

Submit a full paper, including abstract, in English (no longer than 5,000 words or 20 pages, single-spaced, 12-point Arial) in MS Word File. Follow the formatting guidelines of the MLA Handbook, 8th edition. Deadline: 1 July 2022.

Mrs Petra Potočnik
The Slovenian Section of IBBY/ Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS
(The Slovenian Reading Badge Society)
e-mail: petra.potocnik@bralnaznacka.si

The Golden Reader Project – Stories that invite you into the world of reading

The Reading Badge is both the name and the trademark for a cultural and educational movement in Slovenia, encouraging the development of reading habits and reading culture among the youth. The Reading Badge is one of the most intimate free activities, but at the same time very popular as it includes up to 70% of preschool and primary school children and a smaller number of high school students and adults. Teachers and librarians have found the movement to be an excellent way and an opportunity to make reading popular. In 2011, it was awarded The Golden Order of Merit of the Republic of Slovenia and in 2020, it was recognized by the Slovenian section of IBBY for outstanding achievements in the field of promotion of youth literature and reading. In 2019, the Reading Badge was listed in The National Register of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Reading Badge has a long history of multidisciplinary work in the field of reading culture. One of many projects is The Golden Reader. Since 2004, each first-grader in primary school has been given a picture book and thousands of faithful readers were presented with a book at the end of their primary schooling. We donated more than 660,000 books¹! The donated books are considered a gift, a source of motivation, and an invitation to enter the fascinating world of stories. The books promote family reading, help develop reading habits and reading culture and help raise readers who will love and enjoy reading for pleasure all their lives.

¹ Slovenia is a country in Central Europe. Slovenia covers 20,271 square kilometers (7,827 sq mi), and has a population of 2.1 million.



Mrs Petra Potočnik
The Slovenian Section of IBBY/Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS (The Slovenian Reading Badge Society)
e-mail: petra.potocnik@bralnaznacka.si

The Golden Reader Project – Stories that invite you into the world of reading

38th IBBY World Congress, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 5-8 September 2022: The Power of Stories

The Slovenian Reading Badge Society / Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS **What (and Why) is a Reading Badge?**

The Reading Badge was initially a mentoring practice at the Prevalje primary school (a small city in the north of Slovenia). The movement was founded in the school year 1960/61 by Slovenian language professor Stanko Kotnik and author of youth literature Leopold Suhodolčan.

The two of them turned the existing reading club into “*The Competition for the Reading Badge*”, quite a challenging activity. They wanted to find an escape from school formalities. The expansion of all possible sports competitions encouraged them to introduce a new spiritual parallel.

The idea of *The Reading Badge* came to Kotnik while he was reading a report about a similar form of literary education done by the Czechs. He grounded the new competition: “*It is a noble cultural competition where young people compete with their peers and themselves. They are awarded the winning badge for success but at the same time they feel enriched inside.*”



The movement’s initiatives today bring together about 140,000 readers each year. Reading is supported by 7,000 mentors (this includes only primary schools) – librarians, teachers and other experts, as well as authors and publishers; children are also encouraged to read by their families.

The Reading Badge programs even transcend Slovenian borders to reach Slovenian communities abroad.

The mission of the Reading Badge, supported by schools, libraries, and similar organizations, is to promote the lifelong development of reading culture and reading literacy.

Due to its significant role in the national culture, the Reading Badge is listed by the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The main objectives of The Slovenian Reading Badge Society



Slovenian Reading Badge Society:

- **Provides guidelines** for the selection of reading materials and develops the tools needed for their use.
- **Shares expert knowledge** on the development of modern strategies for encouraging reading.
- **Informs** about the development of reading, writing and literary culture.
- **Ensures efficient and quick integration** of the network of participants and an unimpeded flow of information.
- **Organizes programmes** of specialized education and exchanges.
- **Coordinates** visits of Slovenian authors.
- **Provides** motivational **book gifts** and works to improve the quality of youth literature.
- **Prepares motivational** materials and certificates.
- **Develops** various **pilot programmes and projects** for different age groups (e.g. a programme of intergenerational reading, *Reading Tea Parties*).
- **Collaborates** with similar organizations in Slovenia and elsewhere (being one of the initiators of the *National Month of Reading Together* network; heading the *Reading Together* promotion programme, etc.).
- The Slovenian Reading Badge Society is **a member** of the Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth and is internationally active as a member of the Slovenian Section of IBBY and the Federation of European Literacy Associations.



Illustration: Jelka Reichman

The Golden Reader Project

One of the many projects we run in our Society is **The Golden Reader** project. Since 2004, each student has been given a picture book at the beginning of primary school, and thousands of faithful readers were presented with a book at the end of their primary schooling.

The books are considered a gift and a motivational tool. They promote family reading, help develop reading habits and reading culture and help to raise young readers who will love and enjoy reading all their life.

The **collection of books The Golden Reader** is one of the most important projects of our Society. We have been building it for almost 20 years with the support of sponsors and other collaborators.

The Beginning



The publishing and promotional project **The Golden Reader** was developed by **Slavko Pregl**, one of the most prominent Slovenian authors, editors and publishers, who is best known for his youth literature.

In 2004 (when the project began), he was the president of the Slovenian Reading Badge Society. He developed the project based on his knowledge

of the young readers' habits and broad insight into the field of books in Slovenia and internationally as well.

He is actively involved in the project to this day and takes care of both its content aspects and its place in the Slovenian cultural space.

The project began because of the appreciation of the importance of domestic libraries in the development of reading culture, and the desire for quality (modern) books to reach as many young readers as possible.

The book collection is structurally divided into two parts, as it is intended for two age groups:

- a) **first-graders** (and their families), Number of copies: 25,000²;
- b) **young readers** („Golden Readers“) at the end of primary school („**Golden reader**“: a reader who completes the Reading Badge programme in all nine grades of primary school); Number of copies: 9,000.

² The average circulation of printed books in Slovenia is about 1,000 copies.

Selection Criteria

The editorial main goal for the selection of books for both age groups is to choose a quality (contemporary) book for children and young people.

Award-winning and nominated contemporary literary works and popular non-fiction books for children and young people are selected.

We adjusted the campaign according to the funds we managed to obtain.

For the first five years, *Golden Readers* were given two books: one belletristic/literary and one non-fiction book.

From the school year 2008/2009, only one book is presented to *Golden Readers*, but we are careful that there is a balance between poetry, fiction, and non-fiction books.

Occasionally, exceptional editions of canonical texts related to important anniversaries and cultural milestones are selected.

From time to time, new works have been released exclusively for this collection, edited by experts from various fields.

This year's *Golden Readers* were gifted the book *Where the wind sleeps (Kjer veter spi)* by Damijan Šinigoj, which was nominated for various awards for youth literature and awarded with *desetnica*, an award given by the Slovenian Writers' Association.

The theme of the book (speleology, caving) coincides perfectly with the main theme of this year's **National Month of Reading Together (NMRT)/ Reading Together project³ - Reading and movement** (in terms of sports, various outdoor activities, deriving from a quote by Richard Steel: „*Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body*“ ...)

The Extent of the Project

The uniqueness of the project is, above all, its dimensional emphasis, as the reprint of the selected picture book is given to a whole generation of first-graders in Slovenia and the entire Slovenian cultural space.

The reprint of the book for *Golden Readers* covers almost 40% of the ninth-graders and is also intended for all *Golden Readers* in the Slovenian cultural space.

³ NMRT is a project that we have been implementing together with the initiators since 2018. The initiators and organizers of the NMRT collaborate to improve the recognition of the importance of reading literacy and reading culture at the national level and facilitate a more comprehensive national engagement plan in this important field. NMRT is complemented by a public awareness campaign called **Reading Together** (headed by the Slovenian Reading Badge Society).

We have donated **670,500 books!** - **331,500** books to nineteen generations of *Golden Readers*, **314,000** copies of book gifts for first-graders and **25,000** other books of the Slovenian Reading Badge Society.

The Golden Reader project is considered the longest-lasting and most extensive book gift promotion campaign ever in the field of books for children and young people in Slovenia.

A key promotional element of the project is its connection with the economy, as most of the funds for the project's implementation come from the support of sponsors and donors (partly supplemented by public resources since 2009: the Slovenian Book Agency).

The connection with the economy is also important for the promotion of books for children and young people in the wider community that is not directly related to the field of books and reading culture.

Following the example of the Golden Reader project, various successful connections between books and the economy, as well as various public book gift projects and programs have been more courageously established in Slovenia.

Accompanying activities

Golden readers

When the book is published, a press conference with the participation of Reading Badge representatives and sponsors is organized.

At the press conference, the entire *Golden Reader* collection is presented as well as the current book. This is followed by a conversation with the author of the book, the editor and the illustrator if there is one. Students also take an active part in the press conference.

Last year's celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Reading Badge began (with the support of the Zoom application) with a **press conference** on the release of the book for „Golden Readers“ and a conversation with the author. The chosen book was *Partljič.doc*, a collection of the most important works of Tone Partljič, a modern Slovenian author. The editor Miha Mohor created a special set of texts he thought could be interesting for young readers just for this occasion - as a tribute to the 80th birthday of the author, laureate of the most important national culture award (Prešeren Prize) and an honorary member of the Reading Badge Tone Partljič.

A central closing event for the *Golden Readers* is also prepared every year. We include a conversation with the book's creators in the program of the main event and an accompanying entertainment program.

The event is attended by about 1,200 *Golden Readers* (one-fifth of all *Golden Readers*) and their mentors from all over Slovenia. Traditionally, the best *Golden Readers* from Slovenian schools in Italy (Slovenian minority) also come to this event.

In 2021, the event for *Golden Readers* could not be carried out live, instead, we organized an online festival of meetings with some of the most prominent Slovenian authors for young readers, which ran for 5 days in May (the conversation with Tone Partljič was followed by 1800 participants).



This year's event for Golden Readers marked the end of a two-year celebration of the round jubilee of the Reading Badge movement. At the event, we paid a tribute to deserving reading mentors, long-term collaborators and all those who have encouraged and supported the Reading Badge movement all these years.

The keynote speaker was the President of Slovenia, Borut Pahor - last year, he handed over honorary patronage over the events marking the 60th anniversary of the movement to the Reading Badge.

We also prepared an online meeting with the author Damijan Šinigoj and Gaja Kos, the editor of this year's book *Where the wind sleeps (Kjer veter spi)*. The conversation was followed by more than 1000 *Golden Readers*!

First-graders

We make sure schools receive books at the beginning of the school year (September 1st). Schools are asked to hand out picture books **on September 17th**.

On September 17th, we celebrate **Golden Book Day** (the day of birth and death of Slovenian writer, poet and translator France Bevk, who was one of the first collaborators and supporters of the Reading Badge movement). This day marks the beginning of the new reading season. The picture book is an invitation to first-graders (and their families!) into the world of reading.





At six selected primary schools (five schools in Slovenia and one Slovenian school in Italy, where the Slovenian minority lives), the picture books are ceremoniously distributed to first-graders by prominent Slovenian authors.

A press release is organized together with the sponsor of the campaign.

Right now, the print and distribution of books for first-graders are in preparation. This year's selected book is a picture book called *How Bibi and Gusti rewound the Hill* (*Kako sta Bibi in Gusti prevzijačila hrib*) by Ida Mlakar Črnič. The selection of the book also fits perfectly with the main theme of this year's National Month of Reading Together/Reading Together project: Reading and movement.

The added value of the project

The added value of the project is not only in the fact that young readers receive a high-quality book as a gift, the exceptionality and comprehensiveness of the project are also reflected in many other important highlights:

- Enrichment of home libraries;
- Enrichment of school libraries - three additional books per school are donated every year;
- Encouraging family reading;
- Development of reading habits and reading culture among children and young people;
- Children and young people are helped in their search for beauty and values in the rich world of literature, encouraging them to be creative and active participants in the reading community.
- Promotion of intergenerational reading - a few additional copies are devoted to the implementation in the coming years;
- Data collection of tracking reading habits - a questionnaire completed by mentors for each school separately - data analysis is very valuable for the further development of future plans for our Society.
- Promotion of authors and illustrators (performances in schools, public attention) as well as publishing houses where the originals of the books were published;
- Different motivational and informational materials for children and informational and/or educational materials for teachers, librarians, and parents.

The list of books from the project Golden Reader, with translations in other languages

THE ENTIRE COLLECTION OF GIFT BOOK FOR FIRST-GRADERS
17 years- 314.000books



Tabel 1

Books from the project Golden Reader First-graders	School year	Translation
Sweet-toothed Bears (Medvedki sladkosnedki) by Srečko Kosovel (Illustrations: Jelka Reichman) Mladinska knjiga	2004/2005	Sweet-toothed Bears poetry, bears Translated to: Croatian: Medvjedi medojedi , Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1986
School is not for me (Šola ni zame) by Cvetka Sokolov (Illustrations: Peter Škerl) Mladinska knjiga	2005/2006	
Martin Krpan by Fran Levstik (for two generations – first- and second-graders) (Illustrations: Hinko Smrekar) Prešernova družba	2007/2008 (also for first-graders of the school year 2006/2007)	Martin Krpan (literary hero), smuggling, salt Translated to: Serbian (21), Macedonian (8), German (6), Croatian (8), Russian (3), Italian (2), French (1), Hungarian (1), multilingual (1), Occitan (1), Slovak (1), Spanish (1), Swedish (1)

<p>My Daddy (Moj očka) by Lila Prap Mladinska knjiga</p>	<p>2008/2009</p>	<p>My Daddy fathers, imaginary animals</p> <p>Translated to: Chinese (2), English (2), Danish (1), French (1), German (1), Modern Greek (1), Hebrew (1), Croatian (1), Italian (1), Portugal (1), Serbian (1)</p>
<p>Of the king who didn't like cleaning up (O kralju, ki ni maral pospravljati) by Nina Mav Hrovat (Illustrations: Suzi Bricelj) Mladinska knjiga</p>	<p>2009/2010</p>	
<p>The story of the wind (Pravljica o vetru): Slovakian folk tale (Illustrations: Bogdan Grom) Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS</p>	<p>2010/2011</p>	
<p>Birthday (Rojstni dan) by Barbara Hanuš (Illustrations: Ana Zavadlav) Miš Založba</p>	<p>2011/2012</p>	<p>Birthday birthday</p> <p>Two variations of the picture book (both from Miš Publishing House): One is translated into the languages of foreign minorities in Slovenia (Italian and Hungarian) and German for the use of children of the Slovenian minority in Austria. The second version is translated into the languages of immigrants (Croatian and Macedonian) and into the Romani language.</p>
<p>Juri Muri in Africa: About a boy who didn't want to wash (Juri Muri v Afriki: O fantu, ki se ni maral umivati) by Tone Pavček (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič) Miš Založba</p>	<p>2012/2013</p>	
<p>Lipko and BasketBilly (Lipko in KošoRok) by Primož Suhodolčan (Illustrations: Gorazd Vahen) DZS</p> <p>The text was written during the European Basketball Championship, which was hosted by Slovenia in 2013.</p>	<p>2013/2014</p>	<p>Lipko and BasketBilly boys, trees, basketball, loneliness, sports, competition</p> <p>Translated to: English: Lipko and BasketBilly, Ljubljana: DZS, 2013</p>
<p>A Toast (Zdravljica) by France Prešeren (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič) Mladinska knjiga</p>	<p>2013/2014</p>	<p>A Toast Prešeren, France, 1800-1849, the seventh stanza is the Slovenian anthem</p> <p>Translated to: English: A toast, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2017</p>

Children of the World (Otroci sveta) by Janja Vidmar and Benka Pulko Undara Studio	2014/2015	
Pinocchio reads for the Reading Badge (Ostržek bere za bralno značko) by Tilka Jamnik (Illustrations: Peter Škerl) DZS	2015/2016	
7 naughty ones (7 nagajivih) by Leopold Suhodolčan (Illustrations: Marjan Manček) Karantanija	2016/2017	
How Mister Felix Entered a Bicycle Race (Kako je gospod Feliks tekmoval s kolesom) by Peter Svetina (Illustrations: Ana Razpotnik Donati) Miš Založba	2017/2018	How Mister Felix Entered a Bicycle Race cycling, bicycle, competition, victory, competitiveness, carelessness, wheels, books for inspiration, conversation, and reflection <u>Translated to:</u> Chinese: Oriental Babies & Kids Ltd., 2018
A Nook at the End of the World (Kotiček na koncu sveta) by Anja Štefan (Illustrations: Marjanca Jemec Božič) Mladinska knjiga	2018/2019	A Nook at the End of the World animals in the imagination <u>Translated to:</u> Romanian: Un colțisor la capătul pământului , București: Mladinska, 2008
Kuzma the Gremlin Wins a Prize (Škrat Kuzma dobi nagrado) by Svetlana Makarovič (Illustrations: Tomaž Lavrič) Mladinska knjiga	2019/2020	Kuzma the Gremlin Wins a Prize dwarfs (mythical creatures), pranks, awards, animals <u>Translated to:</u> Czech: Šotek Kuzma vyhrává cenu , Praha: Albatros, 1978 Slovak: Škriatok Kuzma , Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1977 Šibal Kuzman škriatok : Nový Sad: Obzor, 1978
The Laughing Machine and the Squealing Brake (Smejnalnik in cvililna zavora) by Slavko Pregl (Illustrations: Kostja Gatnik) Mladinska knjiga	2020/2021	
Swallets: Seventy-Five Riddles and One Solution (Ponikalnice) by Miroslav Košuta (selected and edited by Gaja Kos) (Illustrations: Suzi Bricelj) Miš Založba	2021/2022	
How Bibi and Gusti rewound the Hill (Kako sta Bibi in Gusti prezvijačila hrib) by Ida Mlakar Črnič (Illustrations: Kristina Krhin) Didakta	2022/2023	

THE ENTIRE COLLECTION OF GIFT BOOK FOR GOLDEN READERS
19 years - 331.500 books



Table 2

Books from the project Golden Reader Golden Readers	School year	Translation
<i>Ice Magnolias</i> (Ledene magnolije) by Marjana Moškrič (Cankarjeva založba) and <i>Prešeren.doc</i> (selected and edited by Igor Saksida; Rokus)	2003/2004	<i>Ice Magnolias</i> girls, love, teenagers, abuse <u>Translated to:</u> Croatian: <i>Ledene magnolije</i> , Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2005
<i>Silver from the Blue Cave</i> (Srebro iz modre špilje) by Slavko Pregl (Mladinska knjiga) and <i>Cankar.doc</i> (selected and edited by Anton Šepetavc; Rokus)	2004/2005	<i>Silver from the Blue Cave</i> summer, sea, adventures, treasures <u>Translated to:</u> Czech: <i>Stříbro z modré jeskyně</i> , Boskovice: Albert, 2015 Bulgarian: <i>Srebro ot sinjata pešera</i> , Sofija: EMAS, 2013 Serbian: <i>Srebro iz plave pećine</i> , Beograd: Mono i Manjana; Novi Sad: Ružno pače, 2010
<i>Grammar school boy</i> (Gimnazijec) by Igor Karlovšek (Mladinska knjiga) and <i>Paths of the book</i> (Pota knjige) by Iztok Ilich (DZS)	2005/2006	

<i>Distortion</i> (Distorzija) by Dušan Dim (Cankarjeva založba) and <i>Pavček.doc</i> (selected and edited by Tone Pavček; Rokus)	2006/2007	
<i>Summer on a window shelf</i> (Poletje na okenski polici) by Irena Velikonja (DZS) and <i>Trubar.doc</i> (selected and edited by Kozma Ahačič and Miha Mohor; Rokus)	2007/2008	
<i>Noordung.doc</i> (edited by Miha Mohor) Rokus	2008/2009	
<i>Pink</i> by Janja Vidmar Didakta	2009/2010	<i>Pink</i> adolescents, Maribor, 1970-1980 <u>Translated to:</u> Croatian: <i>Pink: za moju generaciju</i> , Zagreb: Algoritam, 2014
<i>The Emperor and the Flower</i> (Cesar in roža) by Bina Štampe Žmavc (Illustrations: Alenka Sottler) Miš Založba	2010/2011	<i>The Emperor and the Flower</i> love, fairytales <u>Translated to:</u> Chinese: <i>Guowang yu meigui</i> , Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubansh, 2014
<i>Basics of Democracy</i> (Osnove demokracije) by Miro Cerar (Illustrations: Izar Lunaček) Cankarjeva založba	2011/2012	
<i>An Armful of Pebbles</i> (Naročje kamenčkov) by Saša Vegri (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič) Miš Založba	2012/2013	
<i>A Toast</i> (Zdravljica) by France Prešeren (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič) Mladinska knjiga	2013/2014	<i>A Toast</i> Prešeren, France, 1800-1849, the seventh stanza is the Slovenian anthem <u>Translated to:</u> English: <i>A toast</i> , Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2017
<i>Children of the World</i> (Otroci sveta) by Janja Vidmar and Benka Pulko Undara Studio	2014/2015	
<i>Album 14/15/16: The anthology of Slovenian short youth prose</i> (selected and edited by Dragica Haramija) Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS	2015/2016	
<i>From Genes to Stars</i> (Od genov do zvezd) by Sašo Dolenc (Illustrations: Igor Šinkovec) Cankarjeva založba	2016/2017	
<i>Barž ≡ kons</i> by Srečko Kosovel (edited by Igor Saksida)	2017/2018	

(Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič) Miš Založba		
<i>The Shapes of the Sky</i> (Oblike neba) by Boris A. Novak (Illustrations: Marjan Manček) Mladinska knjiga	2018/2019	
<i>Poems from the Gallery</i> (Pesmi iz galerije) by Andrej Rozman Roza (Illustrations: Jakob Klemenčič) Narodna galerija	2019/2020	
<i>Partljič.doc</i> by Tone Partljič (edited by Miha Mohor and Tone Partljič) (Illustrations: Iztok Sitar) Rokus in Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS	2020/2021	
<i>Where the Wind Sleeps</i> (Kjer veter spi) by Damijan Šinigoj Miš Založba	2021/2022	

The future

Slovenian Reading Badge Society is the NGO heading the Reading Badge movement in terms of professional guidance and organization.

The Society implements various programs that encourage children and young people – as well as adults – to read in their free time.

We will continue our efforts to run both campaigns again (with the help of sponsors and public resources) in the next school year (and beyond). We wish that our joint efforts will succeed again.

The Reading Badge will live on, we will continue to build on tradition and constantly adapt to new challenges in the field of reading and the demands of social changes. Its mission, as well as liveliness and perseverance, proved itself again during its 60th birthday celebration (2020/2021) when new forms of promoting reading among young people, their mentors, parents and other educators were required due to the pandemic and lockdown.

The vibrant cooperation between readers, mentors and authors related to reading, literature, and books, which they did not want to give up even during the pandemic, reminded us how special and valuable our movement (and our projects) is.

Works Cited

The Slovenian Section of IBBY: Slovenia Loves Reading Publication:

<https://app.groove.cm/groovemember/download/nsokq66993dbe8d80d31c48d02c42b0a14304>.

Miha Mohor: The Reading Badge: <https://www.bralnaznacka.si/sl/english/>.

The Reading Badge Society: <https://www.bralnaznacka.si/sl/o-nas/predstavitev/>

The Slovenian section of IBBY:

<http://literarnahisa.si/index.php/slo-ibby/arhiv/369-nagrade-in-priznanja-slovenske-sekcije-ibby>.

The Slovenian Reading Badge Society: Various texts prepared for promotion purposes.

Photos: The Slovenian Reading Badge Society archives.