

1. Vilakazi, Zulu poet, novelist, educationist and lecturer was born at Groutville Mission Station in January 1906. As a boy herding his father's cattle after school hours, he learnt traditional Zulu songs and was captivated by praise poems. In 1918 he was sent to St Francis college Marianhill near Durban where he embraced the Roman Catholic faith and qualified as a teacher in 1922.

cartoon- Vilakazi as a boy herding cattle or as a student at St Francis.

2. Through private study he obtained his Matriculation certificate while teaching at the Catholic Seminary at Ixopo and his BA through UNISA in 1934 with a distinction in Zulu while teaching at the Ohlange institute. At the age of 29 he was appointed lecturer in the department of Bantu languages at the University of the Witwatersrand. While there he gained an honours, Masters and finally Doctor of Literature his thesis being 'The oral and written Literature in Nguni! His academic achievements and writings brought him widespread recognition. A true pioneer he was the first SA black to obtain a BA through private study, to obtain his other degrees at a White University and to be appointed to its staff; the first Zulu to publish a collection of poems and the first Nguni winner of an overseas literary prize (the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. Urged on by an irresistible impulse to write he produced five books in Zulu three in prose and two in verse. His real forte was poetry and he is the recognized father of Zulu poetry as distinct from traditional praise poetry. His first volume of poetry 'Inkondlo kaZulu' appeared in 1935 and attracted a great deal of attention.

cartoon - lecturing at Wits.

3. Another important contribution was his compiling of a Zulu-English dictionary with co-author Doke. During the 2nd World War he lectured to troops in the Black military camps of the Witwatersrand. Before his untimely death from meningitis in 1947 at the age of 41 he made many valuable contributions to scholarly reviews journals and newspapers.

cartoon Lecturing to black troops during World War II