

Karoo Writers Festival

AFRIKAANS 100

Lekker Skrywersfees in die Karoo



About Olive Schreiner

Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) was a pioneering South African writer and social critic, best known for her novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), under the pseudonym "Ralph Iron". Considered the first major South African novel. Her writing, marked by feminist and liberal ideals, challenged the rigid gender roles and religious orthodoxy of her time.

What is the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival?

The Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival is an annual literary celebration held in Cradock, South Africa, featuring Writers, mainly from the Karoo. The Festival honours the legacy of Olive Schreiner, who lived in Cradock, and is the renowned author of ***The Story of an African Farm***. She was South Africa's first notable novelist and a trailblazing feminist and social reformer. Set against the evocative backdrop of the beautiful Karoo, the Festival offers an enjoyable and immersive experience of storytelling, writing, culture, and community.

Educational outreach is a key component of the Festival, with initiatives like the AVBOB Poetry Project and AMAZWI Outreach. These programmes aim to nurture young voices and promote the love of reading and writing.

Each year, the Festival brings together a vibrant mix of writers, poets, educators, filmmakers, and readers.

This year is a landmark year as we eagerly anticipate for Cradock to be announced as an UNESCO City of Literature.

We also celebrate 100 years of Afrikaans!

Attendees can enjoy book launches, poetry readings, interviews, film screenings, and workshops that span multiple languages. The Festival's diverse program and interactive sessions explore the intersections of literature and various art forms.

The hallmark of the Festival is an intimate, warm and inclusive atmosphere. Events are hosted in historic venues like the Victoria Manor Hotel and Schreiner House, all within walking distance, fostering a sense of community among participants. Evening gatherings often include dinner-theatre performances, fireside chats, and open mic sessions, complemented by hearty Karoo cuisine and warm hospitality.

Whether you're a literary enthusiast, a curious traveler, or someone seeking inspiration, the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival offers a unique opportunity to engage with South Africa's rich literary heritage and the enduring spirit of the Karoo.

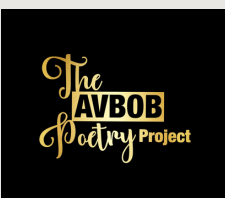
We wish to welcome You to the beautiful and inspirational Karoo!

Proudly Sponsored by:



Karoo Writers Festival

Thursday, 19 June	What's Happening?	Featuring
18:30	Tryst - An evocative journey of Poems, Stories & Songs	Melina Smit Mthombo Mali Liza Badenhorst Elsje Taljaard
Friday, 20 June	What's Happening	Featuring
08:30	Registration: The AVBOB Poetry Project @ SKWF	The AVBOB Poetry Project
09:00	HOW TO! Rhyme with Reason Kletsrym/Slam	Melina Smit Mthombo Mali Liza Badenhorst
10:30	Slam Jam Session	Feesgangers. Festival Goers
11:00	HOW TO! Embody Nature in Poetry	Madeleine Bazil & Casey Diepenveen from <i>Holding Thumbs Productions</i>
12:30	Early Lunch Show & Tell	Visual Material Holding Thumbs Production Company
13:30	Walkabout- Afrikaans Amptelik 100	Corné Slabbert / Izak de Vries
14:30	If the walls could talk Art Rocks vs Graffiti	Kevin Davie
15:30	HOW TO! Use Art Inspired Stories	Melina Smit
17:00	Open Mic Jam Session	Feesgangers. Festival Goers. Cradock Youth
18:30	Dinner. <i>In search of Olive Schreiner</i> film screening	Produced by Lisba Vosloo



Pricing:
*All day Incl. lunch - R200 / Lunch Only- R100
 session - R50 / session only Dinner - R200*



Karoo Writers Festival

SATURDAY, 21 JUNE	What's Happening?	Featuring
08:00	<i>Business Breakfast</i> <i>R150 (incl. if you are staying over)</i> Write ideas to boost your Business.	Tammy Southby, Ronel Wright, Melvin Iverson & Myrlene Alberts
09:00	Cradock UNESCO City of Literature Bid & The Who's Who of Olive Schreiner	Lisa Ker and Team
9:30	Sunshine Simplicities Stories	Tammy Southby
10:00	Latest from amazing Amazwi	AMAZWI
11:00	The many facets of Olive Schreiner	Lisba Vosloo, Madelein Brazil and Kevin Davies interviewed by Izak de Vries
12:00	Afrikaans is ouer as 'n 100	Izak de Vries and Rhuhan Fourie
12:30	Showcasing Local Writers and their work	Including Jimmie Simons, Freda Froehlick, Morne Taks, Junayda Abrahams, Luyolo Stengile et al
13:00	Lunch with Schreiner Fest Fans - R100 pp	Denise Jack, Elsabe and Gideon Groenewald et al
15:00	Afternoon stroll through Cradock: Streets of Stories/ Strate van stories	Pieter van der Westhuizen
17:30	Karoo in Pictures	Chris and Julie Marais
18:30	Karoo Dinner - Savour favourite Olive stories over a lingering Karoo Dinner. R200pp	With Tony Jackman
	Fireside Chats	

Pricing: All day incl. lunch - R200 | Lunch R100 Dinner R200 | Per Session - R50

Cradock's UNESCO City of Literature Application: A Long-Term Investment in Cultural and Economic Growth



Cradock's application to become a UNESCO City of Literature is more than just a recognition of its literary heritage—it is a visionary step toward sustainable cultural and economic development. By aligning itself with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Cradock positions itself among an international cohort of cities committed to placing creativity and literature at the heart of their development strategies.

At the core of this initiative is the town's rich historical and literary legacy, shaped by influential figures like Olive Schreiner and Etienne van Heerden, and celebrated through annual events such as the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival. This foundation provides a powerful narrative for positioning Cradock as a literary destination with authentic roots and ongoing relevance.

In the long run, UNESCO designation can unlock several transformative benefits for Cradock:

Tourism and Economic Stimulation

International recognition will attract cultural tourists, scholars, and literary enthusiasts to Cradock, boosting local businesses—from guesthouses and restaurants to museums and bookshops. A focused literary tourism strategy can extend visitor stays and diversify tourism offerings.

Youth Empowerment and Education

Literature-based programs can be integrated into schools and youth centres, promoting literacy, critical thinking, and creative expression. By celebrating local voices and stories, the initiative can foster pride and aspiration among young people in the region.

Creative Industry Growth

A City of Literature designation encourages the growth of creative industries—publishing, media, performance arts, and design. This could lead to new job opportunities, entrepreneurship, and local investment in creative infrastructure.

Global Cultural Exchange

Through the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Cradock would gain access to international partnerships, funding opportunities, and collaborative projects. This could lead to writer residencies, festivals, and joint publications, allowing Cradock to share its stories with the world while learning from other cities.

Preservation of Heritage and Identity

Emphasising literature as a tool for development helps preserve Cradock's cultural memory. Initiatives rooted in local history can elevate underrepresented narratives and protect indigenous languages and traditions through storytelling.

Cradock's application is not just about past achievements—it is a forward-looking declaration that creativity, education, and culture are central to its future. By becoming a UNESCO City of Literature, Cradock can catalyse a new chapter of inclusive growth, placing the power of words at the heart of its transformation.

UNESCO BID - Cradock's Essential Spaces for Creative Expression and Cultural Education

Cradock boasts numerous facilities that play a crucial role in fostering creative expression and cultural education within the community. These spaces collectively enrich the city's vibrant cultural landscape, ensuring that creative opportunities and cultural experiences are accessible to all residents, regardless of their backgrounds.

Vusubuntu Cultural Centre

The Vusubuntu Cultural Centre serves as a dynamic hub and venue, hosting a variety of events while providing a space significant to creativity and culture.

Sonskyn Centre

The Sonskyn Centre is a cultural and creative venue frequented by various Writers Groups, Forums, and particularly Youth Groups, all guided by local writer Freda Frolich.

Cradock Four Garden of Remembrance and Auditorium

The Cradock Four Garden of Remembrance and Auditorium stands as a meaningful historical site, honoring the Cradock Four and their contributions to the anti-apartheid movement. This museum not only preserves the legacy of these heroes but also organizes cultural events and exhibitions that engage the public and educate visitors about the region's history.

Schreiner House

In partnership with the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival, Schreiner House offers a dedicated program for disadvantaged youth, focusing on the city's predominant languages: Afrikaans and Xhosa.

Revitalising Cradock's Cultural Heritage

Renovating the Schreiner House is a pivotal step in preserving literary heritage while creating a platform for diverse cultural exchanges. This historic site has transformed into a lively venue for literary events, workshops, and exhibitions, attracting participation from local government, private sponsors, and cultural enthusiasts.

The enhancement of the Cradock Four Garden of Remembrance showcases the strength of collaboration among various stakeholders. By turning this area into a respectful memorial and gathering space, the project has brought together civil society, local artists, and educational institutions to honor the legacy of the Cradock Four, nurturing a sense of shared history and community.

The upgrade of the Cradock Civic Centre aims to rejuvenate this municipal building, transforming it into a vibrant hub for cultural and creative activities. Its modernization will create an accessible venue for conferences, creative workshops, and public events, thereby strengthening connections between local government, the creative sector, and the broader community.

Together, these initiatives reinforce Cradock's dedication to cultural collaboration and community involvement.

Library at the End of the World Project - in Market Street - the Street of Stories

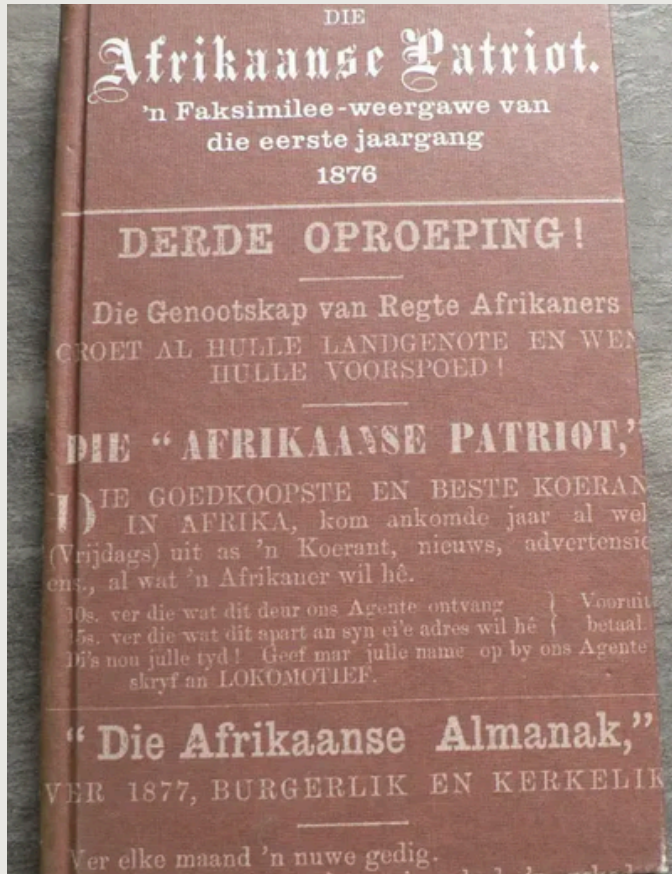
The "Library at the End of the World Project" is another initiative aimed at fostering a culture of reading and learning amongst the locals. This innovative project not only provides access to a wide range of books and resources but also serves as a community hub where people can gather, share knowledge, and participate in various educational programs.



This year is a landmark year as we eagerly await for Cradock to be announced as an UNESCO City of Literature.

AFRIKAANS 100

100 Jaar van Erkenning, Eeue van Erfenis



In 2025 vier Afrikaans ’n eeu van amptelike erkenning – 100 jaar sedert dit op 8 Mei 1925 as amptelike taal van Suid-Afrika verklaar is. Hierdie geskiedkundige besluit het nie net Nederlands vervang nie, maar het ook die pad gebaan vir ’n taal wat die stemme van uiteenlopende gemeenskappe begin verteenwoordig het – van die plattelandse Karoo tot die strate van Kaapstad, van onderwysers tot digters, van kerk tot kombuis. Maar die geskiedenis van Afrikaans begin nie in 1925 nie. Trouens, dit het lank voor daardie datum begin asemhaal – in huise, moskees, markpleine en op die stoep van koloniale huise. Een van die mees noemenswaardige oomblikke in Afrikaans se vroeë geskiedenis was in 1868, oë die eerste publikasie in Afrikaans die lig gesien het: "’n Mengelmoes van Gedigte" deur L.H. Meurant. Hierdie skrywer het die volkstaal begin vaslê in

geskrewe vorm – ’n taal wat toe nog as onbeskaafd beskou is, maar in werklikheid die begin was van ’n unieke kulturele beweging.

Afrikaans het ontstaan uit kontak tussen mense van verskillende tale en kulture – ’n smeltkroes van Nederlands, Khoisan-tale, Maleis, Portugees, Frans, en later Engels. Dit was die taal van die slawe, die vryburgers, die Khoi en die boere. Dié taal het gevorm en gevloei deur generasies van sprekers wat dit hul eie gemaak het, elk met hul eie klem, idioome en kultuur.

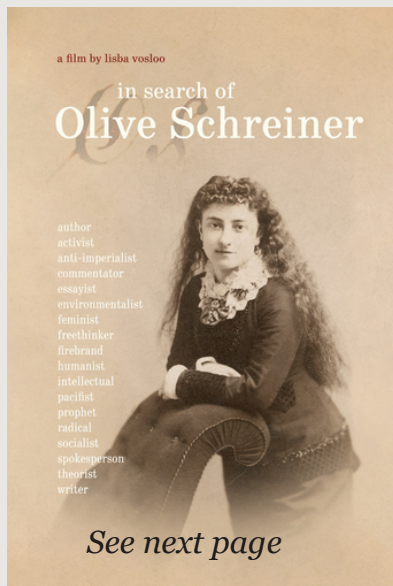
Die pad na erkenning was nie maklik nie. Afrikaans moes homself bewys teenoor die ouer en "meer gesiene" Nederlands, en later, oorleef teen die mag van Engels. Tog het digters soos C.J. Langenhoven, wat aktief geveg het vir die erkenning van Afrikaans, en skrywers soos Olive Schreiner, wat reeds vroeë taaldiversiteit in hul werk herken het, ’n grondslag gelê vir die taal se intellektuele en kulturele ontwikkeling.

Vandag is Afrikaans ’n wêreldklas taal. Dit is die moedertaal van sowat 7 miljoen Suid-Afrikaners, en ’n tweede of derde taal vir miljoene meer. Dit leef in musiek, literatuur, komedie, films, televisie, akademie, en op sosiale media. Van die gedigte van Antjie Krog tot die lirieke van Spoegwolf, van drama op die verhoog tot TikTok-video’s – Afrikaans beweeg saam met die tyd. Hierdie 100-jaar viering is meer as net ’n gedenkdatum. Dis ’n viering van ’n taal wat oorleef het, ontwikkel het, en steeds die harte van sy sprekers roer. Dis ook ’n oproep aan jong mense – aan ’n nuwe geslag Afrikaanse digters, kunstenaars, denkers en dromers – om die taal verder te dra, op hul eie manier, met hul eie stem. Afrikaans is nie net ’n taal van die verlede nie. Dit is ’n taal van vandag – en van môre



Casey Diepeveen

Casey Diepeveen is a multi-arts producer recognized for projects like *ekstasis* (Cannes YDAs), reaching (Infected the City), and the Italian-SA feature *Trifole*. She holds degrees in Industrial Psychology, Political Science, and Strategic Brand Communications, plus film training from New York Film Academy. Her work has received international support from both public and private funders.



Madeleine Bazil

Madeleine Bazil is a South African multidisciplinary artist and writer whose documentary debut *Grandpa Ernest Speaks* (2021) premiered at the Prague International Indie Film Festival and screened internationally. She has exhibited photography in the UK, US, and South Africa, and her writing appears in various journals. Madeleine holds MAs from the University of Cape Town and the University of St Andrews, and her work explores themes of memory, place, and identity.

In Search of Olive Schreiner

This first-ever documentary feature film on the world-famous author of *The Story of an African Farm* - feminist, pacifist and political commentator Olive Schreiner - is an epic journey through her extraordinary life and work against the backdrop of her heartland, the Karoo. Her life was inextricably linked to the suffering caused not only by the South African or Anglo Boer War, but also World War I.



Lisba Vosloo

Cape Town-based filmmaker with over 25 years of experience in the South African film and television industry. Educated at Stellenbosch University and Wits, she has contributed as a researcher, editor, producer, and director on numerous award-winning projects. Notable works include *District 6, there once was a place...*, *Revisiting Cape New Year*, and the acclaimed documentary *Scorched Earth*. She has also produced features on figures such as Beyers Naudé, Desmond Tutu, and N.P. van Wyk Louw. Driven by her interest in South African identity, history, and culture, Lisba continually engages with the complexities of documentary storytelling. Recently, she completed an Afrikaans documentary on Olive Schreiner and is currently developing an extended English-language documentary on Schreiner, utilizing the Olive Schreiner Letters Online.

One of the most striking moments in *In Search of Olive Schreiner*, directed by Lisba Vosloo, is the poignant scene where Schreiner, portrayed through a blend of archival material and dramatised reenactment, stands alone in the vast expanse of the Karoo. The camera captures her silhouette against the stark landscape, evoking the solitude and introspection that permeated much of her life and work. This visual metaphor powerfully conveys her internal struggle and unwavering commitment to social justice, feminism, and anti-imperialism.

In this scene, Schreiner reflects on the societal constraints imposed on women of her time, drawing parallels between the desolate environment and the isolation she felt as a woman challenging the status quo. Her voiceover, taken from her writings, resonates with a timeless relevance, emphasising the enduring nature of her advocacy for equality and human rights.

This moment stands out not only for its emotional depth but also for its cinematic artistry, encapsulating the essence of Schreiner's legacy and the film's overarching narrative.

a film by lisba vosloo

in search of Olive Schreiner

author
activist
anti-imperialist
commentator
essayist
environmentalist
feminist
freethinker
firebrand
humanist
intellectual
pacifist
prophet
radical
socialist
spokesperson
theorist
writer



Fact About Olive

Schreiner requested to be buried on Buffelskop, a mountain near Cradock, alongside her baby and pet dog and horse—her sanctuary in life and death.



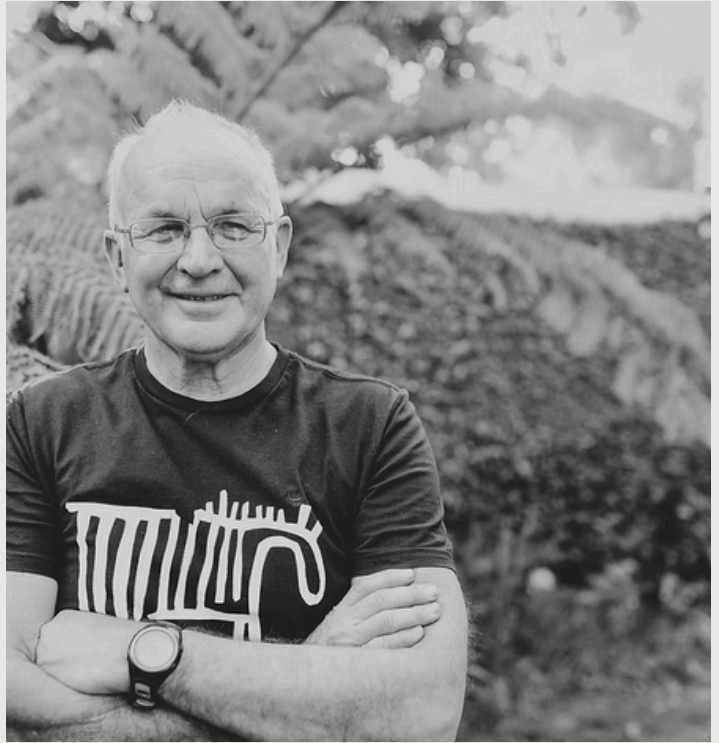
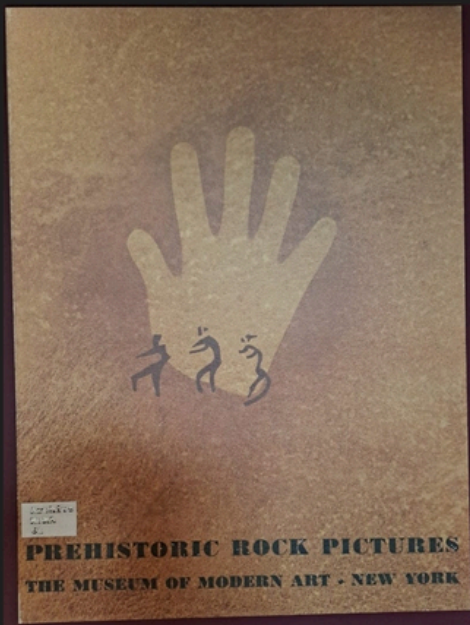
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Rock shelter and art gallery

How African rock art
helped shape modernism

Kevin Davie. ESSA, June, 2024



Kevin Davie

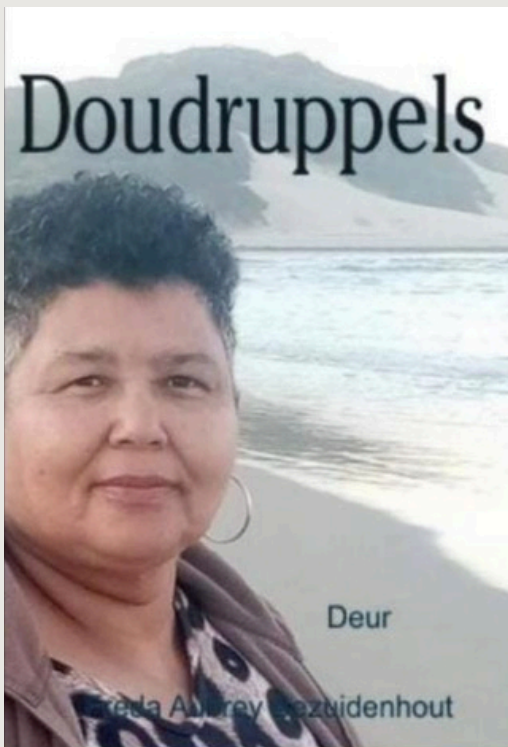
South African researcher, writer, and speaker whose current work explores Olive Schreiner's pivotal role in shaping South Africa's national parks and her visionary environmental thinking. His research delves into Schreiner's advocacy for vast protected areas—described as the “lungs of the country”—and her posthumously published essays, which highlight the interconnectedness of all living things.

Kevin also presents on the influence of ancient African rock art on modern art, tracing its impact from the continent's prehistoric sites to major European avant-garde artists such as Picasso, Miro, Klee, Arp, and Kandinsky. His visually rich talks draw on the legacy of ethnologist Leo Frobenius's expeditions, whose copies of ancient art inspired new movements and were even exhibited at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1937. Kevin has presented on these subjects at venues including the InsideOut Centre for the Arts in Johannesburg.



Scan this QR code to
learn more about
How African rock
art helped shape
modernism

*“The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read” - Mark Twain.
Mark and his family slept in our Victoria Hotel in Cradock 28 and 29 June 1896.*



Freda Frolich

Freda was born and raised in Cradock, a town that has always held a special place in her heart. Her passion for writing was evident from an early age, as she crafted beautiful essays during her primary school years. A true dreamer at heart, Freda often finds herself wandering into the world of her imagination.

In 2021, amidst the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, she published her first book—an achievement that marked the beginning of her journey as an author. Her second book is still in the making, quietly taking shape, with many more stories waiting to be written. Freda describes her thoughts as sometimes waiting for her on a deserted station—stories and dreams she is determined to fetch and share with the world.



Daniel Jimmie Simons

Daniel Jimmie Simons has been an active and passionate participant in the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival (SKWF) since 2012/2013, initially dedicating himself to poetry. In those early years, Daniel penned numerous Afrikaans poems, sharing his work at the festival by invitation.

Through his continued involvement, Daniel became well acquainted with the festival's vibrant literary community, forging connections with esteemed writers such as Etienne van Heerden, Clinton V. du Plessis, and later the late Professor Hans, Daryl David, and Heinrich Wyngaardt, among others. Over time, he became a familiar face at SKWF, eventually expanding his focus to prose.

With ongoing encouragement and support from the organisers and the broader writers' family, Daniel has gone on to publish a poetry collection as well as three successful books—an achievement that stands as a testament to his dedication and literary growth within the festival's nurturing environment.

Afrikaans: A Century of Voice and Verse (1925–2025)

Born from the blending of Dutch, indigenous Khoi languages, Malay, Portuguese, and others, Afrikaans is a language of resilience and reinvention. From the poetic writings of C.J. Langenhoven to the sharp pens of dissident voices like Ingrid Jonker and Breyten Breytenbach, Afrikaans has housed both the soul of a people and the fire of social change.



Erika Bos

Erika Bos is 'n Afrikaanse onderwyser aan Cradock Hoërskool met 'n passie vir taal en storievertelling. Sy het 'n graad in Taal- en Literatuurstudie aan die Noordwes-Universiteit en het drie kinderstories op Storiwerf gepubliseer. Met 'n lisensiaat in Spraak en Drama bring sy haar stories lewendig na die verhoog. Skryf is vir haar 'n tuis-koms en ontdekking, 'n soektog na nuwe woorde en emosies.

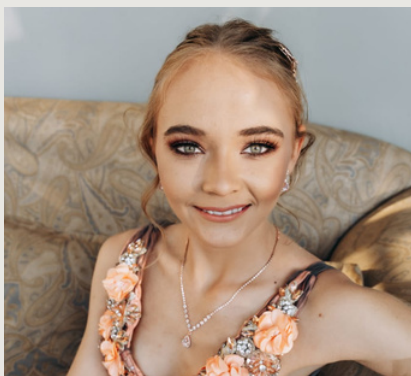


Kyra-lee Lazarus

Kyra-lee, from East London, Eastern Cape, now lives in Cradock. She has a passion for writing, focusing on her story, nature, and cherished people. At nineteen, she published her first Afrikaans poem in a national competition, marking a key point in her creative journey. Embracing her skin condition, vitiligo, as a source of strength, she uses her experiences to create authentic and hopeful poetry. Kyra-lee aims to share uplifting and challenging stories that celebrate the human spirit.

Anné Adam

Anné Adam is a passionate young writer at Cradock High School, where she also plays hockey and tennis. Her storytelling journey began in childhood and gained momentum in 2023 when she started sharing her work. Anné has received multiple Eisteddfod awards, including winning the Prose section at the 2024 Camdeboo Eisteddfod. Her piece "Ek Verlang," about her grandmother and the farm, was published in the national Poort anthology. She continues to write as she prepares for the 2025 Eisteddfods.



Richelle Jansen van Rensburg

Richelle Jansen van Rensburg is a gifted Grade 12 poet at Cradock High School, hailing from a Free State farm. Her passion for poetry began with early morning thoughts, leading to recognition when her poems "Verlate gange" and "Jou liefde" were published in the 2024 Poort anthology, followed by "Geagte onderwysers" in 2025. She attended a writers' conference that year, impressing Coenie de Villiers with her talent. Richelle now cherishes writing and aspires to publish her own collection.



Ineke van der Merwe

Ineke van der Merwe is a passionate and creative young woman with a deep love for the arts, beginning at age 6 with school plays. Her drama career took off with a leading role in the 2018 Kyknet series "Spoorloos." An avid writer since childhood, she has had her poems published, including "hart van goud" in the 2024 Poort writing competition and "Kalahari" in 2025. Ineke is committed to expressing her heart through her writing, believing it can make a difference.



Elsabé Groenewald (Venter)

Elsabé Groenewald (Venter) is in 1973 in Bloemfontein gebore. Ná haar skoolloopbaan aan Hoërskool Fichardtpark, voltooi sy 'n BA-graad in Tale aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat. Haar liefde vir stories en mense het haar van 2018 tot 2022 op 'n reis deur die Noord- en Oos-Kaap geneem as vryskutjoernalis. Tydens hierdie tyd lewer sy gereeld bydraes aan publikasies soos Die Burger (Oos-Kaap), Komani-Karoo Express, Landbouweekblad, Vrye Weekblad en GroundUp.

Elsabé is die trotse ma van vier seuns en twee dogters. Die dood van haar babaseuntjie in 2014 het 'n diepgaande ontwaking in haar lewe veroorsaak en 'n nuwe rigting aan haar pad gegee. Waar sy vroeër die lewe van 'n predikantsvrou gelei het, het sy op 47 haar sykouse en sandale verruil vir 'n sonhoed en stapstewels – 'n simbool van haar nuwe, vryer self.

In 2021 het sy met Gideon, 'n geoloog van Clarens, in die huwelik getree. Saam bedryf hulle vandag 'n knus gastehuisie en bied dinosourustoere aan, geïnspireer deur hul indrukwekkende fossielversameling in die Juweel van die Oos-Vrystaat.

Ten spyte van haar besige gesinslewe, vind Elsabé steeds vreugde in kreatiewe skryfwerk. Sy fokus veral op Afrikaanse poësie en kortverhale – 'n stil uitlaatklep vir haar lewensreis en verbeelding.

Gideon Hendrik Groenewald

Gideon Hendrik Groenewald: A Multifaceted Geologist and Palaeontologist

Gideon Hendrik Groenewald is a South African geologist and palaeontologist, holding a PhD that centers on the stratigraphy and sedimentology of the Karoo Basin. With a career that spans over four decades, he has mapped extensive regions of southern Africa, conducted groundbreaking research on the Karoo Supergroup, and collaborated with notable palaeontologists, including Prof. James Kitching.

Contributions and Community Engagement

He has made significant contributions to conservation and community involvement through his work with the Peace Parks Foundation and Golden Gate Highlands National Park, where he was affectionately referred to as Ntate Ditedu in Lesotho. Currently, Gideon serves as an Honorary Research Fellow at Wits University.

Personal Life

In 2021, he married writer and journalist Elsabé Groenewald. Together, they manage Clarens Dinosaur Hunting Expeditions, which offers engaging educational tours that blend science, storytelling, and the natural landscape.

Gideon takes great pride in being the father of Patricia, a PhD candidate in Archaeology in Cape Town, and David, a palaeontologist residing in Spain with his wife and young son.

'n Paar prettige feite oor Afrikaans

Afrikaans is die jongste Germaanse taal – dit het eers in die 17de eeu begin vorm aanneem in die Kaap.

Die eerste volledige Bybelvertaling in Afrikaans is in 1933 gepubliseer.

Afrikaans word ook buite Suid-Afrika gepraat, soos in Namibië, Botswana, Zimbabwe, en selfs in sommige dele van die VSA en Australië.



J.L. Powers

Jessica, better known by her pen name J.L. Powers, is an award-winning author, editor, and publisher with a deep connection to South Africa. While pursuing her PhD in African Studies, she lived in Imbali near Pietermaritzburg, where she immersed herself in Zulu culture and language—becoming more fluent than many South Africans. Her work explores the hopes and struggles of young people seeking a better life.

*Now based in El Paso, Texas, Jessica continues to maintain strong ties with South Africa, calling Cosmo City her second home. She is the author of several acclaimed young-adult novels, including *Broken Circle* (co-authored with her brother) and *Amina*, which won the 2016 USBBY Outstanding International Book Award. Her nonfiction work, *That Mad Game: Growing Up in a Warzone*, received multiple honours for its powerful global insight.*

*Jessica founded Catalyst Press in 2017 to champion African writers, illustrators, and stories rooted on the continent. She has also served as a creative writing lecturer, publicist, jurist for the NSK Neustadt Prize, and editor of the socially conscious blog *The Pirate Tree*.*

For J.L. Powers, storytelling is more than craft—it's a commitment to truth, justice, and amplifying unheard voices.



Read more on J.L. Powers



Izak de Vries

Izak de Vries is a passionate book lover whose life revolves around the written word. As someone deeply embedded in the world of publishing, he spends his days chasing deadlines—not just for work, but in pursuit of a lifelong dream to help stories find their readers.

Whether he's promoting new voices or championing beloved authors, Izak believes in the power of books to change lives. For him, every manuscript, launch, and literary event is more than a task—it's part of the adventure of living his dream, one page at a time.



Junayda Abrahams

Junayda Abrahams is a young and vibrant South African singing artist and a Grade 11 learner at Cradock High School. With a soothing voice and remarkable vocal talent, she has captured the hearts of the Cradock community from a young age. Junayda began participating in singing competitions early in her life and was awarded the trophy for Best Vocal Solo at the Eisteddfod in 2022.

In 2024, she received another accolade for Best Vocal Solo in French after performing a French song at the Eisteddfod and the annual gala event held by the Cradock business forum. Her performance left a lasting impression, making her a favourite among the Cradock audience. Recognising her potential, Junayda was chosen in 2024 by her school to take part in a master singing class presented by Coenie de Villiers and André Swartz. She has since performed at numerous events, including weddings, parties, church services, formal gatherings, and the Karoo Food Festival, further establishing herself as a cherished local performer.



Jaco de Waal

*Jaco de Waal is a South African creative entrepreneur, artist, and founder of GEM Solutions ZA, a youth-driven marketing agency focused on digital strategy, branding, and community upliftment. His work bridges the gap between visual storytelling and social impact. Known for emotionally powerful artworks such as *Beauty in the Dark* and *Unknown Sacrifices*, Jaco uses fineliner and color symbolism to explore themes like identity, addiction, and emotional healing. His art is deeply introspective, often serving as a mirror to broader societal issues. Through GEM Solutions ZA, Jaco launched a Youth Development Project that trains unemployed youth in marketing, creative thinking, and entrepreneurship. His leadership reflects a strong commitment to reducing youth unemployment, especially in the Eastern Cape. Jaco also played a central role in Cradock's bid to become a UNESCO City of Literature, helping position the town as a global cultural and literary hub. His unique blend of artistic vision and strategic thinking continues to shape projects that honour heritage, empower youth, and amplify rural voices.*

Balancing art, advocacy, and enterprise, Jaco continues to champion the stories, struggles, and strengths of the Karoo and its people. His work, both visual and strategic, reflects a powerful belief: that creativity can transform communities and preserve culture for generations to come.



Ruhan Fourie

Ruhan Fourie is 'n postdoktorale genoot aan die Beyers Naudé Sentrum vir Publieke Teologie aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Sy navorsing fokus op die geskiedenis van Christelike nasionalisme en antikommunisme in twintigste-eeuse Suid-Afrika. Sy debuutwerk, *Christian Nationalism and Anticommunism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, is in 2024 gepubliseer deur Routledge en die Christelike Lekturfonds en het die 2025 Desmond Tutu Gerrit Brand-prys ontvang.

In 2025 is Ruhan aangewys as die **LitNet Tuishuise Inwoonskrywer** in Cradock/Nxuba, waar hy 'n maand lank aan 'n biografie van Beyers Naudé werk. Hierdie projek ondersoek die lewe van Naudé, 'n invloedryke figuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis en seun van die naburige dorp Graaff-Reinet.

Ruhan se werk dra by tot die verdieping van begrip oor Suid-Afrika se komplekse geskiedenis en die rol van geloof en ideologie daarin.

Sien Ruhan Fourie by die Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival



Jakes Gerwel Foundation

The Jakes Gerwel Foundation is a South African nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the legacy of Professor Jakes Gerwel—an esteemed academic, anti-apartheid activist, and cultural visionary. Established by his wife, Phoebe Gerwel, after his passing in 2012, the Foundation champions the values he embodied: social justice, education, and the promotion of arts and culture.

Based in Somerset East (KwaNojoli), the Foundation operates from Paulet House, a restored 19th-century manor transformed into a literary residency and creative hub. Through mentorships, writing residencies, and cultural exchange programs, it supports both emerging and established writers, particularly in Afrikaans and its dialects, while fostering cross-cultural dialogue with international partners.

The Foundation also engages in broader social transformation initiatives, including educational outreach, youth development, and the preservation of South Africa's literary heritage. Its mission is rooted in the vision of an open, non-racial, and democratic society where all voices are heard and valued.



Read more on the Jakes Gerwel Foundation

This year is a landmark year as we eagerly anticipate for Cradock to be announced as an UNESCO City of Literature. We also celebrate 100 years of Afrikaans!



Mthombo Mali

Mthombokazi Mali hails from Cradock in the Karoo and proudly embodies her Xhosa heritage. Passionate about diversity, education, and community, she helped launch Cradock Young Entrepreneurs—mobilizing unemployed graduates through partnerships like Hello Cradock to uplift her hometown. A Media, Communications, and Culture graduate, she gained hospitality expertise at Victoria Manor Hotel before earning a City and Guilds diploma as a professional cook, which sparked her interest in tourism and hospitality.

As a dynamic master of ceremonies, Mthombokazi has hosted pageants and mentored young models, then shifted the narrative for Black women in business as Executive Chef at Karoo-Brew. There, she created jobs and forged a creative hub where local artists showcase their talents. Today, she serves on the Board of the Cradock Creative Arts and Culture Council, advocating for equal opportunities and using art to unite cultures.

Liza Badenhorst

Liza Badenhorst is an avid lover of the Arts in general, believing that there is much healing to be found in the freedom of expression through Art. “Poetry especially allows for such healing, both for the writer and reader. Capturing everyday feelings and issues in metaphors and moments where we are forced to change our perspective, poetry allows us to re-evaluate what we think we know and feel.”



Melina Smit

Melina Smit is a storyteller, ideator, and educator, known for her connection to slightly worn treasures like vintage books and melodies. As a songwriter, she captures the beauty of everyday life through emotion-filled lyrics. Passionate about education and shared ideas, she nurtures young minds and inspires community discussions with authenticity and warmth. Melina celebrates the power of community, inviting others to pause, listen, and honor the stories that shape our lives.





Shané de Beer

Shané de Beer is a passionate writer and educator with a love for stories that stir the heart and challenge the mind, dedicated to uplifting and inspiring young minds through the power of words.

She studied at North-West University, earning her Bachelor of Education in the Further Education and Training (FET) and Senior Phase with a focus on Mathematics and English—graduating in 2022 with distinction. Her commitment to education goes beyond the classroom—she motivates learners to find their voice through writing, encouraging creativity, self-expression, and confidence. Her journey as a storyteller began early, scribbling short stories in notebooks before her mother discovered "Who will help Neo?"—a heartfelt children's story inspired by the tragedy of rhino poaching. The story was self-published in 2012, marking the beginning of Shané's creative path. In high school, she fell in love with literature and art, turning her reflections into poetry. Her Afrikaans poem "Dieselfde Kam" was published in the 2018 edition of Poort, and while at university, she was selected twice among the top five poets in the Voices Poetry Competition hosted by the English Education Faculty. A self-proclaimed sensitive soul, Shané often explores themes of identity, humanity, and the quiet conflicts of everyday life in her writing. Whether through poetry or storytelling, she hopes to connect with others who see the world a little differently.



Luyolo Singatha Stengile

Luyolo Singatha Stengile is a South African author, HIV researcher, and non-profit director from the Eastern Cape. He has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of the Western Cape. After experiencing the dangers of Traditional Male Initiation firsthand, he founded a non-profit focusing on safe initiation practices and community education. Stengile collaborates with tribal leaders and health practitioners to tackle youth issues, including substance abuse and chronic illness.

*He participated in a study on "elite controllers" during the HIV/AIDS pandemic and wrote two books: **The Power Is in the Blood**, which discusses HIV and religion, and **Forgotten Children of the Rainbow Nation**, addressing the marginalization of South Africa's youth. Now 43, he continues to mentor young leaders and work on culturally sensitive public health solutions in his community.*

Did You Know?

Luyolo Singatha Stengile maintains a personal website, siuselele.org, where he regularly shares insights and updates on his work in HIV research, traditional practices, and community development.



The AVBOB Poetry Project and the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival (SKWF) have cultivated a dynamic partnership that enriches South Africa's literary landscape, particularly in the Eastern Cape. Since their collaboration began in 2018, they have co-hosted initiatives aimed at nurturing literary talent and promoting creative expression. One notable endeavor is the AVBOB Pop-Up Studio, launched in 2020, which produced a 12-part video series on creative life-skills. This series, a joint effort with Skills for Life Projects, serves as a free resource for educators and learners, promoting creativity, critical thinking, and communication

in virtual classrooms across South Africa. Furthermore, the partnership has facilitated immersive training sessions for Creative Arts and Languages educators in English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa. These workshops aim to empower teachers to cascade knowledge and inspire learners in their respective schools.

The collaboration also extends to community engagement, with events like mini poetry workshops and district competitions for young poets, fostering a love for poetry and creative writing among the youth.

Through these joint efforts, the AVBOB Poetry Project and the SKWF continue to celebrate and uplift South Africa's diverse voices, honoring the legacy of Olive Schreiner and contributing to the country's rich literary heritage.

The **AVBOB Poetry Project** is a heartfelt initiative that invites South Africans to express their deepest emotions—be it love, loss, hope, or healing—through the art of poetry. Launched in 2017, this annual competition is open to all citizens and embraces all 11 official languages, making it a truly inclusive platform for voices from every corner of the country.

Participants can submit up to 10 original poems online between August 1 and November 30 each year. Winning entries receive cash prizes, book vouchers, and the opportunity to have their work published in AVBOB's annual print anthology and online poetry library. Additionally, selected poems earn a R300 usage fee for publication on the AVBOB Poetry website.

Beyond the competition, the AVBOB Poetry Project serves as a repository of comfort, offering a vast collection of poems that provide solace and inspiration to those navigating life's pivotal moments.



AMAZWI

SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM OF LITERATURE



Photo: My Karoo Life



Did You Know?

Amazwi actively engages with schools and communities through educational programs, workshops, and exhibitions. For instance, during the International Museum Day celebrations, the museum hosted learners from various schools, providing them with interactive experiences that connect literature to cultural and environmental themes.

Amazwi - South African Museum of Literature

Amazwi South African Museum of Literature, located in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), is a national institution dedicated to preserving and celebrating South Africa's literary heritage across all its languages and cultures. Formerly known as the National English Literary Museum, Amazwi has expanded its scope to include literature in all indigenous languages, reflecting the country's rich linguistic diversity.

*Amazwi's connection to Olive Schreiner is both profound and enduring. As a pioneering feminist, anti-colonialist, and author of the seminal novel *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner's legacy is preserved through the Schreiner House in Cradock, a satellite museum managed by Amazwi. This historic house, where Schreiner lived during her formative years, offers visitors an intimate glimpse into her life, showcasing personal artifacts, parts of her and her husband's libraries, and exhibitions that delve into her contributions to literature and social activism.*

The Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival, held annually in Cradock, further cements Amazwi's commitment to literary promotion. As a founding sponsor, Amazwi plays a pivotal role in this festival, which celebrates the region's literary heritage and provides a platform for writers, poets, and scholars to engage with the public. Events often include readings, discussions, and workshops, many of which are hosted at the Schreiner House, emphasising the living legacy of Olive Schreiner and the ongoing vibrancy of South African literature.

Through its stewardship of the Schreiner House and active participation in the Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival, Amazwi not only honors the memory of Olive Schreiner but also fosters a dynamic space for literary exploration and cultural dialogue in South Africa.



Olive Schreiner

Olive Schreiner was a pioneering literary figure whose innovative approach helped shape the course of South African and international literature. Through her experimental narrative techniques and her willingness to tackle contentious subjects, Schreiner introduced a new psychological depth and realism to fiction, moving away from the prevailing Victorian moralism of her time. Her books frequently combined autobiography with allegory, philosophical dialogue, and vivid descriptions of the South African landscape, providing a distinctive voice in English-language literature.

Schreiner's writing addressed themes of social justice, identity, and personal freedom, and was particularly groundbreaking in its nuanced treatment of women's experiences and the complexities of colonial society. Her short stories and allegories, such as those in *Dreams* (1890), employed poetic symbolism to critique materialism, gender oppression, and the power structures of her era. These works influenced not only feminist thought but also inspired later generations of South African writers who grappled with issues of race, class, and gender.

In addition to her novels, Schreiner was a prolific essayist and letter-writer, with an extensive correspondence that reveals her wide network of intellectual connections across continents. Her ideas about social reform, pacifism, and human rights circulated widely and contributed to progressive debates in both South Africa and Britain. By championing artistic honesty and advocating for the authentic representation of marginalised voices, Schreiner set a precedent for socially engaged literature and continues to be studied for her enduring contributions to feminist and postcolonial criticism.

Fun Facts

- ✦ Olive often wrote under the pseudonym "Ralph Iron", including for her groundbreaking novel *The Story of an African Farm*.
- ✦ During the Anglo-Boer War, Olive spoke out fiercely against both British imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism—making enemies on both sides.
- ✦ Despite Olive's ill health and tiny stature (**under 5 feet tall**), Schreiner was a formidable public intellectual whose voice echoed globally.
- ✦ Olive Schreiner lived in multiple towns across the Karoo, including Cradock, Hanover, and Kimberley, often moving for **health or political reasons**.
- ✦ In 2003, Olive Schreiner was posthumously awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in Gold, South Africa's highest honor for cultural achievement.



Sandra Antrobus – Heritage & Literary Visionary of Cradock

“But in the literary life of South Africa, Sandra Antrobus stands head and shoulders above anyone else. She played a pivotal role in the founding of the Olive Schreiner Museum in 1986. She was responsible for the period decoration of the museum. She must have possessed a literary heart, because many of the Tuishuise are named after the regions of famous writers, such as Olive Schreiner, Etienne van Heerden, Guy Butler and Iris Vaughan. She also decorated Doornkop in the Mountain Zebra National Park, which was the setting for the filming of The story of an African farm. She can single-handedly lay claim to being the person under whose loving hand the Schreiner Festival as well as the Etienne van Heerden Veldsoirée were raised – and they continue to flourish’.

Darryl Earl David Founder of Schreiner Karoo Writers Festival and many other Festivals and Founder Booktown Richmond Northern Cape Karoo.



Etienne van Heerden Veldsoirée Cradock 25-27 July 2025

Die Etienne van Heerden Veldsoirée (25 - 27 Julie) is ’n unieke literêre en kulturele naweek wat in Cradock plaasvind en die gees van die Karoo vier. Hierdie intieme geleentheid bied skryfwerkswinkels, inspirerende gesprekke en kultuurtoegte – alles gekombineer met ware Karoo-gasvryheid, plaaslike disse en knetterende vure.

Hoogtepunte sluit in die ATKV-skryfskool, besprekings oor Afrikaanse letterkunde, identiteit, kunsmatige intelligensie en die geskiedenis van die Oos-Kaap. Feesgangers besoek ook historiese plekke soos Olive Schreiner se graf op Buffelskop.

Die Veldsoirée vind plaas by Die Tuishuise, Victoria Manor en Buffelshoek DiRosie Lodge – plekke wat die outentieke Karoo-ervaring perfek vasvang.

Boekebedonnerd Richmond NC

30 Oct - 1st Nov 2025

Bookbedonnerd is an annual book festival held in the Karoo town of Richmond, South Africa, which is also the country's only designated Book Town. The festival, held from October 31st to November 2nd, 2024, celebrates literature, culture, and the "joyous madness" that books inspire. Bookbedonnerd is a unique event that attracts writers, readers, and publishers, offering a literary experience against the stunning Karoo backdrop.

