



Asnath Mahapa flies high

Sara Lekganyane

Khanyisa Masemola



Lebo is interviewing Captain Asnath Mahapa for his school magazine.

He is excited to meet South Africa's first Black female pilot.

"Hello, Captain Mahapa! Welcome to our interview," he says.

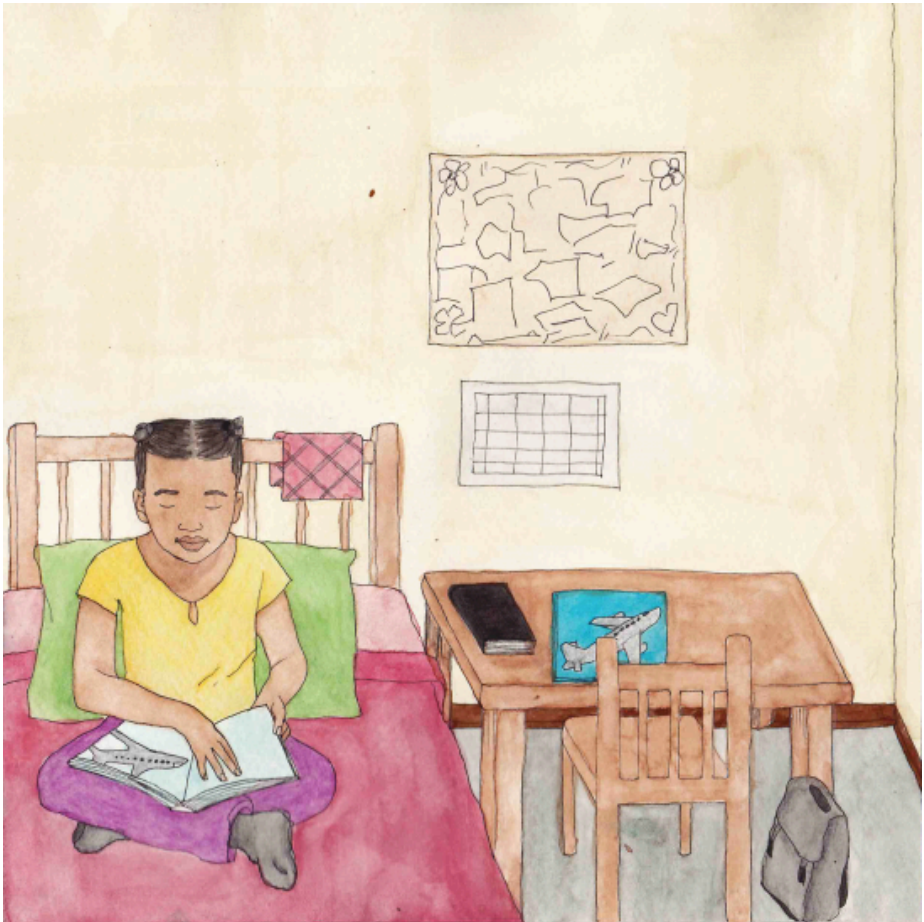
"Hello and thank you. Please call me Asnath," says Asnath.



“Please tell me about your early years,” asks Lebo.

Asnath replies, “I was born in 1979, in Limpopo Province in South Africa.

Where I grew up, there was no running water or electricity. We studied by candlelight.”



“When did you become interested in aeroplanes and flying?” asks Lebo.

“When I was 13, I became interested in aeroplanes.

At boarding school, I started reading magazines about flying.

That is how it all began,” remembers Asnath.



“And how did this love of flying grow?” asks Lebo, making notes.

“I used to wonder how big, heavy aeroplanes stay up in the air!

I wanted to know more about how aeroplanes fly,” answers Asnath.



Lebo's next question is, "What subjects should we study to become a pilot?"

Asnath explains that Mathematics and Science are important subjects.

"You also have to fly for many hours before you can apply for a pilot's license," she adds.



Lebo asks more questions about studying to be a pilot.

Asnath answers, "To be a pilot, you must be good with numbers and calculations."

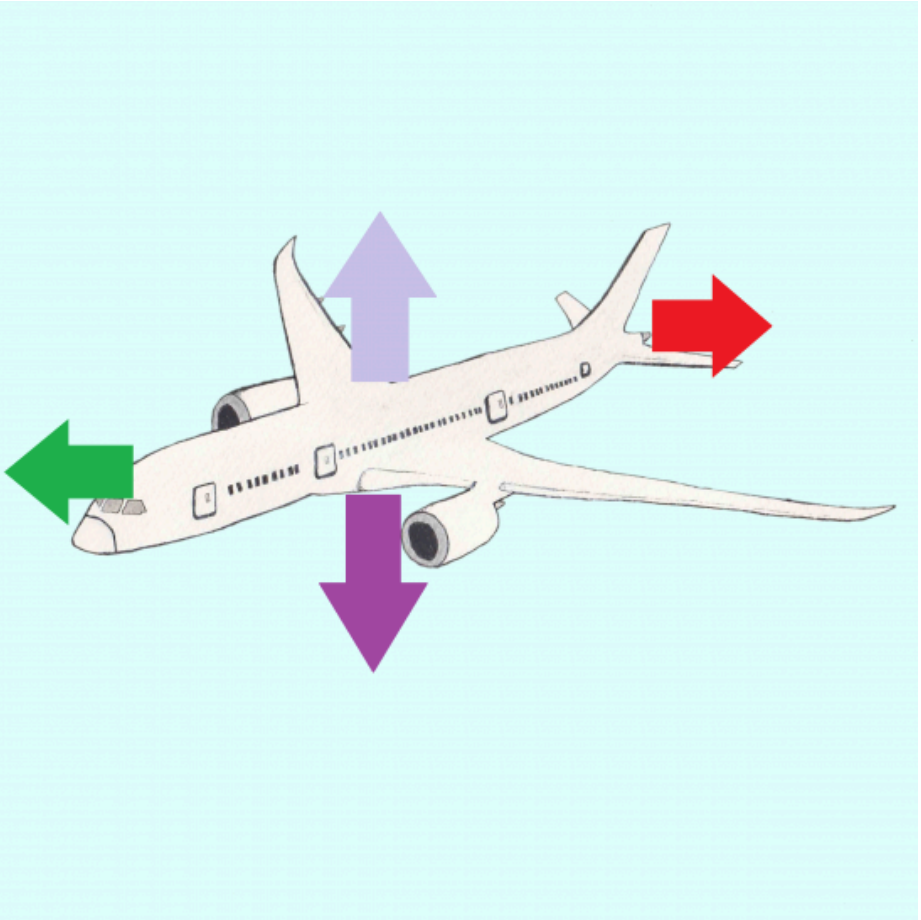
Studying Engineering teaches you about how aeroplanes work. Engineering is based on Science and Maths."



“Can you remember your first flight? I am afraid of flying!” says Lebo.

Asnath responds, “Wow! My head was dizzy and spinning. But I never gave up.

Now, I fly to many different countries, and learn about different cultures.”



“That must be fun!” exclaims Lebo. “Can you tell me more about how aeroplanes fly?”

Asnath explains, “Air moving across the wings creates a force that pushes the plane upward.

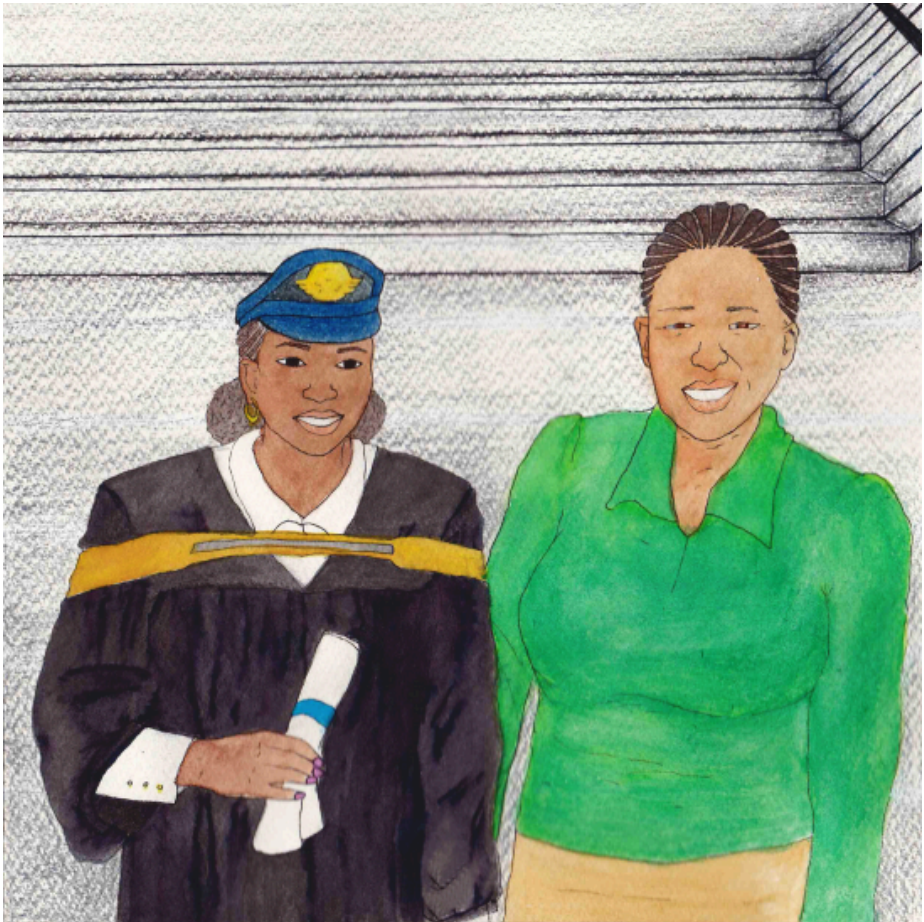
Thrust from the engines moves the plane forward.”



“Very interesting,” says Lebo. “Did you have any difficulties in becoming a pilot?”

“Yes, many challenges! I was told I was too short. And that my qualifications were not good enough,” replies Asnath.

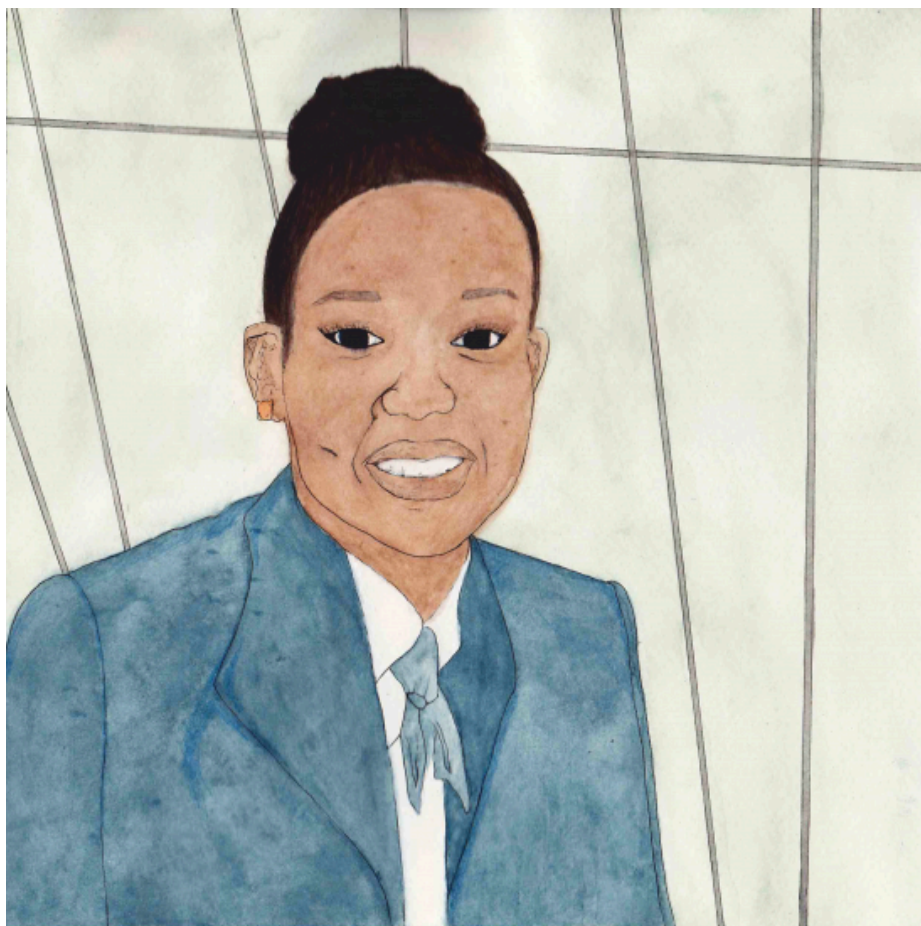
“And that flying planes is not a woman’s job.”



Lebo asks, "How did you solve those problems?"

"I fought to change the law about a pilot's height. I went back to flying school and achieved higher marks.

I wanted to show that women can do this job!" responds Asnath.



Lebo nods and Asnath continues, "I learned that if you focus, you will not fail.

I learned not to listen to anyone who said I could not do it. Women can do anything men can," says Asnath.

Lebo says, "That's the truth!"



“What are you most proud of?” asks Lebo.

“I was only twenty when I qualified as South Africa’s first Black woman pilot.

I was also part of a first flight by an all-women crew.

I’m passionate about encouraging girls to study Science.”



Lebo says, "Unfortunately, we have run out of time. Thank you for the interview."

You show us that if someone is focused and works hard, they can fly high!"

Asnath smiles and replies, "Thanks, Lebo. It was a pleasure to talk to you!"

—Questions

1. Who are the two people in this story and what are they talking about?
2. Why is Lebo doing the interview?
3. What made Asnath want to become a pilot?
4. Draw an aeroplane with yourself in it as a pilot.

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Ulwazi Lwethu is a Zenex Foundation funded and initiated project to develop a series of graded and leisure African language readers and teacher support materials. This project is targeted at teaching and supporting learners in the Foundation Phase to improve their home language reading and understanding. The readers have been originated in nine African languages in collaboration with Molteno Institute for Language and Literacies, Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development, Room to Read South Africa, and Saide. All resources are developed as Open Education Resources (OER).



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Your attribution should include the following:

Title: Asnath Mahapa flies high

Author/s: Sara Lekganyane

Translator/s: Sara Lekganyane

Illustrator/s: Khanyisa Masemola


Assurer/s: Connie Makgabo, African Storybook

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