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Beyond Reenactment: exploring the Battle at Egazini with grade 10 history learners using applied theatre

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Abstract

The South African grade 10 history curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) requires learners to develop historical thinking skills that promote interpretation, analysis, and critical thinking competencies. One way of developing these skills is through revisiting historical events through reenactments to explore untold stories and develop historical empathy. However, reenactments can become sensational, one-sided events that lack the transformative power to offer varied versions of the events such as the Battle at Egazini and its key historical figures. The paper proposes reenactment for learning as an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on art exhibitions, history literature, and applied theatre techniques. The paper shows how these teaching tools actively and creatively engaged the learner-audiences in the reenactment of the 1819 Battle at Egazini between the amaXhosa and the British in Makhanda, formerly Grahamstown.

The facilitators moved learner-audiences from four local schools beyond passive

reenactment modes of engagement using games, pantsula dancing, facilitator-in-role, enrolling participants, and reflection exercises in one-hour workshops. The activities helped learners explore the relevance of colonial expansion and conquest themes within the Battle at Egazini context. The art-based interpretation framework also helped address misconceptions and cultivated an interest in wanting to know more about Makhanda, the war hero that the town is now named after. The paper argues for a creative and engaging pedagogy that helps learners make sense of broad topics. It contributes to current literature advocating for creative historical interpretation and teaching approaches in and outside the classroom space.

Keywords: reenactment; history curriculum; applied theatre; Makhanda; Battle of Grahamstown; participation

Introduction and background

The South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) outlines the mandated history curriculum. Accordingly, CAPS notes various topics and skills learners must learn throughout the year. Topics 2 and 5 under the grade 10 history subject guidelines require teachers to teach about expansion and conquest during the fifteenth – eighteenth centuries and colonial expansion after 1750 (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011:9, 16). In learning about these expansions and conquests, the learners must also acquire specific historical interpretation skills. Accordingly, learners must

> *Engage critically with heritage issues, public representations of the past, and conservation. Thus, thinking about how the past is remembered and what a person or, community or country chooses to remember about the past. Therefore, consider how past events are portrayed in museums, monuments, and traditions. It includes the issue of whose past is remembered and whose past has been left unrecognised or, for example, how a memorial or museum could be made more inclusive.* (DBE, 2011:9).

The abovementioned point alludes to the importance of teaching historical empathy as a historical thinking skill. According to Ramoroka and Engelbrecht (2018), historical empathy is a crucial historical thinking skill that teaches learners to consider other people's perspectives and experiences and helps in reconciliation and nation-building in countries like South Africa. However, as Thelen (2003) notes, history education in school is often riddled with what students perceive as unrelatable content and facts presented chronologically, leaving no room for varied interpretations and engagements. In South Africa particularly, the history curriculum has long been overpopulated with colonial and apartheid thinking and knowledge that disregarded African-centred knowledge forms (Maluleka, 2021). Ramoroka and Engelbrecht (2018:48) further add that these untransformed approaches to history education usually tend to embrace traditional history teaching pedagogies that "undermine the teaching of Historical empathy". According to Barteld Savenije and Van Boxtel (2020:529), teachers can teach historical empathy that explores multiple perspectives through historical figures and events to help "students learn to understand the experiences, decisions, and actions of people in the past. The education ministry in South Africa, therefore has now embraced the idea of fostering a history curriculum with a decolonial and inclusive pedagogical framework following the 2015 #RhodesMustFall anti-colonial education protest (Maluleka, 2021).

Recognising that there is often a disconnect between what the curriculum content asks and the default traditional pedagogical approach to history, the Isikhumbuzo Applied History Unit (IAHU) of Rhodes University made up a multidisciplinary team: a seasoned public historian, Julie Wells; applied theatre practitioners, Phemelo Hellemann and Masixole Heshu; and a professional dancer, Likhaya Jack came together to design a history teaching creative methodology that helped make room for more varied interpretations and engagements with the chosen topic of the Battle of Grahamstown.

The paper explores how applied theatre techniques became helpful teaching tools in studying the Battle of Grahamstown as one of the events that fall under the topic of expansion and conquest that happened in the 19th century but played a role in growing the British colonial expansion in the Cape as noted under topics 2 and 5 (BDE, 2011). The Battle was the Fifth Frontier War (also referred to as the Xhosa War), which was part of nine British attempts to hold on to Grahamstown as a British territory during the 19th century. The place Grahamstown, written as Graham's Town back then, was a British military headquarters that Colonel John Graham established to keep Chief Ndlambe's people away from the Zuurveld (Wells, 2012). The Battle of Grahamstown is one of the most interesting moments in South African history due to the complexities and mystery behind the legend of Makhanda, also known as Nxele, who led amaXhosa warriors to fight for their land in 1819. Grahamstown was renamed Makhanda in 2018 to recognise the warrior's heroic actions during the Battle of Grahamstown (Department of Arts and Culture, 2018).

Briefly, according to Chabalala (2018), minister of the Department of Arts and Culture Nathi Mthethwa announced the renaming of Grahamstown to Makhanda in June 2018 as part of the country's symbolic reparations as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Moreover, the name change was also motivated by what Mthethwa described as "a 20-year-old battle that has pushed people to recognise that Grahamstown carries the name of the most brutal and vicious" colonial British commander, Colonel John Graham (Chabalala, 2018). Not long after the announcement of the name change, a civic organisation called Keep Grahamstown Grahamstown (KGG), challenged the change noting 200 objections stating that the Minister did not follow "proper public consultation process in accordance with what has been laid down by the Supreme Court of Appeal" (Carlisle, 2018). However, their objection did not derail this change, although they remain committed to seeing it through.

Although the town is named after Makhanda, the complexities of the legend remain an area of interest as an attempt to bring local stories to the fore, thus challenging notions of "European observers . . . and . . . the vital question of who was paying tribute to whom" as

Pieres (1975:118) noted. Pieres' concern aligns with the DBE's as they both request that researchers and teachers look deeper into how the past is written and who benefits from such perspectives. These sentiments bring us closer to exploring Makhanda as literature (stories, books, and poems) by drawing on scholars ranging from early writers such as Thomas Pringle to contemporary historians such as Julie Wells who present him as a complex figure.

However, one cannot engage with the man without engaging in the Battle that made him a hero. Thus, through the outlined expectation of CAPS, the Battle of Grahamstown became a catalyst for engaging with Makhanda through a series of workshops. The Egazini Battle workshops, led by the IAHU, confronted the dominant European historical narratives that Pieres noted. The team fostered and centralised a conversation about the Battle with grade 10 history learners from local schools in Makhanda. We received ethical clearance from the history ethics committee, which granted us permission to work with four school groups of 15 to 20 Grade 10 learners from local high schools (Nombulelo; Nathanial Nyaluza; T.E.M. Mrwetyana; and Ntsika Secondary School) and a few Rhodes University history student-teachers studying towards their post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) in four one-hour educational workshops. The participants were familiar with history as part of the grade 10 syllabus. We chose to work with this specific grade because the CAPS requirements on warfare and conquest topics aligned with the Battle at Egazini research interests of IAHU. The workshops took place at the Egazini Memorial Park, thus exposing learners to existing resources about local histories from creative outputs based on oral histories known to African people in Makhanda.

The article, therefore, provides a literature review, which offers the historiography of the battle as contextual framing for the paper. Moreover, the article reflects and analyses the historical empathy educational aims of the workshop for participants, researchers, and facilitators through reenactment for learning. Instead of approaching the Battle chronologically, we structured conversational interactive workshops in response to the expectation of "whose past is remembered and whose part has been left unrecognised" as noted in the DBE (2011:9). To re-vision the stories behind the Battle of Grahamstown, IAHU assessed learners' prior knowledge about the Battle's events and the Xhosa warrior Makhanda and provided opportunities for critical engagement through an art-based pedagogy.

Contextualising the Battle in review: the Battle at Egazini and Makhanda

Notably, when driving or walking through Makhanda, the divide between well-off areas and those lacking adequate housing and quality education facilities is evident. The scenery serves as a reminder of the outcome of the Battle in 1819. As noted by Fox (2019), Egazini lies on the edge of a valley with views of "Fort England, Fort Selwyn and the other colonial sites, but the site is abandoned and neglected".

Egazini, meaning the place of bloodshed, is the battle site where the amaXhosa warriors led by Makhanda fought the British soldiers. Although the battle is commonly known as the "Battle of Grahamstown" (Wells, 2012:83), we propose that for this article we adopt the Battle at Egazini to decentralise the colonial narrative attached to its current name. Shaw argues, based on a poem called *The Battle* by John Rae, who wrote a series of poems celebrating the battle, that authors have long written about the battle from a victor's point of view, thus positioning amaXhosa as a people "driven by hate" (Shaw, 2020:119). To echo Wells' sentiments during the creation of the sixth plinth mosaic art exhibition at the battle site, the battle forms part of the large white colonial conquest narrative, but if we want to move toward a decolonial mindset, then we need to challenge "old mindsets and discourses" (Wells, 2003:83). By calling it the Battle at Egazini, we are not only revisioning it to shift the narrative from a colonial conquest-centred discourse to a more inclusive story that centralises the adversities associated with the site but also broadens the engagement regarding Makhanda's war strategies and sacrifices as acts of love for his people.

Before this conquest, the British had tried over a 100-year-long period through nine territory wars to conquer the Xhosa territory of the Ngqika and Ndlambe compounds. Going as far back as 1779, the Xhosa chiefdoms in the Zuurveld butted heads as Ngqika (a paramount Xhosa chief) and his uncle, Chief Ndlambe, fought over territory and the control of the Zuurveld (Hodgson, 1985). As explained by Wells, all the frontier wars between 1718 and 1819 were about "asserting claims to the Zuurveld, the land between Port Elizabeth and Fish River" (Wells, 2012:75). Discussing the complexities of Xhosa chieftaincy politics is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we provide a brief discussion of what unfolded that led to the events of the Battle at Egazini.

The amaXhosa chieftaincy has a long history of sibling rivalry. The house of Phalo, a great Xhosa chief, was divided between the Rharhabe and Gcaleka sons. They had different rights and authority based on kinship and royal wives' house systems according to tradition and African culture (Pieres, 1975). Because of their rivalry, the brothers had divided

ownership of the Xhosa territory, with Gcaleka ruling over what later became known by their colonial names, the Transkei and the Ciskei, which became land for the Rharhabe (Pieres, 1975). The Transkei referred to all the Xhosa territory east of the Great Kei River, while Ciskei referred to land between the Great Fish and Great Kei Rivers (Pieres, 1975). From the Rharhabe lineage, Ngqika and Ndlambe are subjects of the events that led to the Battle at Egazini. Their conflict started when Ndlambe refused to give up the chieftaincy as a temporary regent appointed while Ngqika was still too young to be chief after his father, Rharhabe, died (Pieres, 1975). Their conflict solidified after cattle theft allegations and encounters when the Rharhabe group went to war with the Boer in 1778 to defend the Fish and Bushmen[1] Rivers boundaries as their territories in the first frontier or Cape-Xhosa war (Stapleton, 2010:4).

Ngqika and Ndlambe split up because they had opposing war strategies. But in 1793, when the Boers attacked the Zuurveld again, Ndlambe joined forces with the Boers to gain the upper hand over Ngqika's people from the Gqunukhwebe group, who lost 2,000 cattle to Ndlambe (Pieres, 1975). In 1795 the conflict between Ngqika and Ndlambe escalated when the British came into the picture as part of the commando by *landdrost* Christaan Maynier to join the territory fight for the Zuurveld by "seizing 8000 cattle and chasing Xhosa groups from the area" (Stapelton, 2010:4). The commando was an intentional action that progressed British colonisation into the Second Frontier war. Not long after Ndlambe attacked Ngqika's people, Ngqika retaliated and overthrew Ndlambe. This led to more disputes in 1807 and 1817, which saw Ndlambe revive his power in the Zuurveld through more cattle raids (Pieres, 1975). These interactions eventually led to the 1819 battle.

In the interim years, Ndlambe and Ngqika employed different spiritual and religious practices and war strategies. Ndlambe soon became acquainted with Makhanda, while Ngqika solicited Ntsikana's help (Stapleton, 2010). According to Chapman (2021:12), both Ntsikana and Makhanda "epitomise two strategies of survival within the colonial advance", with Ntsikana strongly rooted in Christian values of "peace and accommodation" and Makhanda on "ancient customs as a leader of the resistance". Makhanda gained rank and power after joining Ndlambe's forces. During this period of turmoil, Makhanda illuminated Ndlambe's strategies as more forceful than Ngqika. Chapman (2021:13) further explains how Ntsikana's approach was less powerful than Makhanda's; "Ntsikana

1 A colonial term used to describe the indigenous hunter-gatherers of South Africa. The term is problematic because it also carries a derogatory meaning as expressed in the *Mail & Guardian* article by the staff reporter (2007).

advised his followers to discard their spears and arm themselves spiritually by singing his hymns, and he fled Ngqika's wrath after the latter had been defeated by Ndlambe."

Unlike Ntsikana, Makhanda did not solely rely on Christian views to guide his war strategies. According to Shaw (2020:14), he had a "hybrid religion, which combined Christianity, superstition and his own 'wild fancies' and styles as a prophet", and his strategy was driven by revenge and "emancipation from colonial domination". But as Hodgson (1985:15) explains, Makhanda's gift of prophecy and predictions made an impression on Ndlambe, who subsequently gave him his own place and two of his followers. Makhanda became good friends with Mduhsani, Ndlambe's son. Soon after, the British illegitametely accepted him as chief due to his influence and following in the Xhosa communities while others, like Chief Ngqika, rejected his regent status because he was not born into royalty (Wells, 2012). Amongst other political and personal activities, Makhanda arrived in Grahamstown shortly after its establishment in 1812 to pursue "information about Christianity" as part of his varied spiritual practices as an acclaimed prophet (Wells, 2012:33).

In 1819, Makhanda and Mdushani joined forces to lead the Battle at Egazini to reclaim and secure the town as former Ndlambe territory. Wells (2012) explains that the one-hour fight occurred on 22 April 1819 between the amaXhosa warriors and British soldiers. Although the amaXhosa outnumbered the British soldiers that day, the British won the battle because of Elizabeth Salt's intervention to supply British soldiers with new ammunition. According to Jooste (2016), Salt volunteered to bring the soldiers gunpowder from another barrack by disguising the gunpowder as a baby as she walked through the crowd of Xhosa warriors. She knew that they did not kill women and children during wars (Jooste, 2016). Wells states that this view of Salt's heroism is a widely accepted one, but back then her role did not have much recognition because it would have meant that the British soldiers had to "acknowledge that it was her act of heroism which turned the battle in the British favour" (Wells, 2012:89). At the time, it was unheard of for women to receive honour for their role in wars. Nonetheless, her actions made the British soldiers gain the upper hand in the battle.

The gunpowder advantage outweighed the amaXhosa warriors' weaponry; hence, losing ten thousand warriors was inevitable. The loss resulted in Makhanda surrendering and subsequently imprisoned on Robben Island, a well-known prison in Cape Town (Shaw, 2020). The British victory led to the arrival of five thousand 1820 British Settlers in the Cape, who then dispersed and infiltrated the Zuurveld (Wells, 2003). The long-standing historical narrative of the battle has been one of typical heroic terms of how a

small battalion of British soldiers and one brave Englishwoman conquered the amaXhosa warriors and their land. Sadly, the massive loss of amaXhosa lives is overshadowed by the stories and memories of the Battle, often infused with "heroic treatments of Makhanda" and British victory, which Wells notes should indeed be "accepted as highly subjective" (Wells, 2010:5).

This subjectivity is notable in the landmarks and engagements in the town, which have become commemoration sources. There are monuments, names, and statues that denote various stories and events that offer 'accurate' representations of history for the white settlers while they provide misrepresentations that highlight a painful past for the indigenous people. The 1820 British Settler family statue stands tall at the 1820 Settlers Monument on a hill in Makhanda. Unlike the Egazini battle site, which the local municipality is supposed to maintain, the 1820 Settlers Monument is well-maintained and cared for by the Grahamstown Foundation and National Art Festival officials who use it as their workspace. The monument and the statue were built in July 1974 as a preservation of English settler heritage during the apartheid rule, which was very Afrikaans-dominated (Warwick, 2020).

Image 1: Six plinths form the Egazini Outreach Project at the Egazini Memorial in 'A' Street, Rhini, Grahamstown. Source: Roddy Fox (Fox, 2019).

Fort England Mental Hospital, which used to be a military post, and the Elizabeth Salt statue in the centre of town are sites and reminders in Makhanda about what happened in the town in the colonial era. Yet, they do not account for the hidden histories of the painful, traumatic experiences of the amaXhosa under British dominance. Other than the visual representations and interpretations of the six mosaic plinths displayed at Egazini Memorial Park, there is little visual representation of the local people's version of the history. Wells (2012:5) adds that most "books acknowledge that it was a big event", yet the battle site continues to receive less attention and visitation.

Before the construction of the sixth plinths, as shown in Image 1 above, there were no visual landmarks to show where the battle had taken place. Today, the site is a memorial park commemorating the battle's events through a creative visual exhibition by local artists. Wells (2003) states that the 2000 Egazini Outreach Project came from the realisation that the local black African people's history needs visibility. Here, the local people engaged with the battle's history by questioning it and interpreting the event using art mediums such as printmaking and tile mosaic art as interpretation tools (Wells, 2003). The artists drew inspiration and information from "primary sources on the battle and unrecorded oral traditions on the battle" (Wells, 2003:81). These two sources were catalysts for artistic and historical interpretation of the battle that brought African versions out of the peripheries. Accordingly, Wells points out her engagement in that the Egazini Outreach Project revealed how the public sees the past as "elusive and subjective", especially regarding the story of Makhanda, a contested Xhosa historical figure (Wells, 2012:5).

Makhanda continues to be a fascination for historians, religious practitioners, poets, and novelists alike, as Damian Shaw notes in his review of Makhanda's appearances in English literary works such as Rae's poetry on Makhanda. According to Shaw (2020), Rae is among the writers who popularised the myth around Makhanda's belief that British bullets would turn into water during the Battle, and he also writes about him in another poem as the fool who swam from Robben Island to Cape Town on a suicide mission. The literature reveals that to some, he was a hero, while to others, he was a sell-out and a fool who adopted British Christian views (Shaw, 2020).

Arguably, the battle intrigues historians and researchers across various disciplines due to its many misconceptions and varying historical positions and narratives that polarise it. Wells (2012) notes the missing parts in reporting the event, especially regarding Makhanda's heroic actions. Often, books describe him with "negative connotations and embarrassing elements" that present him and his people as puppets of "religious fanaticism" (Wells, 2012:3). From these long-standing perceptions, the myths and misconceptions of

Makhanda and the battle arise. We explored some of these perceptions in the Egazini Battle site workshops with the school learners.

Because most of the literature around the battle is written from a British perspective, for the Egazini Outreach project, the organisers put more effort into getting as many Xhosa perspectives as possible through art. The artists and the historians in the team looked for local Xhosa-speaking elderly, who, according to Wells (2012:81), had "intimate knowledge of the local community and they contributed previously unrecorded oral traditions on the battle." The prominent artworks we draw here are the six mosaic plinths created by the Masakuhle art group, which are made of elderly African women who grew up on the surrounding farms (Wells, 2003). The women's interpretation of the sources and stories gathered on the battle at Egazini focused on the pain and loss experienced by the amaNdlambe people in the events leading up to the battle (Wells, 2003).

Unlike the colonial statues and the monument, the plinths do not receive much attention, highlighting how memory is curated and performed in the town. They are often overshadowed by the occasional battle reenactments, which are interpretations that usually perpetuate the dominant British Settler's perspective and commemorate the battle that led to the arrival of the settlers. One of the leading reenactors in Makhanda is Basil Mills, known for staging battle reenactments in the town (Grocotts' Mail, 2013). The reenactments occur at the 1820 Settlers' monument, where a replica cannon is staged and housed outside the building. There are no set schedules of when these take place; therefore, they happen as he sees it, whether as part of the local art festival or as commissioned by interested parties. From Mills' reenactments, we get the impetus to discuss the various types of reenactments and how we arrived at conducting the Egazini Battle site workshops using applied theatre methods as an alternative approach to Mills'.

Methodology

We employed a qualitative methodological approach that falls under the umbrella term applied theatre. Applied theatre is an unconventional theatre practice that takes theatre to the people no matter where they are, and the audience members become active participants (Landy and Montgomery, 2012). Accordingly, the audiences are encouraged to be both participants and viewers. In an educational context, applied theatre draws its methodological approaches from process drama, also often called drama-in-education (D-i-E). Briefly, process drama is a term pioneered by Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote in the early 1970s in the United Kingdom, and it continues to be a popular drama approach worldwide

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(Schonmann, 2011). According to Norris (2016), D-i-E is qualitative educational research and experiential in guiding education practices using drama. As such, using drama techniques helps teach and learn in/out of the classroom (Andersen, 2004). Its uniqueness lies in unscripted performance or interactions that allow both the teacher and the learners to participate in the learning across various subjects.

D-i-E is also an interdisciplinary methodology. Interdisciplinarity promotes the mixture of two fields of study that create new knowledge, professional roles, and methods, drawing on dual theoretical frameworks (Repko, 2008). Our methodology was interdisciplinary, pulling from drama techniques and history interpretation approaches. As seen in both Mills' and Wells' works discussed earlier, the mixture of art as in visual art, performance as in reenactment roleplaying, and historical content is not a foreign concept in South Africa or internationally. But, as noted earlier, we are not satisfied with the one-dimensional approach Mills tends to use when combining the historical content on the Battle at Egazini and reenactment roleplaying techniques. From this view, we challenge the method and offer an interventionist approach to history education in South Africa. Speaking in an American context, Thelen (2003:157) argues for an interventionist education approach in history education, which fosters an open-ended experience that sees content as an unfinished product that requires ongoing inquiry. We share these sentiments, thus positioning our project as a project that advocates for history education and uses drama techniques to foster inquiry and open-ended engagement with the Battle at Egazini and Makhanda.

Revisiting Reenactment as an interpretation method: from presentation towards historical empathy learning

Reenactment refers to reconstructing histories that focus on a specific event or moment in the past (Cook, 2004). Performers recreate these moments to bring about life experiences during that time. The people who are often interested in this work are historians and military research enthusiasts. This type of historical interpretation is also known as living history performance. It is common in Western public history museums where staff members often take on a historical figure role to lead museum visitors through exhibitions (Jackson, 2000).

However, to assume this persona or historical character, one must do thorough research to represent historical facts well. Thus, reenactments have become popular cultural practices that seek to provide audiences with "authentic experiences of history" (Gapps, 2009:395). These experiences come from primary resources that offer first-hand encounters of the event, ranging from artefacts, personal testimonies and any finding that connects them

back to the past. As such, "photographs, diaries, letters and 'local newspapers of the times'" become useful material that helps reenactors understand the events (Gapps, 2009:395). In this way, they can capture as much information as possible about the historical narrative of the event they are exploring. Reenactors can enhance the experience by staging an event as close to the past as possible through relevant costumes, anticipated dialogue, and rehearsed actions and interactions.

Cook (2004) distinguishes between two types of reenactments: reenactment for presentation and reenactment for learning. Reenactment for presentation simulates the past as it is by presenting objects such as costumes, artefacts (used as props) and the narrative as historically accurate as possible. These types of re-staging serve as a "valid form of public commemoration" in most communities (Gapps, 2009:396). Light and Young (2015) state that commemorations include monuments, statues, street names, and other public buildings. Therefore, reenactments tend to happen in these spaces because they hold historical significance. In Makhanda, the Egazini battle site and the 1820 Settlers monument are commemorative sites, although the latter receives more attention than the former. It is at the 1820 Settlers monument that Mills occasionally reconstructs the battle of April 1819 to commemorate all amaXhosa and British soldiers who lost their lives (Grocotts' Mail, 2013). Mills' commemoration work also takes on a military history approach. In its traditional sense, military history focuses on "traditions of heroic epics" where warfare is glorified to enhance the victor's power (Morillo and Pavkovic, 2012:1-2). Mills achieves this by providing what he perceives as 'an authentic battle experience' through elaborate costumes, props, and cannon demonstrations.

Image 2: Re-enactors in Grahamstown getting ready to do the Battle of Grahamstown re-enchantment. Source: 8A Grahamstown.

As is notable in Image 2 above, the battle staging gives a polarised view of the battle, with Caucasian men in roles as British soldiers and African men as amaXhosa warriors. Here, Mills simulates the past using artefacts and historical narratives as they appear in the historical literature. Sue MacLennan notes Mills' preoccupation with getting replicas accurate as follows:

> *When here in Makhanda (Grahamstown), Basil Mills was asked to make up replicas of survivor Pollux and the Long Tom that got its twin, he jumped at the challenge… Mills operates a traditional metalwork forge, where these extraordinary historical monuments were welded and moulded. The guns are definitely not operational. 'We used a combination of old photographs and some rather vague old imperial plans to get the proportions right,' Mills said.* (MacLennan, 2018:1)

Arguably, the historical event's props, costumes, and location get more attention because they are what he perceives as "what authenticity refers to" (Gapps, 2009:403). He believes that roleplaying in these costumes and props brings the audience closer to the battle as a turning point in the town's history (Cook, 2004). By focusing on costumes and props for authenticity, Mills' reenactments favour British soldiers' narratives, and the audience misses

out on deep conversations about the devastatingly high number of amaXhosa fatalities. He associates military commemoration with fostering public remembrance that focuses on the significance of British soldiers' victory. Thus, this points to the subjectivity of the British victory narrative that Wells warned against earlier. At a surface level, the event serves the purpose of public memory and "collective understanding of the past", but it fails to achieve the facilitation of social cohesion because it focuses too much on the victor narrative (Light and Young, 2015:23). The problem here is that Mills' traditional military history approach presents "narrative without analysis" (Morillo and Pavkovic, 2017:4).

We note the transitional justice gap that reenactment for presentation fails to fill by drawing on Morillo and Pavovic (2017:4), who further contend that military history practitioners need to explore warfare beyond objects and names by exploring "ideas, beliefs (religious practices) and ideologies that shaped plans, decisions and actions of the individual and group". Accordingly, as Keynes (2019) states, transitional justice is a truth-telling process that seeks to redress and acknowledge the harms caused by settler colonial societies. They serve an anthropological purpose which places value on how researchers/performers ought to interact with past objects as Auslander (2013) noted. Hence, one of our primary concerns with limiting authenticity to objects is that it neglects to acknowledge that authenticity can extend to dialogue and emotion to understand further war strategies and beliefs, especially of the victims. With Mills' approach, the collective understanding of the past rests on the victor's narrative while neglecting or underplaying the oppressed's narrative. Accordingly, reenactment for presentation has little engagement with what social cohesion and "public memory as a fluid process of negotiation" can look like (Light and Young, 2015:235).

According to Peers (1999), who writes about live historical performances in the West, live interpretations usually offer one-sided history. A one-sided historical narrative does not allow for negotiation, which means reconfiguring the past to include expressions of "oppositions or contestations of the official public memory" (Light and Young, 2015:235). Thus, Peers' approach and Light and Young's notion of negotiation include creating inclusive interpretations that present native people's perspectives on the past. It is in these varied perspectives that minority stories have gained attention. The need for telling these stories has seen Peers work extensively to revise interpretation from "middle-class activities such as baking bread to telling stories of the roles native people played on-site" (Peers, 1999:42). The shift from staging stereotypical colonial roles to finding authentic material and information that presents alternative stories from the usual Eurocentric view is essential. As supported by Keynes (2019), who writes in an Australian context but

her work resonates within South Africa, the truth-telling of indigenous people's stories should not seek to neutralise history in the name of nation-building (or social cohesion) but instead honour stories that were hidden and untold during the colonial period. By moving from reenactment for presentation to reenactment for learning, we are arguing for a history education approach that embraces transitional justice through engaging learners in dialogue, interactions, and processes of reconciliation that deal with a complicated past as Makhandians.

Research design: the Battle at Egazini as a reenactment for a learning exercise

We draw on Peers' view to highlight the limitations embedded in Mills' one-sided reenactments and offer a methodological approach that embraces alternative historical perspectives and interpretations. IAHU embarked on a creative interpretation journey through four one-hour workshops using the reenactment for learning approach over four days. Thus, the activities of the Egazini Battle site workshops had an educational aim with six phases: enrolling participants, games, group meeting in-role, interaction with plinths, final battle station, and reflections out-of-role. Owing to Cook (2004), we created reenactment for learning that sought to expose their audience to new information. This reenactment played an essential role in illuminating historical facts through the imaginative process. Because of its nature as a reenactment for learning, as interpreters (and facilitators) we were responsible for making historical information accessible by engaging visitors (learners) in conversations, questions, and discussions that helped them understand the Battle at Egazini and Makhanda's role better (Jackson, 2000).

We used applied theatre tools such as games and the teacher-in-role as avenues that help ask questions and start difficult conversations. As O'Neill and Lambert (1982:17) reiterate, "[H]history is one of those subjects which seem an obvious choice for the inclusion of drama strategies". Applied theatre strategies became obvious choices in tackling the passivity of the reenactment process. The tools aided us "academic historians to communicate with a non-specialist audience" because they served as rich tools for content engagement (Cook, 2004:489). The facilitators used images, sounds, gestures, and scenarios to create meaning between the content, interpreter, and visitor (Norris, 2000). We used the six plinths (example on Image 3 below) as existing images to help us create content and improvised scenarios that encouraged dialogue about Makhanda and the battle.

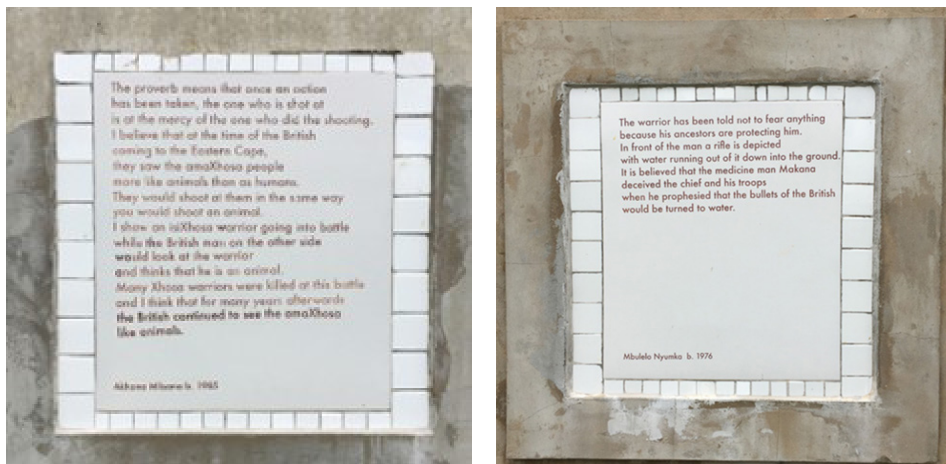

Image 3: Pictures of the writing that accompanies the images on the six plinths erected at the Egazini Memorial park. Source: Phemelo Hellemann

Moreover, not only did the participants engage in making drama, but they were also involved in creating their own meaning about Makhanda, the warrior. Here, the focus of making drama in a process drama event was not to create a theatre piece but to use imagined roles to understand colonial expansion and conquest beyond the usual reading and writing practices in education. The role of drama strategies in this instance "was not to transmit historical facts but an attempt to illuminate those facts" (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982:17).

Ethical considerations

We conducted the study before the university introduced the new ethics application review system. We followed the History Department's ethical protocols and procedures accordingly, as all the participants gave written consent to participate in the study. The schools signed research consent forms, giving the team permission to record the learners' participation and use the schools' names but not the learners' names in the research. The departmental ethics committee, under the guidance of the Head of Department in 2018, granted us ethical clearance to conduct the research.

Actively participating in the Battle at Egazini: Teaching and learning through drama tools.

Enrolling the participants

The first phase involved establishing how the school learners and the teacher accompanying them would be enrolled as fellow characters to ensure that they use roleplaying as a framework to step into the past creatively. Wells, whose writing advocates for a deeper understanding of Makhanda, the warrior, welcomed the participants and facilitated a brief discussion on the history behind the Battle at Egazini. She asked questions and discussed points that familiarised the participants with the history of the place. The participants arrived, and Masixole Heshu, a Xhosa warrior, and Phemelo Hellemann, a British soldier, were already in the role, chanting war sounds and gestures in war costumes, as seen in Image 4 below. Teacher-in-role (T-i-R) is a teaching technique in D-i-E that allows teachers to take on a fictional role/character and use it to "teach complex concepts through interactive engagement" (Hellemann, 2022:5). The teacher can also use the approach to enrol learners, so they participate in the fictional context together. Because we were not their teachers, we called the technique facilitator-in-role (F-i-R) instead of T-i-R. We chose characters based on the traditional Egazini Battle narrative of British soldiers versus amaXhosa warriors. The characters, however, did not have names and remained as general as possible, so we referred to ourselves as commanding officers.

Image 4: Facilitators in-role as a Xhosa warrior (Masixole Heshu) and a British soldier (Phemelo Hellemann). Source: Nceba Mqolomba

Drawing on the reenactment-for-learning approach, we used Wells' book and the information on the six plinths (as shown in Image 3) as pretexts that shaped our semi-improvised dialogue. Our challenge was working on a restricted budget, which did not allow access to war costume replicas like Basil Mills did with his reenactors. We sourced costumes with a similar feel from the Rhodes University Drama Department costume room. Although we kept the costumes and props as minimal as possible, we could not fully achieve the costume authenticity as Mills did because we realised our limitation as we are not military, history-based researchers but more public history practitioners. War costume authenticity was not too essential for us as the focus was on cultivating dialogue and critical engagement.

However, we put more effort into finding historically accurate symbols (as seen in Images 5 and 6 presented below) that we used to enrol participants into their roles. The workshops started with F-i-R handpicking participants and then offering them symbols as badges to wear. We did not want participants to choose sides based on their bias towards

a specific narrative, so we hand-picked them individually. We had a mixture of African participants, such as British soldiers, and white participants stepping into roles as Xhosa warriors and participating in a reenactment that embraced an inclusive pedagogical and interpretation approach. For us, this is the alternative creative pedagogy that Maluleka (2023) argues for, which, according to him, teachers and learners can use to encourage a diversity of voices around sensitive and controversial topics.

Image 5: 1800 British military leather hat. Source: PicUK

Image 6: Vintage Nguni assegai spear and shield. Source: Digital Mayland

Additionally, Peers (1999) states that when performers/participants play races or identities different to their own, they often desire to know more about those cultures and develop empathy and deep meaning about identity, the past and its repercussions on the marginalised. By participating in activities that explore multiple perspectives, learners develop historical thinking skills by understanding the event's historical significance through swapping roles. According to Boadu (2020), historical significance as a historical thinking skill grows when learners understand how past events impact contemporary issues. Thus, the facilitators' choice positioned learners to understand the 'other' in-role, with the modern knowledge of the impact of the battle and colonisation in modern-day Makhanda.

There is a theatrical risk of stepping into someone else's shoes while suspending your preconceptions and allowing yourself to take on a narrative that gives you a glimpse and a brief experience of the 'other' side of the story. As noted by Jackson (2000:205), first-person interpretation while working in role with a real context or place can be a powerful tool for "inviting the audience to engage in the interpretation of the historical content presented to them". Boadu states that the power of this engagement lies in analysing the complex similarities and differences, which requires empathy that students can use to assess what has "changed or remained unchanged over time" in our humanity (Boadu, 2020:281). The swapping was challenging for some participants as they were understandably reluctant to participate. But, they did not get a chance to reflect on this immediately, as they had to step into the role by giving their group a name and engage in game strategies that they would use to win against the opposition.

Games as war strategy simulations

The second phase involved the F-i-R leading the two teams in battle-simulated theatre games. We chose three games: human rock paper scissors (Icebreakers, n.d.), Morabaraba (an indigenous South African game that requires strategic and premeditated playing) (Bead Game, n.d.), and a variation of Simon Says (a well-known children's game) (British Council LearnEnglish Kids, n.d.) to represent frontier wars before the Battle at Egazini. Likhaya Jack was a judge who served as a score facilitator and mediator between the two forces while guiding everyone through each workshop phase. His role represented the role of the media, observers, and commentators who wrote about the battle, often from a victor's perspective. Likhaya used these simple children's games to get participants comfortable working in the role. Instead of saying Simon Says, the 'judge' Likhaya instructed the whole group regarding what gestures to do. The games helped the learners to engage in critical

thinking and strategising, much like in battles. We did not predictably simulate combat; instead, we highlighted the importance of strategy in combat imaginatively.

Image 7: Phemelo Hellemann and learners from Nathaniel Nyaluza Secondary School engaging in a game at the beginning of the workshop. Source: Nceba Mqolomba

As seen in Image 7, the games gave the learners the confidence to participate in the Egazini Battle simulations in a creatively engaged way. Moreover, the theatre games maintained a power balance between the facilitator and the audience as they both participated in the games to establish a working relationship (Boal, 2002). According to the learners, the games were enjoyable because the winner differed every time, separate from the known historical outcome. The creativity did not distract them from discussing the essence of the Battle at Egazini and its consequences on the current Makhanda landscape. The games allowed the groups to strategise moves by working together to defeat the opposition. It was especially effective with the human rock-paper-scissors game, which imitated the British and amaXhosa encounters in other wars before the one on 22 April 1819.

The fictional battle context, through games, allowed the learners to develop historical perspectives that appreciate the value of strategies. As Boadu argues, historical perspective in the classroom can develop through "travelling across present-day culture and value systems and appreciating activities of historical agents of the past" and seeing how they lived and acted differently to present-day societies (Boadu, 2020:281). As present-day activities,

the three games allowed the learners to travel back through an imagined context and appreciate the evolution of warfare strategies during the British-Xhosa wars. As facilitators, we recognised that for such a heavy history topic like the Battle at Egazini, we needed to start with a light activity to build a working relationship with the participants. From thereon, we moved into a more critical thinking process that required more imagination and an in-depth look at how culture and value systems influence actions.

Make-believe world: groups working in-role and town planning

Image 8: Phemelo Hellemann led the town planning and discussion with learners and a teacher from Nombulelo Secondary School. Source: Nceba Mqolomba

In the third phase, as seen in Image 8, the British and Xhosa groups did town planning activities in-role separately. They strategised how they were going to use their land after the battle victory. As facilitators, we conceptualised predetermined but open-ended questions to guide the make-believe interaction of the battle in advance. The questions allowed for the flow of the dialogue between the facilitator and participants. For example, one question was why winning the war was essential to each group, while the other was about town planning strategies. The open-ended questions took the participants beyond the simple yes or no answers. Jackson (2000) notes that the questions asked during the make-believe stage are essential in cultivating conversations and the scenarios that develop during the in-role interactions. Here, we draw on Boadu's (2020) notion of cause as a historical thinking concept, which teaches learners to think about factors, circumstances, and beliefs

as conditions that directly or indirectly motivate people to act.

Although the participants started confidently in the games section, they were shy when they engaged in the town planning activity. We believe this is because they were grappling with how their in-role beliefs and actions and those of the actual British and Xhosa soldiers of the time influenced their decisions about what should happen in the town should either group win the battle. Therefore, as facilitators, we often dealt with awkward silences. However, we used the guiding questions to keep the difficult dialogue going. We wanted to "encourage learners to analyse the complexity of causes, counter-forces and unintended consequences" of warfare (Boadu, 2020:281).

From the British in-role side, there were plans to build schools, hospitals, and churches as an assimilation approach. As one of the participants-in-role said, "[W]e need to make sure that the Xhosas lose their culture and religion by learning the British ways of life". Upon reflection, the participants explained that this is the view of history their school curriculum has exposed them to and they wanted to challenge it. The Xhosa side added that they enjoyed coming up with different ideas of how they would have liked the town to look after winning the war against the British.

Interaction with plinths

Image 9: Masixole Heshu facilitates a discussion on Makhanda's role in the battle using the information noted in Image 3 earlier in the paper. Source: Nceba Mqolomba

Although the plinth exhibition has been on site since 2000, most learners and local people do not engage with it, as noted earlier. The learners expressed that they see it all the time but never take the time to read the information there. As established earlier, the exhibition offers alternative stories of Makhanda, the warrior, and artistic interpretations of the 1819 battle. Through this information, we could probe further to find out what the learners and teachers knew about the legend. As one student-teacher reflected, "I have been studying here (Rhodes University) for a while, and I did not know much about Makhanda the person, even after the town was named after him". This reflection confirms that the Egazini Outreach Project legacy continues to tell untold stories of the battle in a simple but effective way through the art. As Wells writes, the project gave the amaXhosa a version of a courageous Makhanda in a time where "passivity and defeatism were unknown" (Wells, 2003:92). Without the plinths, it would have been difficult to find accessible sources that gave a varied view of the warrior. The plinths served as evidence that the learners could cross-check with other sources (current curriculum content) to improve their understanding of the past (Boadu, 2020). The plinths paired with the in-role discussion served as a valuable pedagogical strategy that "combined content and engaging teaching strategy to avoid monotony in pedagogical content delivery" (Badu, 2020:2818).

Final battle: Morabaraba

Image 10: Likhaya Jack (in the middle), about to start the staged battle game of Morabaraba between the British soldiers with Phemelo Hellemann and the amaXhosa warriors with Masixole Heshu. Source: Nceba Mqolomba

For the final battle stage, Likhaya, as noted in Image 10 above, presented the information from the participants (learners from T.E.M. Mrwetyana Secondary School) in pantsula dance form as the last game. Briefly, pantsula is an African dance of "quick and complex rhythms of dancing feet" performed by skilled young men and women, but more than that, it is a culture and a way of life usually prominent in South African townships (Fowler, 2022). We chose the pantsula dance form because it's a prevalent dance form in Makhanda and Likhaya has used it before as an interpretation tool in another public history project in the town. Likhaya's dance interpretation followed a semi-improvised structure based on the content that the participants were sharing. Cheering and camaraderie were the exciting parts of the session, with each group singing made-up war cry songs. It highlighted how each team had invested in the narrative they built throughout the workshop. As Likhaya in Hellemann (2019:6) states, using dance to make sense of historical content is what applied drama/dance/history means to him, as he uses an art form to help the audience understand content through rhythm, emotion, and action. Dance as an alternative form of history presentation helped us further embrace an interdisciplinary approach to the Battle at Egazini, much like the outreach art project done by Wells in 2000. As Wells (2003:97) argues, "deepening awareness of the meanings embedded in the history in turn need to be freshly shared with the artists to maintain the ongoing 'conversation' which generates both products for the tourism market and the educational activities".

For us, the dance added that element of deep meaning-making, which was an integral educational activity in the Egazini Battle workshop series. The dance finale added to the ongoing conversation which the facilitators and participants explored in the reflection session of the workshop.

Out-of-role: reflections on learning and revelations

Image 11: Participants (Rhodes University student-teachers, learners and teacher from Ntsika Secondary School) reflecting on the process/workshops put of role. Sources: Nceba Mqolomba

For each workshop, facilitators and participants shared a packed lunch meal and reflected on the workshop experience out-of-role. In this session, they shared their revelations and feelings experienced during the workshop. We wanted to know which information was new to them, how much they already knew before the workshop, and what feelings came up for them. As Maluleka (2023) argues, learners already come with some knowledge in the class, which they learn from various sources ranging from parents to social media. The reflection exercise brought all this together, and we discuss the findings from this session in succeeding paragraphs.

Results and discussion: Alternative viewpoints of the battle

Learning history interpretation and analysis in-role

The idea of working in-role was new to all the participants, therefore it made the learning

experience tangible, but it required a lot of intellectual and creative investment. Bolton and Heathcote (1999) state that roleplaying requires investment because facilitators need to engage the group's perceptions and attitudes while considering their world experiences. Working in the role unearthed the participants' perceptions through a framework that allowed for investigative reenactment that stimulated fruitful reflection on land and conquest issues from the past and the present through sensitively conceived and conducted activities (Cook, 2004). One of the learners stated, "[I] it was so much fun to learn about amaXhosa people's history this way; we are not taught like this at school".

The group in-role activity notably allowed the learners to explore what colonial expansion meant. It was in this activity that the learners named their groups, and one of the names they gave themselves was 'Destroyers' because they said their mission was to destroy amaXhosa and their culture by teaching them the colonisers' way of life. When the British won the 1819 battle, they colonised the area by building schools, hospitals, and churches after the arrival of the 1820 British settlers. Through thinking about identity and nation-building, the learners were able to learn about how colonial assimilation added to the cultural erasure of the indigenous people. According to Maluleka, history teachers often do not engage with the effects of forced assimilation and how it impacted "new colonial identities that eroded social bonding, indigenous beliefs, values, and identities, and denying indigenous children knowledge of themselves" (Maluleka, 2023:33). The activity helped the learners develop a deeper understanding of the British invasion strategy, which involved populating the Zuurveld and claiming its complete land ownership to pursue economic and political uses (Wells, 2012).

Moreover, working in-role allowed the facilitators to explore historical content by linking it to the present by getting the learners to think about how the colonial narrative has impacted what they know or do not know about the amaXhosa's side of the story. Although it happened in a fictional context, the Battle at Egazini revisionist history exercise explored Xhosa perspectives, which, according to Keynes, would have otherwise been ignored but are necessary in "complicating a simplistic one-sided representation" (Keynes, 2019:121). This is not to say that this could change people's perceptions, but rather to ask them to "try to imagine the protagonists in the original historical situation sympathetically and to identify with their hardships and dilemma" (Cook, 2004:490). This is how the activity taught historical empathy.

Presenting the other side of the story helped the learners understand the consequences of writing one side only. Once they gained the confidence to speak and make decisions in-role, the Xhosa warriors challenged the British perspective of the battle by imagining

themselves in an alternative narrative, a crucial step in engaging with the Egazini Battle history. This was notable in the Morabaraba and the human rock-paper-scissors games, where learners had to implement war-like strategies. They often huddled in groups, discussing which gesture to choose or sending spies to look at the other team's gestures. They also sang war-cry songs in between the interactions. However, one of the most popular strategies involved them changing their gestures at the last minute after seeing the gesture the opposition chose. Their ideas were not far off from the Xhosa strategies that Wells (2012) discusses in her book, which she highlights as being strong enough to cause panic in the British camp. The real Xhosa strategies included sending spies to the British camp, creating 1.8-meter-long sharp spears, and sending warning messages to the enemy's camp, to name a few (Wells, 2012).

Based on Wells' observations of the terror the British felt during the various frontier wars, we posit that perhaps the battle games were not a farfetched idea from events and thoughts of historical figures at the time because even in this fictional context, the Xhosa warriors consistently won the games. Seeing the fictional representation of the Xhosa's victory on a site riddled with loss and pain was emotional. The outcomes of the battle games showed how we ought to find creative ways to challenge how teachers teach the Battle at Egazini. The experience demonstrated an alternative narrative that teachers could explore that does not pose Xhosa warriors as people who lacked agency and strategies during the territory wars. The activities emulated the narrative in Wells' book on Makhanda, arguing that the Xhosa warriors had agency and war strategy in the battle. Battle simulation, therefore, through games and roleplaying is a tool that can encourage learners to make connections and appreciate multiple perspectives when engaging in historical research and interpretation (Boadu, 2020).

The out-of-role reflection encouraged more dialogue, which the facilitators structured through out-of-role questioning. Jackson (2000) argues that asking questions out-of-role can address any unanswered questions asked in-role. For example, the out-of-role exploration helped the facilitators discover what the learners knew about Makhanda. They learned about the battle from the polarised colonial version, emphasising British victory over Xhosa perspectives. But they also knew what their parents told them, which is very similar to what Wells also discovered during the creation of the plinths, which is people hearing about the "battle of Grahamstown in a general sense from their parents, but without any detail or elaboration" (Wells, 2003:83). We needed to know what they knew so we could unpack views around the myths about Makhanda's role in the battle and his personality. The discussion revealed new knowledge of Makhanda as the same person as

Nxele to the learners, who they thought were different people. Here, we got a chance to address this inaccuracy which was based on their prior knowledge. As Maluleka (2023) argues, the benefit of teaching sensitive and controversial topics is that teachers address learners' inaccuracies and misconceptions. This revelation made us realise that there are still lingering issues regarding Makhanda's identity and personhood, which intrigued the learners.

The lingering versions of Makhanda

The interactive workshops at Egazini were not the first creative attempts to address misconceptions about Makhanda and his involvement in the Battle at Egazini. In 2001, Andrew Buckland, a well-known South African performer and writer, wrote a historical drama called Makana, performed across the Eastern Cape.[2] Buckland in Murry (2002:82) explained that the play was not about presenting "accurate facts of the past" but making sense of the stories and meaning derived from historical war records. The production unearthed misconceptions about Makhanda's beliefs and elements of his heroic positioning within the Xhosa community. It portrayed Makhanda as a man of many secrets and wonders through fallacies of superstitions, as many believed him to be a prophet.

As Wells (2012:178) elaborates, one of Makhanda's beliefs during the battle was that "supernatural forces would assist the amaXhosa" to conquer the British soldiers. As a result, one of the long-standing myths that still circulates across generations is that Makhanda told his warriors that the ancestors would help them turn British bullets into water to make them ineffective, thus, the warriors believed him. The learners had also heard this from parents, but they said they never understood what it meant. According to Sinclair-Thomson and Challis (2017), the belief that bullets could turn into water during the colonial war era was a common indigenous belief among African people (the San, Khoi, and Bantu speakers) as it was influenced by rituals conducted before a war. Thus, it is believed that Makhanda performed a war ritual with Chief Ndlambe and Mdushane, which involved slaughtering cows "accompanied by spells of singing and dancing" (Wells, 2012:178).

Given that Makhanda often drew his spiritual practices from other cultures, such as the Khoi and Christianity, it is not unfounded that he would have borrowed some war preparation rituals and beliefs such as the one noted above. As Sinclair-Thomson and Challis explain further, culture crossings and ritual borrowing were not unusual as seen

2 Many historical records write Makana, but the correct spelling is Makhanda.

with the mix of click sounds between languages such as isiXhosa and San/Khoi languages (Sinclair-Thomson and Challis, 2017). We posit that perhaps Makhanda did say this phrase as encouragement, but the translation of the phrase was taken literally instead of metaphorically, as African languages tend to be. However, Wells does not acknowledge the 'bullets into water' phrase in her writing. Instead, she says it is relatively fair to recognise that "we shall never know exactly what Makhanda told his men the night before the battle, nor as they set out for Grahamstown" (Wells, 2012:170). What remains is that most people throughout generations know him as a man of many superstitions and varied spiritual practices. The learners did not express any views on this. Perhaps this is something we as facilitators could have explored more. However, from the two views, one can see how the mysteries behind Makhanda and his war strategies continue to fascinate historians.

Another tradition that remains is that Makhanda did not die on Robben Island; thus, he will one day return to his people and fight for their land again. As such, Wells (2012) notes how various generations have held on to the idea of Makhanda as their hero and even held on to his superstitions and messages. Indeed, the school learners were familiar with this version of Makhanda's story. They had heard it before from their elders, and they know it as 'ukuza ka Nxele', meaning the return of Makhanda. As Nokes (2011) argues, history is one subject that challenges adolescents to think critically. However, this often competes with their experiences and current conditions, which also tend to shape their thinking. Therefore, it was no surprise that the learners linked this narrative to that of Jesus Christ and Nelson Mandela, which for them is another 'false' promise their parents and community members talk about but never elaborate on. One of the reasons for the name change to Makhanda was that the name "fulfils the prophecy of 'Ukubuya kuka Nxele (the return of Nxele)'" (Masinga 2018:1).

Given that both Christianity and Mandela[3] remain contentious topics in South Africa, it made sense that learners applied the same scepticism to Makhanda based on the correlations they drew. Some learners believed he was not the hero he was made out to be because he surrendered himself to the British authorities instead of fighting to defeat them. Accordingly, the controversy around his surrender lies in that he did not inform his fellow warriors, thus some viewed it as a sell-out move (Wells, 2012). In reflecting on Makhanda's decision to surrender, Wells (2012) further posits that his surrender needs to be viewed as a

3 The discussion of these two figures is beyond the scope of this paper. But for further engagement, readers can refer to Bundy (2020) to understand the revisionist history of Mandela. Manala (2013) notes the complexities of Christianity in South Africa against the backdrop of missionary education and the erasure of African spirituality.

heroic instead of a cowardly retreat because it led to peace negotiations between amaXhosa and the British. The correlation between what some of the learners said and what Wells notes shows that oral tradition plays a part in sharing, if not preserving, elements of African people's history. As Wells (2003:83) notes elsewhere, oral tradition in Xhosa-speaking communities still finds its way as a form of "handing down their history orally from one generation to the next". We posit that this practice also needs to include conversations and be cross-checked and referenced with history textbooks that tend to offer the one-sided narrative of colonial expansion.

The workshops revealed a yearning to learn more about the local history and Makhanda. Although they ran for a limited time, the interactive workshops provided the space to give learners an introductory session on local history, focusing on a small yet significant event/story of expansion and conquest during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. In doing so, we confronted narratives about territorial wars, colonial expansion, and the consequences of war on indigenous people's culture and identity using theatre-based tools such as roleplaying and games to formulate interactive interpretations of Makhanda and the Battle at Egazini.

The impact of the workshops is captured succinctly by Jackson (2000:202), who affirms that theatrical techniques play a vital role in education approaches to history because they "generate a spirit of enquiry and engagement with a recognition of the differences and similarities between past and present". The workshops achieved this by asking the learners to critically engage with the battle information. They made sense of the differences and similarities between what they knew from school, parents/grandparents, the exhibition at Egazini Memorial Park, and what the facilitators presented on the Battle at Egazini. We see this dialogue between the past as a continuous exercise in the knowledge production journey.

Conclusion

Educators and historians interested in educational historical approaches can find solace in using reenactment for learning to teach historical empathy. However, as noted throughout the paper, one needs to intentionally use and structure the reenactment for learning activities. For the facilitators mentioned here, applied theatre games and techniques were a gateway to engaging interactions and participation, which took learning beyond the textbook interpretations of history. Thus, they became practical tools for learners to interpret the Battle at Egazini by questioning, planning, and responding to the day's events.

However, as Cook (2004:493) warns, reenactors should not fall into the trap of causing "disconnections between the response of participants and the attitudes of those in the original situation". We heed this caution by positing that the aim was not to rewrite the Battle of Egazini history based on fictional interactions but to try to imagine an alternative viewpoint as a critical engagement and thinking exercise. The facilitators were not trying to "simulate mentalities of the past", as Cooks further discourages, but rather to improve the learners' "understanding of a different world and the behaviour of its inhabitants" (Cooks, 2004:491).

We know that some might question the approach of using theatre techniques and history content, especially within the history discipline. For concerns such as this one, we draw on Jackson's observations, in which he states (Jackson, 2002:214) that "playfulness and historical accuracy may seem poles apart. But, as most historians themselves are quick to argue, the notion of historical accuracy is fraught with problems."

Therefore, we look at integrating history and theatre techniques to further understanding. The approach is not trying to romanticise or fix the past. As Cooks (2004:492) affirms, "the key to using these experiences constructively is to remember that no proper conclusions about history can ever be drawn". To this end, reenactment for learning is not about drawing conclusions but allowing new meanings and interpretations to develop. This paper provides a starting point for public historians and teachers interested in taking audience participation and history education further in the interpretation processes through active and engaged reenactments to encourage historical empathy as a historical thinking skill.

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