Only one thing has changed

African Storybook

Sibusiso Khumalo

Dumisani is writing an article for his school magazine.

He is interviewing children at his school about their experiences of the Covid pandemic. He goes to talk to learners during break.
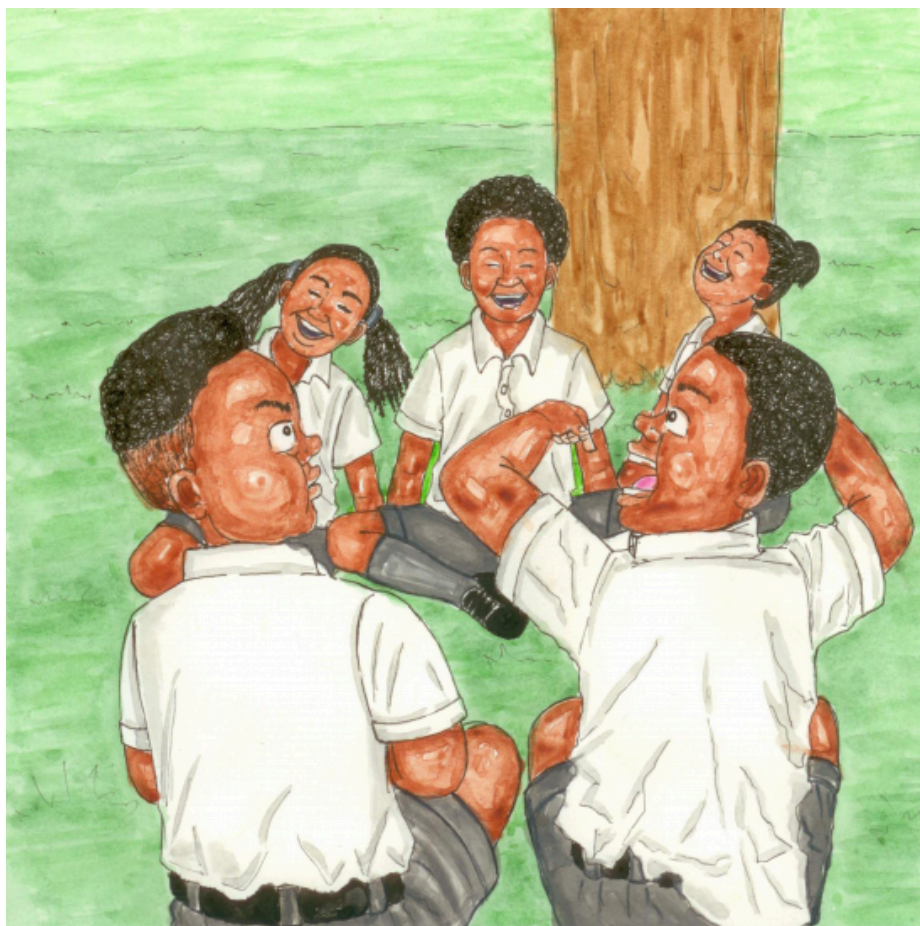
"What did you think when you first heard about the Corona virus?" asks Dumisani.

"A lot of people believe what they see, not what they hear. At the beginning, some said this virus wasn't real," says Moses.
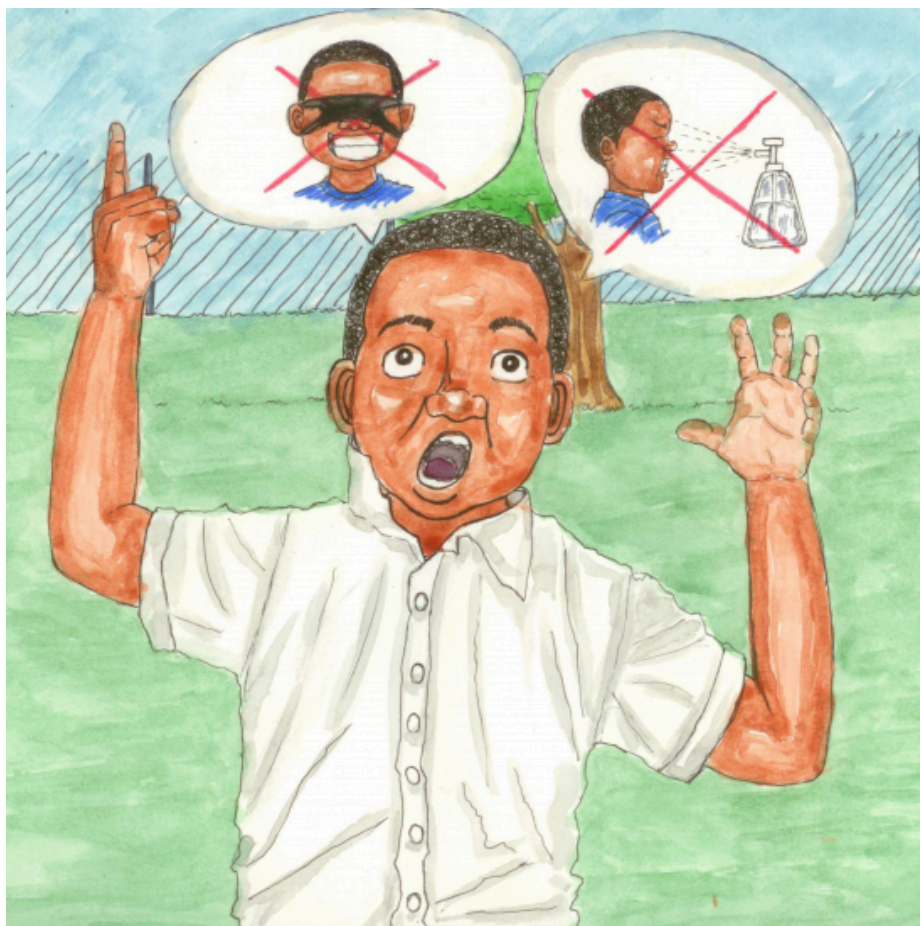
Moses continues, "Some people didn't want to follow the rules. I told them, we all have to follow the pandemic rules. If we don't, the virus will spread."

Zwanga interrupts him, "At home and in the community, we followed the rules!"

"Are you serious?" asks Moses. Zwanga and Moses are twin brothers.

"OK, not everyone in the community, but some of them!" protests Zwanga. The rest of the learners laugh. It was the same experience for all.
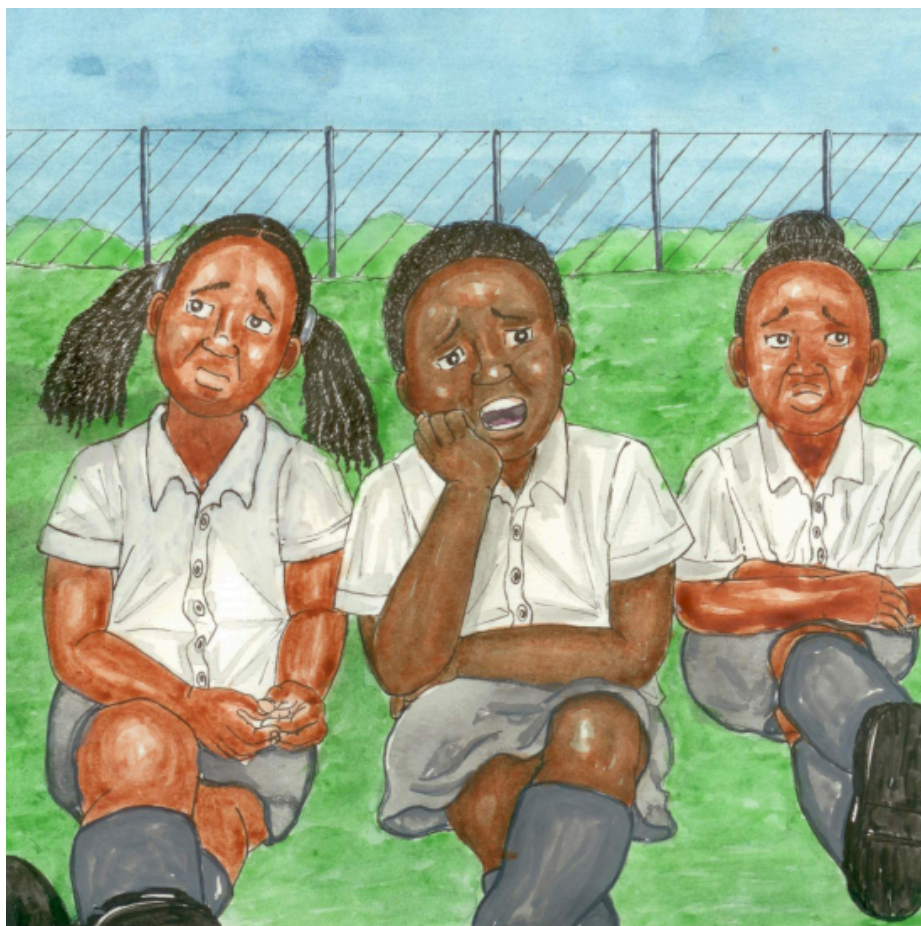
"There were lots of rules and regulations!" moans Zwanga.

"Don't touch your face or nose or mouth. Don't go to a crowded place. Wash your hands, sanitise, wear a mask, social distance!" Zwanga runs out of breath.

Moses says, "Eish, the first lockdown was the worst!" Dumisani asks the group, "How did you deal with lockdown?"

Mpho answers, "It wasn't great! All you did was sit at home and watch TV. At first, you couldn't even go outside."

"It was hard to study at home because there is a lot of noise," says Basani.

"I was alone. I wanted someone to explain the work I was given," says Bongi.

"I was also suffering a lot with my schoolwork," says Mpho.

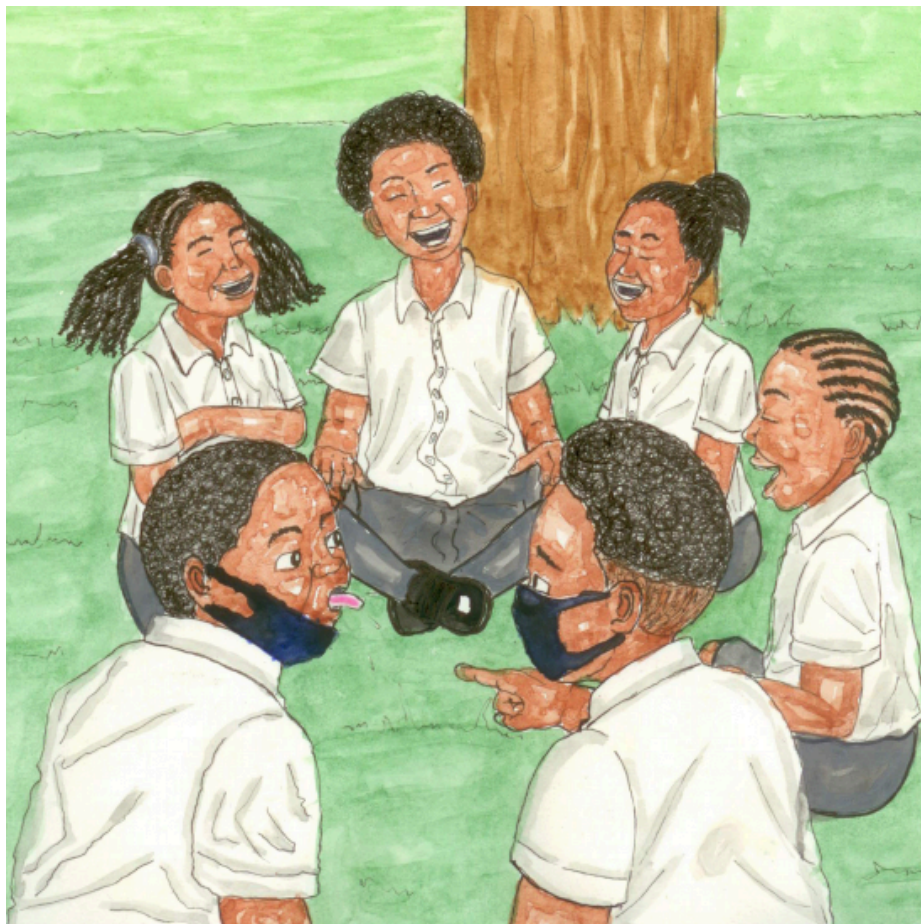"Were you happy when they re-opened the schools?" asks Dumisani.

Andzani replies, "I thought that it wasn't safe enough to go to school." Abdul agrees, "Children might not follow the regulations or we might forget."

"I didn't think the schools should re-open," says Basani. Mpho disagrees, "I was so glad to come back to school."

"Me too!" says Moses, and Zwanga nods.

"What is different at school now?" asks Dumisani.

Moses begins, "Only one thing has changed at school since the Covid pandemic and that is ..."

"... EVERYthing has changed!" Zwanga completes his brother's sentence.

Their friends laugh and agree.

——Questions

1. What did you think when you first heard about Covid-19? Please explain.

2. Explain each word in your own words: pandemic, sanitise, lockdown.

3. Find words in the story that mean the opposite to: end, cry, empty, best.

4. Why is it always necessary to wash our hands?

5. What rules does your school expect you to follow? Why do you think they are important?

6. What does 'Only one thing has changed' mean?

7. What do you think guided the government in reopening school?

This storybook is based on reports for RX Radio. RX Radio is a children's internet radio station, by and for children.

RX Radio operates from the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town.

RX Radio helps children to tell stories about issues important to them.

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Ulwazi Lwethu is a Zenex Foundation funded and initiated project to develop a series of graded and leisure African language readers and teacher support materials. This project is targeted at teaching and supporting learners in the Foundation Phase to improve their home language reading and understanding. The readers have been originated in nine African languages in collaboration with Molteno Institute for Language and Literacies, Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development, Room to Read South Africa, and Saide. All resources are developed as Open Education Resources (OER).

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