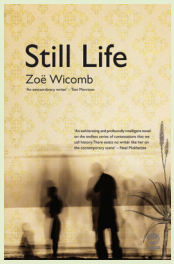
ALMAL BOOK CLUB

Western Cape Government FOR YOU

Minister's book club titles 2026

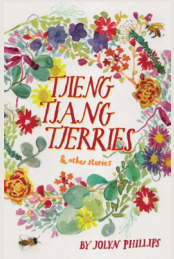
Theme: Promoting a culture of reading

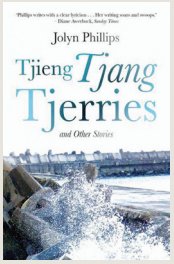
ADULT FICTION



WICOMB, Zoë
Still life.- Umuzi, 2020.

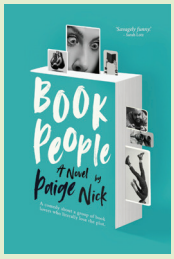
Wicomb's majestic novel juggles with our perception of time and reality as she tells the story of an author struggling to write a biography of long-forgotten Scottish poet Thomas Pringle, whose only legacy is in South Africa, where he is dubbed the 'Father of South African poetry.' In her efforts to resurrect Pringle, the writer summons the specter of Mary Prince, the West Indian slave whose history Pringle had once published, along with Hinza, his adopted black South African son. At their side is Sir Nicholas Green, a seasoned time traveler (and a character from Virginia Woolf's Orlando). Their adventures, as they travel across space and time to unlock the mysteries of Pringle's life, offer a poignant exploration of colonial history and racial oppression.





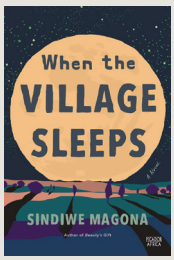
PHILLIPS, Jolyn
Tjieng tjang tjerries and other stories.- Modjaji Books, 2016.

In **Tjieng tjang tjerries and other stories** Jolyn Phillips describes the little-known world of Gansbaai's fishing community. Her stories reflect the natural disorder of daily life and explore how the impact of love and loss defines and divides families and communities. An award-winning collection of short stories and sketches set in the Overberg district. In the author's own words: 'This book is a collection of my soul, who I am as a human being, and how I connect to the people I come from'.



NICK, Paige
Book people: a novel.- Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2025.

A comedy about a group of book lovers who literally lose the plot. Norma Jacobs is your average accountant, running a book club on Facebook and living quietly with her gamer boyfriend in London. Except for the part where she's being threatened by a deranged author and questioned by the police about attempted murder. All just as she's started a new job as the only forty-two-year-old intern in the history of publishing. Harry Shields is a crime writer desperate to hit the big time when a negative review of his latest book on Norma's page results in him having a spectacular public meltdown. He gets cancelled, his events get cancelled, and before you can say 'author behaving badly', he's plotting revenge and stalking his nemesis. By the time Harry's gone viral, and Norma's given up trying to stop him, the online book club has over a hundred thousand rowdy members, and the comments section is a (literal) riot. Entertaining until one member ends up in a coma. A savagely funny satire about online media and cancel culture, for everyone who thinks books are harmless.

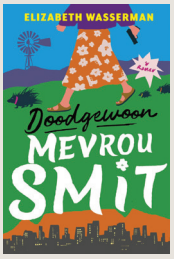


MAGONA, Sindiwe
When the village sleeps: a novel.- Picador Africa, 2021.

When the village sleeps is a visionary novel about what the loss of identity and dignity do to a person afflicted by decades of brokenness. Told through the lives and spirits of four generations of amaTolo women, including The Old, who speak wisdom with ever-increasing urgency, it moves between the bustling township setting of Kwanele and the different rhythms of rural village life. It recalls the sweeping sagas of the great A.C. Jordan and the Dhlomo brothers and invokes the poetry of SEK Mqhayi, while boldly exploring urgent and contemporary issues. An ode to the complex strengths of South African women, **When the village sleeps** is also a powerful call to respect the earth that nurtures human life, and to live in self-sufficiency and harmony with the environment and each other.

CHRISTIANSË, Yvette
Unconfessed: a novel.- Kwela Books, 2007.

'Sila van den Kaap doesn't recall much about her childhood, but one thing is clear: as a young girl, she was taken from her family in Mozambique and sold to Dutch settlers in the Cape Colony of South Africa. Her first owner, a minister named Neethling, eventually drank himself to death. Other masters and mistresses followed, including one, Oumiesies ("Old Missus"), who promised Sila that upon her death she and her children would be free. Sadly, Oumiesies's son destroyed his mother's will, compelling Sila to remain in bondage. When we meet her, she is on Robben Island, imprisoned for strangling one of her children. The story unfolds in fits and starts and reads like a confession to a soulmate. This stream-of-consciousness style gives readers an intimate if disturbing peek into the mind of a fierce 19th-century slave woman. Herself born in South African, Christiansë, author of the poetry collection *Castaway*, based her novel on archival records; that someone with the protagonist's name was actually tried for murdering her child gives the narrative added heft and poignancy. Impossible to put down, this work deserves a place beside such classics as Toni Morrison's **Beloved** and Edward P Jones's **The known world**.' (*Library Journal*, 01/09/2006)



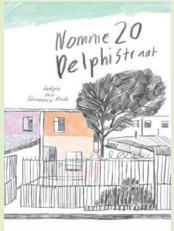
WASSERMAN, Elizabeth
Die fantastiese Mevrou Smit.- Penguin Random House SA, 2023.
Die nege lewens van Mevrou Smit.- Penguin Random House SA, 2024.
Mevrou Smit se reëls vir goeie gedrag.- Penguin Random House SA, 2025.
Doodgewoon Mevrou Smit.- Penguin Random House SA, 2026.

The delightful Mrs Smit series starts with **Die fantastiese Mevrou Smit**. A story of intrigue — a mix of crime and cozy small town fiction. As a newcomer to Aronspoort, Mrs. Smit immediately causes a stir: On her arrival, the police demands that she sleeps at the station as she was caught taking a sip of hard liquor behind the steering wheel! The next morning, when she walks into her new house, a gruesome discovery awaits her in the kitchen: a dead woman's body. Was the murderer actually looking for her? Is there a ransom on her head? Mrs. Smit is no lily to pick without scissors. She abruptly decides to catch the murderer herself, no matter how many toes she steps on or how many skeletons she rattle in the town's closet. But the murderer strikes again and Mrs. Smit becomes increasingly unpopular. Not even the doctor with the beautiful blue eyes misses a lashing from her sharp tongue. Because, you see, she is a woman with a dark past. If the police digs too deep, they might find her own skeletons. And that must never happen... The book is followed by **Die nege lewens van Mevrou Smit**, **Mevrou Smit se reëls vir goeie gedrag**, and, **Doodgewoon Mevrou Smit**.

KAMFER, Ronelda S
Kompoun: 'n roman.- Melinda Ferguson Books, 2020.

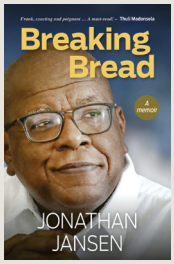
Nadia and her cousin Xavie grow up on Groenplaas in the Overberg where people from different cultural groups live apart. They are raised by their grandmother, Sylvia McKinney, the 'matriarch of lies', the one who shattered the truth like an expensive porcelain vase. The two of them try to piece together the truth, the things their family keep secret: substance abuse and physical abuse but also Antie Diana's relationship with a farm worker from the kompoun and the twins she gave birth to. **Kompoun** is a story about the friendship between a group of cousins in their adolescence, formed through survival in a harsh reality, and how they break away from the older generation, but also find that the tangled family ties are not that easy to shake off. **Kompoun** is prize-winning poet Ronelda Kamfer's first novel for which she received the prestigious Jan Rabie/Marjorie Wallace Writers' Bursary. Kamfer is the author of several poetry collections, some award winners.

ADULT NON-FICTION



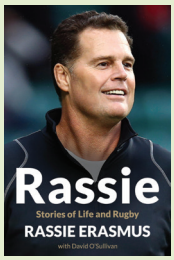
RHODE, Shirmoney
Nomme 20 Delphistraat.- Modjaji, 2016.

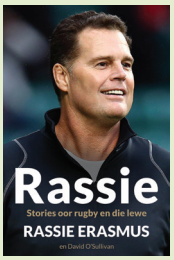
Rhode is a writer and performance poet who grew up on the Cape Flats in Elsies River. She predominantly writes in Kaapse Afrikaans. She is passionate about telling the stories of people in her community and performs her work on different platforms in Cape Town. **Nomme 20 Delphi Straat** is a poetry collection written in both Kaaps and Standard Afrikaans. It started as performance poetry. The poems reflect her experiences and thoughts from her teenager years and as a first generation student. The setting is Elsies River with the title indicating her home address growing up. Gangsterism is one of the themes explored, as well as the stories of the people from Elsies River.



JANSEN, Jonathan
Breaking bread: a memoir.- Jonathan Ball, 2024.

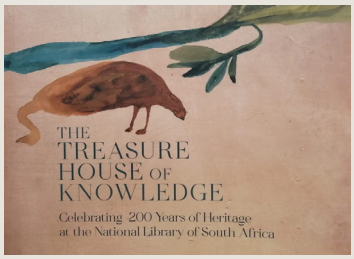
Professor. Pundit. Public nuisance. In his columns, books and on social media, Jonathan Jansen is prolific, and he likes to speak his mind about schools and universities, race, politics and our complex South African society. He has brought incisive analysis, compassion and a sense of humour to some of the most controversial issues in our country for many years. And now, in this memoir, Jansen goes back to his early years: growing up in a loving, fiercely evangelical family on the Cape Flats, being put on the road to purpose by an inspiring school teacher and becoming the first of his generation to go to university.





ERASMUS, Rassie and **O'SULLIVAN, David**
Rassie: stories of life and rugby.- Pan Macmillan South Africa, 2023.
Rassie: stories oor rugby en die lewe.- Pan Macmillan Suid-Afrika, 2023.

Rassie Erasmus has been called a genius. He's been called reckless. All his life, he's done things differently. Now, with his trademark candour, Rassie talks openly about his adventures and misadventures. He reveals the turmoil of living with an alcoholic father and growing up in the conservative town of Despatch. He looks back on an exemplary career as a player, whose innate rugby instincts, ability to read a game differently, and appetite for hard work set him apart. When given the opportunity to lead his country as Springbok captain, he refused the honour. Rassie recalls how he became an important cog in Nick Mallett's record-breaking Springbok team of the late 1990s. He remembers the anguish of the 1999 World Cup and the devastating injuries that cut short his playing career. He discusses his revolutionary coaching methods, which were initially laughed off and then eagerly adopted, how he fought the rugby establishment at the Stormers and earned the respect of Irish fans at Munster. Rassie talks about his greatest contribution to South African rugby, appointing its first black captain, Siya Kolisi. His bold plans for effective racial transformation of the national team achieved immediate success, culminating in triumph at the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Readers will enjoy the behind-the-scenes information about interactions and controversies and previously untold stories from a truly maverick life.



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SOUTH AFRICA
The treasure house of knowledge: celebrating 200 years of heritage at the National Library of South Africa.- National Library of South Africa, 2021.

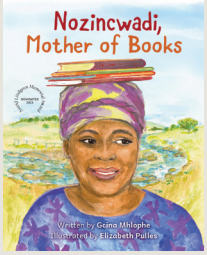
This book shows a microcosm of their magnificent collections and aims to bring before a wide audience a selection of items included in the bicentennial exhibition. During the past two centuries, millions of published and manuscript records have been added to the collections in Pretoria and Cape Town, relating to all of the peoples of southern Africa. The book gives the public an indication of the range of material, the expected and the unexpected, available at the National Library of South Africa.

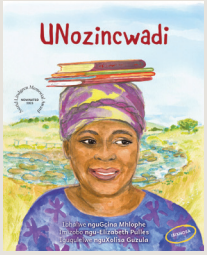
YOUNG ADULT FICTION

SCHOEMAN, Sandy
Chakalaka uit 'n blikkie.- Tafelberg, 2024.

Award-winning teen novel. When Helena's estranged father walks into the restaurant where her mum works, a chain of events is set in motion. Soon Helena is shipped off to a new home, the complete opposite of the rundown Wendy house she shared with Jolene. A life of luxury awaits. But it's not as she'd imagined. When her new life changes abruptly as well, Helena comes to the realisation that it's the simple things she craves, like tucking into the humblest of meals: chakalaka from a tin, eaten on a slice of white bread. The novel is an ode to motherhood, describing the mother/daughter relationship sensitively.

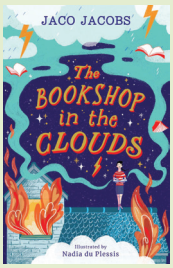
JUVENILE FICTION





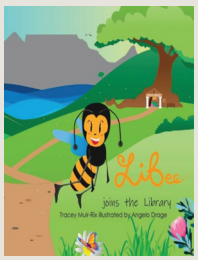
MHLOPHE, Gcina
Nozincwadi, mother of books/illustrated by Elizabeth Pulles.- New Africa Books, 2023.
Nozincwadi, die moeder van boeke/illustrasies deur Elizabeth Pulles; vertaal deur Tanja Malherbe.- New Africa Boeke, 2023.
UNozincwadi/imizobo ngu-Elizabeth Pulles; iguqulelwe nguXolisa Guzula. - New Africa Books, 2022.

A story about the power of reading. The story is set in Dududu Village, which is in KwaZulu-Natal. Mrs Zwane lives in Dududu Village and everyone knows that she loves books. She collects old papers, books and magazines and keeps them in neat piles in her bedroom. Mrs Zwane had never been to school. She could not read or write, but something inside her tells her that there is magic in printed words. 'One day they will talk to me,' she says. This is the story of how Mrs Zwane helps the children of Dududu — and how a young boy gives Mrs Zwane a very special gift. The gift of reading and words.



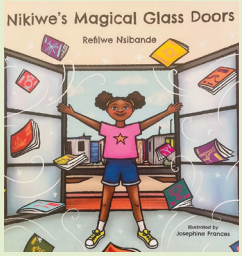
JACOBS, Jaco
The bookshop in the clouds/illustrated by Nadia du Plessis; translated by Kobus Geldenhuys.- Pan Macmillan Children's books, 2021.
Die boekwinkel tussen die wolke/illustrasies deur Nadia du Plessis.- Pan Macmillan Kinderboeke, 2021.

Welcome to Head In The Clouds. It's Ella's favourite shop on earth. A place full of magic, where wonderful things can happen to you. A place where you can buy second-hand books smelling of mystery and adventure and daydreams (and a teeny, tiny bit of sweaty socks, to be completely honest). Between the shelves awaits an adventure that will change Ella's life forever … if she's brave enough. Someone is trying to make sure that the bookshop closes for good, but Ella and her friends are not going to allow that, not even if their lives are in danger. And who knows, perhaps they will receive help from an unexpected source — all bookshops are magical and so are the books they keep …



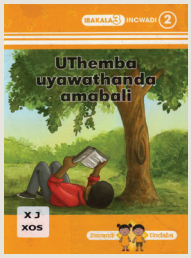
MUIR-RIX, Tracey
LiBee joins the library/illustrated by Angelo Drage.- Tracey Muir-Rix, 2023.

LiBee is feeling glum and Mommy knows just how to cheer her up. She takes LiBee to the local public library. Libee meets the friendly librarian who makes her a magical library card. LiBee buzzes around the library choosing her books and she can't wait to get home and curl up with a good book. Join LiBee on her magical adventure at the library and discover what an amazing space the library is. #Buzzedaboutreading



NSIBANDE, Refilwe
Nikiwe's magical glass doors/illustrated by Josephine Frances.- Native Way Creative Studios, 2023.

This is the author's third children's picture book and is illustrated by Josephine Frances. The book has recently been shortlisted for the 2025 Otto Foundation's inaugural Children's Book Award, in the Picture Book category. The story follows a young girl named Nikiwe as she explores her local library, where she delves into the captivating world of books written by South African authors. Among the pages she encounters book characters that make her ask questions, learn new languages, travel to different places with her imagination and inspire her to dream. Within the confines of Harare library in Khayelitsha, Nikiwe meets friendly librarians and a diverse community of readers, united by their love for borrowing books and discovering new ones. The aim of this book is to inspire and educate kids about the love of reading and the magic that libraries bring to their communities.



XOSEKA, T
UThemba uyawathanda amabali.- Shuter & Shooter, 2024.

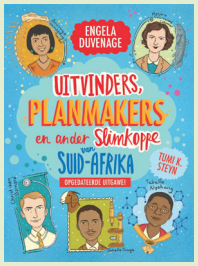
An easy reader title, part of a series called, Zimnandi iindaba. The series focuses on reading for acquisition of phonics, vocabulary and enjoyment. Ezi ncwadi zibhalwe zagxininisa kwizandi nsigama ukwenzela ukuphucula isakhono sokufunda isiXhosa ulwimi lwenkobe.

FARR, David
The book of stolen dreams/illustrated by Kristina Kister.- Usborne Publishing, 2022.

When Rachel and Robert are passed a stolen book by their librarian father, they have to go on the run and protect it at all costs. With their father captured and everyone hunting for the Book, they must uncover its secrets and track down the final, missing page. But the cruel and calculating Charles Malstain is on their trail. When the children discover the astonishing, magical truth about the Book, they resolve to do everything in their power to stop it falling into his hands. For if it does, he could rule forever. Step inside the pages of an immortal adventure and discover a truly unforgettable journey of wonder, courage and magic...

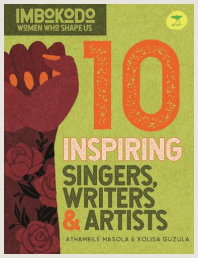
SENNE, Bontle
The haunted library/illustrated by Mogau Kekana.- Human & Rousseau, 2021.

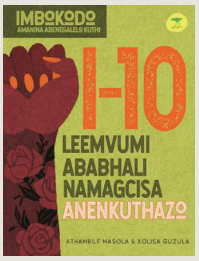
When twin sisters, Karabo and Siphe, overhear some workers complaining about strange goings on at the construction site for the new library, Karabo is determined to find out more. Along with their friend Bandile and his trained police dog, Zuko, they sneak into the building to investigate. But they soon stumble upon a much greater adventure than they anticipated — with dancing ghosts, dangerous quests and one very strange magical creature ... Will Siphe be able to save her sister when Karabo, as usual, lands herself in big trouble? And what will happen when the five friends uncover the truth about the haunted library?



DUVENAGE, Engela
Uitvinders, planmakers en ander slimkoppe van Suid-Afrika/illustrasies deur Tumi K Steyn.
- LAPA, 2023.

In this book, you will read all about inventors, bright minds, and other brilliant science heroes of South Africa. You'll read the stories of people who made medical breakthroughs. Stories about people who love animals and plants. Stories about people who try to understand the secrets of the sky. Stories about people who made interesting discoveries about fossils, the earth, water, and the climate. This is a truly South African book that will inspire all readers to question, to explore and discover, and to create.





MASOLA, Athambile and **GUZULA, Xolisa**
10 inspiring singers, writers & artists.- Jacana Media, 2021.
10 inspirerende sangers, skrywers & kunstenaars.- Jacana Media, 2021.
I-10 Leemvumi ababhali namagcisa anenkuthazo.- Jacana Media, 2021.

Imbokodo: Women who shape us is a groundbreaking series of books that introduces you to the powerful stories of South African women who have all made their mark and cleared a path for women and girls. These books recognize, acknowledge and honour our heroines and elders from the past and the present. South African women are silent no more on the roles that we have played in advancing our lives as artists, storytellers, writers, politicians and educationists. The title 'Imbokodo' has been chosen as it is a Zulu word that means 'rock' and is often used in the saying 'Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo!', which means 'You strike a women, you strike a rock!'