



# IBBY SA



Books for Africa



## NEWSLETTER NO. 62

## DECEMBER 2010 | HAVE A GOOD FESTIVE SEASON!

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- IBBY SA is the South African section of IBBY.
- IBBY is the International Board on Books for Young People.
- IBBY SA's area of interest is everything to do with South African books for children and young people.
- If you are a member of IBBY SA, you are also a member of IBBY.
- IBBY's 2004 World Congress was hosted by IBBY SA in Cape Town.
- The August 2012 World Congress will be in London.

**WAMKELEKILE! SITHEMBA UKUBA UZA KUTHANDA UKUFUNDA ELI PHEPHA ELI FUTSHANE ELI NEENDABA. COME ON IN, AND ENJOY WHAT THE NEWSLETTER HAS TO OFFER BY WAY OF NEWS AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING IDEAS!**

## IBBY SA @ THE CAPE TOWN BOOK FAIR 2010

The eye-catching IBBY SA stand was well situated and we enjoyed interacting with our many visitors. We asked the company BookMark to organise the events and these too were well attended.

Friday the 30th was a trade day and we invited teachers and teacher librarians to join us at the stand to listen to Marianne Serfontein and Zonke Silwanyana from Edulis. Marianne talked about her top SA books that could be used as class readers and Zonke, the specialist reader for books in isiXhosa, discussed and recommend Xhosa books for Grades 1 to 12.

On Saturday, 31 July, Kathy Madlener and Carol Ryan from BookMark presented a 'Book Boggling Quiz' for nine- to twelve-year-olds. The kids' zone was

overflowing with enthusiastic readers and the winners were presented with bags of books.

On Sunday we had a double bill. Sally Boulle, a superb storyteller, shared some 'Tantalising Tales' with a group of enthusiastic youngsters in the morning and in the afternoon there was another book quiz with prizes for the winners. Finally on Monday, Marianne Serfontein invited the older children to 'Chill out at the library and check out the hottest cool reads'.





# 32ND INTERNATIONAL IBBY CONGRESS IN SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN. 8 - 12 SEPTEMBER 2010

**A generous donation from Mr Hideo Yamada made it possible for Exec-member Lona Gericke to travel to Santiago de Compostela to attend the 32nd International IBBY Congress. Lona shares her experiences:**

The theme of the Congress was The Strength of Minorities, and it was attended by over 700 Delegates from 72 countries. The Mayor of Santiago, Mr Bugallo, welcomed participants by saying: "Santiago (A World Heritage Site) is a city of tales. Like a scene taken from a fairy tale, as visitors walk, a stone forest grows, traced in the dreams of Romanesque and baroque architects. The city offers its medieval flagstone pavements, alleys that lead to ancient convents, semi-lighted churches, manor houses, green cloisters and one of the most beautiful collections of monumental squares in Europe ... The most beautiful stories are always a matter of faith ..." Dante Alighieri, Lorca, Ernest Hemingway, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Spanish writers like Manuel Rivas have sung its praises, all writing about the beauty of the city.

I arrived after many long hours by plane to fall in love with the "dark forest of stone, set against the laughing green of the countryside". But I was here to work, and for the next few days the Congress programme offered many choices in plenary sessions and panel discussions, and seminar sessions on the topic of minority languages, reading and cultures.



In their introduction, the organisers stated: "We all constitute an immense minority in one way or another. Either through promoting, writing or illustrating books for children and young people and publishing them in a language or culture distinct from the majority codes; or reading books in the backdrop of an economically unstable climate or with physical and mental disabilities, which hinders access to cultural equality. Often children are forced to act as adults in societies which disregard the fundamental rights of childhood. There are those who are forced to emigrate and start anew in a foreign language or culture. There are also those experiencing, speaking, learning and reading as part of a minority group." Other issues discussed were the fact that children's literature still holds a minority status in the eyes of editors, writers and the media. Diversity and tolerance were propagated.

Literature written in minority languages face a wide set of challenges: the survival of such a literature depends on factors such as socio-political context, the extent of the official status bestowed on them and the general public's response to cultural and linguistic diversity.

Many of the plenary lectures were given in Spanish, with simultaneous translations into English. Sometimes one really had to concentrate very hard to follow the direct English translation which could be delivered in spurts and with pauses. Emilia Ferreiro from Argentina/Mexico gave the opening plenary lecture, and she referred to the complex realities of multilingualism. Teachers speak a language, but often cannot write in that language. Differences are denied. Schools deny diversity. She talked about displaced peoples, and that the children of immigrants cannot be ignored. Diversity should be translated into a

workable language.

Victor Montejos' (Guatemala-USA) talk was titled "On the path of the Maya Ahtz'ib: indigenous literatures as a source of knowledge, power and identity. He accepted the challenge of proving that his culture was not just a relic of the past, but that their cultural heroes were immortalised in the hills, landscape and sacred geography around the town. A Mayan fable stated for example: "He who cuts trees shortens his own life". Montejos concluded that he has survived, that minorities do not need others to speak for them.

Anne Pellowski (USA) chaired an interesting session about oral tradition and minorities without a written language. In this session Prof. Thomas van der Walt substituted Carole Bloch of South Africa who fell ill and could not attend the Congress. Anne enthusiastically exhibited beautiful handmade books from all over the world containing traditional riddles, tongue twisters and untold stories, accompanied by her book Drawing stories from around the world.

A speaker from India identified three focus areas: children who cannot read, those who want to read, and those who do not want to

read. They used the oral tradition and made it more contemporary with interactive centres where books are displayed on a washing line at the child's eye level. To understand the magic behind the words, dancers demonstrated the oral tradition in



dance.

In the afternoon I attended an interesting session on the influence of cartoons on Arab children by Nadia El Kholy of Egypt. She stated that American humour was not acceptable in the Middle East; for example, the cartoon Sesame Street, which was totally Arabised, was more acceptable than the Simpsons. Egyptian cultural and social values were given, not imposed American sensibilities. Bakkar, an indigenous cartoon, is still the most popular. Other speakers stressed firstly that the graphic novel has replaced the comic book in Australia, and secondly that the educational graphic novels were children's favourites in Korea. One source can be put to multiple uses.

Lygia Bojunga of Brazil did an interesting presentation on how alternative traditions were given a role in her country when the work of local artists, for example the women who decorated their houses with paint and designs, and others, had the opportunity to display their work in a museum – like a dancing peacock. Participants claimed that there could not be a larger thought than that – to have their work on display, all of them linked to each other and the beauty of their work recognized. Here the artist is the author. He tells his own story, for example in a visual travelogue. Children are as individual as adults. Lygia asked for a sense of empathy with someone who is not like you.

Bojunga's presentation was followed by a visually delightful presentation about illustration as a medium for representing minorities. At this session, Piet Grobler (South Africa-United Kingdom), also presented a paper. By means of illustration, two speakers from Spain addressed issues, stating that quality literature is in fact a minority literature versus mass publications and illustrations. Miguelanxo Prado of Spain stressed the fact that childhood can be seen as a fragile

defenceless minority; that and individual is in fact a minority; that creative works seeks for universal recognition.

A great variety of interesting papers were delivered; the choices were mindboggling, and I tried to fit in as many sessions as possible!

Other issues addressed were for example: Are girls a minority or majority in children's literature; how an award should be established to recognise quality minority literature; the Somali bilingual book project serving refugees and immigrant families; oral tradition and its decline; how you can tell stories if you put your mind to it; the naïve youthful narrator in the literature of South African Apartheid by Daniel Lehman (USA); young people's literature in Brazil; gender and sexual orientation minorities; the boys as a minority in libraries and reading promotion activities; the impact of translated texts of picture books on reader responses; literature for refugee children; and many more papers.

One of the most moving talks of the Congress was the plenary lecture by Manuel Rivas from Spain. He said: "Santiago de Compostela is a remarkable creation. It arose from a star which marked a tomb and it flourished on that grave. We are referring to an open work – in any case – the chronological pages are spiralling and overlap like the petals of a mysterious rose." According to this poetic and philosophical speaker, children's literature is capable of showing the complexity of the world. He calls it the subversive literature inside the circle of literatures. Rivas further spoke about the subversive energies of creative writing which cannot be subordinated, do not receive orders and cannot be dominated. Relevant, charming and captivating; this literature is like an open body which embraces a whole subversive memory. It is a literature that will fight against abandonment and injustice. Universal literature will stand up and raise itself; this is insurgent literature.

For me personally it was a wonderful experience to be able to meet with so many old IBBY friends; to talk about children's books published in South Africa; to meet so many new faces from 72 countries and listen to all the exciting voices sharing ideas and a mutual passion for children's and youth literature. It was lovely to hear so many languages buzzing away at lunch time; to attend the magnificent opening ceremony and hear Minister of Culture Gonzalez-Sinde Reig enthusiastically support our cause where in South Africa we are still battling to get financial support from government organisations to support us in spreading the message of the important work IBBY does internationally, and in what IBBY SA attempts to do here in South Africa. Sadly, the City of Cape Town for which I have worked for 22 years as a children's librarian, has so far not given us any financial support, or support purely by encouraging membership of IBBY amongst librarians working in children's services.

David Almond, winner of the Hans Christian Andersen award for writing gave an inspiring acceptance speech. He is the English author of several excellent books for teenagers, such as Skellig. Almond spoke optimistically about the future of children's literature and described the children's book world as the "hotbed of literary experimentation".

Juta Bauer from Germany, who won the Hans Christian Andersen prize for illustration, made a personal illustrated presentation of how the parts became the whole, giving tribute to fellow illustrators, mentors, colleagues, family and editors. As a major source of inspiration, she mentioned Tove Jansson. Her own picture books, such as Selma, Queen of Colours and Opas Engel are available in many languages.



A very interesting booklet was compiled by Galician publishers entitled *Worlds of Story: Stories of World*. The history of Galician children and young adults' literature according to them is a tale about a tale of someone who has been asleep for a long time, only to be awakened in the first third of the 20th century by the publication of a few isolated works. In 1996 Teijeiro published *In the Bonfire of Verses*, which received two awards and was on the IBBY Honour list of 1998:

Voice without words:

Silence

Sea without water:

Desert

Sun without rays:

Mystery

Light without brightness:

Knife

Hand without hand

Scream

Pain without groans:

Time

Me without you:

Silence



The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Awards 2010 were presented at the beautiful Hostal dos reis Catolicos at the Santiago cathedral. The winners were Osu children's library fund, Ghana, and Fundacion Taller de Letras Jordi

Sierra I Fabra, Medellin, Colombia, proposed by IBBY Spain. The Osu project is a charity established in 1991 to encourage reading and literacy among children and adults in Ghana. Five large community libraries in impoverished areas in Ghana's capital were built and stocked, as well as 150 smaller libraries in schools and villages in Ghana. The project in Colombia runs activities with the city's reading programme in the four poorest and most vulnerable municipalities.

The final dinner was in the Pazo San Lorenzo, a small hermitage or monastery built in 1216 – a very beautiful place. The cloister is from the seventeenth century and the boxwood with original drawings is from the same century. Here I was privileged to spend the evening in the company of Professor Thomas van der Walt of UNISA, Piet Grobler, well-known South African illustrator who now lives in the United Kingdom, and the very charming Miriam Moellers from Berlin who works with International Children's and Youth literature and is interested in working with South Africans in promoting children's literature.

I left this captivating city with many warm memories. There was little time for sightseeing, but my hotel was situated near the cathedral, so I walked this route every morning to the bus stop to catch the bus to the Palacio de Congressos. May the work IBBY does be continued for many more years, even centuries! No literature can survive or grow or prosper in isolation; it has been confirmed by so many attendees that undoubtedly there is strength in the literatures of minorities when writers, illustrators and publishers of all nations work together to give wings to these minority voices.

**Lona Gericke**  
**September 2010**



## IBBY SA AUTUMN BOOK BASH

This year's Autumn Book Bash was presented by one of the big children's literature publishers, Jacana. Publishing director at Jacana, Carol Broomhall was of course on hand to speak about some of the new and exciting children's books Jacana had just launched or was about to launch. Carol explained that since Jacana is always keen to publish books that are entirely southern African in content, idiom and illustrations, they were happy to further publicise a relatively new concept, of taking old fairy tales and fables that a large number of people grew up hearing and modernising them while also making them fit into the South African way of life. Writers such as Sindiwe Magona, Reviva Schermbrucker and William Gumede are on board to guide and contribute to this

exciting concept. As a result old stories such as *The Ugly Duckling* and *The Little Red Hen* are being brought back to life in a very South African way.

Carol also spoke about a new release, *A Kite's Flight*, that was launched recently. What was exciting about publishing this book for Jacana is that it was author William Gumede's first ever children's book. Gumede, who normally tackles SA's political issues, made a smooth transition with this richly illustrated book about a boy and his father and their journey after creating a kite together. Other new books mentioned were *Taking the Cows Home* by Reviva Schermbrucker, *Die Verhaal van Son en Maan* by Ann Walton and *The Thandi and Nosipho's series* by Catherine Groenewald with their latest title *The little girl who didn't want to grow up*. As always Carol introduced us to some fun new titles and we look forward to hearing about more children's titles from Jacana.

- nonikiwe mashologu



## ENTRIES CALLED FOR THE BIENNIAL OF ILLUSTRATION BRATISLAVA (BIB)

The Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) is one of the oldest international honours for children's book illustrators. It is also one of the more prestigious children's book awards today, along with Hans Christian Andersen Award. Artists are selected by an international jury, and their original artwork is exhibited in Bratislava,

Slovakia. It is sponsored by UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture, Slovakia. IBBY urges publishers and illustrators to visit [www.bibiana.sk](http://www.bibiana.sk) for details. Registration closes on 31 January 2011.

## BOOK BLOGS



Vanessa Badroodien, who has been visiting book fairs and literary festivals around the world as the founding director of the Cape Town Book Fair, launched a great children's book blog called Sparkle and Spin. The blog is

regularly updated and entries are tagged according to age appropriateness, making it easy to find information for specific age groups. Visit the blog at [www.sparkleandspinstudio.blogspot.com/](http://www.sparkleandspinstudio.blogspot.com/)

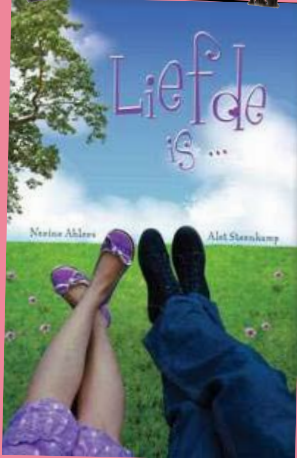
WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER!

## VASVRA-WENNERS

Baie geluk aan Jaco Jacobs wat die regte antwoord eerste ingestuur het. A.G. Visser skryf in die gedig "Die ruiter van Skimmelperdpan" oor Jan van der Meer. Coenraad Walters en Chris Venter het ook reg geantwoord.

WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER! WINNER! WENNER!

Until we find a new manager for our website (any offers, anyone?), we reproduce the full reviews here: Totdat ons 'n nuwe webmeester vir ons webwerf kry, plaas ons die volledige resensies hier:



## **Liefde is ...**

deur Nerine Ahlers en Alet Steenkamp (LAPA, 2010).

Weereensbied hierdie gewildetwee dames vir jong tieners 'n lekker leesboek vir 'n paar aangename leesuertjies! Rondom die tema van 'n debat waaraan drie vriendinne gaan deelneem, met die tema "Moet 'n meisie op sewentien 'n ou hê?" ontwikkel hierdie verhaal met tipiese tienermeisies en seuns wat saam in die skool kuier, aan sport deelneem, partytjies hou en oefen vir die uiters belangrike debat.

Karli is die hoofkarakter; 'n oulike meisie wat aan die begin van die verhaal geskok word deur haar pa se onverwagte bekendmaking dat hy haar en haar ma gaan verlaat. Sy kan vereers met niemand daarvoor praat nie, maar vertel tog later haar goeie vriende. Sy moet terselfdertyd haar toenemende belangstelling in die aantreklike Stefan aan haarself erken, en geleidelik word die klein blou blommetjies wat vir die eerste keer op haar skooltas verskyn die enigste band wat hulle verbind. Maar as hy bloot toevallig hoor toe sy haar toespraak oefen dat sy beweer 'n ou is ok, solank jy hom net gebruik, en nog sien hoe al die ander seuns haar geselskap opsoek, word hy huiwerig om haar ernstig op te neem; sy is dalk net so 'n "los" meisie soos sy ma was. Hier is 'n goeie resep om meisies by die boek te betrek: 'n goeie dosis delikate verhoudings; 'n Valentynsbal en twee pragtige nuwe rokke, sport en irriterende, opdringerige seuns soos Juan, tergende vrae oor haar en haar ma se verhouding, 'n skielike ongeluk wat weer mense bymekaar kan bring ... Ai, ons soek nog baie sulke boeke in Afrikaans! - **Lona Gericke**

## **Bongani's Secret by**

**Gail Smith** (Maskew Miller Longman, 2010).

Wow, Bongani takes us on a journey that binds discrimination, alcoholism and xenophobia into his life. And then there is the so-called 'Bongani's Secret', as he describes his phone. It doesn't have much on it, it's a standard phone with Snake games on it. Then the first SMS peep-peeped at him. That is where it all started. The high school life and his life at home were full of problems as well as with his buddies at school. Yes, as a teenager you do have some difficulties, especially in the first two years at high school and around the age of 15.

I also like the way, after all, that he gains confidence after the incident that happened at his friend Thandai's home. He gained confidence at school and personally; and also he was able to help his mother's gradual rescue from alcoholism to what he always knew her to be.

That is what gave him a stronger mind to think and deal with his so-called 'Secret', and he was brave after all. Gaining confidence as a young boy and knowing the better way to deal with your enemies is very brave and clever. He needed to be there for his friends when they needed him most, all the while dealing with discrimination and xenophobia at the same time.

It's a great book and is a must-read. - **Andi Mgibantaka**



**Die groen hand** deur Jaco Jacobs en Chris Venter (LAPA, 2010).

**Reeks: 'n Kas vol monsters**

Denver en Meyer deel die boomhuis wat op hulle altwee se erwe staan. Een nag word Denver wakker wanneer hy 'n geluid in die kas in sy slaapkamer hoor. Toe hy die deur oopmaak, gly iets voor hom verby. Hy nooi sy ongelowige vriend om die volgende aand by hom te kom slaap sodat hy ook die ding kan sien. Dit word 'n belewenis met vier monsters van die monsterkasteel, almal op soek na die groen hand wat hulle altyd

versorg. Dit is die kinders se geleentheid om die kuiergaste te leer dat hulle hul groen hand ook moet versorg. Lig en vermaaklik, vir jong lesers, 7-9 jaar. Lekker groot druk, kleurvolle illustrasies. - **Lona Gericke**

**Vampierfoto's** deur Jaco Jacobs en Chris Venter (LAPA, 2010).

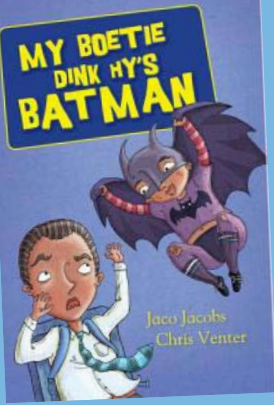
Hierdie is die tweede titel in die Kas vol monsters-reeks. Die week was vir ons twee seuns maar bra vervelig. Dalk sal dit help om na die bruin hangkas te staar waaruit die monsters hulle voorheen besoek het. Toe die twee buite in hul boomhuis spookstories lees, sien hulle 'n verblindende flitslig in Denver se kamer. Die besoekers is Elvis die vampier en die groen hand Kriewels. Elvis is dood ongelukkig omdat hy onsigbaar op foto's is, en hy wil so graag vir sy Vlermina 'n foto van himself stuur vir haar 250ste verjaarsdag. Maar Kriewels kan mos teken, en nou het hulle 'n plan. Kinders sal dit geniet om die verdere avonture van die twee seuns en hul monstervriende te lees! Lekker ligte, humoristiese aanslag. Veral vir die seuns wat nie van boeke hou nie. - **Lona Gericke**





**My boetie dink hy's batman en ander rympies** deur Jaco Jacobs, met illustrasies deur Chris Venter (LAPA, 2010).

Die skrywer verras ons weereens met nog n bundel van 37 vrolike snaakse rympies. Hierdie bundel is 'n duidelike bewys van Jacobs se vermoë om te identifiseer met al die dinge wat deel uitmaak van 'n kind se ervaringswêreld; veral natuurlik as die digter 'n stuitige verbeelding het! 'n Luislang wat sy ouma insluk, 'n hond wat mal is oor boeke, wat die goudvissie sou sê as hy kon praat, 'n tuin wat gevaarlik kan wees as die leuebakkies kan byt, woedebuie, 'n liefde vir pizza, wat die ergste marteling vir 'n kind kan wees, 'n nuwe babasussie wat hy tog te graag by die vlooiemark wil verkoop! Drie woorde wat erger is as vloek: huiswerk, spinasie en tandartsbesoek, waarvoor is krokodille bang?, die lot van ysbere oor 'n honderd jaar, 'n meisie wat dig oor haar windlawaai vriend, 'n boom in 'n skoolkonsert kan dalk eendag 'n rolprentster word. Wat is die langste halfuur op aarde vir 'n kind? Die een voor die laaste klok lui! So hou die rympie-lekkerte net aan en aan. En dan help Chris Venter se illustrasies om elke gediggie nog beter te laat praat met die leser. Hoogs aanbeveel. Alle ouderdomme. - **Lona Gericke**



**Stoffel die ratel** deur Elmarie Botha met illustrasies deur Samantha van Riet (LAPA, 2010).

Stoffel die ratel beland by Moholoholo – 'n rehabilitasie-sentrum vir diere wat siek of beseer is sodat hulleweer kan terugkeer na die veld. Hier ontmoet hy 'n maatjie ratel, Cheeky, en saam het hulle 'n paar avonture. Die storie self met Stoffel as hoofkarakter is maar so-so; dit gaan eintlik daarom om die ratel meer bekend te stel aan jong lesers. Die boek bevat 24 bladsye vol feite oor ratels: wat hulle eet, hoe hulle in die natuur leef, hoe jy 'n ratel kan volg, wie almal die ratels help, en nog veel meer. Hierdie boekie is veral nuttig as 'n feitelike bekendstelling aan ratels. Ek dink dit is handig om kinders terselfdertyd in te lig oor die diertjie wie se verhaal hul lees. Vir jonger lesers, so 8–11jaar.

- **Lona Gericke**



**Sandra se seepresente** deur Marion Drew, met illustrasies deur Vian Oelofsen (Tafelberg, 2010).

**Ook in Engels beskikbaar as Nici's Pocket Presents.**

Sandra, haar pa en boetie is op pad terug Johannesburg toe na 'n vakansie in die Kaap. Op die trein bring sy die twee spesiale geskenke aan haar niggie en nefie – 'n seemeeu vir die niggie, en 'n seekat vir die nefie. Die seekat vervoer sy in haar mond, en die seemeeu in haar broek se sak. Die seekat raak verveeld, en beland in haar snorkende pa se oop mond; die seemeeu weer gaan stel ondersoek in in die eetsalon om uit te vind hoe wors proe! Maar Sandra slaag tog daarin om na die treinavontuur die twee geskenke aan haar ingenome familie te oorhandig. Hulle kan nie wag dat sy weer met vakansie gaan nie. Vir jonger lesers, 8–10 jaar. Ook geskik vir voorlees aan jonger kinders. 'n Lekker lawwe, verbeeldingryke storie. Vir my is die illustrasies van Vian Oelofsen die groot pluspunt – hy gee oortuigend en vermaaklik uitbeelding aan die karakters se avontuur. Regtig besonder goed geïllustreer. - **Lona Gericke**



**Moemin: lig-die-flappie wegkruipertjie met groot flappe vir klein handjies** deur Tove Jansson. In Afrikaans vertaal deur Kobus Geldenhuys. (Human & Rousseau, 2010).

Tove Jansson is een van Finland se bekendste skrywers, 'n H.C. Andersen-wenner in 1966, en die verhale is reeds in 34 tale vertaal. Hierdie terugkeer in Afrikaans word met groot opgewondenheid ontvang. Die karakters spreek tot jong kinders in hul kinderlike onskuld en opregtheid. Moemin en Mymy speel wegkruipertjie, en op elke bladsy soek Moemin haar; maar onder elke flappie kruip ander karakters weg. Dit neem 'n tydjie om haar op te spoor, want sy het 'n baie slim wegkruipplek ontdek. 'n Oulike boek – kleuters sal dit so geniet om Mymy te soek en dan die opgewondenheid as hulle haar kry! Ek hou van die eenvoud van die groot prente en die humor, want baie van die karakters is tipies – soos mevrou Punt in die wind. Hoogs aanbeveel vir 0–6 jariges, vir voorlees veral. - **Lona Gericke**

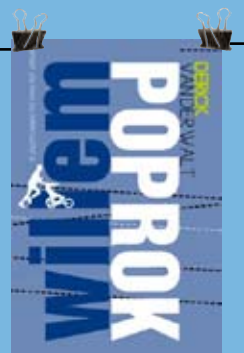


**Willem Poprok** deur Derick van der Walt (Tafelberg, 2010).

**Ook in Engels beskikbaar as Nici's Pocket Presents.**

Hierdie boek is bekroon met die Silwer Sanlam-prys vir Jeuglektuur 2009.

"Sy ma het gespringclean. Dis elke April se storie, al is dit nie "Spring" nie, en niks is nou meer soos dit was nie." So begin hierdie lekker storie oor 'n seun se grootwordjare. Willem Poprok is in Graad 8 (die poprok-bynaam is omdat hy vir sy laatlamsussie Lydia die poprokkie gekoop het). Die Van Vuurens besit die Blou Bul slaghuis in Pretoria. Hy het ook twee broers, Franna en Coenie. Willem wil nie meer rugby speel nie. Hy begin kunsklasse loop en raak verlief op Oom Ravi se dogter Alesea. Dan is daar die belangrike "Pa van die Jaar"-kompetisie waaraan die kinders deelneem, want hulle kan 'n reis na die Okavango wen met hul gedagtes oor hoekom hul Pa nou juis die beste Pa in die wêreld is. Hierdie deursnee Afrikaanse gesin word baie oortuigend, heel natuurlik en gemaklik uitgebeeld. Elke individu is "real" – Franna wat nie "vlak gekyk" wil wees nie; Coenie wat sleg sien maar goed vry! Sy meisie Marietjie probeer hulle leer om "geleerd" oor hul Pa te skryf, maar Willem besluit om hul eie eerlike gedagtes oor hul Pa se goeie hoedanighede te gebruik. Daar is 'n goeie balans tussen die gebeure en die karakters se persoonlike ontwikkeling. 'n Spanningselement sluip in met die rooftog in die slaghuis wat Franna so traumaties ervaar. Daar is heerlike juweeltjies wat die lees van die boek so aangenaam maak, bv. die ou hond Flip, hul ma se reaksie op Franna se versameling kaal foto's wat die klein Lydia onskuldig uitgrawe en vir almal wys, die seuns wat reël dat hul Pa sy twee rugbyhelde van naderby ontmoet, en die verhouding tussen hul Oupa en Oom Fred in die ouetehuis waar Willem se skildery hang. Die verhaal het deurgaans 'n ligte, onopgesmukke aanslag: niks van die vervelige sedepreke of ongeloofbare "issues" wat die leeservaring so kan bederf nie, maar soms roerend soos Franna se opmerkings oor sy broer Willem. Jongmense sal die boek werklik kan geniet, veral waar hulle sekerlik hul eie omstandighede tuis telkens met die lees sal herken en ervaar. Baie mooi beeldspraak en treffende taalgebruik. Hoogs aanbeveel; die ideale boek om voorgeskryf te word in skole. - **Lona Gericke**



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