



A PASSION FOR BOOKS: Moky Makura, publisher of Nollybooks

Picture: MARIANNE SCHWANKHART

# Reinventing literacy with the bookazine

Moky Makura's Nollybooks aim to create new readers, writes **Jackie May**

**H**OW best to right some of our literacy problems? With passion, of course. Moky Makura, publisher of Nollybooks, recently launched her series of chic-lit romances for young African women.

The books are modelled on the Mills and Boon romance series and its formulaic writing. But there is not an insignificant difference between this local series of romantic stories and the international one.

"Formulaic writing works," Makura believes. "It captures readers. It gives them a guarantee. They know what to expect. It's like watching a soap opera. There is a little bit of the same in each book, and this is like what Enid Blyton does for young readers, too, helping to create reading habits."

But the chic-lit stories Makura read while at school in Britain have no relevance to young women in South Africa. How can South Africans relate to dukes and duchesses?

To entice young people to read

they must know the characters in books. "We needed to create books, a model, for young African people," says Makura.

She is passionate about literacy and emphasises that there are more than three million South Africans who are illiterate, eight million who are functionally illiterate and many millions more who are aliterate — those who are able to read but do not read.

Nollybooks should appeal to the aliterate young. Which young South African woman wouldn't want to read how Nomsa Moleme, a student from Soweto, is swept off her feet by hotshot Joburg lawyer Vuyo Motsepe? Readers will want to know why Nomsa was "listening so hard for the sound of Vuyo's breathing, the movement" of his body. Why was she "picturing the fullness of his lips, his thoughtful eyes, the smooth muscles of his arms"?

Nomsa and Vuyo are the romantic couple in *The Perfect Holiday*

*Romance*, which ends with Vuyo asking her to be his wife. But, he gallantly says, "Am I going too fast? Because I can wait a lifetime for you if I needed to."

There is also a story in the series about Arisona Shezi, a journalist who meets the financial whiz, Jason Khoza. And another about a receptionist, Thuli Ngobo, and a Hollywood-based South African director, Jake Mkhize.

Despite all the swooning, there is never any sex.

"We are sensitive to the reality of South Africa, to Aids and to young girls. The sex," says Makura, "happens after the story finishes."

Another difference between Nollybooks and the Mills and Boon series is that Makura has brought certain magazine elements to the books. She calls her concept a "bookazine". Purists would be horrified, but she says there is a new generation of readers out there to

satisfy. So, at the back of each book, there are the added-value pages, where you will find lists of talking points to discuss at a book club.

Girls like to do things in groups, they work in gangs, and part of what Makura is doing is to encourage book clubs. Reading doesn't have to be a solitary thing.

There is also a dictionary section called "word power", and word games. Makura believes that most of the reading her young female market does happens on buses and taxis between work or school and home. Dictionaries are not commonly found in homes, never mind on a taxi, so a description of the more complicated words will be useful to her readers.

With e-books, the distribution of books has changed. But by adding extras to the back of the book and significantly bringing the price down, Nollybooks, says Makura, has reinvented the book model.

●Nollybooks Bookazines are available at CNA and from [www.nollybooks.co.za](http://www.nollybooks.co.za) for R49.95.

**'We needed to create a model for the young'**