Formative Assessment 8

#### Talk about

Do you read and interpret pictures, photographs, diagrams, graphs? What is your opinion?

Why do you write words when it is so much easier to speak them instead?

News paper articles, magazines, text books, these are usually written by one or more persons. Yet they can influence the way an entire society thinks. Discuss your views.

#### Activity 1

Activity 1 is to read the article below to understand its meaning, to acquire background knowledge and to practise the skills of reading, both aloud and silently, and to be able to respond orally or in writing to the questions that follow in Activity 2.

Read this article on South African literature, taken and adapted from Time Magazine, January 2006.

*Many wrongs to write*

*Although the injustices and inhumanities of apartheid have been assigned to the scrap heap, now more than a decade after the establishment of democracy, South African novelists are still finding material enough to instill their fiction with new ideas and vibrancy.*

*South Africa can still boast two current Nobel prizewinners; L.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer. Other renowned writers are Breyten Breytenbach, Andre Brink, Zakes Mda and dramatist Athol Fugard.*

*With the triumph of democracy more than a decade ago, some South African writers and readers have worried that the thrill is gone, the edge lost, the fire dimmed. Like apartheid itself those fears are groundless. As it happens four of South African's leading writers - Brink, Coetzee, Gordimer and Mda – have produced novels this year. Not all are great, but none is dull and together they confirm that the new South Africa is an exciting place to be a writer. The country's literary tradition has long been in white hands, but now black and mixed-race writers are clamouring to be heard. Move over India (pop 1 billion). South Africa (pop 45 million) may well be the developing world's new literary superpower.*

*Asked if the end of apartheid would take the zip out of South African fiction, Gordimer once responded,” On the contrary. We've got plenty of problems.” Among these are an educational system still reeling from the inequities of the past, plus stubborn poverty, environmental degradation, corruption and an aids epidemic that has left 1 out of 5 adults HIV positive. But the literacy rate is a respectable 86% and*

*5 000 new titles are published each year. Besides as in India and other poor countries that export fiction, great troubles can make for great novels.*

*The most powerful novel by a black writer in recent years is Zakes Mda's “The Heart of Redness”. It tells about the assault of modernity on traditional ways.”The Whale Caller” is a subtler tale about a whale-caller who has retired from itinerant labouring to Hermanus, a pleasant holiday mecca in the Cape, where he spends his days blowing a kelp horn to attract whales for his own amusement.*

*This year will see novels by Achmat Dangor, Dido, Niq Mhlongo, Wally Serote, Miriam Tlali and Zoe Wicomb. This is a thoroughly new African generation of writers emerging; a literature born in equality and fired with impatience.*

#### Activity 2: Reading for meaning

Answer the following questions on the article in Activity 1 to test your comprehension skills:

* What values are inculcated in this piece of writing?
* What is the main thrust of this article?
* Why are you reading this article?
* The metaphors “the edge lost” and “the fire dimmed” have a raw meaning. What is it?
* List some of South Africa's pressing problems.
* What do you understand by the “assault by modernity on traditional ways”?