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Beyond words

Pre-reading questions

1. Read the title. What do you think 'beyond words' means?
2. Have you ever danced or acted on a stage? Would you like to? Explain.
3. Imagine you could not speak. How would you communicate and express yourself?

A long time ago, in a village called Pongola, there lived a man named Henry. Henry had many talents, but he could not speak. He used his body to tell stories.

Every afternoon, he would stand under a tree and dance. He would dress up and paint his face to look like an animal. Henry's movements could show when he was happy, excited, sad or lonely.



All the children in the village came to watch Henry. They loved his stories.



The children understood that sometimes you don't have to talk to say how you feel. You can use your face and your body to tell the story. Some days, the children saw that Henry was sad. He had no family and he lived alone. The children wanted to help Henry.



Ayama liked to show his feelings through words and writing. He started to write about Henry. Ayama's plan was to send his stories to all the children who couldn't watch Henry.



Himani painted on the wall of the village's library. Himani wanted everyone to walk past and see what Henry could do. Soon Henry's story spread far and wide.

The local radio station did a programme about Henry's dances and how he told stories without words. The children and Miss Nkosi, the village teacher, heard it. They decided they would make up a dance to tell Henry about the radio programme.

So, one day, as Henry was dancing under the tree, the children started dancing too. Their dance told Henry about the radio programme. Henry was shocked. He didn't know he was famous!



Miss Nkosi wrote to the local newspaper about Henry's dancing. The newspaper decided to do a weekly report about Henry.



Muzi was one of the children who watched Henry. He lived with his grandparents. His mother worked in the city. Muzi had told his mother about Henry. Now he could send her the newspaper and she could see a picture of Henry. He was so happy.

Soon it would be time for the town's festival. The villagers worked hard to prepare for the festival.

Everyone wanted Henry to perform. A big crowd would come to watch Henry. He was famous!

Miss Nkosi and the children showed Henry the stage. They danced on the stage for him. Henry understood.



Henry was nervous. He liked to dance under his tree. He couldn't dance in front of so many people!

Miss Nkosi and the children came up with a plan.

The children would dance with Henry!

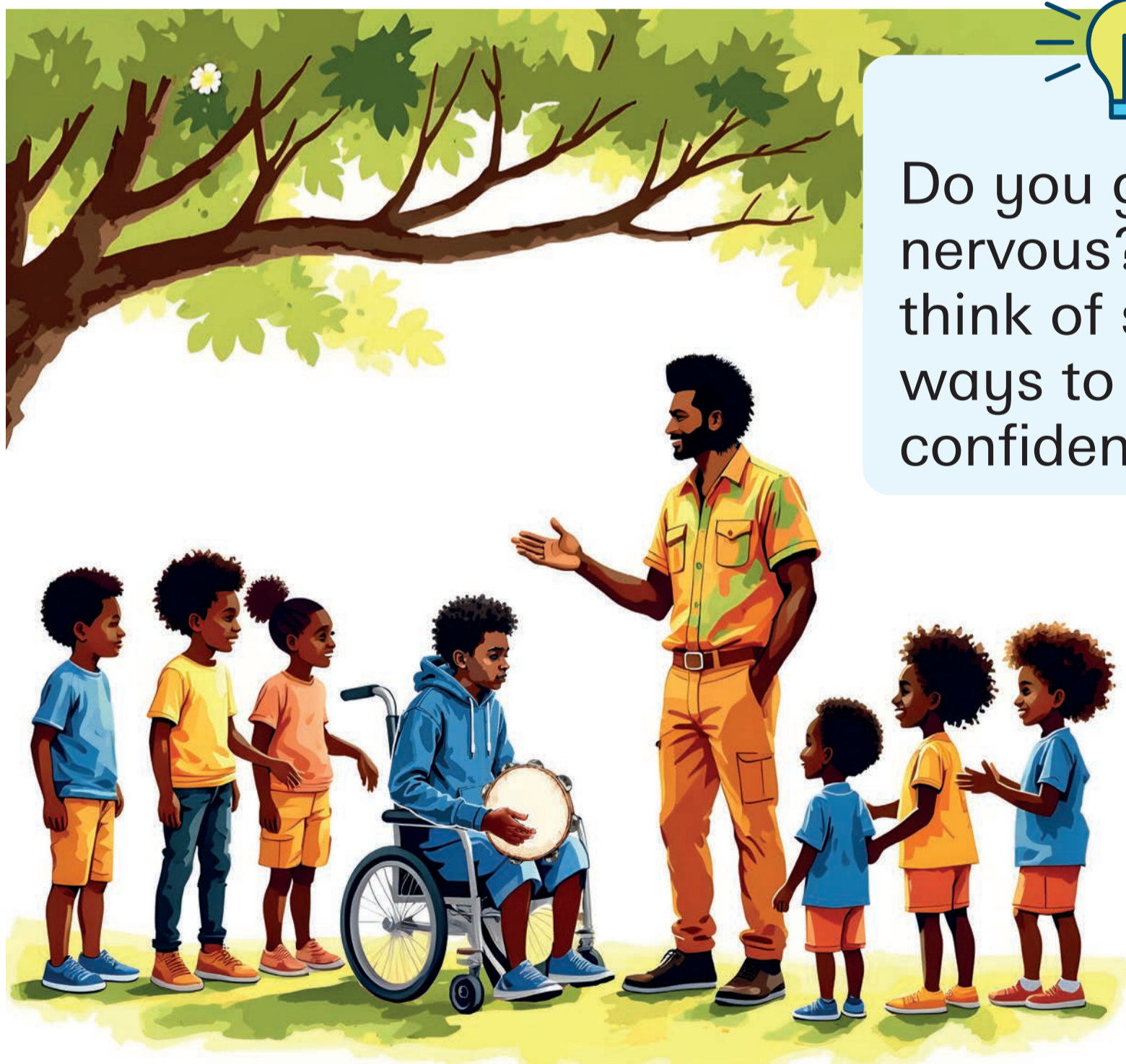
Miss Nkosi said to the class:

Let's dance and jive,

We'll all feel alive!

Henry is our star.

Let's show him together we can go far.



Do you get nervous? Can you think of some ways to feel more confident?

Miss Nkosi made beautiful costumes for the children. They were dressed like all the animals of the veld.



Henry and the children stood on the stage together. The children stood still while Henry danced. The crowd was quiet.

The children started dancing with Henry.
They circled around him.
The crowd could see that they loved
Henry. Everyone was smiling and
laughing.



The dance finished. Everyone clapped
and clapped.

Henry realised how much the villagers loved him. He had shared his story with them. He would never be lonely again.

The village of Pongola became a happy place. All the children listened and spoke to each other with kindness.

Henry taught everyone that talking is about more than words. It is about showing love, respect and kindness.



Post-reading questions

1. How did Henry tell stories?
2. Do you think Henry ever wished he could speak like others?
3. How did Miss Nkosi help the children understand Henry?

Cultures and celebrations

Pre-reading questions

1. What do you think 'rainbow nation' means?
2. What cultural differences have you noticed between you and your friends?
3. What culture would you like to learn more about? Why?

South Africa is a rainbow nation because it has different cultures, traditions, religions, food, songs and dances. We wear different clothes and speak different languages. We celebrate different special days.

