Flying Lerato
One day, long ago, a girl called Lerato was walking through the veld when she saw a little black pig fast asleep under a bush. “Ah,” said Lerato. “We will eat well tonight.” Lerato grabbed the little pig, but to her surprise, it squeaked, “Please, let me go! I'll reward you – I'm a magic pig.” Lerato stared at the pig. “What will you give me?” she asked. “Well, for one week,” said the pig, “you'll be able to fly like a bird in the sky …

Frog’s task
Long ago, when trees could talk and fish could fly, Frog was the biggest of all the animals. He liked to bully everyone, and the animals were growing tired of him. One day, when Frog had gone swimming, the other animals held a meeting to decide how to deal with him. “We need to keep him so busy that he forgets to order us around,” said Lion. “Good idea,” said Rhino, “but how should we do that?” “I know,” said Antelope. “Why don’t we ask Rainbow, she always has such good ideas …

How stories began
A long time ago, a woman lived with her family in a village in the Kingdom of Zululand. Every Sunday the family went down to the big ocean. The woman made food over a fire while her husband looked for wood washed up by the sea to carve beautiful things: birds, people and all kinds of animals. During the week the whole family worked hard, and in the evenings they sat around the fire. It was too dark for working or playing or carving and it was too early to go to sleep. And this was when the children asked their mother to tell them a story …

Phumla and the old woman
Once upon a time, an old woman lived all alone near the top of a tall mountain above a village. Everybody in the village was afraid of her. They called her “The Witch”. One day, a young girl called Phumla went out to collect wild roots and herbs on the slopes of the mountain. Before she knew it, storm clouds had gathered, and very soon the rain came pouring down. Phumla knew she had to find shelter quickly, but the only place nearby was the old woman’s hut …

The eagle and the giraffe
Long, long ago, Giraffe was best friends with Eagle. One morning, when the two friends were at the waterhole, Eagle asked Giraffe, “What do you think is at the bottom of this waterhole?” Giraffe thought for a while. “Well, Hippo says there’s a spirit down there, but I’ve never seen her,” she replied. “I dare you to jump in and find out!” said Eagle. Now, Giraffe was very frightened of the water, but she didn’t want her friend to know that …

The escape
Long ago, a wicked giant stole two children and made them his slaves. All day they cooked and cleaned and washed his smelly clothes. The giant never locked the door, because he knew his pet crow wouldn’t let the children escape. This bird had very sharp eyes, and it told the giant everything it saw. Late one night, as the giant snored loudly, the children sat whispering together. “We’ll never escape!” whispered Neo to Nunu. “That bird will tell the giant as soon as we try!” They thought for a while. Then Nunu said, “I know! Let’s …

The guinea fowl that laid golden eggs
Once upon a time, there was a very poor man called Mzi. “The children are hungry, and we have no money to buy food,” cried his wife, Pumla. “What are we going to do?” “I will go hunting,” said Mzi. “If I can catch some guinea fowl, then we will have a tasty meal.” Off he set into the veld with his catapult and some small stones. Soon he came across a fat guinea fowl in a clearing in the long grass …

King of the birds
Long ago, when the world was new, Nkwazi, the great fish eagle, called all the birds together. “As you know,” he said, “Bhubesi the lion is king of the beasts. But why should he speak for us birds? We need to choose our own king … and as I am so majestic, I say it should be me!” All the birds began to chirp and chitter until one voice rose above the others …
The lemon hunt
Long ago, there was a land filled with every kind of fruit tree. The only fruit that nobody had ever seen or tasted, was the lemon.

One day, the king’s favourite daughter, Bokang, fell ill. Many doctors and sangomas tried to help her, but Bokang didn’t get better. At last, a very old sangoma was called.

“Somewhere in this country there is a lemon tree,” she told the king. “If you give Bokang the juice of one of its lemons, she will get better …”

The magic necklace
Once upon a time, there was a farmer called Vusi who was very, very strong. Nobody knew how he did it, but he could easily carry two cows at the same time.

One morning, when Vusi woke up, he ran around in a panic. “My necklace! Who has stolen my magic necklace?” he shouted. “Without it I will have lost all my strength, and will be just like everyone else!”

He rushed to the window, just in time to see a little boy running off very, very fast …

The traveller’s treasure
Once upon a time, there was a very greedy man. Although he was very rich, all he ever wanted was more money.

One evening, an old traveller came to the greedy man’s door. “I’ve been walking all day,” the old traveller said. “Please let me rest here tonight.”

“Hmmm,” said the greedy man. “What will you pay me?”

“I have no money with me,” said the old traveller, “but tomorrow I can lead you to a special treasure and share it with you …”

Tortoise and the birds
A long time ago, when a bird died on earth, its spirit would leave its body and float up to the clouds where it lived as a cloud person, watching over and caring for the birds and animals on earth.

The birds and animals knew about these cloud people.

There came a time when there had been no rain for a whole year. The grass died, the waterholes dried up and the animals were starving. All the animals and birds came together to decide what to do about the terrible drought …

Tselane and the giant
A long, long time ago, when giants roamed about and chickens talked, a poor woman lived with her daughter, Tselane, in a little house.

Since she had nobody to look after Tselane, the woman was forced to leave the child alone when she went to plough her fields each day …

Why monkeys live in trees
Lion was the king of the beasts. He was proud of his roar, and he was proud of his sharp teeth and claws, but he was most proud of his beautiful golden coat and mane.

One day, as he drank from a pond, Lion noticed that his mane was looking rather patchy. “What’s this?” he grumbled to himself. He turned around and noticed a patch of hair missing from his golden back. Lion was very unhappy. He ran off to see Dr Tortoise to find out what could be done to save his coat …

Why the moon gets smaller and bigger
Long ago, Mother Moon lit up the sky every night. She had a blanket woven from the most beautiful golden thread. Her blanket shone so brightly that there was enough light for all people to see their way through the darkness.

Sometimes, Mother Moon wrapped her blanket tightly around herself and came down to visit the earth. One night, in the middle of winter, near the banks of a river, she came across an old woman who lived alone …