

OTTO  
FOUNDATION  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOK AWARD

Celebrating South African Stories

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# 1. Background on the Otto Foundation

## How did it start?

The Otto Foundation is the philanthropic trust of the Otto family. The trust was established by Chris Otto and his daughter, Zephne Ladbrook, in 2016.

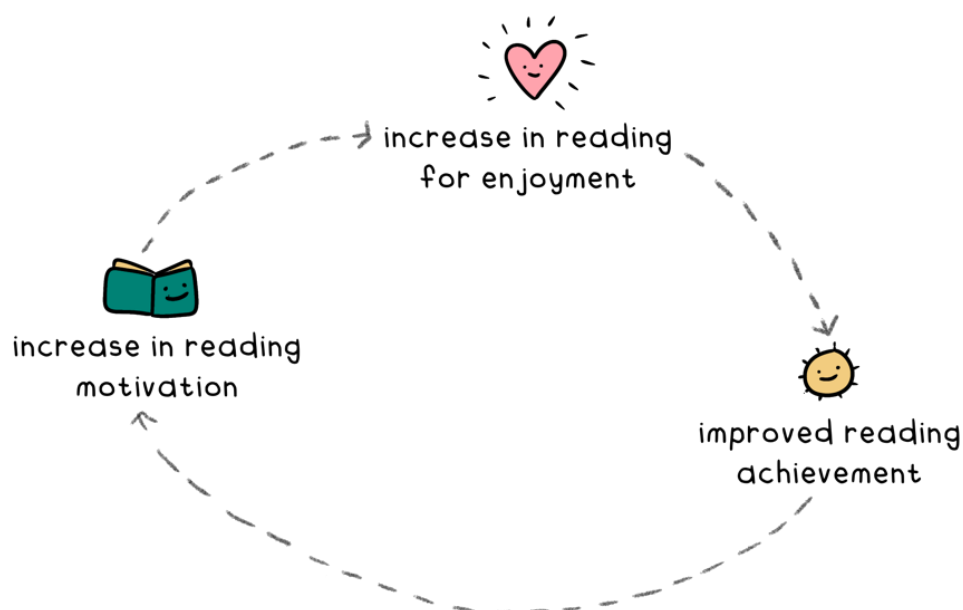
## Our strategic focus

The Otto Foundation aims to improve early literacy by:

- fostering a love of reading,
- promoting access to books, and
- developing and promoting contextually relevant reading materials for South African children.

## The rationale behind our strategic focus

There is strong research evidence linking independent reading (or “reading for enjoyment”) to improved literacy outcomes. More competent readers are also more motivated to read, thus creating a mutually reinforcing cycle between the will to read and the skill to read<sup>1</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> PIRLS (2021). 'Section 7: Students' Reading Attitudes and Behaviours'. Available. [Online]: [https://pirls2021.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/files/P21\\_7-reading-attitudes-behaviors.pdf](https://pirls2021.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/files/P21_7-reading-attitudes-behaviors.pdf) (June 2023)

## 2. The Otto Foundation Children’s Book Award

### Supporting our strategic focus

Children are more likely to read for pleasure when they:

- i. have access to diverse and contextually relevant books
- ii. have choice in what they are reading
- iii. have role models that demonstrate a passion for reading
- iv. are motivated to read in an environment where reading is encouraged and valued, and
- v. have safe, comfortable spaces to read.

Our library projects address our objectives around access, choice, safe reading spaces and deepening reading cultures.

Through the Otto Foundation Children’s Book Award we want to celebrate South African literature and encourage local authors, illustrators and publishers to develop new books that speak to the lived experiences of South African children.

### The objectives of the Otto Foundation Children’s Book Award

- To promote and support local publishers
- To promote new authors and illustrators
- To celebrate South African stories
- To promote diversity in children’s literature
- To recognize and celebrate quality storytelling

### Which prizes will be awarded?

Following the nomination and selection process (outlined below), the Otto Foundation will award two book awards. One for a picture book targeted at learners aged 5 to 9, and one for chapter books or graphic novels aimed at learners aged 10 to 13.

Each of the winning titles will receive:

- A trophy
- A R25 000 cash prize<sup>2</sup>
- Promotion of the title through the Otto Foundation’s website, social media channels and event-related PR

### Recognising the voices of children in the Children’s Book Award

Shortlisted titles will be included in the Otto Foundation’s Reading Relay – hosted among six schools in the District Six area in Cape Town. Book reviews submitted by our learners during the relay process will be considered in the final selection of the award winners.

(Note: 3732 book reviews by learners were received in our 2023 Reading Relay).

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<sup>2</sup> Author/ illustrators teams will receive a total cash prize of R25 000 and will have to agree prior to nomination how the cash prize will be split between team members.

### 3. Award criteria

#### Authentic South African representation

- The book must authentically represent South African culture, traditions, landscapes, and people.
- The characters must be relatable to South African children.
- The story must incorporate elements of South African history, culture, folklore, or everyday life.

#### Creativity and originality

- The book must demonstrate creative storytelling techniques or innovative approaches to its subject matter.
- The illustrations and/or cover design must be original, imaginative, and visually engaging.
- The book must offer a fresh perspective on familiar themes or topics.

#### Quality of writing and illustration

- The writing must be clear, engaging, and appropriate for the target age group (5 to 9 years for picture books, and 10 to 13 years for graphic novels and chapter books).
- The illustrations and/or cover design must be of high quality, enhancing the story and captivating young readers.
- The combination of text and illustration/design must create a cohesive and immersive reading experience.

#### Relevance to target audience.

- The book must address themes, issues, or experiences relevant to children in the age group.
- The characters, storylines, and messages must be age-appropriate and accessible to the intended audience.
- The book must stimulate curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking in young readers.

#### Culture, diversity, and inclusivity

- The book must celebrate diversity and inclusivity, reflecting the multicultural reality of South Africa.
- There must be diverse representations of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and abilities within the book.
- The book must promote empathy, understanding, and respect for different perspectives and identities.

#### Publication date and South African origin

- The book must have been published within the last 18 months or is expected to be available in print by the end of July 2024.
- The publisher must be South African-owned or based in South Africa (local self-published titles will also qualify for the award)

## 4. Selection process

### Timeline

Process phase	Responsibility	Timeframe
Announcement of Otto Foundation Children's Book Award Process	Otto Foundation Team	05/2024
Promotion of the Otto Foundation Book Award	Otto Foundation Team	05/2024 - 06/2024
Nominations submitted	Authors/ Publishers	31 July 2024
Shortlisting	Otto Foundation Team	08/2024
Shortlisted books included in the Otto Foundation Reading Relay	Learners at Otto Foundation libraries	10/2024 - 11/2024
Final review and selection	Otto Foundation Team and Advisory Panel	11/2024 - 12/2024
Announcement of award winners	Otto Foundation Team	01/2025
Promotion of award winners	Otto Foundation Team	01/2025 onwards

### Advisory panel

Members of the advisory panel will be announced in June 2024.

Note: in the selection of award winners, book reviews by learners will contribute a minimum of 25 percent of the final score of each shortlisted title.

The decision(s) of the Advisory Panel will be final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding the selection of the award winners.

## 5. Nominations

Nominations for the Otto Foundation Children's Book Award must be sent to [bookaward@ottofoundation.org](mailto:bookaward@ottofoundation.org).

**Deadline** for nominations: 31 July 2024

Your nomination should include:

1. a brief memo motivating the nomination (more detail on this below), and
2. a digital copy of the title you are nominating (or detail on delivery of a physical copy of the book to the Otto Foundation Cottage, Zonnebloem College Estate, 2 Cambridge Street, Walmer Estate, Cape Town, 7925)

Your **nomination memo** should include the following information on the book that you are nominating:

- The award category for which you want the book to be considered (i.e. picture books targeted at learners aged 5 to 9, or chapter books/graphic novels aimed at learners aged 10 to 13)
- The title, author and illustrator
- The publisher (or indicate that the book is self-published)
- A short paragraph (100 to 400 words) on how/why the book meets the award criteria
- An indication of the way in which a potential cash prize would be split between creative teams (e.g. authors and illustrators)
- Confirmation that the publisher, author and illustrator would allow the Otto Foundation to promote the book through social and traditional media

## 6. Contacts

For more information on the Otto Foundation Children's Book Award please contact the Otto Foundation's Director: Stakeholders & Partnerships, Nonikiwe Mashologu at [nonikiwe@ottofoundation.org](mailto:nonikiwe@ottofoundation.org).