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# Days of the past

## Pre-reading question

Why are grandparents important?

New words

**Nod** – I nod my head up and down when I say yes.

**Expected** – Noma was expected to help with housework every day.

**Starving** – Kim left her lunch at home and she was starving hungry by the end of the day.

**Cereal** – We eat cereal with milk for breakfast.

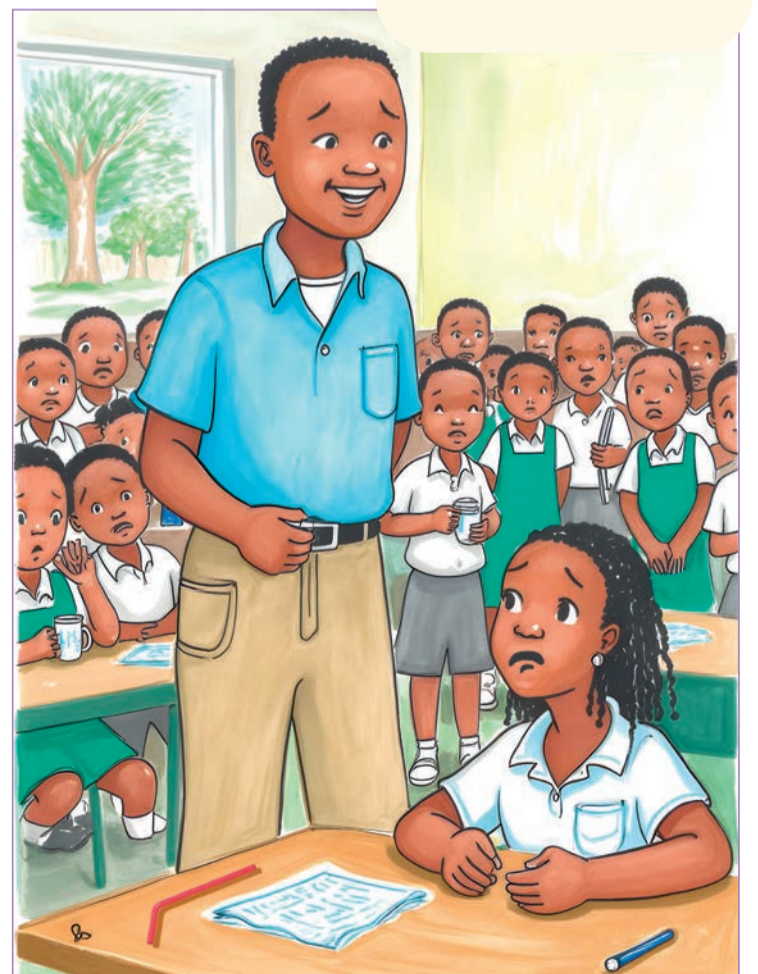
**Chuckled** – I chuckled at my friend's joke.

The class teacher, Sir Mokoena, stood in front of the class smiling broadly.

“I am excited to remind you,” he said, “that tomorrow is Grandparents’ Day! I am really looking forward to meeting your special grandparents. Everyone should respect them.”

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special

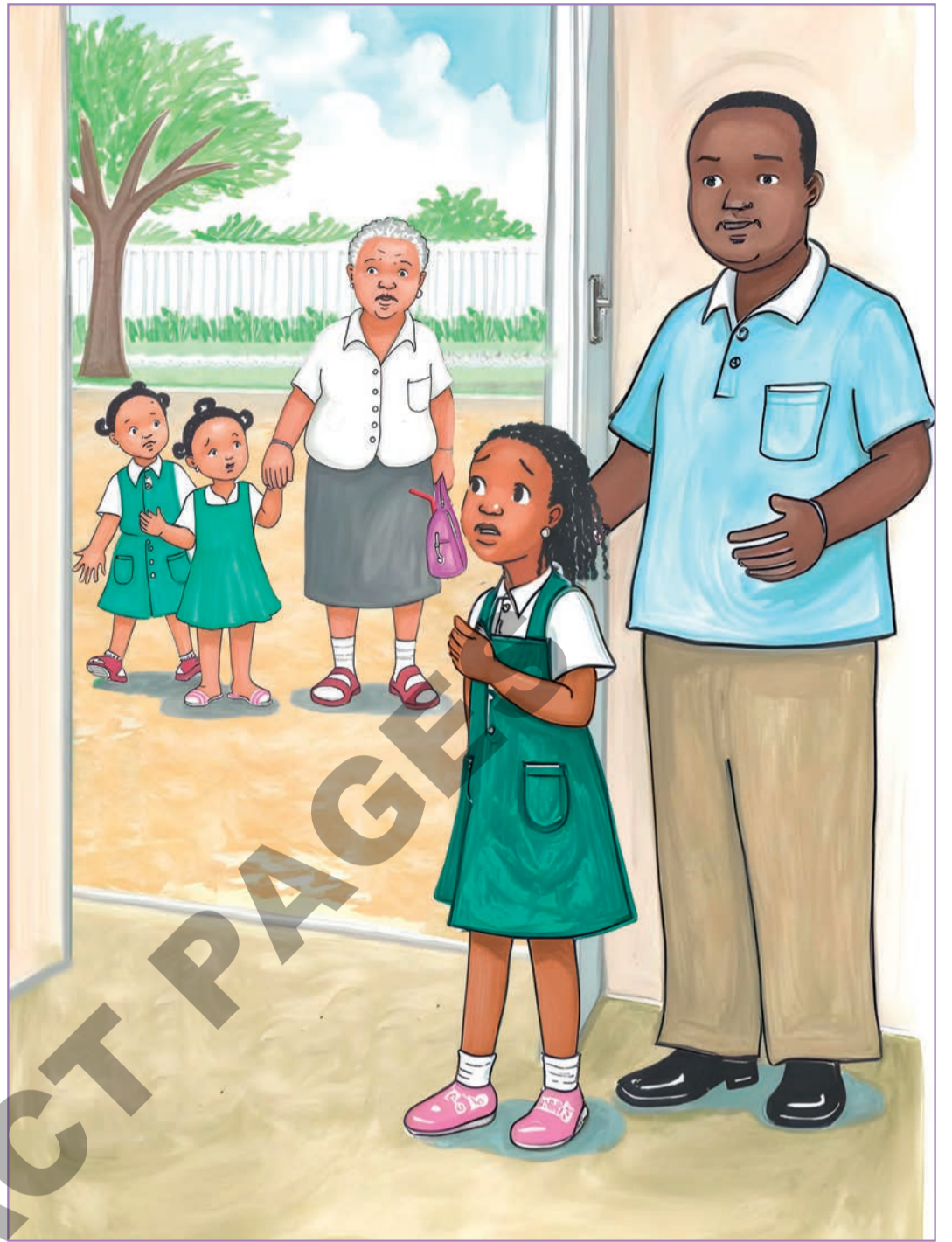


The children cheered, but two children looked sad because they did not have any grandparents.

“And,” Sir Mokoena continued, “my very own grandmother is coming too!”

The next day the children led their grandparents to their classroom. Sir Mokoena shook their old hands and said, “A pleasure to meet you.” Once the class was settled, with the grandparents seated at the front, Sir Mokoena spoke.

“It is such a joy to have your grandparents here today. We look forward to hearing about their lives when they were your age.”



Then Sir Mokoena's own grandmother, Nkhono, stood up saying, "Let me speak first. Every day, before the sun had even risen, I would get up. First I would go and collect any eggs our chickens had laid. Then I would walk down to the river to collect water for cooking and bathing. Only after my chores were done, did I leave for school."



Ma Mpali who had been listening closely and nodding her head, spoke next. “Once our chores were done we would walk three kilometres to school — barefoot.”



“Wasn’t that horrible?” one of the children asked.

“Not at all,” said Ma Mpali laughing, “our feet were tough. We also made up rhymes and songs, and we laughed a lot!”

al

walk

Another grandparent chipped in, “Remember there were no cellphones back then. We talked to each other about everything and shared our problems. Of course, we also had to keep an eye on the small children with us. Looking after our younger brothers and sisters was expected of us.”



“What about the holidays?” asked one of the children.

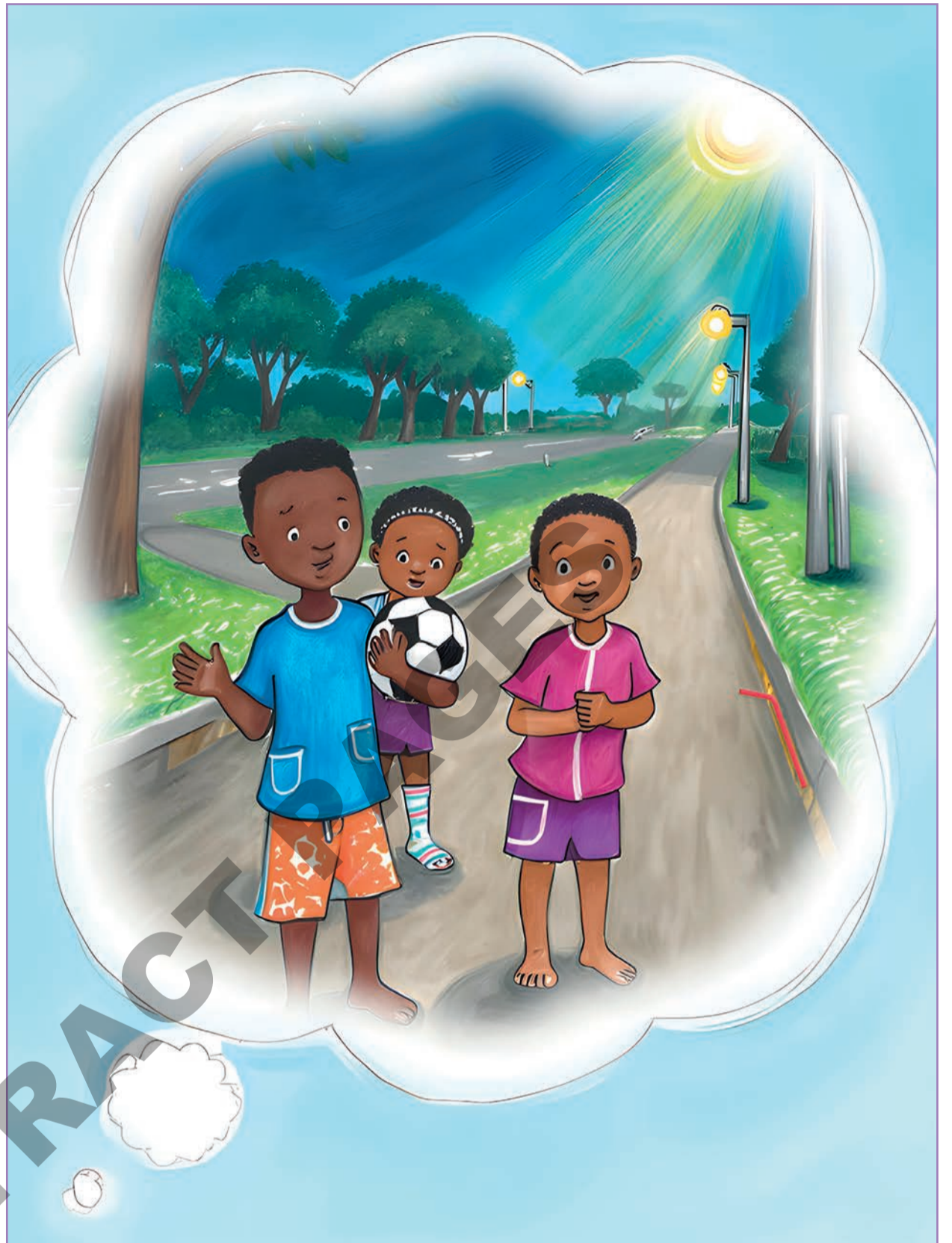
“Oh, they were the best,” said one grandparent clapping her hands.

“We played outside from morning till night and came home very dirty!”

“And tired,” added another. “Starving, as well!”

“Children, please notice how we are different but in many ways we are the same.”

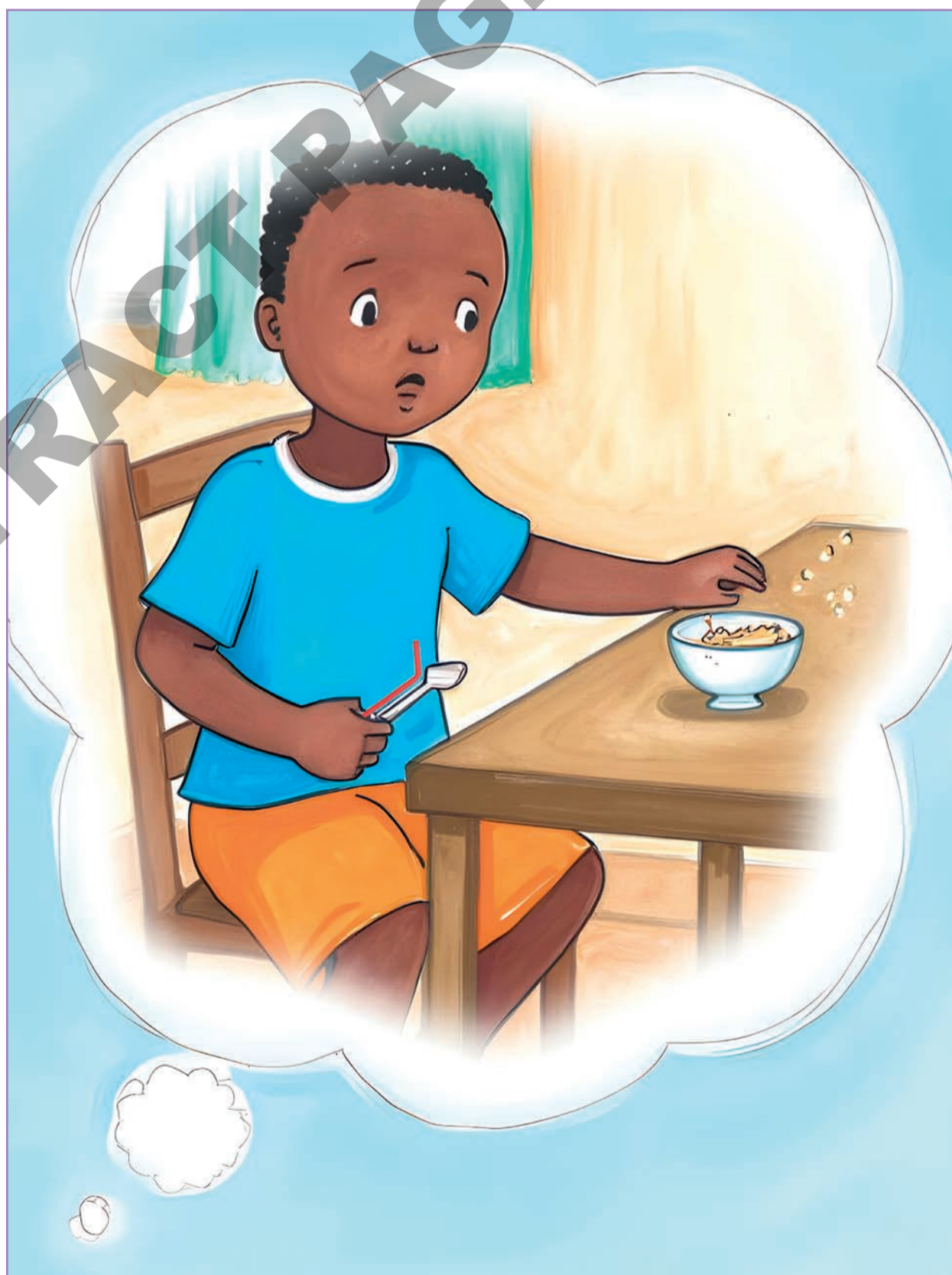
The class laughed as they pictured the scene in their own heads.



Boka raised his hand to ask his grandfather a question, “What did you eat for breakfast, Mkulu?”

“That would have been porridge – or soft samp,” he answered. “Dishes made with mealie meal and home-grown vegetables were delicious. Sometimes we added morogo, a type of spinach that grew wild.

There were no boxes of cereal for us back then,” Mkulu laughed.



ion

question

“Please tell us how you travelled about,” said Tayana. “Were there cars?” Oupa Mack chuckled, “Yes, there were cars — we are not that old. We had to use large paper maps to find our way on the roads.”



Then Gogo said, “We had no car, but how we loved to travel by train! There was a cabin with beds, a restaurant for meals, and a wonderful view! I miss that.”

“Do you think life was better then?”  
Sir Mokoena asked the grandparents.  
One answered, “In some ways it was  
better – simpler, slower and quieter.  
The support of the community made life  
safer too, you know. Nowadays, we can  
enjoy some of the modern things — like  
my cell phone. I love calling my  
grandchildren  
every week  
to check up  
on them!”



Sir Mokoena's grandmother, Nkhona, raised her hand to speak, "Children, always remember there are some things that never change no matter how old you are. These are friendship, kindness, love and caring for each other. Now I have an important question because I am in need of more grandchildren to love. Who in this class might be in need of an old gogo to love them?"



### Post-reading questions

1. Whose grandmother was Nkhono?
2. Which grandparent walked three kilometres to school barefoot?
3. Compare life in the past and life today. What do you think was better and what was worse?