

GRACE CHRONICLES

Issue No. 7 | May 2023



From the Principal's Desk

Farewell Message from Mrs Wood

As I reflect on my season here at Grace Primary I realise there are so many things that I appreciate about the school. I love that this community is family. The staff team is what I call 'The Dream Team'. Each brings their unique strengths that complement each other in their respective roles in the school. They are all passionate about children and education. There is a caring and mutual support that is very evident among them all.

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The children bring joy as they walk in every day with their bright, happy faces. Their love of learning and energy and enthusiasm are what makes the school the vibrant happy place that it is. Their daily growth in character is a joy to witness.

The fact that the school is based on a Charlotte Mason Philosophy has made it a perfect fit for me. This philosophy addresses each child as a unique individual with God-given potential for great things. It sets the warm, peaceful atmosphere that is so tangible to visitors, and ensures a feast of learning for our children.

I take so many happy memories with me and will definitely stay in touch with my beloved Grace 'family'. Thank you for making my time here such a special one - I have learnt and grown so much as a person through walking this journey with you all for this season.

We hope you enjoy this latest edition of Grace Chronicles with its theme of stories.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26



Philosophy Corner: Nurturing Imagination through Stories

It's 2 o'clock in the Grade 5 classroom, and the children are gathered on the mat, filled with anticipation for the next excerpt from their literature book. Currently, they're engrossed in 'The Voyage of the Dawn Treader' by C.S. Lewis, one of the volumes in the Narnia series. One child in the class remarks, "it's fascinating to imagine ourselves in this different kind of world and feel a part of their exciting adventure. Sometimes I wonder what kind of choices I would have made if I'd been in their shoes."

This emphasis on literature in our classes at Grace Primary is one of the central tenets of our school philosophy. Each term, all grades are assigned a carefully chosen literature book to enjoy, narrate and discuss together, alongside other living books that support various subjects. As the class journeys through the pages of these books together, they are not just filling time or adding some fun moments to their day.

cont...

Philosophy Corner: Nurturing Imagination through Stories (cont.)

They are growing a moral imagination that is instilling habits, values and loves that are essential to the growth of persons who understand what it means to be genuinely human.

Imagination was one of our habits of focus this term. It is a mental muscle that needs to be nourished and exercised. Charlotte Mason wrote:

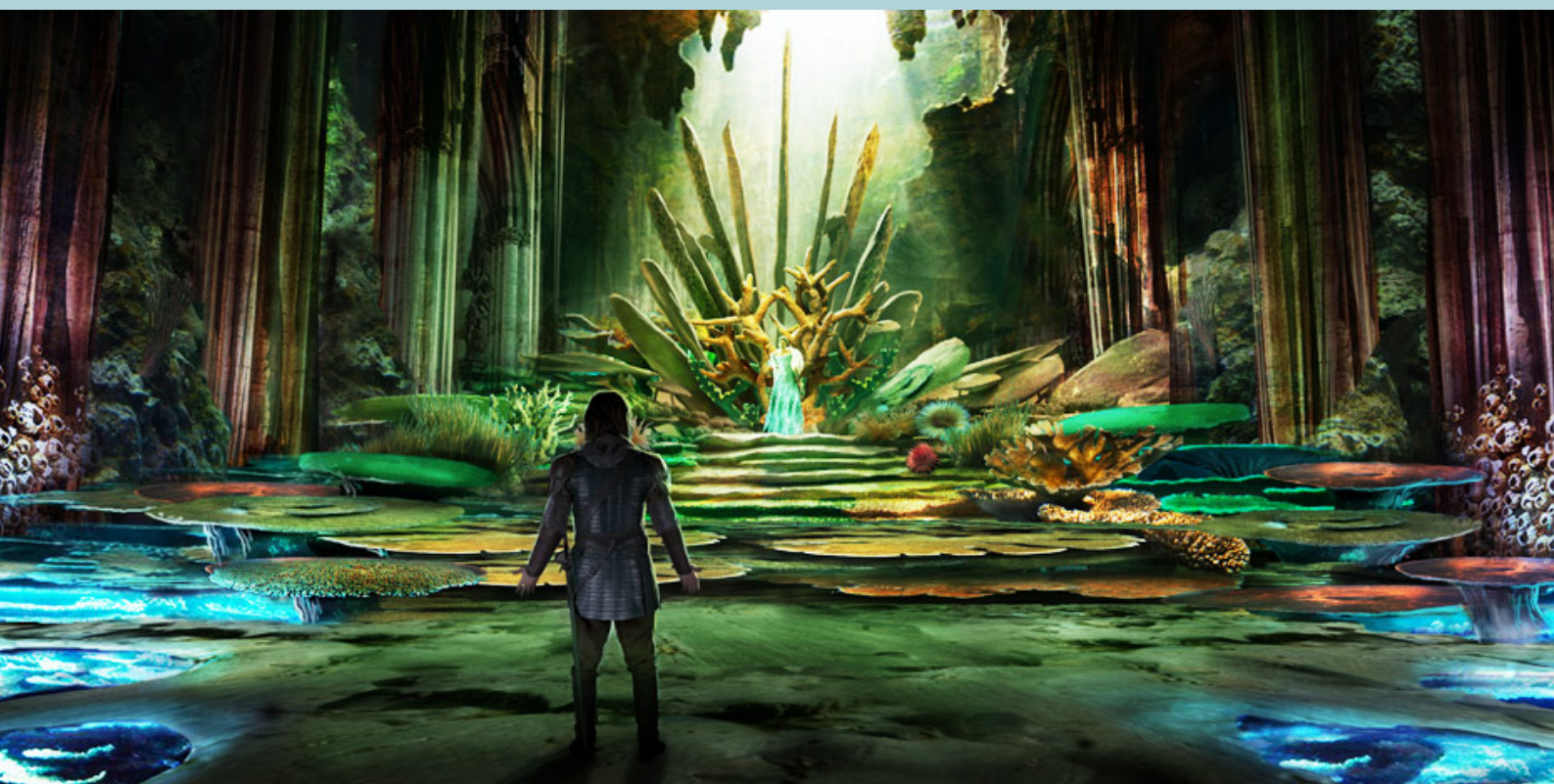
“Now imagination does not descend, full grown, to take possession of an empty house; like every other power of the mind, it is the merest germ of a power to begin with, and grows by what it gets; and childhood, the age of faith, is the time for its nourishing.”

The realm of imagination is particularly nourished through the arts. Imagination grasps the vivid imagery conveyed in literature, poetry, art, or music, enabling the mind to extract their core ideas and deal with them personally.

A well developed imagination, refined through great literature and art, enables us to connect our feelings with the truth – to experience joy when a character has won a great victory or to feel compassion at poverty and injustice in a story. As one writer has noted: “The devil prowls around unseen, but fiction, by describing the world as it is, unmask him.”

So as we journey through the pages of stories like “The Voyage of the Dawn Treader”, we are also journeying beyond the pages, envisioning the kinds of people we want our children to become. We hope that their encounter with a variety of characters and genres in literature will help them to choose heroes (even imaginary ones!) worthy of their affections and to think about how they too can become people of courage, empathy and virtue in the world.

Judy McCcomb, Philosophy Director

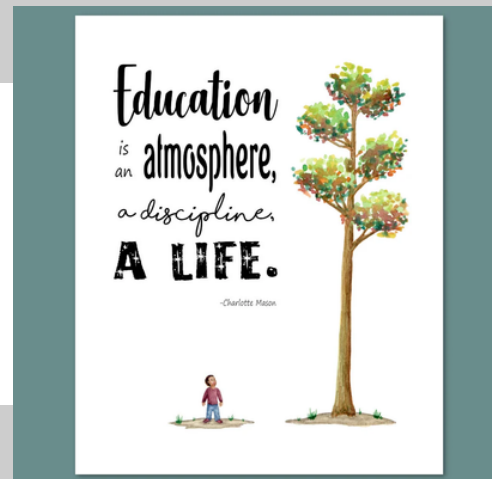
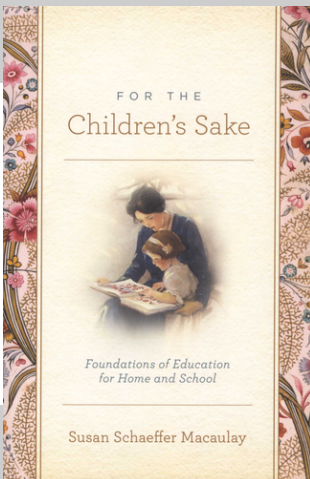


from Voyage of the Dawn Treader (concept art for the movie)

The Story of Grace

Earlier this year, we held a special dedication ceremony to celebrate the final phase of our building programme which included a variety of role players, school family and guests. As part of this dedication ceremony, the story of Grace Primary was shared, and as the school is nearing its 10th birthday celebration, we thought we'd include this history again in our current edition of Grace Chronicles.

The idea of a school, not surprisingly, was inspired by Charlotte Mason's living ideas of education, as described in Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's book 'For the Children's Sake.' After reading this book, the McComb and De Witt families were impressed by the intrinsic wholesomeness of her ideas about the nature of children and the purpose of education. Her philosophy of nourishing children with books, nature, unscheduled play, art, music, and beauty was a breath of fresh air in a world where children seemed to be increasingly distant from these sources.



While the inspiration was one thing, the practical implications of launching a school proved quite daunting. In the months ahead we prayed, planned and talked to a wide variety of educators and school pioneers. Providentially, in just six months we managed to find and appoint an experienced Christian teacher, secure the rental of the facilities at the Pinelands Congregational Church, register our school with the WCED, sign up 14 children for our first class, order books, stationery and furniture, and organize a school uniform with our new Grace Primary logo! When we finally opened the doors of our classroom in January 2014 to our very first Grade 1 and 2 class, we felt so proud of our little school and thankful to God.



Jan 2014
Joint Grade 1&2
15 children

Pinelands
Congregational
Church
(minor hall)



The Story of Grace (cont.)

In 2015, we added a new Grade 1 class and with this addition, one class moved into the church hall which had to be packed up at the end of each day to make room for other activities in the evenings. Our first music teacher, Mrs Meyer started with us that year, teaching recorder lessons in the church kitchen since there was no other space. New parent interviews were also conducted in the kitchen and our administrative assistant, Mrs van der Merwe set up her desk in the church foyer. We were constantly humbled that new families continued to be drawn to our vision when our working spaces were so temporary and modest.

We knew that at the end of 2015 there'd be no further classroom space at the Congregational Church and so we approached Garden Cities to purchase the land on Protea Close which was already zoned for education. Then began the process of getting plans approved, raising money to build and negotiating an often bumpy relationship with our neighbours for whom a school on their doorstep was a big adjustment (and understandably so).



Jan 2015
Grades 1-3
31 children

Pinelands
Congregational
Church
(minor &
major halls)



Jan 2016 Grades 1-4 50 children
Pinelands Congregational Church
& St Andrew's Church



By the start of 2016, we had managed to purchase the land, but with no building up yet our third class began off-site in the rented venue of St. Andrews Church. Now in addition to packing up the classroom at the Congregational Church each day we also had to pack up the classroom at St. Andrews at the end of each week to make room for their Friday night youth. It wasn't easy, but the vision was maturing and the children were happy and growing. Thankfully, this was also the year in which our first Principal, Ms Laubscher joined the team and began some internal pioneering of systems, curriculum and school infrastructure which gave a solid foundation to our school. When building finally started in June 2016, we were like children waiting for their Christmas presents and at the end of the year, phase I was complete and we officially moved in.



Jan 2018 The Grand Opening of our new school premises!

Nevertheless, while we were incredibly grateful for our new school building, it wasn't long before we again started running out of space. Two temporary classrooms were added to our premises and once again we occupied the classroom at the Pinelands Congregational Church. We needed to make progress with Phase II of our building plans to create additional classrooms, a space for aftercare, a bigger music room, an art room, a library and more storage space. We ran in to a number of roadblocks, but then came COVID and with it, we were grateful that we hadn't already commenced the building project and got stuck halfway through. We continued to push and wait for approval of our plans, but 2020 and then 2021 came and went. It felt like the part of the story in which "they all lived happily ever after" was never going to come!

The Story of Grace (cont.)

The years of operating in incomplete surroundings weren't always easy for our teachers who had to improvise and make the best of things. Classrooms had to be packed up and moved around so that the smallest class was in the temporary classroom and to rotate the teacher based off-site at the church. One small music room was shared by 3 music teachers and our art teachers had to set up tables from scratch in the hall each week. But these years of 'making do' were also good years. They taught us that the heart of our school is found in our relationships, both with one another and with learning and growth. We haven't always had all the bells and whistles, but we've had a vision for what schooling can be and we're excited to keep putting these ideas into practice.

Then in 2022 finally the breakthrough came. Our plans were approved and preparations for building were set in motion. Once again our timeframes were tight – but it was all systems go as our school was fenced off and we were surrounded by a building site. There were some exciting days when all the children would go outside to watch the second story go up and then there were some difficult days when we needed to wear ear plugs to survive the day. But at the end of last year, when the children were finally allowed to move some of their classroom items into the new classrooms, the excitement was palpable.



Yet we know that a completed building is not the end of our story and so we continue to pray for the variety of children who will come to our school in the years to come, trusting that they will always remember their years here as a happy, growing time. We are grateful to the Lord for what He has done and for all those, both on the coalface and behind the scenes, who have worked hard and given sacrificially to making our school building a reality.

Judy McComb

Celebration Day: World Book Day

Celebration days are an important means of fostering shared values and traditions. An annual celebration that we have cultivated over the years at Grace Primary School is World Book Day which reminds us of the enduring power of books and the joy of reading. On Friday 21 April, the air was filled with excitement and anticipation as children and teachers alike dressed up as well known book characters, using imaginative accessories to transform themselves into Paddington Bear, Anne of Green Gables, Hermione Granger, Peter Pan, Dr. Dolittle and the like. During the build up to World Book Day, classrooms had been transformed into literary wonderlands, from the world of the Magic Faraway Tree, to Narnia, to a crime scene from an Enola Holmes novel. An obvious highlight of the day was our visit from author Katherine Graham who inspired the children at our morning assembly, sharing very useful tips about writing a good story and involving them in spontaneous enactment of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Enjoy some of the picture memories of this special celebration day!



World Book Day (cont.)

BOOK REVIEW

of Anne of Green Gables

AUTHOR: LM Montgomery

RATING: ★★★★★

GENRE

Fantasy Fiction	Realistic Fiction	Historical Fiction
Traditional Fiction	Nonfiction	Poetry


AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Persuade
Inform
Entertain

3 WORDS THAT BEST DESCRIBE THIS BOOK

- 1 adventurous
- 2 imaginative
- 3 intriguing

IDEAS: imaginative surprising educational touching serious interesting silly scary funny sad exciting suspenseful informative



Anne of Green Gables
BOOK COVER (F/NF)

MY RATING

I rated this book 5 stars because:

It is full of imagination and lots of adventure! You can relate very well to what is happening, you almost feel like you have a relationship with the characters!

MY RECOMMENDATION

I would recommend this book to:

Curious, adventurous girls who are 10-13.

Olivia Middleton, Gd5

NAME: Olivia DATE: 2 February

Isabelle Sole

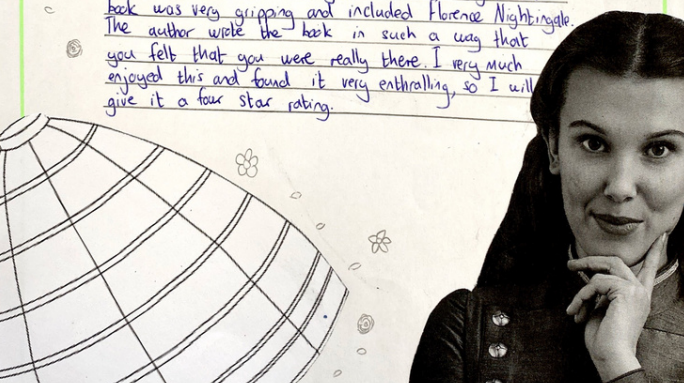
ENOLA HOLMES

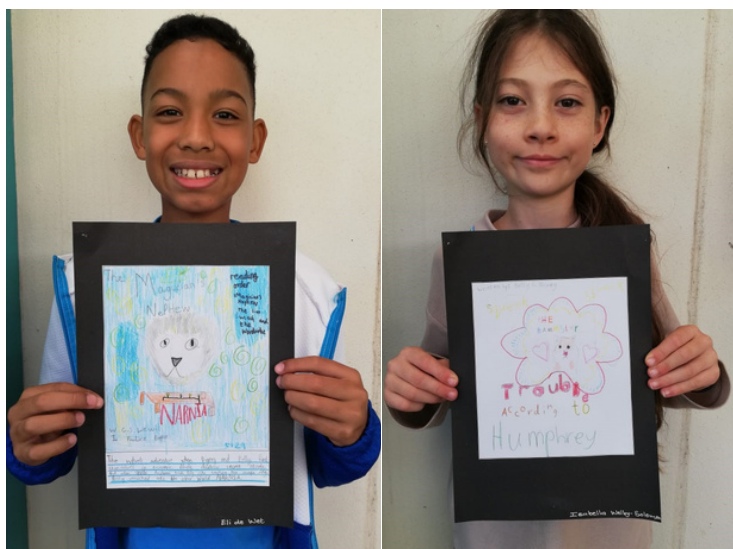
Isabelle Sole, Gd7

CASE OF THE CRYPTIC CRINOLINE

- Nancy Springer


This book in the Enola Holmes series was very enjoyable and thrilling. I would recommend this book for kids from the age of 10 years because there are some complicated scenes. The book also includes kidnapping, frightening intruders, unnoticeable clues and a confident, fast-thinking, capable young detective. She is definitely my favourite character in the book. There was a scene in the book that I found that the author was a bit too ambitious and it could be hard to understand. Other than that, the book opens up a wide vocabulary as well as scenes that you will never forget. The book was very gripping and included Florence Nightingale. The author wrote the book in such a way that you felt that you were really there. I very much enjoyed this and found it very enthralling, so I will give it a four star rating.





Abigail Chitsike, Gd3

18 May
Tale of Anansi - Ancient A Africa



1 Anansi is trying very hard to sink down to the bottom of the river. He just floats. By the time he gets to the bottom turtle had already eaten all the yams.

2 Anansi is at the rice village. He's about to eat the rice when he sees another village. He asks the rice what it is but they don't know.

Very good! ☺

Fundraising News

Last year we raised a fantastic total of around R75,000 through the Fun Run for Furnishings campaign which was a great blessing when it came to installing new white-boards, furniture, blinds, rugs, shelving, cushions, artworks and so on in the new school building.

At the end of Term 1 this year, Miss Anderssen oversaw the organisation of a school-run Market Day to raise funds to subsidise the annual Grade 6&7 Camp and it was a huge success raising around R10,000 for the cause.

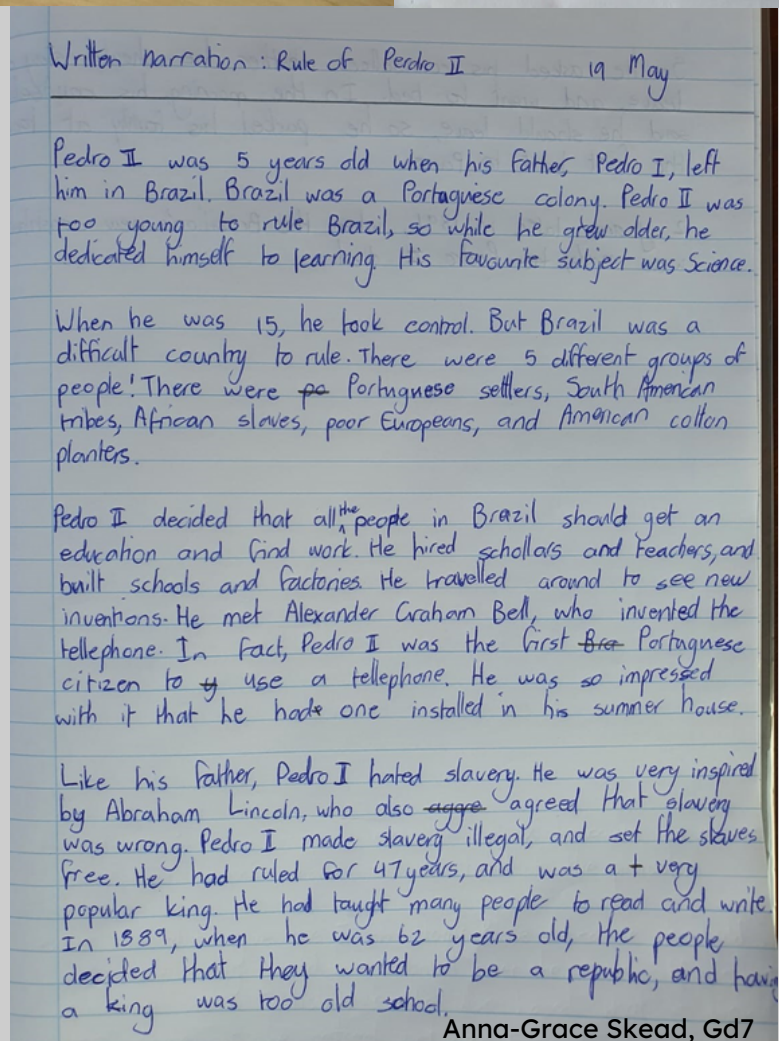
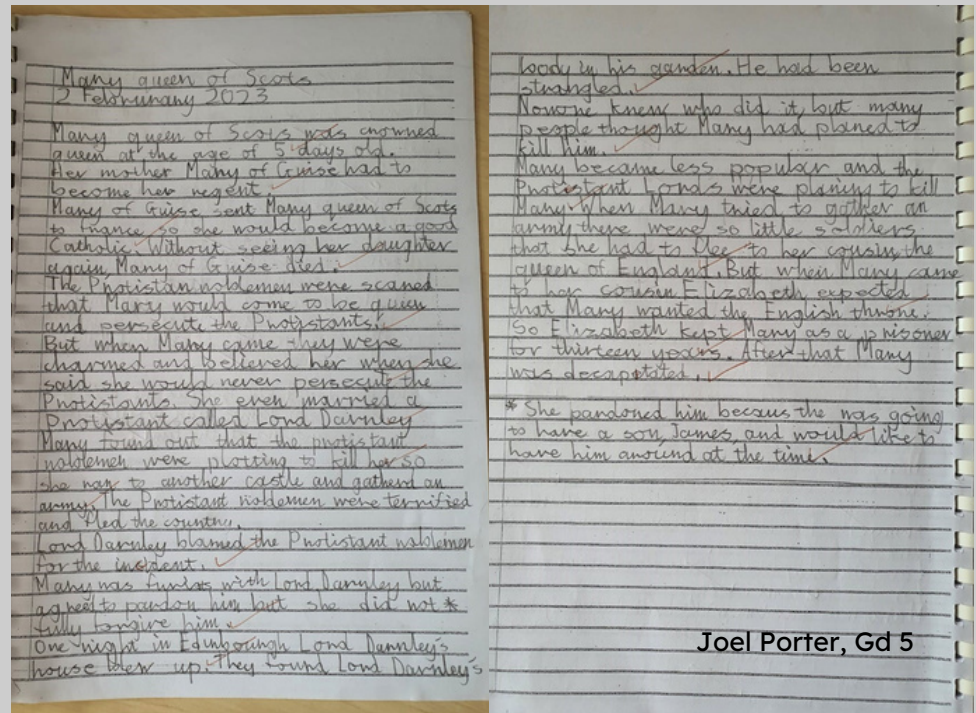
Coming up in a couple of weeks is the Grade 4-7 Movie Night on 9th June, so please do support that initiative.

But the main fundraising event for 2023 is going to be the Barn Dance taking place at Oude Molen High School on Saturday 14th October at 5.30-8.15pm. The previous two we have held (along with their flash mob dances!) are often cited as one of the highlights of the children's school memories. Here are a few photos to give you a feel for what is in store so you can book your tickets early to avoid disappointment (sadly there is limited space in the venue so we can only sell around 240 tickets which means there is not space for every family of 4).



Narration

One of the key methods of a Charlotte Mason education is the use of narration to help children engage with the ideas presented to them in living books. When children begin with us in Grade R and 1, they are trained to listen carefully to the stories read to them in Bible, Literature and other inspirational subjects and to “tell back” what they have heard. At first the focus is simply on cultivating attentive listening, extending vocabulary and building sequential thought. As the children progress in this method, they learn to tell back with greater accuracy, detail and insight and by the time they are in Grade 4, they usually transition from verbal to written narrations. Contrary to what some may think, narration is not merely parroting back information but is, in the words of Charlotte Mason, “absorbing into oneself the beautiful thought from the book, making it one’s own and then giving it forth again with just that little touch that comes from one’s own mind.” Such a method requires a great deal of mental effort as the child is responsible to do the sorting, arranging, selecting, connecting, rejecting and classifying of information rather than simply answering a question. Over time, therefore, the child is learning to think, reflect and build depth into their understanding of ideas.



Staff News

Welcome to Michelle Smith

We were delighted to welcome our new receptionist, Michelle Smith to our team this term. Michelle brings many years of experience of administration, her previous post being Senior Administrative Assistant to Primary Health Care at the Department of Health. Her husband, Selwyn, works as the Facilities Manager at The Vince School in Lansdowne, an Ambleside (Charlotte Mason) school and they have three children, all of whom also attended The Vine School. Michelle brings competence, a heart for education and a natural warmth to the front-of-house role. We know that she will be a blessing to our school.



Temporary Farewell to Mrs Haywood

The Grade 4's will miss Mrs Haywood over the next six months as she prepares for the arrival of her first baby and goes on maternity leave. We are very excited for their growing family and look forward to the healthy arrival of their baby girl. While she is away, Mrs Sawdon will be taking her place as the Grade 4 class teacher.



Mrs Sawdon is a highly experienced teacher who took temporary retirement during COVID, but who has enjoyed doing some relief teaching for us this year. We are thrilled that she is available to take up this maternity cover post until Mrs Haywood returns in 2024.



Farewell to Mrs Wood

As has been previously communicated, we are very sad that Mrs Wood will be stepping down from her position as Principal from the end of this term. Mrs Wood started at Grace Primary in January 2020 and has been an invaluable part of the team through some uncertain times. Not only did she lead the staff team successfully during the transition to online teaching during COVID, but she has also consistently remained a source of stability and support throughout the demanding Build Phase and the expansion of the school to incorporate a Grade R class. It has been clear throughout our journey that the Lord has placed individuals in the life of Grace Primary for a specific role at key times in the life of the school that they uniquely fill. This is certainly true of Mrs Wood. Her care and passion for seeing children well educated will leave their indelible mark on the school for many years to come.



Class Literature

Since our focus for this edition of Grace Chronicles is on the power of stories, we thought we'd share a glimpse of some of the literature being read in the classrooms across the grades along with some responses from the children to this literature.

Grade R

The literature book currently being read by the Grade R's is "The Little Wooden Horse" by Ursula Moray Williams. This is a story about a little wooden horse who is separated from his toymaker-father, Uncle Peder, when he falls on hard times. The little wooden horse is forced to go out into the world to seek his fortune and through all the ups and downs of his journey, we see through to his one true desire - to return to his beloved master's side. The Grade R's have also read the story of "A Bear called Paddington" by Michael Bond and some of the "Hafferttee Hamster" books by Janet Perkins, both of which they have thoroughly enjoyed!



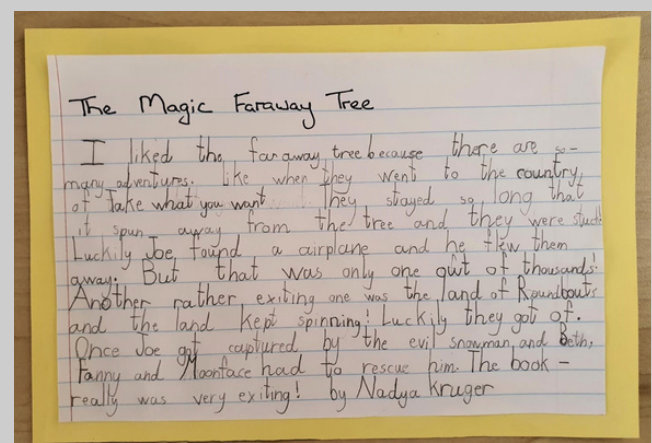
Grade 1

The Grade 1s have been reading "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Marjory Williams which is a much-loved classic story of a toy rabbit who learns about love and what it means to become "real". They have also read "The Boxcar Children" by G. Chandler Warner which tells the adventures of four orphaned children who find an abandoned boxcar in the woods and decide to call it home. After reading these books, the children were given pictures of different aspects of these stories to put in sequence to help them master the unfolding narrative ideas.



Grade 2

The Grade 2's have been reading "Little House in the Big Woods" by Laura Ingalls Wilder and "The Magic Faraway Tree" by Enid Blyton. Little House in the Big Woods is the first in a classic series based on the childhood experiences of the author in a pioneer American family. The children so enjoyed learning about her growing-up experiences in a time so different to their own. The 'Magic Faraway Tree' is a fantasy novel that tells of the adventures of three children who discover magical lands at the top of a tall tree.



Class Literature (cont.)

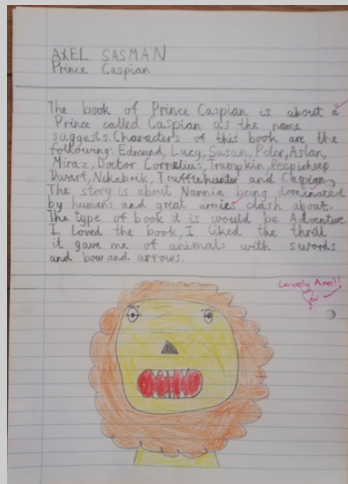
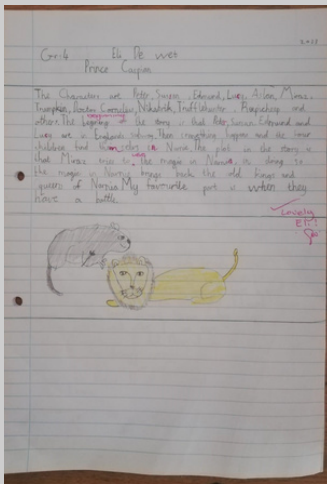
Grade 3

Two of the literature books that the Grade 3 class have read together this year are "The Long Grass Whispers" by Geraldine Elliot, a collection of folk tales told by the Ngoni people of Africa, and "Benjamin West and His Cat Grimalkin" by Marguerite Henry which tells the story about a Quaker boy who loves art and has to find some very inventive ways to paint.

Benjamin West and His Cat Grimalkin A brief reflection by Bradley Rudolph

Benjamin really liked to make pictures but he wasn't allowed to paint because his dad was a Quaker. He got a cat called Grimalkin from his friend Jacob and he started to use Grimalkin's tail hair to make paintbrushes, in secret.

Benjamin was very clever and he made colours like blue, green and red from dirt and flowers and berries. He became a really good painter. I enjoyed it because it was interesting and I never knew what was coming next.



Grade 4

The Grade 4s have been reading "Prince Caspian" by C.S. Lewis this term, which is a sequel in the popular and enduring Narnia series. This is a high fantasy novel describing an alternate world in which the beloved characters from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe travel back to Narnia to help a prince denied his rightful throne. It is full of intrigue and adventure, with many correlations to the Christian life.

Grade 5

The Grade 5's have also been reading a book in the Narnia series, entitled "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader". In this book Lucy, Edmund, and their cousin, Eustace, are magically transported onto the ship, "Dawn Treader", where King Caspian is searching for the seven friends of his father. On the voyage, the children meet many fantastical creatures, including the great Aslan himself.

"During Literature, I like imagining the setting and discovering how the characters change - like Eustace. He went from a terrible person to a likeable character."
Lithemba Nombida

"I like that it is peaceful and quiet when we read. Sometimes we laugh and it is fun and we feel as if we are in the book. Some of the characters are very funny, like Eustace - he was very dramatic at first and then he changed. So I really like this story and all of the people in it."
Hope Ishemunyoro

"I love literature because, after a long day of work, we can just relax and let the wonderful stories fill our heads. I love closing my eyes and imagining all the different scenes playing out. I love the way this book does not describe the characters completely but lets us imagine them in our own ways."
Genevieve Murray

Class Literature (cont.)

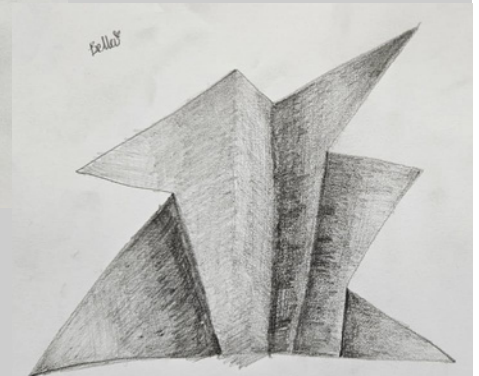
Grade 6

The Grade 6's have been reading 'Holes' by Louis Sachar which tells the story of a boy called Stanley Yelnats who has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the boys build character by spending all day, every day digging holes!

The book explores how the actions of several characters in the past have affected Stanley's life in the present and in the process touches on some complex themes.



Escher-inspired holes art



Grade 7

The Grade 7s have been reading 'Good Night Mr Tom' by Michelle Magorian which tells the story of young Willie Beech, who is evacuated to the British countryside at the beginning of World War II. A sad, deprived child, he slowly begins to flourish under the care of old Tom Oakley.

My favourite character

Goodnight Mister Tom

My favorite character is definitely Willie Beach. I love that he is such a kind kid that also thinks that he's always naughty. I find it really sad that he had to grow up with a horrible mom. I love how he becomes so open and joyful with Mister Tom. He is so caring for his little sister. Overall he's is such a caring, kind, awesome little kid.

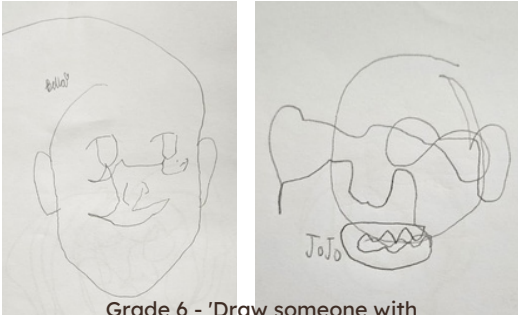
Riya-Ray Alfino

Book Review (Ann-Grace Skead):
Goodnight Mr Tom
 by Michelle Magorian

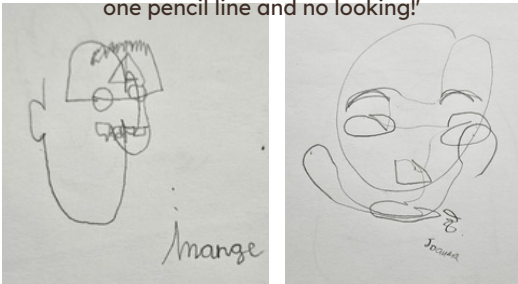
Goodnight Mr Tom is a lovely story about a refugee boy and a grumpy old man. When the Second World War starts, Willie Beech is sent to Little Weirwold to live with old Mr Tom Oakly. At first, Willie is this sad, thin, scared child, but soon he relaxes and begins to thrive. He makes new friend and forms a bond with Mr Tom. But then his cruel mother summons him back to London...

In this heart-warming tale, you will laugh and cry. You will not be able to put this book down. I give this book **5 stars**.

Glimpses of Grace (in pics)



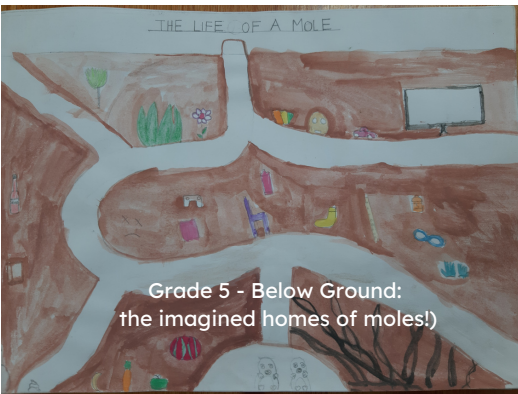
Grade 6 - 'Draw someone with one pencil line and no looking!'



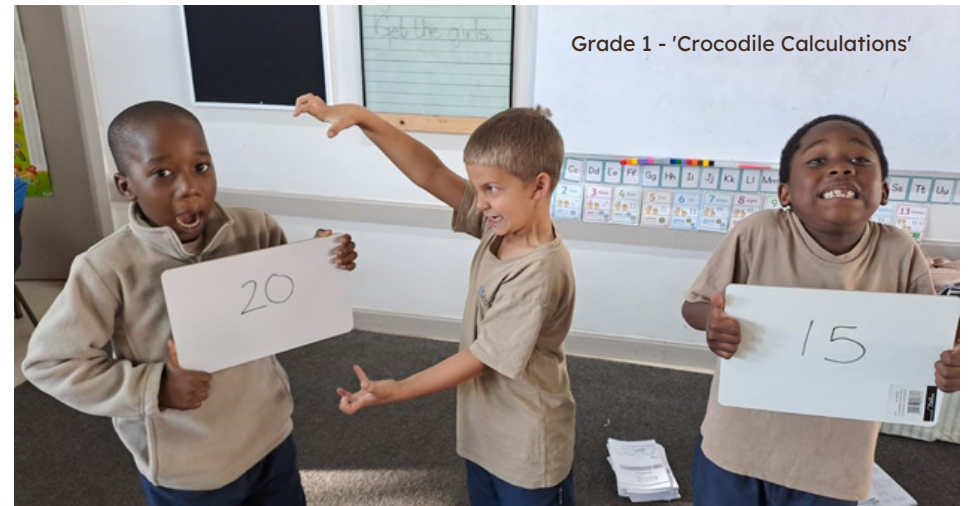
Grade R - Science Colour Experiments



Grade 1 - Seed Planting



Grade 5 - Below Ground: the imagined homes of moles!



Grade 1 - 'Crocodile Calculations'



Grade 5 - Bird Art



Grade 3 - Nature Treasure Boxes

Excursion photos



Grade 1 - Zeitz Mocoq Museum



Grade 2 - Kildare Nature Reserve



Grade 6 - Centre for Conservation of Education (Archeology focus)



Grade 3 - Centre for Conservation of Education (Archeology focus)



Grade 5 - Heart of Cape Town Museum



Grade 4 - Intaka Island



Grade 7 - National Gallery