



DOWN AT JIKA JIKA TAVERN

THE POACHER'S MOON CRIME SERIES

STUDENT WORKBOOK
ASHLING MCCARTHY & CLAIRE GEBER

Student Workbook for **Down at Jika Jika Tavern**

A Novel by Ashling McCarthy

Workbook Content Creation
by Claire Geber

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This study guide refers to a work of fiction. All names, places and events therein are a product of the author's imagination, or are used fictionally.

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THE AUTHORS

Ashling McCarthy is the author of Down at Jika Jika Tavern and an anthropologist working in social development and social change. Ashling has a master's degree in social anthropology. Her work has enabled a better understanding of, and interaction with, the complexities and inequalities prevalent in South African society.

In 2010, Ashling founded an education non-profit based in a rural community in Zululand. It closed in 2025, and Ashling is now focused on collaborating with organisations that facilitate conservation education for children living in communities near game reserves.

Claire Geber is the author of this study guide and an experienced English teacher with nearly two decades of engagement with diverse student communities, spanning three continents. She is passionate about designing language resources that connect meaningfully to students' lived experiences, helping them find relevance and purpose in English studies. She believes in empowering students to express themselves with clarity and confidence.

In Down at Jika Jika Tavern, she found a text rich with contemporary resonance and the potential to inspire thoughtful analysis, authentic self-expression, and personal insight.

Additional resources can be found here to enhance your experience:

 **Youtube**



@AshlingMcCarthyAuthor

 **Pinterest**



@AshlingMcCarthyAuthor

Website



www.ashlingmccarthy.co.za

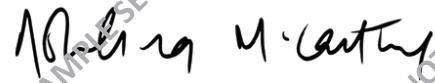
NOTE TO READER

This workbook is packed with activities to help you understand the novel and build your skills — but don't worry if you don't get to every single question during class time.

Your teacher will choose the parts that best match your class's needs, so some sections might be skipped on purpose — there's no need to feel like you're missing out!

Once you've worked through the sections your teacher has chosen, feel free to go back and try some of the other questions if you'd like to practise more or explore the novel further.

Happy reading and learning!



Ashling McCarthy



Claire Geber

PRE-READING

Please refer to the introductory note to the novel entitled, 'How to pronounce the name Nonhle', in which the author helps readers to pronounce the name, Nonhle.

Names are important in both real life and in novels. Your name is important because it symbolises you. You are important! Consider your name:

What is your name? _____

What language does it come from? _____

What does it mean? _____

Do you know why you were given your name? If you know, jot it down here: _____

Some names can be tricky to pronounce. The name Nonhle is difficult for some. The author of *Down at Jika Jika Tavern* opens the novel with an introductory note to help readers to pronounce the name Nonhle correctly. She explains how to say the *-hle* sound from the name Nonhle using the real-life sound of hot coals of a fire being extinguished with water. She writes:

'Imagine it's late, and the bush fire you've been standing around needs to be put out before you can go to bed. You throw a jug of water over the hot coals, which hiss with relief as they cool. That's what 'hle' sounds like! Non-hle.'

Do you find that some people struggle to pronounce your name? What tips, if any, have you come up with to help people pronounce your name correctly? _____

Before having a class discussion on the topic below, read the QR-code-linked article on names and their significance by the author of *Down at Jika Jika Tavern*, Ashling McCarthy.



This is what's important to know about my name.



Scan to go to url



PREDICTION:

Considering the meaning of the name, Mthunzi, what can we predict about his character?

Scan here to listen to how to pronounce character names.



SECTION A

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Here are the characters you'll meet in the novel. Use lines to show their connections — thicker for strong ties, lighter or dotted for weaker ones. Add notes on the type of relationship they have (daughter, boss, friend).



MR MCKENZIE



THOMAS MCKENZIE



KAREL DU RANDT



JOSEPH GUMEDDE



SENZO MDLETSCHE



DUTCH MÜLLER



BENTO



NONHLE NGUBANE



SAMSON NGUBANE



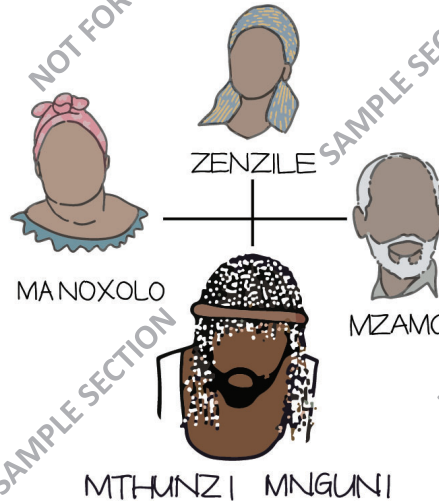
LUCKY MHLONGO



THULI NGUBANE



ZODWA SHEZI



BHEKI



NKOSI



MANDLA MTSHALI

CHARACTER SKETCH

You have been provided with a Character Sketch page for each of the six main characters. The icons below help categorise relevant information from the novel to your character sketches.



Baggage

What from their past has shaped them (backstory)?



Heart

What motivates them?



Mouth

What quotes from the novel, either by the character or about the character, reveal who they are?



Eyes

How do they see the world?



Brain

What thoughts occupy their minds?

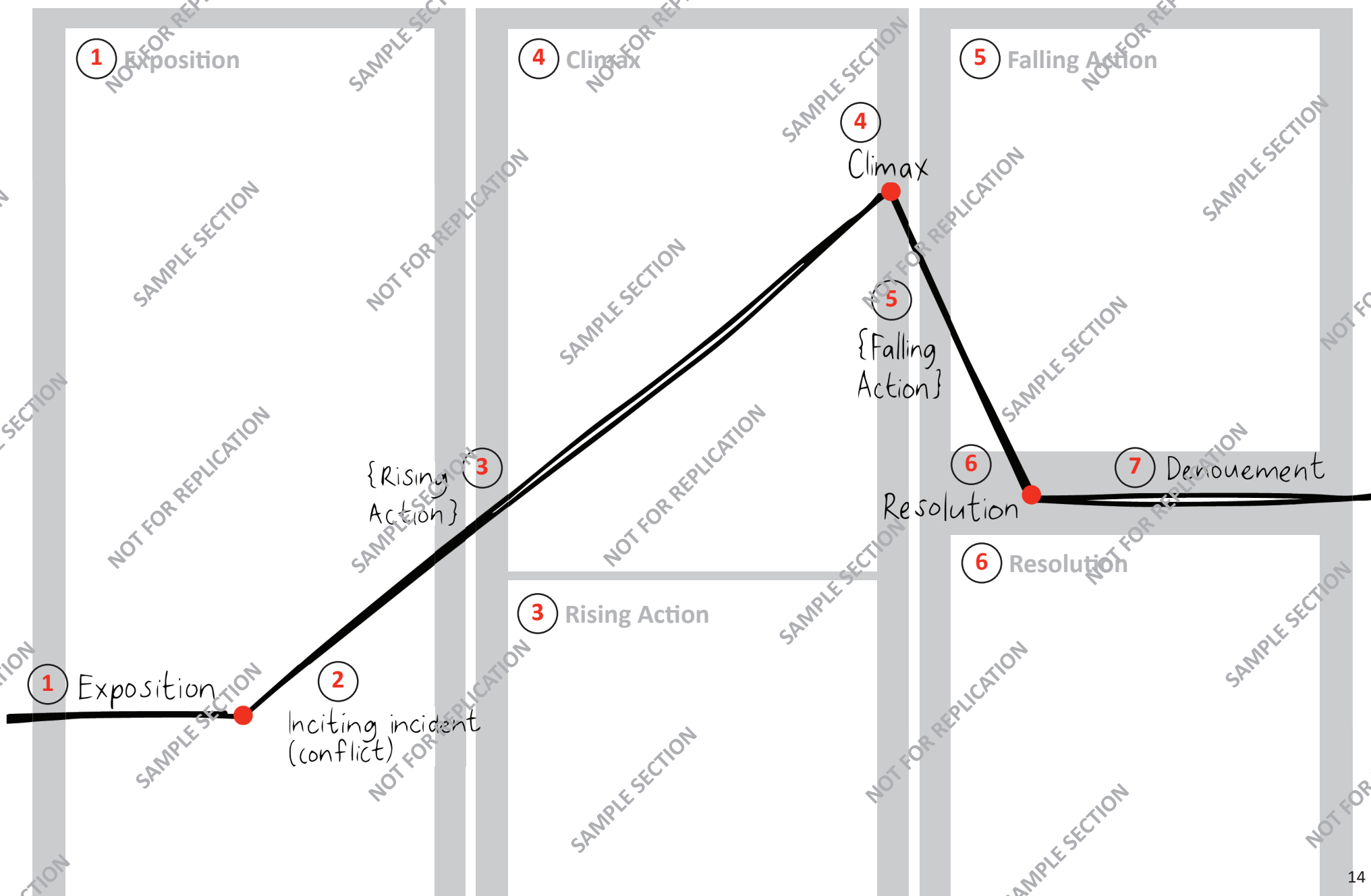


NONHLE NGUBANE



NARRATIVE ARC

You'll be prompted to add notes throughout the guide, but feel free to do so at any time as you gain new insights. **TIP:** Including page numbers in your own notes can be helpful.



Exposition = Setting + Characters
Setting = Where? + When?
See page in novel for map.

2 Inciting Incident/Conflict

7 Denouement

All of this forms the narrative arc, which creates a complete and satisfying storyline.

BEGINNING

MIDDLE

END



THEMES

There are seven main themes in *Down at Jika Jika Tavern*. This list will appear at the end of each chapter section, where you can highlight or underline the key themes. Use the space below to jot down notes on how each theme appears as you work through the guide. **TIP:** Including page numbers in your own notes can be helpful.

1. REVENGE + BETRAYAL

2. CONSERVATION + POACHING



3. GENDER

4. TRADITIONAL CULTURE
VS WESTERN CULTURE

5. IDENTITY + BELONGING

6. EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE
+ POWER

7. GREED





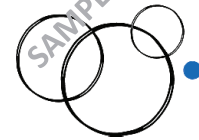
SYMBOLS & MOTIFS

As you go through the study guide, pay attention to the symbols shown here. Copy any information on them to this page to track how each symbol appears in the novel.

TIP: Including page numbers in your own notes can be helpful.



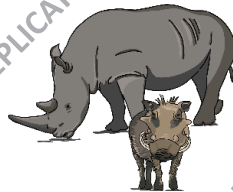
LITTLE BEE-EATER



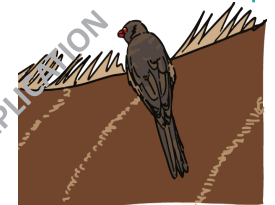
CIRCLES



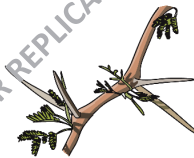
FENCES



RHINO + WARTHOG



OXPECKER



WHITE THORN

SECTION B A TERRIBLE MISTAKE

29th November 2012
(pp1–4)

This is the **prologue** of the novel. A prologue serves as an introduction to a work of literature, often offering background information or preparing the reader for the story to come.

Look at the date in the prologue heading of *Down at Jika Jika Tavern*. What year do the events in the prologue take place?



Pages 2–3: *When Nkosi finally indicated that it was time, the three quickly emerged from the vehicle... Run as fast as he could back to the fence, back to safety.*

'It was a necessary precaution as a small copse of trees missing branches, near a game reserve, might alert a patrolling security company to illegal activity going on.'

Based on this chapter, what kind of 'illegal activity' do you think might happen 'near a game reserve'? Explain your ideas using details from the text.



As you read on and learn more about the **setting** and **characters**, jot down your notes on page 14-15



Based on the title 'A Terrible Mistake' and the images on the novel's cover, what do you think this mistake might be?

P.T.O. for additional answer space.

DEFINITIONS

Prologue

Setting

Character



'He'd never drunk muthi before, but he didn't want to offend the ancestors and create bad luck for himself.'

1: IT IS SO GOOD TO SEE YOU

25th November 2012
(pp5–12)



Page 5: 'When the taxi dropped Nonhle Ngubane off on the side of the road, she was covered in a fine coating of red dust.... Nonhle, however, was completely uninterested in the magic light; she slouched in a wrinkled heap, too tired to pick up her oversized suitcase packed with clothes and gifts for her family.'

Identify and briefly describe specific details about the **setting** that are revealed in this extract.



Let's explore some examples of **descriptive adjectives**. Descriptive adjectives are the most common type of adjective. They provide information about the quality, size, shape, colour, and overall appearance of nouns, helping to add more detail and make descriptions more vivid.

Identify and contrast the descriptive adjectives used to describe (qualify) the common noun, 'weave'.

TIP: Use words like 'whereas', 'however', 'on the other hand', 'in contrast', or 'yet' to highlight the changes in the weave's appearance.

When we order descriptive adjectives before the noun they qualify, we sequence them as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Opinion (e.g., prized, ugly) | 6. Colour (e.g., red, lilac, cerulean) |
| 2. Condition (e.g., shiny, scuffed) | 7. Origin (e.g., French, Japanese, foreign, exotic) |
| 3. Size (e.g., big, small) | 8. Material (e.g., wooden, metal, synthetic) |
| 4. Age (e.g., old, new, vintage) | 9. Purpose (e.g., hiking, expedition, everyday, business) |
| 5. Shape (e.g., round, square, angular, organic) | |

DEFINITIONS

Descriptive adjectives



'Mama, I am so happy to be home.'

In this extract, Nonhle is described as *'too tired to pick up her oversized suitcase'*. The adjective *'oversized'* refers to the size of her luggage. Rewrite the sentence below, ensuring the additional descriptive adjectives for her suitcase are in the correct order.

Later, Nonhle bent to retrieve her hard-shell, travel, carmine, shiny, oversized suitcase.

Later, Nonhle bent to retrieve her _____ suitcase.

Now, think of a bag that you own or have seen and create a correctly ordered list of descriptive adjectives to describe it.

A noun can also function as an adjective when it is placed before another noun to describe (qualify) it. Identify all the examples of nouns used as adjectives in this extract.

A **suffix** is a letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning or grammatical function.

Many adjectives can be turned into nouns by adding the suffix *-ness*. Can you find any adjectives in this passage that can be changed in this way? Write down both the noun form and the original adjective form.

TIP: If an adjective ends in 'y', remember to change the 'y' to 'i' before adding *-ness*.

DEFINITIONS

Suffix



'Because, sisi,
it is hard like
a stone.'



Pages 5–6: ‘She sighed and attempted to reorganise the scowl that the trip had induced..... Since the window had been open at this point, Nonhle had been forced to sit in a furious sulk for the rest of the journey, while the mama relaxed in glorious contentment as the cool air brought down the dangerously high temperature of her inner core.’

The term ‘war’ is used in this extract. Explain why this is a metaphor and not a literal war.

Find one word in the extract that is a **synonym** (a word with a similar meaning) for war and that shows that this is an **extended metaphor** – one that is extended throughout the passage.

Motivation is the reason or drive behind why someone does something or makes certain choices.

Based on the first paragraph of this extract, suggest what might have motivated each character in this ‘war’. Use specific details from the text to support your ideas.

Contrast is used to highlight the different feelings about the outcome of the ‘war’ between the ‘enormous mama’ and Nonhle. Find and quote a two-word description for each character from the last sentence of the extract to show this contrast in mood. Then, suggest who the winner of the ‘war’ might be.

A **euphemism** is a mild or indirect expression used to replace one that may be considered too harsh, blunt, or offensive. Early on in Nonhle’s recollection of this ‘war’, the ‘enormous mama’ is described as having a ‘large posterior’. Name the anatomical feature for which this is a polite reference.

DEFINITIONS

Synonym

Extended metaphor

Motivation

Euphemism

Her 'large posterior' is described as 'glued' to the taxi seat. This is a metaphor because it compares her body sticking to the seat to something being physically glued, without using 'like' or 'as'. With close reference to the extract, explain why this metaphor is effective at capturing the experience of the 'enormous mama' in the taxi on this hot day.

TIP: Focus on how the metaphor appeals to the sense of touch and makes the discomfort of the heat more vivid.

Sibilance is a literary device that involves the repetition of 's', 'sh', or 'z' sounds in a passage to create different effects, such as a soothing or eerie atmosphere, depending on the context. It is similar to alliteration. Sibilance is used in the extract below:

'After passing through the last toll plaza, the taxi driver had swerved to a stop and threatened to leave them on the side of the freeway, if they continued slamming his precious window back and forth.'

Why is the 's' sound effective?



Consider what we learn about Nonhle from our introduction to her as she journeys back to her family home. Jot down your notes on page 8.



Page 6: *'Nonhle stood in the dying light, trying to rid herself of the irritation that continued to course through her body.... The sudden flow of saliva nudged her out of her contemplation, and she bent down to pick up the handle of her new purchase.'*

In this extract we learn that Nonhle has travelled from Durban (in South Africa) back to her family home. Reread the extract, focusing on the way that the author has appealed to the senses of smell and taste using descriptive adjectives.

DEFINITIONS

Sibilance

'I'm going home,' she said,



with a sigh of happiness.

SMELL

TASTE

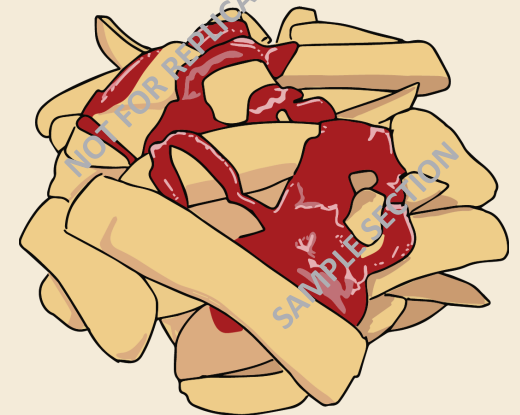


Her mouth watered as her brain conjured up the acidic tang of white vinegar doused liberally over a plate of _____ **chips**, then smothered in _____ **sauce**.

OR REPLICAS SECTION OR REPLICAS

Nonhle's Family Home: _____	Durban
SAMPLE SECTION	SAMPLE SECTION
NOT FOR REPLICATION	NOT FOR REPLICATION

Imagery



28

Rewrite the following part of the extract as if you were Samson and replace all character names with pronouns.

'They walked up the stairs and Samson settled himself onto a kitchen chair, just as Thuli placed a mug of tea in front of him. He briefly squeezed his wife's hand, which she'd placed on his shoulder.'

Begin: We walked up the stairs and...

Note how powerful pronouns are in giving the reader a different point of view. Consider experimenting with different points of view in your own writing.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



THEMES

From the list below, **highlight** the themes that emerged in this chapter:

Revenge & Betrayal | Conservation & Poaching | Gender | Traditional culture vs Western culture |
Identity & Belonging | Education, knowledge & power | Greed



NONHLE NGUBANE



GENZO MDLETSHI

AUTHORS NOTE

Congratulations! You've reached the end of our Student Workbook.

We hope you found it engaging, easy to use, and genuinely helpful as you prepare for your assessments and exams.

If you enjoyed *Down at Jika Jika Tavern*, there's more in store! Continue the journey with the sequel, *The Leopard in the Lala*, where you will reunite with Nonhle, Thomas, and Senzo — joined by new characters — to confront unexpected dangers and explore the plight of leopards, as the future of this majestic cat hangs in the balance.

Look out for the third instalment, *In the Shadow of Baboon Rock*, coming in 2026.

