



CALL FOR CHILDREN'S STORYBOOKS

Kitab Dost (Friends of Books)

Kitab Dost is special storybook reading program, initiated in 2019 in District Peshawar, part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. The program aims to nurture good reading skills and habits among street children, as well as improve reading proficiency and learning outcomes among students attending government primary schools and low-cost private schools. It also provides a platform for young people and adults to contribute to the well-being of the community, mostly as volunteers.

The initiative is led by women scholars from well-known national and international universities. The volunteers who deliver the storybook reading sessions include local university students, youth, retired officials, teachers, authors, and social workers. The story-reading sessions are conducted once a week for 2 hours both in schools and in poor neighborhoods. To support this initiative, two colorful Mobile Rickshaw Libraries operate in Peshawar and Khyber districts to encourage children to attend the story reading sessions.

Over the years we have observed that most storybooks do not represent local and national cultures, heritages, and languages.

This call invites writers to propose relevant short stories for out-of-school children and those who can barely read school mandated school books.

Note to writers: If your stories get selected for publication, we take full responsibility for having your contributions edited, proofread, illustrated, and published with your name printed as the author. As Kitab Dost is a social enterprise, we cannot offer any monetary reward or prize except full acknowledgment of your name (as the author). The Organisation shall not be bound to consider your stories if they do not fall under the guidelines or instructions. Authors are not obligated to prepare multiple stories at this juncture; any number is acceptable as long as they fit the relevant criteria. Thank you for taking an interest in writing stories for children and we look forward to your proposals and contributions.

Guidelines for Writing Stories for Children

General Instructions:

- ✓ Ages: 4-12 years
- ✓ Audience: children both out of school or attending school (Nursery- grade 5)
- ✓ Themes/Categories: 1) historical 2) entertainment 3) informative 4) cultural 5) ethics 6) civic sense 7) stories based on proverbs/riddles/nursery rhymes (in Pashto)
- ✓ Sub-themes/topics: Annex-I
- ✓ Language(s): Pashto, Urdu, English
- ✓ Writing Style: Simple and easy to understand
- ✓ Illustrations: If possible, by the author

Age-Specific Instructions:

Age- 4-6 / Nursery - Grade 1

1. Number of pages: 10 -12
2. One or two sentences on each page with narration/illustration
3. Introducing a maximum of 4 new words to the children (easy new words only)
4. One story per book
5. Themes: See Annex-I.
6. Imaginative writing and fictitious characters can be introduced.
7. The style and language of the stories shall be kept simple and easy to understand.
8. Total number of stories to be published: 5

Examples:

- i. A timeless moral in *The Tortoise and the Hare*
- ii. Learning about numbers, fruit, and days of the week in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
- iii. Easy to read and simple text e.g. Meray Aam
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glCqyWiNYWE&list=PLL2o_tuxEUoP_m0SJIBT6n4o_xUZ2IBbBY&index=21, or Asad ka Pencil Box:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RNo4GDPrA4>
- iv. Subtly teach essential skills such as the alphabet, counting, colors, or seasons.
- v. A character getting along in simple life matters (e.g. learning to make a new friend at school, the importance of getting enough sleep etc).
- vi. A child visiting a place (in Pakistan only) for the first time, or learns a sport, or a hobby for the first time (e.g. learning how to swim)
- vii. An animal and its real-life characteristics linked to a certain trait in life, e.g. the father emperor penguin tends to the baby chicks while the female brings in the food or the lion sometimes being an excellent babysitter while the lioness hunts.

- viii. A character learning to share (their favorite toy/food etc.).
- ix. A magical box, magical shoes (that operate on kindness).
- x. A character learning to be brave amid adversity/learning the importance of honesty.
- xi. Healthy vegetable characters and unhealthy fast-food characters
- xii. A child/animal who is a picky eater.
- xiii. Characters who make a mess and work together to clean it up.
- xiv. A character learning to not compare himself to others, also traits such as loyalty, friendship, anger management, etc.
- xv. Or any other daily life matters

Age- 7-9 / Grade 2-3

1. Number of pages: 12 -15
2. Two or three sentences on each page with narration/illustration
3. Introduction of a maximum of 4-6 new words (easy new words)
4. One story per book
5. Themes: See Annex-I
6. Imaginative writing and fictitious characters can be introduced.
7. The style and language of the stories shall be kept simple and easy to understand e.g. Perhaize (پربیز)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_xsJb3vI9E&list=PLL2o_tuxEUoP_m0SJIBT6n4ox_UZ2IBbBY&index=5
8. Monolingual books will be published.
9. Total number of stories to be published: 4

Age- 10-12 / Grade 4-5

1. Number of pages: 16-20
2. Three or four sentences on each page with narration/illustrations
3. Introduction of a maximum of 8-12 new words (with a certain degree of difficulty)
4. One story per book
5. Themes: See Annex-I
6. Imaginative writing and fictitious characters can be introduced.
7. The style and language of the stories shall be kept simple and easy to understand. E.g. Uff ye Keerray (اف یہ کیڑے)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcDDI6hbcHs&list=PLL2o_tuxEUoP_m0SJIBT6n4ox_UZ2IBbBY&index=19
8. Bilingual books can be published.
9. Total number of stories to be published: 4

Sub-themes/topics:

S.#	Theme	Age (4-6)	Age (7-9)	Age (10-12)	
1.	Cleanliness/Personal Hygiene	✓	✓	✓	
2.	Water conservation	✓	✓	✓	
3.	Pollution/climate change/Tree Plantation	✓	✓	✓	
4.	Respect for Women, Elderly	✓	✓	✓	
5.	Expressing feelings (Empathy, Anger, depression, jealousy etc)	✓	✓	✓	
6.	Virtues (Forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-regulation, courage, respect, truthfulness)	✓	✓	✓	
7.	Traits/Habits (reading books, sharing, peer pressure)	✓	✓	✓	
8.	Human and Animal rights	✓	✓	✓	
9.	Friendship/Making friends, Wariness regarding strangers	✓	✓	✓	
10.	Pakistani Heroes/role models (philanthropists, sports, arts)		✓	✓	
11	Child protection	✓	✓	✓	
12	Interfaith harmony			✓	

Setting:

- Farm
- Home
- School
- Bazaar/Market
- Food related stalls/hotels/eateries
- Jungle/Forest/Park
- Streets/Neighborhoods/ Backyard
- Mountains