



Help your children to live the legacy of Nelson Mandela. Pass on some of the values he stood for through this short series of stories focussing on honesty, compassion and forgiveness.

## The small seed

Retold by Kirstin Hartmann

Illustrations by Heidel Dedekind

There once was an old chief. He was both wise and kind. But there was one thing that made him sad – he didn't have a son who could become chief after him.

The chief needed someone to become the next ruler to look after his lands and all his people. One morning, after the rains, he called all the older boys together and spoke to them.

"Today is a special day," he said, "the time has come for me to choose a new chief and I will choose one of you." There was great excitement and everyone began talking at once. The chief raised his hands, "... but you must listen to me carefully." Everyone fell silent and watched the chief as he explained what he wanted them to do.

"I will give each of you one seed. You must plant the seed, water it and care for it every day." Then he said,

"On this same day next year, you must bring back the plants that you have grown and I will choose the next chief." Then he gave each boy one seed.

Njabulo and his friends were excited. They all started talking at once.

"My sister grows mealies, so she will help me," said one boy.

"My mother knows how to grow morogo, so she will tell me what to do," said another.

"My uncle knows where to get good soil," said someone else, "and he also knows how to make sure that the birds don't eat the seed."

Njabulo just listened to them.



Be the legacy: honesty

As he walked home, Njabulo held his seed in his hand. It was so small – no bigger than a small beetle.

“I wonder what you will grow into?” he said to the tiny little seed.

When he got home, he told his mother what the chief had said and how the other boys all had someone to help them.

“Mmm,” said his mother. “I cannot help you. It is something the chief asked you to do. But,” she added, “I can give you this.” And she gave him a small clay pot to plant the seed in.

Njabulo went down to the river and dug up some soil to put into the pot. Then with his finger he carefully made a small hole and dropped the seed into it. Gently he covered the seed with soil and then he dribbled some fresh water from the river over it.



After that, he found a nice spot to put the pot – a place that was neither too hot nor too cool. “There you go, little seed. I hope you are happy,” he said and smiled.

After a few days Njabulo looked to see if the seed had started to grow. But nothing had happened. The soil still looked as flat as the day he had planted the seed. So Njabulo made sure that the soil was damp enough. Then he whispered, “It’s okay, little seed, you grow when you are ready.”



But the next time he looked, Njabulo could not see any green sprouts or leaves. And the time after that, still nothing. Days and weeks went by and Njabulo was sad to see that his seed was not growing. It made him even sadder that by this time all of his friends were talking about their plants!

“Mine is as big as my foot!” said one boy.

“And mine is as green as the hills in summer!” said another. Njabulo’s heart felt heavy, but he did not say anything.

Months went by and everyone had to get bigger pots for their plants. Njabulo still had the same small pot that his mother had given him because his seed had still not grown.

Finally, the day came for everyone to show their plants to the chief. At first Njabulo was scared. He did not want to go, but his mother said that he must show the chief his pot. Njabulo knew she was right.

When Njabulo arrived at the chief's hut he was amazed to see all the different plants that his friends had grown. There were so many different shapes, sizes and colours. And they were all very beautiful.

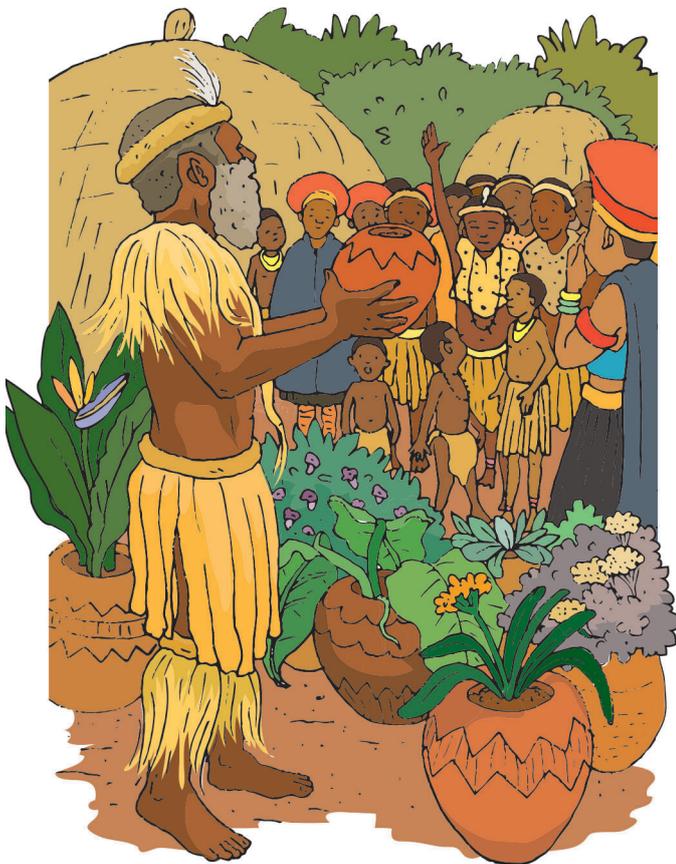
Njabulo held his clay pot tightly and whispered to it, "I am sorry little seed, I did not know how to make you happy." And he placed the pot on the ground with the others. Then he stood right at the back where he thought the chief would not see him.

When the chief appeared, everyone went quiet. They all stood proudly hoping that their plant would be chosen as the best.

"This is a very exciting day," the chief said loudly. "I see so many beautiful plants!" He slowly walked up and down, taking a closer look at all of the plants. Everyone watched him closely. Suddenly he stopped and picked up a pot. It was Njabulo's. Njabulo felt sick with worry.

"Whose pot is this?" the chief asked. Everyone was quiet. Njabulo was so scared, he thought the chief would get cross and chase him away. "Whose pot is this?" the chief asked again.

Njabulo took a deep breath and said loudly, "The pot that you hold, is mine, my chief."



Everyone turned around to look at Njabulo and some boys started to laugh, but they stopped when the chief asked Njabulo to come to the front. As he was standing next to the chief, Njabulo felt ashamed.

"What is your name?" asked the chief.

"My name is Njabulo," he said looking up at the chief.

The chief took a deep breath and then said loudly, "I have chosen a new chief and his name is Njabulo!"



Njabulo was so surprised. How could this be? Even though he had been very careful, he had not been able to grow the seed that the chief had given him.

Then the chief said, "One year ago today, I gave each of you a seed to grow. I told you to plant it, to look after it and to bring it back here to me today. You have all done what I asked of you," he said. "But, I gave each of you a seed that I had boiled in water, which means that those seeds could not grow. When you found that your seed did not grow, each of you planted another seed in its place. All of you have brought me those plants. All of you, except Njabulo. He has shown me that not only has he done what I asked of you, but he has also had the courage to be honest. This is who I choose to be chief, and he will be a very good chief!"

The chief smiled at Njabulo, knowing that he had made a good choice.

# Get story active!

Here are some ideas for using the story on pages 1 to 3 with the children in your class and/or your reading club. Choose the ideas that best suit the ages and interests of the children.

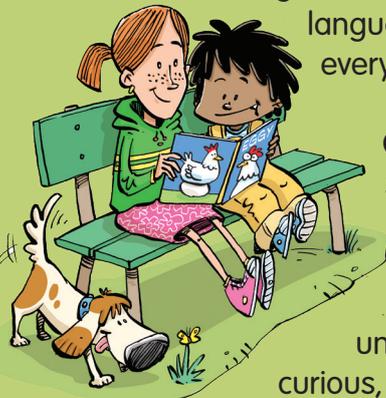
- ★ Before you read the story, ask the children to suggest different ways of choosing a new leader. You could even ask them to vote for which of these ways they think is best. Introduce the story by explaining that you are going to read a story about how a new chief was chosen.
- ★ After you have read the story, ask the children whether they think the chief's plan of how to choose a new chief was a good one. Encourage them to give reasons for their opinions.

- ★ Ask the children to draw a picture of Njabulo and his mother at the end of the story, and to write what they think Njabulo's mother might have said to him. They could write these words in a speech bubble.

- ★ Give the children sticks or twigs, paper, crayons, scissors, glue and plastic bottles, like 2 litre cooldrink bottles or milk bottles. Help them to cut the bottles in half to create pots like those used for plants. Let them fill their pots with sand or soil, and then use the sticks, crayons, glue and paper to create imaginary plants. They could also draw patterns on paper and use this to decorate their pots.

## About Nal'ibali

Nal'ibali (isiXhosa for "here's the story") is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign. It seeks to spark and embed a culture of reading across South Africa, so that reading, writing and sharing stories – in all South African languages – is part of everyday life.



Children who are surrounded by print and immersed in great stories in languages they understand, are more curious, confident and

motivated to learn. They are more likely to become readers, and to do well at school in all subjects. Stories develop vocabulary, strengthen memory and nurture children's imaginations.

Since 2012, Nal'ibali has worked with various state, civil society and business partners to make sure every South African child has opportunities to fall in love with books and stories. Our founding partners include: the DG Murry Trust, PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) and Tiso Blackstar (formerly, Times Media). Through advocacy, training and high-quality reading materials, Nal'ibali is helping to nurture a nation of readers.

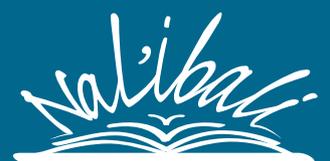
Nal'ibali is here to motivate and support you. **Contact us** by calling our call centre on **02 11 80 40 80**, or in any of these ways:

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It starts with a story...