



Friends of Storylines Incorporated

Ngā Pou O Te Whare Waituhi Tamariki O Aotearoa

Annual Report for 2024

Introduction

It is my pleasure to write the Annual Report of the Friends of Storylines Incorporated. There have been our usual celebrations such as the Storylines Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture Award, and the Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award. The Story Tours continue to grow in strength and have reached enough regions now that the schools, kura and centres are now looking for our next ventures in their area. An inaugural addition to our outreach this year was *Story Sparks: Writing Workshops for Kids* that engaged a group of middle school children in writing tutorials. This was well received and more are planned. Despite the economic climate we continue to succeed in providing opportunities for tamariki to engage with storytelling and children's literature written for them by our Aotearoa New Zealand creatives.

Storylines Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture Award

This was held in April and is presented annually to a person for their lifetime achievement and significant contribution to the broad field of children's and young adult literature and literacy. This year it was awarded to Elizabeth Jones, Director of Literacy and Learning, *National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa*. This event was attended by family and friends; and both current and retired colleagues from around the country. A testament to the high regard placed on Elizabeth's contribution to this field. It was held at the National Library of New Zealand, Stanley Street, Auckland. This short passage cannot do justice to the more than 35 years in which "she has been one of New Zealand's most passionate, articulate, knowledgeable, and effective advocates of children and young people's reading for pleasure and the academic and personal benefits it brings...". Please read more on our website at: <https://www.storylines.org.nz/search-profiles/elizabeth-jones-2/profiles/> and view the video.

Storylines Story Sparks: Writing Workshops for Kids

This was held on 26 September at Kohia Terrace School. Intended for middle school students to extend their creative writing skill set, it proved very rewarding both for the children who attended, the presenters and committee organisers. The programme was geared towards beginners and helping children understand story structure; the positive

feedback from the children about the content and presenters told the organisers that they had hit the mark. New and valuable material was learnt in an atmosphere of encouragement which saw the young writers engaged and happy to ask questions. The presenters were Sonya Wilson and Graci Kim along with the organisers. Thanks to Weng Wai Chan, Anne Kayes and Vanessa Hatley-Owen whose vision and organisation made this possible. Thanks also to Kohia Terrace for the use of their facilities and to Lynda Gee for volunteering to be our first aider.

Storylines Notable Book Awards

The Storylines Notable Book Awards for 2024 celebrates excellence in children's and young adults' literature in Aotearoa New Zealand, showcasing outstanding titles across five categories: Te Reo Māori, Picture books, Junior Fiction, YA (Young Adult) Fiction and Non-Fiction.

The celebration of these awards was deferred to the Storylines Margaret Mahy National Awards Day on 6 April 2025. The convenors comments for each category are below:

The Te Reo Māori category celebrates the richness and vitality of te reo Māori storytelling, showcasing books that inspire, educate, and entertain. The 2024 selection highlighted exceptional writing, beautifully crafted illustrations, and meaningful narratives that immerse readers in te ao Māori. From stories that honour whakapapa and tupuna, to engaging tales that make learning te reo a joy, through powerful themes, poetic language, and cultural depth, these books are a taonga for tamariki and whanau alike.

In the 2024 Picture Book category there were 56 books submitted, somewhat less than in previous years. Some of the problems encountered included many books written in rhyme, that most difficult of techniques, with forced or uneven rhyme and rhythm. Another issue identified is where the message being conveyed overrides the story, which must always be at the heart of a picture book. Illustration skills vary widely. We always look for an interesting layout, good technical ability, and those little extras in the illustrations that go beyond just reflecting the text. All of the 8 books selected did this. The word choice is interesting and well composed, with accomplished rhythm and rhyme where appropriate, and illustrations that are well laid out, showing the artists skill and providing plentiful interest, rewarding repeat reading and a picture book destined for a long life.

The Junior Fiction category had an especially strong selection submitted in 2024. There was incredible variety across the submitted books, from animal stories featuring dogs, penguins and Kahu, to fantasy stories featuring mythical creatures and tamariki who transform into superheroes. Many of the books made us laugh out loud, while others made us contemplate how we might feel in the characters' shoes. Identity was a strong theme

across this category, with characters who are contemplating their place in the world and their connection to their whakapapa. Experienced and well-known authors Stacy Gregg, Leonie Agnew and James Russell feature in this category, alongside debut authors, such as Claire Mabey and Shelly Burne-Field. Popular series, including *Children of the Rush* and Jason Mason, continue to stand out, with the previous books featuring as Notable Books in 2023.

While the number of submissions for the 2024 Young Adult category was lower than usual, the judges were impressed by the gripping and compelling storytelling from our selected Notable Books. These standout titles showcase strong narratives, well-crafted characters, and thought-provoking themes that resonate with teen readers. We hope to see even more incredible YA stories emerge in the coming years, reflecting the depth and diversity of young adult literature in Aotearoa.

Seventeen books were submitted for the Non-Fiction category. The judges were all impressed with the overall quality of publication and interesting topics. The natural world of New Zealand was the predominant theme among submissions, with a few biographies. We all felt the intense cold and incredible perseverance of Mawson and his team in the inhospitable Antarctic environment. What intrigued the judges was the relatively high number of activity books that were successful in becoming a Notable Book. Each of these was different from the other, bringing more depth of content from a more traditional activity book. The ability to learn more about the seashore, backyard, or one's culture through fun activities was truly inspirational. And more surprisingly, and pleasing, was the wide range of audience they would appeal to – families/ schools/ kura/ individuals.

Storylines Manuscript Awards

Manuscript submissions fell away in the Storylines Joy Cowley Award category with 16 less than the year before. The Storylines Janice Marriott Mentoring, Storylines Tom Fitzgibbon, Storylines Te Kahurangi Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira and Storylines Gavin Bishop Award entries remained steady. Pleasingly there was a large increase in submissions for the Storylines Tessa Duder Award with 32 manuscripts submitted compared with 2022 where only 12 were received. In 2024, Allen & Unwin commenced their sponsorship of this award.

Time and again we hear how essential these awards are to our children's authors and illustrators, providing a means to have their work assessed and hopefully accepted by a publisher. Many of our talented creatives have started with a manuscript or storyboard in one of the above categories going on to have a career in their chosen profession. The pleasure the members of the organisation feel when hearing and seeing these accomplishments is real for the judges, organisers and publishers.

Storylines Story Tours

This year, Storylines completed a remarkable seven Story Tours across Aotearoa New Zealand, featuring 28 talented authors and illustrators who inspired and engaged with communities, students, and readers of all ages. Reaching an impressive total of 20,969 students and individuals, we visited 215 schools, libraries and community groups, as well as four bookshops. Through a variety of presentations, the tours have left a lasting impression on our diverse audiences. Tour hosts have expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm, highlighting the tours as accessible, impactful, and memorable. Schools appreciated the ease of organisation and noted the presentations' ability to captivate students, especially in smaller, more intimate classroom settings. The tours were meaningful for students who connected with presenters' dedication to storytelling, persistence in their craft, and love for books. Presenters offered writing activities, read aloud sessions, illustration techniques and publishing insights that nurtured a sense of excitement and curiosity, inspiring the next generation of our writers, illustrators, and readers. The Storylines Story Tours in 2024 have significantly fostered a love for reading and storytelling nationwide, leaving communities and students eagerly awaiting the visit by the Storylines Story Tour.

Unfortunately, the Storylines Trust Board made the decision to cancel the final Story Tour for 2024 which was to be in the Thames/Coromandel region. Not an easy or desirable decision to make, but the end of year projections showed that it would be putting Storylines at too much financial risk to continue with eight tours for year.

Additional to the Storylines Story Tours but related, is the collaboration between Storylines and LitPlus Research and Professional Learning Community at AUT. Two graduate researchers accompanied Vicki Cunningham (Storylines Operations Manager) on the last Tour of the year to the Central Plateau. They helped gather valuable qualitative information and feedback from the schools visited both on the tour and after. The resulting data helped guide our Story Tour programme planning for 2025 ensuring we would reach our audiences effectively as well as giving a valuable tool for grant applications. It was a wonderful opportunity to work collaboratively with another organisation a goal that we are increasingly look to achieve. The Report is titled *Inspiring the Magic of Reading & Writing: A Storylines Story Tour impact report* by Spencer Emery, Opal Jensen, Dr Ross Bernay and Dr John Milne. Published in March 2025.

Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award

Joy Sellen was honoured with the Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award for outstanding service to children's literature and literacy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Joy has served as the administrator of the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults for nearly a decade, handling everything from judging panels to Books Alive events and the HELL Reading Challenge. Known for her quiet dedication and behind-the-scenes mahi, Joy has been instrumental in championing children's books and those who create them. The award presentation recognised not only her extraordinary organisational skills but also her deep care for authors, illustrators, and the tamariki and rangatahi who benefit from greater access to stories. A tireless advocate for inclusivity in children's literature, Joy continues to be a powerful, if modest, force in Aotearoa New Zealand's children's literature landscape.

Organising Personnel

Finally, all the above mahi would not be possible without the tireless efforts of Vicki Cunningham (Operations Manager) and Anne de Lautour (Executive Officer). These two people are the glue that keeps this organisation functioning professionally and with fluidity. It is a pleasure for the Friends of Storylines Management Committee to support the Storylines Trust in their vision for the tamariki of Aotearoa New Zealand and the deep pool of talent that brings storytelling to them through our efforts. It was with sadness that we bid farewell to Christine Young as Chairperson of the Trust after her exemplary leadership, and we now welcome Michelle Chan into the role and know that she will bring her own set of skills to continue to grow the charity.

The Management Committee spends hours of their own time to enable the above and without their planning and skills our activities would not have been accomplished. Our thanks to Zac McCallum for being with us on the Committee for two years, he has stepped down to pursue active roles locally. Thanks also to the many judges, convenors and helpers who work in the background to enable days like the Storylines Margaret Mahy National Awards Day and Betty Gilderdale Award to reach fruition.

We all have the passion and enjoy sharing it with others and of course our tamariki.

The Committee for 2024 comprised:

Kaaren Hirst, Chairperson

Libby Limbrick, Acting Treasurer

Helen Villers, Minute Secretary

Tessa Duder

Pearl D'Silva, Membership Secretary

Vanessa Hatley-Owen

Anne Kayes

Bridget Mahy

Sue Bridges

Nga mihi nui,

Kaaren Hirst,

Chairperson,

Friends of Storylines Incorporated Ngā Pou O Te Whare Waituhi Tamariki O Aotearoa

April 2025.