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New free to download picture book helps children understand COVID-19

As part of the response to fight the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Graduate School of Business Athol Williams and his artist wife, Taryn Lock, have produced the seventh book in their acclaimed Oaky children's picture books series with a focus on the virus.

"This book is extra special because it contributes to our national response to fight the virus," said Williams, who is also an award-winning author.

The book is titled *Oaky and the Virus*. In the book, Oaky and his sister Oaket discuss the reasons for staying home during the lockdown and how they can have fun while doing so.

Lock explained why she enjoyed illustrating this book. "It is a fun story and it is rewarding knowing that it will help children understand the lockdown and what they can do to stay safe."

The book includes the *Oaky Virus Song* which children can sing while washing their hands.

Theart Press, the publisher of the Oaky series, has made this book available at no cost. It can be [downloaded from their website](#) or from the [Oaky Facebook page](#).

As with the other Oaky books, the new book has a set of questions at the back that parents can discuss with their children.

Williams remarked: "It is our hope that parents or guardians use this opportunity to engage with children around matters relating to the virus but also to help ensure that children are reading accurately and doing so with comprehension." The book is currently available in English with plans afoot to translate it into other South African languages.

The first six Oaky books have been hugely popular with children under the age of 10. Theart Press has distributed over 165 000 Oaky books – through the NGO Read to Rise, run by Lock – to children in under-resourced communities in South Africa. Read to Rise visits primary school classrooms to create excitement about reading and distributes the Oaky books.

"Read to Rise currently has a campaign to raise funds for care packs for 20 000 children in Mitchells Plain and Soweto. Each pack will include an *Oaky and the Virus* book, Oaky

activity books, a bar of soap, cloth mask, juice and packet of crisps. Once the lockdown is lifted, we visit schools to hand out the packs and conduct our school literacy programmes,” said Lock.

To sponsor a care pack for a child for only R100 [click here](#).

For more information, please email Taryn Lock at taryn@readtorise.co.za.

In addition to the Oaky series, Williams is also the author of tween novel *A Girl Called H* and his inspirational autobiography, *Pushing Boulders* which tells the remarkable story of how, having grown up on the Cape Flats, he became the first person globally to earn five master’s degrees from five of the world’s top universities including Harvard and Oxford.

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