

Ros Haden, one of the founders of FunDza, has written many books and short stories for young people.



PICTURE:
SIMON WATSON

Find the inner writer in you at Book Fair

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UNDER the hashtag #OurStories, the South African Book Fair takes place in Newtown, Johannesburg, this weekend. Coinciding with National Book Week, the fair has a host of workshops and panel discussions about various topics.

Literary luminaries, such as Zakes Mda, will be there. Mda will be in conversation with another arts great, Hugh Masekela. Actress and singer Marah Louw will also be there, as will Lebo Mashile, Sindiwe Magona, Deon Meyer and others.

While it is called the South African Book Fair, the rest of the continent is not excluded. Mukoma wa Ngugi, Ayòbámi Adébáyò and Bibi Bakare-Yusuf will also be giving talks.

The fair is for the family. There is a Magic Tent inside which is the Cotlands Toy Library where kids are given the opportunity to play with curated, educational material.

A play entitled *James and the Giant Peach* is also on show. There will also be readings for children, courtesy of Project Literacy, an early-childhood development programme.

One of the interesting panel discussions will be “Innovative Reading and Writing with Youth”, which will be facilitated by Ros Haden tomorrow. Haden is one of the founders of the FunDza organisation and has written many books and short stories aimed at young people. Her session will zone in on a FunDza programme.

“A project we’ve been running for the past three years is mentoring writers,” Haden says. “We’ve paired five young writers with professional writers. The professional writers become their mentors and together, they work on short stories. It’s quite intensive and what comes out of that project is an anthology. We publish the short stories on our website as well.”

She continues: “So what I am doing at the Book Fair is, three of the mentees from the Gauteng project will be there. They’re all still writing. And, at the fair, they will be discussing writing for FunDza and how important writing is for readers who don’t have access to books. That’s a really big thing. We started because of the impact that reading for pleasure has on one’s life.”

She sounds particularly jolly when she says: “The mentees have continued to write and one of them went on to win the Short Story Africa competition. There were other professional writers there, so that’s great.”

Is the session only meant for the youth? Haden says: “It’s about teen readership and young adults but I am expecting adults to come to the session as well. It’s open to everyone so I look forward to seeing teachers, librarians and other people who are interested in how the website works.”

● **The South African Book Fair runs at Museum Africa in Newtown from tomorrow to Sunday. Visit southafricanbookfair.co.za**