

The 38th IBBY International Congress

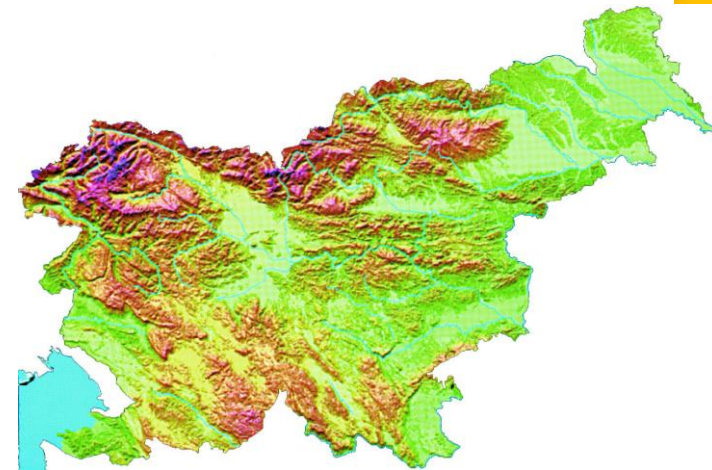


Putrajaya, September 5-8, 2022

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

Petra Potočnik, Društvo Bralna značka Slovenije – ZPMS (Slovenian Reading Badge Society), Slovenia





Slovenia?

- Slovenia is a country in Central Europe.
- It covers 20,271 square kilometers (7,827 sq mi).
- Slovenia has a population of 2.1 million.
- At the beginning of the school year 2021/22, 85,957 children were enrolled in kindergartens, 195,414 students in primary and 75,414 students in secondary schools.

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.”*



- **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**.
- 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**.
- Slovenian Reading Badge Society is a winner of: **AWARD FOR INNOVATIVE LITERACY PROMOTION IN EUROPE** awarded every two years by Federation of European Literacy Associations ([FELA](#)). The award was presented on 5th July 2022 at the 22nd European Literacy Conference in Dublin.

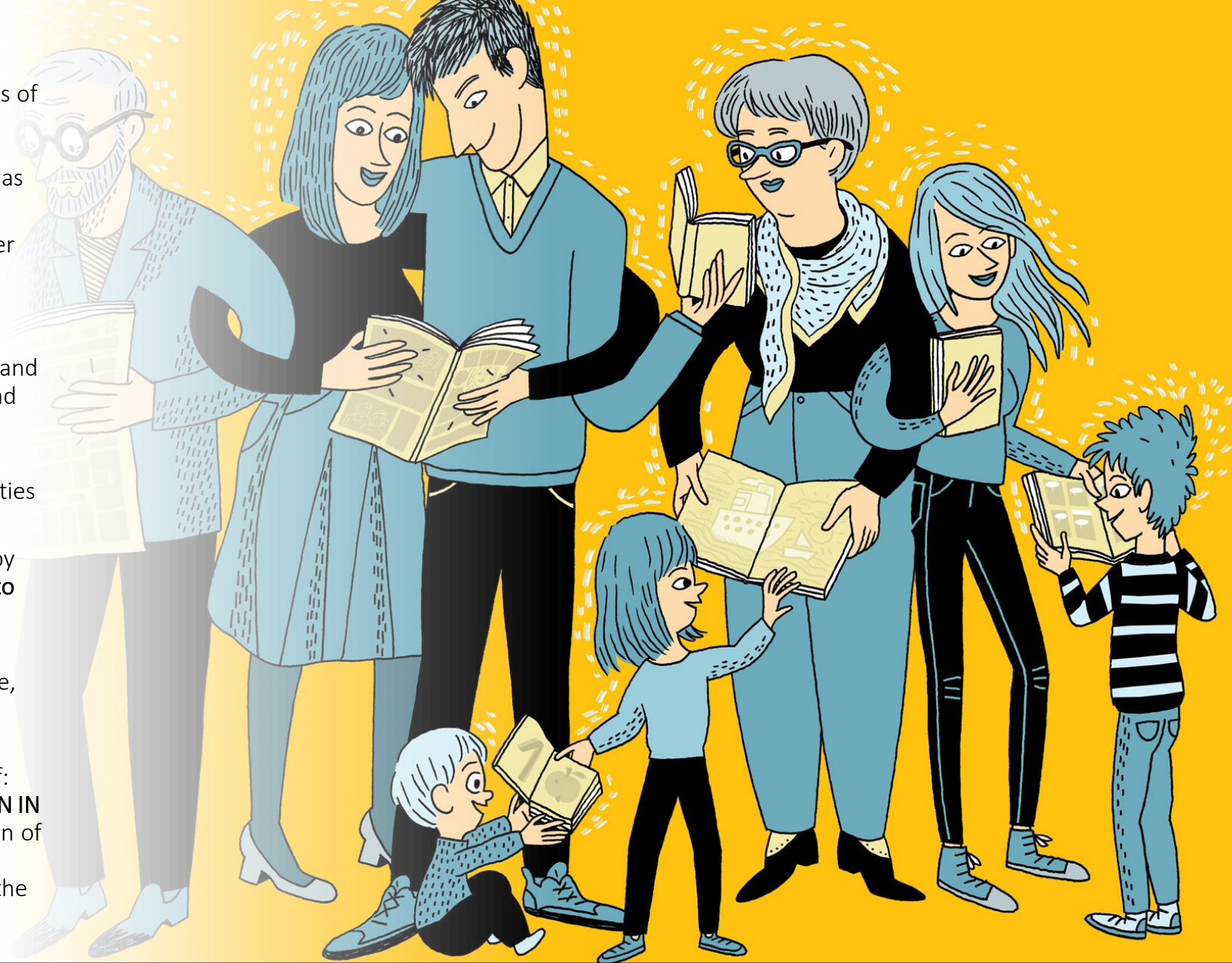


Illustration: Tanja Komadina (from the National Month of Reading Together/Reading Together project).

The main objectives of 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: Tanja Komadina.

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 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

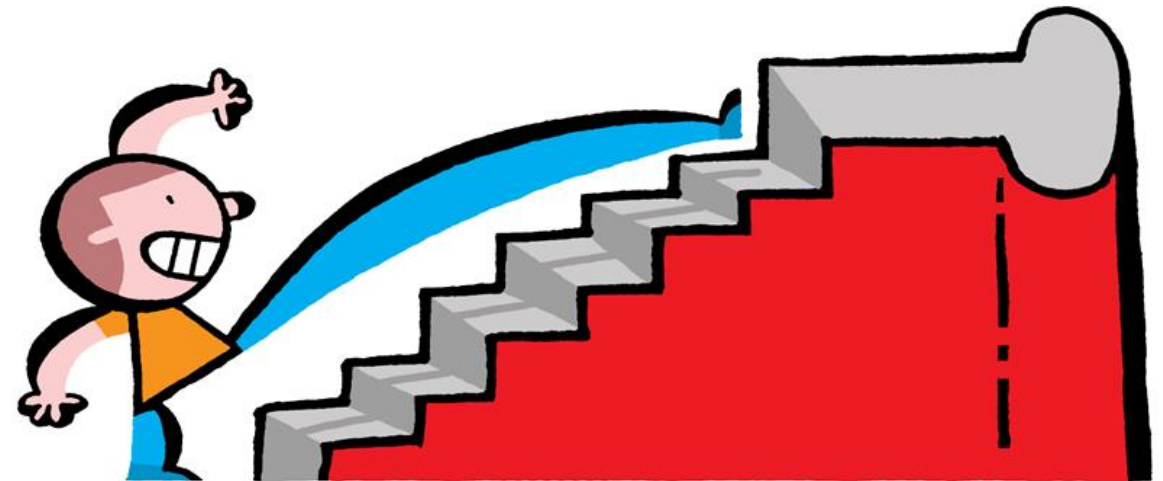
- The publishing and promotional project **The Golden Reader** was developed by **Slavko Pregl**, one of the most prominent Slovenian authors, editors and publishers, who is best known for his youth literature.
- In 2004 (when the project began), he was the president of the Slovenian Reading Badge Society. 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:



- **first-graders** (and their families); Number of copies: 25,000^[1];
- **young readers** („Golden Readers“) at the end of primary school; Number of copies: 9,000.
(„*Golden reader*“: a reader who completes the Reading Badge programme in all nine grades of primary school)



^[1] 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 on, 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** project - **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*“ ...)
- 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).

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.
- The Golden Reader project is considered the longest-lasting and most extensive book gift promotional campaign ever in the field of books for children and young people in Slovenia.
- We have donated **695,500 books!** - **331,500** books to nineteen generations of *Golden Readers*, **339,000** copies of book gifts for first-graders and **25,000** other books of the Slovenian Reading Badge Society.
- 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.

Accompanying activities „Golden Readers“

- 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).



Accompanying activities „Golden Readers“

- This year's event for Golden Readers **marked the end of a two-year celebration of the round anniversary** 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*!





Accompanying activities

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 Slovene 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**.

Accompanying activities

First-graders

- 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 distribution of books for first-graders is in progress. This year's selected book is a picture book called ***How Bibi and Gusti rewound the Hill*** (*Kako sta Bibi in Gusti previjačila 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**.

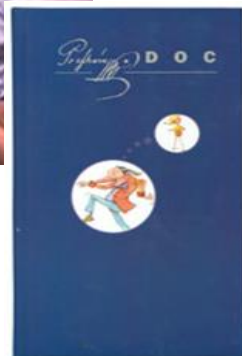




Added value of the project

- 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 supported 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.

Ice magnolias (Ledene magnolije) by Marjana Moškrič and *Prešeren.doc* (selected and edited by Igor Saksida)



Silver from the blue cave (Srebro iz modre špilje) by Slavko Pregl and *Cankar.doc* (selected and edited by Anton Šepetavc)

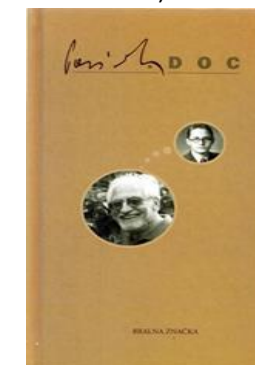


Grammar school boy (Gimnazijec) by Igor Karlovšek and *Paths of the book* (Pota knjige) by Iztok Ilich

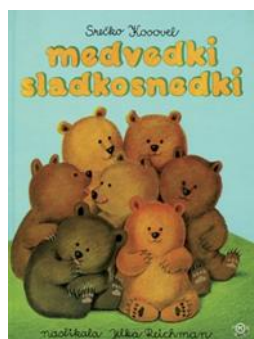


2006/2007

Distortion (Distorzija) by Dušan Dim and *Pavček.doc* (selected and edited by Tone Pavček)

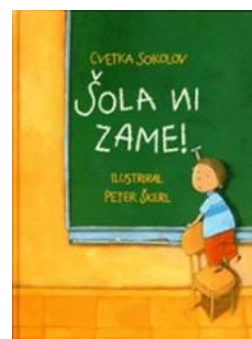


2003/2004



Sweet-toothed bears (Medvedki sladkosnedki) by Srečko Kosovel (Illustrations: Jelka Reichman)

2004/2005

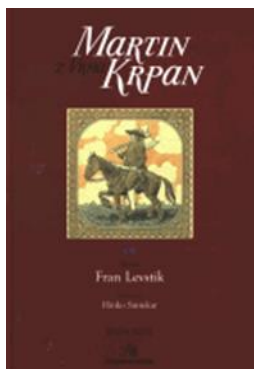


School is not for me (Šola ni zame) by Cvetka Sokolov (Illustrations: Peter Škerl)

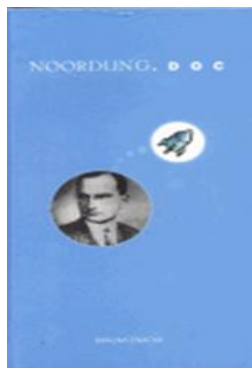
2004/2005

2005/2006

2005/2006



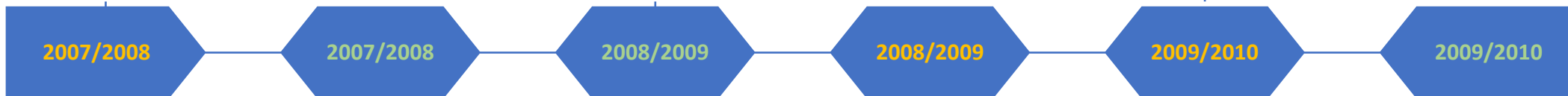
Martin Krpan by Fran Levstik (for two generations – first- and second-graders)
(Illustrations: Hinko Smrekar)



Noordung.doc (edited by Miha Mohor)



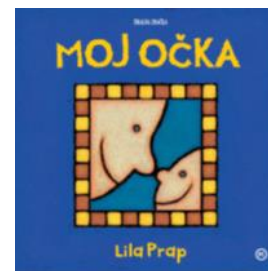
Of the king who didn't like cleaning up
(O kralju, ki ni maral pospravljati) by
Nina Mav Hrovat
(Illustrations: Suzi Bricelj)



Summer on a window shelf (Poletje na okenski polici)
by Irena Velikonja and *Trubar.doc* (selected and
edited by dr. Kozma Ahačič and Miha Mohor)



My daddy (Moj očka) by
Lila Prap



Pink by Janja Vidmar





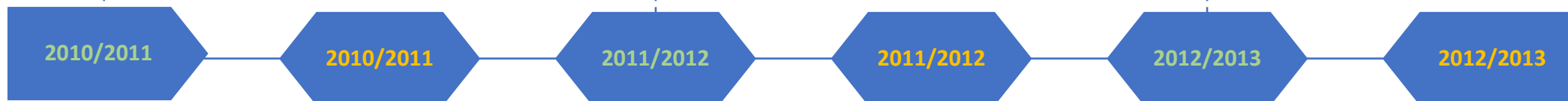
The story of the wind
(Pravljica o vetru): Slovakian
folk tale (Illustrations:
Bogdan Grom)



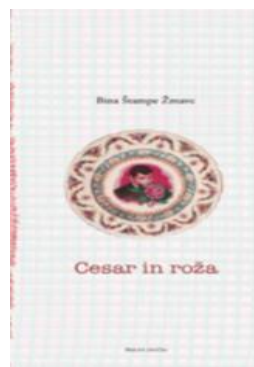
Birthday (Rojstni dan)
by Barbara Hanuš
(Illustrations: Ana Zavadlav)



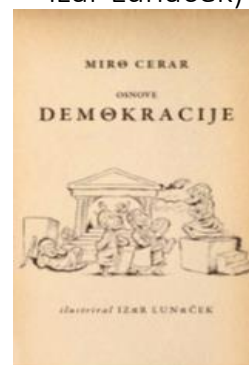
Juri Muri in Africa: About a boy who didn't want to wash (Juri
Muri v Afriki: O fantu, ki se ni maral umivati)
by Tone Pavček (Illustrations: Damijana Stepančič)



The emperor and the flower (Cesar in roža)
by Bina Štampe Žmavc (Illustrations: Alenka Sottler)

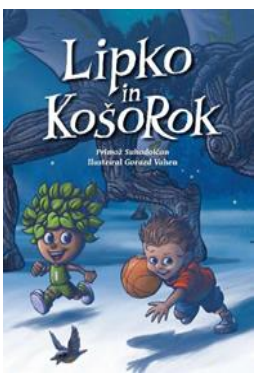


Basics of Democracy
(Osnove demokracije)
by Miro Cerar (Illustrations:
Izar Lunaček)

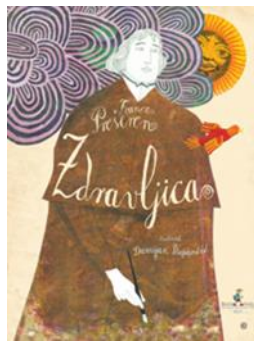


An Armful of Pebbles
(Naročje kamenčkov) by Saša Vegri
(Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič)





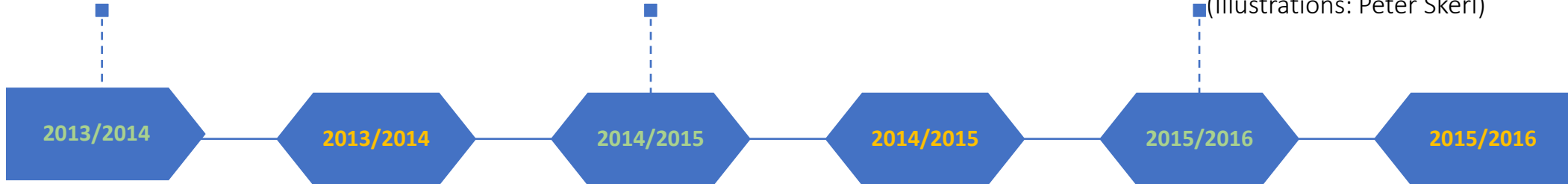
Lipko and BasketBilly (Lipko in KošoRok) by Primož Suhodolčan
(Illustrations: Gorazd Vahen)



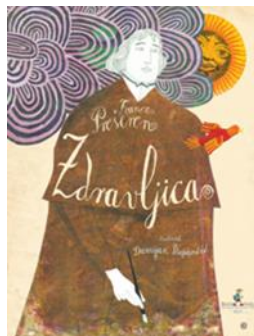
A toast (Zdravljica) by France Prešeren
(Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič)



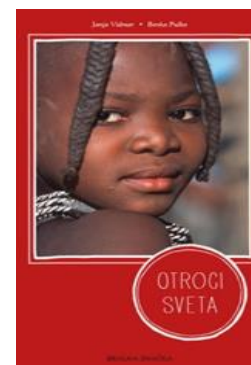
Pinocchio reads for the Reading Badge
(Ostržek bere za bralno značko) by Tilka Jamnik
(Illustrations: Peter Škerl)



A toast (Zdravljica) by France Prešeren (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič)

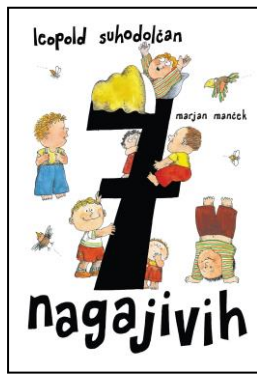


Children of the World (Otroci sveta) by Janja Vidmar and Benka Pulko



Album 14/15/16: The anthology of Slovenian short youth prose
(selected and edited by Dragica Haramija)





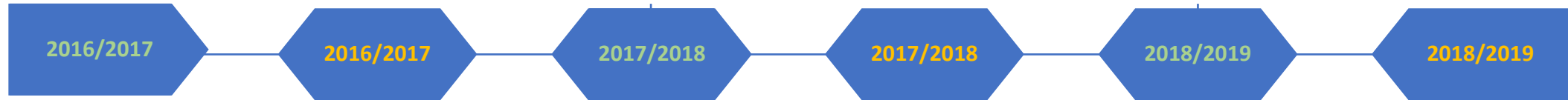
7 naughty ones (7 nagajivih)
by Leopold Suhodolčan
(Illustrations: Marjan Manček)



How Mister Felix Entered a Bicycle Race (Kako je gospod Feliks tekmoval s kolesom)
by Peter Svetina
(Illustrations: Ana Razpotnik Donati)



A Nook at the End of the World
(Kotiček na koncu sveta) by Anja Štefan
(Illustrations: Marjanca Jemec Božič)



From Genes to Stars
(Od genov do zvezd) by Sašo Dolenc
(Illustrations: Igor Šinkovec)



Barž ≡ kons
by Srečko Kosovel (edited by Igor Saksida)
(Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič)



The Shapes of the Sky
(Oblike neba) by Boris A. Novak
(Illustrations: Marjan Manček)

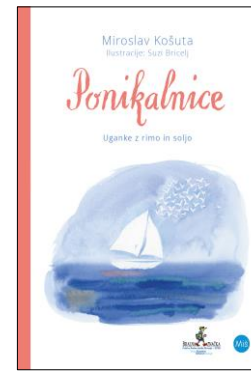




Kuzma the Gremlin Wins a Prize (Škrat Kuzma dobi nagrado)
by Svetlana Makarovič
(Illustrations: Tomaž Lavrič)



The Laughing Machine and the Squealing Brake
(Smejalek in cvililna zavora) by Slavko Pregl
(Illustrations: Kostja Gatnik)



Swallets: Seventy-Five Riddles and One Solution (Ponikalnice)
by Miroslav Košuta (selected and edited by Gaja Kos)
(Illustrations: Suzi Bricelj)



How Bibi and Gusti rewound the Hill
(Kako sta Bibi in Gusti prezvijačila hrib)
by Ida Mlakar Črnič
(Illustrations: Kristina Krhin)

2019/2020

2019/2020

2020/2021

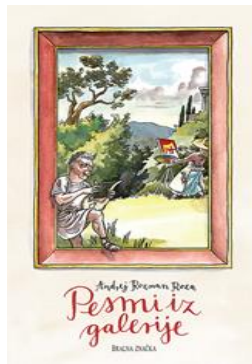
2020/2021

2021/2022

2021/2022

2022/2023

Poems from the Gallery (Pesmi iz galerije)
by Andrej Rozman Roza
(Illustrations: Jakob Klemenčič)



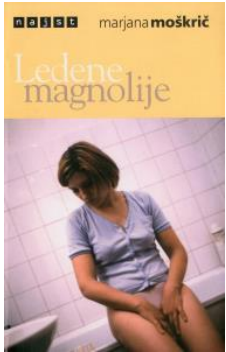
Partljič.doc
by Tone Partljič
(edited by Miha Mohor and Tone Partljič)
(Illustrations: Iztok Sitar)



Where the Wind Sleeps
(Kjer veter spi)
by Damijan Šinigoj
(edited by: Gaja Kos)



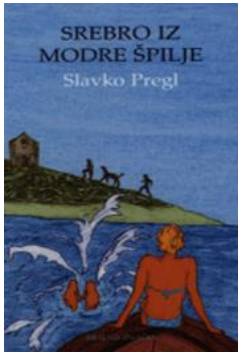
Books from the project Golden Reader translated in other languages



Ice magnolias (Ledene magnolije) by Marjana Moškrič
girls, love, teenagers, abuse

Translated to:

Croatian: *Ledene magnolije*, Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga, 2005



Silver from the blue cave (Srebro iz modre špilje) by Slavko Pregl
summer, sea, adventures, treasures

Translated to:

Czech: *Stříbro z modré jeskyně*, Boskovice: Albert, 2015

Bulgarian: *Srebro ot sinjata pešera*, Sofija: EMAS, 2013

Serbian: *Srebro iz plave pećine*, Beograd: Mono i Manjana; Novi Sad: Ružno pače, 2010



Pink by Janja Vidmar
adolescents, Maribor, 1970-1980

Translated to:

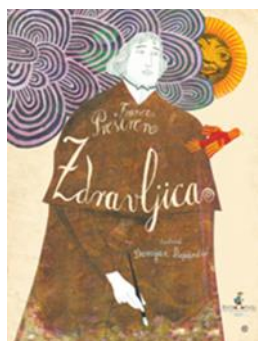
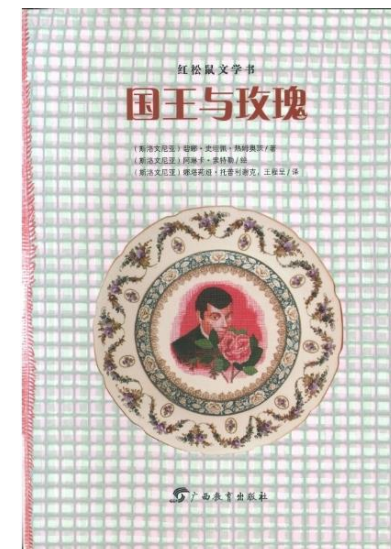
Croatian: *Pink: za moju generaciju*, Zagreb: Algoritam, 2014



The emperor and the flower (Cesar in roža)
by Bina Štampe Žmavc (Illustrations: Alenka Sottler)
love, fairytales

Translated to:

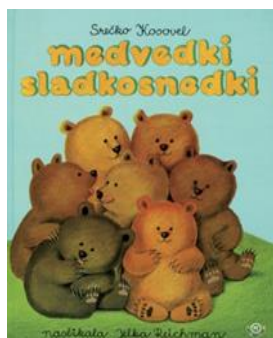
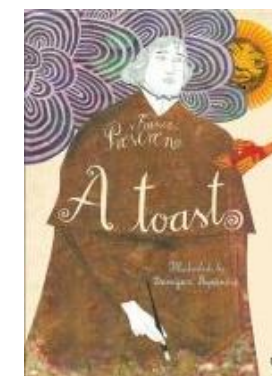
Chinese: ***Guowang yu meigui***, Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubansh, 2014



A toast (Zdravljica) by France Prešeren (Illustrations: Damijan Stepančič)
Prešeren, France, 1800-1849, the seventh stanza is the Slovenian anthem

Translated to:

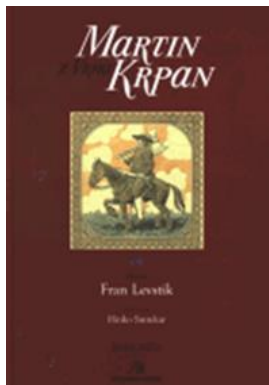
English: ***A toast***, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2017



Sweet-toothed bears (Medvedki sladkosnedki) by Srečko Kosovel (Illustrations: Jelka Reichman)
poetry, bears

Translated to:

Croatian: ***Medvjedi medojedi***, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1986

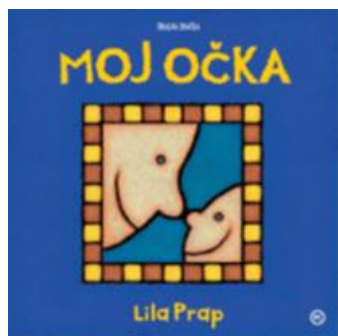
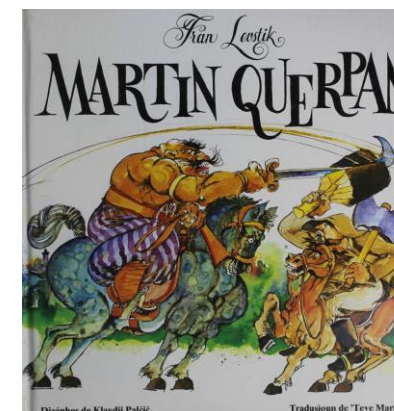


Martin Krpan by Fran Levstik (Illustrations: Hinko Smrekar)

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)

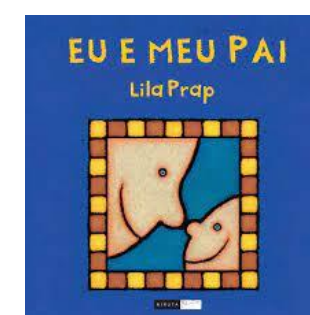
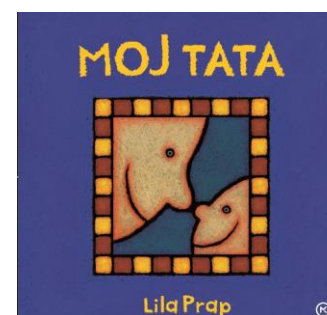
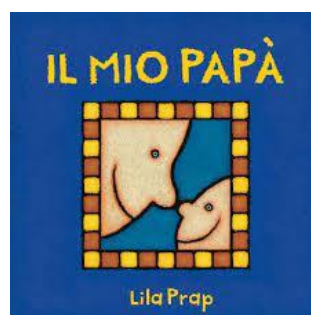
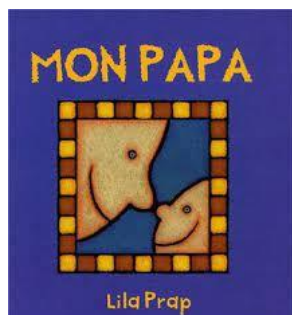


My daddy (Moj očka) by Lila Prap (Illustrations: Lila Prap)

fathers, imaginary animals

Translated to:

Chinese (2), English (2), Danish (1), French (1), German (1), Modern Greek (1), Hebrew (1), Croatian (1), Italian (1), Portuguese (1), Serbian (1)

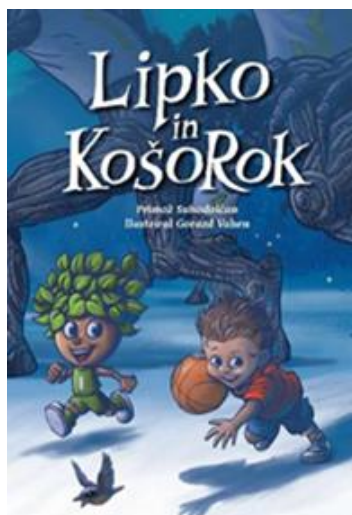




Birthday (Rojstni dan) by Barbara Hanuš (Illustrations: Ana Zavadlav)
birthday

Two variations of the picture book (both by Miš Publishing House):
One is translated in the languages of foreign minorities in Slovenia (Italian and Hungarian) and in German for the use of children of the Slovene minority in Austria.

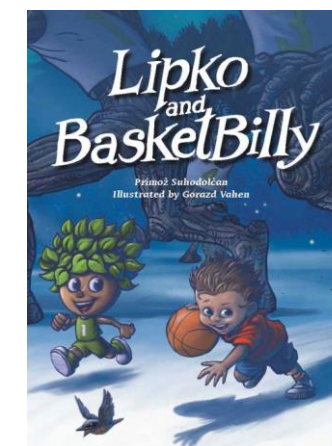
The second version is translated into the languages of immigrants (Croatian and Macedonian) and into the Romani language.

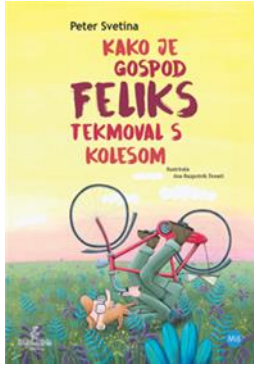


Lipko and BasketBilly (Lipko in KošoRok) by Primož Suhodolčan
(Illustrations: Gorazd Vahen)
boys, trees, basketball, loneliness, sports, competition

Translated to:

English: ***Lipko and BasketBilly***, Ljubljana: DZS, 2013
basketball, mascot





How Mister Felix Entered a Bicycle Race
 (Kako je gospod Feliks tekmoval s kolesom)
 by Peter Svetina (Illustrations: Ana Razpotnik Donati)
 cycling bicycle, competition, victory, competitiveness, carelessness,
 wheels, books for inspiration, conversation and reflection

Translated to:
 Chinese: Oriental Babies & Kids Ltd., 2018



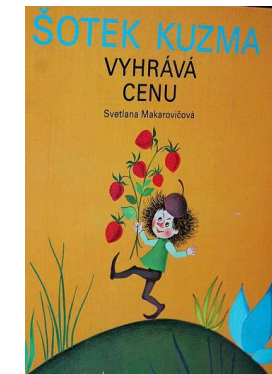
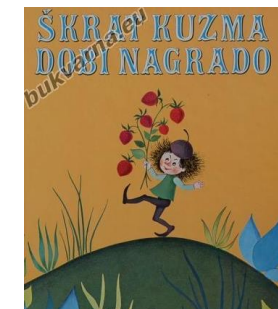
A Nook at the End of the World (Kotiček na koncu sveta) by Anja Štefan
 (Illustrations: Marjanca Jemec Božič)
 animals in the imagination

Translated to:
 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)
 dwarfs (mythical creatures), pranks, awards, animals

Translated to:
 Czech: *Šotek Kuzma vyhrává cenu*, Praha: Albatros, 1978
 Slovak: *Škriatok Kuzma*, Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1977
Šibal Kuzman škriatok: Nový Sad: Obzor, 1978



The future

- 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.

Photo: France Bevk, Slovene author (also youth author), poet and translator. 1961: First award ceremony at the closure of the reading for the Reading Badge. Photo from the archive of Prevalje Primary School.





Sources

- Slovenia Loves Reading Publication: <https://app.groove.cm/groovemember/download/nsokg66993dbe8d80d31c48d02c42b0a14304>.
- Miha Mohor: The Reading Badge: <https://www.bralnaznacka.si/sl/english/>.
- The Slovenian Reading Badge Society: <https://www.bralnaznacka.si/sl/o-nas/predstavitev/>.
- The Slovenian section of IBBY: <https://ibby-arhiv.grooveblog.com/post/nagrada-in-priznanja-slovenske-sekcije-ibby>.
- Photos: The Slovenian Reading Badge Society arhivevs.
- <https://www.bralnaznacka.si/en/>

Illustration: Jelka Reichman.



“With Books into the World”

Thank you for your attention!

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