

Building more book bridges in 2019

In this issue...

The year 2019 has not been kind to the children and youth of Sri Lanka. As we all know, more than two hundred were directly affected by the Easter Sunday bomb blasts; even young people from other countries. Our thoughts are with all of them.

However, it is a consolation for us, to end this year's last newsletter with some good news. **IBBY Sri Lanka's Story Nest project which aims to introduce storybooks and story-telling activities to preschools, has been accepted for funding by a grant from the Yamada Foundation.** The IBBY-Yamada Grant is awarded for projects promoting a reading culture.

The letter of approval states as follows: **'The Committee was impressed with your proposal and are happy to support the 2020 project to revive the reading culture in Sri Lanka with the initiation of the Story Nest project. They particularly liked the reading aloud aspect of the project.'**

Needless to say, a huge responsibility now rests on our shoulders. However, we believe we can fulfil the trust placed in our project. Two of our organisational members, namely Room To Read—Sri Lanka and Abhimana Sri Lanka, will be coordinating the project with assistance from another organisational member: the Stepping Stones Foundation.

Workshop series for authors by a famous Australian author

Dr. Ken Spillman, an author of many books for young people, will be holding the first of a series of workshops during February 2020 in Colombo...

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Up-coming events



A Literature Convention and Arts Festival for Children and Youth, organised by SLBBY will be held on the 5th, 6th and 7th of June, 2020...

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The Story Nest project
—why, what and when

To develop a reading culture again in our country, we need to interest children in books from a young age. A very important sector which has been ignored are the preschools. Hence, the Story Nest project to introduce story-telling and book-related activities to preschools, through teachers and parents.

The preschool is the first public institution where a child spends time, away from home. Thus, it becomes his/her home or nest away from home. This nest is where he/she will spend time, happily flipping through some picturebooks or wordless books. When he/she returns to the home nest, another story nest awaits him/her. That is, a small collection of storybooks from which a parent/guardian reads aloud. Thus, the child flourishes, nourished by the stories and related activities of these two story nests.

The project will be continued over a period of 12 months, beginning in January 2020. However, we will continue to follow-up on the children's progress during the 1st school term in 2021.

Story Nest
in
6
numbers:

9 provinces
36 preschools
80 teachers
1000 children
1000 learning kits
2008 books

Why writing for preschoolers is harder than you think...

The results of latest research done using 2 to 5 year-olds is an eye-opener; not only for children's authors but also for illustrators, editors, teachers and parents...

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... SLBBY LCAF 2020

'Good books lead to a better future' is the theme of this exciting event to be held in a central location in Colombo. It will be declared open by Mr. Mingzhou Zhang, International President of the IBBY.

A range of informative seminars, inspiring workshops and fun activities are planned. Well-known authors, illustrators, editors and publishers from several countries, as well as Sri Lanka will conduct them.

Children of all age groups, teenagers and youths will have ample opportunities to participate. Activities focused on learning, creating and performing will take pride of place on all three days. A book exhibition and fair, as well as the screening of foreign films for children and youth, are among the many attractions lined up.

One of the highlights of the LCAF will be the selection of the Best Children's Book of 2019. Awards will be presented to the author, illustrator, editor and publisher of the best book in Sinhala, Tamil and English categories. Another four appreciation awards will also be presented. The awards will recognise both senior and young authors under their respective categories. A panel of three international experts will be appointed to judge the submissions.

Details of the competition and the judges will be announced from 10th January, 2020. They will be published in Daily Lankadeepa, Daily Veerakesari and Daily Mirror, as well as on our IBBY Sri Lanka website and official Facebook page.

Await more details about the LCAF in our next newsletter. In the meantime, look out for Tikiri the young elephant, our LCAF mascot in the Press and online.

The more that you read,
the more things you will know.
The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go.

Dr. Seuss, *I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*

Workshop series on Writing and Publishing Fiction for Older Children and Young Teens with Dr. Ken Spillman

Michael Rosen once said: "We've all been children, we all know a parent or parent-figure. This makes us all potential writers of children's books."

This series of half-day workshops, spread through 9 months, is specifically aimed at developing the interest and skills of participants in writing fiction for young people aged 12+. The National Institute of Library and Information Sciences (NILIS) of the University of Colombo is the academic partner of the workshops.

Drawing on his knowledge of international publishing and his own experience as an author, Dr. Ken Spillman will take participants through **every aspect of writing for older children and younger teens.**

Dr. Spillman will provide participants real insight into the creative process, building confidence in their individual abilities and ideas. He will provide a wide range of tips for turning ideas into books, and will maximise the workshops' values by providing some online mentoring to participants between workshops. The series will also serve as a practical introduction to market sectors and publishing in Asian and global markets.



Dr. Ken Spillman

Dr. Ken Spillman is the author of around 80 books, most of them for young people. His work has been translated into more than 20 languages, and he has presented sessions to 90,000 children. He has also conducted numerous creative writing workshops with both adults and children.

Ken is a Life Member of the Children's Book Council of Australia, and IBBY India. He was also a finalist in 2 categories of Australian Arts in Asia Awards, a showcase for best practice arts engagement in Asia.

Ken has been a manuscript assessor for several publishers, and has a particular knowledge of Asian markets. He was a long-time board member of the Asian Festival of Children's Content, which he helped establish. Ken has also served on various literature panels in Western Australia.

REGISTER NOW!

Dates: Stage I - **26, 27, 28 February, 2020**

Stage II - **9, 10, 11 June, 2020**

Stage III - **late September/early October, 2020** (dates to be confirmed)

Time: **08:30am-12:45pm**

Venue: **NILIS, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7**

Fee for all 3 stages of series: **Rs.20,000 (includes stationery and refreshments)**

To apply, send an e-mail to secretary1@ibbysrilanka.org before **20th Jan. 2020** as the workshops are limited to **25 persons**.

Creating stories for preschoolers: some points you should know

If you look around in our bookshops, locally created books suitable for 2–5 year-olds are few. The key point to note is 'suitability'. What the author or publisher considers suitable for this age group, can in fact be unsuitable. Understanding how the brain of children of this age group works, can overcome this problem.

Advances in technology, such as tracking eye movement, has helped researchers to understand how preschool-age children view and process information. These findings are important for creating books that meet preschoolers' needs.

The findings can be considered according to whose work they affect directly:

Authors

Observation #1:

Children from ages 2–5 can understand simple storylines. However, they **cannot** understand complicated moral lessons.

For example, a story about an animal character which steals a smaller animal's food, where the child is expected to realise he/she must not behave like the thief.

Observation #2:

Stories reflecting this age group's interests capture their attention. For example, some characters picking up seashells on the beach or blowing soap bubbles. Create stories based on what children of these ages find interesting or like to do. Spend some time observing children of this age group in a free environment, such as at a park, a beach or even a home garden.

Observation #3:

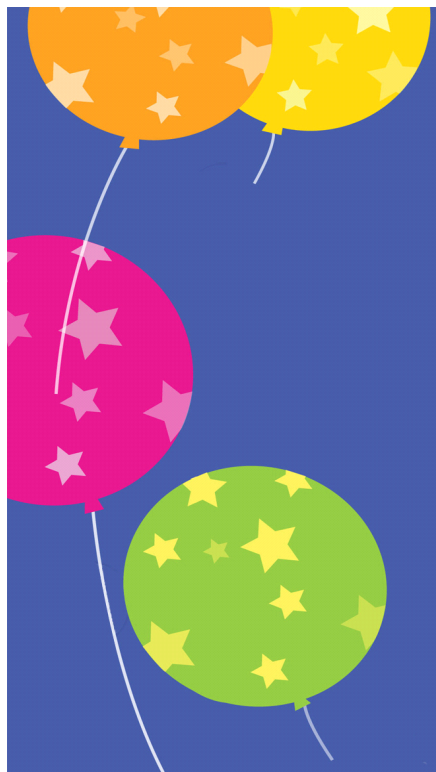
The characters of a story must have depth. That is, the strength of feeling between the characters should be noticeable, and also believable. For example, a rabbit rescuing its friend from an enemy. Otherwise, the child will lose interest in following the story.

Illustrators

Observation #1:

Young children have difficulties in noticing characters placed against backgrounds. So, a scene's main character or object must attract the child's attention. This can be achieved in several ways:

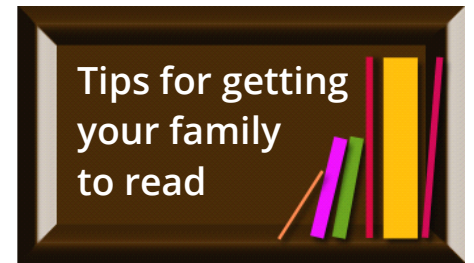
- Drawing characters with big faces and clearly marked eyes.
- Using bright, contrasting colours to capture and guide attention.
- Placing the character or object against a plain coloured or white background.



Observation #2:

The visual system of preschoolers is less developed than that of older children. So, reduce the action in a scene to a minimum. This helps the children's slow visual abilities to follow the story.

By using the above as points of reference, Sri Lankan authors and illustrators will be able to create books that attract, and also interest preschool children. Furthermore, editors can use those same points of reference when selecting manuscripts, and instructing illustrators.



1. MAKE visits to the library a regular family activity:

Take the whole family to the local public library at least twice a month.

2. MAKE reading a family habit:

Keep a variety of reading materials at home, including newspapers, magazines, graphic novels, fiction and nonfiction.

3. MODEL reading at home:

- ▶ Show your family that you make time for reading daily. Aim for 20 minutes per day.
- ▶ Everyone can read their own books together or read aloud to one another.

4. TALK about what you read with members of your family:

Ask your family to talk about what they read, too. This can happen right after daily reading or as part of a different daily routine such as travelling to school, during a meal or before bed.

...and remember to:

Introduce literature on social justice issues to guide your children to become socially conscious, and to foster real-world connections to what they read.

(Adapted from: *Advocating for Children's Rights to Read*, published by the International Literacy Association, 2019)

Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.

Emilie Buchwald

Award-winning children's author, poet, editor and teacher

Some of our recent activities

August 2019



Filming of children stating the Children's Rights to Read. Fifty nine children and youth (ages 5–21) from Moneragala and Mullaitivu participated. The recording was done in both Sinhala and Tamil languages by Abhimana Sri Lanka, one of our organisational members.

26-28 September 2019



Participated at the 4th Asia and Oceania IBBY Regional Meeting in Xi'an, China. The National Sections of China, Japan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam also participated. The Executive Committee Members of IBBY from the UK, USA, Russia, South Africa and Lebanon also participated.

1st October 2019



232 copies of *The Six Doves*, a wordless book about coping with loss and ethnic harmony, were handed over to the Archbishop of Colombo's representative, for distribution among the children and youth victims of the Easter Sunday bombings on April 21st.

1st October 2019



A story-telling programme to celebrate World Children's Day was held at the National Youth Services Centre (NYSC) in Maharagama. It was organised jointly by ITN and IBBY Sri Lanka.

5th October 2019



An award ceremony on Teachers' Day was held at the Mahaweli Centre in Colombo. Teachers were presented awards for their writing of children's books. The awards were sponsored by IBBY Sri Lanka.

26th, 27th October 2019



Ruhunu Aswenna, a Literature and Art Festival was held in Matara. IBBY Sri Lanka conducted 2 sets of presentations : one on adapting stories from books to theatre, and one on reading books, including wordless books. Both were a great success.

To know the latest news and announcements from IBBY Sri Lanka, visit our website or Facebook page:

www.ibbysrilanka.org www.facebook.com/ibbylanka