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# A day in the life of Melokuhle Nolulamo Mnyaka- Mngeni Rob Owen

Synopsis:

A story about a baby girl called Melokuhle and her four-year-old brother Asante, who go to a play centre.

English

Melokuhle was born in a small, diverse rural township in South Africa.

South Africans speak many different languages, like isiXhosa, Sesotho, isiZulu, Shona, English and Afrikaans – even in one household.

Melokuhle's mother speaks isiXhosa and her father speaks Sesotho. Her father lives and works in a city far away.

Melokuhle's mother works in a shop owner's house in town. She has a firstborn child called Anathi, who is 15 years old, and two young children. Asante is four years old, and Melokuhle is six months old.



It is early in the morning and it is still dark and cold outside. Anathi steps onto the misty street and pulls the shawl close around her neck.

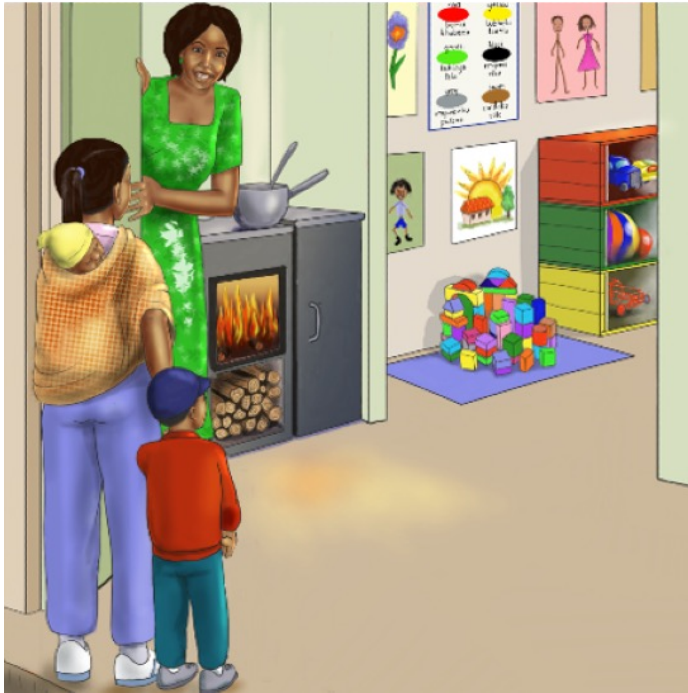
Melokuhle is warm and cosy against the wind, wrapped in a blanket and sleeping on her sister's back. Asante walks next to them, holding Anathi's hand.

Anathi is taking Melokuhle and Asante to the play centre down the road. As she walks, Anathi sings a song.

Melokuhle and Asante are the first to arrive at Iindumiso Centre.

Nolulamo runs this play centre for children from birth to four years old. The centre is a small four-roomed house.

Inside the play centre it is warm, heated up by the stove on which porridge is cooking.



Anathi greets Nolulamo in Sesotho, "Dumela Mme."

Nolu responds in isiXhosa, "Mholweni, Anathi" and to Asante, "Mholo, Sante. Unjani namhlanje?" Asante replies but he is shy, "Philile."

Nolu tries to get Asante's attention, "Ungxamelephi na awandihoya?" He replies, "Qhuba imoto," and goes off by himself to the car toys.

Nolu takes Melokuhle gently from her older sister's back and lays her on the mattress in the next room for babies.



Meanwhile, Asante plays with cars on the road mat until the other children arrive.

Melokuhle wakes up and Nolu changes her nappy.

"Melo, Melo! Ubonwabele ubuthongo bakho. You enjoyed your sleep, neh?" She smiles at Melokuhle.

Nolu laughs and shakes her head. Melokuhle copies Nolu, shaking her head and giggling.





Nolu speaks to Melokuhle, "Masitshintshe ke ngoku," making eye contact. "Kufuneka sicoceke, sinuke kamnandi, xa sizakutya." She wants Melo to be clean and to smell nice when she eats.

While Nolu clears the change area Melokuhle looks at other objects around her and talks to herself quietly. "Ta, ta," she says.

"Thatha," says Nolu, giving Melo a soft toy which she grabs and chews.

Melo's attention turns to the bright sunlight coming through the window. She is staring at the sunrays.

Nolu tells Melo it is time for breakfast. "Lixesha lesidlo sakusasa, Melo," says Nolu. "Yum, yum, yum."

When the food is finished, Nolu shows Melo the empty bowl and says, "Mmmmh, phelile!" Melo replies, "Mmmmh."



Nolu settles Melokuhle on a blanket on the floor, next to two other babies. She puts a variety of toys in front of them.

She shakes a soft ball in front of Melo's eyes and says, "Hlukunghla, hlukunghla, hlukunghla ibhola. Jonga, Melo." She shakes the ball from side to side. Melo watches the ball carefully.

Nolu names each toy for Melo and watches while she plays.

Asante's age group had breakfast too. Now they are playing in different areas.

Asante has finished playing with cars. He decides to show his baby sister his baby doll.

He finds Melo in the baby room, lying on the blanket on her tummy, after her nap. "Melo," he says, giving her the doll, "Yeyakho."

Melo tries to hold the doll but it falls. She grabs the doll's leg and tries to put it in her mouth.



"Asante, mkhulu kakhulu unodoli kuMelo," Nolu tells Asante that the doll is too big for Melo.

Nolu takes the doll and tells Melo not to eat it. She says, "Melo, sukutya unodoli." She replaces the doll with a soft rubber toy.

She gives the doll to Asante and says, "Uyathanda ukwabelana nosisi wakho omncinci." She praises Asante for sharing with his baby sister. "Ewe," replies Asante.

Nolu asks Asante to go and play with his friends. "Hamba uyodlala nezihlobo zakho."

"Ndihlala noMelo," Asante replies. "Melo yahleka," he says.

"Yes," says Nolu. "Melo yahleka." She asks Asante to come and see Melo later. "Ungabuya uzokumbona ngelinye ixesha?" Asante smiles, "Ewe." He goes to the playroom

Teacher Sara has prepared the learning environment in the small playroom



Asante and the other children are busy playing. They take turns to do different activities, chatting to each other.

Asante loves playing with the blocks, stacking them as high as he can until they fall down.

When they fall Lebo says in Sesotho, "A re etse hape, ibedelele jwalo kasifate!" Asante laughs. "Ewe, ibende njengomthi," he agrees in isiXhosa. They build another tower as tall as a tree.

Xolani and Cynthia always play together, sorting the bottle tops and putting them into colourful piles. .

Xolani says, "Eziluhlaza kunye, ezibomvu kunye, ezilubhelu kunye."

"Blue, red, and yellow," says Cynthia.

Nomsa and Tumelo are drawing at the table talking to each other about what they are drawing.

It is nearly time for the children to rest. They help Teacher Sara to put the toys away on the shelves. Then they sit in a circle on the floor next to Teacher Sara.





While Teacher Sara reads, she shows the pictures to the children. She listens to the children when they talk about the story.

Nolu knows that Melo also likes to listen to stories. Nolu sits on her chair next to Asante.

Melo sits with Asante. The brother and sister are happy together, listening to the story.

This storybook is part of an educational pack for student teachers. The full pack is available in the Guides section of the African Storybook website, [www.africanstorybook.org](http://www.africanstorybook.org).

The following seven activities will help student teachers to think about language diversity and multilingualism in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

Activity 1: Language in context (pages 1, 2, 3 of the story)

- a. Think of a song/s sung to babies in your culture and other cultures.
- b. What do children and young babies learn from listening to and singing songs?
- c. Who are the important people in Melokuhle and Asante's life?
- d. Why is it important for Nolulamo, who runs the play centre, to know these people?
- e. What do you think the reason is for their older sister, Anathi, to be taking Melo and Asante to the play centre, instead of their mother or father?
- f. Is it important for Nolulamo to know these reasons? Why do you think so?

## Activity 2: Multilingualism and translanguaging (pages 1, 4, 7 of the story)

Think back to Melokuhle and Asante's language context. Melo's mother speaks to Melo and Asante in isiXhosa and their father speaks to them in Sesotho.

- a. What would you say Melo and Asante's home language is?
- b. What role does Nolulamo have in helping Melo and Asante to speak isiXhosa and Sesotho?
- c. Who are the important adults and capable peers in Melokuhle and Asante's life?
- d. How can they support Melo and Asante to learn new words and additional languages?

Activity 3: Learning through language and doing  
(pages 8, 9, 10 of the story - look carefully at the pictures too)

- a. Think about and write down what you think Nolu is doing that supports the babies' learning through doing and interaction.
- b. What is Nolu doing that supports Melokuhle's language development?
- c. Discuss your responses with a fellow student. Do you agree with each other about your responses? What if you disagree? Can you reach agreement?

#### Activity 4: Being responsive to language needs (pages 11, 12, 13 of the story)

Think about Asante giving his doll to his baby sister.

- a. Why is it important for him to talk to Melo and share what he does?
- b. Why did Nolu give Asante time to talk to Melo?
- c. Why did Nolu take the doll from Melo and ask Asante to go and play with his friends?
- d. Why did Nolu give Melo a rubber toy to play with?

Activity 5: Communication, early learning and development (pages 4, 12, 13, 14 of the story)

Read Asante's responses to Nolu and other children.

- a. What would you say about Asante's speech and communication?
- b. What does Nolu do to help Asante?
- c. What opportunities would you advise Nolu to give to Asante?

Activity 6: Language and the learning environment  
(pages 14, 15 of the story)

- a. Who are Asante's more capable peers?
- b. How will they help him to learn Sesotho? What else can they help him to learn?
- c. What role does Asante play in the learning and development of other children, including Melo?



Activity 7: Stories and storybooks (page 16 of the story)

- a. What kind of story or storybook will be suitable for Melo?
- b. What kind of storybook will be suitable for Asante and his peers?
- c. Is it okay for Melo to listen to a story for older children? Why do you think so?
- d. What will happen if Asante looks at a picture book with his baby sister, Melo?

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## A day in the life of Melokuhle

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**Level** - Read aloud

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