A Day in Parliament
A Day in Parliament

Look NoaNoa,
more children!

Yes. We used to
have the place
to ourselves.

Don’t be so grumpy, Mاما.
The doors of Parliament must be open.
It’s a people’s parliament now.

Zinzin!
Abdul! Come
going now!

Just listen to him!
He thinks we’re here
to learn something!

Little does he
know we’re here to
have FUN!

This way
please, children.

Wow! Just look at
all this security! Why do you want to
see what’s in my bag?

Just to see if you’re
bricking a gun.

Dad, you know
that little children
don’t do guns?
Welcome! I'm Arcele, your guide.

Where's his suit and tie? Very pleased to meet you.

This poor chap looks like he needs to relax a bit.

Sir's going through culture shock.

There are two Houses of Parliament. First we are going to the National Assembly.

This is the visitors' gallery. The National Assembly is sitting.

Who are these people?

Members of Parliament (MPs) from the parties people voted for in the election.

The President sits to the right of the Speaker.

Sitting? But some of them are standing up.

Who is this embarrassing person?

And there's the President!

Hey, little sister, you must show respect here. You can't talk in the visitors' gallery. These people have important work to do.
Now that the sitting is over, we can go down and have a look.

The press sit in the press gallery and report on proceedings.

The Speaker is the chairperson of the National Assembly.

The mace is the symbol that Parliament is sitting. It is carried in at the opening of Parliament.

Come Zintzi! Let's pretend...

What is that child up to now?

I'm carrying the mace into the National Assembly.

Order in the House!

Madam Speaker, a point of order.

This government is doing a fine job!

I am the opposition and I disagree!

These children are completely out of control!

Relax, Sir! It's good that they learn that Parliament is a place of debate.
Now we can go and see the other House of Parliament.

This corridor leads to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

Zinzl! Don't even think about it!

This is the oldest part of Parliament. These days the NCOP meets here.

All nine provinces are represented in the NCOP. Local government (municipalities) are also represented.

The National Assembly and the NCOP work together to make the laws of the country.

Queen Elizabeth II of England sat here when she visited Parliament in 1947 as a Princess.
The old British coat of arms. This part of Parliament was built in the days of Queen Victoria when the Cape was a British colony.

But what do all these people do? Why are they here...

Yes... and you say they make laws. What does that mean?
People in Parliament

Hello Zinzi, I'm the President. I am elected by Parliament. Every year I make a major speech in Parliament but, as President, I do not have the right to vote in the House.

What is your job, Madame Speaker?

My job is to keep order in the National Assembly. I must chair meetings and give everybody a fair chance to speak.

Yay! There are many important women in Parliament.

For the first time in her life, Zinzi is at a loss for words.

Each party has a chief whip and other whips to help her or him.

Chief Whip! Can, what a name! Do you punish people?

I hope not. The whips have to make sure that the work of Parliament runs properly.

I am the Leader of Government Business in the National Assembly. My job is to work with the officials in Parliament and tell them about the Bills that Cabinet wants to introduce.
The garden of Tuynhuys, the President's parliamentary office. The garden has been planted with indigenous fynbos.

The entrance to Tuynhuys

The National Assembly Chamber
The main staircase to the National Assembly public gallery

Offices

Committee meeting room
I am the Chairperson of the NGO. I have to keep order in the House and make sure everyone gets a fair chance to speak.

It makes me happy that my province is represented in Parliament. There are many poor people where I live.

Our job as the opposition is to represent the people who voted for us. The political party who wins the most votes in an election becomes the government. Other parties that win votes become opposition parties. So, yes, we often argue, because we disagree.

Is that good? To argue all the time?

Yes, it is good. Because democracy means that all views must be represented in Parliament.

I thought Ministers were people who say prayers in church.

No, I'm not that kind of minister. I am the Cabinet Minister in charge of Trade and Industry. The President chooses a few MPs to be in charge of government departments. They become Ministers who work together as the Cabinet.

Are you also a very important person?

I am the most important person here. Without me, everyone would be too thirsty to talk. And this is a place of much talking.

Another important moment! Now I know what I'm going to be when I grow up.
How Laws are Made

The main job of Parliament is to make laws.

A law begins its life as a Bill, or draft law.

Let us imagine that a Minister of the Cabinet wants to pass a law to protect children.

First she must write (draft) a Bill.

Then she must take it to Cabinet where it is discussed.

If Cabinet agrees to the Bill, the Minister introduces it in Parliament. Either in the National Assembly or in the NCOP.

Let us say that this Bill starts in the National Assembly.

Now the Bill must be properly discussed by Parliament, so it is sent to a Committee.

The Committee must debate the Bill.

It must also find out what the public thinks about this Bill.

As this Bill is about children, the Committee may want to talk to people with a special interest in children’s rights.
When the Committee has made its changes and has agreed to the Bill, it goes back to the National Assembly for the debate.

At the end of the debate, the members of the House must vote.

If most of them vote yes, the Bill will go to the NCOP for the second part of the law-making process.

When the Bill has been discussed by everybody, the National Council of Provinces must vote.

If the NCOP votes yes, the Bill goes to the President for his signature.

If the NCOP votes no, one of two things may happen. Either the two houses must try to agree or the National Assembly must vote again. There are different rules for different kinds of Bills.

Now this Bill is a law or Act of Parliament and everyone must obey it.

Look! Here it is in the Government Gazette.
How to play this game:
1. Use your dice and counters.
2. Roll your dice and move your counter around the board.
3. Follow the instructions in the block you land on.
4. The winner is the first to have a law signed by the President (block 25).
Now we have an idea how Parliament works. I'd like to learn more. I hope we can talk about it at school.

Yes, and the most important thing we know is that it is OUR Parliament. It is here to represent ordinary people like Abaas and me and our parents and friends and all the people in our community.

Hmmm! But how do we know that Parliament will look after us all.

We know because everybody in South Africa has rights. These rights are written in the Constitution.

Sir!!

For example, children have very important rights. These cannot be changed by anybody. You must always remember this. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution is the document that guarantees your rights as a South African citizen.
Offices in Parliament that may be useful to you

You can phone the following numbers for information about ...

| Public Relations and Information     | (021) 403 2197/8       | (021) 461 5372 |
| Visits and Tours of Parliament      | (021) 403 2537         | (021) 461 5872/403 8017 |
| Public Participation                | (021) 403 8128         | (021) 424 8144 |
| Media Relations                     | (021) 403 2242/2218    | (021) 461 9268 |
| Help Desk (Room V12)                | (021) 403 2460         | (021) 461 5372 |
| Parliamentary Shop                  | (021) 403 2557         | (021) 461 5372 |
| Committees                          | (021) 403 3788         | (021) 461 7929 |
| Legislation and Proceedings         | (021) 403 2216         |                  |
| Parliament's Programme              | (021) 403 2582         | (021) 461 5627 |
| International Relations             | (021) 403 217/2468     | (021) 461 6287 |
| Registrar of Members' Interests     | (021) 403 2467/7       | (021) 461 0090 |
| Provincial and Municipal Liaison    | (021) 403 2624/2553/2457 | (021) 403 2430 |
| South African Local Government Association (SALGA) | (021) 403 8270         | (021) 403 8277 |

To contact Political Parties, MPs or other sections phone the switchboard at (021) 403 2911.

A Day in Parliament

Published by the Public Participation and Information Section of Parliament of the Republic of South Africa.
A project of the European Union Parliamentary Support Programme.
PO Box 15, Cape Town 8000. Tel: (021) 403-2900

ISBN: 0-920-24088-4
First published 1999
This book may be reproduced for non-profit purposes

Written by Sue de Villiers * Illustrated by Tanya Rosser * Produced by Pas Publishing Cape Town (Pty) Ltd