the violence associated with divorce and family break-up. His poem reflects and triggers thoughts of his family situation. Lines 6-12 of his poem, inserted as (Figure 5.1), address the issues of abuse in marriage. He stated in his poem that the text

reminded him of his parents' divorce and that he wished they had stayed together. In explaining his poem, Hassan stated that

Line 6 addresses issues of abuse, and I link it to Onai and Gari's relationship where Gari constantly abuses Onai. This has some effects on the children because they have to bear to see a person who they love unleashing so much hatred on another person whom they love. The abuse of the mother directly or indirectly cascades to the children. I also wish to see a world in which married couples live in peaceful co-existence. I also link this to my own life because my parents divorced, and I think it would be beautiful if they lived in peaceful co-existence. (Hassan.L.12:43)

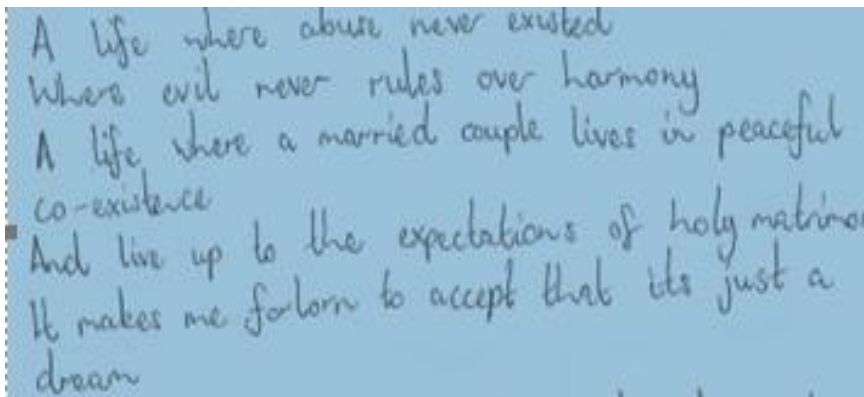


Figure 5.1: Hassan's poem

Kante's response to the text was influenced by his own violent childhood experiences and birth circumstances. His mother was impregnated by a married neighbour at the age of twenty. He linked Onai's unfortunate circumstances of raising the children and educating them by herself, to his mother's situation when she had to single-handedly raise him and educate him. He was traumatised by the prejudice and stigma his mother suffered as an unwedded mother: the name-calling, condemnation, and labelling and attempted infanticide. He emotionally explained that

There are so many aspects and incidences in Onai's life that I would equate to those of my mom and myself. My mom and I have been through a lot of unfortunate and painful situations, just like Onai and her children... mom was humiliated and called all sorts of names for getting pregnant to a married neighbour... she had to go to rural Chabwino because she just wanted herself out of Warren Park, away from the stigma, from the laughter, from the gossip, and above all, from the threat on my life after the attempted poisoning by my stepmother. (Kante.L.9:51)

Some of the participants' responses to the text and their perceptions of certain characters in the text were influenced by their close family members who had been victims of traumatic experiences similar to those endured by the characters. They vividly narrated various sad ordeals suffered by their victimized relatives. Ahab emotionally related that Gari, and his irresponsible, abusive nature reminded her of her uncle, who lived in Mutare. She said that he

was very abusive; he was an absent father; he drank and subsequently abused his wife; he did not know how old his children were and did not know which school they attended. Ahab complained that her aunt was beaten up (Ahab.L.6:48).

Kante also explained that at some point in his life he was psychologically traumatized by his uncle's abuse of women. He narrated that when his uncle had experienced challenges in life, he used to beat up his wife and children. Kante lived with them and seeing the beatings was disturbing to the extent that it changed his understanding of how women should be treated. Kante regretted that there was a time when he thought the best way to discipline women was by beating them (Kante.L.6:41). Tatata also described that she was haunted by an incident of violence that befell her neighbour who had her face damaged from hot cooking oil wounds due to domestic violence and the woman's face kept vividly coming to Tatata's mind (Tatata.L.9:61).

Some participants were haunted by personal experiences of violence at a young age. For instance, Kuku painfully narrated that the descriptions of demolitions of houses in the text evoked vivid and disturbing memories of demolitions that had occurred in her neighborhood when she was very young. Kuku vividly recounted that

there was once a Murambatsvina¹ incident at our residential area, but I was very young then. The Murambatsvina incident in Mabvuku, a place where we used to have shacks and they were destroyed by the council...when I read about the Mbare demolitions in the text, I feel like the demolitions are taking place in Mabvuku. The description of the demolitions, the chaos, and the subsequent devastating consequences on the Mbare people in the text revived my memory of the incident and the events of that time in my neighbourhood. (Kuku.L.9:58)

Kudzie also related traumatic childhood experiences; she stated that her neighbour's children were exposed to domestic violence. She explained that her neighbour abused his wife and children. Kudzie narrated that after drawing his salary, the husband would go to the bars, and spend all his money on beer and prostitutes; he would return home drunk, beat his wife and harass the children. Kudzie also added that the children were verbally abused; Kudzie indicated that seeing their mother being beaten up affected them psychologically.

For most participants, the violent events in the text triggered their dark memories of personal traumatic encounters that they had experienced at some point in their lives. Ahab and Rody both recollected incidences when they had been caught up in violent brawls between the

¹ Murambatsvina was launched by the Zimbabwean government in May 2005 as a programme of evictions and demolitions of unauthorised housing, together with actions against informal traders, throughout Zimbabwe's urban areas. Of the population of approximately 12.7 million people, the UN estimated that the operation had rendered 570,000 people homeless, deprived 98,000 people of their direct livelihood and directly or indirectly affected 2.4 million people (Security Council Report, December 2005).

police and demonstrators in Harare. Rody explained that the demonstrations and riots in the text provoked his memories of his traumatic experience during riots and subsequent police brutality, being sprayed with itchy water by a police tanker, and being caught up in the middle of a wrangle between demonstrators and with the police (Rody.L.9:59).

Similarly, Ahab recounted her ordeal when she had gone with her sister to buy school shoes in Harare. She recalled that when leaving the shop, they saw people running, and they did not suspect anything sinister, until they saw the police in hot pursuit, wielding sticks. She emotionally remembered that they ran to the taxi rank and boarded a taxi; however, the police arrived and broke taxi windows. She equated to the demonstrations described in the text to that incident which led to the killing of innocent people; she recalled the young boy in the text who is hit by a car when Onai and Hannah are chased by the police during the riots (Ahab.L.9:64).

5.3.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Emotional triggers

An emotional trigger is described by Raypole (2020) as memories, experiences, or events, that spark an intense emotional reaction in a person, regardless of her current state of mind. For this study, emotional triggers are identified as aspects, events, or topics/themes that evoke discomfort or displeasure by foregrounding painful memories, and that result in emotional uneasiness of the experiencing individual. However, some aspects may also evoke positive feelings of calmness and the re-experiencing of wonderful memories; however, from the available data in this study, few positive memories emerged.

The set novel dwells on the *Wenera* (labour migration) theme, and related circumstances such as broken family ties and the physical and psychological distancing between parent and child. Issues of labour migration in the text aroused anxiety and loneliness in Zee, whose parents both worked and lived in South Africa. She emotionally narrated that whenever she read about John, Katy's husband, who drives a truck to South Africa and who is away from home for long periods, she thought of her father. He sacrificed his time and energy so that he could pay school fees for his children; her father lived in a foreign land because he wanted to provide for his family. She complained of his absence. Zee said that her father was an architect and her mother a nurse, and they both lived in Johannesburg. She further lamented that

Though granny is taking good care of us, we still feel that gap, that distance from our parents. But we sometimes visit here and there, and they also do. (Zee.L.6:46)

Zee also emotionally revealed that she likes literature because of her loneliness and anxiety over her parents' absence, which finds expression in poetry. She said that

Literature gives freedom of expression, it makes me express how I feel, it helps me to express my emotions. For example, I write poetry when I miss my parents; I express my feelings in poetry. (Zee.L.4:24)

Zee's poem confirms that Wenera affected her emotionally. The first stanza of her poem alludes to labour migration. Here, she expresses that due to the unavailability of money, many people are bewildered and leave in search of greener pastures. She wrote:

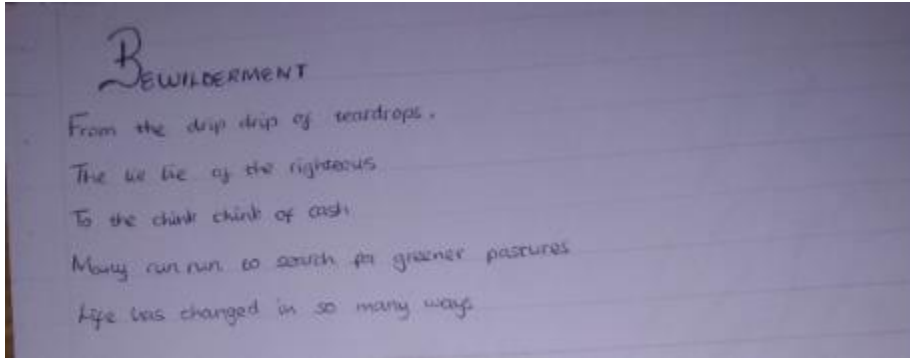


Figure 2.2: Zee's poem

Wenera also affected Tamuda's emotional disposition. He related that he had many unanswered questions about his father's long stays in South Africa, and he was harbouring those questions and the anxiety therein. He sadly said

When I look at Kate and John's situation, I quickly link it to my own parents' situation at some point. There was a time when my dad was working in SA, and he did not come back home for months. I am sure my mom was affected but I am not sure if he had any issues with my mom, but I am sure I will ask him when I am old enough. (Tamuda.L.6:41)

Gari's irresponsible and reckless behaviour as a father aroused feelings of rejection and pain in Vuyo and Kante. Both were reminded of their unfortunate circumstances, whereby their fathers neglected them. Vuyo indicated that the experiences of Onai's children were almost similar to his and young sister's. He referred to Gari who does not provide for his children and who cares nothing about their education and upbringing. Through an emotionally torn voice, Vuyo stated that

Similarly, our dad is a well-to-do man, but he doesn't care much about us. He sometimes goes for a year or more without giving us a cent.. he refuses to pay our school fees...has another wife and other children whom he gives all his attention to, and our stepmom seems to fear that if he gets close to us, he will come back to our mom. When I read about Gari, I get a picture of our father, who is there, alive, but absent in our lives. (Vuyo.L.9:67)

Similarly, Kante pointed out that he shared a deep feeling of rejection with Fari, Gari's only son in the text. He said that Gari's irresponsible nature as a father is traumatising, especially

for his son, Fari. Kante pointed out that male children wanted to spend time with their fathers, to ask them questions, and to feel the warmth of their company; this bond was also absent between Gari and Fari. He complained that Gari is never there to give material and moral support to his children; he never talks to them and does not make time to bond with them as a father (Kante.L.FGC.27:116).

Kuku also expressed that she was frustrated with her father's past recklessness with women; this feeling was revived by Gari's promiscuity. She emotionally stressed that

when I read about Onai and her husband Gari who cheats on her and sleeps with many women, I get deeply frustrated and I think of how I used to pity my mother because when I was young, they used to have problems with my father. My father would sleep around and sometimes he would never come back home. ... the memory and the frustration I felt in solidarity with my mother still runs fresh in my mind. (Kuku.L.6:45)

5.3.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Physiological triggers

The physiological triggers in this study refer to the aspects that affect the participants physically or that relate to bodily needs. Deon stated that similar to the people of Mbare who endure arduous queues in the text, he spent hours queueing for fuel and food with his mother during the school holidays. He complained that they would be physically and emotionally exhausted by the effort (Deon.L.9:58). Similarly, Benco's response to the writer's representation of *Midungwe* stemmed from his personal experiences. He indicated that he suffered from physical strain due to queueing and high fuel prices. He said that

my mom is a teacher and it's public knowledge that teachers in Zim are counted among the poor elements. We have challenges... father is an entrepreneur... business [is] almost stagnant... money is scarce ... high prices and scarce commodities hit us badly and like the people in the text, we are also victim to long queues for basic commodities. (Benco.L.9:57)

The participants also alluded to hunger as a recurring problem similar to that described in the text. They lamented that they are victims of food scarcity, which has haunted Zimbabwe since 2000. Fanty posited that the shortages of basic commodities in the novel, for example, mealie meal, cooking oil, and sugar, reflect the food shortages of 1992, 2008 and 2013 in Zimbabwe. Food was scarce, and people had to queue for various commodities; additionally, money was in short supply and coupled with soaring inflation. The year 2008 was dubbed "Gore renzara", which means "Year of Hunger" (Fanty.L.FGA.25:17). Benco used a war metaphor to express the depth of the hunger strain in the Zimbabwean populace. He equated Zimbabwean people with soldiers fighting a war because the economy was a dangerous enemy and hunger was the destruction born by this enemy; consequently, Zimbabweans went to other countries for food and money to fight the economic enemy (Benco.L.FGD.25:34).

Health, which is a basic physiological need is threatened by the inadequacy of healthcare facilities in Zimbabwe. The text dwells on the dwindling healthcare facilities, and the negative consequences it holds for the majority of poor people. Tyra was haunted by the healthcare problem following her aunt's experience as a victim of a power cut during a C-section. She explained that she had accompanied her aunt to hospital and there was a power cut before the procedure was completed (Tyra.L.9:63).

5.3.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Environmental triggers

Environmental triggers are divided into three categories; the physical environment, or where the participants live: this includes the demographics, the infrastructure and utilities such as water and transport; the cultural environment, which comprises the traditions, customs, belief systems and values; and the social environment, which covers relationships, interactions, modelling and support systems.

5.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1.4.1: Physical environment

The participants' residential status played a significant role in their interpretations of and responses to the text. RP said that the densely populated ghetto in which he lived was similar to Mbare's hustle and bustle that is described in the text. He stated that he linked his neighbourhood to the Mbare market stall described in the text with the huge population density is huge and the hustle and bustle of sellers of diverse commodities (RP.L.9:66)

Robert who resided in high-density Chitungwiza alluded to utilities such as water, electricity and medical shortages. Robert said that the lack of amenities was deeply felt, as most parts of Harare and Chitungwiza experienced severe water shortages. He also noted that there were borehole queues and electricity shortages in most suburbs (Robert.T.20:15). Deon who stayed in a low-density Harare suburb referred to the poor road infrastructure; most roads were covered in potholes. He also observed that burst water pipes were common (Deon.L.6:44). Martin who was born in rural Mutare complained of poor service delivery and potholes. He also mentioned that residential areas lacked clean water supply, had blocked sewage and drainage systems and the staff and material shortages in hospitals (Martin.T.20:14).

For Dassy from rural Goromonzi, the text's description of many power cuts reminded her of the previous school holiday. She lamented that power outages would occur while preparing supper; a shortage of gas meant sleeping on empty stomachs. She stated that when she read about the power cuts at hospitals in the text, she understood and felt the doctors' pain and frustration (Dassy.L.9:66).

5.3.4.2 Sub-theme 1.4.2: Social environment

Some of the participants' responses to the text were triggered by their social environment and social circumstances. The participants' social environment included their biographical circumstances, such as their family backgrounds or statuses. For instance, most of the learner participants in this study were from broken families. Therefore, the chaotic family circumstances of the protagonist's family in the text became an aspect of concern to many learners, who identified links with their family backgrounds. This was confirmed by Tamuda who confessed that more than ten of his classmates came from broken families (Tamuda.L.5:30)

Miracle affirmed that the text's representation of Gari's patriarchal and selfish family, which neglects Gari's widow and orphaned children, triggered her memories of her circumstances at the death of her father. She lamented that

Toro and Chipso remind me of my relatives, precisely, my father's siblings. They are greedy, cruel, they think of themselves... They never assist us in any way, and they don't care to know how we are faring. Some of them can afford to go for years without bothering to check on us at all. (Miracle.L.6:46)

Fanty, whose parents are both Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) church pastors, responded to the text from a Christian perspective. Her responses to the text mirrored Christian values; she made various biblical allusions and explained the text according to Christian doctrine. For instance, where most participants identified patriotism in Emily's commitment to her calling as a doctor and her refusal to leave for greener pastures, Fanty viewed Emily as a bearer of unconditional love. She equated Emily to Jesus Christ and emphasised the rare nature of her love for humanity, which she described as resembling

the love Jesus Christ showed to the world, whereby he died for all our sins, for no repayment. His blood was shed for us, but none of us paid him for that. Emily is like that, she sacrifices her happiness, wealth, money, good living, etc., and remains in the hospital to save lives. Sacrificing for others under the tough economic conditions of the day is indeed living like Christ our Lord. (Fanty.L.7:9)

Some of the learners' responses to the text were also influenced by gender affiliation. The findings from this study reveal that the gender issue was core to most of the discussions. In many instances, female participants responded to the female characters in compassionate ways. Male participants' responses to gender-related issues were mostly shaped by their mothers being victims of gender-based violence. One of the female participants, Fanty confirmed her gender affiliated perception of the text:

The text gives a clear picture of women's capabilities and their part in the fight with poverty and other related factors like hunger, disease, homelessness, etc. It is like our

culture, and even in history passed down through folktale that men are the ones who fend for the family, and men are portrayed as hunters, fighters, warriors, etc. who stand out and make life bearable. This text undoes all the misconceptions and places women in the fore of events, not because men aren't present, but because men have fallen to selfish vices like prostitution, corruption, robbery, etc. (Fanty.L.5:34)

Kudzie, another female participant said that women's work ethic and persistence were most striking in the text and reminded her of her mother. She identified her mother in Onai's strength and perseverance; her mother was hard working and persevered in difficult circumstances. She added that her mother was always there for her children and gave them all that was needed so that they would not feel embarrassed at school (Kudzie.L.6:49).

CP7 (L) felt that his society was rigid and brainwashed. He believed that academia held the key to success. Furthermore, he viewed the text as centred on Onai's determination and thwarted dream to succeed. Throughout the interviews and discussions, CP7's contributions were hinged on his dream to be a soccer star, which met with criticism from his family. He pointed out that he saw himself in Onai, who is determined and who wants to succeed, but all her efforts are thwarted by society. In one of the interviews, he emotionally explained that his dream of becoming a world soccer star was always met with criticism; he complained that society did not view sport as a praiseworthy profession. He added that education was prioritised; therefore, he had to attend boarding school, and pursue a 'recognised' profession. He lamented that he was thwarted in his dreams, though he was certain that like Onai, he would eventually achieve his goals (CP7.L.6:40). CP7'S poem-drawing, (Figure. 5.3) confirmed his deep frustration at having his soccer dream thwarted and discouraged, as well as his determination to overcome criticism.

CP7 explained his poem and drawing:

I picked my poem from Onai. Explaining my poem, 'Beware of dream, vision, and passion killers', I am referring to the society Onai was in... there are people out there who can push a person out of their dream... My view of it all is that it might be disappointing at first, things might move slower than we expect, and society may view our situation negatively, but the most important thing is to be positive and press on in our hope... In my drawing, I am having here the person who is reaching out for the stars. Stars resemble dreams, your ambitions, passion, and many good things one wants to become. They shine brightly from afar, to ascertain one of light ahead, light not yet reached, but which is reachable if one stretches out their hands to them. (CP7.L.12)

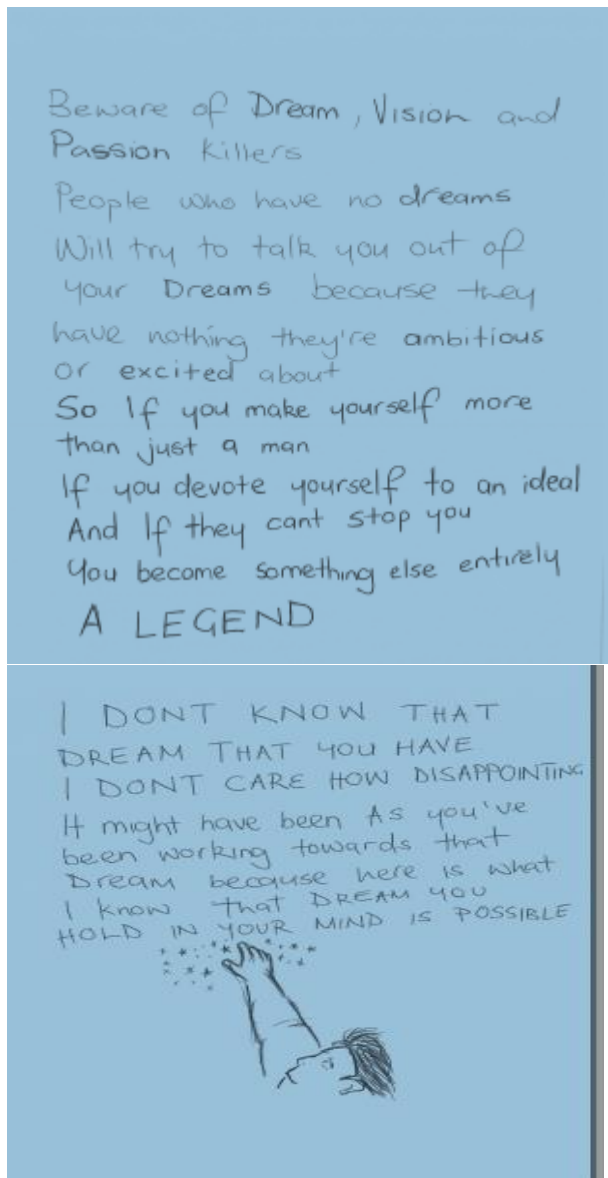


Figure 5.3: CP7's poem and poem-drawing

5.3.4.3 Sub-theme 1.4.3: Cultural environment

Participant reactions and responses to the text were also triggered by their cultural environment. They responded to cultural aspects of the text as these related to their cultural experiences in their respective communities.

In their biographical details, almost all the participants indicated that their communities had grown indifferent to cultural adherence. Subsequently, many participants lamented the loss of cultural cohesion in their communities. Maggy from urban Waterfalls described her community as a medium-density mixed suburb, a quiet place with people living private lives. She said that there was limited social interaction and a growing selfish individualism (Maggie.L.2). Tatata said that she had been living in rural Goromonzi since childhood and had witnessed increasing

individualism. She recalled that when she had been growing up, Goromonzi was a friendly community. She added that people were caring and there was harmony and solidarity of purpose. She concluded that just like in the text, their society was splitting into small self-contained clusters and that larger communal identity had collapsed (Tatata.L.2). Zee also attested to the growing individualism:

Chitungwiza Unit C is a fantastic place, which I have stayed in since birth. Back then, it used to be a busy high-density place with very friendly and generous people. We used to enjoy playing on the streets, boys playing soccer and us girls playing games like 'Rhaka-rhaka'. It was nice being a big family. Today things have significantly changed, with people growing more and more individualistic. The unity has since disappeared maybe due to too many economic problems. (Zee.L.2)

Robert (T), who also grew up in Chitungwiza, regretted the growing individualism in the text and in his community, and he recalled that

In the early 1980s, the part of the high-density suburb where I lived was a bit on the sparser side than other sections, but it had the same ghetto flare such as semi-detached houses and we grew up playing on the streets. It was communal living because everyone knew what the neighbour was doing such as a new baby, new furniture, etc. Even when robbers broke into another's house, people would communally approach it. Phones were not there but the information would pass to everybody through the grape vine. (Robert.T.13:1)

Their views were supported by other participants who perceived the text as an articulation of dwindling family cohesion, a feature that they experienced in their own families. For instance, RP whose father was deceased proposed that the text centres on Onai's unfortunate experiences with patriarchy and its flaws. He accused his extended family of neglecting their cultural duty of assisting his widowed mother with her children's welfare at the death of his father. He said that his mother's situation compared with Onai in that single handedly took care of her children and their relatives did not assist with anything (RP.L.6:50).

From a similar perspective, Miracle hailed the novel as exposing self-serving traditional practices like *Nhaka*. She described *Nhaka* as among the central themes of the text: the dispossession of a widow after her husband's death. This view was influenced by her personal situation; when her father died, his relatives wanted to dispossess her mother; however, she managed to regain her late husband's property through the courts. She emotionally stressed that

During my father's illness and pain, most of the family members weren't in the picture at all, but his death made us realise he had a big, big 'family' that 'loved' him enough to want to protect his wealth from his surviving wife and children. Yaa, my mom had to be strong because it wasn't easy at all. Though in the text, Onai fails to get back her husband's property, I still equate her strength of character to my mother's. (Miracle.L.9:61)

From a more positive perspective, Vuyo observed that the text also emphasises the cultural value, *Hunhu*, and the importance of placing family cohesion before materialism. He was inspired by Mawaya, who lives on the streets, eating from the bins and sleeping in street verandas, to show he regrets his wife's death. He indicated that Mawaya's circumstances reminded him of his aunt who loved and cared for her amputee husband. He explained that many people thought she would leave him, but she had remained faithful:

At the time he was in the hospital, many whispers were making the rounds that she would leave him, people saying that no woman would stay for a crippled man who can no longer provide and who needs extra care for that. I admire the type of love my auntie has, which most contemporary relationships have failed to uphold. (Vuyo.L.6:51)

5.3.4.4 Summary of theme 1

This section has revealed that the participants' personal backgrounds and experiences influenced their responses to the text; these personal circumstances acted as subtextual triggers to the text. Experiences from the learners' individual backgrounds, which appealed to their individual disposition and that influenced their responses to or perceptions of themes of the text became individual triggers. The participants revealed that they were haunted by the trauma of violence in their own lives because of biographical factors such as parents' divorce, parents' deaths as well as parents' reckless behaviour. Some participants were victims of emotional stress caused by personal circumstances and experiences, and by those of close family and communities. Emotions such as rejection and anxiety emerged as the major triggers in the participants' interpretations of and responses to the text. From the data above, it is also evident that environmental factors such as residential status influenced the participants' perceptions of the text. In the next section, I discuss the shared/common triggers.

5.4 Theme 2: Shared/Common triggers

This theme corresponds to the third subsidiary research question of this study: **What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?** Shared /common triggers are identified in this study as the aspects that shape the participants' collective identity as these relate to their past, present, and future. The shared triggers centre on the participants' history and memory as a community.

5.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Historical experiences

The participants' understanding of the historical circumstances of their society influenced their interpretations of and responses to certain aspects of the text. They studied the history of Zimbabwe in History studies at school and university. Additionally, historical traditions were

passed down orally by their elders. For instance, Kartel (L) referred to the part in the text where Hondo sings the song “Zimbabwe ndeyeropa”, which means “Zimbabwe was born of blood”. Kartel stressed that the song was a reminder that the country was born through the loss of the blood of those who had sacrificed their lives for freedom. She further observed that the song also revived memories of the bloody liberation war, during which many had lost their lives (Kartel.L.FGB.25:22).

Martin (T) explained that he witnessed the liberation war when he was a child while growing up in his rural home in Mutasa district, Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. Martin explained that the province was a hot spot since it was the major exit and entry point for freedom fighters leaving the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) for training in Mozambique and operations against the settler Rhodesian army. Martin explained that he still carried vivid memories of clashes between the guerrillas (freedom fighters) and Rhodesian soldiers, in his village. He also said that the sound of an aeroplane always reminded him of the buzzing war helicopters he had encountered at a young age. He described the memory of the liberation war which he shared with the characters in the text as a violent memory with long-lasting impact (Martin.T.13:1).

CP7 (CP7.L.10:1) pointed out that Zimbabwean society was affected psychologically by the war of liberation; for instance, there is an aspect of fear, which pervades society, and it has been present during the four decades since independence. He said that society was affected by the cruelty that characterised the war and people did not want to engage in any similar violent catastrophe again. He remarked that in the text, Murambatsvina turns people into sheep, which do not resist; some are even tasked to demolish their own houses, which they do religiously. CP7 opined that

we are all victims and recipients of the war trauma that our parents suffered during the bloody war. In the novel, many groups are mentioned to have staged some demonstrations, but at the sight of the police, the demonstrators quickly disperse and disappear. Then when I look at the ex-war fighter, Hondo, I see a people that have resigned to war. Hondo is affected by the demolition. But Hondo chooses to show his disgruntlement by committing suicide. To me, it's a sign of resignation and fear. There is some underlying fear in our society, which I believe emanates from the war violence.
(CP7.L.10:1)

Participant responses being influenced by historical triggers are also evident in Zee's interpretation of the character, Hondo. According to her, through the name, Hondo, Tagwira foregrounds the gloomy picture of post-colonial Zimbabwe, where people have to struggle for survival. Zee opined that the name Hondo means ‘War’ and it is a reminder of the liberation war; the economic war; the socio-economic war and the socio-political war, which are all exposed through the text. In her view, he continues to carry the name Hondo two decades after the liberation war, and his life is that of struggle; it represents an incessant war of survival.

Zee said that Hondo's clash with the demolishers, who destroy his home, is symbolic of the war that is still raging. She added that the crowded dwelling in Mbare, which contrasts with the affluence of Belvedere, reflects an on-going war and the gap that exists between the poor and the rich. Zee's use of the war metaphor evidences that she carries the collective memory of war trauma (Zee.L.FGB.25:22).

Fanty (L) identified poverty as a colonial offshoot, which is part of her society's history and identity. She observed that society had a lot in common with previous generations. She described poverty as a trauma that had cut across generations; an inheritance passed down by the fore-parents. She bemoaned that most of her ancestors had lived in poverty and racial segregation under the white colonisers. Black was associated with poverty because land ownership was racially driven. She further stressed that Blacks, who were the natives of the land, had received infertile soil, and from the unproductive soil emerged the poor. Fanty resounded that

So, for the Blackman, poverty became inevitable...the majority of the black people inherited the poverty from their ancestors and a few 'lucky' rich ones missed the miserable inheritance. There is serious poverty in our society today. Some people can't even afford a single decent meal a day. Many people live in shacks and unpalatable dwellings. And the majority of the so-called employed people hardly have enough to eat, drink, and clothe. (Fanty.L.10:9)

Robert (T) indicated that the poverty that is experienced by the Mbare dwellers in the text was a common feature, which had cut across generations in his community (Robert.T.21:19). This was echoed by Tafadzwa (L) who alluded to poverty as a shared historical trauma that haunts the people in the text and that he associated with his own society, and which had remained

stuck on us maybe from the time the western economy was ushered into our land. This poverty has remained around most descendants of those people, who are us, the majority of Zimbabweans. (Tafadzwa.L.10:14)

Hassan (L) also viewed poverty as a historical trace, as something the majority had worn like a jacket. He stressed that

I wouldn't be surprised that 'poverty is the word used the world over to describe Zimbabweans. Our people went to war with the colonisers to fight poverty that had been imposed on us. Independence was gained, about 40 years back, but poverty has stubbornly remained stuck on our backs. The majority of us are still poor. The bridge between the few rich and the poor majority has even widened further than it was during colonisation. (Hassan.L.10:3)

Bella (L) blamed the poverty and economic ills of the text and of her own time on the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme² (ESAP), which she described as a historical trace, whose effects had cut through the decades since its inception in 1990. She pointed out that most of the economic challenges in the text reminded her of present-day Zimbabwe's economic challenges which could be traced back to the ESAP policy. She referred to inflation, high prices, high crime rates, black markets, prostitution, lack of stable currency, illegal money trading, and forex dealing as problems that had become perennial. She lamented that ESAP's effects were still felt almost three decades on (Bella.L.10:11).

Bella's view was echoed by Fanty (L) who said that the retrenchment that Gari mentions in the text reminded her of the massive retrenchments which the people of Zimbabwe witnessed when the Western-oriented policy of ESAP had been adopted; the economy worsened on a daily basis and people's livelihoods dwindled. (Fanty.L.FGA.25:20). Kuku (L) reiterated that food shortages in shops in the text were also present in Zimbabwe at the inception of ESAP, which worsened the economic recession, which had remained glued to Zimbabwe. She bemoaned that people scrambled for foodstuffs like bread (Kuku.L.10:8).

The participants also viewed class differentiation, which is a theme of the set text, as colonial residue. Tamuda referred to social classes and that the ordinary people were abused by the rich. He indicated that, similar to the prescribed text, class identity still haunted society (Tamuda.L.10:4). The sentiment was echoed by Ahab, who observed that there was a class division in the text in terms of residential places. The poor live in Mbare and the rich live in Belvedere. She related that it was the same scenario in Salisbury during colonisation; when suburbs had been demarcated according to population densities; the rich, especially whites, lived in low-density areas whilst the poor blacks were crowded in hostels and cluster homes or semi-detached houses. She added that in some cases, men lived as bachelors sharing rooms in the hostels while their wives and children lived in the reserves. She also said that some families were permanently broken up due to promiscuous spouses (Ahab.L.FGA.25:17).

Dassy stated that the class division between the rich and the poor in the text triggered her memory of the situation in Zimbabwe before independence, whereby it was a crime for a black person to be seen on First Street in Salisbury or in certain shops and restaurants designated for Whites (Dassy.L.FGA.25:17).

²The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme was initiated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and was adopted by the government of Zimbabwe in 1990; it had negative effects for the ordinary people (the *povo*) of Zimbabwe, who have experienced massive income and welfare shocks (Mutambirwa, 1998).

5.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Intergenerational and transgenerational experiences

The *Wenera* (labour migration) theme was portrayed by the writer and some of the participants as causing intergenerational trauma. Almost all participants who mentioned labour migration described it as having deep roots in their society. It was also perceived as having caused marks and traces of pain, anxiety, loss, and physical and psychological separation among families. Kupakwashe (T) said that labour migration experienced by characters in the text reminded her that her forefathers had experienced it; many families lost fathers who left in search of jobs, to countries like South Africa and some never came back. She observed that labour migration had a long history and that present-day Zimbabwe continued to witness Zimbabweans crossing into South Africa, many illegally (Kupakwashe.T.21:20).

Tyra's family situation affirmed the intergenerational experiences of *Wenera*. She narrated that her grandfather left for *Wenera* many years ago and had never returned home. Her parents lived in South Africa and occasionally visited. Her father and his siblings had been raised by her paternal grandmother who was now raising the same son's children:

My grandfather went to work in SA, and he never came back. My grandmother was able to work on her own. My grandmother made sure that all her children, that is my Dad and his siblings, had to go to boarding school when my grandfather was not around... until now, but now we know his whereabouts, though naturally, the communication is very weak. The family tie or bond of father and children is already broken and so, Yaa, communication is weak. I live with my grandmother. My parents live in SA, and I am here in Zimbabwe for school. I go to SA during the holidays. Hopefully, after my Advanced Level, I go as well. (Tyra.L.6:47)

Kudzie's (L) perception of the theme of human trafficking in the text was that it has originated from the long history of slavery of Africans. She said that the theme of human trafficking raised in the text where John smuggles girls and women into South Africa to be used in clandestine businesses, was evidence that desperate people were taken advantage of; this reminded her of slavery, when Africans had been trafficked under very dehumanising conditions as cheap labour to enrich the western economies (Kudzie.L.FGB.25:27).

Kartel also interpreted human trafficking from a historical point of view and equated it with intergenerational trauma. She indicated that many women in the text are abused, especially sexually, after illegally crossing the borders. She added that in her community, women returned pregnant or with child to Zimbabwe, some after they had been raped. She added that these circumstances reminded her of women who had been objectified during the colonial era; they were used as low-paid labourers on white-owned lands and in kitchens, some were over-worked and raped by the same whites who purported to despise them as dirty. She regretted that those rape incidents brought about many coloured children, most of whom occupied

suburbs like Acadia in Harare; they represented backdoor relationships between black servants and white masters. According to her, the existence of these coloureds was a reminder to the progeny of the violence and harshness of colonialism (Kartel.L.FGB.25:23).

Some of the participants' perceptions of the disparity in residential areas in the text, (the Mbare/Belvedere binary), stemmed from the intergenerational land war which has remained a distinctive feature of Zimbabwean and African history. CP7 observed that the text describes the re-acquisition of farms by Zimbabwean blacks from white farmers who acquired these during colonisation and the occupation of Zimbabwe. He opined that he would consider this a recurrent problem because the land question is a historical issue that forms the basis of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe; the text addresses the land issue, nearly three decades after the war. He suggested that the land question is associated with controversy, greed and selfishness, which were inherited from the Whiteman and colonialism. He said that the Mbare/Belvedere binary revealed that land is of great concern in Zimbabwe; there is a continued unfair distribution of land and similar to the colonial era, the ordinary masses continue to be relegated to unproductive land; only a few rich elements amass the rich soils for themselves (CP7.L.FGB.25:31).

Intergenerational experience also includes the participants' perceptions of gender. The text's representation of gender foregrounded some participants' views on gender and triggered their responses that gender inequality is a transgenerational phenomenon in societies globally. Dassy opined that historically, patriarchy was part of Zimbabwean identity; men had always been in charge and treated women as second-class subjects; women's perceived duty was to comply with patriarchal decisions and rules. Dassy referred to Onai who is expected to accept Toro's patriarchy because she is married to the whole family due to the system of lobola, and not only to Gari. She regretted that a woman in patriarchal society could not make her own decisions, and like a sacrificial cow, she had to abide (Dassy.L.10:14). Her view was echoed by Martin (T) who opined that

For generations and generations, our society has always been patriarchal. Women have remained the 'other' sex in our society and in many other societies, universally.
(Martin.T.21:18)

The same sentiment was shared by CP7 who observed that the abuse of women was a universal issue. He stated that there was a general tendency to treat women unfairly, yet everyone was born from a woman. For instance, the beating of wives was present in the time of the forefathers. He said that it had always been considered normal for a man to discipline his wife and children through corporal means, and women in society had been subjected to many forms of gender-based abuse. Benco also opined that there were societies in African

countries that still practiced cruel, violent, and suppressive traditions like female genital mutilation. These practices were forms of abuse and they objectified women:

In some parts of our country, they still practice things like 'Chinamwari' where women are taught how to please men in bed and other related things... it's one of those things meant to objectify women and treat them as if they are created to satisfy the demands of men, especially sexual demands. So, I think we have this generational problem of abuse of women. (Benco.L.10:6)

During the discussions, some participants' responses to HIV-AIDS-related issues raised in the text were prompted by intergenerational concerns. RP stated that the AIDS pandemic had haunted society for generations. He recalled that AIDS became a concern in Zimbabwe in the 1980s. He emphasised that his generation had not yet been born when AIDS first struck Zimbabwe, but that AIDS had remained amongst the worst health concerns. Similar to the text, AIDS had caused countless deaths and this monster especially affected Africa. He observed that almost all Zimbabweans had been affected by AIDS (RP.L.10:14).

The theme of *Midungwe*/queuing raised in the text reminded Miracle of this practice that had become a trace of intergenerational trauma in Zimbabwe:

I can think of long queues for buses, for sugar, for cooking oil and for bread. The queues have been a part of our lives in my society, such that they seem like some sort of inheritance, passed down from year to year or from phase to phase. They have always been there, but one can clearly relate 2005; 2008; 2013; and now; 2019 queues quite vividly. Yaa, our lives seem glued to this queueing problem. One would think one day we could queue for oxygen. Hahaha! (laughing). You wouldn't understand why I am laughing, but these days when one sees people in a queue, they just run to join and ask later what the queue is for. Hahaha! (laughs again). (Miracle.L.10:10)

5.4.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Socio-political experiences

Participants alluded to socio-political challenges that had remained affixed in the intergenerational memories of Zimbabweans. Their reading of aspects like the Murambatsvina demolitions, which led to the massive displacement of people from Mbare in the text, aroused the participants' memories of recurrent socio-political scenarios, which had continued to haunt Zimbabwean society. According to Tamuda (L), displacement was a persistent ulcer in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans. During colonisation, the Africans were displaced and crowded in reserves to pave way for a 'superior' white minority.. He added that there were recurrent 'clean-up' operations that took place in the areas inhabited by the poor; for instance, the Murambatsvina operation described in the text led to many dwellings being demolished and to people being displaced and resettled in inhospitable areas. He concluded that the 'clean-ups' were a common feature in Zimbabwe (Tamuda.L.FGD.25:31).

The participants also stated that socio-political repression was inherited from the colonial master. According to Hassan (L), the demonstrations, which take place in Harare in the text, reminded him of the various attempts by ordinary Zimbabweans to fight the colonial masters during the various uprisings in the late 19th century to mid-20th century. The uprisings were a sign of discontentment with colonial governance. However, these were quelled and tougher restrictions for blacks such as arrests, curfews, and passes were introduced. In the text, demonstrators are also arrested, and certain parts of town are declared off limits (Hassan.L.FGD.25:34). Tyra also commented on repression, especially of women. She referred to the incident in the text where Onai finds it difficult to report her sexual assault by Boora. Tyra said that historically, this was the case during the colonial era when African women were raped by white men. The former could not report their masters and suffered silently. She added that until today, even educated women like Faith have no voice. Tom constantly tells Faith to be quiet when vocalising her freedom. During the colonial era, this was tantamount to challenging or questioning the master. Tyra alluded to the Kushinga Women's demonstration in the text, which is crushed by the police as an example of repression (Tyra.L.FGB.25:24).

Kartel (L) equated Fari's (Onai's son) enjoyment of queuing with Christianity as a tool for repression during colonisation. Kartel described Fari's attitude as an indication that the poor people were so used to their situation that they failed to find reasons to shun it; it was their normal. She said

Some of the colonised took the clear racial disparity as normal and due to colonial instruments like Christianity, they were brainwashed to believe that their 'inferior' position was God-given, that the Whiteman was created to be their leader, superior, master, redeemer, etc., therefore, they found no reason to fight or refute oppression. In fact, at some point, some toiled happily under the guise of the gospel from a religion that indoctrinated them, convinced them that earth was for suffering and poverty, and promised them heavenly bliss in wealth and plenty. (Kartel.L.FGB.25:25)

Kartel's interpretation of the sexual assaults on women unleashed by the corrupt Housing allocation officer, Boora hinged on her understanding of the repressive assimilation of blacks during colonisation. She argued that

Boora's attempt to sleep with Onai in exchange for her placement on the housing scheme list is nauseating and it mirrors the relationship between blacks and white settlers whereby whites had wealth in their hands, but they continued to expect more from blacks in terms of forcing the colonised to denounce their traditional beliefs, dropping their customs, changing their dress, adopting a western type of education and language. (Kartel.L.FGB.25:26)

Some of the participants' perceptions were influenced by their view of neo-colonialism as a common experience of ex-African colonies. Dassy (FGA) opined that the existence of the Coca-Cola company, a trans-national company, almost three decades after independence reflected the neo-colonial state that Zimbabwe assumed at independence. She explained that people took up the liberation war to remove white rule, but the Whiteman's presence did not disappear with political independence. She also suggested that some of the policies adopted at independence left the coloniser in control of the country's economy. In her view, political power changed hands, but the coloniser remained with a tight grip on the economy; this is a shared experience of most postcolonial states, especially in Africa (Dassy.L.FGA.25:21).

RP (L) interpreted the writer's portrayal of the relationship between Gari and Onai as one reflecting colonial relations, or the superior/inferior binary. He observed that Onai is denied access to a decent occupation despite her education and qualifications; Onai's life changing for the better reflects Zimbabwe's independence after a long period of suffering under colonisation. He stated that similar to patriarchy that suppresses Onai,

Zim was suppressed, compressed, and suffocated at the hands of the 'superior' master who perceived Zim as in need of his 'stewardship' because she was incapacitated to survive on her own. It was a horse and rider relationship. The colonial master saw himself as a benefactor and owner of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabweans were viewed as cripples with a natural inability to govern themselves or to survive without the Whiteman. This situation is embedded in the marriage between Onai and Gari, with Gari perceived by culture as the provider, protector, owner, and master to Onai who must remain humble and submissive to her owner, Gari. (RP.L.FGD.25:32)

5.4.4 Summary of theme 2

The data revealed that the shared experiences of the participants are rooted in colonisation. The participants indicated that they are products of an inherited history of violence due to harsh colonial policies. They also specified that Zimbabwe bears a long history of violence due to the war of liberation, which has caused perpetual fear across generations. They also referred to transgenerational experiences like slavery and *Wenera*-labour migrations. The participants revealed that their perceptions of the text were triggered by socio-political aspects that included displacement and repression, which dated back to colonisation. They also alluded to a growing neo-colonial identity.

5.5 Theme 3: Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes

This theme corresponds to the first subsidiary research question of this study: **What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?** The details are provided in Table 5.1, sub-themes 3.1-3.10. The data sources for this theme were

face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with the learners, poem writing and poem-drawings by the learners, and face-to-face interviews with the teachers.

5.5.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Gender

The participants raised several gender-related issues which are identified in this section as Gender-based violence; Oppression and Suppression of women; Abuse of women; Gender stereotyping; Women/Men binary and, Change and Advocacy. This theme stirred a lot of debate during the focus group discussions.

5.5.1.1 Learners' poems and poem-drawings

In the poems and poem-drawings, the learners raised several gender-related issues. Ahab's first two stanzas of her poem and her poem-drawing (Figure 5.4) are based on the theme of domestic violence. In explaining her poem and poem-drawing, Ahab stated that

The poem is about Onai, and the woman in the drawing is Onai with a deformed face. The face is showing the abuse that she faces from Gari, her husband. The deformation of the face is linking with the first stanza of my poem reflecting the abuse she was going through. The drawing also shows a basket and some vegetables in it. This reflects Onai's way of survival, as a vendor... The tattered dress shows that Onai is suffering... In the drawing, the sun is rising and it's a sign of hope because in the text we see that as Onai looks at the Humpty-dumpty clock, she is encouraged, she develops hope for a better future ... Clouds symbolize that Onai's life is dark. It is not a good life that is why I drew the cloud, lightning, and the moon. Just resembling that there is no light in Onai's life, but then the sun is rising, and it shows that there is going to be hope. (Ahab.L.12:15)

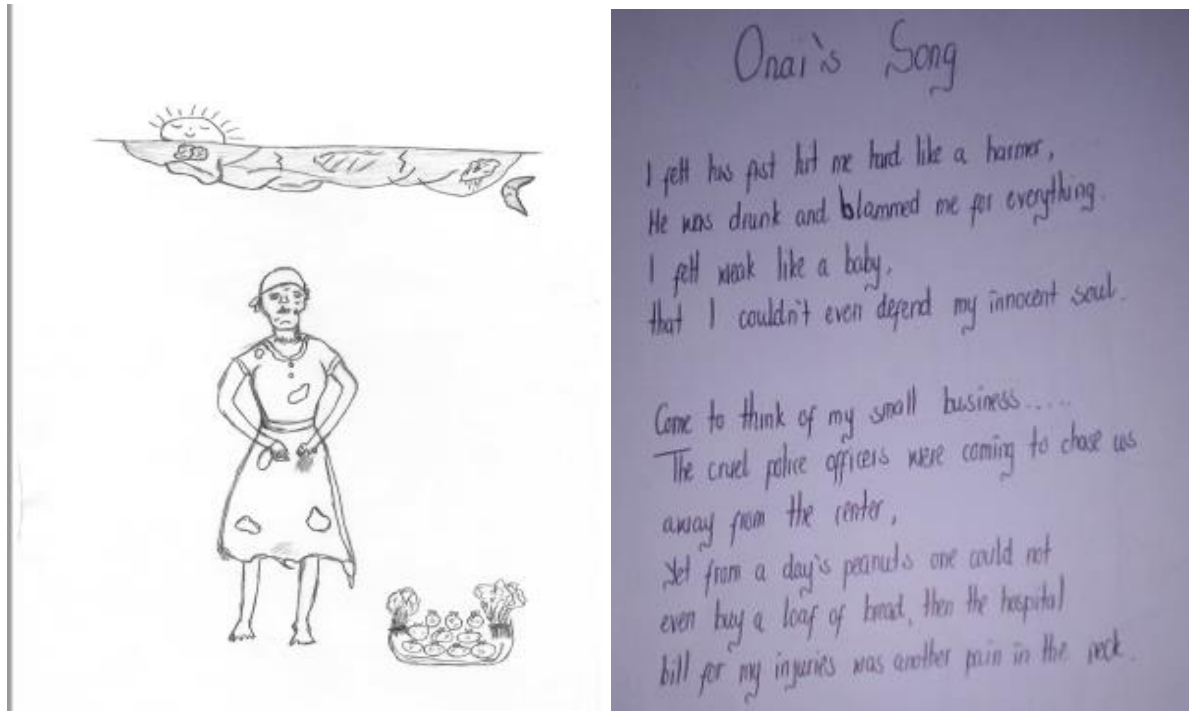


Figure 5.4: Ahab's poem and poem-drawing

Kartel's poem-drawing (Figure 5.5) reflects the oppression of women. Her explanation of the drawing reveals that she sympathises with women's oppression in the text and in society:

On the drawing, I have two thin cows on a yoke. Energy... There are cows because in the text there are a lot of women who are taking more responsibilities than men. They are carrying a heavy yoke which is burdensome considering they are very thin... yoke symbolizes the problems of the society, especially oppressed/yoked women. The burning sun symbolizes the economic drought presented... especially women and children suffering long queues... Dry grass and very poor soils represent hopelessness with life ... death. Withering plants symbolise the draining of energy through many struggles, especially for women...instead of Gari taking responsibility for the family, we see Onai at the centre of things... During the economic drought, Onai has to run up and down to feed the family. (Kartel.L.12:17)

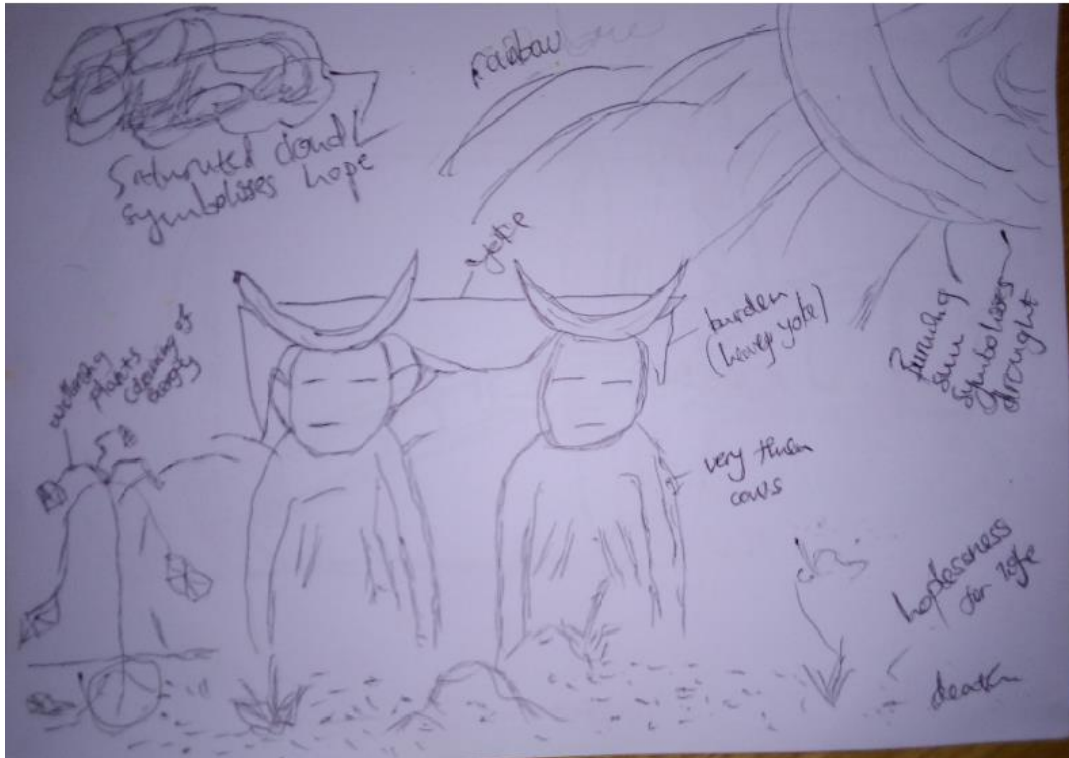


Figure 5.5: Kartel's poem-drawing

Vy's poem-drawing (Figure 5.6) also reflects the suppression of women, whom she believes are suffocated in a bottle, and they have to stand strong and labour hard to get out. Vy explained her drawing:

The bottle has a broad base and a narrow top. The narrow top symbolizes how the number of women who leave the bottle is very limited and how at the base of the bottle, it is very broad... There are lots of women who are suffocated in the bottle... there is the man at the top of the bottle, showing how men are there to suppress women. They lock up women in the bottle to the extent that they are unable to leave the bottle, or they cannot move out of the bottle. Women struggle to move out of the bottle except for a few... There is also a ladder that's in the bottle. It's more like a bridge between men and women, to signify that if there is a woman that is determined and courageous enough to leave the bottle, they have got a chance to, and to get to the level where men are. The bottle is made of glass; therefore, it can be broken [similar to relationships]. (Vy.L.12:20)



Figure 5.6: Vy's poem-drawing

Bella explained that her poem drawing (Figure 5.7) is a hand, which represents dedication to friendship:



Figure 5.7: Bella's poem-drawing

it's a helping hand which represents Katy and Emily who are always there for Onai. There is an eye within that hand, and an eye means that there are always people who look after a person. Onai needed emotional advice, she needed to be consoled, otherwise she could actually commit suicide because of too many problems and the abuse she faces. Kate is always there for her, Onai's children are looked after by their mother because their father is irresponsible. Onai works hard and she protects her children. The people to whom she looks up are actually the reason she does not give up. The broken heart inside the palm resembles Onai's loveless marriage because Gari does not love her. When Onai tries to get a house she meets Boora, the woman abuser who pulls her down. She never goes back to the housing office because of what Boora does to her. He wants to abuse her so that he can place her on the housing waiting list. The palm is covered in barbed wires, which represent the barriers or challenges faced by Onai and the other women around her in the patriarchal society. Barbed wires are women's obstacles, which are there everywhere, and which cause Onai's scars everywhere. Her life is miserable. (Bella.12:9)

Tayra's poem-drawing (Figure. 5.8) below shows a flower that is growing on a thorny-rocky surface.



Figure 5.8: Tayra's poem-drawing

Tayra explained her poem-drawing saying:

The flower is blooming and there are also thorns that are there. I took Onai as a flower despite everything that she is facing. The flower is blooming inside and at the core, there is sort of a heart, so the heart is being protected around. Onai is protecting herself from everything that she is suffering from. Flower is blooming and it is going further from the heart, and the thorns are there as well. My drawing is talking about the flower looks beautiful on the outside, but there are thorns that surround it though it remains blooming. The leaves resemble Onai's children and Katy who have been supporting her in everything that she has been through. The leaves are supporting the flower and making it look more beautiful. The thorns are around the flower but then the flower is still blooming, just like Onai is suffering but that is not killing her. (Tayra.L.12:26)

5.5.1.2 Face-face interviews with the learners

Gender-based violence was alluded to by many participants. They referred to wife battering as a cruel feature of society in the text; this also haunted present-day communities. Bella described men as perpetrators of domestic violence. She referred to Gari as a representative of many men in her society who beat their wives. Bella blamed Gari for beating his wife at the slightest provocation. She further regretted that some men did not consider the emotions of the children when they assaulted their mothers (Bella.L.11:46).

Dassy condemned Gari's constant wife battering which she viewed as characteristic of her society. She lamented that many women are abused, but just as with Onai's situation, they never wanted to admit the abuse when they visited hospitals (Dassy.L.7:16). From a similar perspective, Ahab observed domestic violence as a critical feature of both the text and her society. She cited the incident in the text where an 18-year-old abused woman is brought to hospital, with a swollen and bruised arm. Ahab expressed that

This violent act presents women as objects of pity, given that most of them suffer the violence in silence, and some fear reporting the cases, lest their husbands get arrested. There are many different cases of unreported wife battering, with some women fearing the reaction of the husband's relatives if she gets him arrested. (Ahab.L.8:30)

The participants also referred to other examples of oppression as pervading the text and contemporary societies. They alluded to the traditional 'Gomera uripo' [persevere and endure uncomplaining] concept which they viewed as indoctrination that women inherited from their mothers and female mentors. According to Tatata, in adhering to her mother's instruction, Onai refuses to leave Gari, even though she is mistreated, to please society and for the sake of the children (Tatata.L.8:28). RP expressed a similar sentiment, saying that men, like Gari, injured women physically and emotionally, yet the women never quitted their marriages, and nobody noticed their pain, as they kept the abuse secret (RP.L.8:32). RP described suppression of women as a general practice:

not only happening at the household or family level, but it is happening even at national level. When one wants to think broader, they will realise that this suppression of women is a universal issue which many societies the world over have experienced, and some are in the process of addressing. (RP.L.11:51)

The participants also described the society depicted in the text as patriarchal. Miracle observed that Gari is considered the 'father of the house' and by patriarchal standards, he is the decision-maker in the home. In Miracle's view, it was ironic because Gari is never at home, and yet, decisions are supposed to be made by him. Gari beats Onai for questioning his

relationship with Gloria; an 18-year-old wife is brought to the hospital after she was beaten by the husband for serving cold food:

This patronizing behaviour by men is not a thing of the text, it is a thing of our culture, of our tradition. In most homes, husbands are rarely seen at the fore of day-to-day activities, yet the women who run the show are perceived as insignificant when important decisions of the home are made. (Miracle.L.7:11)

Dassy described women as bearing greater burdens than their husbands; they lived in a patriarchal society and were poor as well (Dassy.L.11:50). Tyra (L) blamed women for perpetuating the dominance by patriarchal society. In her view, women lacked confidence. She said there were many women like Onai who did not affirm their dignity. She observed that in society, women remained in miserable marriages all for the sake of wanting society to respect them (Tyra.L.11:46). Kartel observed that women seemed to take pride in dependency on men and as a result, they did not improve their situations. She added that women were abused in marriages, but that laziness caused them to accept their lot (Kartel.L.11:49).

Ahab referred to men's collective patriarchal identity and their individual vulnerable dispositions. She proposed that the writer portrays men as weak and vulnerable to women and society. In her view, the writer mocks patriarchal society which places men in a position of dominance, yet their individual dispositions expose them as vulnerable:

My uncle's wife can send him to do all sorts of chores, including changing the baby's diapers. One of our neighbours is always shouted at by his wife, called all sorts of names, even in public and sometimes we see him hanging his clothes and one wonders if it's only hanging or he washes them for himself. Yaa women can be 'kings' in their homes, while patriarchy is busy rendering men a collective identity of dominance. (Ahab.L.11:47)

Tatata shared a similar sentiment that some men hide behind an already inscribed patriarchal identity, yet they carry themselves otherwise. Tatata proposed that to some extent the writer portrays men as cowardly, weak, and unable to handle pressure, contrary to the powers of dominance culturally invested upon them by the patriarchal society. She went on to state that generally, men are seen to cower when trouble strikes, both in the text and in society. She said

some men are hugely gutless and chickenhearted when faced with circumstances that shake their comfort zones... Commissioner Nzou, being outsmarted and blackmailed into compliance by two poor, Mbare women... men can be vulnerable. Nzou, a whole Police Commissioner is bullied by Katy and Onai... this is a man who holds two powerful identities; being a man plus being a Police Commissioner, but one sentence from the mouth of a poor, Mbare woman shakes his person. Two Mbare women demonstrate courage by taking up the guts to knock on a Police Commissioner's door and blackmail him. They threaten him, right in his face. (Tatata.L.11:45)

Zee raised the issue of the government planned, operation, Murambatsvina that is described in the text as an incident that exposed men as vulnerable during the execution of the forced demolitions. She pointed out that through Murambatsvina, men are presented as weak; for example, Hondo commits suicide at the sight of trouble whereas Hondo's wife remains alive, looking after the children. She concluded by saying

So many Murambatsvina operations have been carried out in many parts of Harare, especially and we hear stories of men's unfortunate responses to the ugly catastrophe, such as heart attacks. Sadly, our culture is designed to never herald men's vulnerability which is always protected and covered up with many ways. (Zee.L.11:45)

The participants cited physical, emotional, and psychological abuse of women in the text. Vy proposed that there are several types of abuse in the text, such as child abuse, abuse of women, power abuse, and abuse of resources (Vy.L.7:4). Maggie commented on sexual child abuse. She emotionally observed that when a society experiences survival of the fittest, respect for humanity is compromised. She referred to three separate occasions in the text when men hiss at Rita, a young, primary school-going girl, and shouting sexually-oriented abuses at her. (Maggie.L.7:7). Maggie further emotionally emphasised that

Rita is only a primary school child, yet men have already started seeing the possibility of enjoying her womanhood. It is quite sad that to date, our society views women in terms of their sexuality. Men are socialised into this macho attitude, which makes them think women are meant to sexually please men. (Maggie.L.8:25)

The participants also alluded to Gender stereotyping in the text and their contemporary society. Bella observed that there is a stereotypical belief that women cannot live without men. She described the Kushinga Women's Organisation that carries out a demonstration which is crushed by the police and Emily and Faith are thrown into a holding cell at the central police station. Bella voiced her disgruntlement that these women are charged with public disorder, and Tom pays their bail. She pointed out that the idea of a man coming to their rescue gives the impression that women cannot survive without men and that women will always require men's assistance. She added that

Tom is even described as having (I read), "sounded rather smug and self-satisfied that he, the man, was coming to rescue them". (Bella.L.8:29)

Hassan observed that Onai's emancipation at the end of the text is again attained through men, Tom, and Tapiwa. Hassan further indicated that when Onai collects the key to the house, which she acquires through the Kushinga Women's Organisation, she is handed keys by a man, not a fellow woman. He lamented that

It seems that women can only go up to some limited level on their own, then they need men to reach the end. What pains most is that once a man gets involved, no matter at

what stage, he gets the credit because it is the design, the husband comes first. (Hassan.L.11:37)

Maggie proposed that women are perceived as incapable of filling positions, which are associated with men. Maggie said that Onai is hospitalised after one of her abusive encounters with Gari and she finds Emily, a female doctor, on call. Maggie described Onai as very sceptical of Emily's capability as a doctor because she is a woman and, subsequently, Onai is very tense and mean when Emily examines her. Maggie viewed Onai as a woman who has been indoctrinated to believe that employment is for men, and that she failed to achieve her dreams. Therefore, Onai feels that women are incompetent. Maggie said that Onai is frustrated by her own life and inability to get a job because Gari does not approve of a wife going to work due to his oppressive attitude; this frustration results in her failing to appreciate achievements of professional women. She concluded that if such women

see a female driver, miner, lawyer, etc. they look down on them or even label them as rebellious or the most popular, 'she is not wife material'. (Maggie.L.7:7)

According to Kudzie, there is a stereotypical myth that every man is a father figure in the home or is a responsible father in his home, yet the reality is that not all men are fathers in their homes. Kudzie observed that some men are taken care of by their enterprising wives such as Maya and Onai in the text. She said that Maya runs a market stall and goes to South Africa to order goods for re-sale; however, Mazai, the husband is always in the house, and in the kitchen. She further said that Onai feeds Gari every day, clothes the family, and pays school fees for the children; she is the breadwinner, yet Gari is labelled the 'father of the house'. Kudzie mockingly proposed that

Being a man doesn't make one responsible, one can be a man without being a father figure, so, if Gari can only get Onai pregnant and end there, well, his description ends at being a man and he doesn't qualify among fathers. Gari is not a father, he is a man, a male species, Hahaha! (laughing). Mazai is even worse because he fails to get Maya pregnant and he can't provide for her as well, Hahaha! (more laughter). So, not every man who lives with a woman and has children is a father figure. Some of these 'fathers' have honorary identity placed upon them by our culture which gives too much recognition and undeserved power to men. (Kudzie.L.11:49)

The participants also raised issues on the writer's seeming advocacy for female emancipation and for change in the way women are perceived and treated in society. Some of the participants alluded to the disengagement of societal stereotypes. For example, Zee observed that the novel seems to take a feminist viewpoint whereby the writer gives a voice to women and articulates women's capabilities (Zee.L.11:47).

Jessie used a war metaphor to articulate that the writer presents women as warriors. In her view, the writer portrays women as warriors; they face the war on various fronts, similar to most women in present-day Zimbabwe who fought the same battles, especially the economic war. Jessie cited that today and, in the text, women fight the economic and domestic wars; these campaigns are reflected in standing in the unending queues; nursing the children and enduring abusive marriages. She also said that women fight the employment war in the form of, unemployment and subsequent poverty; the education war includes engaging in academia under antagonistic conditions. Jessie observed that in all these categories, one finds that women have wars to fight, but they stand up like warriors to face the war every day. She concluded that women remain strong under very bad conditions (Jessie.L.11:39).

Fanty observed that the writer presents women in a more positive light in many respects; for instance, we have outstanding female doctors, female lawyers, breadwinners, and even dealers [economic hustlers who engage in informal broking in anything the market demands]. Fanty explained that

Men would always be presented as leaders, but in the text, most men are in the rear, with the likes of Gari being fed by the womenfolk. Women are in many places and positions traditionally reserved for men, even the most masculine jobs. Today women are in politics, mining, long-distance driving, etc. Even when I look at the ending of the novel, with Onai getting a job, a house, and taking up her dream to be a dressmaker, I feel that the novel is a long plea for women empowerment. (Fanty.L.11:43)

Rody also observed that women are on the forefront as agents of change. Rody observed that the writer assigns societal responsibilities to women or females which foreground their role in society. Rody said that Faith is presented as an ambassador for the poor elements of society, who conscientises Tom, who represents the rich, on the challenges faced by the poor which the rich are ignorant of (Rody.L.11:44).

5.5.1.3 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the focus group discussions, the participants raised several issues on gender-based violence, a practice which they condemned. In an emotionally charged contribution, Tyra (FGB) expressed her distaste for domestic violence and its far-reaching consequences. She stressed that

The trauma of domestic violence lives on and on the minds of children who sometimes end up running away from home to become street children, fighting it out on the cold, open streets with total strangers than being harassed by those who are supposed to care for them. (Tyra.FGB.27:109)

In FGD, CP7 alluded to domestic violence as a traumatising theme in the text. CP7 referred to Emily who tells Onai that doctors treat many women at hospital with assault injuries; Emily

laments that soon Onai would be another tragic statistic, and this implies that many women die of this form of abuse. CP7 expressed his disappointment with the reality that in present-day society, many incidents about women who had died of various forms of physical abuse, especially that inflicted by husbands were broadcasted on television, and reported in in newspapers, and on social media (CP7.FGD.27:117). His view was seconded by Hassan, who blamed his society for despising divorcees and looking down on single mothers to the extent that many women chose to suffer violence privately. Hassan complained that there was a lot of stereotyping and labelling of single mothers and unmarried women which resulted in women keeping quiet so that they adhered to societal norms; this was quite traumatic to women (Hassan.FGD.27:117).

In FGB, Tatata alluded to wife battering in front of children as another very traumatising experience. She explained that Onai's children always watch Gari beat her and consequently, they have to absorb the pain of their mother's abuse; they are also expected to love their father. Tatata further said that the relationship between their parents traumatises them as evidenced by their crying while Gari beats their mother. Tatata stressed that many children were psychologically traumatised in homes where fathers unleashed violence on their mothers. She said that in present-day Zimbabwe, there were many awareness videos published by Childline, which revealed the various traumatic experiences of children in violent homes (Tatata.FGB.27:109). In response, Tyra condemned domestic violence where children were involved affected children who could grow violent tendencies as they grew up and could also have misguided beliefs about love and marriage (Tyra.FGB.27:109).

In response, Rody observed that the violence affects Ruva's attitude when she is described as indifferent or detached from the issues in the house. He said that Ruva seems distracted and does not seem to care about her family; she could be psychologically reacting to the harshness and lack of care and lack of love that Gari displays. Rody suggested that parents are supposed to model their children to be appreciative of one another, but Gari unleashes violence on Onai in the presence of the children. Rody concluded that the children's attitudes could become those of their parents and a parent like Gari is not a role model (Rody.FGC.27:112).

The groups also referred to the oppression and suppression of women. From FGA, Bella observed that Onai's capability and potential are suppressed by Gari, who denies her a chance to use her qualification to get a position. Bella complained that Gari does not allow Onai to use her dressmaking certificate to get a position; she has to endure the humiliation of being a market vendor despite having a dressmaking qualification; Gari refuses her permission to

apply for a passport, and she has no room to voice her desires; she is disowned by her family after Gari's death. Bella stated that

Men in our society are happier when their wives maintain low status and rarely do they want to marry women of higher status, especially when it comes to jobs and qualifications. (Bella.FGA.27:105)

Tafadzwa opined that it is not easy for society to believe in the success of a woman as a single entity; Zimbabwean society largely believed that a woman needed a man to be both successful and respectable. He pointed out that

many successful unmarried businesswomen do not have the recognition they deserve because they are called names for failing to sustain marriages for one reason or other...those who are capable of nothing but have remained in marriages are given overwhelming recognition even at gatherings. (Tafadzwa.FGC.26:93)

FGA discussed child abuse. Kuku mentioned Rita, a minor child who endures the trauma of vending on the streets. Kuku explained that Rita is traumatised both physically, through the exhaustion of the day's work on the streets, and psychologically by men who touched her inappropriately. Kuku expressed her disgruntlement that Rita is both physically and psychologically abused as a child labourer; this was true of Kuku's community as well. Kuku lamented that

Many children, especially in the ghetto experience such nasty scenarios and there are many cases of child rape reported on the media nowadays and in my neighbourhood, it's quite common. (Kuku.FGA.27:106)

The groups raised the theme of gender stereotyping. Miracle observed that even women doubt the capabilities of fellow women; this is revealed when Onai doubts the capability of Emily as a doctor because she is a female doctor. Miracle explained that top positions, such as the Presidency was associated with men; furthermore, females who ran for these posts were discouraged; other women would even be at the forefront of rejecting female candidates (Miracle.FGB.24:64). From a similar perspective, FGD discussed the stereotypical perspective that a woman cannot own property, especially if she is a single mother. CP7 referred to the women waiting in a fuel queue who accuse Onai of being a prostitute when she wants to sell her 'maputi' (fried corn) to them; they quickly label her a prostitute just because she is a vendor, a woman, trying to better her life. CP7 explained that these women think Onai uses vending, as a cover for prostitution. In CP7'S view, it reveals a society that that does not approve of women fending for themselves and that women do not believe in themselves and each other (CP7.FGD.24:83).

Rody, (FGC) opined that women associate fellow women of lower social status with potential husband snatching. He explained that there are also women who despise less privileged

women. In his opinion, they think that any woman who is of low social status is a potential threat to their marriages (husband snatcher) (Rody.FGC.24:76).

The groups also identified the writer's advocacy for change and the emancipation of women. Vy alluded to an aspect of dwindling gender role differentiation whereby men and women are both doing household chores. She likened the situation in the text to that of her community:

our culture doesn't promote a scenario where a man does house chores, but nowadays it's happening. If a man isn't employed or working like Mazai, these days it's quite normal to see him doing chores. (Vy.FGC.24:77)

In FGA, Fanty proposed that the writer presents women as breadwinners, a scenario that puts women in a dominant economic position. She remarked that Onai represents women who work hard, who take care of the children through diligent enterprise, who fend for their families while the husband is out visiting their 'Small houses' and neglect their responsibilities as fathers. Fanty explained that women becoming the breadwinners was quite common in Zimbabwean society; women confronted the hard-economic atmosphere through partaking in activities such as cross-border trading, fruit and vegetable selling, and poultry projects (Fanty.FGA.24:58).

On emancipation of women, Kartel (FGB) stated that just like the writer's Kushinga Women's Organisation in the text, in present-day Zimbabwe, organisations such as The Angel of Hope assisted women in taking care of their children and in standing up against oppressive patriarchal practices (Kartel.FGB.24:64).

5.5 2 Sub-theme 3.2: Postcoloniality

5.5.2.1 Learners' poem-drawings

During the individual interviews on the poem-drawings, Fanty (12:2) explained that her poem, Figure 5.9, concerns the corruption that takes place in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. She said that the pendulum (line 1) refers to authority. She said that it points to an aspect of corruption whereby those with power are represented by the pendulum frozen to one side, the right side, a scenario which suggests that it is to the advantage of one group: those in authority or the rich are the only ones enjoying life. The poor people, 'Like little larks they peer' because they have no power. Furthermore, 'bills, pills' are the challenges the poor people face. She said that the proverb 'blood is thicker than water' means people have to be related to those in authority if they are to succeed, which is corruption. She also said that she used alliteration to emphasise the power of money in people's lives, 'money muscle'.

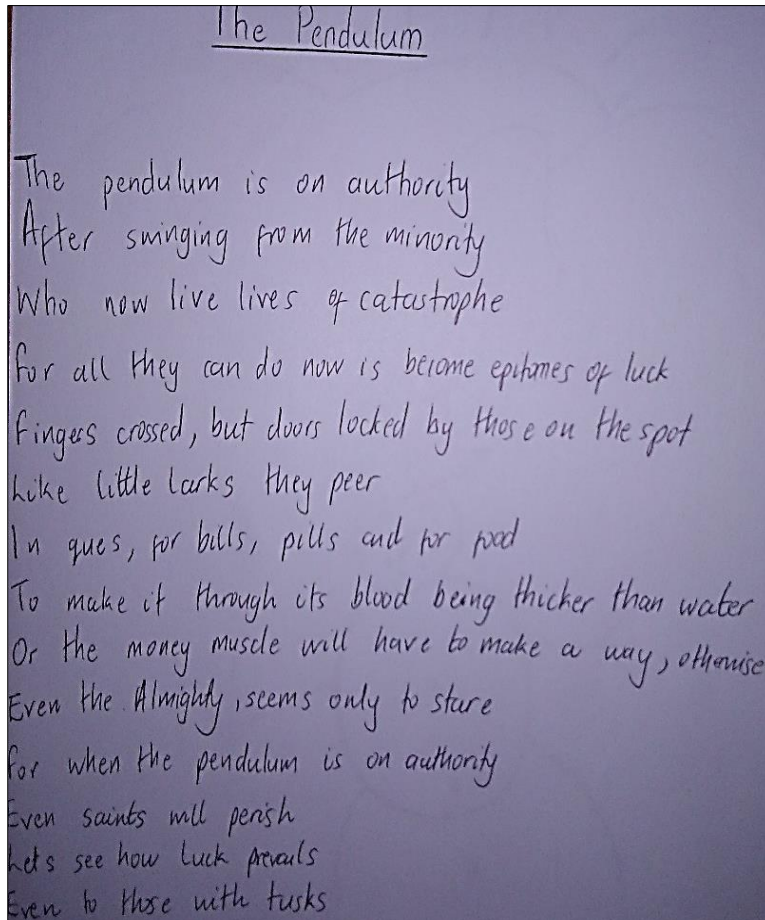


Figure 5.9: Fany's poem

Fany explained that her symbol, Figure 5.10, is of a pendulum, which is swinging in a normal, sideways movement in the first picture but unnaturally hangs to one side, suspended in mid-air, in the second picture. She said that the normal sideways movement indicates that everyone should have the opportunities to survive. She further stated that the unnatural suspension of the pendulum in the second picture reflects unfairness, thus, the aspect of corruption. Those in power are represented by the frozen pendulum and they are the only ones enjoying opportunities and access to wealth. She also said that the pendulum is no longer swinging naturally because of corruption.

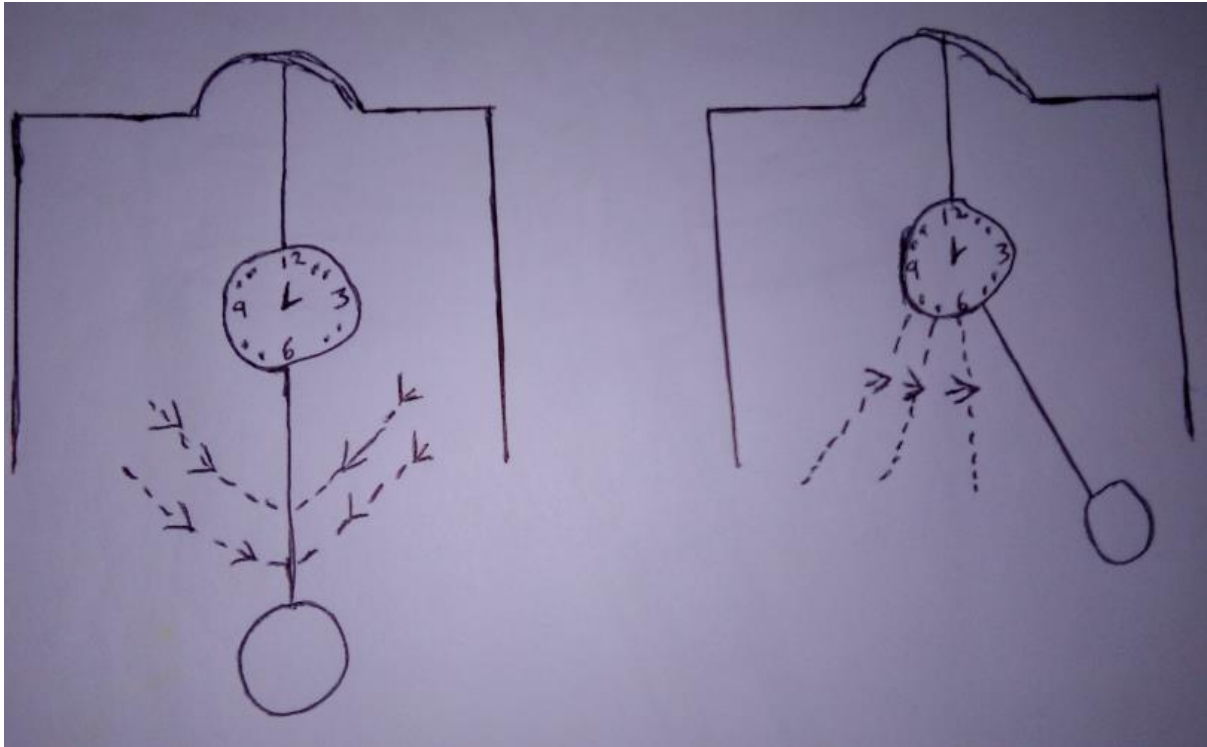


Figure 5.10: Fanty's poem-drawing

Zee explained that her symbol, Figure 5.11, which is based on her poem, represented individualism and corruption.

The Snowman represents the privileged people but who are cold and unhelpful to society. Snowman is associated with happiness in the festive season. Is made up of ice and is cold. There are these groups who are supposed to deliver other groups, but they are cold and turning a blind eye, he has closed eyes. On a new perspective on the mountainous horizon, one can see out the sun rising, and it is melting the snowman, giving way to these hands, which are reaching out for help. In other words, fighting against corruption through education that why I drew the hands reaching out for help. We notice that after the sun has risen the snowman will melt providing water to the promised land, showing opportunities and potential after the sun has risen. I am linking the sun with knowledge.



Figure 5.11: Zee's poem-drawing

5.5.2.2..Face-face interviews with the Learners

In explaining subtextual themes deduced from the text, Dassy mentioned class differentiation as one of the central issues of the plot in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Class differentiation is a postcolonial theme that emanates from the capitalist worldview, which Zimbabwe assumed as a result of the adoption of the former coloniser's class system. She suggested that the writer presents two lovers, Tom and Faith who are from two different backgrounds, to reveal the existence of two classes. She mentioned that their relationship exposes the misconceptions that the rich hold about the poor. She referred to page 349 of the text:

Faith describes Tom as someone who is so principled, so moral, so caring about the people that he loves, while on the other hand, he is almost amoral when it comes to the poor and underprivileged. She even thinks that Tom views the poor as a sort of (if I may quote), "indistinguishable mass" and the squatters as "rubbish". (Dassy.L.8:32)

She added that these misconceptions are common in her society:

...people from poor backgrounds are perceived to be capable of negative deeds like stealing. In actual fact, poverty is like a crime or some leprosy of some sort. (Dassy.L.8:32)

Responding to the same question on hidden themes, Benco alluded to class differentiation. He mentioned racism and discrimination, citing Tariro, a young medical doctor's experience

in the prescribed text. Tariro abandons training in the UK due to disgruntlement with racism and the discrimination meted out to foreign healthcare personnel in the UK. Benco summarised Tariro's experiences as one who

...was almost always reminded that the British taxpayer was paying for her education, therefore she had no right to question the way she was treated; she was rated third class doctor; she was constantly on the edge of clinical depression and never felt she belonged. (Benco.L.8:24)

Benco described Tariro's description of her experiences in the UK as a testimony that resonated with him in that it dispelled what he termed the "Diasporic bliss myth". This myth was orchestrated by many people in his society who returned with stories of success and who painted a rosy picture of life across the borders. He further described the returnees in his society as being

...highly regarded as those that dine and wine with the Whiteman. In actual fact, it's rare to hear anybody testifying to such negativity as brought out by Tariro. Tariro admits that it's not easy at all back home, but she prefers the home heat better than she went through in the UK. This suffering of people in the diaspora is happening in many ways. We hear that some are inwardly humiliated by being offered low menial jobs out in foreign countries when they were managers back home. Some work on mines and on farms, after completing degrees in high status fields back home. I know of a relative who picks oranges at a farm in SA, yet he is a Bindura University graduate. (BencoL.8:25)

During the face-face interview, Maggie (L), pointed to individualism, another offshoot of colonialism, as one of the central themes of the plot. She said that individualism emanated from too much suffering due to poverty, which resulted in the hardening of people's hearts. She mentioned the burglaries that take place in the text, in Mbare for instance, where Onai's (a poor woman) most valued possession, a black and white television set, is stolen. According to Maggie, the text depicts survival of the fittest; those who steal from the poor have become desensitised to the predicament of others. She described the individualistic attitude of society that is depicted in the text as typical of contemporary Zimbabwe. She said that (Maggie.L.7.7).

In explaining the central themes of the prescribed text, Tamuda (L) mentioned corruption as one of the major issues raised in the novella. He suggested that there are various levels of corruption that permeate both the rural and urban divide of society in the text. He cited corruption as originating from above. The police boss, Police Commissioner Nzou confiscates money collected from illegal market stall owners in Mbare. Nzou also engages in illegal forex dealing and smuggles electrical goods across the border without paying import duty. Tamuda described Commissioner Nzou's corruption as disgraceful to the force and government and called Nzou an epitome of:

a huge number of police officials in our society today, who are known to be involved in scandals, especially to do with the collection of funds from offenders which they put to personal use. (Tamuda.L.7:3)

Benco agreed that corruption is a central aspect of the text. He cited evidence of business people in the text, like Tom, who receives government subsidised fuel for his buses to serve public routes. Tom fuels up his bus fleet then drains the fuel and sells it at 'black market' prices. He short-changes both the government and the public. Benco condemned this attitude, which he identified as typical of Zimbabwean society. He said that:

This tendency to divert materials meant for the benefit of the society is not a thing of the society of the text alone. It happens every day in our society. We have often heard of beneficiaries of government-subsidised materials selling them at highly exorbitant prices to the unsuspecting public, especially in rural areas. (Benco.L.7:6)

Zee pointed out that the prescribed text's writer foregrounds the corrupt character, Nzou to expose the dishonest behaviour of office-bearers of contemporary society. She said that Nzou's greedy and selfishness was typical and Nzou smoothly fitted into present-day society (Zee.L.8:30).

5.5.2.3 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the Focus Group discussions, the theme of class differentiation was raised through the binaries existent in the text. In Focus Group A (FGA), Fanty identified the class divide as represented by different residential areas. She articulated the Rich/Poor or Belvedere/Mbare binary in the prescribed text, as an indicator of class differences. She pointed to the text's description of Belvedere as

a home for the rich and affluent while Mbare is the hub for the majority, who are the poor. Belvedere have good and proper houses, proper sanitation, access to good healthcare facilities, and living happily as if nothing is happening in the other side of the city, in Mbare, where people are dying of various waterborne diseases due to poor sanitation, suffer poor healthcare facilities at ill-equipped and ill-staffed public hospitals, live under dehumanising conditions and can hardly access basic commodities, let alone money. (Fanty.FGA.28:134)

Her view was echoed by Bella who linked the text with what she learnt during history lessons on colonialism. She described the Belvedere/Mbare binary as

the clear distinction between the rich and the poor is not much of a surprise for a society that is a product of colonial policy whose main attributes included the establishment and maintenance of class society which separated the master as rich from the colonised as poor. (Bella.FGA.28:134)

During the discussion Maggie (FGC) described the disparity between Mbare and Belvedere or Borrowdale in the text as disturbing. In her view, Mbare residents who are the majority live

in squalor and abject poverty yet those in Belvedere and Borrowdale have ample living space. For instance, Tapiwa (Mawaya) offers Onai accommodation at his place, in an unused cottage. Maggie described it as quite traumatising that some lived in so much opulence, yet the majority were homeless and some even slept outside in the cold (Maggie.FGC.27:121). She said that this disparity haunted present-day society:

This scenario is still evident in our society and the up-class residential places are continuing to expose affluence... some being rumoured to have swimming pools on the roofs...one has attempted to build a mansion with an airport on top. As all this is happening on the other side, more and more cabin dwellings are being erected in high-density places to accommodate the growing population as well as to get rentals from letting out those cabins. (Maggie.FGC.27:122)

Focus Group D discussed differentiated access to resources. Dassy suggested that there was a rich unscrupulous/poor humble binary evident in the text. She described the incident in the text where Tom and Faith visit a shop where people from Mbare are waiting in a long queue. Tom and Faith use the back door to get drinks because Tom is a friend of the shop owner. Dassy said that similar to present-day Zimbabwean society, the rich created their networks or connections, which enabled them to access scarce commodities through back-door outlets while the poor endured the long queues at the front door (Dassy.FGA.28:133).

In Focus Group D, class differentiation was viewed through the lens of racism: Jessie pointed out that feeling vulnerable in a foreign country was quite traumatic. She alluded to doctor Tariro in the prescribed text, who returns from the UK because she experienced racial discrimination, Jessie equated Tariro's experiences to those of Zimbabweans who were part of the diaspora. Jessie further cited the horrors of humiliation and dehumanisation which people in her society had been exposed to during the diaspora. For example, some did menial jobs like washing dogs, looking after old people, and in extreme cases, some had been rumoured to have been forced to sleep with dogs. She emotionally lamented that:

We also hear of some people in the diaspora being called derogatory names, names which are suggestive of their poverty and foreign identity. The worst and the commonest scenario these days is that of xenophobic attacks. Our people are rumoured to have been burnt alive and some have returned home crippled from various forms of physical xenophobic assault. (Jessie.FGD.27:127)

During Focus Group discussions, groups A, B, and D cited individualism, a fallout of colonialism, as one of the issues raised in the text which mirrored present-day Zimbabwean society. Kartel lamented the erosion of the moral fibre, and the collapse of traditional values in a community that had become a dog-eats-dog society where only the fittest survive (Kartel.FGB.24:74). Tyra backed Kartel's view by stating that many company bosses

demanded favours like bribes and sex from desperate citizens, mostly women, in return for positions (Tyra.FGB.24:73).

From a similar standpoint, Fanty (FGA.24:59) indicated that individualism in society caused the abuse of street children: selfish adults encouraged them to steal and commit other crimes. She reiterated that children roamed the streets and engaged in activities like stealing and snatching valuables from people in broad daylight. Fanty indicated that it was sad that these young people sold the stolen accessories to adults who paid them little (Fanty.FGA.24:60).

Focus Group D viewed individualism in contemporary Zimbabwean society from an economic perspective. According to CP7, due to shortages of essential commodities like fuel, there arose related problems like hoarding whereby a few individuals bought oil in bulk (hoarded) and stocked it privately at the expense of the majority (CP7.FGD.24:83). Benco added that:

The shortages naturally evoke self-centeredness, which has made our once united society a 'dog-eat-dog' society where a neighbour can have ten-car fleet, all with full fuel tanks and a huge private reserve in his compound yet a neighbour can hardly drive to work because he has no drop of fuel because he isn't 'connected'. (Benco.FGD.24:84)

All four focus groups pointed out that corruption was among the issues raised in the text, which reflected contemporary Zimbabwean society. From FGA, Kuku condemned the unscrupulous activities by Police Commissioner Nzou in the text. She said that his deeds mirrored the behaviours of many people in positions of authority in Zimbabwe, who unscrupulously robbed the companies they worked for (Kuku.FGA.24:60).

Tyra indicated that many anti-corruption campaigns had been launched in Zimbabwe, especially on the borders with other countries and in banks. She also said that posters alerted and informed the public of possibilities of corrupt activities in certain places, which indicated that corruption was a reality. She also added that:

Even the existence of an anti-corruption commission, the Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission (ZACC) is evidence that corruption is indeed a problem of the day. Even if one reports a corruption case, they get paid for it which reveals the extent to which it is a societal wound. (Tyra.FGB.24:66)

From an economic perspective, Rody (FGC) pointed out that Commissioner Nzou's shoddy money-changing deals in the text could be likened to illegal money-laundering activities in present-day Zimbabwe. Rody stated that:

Today illegal money changing is so rampant that one is tempted to think that it's legal. Money is changing hands more on the streets of Zimbabwe than it is in banking halls. (Rody.FGC.24:76)

5.5.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Socio-political disposition

During the interviews and in the poems and poem-drawings, the participants raised several issues relating to the socio-political milieu of both the text and their society.

5.5.3.1 Individual interviews with the learners

Fanty raised the theme of patriotism, which relates to one's commitment and devotion to one's country. Fanty remarked that patriotism in the text is demonstrated by Emily, a young doctor, who has the potential and opportunity to leave a challenging and low-paying job. However, she chooses to remain in the hospital in Zimbabwe to make a difference. Fanty said that Emily's informs her fellow doctors that it is not proper for all doctors to join the diaspora, Some, including her, must remain home, work hard, and make a difference. Emily says that she is a doctor not because of the money, but to help the thousands of suffering people who need her assistance. Fanty described Emily's love as

a rare type of love considering the extent to which society, especially today, has become individualistic. As it stands today, one cannot imagine our young doctors showing that level of patriotism by sacrificing any opportunity to leave the country.
(Fanty.L.7:9)

Bella alluded to demonstrations/riots and repression as socio-political themes in the text. She referred to the Kushinga Women's Organisation, which's demonstration is crushed by the police before the marchers reach their intended destination; subsequently, Emily and Faith are thrown into a police force holding cell. They are charged with public disorder, yet they have a noble cause: that of encouraging women to report incidents of domestic violence. She described arrests of demonstrators as part of repressive incidences that are common in her society (Bella.L.8:28).

Kartel referred to an aspect of discriminatory government policy. Kartel complained that the discriminatory attitude of the government is revealed in the people of Mbare's suffering whilst people in Belvedere live comfortable lives. Kartel also cited the high rate of poverty, the presence of illegal shacks, and a lack of proper sanitation in Mbare. According to Kartel, the author, Tagwira wanted to point out that the government is biased towards the 'noble', who never complain about their work, because they are unfairly privileged, for example, the corrupt Commissioner Nzou (Kartel.L.8:30).

5.5.3.2 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the group discussions, Tafadzwa stated that poor planning by local government formed part of the socio-political issues raised in the text and which was also evident in his community.

He was opposed to demolishing teams that demolish 'illegal' structures such as shacks and 'illegally' erected houses in Mbare, as discussed in the text. He was also upset with the destruction of houses in contemporary Harare, due to Operation Murambatsvina. He explained that the affected dwellers are not notified, and neither are the places where they are relocated suitable for human settlement. He further stressed that ambush demolitions were a common occurrence in Zimbabwe's high-density areas, and most of the victims were not compensated or relocated. He described Murambatsvina as a dehumanizing experience (Tafadzwa.FGC.24:74).

Ahab (FGA) described operation Murambatsvina as a traumatic experience for Zimbabwean society, as discussed in the text and experienced in reality. Ahab lamented that the demolitions in the text and in real life lead to the destruction of people's livelihood, leaving many families homeless and stranded:

it finds expression through Hondo's contemplations because the operation transforms his identity and leaves him disillusioned and traumatised to an extent of committing suicide. With a destroyed home, he finds death a quick and easy escape.
(Ahab.FGA.27:105)

Operation Murambatsvina was also identified as a traumatic event in the lives of the characters in the text by Focus Group B (FGB). Kartel pointed out that the demolitions leave both shack dwellers and shack owners devastated and that in the text, innocent children

are exposed to the cold and unfriendly nights and days at the ill-prepared Tsiga grounds in a nerve-wracking operation which reveals lack of consideration on the part of the city fathers. The dehumanisation involved in the operation is highly traumatising.
(Kartel.FGB.27:108)

In response to Kartel's observation, Kudzie reiterated that the Murambatsvina situation in present-day Zimbabwe was such that

It is undoubtedly traumatising to see a house that has been your shelter and home for years being gutted down to rubbles... you find yourself destitute in a matter of seconds... ..Homelessness is a breath-draining experience. But history has it that demolitions have almost become a fashion in most cities in Zim. (Kudzie.FGB.27:108)

Commenting on Murambatsvina in FGD, Tamuda remarked that Hondo reveals his deep sense of betrayal by fellow Zimbabweans because he believes that he deserves respect for his contributions during the struggle, which won Zimbabwe's independence. However, the demolishment of his house proves otherwise. In Tamuda's view, suicide is Hondo's way of communicating his defeat and disappointment at the futility of his efforts during the liberation struggle (Tamuda.FGD.26:97). In response, CP7 objected to Tamuda's suggestion that Hondo feels betrayed; Tamuda then proposed that Hondo's suicide is

due to the demolition of his house. Remember he toils in constructing the house, he goes to South Africa to purchase material because of shortages or unavailability in Zim. There is inflation in the country and after putting so much effort into making a home for himself under the tough conditions, part of his home is destroyed, and this pushes him into mental depression and subsequent suicide. (CP7.FGD.26:97).

Ahab (L) identified hard work as a common feature of Zimbabwean society; she further remarked that Emily's diligent labour qualifies as patriotism. Ahab commended Emily for remaining

...committed and focused on her work and her patients too. So many people can no longer sacrifice for their immediate families, yet she uniquely sacrifices for strangers, for a whole country. (Ahab.FGA:24:57)

The discussions in the Focus Groups revealed a degree of political awareness among the learners. Political demonstrations were one of the socio-political aspects which were raised, and which stirred a heated discussion in FGC: Rody proposed that police brutality is a central theme in the text, which is revealed when the city fathers send police officers to remove Mbare market vendors whom they accuse of operating illegally. He condemned the police for harshly removing the vendors and using teargas canisters on the crowds. He further described the act by the police as a feature of today's Zimbabwe. He recalled recent events where there was a demonstration and people were beaten up by the police; some protesters stampeded, some were injured, and others were killed (Rody.FGC.24:73).

Vy (L) asked the group (FGC) why anyone would take the risk of going into town where a demonstration was going on since demonstrating was illegal (Vy.FGC.24:73). Vy was interrupted by an angry Kante:

Point of correction, a demonstration is a constitutional right that is being unfairly crushed when people are attacked, and some resort to staying indoors for fear of victimization and beating by the police. (Kante.FGC.24:73)

Rody added that in the text,

there are also attempted demonstrations that are violently quelled down by the police. The writer presents the actions of the police as a manipulative tool that is used to suppress people's concerns and creates a picture of a society that is content and ready to support the status quo. (Rody.FGC.24:73)

5.5.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Economy

Many economic issues in Zimbabwe were raised by the participants. Generally, the participants referred to negative aspects of the economy, similar to the writer's portrayal of the economy in the prescribed text. For example, the economy was described as "dull and weak"

(Tyra.L.8:28). The learners' articulation of their own experiences of the contemporary economic situation also echoed the negative picture portrayed in the text.

5.5.4.1 Learners' poems and poem-drawings

Some of the participants' poems and poem-drawings reflected the economic issues raised in the text as well as those currently experienced by their communities. For instance, Tatata's poem-drawing, Figure 5.12, concerns the economic hardships faced in the text and by her community.

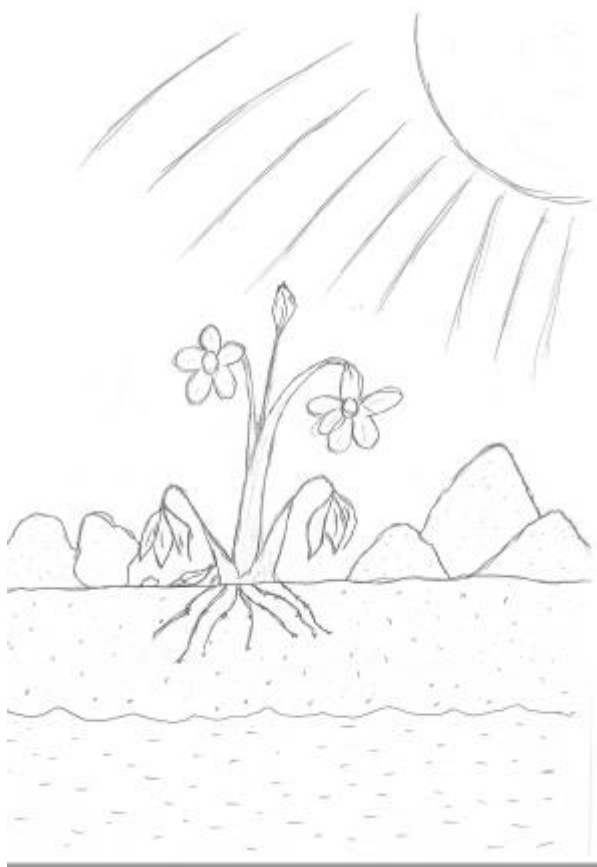


Figure 5.12: Tatata's poem-drawing

Tatata explained her poem-drawing as follows:

My drawing is made up of the sun, the plant, a fallen leaf, the water table, and the mountains... The plant is symbolizing the human beings in the society and we can see the withering leaves symbolizing the failures of the people in the society such as Onai who tries to do the dressmaking course but Gari refuses... Failure for the plant roots to reach the water table is metaphorical in the sense that, the plant stands for human beings in the society, and the unreachable water table shows that probably the people in society are away from life, and they die, as evidenced by falling leaves which signify the deaths of Gari and Sheila. The burning sun symbolizes the economic meltdown, and since water is far below, the people are suffocating in the economic meltdown and with no hope of living in such a society. (Tatata.L.12:4)

Kuku's poem-drawing (Figure 5.13) is a tree with branches that are swayed to one side by the wind; some of its leaves are falling to the hard, rocky ground.



Figure 5.13: Kuku's poem-drawing

In her explanation of the poem-drawing, Kuku said that

It is all about how people are suffering due to economic hardships, especially poverty. The tree is symbolising the society. The wind, which is pushing the tree to the side is representing the economic hardships. The economic hardships are pushing people to do what they do not want to do, that's why the tree branches have been swayed to the side. The little flowers growing on the hard earth represent people surviving in the hard-economic situation and that there is hope to overcome the hardships. The falling leaves represent some people who are failing to adjust to some economic situations, so they die. The falling leaves that are succumbing to the pressure of the wind, are flying off and falling to the hard ground can also include those people becoming immoral due to the economic pressure. (Kuku,L.12:28)

Miracle's poem and poem-drawing (Figure 5.14) below represent the possibility of a better future for the poor people and for women after a long period of suffering various adversities.

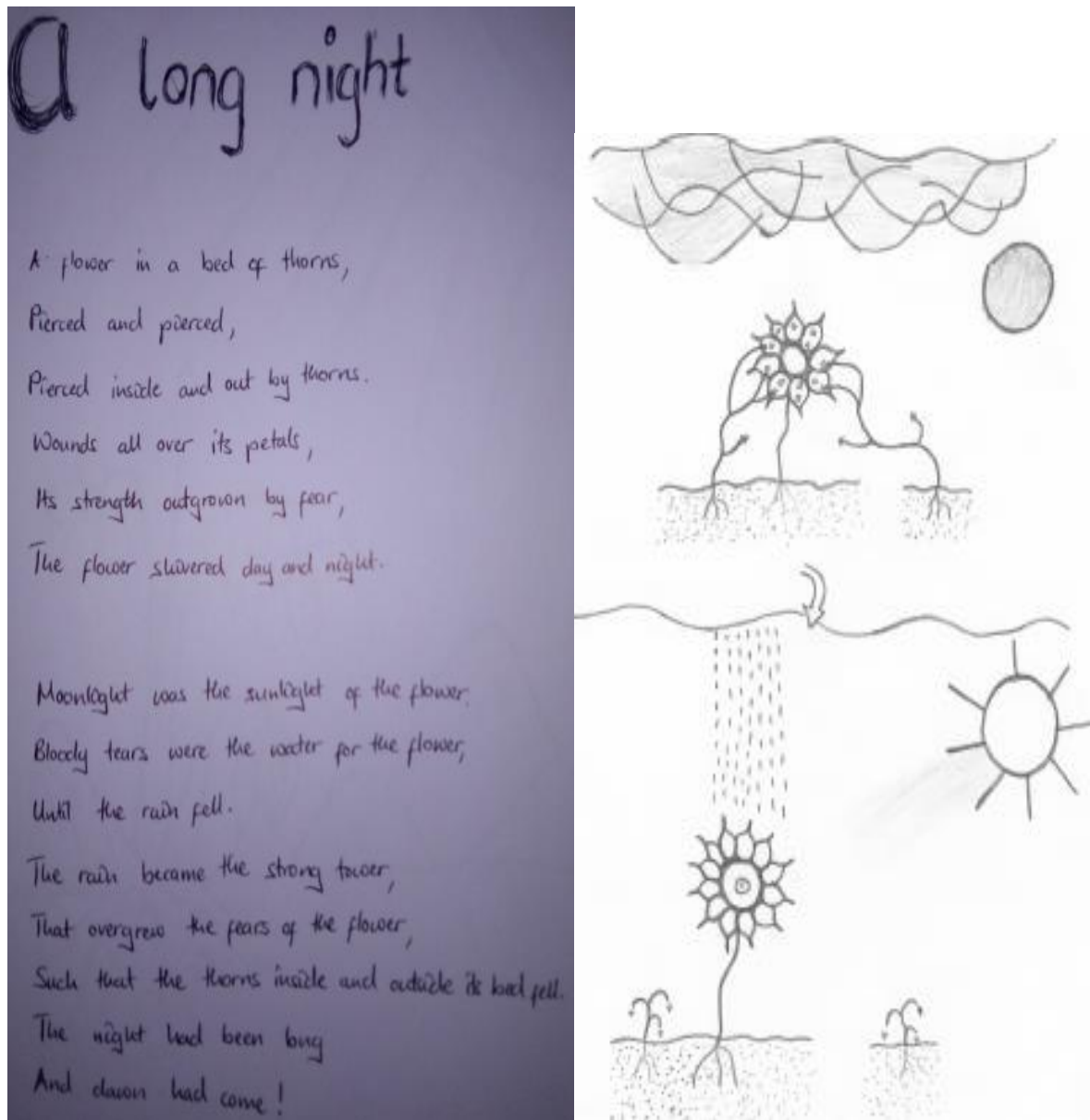


Figure 5.14: Miracle's poem and poem-drawing

Miracle explained her poem and poem-drawing:

A Long Night - the title means a long-suffering Onai had, with almost three quarters of her life being of suffering. The problems in the marriage are hurting her, problems outside her marriage like death and the economic hardships. The flower is representing Onai in a bad marriage. '...The flower shivered day and night...', Onai is scared but her friend helps her to withstand her fear, but the problems outgrow her strengths. '...Moonlight was the sunlight of the flower...' The statement means that her life is full of darkness, there is no hope of happiness. The economy is just hard on her. '...Bloody tears...', everything she reaped was out of tears so that was the only thing that made her to survive. Her tears offer her strength to continue until '... the rain fell...' the rain is Mawaya, the man who gave her job of sewing the wedding gowns. '...The strong tower...' The unemployment, lack of accommodation and money to educate her children make part of her fear that overcome by Mawaya. The night represents the long suffering. Dawn represents time for her to shine. The drawing first part the cloud resembles the darkness. The moon shows that the flower has no light. Thorns are economic hardships. Creeping thorns that entangle her represent Gari who cheats on

her and the pain that she feels when Gari cheated. In the second part, the Rain are those who helped Onai like Kate, Faith and Mawaya. The sunlight is the hope that finally helped her. Withering thorns represent the economic hardships disappearing when Mawaya gives her a job.

5.5.4.2 Face-face interviews with the learners

Participants identified inflation as the best indicator of a troubled economy. For example, during the individual interviews, Jessie said that inflation affected the economy of the country. She stated that inflation resulted in steep price rises, which are also described in the text. She recalled when Sheila's friend who works at a shop complains that her hands hurt from constantly changing price tags. The ever-rising prices result in people failing to plan and to budget because they live from hand to mouth. Jessie stated:

Price increases are among our worst problems currently. As we speak, the price of bread seems to be rising every day nowadays. Imagine, having an unstable bread price. It's scary... (Jessie.L.7:6)

Similarly, Kudzie lamented that in the text, due to the inflation and lack of currency, money is sold illegally at street corners and houses. She said it was comical that the banks reportedly had no money, yet forexes were confiscated at the Mbare market during the market demolitions:

Just the same way one sees stacks and stacks of cash being sold along streets and bus terminuses today, yet the banks have almost become more like mere reminders of a once existing banking system... (Kudzie.L.7:15)

Ahab identified the lack of electricity as an economic drawback that negatively affects people's livelihoods. She referred to an incident in the text where a woman who suffers physical violence from her husband explains that she was beaten because she served her husband cold food; there was a power cut, so she could not heat the food. Ahab described the woman as a victim of misdirected aggression, as she is not responsible for the power cut. Her husband should provide for a power backup. Ahab indicated that the man is aware of the power cut, but merely directs his frustration onto the weakest and nearest person (Ahab.L.8:29)

Hassan mentioned the problem of unemployment as one of the central concerns of the text; he observed that the massive brain drain which the country had witnessed both in the text and currently, was aggravated by factors such as low wages and job scarcity (Hassan.L.7:1). Hassan's view was also shared by Kartel who observed that there was rampant crime both in the text and in present-day Zimbabwe as a result of poverty and unavailability of employment opportunities, and the problem was still present in 2019. She added that empty stomachs of the unemployed citizens led them commit crimes, and that the problems of society were interconnected, whereby one led to the other (Kartel.L.7:15).

Kartel indicated that it was traumatising to remain faithful to one's job if it posed threats to personal health and emotional stability. She alluded to Emily's loyalty to her calling as a doctor; she is overwhelmed with work and is also at risk of being traumatised due to the many deaths occurring at the hospital as a result of poor infrastructure and lack of medication (Kartel.FGB.27:111). Zee added that in as much as Emily is committed to her job, the working conditions are worsening. Zee complained that Emily struggles to get fuel to go to work and has to hustle to get it; furthermore, no provision for fuel for doctors is made by the health ministry. She retorted that

It is also in the nature of our society to attribute any losses that occur in a hospital to a failure by the doctor or nurse and nobody talks about the ill-economy which makes hospitals sub-standard or the powers above, who are supposed to be responsible for the welfare of doctors and hospitals. (Zee.FGB.27:111)

Kuku observed that in Mbare and many other places in present-day Zimbabwe, residents experienced unsuitable living conditions: raw sewage flowed through houses and shacks. She complained that people generally lived in sub-standard conditions (Kuku.L.7:8). Tafadzwa also described poor service delivery and sanitation as central themes of the novel, as the people of Mbare live in appalling conditions. He added that in the text, the roads are potholed, and there is generally poor sanitation (Tafadzwa.L.7.8).

The participants also alluded to the gross poverty of the people in the text, which they linked to current society. Kante observed that at the core of issues raised in the text is shortages of commodities and poverty, which were related. He found the description of people in the basic commodities queues saddening, where women and children are barefoot and dressed in tatters, with dusty, cracked feet, and walking long distances from Mbare to town, with insufficient money for food. He lamented that

Onai explains that getting herself a pair of underwear is selfish extravagance. Honestly, how can a woman be comfortable with doing without underwear? The poverty has reached high levels and it has even robbed people of their dignity. It is some kind of harassment, Yaa, poverty harasses these poor people. But there was a time I heard that it was the case in our society in 2008 when even teachers could not afford decent meals per day and such things like unders were luxuries for most civil servants. It's disheartening. (Kante.L.7:3)

Ahab indicated that the writer foregrounds the extent to which society has been affected but also strengthened by the poverty (Ahab.L.8:29). This opinion was echoed by Zee who observed that

There is also the theme of resilience, souring over in the economic collapse, standing firm against all odds. The people of Zim, up to this very day are strong and alert to the harshness of the economic times. Yes, the times at hand are bad, but everyone is seen

to rise to them, even young children, like Onai's children and many other children in the text, are presented as participating in the economic hustle that has consumed the majority of the population. It is like independence brought a new wave of heroism, economic war heroes, and heroines. (Zee.L.7:12)

5.5.4.3 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the focus group discussions, the theme of high inflation rate in the text and in present-day Zimbabwe was raised. In FGA, Fanty opined that in the text, high inflation of 600 percent is described, which was

coupled with unfixed prices, unstable price hikes and the money has dismally lost value. There are rampant shortages of critical commodities such as fuel and bread. These same conditions prevail today whereby inflation has continued to sour, and it is hardly possible to have stable pricing of even the most basic commodities and fuel shortages are the order of the day. As a result, people are suffering the same way characters in the text are. (Fanty.FGA.24:55)

FGD also identified high inflation as a concern in both the text and of the present-day Zimbabwean economy. CP7 commented that the theme of inflation is one of the issues that are central to the text and to present-day Zimbabwe; high inflation causes prices to rise so that most people cannot afford to buy basic commodities; in the text, these price hikes occur at an alarming rate (CP7.FGD.24:77). The same sentiment was shared by FGC. Tafadzwa indicated that massive inflation and lack of a local currency are part of the traumatic economic experiences in the text, which also haunt his society. Tafadzwa emphasised that

... inflation is at a high 600% at the time of the text... there is no real currency, and the country is using bearer's cheques. It is quite a sad scenario for a country or an economy to run without a national currency, a situation that has remained in place to date. Onai at some point reveals that so many people had become 'millionaires'. Onai laughs at the thought that she had never imagined herself a millionaire. She describes herself as being among the poorest millionaires in the world. This hints at the terrible devaluation of the currency and severe inflation. (Tafadzwa.FGC.27:113)

Kartel (FGB) pointed out that money which was sold on the streets was not obtainable from banks. She described the contemporary situation as sad:

One must buy money... exchange rate rises sometimes by the hour... one wonders where our generation is going with such an ugly economy. When you look at it all closely, you see the timelessness of the novel. What the author portrays of the Zim society of the 2005 period has remained the same to date and has even increased and worsened. (Kartel.FGB.24:71)

FGB identified the lack of formal industrial production as a cause for economic breakdown. Tyra postulated that in the text, there is no industrial production, as many companies migrate to other countries and retrench workers in the process. She likened the situation to contemporary Zimbabwe, which was characterised by massive unemployment that resulted

in an increased crime rate, including robberies (Tyra.FGB.27:109). During another discussion on themes from the text, which reflected present-day Zimbabwean society, Tyra mentioned that people engaged in small informal businesses. She articulated that the novel reveals the characteristics of hope and resilience, which she described as a feature of Zimbabwean society that has remained to the present day. She remarked that

In response to the massive economic meltdown, people have managed to engage themselves in activities such as running little shops or vending and even going out to neighbouring countries like South Africa to buy goods for resale back home. It is like people have some hope that they can earn a living even if the economy doesn't favour them and they face their struggles in a hopeful approach. (Tyra.FGB.24:64)

In another discussion on binaries existent in the text, Tyra (FGB) referred to the dwindling formal industry/booming informal industry binary. She reiterated that the Zimbabwean economy was threatened by a lack of formal industrial production, which was contrary to the boom in the informal industry. Tyra said that

Tagwira presents the formal/informal industry binary through Gari's workplace, the Coca-Cola Company as the former, and the Siyaso Industry and Mbare musika (market stall) as the latter. The Coca-Cola company... a multi-national company... employing many local people and is facing loss... dwindled economy... production slackening and sales decreasing... rumoured to be in the process of closing... presence of the company is good for the socio-economic face of the country... through exports and tax revenues...informal industry is growing as evidenced by Siyaso where thousands of people engage in various informal trades...informal is growing bigger than the formal sector; evidence of a decaying economy because the informal sector is largely untaxed. Unfortunately, this situation prevails to date. (Tyra.FGB.28:129)

The participants also lamented the persistent lack of electrical power supply in the text and in present-day Zimbabwe as a heavy blow to the economy and the livelihood of the people. FGA pointed out that the traumatic consequences were aggravated by the economic malaise. (Fanty.FGA.27:104). This was reiterated by Maggie in FGC, who observed that the electricity shortage in the country caused trauma, especially in critical service delivery sectors like hospitals, and that the absence of a power back-up plan in hospitals is a traumatising condition. Maggie lamented that electricity and fuel are economic drivers in the modern world, but Zimbabwe had witnessed severe power shortages over a long period; industrial production thrives on the availability of both fuel and power (Maggie.FGC.27;114).

The theme of retrenchment was also discussed as part of the economic challenges haunting the text and contemporary Zimbabwean society. Retrenchment was perceived by the participants as a negative economic fallout which had devastating consequences on people's livelihoods. Kudzie (FGB) stated that massive retrenchment resulted in high levels of unemployment; one of the painful experiences of the Zimbabwean society today. She said

that unemployment had resulted in serious brain-drain whereby many educated people were migrating to countries like South Africa looking for jobs (Kudzie.FGB.24:63). Kuku (FGA) linked the retrenchment problem to her understanding of the economic history of Zimbabwe. She stated that she believed that the problem of retrenchment experienced in the text as well as in her society had originated with the adoption of ESAP (Kuku.FGA.27:103).

In response to Kuku's proposition, Bella blamed ESAP induced retrenchment for a myriad of economic ills that had befallen the country and had driven people to commit murder. She advanced the view that

From what I have heard, in some companies, some people went to extremes at the peak of the ESAP initiated retrenchments, killing fellow workmates to take their posts. I am told that I lost an uncle in what was suspected to be foul play emanating from the company's intended retrenchments. (Bella.FGA.27:103)

In FGB, Miracle raised the negative effects of the economic meltdown, such as the massive exodus of Zimbabweans due to the diaspora in the bid to ease their economic woes. She described the wayward behaviour of contemporary youths caused by the economic meltdown and the subsequent diaspora:

because these youths' parents are out there in various countries across the globe, as victims of an ill economy while the money they are earning there and sending back home, and their absence from home are making their children victims of and perpetrators of immorality. (Miracle.FGB.24:66)

This sentiment was echoed by Kudzie, who described Zimbabwean society as characterised by acts of desperation and by misguided ways of trying to drown sorrows. She referred to the behaviour of street children who bought glue to sniff instead of buying food. They dampened their pain through glue sniffing which gave them temporary relief from their difficult reality. Kudzie concluded by suggesting that economic hardships and moral decadence were related issues (Kudzie.FGB.24:69).

The focus groups also alluded to poverty as a major concern of the text, which emanates from a weak economic infrastructure. FGD identified poverty as a central socio-economic theme that traumatises the people of Mbare in the text, and contemporary society. According to Hassan, the description of Onai's house is synonymous with poverty. For example, the rickety metal gate, battered cardboard box used as a dressing table, threadbare blanket, black and white television and wobbly wooden table, all speak of poverty (Hassan.FGD.27:115). CP7 added that the small black and white television is described as Onai's most prized possession and that she prepares food, which mainly consists of boiled cabbage, without cooking oil. He further referred the group to page 67 of the text, which describes Onai's table as always

consisting of the most basic food, which usually includes *sadza* (maize-meal porridge) and boiled cabbage without tomatoes; she can only buy meat for her children at Christmas and New year, and for Onai, having a small braai on those occasions was wanton extravagance. CP7 also recalled the time when Onai said that hair care is pure extravagance. CP7 emotionally remarked that

It is quite sad to realise that a woman would consider hair care as extravagance considering that women normally would care very much about their hair as a crucial part of their general outlook and feminine presentation. (CP7.FGD.27:116)

Benco added that there is a link between the themes of poverty and gender. Onai rebukes herself for harbouring the thought of buying new underwear as useless extravagance. He stated that the level of poverty and suffering witnessed by people at this point in the text is pathetic and appalling, as women no longer care about their private hygiene. Benco further related that

But when I discussed this book with my mom the other day, she told me that the situation was the same in 2008 in this country. She mentioned those things like most people not being able to access things like underwear, make-up, hair extensions, etc. Come to think of it, these things define women, they are most women's concern, yet they are here considered as an extravagance. (Benco.FGD.27:116)

5.5.5 Sub-theme 3.5: Midungwe

Dungwe/Mudungwe is the Shona singular word for a 'queue'; the plural form is Midungwe, which means 'queues' in English. I chose to use the Shona name because most of the participants described queueing, which they said is peculiar to the Zimbabwean context. Maggie said that the noun 'queue' is synonymous with Zimbabwe, and she further proposed that it would be a gross misrepresentation of historical detail if a person from her generation were to narrate the history of post-independence Zimbabwe without mentioning the perennial queues (Maggie.FGC:24:72).

5.5.5.1 Face-face interviews with the learners

The general observation by the participants was that queuing is largely a result of gross shortages of basic commodities, both in the text and in their context. Hassan expounded that

I think one cannot mention the central issues of both the text and the contemporary Zim society without mentioning the shortages, which rock the society day in day out. There are shortages of both material and human resources. (Hassan.L.7:1)

This view was reverberated by Kante who observed that the core issues raised in the text are shortages of commodities and poverty, which go hand in hand, especially in Mbare. He viewed society in the text as thoroughly drained of energy by the shortages of basic commodities,

which result in endless queuing. He also observed that their lives revolve around queues, which they cannot avoid, lest they starve. Kante pointed out that inequality is exposed through the description of shortages in the text and present-day Zimbabwe:

poor people of Mbare are the ones who are described as queuing for basic foodstuffs... the rich being in fuel queues. One wonders if the rich aren't eating as well... gives an impression of unequal distribution of resources across the society. During the school holidays, most of us students endure queues for various commodities in our different residential places. (Kante.7:3)

Kuku said that she felt pity for the poor women in the text, who walk barefoot, for long distances in search of basic commodities in town and at shopping centres:

These days we still experience the same queuing predicament, though with the cell phone convenience, sometimes we are saved the hustle of just walking in search without being sure where to get a commodity. (Kuku.7:8)

5.5.5.2 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the group discussions, shortages were raised as one of the central concerns of the text, which also reflected the present-day Zimbabwean situation. Fanty (FGA) remarked that society of the text experiences rampant shortages of critical commodities such as fuel and bread. She commented that those same conditions prevailed in contemporary Zimbabwe, as there was fluctuating pricing of even the most basic commodities. She added that fuel shortages were the order of the day and that as a result, people suffered the same way as the characters in the text (Fanty.FGA.24:55). Her view was supported by Ahab, who observed that similar to the text, people in present-day Zimbabwe

are having to nurse queues for fuel as well as for commodities in the shops. These queues are the fashion of present-day society with the same commodities, which are in short supply in the time setting of the text also being in short supply, today. (Ahab.FGA.24:55)

In FGB, Tatata complained that the situation currently was such that

Sometimes people are kept off their houses by shortages of important commodities, which have brought unending queues for such commodities as fuel. Men spend nights in queues, and some take advantage of those queues to be out with girlfriends and some women also bring in boyfriends while men are out at the queues. When one puts it together, they see that a rotten economy breeds a foul-smelling society. (Tatata.FGB.24:67)

Zee supported Tatata's viewpoint by suggesting that their generation had become wayward because as youths, they had fallen victim to the queues. She added that youths smoked, drank, and engaged in activities like gambling while parents think they were hustling for commodities (Zee.FGB.24:68).

This was further expounded by Kante, who reiterated that waiting in a long queue would end in the commodity being sold out before it could be bought. He added that one could walk from one suburb to another, wait in the queue and go back home empty-handed, similar to Onai in the text, who walks from Mbare to town in Patapata³ shoes (Kante.FGC:24:72). Maggie stressed that

It's quite sad and rouses emotions especially when one remembers that we are all victims of the same ordeal suffered by characters in the text. I wouldn't describe life in Zimbabwe at any point since I was born without mentioning long queues. The noun queue is synonymous with the noun Zimbabwe. It would be a misrepresentation of historical fact for anyone in this generation to narrate the events of our time without mentioning perennial queues. (Maggie.FGC:24:72)

Deon (FGD) mentioned that commodities were inaccessible to most citizens. She likened the scenario to that in today's Zimbabwe in that prices were very high, and most families failed to afford basic commodities. She observed that commodities are very scarce and very expensive in the text similar to the current situation in Zimbabwe where the goods were expensive, with fuel almost running dry (Deon.FGD.24:77). Jessie responded that money was lacking in both the text and present-day Zimbabwe. She added that in the contemporary Zimbabwe, most goods were available but there was no money, and in the text, both goods and money are scarce. RP emotionally responded that

Nowadays some of the shortages are artificial and some are manufactured shortages whereby some dubious elements and cartels hoard commodities and then sell them at 'black market' prices. There is no fuel at the pump but plenty in jerry cans are being sold at roadsides. (RP.FGD.24:78)

5.5.6: Sub-theme 3.6: Wenera

5.5.6.1 Face-face interviews with the Learners

Most participants identified migration or Wenera as one of the central themes raised in the prescribed text. Bella said that there is a lot of movement in the text, some of it illegal, to outside countries. This represents people's search for employment. She alluded to the writer's reference to the many medical personnel who immigrated to various parts of the world for better opportunities, leaving the health sector at home in disarray (Bella.L.7:13).

³ *Patapata* are foam slipper sandals usually used as indoor toilet shoes, but commonly used as day-day sandals by poor Zimbabweans. Wearing *Patapata* to a public place is usually associated with poverty or lack of appropriate shoes. The '*patapata*' does not protect the wearer from sharp objects and does not prevent ankle rolls and breaks, toe blistering, forefoot load and stress (Kaguyo et al, 2020).

Similarly, Hassan mentioned that labour migration is a cause for human resource shortages, or the brain drain in the text; this results in catastrophes that include the many deaths in the hospital, which Emily mentions. He highlighted that the massive brain drain is aggravated by factors such as low wages and job scarcity:

This is not only a problem of the text but one that our current society has nursed for quite some time. Brain drain has affected many sectors of the Zimbabwean economy, especially. Many professionals have been produced but have not been sustained due to material resource shortages and many other push factors. (Hassan.L.7:2)

Bella said that many women and girls illegally crossed into South Africa assisted by long-distance drivers like John in the text. He ‘helps’ them cross the border and he gets forex in return. She also referred to other instances of illegal border crossing in the text. For instance, Hannah, one of Onai’s colleagues at the market, explains that her husband illegally crossed into South Africa, where he disappeared. Bella referred to where Onai “*wondered about the woman’s husband. Hopefully, he was not among the unidentified group who had recently made headlines- the men had drowned in the Limpopo River while trying to escape to South Africa.*” (Tagwira, 2006:211). According to Bella, it appears that Zimbabwean society, both in the text and today, has high expectations of South Africa. Consequently, Zimbabweans risked illegally crossing the border with uncertain work prospects. She further said that some applied for asylum. Bella cited consequences of migration:

Yaa, some people have made it, families do receive [news] from members who have successfully crossed, but, unfortunately, many perished on the way and after crossing. (Bella.L.7:14)

5.5.6.2 Focus group discussions with the Learners

FGA discussed the brain drain as a common theme. Dassy commended Emily for not falling into the same trap, as the large numbers of educated/professional minds who migrate to other countries in search of opportunities; this led to the acute brain drain:

Today the country is seriously rocked by a massive exodus of professionals and graduates who fail to make it in the saturated employment environment who also face the threat of very low salaries then they leave in frustration. Only a few remain just like Emily in the text. (Dassy.FGA.24:62)

During the same discussion, Ahab identified human trafficking as a common aspect present in the text and in Zimbabwean society. She referred to John in the text, who transports girls and women to South Africa:

Even today, the social media is awash with news of cartels and syndicates crossing people into SA through undesignated places along the Limpopo River and issues of

drowning, robberies, and rape are rampant. We cannot put our fingers to crude evidence, but these things are there in our society. (Ahab.FGA.24:65)

FGB indicated that unemployment was a traumatic phenomenon, which had resulted in a serious brain-drain (Kudzie.FGB.24:68). Rody (FGC) said that in the text, medical personnel are migrating because of ailing working conditions and unsatisfactory remuneration. He added that this exodus or diaspora of medical personnel threatened the health sector; poor remuneration and poor working conditions remained the major push factors (Rody.FGC.25:78).

FGB discussed the issues of labour migration, cross-border trading, and the diaspora as causes of conflict in the text, especially with regards to family relations. Tyra referred to Maya, a cross-border trader who is rumoured to have extra-marital affairs during her errands to South Africa. Chanda's wife lives in the UK. Chanda engages in prostitution and dates many young girls while she is away. Tyra raised the concern that

For many years, many families in Zim are living separately because one partner would be out of the country or both go out, leaving children in the care of relatives. All involved parties are traumatised in huge ways by the distancing, separation, and breakups involved. I understand the trauma of missing one's family because both my parents live and work in SA. I do visit them on school vacations, but many months are characterised by anxiety, nostalgia, boredom, and trauma of missing the family unity we once shared before they migrated the diaspora situation has in some cases resulted in some children being raped by the 'guardians' who betray the trust of both the children and their parents. (Tyra.FGB.27:117)

5.5.7 Sub-theme 3.7: Socio-cultural distress

The participants raised several concerns about the socio-cultural environment of the text, which they closely linked to their own society's socio-cultural experiences. They focused on the negative socio-cultural environment, characterised by distress.

5.5.7.1 Face-face interviews with the learners

During the individual interviews, HIV-AIDS and death were among the matters raised by most participants. CP7 described death as a central theme in the text. He opined that death and AIDS are of equal importance in the text. He emotionally remarked that

The writer aptly captures the sad situation of the time, whereby AIDS robbed many families of their loved ones. There was a time in the history of our country when attending a funeral was like attending any other function when death ceased to carry the weight it is supposed to carry in our culture. (CP7.L.7:1)

Deon also expressed his view that the AIDS pandemic is one of the themes the writer dwells on in the text; the people witness many AIDS-related deaths, which emotionally and psychologically shake them. He referred to Onai's mother, Mamusara, who loses children to the pandemic; she has to nurse two sick children (sons) whom she eventually surrenders to the pandemic. Deon, in an emotionally charged voice, stated that

The history of AIDS in Zimbabwe is a dark chapter, we have many victimised families today, and many orphans have owed their pathetic situations to the same monster pandemic. Many old parents who gave birth to numbers of children were left childless by the monster. (Deon.L7:6)

Vuyo also mentioned AIDS-related deaths as among the central themes of the text. He alluded to page 241 of the text, where a grave cannot be secured for Gari because graveyards are filled due to AIDS-related deaths. Vuyo expressed his shock at the 'un-cultural' habit of pre-purchasing gravesites:

Honestly, Madam, it appears like there is a scramble for gravesites up until now because we hear that at cemeteries like Glen Forest, most of the gravesites there were already bought, by people who don't even know when they will die. It's sort of queer in our society for one to buy a grave when they are still alive. Things are changing, it's something we used to consider unheard of in our culture, but well, it's happening. (Vuyo.L.7:18)

Dassy alluded to Nhaka (inheritance) as an unfair practice that reduced women to objects in the text. Dassy complained that at Gari's funeral, Onai, his widow, is not given a chance to speak as Gari's relatives take centre stage. Dassy indicated that in the text, as well in present-day Zimbabwean society, a widow

is not consulted concerning her future and is just expected to loyally consent to being inherited by Toro, Gari's brother... unfairly accused by relatives... of killing Gari...refusal to marry Toro... results in her being chased out of the 'family' house, together with her three children... denied access to Gari's bank card and his benefits from his former workplace. This indecent treatment is not peculiar to Onai but is typical of our tradition, which perceives all property as belonging to the husband alone. Even today, the courts are awash with cases of women who are dispossessed of properties such as houses at the death of husbands. (Dassy.L.7:17)

Kante pointed out that men are portrayed as reckless in the text; Gari sleeps with Sheila, a prostitute, and treats Gloria, another prostitute, as a second wife. He added that Gloria and Gari have unprotected sex. Kante complained that all these are signs of recklessness on Gari's part, who spends money on beer and women; when he falls ill, there is no money for medication; he has no savings, and he does not invest in any business (Kante.L.11:37).

Benco also described Zimbabwean society as patriarchal, which promoted man's irresponsibility and recklessness. He indicated that many men indulged in womanising, and

that some had left their homes, but their wives accepted them back on their return. He related that some men like his uncle, left home and spent years, drinking and womanising, and then returned home when they were sick and infected with AIDS; their wives nurse them in their sickness (Benco. 11:39).

Tamuda also condemned his society for ignoring promiscuity and polygamy when perpetrated by men. He recalled when Katy got married, her aunt's advice was that she had to accept that men had sexual needs that could not be satisfied by one woman. Tamuda referred to this aspect of society:

The culture permits men to have more than one sex partner or even more than one wife. This makes the society patriarchal and oppressive on women. (Tamuda.L.11:36)

5.5.7.2 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the focus group discussions, HIV/AIDS and death were identified as major concerns of the text and present-day Zimbabwe. Dassy (FGA) observed that in the text, the HIV pandemic is presented as a cause of death and a threat to marriages. She added that today, Zimbabwe is a victim of the pandemic. She, however, stated that today, as opposed to the situation in the text, ARVs are available and accessible to all people. She emphasised that despite the availability of ARVs, the reality remained that AIDS had caused many deaths in families that were now headed by children (Dassy.FGA.24:59). Dassy's view was echoed by Kartel from FGB, who observed that people still died of AIDS, despite the improved availability of ARVs. People died due to denial, negligence, and lack of knowledge. Some people were not tested due to the social stigma attached to the disease (Kartel.FGB.24:62).

Miracle from FGB also identified HIV-AIDS as a socio-cultural problem, citing that being HIV positive was a traumatic experience, especially in the text where ARVs are unavailable; many people die due to lack of ARVs at the clinic. She referred to Sheila, a prostitute in the text who lives in constant fear and the knowledge that death awaits her. Miracle sympathised with Sheila who is concerned about the future of her child would die. Miracle stressed that the situation traumatises the innocent child that knows nothing about the circumstances of its birth. Sympathisers like Onai are also traumatised by Sheila's fast-deteriorating condition and that of her baby due to HIV-AIDS. Miracle emotionally lamented that

Realistically, Sheila is just an epitome; the sad reality of our time is that it's the same extent to which HIV can be devastating because it haunts both the infected and the affected. The sick person suffers it together with those around him or her. Our society today has two types of victims of the pandemic: the infected and the affected. I doubt if anybody, anywhere in our society can claim that they have never been affected by HIV-AIDS. (Miracle.FGB.27:112)

Roe (FGD) proposed that HIV-AIDS is another traumatic experience that befalls families in the text, and which devastated many families and individuals in Zimbabwe. He indicated that Sheila is devastated because she has no hope of surviving the disease, and the history of the pandemic in Zimbabwe was similar for many. Roe opined that the problems Sheila encounters as an HIV victim are recorded in his community as well:

It is not news that at some point, victims failed to access ARVs at the hospitals; corruption at the distribution points, where one has to be connected in order to get the drugs; one had slept with someone who would, in turn, give them the ARVs; some people were selling the drugs on the streets of Harare, for example, at Market Square. (Roe.FGD.27:117)

In response, Benco supported the view that AIDS had similarly rocked his community as it has in the text. He observed that

When I look at the way prostitution has continued to date despite the devastation AIDS has caused, I get the impression that there are many people in our society who have chosen and who continue to choose to rather die of AIDS than of hunger. The situation is just bleak, especially when one looks at massive unemployment and the ailing economy. It looks like people are squeezed between two cruel fingers and whichever choice one makes has its consequent pains. I think many of our people end up like Sheila, choosing AIDS, thinking it is better to die of AIDS but on a full stomach. (Benco.FGD.27:117)

Kartel described death as a traumatic experience that consumes Hondo, an ex-liberation and war veteran who dies due to the trauma caused by the dashed expectations of independence. Hondo feels rejected and dishonoured by the society that he helped to build through his contributions during the liberation struggle. She further emphasised that the painful reality in Zimbabwe was that the struggle was in itself a traumatic experience for both the fighters and the masses. Kartel said that anyone who witnessed the liberation struggle, or who participated in it would not embrace violence again. She indicated that many survivors of the violent struggle did not want another war, thus, the likes of Hondo opt to die silently and in despair (Kartel.FGB.27:106).

Miracle stated that the death of a family member was indeed a traumatic experience, which she had also endured:

I fully understand his pain at losing a close person because my father's death is some special kind of pain that I have been haunted by and I am certain will continue to haunt me maybe for a lifetime. It's not the same as a simple "Goodbye, see you next year", it's for eternity. Death pricks the most hidden and softest parts of a person's heart, and it does so mercilessly (voice sounding emotional). (Miracle.FGB.27:106)

Kante discussed women in patriarchal society who abused and harassed their fellow women. He referred to Chipso, Gari's sister, who decides Onai's fate after Gari's burial. Kante blamed

Chipo for rejecting Onai's children and blaming Onai for Gari's death; Chipo thereby participated in the patriarchal stance of negating and relegating women who desire independence. According to Kante, the patriarchal practice considered marriage as a yoke, as the man is the owner of the yoked cow; everyone who shares the man's blood does as he pleases with the collectively owned cow. In Kante's words:

That emanates from the traditional perspective that a wife is married to the whole family or clan. Sometimes when a new wife joins the family, one hears the elders saying, 'mukadzi ndewemusha, anoroorerwa mhuri yese, haasi wemurume wake chete' [a wife is married for the family, not for her husband alone]. (Kante.FGC.24:76)

5.5.8 Sub-theme 3.8: Religion and beliefs

The participants raised issues that revealed their affiliation to Christianity, African Traditional Religion, and to certain beliefs that exist within their culture and societies.

5.5.8.1 Face-face interviews with the learners

Fanty referred to characters in the text who uphold Christian values. She proposed that the novel carries the theme of love, through the many characters who demonstrate love. She mentioned Katy's unconditional love for Onai. Fanty explained that

Katy bears the 1 Corinthians 13 type of love. Unconditional love, and love which is not harsh, love which conquers all. Then, there is also Emily who represents a deep type of love... Emily is a young doctor, who has the potential and capability to leave a low-paying job with harsh conditions, but she chooses to remain in the hospital, in the country with the intention of making a difference... She says that she is not there for money, because it's not there, but she is there for the thousands of suffering people who need her assistance. That is a rare type of love considering the extent to which the society has become individualistic. Emily demonstrates the love Jesus Christ showed to the world, whereby he died for all our sins, for no repayment. His blood was shed for us, but none of us paid him for that. Emily is like that, she sacrifices her happiness, wealth, money, good living, etc., and remains in the hospital to save lives. Sacrificing for others under the tough economic conditions of the day is indeed living like Christ our Lord. Many people have lost love for their closet of family and individualism has claimed the hearts of many and destroyed many relationships. (Fanty.L.7:9)

Benco described women as bearers of a Christian obligation and responsibility to humanity endowed by God. He alluded to the writer's presentation of women as compassionate figures who are always ready to assist fellow human beings. Benco described most of the women in the text, and in his community, as gifted with the unique qualities of compassion: love, humility, generosity, care, forgiveness, loyalty, sympathy, faithfulness, and true friendship. He added that the writer presents most female characters as being aware that God endowed women with the responsibility of bringing life into the world. Benco appreciated that it is women who give birth, which is a gesture of love; they are God's helpers in bringing life and they assist

God in sustaining that life by nurturing a child until it is self-reliant. He admitted that he is male, but he appreciated women's nature; for instance, Emily, a compassionate doctor sacrifices her happiness to remain in Zimbabwe and helps sick people at the under-equipped hospital and for an inadequate salary. Onai endures all the abuse and beating from Gari but remains steadfast in her marriage and supports Gari until his death; Katy remains a friend to Onai; Faith remains compassionate although she could have forgotten the poor people of Mbare when she dates Tom, an affluent person. Faith convinces Tom to assist the Mbare people. Benco commented that the women in the text and in her community are empathetic and understanding towards those who suffer. He commented that women deserve recognition for their acts of compassion and for motherhood. Benco indicated that most women have forgiving hearts and they endure and shoulder the pains of their families. Benco concluded that women even loved their wayward husbands and accepted them when they returned home after many years of careless living (Benco. 11:39).

Kartel referred to the people's belief in spiritualists as capable of solving their problems. She alluded to Tsikamutanda, a spiritualist in the text; they were also popular in present-day Zimbabwe. She further referred to Commissioner Nzou in the text who consults Tsikamutanda, to improve his position at work (Kartel.L.8:31). Kuku also commented on the same issue, suggesting that Commissioner Nzou wants a promotion so desperately that he consults a spiritualist, Tsikamutanda, for luck-chums so that these could expedite his promotion. She described the visit to a spiritualist as a sign of lack of confidence in himself as a competent police officer (Kuku.L.11:42).

5.5.8.2 Focus group discussions with the learners

During the group discussions, Rody (FGC) commended Onai for upholding the Christian value of love and commitment to marriage:

Onai's deep compassion and feminine heart are shown at the time Gari collapses just after ordering Onai out of his house and his life when he brings in Gloria as a second wife. She shows a remarkable example of "Till death do us part", which most marriages seem not to adhere to in this age. (Rody.FGC.26:95)

Fanty (FGA) shared a similar sentiment, and she explained that immediately after the humiliating incident of Gari choosing Gloria, a prostitute, as a second wife, Gari falls ill; Gloria runs away, leaving Onai to take care of Gari and to endure the trauma of his sickness all alone. Fanty stated that Onai looks after Gari on his deathbed. Onai is further traumatised when she is chased away by Gari's family. Fanty further explained that all these setbacks do not change Onai, who resembles the Christian wife, who stands by her vows unconditionally; she is juxtaposed to Gloria who represents vanity and greed (Fanty.FGA.27:105).

Kartel (FGB) alluded to the desperation pervading present-day Zimbabwean society due to the continuously deteriorating economic situation, similar to the descriptions in the text. She said that most people were turning to God for solutions and answers. She stated that in churches people prayed and fasted in attempts to change the economic situation of the day (Kartel.FGB.24:65). In response, Dassy commented that in present-day Zimbabwe, prosperity churches exploited the people. She blamed the gospel of prosperity for making people believe that they could succeed without work. She stated that there was too much preaching of miracle money and that people had turned away from the conventional churches that encouraged hard work. She insisted that conventional churches valued education as a means to a good life (Dassy.FGB.24:65).

During a discussion on the writer's presentation of the psyche of the characters in the text, Rody alluded to the use of the song 'Ivai nesu Mwari Baba' (Lord be with us). He proposed that the song could have been used to reveal the desire by women to be heard by God to intervene in a society, which suppresses women and others. Rody referred to many silenced groups like widows, children, orphans, the poor and workers. He added:

The song also has a message of hopefulness that the Lord will intervene, a sign that the problems at hand have risen beyond man and it's now a question of faith in the creator. It is quite typical of humanity to submit to God whenever situations become pressing and where solutions seem beyond one's control and where there seems to be no room for understanding with the perpetrators of one's afflictions.
(Rody.FGC.26:96)

Miracle (FGB) raised the belief in spiritualists. She described Police Commissioner Nzou's belief that Tsikamutanda's luck-chums will secure his promotion reveals Nzou's desperation and greed, which contradicts 'ubuntu' ethics. In her view, all that mattered to people was to survive the economic situation in Zimbabwe. She further suggested that the present-day Zimbabwean economy had negatively affected people's psyche, turning them into mere shadows of who they were supposed to be (Miracle.FGB.26:91). In FGA, the same sentiment was shared by Bella, who observed that Nzou's actions reveal the insecurity that he harbours. He observed that Nzou wants to secure his job and a promotion with magic charms (Bella.FGA.26:87). During the discussions with FGC, Kante described Commissioner Nzou's use of magic chums and the visit to an herbalist to attain a promotion as evidence for his greed. He blamed Nzou for wanting to hasten his promotion by unscrupulous means. Kante explained that Nzou

represents the elements in the society who are ready to go to any extremes to achieve their interests. This has become very common in our society with many cases of people buying 'Zvikwambo or goblins' [inanimate objects that are used as companions that

can generate mysterious riches or success] *to boost businesses or to use as luck-chums*. (Kante.FGC.26:97)

Kartel (FGB) alluded to the belief in and use of chums and goblins in the text and in her community. She detested the private use of chums by men, which in many cases destroys trust in marriages. She alluded to John's venture into human trafficking, to which she remarked

Such a scenario is common especially in the lives of many women in Zim and beyond because men do things privately and they only become open when trouble strikes and there is no more option but to say it out. Some women even discover it at the husband's death. For example, the issue of goblins, which men buy for purposes of getting easy wealth and they keep them secretly. Usually, men keep them secret and the discovery by their wives, relatives, and children is quite traumatising. (Kartel.FGB.27:110)

5.5.9 Sub-theme 3.9: Hunhu/Ubuntu

The participants dwelt on the aspect of *Hunhu/Ubuntu* as a central concern of the text and Zimbabwean society. The general observation was that both the text and community are marred by gross moral dearth.

5.5.9.1 Learners' poems and poem-drawings

Some of the learners' poems and poem-drawings were about violation, as well as the upholding of *Hunhu*. Hassan's poem-drawing, Figure 5.15, is a large, rootless tree that is being consumed by a strong fire. He explained that it reflects the demise or disintegration of the Zimbabwean *Hunhu* fibre due to immorality. He said that the rootlessness resembles the directionless Zimbabwean society, which had lost its moral base. He emphasised the violation of the marriage institution due to social ills such as promiscuity, greed, and selfishness, which he equated to the raging fire in his drawing (Hassan.L.12:34).



Figure 5.15: Hassan's poem-drawing

5.5.9.2 Face-face interviews with the learners

During the individual interviews, Tatata (L) alluded to drug dealing, which is mentioned in the text. She referred to Onai's visit to the graves of her twin brothers who died of AIDS. She indicated that Onai mentions that her twin brothers were criminals and drug dealers, who lied and dated the same girlfriend, from whom they were suspected to have contracted HIV. Tatata stated

Many city dwellers nowadays engage in various crimes, which are aggravated by the tough economic situation. The unfortunate part is that most parents or even wives and children never get to know some of the criminal activities conducted by the men, and which bring them food to the table. In most cases, things only spill out when the perpetrator meets a dead-end. (Tatata.L.7:12)

The participants also condemned rampant prostitution, which they blamed for many other social problems experienced by their community and described in the text. Tatata mentioned moral decadence as one of the core themes of the text. Tatata referred to Melody's confession that she dated Chanda, a married man, in an effort to get off the streets of Harare. Tatata referred to irresponsible men like Gari who visits prostitutes and drinks (Tatata.L.7:13). Tatata's view was reiterated by Kante who criticised Gari's promiscuous behaviour. Kante

emotionally lamented that Gari's attitude towards women pained him and reminded him of his own father's recklessness and lack of care (Kante.L.11:39).

Kudzie observed that society treated men and women differently on the issues of prostitution and promiscuity. She was hurt by how Gloria and Sheila's prostitution is addressed openly, while men like Silas and Gari sleep with prostitutes but are not labelled. She complained that

Our society is somewhat very biased towards men in those respects. For instance, there is so much talk on social media platforms and even in the newspapers about female prostitutes in the Avenues area of Harare. Yes, I am not saying they are not there, but would they be called prostitutes if there were no men who hire them? Would they still roam the Avenues if there was no 'business'? They exist because male prostitutes exist. Come to think of it, most of those men who pick prostitutes are married men. If anything, I would say it's the married men who are prostitutes because those single ladies are unattached, and they are free to date. (Kudzie.L.11:49)

Kudzie blamed Zimbabwean culture, which condoned men's promiscuous behaviour. She explained that polygamy was acceptable, and it was debated whether married men should be allowed to have 'Small houses'. In her view, dating another woman outside marriage was prostitution, but men were allowed to do this. She condemned the 'Small house' syndrome and remarked that giving 'Small houses' rights allowed men to own many women. She concluded that culture allowed men to prostitute, that was why there were female prostitutes (Kudzie.L.11:49).

The participants also raised family and societal cohesion, which is a characteristic of *Hunhu/Ubuntu* in Zimbabwean culture. They largely alluded to broken family cohesion. Deon lamented the gross neglect of orphans in the text and by the community. He referred to Sheila, in the text, who explains that her family neglected her when her parents died, and she had to choose between morality and dying of hunger and becoming a prostitute and dying of AIDS. Deon emotionally said that Sheila's unfortunate and pathetic AIDS-related death indicated that society should not condemn wayward women without endeavouring to understand them. He emphasised that society needed to be more tolerant of these women. He further commented that the writer's presentation of this societal evil is very realistic because many families have experienced this; a female member turned to prostitution out of desperation, and the family failed to assist her by blaming her for indulging in prostitution (Deon.L.11:40).

Ahab commented that a section of contemporary society celebrated female domination. She said that there had been a shift away from the patriarchal dominance by men in the home. She observed that in the text, Chipu's husband, Mazai is described as quiet and subdued, and he helps with the house chores. She indicated that these representations are not just creations

by the writer, but a true reflection of what happens in society. Ahab mocked her relatives' experiences:

I have been to many houses, visiting relatives and friends and I have witnessed worse than these two. Hahaha (laughing). Madam, some women rule their homes and their husbands. My uncle's wife can send him to do all sorts of chores, including changing the baby's diapers. One of our neighbours is always shouted at by his wife, called all sorts of names, even in public and sometimes we see him hanging his clothes and one wonders if it's only hanging or he washes them for himself. Yaa women can be 'kings' in their homes, while patriarchy is busy rendering men a collective identity of dominance. Honestly, I cannot deny that many people know about it because the grape vine is always alert. Village gossip is a reality, but I am not too sure how many know about it. But to us close neighbours, oh! It's almost normal now. (Ahab.L.11:47)

Hassan mentioned materialism as a threat to society in both the text and present-day Zimbabwe. He lamented that society had been destroyed by the love of money, which was triggered by a harsh economic outlook. Hassan stated that the current economic situation in Zimbabwe forced people into condemnable activities, and he suggested that the writer uses characters like John to reveal the real situation in Zimbabwe (Hassan.L.8:21).

Rody raised an aspect of disrespect for the dead, which he condemned as uncharacteristic of his culture. He referred to the writer's description of the situation at the mortuary as suggestive of a system that has denied people the respect associated with death. Here, the corpses decompose on the floor, and the refrigerator is dysfunctional. Rody opined that it is ironic to call it a mortuary; it has become a corpse safe-keeping house, where the corpse is kept at the relatives' risk. He further observed that

The sad part is that the poor people, suffer sub-human conditions both in life and in death. There is no respect for the living and the dead. Our culture is known for respecting the dead, just like the relatives who speak at Gari's graveside mention a lot of good things about him and they leave out the negatives. That's what our culture is known to be, yet the service providers deny the dead the decency of refrigeration of corpses. (Rody.L.8:27)

RP argued that conditional love diminished *Hunhu*. He alluded to the text's presentation of Melody, who represents girls who date older married men for money. RP stated that he suspected that since the introduction of ESAP, poverty had created many 'gold-diggers; women or men who 'loved' for the sake of money and other material benefits (RP.FGD.24:82).

The participants also commented on the text's descriptions that promote *Hunhu*, some of which mirror the participants' society and their particular communities. Maggie viewed the act

of ‘Kutanda botso’⁴ as a means for offenders to repent their crimes. She referred to Mawaya who loses his wife; he blames himself for sending her on an errand during which she is involved in a fatal accident; he goes into self-designed ‘Kutanda botso’ as a way of appeasing his wife whom he claims to have killed. Maggie said that Mawaya embarks on street life, eating with dogs from rubbish bins and sleeping on the street as a sign of penance (Maggie.L.11:41).

Tamuda also mentioned the ‘*Kutanda botso practice*, which the writer manipulates to send a message to rich people and that she represents through Mawaya’s madness. Tamuda stated that the writer deliberately eliminates Mawaya’s wife so that Mawaya practices ‘*kutanda botso*’ he becomes a beggar in Mbare, lives among the poor, and he learns that there are poor people who are prepared to share the little they have. Tamuda explained that Onai shares the plain sadza (thick maize porridge, the staple food in Zimbabwe) with Mawaya and she is always patient with him, contrary to the rich women in the fuel queue who despise Onai and associate her position of poverty with prostitution. Tamuda said that during the time Mawaya stays on the streets, he learns about the beauty of sharing, and on the day he chooses to go back home, to the affluence of Borrowdale, he buys groceries for Onai. In Tamuda’s view, the writer suggests that Mawaya admires the sweetness of sharing which he reciprocates.

Tamuda also observed that during the time Mawaya is on the streets, the writer exposes many issues about the general situation of society. Tagwira does so through the experiences of a madman, and these include rioting and economic disorder, police brutality, hunger, and the existence of street children. Tamuda also recalled that Mawaya is hit by a car and taken to hospital; here he shares the psychiatric ward with a lunatic who claims to be a prominent minister but who leads an extravagant life. Tamuda said that the writer uses madness to expose the negligence of duty, corruption, and extravagance of the elite; he viewed Mawaya’s madness as a crucial avenue through which the writer expresses some of the critical themes in the text (Tamuda.L.8:22).

5.5.9.3 Focus group discussions with the learners

The groups alluded to rampant moral decadence in the text and in contemporary Zimbabwe. Dassy (FGA) proposed that the text presents moral decadence through broken marriages due to extra-marital affairs. She emphasised that the current Zimbabwean situation, similar to the text, was characterised by rampant prostitution, especially in the Avenues area of Harare (Dassy.FGA.24:55).

⁴ *Kutanda botso* (ritual cleansing to appease the aggrieved spirit of the deceased biological mother) is a ritual “cleansing process undertaken by adult sons or daughters who disrupt the social norm. They have been taught not to verbally abuse, assault or kill, as they will suffer the consequences of an avenging spirit” (Chivasa, 2021).

Kartel (FGB) referred to the theme of extra-marital affairs, where Melody, a university student, dates Chanda, a married man, for university fees (Kartel.FGB.24:66). Kuku (FGA) observed that cases of students involved in love affairs with married men were on the increase in Zimbabwe. She said that

University students, both male and female date older and rich women and men so that they can meet their material needs. They even have special names for their sugar daddies and mummies, for example, these days they are called 'Blessers'. Sadly, even primary, and secondary school children have fallen to the 'Blessers' fashion and the 'Blessers' have died morally, grabbing other people's children, yet the same 'Blessers' are also parents in their own homes. (Kuku.FGA.24:59)

Tatata (FGB) observed that in the text, Chanda's wife sends him money from overseas, which she earns through her reckless escapades. She immigrated overseas and is part of the multitudes of diasporans or the brain drain. Tatata blamed the money that diasporans send to family members and the absence of diasporan parents for the rampant immorality demonstrated by youth in Zimbabwe. Tatata mentioned youths' sexual immorality:

Quite recently there was noise on social media and in some papers about young boys and girls who are engaging in night parties in Bulawayo where they indulge in demoralizing competitions like sex contests. There was a girl who was crowned Queen in one of the contests for managing to have sex with more than ten boys in one night. (Tatata.FGB.24:66)

Miracle commented on increasing AIDS cases in Zimbabwe and blamed the harsh economic environment for promiscuity. She said that high-density suburbs like Epworth run brothels; a place called Boosters 'employs' young girls to offer sexual services to men for food or school fees (Miracle.FGB.24:62). Tatata lamented the recognition of prostitution, as Commercial Sex Workers. She said that moral decadence had persisted in Zimbabwe; prostitution was rampant and was a recognised trade (Tatata.FGB.24:65). Kartel added that

At the International Trade Fair in Bulawayo, earlier this year, for the first time, the sex workers had a stall there, representing themselves like any other company. I read from the papers that one can be slashed with three months of community service if they call a commercial sex worker a prostitute. (Kartel.FGB.24:66)

Tyra added that the recognition of prostitution showed that people were normalizing the abnormal due to the prolonged economic recession and subsequent poverty (Tyra.FGB.24:66).

Zee (FGB) cited rampant divorce, which she believed had been aggravated by prostitution, and the proposed legalisation of 'Small houses'. Zee stated that in the text, prostitution destroys Onai's marriage. She further added that in present-day Zimbabwe, divorce had become rampant; married men left their homes to live with young girls. Zee said that it had

become widespread for a man to leave their homes and seek alternative, less attractive accommodation with his 'Small house' (Zee.FGB.24:67). Tyra added that these illegal marriages were in the process of being recognised. Tyra mocked the recent motion that 'Small houses' had to be legally recognised after a specified period (Tyra.FGB.24:67).

Miracle (FGB) identified the theme of parental irresponsibility in the text, which is illustrated through Gari's alcoholism and absenteeism. She added that in present-day society some men spent money on beer, women, and drugs despite the harsh economic conditions (Miracle.FGB.24:69). Kudzie added that she wondered if inflation did not affect the irresponsible drunkards too. She also suggested that maybe their behaviour was a result of desperation or misguided ways of trying to drown their sorrows. She added that it reminded her of the behaviour of street children who if they received money bought glue to sniff, instead of buying food. Kudzie remarked that there was a link between economic hardships and moral decadence (Kudzie.FGB.24:69).

Kante (FGC) described Gari's irresponsible nature as a father as traumatising, especially for his son, Fari. Kante argued that male children wanted to bond with their fathers. He complained that in the text, Gari does not provide food, clothing, or morale support to his children; he never creates time to bond with them as a father. Kante concluded by emotionally lamenting that

I understand how it feels to be a boy child and to be so distanced from one's father because my father is almost like Gari. He is forever busy and does not seem to regret failing to allow time for me to bond with him. Yaa, I try to manage the pain but it's always there. (Kante.FGC.27:112)

FGA referred to young children vending on the streets and blamed society for failing to value family cohesion as *Hunhu* entails. In the text, Rita is sexually molested by adult men while she is vending. Kuku remarked that Rita is traumatised both physically, through the exhaustion of the day's business, and psychologically through the molestation. Kuku condemned the incident:

This becomes a double potion of abuse for children in the contemporary setting. Many children, especially in the ghetto experience such nasty scenarios and there are many cases of child rape reported on the media nowadays and in my neighbourhood it's quite common. Some families live crowded, like in one room, because of lack of money to pay for bigger apartments, and such scenarios create room for cases of child rape and other related incidents. (Kuku.FGA.27:106)

Benco (FGD) referred to spouses who hastily found another at the death of a partner. He applauded Mawaya for taking up the 'botso' ritual voluntarily, which reflects his deeply felt love for his wife and the deep loss he feels at her death. Benco stressed that it is a sign of respect

and genuine love for his wife, which is quite rare in present-day society. Benco further added that it was a unique expression of love, considering that some people hardly waited for the burial of a spouse before they started looking for another (Benco.FGD.26:99).

The groups also mentioned the upholding of *Hunhu*. The groups referred to Mawaya's voluntary 'Kutanda botso' as a gesture of *Hunhu*, which reflects his deep love for his late wife. Kuku celebrated Mawaya's 'botso' as a sign of penance at the death of his wife. She further stated that the gesture also reveals a society that still preserves cultural ethos (Kuku.FGA.24:59). RP (FGD) observed that Mawaya creates his version of 'kutanda botso' because the ritual is performed if one kills or wrongs a mother or is involved in the death of the mother. Roe opined that the writer uses Mawaya's 'madness' to reveal that there are people who can distinguish between right and wrong, regardless of their class. Roe added that there was hope for societal redemption through this act of love and compassion (Roe.FGD.26:99).

Miracle (FGB) described the death of a close family member as a traumatic experience, which results in Mawaya's madness at the death of his wife. Miracle emphasised that

I fully understand his pain at losing a close person because my father's death is some special kind of pain that I have been haunted by and I am certain will continue to haunt me maybe for a lifetime. It's not the same as a simple "Goodbye, see you next year", it's for eternity. Death pricks the most hidden and softest parts of a person's heart, and it does so mercilessly. (Miracle.FGB.27:106)

Another feature of *Hunhu*, which was discussed by most groups, is hard work. Ahab (FGA) alluded to Emily as an epitome of diligence, commitment, patriotism, selflessness, and a passionate medical practitioner. Emily sacrifices her time and efforts for strangers in a selfish society (Ahab.FGA.24:57). Ahab also mentioned the motherly love, which is reflected in the way Onai suffers with her children (Ahab.FGA.24:59). Similarly, Fanty mentioned Onai's mother, Mamusara, who sells her cattle to pay for Onai's education. Fanty added that despite the hard economic circumstances in Zimbabwe, many parents had remained committed to the education of their children, and, subsequently, Zimbabwe had very high literacy levels (Fanty.FGA.24:59).

Tafadzwa (FGC) indicated that hospitality was a characteristic of *Hunhu*. He explained that the writer uses Sheila to reveal Onai's good-heartedness and soft, feminine nature that some women still carry despite their poverty. Tafadzwa stated that Onai accommodates Sheila in her shack even though Sheila is HIV positive and is shunned by society. In Tafadzwa's view, this reveals Onai's motherly heart, which is also mirrored in her tolerance and hospitality

towards the 'madman', Mawaya whom she feeds despite her poverty and Gari's objections (Tafadzwa.FGC.26:94).

5.6 Face-face interviews with the teachers

The three teachers referred to nine of the sub-themes, and three of them did not mention anything on Sub-theme 1.9: Religion and beliefs.

5.6.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Postcoloniality

Martin referred to poverty, which he described as a product of colonialism. He argued that

In most areas, things are still the same as they were in the time setting of the novella, and some like poverty, have remained the same since colonisation. Many generations have witnessed poverty, which historically started with the colonial set up which divided the country into the haves and the have-nots. It's like most families or groups of people never recovered from the poverty which was imposed by colonial policy.
(Martin.T.21:16)

Kupakwashe also alluded to poverty as a central theme; she testified that both rural and urban communities in Zimbabwe lived in poverty. She added that the majority of people lived in poverty (Kupakwashe.T.20:15). The same sentiment was shared by Robert who observed that on a psychological level, the characters in the novel suffer a lot of psychological pain due to the trauma of poverty. He stressed that psychological pain was visible in Zimbabweans and that poverty was a source of intergenerational trauma.

Robert went on to lament the postcolonial situation under which individualistic tendencies were celebrated through aspects like the 'Dealer syndrome'. Robert said that dealers were celebrated in the novel, for instance, foreign currency dealers and fuel dealers; Commissioner Nzou was one of them. He suggested that there were money and fuel dealers in Zimbabwe, who made huge profits and were treated as celebrities. He emotionally emphasised that

The dealer syndrome has brought our economy into chaos and gross disrepute, and the most unfortunate thing is that it is persisting. The scenario has brought a situation like the one in the novel where we have extreme poverty on one end and extreme wealth on the other. (Robert.T.21:18)

Robert also drew a link between the individualistic dealer syndrome and the colonially induced class division. He blamed individualistic motives for having divided society along economic lines, just the way it was during colonisation (Robert.T.21:18).

Martin alluded to corruption, an offshoot of individualism, as one of the themes the writer addresses in the text, and which affects society. He said that

We have the issues of ... favouritism in government, for example, the character, Tom, has access to privileged information but the author does not mention that outright, but we notice that she is referring maybe to corruption. Tom represents those few elements in our society who are 'correctly' positioned, who access 'correct' information, such as where and when scarce commodities are available. Those who easily lay their hands on resources that are considered unreachable and unaffordable by many. Those who get what they want when they want it and fear nothing. (Martin.T.20:13)

5.6.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Socio-political disposition

Martin raised the theme of patriotism in the text, which he described as uncommon behaviour under the prevailing circumstances. He stated that in the text, Emily, a young female doctor possesses a unique patriotic quality; she adheres to the principle of *Hunhu and chooses to remain in Zimbabwe* and serve the country, which is untypical of the contemporary breed of doctors who would grab any chance to leave for greener pastures (Martin.T 20:14).

5.6.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Economy

Robert described economic mismanagement as the root of all challenges experienced in his community. He stressed that the most important meaning he derived from the text was the mismanagement of the economy. He further described the novel's context as post-independence Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans expecting a better life; the economy is mismanaged, and it affects all facets of life; even house rats do not have enough food (Robert.T.22:22).

During the discussions, the participants mentioned poor services delivery in the text, which was similar to their communities' experiences. According to Martin, (T) the writer dwells on poor service delivery, which was similar to the Zimbabwean situation: potholed roads; lack of clean water; blocked sewage and drainage systems; and staff and material shortages in hospitals (Martin.T.20:14).

Robert said that people suffer in the text, and amenities are absent. He further said that in his community, similar to the novel, there was service-delivery chaos, which included empty shops and water and electricity shortages. Robert further explained that this issue was a contemporary wound, with most parts of Harare experiencing severe water shortages. He also observed that there were borehole water queues in most Harare suburbs.

Kupakwashe recalled the 2005 shortages in Zimbabwe, which included shortages of medical supplies. She indicated that shortages still haunted hospitals in Zimbabwe and had even worsened. She also pointed out that there were no basic materials like bandages and painkillers like paracetamol in most public hospitals. Kupakwashe also said that the inaccessibility of healthcare resources had persisted.

Robert (T) suggested that the writer does not realistically present the protagonist, Onai's economic experiences. He described the novel as a fusion of art and realism, which bordered on the romantic. He mentioned Onai, the protagonist

who seems to win and triumph in the end, after experiencing all the economic challenges that Onai goes through. A typical Zimbabwean woman would not be able to pick herself up and rise so fast. Tagwira fuses art and realism. (Robert.T.22:22)

Kupakwashe (T) observed that Tagwira realistically presents the mismanagement of the economy, which has resulted in economic meltdown in the novel and these circumstances matched those of present-day Zimbabwe. She also lamented the inaccessibility of banks and the use of a local currency, which Zimbabweans cannot use across their borders (Kupakwashe.T.22:23).

5.6.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Midungwe

Kupakwashe (T) described the writer's presentation of perennial queueing as a realistic portrayal of the Zimbabwean situation. She blamed the problem on acute shortages and the subsequent black market trade. She commended the writer for realistically presenting the queueing situation:

Her presentation of the commodity shortages and queues for even the most basic domestic needs is highly realistic. (Kupakwashe.T.22:23)

5.6.5 Sub-theme 3.5: Wenera

Kupakwashe mentioned migration, which she described as having a long history and which caused a myriad of societal problems in Zimbabwean communities. Kupakwashe alluded to labour migration as a social problem in both the text and present-day Zimbabwe. She stated that similar to the novel, around 2005, there was a massive brain drain in Zimbabwe, and many teachers left for 'greener' pastures. She pointed out that the problem had started well before 2005, and with the worsening economic situation, it continued, and by the time of the writing of the novel, it had reached significant levels. She also said that migration to other countries had a long history, which her ancestors also experienced. She alluded to many families losing fathers and sons who had gone to countries like South Africa and some never returned. She added that in many Zimbabwean communities, there were people who were nicknamed 'Mujubheki', (One from Joburg), while some media reports carried unfortunate incidences of rape, murder, drowning, arrests, kidnapping, human trafficking, xenophobia, unpaid labour services, hard labour, hunger, and many others which some of the illegal

immigrants experience in foreign countries, some of them resort to different forms of crime and were arrested, killed, or deported back home. (Kupakwashe.T.21:20)

5.6.6 Sub-theme 3.6: Socio-cultural distress

Martin mentioned HIV-AIDS as one of the shared experiences of Zimbabwean society. He described the AIDS pandemic as a cause for widespread physical and psychological suffering. He said it was an area that had seen some improvement, but AIDS had remained catastrophic. Martin further described it as a generational problem:

Though it mainly hit our country in the early years of independence, the HIV-AIDS pandemic has remained with us for a long time. The pain and suffering caused by the pandemic have a far-reaching impact on many generations of our people.
(Martin.T.21:18)

5.6.7 Sub-theme 3.7: Gender

During the interviews, the participants described the text as having aptly captured gender issues prevalent in Zimbabwean society. They alluded to domestic violence, which Robert described as:

On the psychological level, the characters in the novel suffer a lot of psychological pain, whether it is a housewife being beaten by a husband, like Onai and other women who are seen in the hospital ... Even today the psychological pain is so apparent in the people of Zimbabwe. Issues of domestic violence are rife... The main culprit is economic anxiety, which degenerates into temper tantrums, due to frustration and hunger. Mostly, men are the perpetrators of domestic violence, and they are also victims of psychological disarray due to incapacitation to provide for their families.
(Robert.T.21:18)

Kupakwashe reiterated that the novel presents a society with a high rate of domestic violence which had been on the rise in Zimbabwe. She observed that many deaths had been recorded, which emanated from violent domestic squabbles. She added that with the rise in unemployment, many families spent more time together, which bred misunderstanding due to unfulfilled economic expectations (Kupakwashe.T.20:16).

Kupakwashe said that oppression in marriage was revealed through Onai's unfair treatment by Gari. Kupakwashe stressed that Onai is abused by Gari at the least provocation, for example when the TV is stolen, Gari blames her. He is forever out late on his careless drinking and womanising escapades, and when he returns home, he finds fault in Onai. She is not formally employed, because he denies her that opportunity, but she looks after the children. Kupakwashe blamed oppressive Zimbabwean culture:

[The] situation is typical. Many women in our society suffer different kinds of oppression, though most of them suffer silently because our culture is also oppressive in that a proper woman wants to keep her marriage and does not publicise her marital challenges. (Kupakwashe.T.20:16)

Martin observed that gender disparity was another shared experience of Zimbabwean society. He stated Zimbabwean society was patriarchal. He lamented that women had remained the 'other' sex globally (Martin.T.21:17).

Martin credited the writer's realistic presentation of abusive husbands. He described Gari as a typical abusive husband. He further opined that there were many Gari versions in society. He lamented that many families witnessed abuse of women and children by irresponsible and selfish men (Martin.T.22:22).

5.6.8 Sub-theme 3.8: Hunhu

Martin alluded to the writer's articulation of the traditional 'Kutanda botso'⁵ ritual, a corrective measure imposed on those who killed or angered a mother before her death. Martin explained that Zimbabwean society's concerns, which the writer addresses, are realistic; the texts reads like a newspaper article. He, however, observed that some of Tagwira's depictions of character are questionable. For instance, her depiction of Mawaya was alien because '*kutanda botso*' appeased a wronged mother and not a wife. Martin said that, moreover, Mawaya is not responsible for the death of his wife, yet he adheres to *kutanda botso*:

The reality on the ground is that we have men who are very abusive and who can even go on a date with another woman on the day of a deceased wife's burial...in our culture to have a dress code for the burial of a loved one and to see the widowed woman all dressed up, with heavy make-up at the burial of her husband, should be condemnable, but these days it's the in-thing. (Martin.T.22:22)

5.6.9 Summary of theme 3

Theme 3 was based on the participants' perceptions of subtextual themes, which are raised within ten sub-themes. Figure 5.16 summarises the sub-themes in terms of the frequency with which each of them was raised in the interviews and focus group discussions, as well as in the poems and poem-drawings.

⁵ "*Kutanda botso* is ritual cleansing to appease the aggrieved spirit of the deceased biological mother or a ritual process undertaken by adult sons or daughters who disrupt the social norm by verbally abusing, assaulting or killing their mother. This ritual diverts the suffering caused by an avenging spirit. The offender leaves home and lives on the streets, dressed in rags, begging for food and publicly confessing his crime" (Chivasa, 2021).

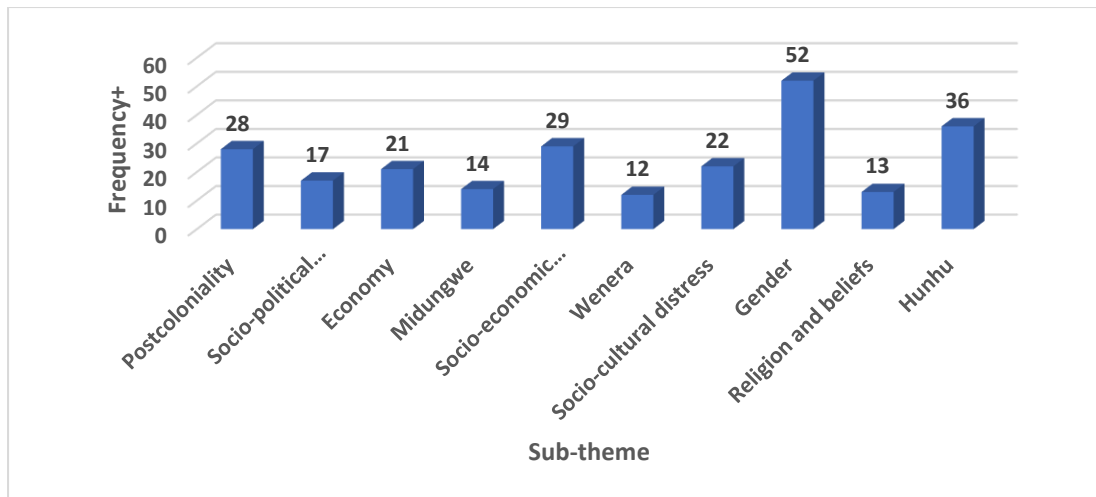


Figure 5.16: Bar graph showing sub-theme frequency

The graph reveals that the gender theme was raised most, followed by *Hunhu*. It also shows that the *Wenera* theme was the least alluded to by the participants. The graph is not presented for statistical purposes, but to give a clearer understanding of the participants' perceptions of the text, and their own subtextual experiences of the text.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presents the data, which were collected on subtextual responses to and perceptions of Advanced Level learners and teachers, to a selected set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. The data were collected through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, poems, and poem-drawings, and were analysed through thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that the participants formed diverse interpretations of the text, which were informed and influenced by a wide range of their subjective individual and shared experiences. The findings showed that the participants based their perceptions of the text on their contemporary and historical circumstances. There was evidence that the text presents issues that directly connect with the participants' societal concerns. In the next chapter, I discuss the relevance of these themes, through a scientific and consolidated analysis. This is done through the lenses of the literature review, the theoretical framework and the research questions, which underpinned this study.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to explore how the subtext influences high school learners and teachers' responses to and perceptions of the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the study, which are presented in Chapter Five. The discussion incorporates the literature that was reviewed (Chapter Two) and the theoretical framework (Chapter Three) to contextualise the findings which emerged from the thematic and content analysis of individual interviews, focus group discussions, document data and poems and poem-drawings. It provides a detailed discussion of the findings under the themes: individual triggers; shared/common triggers; and participants' perceptions of subtextual themes. The chapter also includes the insights obtained from the findings and the significance of the findings for classroom practice.

6.2 Insights obtained from the findings

This section provides a summary of the insights gained of the influence of the subtext on the perceptions and responses of learners and teachers to the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006). Considering the existent scholarly vacuum in research on the phenomenon, the subtext of literature for the classroom, insights obtained in this study are novel contributions to research:

- a) The themes raised in the text become subtextual when they trigger the participants' memories of similar personal experiences and are personalised by the participants to their circumstances. In the findings, most of the textual elements and themes match the private situations of the participants and of present-day Zimbabwe in the areas of politics, economy and culture. Their ability to connect their personal experiences and the themes in the text conforms to the view that learners can be nurtured to become active learners, capable of connecting the classroom with the outside world (Wang, 2014; Yaqoob, 2011).
- b) This study situates the participants as a generation that harbours postmemory: a generation haunted by an inherited traumatic past that marks their lives. The findings reveal the festering wounds and scars imprinted on the psyche of Zimbabwean society by colonisation, which the participants share. The participants in this study experienced what their ancestors had

experienced, as they inherited the trauma of class, race and economic struggle. This intergenerational trauma is reflected in traces of post-traumatic psychological scars evident in their responses to experiences of characters in the set text.

c) The use of art-based methods (poems and poem-drawings) in this study elicited a wide variety of subtextual interpretations and meanings from the learner participants. The learners used varied symbols and metaphors in their poems and poem-drawings, which reveal the diversity and subjectivity of literary interpretation and meaning making. Some of the participants used natural and cultural symbols, which reflect their identity as part of a collective Shona traditional heritage. Other learners employed western symbols, which mirror their exposure (consciously or unconsciously) to globalised society (embraced through the media) and their identity as part of a postcolonial hybridised society whose worldview sits at the crossroads of African Indigenous Knowledge and Westernisation. I would describe this as reflecting a cultural goulash. For example, Fanty's fourteen-line sonnet expresses a mix of Africanised and hybridised literary modalities. Other learner participants employed inorganic symbols, which reflect either their cultural indifference or cultural impartiality.

d) The findings reveal that there were conscious and unconscious participant responses to the text. The conscious responses were openly expressed during the interviews and discussions. Unconscious responses I deduced as the researcher from their verbal responses during interviews and from my analysis of their poems and poem-drawings. Varied perceptions of subtextual themes were embedded in their unconscious responses. The unconscious responses revealed the participants' emotional, individual and subjective perceptions of the text. During the focus group discussions, their responses were mostly peer driven, probably because they responded to a text that they had studied as a collective in class. The findings of the focus group discussions indicate that most of their interpretations were similar across the groups, and in some instances, even similar to those of their teachers. Their individuality was mostly evident in their poems and poem-drawings, which they crafted individually and creatively, an aspect which shall be discussed in detail in another section.

e) The participants' subtextual experiences reveal a lack of psychological closure in post-independence Zimbabwe. The findings indicate that independence did not end the colonially induced woes for the Zimbabwean people, especially on the economic level. The participants are part of generations that inherited and nursed physical and psychological wounds, especially economically. Aspects of *Midungwe*, *Wenera* and manual work continue to haunt generations, which are a sign of lack of psychological closure. The lack of closure in terms of *Wenera* is intense, as *Wenera* has led to negative demographic, physical and psychological consequences. The participants and their ancestors and parents were victims of labour

migrations. Consequently, there are underlying undertones of loss and psychological depression in the participants' confessions about Wenera.

6.3 Theme 1: Individual triggers

Most of the participants' responses revealed that they were victims of psychological trauma due to various forms of violence that they had either experienced or witnessed, especially during childhood. The findings also reveal that many participants were psychologically scarred by violence perpetrated by their close relatives and neighbours. Many participants equated the violence endured by the characters in the text to that in their own communities and families. This abuse was caused by uncles and neighbours, who either assaulted wives in the presence of children or physically and verbally abused children and their mothers. Participants like Kuku, Rody and Ahab narrated their personal experiences of traumatic incidences such as exposure to Murambatsvina or the violent destruction of homes. These events triggered vivid memories when they read about violent demolitions in the text. They also related that descriptions of violent clashes with police during riots and demonstrations in the text triggered their own traumatic memories and experiences of violent clashes between the police and demonstrators. Freud (1953) indicates that violent incidences and experiences of characters in a text evoke the repressed traumas stored or harboured in the unconscious psyches of the readers. Farley (2014:7) and Stearns (2017) describe "the unconscious as a visual site of memory" that can be expressed through symbols, such as drawings, poetry, plays, and other artistic acts of representation. The participants were psychologically haunted by violence and their repressed traumas found expression in their poems and poem-drawings because these textual artefacts carry explicit or underlying traces of violence. For instance, many learners' poem-drawings include symbols of violence such as a blazing sun; yoked cows; a hand entrapped by barbed wire; a raging fire; people drowning, and a thorny, rocky surface. All these symbols, personally and individually drawn by the learners reveal that they were consciously or unconsciously traumatised by violence.

The participants' responses to and perceptions of the prescribed text in this study were triggered by biographical factors such as their family life. Most of the participants who grew up in broken homes found the chaos and instability in the protagonist Onai's family life psychologically disturbing. It reminded them of their own parents and relatives' unstable marriages and in most cases, subsequent divorces. Hassan's poem and poem-drawing reveal an underlying yearning for a peaceful and cohesive family life, following his parents' divorce. He expressed this through a symbol of a tree that is engulfed by a raging fire. He explained that the tree represented the marriage institution, which was threatened by strong anti-cohesion forces that led to many divorces in society. Kante, RP and Miracle equated the

unhappy childhood experiences of Onai's children with their personal experiences of neglect, stigma, labelling, rejection and prejudice. For instance, Kante recounted the humiliation and name-calling his unwedded mother endured after she had been impregnated by a married neighbour. This social stigma also led to witchcraft, as his father's first wife attempted to poison him when he was a toddler. This reveals that these participants' unconscious trauma was evoked or triggered to consciousness by similar experiences of the characters in the text.

Many participants were emotionally traumatised by the physical, emotional and psychological distance caused by the migration of especially their parents in search of better economic prospects. The findings reveal that *Wenera*-labour migration, which is an important theme in the text, was also widely experienced in the participants' communities and families. Zee confessed that her interest in literature and poetry was sparked by a desire to express her loneliness, emptiness and anxiety over her parents' absence. She gave voice to these anxieties through poetry writing, as evidenced in her poem, 'Bewilderment'. Her poem is driven by an underlying tone of loss, confusion and nostalgia. In the first stanza, she alludes to *Wenera* and writes about the many people who have left in search of greener pastures and that life has changed significantly. Her poem has four stanzas, all ending with the chorus line, '*Life has changed in so many ways*'. The expressed anxieties reveal that her psychological body was threatened by her stressful social environment, which shaped her behaviour. Taheri and Biriya (2013:1 652) state that the psychological or emotional body is among the interrelated constituent components of the human condition, which also includes the mental body and the physical body. The psychological body is characterised by the emotional psyche, which transcribes mental perceptions into emotions such as anxiety, misery and yearning. Based on this understanding, *Wenera* creates physical and psychological borders between immigrants and those that they leave behind, an aspect, which is discussed in Theme 3.

Kante, Vuyo and Kuku expressed emotional distress caused by feelings of rejection, neglect and frustration with their fathers' recklessness and lack of commitment to their responsibilities. Gari's carelessness and promiscuity in the text reminded Kante, Vuyo and Kuku of their own fathers' infidelity, failure to bond with their children and neglect of parental duties. Jung (2003) observes that through literary study, the readers' memories of their traumatic experiences can be triggered by the traumatic experiences of the characters in the texts. Kante indicated that adolescence is critical in the development of boys; they have many questions about life, and they have much to discover. Therefore, they need nurturing and a father figure, yet according to the findings, five of the participants had absent fathers.

Participants like Fanty, Deon and Benco's responses were triggered by the physiological needs of the characters in the set text, which they equated to their own. Participants revealed

that similar to the characters in the text, they were victims of physical strain, hunger and exhaustion due to the excessive and recurrent queueing in Zimbabwe. They mentioned fuel and food queues that had been caused by the scarcity of basic commodities in Zimbabwe in 1992, 2008 and 2013. This situation had worsened when this research was conducted in 2019.

This study also reveals that the participants' responses were triggered by their environmental circumstances. The physical environment of the participants, who mostly lived in densely populated ghettos similar to Mbare in the text, influenced their perceptions of the text's presentation of this ghetto. Participants sympathised with the poor, suffering and oppressed Mbare residents in the text. The participants revealed that they shared similar challenges, especially poor service delivery that included power cuts, potholed roads, poor infrastructure, sewage-strewn streets, inadequate healthcare facilities and water scarcity.

The participants' social environment also influenced their perceptions of the set text. The participants comprised of many learners from broken homes and their personal circumstances influenced their perceptions of family relationships in the text. For instance, Hassan testified that the toxic relationship between Gari and Onai made him realise that his own parents' toxic divorce was perhaps unavoidable. Some participants' perceptions were triggered by their parents or relatives' violent experiences. Many of the participants attested to hating male perpetrators of gender-based violence in the text because their mothers were also victims of gender abuse. Gari was an unpopular character among the six participants whose mothers, family members or neighbours had suffered gender-based violence.

Miracle and RP's perceptions of the text were influenced by their distaste for rigid socio-cultural practices prevalent in the text and in their families and communities. This included *Nhaka*, which made them victims of selfish patriarchy at the deaths of their fathers. *Nhaka* is a traditional practice characterised by patrilineal wife/widow inheritance, whereby a brother inherits a deceased brother's widow along with his wealth and children. RP and Miracle explained that their fathers' relatives attempted to inherit the property of their late fathers. However, their mothers were protected by government law. They also attested to neglect by their fathers' relatives after the failed inheritance attempts. They viewed *Nhaka* as part of the practices that are self-serving and exploitative, and which are based on material considerations rather than on the welfare of the widow and her children. Their confessions revealed that western law was fairer than traditional law concerning the distribution of a deceased husband's estate, which rendered individualism fairer than communalism.

This study also reveals that some of the participants' responses to and perceptions of the text were triggered by the compromised cultural environment of the text, which they linked to their

own tainted cultural milieus. Many participants attested to broken cultural cohesion in their community, which they linked to the description of growing individualism in the text. Participants from both the rural and the urban divide lamented the negative change that their communities were undergoing. They expressed nostalgia for *Hunhu*. Its qualities include love, generosity, family unity, solidarity and care, which had been eroded by selfish individualism, meanness and family fragmentation due to westernisation and *Wenera*.

6.4 Theme 2: Shared/Common triggers

This study reveals that the participants' collective historical experiences that were shaped by the concept of family with a shared past, present and future identity influenced their responses to the text. This study confirms that the participants shared collective intergenerational symbols or archetypes of loss, which were imprinted in their psyche. This intergeneration inheritance of shared ancestral experiences is expounded in the literature by Adamski (2011). The participants unconsciously connected with their past, and this manifested in their responses to certain aspects raised in the text. Some of the themes presented in the text, such as the liberation war in Zimbabwe, were transferred through History Studies at school, and passed down orally by their family members who had witnessed these events. These historical traditions exposed the participants to their collective circumstances. The set text's intergenerational presentation of Zimbabwean history, which includes the protracted colonial war and land conflict is supported by Mapara's (2007) view that literature compliments history and that fiction is a carrier of history.

As reflected in the literature, a literary text is contextualised within a historical past from whence interpretation and meaning are derived (Jauss, 1982). The participants identified the Zimbabwean liberation war as part of the shared experiences that caused post-traumatic stress. CP7 stated that the conflict continued to haunt the people of Zimbabwe four decades after the war. This study reveals that Zimbabweans have been intergenerationally traumatised and they display the psychological fallout of underlying fear, which emanates from their experiences of a violent and protracted war of resistance against colonialism. This echoes Fanon's (2001:44) "muscular demonstrations", whereby the colonised resort to violent acts as an outlet for psychological frustrations. The violence presented in the text also reminded the participants of the violence in present-day Zimbabwe, especially the violent repression by the government and the incessant destruction of homes and houses during the *Murambatsvina*. As observed by Fanon (2001), the indigenous psyche is so traumatised by colonialism that it turns against its brother in an effort to reclaim its self-worth. This could be an explanation for Zimbabwe's post-independent challenges, especially considering the prevalence of neo-colonialism and lack of law and order. The authorities, formerly victims of psychological trauma

caused by colonialism, turned against their own people to victimise them through harsh economic and political policies and practices. Violence, especially the repressive quelling of demonstrations and the forced removals under the Murambatsvina banner appears to be muscular demonstrations used by the authorities on their own people.

Four learner participants used a war metaphor to explain the Zimbabwean situation four decades after independence. One of the characters in the text is Hondo, which means 'War'. Hondo reminded participants of the many on-going conflicts in society. These included economic, socio-economic, political and socio-political wars that are also exposed in the text. Dassy and Jessie used a war metaphor to describe the hunger strain prevalent in Zimbabwean society. They equated the Zimbabwean people to soldiers fighting a war. This war was waged against the economic enemy, whose major ammunition was hunger. Their use of the war metaphor evidences that they carried the collective memory of war trauma. Therefore, the participants experienced personal and collective trauma that characterises most postcolonial subjects (Chigwedere, 2015; Hirsch, 2012). As members of a younger generation, they remembered the older generation's experiences that manifested as memories, a connection conceptualised as "postmemory" by Hirsch (2012:5). Postmemory is a "structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience" (Hirsch, 2012:6). Hirsch (2012) further observes that the "generation after" is connected to the "personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before". My study found that nearly four decades after Zimbabwe's independence, the generation of participants continued to refer to war. They experienced the transgenerational reoccurrence of traumatic information, psychological phobia and embodied experience. This conforms to Fanon (1952:132), who observes that the African is a "phobogenic" figure who inherits and passes down phobias (neurosis characterised by anxious fear of phenomena) in the form of psychological conditions or traumas from generation to generation. The participants' reference to war reveals that they are inheritors of a transgenerational subjective insecurity imbibed in their society by the harsh and traumatic war experience.

Colonisation is part of the historical past and the subsequent cultural environment of Zimbabwean society. This study reveals that the participants viewed poverty suffered by characters in the text and by their own society as transgenerational traumatic experience, which dated back to colonial times. Participants observed that their ancestors' poverty was induced by colonial land policies that relegated natives to unproductive land, servitude and forced labour. The participants viewed their present-day poverty as worsened by ill-conceived post-independence economic policies such as ESAP. This policy precipitated the emergence of a rich minority that imitates the oppressive colonial policies. Therefore, they dominate the

economy and perpetuate the widening rift between the rich and the poor. Similar to Fish (1972) and Rosenblatt's view (1982), the participants' interpretations of the set text were ingrained in their shared historical and cultural milieu.

The study also reveals that the participants viewed class differentiation as a colonial residue. The participants cited gross class differences within their society, akin to that evident in the text. They alluded to the existence of two separate classes, the rich and the poor. Subsequently, there is a clearly defined rich/poor binary in the text and in the participants' perceptions. They lamented the loss of the spirit of oneness, which drove the struggle against colonisation. They alluded to the rich elite who selfishly enjoyed access to resources at the expense of the majority poor people.

It would appear that racism experienced by Zimbabwean society during colonisation produced in the colonised a desire to be white or to occupy the position and privileges enjoyed by the coloniser. The literature reveals that colonisation can breed a desire to be white, an inferiority complex and mental illnesses in the colonised (Fanon, 1986; Hanson, 2015). These reactions, which are evident in the set text reveal psychosocial stress caused by racism which arouses in the colonised a selfish desire to imitate the coloniser or to assume an elevated class position. In the set text, the minority rich own roomy homes, luxury cars and spacious farms, as compared to their crowded, barefooted, landless and homeless poor counterparts. Hanson (2015) posits that psychosocial stress leaves epigenetic marks in the progeny that may be transmitted through matrilineal ancestors to the next generation. This could be the cause of class differentiation existent in Zimbabwean society, which includes a class divide in land occupation and residential areas. The participants described these divisions as colonial residue. The elite blacks in power took up the position of superiority previously occupied by the coloniser to create a similarly modelled class society. At independence, land occupation discrepancies that include residential boundaries modelled along the Separate Development Policy and created by the colonial system were not resolved (Makumbe, 2003). For instance, in the set text and in present-day Zimbabwe, Mbare has remained overpopulated and a hub for the poor masses. Participants indicated that the Mbare/Belvedere binary in the text evidenced an incessant transgenerational class differentiation in land occupation in Zimbabwe. These responses by participating learners reveal the youth's awareness of the socio-political situation in Zimbabwe as well as their historical and cultural heritage.

The study also reveals that *Wenera* (migration), especially labour migration is a transgenerational phenomenon in Zimbabwean society. The participants indicated that their ancestors had experienced labour migration in the past and that present-day Zimbabwean communities continued to migrate to other African countries and parts of the world. In the set

text and in present-day Zimbabwe, *Wenera* represents a muscular demonstration or physical reaction against economic and socio-political instability. The physically and psychologically traumatised citizens decide to embark on emigration, to escape from their problems, and to offer their services on foreign soil as a sign of discontentment. The participants lamented the challenges faced by Zimbabweans after emigrating. The *Wenera* are indentured labourers who endure rape, human trafficking, forced labour, and low remuneration akin to that of the colonial era when Africans were objectified, overworked and abused in White-owned properties. Tariro in the set text and many participants' relatives who were part of the diaspora, suffer nostalgia and many physical and psychological challenges, which trigger a longing for home. It also appears that the material successes of immigrants do not nourish the spirit; they suffer psychological hunger.

This view is shared by Bulawayo whose protagonist in *We Want New Names* (2013) reveals various psychological and physical traumas imposed on the immigrant by the alien diasporic environment. These include snow, which symbolises the harshness of racism, alienation, xenophobia and exploitation. Snow was also used as an image by Zee, whose poem-drawing of a snowman represents the harshness of class society, individualism and selfishness (discussed in detail in Theme 3). Through Tariro's confessions in the set text, the participants were able to understand the reality of the lives of their relatives in diaspora. Benco mocked the narratives of *been-tos* (diaspora returnees) in her community as "diasporan bliss". Kupakwashe referred to neighbours whose families carried derogatory names such as 'Mujubheki'. In direct translation, 'Mujubheki' means one who has been to Johannesburg, though Zimbabweans use it loosely to refer to somebody who has been to any part of South Africa. Consequently, the family name becomes a generational reminder of the many negative experiences associated with labour migration. It becomes a transgenerational tag when one considers the significance a name carries in African societies. Naming/names in African culture concern family identity, roots and heritage. A name carries memories of one's past, ancestral history and how ancestors are recognised and appreciated (Osueke, 2011). Family names cement a people's collective memory by chronicling the circumstances of their experiences. Thus, the 'Mujubheki' family would generationally be recognised and remembered as a family of migrants, or people who turned their backs on Zimbabwe.

The findings also reveal that the participants' responses to the text were triggered by their perceptions of gender-related issues. They generally viewed gender disparity depicted in the text as historically imbued in Zimbabwean society. In the set text, Onai and other women experience diverse forms of objectification, especially the societal expectations with which men dictate their wives' lifestyles and career paths; women must avail themselves for

husbands' sexual gratification and they are part of men's inheritable property. The participants identified patriarchy as a generationally celebrated institution, which negates women to second-class status. Many participants used the yoked cow metaphor (explained in detail under Theme 3) to describe the universal position of women as confined objects with no room for independent choices and decision-making. The participants also denounced traditional intergenerational practices like female genital mutilation and *Chinamwari* as suppressive traditions, which restricted women's role to sexual objects. *Chinamwari* is a traditional rite whereby pubertal girls are secluded in camps where they are initiated into womanhood, prepared for marriage and taught how to please men in bed.

Objectification is synonymous with feminist theory. It identifies objectification as seeing and/or treating a woman as: a tool for the objectifier's purposes (instrumentality); lacking in autonomy and self-determination (denial of autonomy); lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity (inertness); being interchangeable with other objects (fungibility); being owned by another and who can be bought or sold (ownership); a person whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account (denial of subjectivity); being identified with her body, or body parts (reduction to body); a mere tool for the lover's purposes (instrumentality) (Papadaki, 2019; Langton, 2009; Nussbaum, 1995; Kant, 1963).

Crucially, the findings reveal that the participants viewed the set text as an attempt to re-define the position of women in contemporary Zimbabwean society. They indicated that Tagwira advocates the recognition of women as human beings that have autonomy and agency. They described Onai, Faith and Emily as representatives of women who rise above the odds and shake off objectification despite the glaring patriarchal adversity. They viewed Emily as a medical doctor, a field traditionally considered a male preserve; Onai as resilient and prudent in rejecting powerlessness; and Faith as steadfast in both her education and in her manipulation of her relationship with the affluent Tom, to improve the situation of her Mbare community. The participants' view harmonises with the available literature; Chitando (2012:224) posits that Tagwira defies stereotypical depictions of women as she authors courageous, empowered, sagacious, resilient and resourceful women who are a "living testimony to the indomitable nature of the human spirit".

The participants' responses to the text were also triggered by intergenerational socio-economic themes raised in the text, such as the Murambatsvina displacement. This displacement of the poor residents of Mbare, whose homes and shelters are demolished, is described in the text: this left them destitute. The participants linked Murambatsvina to the historical circumstances in Zimbabwe and specifically to the white settlers who forcefully drove black natives into unfertile reserves. In the set text, victims of Murambatsvina are driven to the

ill-prepared and congested Tsigas grounds, where they suffer inhuman conditions and are exposed to the harshness of winter. Kuku recounted her experience of Murambatsvina in Mabvuku-Harare. This incident had left indelible memories, which were triggered by her reading of Murambatsvina in the set text. The participants shared these troubling memories that dated back to colonisation, and which linked past, present and future generations of Zimbabwe.

Crucially, this study indicates that the participants shared intergenerational memories of violence caused by forced removals whose origins lie in colonial times. Their views of the impact of the forced removals concur with the available literature, wherein Chivizhe (2016); Mangena (2015) and Tibaijuka (2005) observe that the aftermath of Murambatsvina forced removals left deep and intergenerational psychic wounds, which also manifest in the nightmares and psychological pain of Bulawayo's protagonist in *We Need New Names* (2013). Her subconscious is haunted by vivid memories of violence and destruction, both physical and psychological.

6.5 Theme 3: Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes

The participants identified various themes, which they derived from their reading of the text. This section presents the identified themes under specific subheadings. The themes revealed the participants' perceptions of subtextual themes as they personalised and related these themes to their subjective experiences or circumstances.

6.5.1 Individualism

Most of the participants cited individualism as central to the thematic concerns of the prescribed novella. They stated that other themes arising in the text are offshoots of individualism. They blamed it on colonisation and its segregationist policy characterised by racism. They indicated that the formerly colonised adopted western traits and the tendencies of Othering from the colonial master. According to the participants, individualism was bred by poverty and excessive suffering which had their roots in colonisation. The participants stated that at independence, Zimbabwean society adopted western cultural traits and relegated principles of oneness fostered by *Hunhu/Ubuntu*, thereby creating westernised communities. Hasan alluded to a Mbare/Belvedere binary which runs through the set text, and which exposes the discriminatory policies that were adopted by the post-independence administration.

Through close analysis of the poems and symbols crafted by the learner participants, I deduced certain implicit meanings and messages, which they derived from the set text. This

concurs with Reader-Response theorist Holland's (1980) view that the reader's response comprises of unconscious desires and expectations that shape the reader's identity. For instance, the participants alluded to the emergence of a "dog-eat-dog" society in which only the fittest survived, especially after independence. They proposed that individualistic tendencies led to the rise in corruption and class differentiation. Some of the learners' poem drawings depicted individualism, corruption and a shift away from the expected norm of *Ubuntu/Hunhu*.

Zee's drawing of a snowman subconsciously reveals the unnatural state of Zimbabwean society. The snowman symbol depicts a westernised perception; a snowman is not an African concept and there is no snow in Zimbabwe. The use of the snowman symbol highlights change and abnormality. It is a western symbol of happiness and holiday festivities. From a Zimbabwean viewpoint, the snowman symbolises happiness for the rich but not for the poor. It reflects class differentiation and a shift from the collective identity enshrined in *Hunhu* to the cold and strange detachment by the rich. The plump snowman represents the rich; he has his hands stretched away, refusing to rescue the many drowning poor, whose hands are raised above the water in a desperate gesture for help. The snowman does not lower his hands to help them. This stresses the adage of the survival of the fittest that was repeatedly alluded to by many participants.

Fanty drew the western symbol of a pendulum, through which she subconsciously illustrates abnormality and a shift from *Hunhu*. In one illustration, the pendulum is making a natural back and forth motion, which represents *Hunhu*. Eventually the pendulum will return to its fixed position and equilibrium. In another illustration, the hand or bob of the pendulum is frozen to one side and is no longer making a semi-circular to-and-fro movement. The back-and-forth semi-circular movement of the pendulum illustrates social equilibrium or involvement of all members of the community in sharing resources and opportunities. The frozen hand of the pendulum represents a new unnatural scenario, whereby only one section of the community has access to resources and opportunities.

The rhythmic, semi-circular movement of the pendulum represents the African indigenous circular concept of existence; life is viewed as a circle where people continue existing after death as ancestors who live among the living. Crucially, indigenous understanding of the cosmos is grounded in a cyclical conceptualisation of existence; the community is linked with the ancestral world through time, space and action (Newfield and Bozalek, 2019; Genis, 2020:6). The unnaturally frozen pendulum depicts linear movement and stasis, which contradict *Ubuntu/Hunhu*. The frozen pendulum could also represent the social and economic inertia in Zimbabwe due to societal challenges like the perennial queues, where people spend

many hours waiting for unavailable commodities. Fanty's use of a symbol that illustrates the indigenous African circular concept of existence and her focus on *Hunhu* indicate that learners learn from their respective communities, and they carry culturally specific knowledge into the classroom (Mawere, 2015).

The learners' use of western symbols, which include the snowman and the pendulum to describe or depict African/indigenous/local phenomena could also be a reflection of their compromised cultural identity. Postcolonial Zimbabwean society to which these learners belong is largely westernised and their exposure to western phenomena reflects globalisation and multiculturalism, which are part of their socio-cultural environment. Wertsch (1997) and Wang (2014) argue that knowledge construction is influenced by social interaction in a specific environment, and it is an active process of understanding the outside world. The postcolonial, globalised and multicultural environment, therefore, affects the learners' construction of personal and individual knowledge. Their use of western symbols to describe African phenomena confirms postcolonial theorist Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity since it reveals that their ideas are cross-fertilised due to colonialism. The participants belong to a postcolonial society whose identity and worldview were affected by colonisation and subsequent westernisation.

This study also reveals that six of the learner participants used nature and cultural symbols in their poems and poem-drawings, which include the moon, the stars, trees, the sun, flowers, and the yoked cow. Nature and cultural metaphors and images are part of the collective heritage of African communities, and traditionally employed in indigenous praise poetry (Genis, 2018: 131-185). The learners' use of nature symbols reflects their connection with their indigenous literary modalities and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKs). Participants who drew tree symbols included ominous forces threatening the trees' existence: a strong wind sways Kuku's tree vehemently to one side; Hassan's tree is destroyed and consumed by a raging fire; Tatata's tree grows on hard ground and its roots fail to reach the water table. These symbols consciously or subconsciously signify various challenges faced by Zimbabwean society, to which the learners belong. The tree that grows on hard ground serves as a symbol of growth despite adversity. In spite of its unfavourable circumstances, the tree is able to fight for its survival, just as the text's characters and the participants' communities do. A tree could also represent a family, a culture or a people. Hassan's poem laments the destruction of marriage and family institutions by rampant divorce and his symbol of a tree consumed by a raging fire signifies both family and cultural demise. Kuku's tree is swayed to the side by a strong gale and loses many of its leaves, which fall to the ground. The falling leaves could signify detachment and migration. Many Zimbabweans left the country

during the diaspora amid economic and political challenges, which are represented by the strong gale and falling leaves.

6.5.2 Hope and resilience

This study also reveals that the text carries the features of hope and resilience, which characterise Zimbabwean society. Some of the participants' symbols consciously and unconsciously mirror aspects of hope and resilience, found among Zimbabweans. Tatata's drawing includes the symbol of a withering plant growing between mountains, and a too distant water table and blazing sun. However, the plant sprouts a fresh bud that reveals its ability to withstand the environmental harshness. This could signify the strength of Zimbabwean people to withstand economic pressures. This is also reflected in Kuku's symbol of a tree, which is being tormented by a violent wind, its branches swaying to one side, yet it remains anchored in its deep roots. The undergrowth that survives in the rocky, hard earth could represent the majority of Zimbabweans who survived despite their economic hardships: inflation, high prices, unemployment and *midungwe*, all represented by the rocky ground and the blazing sun. Tyra's drawing includes a flower, which is blooming amid the harshness of thorns that surround it. The flower has a strong core, which has the shape of a heart, representing the strong-willed nature of Zimbabwean people, especially women. The flower endures the harshness and continues to bloom brightly. In the discussions, Tyra observed that the people of Zimbabwe, both in the text and in present-day Zimbabwe were not completely weighed down by the unfavourable economic outlook, but resiliently established informal businesses such as vending, running tuckshops, crossing into neighbouring countries to buy goods for sale and establishing small tuckshops. Thus, the learners' views and interpretation of the text were influenced by the economic environment of their society.

The findings reveal that the participants singled out women as agents of resilience and unwavering hope. Miracle's poem and poem-drawing mirror the resilience of women against diverse odds. Her poem, 'A long night' presents women's suffering in Zimbabwe as a long night that eventually turns into dawn when they unite to change their dark circumstance. The poem represents women and the poor as hardened by their economic challenges. Fanti, Vy, Kartel, and Kante described the female characters in the text as the writer's models or archetypes to reveal the possibility of positive change especially for women in Zimbabwe. Fanti described Emily as a unique female stalwart who stands up to men in a profession traditionally considered a male preserve. Kartel viewed Faith as a staunch and unwavering ambassador of change for the poor Mbare community, whose ascension to a higher social status as lawyer and bride-to-be for an affluent Tom does not detach her from her people or from her cultural ethos. Kante described Katy and Onai as poor women, who defy all odds in

order to survive patriarchy that does not favour the two identities that women carry; being both female and poor. Their perceptions concurred with the available literature, as Chitando (2015) suggests that Tagwira's inclusion of female models or archetypes – Faith and Emily – “show[s] that it is possible for women to engage in gainful thinking, without fear or prejudice”. Kante, RP and Kuku recognised their resilient and hardworking mothers in the Mbare women in the text, who persevere to feed their families despite the economic adversities that have persistently hit Zimbabwe across generations.

CP7 drew the symbol of a hand stretched out to reach the stars. His poem, which fosters determination and persistence echoes Onai's unwavering determination and efforts to change her circumstances. CP7 explained that his symbol was triggered by his personal experience of being discouraged by family from pursuing his soccer dream. He felt there was an opportunity for him to achieve his dream after completing his academic studies. Like Onai, his social background militated against his dream, a scenario, which harmonises with the literature. Wertsch (1997) postulates that social and cultural background aids in shaping the knowledge and truth that the learner creates. CP7 and other participants observed that Onai is beset by multiple adversities, but she refuses to be crushed; she keeps her focus until she achieves upward social mobility. The participants celebrated Onai's rise from the slums of Mbare to affluent Borrowdale as representing the poor's ability to succeed in their struggle against being labelled the perpetual Other. CP7 found common ground with Onai due to his personal experience as one whose dream was threatened by postcolonial society, which was brainwashed into believing that success only lies in academic achievement.

6.5.3 Timeless socio-economic adversities

This study indicates that the recurrent economic woes hint at the timelessness of the text: what applies in 2005 to the text applies to the Zimbabwean economy at any point in time, and especially for the years 2008, 2013 and 2019. According to the participants, the economy has been in the doldrums throughout the history of post-independence Zimbabwe. Inflation, *Midungwe* (*queues*), illegal money changing, and labour migration have never ceased to exist. The participants emphasised that abject *Midungwe*, which they described as a perennial phenomenon, had proven difficult to eradicate. Maggie stressed that the noun 'queue' was synonymous with 'Zimbabwe' and that it would be a distortion of historical truth to discuss the economic history of post-independence Zimbabwe without mentioning the perennial queues. The participants indicated that queueing was aggravated by shortages of basic commodities and amenities such as water and electricity. *Midungwe* and other challenges related to shortages and subsequent labour migrations reflect the physical hardships experienced in postcolonial Zimbabwe; queueing and manual labour migrations were experienced by the

characters in the text, the participants and their ancestors and they persist in present-day Zimbabwe.

The participants expressed disgruntlement with the lack of provision of amenities such as clean water, healthcare facilities and electricity in the text. They linked the shortages situation in the text to their communities' experiences of shortages which led to scenarios such as the inadequate borehole water system, especially in the capital city, Harare. They expressed that the borehole system was commonly associated with life in rural Zimbabwe. Its presence in the capital signifies the extent to which standards of living have deteriorated in Zimbabwe. The rampant unavailability of electricity highlighted by both the text and the participants negatively constraints economic production. Electricity is the backbone of industrial production and subsequent economic growth.

Jessie, Tamuda, Bella and Zee alluded to various push factors that contributed to labour migrations in their communities. They explained that the set text describes the unstable economic situation, unemployment and Murambatsvina as some of the push factors that drove many Zimbabwean people into diaspora. The participants further cited poverty, unemployment, economic frustration and political instability as contributing factors to the labour migrations witnessed by their communities. They also cited challenges met by Zimbabwean immigrants as they crossed the borders into countries across the world: human trafficking, slave labour, xenophobia, murder, forced crime, rape and depression. The literature also alludes to labour migration. Pasura (2001) identifies human resources as Zimbabwe's major export, and Chiumbu and Musemwa (2012) refer to labour migration as a feature of both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe.

6.5.4 Gender and patriarchy

The participants referred to the text's presentation of a patriarchal society, which relegates women to objects and to second-class citizens. Their view harmonises with the postcolonial proponent Spivak who emphasises the marginalisation, manipulation and underestimation suffered by women, especially in patriarchal societies (Roy, 2008). The participants also viewed traditional practices such as *Nhaka* and polygamy as suppressive and biased towards women. The findings reveal that *Nhaka*, and polygamy are among many self-serving and dictatorial traditional practices that objectify women. Kartel, Kante and Bella used cultural symbols and metaphors, such as the cow metaphor to describe oppressed women in the text and in their communities as yoked cows. The symbol drawn by Kartel specifically represents women as yoked cows. In traditional societies, and particularly in Shona society in Zimbabwe, cattle fulfil a wide variety of roles: religious, political, societal, socio-cultural, economic, genetic

and environmental (Dessie and Mwai, 2019). Cows are a critically important daily source of food and nutrition, calf bearing and subsequent herd expansion. The yoking of cows is atypical since yoking in the Zimbabwean culture is reserved for oxen (*madhonza*) or bulls, which perform agricultural tasks in the homestead. Being yoked limits freedom, and the yoked cows symbol represents the pathetic, burdensome condition of women in society.

The poem-drawings by Ahab and Kartel hint at women as victims who carry multiple burdens. For instance, Ahab's symbol of a woman with a deformed face represents the physical abuse experienced by Onai in the text and by women in present-day Zimbabwe, which include Ahab and Kante's aunt and Tyra's neighbour. The woman in Ahab's poem-drawing wears a ragged dress which represents her poverty and limited material resources. Moreover, the woman is bare footed, a scenario which reflects extreme suffering and lack. The woman carries a basket of wares, which represents work and economic hustle. The basket full of wares for sale also mirrors her important role of feeding her family. Above her is a half-moon behind dark clouds, which represents the unpredictability of her circumstances. However, despite her bleak condition and multiple adversities, there is lingering hope represented by the rising sun. The sun has friendly eyes and smiles, which could signify the possibility of redemption or an empathic presence.

Vy's inorganic symbol of a bottled-up woman alludes to the limitations and entrapment experienced by women in the text and in society. Being bottled up deprives her of choices such as freedom of movement. There is only one possible way out and that is through the narrow-necked lip of the bottle. The findings reveal that women in the text and in Zimbabwean society are entrapped physically, culturally and emotionally. Practices such as *Nhaka* and '*Gomera uripo*' culturally entrap women, and exclusion from critical decision-making processes emotionally bottles them up. The participants' view of women as entrapped and having limited choices is shared by Mangena (2017), who describes women's choices in patriarchal societies, including Zimbabwe, as circumscribed. The symbols drawn by the female learner participants reveal that they were psychologically aware of the foregrounding of the lack of gender responsiveness in the selected text.

The participants addressed the physical entrapment of women by referring to gender-based violence, which is rampant in the text and in their own communities. The participants condemned Gari's spousal abuse and those of many male characters in the text. They linked this to the abuse meted out by their relatives and neighbours in their communities. They denounced the physical and verbal abuse Onai suffers in the presence of her children, which they described as reducing women to the level of children and as psychologically damaging to the children. Onai's daughter, Rita's psychological trauma is revealed in violence, which

she emits during conversations with her elder sister. Kante attested that women were victims of psychological abuse due to exposure to physical violence meted out by their male relatives. He confessed that at some point in his childhood he believed that the best way to discipline women was by beating them, because his uncle used to beat his wife and children. This finding harmonises with the observation by child development psychologist, Law Nolte (1972) that children learn what they live: when children live in violence, they may subsequently harbour and unleash violence themselves.

The participants also alluded to gender stereotyping, both in the text and in their communities. The participants viewed gender-stereotyping as a universal phenomenon. The same view is shared by Chi Cheng (2016) and Muleka (2012), who refer to the gender stereotypes of female passivity, subservience and docility in literature books used in classrooms in Hong Kong and Kenya respectively. My study reveals the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the set text, although the text foregrounds it as a negative phenomenon.

The participants indicated that women were stereotypically ascribed certain duties and responsibilities, especially those related to the home and childcare. They referred to Emily, whose medical competency is doubted because of her gender, even by fellow women like Onai. According to the participants, both in the text and in their community, women like Emily rise above the social limitations set by men and patriarchal women and suffer the subsequent stigmatisation. Stigmatisation results in Othering of the labelled individual or group. The participants' observation that responsibilities are stereotypically ascribed concurs with Mutekwe and Modiba (2012); Tagwirei (2013); and Zivave, et al. (2020) who propose that stereotyping, marginalisation and bias harbour undertones of superiority and inferiority rooted in masculinity. These stereotypes could potentially hinder the career ambitions and prospects of learners based on gender.

6.5.5 Hunhu/Ubuntu

The participants perceived their society as one that had become highly westernised. They alluded to increasing levels of immorality in society, which include promiscuity, prostitution, corruption and embezzlement of public resources. Hassan (L) blamed rampant prostitution for the break-ups in marriages that characterised society, consequently resulting in social challenges, which include the presence of street children and psychological damage to children. He referred to Ruva in the text, whose parents' strained relationship due to Gari's promiscuity and recklessness makes Ruva hostile and mean. Fanty (L) described the street children as a symbol and constant reminder of society's failure in its obligation to nurture and protect them.

The participants bemoaned society's drifting away from the principles of Hunhu/Ubuntu. Fanty emphasised that under Hunhu/Ubuntu, a child is everyone's responsibility, thus, the street children symbolise the demise of Hunhu/Ubuntu and the collective failure of society.

On a more positive note, many participants viewed the '*Kutanda botso*' tradition presented by the writer in the text as a correctional practice, which their communities also upheld. Martin (T), Tamuda (L), and Maggie (L) appreciated the writer's effort to infuse the cultural value system through Mawaya's 'madness', as a sign of penance for causing the death of his wife. They appreciated the writer's version of *botso*, whose correctional purpose concurs with the traditional *Kutanda botso* practice. In the text, Mawaya experiences guilt for causing his wife's death. He blames himself for having sent his pregnant wife on an errand and becomes a beggar on the streets of Mbare. The participants' valuing of the *botso* aspect in the text confirms the view expounded by Eagleton (1985) that the study of literature develops aesthetic sensibilities as well as inculcates values and morality in the reader. Expressing their sentiments on the *Kutanda botso* concept indicates that the participants' personally and emotionally derived values and morality from the text. They agreed with the indigenous African ethical framework, whereby one's behaviour is bound within *Hunhu/Ubuntu*.

Tamuda (L) opined that the writer deliberately manipulates the experiences of a madman in order to expose societal ills. The experiences of the lunatic, Mawaya serve as socio-cultural lenses. He explained that during Mawaya's stay on the streets, he experiences rioting, economic disorder, police brutality, hunger and the plight of street children. Tamuda (L) also referred to Mawaya's car accident that lands him in hospital where he shares a psychiatric ward with a lunatic who claims to be a government minister, who lives extravagantly. In Tamuda's view, the writer expertly uses madness as a metaphor to expose the corruption, repression, extravagance and negligence perpetrated by government officials. Tamuda's critical view reflects the power of literature to develop learners' higher order thinking skills to question creatively and interpret the world around them (Dass, 2013; Langer, 1997).

6.6 Significance of findings for classroom practice

This study has demonstrated that in literature, readers essentially study their own socio-cultural-specific actions and interactions in a distinctively subjective manner. Therefore, teachers should create learning opportunities and learning experiences for learners, aimed at creating a learning environment conducive for constructing personal meaning. A multimodal approach to teaching and learning through art-based methods gives learners the opportunity to create sensory meaning, rather than merely focusing on fixed interpretations (Newfield and

Maungedzo, 2006). This encourages greater learner involvement in the Literature in English classroom.

Teachers should also consider that participatory modes like art-based methods are therapeutic and encourage even the shiest learners to share their thoughts in a more relaxed environment as opposed to a teacher-controlled classroom. Moreover, the combination of the learners' social environment, their personal backgrounds and the engagement of multimodalities could create greater appreciation of literature in English, the attainment of richer perceptions from the learners, and a deeper understanding of their individual qualities. For instance, the findings of this study revealed that the poems and poem-drawings, which were crafted by the learners, created diverse interpretations that foregrounded the learners' subjectivity. Through their personally crafted poems and poem drawings, the learners employed varied symbols: natural and cultural symbols reflected affiliation to a collective Shona traditional heritage; western symbols mirrored conscious or unconscious postcolonial cultural hybridisation or quasi-westernisation; and inorganic symbols represented cultural indifference or cultural impartiality. Although I could classify the cultural worldviews of the participants into three categories, the learners used different symbols to express their personal understanding of the set text. Moreover, it was through the self-crafted poems and poem-drawings that the learners' cultural worldviews surfaced. The cultural background of each reader is important to their interaction with the text, thus making it imperative for teachers to engage methods and strategies of literary analysis that evoke the most peculiar aspects about individual learners. In light of this, the employment of art-based methods enables the elucidation of fascinating pools of biographical and literary information.

Teachers should also seek and value learners' points of view, allow learners to take ownership and have a voice (Giessen, 2004), thereby strengthening learner autonomy. Learner-centred pedagogy enhances learning by encouraging learners to learn independently and creatively and to gain ownership of the learning process. This implies that the use of the learner-centred pedagogy in literary study is essential for learners to improve their analysis skills without depending too much on facilitators/teachers.

Wang (2014) postulates that constructivism holds that the meaning of an article (text) rests foremost in the learners' construction, which is based on their existing knowledge, emotions, experience, and culture, rather than in the text itself. In this regard, teachers should pay critical attention to learners' previous experiences (individual and shared), which influence their understanding of the set text. These prior experiences link to what Freudian psychoanalysts term the unconscious (repressed thoughts, wishes, desires), which can be invoked through reading and learning approaches that stimulate hidden desires (Kim, 2014). The findings of

this study revealed that the learner participants' poems and poem-drawings harboured implicitly expressed thoughts, perceptions and ideas, which I had to deduce from my analysis of these documents.

Multiple interpretations allow for creative and critical thinking to take place, through evocation of the affective aspect of the learners, which include their feelings, emotions, free expression, and opinions. As such, teachers need to exercise minimal intrusion and focus on scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976) rather than impose their perceptions when teaching literature. The findings of this study indicated that the responses of the learner participants during the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were similar in most instances and in some cases, they even echoed the responses of their teachers. However, in the poems and poem-drawings, the learners raised views that were more personal and independent and some manifested unconscious responses. It is, therefore, imperative for literature teachers to encourage learners to interact and share their personal experiences and ideas through class activities that include role-plays, simulation games, group discussions, and cooperative learning. All these promote communication amongst learners, which provide room for the identification of shared experiences (and the subtext), which as Jung (1961) indicates, reside in the collective unconscious. Moreover, the subjective nature of literature requires every learner to express her opinion, thereby enriching the analysis of a text.

It is also imperative for teachers to focus not only on literary and linguistic contents of set-books, but also on the implicit and personal interpretations held by the learners, as these have long-lasting impact on the personal development of learners. Teachers can employ strategies such as art-based methods that elicit or deal with the innermost emotions held by learners; these include humiliation, love, grief, betrayal, and sorrow, which they may not feel confident to share during teacher-directed classroom discussions of texts.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings that are based on three themes, which developed from the data analysis. These comprised the individual triggers, shared/common triggers and the participants' perceptions of subtextual themes. The chapter firstly presents the insights, which emerged from the findings of the study. It was found that the participants were victims of psychological trauma induced by their personal backgrounds, which triggered their responses to and perceptions of the text. The participants' collective intergenerational experiences also triggered their responses to and perceptions of the set text. The literary allusions and themes that learners derived from the text became their perceptions of subtextual themes once they had personalised and integrated them in their subjective circumstances. Though there is a

scholarly gap in literature based on classroom subtextual experiences of texts, the available literature on themes raised in the set text harmonised with the participants' perceptions. In the next chapter, I conclude the study, and focus on the research questions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discuss the findings of the study from the perspective of the literature that was reviewed and under the themes that had emerged during data analysis. In this chapter, I present the conclusion and recommendations of the study. It comprises a chapter-by-chapter summary of the study, the conclusions that are based on the three research questions, the alignment of the findings with the eclectic theoretical framework, the implications of the findings, the recommendations and the conclusion. The purpose of this study was to advance an understanding of how and why the subtext influences high school learners and teachers' responses to and perceptions of a set-text. Additionally, this study was conducted to address the dearth in studies on the analysis of the subtext of literature for the classroom. Moreover, the study engaged more participatory data collection instruments in classroom-based research. The study employed art-based research tools that encouraged learner creativity and independence in aesthetically and personally responding to text.

7.2 Summary of the study

In Chapter One, I explained that the aim of this study was to explore how and why the subtext influences the learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to a prescribed text. I also indicated that the motivation for this study stems from the dearth in literature on empirical field studies pertaining to the subtext of literature for the high school classrooms in Zimbabwe and beyond. Furthermore, I explained that my study employed an eclectic theoretical lens with the aim of richly informing other studies on literature for the classroom. To expand the knowledge and understanding of learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes of literary text, the following research questions were asked: What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?; What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?; and What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' perceptions of the prescribed text?

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature on the concept, subtext, the prescribed text (*The Uncertainty of Hope*) and the theories informing the study. The findings revealed that the learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to textual themes became subtextual

when they personalised them to their circumstances. The literature on the set text revealed that the learners and teachers' understanding, and interpretation of the text concurred with that of mature non-classroom critics of the novel. I also discussed the theories that constitute the eclectic theoretical framework that undergirds this study. I addressed the theories separately in order to build a more elaborate understanding of each. The reading theories and approaches that inform this study include Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, and the Reader-Response approach. Considering that my participants are African learners and teachers, I fused the reading theories with African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK). The literary theories that inform this study include postcolonialism and psychoanalysis.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the eclectic theoretical framework of the study. The eclectic theoretical framework fused literary theories (postcolonialism and psychoanalysis), learning and reading theories and approaches (Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, Reader-Response approach) and African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK). The fused reading theories and approaches are conceptualised in the belief that meaning-making is subjective and culturally specific. The literary theories enable learners and teachers to read critically the text and to connect it with their social and cultural realities (Yaqoob, 2011). Collectively, there is harmony amongst the theories in revealing that participants were autonomous readers of the set-text and that their subjective interpretations were socially and culturally anchored. The eclectic theoretical framework also centres on the observation that the reader transacts with the text and conceives meaning consciously (explicitly, literally, plainly) as well as subconsciously (subtextually, implicitly). The eclectic framework allowed for an in-depth exploration of a constructivist-subtextual conception of meaning.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the research design and methodology that I used in the generation and collection of data, and in the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The interpretive paradigm was the most suitable research paradigm for this study. This paradigm's selection was guided by the research questions and the purpose of the study, which was to understand the learners and teachers' perceptions of subtextual themes and experiences of the literary text. I adopted a single case study design to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions of subtextual themes of and responses to the set text. The decision to adopt a case study design was shaped by the understanding that this design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2003). I, therefore, chose the case study design since my study is anchored in the question: How and why does the subtext influence learners and teachers' perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text? I employed qualitative data collection methods consisting of conventional methods (face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis) and art-

based methods (poems and poem-drawings). Data were analysed through inductive thematic and content analysis.

In Chapter Five, I presented the findings of the study under three major themes: (1) Individual triggers; (2) Shared/Common triggers; and (3) Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes. There were several sub-themes under each major theme, and all related to the main research question, the subsidiary questions and the eclectic theoretical framework of the study. Themes 1 and 2 of the findings addressed the triggers or determinants of the participants' perceptions of subtextual themes of the text, while theme 3 addressed the participants' subtextual experiences of the text. Each major theme also corresponded with a respective subsidiary question of the study.

In Chapter Six, I discussed the findings under the themes which had emerged during data analysis. The findings of the study were presented under the themes: (1) Individual triggers; (2) Shared/Common triggers; and (3) Participants' perceptions of subtextual themes. The findings revealed that the participants' perceptions of and responses to the text were triggered by: (1) their personal experiences of trauma which they either verbally expressed during interviews or consciously or unconsciously expressed in their poems and poem-drawings; and (2) collective intergenerational experiences through which they consciously or unconsciously connected with their past. The findings also revealed that the participants identified various themes in the set-text, which they personalised and related to their subjective experiences or circumstances and thus, these themes became their perceptions of subtextual themes.

The literature reveals that violent incidences and experiences of characters in a text can evoke repressed traumas harboured or stored in readers' unconscious psyches (Freud, 1953). This explains the trend in the findings of this study that the participants consciously and unconsciously related or equated the themes raised in the text to their own circumstances and experiences. Their unconscious connections mainly manifested in their individually crafted poems and poem-drawings.

7.3 Positioning the findings within the study's theoretical framework

The eclectic theoretical framework of this study is rooted in the constructivist tenet that knowledge and meaning construction is a social constructivist construct that views experience as a group phenomenon. In essence, the eclectic lens drives the belief that meaning is socially constructed and that readers' social environment influences their reading, understanding and interpretation of literary text. The constructivist eclectic theoretical framework of this study views readers as conceiving meaning both consciously (explicitly) and unconsciously (subtextually). It is evident in the findings that the participants' poems and poem-drawings

revealed unconscious (implicit, subtextual) conceptualisations and interpretations, which I deduced as the researcher.

The findings confirmed the belief held within the eclectic theoretical framework for this study that knowledge is socially constructed, and that meaning construction is subjective and mainly based on a reader's social background and experiences (Kim, 2014), both as an individual and as member of a community that shares intergenerational memory (Genis, 2019; Mawere, 2015). It is evident in the findings that the participants' interpretations of the text reveal that they carry individual and collective intergenerational traumatic memories of aspects such as violence, racism, gender discrimination and various other forms of colonially induced discrimination.

Each literary text is linked to a historical context and historical events (Genis, 2019; 2018), and as such, the conception of meaning by the reader is guided by the historical circumstances that inform the text, as well as the historical context of the reader. This underscores the engagement of postcolonial theory in this study as part of the conceptual literary lens through which the selected text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, was analysed: the novel focuses on the post-independence historical context in Zimbabwe. The findings identified postcoloniality as an umbrella theme, through which subtextual postcolonial subthemes including corruption, individualism, class differentiation and neo-colonialism were identified and discussed by the participants.

7.4 Situating the findings within my own conceptualisation

As I previously explained, this study conceptualises the subtext of literature in English for the Zimbabwean classroom as the literary elements or allusions in the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), that elicit a personal, emotional and psychological response from the reader. Based on this conceptualisation, the findings of this study reveal that literature for the classroom provides for an intergenerational experience. The learners and teachers' memories and emotional responses to the text revealed that they were intergenerationally linked with the text, with each other and with previous generations. The findings indicate that in the Zimbabwean context, the spirit of Hunhu/Ubuntu is suppressed in the economy and in society due to the overemphasis on individualism; however, Hunhu/Ubuntu is still present in the learners and teachers' intergenerational experiencing of the set-text and of literature. This came to fore in their responses during interviews and primarily in their individually crafted poems and poem-drawings of their experiences of the set-text. The findings specifically highlight the intergenerational experiencing of literature by making the subtext visual and by foregrounding the subtext. As evidenced by the findings, the implicit subtext is made explicit

by the learners and teachers' interview responses and by the learners' poems and poem-drawings. This emphasises the importance of the subtextual intergenerational link that exists between the writer, the reader (learners and teachers) and their specific experiences within the school context.

The findings of this study have also revealed that literature is a bodily or embodied experience because it links language, psychology/memory, experience and context/environment. The study of literature is not just a language thing, but it is also a memory thing and closely influenced by the environment, specifically the Zimbabwean environment. The learners and teachers' experiences and revelations can also be phrased as constituting literary bodies; the learners and teachers' responses are part of the literary body of intergenerational experiencing of literature. In the next section, I discuss the conclusions of the study.

7.5 Conclusions based on the research questions

In this section, I present the conclusions of the study in answering the research questions that guided the study.

7.5.1 Research questions

As presented in Chapter One, the three research questions that support the main research question for this study were: What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?; What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' views of the prescribed text?; and What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' views of the prescribed text? I answered these research questions by interviewing both groups of participants, teachers and learners. I also conducted focus group discussions with the learners and reviewed documents in the form of the set-text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the learners' poems as well as their poem-drawings.

7.5.1.1 Research question 1

What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?

The findings revealed that the participants derived diverse themes from their reading of the set literary text. They also related these themes to their personal experiences, thus, making them subtextual themes. The participants mostly alluded to postcolonial Zimbabwean society's problems and identified the themes, class differentiation, corruption, gender disparity, Wenera (labour migration), Midungwe (queues), disruption of Hunhu/Ubuntu and poverty. They described individualism as the main problem from which many other themes/problems of the set-text's plot and that of the contemporary Zimbabwe stemmed. They

expressed that individualism in the text and in their own communities was bred by segregationist racist colonial policies, which the formerly colonised Zimbabwean society adopted at the expense of Hunhu/Ubuntu principles of oneness, sharing and community.

The findings revealed the socio-economic challenges of Wenera (labour migration), Midungwe (queues) and economic destabilisation. Participants viewed these problems as perennial socio-economic ulcers that tormented Zimbabwean society depicted in the text and that of present-day Zimbabwe. The participants blamed the socio-economic problems of the text and of their own communities on the ill-conceived economic policies adopted at independence, colonially induced poverty and gross corruption. The most commonly discussed sub-theme was gender. Overall, the findings revealed that the text presents themes/issues that directly connect with the participants' personal socio-economic-cultural experiences.

7.5.1.2 Research question 2

What individual experiences shape the learners and teachers' views of the prescribed text?

The findings revealed that personal and individual experiences of the participants triggered their subjective perceptions of and responses to the prescribed text. The individual triggers evident in the findings include psychological triggers such as participants' traumatic experiences due to strained family relations. The latter include parental divorce and violent childhood experiences. The findings also revealed that the participants' responses to the text were a result of emotional triggers, which include memories and events that sparked emotional reactions to certain aspects of the text. Participants were primarily affected by personal experiences of psychological and physical distance caused by their parents' absence due to Wenera (labour migration). Some shared feelings of rejection and neglect with the children of the protagonist, Onai, due to their own childhood experiences of rejection, mainly caused by their fathers. It was also observed that the physiological experiences of the characters in the text triggered the participants' memories of their personal physiological challenges, such as the Midungwe (queues), inadequate healthcare facilities and hunger, which characterise the lives of the ordinary people in the text and in their own communities. Most of the participants attested to being victims of physical strain due to incessant queuing for basic commodities, which was also prevalent in the present-day Zimbabwean society. The participants' perceptions of subtextual themes of the text were also triggered by the physical, social and cultural environment of the characters in the text, which the participants equated to their own. For instance, most participants who resided in ghettos bemoaned the squalid conditions experienced by the Mbare residents in the text, which were a reminder to them of their own communities' predicaments. The findings indicated that the participants shared similar

experiences of shortages of utilities such as water, electricity and medical facilities. The social environment and social circumstances of the characters, which include the chaotic family setting of the protagonist linked with some of the participants' personal social conditions. It was observed that most of the participants were from broken families. The cultural environment of the text had much in common with the participants' own communities' cultural experiences, especially increasing individualism and loss of family cohesion.

7.5.1.3 Research question 3

What shared experiences shape the learners and teachers' views of the prescribed text?

The findings revealed that the participants' responses to the text were triggered by aspects that shaped their collective past, present and future identity. These experiences position the participants as progeny. The participants, similar to the characters in the text, shared a collective memory with their ancestors. As such, the findings indicated that the participants' understanding of their society's historical circumstances influenced their interpretations and subsequent responses to the set-text. Historical aspects, which include the liberation war, resulted in shared posttraumatic stress. Some teacher participants revealed that they had witnessed the war first hand and still carried violent memories. The participants' understanding and memories of segregative colonial policies influenced their interpretation of poverty in the text and in their own communities. They viewed it as a colonially conceived problem. The findings also revealed that Wenera (labour migration), as experienced in the text and in Zimbabwe, is a cause for intergenerational trauma with traceable marks of pain, anxiety and of physical and psychological boundaries. The participants' responses indicated that the objectification of women, which is evident in the text, is a transgenerational and global phenomenon. Similarly, patriarchy is a universal institution, which subjects women to second-class status. The findings also indicated that the Murambatsvina (displacement), which takes place in the text and in present-day Zimbabwe, has led to intergenerational trauma and it echoes the colonial displacement of Africans from fertile lands by the colonisers. It was largely agreed that the shared experiences of the participants had their roots in colonisation and that they were recipients of an inherited history of colonially induced violence, fear and anxiety across generations.

7.6 Limitations of the study

The use of a qualitative single case study design, which does not provide for generalisations to other contexts, was a limitation of this study. Literature in English is not only studied at Groove High School in Mashonaland East Province. Therefore, it would have been ideal to extend this study to schools in other districts in order to have a more comprehensive view of

learners and teachers' subtextual experiences of the set-text. However, it was not the aim of this study to generalise the findings of this study to other schools and to other districts.

A limitation may be that only text was chosen to which the participants responded. I chose the novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope* because it addresses diverse, contemporary and recurrent post-independent Zimbabwean issues, with which learners are familiar. The text is also rich in subtextual themes and representations, for example, gender stereotyping, individual and collective psychological trauma and marginalization of subaltern individuals and groups. It is also imbued with subtextual binaries that include abused woman/oppressive husband, and draconic government/suffering citizens. The text, therefore, provides rich examples for subtextual analysis. Moreover, focusing on one text enabled an in-depth study. As indicated, the Zimbabwean literature curriculum draws from various contexts and there is a wide selection of texts; high school learners (Grade 12) have to study more than nine set books. It is difficult to base a study on all the set texts considering the practical considerations that include time constraints and lack of in-depth study if too many set books are chosen.

The study focuses on the perspectives of learners and teachers at one purposively selected school. The reason for this 'limited' choice was the challenges in obtaining in-depth data if the researcher engages too many participants. The study is, therefore, limited to the Groove High School's Literature in English Advanced level class, (2018-2019 class) and not the whole school, to enable an in-depth study within a realistic timeframe. Moreover, Groove High School was selected for this study because it is a co-educational school. This enabled me to determine perceptions of both male and female learners through gender sensitive, representative and objective data. Groove High School is a non-denominational government boarding school with an inclusive multi-cultural and broad mix of socio-cultural, tribal, religious and economic groupings from the urban and rural divide of Zimbabwe. This enabled me to identify the perceptions of learners from diverse backgrounds.

7.7 Implications and recommendations of the study

This study identified gaps in the research, which included the lack of field studies on high school learners and teachers' subtextual experiences and perceptions of prescribed literary texts. The study also employed creative art-based methods to literary analysis. This approach improves the quality of literary engagement and analysis in the classroom. Considering the research findings, the implications of the study are outlined in terms of curriculum developers in education, and possibilities for future research.

7.8 Implications and recommendations for curriculum developers

As reflected by this study, each reader attaches his or her own personal, unique, and subjective interpretation to a text. Thus, it is imperative for curriculum developers in education to model teaching tools on the understanding that effective teaching and learning of literature in the classroom requires activities that encourage students to draw on their personal life experiences, emotions, opinions, concerns, memories, and feelings in their interpretation of literature (Van, 2009). It is upon this premise that this study engaged in art-based methods of data collection, whereby the learners personally crafted poems and poem-drawings that generated personal, original, and subjective learner responses to the prescribed text. Allowing the learners to analyse, interpret and respond to the set text within the framework of their backgrounds and life experiences empowered them to give opinions of the subtext that were independent of the teacher's views. Moreover, when literature combines with communicative activities, which include discussions, learners are more engaged and motivated in the learning process.

This study has revealed that there is need for a shift from the non-participatory methods of text analysis to incorporating diverse modalities that are more learner focused. It is, therefore, important for curriculum developers to reflect on the methods of literary text appreciation and analysis employed in the classrooms and engage in intensive in – service teacher training so that more literacies and modalities can be incorporated in the classroom and existing pre–service training programmes. Moreover, though classroom intervention could encourage the adoption of participatory methods in the reading and analysis of literary texts, I believe that curriculum intervention could have greater impact. Curriculum developers should, thus, consider prescribing participatory methods of literary texts analysis that can have a positive influence on teaching and learning literature in the English classroom. For instance, through crafting poetry, learners share a critical component of their culture since most African societies expose children to poetry practises from birth. The learner participants in my study had the opportunity to express their cultural awareness and to share their feelings and emotions.

7.9 Implications and recommendations for future studies

This study was limited to one ZIMSEC literature set book, and Advanced level students and teachers of Literature in English at one school in Mashonaland East Province. Therefore, further research should be carried out in other parts or provinces of the country. Moreover, other prescribed literature set-books should be analysed that are not studied for ZIMSEC examinations. As mentioned in Chapter One, there are three levels of secondary education in

Zimbabwe; therefore, there can also be research based on set-books that are studied at the other two, lower levels of secondary education.

Educational field research, including Literature, should take cognisance of the need for learners' personal interpretation of the world. Thus, this particular study uniquely contributed to research on classroom literature by engaging art-based research methods in the form of personal poems and drawings by learners to assist them to conceptualise their understanding of the set-text. More field-based research on literature for the classroom should be conducted that employs participatory research methods to generate richer knowledge from classroom readers of literary texts and to make the study of literature a multimodal experience.

Another unique contribution of this study is that the subtext of literature has not been explored in the Zimbabwean classroom. It is, therefore, a worthwhile pursuit to investigate this concept in other contexts. Exploring the responses of learners to set-texts by studying literary works as a source of enjoyment, empowerment and development of critical analysis skills in the classroom is a more worthwhile educational pursuit than merely teaching literature for the examinations.

7.10 Conclusion

Based on the results presented in Chapter Five and the major findings discussed in Chapter Six, the following main conclusions emerged;

- The study of literature in the classroom revealed a bio-psychological connection between living human bodies (learners and teachers), who share intergenerationally linked memories, and the literary body (the set-text) to which they responded. The similar social contexts of the participants and characters in the text, and related themes in the text and present-day Zimbabwe triggered the participants' responses to and perceptions of the subtext.
- The themes raised in the text become subtextual when they trigger the learners' memories of similar personal experiences and are personalised by the learners to their private situations and circumstances. Their ability to connect their personal experiences and the themes in the text conforms the view that learners can be fostered to become active learners, literary critics, capable of connecting the classroom with the outside world.
- The use of participatory art-based methods either in literary research or in the teaching of literature for the classroom elicits varied, subjective and rich interpretations and meanings from learners. Art-based inquiry and text analysis provide the opportunity to

engage uniquely relevant symbols and metaphors, which reflect diversity and subjectivity in literary interpretation and meaning making. Teachers of Literature and researchers in the discipline should engage art-based strategies in the analysis of texts in order to enable the elucidation of diverse and subjective interpretations.

- Conception of meaning occurs both consciously (explicitly) and unconsciously (subtextually), with the reader posing as either an individual or as a member of a community that shares intergenerational memory. As such, learners and teachers' construction of meaning does not take place in isolation, as it is linked with their social and cultural communities which are bound by social, cultural, physical and psychological environmental factors. They carry similar memories as the generations that existed before them, and thus, they experience certain inherited psychological traumas, fears and anxieties.
- The eclectic fusion of literary theories (postcolonialism and psychoanalysis), learning and reading theories and approaches (Constructivism, Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response theory, Reader-Response approach) and African Indigenous Knowledge (AIK) is based on the belief that meaning-making is subjective and culturally specific. This approach produced an in-depth exploration of a constructivist subtextual conception of meaning. Crucially, there was convergence and harmony amongst the theories in expounding how a postcolonial reader interacts with text within the African indigenous cultural context through a transaction that conjures their repressed individual and inherited traumas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of permission to conduct a research- PED-Mash East

The Provincial Education Director
Mashonaland East Province
Marondera
Zimbabwe

Dear Sir / Madam

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH [REDACTED]
SCHOOL IN [REDACTED] OF MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE**

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study entitled: **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**. The aim of this study is to explore how and why the subtext influences the perceptions and responses of learners and teachers to the prescribed text, **The Uncertainty of Hope**, which is studied at Advanced Level (U6). This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. G. Genis also in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. We are requesting permission from you to conduct this research with Advanced Level Literature in English class, learners and teachers at one school, [REDACTED] Mashonaland East Province.

I will conduct individual interviews and focus group discussions at the school. Participants will write individual poems based on their personal experiences of the text (novel), followed by drawing of symbols of the themes that they have identified in the poems. This will be followed by scheduled semi-structured individual interviews through which participants will explain both their poems and drawings and respond to other prepared questions. Focus group discussions with learners will be conducted and will last between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder after obtaining consent from the participants to ensure accurate collection of information. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient to participants in order not to disrupt lessons. After transcription, I will give each participant their interview transcript to give them an opportunity to confirm, add or clarify any of their information.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. The consent of adult participants and the parents of minors (learners) will be obtained before the start of the study. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants and the institution. I will not use the real identity of the participants or the name of the school participating in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation in this study will be voluntary. The interviews and focus group discussions will not be conducted in class, so non-participant learners will not be interfered with and will partake in other activities planned by the school during that time. Should the need arise; participants can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. There

are no anticipated risks to participants in this study. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format at the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that responses of participants in this study will enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to learners and teachers. The results of this study will also be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the University of Pretoria library for public use.

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on +27 633325508 or flodewa@gmail.com; or Dr. Genis, G. on +27 124205547 / +27 827860474 or gerhard.genis@up.ac.za.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dewa Flora (PhD Student)

Date

Dr. Gerhard Genis (Supervisor)

Date

Appendix B: Letter of permission granted to conduct the study-PED-Mash East

Reference: P/Dewa F

E. C. No.:5400398 X

All communications should be addressed to
"The Provincial Education Director
Mashonaland East Province"
Telephone: 0279-24811/4 and 24792
Telex :
Fax: 079-24791
E-mail: mopsemeped@hotmail.com



Ministry of Primary & Secondary Education
Mashonaland East Province
P.O. Box 752
Marondera
Zimbabwe

10 September 2019

Ms Flora Dewa
16B Adylin Road
Marlborough
Harare

PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SCHOOL FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES: MS FLORA DEWA: E. C. NO.: 5400398 X: STUDENT I.D.U18256300: FORMER TEACHER AT ST DOMINICS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Reference is made to your minute dated May 2019.

Please be advised that permission has been granted that you carry out research work in our school(s). You are accordingly being asked to furnish the Ministry with information about your findings so that we share the knowledge for the benefit of the system as well as our nation at large.

We wish you all the best and hope to hear from you after completing your project work.



N.SENGWYO
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER – DISCIPLINE
FOR PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR
MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE

/mm



Appendix C: Information letter for the teachers

Dear Teacher

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study entitled: **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**. The aim of this study is to explore how and why the subtext influences the perceptions and responses of learners and teachers to the prescribed text, **The Uncertainty of Hope**, which is studied at Advanced Level. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. G. Genis also in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria

I will conduct individual interviews as well as focus group discussions at your school. Participants will write individual poems based on their personal experiences of the text (novel), followed by drawing of symbols of the themes that they have identified in the poems. This will be followed by scheduled semi-structured individual interviews through which participants will explain both their poems and drawings and respond to other prepared questions. You will be involved in a semi-structured individual interview. The duration of the interview will be between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder with your consent to record the interview in order to ensure accurate data collection. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient to you as a participant in order not to disrupt lessons. After the transcription, I will give the interview transcript to you to confirm, add or clarify any of your information.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. The consent of adult participants and the parents of minors (learners) will be obtained before the start of the study. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and the institution. I will not use participants' names or the school's name anywhere in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation will be voluntary. You as the participant can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. Should you decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, I will seek consent from you to use your information. There are no benefits or anticipated risks in participating in this study.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format in the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that your responses and those of other participants in this study will enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to

learners and teachers and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the University of Pretoria library for public use.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Dewa Flora (PhD Student)

Date

Dr. Gerhard Genis (Supervisor)

Date

Appendix D: Informed consent for the teachers

CONSENT LETTER

I _____ of _____ school have read the information presented in the letter requesting my permission to participate in the research study titled: **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and request further explanations about the research study. I understand that the research is being carried out by a PhD student by name Dewa, Flora, under the supervision of Dr. Genis, G. both in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria.

I understand that I will participate in poem writing and drawing followed by an individual interview, lasting 30-60 minutes and with my consent this will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate collection of information. I am aware that these interviews will be conducted at my school, at the end of lessons or at places and times convenient to me and other participants in order not to disrupt lessons. I understand that a transcription of my interview will be given to me as an opportunity to confirm, add or clarify any information I gave.

I understand that the researcher will ensure my anonymity and confidentiality and that of my institution. The researcher will not use my name or the school's name anywhere in the study but will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, I understand my participation is voluntary, that I can withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process without suffering any consequences or penalties. I also understand that, should I decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, the researcher will seek consent from me to use my information. In addition, I understand that there are no direct benefits or anticipated risks to me in this research study.

I understand that my data may also be used confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies. I am aware that after the study, all data will be stored in digital format with the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria.

I have been made aware of the fact that participants' responses in this research may enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to learners and teachers and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the University of Pretoria library for public use.

Participant: _____

Date: _____

Dewa Flora (PhD Student)

Date

Dr. Gerhard Genis (Supervisor)

Date

Appendix E: Information and consent letter for the learners' parents.

Dear Parents/Guardians

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study entitled: **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**. The aim of this study is to explore how and why the subtext influences the perceptions and responses of learners and teachers to the prescribed text, **The Uncertainty of Hope**, which is studied at Advanced Level. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. G. Genis also in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria.

This serves to inform you and your child that I will conduct individual interviews as well as focus group discussions at your child's school. Participants will write individual poems based on their personal experiences of the text (novel), followed by drawing of symbols of the themes that they have identified in the poems. This will be followed by scheduled semi-structured individual interviews through which participants will explain both their poems and drawings and respond to other prepared questions. Your child will be involved in poem writing and drawing, a semi-structured individual interview as well as a focus group discussion with other learners in the Literature class. The duration of the interview will be between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder with the participants' consent to record the interview in order to ensure accurate data collection. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient for participants in order not to disrupt lessons. After the transcription, I will give the interview transcript to participants to confirm, add or clarify any of their information.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. The consent of adult participants and the parents of minors (learners) will be obtained before the start of the study. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and the institution. I will not use participants' names or the school's name anywhere in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation will be voluntary. The interviews and focus group discussions will not be conducted in class, so non-participant learners will not be interfered with and will partake in other activities planned by the school during that time. Should the need arise; participants can withdraw at any stage of the

research process with no consequences or penalties. There are no benefits or anticipated risks in participating in this study. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format at the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that your child's responses and those of other participants in this study will enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to learners and teachers and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the University of Pretoria library for public use.

If you agree that your child participates in the interviews, please complete and sign in the space provided below as a declaration of your consent.

=====

I _____ accept / do not accept that my child should participate in the research.

Parent's / guardian's signature: _____ Date: _____

For any query or additional information on this study, please contact me on +27 633325508 or flodewa@gmail.com; or Dr. Genis, G. on +27 124205547 / +27 827860474 or gerhard.genis@up.ac.za

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dewa Flora (PhD Student)

Date

Dr. Gerhard Genis (Supervisor)

Date

Appendix F: Information letter for the learners

Dear Learner

INFORMATION ON YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. Currently, I am undertaking a research study entitled: **The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom**. The aim of this study is to explore how and why the subtext influences the perceptions and responses of learners and teachers to the prescribed text, **The Uncertainty of Hope**, which is studied at Advanced Level. This research is being carried out under the supervision of Dr. G. Genis also in the Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria

I will conduct individual interviews as well as focus group discussions at your school. Participants will write individual poems based on their personal experiences of the text (novel), followed by drawing of symbols of the themes that they have identified in the poems. This will be followed by scheduled semi-structured individual interviews through which participants will explain both their poems and drawings and respond to other prepared questions. You will be involved in poem writing and drawing, a semi-structured individual interview as well as a focus group discussion with other learners in your Literature class. The duration of the interview will be between 30 to 60 minutes. I will use an audio-recorder with your consent to record the interview in order to ensure accurate data collection. The interviews will be conducted at the school, at the end of lessons or at places, dates and times convenient for you as participants in order not to disrupt lessons. After the transcription, I will give the interview transcript to you to confirm, add or clarify any of your information.

The ethical requirements of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will guide the ethical integrity of this research. The consent of adult participants and the parents of minors (learners) will be obtained before the start of the study. I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and the institution. I will not use participants' names or the school's name anywhere in this study. I will use pseudonyms and codes throughout all the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting. Furthermore, participation will be voluntary. You as the participant can withdraw at any stage of the research process with no consequences or penalties. Should you decide later to withdraw from the study after data collection, I will seek consent from you to use your information. There are no benefits, anticipated or known risks in participating in this study.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies. After the study, all data will be stored in digital format at the Department of Humanities Education of the University of Pretoria.

I anticipate that your responses and those of other participants in this study will enable a deeper understanding of the concept of subtext and make literary analysis more beneficial to

learners and teachers and that the results of this study will be published in journal articles and the thesis will be available in the University of Pretoria library for public use.

I have requested consent from your parents/guardians for you to participate in this study.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dewa Flora (PhD Student)

Date

Dr. Gerhard Genis (Supervisor)

Date

Appendix G: Interview protocol- Learners

Date:
Time of interview:
Name of interviewee:
Interviewer:
Position of interviewee:
Length of interview:

TITLE: The subtext of literature in English for the High school classroom

Questions

Section A: Biographical information – Learners

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Briefly tell me about your family.
3. What aspects of your home society/neighbourhood would you like to share?
4. Tell me what prompted you to select Literature in English as one of your study subjects at Advanced Level.

Section B: Text analysis information – Learners

5. Tell me your reasons for liking/disliking the text, *The Uncertainty of Hope* for Advanced Level.
6. In what ways (if at all) would you identify with the characters in the text?
7. Briefly explain the themes that you consider as central to the plot of *The Uncertainty of Hope*.
8. Are there any hidden themes/meanings that you deduce from your analysis of the text?
9. How do personal experiences shape your views of certain themes/aspects that are included in the text?
10. What would you say are some of the common/shared experiences of your society which are addressed by the text?
11. From your reading the novel, how do you feel about the author's portrayal of male/female characters?
12. Indicate the issues that you would prefer literature texts selected for study in high schools to address.

Appendix H: Poem writing and poem-drawing protocol

Step 1:

Write a poem that illustrates how you feel about/perceive/respond to the prescribed text, *The Uncertainty of Hope*. In planning to write your poem, think about the themes, characters, setting and plot of the text.

Step 2:

Identify all the themes/topics/aspects in your poem and draw a picture or symbol that represents these themes/topics/aspects.

Your poem and poem drawing must be based on your personal understanding of the prescribed text.

Appendix I: Interview protocol- Teachers

Date:
Time of interview:
Name of interviewee:
Interviewer:
Position of interviewee:
Length of interview:

TITLE: The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom

Questions

Section A: Biographical information – Teachers

12. Where did you grow up?
13. For how long have you been teaching Literature in English?
14. What is your highest qualification?
15. What were your considerations/reasons for selecting the novella, *The Uncertainty of Hope* for your class to study?

Section B: Text Analysis Information – Teachers

16. What do you understand by the term Subtext?
17. Is your teaching guided by literary and teaching approaches/ theories? Which ones guide your teaching of *The Uncertainty of Hope*?
18. What would you consider as your personal experiences that influence your approaches to Literature teaching? Explain how (if at all) those personal experiences influence your perceptions of *The Uncertainty of Hope*.
19. Briefly explain some of the major themes you derive from the text.
20. The novella addresses a broad spectrum of Zimbabwean societal issues. What aspects would you consider as common/shared experiences of the society?
21. In what ways do you find the author's depiction/presentation of the Zimbabwean society realistic?

Appendix J: Focus group discussion protocol

Date:
Time of discussion:
Discussion prompter:
Participants:
Length of discussion:

TITLE: The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom

Questions

22. In what ways do the themes/issues raised in the text reflect the present day Zimbabwean society?
23. From your reading of *The Uncertainty of Hope*, what historical experiences of the Zimbabwean society are reflected in the text?
24. Cite any occasions when the writer brings out/reveals the inner thoughts and feelings (psyche) of the characters?
25. What would you consider as the traumatic experiences of the society in the text?
26. Discuss the author's presentation of male/female characters and any other binaries [to be simplified for the benefit of learners] existent in the text, e.g. poor/rich.

Appendix K: Document analysis protocol

Date:

Name of author/participant:

TITLE: The subtext of literature in English for the high school classroom

1. Type of document
 - Primary source (Poem; Poem-Drawing)
 - Secondary source (Set-text; Journal article; Critical work)

2. Physical characteristics of the document
 - Handwritten
 - Typed
 - Hand drawn

3. Status of the document
 - Published
 - Unpublished

4. Author of the document:
Date and year of document:

5. Document information
 - a) Its engagement of imagery and symbolism
 - b) Diction, structure and tone of the document
 - c) What it says about characters in the set-text
 - d) What it says about themes raised in the set-text
 - e) Its reflection of the participant's individual experiences of the set-text
 - f) Its reflection of the participant's socio-cultural worldview

Appendix L: Sample data analysis

Sub questions AND Interview questions	Participant Responses/Transcript	Segments	Codes	Themes/ sub themes
SQ. 1: What subtextual themes do the learners and teachers derive from the prescribed text?		EXPLICIT and SUBTEXTUAL EXPERIENCES	EXPLICIT and SUBTEXTUAL EXPERIENCES	
IQ 7. Briefly explain the themes that you consider as central to the plot of <i>The Uncertainty of Hope</i> .	INDV:7:L:CP7: Well, I would say there is a theme of death which pervades the text. Death is a central issue in the text, which is coupled with many other central concerns. Death and AIDS are of similar weight in the text. The writer aptly captures the sad situation of the time, whereby AIDS robbed many families of their loved ones. There was a time in the history of our country when attending a funeral was like attending any other function, when death ceased to carry the weight is supposed to carry in our culture. I'm told by my mom that there was a time when a week wouldn't pass without one hearing about someone they know losing a relative to the pandemic. INDV:7:L:Hassan: I think one cannot mention central issues of the text without mentioning the shortages which rock the society day in day out. There are shortages of both material and human resources. The economy is crippled to the core by shortages. Basic commodities are a nightmare, especially for the poor who cannot afford to import goods or to cross borders into neighbouring countries to buy goods. On	The writer aptly captures the sad situation of the time, whereby AIDS robbed many families of their loved ones. There was a time in the history of our country when attending a funeral was like attending any other function, when death ceased to carry the weight is supposed to carry in our culture. There are shortages of both material and human resources. The economy is crippled to the core by shortages. Basic commodities are a nightmare, especially for the poor who cannot afford to import goods or to cross borders into	Emotional stress (CP7.7) Death (CP7.7) AIDS (CP7.7) Cultural destabilisation (CP7.7) Loss (CP7.7) Economic disorder (Hassan.7) Material resources shortage (Hassan.7) Human resources shortage (Hassan.7)	Socio-cultural distress Queueing

	the other hand, the massive brain drain which is aggravated by factors such as low wages and job scarcity subsequently causes human resource shortages. The shortages of basic goods result in price hikes and exorbitant charges. Sectors like the health are affected by human resource shortages in ways that are clear and difficult to conceal, because they result in catastrophes like the many deaths which Emily and other doctors mention in the text. This is not only a problem of the text, but one that our current society has nursed for quite some time. Brain drain has affected many sectors of the Zimbabwean economy, especially. Many professionals have been produced but have not been sustained due to material resources shortages and many other push factors. INDV:7:L:Tamuda: When I look at the central aspects of the text, I see corruption being one of the rampant societal issues the writer brings forth. There are various levels of corruption highlighted in the text. It cuts across the urban and rural divide, only the degree and intensity would differ, but both societies witness corruption. The most embarrassing and saddening type of corruption is that done by the supposed law enforcement agents like the police officers. In the city, we hear of various police scandals, such as taking of bribes, even from the poor elements of society. For instance, there is a police officer who takes an injured woman to hospital and meets Emily as the doctor on call. Emily openly tells the officer that she is aware of the police officers' collection of bribes from men who abuse their wives so that they help them in avoiding the courts after beating their wives etc.	neighbouring countries to buy goods. On the other hand, the massive brain drain which is aggravated by factors such as low wages and job scarcity subsequently causes human resource shortages. The shortages of basic goods result in price hikes and exorbitant charges. I see corruption being one of the rampant societal issues the writer brings forth...The most embarrassing and saddening type of corruption is that done by the supposed law enforcement agents like the police officers. In the city, we hear of various police scandals, such as taking of bribes, even from the poor elements of society. Emily openly tells the officer that she is aware of the police officers' collection of bribes from men who abuse their wives so that they help them in avoiding the courts after beating their wives etc.	Migration-brain drain (Hassan.7) High cost of living (Hassan.7) Misconduct -accepting bribes (Tamuda.7) Corrupt officials (Tamuda.7) Domestic violence (Tamuda.7)	Wenera Queueing Hunhu/Ubuntu violation Gender
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