



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 24 · One Country – South Africa

22–26 March 2027 · 13 minutes a day · ages 2.5–6, English learners

Teacher Tredoux's own country · family from Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal · 春分 fell on Sunday 21 March

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

Last week we found a whole continent. This week we zoom right in on **one country in it** — the one at the very bottom, with six colours in its flag and a mountain with a flat top — and it is **Teacher Tredoux's country**. Say that out loud every single day, and say it in the first person: *my flag, my mountain, my country*. That is what makes it real to them.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

South Africa zebra mountain flag hello

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Hello!” (a big two-handed wave), “Zebra!” (draw stripes down your body), “Mountain!” (flat hands, flat top).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “This is South Africa.” · “The zebra is black and white.” · “The mountain is flat on top.” · “Sawubona means hello.”

Never ask a little for a sentence. They will get there by watching the bigs.

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

- 2 MIN** Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.
- 4 MIN** Teach — the day's word with the real thing in your hands. Get it wrong once on purpose.
- 3 MIN** Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.
- 3 MIN** Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.
- 1 MIN** Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon the real South African flag, and six squares of coloured paper · **Tue** a toy zebra and a very long black-and-white striped cloth · **Wed** a photograph of Table Mountain and a fistful of wooden blocks · **Thu** a Zulu beaded bracelet · **Fri** every prop from the week, plus Teacher Tredoux's own photographs from home and an African drum.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!” (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave on the shout*)

THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1** • Six-colour flag collage — six paper strips onto a hand-drawn flag template. *Control:* the template's own colour blocks. (From Monday. Draw the template yourself from the real flag — it is deliberately not printed in the pack.)
- 2** • Zebra stripes — black and white clip pegs round a zebra card. *Control:* the printed stripe pattern underneath. (From Tuesday.)
- 3** • Table Mountain building — blocks against a flat-topped silhouette card. *Control:* the silhouette. (From Wednesday.)
- 4** • Bead a bracelet — red · yellow · blue repeating, with the pattern card laid beside the string. *Control:* the pattern card. Practical life, fine motor. (From Thursday.) Beside it the 3-part cards, the 12 sorting cards and the action cards.

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day on the week's paper strip: 旗 · 马 · 山 · 好 · 南 — building to 国旗 · 斑马 · 桌山 · 你好 · 南非. Count the six flag colours in Chinese on Monday (一到六); 黑 / 白 on Tuesday. 春分 fell on **Sunday 21 March**, day and night exactly equal — on Friday we stand a raw egg on its end, 春分立蛋.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS SOUND

z — a buzzing bee sound, voice on, right at the front of the mouth: zip, zoo, buzz, zig-zag. “Zippy zebra, zzz!” The week's own animal carries it, and Friday's verse says it three times: **z**ebra, **z**ig-zag, **z**oo. Finger on the throat — **z** buzzes, **s** does not. That is the whole difference.

MONDAY · DAY 1

Six Colours, One Flag

Today's words: **flag**

Grab: the **real South African flag** in the Magic Box (a cloth one you can wave, not a picture); **six squares of coloured paper** — black, gold, green, white, red, blue; last week's **green Africa puzzle piece** and a **photograph of Teacher Tredoux as a small boy**; a long strip of paper pinned up as the week's display; the 旗 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is light and flat, and when you tip it something **whispers** — cloth sliding on cardboard. Whole class chants:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — a soft dry whisper, no rattle at all. Sniff it — nothing. Peek in for a long time and let your face go enormous. Then take hold of **two corners** and pull it out slowly, wide open, so it fills the space in front of you.

Teacher: "Look at all the **colours**... let's **COUNT** them." (*touch each colour and count out loud together — one... two... three... four... five... SIX!*)

Everybody waves an imaginary flag above their head: **"Flag!"**

4 MIN TEACH · FLAG

The flag stays open in your two hands the whole way through. Say it twice; the second time they do the actions with you:

Six bright colours, (*hold the flag wide open in both hands*)

One big flag, (*snap it once so it cracks*)

It flies up **HIGH**... (*lift it right above your head*)

Wave, wave, **wave!** (*wave it big and slow, side to side*)

Then the map. Last week's **green Africa piece** goes on the floor in the middle of the circle, and your finger travels all the way down it, slowly, to the very bottom point. Stop there. **"Right down here, at the bottom — that is South Africa. That is MY country."** Now the photograph goes round the circle: a small boy, in that country, a long time ago.

Littles wave and say **"Flag!"** Bigs owe you the frame: **"This is South Africa." "The flag has six colours."**

Teacher fails: count the colours again, out loud, confidently — and stop at **four**. "One, two, three... FOUR! Four colours." Look delighted with yourself. Wait.

Chinese moment: pin the 旗 card at the top of the week's paper strip — 国旗. Then count the six colours again, in Chinese, touching each one: 一 · 二 · 三 · 四 · 五 · 六. The row of 汉字 grows by one card every morning this week.

3 MIN GAME · SIX COLOURS

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The six paper squares are face down in the middle. The flag hangs open where everybody can see it.

Teacher: (*turn over one square and hold it up*) **"Green!"** — can you find green on the flag?" (*everybody points at it, then goes and finds that colour somewhere in the room*)

Six rounds, six colours. Littles point and say the colour word; Bigs come back with the thing they found and tell you: **"I found green. It is a leaf."**

Do **black** and **white** last and leave them out on the mat — they are tomorrow's whole lesson, and the children will spot the join themselves.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody standing, one hand waving an imaginary flag. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!" (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Not So Fast, Songololo* (Niki Daly) — a small boy and his grandmother go shopping in a South African city, and he gets new red shoes. It is a real street in a real country and the pictures do all the work.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Monday's verse → chorus, with the real flag in the middle of the circle.

"Six bright colours in one flag, / South Africa — wave your flag!" (*six fingers, then the flag; wave it right over your head*)

TUESDAY · DAY 2

Zebra Stripes

Today's words: **zebra** (*flag comes back every day*)

Grab: a **toy zebra** and a long length of **black-and-white striped cloth** in the Magic Box; black and white pegs plus a zebra card on the shelf tray; the 马 card; the black and white squares left out from yesterday.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is heavy on one side, and when you tip it something firm **thumps** from end to end. Chant, then tip it twice — *thump ... thump* — and stop dead.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Take out the **cloth** first, and keep pulling: it goes on and on and on, far longer than the box could possibly hold, until it is lying right across the circle.

Teacher: “Black... white... black... white...” (*walk the length of it, tapping each stripe, until you reach the end — then reach back into the box and lift the zebra out*)

Both hands draw stripes down their bodies: **“Zebra!”**

4 MIN TEACH · ZEBRA

The zebra stands in your open palm the whole way through. Say it twice; the second time everybody does it with you:

Black and **white**, black and white, (*draw stripes down your front with both hands*)

Stripes down my **back**, (*reach over your shoulders and stripe all the way down*)

Every zebra is **different**... (*point slowly at three different children*)

just like **YOU!** (*point at one child, then at your own chest*)

Then the true thing, said plainly and once: **no two zebras in the whole world have the same stripes**. Exactly like the lines on a fingertip; exactly like the faces sitting in this circle. Hold two children’s hands up side by side while you say it.

Little stripe their bodies and say **“Zebra!”** Bigs owe you a sentence: **“The zebra is black and white.” “The zebra lives in South Africa.”**

Teacher fails: drape the striped cloth round your shoulders, crouch down and announce, with total confidence, that you are a **TIGER**. Roar. Hold it. Wait for the correction.

Chinese moment: the 马 card joins 旗 on the strip — 斑马, which is literally *stripe-horse*, and they will love that. Then the two colours, pointing at the cloth: 黑 · 白.

3 MIN GAME · ONE LONG ZEBRA

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody lines up nose to tail, each child’s hands on the shoulders in front. You are the head. That is one zebra, and it is very long.

Teacher: “Zebras walk... **slowly**... zebras **trot**... and zebras — **FREEZE!**” (*everybody stops, hands still on shoulders, completely still*)

Walk the whole room. Then turn round so the child at the back becomes the head and do it again — the tail leads, and it is a different animal entirely.

Nobody is left holding nobody. If a child does not want to be touched they walk **beside** the line as the zebra’s foal and nothing is said about it.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody standing, both hands ready to stripe. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!” (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *How the Zebra Got Its Stripes* — a traditional African tale, in any picture-book edition you can find. Let them do the zebra’s kick and the baboon’s shriek every time it comes round.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Tuesday’s verse → chorus — the striped cloth goes round on the ZA-ZA-ZA. “Zebra, zebra — black and white, / Stripey, stripey — what a sight!” (*stripes down your front; hands wide, eyes wide*)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 3

Table Mountain, Flat on Top

Today's words: **mountain** (*flag · zebra come back*)

Grab: a big **photograph** of **Table Mountain** and a fistful of **wooden blocks** in the Magic Box; a square of white cloth or a handful of cotton wool for the cloud; a real small table if you have one; the 山 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is **heavy** and it **clonks** — wood on wood. Chant, then shake it once, hard, and let everybody hear it.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Reach in and pull out one block. Then another. Then a whole handful, dropped in a heap on the mat. Last of all, the photograph — held up flat against your chest, face hidden, for one long beat before you turn it round.

Teacher: (*turn the photograph round*) “A mountain... but look at the **TOP**.”

Flat hands held out level, like a tabletop: **“Mountain!”**

4 MIN TEACH · MOUNTAIN

Everybody stands up for this one. Say it twice; the second time they do every action with you:

A mountain goes **UP**, up, up, (*both hands climb, higher and higher*)

But **this** one stops — **FLAT!** (*slap both flat hands out level, hard*)

The clouds come **down** like a tablecloth, (*flutter your fingers down over the flat hands*)

And **that** is **that!** (*fold your arms, done*)

Then build. Two mountains out of the blocks, side by side: one **pointy**, one **flat on top**. Point at each in turn and let the class vote with their bodies — pointy hands over the head, or flat hands out level — for which one is Table Mountain. Then lay the white cloth over the flat one, slowly, so it hangs down the sides: that is the real cloud that sits on it, and in South Africa people call it **the tablecloth**.

Littles hold flat hands and say **“Mountain!”** Bigs owe you the frame: **“The mountain is flat on top.”** **“Table Mountain is in South Africa.”**

Teacher fails: build a beautiful **pointy** mountain, announce it is Table Mountain, and try to lay the cloth on the point. It slides off. Try again. It slides off again. Keep going until somebody takes the cloth off you.

Chinese moment: the 山 card joins 旗 · 马 — 高山, and this one is 桌山: *table*-mountain, the same word in both languages. Draw 山 in the air with one finger, big, all together: it is a mountain with three peaks — and then flatten the middle one with your hand.

3 MIN GAME · FLAT TOP / POINTY TOP

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” No blocks now — the bodies are the mountains.

Teacher: **“Pointy top!”** (*everybody makes a point over their head with both hands*) **“Flat top!”** (*flat hands out level*)
“Pointy... flat... **FLAT!**”

Faster and faster, and then a trick: call **“Table Mountain!”** and see who goes flat. Littles copy whoever is nearest, which is exactly how they learn it. Last round, a Big calls the shapes and you play in the circle with everybody else.

Two shapes only, over and over. The listening is the lesson: they are matching a whole body to one English word, which is what they must do to hear the difference between any two words.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody standing, flat hands ready. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!” (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Jamela's Dress* (Niki Daly) — a South African girl, a length of beautiful cloth, and one very big mistake. It is set in the same country as the mountain, and the cloth ties straight back to yesterday's stripes.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Wednesday's verse → chorus — hold the freeze on STOP for three full seconds.

“Table Mountain, flat on top, / Climb up, climb up — then STOP!” (*flat hands out level, held high; climb, then freeze dead still*)

THURSDAY · DAY 4

Sawubona!

Today's words: **hello (Sawubona)** (*flag · zebra · mountain come back*)

Grab: a **Zulu beaded bracelet** in the Magic Box; a bowl of big wooden beads and laces on the shelf tray with the red · yellow · blue pattern card; the 好 card; the class name list, so you can greet every single child by name.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is nearly empty and it makes a tiny, hard, seed-like **rattle** — you have to hold it right up to your ear to hear it. Chant, then hold it to your ear and go completely still.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Hold it to **one child’s** ear. Then another’s. Then lift out the bracelet on one finger and turn it slowly so the light runs round the beads.

Teacher: “These beads were **made by hand** — in a place called **KwaZulu-Natal**, where my family lives.” (*hold it out flat on your palm and let it go all the way round the circle*)

A big two-handed wave: **“Sawubona!”**

4 MIN TEACH · HELLO · SAWUBONA

Nothing in your hands for this one. Say it twice; the second time they wave it with you:

Sawubona! (*a big two-handed wave, right over your head*)

It means **HELLO**. (*wave again, smaller, at one child*)

Say it **soft...** (*whisper it, one hand beside your mouth*)

say it **SLOW**. (*say it in four slow pieces — sa · wu · BO · na — clapping each one*)

Then the round, and this is the work: you go to every child in turn, look at them, and say **“Sawubona, <name>!”** They answer **“Yebo, sawubona!”** — yes, *I see you too*. Say the true thing once, plainly: this is **Zulu**, one of the **twelve** languages of South Africa, and it does not really mean “hello” at all — it means **“I see you.”** In this room we already speak two languages. Now we have three.

Littles wave and say **“Sawubona!”** Bigs owe you the frame: **“Sawubona means hello.” “Sawubona, teacher!”**

Teacher fails: greet the **shelf** with an enormous “SAWUBONA!”, then the door, then the whale on the wall. Shake the door’s handle warmly. Wait for them to point you at an actual person.

Chinese moment: the 好 card joins 旗 · 马 · 山 — 你好. Then the three greetings in one breath, round the whole circle: 你好 · hello · sawubona. Three languages, one circle, ten seconds.

3 MIN GAME · PASS THE BRACELET

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody in a circle, knees touching. The bracelet goes round hand to hand, **two hands** to give and two hands to take.

Teacher: “Look at the bead under your **thumb** — what **colour** is it? Say it... then say **sawubona** to the friend you give it to.” (*they name the colour, turn, and greet the next child by name*)

Round the whole circle. Littles just name the colour and wave; Bigs use the name: **“Sawubona, Amy!”** Nobody wears it and nobody keeps it — it is a thing that travels.

Go slowly enough that every single child is greeted **by their own name**, out loud, in front of everybody. That is the real lesson of the day and it takes exactly as long as it takes.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody on their feet, both hands up ready to wave. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!” (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave on the shout*)

Before home time: tomorrow everybody greets everybody, three times over, in three languages. Walk the circle once today in silence and practise just the **looking** — eyes up, find the face, then wave. It makes Friday twice as good.

Got 3 spare minutes? *Handa’s Surprise* (Eileen Browne) — a girl carries a basket of fruit to her friend and one animal after another helps themselves. Let them shout the animal’s name before you turn the page.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Thursday’s verse → chorus — the wave goes left, then right.

“Sawubona means hello, / Say it softly — soft and slow!” (*a big wave, then both hands open; drop to a whisper, wave very slowly*)

FRIDAY · DAY 5

My Country + Big Review

Today's words: **South Africa** — and **flag** · **zebra** · **mountain** · **hello**, the whole week

Grab: every prop from the week packed back into the box, plus **Teacher Tredoux's own photographs from home** and an **African drum**; a raw **egg** for 春分; the awards (print pack page 17); the 南 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out bulging and will not quite shut.

Teacher: "Today the box is FULL — it's got our whole WEEK inside it!"

Pull each thing out and hold it up in complete silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The flag → "**Flag!**" The zebra → "**Zebra!**" The blocks and the photo → "**Mountain!**" The bracelet → "**Sawubona!**"

Last of all, right at the bottom, a small bundle of **photographs**. Lift them out and hold up the first one. "**SOUTH AFRICA!**"

4 MIN TEACH · SOUTH AFRICA, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

Everybody stands. We tell the whole week with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

A **flag** with six bright colours, (*wave it overhead*)

A **zebra**, black and white, (*stripes down your body*)

A **mountain** flat on top, (*flat hands out level, held high*)

Sawubona — that's "hello"! (*a big two-handed wave*)

This is **SOUTH AFRICA** — my home! (*both arms thrown wide, then both hands over your heart*)

Then the photographs, one at a time, slowly, and told as plainly as you can: **this is the town I come from — Newcastle, in KwaZulu-Natal**. This is the house. This is the road I walked to school on. This is my family. Let them hold the pictures. A real photograph of a real person's real house does more in ten seconds than any poster on any wall.

Littles do the five gestures and shout the five words. Bigs owe you a whole sentence each: "**This is South Africa.**" "**The zebra is black and white.**" "**Sawubona means hello.**"

Teacher fails: on "this is my home", point confidently at the classroom window and name **this** city. Look certain. Then look at the photograph, then out of the window, then at the photograph again. Let them sort you out.

Chinese moment: the 南 card completes the row — 旗 · 马 · 山 · 好 · 南, the whole week on the strip, and 南 is the one that matters: 南非, *south-Africa*, the country at the bottom. Then 春分: it fell on **Sunday**, and on 春分 the day and the night are exactly the same length. Stand the raw **egg** on its end on a flat table — 春分立蛋 — and let them take turns until somebody does it.

3 MIN GAME · SAWUBONA ROUND

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Everybody stands in the circle facing a partner. This is the whole week, performed.

Teacher: "Look at them... wave... and say it **three times: sawubona...** 你好... **hello.**" (*then everybody takes one step to the left and does it again with the next friend*)

Round and round until every child has greeted every child. Bigs use the name every time: "**Sawubona, Amy!**" Littles wave and say one of the three — any one of them — and that is a full win.

Say the names out loud with them as they go. Twenty children hearing their own name twenty times, in three languages, in one circle, is the best ten minutes of language work you will do all term.

1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a "You are a STAR!" award to take home. Then, standing in the circle with the drum, all five gestures:

Everyone: "Flag... zebra... MOUNTAIN! SAWUBONA, SOUTH AFRICA!" (*wave the flag · stripes down your body · flat hands overhead · a big two-handed wave, with the drum, on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Africa, Amazing Africa* (Atinuke) — one spread per country, big pictures, short lines. Find South Africa at the very bottom and read only that page. Next week we come back to where we are standing: **spring**, and everything waking up.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the WHOLE song, top to bottom, with the drum underneath it.

"Zebra, zebra — zig-zag-zoo, / South Africa says hello to you!" (*zig-zag one finger through the air; a big wave to the whole room*)

SONGBOOK

★ “Sawubona, South Africa!”

C (0003) F (2010) G7 (0212) Am (2000) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“sa-wu — bo — na-na”)

The one new shape this week is **Am** — one finger on the top string at the second fret, the same finger you already use for F, just moved. It appears **once per chorus**, on the mountain line, and the verses do not use it at all. C is one finger, Am is one finger, F is two, G7 is three; learn them in that order. Walking pace, warm and swinging, with a big rest before “Six bright colours” so the last line lands on its own.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

C Sawubona, sawubona — F South C Africa! (*a big two-handed wave*)
F Black and C white zebra — G7 ZA-ZA-C ZA! (*stripe both hands down your body*)
Am A flat-top mountain F touching the C sky, (*one flat hand held high overhead*)
F Six bright C colours G7 flying C high! (*wave the flag*)

MONDAY · FLAG

C Six bright colours in one flag,
G7 South Africa — C wave your flag!

TUESDAY · ZEBRA

C Zebra, zebra — black and white,
G7 Stripey, stripey — C what a sight!

WEDNESDAY · MOUNTAIN

C Table Mountain, flat on top,
G7 Climb up, climb up — C then STOP!

THURSDAY · HELLO

C Sawubona means hello,
G7 Say it softly — C soft and slow!

FRIDAY · ZIG-ZAG

C Zebra, zebra — zig-zag-zoo,
G7 South Africa C says hello to you!

Each day: chorus → today's verse → chorus. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom, standing in one circle with the drum going underneath it and the flag travelling from hand to hand — that run-through is the review of the week. Friday's verse is also the week's **z** sound, three times over. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down, give one child the drum and do the finger-play instead; the wave and the stripes carry the meaning either way.