

Celebrating International Literacy Day with a children's story carrying a message for our times.

Over 5,000 Champions join hands with Pratham Books to spread the message of protecting the environment.

Bengaluru, September 7, 2018: **One Day, One Story** is Pratham Books' annual flagship event, a nationwide storytelling campaign is aimed at helping children discover the joy of reading, on the occasion of International Literacy Day, September 8. This year, given that India was the global host of 2018 World Environment Day, with the theme of "Beat Plastic Pollution," we chose a book that carried the message of pollution awareness — and action.

Pratham Books' **A Cloud of Trash** is a charming children's picture book written by Karanjeet Kaur and illustrated by Bhavana Vyas Vipparthi. It's the story of a little girl called Cheekoo, who has a cloud of trash hanging over her head. This makes her very, very unhappy, and as we follow her story, we learn a little more about trash, about keeping our surroundings clean, and how everyday waste can, and should, be reused, recycled, or disposed of responsibly.

The story works well for children across different ages and reading levels, and can be followed by simple activities like recycling and upcycling.

Bijal Vachharajani, Senior Editor, Pratham Books, says "**A Cloud of Trash** is a timely story. It comes at a time when our seas are regurgitating our garbage to us and we are drowning in trash of our own making."

Karanjeet Kaur, journalist and author of the book, explains, "A few years ago, I was writing about the fire at Mumbai's Deonar landfill, and I kept thinking about how much it must have affected those who live cheek-by-jowl with the landfill. When I spoke with a few of them, I learnt that they were massively upset with the fire... not because their health was getting affected, but because their livelihoods had. Several worked as daily-wage recyclers, sorting and sifting through the trash and were aching to go back. I thought about that a lot, and for many days — what constitutes trash, how we think about it, is there a way for us to be a little more conscious about what we consume, and what we discard."

The 'reality' of something as everyday as trash was also magnified by the art of the storybook. Bhavana Vyas Vipparthi, who created a mixed media style for the illustration, says, "**A Cloud of Trash** lent itself beautifully to this medium. The impact of a huge cloud of garbage hanging over her head could only be brought about if it was, in fact, real garbage."

One Day, One Story is a volunteer-driven campaign, now in its seventh year. It enables individuals and organisations to be champions of literacy, and read a story with children in

their neighbourhoods, cities, towns, and villages in a language of their choice. This year, over 5,000 Pratham Books Champions (#PBChamps) will be conducting sessions on and around September 8, 2018. These sessions are spread across 23 states of India and will also be conducted in 7 other countries.

Champions range from school teachers and librarians, to mothers, teenagers, and not-for-profit organisations. They, too, have developed the theme to suit their audiences. We have already seen comic book versions of the story, recycling and upcycling exercises, and more. Some sessions are followed by talks with waste management experts, while others invite children to discuss ways to reuse everyday items. As September is very close to the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, one set of Champions will be following their reading with a workshop on making a recyclable Ganesha!

A message like this deserves every form of amplification and reach it can garner. The story, in all languages, can be read and downloaded for free as e-books on StoryWeaver, Pratham Books' digital platform. Radio Mirchi has produced audio versions of the book in six languages, that are also free to listen to on SoundCloud.

This year, we've collaborated with community radio station networks like Gramvaani to carry the story into rural India -- Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Haryana. With partners like Worldreader, a digital version of the stories will reach children worldwide through their mobile app. And in our home location of Bangalore, we are sharing Readalong versions of the story through teachers' groups on WhatsApp. As always, our campaign strives to deliver a joyful story reading to children in the farthest corners of India - and to plant the seed of reading delight.

Suzanne Singh, Chairperson, Pratham Books, says, "It's an enjoyable story, but it also contains the germ of an idea for children to take away with them. The idea of reducing plastic pollution is a way for all of us to come together to address one of the great environmental challenges of our time. We hope that **A Cloud of Trash** also leads children to seek out stories that introduce them to new ideas, or make them think about things differently."

About Pratham Books

Pratham Books (www.prathambooks.org) is a not-for-profit children's book publisher founded in 2004 with the mission to see 'a book in every child's hand'. Its key objective is to publish good quality, affordable storybooks in multiple languages to support reading acquisition among children. Since inception, Pratham Books has published over 3000 books in 21 Indian languages. The books cover a range of genres including early readers, fiction, nonfiction, and storybooks on science, history, mathematics and nature. Pratham Books has had the distinction of working with many of the country's renowned authors and illustrators and their books have won several awards as well.

In recent years, Pratham Books has leveraged technology to further its mission:
StoryWeaver (www.storyweaver.org.in) is a first-of-its-kind digital platform providing open access to thousands of multilingual stories for free, and **Donate-a-Book** (www.donateabook.org.in) is a unique crowdfunding platform that's helping build libraries for the children who need them the most.

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