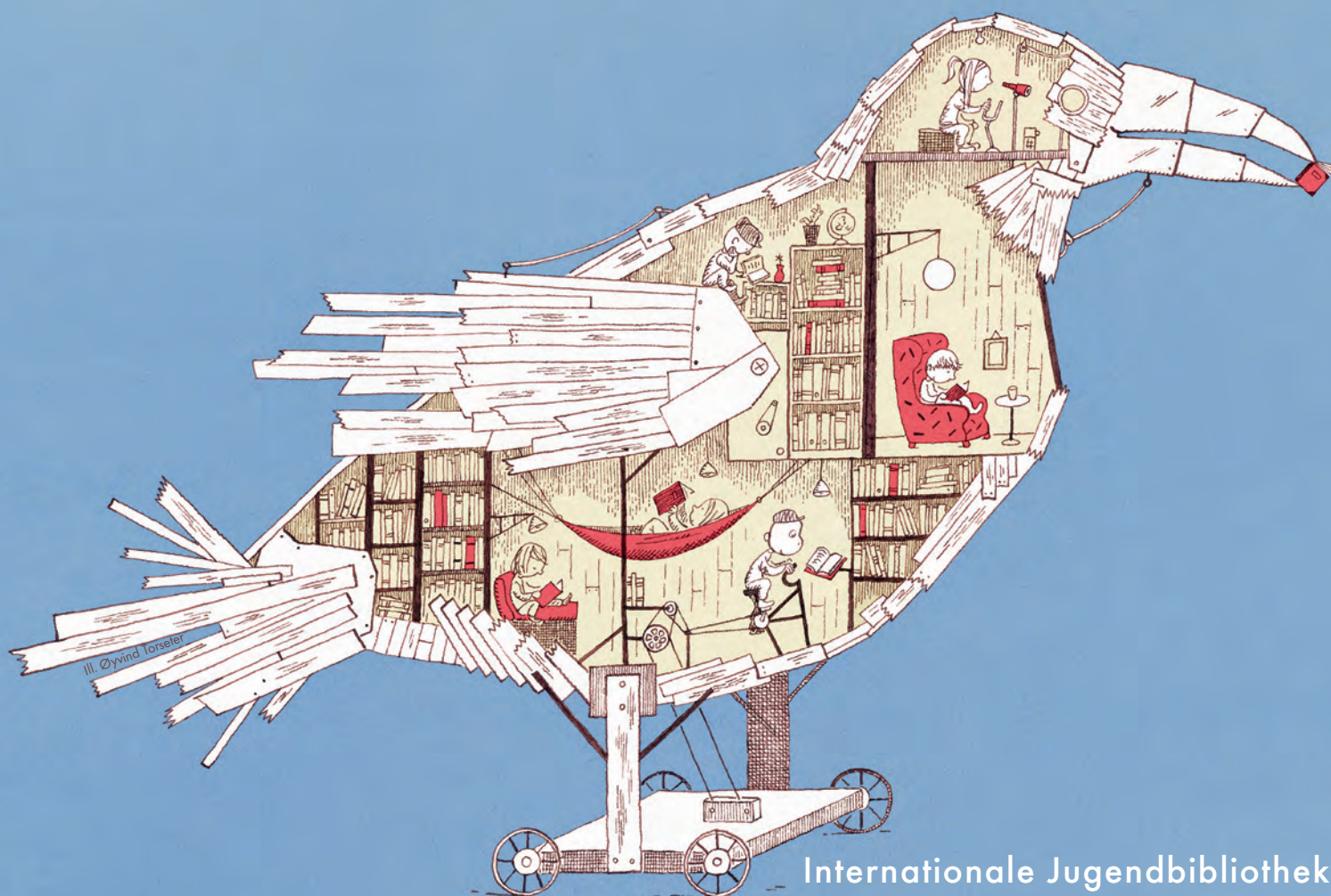


2025 | The White Ravens

A Selection of International Children's and Youth Literature



Internationale Jugendbibliothek

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PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that we present the 2025 edition of our annual recommendation list »The White Ravens«.

This year our cover features a large white raven constructed from rough slats of wood. Its interior is a most welcoming paradise for children – a dreamlike place that exudes the magic and intimacy of reading. This raven recalls the technically sophisticated, mechanical automatons that have amazed people for centuries. Or is it a Trojan Raven slyly smuggling books into the land of non-readers? The image was created by Norwegian illustrator Øyvind Torseter. His books »Dronefangeren« (The Drone Catcher) (Cappelen Damm, 2023) and »Til slutt blir alle hester. Dikt for barn« (In the End, They All Turn into Horses. Poems for Children) (text by Gaute Heivoll; Vigmostad & Bjørke, 2023) were included in the »The White Ravens 2024« catalogue.

We are delighted and grateful that publishers, institutions, and organisations, as well as authors and illustrators, continue to support the International Youth Library with donation and review copies of their new publications. It is only thanks to their support that we

are able to present the »The White Ravens« catalogue, the most important annual publication of the International Youth Library. It aims to promote quality in children's book publishing and has become an increasingly useful tool for anyone interested in looking beyond national borders. »The White Ravens 2025« contains a selection of 215 notable children's and young adult books published in 49 languages and from 63 countries and regions.

The books in this unique selection cover a wide range of voices. Its international character is the result of the efforts of some twenty children's and young adult book experts. The library's in-house staff members in Munich cover many literary regions, and freelance readers and advisors monitor and consult on other languages, countries and regions. They all have the task of sifting through the thousands of books that are donated to the International Youth Library each year and highlighting and reviewing new publications that catch their attention and strike them as being noteworthy. Some of these works are then selected for this list on the basis of the universal relevance of the themes they address, their literary and visual qualities, or their innovative approach or design.

Our library team have long relied on a variety of means to gain a sound overview of the issues, trends, and people involved in current international children's and young adult literature: As well as reading new publications in the original languages, they attend international book fairs, scout and gather information, and keep in touch with publishers, institutions, organisations, and other experts. They also engage in discussions with the research fellows of the International Youth Library, foreign scholars who have a profound knowledge of the literature of their home countries.

As usual, the »White Ravens« are announced and published online a few days before the Frankfurt Book Fair, where the IYL team will present some of the books from the catalogue to the fair's visitors. This podium event has been a fixture in the Book Fair calendar for several years.

The reviews, bibliographical data, and book covers are also available in the White Ravens database on whiteravens.iyb.de/list. We will also be showcasing each of the 215 books on our Instagram account [@thewhiteravens.books](https://www.instagram.com/thewhiteravens.books) throughout the coming year.

For decades, all the recommended books have been displayed in print at the International Youth Library's booth at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. This tradition allows visitors to the booth to peruse the books at their leisure, leafing through their pages and exploring the stories and illustrations. We look forward to having this opportunity again and hope to see you in Bologna in 2026.

Once again, my sincere thanks go first and foremost to the countless publishers who have been supporting the work of the International Youth Library for decades with their book donations. I would also like to thank all those who have contributed to this catalogue both abroad and in Munich.

I hope that »The White Ravens 2025« will fall into the hands of many curious readers, and that they will enjoy making new discoveries. May the selected books and their creators receive the international attention they deserve. We hope that our work will contribute to this goal.

Dr. Christiane Raabe
Director of the International Youth Library
October 2025



1

Barakāt, Ibtisām (Barakat, Ibtisam) (text)
 Šāmā, Šārlūt (Shama, Charlotte) (illus.)

Bawwābat al-Quds al-ḥafīya

(Jerusalem's hidden gate)

ʿAmmān: Dār as-Salwā (Al-Salwa), 2025. – [36] p.

ISBN 978-9957-04-296-7

Jerusalem | Art | Cultural heritage | Cultural memory |
 Imagination | Picture book

This lyrical picture book by Palestinian author Ibtisām Barakat opens a magical portal into Jerusalem. The story begins when children discover a hidden gate within the iconic painting »Jamal al-Mahamil« (Camel of Burdens) by Palestinian artist Suleiman Mansour. Stepping through this gate, they enter an imagined Jerusalem woven from the city's most familiar artistic and cultural symbols. Here, stone alleys breathe, gates tell stories, and landscapes transform into dreamscapes of memory and hope. With Charlotte Shama's evocative illustrations, the book becomes both a journey through art and an adventure of discovery, linking Palestinian visual heritage with children's imagination. »Bawwābat al-Quds al-ḥafīya« celebrates how art, memory, and storytelling allow young readers to reclaim and reimagine their city beyond boundaries, turning cultural icons into living spaces filled with wonder and belonging. (Age: 8+) [LW]



2

aš-Šauwā, Hudā (Al Shawa, Hooda) (text)
 Sibtibilā, Siyienī (Septibella, Sienny) (illus.)

al-Ḥimār allatī ḥamlat al-ḥarb ʿalā ḡahriḥā

(The donkey who carried the war on her back)

Rāmallāh: Intāḡ muštarik li-Mu'assasa Tāmir lit-ta'lim
 al-muḡtama'i wa-dār Sināmūn lin-našr (Tamer Institute
 in collab. with Cinnamon Art Publ., 2024. – [44] p.

ISBN 978-981-18-1602-4

Gaza | Everyday life | War | Resilience | Friendship |
 Hope | Animals | Picture book

Zahra is a young donkey who lives with her companion Sami in Gaza City. Their days are filled with simple yet meaningful routines: carrying baskets of vegetables from the market, delivering falafel sandwiches to schoolchildren, or transporting flowers and strawberries from the fields. Through Zahra's voice, readers experience the innocence of ordinary life, rich with joy and connection. When war reaches the city, everything changes. The same familiar tasks take on a new weight: flour, water, and even wounded people replace fruits and flowers. Without sensationalizing, this story captures how war transforms daily routines and community rhythms. Hooda Al Shawa's delicate narrative, paired with Sienny Septibella's evocative illustrations, addresses the consequences of war for everyday existence with sensitivity and care. Rather than focusing on violence, the book highlights resilience, companionship, and the quiet endurance of ordinary beings who hope that one day life will be filled with strawberries and flowers again. (Age: 7+) [LW]

3



Christova, Zornica (Khristova, Zornica) (text)
Zacharieva, Siyana (Zakharijeva, Siyana) (illus.)

Složete gašti na tezi kartini

(Slozhetе gashti na tezi kartini)

(Put pants on these works of art!)

[Sofija]: Izdatel'stvo Točica (Izdatelstvo Tochica),
2024. – [48] p.

ISBN 978-619-7172-53-9

Art | Nudity | Non-fiction

Nudity in art – is that okay? Or should Michelangelo's David and similar works have some underwear slipped over their private parts, as an outraged Queen Victoria demands on the cover of this small, entertaining non-fiction book? With much humour, the book introduces a central debate in art and art history, allowing artists like Auguste Rodin and Egon Schiele to share their views both on artistic freedom, censorship, and whether nudity in paintings and sculptures is offensive or necessary. Siding with the »underwear« faction, Queen Victoria guides readers through this thought experiment. The pros and cons are presented by Zornica Khristova in engaging, amusing dialogues, without being too theoretical. Thanks to Siyana Zakharijeva's witty illustrations, the book makes for light, easy reading. The bustling Kazanlak Art Gallery also played an important role in publishing »Put pants on these works of art!«. (Age: 7+) [KW]

4



Vasileva, Zoja (Vasileva, Zoya) (text)

Janeva-Tabakova, Mila (Yaneva-Tabakova, Mila) (illus.)

Čaj ot Paragvaj

(Chai ot Paragvai)

(Chai tea from Paraguay)

Plovdiv: Žanet 45 (Janet 45), 2024. – 45 p.

ISBN 978-619-186-827-8

Childhood | Poetry | Picture book

The children's poems by Zoya Vasileva (1952-2021) beautifully demonstrate how children perceive the world, their environment, and everyday life with completely different eyes and priorities than adults – especially parents. At times poetic in their perception of nature (rain! snow! water!), and at other times gleeful with the unbeatable logic of a child. For example, when a mother reminds her playing child that there are many tasks waiting to be done, the child responds that these can also be done tomorrow – because after all, they could wait patiently. Mila Yaneva-Tabakova perfectly captures the atmosphere of the poems in well-orchestrated colour illustrations in orange, turquoise, yellow, and blue. Like Vasileva, she has an unpretentious, fresh perspective. Both recognize what is special and important to children in the little tableaux of their everyday life – in their room, on the playground, in the rain. (Age: 5+) [KW]

5



Ahumada, Laia de (text)

Fosch, Cinta (illus.)

Hem hagut de marxar. Sis testimonis de joves migrants

(We had to leave. Six testimonials from young migrants)

Barcelona: Akiara Books, [2024]. – 87 p.

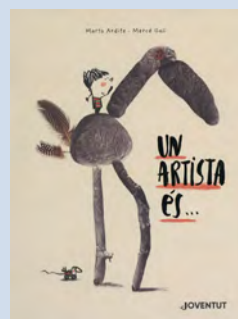
(Series: Akivida; 1)

ISBN 978-84-18972-49-2

Migration | Refugee | Non-fiction

Laia de Ahumada conducted conversations with six migrant women and men, aged between 25 and 45, and then edited the material for this book. With authentic, individual voices, these six people describe why they left their homeland, their often long and arduous journeys, and the challenges encountered in Spain, where they live today. Their individual stories stand for the large number of migrants worldwide, who are often perceived as an anonymous mass. Because the book does not reduce them to this one part of their biographies – each of them had a life before – readers can draw connections to themselves: they are more like us than we may think. The book conveys these experiences in a comprehensible and vivid way, prompts reflection, and awakens empathy. The graphic design is also compelling. The thoughtful and aesthetically appealing black-and-white illustrations and maps by Cinta Fosch, complemented by a different colour for each individual, are memorable and to the point. (Age: 12+) [JW]

6



Ardite, Marta (text)

Galí, Mercè (illus.)

Un artista és ...

(An artist is...)

Barcelona: Joventut, 2024. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-84-261-4867-4

Art | Artist | Creativity | Picture book

Pau wants to become an artist. »What is an artist?« asks his little sister Greta. Pau lists several things to explain what he thinks makes someone an artist: being curious, being attentive, closely observing one's surroundings and collecting all sorts of impressions; being brave and trying new things; using one's imagination to conjure things; and, last but not least, telling and expressing things in one's individual and unique way, allowing oneself the freedom not to follow well-trodden paths or those already known. Mercè Galí contributes an exceptionally creative rendering of the text by art historian Marta Ardite. She translates the short, incisive sentences into images through a free, playful, and associative way, at times abstract, at other times figurative, using pen and brush, scissors, or camera. The illustrations are surprising and witty and provide original answers to a child's question. They themselves are a prime example of what it means to be an artist. (Age: 5+) [JW]

7



Mollà, Jesús (text)

Helena

Alzira: Edicions Bromera, 2024. – 174 p.

(Series: Espurna; 144)

ISBN 978-84-1358-629-8

Family | Conflict | Siblings | Violence

With »Helena« Jesús Mollà has produced a compelling novel that will not leave readers unmoved. From the outside, the life of Helena, the teenage protagonist, seems unremarkable and alright. She earns good marks at school, has friends and in general a stable environment. Although there are no visible problems or conflicts, an oppressive reality lurks beneath the surface. At home, Helena is being harassed by her older brother. But there she is given no support because her mother plays down the situation and refuses to take action. Mollà tells the story in direct, clear language that neither sugarcoats things nor shies away from portraying difficult scenes. At times this is painful reading, but precisely because of its unflinching honesty the novel awakens empathy and makes a young person's fear, despair, and anger understandable and relatable. This powerful, raw story of family violence, silence, and repression lingers long in the mind. (Age: 13+) [JW]

8



Serra, Sebastià (text/illus.)

El conte que no s'acaba mai

(The fairy tale that never ends)

Barcelona: Animalibres, 2025. – [44] p.

ISBN 978-84-10302-41-9

Witch | Magic | Hair | Fairy tale | Picture book

As the title says: this is a story that has no ending. Like a yarn being spun, it winds on and on, before finally and unexpectedly looping back to the beginning, where it spins anew. There is something tragic about this – if only it weren't so funny. Sebastià Serra tells the story of a witch who is asked to brew a remedy for the princess's headaches. This would be a routine matter, were it not for that green drop from her congested nose that falls into the cauldron. The potion causes the princess's hair to grow ever longer, denser, and wilder. A gigantic hairy forest emerges, in which birds build nests, animals hide in the undergrowth, and whole villages arise, even a kingdom with a king, a queen, and a witch who is expected to cure the princess's headaches... This endlessly spinning fairy tale, which also deals with power and greed, is superbly illustrated. Sebastià Serra's enchanting pictures are brimming with ideas and details and are as opulent as the untamed and ever-expanding forest. (Age: 4+) [JW]



9

Pen So (i. e. So, Chun-man) (text/illus.)

Da li shu dian

(Dali Libreria)

Hong Kong: Pen So Artlab, 2024. – [172] p.

ISBN 978-988-70649-0-9

Surrealism | Dalí, Salvador (1904-1989) | Bookstore | Reading | Magic | Self-discovery | Graphic novel

»Dali Libreria« commemorates the 100th anniversary of the »Manifeste du Surréalisme« (1924) and Salvador Dalí as a representative artist of surrealism. At a time marked by the decline of bookstores, store owner Babou acquires the magical power to penetrate the subconscious of his customers and help save his struggling business. The hyper-rational loner finds meaning in life and a way to keep his store by exploring his own subconscious in a surrealist world inspired by Dalí's art. The graphic novel interweaves extensive allusions to Dalí's work and biography, and references psychoanalytic and surrealist theory with memories of Hong Kong's former cityscape and its disappearing bookstores. Pen So masterfully designs his black-and-white worlds using light and shadow as well as changing perspectives to achieve breathtaking three-dimensional effects with a cinematic flair. Like all of his previous works, »Dali Libreria« received several international awards shortly after its publication. (Age: 14+) [LO]



10

Bao Shu (i.e. Li, Jun) (text)

Kong long qi lu

(A strange journey to the dinosaurs)

Shanghai: Shao nian er tong chu ban she (Juvenile and Children's Publishing House), 2023. – 225 p.

(Series: Ke xue jia dai ni du ke huan: Chang pian xi lie) ISBN 978-7-5589-1419-5

Dinosaur | Time travel | Mesozoic Era | Love | Hope | Science fiction | Fantasy fiction

This novel is set in the 22nd century, where time travel has become a reality. Middle school student Xie Baosheng joins a study trip going through a wormhole to the Mesozoic Era to observe dinosaurs. What was supposed to be a routine excursion takes a drastic turn due to quantum effects. The team arrives just as an asteroid strikes Earth. Amid life-and-death chaos, the characters are forced to use their survival instincts, intervening in a timeline that was never meant to be theirs. Ultimately, the child narrator, who in youthful defiance mocks nearly everything, selflessly makes the choice to save others rather than abandon them. Blending science fiction with fantasy, the novel weaves past and future, forming a fascinating Möbius loop of time and space. Pioneering science-fiction writer Bao Shu, known for »Shi jian zhi xu« (The wasteland of time) and »Gu lao de di qiu zhi ge« (The ancient song of the earth), has won the Nebula Award, the Galaxy Award and was shortlisted for the 2024 Hugo Award for Best Short Story. (Age: 12+) [FW, ZX]



Cai, Gao (text/illus.)

Bu neng mei you

(Cannot do without)

Beijing: Tian tian chu ban she (Daylight Publishing House), 2024. – [38] p.

ISBN 978-7-5016-2423-2

Humans | Life | Meaning of life | Picture book

Humans cannot do without the sun, the clouds, the wind, the rain. Nor without a book, a smile, a dream, a hug, a mirror. This picture book is about everything humans need and should treasure. Its prose unfolds like an exquisite poem, revealing a world both simple and multi-layered. The text, rich in realistic and metaphorical implications, harmonizes perfectly with the illustrations' modern creative interpretation of traditional Chinese paintings. Readers can also use the blank space at the end to draw what they consider indispensable in their own lives. Cai Gao is best known for her creative adaptations of Chinese folklore in her picture books, including »Bao er«, »Tao hua yuan de gu shi« (The story of Peach Blossom Spring), and »Bai niao yu yi« (A feather robe from hundreds of birds). She is the first Chinese illustrator to win the BIB Golden Apple and has been shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. In 2022, she won the Special Contribution Prize of the Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award. (Age: 3+) [FW, ZX]



Liu, Haiqi (text)

Ke Ke (illus.)

Nan hai zhang da

(Boys grow)

Qingdao: Qing dao chu ban she (Qingdao Publishing House), 2025. – 278 p.

ISBN 978-7-5736-3269-2

Painting | School | Blackboard newspaper | Art | Childhood memories

This novel captures a Chinese childhood from over half a century ago, witnessing how a boy grows almost imperceptibly by holding on to what he loves. Liu Lixian loves scribbling on walls, paper, classroom blackboard newspapers, and his passion for painting scenes from everyday life blossoms from crude sketches to skillful artistry. Woven into Liu's artistic journey are his school experiences, friendships, and youthful romance. Life appears simple, children grow like sunlit wheat shoots – absorbing every bit of the world around them. Rooted in his own childhood memories, Liu Haiqi's vivid narrative feels authentic. His concise language and signature colloquial style bubble with light-hearted humour, subtle warmth, and wit. Liu is the author of »You ge zi de xia tian« (The summer of pigeons), »Wu wei xiao shu li xian ji« (Adventures of a tailless mouse) and »You yong« (Swimming). He has won several awards, including the National Award for Outstanding Children's Literature (Quan guo you xiu er tong wen xue jiang). (Age: 10+) [FW, ZX]

Xiao, Dingli (text)
Wang, Chuen Tz (illus.)

Ni shi yi zuo hua yuan

(You are a garden)

Beijing: Zhong xin chu ban ji tuan
(CITIC Press Group), 2024. – 185 p.
(Series: Wan wu de tong hua)
ISBN 978-7-5217-6389-8

Garden | Nature | Imagination | Short story

In this book from the author's »Fairy tales of everything« series, the world is like a boundless garden, where beauty waits around every corner. With the crystal-clear gaze of a child, the writer beholds and re-imagines this world, painting it in strokes of poetry. Each story is touched by childhood's whimsical magic: a boy swimming through the sky like a frog in a pond; the wind's invisible footsteps tracing intricate patterns along the water's edge; the cosmos flower raising its fragrant chalice to toast sun and moon; a book reading aloud to another. Blending the wonder of fairy tales and the lyricism of poetry, the writer's pen scratches the surface of things only to plumb their hidden depths. The naive illustrations and the text complement each other in delightful harmony. Xiao Dingli is best known for her fairy tales and novels for children, such as »Xiao dou zi xi lie« (The little bean's stories series), »Wan wu de yao shi« (Keys for everything), and »Xiao shi zi Mao Erdong« (The little lion Mao Erdong). (Age: 8+) [FW, ZX]



Zhu, Xiqin (text)
Yu, Hongyan (illus.)

Ce ma shao nian

(The boy riding a horse)

Beijing: Xi an jiao tong da xue chu ban ji tuan
(Xi'an Jiaotong University Press), 2024. – [77] p.
ISBN 978-7-5693-0292-9

Horse | Horse racing | Freedom | Picture book

As a member of a renowned horse-judging family, the narrator's brother has to select a racehorse for the richest family in the area and returns from the horse market with Hailong, an unremarkable, scarred little wild horse. No one believes it can become a good racehorse – until the brother rides it to a stunning victory at the Nadam Fair, only to release it back into the wild. »Some horses belong to the pastures, some to the racetrack. But Hailong belongs to the vast sky and earth, to the mountains and rivers, to no one.« The suspense and plot twists are captivating, while the friendship between the boy and the horse is deeply moving. The illustrations show the vastness of the grasslands and the vibrant spirit of their inhabitants. Zhu Xiqin is the author of »Xiao xun ma shi Baatar« (The little horse trainer Baatar) and »Guo bao te gong« (Special agents of national treasures). Yu Hongyan is the illustrator of »Yi li zhong zi gai bian shi jie« (A seed changes the world) and »Ma tou qin de chuan shuo« (The legend of Morin Khuur). (Age: 5+) [FW, ZX]



15



Yen, Chih-Hao (text)
Hsueh, Hui-Yin (illus.)

Mao fang zi

(The cats' house)

Tainan: Nan yi shu ju

(Nani Book Enterprise), 2024. – [45] p.

(Series: KIDO Qin zi shi tang)

ISBN 978-626-351-599-4

Old age | Dementia | Care | Cat | Picture book

Granny detests cats, but the neighborhood's strays persistently sneak into her house, settle down, and gradually take over her everyday tasks when she begins to lose her memory. After she forgets that she hates cats, they take complete control and, in true feline fashion, give her a sense of security and happiness. At the end, readers learn that Granny's late husband, who died in a car accident while feeding stray cats, had repeatedly begged them to take care of his demented wife. Large-format paintings in rich colours alternating with delicately drawn comic panels add further narrative layers to the story. While children will enjoy discovering hidden objects and camouflaged cats, adults will delight in the nostalgic views of traditional Japanese-style houses and Taiwanese tin roofs of bygone times. Yen's and Hsueh's first collaboration, »Meng you« (Sleepwalking), was selected for the 2021 Bologna Illustrators Exhibition. »Mao fang zi« has received several awards and is shortlisted for the Golden Tripod Award and the Feng Zikai Award. (Age: 6+) [LO]

16



Bezinović-Haydon, Iva (text)
Tintor, Hana (illus.)

Ja protiv sebe

(Me against myself)

Zagreb: Ibis Grafika, 2024. – [32] p.

ISBN 978-953-363-184-4

Search for identity | Self-doubt | Coming of age | Picture book

An impressive picture book for teenagers, this book has universal appeal. It tells the story of all those who find it hard to live with themselves, even while knowing they can't escape who they are, nor would they truly want to. The first-person narrator struggles with herself, her family, and her own life. Wherever she happens to be, she feels out of place and isolated. Inside herself, she senses turmoil and anger. Everyone wants something from her, but simultaneously she feels as if no one cares about her at all. At some point – during a walk and a silent tête-à-tête – she looks at her reflection in a puddle and feels the lump in her throat dissolve. Iva Bezinović-Haydon's elliptical, contemplative impressions and dynamic sequence of images wonderfully capture that inner tug-of-war and conflict. Hana Tintor's illustrations, which use only a few lines and use colour (red, blue) only in select spots, vividly symbolise the protagonist's mood swings. (Age: 12+) [KW]



Vernić, Vendi (text/illus.)

Saturn na zimskom plivalištu Budućnost

(Saturn in the winter swimming pool »Future«)

Zagreb: Mala zvona, 2024. – [40] p.

ISBN 978-953-8553-01-1

Incomprehensibility | Humans | Coping with change |
Picture book

How astonishing the absurd and the inexplicable can be is brilliantly demonstrated by Vendi Vernić's large-format picture book. One day, Saturn breaks into a swimming pool named »Future«. The planet swims in the basin and refuses to be removed from the premises, not even by the military or through the construction of a drain. On the contrary, it continues to grow and expand. This disrupts the activities of the pool's regular visitors. Then, one day, Saturn simply disappears. In her picture book Vernić offers a poetic study of human life, illustrating how people react to and cope with unexpected, incomprehensible, and overwhelming events, and with change itself. Vernić creates a contrast between the calmness and the power of the static scene of a large planetary sphere in the pool and the small, scribbled figures. The figures are at the mercy of this event, forced to adapt without understanding what is happening or receiving any logical explanation. (Age: 4+) [KW]



Buddeus, Ondřej (text)

Janíček, Jindřich (illus.)

Kolo. Dopravní prostředek budoucnosti

(The bicycle. The future mode of transportation)

Praha: Paseka, 2024. – 117 p.

ISBN 978-80-7637-489-8

(Originally published in the German translation as »Fahr Rad!« [Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag, 2024])

Bicycle | Non-fiction

Cycling is fantastic! After reading »Kolo«, you'll have no doubt about it. The passionate cyclist and author Ondřej Buddeus has bundled up all his knowledge and passion for the »dandy horse« in this book, and together with illustrator Jindřich Janíček, he has written an information-packed declaration of love for the bicycle. This non-fiction book for children offers not only the history of its development and many facts in beautifully illustrated and digestible portions, but also celebrates the diversity of the bicycle and its capacity for empowerment. After all, it gives children their first sense of freedom and independence. The bicycle thus becomes a symbol of equality and is the vehicle that lets people nearly fly using their own energy. »Kolo« was first published in German translation and nominated for the 2025 German Children's Literature Award. The Czech edition won the 2025 Golden Ribbon children's book award in the non-fiction category. (Age: 10+) [KW]



Čupová, Kateřina (text)

Čupová, Zuzana (illus.)

Omrzlina

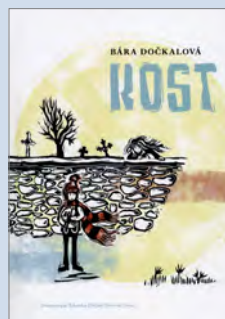
(Frostbite)

Brno: Host, 2024. – 49 p.

ISBN 978-80-275-2218-7

Imagination | Cold | Gnome | Climate change

A family's youngest child, Míša, narrates this first-person travelogue from her own childlike perspective. While highly imaginative and inventive, perhaps not every detail should be taken at face value. Nonetheless their strange and icy summer adventure is quite extraordinary. After a swim in the lake, everyone, and especially Míša's older brother, is freezing cold. Then Míša discovers the ice goblin Omrzlina in their freezer. Like many goblins, Omrzlina has left her icy homeland as the frost disappears. The sisters Kateřina and Zuzana Čupová have created an engaging story in which more and more magical moments unfold in an initially realistic plot. And they tell these stories in a delightfully fresh manner: short sections of text blend naturally with wordless sequences of images in pastel matte tones. »Omrzlina« is a fast-paced, fantastical children's story that can also be read as an allegory about climate change. (Age: 8+) [KW]



Dočkalová, Bára (text)

Holub Převrátilová, Zdenka (illus.)

Kost

(The bone)

Praha: Labyrint/Raketa, 2024. – 229 p.

ISBN 978-80-86803-94-4

Family | Family secret | Coming to terms with the past | Death

When ten-year-old Matěj secretly steals a bone sticking out of a grave during his great-uncle's funeral, it marks the beginning of an incredible story. The bone belongs to Matěj's great-grandfather who begins to make its presence known at home. The boy realises that he must return the bone. And so, under a false pretence, he sets off on a »holiday« to visit the eccentric great-aunt whom he hardly knows. Author Bára Dočkalová demonstrates her storytelling skills by gradually revealing the history of Matěj's family, including a long-standing quarrel between Matěj's father and uncle. There are plenty of surprising twists. The combination of a morbid theme, Matěj's determination and mysterious characters like Róza, a girl who believes in nature mysticism, makes »Kost« a deeply engaging and profound children's book. (Age: 10+) [KW]



Stará, Ester (text)

Vostřelová, Marcela (illus.)

O zzzvědavé včele Elle

(All about the curious bee Ella)

Praha: Pop-Pap, s.r.o., 2024. – [28] p. + [4] stencils

ISBN 978-80-908744-2-8

[Animals](#) | [Board book](#) | [Poetry](#) | [Non-fiction](#)

As it travels, a bee encounters various animals – from a horse to a cow to a goat, to a rabbit, a pig, and a chicken. The short poems that accompany this journey are complemented by concise factual descriptions and interesting details about each animal, as well as riddles and prompts for interaction. But there is much more to »O zzzvědavé včele Elle«. The book is also aesthetically delightful. The bee flies through small, perforated holes, guiding readers from page to page. Special tactile and visual moments are also created by delicate animal stencils included with the book. Transparent, barely visible animal silhouettes complement the colourful animal illustrations and present the animals from a different perspective. Ester Stará and Marcela Vostřelová transform a simple board book for the very young into a poetic and tactile experience. (Age: 2+) [KW]



Neerlin, Mette Eike (text)

Alt for Pipper Villumsen

(Everything for Pipper Villumsen)

København: Gyldendal, [2024]. – 112 p.

ISBN 978-87-02-31900-2

[Grief](#) | [Loss](#) | [Angel](#) | [Bird](#) | [Road trip](#)

Hope can be found in a cherry stone – this is just one of the comforting messages Mette Eike Neerlin offers her readers. »Alt for Pipper Villumsen« is a story about death and loss, about longing and sorrow. These are not exactly cheerful themes, and they have already been written about extensively. Yet the author populates her almost cinematic roadtrip novel with such delightfully quirky and endearing characters, and tells their stories with such warmth and dignity that more than once a quiet smile is sure to cross the reader's face. There are searching souls like Elinor and Ketty, who are separated by nearly 80 years of life, but have so much in common. Or Brigitte and Rosa, who feel lonely and unseen. They are all brought together by Cookie, an angel sent to accompany Pipper, Elinor's budgie, on its final journey. In the end, everything turns out quite differently – but one thing is certain: hope can (also) be found in a cherry stone. (Age: 10+) [IG]



Nielsen, Carsten René (text)

Marcussen, Mette (illus.)

Knoglebowling. Digte for børn

(Bone Bowling. Poems for children)

[Vordingborg]: Vild Maskine, 2024. – [26] p.

ISBN 978-87-7227-447-8

Death | Ghost | Horror | Poetry | Picture book

Denmark ■ DANISH

The title »Knoglebowling« (Bone Bowling) says it all: things could get a bit spooky here! And the skull on the cover, with a spider dangling in one of its eye sockets, sets the tone for some creepy fun. The poems in this book tell of old ghosts in a care home, dolls that come to life at midnight, and a boy who suddenly becomes magnetic – attracting everything made of metal, including, unfortunately, a giant aeroplane that ends up crushing him. Right from the start, the first poem offers up a TV snack of eyeballs instead of peas in a pod – mmmh, delicious! It's all quite creepy, but at the same time ever so over-the-top that it is all actually funny – especially through the interplay of text and illustration. »Knoglebowling« is Halloween and Día de los Muertos in book form, more grotesque and playful than frightening. P.S. Eyeballs, by the way, taste like a ghost's earwax and sleeping raspberries. (Age: 6+) [IG]



Akveld, Jolkje (text)

Jutte, Jan (illus.)

Pinguin en de ober

(Penguin and the waiter)

Tielt: Lannoo, 2024. – [71] p.

ISBN 978-94-014-9921-7

Restaurant | Penguin | Waiter | Social norm

Belgium ■ DUTCH

Traditionally dressed waiters look a bit like penguins, but the server in this book considers that a gross insult. He also doesn't like it when a penguin comes to dine in his restaurant, especially when it addresses him as »my friend.« In five funny chapters, Jolkje Akveld imagines how a friendship develops, despite all this, between the self-conscious penguin and the reserved waiter. She pokes fun at the conventions of an old-fashioned restaurant by interspersing facts about penguins. Illustrator Jan Jutte's witty illustrations are reminiscent of American cartoons from the 1950s, such as those of Crockett Johnson. The images are sober, in black and white, with pink backgrounds and accents, which makes a good match for the old-fashioned setting of the restaurant. The cartoon-like drawings are also perfect for bringing across the humorous facial expressions and postures of the characters. A wonderful book to read aloud, with a funny twist at the end. (Age: 4+) [VJ]

25



Colman, Charlotte (text)
 Van Hertem, Stefanie (illus.)
Wie zit in de gevangenis? En andere bijzondere weetjes over misdaad en straf
(Who's in prison? And other extraordinary facts about crime and punishment)
 Gent: Borgerhoff & Lambrigts, 2024. – 84 p.
 ISBN 978-94-6477-838-0

Crime | Justice | Punishment | Prison | Non-fiction

While library shelves are full of non-fictional children's books about animals, sports and foreign countries, this one tackles a more original subject: crime. It is not so much about detecting crime, but rather takes a philosophical approach to the very concepts of crime, law, justice, and punishment. The author is a criminologist, who first takes readers through the history of crime and then reflects on contemporary statistics, practices and moral dilemmas related to the subject. Why do more men commit crimes than women? What age group is most prone to committing crimes? Why does Amnesty International oppose capital punishment? The subject matter is sensitive and complex, but the author finds the right tone to handle it, supported by clear illustrations that often provide a light touch. (Age: 12+) [VJ]

26



Dierickx, Davien (text/illus.)
Zoekboek. De geschiedenis van het boek
(Seek book. The history of books)
 Antwerpen: Horizon, 2025. – [28] p.
 ISBN 978-94-641-0475-2

Book | Writing system | Printing | History | Non-fiction

Children who love reading don't always know where and how books originated and may be curious to find out. This non-fiction book takes young bibliophiles on a journey to ancient Mesopotamia, where people first recorded stories on clay tablets, and then guides them through the history of paper, printing, the oldest libraries, and modern printing presses. Flemish author and illustrator Davien Dierickx does not take herself or history too seriously while guiding readers on this journey through time. The double pages devoted to each episode in the history of books are full of little jokes: from modern cartoon figures on a clay tablet to a contemporary of Shakespeare who is also reading this book. In this way, »Zoekboek« combines instruction and delight – a classic recipe for literary success in the history of children's books. (Age: 8+) [VJ]



Jacques & Lise (i.e. Jacques Maes and Lise Braekers) (text/illus.)

August

Kalmthout: Pelckmans, [2024]. – [48] p.
ISBN 978-94-6383-388-2

Forest | Nature | Love of nature | Picture book

As soon as you open this picture book, a stylish adventure begins right on the endpapers. You see a forest packed with pine trees, a small yellow bird, and a helicopter. This vehicle is carrying August, who lands in the forest with a large bag full of provisions and even bigger plans. He is ready to live alone in a tree house and to take care of the forest and the animals. Over the years, he experiences all kinds of adventures and natural disasters, including a hurricane, a fire, a termite infestation, and famine. These events mainly seem to serve as inspiration for beautiful illustrations with sophisticated compositions and colour combinations. The termites, for example, appear as huge cranes and bulldozers, while on the next page, human trucks and digging machines cast shadows that look just like termites. This carefully crafted and visually playful picture book invites you to pause, enjoy, and, like August, love nature. (Age: 4+) [VJ]



Stuyck, David (text)

Van den Berghe, Seppe (illus.)

Tekkeltje Tralala

(*Little Teckel Tralala*)

Eke: De Eenhoorn, [2024]. – 58 p.

ISBN 978-94-6291-818-4

Dog | Pampering | Adventure | Search for identity

Since Mr. Plumcake passed away, their dog Little Teckel has taken his place in Mrs. Plumcake's heart: he eats with her, sleeps in her bed, is pampered, and even driven around in a stroller. For the neighbours' tougher dogs, the spoiled lap dog is the target of ridicule, and this increasingly bothers Little Teckel. He decides to take off on an adventure. This little stylish book is a delight to read aloud. First, you can revel in the funny details about the life of the posh Mrs. Plumcake and her devotion to the dog. Seppe Van den Berghe's black-and-yellow illustrations skillfully capture both the woman's intense love and the little dog's discomfort. Once Little Teckel goes on an adventure, things get exciting, and even a little gruesome, but the tension is bearable because the little dog finally gets to play the heroic role he has longed for. Moreover, not only does he become braver, but the neatly groomed dachshund also becomes increasingly dirty, which adds another funny touch. (Age: 8+) [VJ]

29



Bosmans, Nancy (text)
Winsen, Lisa van (illus.)

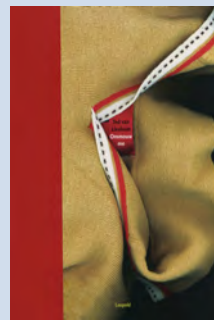
Het meisje met de zaadjes in het haar

(The girl with the seeds in her hair)
[Amsterdam]: Condor, [2025]. – [36] p.
ISBN 978-94-9335-664-1

Slavery | Colonialism | Picture book

This sensitive picture book tells the story of an African girl who is kidnapped together with her mother, transported across the ocean and then enslaved. Yaa's mother feels that something is up when colonizers start eyeing their village and she hides small seeds between her daughter's braids. Those seeds turn into a symbol of hope when, after the long journey at sea, they are sold, given new names and then forced to labour hard on a coffee plantation. Thanks to the plants that grow out of those seeds, they can retrieve the smells and tastes that they cherished at home. The story provides a way to have conversations about injustice, colonialism and slavery with young children. The illustrations show the sadness and anger of the enslaved characters, while also conveying a message of hope, embodied both by the symbolic seeds and the colourful images. (Age: 6+) [VJ]

30



Lieshout, Ted van (text/illus.)

Ommouw me. Gedichten & portretten van kleding en schoeisel

(Sleeve me. Poems & portraits of clothing and footwear)
Amsterdam: Leopold, [2024]. – 96 p.
ISBN 978-90-258-8415-4

Clothing | Emotion | Poetry

How does a coat feel when it is no longer worn? What thoughts can be ascribed to the trousers of a girl who is undressing in front of her boyfriend? Through pictures and poems about clothes, the acclaimed Dutch author Ted van Lieshout explores a whole array of human experiences and emotions. To find inspiration, he delved into both his own wardrobe and that of his deceased brother. The collection sketches a moving portrait of loss and mourning. There is also a political message. In a section entitled »We left our country,« the pictures and poems reflect on the international clothing industry, as well as on people who are trying to find their place in another country. The poems show us, that clothes are what unites us, while the widely varied styles of both the poems and the items of clothing convey that message with a refreshingly light touch. The collection was shortlisted for the Boon Jeugdliteratuur, the most important Flemish prize for children's literature. (Age: 12+) [VJ]

31



Riphagen, Loes (text/illus.)

Coco en het gekke ding

(*Coco and the strange thing*)

Haarlem: Gottmer, [2024]. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-90-257-7894-1

Forest animals | Balloon | Family | Emotion |
Picture book

32



Schaap, Annet (text)

Krekel

(*Cricket*)

Amsterdam [et al.]: Querido, 2025. – 409 p.

ISBN 978-90-451-3115-3

Siblings | Search | Longing | Grief | Fantasy fiction

DUTCH
Netherlands

A pink balloon has landed in the forest, and all the animals are curious to find out what it is and what it can do. One animal after another takes a guess, until they discover that it can be used as a very soft pillow to relax on. They all find a spot to lie on the big, pink pillow, but then a hedgehog also wants to join the party. This picture book plays with the knowledge that young children may already have acquired about balloons and animals. The climax can be anticipated but is nonetheless very funny. Luckily a shattered balloon doesn't spoil the party, as some animals know how to use the remaining bits creatively. Loes Riphagen's picture books featuring the little black bird Coco have become very popular read-alouds for young children in the Low Countries. These colourful books explore familiar situations and emotions in an original and accessible way. (Age: 3+) [VJ]

DUTCH
Netherlands

Annet Schaap reimagines fairy tales in a style that appeals to contemporary readers of all ages. »Lampje« (2017) has become a modern classic in the Low Countries and has been translated into many different languages. »Krekel«, which features some of the same characters, is on par with it. The story follows Eliza and her little brother Krekel (Cricket), who are looking for the other brothers while desperately trying to stay out of the hands of their father and step-mother. As they encounter various other adults, they need to learn who to trust. The novel is inspired by Grimm's fairy tale »The Six Swans«, to which it adds new scenes and characters, as well as a rich exploration of the protagonists' minds. The plot offers a compelling alternation of suspenseful and moving scenes. The language is at the same time crystal clear while having poetic and humorous touches. The entire fantasy world that Schaap has created is particularly captivating, and the book evokes an array of different emotions: it is sad and scary, but also funny, moving and daring. (Age: 10+) [VJ]



Stegeman, Lotte (text)
Ten Berge, Marieke (illus.)
Wij beren, eindelijk ons echte verhaal
(*We, bears – finally our true story*)
Amsterdam: Luitingh-Sijthoff, [2025]. – 144 p.
ISBN 978-90-210-5260-1

Bear | Non-fiction

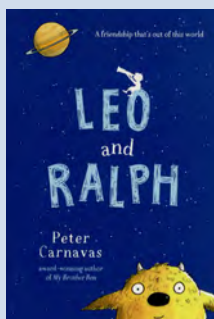
From Baloo to Paddington to Winnie-the-Pooh: bears are a staple subject of children's literature. This stylish non-fictional book tells their »real story«. First, it explains facts about different species of bears, from the popular brown, panda and polar bears, to the lesser-known species, such as the spectacled bear. Next, it zooms in on their interaction with humans, providing famous examples from history, such as circus bears. Readers learn, amongst other things, that a polar bear lived in the Tower of London during the reign of King Henry III. Bears turn out to be particularly intelligent and observant animals, more similar to humans than you might think – even if they don't wear T-shirts like Winnie-the-Pooh. The text is fluently written and provides just the right amount of information to keep readers intrigued. Marieke ten Berge's illustrations show that bears are a rewarding subject to draw, also when they are not anthropomorphized: her illustrations are realistic, yet also most endearing. (Age: 8+) [VJ]



Camp, Joaquín (text/illus.)
The robbery
Kew East: Berbay Publishing, 2024. – [32] p.
ISBN 978-1-922610-73-7

Thief | Bank robbery | Tunnel | Meaning of life | Picture book

Robbing a bank is a walk in the park, provided that you prepare it well – and the three thieves have certainly done so. Not only do they have an ingenious plan: they will »dig a tunnel«, they have also taken a crash course with the best of teachers on how best to dig. So far, so good. However, oddly enough, the guys can't seem to find the right destination. Their tunnels lead them into the middle of a concert hall, into a wrestling match, aboard the passenger ship Titanic, and to other outlandish places. Argentinian artist Joaquín Camp's dynamic felt-tip-pen illustrations follow the unlucky trio, clad in identical robber attire, as they fail to locate the gold-filled vault again and again. Yet readers, in addition to watching the fruitless pursuits, are treated to glimpses of entertaining underground side stories that remain hidden from the protagonists' eyes. The short, clever text and the colourful pictures create an entertaining read for pre-school children with visual allusions that older readers in particular will cherish. (Age: 4+) [CS]



Carnavas, Peter (text/illus.)

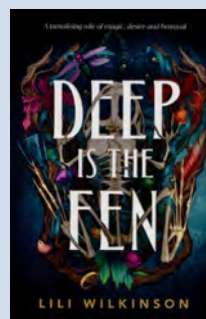
Leo and Ralph

St Lucia, Queensland: UQP, 2024. – 268 p.

ISBN 978-0-7022-6621-8

Outsider | Differentness | Imaginary friend |
Imagination | Expectation | Guilt

You are different and don't fit in with your classmates, your family, and the whole world? This sucks big time. Especially when your parents can't stop worrying and your extroverted little sister suddenly gives you advice on how to find friends. So when Leo meets Ralph, a bouncy, furry little creature from one of planet Jupiter's moons, and they immediately hit it off, everyone's worries seem to vanish, and Leo is left to enjoy the imaginative games he and Ralph invent. Yet once he gets older, pressure returns to say goodbye to his imaginary best friend and grow up, and the family's move to a small town in the country – worlds away from his home city – is the perfect opportunity for a fresh start, at least in his parents' opinion. Acclaimed author Peter Carnavas has a knack for tackling life's big questions in a quiet and gentle way that envelops readers who might go through similar hardships with warmth and understanding. This moving story shows that friendships come in a myriad of ways... and that's ok. (Age: 8+) [CS]



Wilkinson, Lili (text)

Deep is the fen

Sydney [et al.]: Allen & Unwin, 2024. – 396 p.

ISBN 978-1-76106-686-3

Magic | Witch | Power | Secret society | Friendship |
Love | Misogyny | Fantasy fiction

Set in the same magic universe as her award-winning »A Hunger of Thorns«, Lili Wilkinson's new YA fantasy novel follows 17-year-old Merry and her two best friends, who live in the quiet town of Candlecott, where magic is strictly regulated. Merry is more than happy to keep away from magic and evil witches, as one of them purportedly caused her mother's death. Therefore, when Teddy decides to pledge himself to the Toadmen, a sinister men-only secret cult, the headstrong teen needs to find a way to stop him – even if this means enlisting the help of her high-school archenemy, rich and haughty Caraway. Yet she hadn't expected to plunge into a deadly dangerous ceremony and see magic being manipulated by power-hungry men. Written in a captivating tone with both an ancient Welsh fay atmosphere and a distinctly modern protagonist, this slightly creepy romantasy invites readers to dive deeper into a world of witches involved in a resistance movement, cruel capitalist corporations, and an enemies-to-lovers plot twist. (Age: 14+) [CS]



Burgess, Matthew (text)

Salati, Doug (illus.)

Words with wings and magic things

[Toronto]: Tundra Books, [2025]. – 125 p.

ISBN 978-1-77488-028-9

Magic | Poetry

»Words With Wings and Magic Things«, is the first close collaboration between celebrated author Matthew Burgess and award-winning artist Doug Salati. This collection of whimsical, witty, and wondrous poems with a myriad of ingenious mixed-media illustrations in Salati's trademark style was conceived in 2020 and refined over several years – and the outcome is truly magnificent. Divided into seven sections, each introduced by a two-line poem and a »portal« – i.e. two connected double page pictures with a die-cut – the volume is chock-full of fantastically funny verses as well as thoughtful lines. They talk about »The Fairies«, »Hair Care«, or »Living with Lions«. They transport readers from the real world into imaginary realms, take them on magical adventures, or show them cosy hiding places and wild wonders, making them realise that »To reach the place of things unseen, / words can be your trampoline.« It's a book of wordplay, rhymes, and banter for all ages to enjoy. (Age: 5+) [CS]



Lam, Thao (illus.)

One giant leap

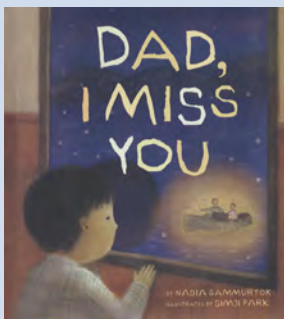
Toronto [et al.]: Owlkids Books, 2024. – [42] p.

ISBN 978-1-77147-599-0

Outer space | Astronaut | Playing | Imagination | Wordless book | Picture book

Thao Lam, acclaimed Vietnamese-Canadian artist behind a number of powerful and insightful picture books, including »The Paper Boat«, has created a fun new offering for young readers. »One Giant Leap« is a wordless space adventure following a young astronaut as they trek across barren lunar territory, jump over craggy rocks, climb up craters, encounter weird, silent otherworldly creatures, and come face to face with scary extra-terrestrial monsters. When a snowstorm starts, the brave protagonist struggles to get to safety, and finally ends up ... in the school hall with their friends. The clever, engaging visual story is presented in bold collage pictures that mix different textures and cunningly play with perspectives, whisking readers along. Only two double-page spreads at the very beginning and end signal that this exciting out-of-the-world adventure actually takes place in the mind of a creative child on their very mundane walk to school. What a clever leap of imagination! (Age: 4+) [CS]

39



Sammurtok, Nadia (text)
Park, Simji (illus.)

Dad, I miss you

Iqaluit, Nunavut [et al.]: Inhabit Media, [2024]. – 39 p.
ISBN 978-1-77227-482-0

Inuit | Father | Son | Residential school | Trauma |
Cultural identity | Picture book

This moving picture book tells the story of a young Inuit boy who is taken from his family and forced to attend a residential school, like so many Indigenous children in Canada between the late 19th century and the 1990s. Based on experiences of Inuit writer Nadia Sammurtok's own family, the story alternates between the internal monologues of the boy and his father. The emotional thoughts relate the fear, grief, and loss of identity that the son suffers, as well as the sadness, guilt, and feeling of powerlessness that weigh on the father's mind. His repeated »They said it will be better this way« is clearly a desperate attempt to convince himself everything will be all right. South Korean artist Simji Park translates the two protagonists' silent pleas, suffering, but also hope into atmospheric full-page pictures in soft hues, drawn in coloured pencil and watercolours. A short afterword and a QR code at the back of the book provide a wealth of background information on the traumatic topic of residential schools. (Age: 6+) [CS]

40



Sharp, Sid (text/illus.)

Bog Myrtle

Toronto [at al.]: Annick Press, [2024]. – 142 p.
ISBN 978-1-77321-892-2

Sister | Exploitation | Greed | Kindness |
Graphic novel

It comes as no surprise that illustrator Sid Sharp is a fan of folk tales and horror. Her second graphic novel for kids features a pair of dissimilar sisters living in a »hideous, drafty old house on the edge of town«. Short, round-faced Beatrice is a kind-hearted and creative optimist, bouncing through life always smiling; lanky, cranky Magnolia, on the other hand, is as mean as they come, constantly scowling and bossing her sister around. When Beatrice befriends a giant spider in the forest – Bog Myrtle – and receives a skein of her magic silk to knit her sister a warm sweater, greedy Magnolia immediately sees this as a business opportunity, forcing Beatrice to knit 24 hours a day until the friendly house spiders convince her to go on strike. Magnolia eventually gets her comeuppance in this wry tale about sustainability, labour rights, capitalism, and kindness. The ingenious, colourful, matt, folk-art-like illustrations were created with pencil, gouache, watercolour, ink, as well as beet juice, and dirt. (Age: 5+) [CS]



Yayo (text/illus.)

SOS water

Vancouver [et al.]: Tradewind Books, 2024. – [50] p.
ISBN 978-1-99059-823-4

(Parallel ed. in French and Spanish from the same publisher)

Plastic | Water pollution | Environmental awareness |
Habitat | Friendship | Picture book

When Lalo the sailor befriends little goldfish Rosa, who sits abandoned in her fishbowl on top of some plastic garbage bags, he immediately takes on the task of finding her a better home. However, this is easier said than done. The two new friends travel near and far – from the local park to the peak of a high mountain, then down into the jungle, and even to the icy Arctic, where the polar bears dwell. Yet no place is safe anymore. Hundreds of thousands of empty plastic bottles are polluting planet Earth and posing a serious threat to animals and the environment. Award-winning Colombian-Canadian artist Yayo tells this story in sparse text that leaves plenty of room for readers' own musings. Drawn partly in a cartoon-like style, the satirical mixed-media illustrations unfold their full power when they show the ubiquity of plastic waste – reaching a climax with an ocean of nothing but plastic bottles. This strikingly illustrated book is an emphatic, urgent plea to fight against pollution that speaks to readers of any age. (Age: 4+) [CS]



DasGupta, Piu (text)

Secrets of the Snakestone

London: Nosy Crow, 2024. – 275 p.
ISBN 978-1-83994-631-8

Paris | History 1890s | Social justice | Secret society |
Sewer | Adventure fiction | Historical fiction

Debut children's book author Piu DasGupta, who was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, and grew up in the UK, has been living in Paris for the past 20 years. When she visited the Parisian catacombs with her family, the underground tunnels immediately fascinated her – so much so that she decided to write a gothic adventure story for young readers partly set in the city's sewers in the 1890s. The book tells the fast-paced tale of Zélie, a French-Indian girl working in a rich French household, and her new acquaintance Jules, hard-working sewer boy. The two set off on a quest for the missing Snakestone, a mysterious jewel with dark powers, but are pursued by the evil leader of a secret society of sinister scientists. The colourful crew of characters, the spooky locations, and the dab of ancient magic make for a riveting read that also tackles a range of thought-provoking topics, including social justice, gender roles, and the importance of family. (Age: 10+) [CS]

43



Hoskins, Neal (text)

Vaicenavičienė, Monika (illus.)

The girl and the robot heart

London: Thames & Hudson, 2024. – [50] p.

ISBN 978-0-500-65289-3

Christmas | Robot | Humans | Storytelling | Poetry |
Picture book

In a small town, a young girl and her toy robot start talking on Christmas Eve, while snow is falling and »settling on the lamplights« outside. The inquisitive tin fellow is curious about the secret of the human heart, and what it is that a heart holds inside – and so the girl starts telling him story after story. Neal Hoskins's quiet, lyrical, philosophical text is a celebration of the magic of storytelling, creating an imaginative, fairytale atmosphere, which Monika Vaicenavičienė perfectly captures in her dreamlike, soft-coloured mixed-media pictures. The poem evokes fantastical landscapes where »the golden deer [...] gather in the woods« and orangey hot air balloons sail through the evening sky; the pictures don't merely illustrate, but also extend the stories with plenty of visual details. At the back of the book, the whole poem is featured on a double page, and afterwords by author and illustrator tell readers about the inspiration for the book and its illustrations, adding another layer to the experience. (Age: 5+) [CS]

44



McDonald, Margaret (text)

Glasgow boys

London: Faber, 2024. – 343 p.

ISBN 978-0-571-38297-2

Foster care | Trauma | Violence | Mental health |
Friendship | Love

Debut author Margaret McDonald's award-winning YA novel tells the poignant story of two teen boys who have grown up in the Scottish care system. In alternating chapters, 18-year-old Finlay and Banjo, who is 17, relate their lives at a crossroads, struggling to adapt to lots of changes. Finlay has just started university to get a nursing degree, juggling academic work with a practical placement and – on top of that – a job as a cleaner to make ends meet. Banjo, whose anger always flares up quickly, landing him in many fights, is set to finish his last year of high school while trying to fit in at another new school and new foster family. The intense, raw narration with dabs of Scots dialect lets readers witness the boys' fear of and – at the same time – urgent need for connection, friendships, and love. However, the traumas they experienced in the past make them extremely vulnerable and insecure. This heart-felt Glaswegian story is surely not an easy read, but a hopeful one that will stay with readers for a long time. (Age: 14+) [CS]



Parish, Theo (text/illus.)

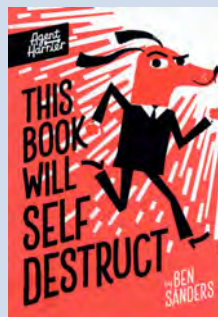
Homebody

London: Macmillan, 2024. – 207 p.

ISBN 978-1-0350-1762-1

[LGBTQ+](#) | [Transgender](#) | [Self-acceptance](#) | [Friendship](#) | [Memoir](#) | [Graphic novel](#)

Norwich-based author-illustrator Theo Parish's debut graphic novel is a very personal account of their journey to discovering their transgender nonbinary identity and slowly coming to terms with and exploring it. Divided into six chapters and presented in a mixture of narrative text and dialogue, this moving memoir chronicles a childhood and youth in which school friends and the outside world in general put a lot of pressure on the young protagonist to conform to binary gender expectations. This led to years of struggling before they started embracing their body and feeling comfortable being their »true authentic self«. The story is moved along by the atmospheric cartoony illustrations with soft, flowing lines in grey and white with dabs of rose. »Homebody«, which won the 2025 Carnegie Showers' Choice Medal for Illustration, offers a heartfelt tale that will resonate not only with transgender and nonbinary readers, but with every person who yearns for acceptance, love, and a place to belong. (Age: 12+) [CS]



Sanders, Ben (text/illus.)

This book will self-destruct!

London: Little Tiger, 2024. – [64] p.

(Series: Agent Harrier)

ISBN 978-1-80104-610-7

[Secret agent](#) | [Villain](#) | [Metafiction](#) | [Graphic novel](#)

Secret Agent Harrier, a long-limbed, suit-wearing canine, sees himself as a Lone Wolf – a clever super hero who saves the world single-handedly. The narrator of this slim book, however, doesn't share the protagonist's positive self-assessment. Yet, true or not, Harrier urgently needs to complete the mission his boss Top Dog has handed to him: save the very book he is in from exploding – and he only has five minutes to do so. Could the Red Herring be the villain he needs to catch? There are plenty of things to enjoy in this first volume of a quirky new graphic novel series. Young comic aficionados as well as their parents will giggle at the over-the-top word-play, intertextual allusions, hare-brained storyline, the metafictional banter between narrator and protagonists, and the graphic digital illustrations in black-white-and-red. With great aplomb, acclaimed Australian author-illustrator Ben Sanders whisks readers into a vibrant nonsensical adventure with spy movie flair. (Age: 7+) [CS]

47



Smith, Maudie (text)
Khatun, Jen (illus.)

A hat full of sea

London: Lantana, 2024. – [26] p.
ISBN 978-1-915244-66-6

Grandfather | Hospital | Granddaughter |
Imagination | Picture book

When Cora visits her beloved Grandpa Jim in hospital, she is distressed to see that a small square of blue sky is the only view he gets from his bed. This won't do. Since he can't join her outdoors, she is determined to bring the outside world into his barren chamber. Grabbing her special hat, she runs down to the beach and scoops up »the salty spray [...] the white foaming waves [...] the softness of the sand and the seagull cries wrapped up in the wind.« Grandpa is delighted. Yet this is just the first of Cora's offerings. She follows this up with scenes from the countryside and even the moon and stars, until she accidentally drops her hat. What a catastrophe! Maudie Smith's engaging text makes readers feel the special bond that Cora and her grandfather share. Acclaimed illustrator Jen Khatun's boisterous pictures with wiggly outlines, bold brushstrokes, scribbles, and bright colours sweep readers – and Grandpa – straight into Cora's imaginative, colourful landscapes. A touching and fun book about a special girl. (Age: 3+) [CS]

48



Stanley, Sara (text)
Schwarz, Viviane (illus.)

One-Button and the sea

London: Scallywag Press, 2024. – [32] p.
ISBN 978-1-915252-60-9

Grandfather | Grandchild | Displacement |
Community | Home | Fable | Picture book

As a specialist for bringing children and philosophy together in playful ways, Sara Stanley has been working with picture books for years. It's only natural that her first authored picture book deals with big issues, too: A community of anthropomorphised animals are suddenly uprooted by some unnamed catastrophe, having to leave their cosy homes and flee to the open sea in a cluster of small boats. Together with their friends and neighbours, little cat One-Button and Grandpa weather storms, fear, sadness, and buoy each other up – until they can finally return to a safe (new?) home. Award-winning artist Viviane Schwarz's vibrant mixed-media illustrations perfectly capture the different moods in the story from terrifying to quiet, from scary to relaxing and funny. Both the poetic text and the dynamic pictures, with details aplenty and nuanced facial expressions, highlight the characters' wonderful bond and support of each other. It is a great book for encouraging kids to discuss literal and metaphorical displacement. (Age: 5+) [CS]



Valentine, Jenny (text)

Us in the before and after

London: Simon & Schuster, 2024. – 244 p.

ISBN 978-1-4711-9658-4

Death | Grief | Friendship | Love

Elena (Elk) and Mable (Mab) are sixteen, best friends and absolutely inseparable. They go to the same school and basically live at each other's houses – until a tragic accident rips them apart. Yet they aren't ready to let go just yet: so they don't. Mab's ghost stays with Elk, and they keep chatting, commenting on life and complaining about the unfairness of it all. Award-winning author Jenny Valentine's superb new YA novel about family, friendship, love, loss, and grief lets readers put the teens' story together piece by piece, allowing them to see snippets of Elk's precious memories from BEFORE and glimpses into the two girls' new normal AFTER the fatal night. Elk's first-person narration is matter-of-fact, lyrical, humorous, and tragic all at the same time – making for a profoundly moving story with an unexpected twist at the end. Just like Jenny Valentine's previous novels for teens, this book is heart-breaking and thought-provoking, inspiring readers to ponder what's most important in life: human connection. (Age: 14+) [CS]



Kripa (i.e. Bhatia, Kripa) (text/illus.)

Thapar, Rohina (design)

Art is a voice

[New Delhi]: Artfirst, 2024. – [80] p.

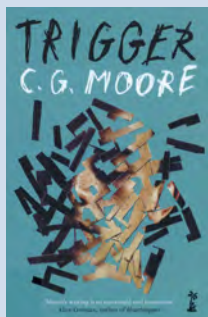
(Series: Arts integrated)

ISBN 978-81-942109-4-8

Art | Artist | Activism | Injustice | Poetry | Picture book

Shocked by the Citizenship Amendment Act passed by the Indian government in 2019, author and artist Kripa penned a powerful poem to speak out against injustice. Each of its eleven verses constitutes a mini chapter in this fabulous book and addresses an important theme ranging from displacement to intolerance and exploitation. Kripa's own colourful collage illustrations – created from »newspaper clippings of protest signs, flag-coloured papers, [and] textured and handmade papers with symbolic patterns« – are complemented by selected works of eleven contemporary artists from India who use their art to take a stance. With its attractive design and its mixture of informational text, lyrical writing, and expressive artwork, this second book in the »Arts Integrated« series, which received the Bologna Ragazzi Award for Sustainability, clearly shows how art can be an effective tool for activism. In addition, it provides a strong incentive for readers to find their own ways to flag up pressing issues in society. (Age: 6+) [CS]

51



Moore, Christopher George (text)

Trigger

Dublin: Little Island, 2024. – 197 p.

ISBN 978-1-915071-53-8

Homosexuality | Sex trafficking | Sexual assault |
Amnesia | Truth | Verse novel

ENGLISH
Ireland

After a night out at a club with his boyfriend, Jay comes to in a park, bloody and bruised, with no memory of how he ended up there: »Head heavy / Lifeless limbs, / Muddled mind – / Every sound / Slices through my being, / A waterfall of sensations / Drowning me.« The young teen feels violated and broken and is haunted by nightmares. As the police do not find any hard evidence of who assaulted him, Jay becomes obsessed with searching for his attackers himself and taking revenge – a dangerous decision. Inspired by a combination of personal experiences and those of close friends, award-winning author Christopher George Moore has crafted a heartbreaking verse novel about sex trafficking and sexual abuse and its shocking and long-lasting aftermath for the victims. The short chapters with their emotionally intense verses grip readers from the beginning, allowing them to witness the pain, guilt, and shame that Jay goes through, until he can finally see some hope thanks to support and love from his friends and mum. (Age: 14+) [CS]

52



Hager, Mandy (text)

Gracehopper

[Auckland]: OneTree House, 2024. – 352 p.

ISBN 978-1-99-003535-7

Mother | Daughter | Search for identity | Resilience |
Mental illness | Grief | Trauma | Love

ENGLISH
New Zealand

Award-winning author Mandy Hager is known for tackling complex issues with great aplomb and sensitivity. In this YA novel, 18-year-old Grace, born in Taiwan on the night of the 1999 Jiji earthquake, has always wondered about her father. Yet her mother Katherine, who barely survived the traumatic event and suffers from severe PTSD, refuses to talk about him. Grace often feels overwhelmed as she juggles the care for her mentally unstable mum and her dying grandmother, while also having to earn her living. Jeet Kun Do is the only thing that centres her. Suddenly, her ex-best friend Charlie, who faces his own challenges due to his achondroplasia, pops back into her life. As they quickly grow closer again, Grace and Charlie become each other's lifelines in their everyday struggles. This gripping book features well-rounded, resilient characters, witty, to-the-point dialogue, and a warm-hearted story, slowly revealed to readers in chapters alternating between the present time and various moments in the past. (Age: 14+) [CS]



Low-Jimenez, Felicia (text)

Low, Claire (illus.)

Tiger Girls

Singapore: Difference Engine, 2025. – 160 p.

ISBN 978-981-94-1168-9

Chinese Zodiac Signs | Cultural belief | Woman |
Oppression | Graphic novel

This YA graphic novel, based on a short story turned into a webcomic, is set on a fictional island in an Asian society where »To be born a girl in the Year of the Tiger is a death sentence«. Due to a strong belief in the influence of the Chinese zodiac signs on people's characters, girls born in the year of the tiger are persecuted. In order to survive, they have to escape the mainland and hide, ever vigilant of attacks from outside. In this women-only community, naïve Suling – who is assigned the task of record keeper in an underground library – yearns to join her best friend Nadia, a water warrior, in protecting the front lines. Yet when an intruder is washed up on the island, both girls discover secrets that make them question their leaders' decisions. With a uniquely Southeast Asian setting, strong-willed protagonists, and a topical theme, »Tiger Girls« provides a gripping and thought-provoking read. The dialogue-driven story is brought to life through powerful illustrations in subdued colours. (Age: 14+) [CS]



Desnitskaya, Anna (text/illus./transl.)

A star shines through

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books

for Young Readers, [2024]. – [32] p.

ISBN 978-0-8028-5631-9

War | Refugee | Migration | Mother |
Daughter | Home | Picture book

A child lives with their parents in a cozy apartment with a paper star illuminating the window, a beacon welcoming them home. However, when war erupts, the child and mother flee, landing in another country with an unfamiliar language and bare living quarters. Nothing feels like home until the mother brings home supplies to make a star lamp like the old one. Slowly a new idea of home begins to form. Striking illustrations in full colour, created with hand-drawn contours and Photoshop, use simple, clear lines to offer rich, detailed views of each interior and street scene, from air conditioning units and shop signs to sidewalk utilities. Once war begins, the only lights are cold blues and greys, but after making the star, warm, golden tones emanate not just from the apartment, but from the lights on city streets as well. In an author's note, Anna Desnitskaya explains that her inspiration for this book came from her family's own experience emigrating from Russia after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. (Age: 5+) [MB]



Fagan, Deva (text)

A game of Noctis

New York [et al.]: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, [2024]. – 310 p.
ISBN 978-1-6659-3019-2

Game | Fairness | Abuse of power | Team spirit |
Death | Courage | Fantasy fiction

In Dantessa, a Venice-like city of old mansions and canals, every aspect of life – including the citizens' position in society, profession, and wealth (or lack thereof) – depends on the standing they earn in the more than eight thousand officially recognised games. Pia Paro is a talented player, but she and her aging grandfather struggle to make ends meet. When he loses his rank as a player and is banished to a small island, Pia joins a motley crew of young players to compete in the deadly game of Noctis and earn money to rescue him. However, Pia and her new teammates soon learn that the rules of the »Book of Games« are anything but fair, and that the wealthy and powerful manipulate the Great Game to their advantage. Award-winning author Deva Fagan has penned a middle-grade fantasy that provides suspense and fun, as well as a healthy dose of social criticism – and features a myriad of original games. The book is populated by strong-willed characters who are willing to risk life and limb to create a just society for all. (Age: 10+) [CS]



Hosler, Jay (text/illus.)

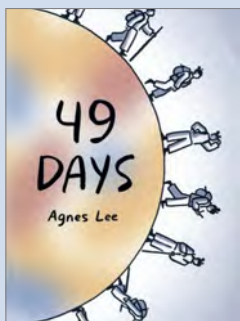
Ant story

New York: HarperAlley, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, [2024]. – 156 p.
ISBN 978-0-06-329399-1

Ant | Storytelling | Graphic novel | Non-fiction

Biologist and cartoonist Jay Hosler is a whizz at combining his two passions into creating unique science comics. His latest offering for middle graders is a very humorous exploration of the world of insects. The protagonist of this fast-paced graphic novel is Rubi, a red cartoon ant, living in a colony amidst »real« ants. Talkative Rubi loves inventing suspenseful stories starring herself as the brave heroine. Yet since her nest sisters do not speak in words (real ants use scents for communication instead), Rubi is both performer and audience of all her storytelling. Until one day, when she meets Miranda, another talking ant – or could she be an evil enemy spy? »Ant Story« is a hilarious adventure story with horror elements and a loveable and witty protagonist, whose sarcastic side remarks will entertain younger and older readers alike. In addition, it's a story about friendship that – along the way – imparts a flood of fascinating and detailed information about the everyday lives of different types of ants. (Age: 8+) [CS]

57



Lee, Agnes (text/illus.)

49 days

Montclair [et al.]: LQ, [2024]. – 341 p.

ISBN 978-1-64614-375-7

Death | Grief | Journey | Buddhism | Graphic novel

In her debut YA graphic novel, Korean American artist Agnes Lee – illustrator of the weekly New York Times Metropolitan Diary – presents a touching story of family, loss, and grief. Loosely based on the Buddhist tradition of »bardo«, where a person's soul remains in a liminal state between death and rebirth for 49 days, the book follows young Kit's journey after she dies in a bus accident. At the same time, it also chronicles her family's struggle to come to terms with her sudden death. The 49 short chapters weave three storylines together created in distinct two-colour schemes: Kit's bardo travels in black and grey, her Mom's and two siblings' daily life in black and brown, and, connecting them both, memories from before, illustrated in black and sandy brown. The quiet, uncluttered artwork with bold black outlines and the short dialogues and thoughts aptly portray the grieving process, anger, and slow acceptance for all protagonists. A powerful, philosophical, and potentially healing look at death and afterlife. (Age: 14+) [CS]

58



Lucianovic, Stephanie V.W. (text)

Park, Chris (illus.)

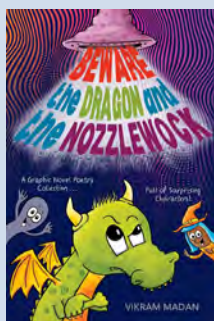
Touch the sky

Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group, [2024]. – [32] p.

ISBN 978-1-7284-6045-1

Playing | Self-esteem | Autonomy | Resilience | Picture book

Playground swings serve as the focal point of this tale of frustration and triumph. Long-haired Vern envies the children who know how to pump their legs when they swing. The ease with which they soar through the air is both enticing and maddening, as he tries, without success, to replicate their actions. When he meets quirky Gretchen, she offers to help, giving him instructions on what to do. To his disappointment, he isn't instantly an expert, the girl offering encouragement. Tempted to give up, Vern continues to practice until, at last, he finally sees success. Stephanie V.W. Lucianovic taps into a universal childhood experience, never downplaying the work and effort that go into learning something new. The bouncy, amusing text is paired alongside Chris Park's fluorescent mixed-media illustrations. Swinging here is an act of bright colours and electric typography, the words and art working in tandem. A marvelous encapsulation of persistence, eschewing didacticism at every turn. (Age: 4+) [EB]



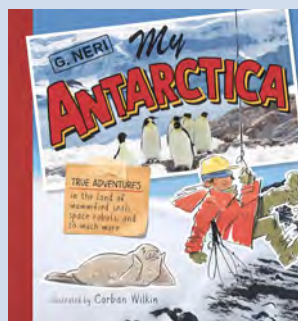
Madan, Vikram (text/illus.)

Beware the dragon and the Nozzlewock.
A graphic novel poetry collection full of surprising characters!

New York: Wordsong, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2024. – 120 p.
 ISBN 978-1-63592-817-4

Dragon | Monster | Poetry | Comic

Combining children's poems and comics ... does that work? You bet! There is no better proof than acclaimed author-illustrator Vikram Madan's new masterpiece »Beware the Dragon and the Nozzlewock«. This ingenious collection for young readers presents 25 witty and wacky poems about dragons, greedy ghosts, the Salesmoose, some squishosaurs, the fiery super-gal, and other surprising characters, including the mysterious Nozzlewock, whose »[...] impressive nose / Can function like a vacuum hose. / With sniffs and snorts / Its snoot contorts / To siphon all your clothes.« Colourful cartoon-style illustrations perfectly complement and enhance the silly verses, which come in a wide variety of lyrical forms. Indian-born Madan not only perfectly nails rhythms and rhymes, he even ties the individual texts together into something like a graphic novel by having characters visually pop up in several poems while increasingly intertwining the different narrative strands. The result is a laugh-out-loud read for young and old. (Age: 5+) [CS]



Neri, Greg (text)

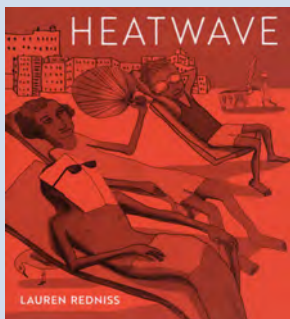
Wilkin, Corban (illus.)

My Antarctica. True adventures in the land of mummified seals, space robots, and so much more

Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2024. – 96 p.
 ISBN 978-1-5362-2332-3

Antarctica | Non-fiction

On a grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation, award-winning author and illustrator Greg Neri traveled to Antarctica. The result of his journey is this book, which offers a fascinating glimpse into one of the least habitable places on Earth. Part travelogue, part informational read, the illustrated non-fiction work about the world's coldest continent serves as an inspiration to budding artists, scientists, and explorers. Neri shares his struggles with math and science as a child, which led him as an adult to find creative ways to describe concepts to kids. As a result, the text is succinct, accessible, and fun. Corban Wilkin's illustrations incorporate photographs (many taken by Neri) with digitally created watercolour-and-ink comic-style drawings added on top. These drawn images add interest and context to the photographs, while the photos themselves offer a realistic view of a place almost no reader has visited. Backmatter includes an author's note, additional facts, recommended source materials, and an index. (Age: 7+) [MB]



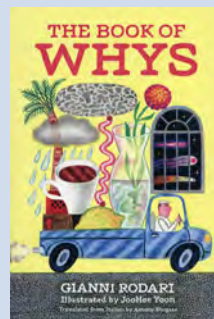
Redniss, Lauren (text/illus.)

Heatwave

New York: Random House Studio, [2024]. – [34] p.
ISBN 978-0-593-64594-9

Summer | Beach | City | Heat | Global warming |
Picture book

»Heatwave« is certainly not the first book about a hot summer day in the city. Yet no one has ever managed to have a picture book radiate scorching heat off the page quite like Lauren Redniss. The award-winning author and artist portrays her long-limbed characters with their slightly distorted proportions and features in shades of fiery red and matt grey, placed against a stark background of the same colours. A boy and his dog, together with a few other exhausted citizens, suffer this unbearably hot day, lying around on a city beach with no respite in sight. Suddenly, a single blue drop of rain, then two, announce a downpour. Characters run for shelter, and readers exhale in relief as cool blue takes over the page. The powerful illustrations and sparse text of just one to three words per page tell a seemingly simple story, but small details in the peritext and illustrations clearly link the story to the hot potato topic of global warming and its unrelenting consequences – inviting readers to join in the discussion. (Age: 4+) [CS]



Rodari, Gianni (text)

Yoon, JooHee (illus.)

Shugaar, Antony (transl.)

The book of whys

New York: Enchanted Lion Books, 2024. – 141 p.
ISBN 978-1-59270-364-7

Child | Question | Answer

Gianni Rodari (1920-1980) is undoubtedly one of the most revered Italian children's book authors of all time. From 1955 to 1958, he worked as a journalist for the daily paper »L'Unità«, where, among other things, he answered questions that children sent in to the newspaper's regular columns. A selection of these answers was presented in his collection »Il libro dei perché«, first published in Italy in 1980. Almost 45 years later, English language readers finally get the chance to enjoy Rodari's ingenious texts via Antony Shugaar's inspired translations. Instead of just providing detailed information to the children's quirky enquiries, Rodari's answers straddle the border between facts and imagination by including funny asides, proverbs, irony, poems, and tongue-in-cheek remarks – such as his reply that »grownups« are always right / Except for when they're wrong...« Award-winning JooHee Yoon's bright and bubbly coloured-pencil illustrations perfectly frame the witty texts and take readers on a whimsical visual journey. (Age: 6+) [CS]



Thomas, Kiah (text)
Steele, K-Fai (illus.)

Lone Wolf goes to school

New York, NY: Neal Porter Books, an imprint of Holiday House, [2024]. – [60] p.

(Series: Lone Wolf; 1)

ISBN 978-0-8234-5777-9

Wolf | Grumpiness | Solitude

A misanthropic loner finds happiness in solitude in this eclectic book, which starts a new series for early readers. In seven short chapters, we meet Wolf. Happiest when alone, he unfortunately lives in a social world. Upon attending Mrs. Horsefly's class in school, he must avoid every friendly child. In the movie theatre, a tall man blocks his view, forcing him to ward him off with unconventional means. A trip to the beach is ruined by seagulls, and a bike ride up a mountain by the horribly jolly Jolly Camper. Inspired, Wolf invites every character in the book to his home. Now he can enjoy the theatre, the beach, the mountain, and even the classroom without company or distractions. While Wolf may actively dislike companionship, he never eschews others cruelly. Situational humour is evident throughout, aided by art that brings a loose hilarity to both Wolf's frustrations and the guileless ignorance of those around him. Touted as anathema to books featuring buddy duos, this is a celebration of solitude rarely seen. (Age: 6+) [EB]



Ursu, Anne (text)

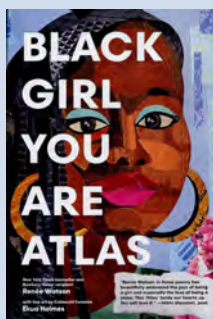
Not quite a ghost

New York: Walden Pond Press, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, [2024]. – 277 p.

ISBN 978-0-06-227515-8

Moving house | Ghost | Chronic illness |
Horror fiction

Violet and her family move into an old house, where she has her own room in the attic, spacious but a bit creepy, with its unusual wallpaper crawling with vines. As Violet adjusts to the home, she begins middle school, which has new schedules, teachers, and friend dynamics. Then she contracts a nasty virus and seems to recover, but exhaustion and other symptoms linger, making daily life challenging. As her condition worsens, doctors fail to diagnose her, friends become distant, and Violet spends more time in her room, where the vines seem to separate and shift, until one night the visage of a corpse girl appears in the wall. Beyond the horror elements, Anne Ursu's well-crafted novel features strong character development and issues relevant to its middle grade audience, all of which add richness and depth. An author's note reveals the story is inspired by the novella »The Yellow Wallpaper« by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Ursu's own experiences with chronic illness. (Age: 11+) [MB]



Watson, Renée (text)

Holmes, Ekua (illus.)

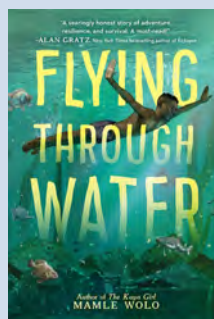
Black girl you are Atlas

New York: Kokila, 2024. – 81 p.

ISBN 978-0-593-46170-9

[Black people](#) | [Childhood](#) | [Girl](#) | [Identity](#) |
[Self-confidence](#) | [Poetry](#)

Renée Watson, award-winning author, poet, and teaching artist, often finds inspiration for her texts in her own experiences of growing up in Oregon. This semi-autobiographical collection of poems for teens invites readers, especially young Black girls, to share in the author's memories and musings, to see their stories reflected, and to discover their own strengths and confidence – no matter what obstacles the world throws at them. The heartfelt texts – presented in a variety of different poetic forms ranging from haiku and tanka to pantoum and free verse – touch upon a multitude of themes that weave a tapestry of Black existence in the US with all its triumphs and challenges. Celebrated artist Ekua Holmes's magnificent mixed-media collage artwork in rich colours perfectly complements the poems and visualises a wide universe of experiences, often adding layers of meaning to the texts. This slim volume, a 2025 Coretta Scott King Honor book, provides an inspiring and emotional read for teens as well as adults. (Age: 13+) [CS]



Wolo, Mamle (text)

Flying through water

New York [et al.]: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette, 2024. – 288 p.

ISBN 978-0-316-70396-3

[Ghana](#) | [Slavery](#) | [Human trafficking](#) | [Shipwreck](#) |
[Nature](#) | [Poverty](#)

Having left the larger town of Sogakope for a small village in Ghana, junior-high student Sena grows close to his grandfather. The man regales his grandson with tales of his youth, giving Sena a sense of the land as it once was before the dams. As the family struggles with money, the boy is lured by the promises of a man named Jack of Diamonds to help his family's finances. What appears to be a temporary occupation, however, turns out to be a horrifying human trafficking operation, where boys are roped into fishing work in a remote location. Sena escapes, but finds himself stranded on an island, where his only companions are the manatees in the seas and monkeys on the land. Split into thirds, the book is a tale of family togetherness, a horrifying tale of survival, and a wilderness adventure and appreciation of nature. Mamle Wolo adeptly forges a clear link between the manatees that befriend Sena and his grandfather's tales of water goddess Mama Wata in this gripping page-turner. (Age: 9+) [EB]

67



Kitsik, Tiiu (text/illus.)

Me kolime ära

(We are moving away)

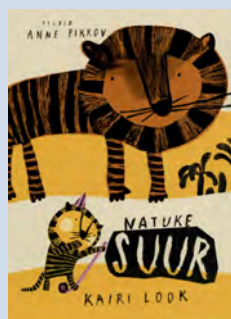
[Tallinn]: Tänapäev, 2024. – 164 p.

ISBN 978-9916-17-566-8

Family | Work migration | Foreignness

This debut children's book by illustrator Tiiu Kitsik brings humour to an experience that is not always fun: a family's move to another country. In this case, the young, exceptionally clever protagonist Luise moves with her family from Estonia to Germany, specifically to Freiburg where her father has taken a new job. Luise shares her uneasy feelings about having to leave friends behind, making new ones, learning a foreign language, starting at a new school, and facing many frustrating situations, such as when Mum gives her a biscuit to take to school, only for her to discover it is actually a dog biscuit. Tiiu Kitsik describes all of this with great situational humour, such as when the smart home system that Dad installs begins to talk and develop a life of its own. Through her humorous perspective, the author softens the challenges of starting over without minimizing them. (Age: 8+) [KW]

68



Look, Kairi (text)

Pikkov, Anne (illus.)

Natuke suur

(A little bit big)

Tallinn: Kirjastus Koolibri, 2024. – [34] p.

ISBN 978-9985-0-5326-3

Growing up | Inner child | Birthday | Picture book

The little tiger is feeling anxious. In the evening after a wonderful birthday party filled with friends, cakes, fun and games, he notices that his tiger stripes have shifted. Mama Tiger tries to reassure him: »That's just because you're growing!« But the little tiger doesn't want to grow at all – or maybe just a little bit. Because big tigers are always so sensible and have forgotten how to have fun. Fortunately, Mama Tiger skilfully proves to him that adults can also keep their playful, childlike spirit. Kairi Look and Anne Pikkov have combined all their marvelous skills to create this award-winning picture book. Short, well-crafted text passages are paired with lively yellow-orange illustrations featuring agile tigers (both large and small), palm trees, and cakes that capture each situation with just a few telling details. Together, text and imagery create a warm, heartfelt, yet humorous atmosphere, in which the close bond between mother and child is beautifully embedded. (Age: 3+) [KW]



Michelsen, Sólrun (text)
Øyrabø, Annika (illus.)

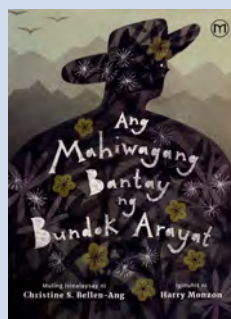
Sjókæti. A-OY

(Seafood. A-OY)

Tórshavn: Bókadeild Føroya Lærarafelags,
2025. – [70] p.
ISBN 978-99972-3-002-7

Alphabet | Poetry | Marine animals |
Picture book

The Faroese alphabet consists of 29 letters and three diphthongs: ei, ey, and oy. It's obvious that such a collection of letters can be turned into all sorts of things – or should one say into all sorts of finned things? After all, this poetic alphabet book is all about sea creatures (which makes perfect sense, since the Faroe Islands are an archipelago in the North Atlantic, surrounded by water on all sides). Sea urchins, mussels, and of course fish in every size, shape and colour – whether swimming as loners or schooling like herring – are the stars of these playful poems. Capelin (a small fish from the smelt family) and salmon, for example, are known for racing about madly. Sólrun Michelsen, one of the best-known Faroese authors, who writes for both children and adults, wrote the fishy verses. The illustrations – colourful, tongue-in-cheek collages – were created by Annika Øyrabø, who is also known beyond the islands' borders. (Age: 4+) [IG]



Bellen-Ang, Christine S. (text)
Monzon, Harry (illus.)

Ang Mahiwagang Bantay ng Bundok Arayat

(The mystical guardian of Mount Arayat)

Pasig City, Metro Manila: Milflores Publishing,
2024. – 28 p.
ISBN 978-971-828-140-6

Philippines | Central Luzon | Mountains |
Protection of nature | Folk tale | Picture book

Pure-hearted Oke is taken on a journey through the region of Central Luzon to meet the guardian spirits of the mountains Arayat, Makiling, and Banahaw. Harry Monzon's delicate illustrations – layered semi-transparent mystical veils in shades of green – evoke the beauty of Luzon's nature and the enchanted realm of the immortals. However, Oke's otherworldly journey is marked by a distortion of time. When he returns, 180 years have gone by, the deities have departed due to human greed, and he becomes the guardian of Mount Arayat. This is an adaptation of »Ang Mahiwagang Pagkalibang« (The magical amusement) by Severino Reyes (1861-1942), based on a Kapampangan folktale and first published in 1925 as part of »Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang« (Grandma Basyang's Stories). Christine S. Bellen-Ang's award-winning retellings of Basyang's stories have appeared as books, comics, TV shows, films and dance pieces. This retelling emphasizes the need to protect the natural environment and promotes a sense of shared Philippine cultural heritage. (Age: 9+) [LO]



Tolonen, Tuutikki (text)

Vasko, Anne (illus.)

Salaiset

(Secrets)

Helsinki: WSOY, [2024]. – [36] p.

ISBN 978-951-0-50120-7

Secret | Fantastical creature | Imagination | Mystery |
Picture book

This book's title »Salaiset« (Secrets) instantly arouses one's curiosity. What kind of secrets might be hidden here? Could they have something to do with the little creature peeking out from behind the letter »I«? Yes, indeed! »On olentoja, jotka saattavat asua ihan vieressäsi, mutta et tiedä niistä mitään.« (There are creatures that may live right next to you, but you know nothing about them.) Yes, of course! Somehow, we have always suspected that more is going on around us than meets the eye. And »Salaiset« sheds light on exactly that: it tells of tiny fleas that love to nibble on socks or stash away remote controls. These shy little creatures may be good at hiding – but they don't always manage to cover their tracks completely. Tuutikki Tolonen and Anne Vasko have created an imaginative picture book that encourages readers to take a closer look at everyday mysteries – and to invent their own explanations or stories. That the book also quietly advocates for peaceful coexistence goes without saying. (Age: 3+) [IG]



Bernard, Marine (text/illus.)

La barbe

(The beard)

Bruxelles: Alice jeunesse, [2024]. – [52] p.

ISBN 978-2-87426-579-2

Hair | Body | Stereotype | Social norm | Tolerance |
Acceptance

In idyllic suburbia there are little houses with gardens and obedient husbands who mow the lawn. Little Alice stands out with her bright red mane. Most of all she likes to be taken for a wild lioness and definitely does not match the image of a sweet little girl. Her bourgeois parents hold up her older sister as a role model – Zoé, who is going to dance a solo in a ballet that evening. Then in the night following Zoé's triumph comes the shock. She develops a thick beard and hair all over her body. While the rest of the family desperately searches for solutions, Alice envisions a world of proud, bearded women who need no hair removal procedures. Marine Bernard's drawings of her protagonists are quite apt, and especially those in Alice's visions are imaginative and dynamic. Using coloured pencils, watercolours, and other techniques, she works flexibly with perspective and dimensions, highlighting the key details in the décor. This book radiates the very freedom it lays claim to. (Age: 6+) [OIS]



Billioud, Jean-Michel (text)
Sterckeman, Michaël (illus.)

**Quand on arrive en France.
Histoire de l'immigration**

(When one arrives in France. The history of immigration)
Bruxelles: Casterman, [2024]. – 95 p.
ISBN 978-2-203-27566-9

France | Immigration | History | Racism | Non-fiction

Many EU countries are experiencing a shift to the right. Condemnation of immigration, often based on oversimplified or false arguments, is an integral tenet of populist movements. Other parties have opportunistically adapted their platforms to this trend. With its far-right Rassemblement National increasingly winning over voters, France serves as a prime example. Jean-Michel Billioud's history of immigration aims to help ground societal discussion in facts once again and exposes polemical discourse for what it is. In a broad chronological arc, the historian and journalist shows how the »Grand Nation« brought in or admitted migrants into the country, integrated them, but also discriminated against them. Section headings facilitate access to this complex subject. Historical context, individual fates, society's perspective, and much more are presented in short, precise texts, comics, or documentary images. Additionally, five double-page spreads throughout the book debunk common prejudices such as »they take our jobs.« (Age: 13+) [OIS]



Douine, Julie (text)
Favart, Noémie (illus.)

Il y a aussi une T.rex, mais ce n'est pas le sujet
(A T.rex also appears, but that is not the subject)
Bruxelles: Versant sud, [2024]. – [36] p.
ISBN 978-2-930938-85-1

City | Environmental awareness | Social activism |
Tree | Commitment | Imagination | Utopia

Édith and her father live in a housing estate dominated by grey concrete buildings. To brighten up their dismal surroundings, Bachir spins a tale: »67 million years ago, on a Thursday at 2:34 pm, a female T.rex sniffed out her next meal here.« Édith responds, turning the game toward the future: »In 111 years, a great cedar will stand here!« No sooner said than done. Obtained through a chain of friends, a seed is planted during a nocturnal guerrilla operation; next, a bench is installed. This ensemble becomes a meeting point for an increasingly greener neighbourhood. Years later, Édith continues her commitment as mayor. Julie Douine addresses children directly; her text is full of humour and engaging ideas. Words and images harmonise to illustrate the positive effects of ecology and solidarity, without over-idealising the day-to-day aspects of social participation. This picture book shows how people in the future might be able to have an environment worth living in. What an intelligent and witty utopia! (Age: 5+) [OIS]



Durand-Allizé, Evangéline (text/illus.)

Leçons de piano

(Piano lessons)

[Uccle]: Cotcotcot éditions, [2024]. – [32] p.

ISBN 978-2-930941-69-1

Piano | Music | Pedagogy | Picture book

Cléo wants to teach her young neighbour Léon to play the piano. She skilfully avoids any pressure that might spoil Léon's enjoyment. Therefore, the lesson starts with building blocks: the person who constructs the taller tower gets to decide whether they will play a rap tune or Chopin. Then, a conversation about spiders casually introduces the ideal hand position. Evangéline Durand-Allizé's airy, predominantly black-and-white illustrations initially focus on the two protagonists. Each of their voices is given a colour, keeping them identifiable even when the images take us on a stroll around the neighbourhood, discovering animals in the city and viewing the quarter from over the rooftops. This excursion underscores the immense freedom conveyed in »Leçons de piano«. Cléo always meets Léon on equal terms. Her explanation of improvisation sounds like a motto for the book: »Play freely, [...] follow no predetermined path, [...] it's like being an explorer.« When Cléo and Léon take a bow at the end, we applaud enthusiastically. (Age: 4+) [OIS]



Duchesne, Christiane (text)

Lemay, Katy (illus.)

Le secret des fleurs

(The secret of flowers)

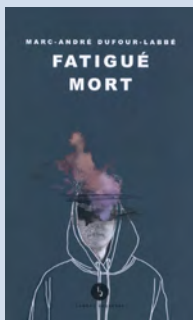
Montréal (Québec): Québec Amérique, [2025]. – 31 p.

ISBN 978-2-7644-5367-4

Plants | Pollination | Picture book | Non-fiction

A poetic non-fiction book – is that possible? Yes, Christiane Duchesne and Katy Lemay demonstrate how to do it when they depict the reproductive cycle of plants as a never-ending journey. The text skilfully places the events within a loop outside of place or time. From the moment of pollen dispersal, four children become observers and guides who help explain the process of fertilisation. Arthus, for example, observes that a bat can also pollinate, while Nox directs insects to the sweetest nectar. What is particularly impressive about this book is its graphic design. In collages, Katy Lemay unites a variety of techniques, including different types of pens and colours, painted, printed, and cut-out paper, as well as historical illustrations and photographs. With large, colourful elements and sketchy black-and-white drawings, she connects the double pages into a multi-layered and balanced whole. This is an intelligently orchestrated non-fiction picture book with an elegant vintage touch to its illustrations. (Age: 6+) [OIS]

77



Dufour-Labbé, Marc-André (text)

Fatigué mort

(Dead tired)

Montréal (Québec): Leméac jeunesse,
[2024]. – 131 p.
ISBN 978-2-7609-4267-7

Coming of age | Parental absence |
Crisis | Drugs

Sam, 16, feels abandoned. His mother has moved away with a woman, his father, when not driving his long-distance lorry, is desperate and drunk the rest of the time. In this all-male household, the fridge remains empty. Sam has lost interest in school. He finds a part-time job at the bar owned by Wario, a charismatic underworld figure. His motto »No back down!« initially seems like a solution to Sam. He starts dealing for Wario, enjoying the money and the drugs. Gradually, however, Sam's situation spirals out of control. He becomes more emotionally fragile and begins to decline physically. After a conflict with his boss, Sam runs to his mother. Surprisingly, her new partner Geneviève understands him better than anyone else. Clear, precise, empathetic, and without sensationalism, the author gives Sam a voice that immediately captivates readers. He describes his development within a complicated environment of multi-dimensional, believable characters. At the end of this gripping coming-of-age novel, Sam finds himself again. (Age: 15+) [OIS]

78



Picard, Valérie (text)

Goulet-Tremblay, Laurence (illus.)

Zip zap

(Zip zap)

Montréal (Québec): Monsieur Ed, [2025]. – [52] p.
ISBN 978-2-924663-36-3

Dispute | Escalation | Reconciliation | Imagination |
Sister | Picture book

This is a story about the power of words, told through a picture book. Serena tries to persuade her sister Cassandra to keep on going. However, Cassandra – like her namesake from Greek mythology – foresees only the worst ahead and refuses. The conversation escalates, and with it the wild creatures and forces of nature that the sisters conjure up through their imagination. After confrontations between Godzilla and a female King Kong, there is a moment of catharsis, in which humorous verbal exchanges pave the way for reconciliation. Laurence Goulet-Tremblay's illustrations use plenty of gentle blue, green, and brown to find the perfect way to express conflict, crisis, and ultimate harmony. The artist is a master at depicting not only the sudden appearance of monsters but also the small visual details that appear throughout the story, holding it together. »Zip zap« celebrates a spirited culture of debate and the sweet fruits of reconciliation. (Age: 5+) [OIS]



Bournay, Delphine (text/illus.)

Comment faire sortir papa du chapeau?

(How to get Papa out of the hat?)

Paris: L'école des loisirs, 2024. – [40] p.

(Series: Collection Albums)

ISBN 978-2-211-33760-1

Father | Hat | Search | Animals | Friendship |
Picture book

Awa's father picks up his daughter from school. Excited and very, very talkative, the little green lizard recounts how she and her friend Ibis fought off some invaders from Mars. The speech bubbles become increasingly full, scribbly, enlarged, and eventually cover over the father entirely. Suddenly, he's gone – only his hat remains lying on the ground. Quickly, Awa and her friends Ibis, Jaguar Jajah, and Croco analyse the situation. If Dad isn't there, he's sleeping in his hat. They immediately put cookies and juice inside to wake him up, then try the »silly« trick of tearing up their notebooks. This turns into a joyful exorcism of the school day. But only the wind can finally lead the children back to Awa's dad. Delphine Bournay's dialogues convincingly reflect the language and thoughts of the children, with hilarious yet efficient facial expressions that perfectly convey their emotions. The quiet moments in the story are just as powerful as the wild ones. This is a funny picture book about friendship, family bonds, and the unerring logic of children. (Age: 3+) [OIS]



Contraire, Bastien (text)

Cruzinha, Caroline (illus.)

Le chat est trop

(The cat is too much)

Paris: La Partie, [2024]. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-2-49459110-3

Animals | Characteristics | Cat | Board book |
Picture book

Animals will always spark children's curiosity and affection. However, upon closer inspection, it's often not so easy to find the perfect animal, as this board book aptly demonstrates. The snail is too slow, the crocodile too frightening, the snake too long, and the rabbit scampers away too quickly. Caroline Cruzinha's delicate, naturalistic coloured pencil illustrations create a dynamic depiction of each animal, using partial views such as an enormous elephant foot or by placing them against sparsely decorated backgrounds. Each of the descriptive adjectives is rendered distinctly in a font inspired by handwriting. Bastien Contraire's storytelling contains several turning points. Even when the cat – finally identified as the perfect animal – escapes, there's still a winner: the mouse. This beautifully designed picture book subtly engages the senses and promises to be a pleasurable read for both young and older readers! (Age: 1+) [OIS]



Dhôtel, Gérard / Corgibet, Véronique (text)
Arno (illus.)

Israël – Palestine. Une terre pour deux

(Israel – Palestine. One land for two)

Arles: Actes Sud Jeunesse, [2024]. – 142 p.

ISBN 978-2-330-19107-8

Middle East | Israel | Palestine | Arab-Israeli conflict |
Non-fiction

Opinions differ over the conflict in the Middle East more than over nearly any other issue. Due to recent tragic escalations, including the brutal terrorist attack by the Palestinian Hamas and violations of international law by the Israeli government under Netanyahu, the ongoing crisis has again become omnipresent. The authors explore the history of the conflict from pre-Christian times to the present day. Thanks to easily readable maps, the core problem quickly becomes clear: it's about a territory that both sides claim as rightfully theirs. In this context, it becomes evident how the conflict has been inflamed by historical events such as colonialism and the Holocaust, how much the dispute is shaped by geopolitical interests of international actors, and how religion is instrumentalised. A significant achievement of the book is that, despite everything, it discusses potential solutions. After all, people of Muslim and Jewish cultures greet each other with expressions of peace that come from the same linguistic root. (Age: 15+) [OIS]



Galimberti, Gabriele (photos)

Mes jouets préférés

(My favourite toys)

[Paris]: Éditions des Grandes personnes,
[2024]. – [56] p.

(Series: Collection Kids love photography)

(Les Grandes personnes)

ISBN 978-2-36193-761-4

Toy | Photography | Portrait | Photo book

Photographer Gabriele Galimberti creates portraits of people from around the world in long-term projects. In the new photo book series of the French publisher Les Grandes Personnes he has contributed »Toy Stories«, in which children from all continents pose with their favourite toys. In the vibrant colour images, each child stands in their own home, looking directly into the camera. The subjects are surrounded by their toys, arranged as if in a shop window. The captions provide only their name, age, and place of residence. The viewers, whether children or adults, will immediately begin to ponder over what is similar and different, over settings and possibilities. Ultimately, what is fascinating is the diversity of the objects. Of course, there are many cars and toy guns, but there are also instruments, books, and improvised playthings. It becomes clear that a single cuddly toy can bring as much happiness as a complete collection of plastic merchandise. The portraits reveal children as a global force in play and imagination. (Age: 3+) [OIS]



Gueugneau, Maxime (text)
Bournel-Bosson, Simon (illus.)
Florimonde et l'affaire Coquille
(*Florimonde and the Coquille case*)
Paris: L'Arbre, [2024]. – [60] p.
ISBN 978-2-490975-92-1

Kidnapping | Pop culture | Sea animals | Architecture |
Crime fiction | Parody | Picture book | Comic

In Le Havre, the pop star Coquille disappears just before a major concert. The city is in an uproar. The crowd of blue mussels are in tears; the mayor, a lobster, is furious; and the police chief, wearing his limpet hat, bawls confusing orders. Reluctantly, Inspector Florimonde returns from her holidays to take on the case. The only thoroughly human character in this quirky mix of comic and picture book, she is always dressed in a yellow cap, an oilskin raincoat, and bright red rubber boots. Simon Bournel-Bosson arranges the illustrations to match the plot in a suitably dynamic style. The backgrounds of his brightly coloured illustrations are a tribute to the architecture of the city Le Havre, which was completely destroyed in World War II. Rebuilt according to the plans of Auguste Perret, the city today features numerous reinforced concrete buildings. Maxime Gueugneau crafts an entertaining pastiche of a detective story peppered with maritime metaphors. Armed with her jokari paddle and ball, the inspector solves the case. (Age: 7+) [OIS]



Néjib (text/illus.)
Haute enfance
(*Superior childhood*)
[Paris]: Gallimard, [2024]. – [190] p.
ISBN 978-2-07-519360-3

Tunisia | History 1980s | School | Coming of age |
Authoritarian upbringing | Revenge | Friendship |
Siblings | Graphic novel

Tunis in 1986 is a patriarchal society where teenagers can be beaten by a tyrannical teacher. Smurf, who unlike his friends Farid and Ghasser does not come from a middle-class family, smarts from this treatment even more than they do. At his initiative, the three undertake an expedition to the teacher's home and exact revenge. The narrator of this graphic novel is Farid's younger brother, Slim, who insisted on participating in the action. Along their journey, the group must pass tests and defend itself against hostile gangs. Although Smurf is a cunning leader, who mirrors the cruelty of his environment, he possesses unexpected talents. Thanks to his street dancing, the kids collect money to buy themselves colas. In the illustrations, Néjib focuses on the harsh facial expressions of the characters. For the main storyline, he limits himself to black and white plus primary colours to good effect, while making use of the possibilities of the genre in the panel layout. A captivating coming-of-age story – with a bitter ending. (Age: 14+) [OIS]

85



Ollivier, Mikaël (text)

L'autre côté de la rue

(The other side of the street)

[Paris]: Éditions Thierry Magnier, [2024]. – 46 p.

(Series: Petite poche)

ISBN 979-10-352-0708-3

Father | Daughter | Unemployment | Social disparity |
Social status | Ambition

Alma is a young teenage girl living somewhere in France. At school, she is very diligent and very determined to become a neurosurgeon. So on orientation day, when parents introduce their professions to the class, her interest is limited. But what about the father who tells them about his precarious life as a cleaner? With considerable dignity and humility, he challenges the stereotypes about job seekers who are often accused of only wanting to benefit from the system. He talks about financial difficulties and how he first lost his home and then, two years ago, contact with his daughter. He also speaks of the impossibility of making oneself heard in society. When Alma reunites with this man – recognizing him as her father – both have shown courage, and the reader understands that they are both doing the right thing. In his short novel, Mikaël Ollivier demonstrates how social fragility can impact parent-child bonds. In just a few words, he sketches his characters and masterfully conveys their feelings and development. (Age: 9+) [OIS]

86



Perret, Delphine (text/illus.)

Le gros livre

(The big book)

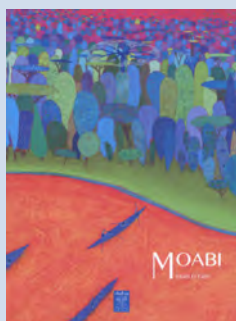
[Montreuil]: Les Fourmis rouges, [2024]. – 179 p.

ISBN 978-2-36902-196-4

Book | Fun | Contentment | Diversity

Absurd, funny, and wise – these words aptly describe this »big book« by Delphine Perret. The title is deliberately contradictory, since the book is actually palm-sized. This playfully philosophical book delights in turning conventional thinking upside down, showing children the possibilities of the medium of the book: where to read, how to read... or even not to read at all? Therefore, right in the middle, the book takes a short break. Perret's minimalist black-and-white illustrations and her laconic texts form short comic strips full of subtle humour that gleefully defies logic. Is a rotten apple useless? »Oh, come on!« retorts a magnificent tree that has grown from the discarded fruit, suggesting that what humans consider worthless might have value we don't see. The stories show many ways to be content: a pebble and a cat are both perfect for children because the animal can play, but the stone cannot die. This book offers »big« encouragement for finding your own way in a world full of supposed superlatives. (Age: 5+) [OIS]

87



El Fathi, Mickaël (text/illus.)

Moabi

(*Moabi*)

Casablanca: Éditions Yanbow al Kitab, [2023]. – [44] p.
ISBN 978-9920-771-27-6

Tree | Evolution | Nature | Environmental protection |
Picture book

Moabis grow in Gabon and Cameroon. Reaching heights of up to 70 metres, they are among the tallest trees in Africa. They can live for several hundred, perhaps even a thousand years. In this picture book, Mickaël El Fathi imagines a Moabi tree that has witnessed vast parts of evolutionary history. Much like a coming-of-age tale, the tree tells how it began as a tenuous seed. Then it grew up together with its own kind into a mighty forest, providing animals with shelter and nourishment. Only when humans arrived and were driven by hunger for raw materials and more space did the Moabi sense its precariousness once again. But one day, according to the vision of this venerable old tree, humankind will make peace with the forest. The full-page illustrations often feature intricate structures reminiscent of images seen under a microscope, with rich and tasteful colouring and composed in a wide variety of perspectives. Thanks to its captivating aesthetic and clear language, the book is a powerful appeal to preserve natural habitats. (Age: 5+) [OIS]

88



Razafimamonjiraibe, Fano (text)

Tefy (i.e. Andrimahery Raoelison) (transl.)

Tsidy et ses amis les lémuriens =

Tsidy sy ireo gidro namany

(*Tsidy and his friends, the lemurs*)

Antananarivo: Editions Teny, [2024]. – [24] p.

(Series: Collection Terra-tany)

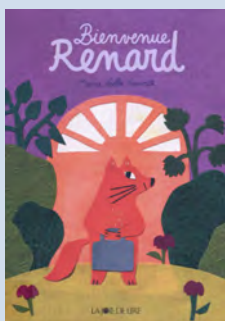
ISBN 978-2-493799-33-3

Text French and Malagasy

Madagascar | Monkey | Non-fiction | Bilingual book

Lemurs are primates found only in Madagascar. The best-known are ring-tailed lemurs, with their long, black-and-white striped tails and round, orange eyes. In this bilingual landscape-format book in French and Malagasy, a small mouse lemur speaks directly to the reader. It describes the lemurs as a kind of extended family, highlighting what they all have in common – such as an excellent sense of smell – while also explaining the differences between those active during the day and nocturnal species. Groups of these sociable animals are often led by females. Through Tsidy's descriptions of the lemur adaptability, the rich diversity of Madagascar's natural world also comes to life. In the final pages, Tsidy draws attention to the threats facing lemurs, including shrinking forests, hunters, and climate change, but also explains what children can do to help. »Tsidy et ses amis les lémuriens« is a lively, illustrated non-fiction book, full of empathy and information. (Age: 5+) [OIS]

89



Horvath, Marie-Noëlle (text/illus.)

Bienvenue Renard

(Welcome in, Fox)

Genève: La Joie de lire, [2024]. – [30] p.

ISBN 978-2-88908-670-2

House | Home | Journey | Helpfulness | Fox |
Badger | Picture book

Fox is going to be a house-sitter for his cousin Badger for a few days. The instructions in the homeowner's friendly letter form the soundtrack of this picture book. Accompanied by Badger's explanations, each double page reveals a new room: the kitchen, the conservatory – where Fox is supposed to water the flowers – or the attic, where a trumpet awaits as a gift for the houseguest. The fascinating element of this book is the plasticity of the illustrations. Marie-Noëlle Horvath creates them from dyed and embroidered fabrics, which she glues onto linen backgrounds. This results in lively, finely textured images that, even in the book's photographic reproductions, seem to subtly transcend their two-dimensionality. Rich reds and greens emphasise the cosy atmosphere of Badger's home. The author has crafted an aesthetically pleasing book about openness, mutual support, and hospitality. In addition, small discrepancies between the story's words and the fox's actions in the illustrations show that instructions leave room for interpretation. (Age: 3+) [OIS]

90



Trigo, Ramón (text/illus.)

Labirinto. Diario de viaxe dun artista monocromo

(Labyrinth. Travel diary of a monochromatic artist)

Pontevedra: Kalandraka, 2024. – [38] p.

(Series: MareMar)

ISBN 978-84-1343-318-9

Nigeria | Journey | Artist | Art | Inspiration

Feeling his creative energy nearly exhausted and hoping to escape, as he puts it, his »monochrome art«, the visual artist Ramón Trigo undertook a journey to Nigeria. This impressive book emerged from his notes and the numerous paintings he produced there. It contains illustrated travel memories in which the boundaries between experience and fiction are blurred. The text is concise and the language vivid and metaphorical, when, for example, real places are described as labyrinthine spaces that the artist experiences with all his senses, where he loses himself and finds inspiration. Ramón Trigo employed a variety of techniques to create the expressive images, in which broad brushstrokes, textures, and layers are clearly visible. Colours also play a central role: the palette ranges from monochrome black-and-white to an intense colourfulness in which his experiences and inner transformation mirror each other. »Labirinto« is a very beautiful book that readers will want to look at more than once. (Age: 12+) [JW]



Hammerschmid, Michael (text)

Hoffmann, Barbara (illus.)

Was keiner kapiert

(What no one gets)

Wien: Jungbrunnen, 2024. – 104 p.

ISBN 978-3-7026-5996-7

Coming of age | Identity | Poetry

Michael Hammerschmid is one of Austria's most renowned (children's) poets. In the bright blue volume »Was keiner kapiert« (What no one gets), he takes a step out of childhood and toward adolescence, exploring a phase of life that is as full of contradictions and intensity as hardly any other. The themes include searching for meaning and self-discovery, falling in love, love itself, everyday life, school, feeling overwhelmed, and boredom. Hammerschmid's poems are powerful, raw, and rhythmic. Sometimes the verses are tender, sometimes worldly-wise, sometimes exhausted, and then other times coarse. Hammerschmid strings the words together in succession – bam bam bam – creating surprising connections. He works with repetitions and often with line breaks that make the reader stumble. This can result in a loss of rhythm – which also mirrors the emotional state of youth. The illustrations by Barbara Hoffmann are at times concrete, at other times abstract, thereby depicting particular details or moods. (Age: 12+) [IG]



Janisch, Heinz (text)

Roher, Michael (illus.)

Das Buch der Anfänge.

33 Einladungen zum Weiterdenken

(The book of beginnings. 33 ways to keep on thinking)

Innsbruck [et al.]: Tyrolia Verlag, 2025. – [72] p.

ISBN 978-3-7022-4312-8

Imagination | Inspiration | Storytelling

»The sun shone, but did not provide warmth.« Or:
»The stick looked like a magic wand.« Or: »The noise loved the silence, which was difficult.« These are just three of the 33 first sentences that Heinz Janisch came up with to serve as invitations – or prompts – to fabulate, to invent stories, and to think. Anything can be developed from them – fairy tales or dramas, love stories, crime novels, or poetry. Michael Roher takes Heinz Janisch's individual threads and not only captures them in his images but also continues on with them in surprising, poetic, and appellative ways. Perhaps, then, the images came first and inspired Heinz Janisch? But whatever the case may be, this book is incredibly inspiring for storytelling, fantasising, and writing, whether on a picnic blanket, on a train, with a kindergarten group, or in the classroom. A book for everyone, everywhere! (Age: 4+) [IG]



Brandi, Charlotte (text)

Fischtage

(Fish days)

Berlin: park x ullstein, [2025]. – 299 p.

ISBN 978-3-98816-026-3

Coming of age | Anger | Loss of control |
Dysfunctional family

Ella is angry. She is 16 and often loses her temper. Completely loses control, time and again. She comes from a family for which »dysfunctional« is almost too nice as description. Her parents are total failures, her mother a neurotic gallery owner, and her father a weed-smoking actor. Both see their three children as random flatmates at most. When Ella's younger brother Luis goes missing, the parents are hardly bothered. Ella finds this incomprehensible and moves into the old neighbour's holiday home before setting out to find Luis. Along the way, she encounters not only a talking plastic fish but also people like Oksana, with whom she gets herself in tricky situations more than once. Ella, who is both an unreliable and keen observer, tells a gruff and spot-on story about a summer in which a lot happens. She is fearless, impulsive, and tough, but beneath her prickly exterior, she is sensitive and empathetic. The novel »Fischtage« is a splendid literary debut by musician Charlotte Brandi. (Age: 12+) [IG]



Drust, Rike (text)

Palmtag, Nele (illus.)

Hört mal! Brülle-Post-Leporello

(Listen up! Bellowing-Telephone-Leporello)

Mannheim: Kunstanstifter, [2025]. – 16 p.

ISBN 978-3-948743-36-9

City | Communication | Misunderstanding | Leporello |
Picture book

Everything begins with angry shouts from a man with the crazy Christmas tree haircut. As he pushes his shopping trolley through the city, he bellows at everyone he encounters: »Clear the stance!« But his yelling gets transformed in the ears of those who hear it into something entirely different. The police officers ask: »Steer the dance?« The marching protestors interpret it as »Give PEACE a CHANCE!«, while the small child babbles »Keer da nance?« Nele Palmtag and Rike Drust take the game known as »Chinese Whispers« (or »Telephone«) – where a message is whispered from person to person in a group and often ends up completely different from what was originally said – and create a game of rhymed shouting. By using the leporello format which unfolds into a vibrant and colourful city street, they demonstrate how creative understanding can transform messages – ultimately even dissipating the anger of the bellowing man. (Age: 3+) [IG]

95



Fischels, Michèle (text/illus.)

Outline

(Outline)

Berlin: Reprodukt, 2024. – 204 p.

ISBN 978-3-95640-429-0

Coming of age | Friendship | Love | Graphic novel

GERMAN
Germany

»Outline« was Michèle Fischels's final project for her degree in illustration at the Münster School of Design. And the graphic novel itself also depicts a year of changes: Clara, Ben, and Andreas, who are soon to take their A-levels, now face the (ostensibly) big questions about the future, sometimes this way, sometimes that – with a plan, a rebellion, or just a »let's wait and see«. The three are connected in different ways: as friends, as lovers, or secretly infatuated. Besides a real closeness, there also exists alienation and confusion between them. Michèle Fischels depicts her characters with ease and warmth. She uses colour to create atmosphere and mood, and her dialogues hit the perfect tone. In this way, she manages to capture the intense emotional amalgam of the final school year with its study stress and celebrations, melancholy, insecurity, a sense of new beginnings, curiosity, and freedom. An awesome debut! (Age: 14+) [IG]

96



Hach, Lena (text)

Dürr, Julia (illus.)

Tomke gräbt

(Tomke digs)

München: Mixtvision, [2025]. – [26] p.

ISBN 978-3-95854-222-8

Garden | Hole | Digging | Playing | Picture book

GERMAN
Germany

Tomke goes into the garden and starts digging. Grandma and Grandpa ask if she (or he, since Tomke is a name given to both boys and girls) wants to plant flowers. Dad asks if she is setting a trap for a dinosaur. Mum is sure that Tomke is searching for a treasure, while her brother believes she is excavating a pond. Well, it could be all those things. Or maybe not. Because Tomke is digging. Just digging. It seems the whole world thinks they know the reason behind Tomke's digging, but they don't even consider the idea that someone might just be digging a hole – simply because that's what they want to do: dig. In both text and pictures, Lena Hach and Julia Dürr have created a fabulous character in Tomke, who is completely at ease with herself and won't let herself be deterred. Hence, this picture book is a tribute to purposeless activity and to being in the moment – something children (unlike adults) master perfectly. (Age: 3+) [IG]



97

Heidelbach, Nikolaus (text/illus.)

Könnecke, Ole (text/illus.)

Gutenachtgeschichten für Celeste.

Ein sehr gruseliges Bilderbuch

(Good night stories for Celeste.

A very spooky picture book)

München: Hanser, 2024. – [30] p.

ISBN 978-3-446-28077-9

Monster | Horror | Bedtime story | Picture book

What a coup! Two of Germany's most renowned picture book artists have teamed up to create a book. This brings together two styles of illustration that could hardly be more different: one (Nikolaus Heidelbach) has an old master quality, painterly and detailed, while the other (Ole Könnecke) is sketchy, quick, and cartoonish. But as we all know, opposites attract. In these beautifully designed pages, Heidelbach and Könnecke tell a bedtime story about Boris and Celeste which features not only mischievous characters – the fearless Celeste asks for splatter! – but also crazy plot twists. Since the artist duo has also recorded the story personally and the audio file can be accessed via a QR code in the book, parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts can simply let the professionals do the reading, in case they get too scared to read it aloud themselves. (Age: 4+) [IG]



98

Hensgen, Andrea (text)

Brückner, Hannah (illus.)

Wir Kinder im Zug

(We children in the train)

Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, [2025]. – [42] p.

ISBN 978-3-7795-0783-3

Train | Journey | Homelessness | Displacement | Parable | Picture book

A group of children live on a train that keeps traveling nonstop along its route. Every two weeks, the train crosses a bridge. From there, the children can see their parents standing in the valley below the bridge. Each time the train approaches the bridge, the children get very excited even though they cannot get off the train. All that the parents and children can do is wave to each other through the open windows. After six minutes, everything is over, and the train continues on. One of the passengers, Jamil, is the narrator of this story. He describes all this quite calmly, because for him and the other children, everything that happens is simply their everyday life. But that is precisely what is so disturbing. Both in Andrea Hensgen's text and in the illustrations by Hannah Brückner, the picture book tells a succinct and haunting parable about homelessness and uprootedness. Through the choice of framing and perspective, Brückner's pictures feel dynamic and surprising but in no way overloaded. (Age: 4+) [IG]



99

Kreller, Susan (text)

Das Herz von Kamp-Cornell*(The heart of Camp Cornelian)*

Hamburg: Carlsen, 2025. – 285 p.

ISBN 978-3-551-58546-2

Mystery | Secret | Family

Something is definitely out of kilter in Kamp-Cornell (Camp Cornelian), a little village in the middle of nowhere, whose only attraction is the bright yellow flowering Cornelian cherry trees. Indeed, a strange feeling is also beginning to creep over Edin and his four cousins, who until recently knew nothing about each other and now live together with their mothers – three sisters – in their grandfather's mysterious house. What's really going on here? Why does the grandfather look like a gaunt ghost? Why does the house make such strange noises? And what's the deal with the forbidden room? Susan Kreller is a master of subtle suspense. She doesn't rely on clumsy clues or jarring effects but on her great love for language, literary composition, and quirky characters, which only she could portray in this way without making them seem ridiculous. And what exactly is wrong in Kamp-Cornell? Of course, you'll find no spoilers here. All we can say is: it's really creepy. (Age: 14+) [IG]



100

Krügel, Mareike (text)

Schilling, Anna (illus.)

Inselstage mit Rosa*(Island days with Rosa)*

Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg, [2025]. – 139 p.

ISBN 978-3-407-75285-7

Friendship | Grief | Comfort | Grandmother | Island | Storm

Linnea and Rosa are inseparable. They do everything together. They play the wildest games, have lots of fun, and understand each other implicitly. But then it becomes clear that Rosa is now only present in Linnea's imagination, because Rosa was killed in an accident. Linnea misses her very much and meets with her every day in her thoughts, even on the small island where she is now staying with her Grandma Mu. She hardly knows Mu, but when a storm forces them to remain on the island much longer than planned, they start to become closer. Grandmother and granddaughter give each other space. They take their time, and eventually Mu shares stories from her life and about her friend who has dementia. In turn, Linnea is able to talk about Rosa and her loss. She realises that within all the pain she feels, there is also happiness in having known Rosa. In this children's novel, Mareike Krügel gently tells about grief and sadness, as well as about security and closeness. (Age: 10+) [IG]



Mohl, Nils (text)

Engel der letzten Nacht

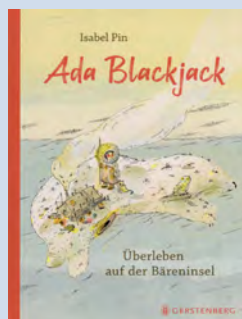
(*Angel of the final night*)

Frankfurt am Main: Rotfuchs, [2025]. – 222 p.

ISBN 978-3-7571-0192-3

Suicide | Death wish | Accident | Coming of age | Dream

»Engel der letzten Nacht« (Angel of the final night) deals with the more or less concrete mental scenarios of 17-year-old Kester, who is considering taking his own life. But is it okay for someone to do that – even though at 17 the world and the future lay wide open? Is it okay to despair of life and feel fed up? The novel is about showing that this is indeed permissible (and perhaps even necessary), and that there are nonetheless reasons to stay around longer. Not only in his choice of subject matter, Nils Mohl has taken an existential and radical approach. The author explores and relentlessly pushes the boundaries of fiction and storytelling through shifts in perspective and the use of multiple versions, leitmotifs, a meticulously composed and rhythmically crafted language, as well as intertextual allusions. This book is not a simplistic »just-so story«, it is, on the contrary, literature that is complex and thus challenging in a good way. (Age: 14+) [IG]



Pin, Isabel (text/illus.)

Ada Blackjack. Überleben auf der Bäreninsel

(*Ada Blackjack. Surviving on Bear Island*)

Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 2025. – 88 p.

ISBN 978-3-8369-6321-3

Alaska | Wrangel Island | Blackjack, Ada (1898-1983) | Inupiat <people> | Native Americans | Expedition | Biography | Non-fiction

Ada Blackjack is one of those women about whom we know far too little. Born in 1898 in Okpiktuulik on Alaska's west coast, Nayuummauraq, called Ada, is an Iñupiaq. Because she desperately needs to earn money for her family, she joins a four-person expedition to the inhospitable Wrangel Island in the Arctic Ocean in 1921. After two years, she is the only one still alive; the men are either dead or missing. However, Ada possesses incredible mental strength and is finally rescued. Back home, she faces a great deal of mistrust and repudiation: »How could it be that a young woman, and an Iñupiaq at that, survived when four strong white men perished?« Isabel Pin skilfully masters the balancing act between imparting knowledge and following literary and artistic standards. The book not only pays tribute to an extraordinary woman but also serves to remind us of all those who have been forgotten, degraded, or overwritten over the course of history. (Age: 8+) [IG]

103



Raymond, Mirjam (text)

Bohn, Maja (illus.)

Von Null auf Held oder Wer ist eigentlich Amin?

(From nought to hero, or Who is Amin again?)

Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Sauerländer,

[2025]. – 234 p.

ISBN 978-3-7373-4393-0

Refugee | Loneliness | Outsider | Disappearance | Friendship

GERMAN
Germany

Jonny likes to play the big macho in his schoolyard gang, the »Sheriffs«, but he's not quite sure who is actually in his class. When the teacher mentions that Amin has gone missing, he has no idea who that is – even though Matteo claims that Amin rang his doorbell on the day he disappeared. But then Jonny by chance stumbles upon Amin's diary and discovers not only that Amin spent every break alone in the toilets, but also that he is good at drawing and playing football. And that Amin lives in a refugee shelter without his parents. So what did actually happen to him? Was Amin deported back to Afghanistan? Or did he run away? Thanks to the well-chosen narrative perspectives – Jonny tells the story, but Amin has »a speaking part« through his diary – Mirjam Raymond manages, in her debut children's book, to handle a difficult subject with skill and sensitivity, without compromising its gravity. (Age: 10+) [IG]

104



Ross, Mikael (text/illus.)

Der verkehrte Himmel

(Upside-down heaven)

Berlin: Avant-Verlag, [2024]. – 341 p.

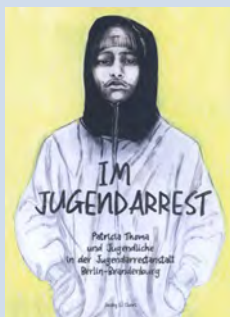
ISBN 978-3-96445-108-8

Human trafficking | Vietnam | Berlin | Graphic novel

GERMAN
Germany

This graphic novel by Mikael Ross, a recipient of the Max and Moritz Prize who is also known for works such as »Der Unfall« and »Goldjunge«, is a real page-turner. During a sweltering summer in Berlin, the siblings Tãm and Dennis find a severed finger in the bushes. Immediately they want to find out what happened. They decide to get to the bottom of the matter, unaware of the danger they are putting themselves in. Because that finger has something to do with a mysterious girl who was sitting in a van at the »Polish Market« and who wrangled Dennis out of the kitchen cleaver he had just bought. As it turns out, the girl is not there voluntarily. In this black-and-white comic, Mikael Ross tackles a little-noticed subject that often remains under the radar: human trafficking. In contrasting despair and brutality with youthful nonchalance, the author does not diminish the seriousness of the issue; on the contrary, he intensifies it. (Age: 14+) [IG]

105



Thoma, Patricia (text/illus.)

Im Jugendarrest

(In youth detention)

Berlin: Verlagshaus Jacoby & Stuart, [2025]. – 92 p.

ISBN 978-3-96428-269-9

Prison | Juvenile detention centre | Education |
Integration | New beginning | Graphic novel

GERMAN
Germany

What is it like to live in a youth detention facility? What do you do there all day? And why do people end up there in the first place? For this graphic novel, Patricia Thoma spent time with young people being held in the Berlin-Brandenburg youth detention centre. All of them have made mistakes and committed crimes, and they are aware of that. But they all share the feeling of being overlooked by society or being seen only as »a problem«. For the time after detention, they wish not only for a fresh start and the chance to »do better«, but also to be seen and to be appreciated. Patricia Thoma approaches her interviewees respectfully and with empathy, and in »Im Jugendarrest«, she combines her personal engagement with an approach that is both documentary and artistic. This is an important, informative, and, moreover, a powerfully drawn book! (Age: 12+) [IG]

106



Unterlehnberg, Mascha (text)

Wenn wir lächeln

(When we smile)

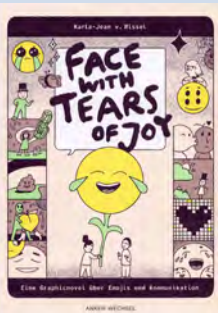
Köln: DuMont, 2025. – 253 p.

ISBN 978-3-7558-0036-1

Coming of age | Friendship | Sisterhood | Power |
Self-empowerment

GERMAN
Germany

Anto wears shimmering lip gloss and is tough as nails. Jara puts on faded T-shirts when she goes out and loses herself in daydreams that now and then drift toward the apocalyptic. Jara talks about her friendship with Anto – a girl who has money but still steals, who gives away studded rings and generously lends her clothes. Anto won't let herself be made a fool of, and Jara finds this spot-on. But, with time, Anto and Jara drift apart. Life just gets in the way. In her debut novel, Mascha Unterlehnberg tells the story of a sisterhood and how two young women fight to carve out their places in the world – because, after all, the rest of the world also just takes what it wants. »Wenn wir lächeln« is neither a manifesto for activists nor a call for overt selfishness. It is a powerful novel – raw and tender, even while leaving many things in the realm of uncertainty. (Age: 14+) [IG]



Wissel, Karla-Jean von

Face with Tears of Joy. Eine Graphicnovel über Emojis und Kommunikation

(Face with tears of joy. A graphic novel about emojis and communication)

Hamburg: Ankerwechsel Verlag, 2024. – 157 p.

ISBN 978-3-947596-12-6

Emoji | Semiotics | Emotion | Communication | Graphic novel

GERMAN
Germany

Colon, dash, parenthesis – or simply :-): Emojis are now an integral part of modern written communication. Almost everyone uses them to express feelings and thoughts quickly and concisely, without words. But hang on – concise? Yes, they are that, but with some emojis, you're not quite sure what their »exact« meaning is supposed to be. As simple as they seem, they are actually quite complex. Aside from different interpretations in different cultures, their meanings are sometimes not even defined at all. In her well-researched and amusing graphic novel, Karla-Jean von Wissel depicts the invention and emergence of emojis in brisk strokes while drawing upon communication and semiotics theory, emotion research, and philosophical considerations. »Face with Tears of Joy« is an incredibly entertaining treasure trove of knowledge, effortlessly combining factual information with entertainment. Big thumbs up! (Age: 12+) [IG]



Engelmann, Julia (text)

Himmel ohne Ende

(Where the sky never ends)

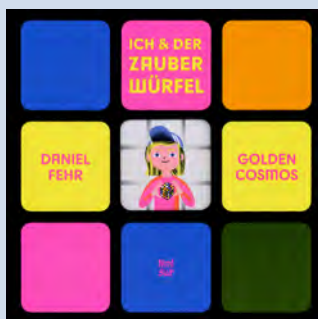
Zürich: Diogenes, 2025. – 336 p.

ISBN 978-3-257-07323-2

Coming of age | Emotion | Feeling | Fear | Friendship

GERMAN
Switzerland

This book is filled with so many brilliant lines that it's impossible to pick just one to quote. Julia Engelmann, a successful slam poet and author of remarkably bestselling poetry books, has now written her first novel, »Himmel ohne Ende«. And what a debut it is! Charlie is 15, full of doubts, longings and fears. She often feels out of place, misunderstood and invisible. But then Pommes joins her class. Their friendship helps her grow and brings her joy – perhaps even more so because Pommes, too, carries more than a little emotional baggage. With great affection for her characters and striking honesty, Julia Engelmann tells the story of a time that is both crushingly low and soaringly high – confusing, exhausting, yet filled with moments of real beauty. This is an intense coming-of-age novel that shakes its readers, making them nod in recognition, smile quietly, and sometimes swallow hard. A moving narrative debut from a true master of words. (Age: 14+) [IG]



Fehr, Daniel (text)

Golden Cosmos (illus.)

Ich und der Zauberwürfel

(*Me and the magic cube*)

Zürich: NordSüd, 2024. – [46] p.

ISBN 978-3-314-10696-5

Magic cube | Game | Puzzle | Picture book

Ernő Rubik's magic cube was a worldwide sensation fifty years ago. It felt like everyone had one, and almost everyone became addicted: twisting it back and forth and back again! For most, however, the excessive enthusiasm gradually turned into frustration because restoring the cube to its original state simply wasn't possible. For many, the best they could achieve was to make one side have a single colour. Every further turn seemed to make things worse rather than better. Daniel Fehr and the illustration duo Golden Cosmos, known for their prints and love of neon colours, have created a terrific and absorbing picture book to commemorate the cube's anniversary – packed with lots of information about the Rubik's Cube, as well as calculations and tips on the best way to »make it turn out right«. Because what we all did to try to make every side uniform in colour – that is, peeling off the stickers and sticking them back on – is obviously not the solution. (Age: 8+) [IG]



Blachos, Giōrgos (Vlachos, Giorgos) (text)

Skura, Eirēnē (Skoura, Eirini) (illus.)

»Omēru«: Batrachomyomachia

(*»Homer«: Battle of the Frogs and Mice*)

Pallēnē [Attikē]: Ekdoseis Mikros Ērōs

(Mikros Iros Publications), 2024. – 55 p.

ISBN 978-618-206-193-0

Homer/Battle of the Frogs and Mice | Populism | War | Graphic novel

This graphic novel is an incisive, brilliant parody of »The War of the Frogs and Mice«, an ancient Greek comic epic that parodies Homer's Iliad. The budding friendship between a frog prince and a mouse prince is cut short when the mouse drowns while playing in the realm of the frogs. When the Mouse King is told it was an assassination attempt, a brutal one-day war begins. Hundreds of lives are lost on both sides, until the gods of Olympus dispatch armies of gnats and crabs to decide the matter. The book addresses the themes of war, xenophobia, exploitation, populism, abuse of power and justice, and even fake news with such acuity that it has an undeniable immediacy and relevance. In the illustrations, the cruel aspects are first deftly mirrored, then softened through absurd humour, such as the poet as war reporter or social media from inside the council of the gods, while the text itself is written in the style of the original's grand-sounding iambic rhyming narrative. (Age: 10+) [TA]

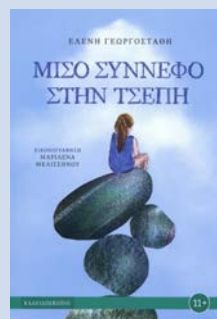


Charitos, Kyriakos (Haritos, Kiriakos) (text)
Kutsogiannēs, Basilēs (Koutsogiannis, Vassilis) (illus.)
To metaxenio
(*Silken*)
Athēna: Ekdoseis Metaixmio, 2024. – [44] p.
ISBN 978-618-03-4145-4

Overprotection | Outsider | Love | Self-realisation |
Picture book

GREEK
Greece

■ A child of silk requires special protection. Sheltered by its mother for years, it has been kept away from every thorn, every teardrop, from sun, rain, and human hands. But then one day, tempted by a royal celebration, the silken child escapes its golden cage. The splendid pageantry, filled with music and scents, lights, colours, and people, draws it in like a magnet. Hand after hand reaches out to claim a fibre of precious silk for itself. They all tug, pull, and tear, until the child falls apart. Only a poor, little tailor comes to its aid. He mends, patches, stitches and sews up the child anew with sturdy cotton. From then on nothing can separate them. Told in verses, this lyrical fairy tale is about human kindness and the courage to be oneself. Kiriakos Haritos masterfully depicts vulnerability as a necessary condition for sensitivity, which in turn is the essential substance of love. The fascinating, richly coloured pictures by Vassilis Koutsogiannis extend and delicately mirror the protagonist's emotional world. (Age: 6+) [TA]



Geōrgostathē, Elenē (Georgostathi, Eleni) (text)
Melissēnu, Marilēna (Melissinou, Marilena) (illus.)
Miso synnepho stēn tsepē
(*Half a cloud in the pocket*)
Athēna: Ekdoseis Kaleidoskopio
(Kaleidoscope Publications), [2024]. – 158 p.
ISBN 978-960-471-278-6

Single-parent family | Social disparity | Outsider |
Inclusion | Siblings | Mother | Daughter

GREEK
Greece

■ The Blue Coast campsite is not a holiday destination for the family of eleven-year-old Anna and her sister. They are here due to hardship – their single mother has become unemployed and the family therefore homeless. While the mother keeps the three afloat with her job as a cleaner, the two girls have learned to cope with complicated situations. Their flexibility, empathy, and level-headedness help them get by and fit in. Encounters with new friends and with adults, who are sometimes cruel, sometimes humane, challenge Anna, the first-person narrator, believe in herself again. Her courage protects her from danger, and her zest for life is strengthened by creativity and unexpected humanity. In this sensitive novel, Eleni Georgostathi contrasts the ugly aspects of human society with deeply humanitarian values. The text is accompanied by Marilena Melissinou's illustrations, summer-blue and gentle as clouds. (Age: 11+) [TA]



Panagiōtakēs, Giōrgos K. (Panagiotakis, Giorgos) (text)
Amphibia
 (*Amphibians*)
 Athēna: Ekdoseis Patakē (Patakis Publishers),
 2024. – 222 p.
 (Series: Synchronē logotechnia gia neus)
 ISBN 978-618-07-0705-2

Coming of age | Family | Friendship | Love |
 Sexual identity | Social media

Like the complex metamorphoses that amphibians experience, two youngsters in Athens oscillate between contradictory worlds. The introverted Max lives with his hard-working mother, far away from his rich, distant father, who sends him to a private school where he is bullied. The unconventional Alexandra sees herself as a romantic, not least because of the sexual abuse she once experienced but never disclosed to her strictly religious parents. The teens meet at an event hosted by a YouTuber they both find inspiring. A bold adventure unfolds, strengthening their resolve and drawing them closer to each other. As in his other novels, the renowned writer Giorgos Panagiotakis explores the lives of today's young people with sober clarity and empathy. He skilfully turns the three chapters of the novel into three dramatic acts about guilt and innocence, closeness and distance, truth and deception in both the real and the virtual world. (Age: 14+) [TA]



Selelē, Alexandra (Seleli, Alexandra) (text)
 Krigku, Petrula (Krigkou, Petroula) (illus.)
Istories gia eftapsycha skupidia
 (*Stories of soul-filled garbage*)
 Ellēniko: Kalentēs (Kalendis Editions), 2024. – 56 p.
 ISBN 978-960-594-119-2

Recycling | Upcycling | Sustainability | Everyday life |
 Art | Architecture | Non-fiction

Using scraps and leftovers for arts and crafts is extremely popular with children. But how aware are they of the value of reusing things in daily life – or even in art? What do household objects and toys have to do with bones? Where is the connection between mummies and old school notes on papyrus? What is meant by kintsugi, palimpsest, or spolia? Can Grandma's rag rug be considered upcycling? Archaeologist and art historian Alexandra Seleli presents these fascinating topics in seventeen factual texts in an engaging and very accessible manner. Ranging from prehistory to today, they cover everyday objects, building techniques, and works by artists such as Duchamp, Tsarouchis, Warhol, Jordan, Pikionis, and Papagiannis. Petroula Krigkous's two-tone illustrations are charming and imaginative complements to the texts. Original upcycling ideas and a bibliography complete the book, whose call for mindful use of resources is reflected even in its simple design and compact format. (Age: 5+) [TA]



Tsaknias, Giōrgos (text)

Kamperē, Iphigeneia (Kamperi, Ifiyenia) (illus.)

Ena kalamari epithymeï na paei sto phengari kai alles poiētikes istories

(A squid dreams of flying to the moon and other poetic stories)

Athēna: Papadopoulos (Papadopoulos Publishing), 2024. – [26] p. – ISBN 978-618-232-005-1

Sea | Marine animals | Poetry | Limerick | Nonsense literature

This delightful, fully illustrated collection of twenty limericks paints a lively aquatic world with lots of quirky inhabitants. Sharks make music, monkfish travel, octopuses love spaghetti, sea bass speak in rhymes, sardines paint, squids fly to the moon. In a witty and imaginative way, the historian, writer, and translator Giōrgos Tsaknias has his creatures act like humans in situations familiar to young readers. This reflection of human reality in the animals' behaviour gives readers space for playful interaction with their own experiences. The nonsense nature of the poems is heightened by the surprising choice of words. The verses faithfully follow the limerick rhyme scheme. In the illustrations that accompany and expand the text, renowned illustrator Ifiyenia Kamperi charmingly and comically depicts sea creatures in their surreal roles, while preserving their distinctive characteristics. In a sense, therefore, the volume is also a lively picture book of natural history. (Age: 4+) [TA]



Blum, Yo'av (Blum, Yoav) (text)

Teplō, Rotem (Teplow, Rotem) (illus.)

Efoh eyn yofi?

(Where there is no beauty)

Moshav Ben-Shemen: Keter, 2025. – [30] p.
no ISBN

Philosophy | Curiosity | Beauty | Parent | Child | Dialogue | Picture book

This tender and thoughtful picture book unfolds in a dialogue between a girl, Galia, and her father, as they sit together on the seashore. Galia's curious questions – Where does the sea end? Where does the sun go after it sets? – culminate in the most profound one: Where is there no beauty? This question sparks a gentle philosophical journey in which Galia discovers that beauty is present everywhere, even in places that may seem ordinary or overlooked. Yoav Blum weaves a simple yet profound narrative that invites readers, young and old alike, to reflect on perception and how we choose to see the world. Rotem Teplow's enchanting illustrations enrich the text, capturing the play of light, sea, and imagination while amplifying the book's spirit of curiosity and optimism. »Efoh eyn yofi?« offers an inspiring reading experience that nurtures reflection, wonder, and joy in life's smallest details. (Age: 5+) [LW]



Vaisman, Shirli (Waisman, Shirley) (text/illus.)

Saba shel pa'am

(*Good-old-days Grandpa*)

Tel Aviv: Tal-May Publishers, 2024. – 29 p.

no ISBN

Family | Intergenerational relationship | Grandfather | Grandchild | Belonging | Picture book

This picture book follows Ron and Don, two energetic children who are fed up with their grandfather's quirks, such as falling asleep in the middle of a pillow fight or wearing his clothes backwards with suspenders and a tie. Convinced that Grandpa belongs to the past, they »donate« him to the Museum of History. Much to everyone's surprise, Grandpa thrives there: he gives speeches, presents exhibitions, and becomes a celebrated national treasure. Yet the girl and the boy realize that in sharing him with the world, they have lost their Grandpa. In a playful twist, disguised as thieves, they »steal« him and return home where they discover the joy of reading old newspapers and playing silly games together. Only on certain days does Grandpa go back to the museum as a tour guide. Shirley Waisman blends wit, warmth, and irony to explore intergenerational bonds and the value of belonging. The lively illustrations highlight the absurd yet tender journey of a grandfather, who is both part of history and fully present in the lives of his grandchildren. (Age: 5+) [LW]



Shukla, Sushil (Śukla, Suśīla) (text)

Soni, Prashant (Sōnī, Praśānnta) (illus.)

Jungle mein ek raat

(*Jaṅgala mē ḥka rāta*)

(*A night in the jungle*)

Bhopal: Eklavya Foundation, 2024. – [24] p.

ISBN 978-93-94552-99-9

Jungle | Night | Tiger | Sound | Nature | Poetry | Picture book

It's dark, it's eerie, it's quiet – so quiet that you can hear a leaf fall, a rabbit nibble a stalk of grass, and an ant take a breath. In renowned editor, educator, and author Sushil Shukla's evocative poem in beautiful rhymes, nighttime in a dense jungle comes alive for young readers. Prashant Soni's stunning, detailed black-and-white illustrations are rich with different textures and patterns (including some very funny elements). They show a majestic tiger on a stroll through its territory enjoying nature while soaking up the forest's silence. Only occasional beams of moonlight pierce the darkness. Children (and adults) are drawn into the atmospheric, slightly stylised double-page spreads with the mythical-looking feline taking centre stage, while smaller night creatures hover nearby or hide in the foliage. This square picture book, which has received the Ficci Publishing Award, provides an entertaining and captivating walk through (potentially) perilous territory – all from the safety of your home. (Age: 4+) [CS]



Wang, Jin-Shiuan (text) / Chao, Kuo-Tsung (illus.)

Hong-tshue, hong-tshue, tī thinn-tíng pue.

Tài-gí tshòng-tsok gin-á-kua (*The kite, the kite, flies in the sky. Taiwanese nursery rhymes*)

Taipei: Yuan jian tian xia wen hua chu ban gu fen you xian gong si (Global Views – Commonwealth Publishing Group), 2024. – [64] p. (Series: Hui ben guan; 288) ISBN 978-626-355-981-3

Text in Hokkien and Chinese

Poetry | Children's song | Nursery rhyme | Picture book

Committed to preserving the heritage of Taiwan Minnan, a beautiful language with ancient cultural roots, the author has been composing »Nanzai ge« (Taiwanese nursery rhymes) for many years to encourage children to learn the language. This collection of thirty nursery rhymes covers a wide range of topics closely related to Taiwan's daily life and folklore: beetles and bunnies, aunties and grandmas, tigers and monkeys, red peppers and white-feathered herons, mid-autumn nights and winter melons. Witty content, vivid metaphors and lively rhythm make these short poems memorable, entertaining, and fun to recite. They also stimulate children's observation of the world around them. Many of Wang Jin-Shiuan's (b. 1964) Nanzai ge have been selected for elementary school textbooks. Chao Kuo-Tsung (b. 1940), former Director and Dean of the Department of Fine Arts at the National Academy of Arts, maintains a childlike spirit in his creations. Both have received numerous awards for their work. (Age: 6+) [LO]



Babarczy, Myriam (text/illus.)

Juharfa utca

(*Maple Street*)

Budapest: Csimota, 2024. – [88] p.

ISBN 978-615-6472-37-3

Humans | Community | Coping with life |
Neighbourhood | Picture book | Wordless book

»Maple Street«, connects the lives of people who feel abandoned and alone with their problems across five episodes. This wordless chain story moves from house to house showing what is happening inside: a boy is fearful of more domestic violence, a young girl has feelings of inferiority, a lonely teenager feels trapped by his sadness, a single mother is overwhelmed by the tasks of her everyday life, and an elderly man has no one left to make music with. A black cat roaming through the street reveals that these people are neighbours and gradually brings them together. They begin to take an interest in one another, share their worries, and become a community. Myriam Babarczy's picture book grew out of her master's thesis. With just a few visual elements, she skilfully creates film-like scenes and finds a clear, powerful language without using words. (Age: 4+) [KW]



Kiss, Judit Ágnes (text)

Sipos, Fanni (illus.)

Tujaszörny és nyírfakobold

(The thuja monster and the birch goblin)

Budapest: Pagony, 2024. – 93 p.

ISBN 978-963-587-543-6

Foreignness | Diversity | Respect | Acceptance | Integration

The furry white, cuddly, but rather clumsy-looking giant thuja monster named Tutu has had to leave his home. He is alone and overwhelmed until the clever but impulsive birch goblin Habók finds Tutu and decides to offer him shelter. However, Habók first needs the approval of the birch goblin community. The other goblins regard the thuja monster with suspicion as he struggles to integrate into their everyday life. Tutu wants to help, but makes many mistakes, and the community only tolerates him once he proves to be useful to them. Meanwhile, Habók, who has become a true friend, finds this behaviour troubling and wants Tutu to be accepted as he is. Set in a fantastical world of forest creatures, Judit Kiss's children's book deals with the complex theme of integration. Fanni Sipos's illustrations add a grand touch of magic to the story. The images and the text work together seamlessly. (Age: 7+) [KW]



Zunda (i.e. Naidi Atika Zundaro) (text/illus.)

Ayahku seorang nelayan

(My father is a fisherman)

Yogyakarta: Penerbit Hujan & Bumi,

2024. – [41] p.

ISBN 978-623-10-0406-2

Fisherman | Poverty | Father | Son | Picture book

A young boy recounts the daily »adventures« of his single father, who is »a great fisherman«: He ventures out to sea in his small boat, spends the entire day casting his line, even diving to the bottom of the sea, only to start all over again when a storm capsizes the boat and washes away his entire catch. The story is visualized on double-page spreads with sparse text and wordless comic panel inserts using a minimalist colour palette dominated by the dark blue-green of the sea. Even though these events are depicted somewhat fantastically – they are the product of the boy's imagination, fuelled by his father's stories – the book draws attention to the harsh lives of Indonesian fishermen, who can barely earn a living. It is dedicated »to all fathers and fishermen in Indonesia«. This reworking of Zunda's final artwork for her degree in Children's Book Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art has been selected by the TaCiTa Foundation as one of 20 titles for the 2024 Indonesian Children's Literature Awards. (Age: 4+) [LO]

123



Ní Ghlinn, Áine (text)
Donnelly, Paddy (illus.)

Na trí mhuicín

(The three little pigs)

An Spidéal: Futa Fata, [2024]. – [34] p.

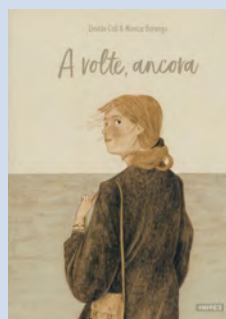
ISBN 978-1-915684-11-0

Pig | House | Wolf | Cleverness | Folk tale |
Retelling | Picture book

IRISH
Ireland

Prolific illustrator Paddy Donnelly is a creative mastermind – and when he is paired with poet Áine Ní Ghlinn, former Laureate na nÓg, readers are in for a special treat. Award winner »Na Trí Mhuicín« is the second instalment in Futa Fata's verse retellings of traditional tales. It recounts the well-known story of the three little pigs whose new houses face demolition by a hungry wolf. The energetic text presents the dramatic tale with great rhythm and rollicking rhymes. The vibrant digital illustrations effectively play with the colour contrast of warm yellow, green, and red for the three pigs and icy cold blue for the terrifying wolf. And what an impressive beast Paddy Donnelly has conjured up in his pictures: Wolf has a coarse coat of aqua blue fur, loong sharp teeth dripping with saliva, and he is constantly growing in size – almost filling the entire double page, as the petrified piglets cower in their humble abodes of straw and sticks respectively. A ferociously funny new version of a beloved classic. (Age: 3+) [CS]

124



Cali, Davide (text)
Barengo, Monica (illus.)

A volte, ancora

(Still, sometimes)

Padova: Kite, [2024]. – [34] p.

ISBN 978-88-6745-214-9

Love | Memories | Nostalgia | Longing | Picture book

ITALIAN
Italy

In this tender picture book, aimed at young adult and adult readers, the first-person narrator sits in a café named »Toi et Moi« (You and Me), reminiscing about a woman he once loved deeply. They used to meet here, where he would listen to her share her thoughts. Whenever they went to the cinema, she would choose the film – only to fall asleep shortly after it began. They enjoyed lovely walks along the beach, where she always seemed to find stray dogs. Their kisses beneath the starry sky were gentle. The woman is no longer with him, yet the man still sits in the café every day, accompanied by his faithful dog. »It would be nice to have a coffee again together,« he muses. It is only as he slowly walks home that we see he has grown older and a little stout. On the book's back cover, two similarly plump figures are shown sitting at a table in a café by the seaside. »I'm waiting for you,« reads the caption. Davide Cali's story of longing and memories is beautifully illustrated by Monica Barengo with delicate pencil drawings in warm sepia tones. (Age: 14+) [AB]

125



Cima, Ludovica (text)

Sylvie sogni di seta*(Sylvie's silk dreams)*

Milano: Mondadori, [2024]. – 220 p.

(Series: Contemporanea)

ISBN 978-88-04-78195-0

Milan | Fashion | Passion | Courage | Self-realisation

ITALIAN
Italy

This novel by Lodovica Cima, based on a true story, shows how important it is to follow one's passions. Penny is fifteen, lives in the Netherlands, and loves fashion. When she is awarded a scholarship to a fashion school in Milan, a dream comes true. She stays in a beautiful house just outside the city. There, she is welcomed by Camilla, a vivacious woman who, however, has little in common with the Italian style Penny had always dreamed of. But in Camilla's past – hidden away in a chest in the attic – lies the forgotten story of Silvia, a young seamstress. Her talent and determination led her to become an established Milanese designer in the years following World War II, and eventually took her all the way to Paris, to become Sylvie. Amid satin bows and fine fabrics, new friendships and scooter rides, Penny uncovers the story of a woman who embodies determination and creativity. Inspired by her courage and willingness to learn, Penny begins to find her own path. (Age: 11+) [AB]

126



Cinquetti, Nicola (text)

Sanna, Alessandro (illus.)

Quando la sera la luna ci parla*(When at night the moon speaks to us)*

Roma: Lapis, [2024]. – [66] p.

(Series: Versi diversi)

ISBN 978-88-7874-973-3

Nature | Seasons | Everyday life | Sound | Poetry

ITALIAN
Italy

One of Italy's most gifted poets, Nicola Cinquetti, plays with language in these 52 poems, crafting verses rich in anaphora, assonance and synaesthesia to reflect on the everyday sounds around us – allowing them to resonate like music. Sometimes the poems are about animals, mostly birds; sometimes, the sounds of nature, such as rain and wind, or electronic devices inspire bubbling rhymes and unexpected comparisons. Water falls from the sky, drips like a stream from the tap, sprinkles like rain from the shower, or rushes like a waterfall from a toilet flushing. The spin of the washing machine, the oven fan, the neighbour's drill – or the dentist's. All find their voice in these poems. Even different kinds of silence are not forgotten – until, within that silence, the moon shines and »speaks«, for to the childlike mind, everything has a language of its own. Each of the short poems is accompanied by a delicate water-colour by Alessandro Sanna that skilfully illustrates the author's words. (Age: 7+) [AB]

127



Gramantieri, Nicoletta (text)

Mal di nebbia*(Fogsickness)*

Roma: Emons Edizioni, [2025]. – 255 p.

(Series: Emons Raga)

ISBN 978-88-6986-355-4

Family | War | Mystery | Ghost story | Haunting |
Fantasy fictionITALIAN
Italy

Twelve-year-old Albertina was raised by her grandmother, and after her death, she must return to her native village – a place said to be under a curse. During the First World War, a group of soldiers on leave allegedly refused to return to the front and drowned themselves in the river. Since then, an uncanny mist has hung over the village. The ghosts of the young men are said to reappear, children who approach the river die, and outsiders want nothing to do with the villagers. Determined to uncover the truth and lift the curse, Albertina sets out with the help of her two friends, Celso and Vero. But after a mysterious accident by the river, she loses her ability to speak – and ultimately discovers a solution far more real than anyone could have expected. Written in a precise, literary style and set against a well-researched historical backdrop, Nicoletta Gramantieri's novel blends fantastical elements with realistic situations. Its magical atmosphere captivates readers from the very first page. (Age: 11+) [AB]

128



Negrin, Fabian (text)

Muhova, Kalina (illus.)

Cromosomi*(Chromosomes)*

[Perugia]: Edizioni Corsare, [2025]. – [38] p.

(Series: Illustrati)

ISBN 978-88-99136-53-6

Family history | Genealogy | Evolution | Diversity |
Non-fiction | Picture bookITALIAN
Italy

Ninety-year-old Lucia looks back over her life. Her father, a photographer who travelled all over the world, met her mother in London. Her mother's father was a ship captain who had met his Chinese wife Mei on one of his voyages and had married her against his family's wishes. The family history goes back further and further, to the time of the Crusades, when one ancestor, the son of a Saxon knight and an Arab princess, received a ring that – as the story goes – once belonged to the Egyptian queen Nefertiti. Going back even further, her ancestry traces to Africa, where Lucia's great-great-great-grandmother Lucy lived 3.2 million years ago. In a fascinating way, Fabian Negrin shows how each of us belongs in some way to the great and diverse human family. Kalina Muhova's original illustrations are notable for their cinematic layout and for the use of the bright pink of the Pantone colour system, which makes the drawings stand out wonderfully. (Age: 6+) [AB]



Packer, Neil (text/illus.)

Saorin, Sara (transl.)

La parabola del panificio indipendente

(The parable of the independent bakers)

[Monselice]: Camelozaampa, 2024. – [42] p.

(Series: Le Scintille)

ISBN 979-12-5464-11-01

Handicraft | Tradition | Baking | Industrialisation |
Gentrification | Picture book

ITALIAN
Italy

This book by Neil Packer – author of the much-acclaimed »One of a kind« – has been published directly with the Italian publisher Camelozaampa, a small, committed, and independent publisher. It tells the story of an elderly couple who run a charming little bakery. Like many others, their shop is bought out by a large industrial baking corporation. As compensation, the initially reluctant couple receive enough money to embark on a six-year-long cruise. Upon their return, they bake only for themselves. But when everyone else suddenly longs for their delicious, fragrant bread, the old bakers decide to share their recipe (which is included in the book). The book has an unusual format, and its detailed red-and-blue illustrations recall German Expressionism and the work of Austrian painter Egon Schiele. It was printed by the last remaining printing house in Venice, and the bread recipe comes from master baker Marco Sutto. This book is a heartfelt homage to craftsmanship in all its forms. (Age: 8+) [AB]



Valentinis, Pia (text/illus.)

Fare figure

(To make pictures)

Milano: Topipittori, [2025]. – [52] p.

(Series: 2.10 dueocchi.diecidita)

ISBN 978-88-33701-78-3

Illustration | Art | Perception | Inspiration | Non-fiction

ITALIAN
Italy

Pia Valentinis has created many outstanding picture books. In this one, she reveals the secrets of her art and explains her approach to illustration and why it represents a different way of perceiving the world. Each illustration is the result of years of observing her surroundings, recorded in countless sketches. At the start of every book, Pia Valentinis develops a concept, designs a storyboard, and reflects on materials and techniques. These can produce very different effects—such as through the use of lead pencils, coloured pencils, gel pens, watercolours or felt-tip pens. Images can also be created through collage or even embroidery; inspiration can be found in old photographs discovered at flea markets. As the artist puts it: »It is as if you're learning to write in different languages—but your hands already know so much and have so much to say.« This little book is sure to inspire young readers to try out new and creative drawing techniques of their own. (Age: 8+) [AB]

131



Zocca, Bruno (text/illus.)

La nottataccia

(What a night!)

[Milano]: LupoGuido, [2025]. – [42] p.

ISBN 978-88-8581085-3

Night | Bedtime | Sleep | Daily routine | Picture book

ITALIAN
Italy

What can you do when you simply can't fall asleep? Lucia thinks she must have forgotten something – perhaps that's why it isn't working. First, she goes through her usual bedtime routine once more: brushing her teeth, putting on her pyjamas, getting a goodnight kiss from Dad, turning off the light. Still, she just can't fall asleep. She could ask her father for advice, but – unlike her – he is fast asleep. After trying to imitate the snoring dog, she decides to go for a little walk. Maybe that will help. All the animals in the forest – and even the moon – are already slumbering. Only one creature is still awake: the big brown bear. So, Lucia decides to read him a bedtime story. And then, suddenly, she remembers what she forgot – something that always helps her fall asleep. Bruno Zocca tells this simple story with comic-style illustrations in which young readers will recognise the steps of their own bedtime routine, while also spotting many little details that almost seem to bring the pictures to life. (Age: 3+) [AB]

132



Eguchi, Eri (text)

Kawasaki, Shunichi (illus.)

Fujiwara, Yoshihiro (scientific advisor)

Kujira ga shindara

(After the whale dies)

Tōkyō: Dōshinsha, 2024. – 40 p.

ISBN 978-4-494-01599-3

Whale | Death | Life | Ecosystem | Deep sea | Non-fiction | Picture book

JAPANESE
Japan

»Kujira ga shindara« is one of two recent picture books in Japan that deal with whales and their role in the ecosystem – a topic that has been unusual until now. The book explores the subject in a totally new way using a highly unusual artistic style and a composition method that effectively visualizes the story. After end papers depicting a dead whale sinking deep into the sea, the picture book portrays the fish, crustacea, bone-eating worms, and many other creatures one after another against a black backdrop, showing how the enormous whale body generously offers food and shelter for them. The whimsical illustrations capture the characteristics of each species and employ dynamic changes of perspective by zooming in and out. The illustrations and texts cleverly engage readers, encouraging them to explore the detailed, explanatory material at the end of the book. This work was the winner of the 2025 Kodansha Picture Book Award (Kodansha ehon shō). (Age: 5+) [RN]



Hasegawa, Mariru (Hasegawa, Marie-Lou) (text)

Yobito wa tabi o suru

(Yobito people on the road)

Tōkyō: Kaiseisha, 2024. – 254 p.

ISBN 978-4-03-727480-1

Minority | Diversity | Empathy | Ecosystem |
Short story

It is not easy to understand the adversities that others are facing – regardless of their nature, and especially when one has not had similar experiences. Nevertheless, most humans want to understand people of different backgrounds as much as they themselves want to be understood. In this book, with a setting that resembles our own real world, individuals called »Yobito« are afflicted with an incurable syndrome of unknown origin. Because they attract massive plants, animals, or rain, they cannot remain in one place. They need to travel about constantly and live under governmental protection. Whenever the syndrome breaks out, suddenly and unpredictably, a Yobito feels confused and is sometimes rejected by their own family. They may become targets of hatred when their condition affects the lives of others. Thanks to this collection of six short stories told by different characters, young people can consider and discuss what it is like to live as a member of a minority and perhaps learn to have empathy for others. (Age: 11+) [RN]



Horikawa, Rimako (text/illus.)

Ima Nihon wa sensō o shite iru

(Japan is at war)

Tōkyō: Komine Shoten, 2025. – 128 p.

ISBN 978-4-338-02210-1

Japan | History 1937-1963 |
Pacific War (1941-1945) | Non-fiction

Illustrator and painter Rimako Horikawa (b. 1965) made paintings based on her father's wartime memories. This led her to create this innovative children's book about the Pacific War (1941-1945). The book contains vivid, illustrated texts based on the memories of 17 Japanese people who survived the atomic bombing, the Battle of Okinawa, air raids, repatriation, or evacuations as children. Horikawa interviewed each person for many hours. Due to their now vague and changing memories, she modified her paintings again and again. The book tells, for example, about an eight-year-old boy who tried to get the chairs of his school back from the Soviet occupation army in Manchuria. There is also a fourteen-year-old tram conductor who found reassurance when she reached the evacuation site and could play, only a few hours after the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. Each episode conveys everyday civilian life and the immense losses involved. A chronology offers further information about how Japan's policies of colonialism led to the Pacific War. (Age: 7+) [RN]

135



Maeda, Jirō (text/illus.)

Umi no mamono

(The sea spirit)

Tōkyō: Tokuma Shoten, 2024. – [33] p.

ISBN 978-4-19-865871-7

Sea | Spirit | Sustainability | Fishing | Picture book

JAPAN
JAPANESE

When he studied arts, Jiro Maeda (b. 1983) participated in a project in which he and other students built a boat using traditional craftsmanship techniques. While sailing from Indonesia to Ishigaki Island in Japan, the boat ran aground on a night of the full moon. On that journey, Maeda learned a sea spirit legend from Indonesian crew members. Nearly 20 years later, he created »Umi no mamono« to preserve his memories. In this picture book, a boy goes fishing on his own in a canoe under a full moon. He ignores his family's warning not to catch too much and takes on a moray, a squid, a whale, and a hermit crab. On his way home, he almost becomes stranded and loses all his catch. While the boy remains unaware of what is happening under him, readers see the white cut-out shapes of his catches grow larger and combine to form the sea spirit's face. With the use of papercutting and nuanced shadows, Jiro Maeda's humorous art perfectly conveys the universal message of respecting nature's boundaries. (Age: 3+) [RN]

136



Minagi, Kumiko (text)

Kemonomichi no niwa

(The animal trail garden)

Kōbe: BL Shuppan, 2023. – 198 p.

ISBN 978-4-7764-1102-4

Japan | Nature | Changeling | Literary fairy tale

JAPAN
JAPANESE

Ten-year-old Fuka's grandfather built a house at the foot of the mountain and now lives there on his own. Although Fuka's grandmother refuses to live there with him because of legends about strange events on the animal trail that passes by the house, Fuka loves to go there and observe other-worldly things. At night, one can see cherry blossoms bloom where only a stump is visible during the day. She also discovers a tiny person stealing her grandfather's miniature radishes. After peeking into this other world around her grandfather's house, Fuka comes to understand why her grandfather and grandmother live apart. She also thinks about life and death when her grandfather's dog passes away after they have seen the rainbow bridge together. This book includes twelve short tales, one for every month of the year, and each portrays situations involving this world and the other world, and people caught between both realms. (Age: 9+) [RN]



Sam, Bob (oral narration)
 Azumimushi (illus.)
 Tanikawa, Shuntaro (transl.)
Yoake no hako. Arasuka no mukashibanashi
(Box of daylight. An Alaskan folktale)
 Tōkyō: Asunaro Shobō, 2025. – [40] p.
 ISBN 978-4-7515-3250-8

Alaska | Tlingit <people> | Indigenous people |
 Raven | Trickster | Folk tale

Azumimushi (b. 1975) is a picture book artist who frequently visits Alaska. In this beautiful picture book, »Yoake no hako«, she breaks new ground with her distinctive art using cut and coloured aluminium plates. For this book, she collaborated with Bob Sam, a Tlingit storyteller authorised to tell his clan's raven stories, and also consulted other experts in the local tradition. The folk tale is set in ancient times, in a dark world without sunlight. A trickster raven plots to steal the three boxes in which the sun, the moon and the stars are kept. Reborn as the elder's grandchild, the raven demands the boxes. Unable to resist his dearest grandchild's wish, the elder gives him the three boxes. By opening them, the child brings light into the world. Some people, delighted by the light, jump into the water and turn into fish, others become birds and fly into the sky. »Yoake no hako« retells an authentic folk tale that offers an interpretation of nature and the joys of living in this world. (Age: 9+) [RN]



Sugiyama, Kanayo (text/illus.)
Bōken shiyō!
(Let's have an adventure!)
 Tōkyō: Kaiseisha, 2024. – [11] p.
 (Series: Tenjitsuki sawaru ehon)
 ISBN 978-4-03-226170-7

Braille | Adventure | Picture book

Kanayo Sugiyama (b. 1967) is a picture book artist as well as creator and editor of the bimonthly braille picture book series »Terumi«. Her aim is to create diverse picture books which can be enjoyed by children with and without disabilities. In her unique and clever picture book »Bōken shiyō!«, readers use their fingers or any part of the hand to trace the line printed with embossing ink. Different textures convey the sensation of rough gravel and smooth slopes. The challenges of crossing a river or walking the fragile suspension bridge offer an exciting adventure to all children, including those who, for whatever reason, cannot play freely. Kanayo Sugiyama's close collaboration with visually impaired specialists helped to create appropriate braille illustrations that can be clearly understood, even while adding witty touches, such as a path full of stones and stone-like bear droppings more easily recognized by touch. A QR code gives access to audio texts read by the author. (Age: 3+) [RN]



Uchida, Yumi (text/illus.)
Mitsudome, Kuniko (cooking dishes)
Miura, Yasuko (Japanese culture consultant)

Osechi

(*Osechi*)

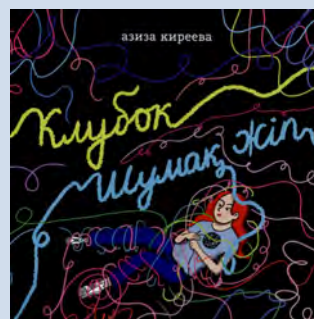
Tōkyō: Fukuinkan Shoten, 2024. – 32 p.

(Series: Kodomo no tomo ehon)

ISBN 978-4-8340-8813-7

Japan | New Year | Food | Tradition | Picture book

Osechi are traditional Japanese New Year foods. Each dish is associated with making a wish for the coming year. For instance, herring roe symbolizes being blessed with children, small sardines represent a great harvest, and bent-looking shrimps and tortoise-shaped taro corms signify longevity (as both animals are said to enjoy very long lives). In this picture book, the precise and meticulous illustrations – which might be mistaken for photographs – brim with warmth. The result of close observation and diligent work, Yumi Uchida's illustrations capture the long-time Japanese tradition of people praying for happiness and the fulfillment of wishes. The fascinatingly beautiful, rhythmic, rhyming language and the thoughtful and sophisticated design using traditional Japanese patterns and shapes make this book a true treasure that will long remain appealing to young children. (Age: 4+) [RN]



Kireeva, Aziza (text/illus.)

Šumaq žip = Klubok

(*Tangled up*)

Almaty: Tentek Publishing House, 2023. – 55 p.

ISBN 978-601-08-3184-1

Text in Kazakh and Russian

Kazakhstan | Postcolonialism | Cultural identity | Comic | Bilingual book

Aziza Kireeva's highly engaging Kazakh-Russian comic was created as part of a project about identity in contemporary Kazakhstan. As a former Soviet republic, national identity is also shaped by the ongoing influence of Russian hegemony. The comic explores various life situations and provides insight into the complex web of linguistic intersections and cultural blending that many Kazakh people experience today. The young protagonist faces the challenge of following Kazakh-Tatar traditions at home while trying to fit in at school. Later, she is reprimanded at school for her poor Kazakh language skills because she usually speaks Russian. In other situations, she encounters prejudice from those who read her as Asian, or she finds notices stating that certain apartments will only be rented to »Slavs«. This book highlights such conflicts of identity without attempting to resolve them. (Age: 14+) [KW]



Cook, Marsha (text/illus.)

Nuggett, Tamua (illus.)

The moon story. A story in Kriol and English

Sydney: Indigenous Literacy Foundation, 2024. – [22] p.

ISBN 978-1-92259-255-2

Text in Kimberley Kriol and English

Walmajarri <people> | Family | Camping | Moon | Country | Storytelling | Bilingual book | Picture book

This simple and heart-warming bilingual story shares memories of a family camping trip to the grandfather's favourite place during the cold season. After the kids collect firewood, and a campfire is crackling, everyone watches the moon rise in the night sky. When they settle down, the »oalman« starts to sing a song. Walmajarra woman Marsha Cook's second picture book came into being thanks to a workshop by the ILF with renowned children's book authors Alison Lester, Jane Godwin, and illustrator Lee Burgemeestre in her home community of Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia. The striking illustrations against a solid black background, which she created with her son Tamua Nuggett, display strong matt colours as well as white paint in a textural style reminiscent of traditional Aboriginal paintings. On selected pages, photos of the moon are digitally superimposed preserving the golden radiance of the original paintings. The book evokes the importance of family, language, and country, and the connection between all three. (Age: 4+) [CS]



Cho, Myung Hwa (text/illus.)

Horangi ga dorawatda

(The tiger has come back)

Seoul: Chaek gorae (Bookgorae), 2024. – [44] p.

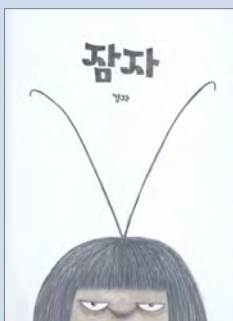
(Series: Chaek gorae aideul)

ISBN 979-11-6502-191-7

Nature | Tiger | Extinction | Ecosystem | Humans | Animals | Picture book

This picture book is inspired by the idea that tigers might still be alive somewhere in Korea. It begins with the sound of a gunshot – bang! – and the scene of a male tiger dying. Left alone, his mate sets out in search of a safe habitat, wandering through a human-dominated world, constantly trying to make herself invisible. She poses as a sculpture in a national park and as a slide in a playground, she boards a kindergarten bus, sneaks into a human family's home, positions herself like a product in a general store and even visits a zoo. But she never feels safe anywhere. As the story unfolds, her belly grows rounder and rounder, and when she finally returns to a forest free of humans, she has two cubs by her side. Readers are prompted to reflect on the extinction of the Siberian tiger and on the relationship between humans and nature. Cho Myung Hwa, who wants to capture the beauty of traditional Korea, manages to achieve a modern look through a limited palette of bold, contrasting colours, creating a striking visual effect. (Age: 4+) [YC, MC, SP]

143



Gyeongja (text/illus.)

Jamja

(Samsa)

Seoul: Gorae Baetsok, 2024. – [45] p.

(Series: Gorae baetsok changjak geurimchaek)

ISBN 979-11-93138-39-7

Metamorphosis | Normalcy | Self-realisation |
Social control | Individuality | Picture bookKOREAN
Republic of Korea

Inspired by Franz Kafka's »The Metamorphosis«, this picture book features Jamja, a girl with the body of a cockroach, who is passionate about drawing and spends every minute engrossed in her artwork. When it is suggested she live like »everyone else«, Jamja flies out into the world to learn more about »everyone else's life«. The trip does not awaken a longing for such a life in her, but rather a desire to transform her observations into art. She immerses herself in her art like never before. When she is asleep one night, her increasingly concerned family cut off her antennae – believing them to be the cause of her »anomaly«. The next morning, Jamja's appearance and lifestyle have returned to what is considered »normal«. With delicate graphite and coloured-pencil drawings, Gyeongja invites readers to question how society defines a »normal« or »ordinary« life and what lies beyond. The book prompts reflection on the standards by which lives are judged and encourages readers to think about their own values. (Age: 4+) [YC, MC, SP]

144



Kim, Ji young (text/illus.)

Namu ya namu ya

(Tree, dear tree)

Goyang: Sowon namu (Wish Tree), 2024. – [34] p.

(Series: Sowon urisup geurimchaek; 16)

ISBN 979-11-93207-41-3

Tree | Forest | Ecosystem | Interdependence |
Picture bookKOREAN
Republic of Korea

This lyrical picture book traces the journey of a tree seedling that sprouted in the darkness of night as it grows into a tall tree. The little plant puts effort into blooming flowers and stretching out its branches. It even refuses a butterfly's request for nectar, fearing its petals might drop. But when a storm hits and all its flowers and branches are swept away, it realizes that it has survived thanks to the towering trees around it and comes to understand that it cannot live on its own. Following the advice of the elder trees, it begins to send its roots deeper into the earth, guided by the song of water, and shares water with its forest friends in a lush and vibrant woodland. Kim Ji young uses printmaking techniques to capture the rugged and earthy textures of trees, evoking the distinct and beautiful patterns of nature. The top-bound format, which allows pages to be flipped upward, visually represents both the growth above ground and the deepening of roots below, expressing the vital bond between plants and water. (Age: 4+) [YC, MC, SP]



Lee, Sook Hyun (text)

Ahn, Somin (illus.)

Na ege Juneun sang

(An award to myself)

Seoul: Horangi kkum (Tiger Dream Books),
2024. – [45] p.

(Series: Horangi kkum geurimchaek; 06)

ISBN 979-11-984247-4-7

Caterpillar | Butterfly | Metamorphosis |
Self-esteem | Picture book

In this picture book, various caterpillars are introduced through colourful crayon drawings. Although small and vulnerable, they each excel at something different: the playful caterpillar who enjoys doing what it loves, the brave one who faces its fears, the quiet one who constantly challenges itself, and others. They come up with the idea of giving themselves awards, like the »Draw-It-My-Way-Award« or the »Stretch-and-Shrink-Award« to boost their self-esteem. In the process of transforming into butterflies, they discover that what they love and what they are good at does not really depend on external recognition. Early childhood educator Lee Sook Hyun is the author of »Chokochip kuki annyong« (Goodbye, chocolate chip cookies) and »Gicha yeohaeng« (Train journey). Illustrator Ahn Somin, creator of »Na neun, moeuneun saram« (I am a collector) and »Salmeun dalgyal gwa gamja wa hobak« (Life is eggs, potatoes, and pumpkins), was selected for the Illustrators Exhibition at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2020. (Age: 3+) [YC, MC, SP]



Lee, Yeon Joo (text/illus.)

Ulli ui haru

(A day in the life of Woolly)

Seoul: Geulloyeon (Gloyeon), 2025. – [36] p.

(Series: Geulloyeon geurimchaek; 41)

ISBN 979-11-93279-08-3

Hair | Daily routine | Picture book

Woolly, whose hair grows 18 cm longer every hour, has never been separated from her beloved doll Haru. At night in her sleep, she hugs Haru tightly, but in the morning, it is nowhere to be found. Every day, Woolly has to visit the Mouse's hair salon, where her hair is trimmed in a lengthy procedure, until Haru peeks out from underneath. Now they happily pass another perfectly ordinary day with small tasks: carefully attaching a loose eye to the doll, bathing and reading together, falling asleep, while Woolly's hair grows again. The charm of a repetitive daily routine, the preciousness of small joys in everyday life, is also reflected in the doll's name – »Haru« means »daily« in Korean. Lee Yeon-joo studied comics and design and created game UIs and characters before becoming active as a book illustrator in 2014. Her delightful images for this book appear to be drawn with acrylic gouache and oil pastels, with the colours intensified by the addition of vibrant hot pink highlights. (Age: 3+) [YC, MC, SP]

147



Dobeļe, Maira (text)
Lukošus, Rebeka (illus.)

Es tevi gaidīju

(I have been waiting for you)

[Rīga]: Liels un mazs, [2024]. – 69 p.

ISBN 978-9934-633-12-6

Dog | Humans | Picture book | Comic

Latvia LATVIAN

In a work somewhere between the genres of picture book, picture story, and comic, Rebeka Lukošus and Maira Dobeļe invite readers into the world of Švamme and Vilma. Švamme is an exceptionally charming and lively dog who enjoys his blissful everyday doggy life. His owner Vilma cares for him tenderly, just as he does for her. Together, they explore their surroundings, meet schoolchildren, cook together, and do household chores. The book presents not only the human's perspective but also Švamme's dog's-eye view. His simple thoughts are humorously expressed through Maira Dobeļe's text and Rebeka Lukošus's fantastic illustrations. At the same time, it offers a tongue-in-cheek commentary on Švamme's world, showing that an animal has its own needs, which sometimes differ from those of its owner's. But Vilma doesn't mind. She loves Švamme with all his (ostensibly) quirky traits. And Švamme loves Vilma for her equally (if not more so) quirky traits. (Age: 5+) [KW]

148



Reinsone, Sanita (text)
Runde, Aleksandra (illus.)

Draugi un kaimiņi

(Friends and neighbours)

Rīga: Jānis Roze, [2024]. – 142 p.

ISBN 978-9984-23-996-5

Social activism | Courage | Perseverance |
Neighbourhood | Protection of nature

Latvia LATVIAN

The best place in the world? For the children in »Draugi un kaimiņi« it is definitely their »Jungle« – a hideaway on the edge of a nearby meadow. They come here to play, chat, and just enjoy spending time with each other. When the local authorities decide to build a factory at this very site, the children spring into action. They organise a petition against the project and, in this way, come into contact with other residents on the street. Along the way, they experience some surprises and encounter quite a few odd moments to gather the necessary signatures, all of which are beautifully captured in Aleksandra Runde's illustrations. In the end, they succeed in preventing the building project, and the »Jungle« is allowed to stay. Sanita Reinsone has written a wonderful children's book that embodies the spirit of an autonomous childhood and features an exciting plot. It tells the story of what (even young) people can achieve with courage and perseverance, and by working together. (Age: 8+) [KW]



Ganc, Diana (text)
Pričinas, Arnoldas (illus.)

Troleibusu

(On a trolleybus)

[Kaunas]: Žalias kalnas, [2024]. – [26] p.
ISBN 978-609-8310-14-6

Death | Grandmother | Coping with grief |
Picture book

LITHUANIAN
Lithuania

The boy Rokas is riding on a trolleybus. It quickly becomes clear that he is not on a simple trip across town, but he appears extremely tense. He has trouble finding the correct stop to get off. Apparently, he is searching for a very specific house. It is the one where his grandmother lives. But through the window, Rokas only sees the cat. The story skilfully employs narrative jumps and gaps, and readers eventually learn that Rokas's grandmother has passed away and that the boy can no longer visit her. Following her award-winning young adult book »Lota«, author Diana Ganc once again explores the theme of grief in »Troleibusu«. The text is complemented by Arnoldas Pričinas's striking illustrations in muted colours. The result is a poignant and multi-layered picture book that captures the heavy, hollow atmosphere of mourning and offers a brighter outlook at the end. (Age: 5+) [KW]



Marcinkevičius, Marius (text)
Itagaki, Lina (illus.)

Mergaitė su šautuvu.

Istorija apie mergaitę partizanę

(Girl with a gun. The story of a young partisan)

Kaunas: Misteris Pinkmanas, 2023. – [218] p.
ISBN 978-609-96295-6-8

Lithuania | Soviet Union | World War II |
History 1944-1953 | Partisan movement |
Independence | Comic

LITHUANIAN
Lithuania

This internationally acclaimed comic tells the story of a brave girl named Magdė against the backdrop of real events in Lithuania during the Second World War. While the rest of her family is deported to Siberia by the Soviet occupiers, Magdė remains in Lithuania. She hides in the forests along with other villagers and witnesses and joins the partisan uprising. Eventually, she assists in a dangerous mission to blow up a Soviet train carrying tanks and lorries. With support from the text of Marius Marcinkevičius and with a keen sense of narrative tension, artist-illustrator Lina Itagaki provides earnest and compelling insights into the Lithuanian partisan movement and their fight for independence against the Soviet occupation. The multiple award-winning book conveys the drama and moral dilemmas of wartime chaos. An afterword provides historical context for the story. (Age: 10+) [KW]

151



Firfova, Nadica (ed.) / Ilievska, Aneta (design)
Se vikam hrabrost. 50 inspirativni prikazni za životot na makedonski heroini
 (Se vikam khrabrost. 50 inspirativni prikazni za zhivotot na makedonski kheroini)
 (My name is courage. 50 inspiring stories about the lives of Macedonian heroines)
 Skopje: Libi, 2024. – 205 p. – ISBN 978-608-280-070-7

North Macedonia | History 19th - 20th century | Woman | Biography | Non-fiction

Winner of the »Most Creative Publication 2024« in North Macedonia, this non-fiction book gathers together fifty short portraits of inspirational women. On each two-page spread, a woman from North Macedonia's history during the 19th and 20th centuries is introduced. By employing bold pink and bright yellow, the fresh layout creates a casual frame for the many coarse-grained black-and-white photos that are used where available. Included are cultural figures, a nurse, a pharmacist, a pilot, a basketball player and coach, a mountaineer, a mathematician, an analog astronaut, and many others, including Mother Teresa. The book includes many portraits of so-called »People's Heroines,« revolutionaries, partisans, or anti-fascist fighters, such as Fana Kočovska, who also adorns the cover of the book. This term is a legacy from the time when North Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia and an allusion to the country's tumultuous history. (Age: 13+) [KW]

152

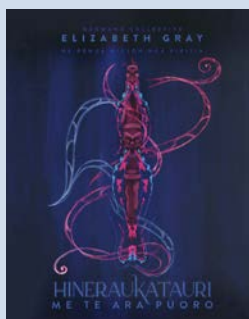


Yusof, Emila (Mohd Yusof, Nor Emila Binti) (text/illus.)
Pohon kenangan
 (Tree of memories)
 Johor Bahru: Dua Penulis PLT, 2024. – [32] p.
 (Series: Siri nostalgia)
 ISBN 978-967-2435-07-5

Malaysia | Botany | Tradition | Childhood memories | Non-fiction | Picture book

This picture book introduces traditional Malaysian plant knowledge by following the author on a journey into her childhood. Together with her cat, she explores the small jungle in the backyard of her grandparents' house. Their undertaking is observed by a squirrel that is hidden in each double-page scene, waiting to be discovered by the readers. The little explorers watch the red-winged nuts of the Meranti tree being dispersed by the wind; they gaze in fascination at the seed pods of the Acacia tree, nibble on the purple berries of the Rose Myrtle and taste the fuzzy fruit of the Wild Passionflower before returning home. A glossary shows botanical illustrations of the species mentioned. Emila Yusof, an award-winning visual artist, illustrator, and author of numerous picture books, is known for her delicate watercolours and black-and-white line drawings with only minimal addition of colour. She has a passion for creating art that celebrates the beauty of life and captures the essence of nature. (Age: 4+) [LO]

153



Gray, Elizabeth (text)

Wilson, Rehua (illus.)

Hineraukatauri me te ara pūoro*(Hineraukatauri and the origin of sound)*

Te Whanganui-a-Tara: Huia Publishers;

Haumanu Collective, 2024. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-1-775508243

Māori | Journey | Mythology | Voice | Music |
Nature | Picture bookNew Zealand
MĀORI

This mesmerising picture book in te reo Māori is a lyrical story about the Māori deity Hineraukatauri, and the creation of the Pūtōrino, a traditional Māori musical instrument (tanga pūoro). At the beginning of the story, Hineraukatauri, personified as a case moth chrysalis, arrives in the world of human beings. As she does not yet have a voice or language, she journeys to a number of gods – from Rūaumoko, the god of earthquakes, to Tūmatauenga, the god of humanity and war – to ask them for gifts. Each of them grants her elements of natural sounds that ultimately constitute her unique voice and enable her to give beautiful music to humans. Rehua Wilson's digital illustrations glow with swirling lines and incorporate a wealth of details that evoke nature and Māori storytelling. Elizabeth Gray's poetic text unfolds with an almost hypnotic quality, drawing readers into the story – especially through the full audio recording with text and music that readers can access via QR code on the back endpapers. (Age: 4+) [CS]

154



Dybvig, Per (text/illus.)

De står i kø*(Queuing up)*

Oslo: Aschehoug, [2024]. – [36] p.

ISBN 978-82-03-45178-2

Conformity | Non-conformity | Waiting | Picture book

Norway
NORWEGIAN

Samuel Beckett's »Waiting for Godot« meets picture book art when little Kvist discovers a forest full of animals standing »behind and in front of each other.« What could they be up to? Kvist immediately wants to join in! But this is a more earnest matter than Kvist realises. »Dette er ikke noen lek. Det er en kø!« (This is not a game. This is a queue!). No one quite knows why or what they're queuing for, but everyone is doing it. That's why the line is veeery long – so long, in fact, that Kvist, who's told to go to the back, walks for ages without ever reaching the end. And then, just as the leaves begin to fall from the trees, the queue grinds to a complete halt. Nothing moves at all. Good thing Kvist has a brilliant idea! Per Dybvig tells this wonderfully absurd story together with energetic, wild, and yet very precise, coloured pencil drawings. It playfully questions the logic of group dynamics while celebrating creativity and the spirit of (constructive) rebellion. (Age: 4+) [IG]

155



Estes, Max (text/illus.)

Det store gulrotkuppet

(The grand carrot theft)

Oslo: Gyldendal, 2024. – [52] p.

ISBN 978-82-05-60495-7

Rabbit | Carrot | Theft | Pursuit | Picture book

Norway
NORWEGIAN

Fast-paced and very funny – that fits Max Estes's picture book »Det store gulrotkuppet«. In total shock, two rabbits stand in their completely plundered carrot field. There is not a single carrot left in the ground. The sneaky thief must be apprehended. Following clues leading to the river, the two climb aboard the canoe of the captain-and-coxswain chicken. After surviving a dangerous encounter (a crocodile!), they reach King's Castle Landing. Scattered carrots put them on the right trail. But how will they overcome the castle moat and walls? Will the rabbits and the chicken manage to recover the carrots? Max Estes, who hails from the United States and now lives in Norway, is not only a prolific picture-book artist but also someone whose work exploits the possibilities of the medium – for example, by switching between landscape and portrait formats. He also enjoys hiding funny yet crucial details of the plot in his illustrations. It's a lot of fun to discover them. (Age: 3+) [IG]

156



Quintano, Kristina (text)

Flukt. 11 ungdommers historier om reisen, frykten og håpet

(Refugees. 11 stories of adolescents about their journeys, fears and hopes)

Bergen: Vigmostad & Bjørke, 2024. – 198 p.

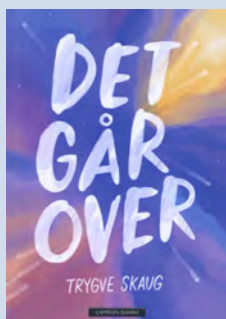
ISBN 978-82-419-6411-4

Refugee | Migration | Cruelty | Violence | Biography

Norway
NORWEGIAN

»I was called an ›ambassador from hell‹ because I write about people who flee their homes – people who have often endured horrific experiences.« It's difficult to bear knowing what human beings suffer as they set out into the unknown, along a path fraught with danger, in an attempt to escape war, terror, and hunger. And yet, or rather, precisely because of this, Kristina Quintano gives a voice to eleven young people in her anthology »Flukt«, all of whom have fled from countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Eritrea, or Gaza. On their journeys – through burning deserts, across snow-covered mountains, or over the Mediterranean Sea – they have faced unimaginable horrors. This is a book that should be read by everyone who sees empathy and compassion as weakness, and who would rather invest in border control than in the protection of human lives. (Age: 10+) [IG]

157



Skaug, Trygve (text)

Det går over*(It will pass)*

Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2024. – 109 p.

ISBN 978-82-02-73976-8

Coming of age | Comfort | Poetry

Norway
NORWEGIAN

»Annerledes betyr ikke rar / annerledes betyr ikke teit / folk kan plukke på deg / fordi du ikke gjør ting som dem / men det er jo hele poenget / du må gjøre ting som deg« (Being different does not mean weird / being different does not mean stupid / people cannot bother you anymore / because you don't do things the way they do / but that is exactly the point / you have to do things in your own way). The singer, songwriter and poet Trygve Skaug speaks to the hearts and minds of those who – whether young or not so young – feel lost, disorientated, unseen and sad. Not only the title of the poetry collection and the verses themselves provide support, comfort and encouragement, but also what he writes in the foreword: It will pass. Even the darkest moments do not last forever; at some point, things will brighten up. Nothing always stays the same, even if this is sometimes barely noticeable and lasts a long time. (Age: 12+) [IG]

158



Stai, Kari (text/illus.)

Flokken*(The herd)*

Oslo: Samlaget, 2025. – 131 p.

ISBN 978-82-340-1439-0

Belonging | Identity | Self-awareness | Fantasy | Imagination | Short story

Norway
NORWEGIAN

The short stories collected in »Flokken« are associative and full of surprises, all centred around a ten-year-old boy. Juri is a sensitive and perceptive observer with a vivid imagination: brief news reports, offhand remarks, or fleeting glimpses spark entire films in his mind. Told in the third person and written in short, striking main clauses that read like verses, the stories trace Juri's thoughts as they circle around belonging and what it means to »be yourself«. Everyone talks about it – and yet that doesn't make it any less confusing, especially when »being yourself« means standing out from the rest and sometimes being seen as »too different.« Kari Stai's illustrations are »different« too – not in the sense of being smooth or pleasing, but in the sense of resisting simplicity. These black-and-white drawings demand close attention; often, they appear to contain multiple layers, which means the details don't always reveal themselves immediately or merely at a superficial glance. (Age: 6+) [IG]

159



Torvund, Helge (text)
 Kanstad Johnsen, Mari (illus.)

Ord på jord

(Words on earth)

[Kolbotn]: Magikon Forlag, [2024]. – [56] p.
 ISBN 978-82-92863-94-7

Writing | Language | Poetry | Poetics

Norway
 NORWEGIAN

Without language, it is all for naught. With words, we can create »long stories, weather reports, shopping lists or books about footballers.« And, of course, poems. Helge Torvund is both a psychologist and a poet. His book »Ord på jord« is a personal and poetic reflection on poetry itself, a celebration of his love for words and verse. It's about condensation, surprises and sound, about the associative power of language and its sensual, visual qualities. This book is also an inspiring guide, offering practical tips for anyone who would like to write poetry but perhaps hasn't dared to try or believes they don't quite know where to start. Mari Kanstad Johnsen's illustrations perfectly complement Torvund's homage to language. They are flowing, colourful, joyful and expressively painterly, sometimes even a little enigmatic. These illustrations invite you to look more than once in order to discover everything, just as you can with a good poem. Wonderful! (Age: 6+) [IG]

160



Ibrāhīmī, Payām (Ebrahimi, Payam) (text)
 Bigdilū, Ġazālah (Bigdelou, Ghazaleh) (illus.)

Madrisih-yi tizubuzān-i Ġangal

(Madresey-e tiz-o bozan-e djangal)

(The marvelous zippy Whiz Cub Academy)

Tih-rān: Tūḡī, Intišārāt-i Fāḡimī (Touti, Fatemi),
 [2024] (=1403 h. sh.). – [36] p.

ISBN 978-622-6630-16-0

Education | Competition | Talent | Difference |
 Diversity | Picture book

Iran
 PERSIAN (FARSI)

In an ordinary forest, among ordinary animals, there is someone determined to educate the young creatures to be extraordinary – to turn them into little geniuses and even promise them certificates. But will this unconventional educator succeed? Would it really be a good thing if everyone could run as fast as a cheetah, emit a foul smell in danger like a skunk, or feed on insects like birds? This picture book celebrates the value of being ordinary, and the importance of recognizing and accepting the unique abilities and differences among children. It gently critiques the obsession with certification and competition and embraces the idea that children don't always have to be the best. They simply need to be themselves. The story's brilliant concept is beautifully complemented by the exceptional pictures, resulting in a witty, multi-layered, and captivating whole. Payam Ebrahimi and Ghazaleh Bigdelou are among Iran's most celebrated children's book creators, with previous works selected for the »White Ravens« catalogue. (Age: 6+) [RM]



Nayyeri, Şafūrā (Nayyeri, Safura) (text)
Bābāḥān, Salīmāh (Babakhan, Salimeh) (illus.).
Sitārih-hā ābī miḥandand
(Setareh-ha abi mikhandand) (*The stars laugh in blue*)
Tih-rān: Mu'assasa-i Pažuhiš-i Tāriḥ-i Adabīyāt-i
Kūdākān, Kitāb-i Tāk (Muasseheye Pajouheshi Tarikh
Adabiate Koudakan, Ketabe Tak), [2024] (= 1403 h. sh.).
– 48 p. – ISBN 978-622-5565-27-2

Nature | Youth | Emotion | Poetry | Picture book

Iran ■ This graceful and resonant poetry collection captures the inner world of teenagers – their emotions, their dreams, and the quiet beauty they often discover in everyday life. With a both lyrical and refreshingly modern voice, Safura Nayyeri writes of hope, solitude, nature, resilience, and delicate wonders woven into simple moments. Each poem invites readers to slow down, to reflect, and to feel more deeply – encouraging a connection with both the world around them and the often-overlooked landscapes of their own thoughts and emotions. Symbols like rain, birds, gardens, and stars recur throughout the pages, awakening a sense of longing and curiosity that feels both deeply personal and universally shared. Salimeh Babakhan's gentle, expressive illustrations beautifully echo the tone of the poems, enriching the reading experience with visual warmth and subtlety. Reminiscent of the golden era of contemporary Iranian poetry for young readers, this book speaks a universal language that crosses borders, generations, and hearts. (Age: 12+) [RM]



Quḡuq, Yūsif (Qojoq, Yousef) (text)
Mahdawī Ašraf, Naḡlā (Mahdavi Ashraf, Nadjla) (illus.).
Ḥuršīdī dar Šahrāy-i Turkman
(Khorshidi dar Sahraye Turkman)
(*A sun in the Turkmen Sahra*)
Tih-rān: Kānūn-i Parwariš-i Fikrī Kūdākān wa Nūḡa-
wānān (Kanoon), [2024] (= 1402 h. sh.). – 24 p.
ISBN 978-600-01-0886-1

Turkmens <people> | Rural life | Tradition | Carpet |
Picture book

Iran ■ This tender and evocative story invites readers into the simple world of Aylar, a young Turkmen girl, and her innocent childhood worries. When she tells a small lie to an elderly neighbour, her peaceful life is shaken. Due to her feelings of guilt, she is no longer able to weave carpets as she once did. Through the support of her mother and the women of the village, Aylar learns the meaning of honesty and kindness. Set against the vivid backdrop of Iran's Turkmen Sahra (Turkmen Desert), the book captures a world full of colour, tradition, and quiet strength. Each page looks like a woven carpet – a tribute to the artistry and resilience of the Turkmen people. The patterns of their world-renowned carpets, inspired by nature and everyday life, served as a visual foundation for Nadjla Mahdavi Ashraf's exceptional illustrations. Yousef Qojoq, a native of the Turkmen region, often draws on his cultural heritage in his stories. The book's artwork was selected as a finalist at the Bologna Children's Book Fair Exhibition. (Age: 6+) [RM]



Šāhābādī, Ḥamīd-Riḍā (Shahabadi, Hamid-Reza) (text)

Tābūt-i sargardān

(Tabout-e Sargardan)

(The wandering coffin)

Tih-rān: Ufuq (Ofoq), [2024] (= 1403 h. sh.). – 243 p.

(Series: Rumān-i Nawḡawān; 260)

ISBN 978-622-332-152-8

Iran | Medicine | History 19th century | Journey |
Adventure | Love

This is a complex, multilayered, and gripping novel blending fantasy, horror, and historical fiction, set in the era of the Qajar dynasty. Samad, a medical student in Tehran, embarks on a perilous journey to deliver a corpse, hidden in a chest, to the medical school in Tabriz, where it is needed for anatomy classes. The trip takes a dark and dangerous turn, leading to a series of suspenseful events that pull the reader in from the very first page. Samad faces terrifying external threats, including supernatural beings like demons and specters, and also has to confront buried fears and painful memories of his past. These harrowing experiences push him toward inner reckoning and eventual growth. While thrilling in pace and atmosphere, the novel also opens a window for readers to the challenges of medical education and the dangers of travel in 19th-century Iran. Acclaimed and multi-awarded author Hamid-Reza Shahabadi masterfully combines psychological depth with historical tension in this unforgettable tale. (Age: 14+) [RM]



Šams, Muḥammad Riḍā (Shams, Mohammad Reza) (text)

Ḥaydarī-zadah, Parwīn (Heydari-Zadeh, Parwin) (illus.)

Sīyāḡālīš nigahbān-i ḡangal

(Siyagalesh negahbane djangal)

(Siyagalesh, the forest guardian)

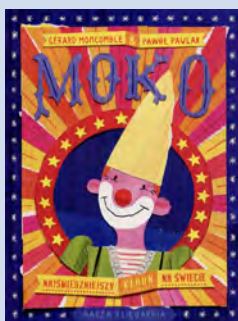
Tih-rān: Purtiqāl (Porteghal), [2024]

(= 1402 h. sh.). – [40] p.

ISBN 978-622-274-587-5

Iran | Forest | Mythical creature | Animals |
Environment | Folk tale | Picture book

In northern Iranian folk tales, there is a legendary figure known as Siyagalesh, who is the guardian of herders' cattle and sheep. Living deep in the forest, he also protects wildlife and punishes those who harm animals. This story draws inspiration from that traditional character and reimagines him in a contemporary setting. Siyagalesh, who always helps animals in need, one day falls into a trap set by hunters. This time it is the animals who come to his rescue. Parwin Heydari-Zadeh's illustrations maintain the story's whimsical tone and help young readers to become familiar with different animals living in the woods. The book is also an introduction to the rich biodiversity and wide range of animal species native to Iran's ecosystems. Mohammad Reza Shams is one of Iran's most esteemed children's authors, renowned for his retellings of traditional legends and folk tales for young readers. (Age: 4+) [RM]



Moncomble, Gérard (text)
Pawlak, Paweł (illus./transl.)
Moko. Najśmieszniejszy klaun na świecie
(*Moko. The funniest clown in the world*)
Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 2024. – [60] p.
ISBN 978-83-10-14032-6

Circus | Clown | Sadness | Loneliness |
Self-acceptance | Picture book

Circus clown Moko is the funniest clown in the world. That's clear. And that's what everyone expects from him – both the stern circus director and the audience. But for Moko himself, it's a very different story. He doesn't feel at all funny, happy, and colourful – like a clown should be – but instead grey, downcast, and different. Eventually, this becomes noticeable and Moko loses his job. Even the parts of his body begin to leave him one after the other in order to be independent of him. Only when a young boy brings Moko and his true nature back together is Moko's confidence in himself finally restored. After previous, successful collaborations, Gérard Moncomble and Paweł Pawlak have teamed up again to create a splendid picture book. Laconic and full of powerful symbolism, it tells the story of a person who feels lonely, sad, and incomplete. Illustrations made from paper cut-outs and collages, paired with nearly blank pages, impressively depict Moko's fragile inner world. (Age: 5+) [KW]



Strzelecka, Maria (text/illus.)
Hajda. Beskid bez kitu
(*Come along. The Beskides for real*)
Rzeszów: Libra PL, 2023. – 141 p. + [3] p.
ISBN 978-83-969289-6-2

Poland | World War II | Post-war era | Lemkos <people> |
Operation Vistula | Nature | Beskid Mountains

»Hajda« forms the grande finale of Maria Strzelecka's three-volume »Beskid« series, set in the Beskid Mountains in eastern Poland. Here she looks back on this region in the years shortly after World War II. In her magnificently narrated text and artistic animal illustrations, she tightly intertwines history with the forested wilderness and its animal life, which encompass the human world like a serene and mighty cocoon. The book breathes adventure and Kola, a boy from the Lemko ethnic group, is exuberantly free to roam through the woods. But gradually his carefree life darkens as the tense situation of the post-war years becomes increasingly apparent. The land needs to be re-cultivated, new borders and political systems are established, and no one trusts anyone. The dramatic climax is the (historical) Operation Vistula, during which, among other things, the Lemko community, including Kola with his mother and grandfather, is forcibly resettled in 1947. And the Beskides? They are a »paradise lost.« (Age: 10+) [KW]

167



Wasilkowska, Katarzyna (text)
Oparkowska, Anna (illus.)
Witajcie w Chudegnatach
(Welcome to Chudegnaty)
Łódź: Wydawnictwo Literatura,
2024. – 134 p. + [2] p.
(Series: To Lubie)
ISBN 978-83-8208-251-7

Summer holiday | Family | Aunt | Eccentricity |
Country

Holidays at Auntie's. Somewhere in the middle of nowhere, no mobile phone network and no cash-point, but a great deal of open countryside. And Auntie? Hmm, she's fairly unconventional and has her own ideas about daily routines, fashion, and life. Matylida has to go and stay with her, even though she is not at all keen on it. In a wonderfully ironic tone, the ten-year-old protagonist tells how her holiday stay with Aunt Krychna unfolds. Katarzyna Wasilkowska has an unerring sense of humour, and it especially shines through in the misunderstandings and confusions between Matylida and her scintillating and hilariously unpredictable aunt. In combination with small adventures and the experiences of a child's sunny summer holiday by the lake, »Witajcie w Chudegnatach« makes for a light, easy summer read. And Matylida and her aunt? As the story unfolds, they grow closer and realise that they make a fantastic team after all. (Age: 9+) [KW]

168



Wróbel-Lutz, Monika (text)
Fryza, Kasia (illus.)
Stworzenia do policzenia
(Creatures to count)
Warszawa: Tatarak, 2023. – [24] p.
ISBN 978-83-66749-40-5

Animals | Counting | Contrast | Board book |
Picture book

Cool animals and catchy rhymes – that's all that's needed in the fantastic board book »Stworzenia do policzenia«. Young children could hardly be better entertained while being introduced to animal names, counting, basic arithmetic, or recognising opposites. Monika Wróbel-Lutz and Kasia Fryza achieve the impressive feat of transforming simple, toddler-friendly themes into a sophisticated, highly attractive picture book. On each double-page spread, there is a scene filled with animals. The total number of creatures is briefly and clearly stated, followed by two short, snappy rhymes explaining that one of the creatures is doing something different from the others: »Four alligators, three healthy, one ailing.« Or: »Six elephants, five fleeing, one pursuing.« The illustrations capture each scene vividly and with delightful dynamism. These same »creatures« can be found again in the Christmas sequel »Stworzenia składają życzenia« (Creatures make wishes). (Age: 2+) [KW]

169



Bertucci, Everson (text)
Vaz, João (illus.)

Eugênio

São Paulo: Peirópolis, 2024. – [64] p.
ISBN 978-65-5931-332-7

Old age | Death | Outsider | Friendship | Imagination

Brazil PORTUGUESE

■ No one dares to climb the mountain where old Eugênio lives. Rumour has it he is a sorcerer, up in the pink house, where a pink rain falls every evening. Nevertheless, Olívia dares to go up there. The girl wants to recover her kite, which was blown up and away by the wind. Eugênio is not what everyone thinks he is. A friendly man, he has been lonely since the death of his beloved Eulália, which is why he surrounds himself with chickens, rabbits, cats, and dogs. No doubt, he is different, but so what? Olívia visits Eugênio regularly until, one day, he is gone. He has »gone up.« His house remains grey and empty. Sometime later the pink rain returns – a rain of letters from which stories are made, stories that people tell each other. »Eugênio« is full of poetry and melancholy, a book about being different, friendship and the power of words. The pictures, mainly in tones of grey and pink, are full of enigmatic details and, like the text, leave ample room for readers' imagination. (Age: 6+) [JW]

170



Gravatá, André (text)
João, Kammal (illus.)

Converseiro da natureza

(Plurilog of nature)

São Paulo: Companhia das Letrinhas,
2024. – [60] p.
ISBN 978-65-81776-97-8

Nature | Communication | Universality

Brazil PORTUGUESE

■ Everything is animated, speaks, communicates, and is interconnected. André Gravatá's text reads like a prose poem, a long sequence of sentences with repetitive patterns that are variations on the book's theme. »Listen carefully« is the first line, for if you listen attentively, you will hear it and perhaps understand – the all-encompassing, all-pervading language found in nature. Everything in the universe has its own way of speaking: the lizard, the drifting pollen, the sun that touches our skin. The snail speaks through its slime trail, the egg through its shell. The rain and the island also speak. Even saying nothing is a way of speaking. The jaguar speaks Jaguari, the snail Snailish. The moss and the stone converse with each other in complete silence. Kammal João has illustrated this wonderful, profound text with a diverse range of witty and imaginative images. Some are delicate and intricate, others powerful and moving – and all are reduced to the essential. A highly stimulating book for children and older readers. (Age: 6+) [JW]

171



López, Anabella (text/illus.)

O homem, o rio e a caixa

(The man, the river and the chest)

São Paulo: PeraBook, [2024]. – [56] p.

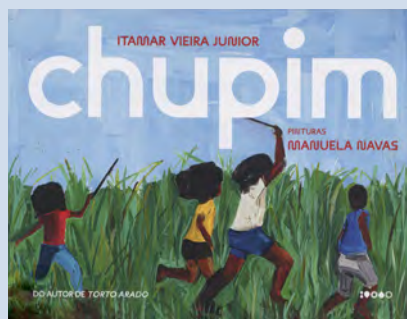
ISBN 978-65-6121-040-9

Love | Freedom | Greed | Humans | Nature | River |
Picture book

Brazil ■ PORTUGUESE

A man who lives alone in a forest falls passionately in love with a river. Because the river returns his love, they live together in close harmony. »Everything was perfect« – until the man becomes tormented by fears of losing his beloved. He lures the river into a chest and locks it up so that there is no escape. No matter how much the river pleads and struggles, in the end it dries up wretchedly. And the man dies of shame and grief. From the last tear he sheds, a new river is born, a sign that life carries on despite everything. Anabella López's fascinating and stirring picture book leaves a strong impact. Poetically and persuasively told, the compelling text is a wise story about love and passion, freedom, possession, control, and the taming and destruction of nature by humans. The at times highly abstract, expressive images rely mainly on colours and dynamic lines to express vividly the changing moods and intense feelings of the protagonists. (Age: 6+) [JW]

172



Vieira Junior, Itamar (text)

Navas, Manuela (illus.)

Chupim

(Shiny cowbird)

São Paulo: Baía, [2024]. – [28] p.

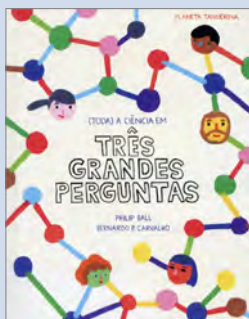
ISBN 978-65-85773-43-0

Farm life | Social criticism | Child labour |
Picture book

Brazil ■ PORTUGUESE

Julim sets out at dawn with his father to work in the fields. He and the other children drive away the shiny cowbirds – in Portuguese »Chupim« – that swarm the rice fields. What might seem like a game is part of the hard life of exploited farm workers who must work for starvation wages. The boy does not fully realise his situation yet, but he contemplates the birds that fight for rice grains and are considered parasites and pests until, once the fields are harvested, they have to move on. This adds a second layer to the story, suggesting parallels to the life of Julim and his family. The simple language and lyrical tone of Itamar Vieira Junior's story are vividly illustrated by Manuela Navas in broadly stroked oil paint. The images, rendered in a wide range of colours, focus on details such as a petroleum lamp, two hands holding sticks, or the silhouette of a bird in the sky. They convey a sense of calm and capture the atmosphere of the story very well. (Age: 7+) [JW]

173



Ball, Philip (text)
 Carvalho, Bernardo P. (illus.)
 Martins, Isabel Minhós (transl.)
(Toda) a ciência em três grandes perguntas
[[All of] Science in three big questions]
 Carcavelos: Planeta Tangerina, 2025. – 215 p.
 ISBN 978-989-9061-29-3

Science | Knowledge | Non-fiction

Portugal
 PORTUGUESE

The range and number of non-fiction books for young readers is impressive and is growing each year. They explore topics from the most diverse scientific fields. But what exactly is science? That is the question posed by Philip Ball, a chemist, physicist, author of popular science books, and long-time editor of the journal »Nature«. In clear, humorous language, he engagingly explains what scientists do and how exciting their work can be. It becomes clear that science is not simply the accumulation of facts, but first and foremost a continuous process of questioning and doubting in order to understand the world. Three fictional figures – a physicist, a chemist, and a biologist – describe vividly the kinds of fundamental and everyday questions they grapple with in their work. The colourful, picture-book-style illustrations by Bernardo P. Carvalho have a wonderful narrative quality and give the book a playful lightness. (Age: 10+) [JW]

174



Santos, Victor D. O. (text)
 Sobral, Catarina (illus.)
 Berhan, João (transl.)
As pessoas são esquisitas
(People are weird)
 Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2025. – [36] p.
 (Series: Orfeu Mini)
 ISBN 978-989-9225-25-1

Diversity | Differentness | Individuality | Picture book

Portugal
 PORTUGUESE

What does it mean to be »weird«? Are people odd because they are »different«? This charming picture book explores the diversity of human behaviour. Everyone is different, and that is normal, to put it in a nutshell. On every double page you meet a new character: there is, for example, a man who spends more time at the gym's mirror than in training, or a boy who walks his tortoise on a leash. Even the narrator has a foible, adding a humorous twist to the final page. Victor D. O. Santos's succinct text is vividly brought to life through Catarina Sobral's dynamic illustrations, which add details and little side stories. The bold colours, awkward shapes, and unconventional perspectives give them a quirky appearance perfectly suited to the book's theme. The characters themselves are stylised, but their emotions are easy to read. A funny, empathetic, compassionate picture book. (Age: 5+) [JW]

175



Tomaz, Filipa / Carmo, Letícia do (text)

Kono, Yara (illus.)

Alves, Fátima (tactile design)

Uma casa é uma montanha é um chapéu

(A house is a mountain is a hat)

Lisboa: Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa,

2024. – [38] p.

ISBN 978-989-33-3177-4

Text in print and in Braille

House | Architecture | Picture book | Non-fiction

Portugal
PORTUGUESE

This book, aimed at both sighted readers and those who are visually impaired or blind, depicts and explains what houses are and what they can be. They are buildings and places to live in, they can stand alone or in a city, can be »vain« or »shy«, can protect their inhabitants like a hat, or have roofs, for example, as sharp as mountains. »Uma casa ...« stands out for its attractive design and high-quality material. The sturdy paper gives a very pleasant haptic sensation, and the landscape-format pages are held together by a durable spiral binding. The generously spaced text appears in both print and Braille. The illustrations can also be accessed in two ways. They can be read both as coloured pictures and as raised lines and embossed spaces, enabling many details to be experienced by non-sighted readers – from veined wooden beams to ribbed radiators to winding drainage pipes and much more. All this makes it an outstanding picture book. (Age: 6+) [JW]

176



Tivu, Diana (text/illus.)

Cozonăcei cu stafide

(Scones with raisins)

București: Frontiera, 2024. – 32 p.

ISBN 978-606-8986-84-5

Animals | Theft | Hospitality | Expectation | Comic

Romania
ROMANIAN

The otter and the badger secretly climb into the bear's den to steal his freshly baked, temptingly fragrant raisin scones. The two make a funny pair: while the otter is clever and takes charge of »Operation Raisin Scones«, the badger is simple-minded, clumsy, and what's more, ravenously hungry. When the bear discovers them, they fear they are about to become his next meal. It turns out, though, that the bear is happy that he can finally share the results of his annual baking session with others. »Cozonăcei cu stafide«, illustrator Diana Tivu's jaunty comic debut, is full of situational humour. It plays with the expectations of both readers and the protagonists alike and offers a number of surprising twists. Following in the tradition of picture stories, this book will entertain children and adults equally. (Age: 4+) [KW]

177



Kravčenko, Asja (Kravchenko, Asya) (text)

Lytaeva, Lidiya (Lytaeva, Lidiya) (illus.)

Glazam ne verju! Illjuzii – fokusy s razoblacheniem

(Glazam ne veryu! Illjuzii – fokusy s razblacheniem)

(I can't believe my eyes! Illusions – tricks with lighting)

Moskva: Peškom v istoriju [Peshkom v istoriyu], 2024. – 63 p.

(Series: Nauka i tekhnika)

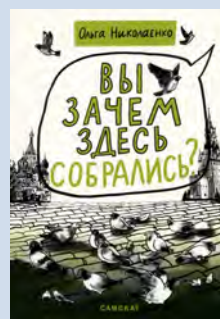
ISBN 978-5-907793-03-3

Optical illusion | Visual perception | Non-fiction

Russia RUSSIAN

In these times of fake news and AI-generated photo montages, a children's non-fiction book about optical illusions and visual perception comes at just the right moment. Children's author Asya Kravchenko and illustrator Lidiya Lytaeva demonstrate, explain, and clearly show how easily the human eye can be deceived. Starting with physiological phenomena such as the »blind spot«, they also delve into psychological, physical, and mathematical explanations for »misperceptions«. Especially interesting is the section covering image illusions and visual tricks in art which prevent viewers from seeing what is »really« there. Readers are invited to try things out for themselves, to experiment, and even create their own illusions. »Glazam ne veryu!« is an extremely informative and highly entertaining book, and after reading it no one will be able to trust their eyes unconditionally. (Age: 6+) [KW]

178



Nikolaenko, Ol'ga (text)

Mjakon'kina, Vlada, (Myakon'kina, Vlada) (illus.)

Vy začem zdes' sobralis'?

(Vy zachem zdes sobralis?)

(Why have you gathered here?)

Moskva: Samokat, 2023. – 107 p.

(Series: Menja èto kasaetsja [Menya eto kasaetsya])

ISBN 978-5-00167-457-3

Democracy | Freedom of assembly |
Freedom of expression | Human rights | Non-fiction

Russia RUSSIAN

This non-fiction book's titular question, »Why have you gathered here?«, focuses on the freedom of peaceful assembly, something which is endangered in many countries. It also highlights the importance of the right to free expression and collective action. A fictional school class 9D (D for Democracy), together with the author and human rights advocate Olga Nikolaenko, explores why these rights are vital and what can happen when they are restricted or abolished through abuse of power. Nikolaenko introduces key ideas to facilitate the understanding of democracy using examples from both the past and the present, as well as from international politics, such as how voting was conducted in ancient Greece. Obviously, these examples can easily be related to current times and contemporary political contexts. The book is part of the series »Menya eto kasaetsja« (This affects me). It is to be hoped that it will reach many readers, and that they understand that these issues also apply to them. (Age: 12+) [KW]

179



Janković, Nevena (text)

Mitrović, Lazar (illus.)

Čovečuljak u 6 reči

(Blue in 6 words)

Gornji Milanovac: Grafoprint, 2024. – [72] p.

ISBN 978-86-7432-217-8

Philosophy | Concept | Idea | Flash fiction |
Picture book

Serbia
SERBIAN

Nevena Janković and Lazar Mitrović have created an unusual concept book. On each page, there is a sentence, saying, phrase, thought, or idea – each condensed into exactly six words. Divided into three sections, the book explores the themes of »Me«, »Life«, and »Others«. These philosophical miniatures examine how individuals relate to themselves, to life, and to others. For example, the question is posed, »Do we hear as it is?« while minimalistic, almost pictographic illustrations depict the difficulties faced by two stick figures when trying to communicate. As another example, in »Different ways but the same direction«, it is demonstrated how both a winding line and a jagged path can lead to the same point. Besides the Serbian edition of »Čovečuljak u 6 reči«, there is also an English version titled »Blue in 6 words«. Here, too, thoughts and ideas are expressed in exactly six words. (Age: 8+) [KW]

180



Mladenović, Dragana (text)

Stanojlović, Marta (illus.)

Doktorka Gugu

(Dr. Gugu)

Čačak: Pčelica (Pchelica), 2025. – 48 p.

ISBN 978-86-6088-249-5

Helpfulness | Selflessness | Assertiveness | Willpower

Serbia
SERBIAN

Gugu is something special: Ever since she tragically lost her sick father while still a young dove, she has made it her goal to help other doves. Strictly speaking, she's not allowed to do that, because the head dove, Sid, has ruled that sick animals must be excluded from the dove community – supposedly to protect the group. But Gugu remains undeterred and secretly heals sick and ostracised birds with the support of her friend Plavko. As a result, the entire flock of doves stands up for Gugu before Sid, and in the end she can even open a clinic. In this story, the (children's) poet Dragana Mladenović shows what it means to selflessly help others. Her heroine Gugu is portrayed as a strong-willed personality with a strong sense of justice and a willingness to assert herself. The illustrations by Marta Stanojlović go perfectly with the text and create a very harmonious overall impression. (Age: 7+) [KW]

181



Lomnická, Terézia (text/illus.)

Beno

[Bratislava]: Monokel, [2024]. – [32] p.

ISBN 978-80-8234-028-3

[Dog](#) | [Wish](#) | [Dream](#) | [Picture book](#)

Slovakia SLOVAK

The first-person narrator in Terézia Lomnická's picture book wishes for a different dog. Her dog Beno is simply too ordinary. In her dreams she comes up with a variety of imaginative »alternatives«. As a result, a huge purple dog named »Great Dreadlocks« suddenly appears in her room, and on the next page, we see a house-sized »Orange Élégante«. The narrator also conjures up the shaggy »Sunshine«, a chubby but friendly dog, and other dogs that are as long as a train. But when her own dog wakes her up, the girl realises that Beno is actually quite alright and, in fact, the best dog in the world. Terézia Lomnická finds a fitting rhythm for her humorous story and page after page readers are surprised with new, unexpected types of dogs in all sorts of colours and with ever funnier names. At the end of the book, readers themselves are given the challenge to draw dogs in the blank picture frames under which amusing dog names are already noted. (Age: 4+) [KW]

182



Arnuš Pupis, Tina (text)

Sitar, Iztok (illus.)

Modrosti mačjega vojvode

(The wisdom of the ducal cat)

Maribor: Pivec, 2024. – 70 p.

ISBN 978-961-7204-68-1

[Cat](#) | [Family](#) | [Grandmother](#) | [Dementia](#) | [Empathy](#)

Slovenia SLOVENIAN

From the perspective of the – of course – downright majestic cat, Duke Leopold aka Poldi, we hear the story of the Kovač family in Tina Arnuš Pupis's children's book. A big change is on the horizon: Grandma, who is also dearly loved by Poldi, is becoming increasingly forgetful (possibly she suffers from dementia). She does strange things and cannot remember names. One day, the family has to place her in a care home. Through subtle hints in the narrative, it becomes clear that this event weighs heavily on the family and causes tensions among them. Thanks to the clever focalisation on Poldi, however, the author manages to incorporate this serious topic into an incredibly funny and entertaining story. Poldi perceives the situation from the unique perspective of an animal that doesn't understand everything but has a keen intuition. At the same time, he is a thoroughly capricious cat and delights readers with ten pieces of wisdom for a comfortable feline existence. (Age: 8+) [KW]



Frlic, Špela (comp./retelling/transl.) / Zavadlav, Ana (illus.)
Dekle, obljubljeno soncu. Bosanske, hrvaške, makedonske, slovenske in srbske ljudske pravljice
(The girl who was promised to the sun. Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Slovenian and Serbian folk tales)
 Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2024. – 210 p.
 (Series: Zlata ptica)
 ISBN 978-961-01-7614-5

Folk tale | Female protagonist | Anthology

This anthology demonstrates that folk tales are anything but outdated – they are exciting, diverse, and certainly not just for young children. The folk tales are meticulously compiled, (re-)told, and translated by Špela Frlic. What an outstanding project! Špela Frlic has not only collected folk-tale material from a multitude of different cultures from former Yugoslavia, but has also focused on a particular aspect: she puts strong women and girl characters in the spotlight. They are not always good, obedient, and submissive, but assert themselves with their edgy, quirky personalities and their own (survival) strategies. The elements of the Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovenian folk tales are complemented by Ana Zavadlav's beautiful, minimalist illustrations with stylised motifs in blue and black. Their grainy, almost fabric-like texture recalls monochrome printing techniques. (Age: 10+) [KW]



Gomboc, Mateja (text)
 Bartolj, Marta (illus.)
Vse živali družine Cmok
(All the Cmok family pets)
 Dob: Miš, 2024. – 58 p.
 (Series: Zbirka Miškolinke)
 ISBN 978-961-272-699-7

Family | Pet | Animal husbandry

Which child does not wish for a pet? It is no different for the first-person narrator in Mateja Gomboc's witty children's book. Chapter by chapter, Pija and her two sisters repeatedly find ways to subvert the family's top commandment, which states: We have no space for animals; our flat is too small. While their mother initially plays the role of the killjoy, the girls slowly win their father over to their cause in order to bypass this »law«. Told from the perspective of a nine-year-old in a wonderfully childlike and frank manner, the story shows the number of pets steadily increase until, in the end, the Cmok family is home to an entire horde of pets. As a reader, you look forward to each new chapter because it's clear that some new furry creature will »just happen to« or be »compelled to« join the family. Marta Bartolj's illustrations perfectly match Mateja Gomboc's humorous narration and reflect the full comic charm of this lively story. (Age: 8+) [KW]



Arroio, Daniela / Gramajo, Micaela (text)
Pautasso, Nono (illus.)

Cosas pequeñas y extraordinarias

(Small and extraordinary things)

Buenos Aires: Limonero, 2024. – [60] p.

ISBN 978-631-90241-3-5

Authoritarian regime | Migration | Refugee | Exile |
Being at home | Picture book

This picture book, which was adapted from a play by the authors, depicts emigration and exile from the perspective of eight-year-old Ema. As her homeland becomes a dictatorship, her family pack their bags and flee to another country. There, very slowly, Ema finds her footing, makes friends, and feels at home. What she has experienced is symbolized in her »Museum of Small and Extraordinary Things«, which she had to leave behind. It was full of little found objects and personal memories, and now, without it, the world is grey and lifeless. It will take her time to create and fill a new museum. Through hints – the »disappeared« uncle or the grandmother who fights for justice and against forgetting – Ema's homeland can be identified as Argentina. But the new home could be anywhere and is simply a place that represents exile and new beginnings. In text and images, the girl's range of feelings – grief, pain, loneliness, happiness, and a sense of security – is conveyed tangibly and with great sensitivity. (Age: 7+) [JW]



De Luca, Luciana (text)
Pastorino, Giulia (illus.)

Un cuento a medias

(Half a story)

General Pueyrredón: Lecturita Ediciones,

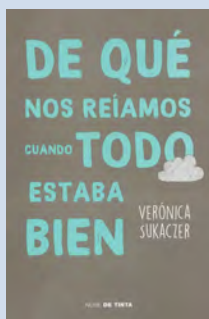
2024. – [36] p.

ISBN 978-987-8455-50-1

Sock | Getting lost | Island | Diversity | Picture book

If you sometimes wonder where lost socks end up, here you'll find the answer. Two brightly striped specimens – twins, of course! – lead a fulfilled life together (»sport, films, dance lessons«), until one day they are separated in the washing machine. While one dries gloomily on the line, the other embarks on a turbulent journey. First, she is whirled through stinky drainpipes, then she drifts out to sea and finally lands on an island, the »Place Where Lost Socks Go.« Here socks of all ages, colours, lengths, and patterns live in a diverse society, which includes all kinds of professions and lifestyles. The story's protagonist is happy there too, except when she occasionally has to think of her sister. But don't worry, there will be a happy ending. Luciana De Luca and Giulia Pastorino tell an original, imaginative tale. The laconic humour of the concise text matches perfectly with the exuberant colourfulness of the witty, lively illustrations. (Age: 3+) [JW]

187



Sukaczer, Verónica (text)

De qué nos reíamos cuando todo estaba bien

(What we laughed about when everything was good)

Buenos Aires: Nube de tinta, [2024]. – 191 p.

ISBN 978-987-1997-79-4

Bullying | Violence | Cruelty | Peer group |
Group dynamics

Argentina SPANISH

In this powerful novel, Verónica Sukaczer tells how a victim becomes a perpetrator. Jeremías and his friend Albano move from the countryside to the city to attend secondary school. Some classmates target them from the start, mocking and bullying them. While Albano is unable to withstand the pressure and hostility over time, Jeremías's personality undergoes a radical change. He develops a hardness he had not shown before, begins to taunt others himself, relish their weaknesses, and bully them in cruel ways. In clear, forthright language, the author depicts group dynamics as well as the conflicting feelings of the first-person narrator Jeremías – insecurity, vulnerability, the sense of exclusion, and the need for recognition – without passing judgment. The plot and characters are not developed around a simple good-evil dichotomy, but are complex, contradictory, and thus convincing. A novel that lingers long in the mind. (Age: 13+) [JW]

188



Pohl, Nélida (text)

Ca_teter (illus.)

Bajo tierra. El mundo subterráneo que nos da la vida

(Under the earth. The underground world that gives us life)

Santiago de Chile: Escrito con Tiza, 2024. – 61 p.

(Series: Colección Binocular)

ISBN 978-956-6049-65-4

Soil | Biology | Ecology | Non-fiction

Chile SPANISH

Most people probably walk around carelessly, without giving a thought to what lies beneath their feet: namely soil aka earth. Perhaps it is no coincidence that earth – so substantial for life – has the same name as our planet Earth. »Bajo tierra« is a very well-made informational and stimulating interactive book. The information is compact, easy to understand, and by no means dry. The book explains, for example, how soil forms and how this process unfolds infinitely slowly, that earth is a densely populated living space of interconnected beings, or that it is the world's largest recycling plant, and yet it is often poorly treated by humans. The second part, »Into the laboratory«, encourages readers to mould bricks from clay, create colours for rock paintings, build a water filter from soil, and much more. The illustrations blend information and fiction. Rendered in Ca_teter's characteristically detailed and bustling style, they are well suited to depicting the universe of soil and its countless organisms and creatures. (Age: 6+) [JW]

189



Segovia, Alexis (text/illus.)

Desde lejos

(From a distance)

Santiago: Claraboya Ediciones,

2024. – [44] p.

ISBN 978-956-9825-43-9

Rural life | Child labour | Loneliness | Picture book

Chile SPANISH

In a remote house in the vastness of Patagonia, a family leads a very modest life. The children help with feeding the livestock and making fires, or they play with glass marbles. One day, the oldest son – still a child – must leave the family to work on the farm of a neighbour who lives far away. »Desde lejos« is a quiet book that, despite its simple, restrained language and delicate pictures, has a strong impact. Only in an afterword does the author comment that the story (also) deals with child labour. The pictures drawn with graphite and coloured pencils express the boy's feelings of loneliness and homesickness, as well as his remarkable calmness and composure. They clearly show how his emotions and the story's mood shift: from subtle colourfulness to the sepia-tone brown-yellow reminiscent of old photographs, to the grey on grey of a shadowy world, into which a little colour returns only at the very end, when the boy is on his way home to visit his family for the first time. (Age: 8+) [JW]

190



Buitrago, Jairo (text)

Mayorga, Juan Camilo (illus.)

Pequeño naufrago

(Little castaway)

Bogotá: Cataplum Libros, 2025. – [44] p.

ISBN 978-628-96020-4-3

Shipwreck | Island | Robinsonade | Parody | Picture book

Colombia SPANISH

A boy ends up stranded on an island. Calmly he accepts his fate and quickly settles in. He leads a fairly modest life until an annoying but literature-loving orangutan appears, with whom he must share the island. The boy gives the local creatures and inanimate objects new names because he has gradually forgotten the correct ones, and, with the help of the orangutan, sends out a message in a bottle. There are pirates to whom the ape sells wooden legs and grappling hooks, and yes, there are allegedly even cannibals around. This picture book is a playful riff on Robinson Crusoe. Jairo Buitrago tells the story with a hefty pinch of nonsense, absurd humour and quirky twists. Young readers will enjoy the crazy tale, while adult readers will relish the parodic allusions to the famous literary original and the way stereotypes are both referenced and playfully subverted, both in the text and in Juan Camilo Mayorga's illustrations. »Pequeño naufrago« is simply great fun. (Age: 5+) [JW]



Ortiz, Francisco (text)
Fittipaldi, Cica (illus.)
Rojas, Freddy (narrator)

Kaaliawiri, el árbol de la vida. Relato piapoco

(*Kaaliawiri, the tree of life. A Piapoco tale*)

Bogotá: Editorial Monigote, 2024. – 65 p.

ISBN 978-62-895240-8-6

Piapoco <people> | Origin myth | Creation |
Tree of life | Plants | Agriculture

Colombia SPANISH

»Kaaliawiri« is a fascinating creation and origin myth of the Piapoco, a people living on the borderlands of Venezuela and Colombia. It tells how, »in the beginning, when the world was still very small,« Kutzi, the Night Monkey, found the Tree of Life reaching up to the clouds. To harvest the countless things growing on it – among them yucca, pumpkin, banana, maize, and pineapple – animals and humans alike felled the tree. This act marks the beginning of time and the moment when the Creator Kuwaiseiri entrusted the Earth to his creatures, who must now look after themselves. In rich, vivid language, Francisco Ortiz retells the story he heard from a Piapoco elder, incorporating descriptions of the forest's domestication and the early days of agriculture. Brazilian illustrator Cica Fittipaldi, who has long devoted herself to indigenous folklore, presents a dreamlike world rendered in intense colours and soft, organic forms. (Age: 8+) [JW]



Brozon, M. B. (text)

Segunda llamada

(*Second call*)

Ciudad de México: El Naranjo, 2024. – 333 p.

(Series: Colección Ecos de Tinta. Para jóvenes lectores)

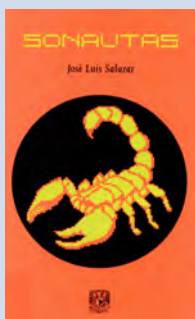
ISBN 978-607-8807-58-1

Coming of age | Family conflict | Search for identity |
Self-realisation

Mexico SPANISH

M. B. Brozon's gripping coming-of-age novel follows Inés, who wants to project the image of an ideal, exemplary family life, but realizes the harmonious facade has cracks and stains. Bit by bit, the longing and resolve to break free from her life grows, which means, among other things, freeing herself from her strict, conservative father's control. This gradual, conflict-laden transformation is portrayed with sensitivity and nuance – in what the young woman experiences, how she acts, and how she thinks about herself and others. Like the protagonist, the other characters in the novel are rendered as credible and multi-dimensional individuals. The language is equally compelling – rich in register, vivid, and authentic. Page by page, the novel paints a multi-faceted portrait of a teenager moulded by tradition, family expectations, and social norms, who, encouraged and supported by others, finds her own way to be herself. (Age: 14+) [JW]

193



Salazar, José Luis (text)

Sonautas*(Sononauts)*

Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional

Autónoma de México, 2024. – 394 p.

(Series: Hilo de Aracne. Poliédrika; 15)

ISBN 978-607-30-9551-8

Music | Coming of age | Search for identity | Family

MEXICO
SPANISH

The 17-year-old protagonist of this novel has suffered from a stubborn tinnitus since childhood. But that is not the only thing that distresses him. He has little in common with the brusque grandfather who raised him. He misses his mother, often feels alone, and faces rejection from others as well. Increasingly, he retreats into the world of music, which offers him shelter and enables him to find himself. Told from the first-person perspective, this novel has a remarkable and ambitious form. The narrative sections incorporate various other text types: diary entries, text messages, dialogues, song lyrics, and even typographical elements. This makes the storytelling feel fragmented, yet simultaneously rhythmic, multi-voiced, musical, and sonorous. Its heterogeneity is also evident in the different language registers, ranging from concise to laconic to poetic. »Sonautas« is an unusual work of literature for teenagers and young adults that will challenge its readers. (Age: 15+) [JW]

194



Albo, Pablo (text)

Font, Anna (illus.)

Dentro del león*(Inside the lion)*

Aguadulce, Almería: Libre Albedrío,

2025. – [52] p.

ISBN 978-84-128200-9-6

Zoo | Lion | Gluttony | Chain story | Picture book

SPAIN
SPANISH

In her veterinarian practice, Dr Durrell receives a lion from the zoo who has a gigantic, never-before-seen paunch and is tormented by awful pain. The doctor bravely reaches into the lion's mouth and pulls out: a father who is looking for his lost son; the zoo's cashier (and a penguin); the ticket booth (and a penguin); an ambulance (and a penguin); a bus and all its passengers; sheep; a lovesick poet (and a penguin); this and that (and several penguins); and finally, the cheeky boy who caused all the chaos. All's well that ends well! And the lion can embark on a journey to the savannah to visit his family. Pablo Albo and Anna Font tell this grotesque chain story in a grandiose way: thanks to its laconic tone, the rhythmic, partly rhyming text forms a perfect bond with the pictures. The scenes are delightfully loony and populated by very funny, likeable characters. »Dentro del león« is a wonderfully absurd and hilarious read-aloud book that invites looking at again and again. (Age: 3+) [JW]

195



Azcona, Marta (text) / Font, Anna (illus.)

Desventuras de un cerdo colosal en la Biblioteca Nacional (con instrucciones para cuidar los libros)

(The misadventures of a colossal pig in the National Library [with instructions on how to handle books with care])

Barcelona: Takatuka, 2024. – [47] p.

ISBN 978-84-18821-93-6

Animals | Library | Vandalism

Marta Azcona has chosen a form that is unusual for a children's book: a tale told in rhymed verses reminiscent of traditional balladeers. The chapter headings and the tongue-in-cheek moral maxims at the end of each chapter reinforce this ballad-like tone. The story itself is wonderfully turbulent. One day, a librarian is plagued by a headache and delegates the library oversight to a pig. But the pig is hopelessly overwhelmed when a gang of animal morons – from A for asno (donkey) to Z for zorro (fox) – descends upon the orderly realm of books and reduces it to anarchy and chaos. »Little Red Riding Hood« is gnawed on by snails, »Cinderella« is nibbled at by goats, and »Alice« must serve as wrapping paper for potato salad. In the end, a penguin is able to restore order. In this way, the hilarious tale is a not entirely serious guide to proper behaviour in a library. Anna Font's illustrations briskly echo the absurdity of the encounters and amplify the humour in the text. (Age: 7+) [JW]

196



Dipacho (text/illus.)

Preguntas animales

(Beastly questions)

Zaragoza: Apila Ediciones,

2025. – [30] p.

ISBN 978-84-10398-03-0

Animals | Question | Picture book

In this book, one finds 137 questions and well over 200 animals drawn in black-and-white or in colour, painted with watercolours, torn from paper and collaged or assembled from various materials. Some are sketchy, others realistic, surreal or oddly distorted. And all of them are unique! As is common in animal books, they are presented in groups – though here the categories are a little different. For example, there are animals made from everyday objects, angular mice and rats, animals made from leaves, or animals in black and yellow. This enchanting book becomes even more inventive through the questions connected with the pictures, mostly related to how the animals are made: »Is a creature drawn only with black lines transparent or white?« »If I paint a tiger red, is it still a tiger?« Through such surprising yet deep questions, Dipacho invites readers to reflect on the creative power of imagination and the endless possibilities of art. (Age: 8+) [JW]

197



Hernández Chambers, Daniel (text)

Reyes de la montaña

(*Kings of the mountain*)

Barcelona: Edebé, 2024. – 238 p.

ISBN 978-84-683-7014-9

Mountains | Isolation | Survival | Group dynamics |
Group psychology | Human nature

Spain ■ SPANISH

Daniel Hernández Chambers's prize-winning novel revolves around the question of how people act when familiar structures collapse. Ten young people living in a juvenile detention centre because they come from troubled families, have experienced neglect, or have been knocked off balance due to the use of violence and drugs, take an excursion into the mountains with their guardian. This turns into an extreme test of their resilience, for in order to shield themselves from a deadly virus that is spreading they are suddenly isolated from the outside world and must learn to survive in the wild. At times there is solidarity, but there are also fierce conflicts, and naked egoism comes to the surface. The novel, which gives a nod to classics like »Lord of the Flies«, is told in a gripping manner and convincing in its characterisation as well. The protagonists are not one-dimensional heroes; they come across as credible because of their doubts, weaknesses, inner conflicts, and longing for recognition and belonging. (Age: 14+) [JW]

198



Morros Serret, Marta (text)

Tolosa Sisteré, Mariona (illus.)

Todos los besos del mundo

(*All the kisses in the world*)

[Madrid]: NubeOcho, 2025. – [32] p.

(Series: Colección Somos8)

ISBN 978-84-10406-56-8

Kiss | Picture book

Spain ■ SPANISH

»Todos los besos del mundo« is a delightful picture book that introduces children to the world of kissing in a highly entertaining way, from good-morning kisses to good-night kisses, from gentle pecks to loud smacks, from melodic aunty kisses to damp dog kisses. People kiss all over the world, but in every place a kiss sounds different – MUAC in Spanish, SMACK in English, or CHŪ in Japanese, to name a few examples. The variety is immense: greeting kisses, farewell kisses, love kisses, friendship kisses, reconciliation kisses, and cultural quirks such as nose nudges and triple kisses. The book shows how universal and multifaceted affection is. Only one thing is off-limits: being kissed if you don't want to be. The illustrations by Mariona Tolosa Sisteré for Marta Morros Serret's text are fabulous, humorous, affectionate, wildly dynamic, and full of clever ideas. The luminous, high-contrast images in all possible kinds of intense colours are truly striking and give the book a stunning expressiveness. (Age: 4+) [JW]

199



Serrano Echeverría, Julio (text)

Fonseca, Armando (illus.)

El animal en la piedra*(The animal on the stone)*

Colonia del Sacramento: Amanuense,

2024. – [44] p.

ISBN 978-9974-883-55-0

History of humankind | Migration | Poetry |
Picture bookURUGUAY
SPANISH

In his previous works, the Guatemalan author Julio Serrano Echeverría has explored themes such as identity, nature, and cultural heritage. In this long prose poem in ten parts, he links the past and present by building a bridge from the beginnings of humanity, when our ancestors roamed as hunter-gatherers and lived in caves, to the present day, showing that people have always moved about, becoming, in effect, migrants. The text tells no story; it is a poetic tapestry that uses allusions to conjure up thoughts and images in the minds of readers. Illustrator Armando Fonseca has translated the associative, at times enigmatic text into powerful images reminiscent of cave paintings. The lyrical prose and striking imagery recount human history as a journey that began long ago and continues today. »El animal en la piedra« is a fascinating book and a challenging read for both adolescent and adult readers. (Age: 12+) [JW]

200



Garralón, Ana (text)

Pascual de la Torre, María (illus.)

Calle de la Oca*(Goose Street)*

Caracas [et al.]: Ediciones Ekaré,

2024. – [42] p.

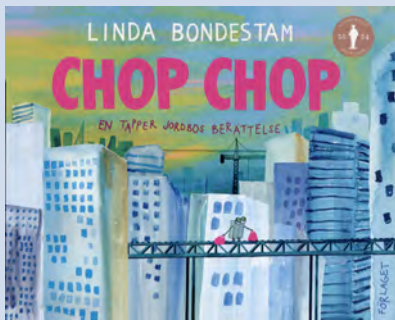
ISBN 978-84-128950-2-5

Street | City | Observation | Perception

VENEZUELA
SPANISH

Re-discovering something (seemingly) familiar – that is what this book is about. Fiction and non-fiction blend together while following Oliver and an ever-changing cast of people who accompany him on his way to school. The street they pass through, Calle de la Oca (Goose Street), presents itself anew each time. Since the individuals differ in their knowledge, professions, interests, and views on the street, this becomes a place with many faces. The grandfather speaks of old times, the writer Enrique finds all sorts of possible beginnings for stories, for the biologist Patricia, the street is a habitat of animals and plants, the photographer Cristina views it as through a camera lens, and the musician Joaquín perceives it as sounds. In a clever and vivid way, Ana Garralón guides the eye to discover the facets and layers of the street, inspiring readers to explore the world with all their senses. The illustrations by María Pascual de la Torre, whose variety and detail invite lengthy exploration, pair perfectly with the text. (Age: 8+) [JW]

201



Bondestam, Linda (text/illus.)

Chop Chop. En tapper jordbos berättelse

(*Chop Chop. The story of a busy robot*)

Helsingfors: Förlaget, 2024. – [80] p.

ISBN 978-95-2333-609-4

Robot | Humans | Work | Humankind | Apocalypse |
Dystopia | Utopia | Picture book

The chief of the parcel dispatching centre introduces the newest co-worker: a small robot called Chop Chop. Chop Chop enjoys working, is fast, never gets tired – and soon the human workers are no longer needed. But then a newer, bigger robot arrives – and Chop Chop is let go. He tries this and that; some things work out, others don't. He can never stay on for long. When war breaks out, Chop Chop is sent to the battlefield. It ends badly – both for him and for humanity. And yet, Chop Chop wouldn't be Chop Chop if he didn't have an idea about how to make the world a better place again. In »Chop Chop«, Linda Bondestam links dystopia and utopia in a surprising way. The obsession with technology and dehumanisation is portrayed with clarity and a certain disillusionment, yet the deeply human (and undeniably cute!) little robot manages to rise above the apocalyptic scenario. The tongue-in-cheek illustrations are full of humour, without ever downplaying the seriousness of the situation. (Age: 6+) [IG]

202



Holmer, Anders (text/illus.)

Karavan

(*Caravan*)

Stockholm: Natur & Kultur,

2025. – [18] p.

ISBN 978-91-27-18962-1

Existence | Meaning of life | Journey | Leporello |
Picture book

Anders Holmer, an architect by profession, has published many remarkable picture books in recent years. He writes haikus and other poems, expanding the concise form of his associative texts through his illustrations. These, too, often appear sketchy and candid, but at the same time, they are detailed and carefully composed. In »Karavan«, people – both young and old – as well as animals and hybrid beings set out on a journey. Their long caravan winds its way through woods and fields, across bridges and over mountains. Along the way, many questions arise – for instance, why do tears taste salty, or why does the luggage seem to grow heavier? Fittingly designed in leporello format, the book presents life as a journey, as continuous movement, as a process of questioning and searching for meaning – both in terms of the small things and the big picture. Anders Holmer's books often revolve around existential themes. His characters are wanderers, seekers, questioners. He never offers answers, but always provides food for thought. (Age: 6+) [IG]

203



Jonsson, Mats (text/illus.)

Stinas jojk

(*Stina's joik*)

Stockholm: Alfabeta, 2024. – 363 p.

ISBN 978-91-501-2313-5

Larsdotter, Kristina Katarina (1819-1854) |

Sámi <people> | Colonialism | Racism | Exclusion | Circus | Biography | Graphic novel

Sweden SWEDISH

From a young age, Stina Larsdotter, a Sámi, stood out due to a genetic condition that prevented her body from stopping growing. As she became older, she began performing in circuses and ethnographic shows across Europe – often recruited by dubious impresarios who promised her great riches and accompanied by her sister Sara. With »Stinas jojk«, Swedish artist Mats Jonsson has created a graphic novel that is as visually and thematically complex as it is brilliant. On one level, it tells the story of an extraordinary individual; on another, it sheds light on the way of life and traditions of the Sámi people, who inhabit the mesmerising vastness of Lapland. And thirdly, the book addresses questionable ideologies and the suffering and injustice endured by those who are exploited, degraded, and colonised. Yet it also shows how Stina and Sara strive to suppress the feeling of not belonging – and how, despite everything, they manage to preserve their strength, zest for life, and dignity. (Age: 12+) [IG]

204



Karinsdotter, Emma (text)

Kristensen, Bjarke Stenbæk (illus.)

Det sista killregnet

(*The last boy rain*)

Stockholm: Bonnier Carlsen, 2025. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-91-7979-753-9

Masculinity | Gender role | Emotion | Crying | Tears | Mental health | Picture book

Sweden SWEDISH

Roberto is seven years old and lives with his grandfather and his dog Korven (Sausage) in the town of Glädjen (Joy). There, all the (exclusively male) inhabitants are always cheerful – even when someone dies or when someone hits his thumb with a hammer. The only time the men allow themselves to cry is when it rains, because then their tears mix with the raindrops and remain »invisible«. But then one day they can't stop crying. The rain keeps falling and falling, and the water keeps rising. Emma Karinsdotter's modern parable is anything but conventional, thanks to many surprising details that make it witty and amusing. The illustrations by Bjarke Stenbæk Kristensen emphasise the humour, especially on the endpapers. At the same time, the book makes it clear that it's better when men also allow themselves to feel sadness and other unpleasant emotions. (Age: 4+) [IG]



Lindenbaum, Pija (text)

Åkerström, Anna (illus.)

Vi måste ha ketchup!

(We need ketchup!)

Stockholm: Lilla Piratförlaget, [2025]. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-91-7813-593-6

Summer holiday | Camping | Search | Picture book

Sweden SWEDISH

How wonderfully Anna Åkerström has brought this story to life! For »Vi måste ha ketchup!«, the illustrator crafted elaborate, three-dimensional papier-mâché figures and paper props, built a setting for every (double) page, and then photographed it. Fabulously elaborate, and unusual, this gives the book a theatrical character that underscores the story's dramatic composition. The text is by Pija Lindenbaum, who usually illustrates her books herself. It's about holidays at a campsite, adults who barbecue every day, and kids who are fed up with sausages – and even more without ketchup. Unfortunately, the ketchup is all gone (it's used every day), so the kids must go in search of a new bottle – a quest involving some odd encounters. There are few who can match Pija Lindenbaum in turning a small everyday event into a twisty story, as always showing capable children and telling it in a concise, laconic manner. (Age: 4+) [IG]



Oscarson, Stina (text)

Pyk, Madeleine (illus.)

Berättelsen om pojken, radion och kriget

(The tale of the boy, the radio, and the war)

Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, [2025]. – 45 p.

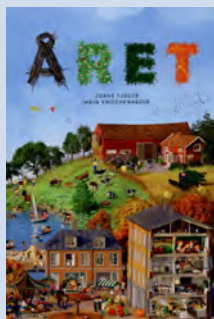
ISBN 978-91-29-74764-5

War | Art | Hope | Solidarity | Picture book

Sweden SWEDISH

»Men varför ska man måla ugglor när världen brinner?« (Why paint owls when the world is burning?) This is what a small boy asks himself when he hears news of the war on the radio. Indeed, why uphold the ideals of »beauty, truth and goodness« in a world full of terror, contempt, oppression, and abuse of power? Why learn word lists? Or the names of past kings? Answer: if not now, then when? Because these things make us human, because they can offer comfort and, at least for a while, lessen our feelings of powerlessness. Stina Oscarson, who died in April 2025 after a long illness at the age of 49, and Madeleine Pyk, who turned 90 in 2024, have written and illustrated a tender, poetic story containing text insets that resemble parables and fairy tales. The story deals with despair and doubt, fear and hope, and with community and solidarity. (Age: 6+) [IG]

207



Tjäder, Jonas (text/illus.)

Knochenhauer, Maja (text/illus.)

Året*(The year)*

[Bromma]: Opal, [2024]. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-91-7226-721-3

Seasons | Wimmelbook | Picture book

Sweden ■ SWEDISH

A book for lifelong enjoyment! There is so much to look at and discover here, it's the kind of book one can return to again and again over decades. In »Året« (The year), we see how a cityscape changes over the course of the seasons. In January, the residents – who resemble figures drawn in the Japanese Kokeshi style – play ice hockey, go skiing, or sit cosily in the library perusing »Bokstavshusen« (incidentally, the first book that Jonas Tjäder and Maja Knochenhauer created together). Half a year later, in July, they are swimming in the lake, and instead of skiing, people race down the hill on mountain bikes. In the library, there's a reading session with »Pettsen and Findus« (subtext: reading is good all year round!). In the best tradition of search-and-find books, the lovingly detailed illustrations show a wealth of activities, while short prompts encourage readers to look closely and invent stories of their own. A book for every stage of life! (Age: 3+) [IG]

208



Urupongsa, Jan (text) / Limviphuvadh, Hiroka (illus.)

Kias Matt (paper-engineering)

Nok hūk thī mai khāi bin*(The owl who never ever flies)*Moo 17, Kookot: Bāfūt Bānānā (Barefoot Banana Publishing), 2nd edition 2024. – [30] p.

ISBN 978-616-93918-4-5

Text in Thai and English

Owl | Flying | Fear | Defiance | Self-realisation | Bilingual book | Picture book

Thailand ■ THAI

»Deep in the woods, there is an owl, who never ever flies.« For inexplicable reasons, he always chooses a different means of transport: driving a car, biking, taking a train, swimming, or ice skating. One day, as he jogs to his nest, sweating and exhausted, a flying pig offers him a piggyback ride home, and for the first time he takes to the sky. Now, at the end of the book, he »decides to ...«. The story encourages children to use their imagination to question motives, discover reasons for seemingly strange behaviour, offer their own interpretations, and learn to make decisions at their own pace. Jan Urupongsa, an educator, is the publishing director of Barefoot Banana, an independent children's book publishing house, which aims to enhance the quality of Thai children's literature. In the detailed illustrations of her first picture book, illustrator Hiroka Limviphuvadh hides another tiny protagonist and a parallel story. Paper engineer Kias Matt uses 3D papercraft to transform the owl into a flying bird. (Age: 4+) [LO]



Gültaşlar, Beyhan (text)

Inaraja, Christian (illus.)

3 çok mu?

(Is 3 too many?)

İstanbul: Bulutsu Yayınları, [2024]. – [28] p.

ISBN 978-625-94205-6-1

Number | Counting | Perception | Board book |
Picture book

TURKISH
Turkey

The protagonist of this board book poses a simple yet profound question: Is three too many? As the story unfolds, the answer varies. Three is sometimes insufficient, at times excessive, and at moments just right. This award-winning book explores the relativity of quantity, prompting readers to consider for whom and under what circumstances the number three holds different meanings. Anchored in a child's curious inquiry, the narrative proceeds through interactive flaps, each revealing a distinct perspective on the value of three. In doing so, it invites readers to think about how context affects our understanding of numbers. Christian Inaraja's minimalist, whimsical illustrations reinforce this conceptual exploration. The result is a thoughtful and engaging counting book that enriches early number learning by showing how numbers relate to everyday life. (Age: 2+) [IVA]



Yılmaz, Gürçim / Köylü, Zeynep (text)

Van Gasse, Lies (illus.)

Mokadikko

İstanbul: MEAV Yayıncılık, 2024. – [36] p.

ISBN 978-625-6010-04-8

Language | Word | Serendipity | Picture book

TURKISH
Turkey

This imaginative picture book is engendered by the spontaneous utterance of an unfamiliar word – Mokadikko – that unexpectedly enters the protagonist's mind. As he speaks it aloud, bizarre responses follow: a bird, a dog, and even a tree respond to the boy. Attempting to rid his mind of the seemingly meaningless term, the protagonist writes it on a paper airplane and casts it out the window, only to witness its return. The narrative subtly questions one's apprehension about the unfamiliar, suggesting that it may, in fact, harbour unexpected gifts. Mokadikko holds an elusive yet animated presence, possessing an agency of its own. Lies Van Gasse's sensitively textured and abstract illustrations create a liminal space between dream and reality, enhancing the book's meditative tone. The interplay of type, illustration, and hand-drawn letters animates and scatters the letters of Mokadikko, blurring the boundaries between text and image, and allows readers to navigate an evolving relationship with the unknown. (Age: 5+) [IVA]



Karp'juk, Vasyl' (Karpyuk, Vasyl) (text)
Sekereš, Olesja (Sekeresh, Olesya) (illus.)

Čudernac'ka karpats'ka istorija

(Chudernatska karpatska istoriya)

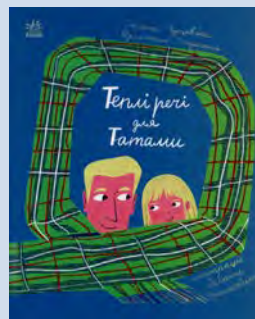
(A crazy Carpathian story)

Brustury: Vydavnytstvo Brustury, 2024. – 90 p.

ISBN 978-617-8326-13-5

Carpathians | Hutsuls <people> | Winter | Magic | Fairy tale

■ Molfar is the term used for a man who practices nature-based healing and herbalism among the Huzuls, a people living in the Carpathians. In this story by Vasyl Karpyuk and Olesya Sekeresh, the central character is a molfar named Kotsenek. He lives together with a tame bear on the outskirts of a village. One day, an ominous letter arrives from Kotsenek's old mentor. It urges Kotsenek to wake the dragon Vasylyna before winter, as the dragon sleeps in the cellar of his house. This marks the beginning of the »crazy« events alluded to in the book's title. Kotsenek ignores the warning. When he realises, however, that his magical powers are not enough to get wintertime going properly with snow and frost, and that the village's annual Christmas carolling is endangered, he remembers the dragon. At last, winter is once again as it should be! Witty illustrations and a nimble style of storytelling, filled with references to Huzul culture, make this children's book a spirited winter tale. (Age: 8+) [KW]



Luščevs'ka, Oksana (Lushchevska, Oksana) (text)
Bandarenka, Dzmitryj (Bandarenka, Dzmitry) (text)
Dračkovs'ka, Oksana (Drachkovska, Oksana) (illus.)

Tepli reči dlya Tatamy

(Tepli rechi dlya Tatamy)

(Warm clothes for Tatamy)

Charkiv: Vydavnytstvo Ranok, 2024. – [32] p.

(Series: Knyžky pro važlyve [Knyzhky pro vazhlyve])

ISBN 978-617-09-9134-8

Daughter | Father | Soldier | War | Picture book

■ Ustyna is a little girl who, at the beginning of the picture book, lays out all the warm clothes she will need for winter because she doesn't want to forget anything. At the same time, Ustyna is concerned about what kind of warm clothing her dad, Tatamy, needs – woolly jumpers, padded vests, gloves, and so on. In numerous wonderful illustrations, Oksana Drachkovska depicts the close father-daughter relationship when they spend time together romping and playing. In the succinct text by Oksana Lushchevska and Dzmitry Bandarenka, however, Ustyna is the sole driving force – for a very specific reason. Ustyna's father is serving as a soldier in the war and isn't at home. Instead, Ustyna and her mother write him a letter, hoping that Tatamy will return home soon. With this twist ending, the close bond between father and daughter becomes even more touching, and the warm clothing transforms into warm thoughts and memories of their shared time. (Age: 4+) [KW]



Romanyšyn, Romana (Romanyshyn, Romana) /
Lesiv, Andrij (Lesiv, Andriy) (text/illus.)

**Z pivslova. Pro spilkuvannja ta
rozuminnja odne odnoho**

(Z pivslova. Pro spilkuvannja ta rozuminnja odne
odnoho) (*Do you read me? On communication
and mutual understanding*)

L'viv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2025. – 127 p.
ISBN 978-966-448-418-0

Communication | Understanding | Non-fiction

Understanding one another – nothing is more urgently needed these days. A first step is to interact with each other and begin to communicate. The wide variety of ways this can be done is demonstrated by this splendid non-fiction book by Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv (aka Art studio Agrafka). As always, their work is highly aesthetic, concise, and engaging. »Z pivslova« broadens and deepens our perspective on how communication takes place. The first part of the book presents »dialogues« between people, animals, and plants, while the following section explores the nature of these »conversations«. Are they spoken words, sign language, body language, scents and odours, clothing, or Morse code? A clever cross-referencing system guides the readers through a communicative situation to the underlying methodology and to further relevant information. The authors provide their readers with many fantastic »aha« moments. And in the end, it becomes clear that in one way or another, everything is communication. (Age: 7+) [KW]



Karimova, Nargis (ed./illus.)

**Oq terakmi, ko'k terak. Bolalar
uchun qo'shiq va oyinlar to'plami**

(*White poplar, blue poplar.*)

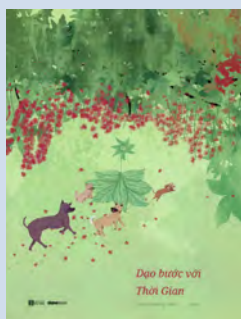
A collection of songs and games for children)

Toshkent: [s.n.], [2023]. – [26] p.

ISBN 978-9943-9083-1-4

Uzbek | Children's song | Children's rhyme | Game |
Anthology

As a special project, author-illustrator Nargis Karimova has compiled and illustrated this fine collection of twelve traditional Uzbek songs and games for children. The anthology is the first of its kind and includes songs about rain, rhymes about snowfall and about growing up – which is associated with the blooming of flowers – lullabies, and the song »Sumalak« about the traditional dish of the same name prepared for Nowruz, the New Year festival. It also features call-and-response and courage games such as »Kim oladi yo« (Who gets it) and the eponymous »Oq terakmi, ko'k terak« (White poplar, blue poplar), where two groups of children face each other and exchange members according to a ruleset. The texts are set to music and can be listened to via QR codes. The illustrations depict traditional Uzbek clothing, jewellery, and ornamental patterns, providing an excellent insight into Uzbek children's culture. (Age: 3+) [KW]



Quỳnh Hương (Hũ) (text)

Maru (illus.)

Dạo bước với Thời Gian

(Walking with time)

Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Hà Nội (Hanoi Publishing House); Slowbooks, 2024. – [58] p.

ISBN 978-604-44-3138-3

Vietnam | Nature | Seasons | Time | Poetry |
Picture book

Four stone dog figurines on a dresser come to life and follow the first-person narrator and a plant called »Time« on their walk through the four seasons. They observe peach blossoms drenched in spring rain, notice fresh shirts soaked with summer sweat, witness the blush of a blooming pomegranate in autumn, and realize that spring is about to return when the bare frangipani branches bloom in late winter. As the eternal cycle of life starts anew, the dogs turn back into stone. This elegiac poem weaves together symbol-filled depictions of Vietnam's nature, art, crafts, and architecture creating what feels like a series of colourful still-life paintings. At the end, readers are invited into a »time walk museum« where these details are explained. Slowbooks is an independent picture book publisher dedicated to connecting young readers with their native Vietnamese culture. This first picture book by publisher-author Hũ and illustrator Maru aims to introduce children to the challenging concepts of time and the transience of life. (Age: 9+) [LO]

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