

A whimsical illustration of a landscape. In the upper left, a large yellow butterfly with red circular patterns on its wings and a pink body with antennae is flying. Below it, a dark green bush with small white flowers and a small black mole with two eyes is visible. To the right, a soccer ball with blue and white panels sits on the grass. A large, dark tree trunk is on the right side. In the foreground, a checkered blanket in shades of green and white is spread out, with a vine with green leaves climbing over it. The background shows rolling green hills under a light blue sky.

MORE SWEDISH BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

SLE

SWEDISH
LITERATURE
EXCHANGE

DEAR READERS!

In these pages, we introduce you to exciting children's and YA authors writing in Swedish today. They are authors who have already found readers in other languages and have the potential to reach even more.

We introduce each author in several paragraphs and list a few of their titles. For each title, we give details about the original publisher and representation as well as rights sold at the time of this publication, Spring 2024.

To select these authors, we turned first to the agencies and publishers in Sweden who sell rights to Swedish children's and YA literature. We asked them to nominate authors and books that they thought would connect with readers around the world. To ensure an even distribution of publishers and agencies, genres and age groups, a working group at the Swedish Arts Council made the final selection for the publication.

Linnea Krylén, Martin Hellström, Hanna Jedvik and Thomas Evertsson wrote the author presentations. More about these writers on the final page.

At the very end of this publication, we give you contact details for the Swedish children's and YA agencies and publishing houses. We also tell you about the grants you can apply for from us.

Happy reading!

Susanne Bergström Larsson
Head of Swedish Literature Exchange,
Swedish Arts Council

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LISEN ADBÅGE

(b. 1982)

Lisen Adbåge's illustrations deliver brilliant colour and a pitch-perfect look at the world through the eyes of a child. Her multi-layered images are usually in clear fields and always hand-coloured in a cheerful palette. Yet she can also defy our expectations, not only of her but of picture books in general, and give us, as in *The Pine Tree* (2021), a genuinely creepy palette dripping in shades of brown.

After years of city life, Adbåge eventually returned to rural Östergötland, where she spent her childhood and where she now works in a big, pale-green house with a rushing stream outside the window. Since her debut in 2000, she has produced some 20 books of her own and at least as many in collaboration with other authors, including illustrations for both chapter books and picture books. Many of her books have won awards and critical plaudits for their stories and pictures alike.

Adbåge displays a consistent ability to depict play and daily life and to use simple tricks and symbols to create a sense of space and instant recognition. Her often short, rhythmical texts portray people and phenomena from the real world with humour, precise lyricism, and a great joy in language. Her method is always evolving, with each new book offering a slight twist on the last. She is neither afraid to experiment nor limited by ideas about what might be suitable for children. She is always honest and always listening.

Over the years, Adbåge has become one of Sweden's most beloved picture book creators. Her books have been adapted for the stage, set to music, and read – oh, how they have been read!

Linnéa Krylén

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Rights sold: French, Arabic, Darsi, Dari, Somali, Korean, Bosnian, Malay



Foto: Jonas Laskie



Today Åke is a Dog (text by Per Nilsson), picture book, 32 p., 2023, Rabén & Sjögren

Today Åke is a Dog is a masterful book about imagination and play. It's a fact: some days you're a dog. Your grown-ups, your pre-school—everyone, really—will all just have to accept it.



The Pine Tree, picture book, 32 p., 2021, Rabén & Sjögren

A family finds their dream property, but a dilapidated cottage is in the way. They have to tear it down, and they have to fell some old pine trees, too. Yet something is strange about those trees. They resist. It's almost as if the trees are still alive. Soon strange things start happening.



Ten Wild Horses (text by Grete Rottböll), picture book, 32 p., 2018, Rabén & Sjögren

One by one, the wild horses disappear until only one is left. The lone remaining horse is bored. He races back, and, horse by horse, retrieves his friends until all ten horses are gathered again. Wonderfully charming pictures and fun, rhyming verses that bring a smile to everyone's face.

HANNA ALBREKTSON

(b. 1977)



Foto: Privat



The Seagull, board book, 20 p., 2023, Lilla Piratförlaget

The seagull lives in a crowded, grey city. A swallow inspires the seagull to fly south, but the seagull thinks moving is scary. Yet as the seagull will discover, moving can also be a good thing! This book for toddlers is full of adventure and wisdom and never preachy.



Little Snail, board book, 20 p., 2022, Lilla Piratförlaget

Little Snail goes on an adventure – all alone! Sometimes the going is slow; sometimes it is speedy. There are dangers along the way – watch out! Eventually, Little Snail wants to go home. But how? And where is home when you carry your house on your back?



All Beautiful Me, board book, 24 p., 2019, Lilla Piratförlaget

Read and move your body with *All Beautiful Me*, a playful book that can help young children get to know their body better as it encourages them to make associations between pictures, movements and the different parts of their bodies.

Hanna Albrektson is a well-established illustrator. Since 2005 she has worked for many periodicals and for a range of clients in advertising. She has also created illustrations for fashion magazines in Sweden and abroad, for cultural institutions, and for other authors. In 2012 she debuted under her own name with *Feelings*, a board book for ages 0–3. Her newest book, *Little Snail*, is about Little Snail who lives with Big Snail and gets left at home alone for a while. "You stay at home," Big Snail says. But Little Snail has a taste for adventure and glides off to explore the world, crossing paths with a crow, an anthill, and a whole gang of threatening-looking snails. Gravel is slow, downhill is speedy, and at water's edge Little Snail catches a ride with a frog. But how do you know where home really is when you carry your house on your back?

Albrektson is a playful storyteller who writes from the child's point of view. Her stories, like her colourful illustrations, are multi-layered, warm, and funny. The direct and personal address welcomes children along on exciting voyages of discovery. In *All Beautiful Me*, readers learn about the human body, and in the clever *The Seagull*, Albrektson takes us on an adventure to the other side of the earth.

Hanna Albrektson's work displays an artist's sensibility. Her pictures grow organically as she combines multiple techniques – paper, scissors, ink, gouache, watercolour – to achieve just the right emotion. The result is books that grant children the utmost respect and take them and their culture seriously.

Hanna Jedvik

Rights: Lilla Piratförlaget
Rights sold: Danish, Norwegian, Korean

ELAF ALI

(b. 1987)

Seventh-grader Elaf has been hanging out on an internet forum called Lunarstorm. She's trying to get away from bullying, racism and the constant fighting in her family at home. Online, under the alias *nicegirl*, she can just be herself – not the person the kids at school think she is, or the person her parents force her to be. On Lunarstorm she meets David, a boy one year older who lives far away. One day David calls Elaf at home, and her father picks up on the landline. Time stands still. The worst thing that could happen is for Elaf's father to get the idea that Elaf has a boyfriend.

In the autobiographical novel *Who Said Anything About Love?* journalist and author Elaf Ali writes about growing up amidst honour-based violence and oppression. At the same time that her story takes place, the story of 26-year-old Fadime Şahindal shakes Sweden. Fadime has been killed by her family for having a boyfriend. Elaf asks her father: "Could you ever murder me?" Without hesitating, he answers: "Yes."

Who Said Anything About Love? is a shattering portrait of honour-based violence inside a family, but also of the shame that takes up residence in the young Elaf when she gets her first period. Now her body has to be hidden and her freedom is suddenly extremely restricted. Auto-fictional passages alternate with factual presentations of such topics as honour-based violence, children's rights and forced marriage. Also woven into the text are interviews with Elaf's parents about their views today on honour-based norms and the upbringing they gave their daughter.

Elaf Ali writes with insight and enormous empathy about being subjected to violence and oppression by the people supposedly responsible for keeping you safe. But hers is also a story about protesting, breaking free and choosing your own path in life. It will be exciting to follow Ali's own journey, both in journalism and in literature.

Hanna Jedvik

Rights: Salomonsson Agency

Rights sold: Finnish, Serbian, Slovenian



Foto: Hugo Thambert



Who Said Anything About Love?
YA fiction, 233 p., 2021,
Rabén & Sjögren

An innocent phone call sets in motion an exploration into cultural clashes, love and the pursuit of self-determination. This accessible and ambitious story offers a look into the complexities of honour-related challenges and is a powerful testament to resilience and the quest for personal freedom.

MOA BACKE ÅSTOT

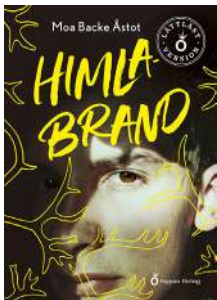
(b. 1998)

Foto: Carl-Johan Utssi



Flutters of the Heart, YA fiction, 187 p., 2023, Rabén & Sjögren

Vilda is wrestling with her Sámi identity. When her grandfather, who is her cultural guide, passes away, she must navigate the path to self-discovery in the midst of her grief. Åstot interweaves powerful emotion with explorations of minority issues as it delves into themes of love and loss.



Fire From the Sky, YA fiction, 205 p., 2021, Rabén & Sjögren

This multi-award-winning novel delicately balances tradition and queerness, offering a rare and triumphant exploration from inside Sámi culture. Åstot's rich descriptions and use of Sámi words create an immersive experience that addresses themes of love, identity and society's expectations.

Ánte is a teenager in upper secondary school in Jokkmokk in the far north of Sweden. He is also Sámi and his family are reindeer herders. Ánte knows exactly what is expected of him, both by his family and by their small community where life goes on as it always has. All the same, he can't stop thinking about Erik. Erik, whose eyes make him tremble, who sets his emotions surging and has him asking Google whether gay Sámi even exist. Imagine if Erik returned his feelings – what would life look like then? Can you live as gay in a world so sharply constrained by old-fashioned values traditions? When Ánte hears his father talking with friends about "that faggot" Ruben, who didn't fit in and had to leave Jokkmokk for Stockholm, he knows the answer is "No."

As Ánte begins to reflect on his identity, he comes across the book *Racial Types in Norrbotten* – a reminder of Sweden's legacy of colonialism, racial biology and Sámi oppression. In this way he also starts to unravel the brutal history of the Sámi and his own family's unhealed wounds.

Moa Backe Åstot, herself a reindeer-owning Sámi, writes about fraught passion and emotions in language so fiery it glows. In her debut book, *Fire from the Sky*, she succeeds in capturing not only Sámi living conditions but also politics, relationships, love, and revolt in a single story. Yet she also shows a strong gift for writing about animals, nature, snow-drifted landscapes and life far from the city. Moreover, she is bold enough to let her main character steer his own course, refusing to tell the most expected story about a young gay man who doesn't fit in. Perhaps you *can* live as both a gay man and a Sámi and not compromise on either.

Hanna Jedvik

Rights: Salomonsson Agency

Rights sold: English, Faroese, Norwegian, Spanish, South Sámi

JONNA BJÖRNSTJERNA

(b. 1983)

To words and illustrations alike Jonna Björnstjerna brings boundless playfulness and attention to detail combined with a razor-sharp wit. Those of us who liked to draw as children will recall how the story of a drawing could unfold during the very process of drawing itself: how a drawing had the power to surprise, to fill the page to the amazement of all (including ourselves). Björnstjerna's books possess that pure joy in drawing, never far removed from the visual storytelling of the child. You can recognize a Björnstjerna book in an instant. And when you do, you know you're in for a scare!

Jonna Björnstjerna was born in 1983. She studied comic art at Serietecknarskolan (now Serieskolan) in Malmö and illustration at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London. Since her publishing debut in 2007, she has written and/or illustrated some 20 books, including nonfiction, chapter and picture books. After a number of years in big cities such as Barcelona, Bristol and London, she returned with her family to Sweden, her current home.

Björnstjerna creates her illustrations digitally on a large tablet. They are usually (cozily) creepy and always subtle. She has won multiple awards and plaudits for her ability to write horror for the very small. Not surprisingly, reviewers have called her a "Steven King for the youngest readers". Certainly, she has, like few others, struck precisely the right balance between multiple elements: a dose of the ghastly and gruesome, a heaping helping of folk and fairy-tale rhythms, her own funny and direct prose – and, of course, always a happy ending.

Linnéa Krylén

Rights: Bonnier Rights

Rights sold to: Chinese, Danish, Japanese, Finnish, Norwegian

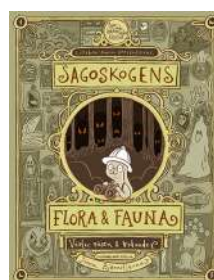


Foto: Caroline Andersson Renaud



The Enchanted Castle, picture book, 32 p., 2023, Bonnier Carlsen

Every self-respecting royal family has a castle dragon – but sometimes that dragon nips at the courtiers and smashes the castle towers. Lillebror Rabbit finds himself tossed onto a horse with a shield in his paw! In this moment of danger, who will he be – a fluffy coward or someone who triumphs?



The Flora & Fauna of the Wonderwoods, (The series The Dark Tales of Lillebror Rabbit, 10 titles) picture book, 64 p., 2021, Bonnier Carlsen

Welcome to the magical world of Wonderwoods! It's a place for everyone who loves adventures in both the pretty and the scary parts of the forest. Lillebror Rabbit guides us through beautiful glades and we cross paths with fascinating monsters, mean little elves and terrifying creatures and plants.



The Return of the Mummy, picture book, 32 p., 2021, Bonnier Carlsen

Lillebror Rabbit has a sleepover at Grandma Rabbit's house, but Grandma disappears during the night. Lillebror goes searching for her, but he meets so many awful creatures – wind ghosts, wardrobe monsters, witches and other nasties. And what about the room that swallows everything up?

JOHAN EHN

(b. 1967)



Foto: Ola Kjelbye

Actor Johan Ehn has written (to date) two books for young readers: *Down Under* (2017) and *The Horse Boys* (2019). *The Horse Boys* was nominated for the Nordic Council Children and Young People's Literature Prize and the winner of the Nils Holgersson Plaque. Its storylines unfold in both the present and the past, linked by Anton, a boy who works in home care services, and Sasha, an older man with a background in Czechoslovakia. Two timelines weave in and out of each other throughout the book. Sasha tells his story of growing up in a circus, fleeing to Berlin and encountering the free-minded club named Eldorado. Alexander goes from being a child in an orphanage to a famed equestrian to finally reclaiming his own identity in the heart of Germany – even as the Nazis are rising to power.

The meetings between the generations are described in a way that creates an exciting contrast between the simple thereness of home care duties and the Continental circus art of the 1900s.

Down Under, Ehn's debut novel, also saw him working with a journey between two different environments: in this case, Stockholm and New Zealand. Jim is a young man starting a new life. The novel portrays both the threat posed by Jim's chaotic past and his confrontation with a place that does not accept that he is gay. *Down Under* shows Ehn to be a confident stylist with a skilful ability to interleave time and place, pointing the way to the acclaimed *The Horse Boys*.

Martin Hellström

Rights: Grand Agency

Rights sold: Norwegian, Dutch, Finnish, Italian



***The Horse Boys*, YA fiction, 362 p., 2019, Gilla Böcker/Lilla Piratförlaget**

Set in Stockholm of today and 1930s Berlin. Two boys run away from an orphanage, become equestrian vaulters for the circus and end up in love in Berlin. Anton works in home care and meets an old man named Alexander. Bit by bit, Anton learns about Alexander's life through pictures and letters.



***Down Under*, YA fiction, 315 p., 2019, Gilla Böcker/Lilla Piratförlaget**

The year is 1987. Nineteen-year-old Jim escapes chaos in Stockholm by running away to New Zealand. He moves in with his conservative uncle and aunt, but they disown him when they find out he is gay, marking the start of Jim's turbulent outer and inner journey to find himself – down under.

ANNA EHRLING

(b. 1969)

Anna Ehring's favourite motifs appear with greatest clarity in her book *Isak's Universe* (2019). Isak finds refuge from his difficult daily life in a treehouse or the swimming pool. Up in the air or in the water he becomes weightless. He can float free and easy while thoughts of his parents' arguments recede away. In the best case, he might even meet a soulmate in his weightless world. One day he sees Blenda sitting on the edge of the pool. She too has more beneath the surface than you might guess.

Ehring constructs a world of metaphors that shows clearly the emotions children can have and how they can be handled. The treehouse and the pool are places of import. The treehouse pops up again in *Mira and Martin* (2017) as the place where the two friends meet – if they really are just friends? As readers, we are slightly sceptical. Gradually Mira's feelings when she looks at Martin begin to be described in a different way and our doubts disappear. Emotions also lie at the heart of two books by Ehring for younger readers: *Herring Gets a Sibling* (2020) and *Herring Starts School* (2021). The Herring books are a prime example of a writer breathing new life into motifs well known even to young readers: namely, curiosity about a new sibling and the simultaneous shock of not being the only child anymore, as well as interest in school, new friends, and learning to read.

Anna Ehring takes young readers seriously. She is a recipient of the Nils Holgersson Plaque and her debut book *Jam Sandwiches and Hard Life* was nominated for the 2010 August Prize – but her writing is deserving of even more attention.

Martin Hellström

Rights: Bonnier Rights
Rights sold: Finnish, Danish



Foto: Linda-Maria Birbeck



XO, Polly Storm, children's fiction, 144 p., 2024, Bonnier Carlsen

On Christmas Eve, Polly gets a new baby brother, but he has to stay at the hospital. Polly goes to stay with Grandma. Her thoughts are all in a turmoil, so Grandma suggests she write a book. It's a story about Polly and a few snowy days when her life is upended and Christmas gets put on hold.



Herring Gets a Sibling (The Herring series, 4 titles), children's fiction, 80 p., 2020, Bonnier Carlsen

Mira and Martin hang out together a lot. They have a special place in the woods where they meet, but at school they hardly acknowledge one another. Emotions overwhelm and complicate everything when Mira and Martin meet. A story that will evoke giggles and maybe some tears!



Mira and Martin, children's fiction, 135 p., 2017, Bonnier Carlsen

The life of Hugo "Herring" Ström is about to change. His new baby brother has just been born and Hugo is waiting for Mum and Dad to get back from the hospital. Luckily, Grandpa is good at inventing things. The two of them find ways to pass the time and quieten Herring's nerves.

ELLEN GREIDER

(b. 1995)



Foto: Privat

Ellen Greider is a trained comic artist who made her publishing debut with the comic book *Lunchbox* in 2018. She studied at Serieskolan in Malmö, which has also educated such prominent comic artists and authors as Liv Strömqvist and Loka Kanarp.

In her book *That's Right, I Hate Parties*, Greider continued to refine a comic-strip aesthetic first developed in illustrations for children's magazine *Kamratposten*, retaining their slight edginess and attitude of keeping the reader at arm's length. It is a style that marries well with the book's theme of not liking parties and other things that get forced on you. The idea that all children like parties is one Greider challenges in this story about Freja. Freja's being alone is a problem for the grown-ups, not her. Freja enjoys being by herself. It gives her time to be creative – just like a certain cartoonist might need some alone time to stake out their own creative space. In fact, Greider describes herself as someone who is never happier than when she is alone drawing pictures of Marilyn Manson (for example).

In Greider's *Valle and the Teenagers* (2021), the young Valle discovers that there is a category of person in between children and adults: namely, teenagers. He is simultaneously scared of teenagers and drawn to them. Most exciting of all is his realization that he too will be a teenager one day. In her newest book, *Light As a Parrot Feather* (2023), a young poet starts to take an interest in a new genre: the love poem. For readers of every age, Greider emphasizes the importance of being alone and able to immerse yourself in the pleasure of independent reading.

Martin Hellström

Rights: Alfabeta
Rights sold: Danish, Faroese



Light As a Parrot Feather,
children's fiction, 142 p., 2023,
Alfabeta

Nicco is a dog lover and a poet, but she has never written a love poem. Natalie is moving into the same block of flats as Nicco. Rumour has it that Natalie's friend Musse is in love with Nicco. The coming weeks will be the weirdest in Nicco's life. A story about love, play and serious conversation.



Valle and the Teenagers,
children's fiction, 80 p., 2021,
Alfabeta

Valle discovers that teenagers exist. They are interesting and scary, all at the same time. Teenagers sort of do what they feel like. Now he sees them everywhere: huge, unpredictable and fascinating. A story about everything changing and the way that might feel.



That's Right, I Hate Parties,
children's fiction, 76 p., 2020,
Alfabeta

Some children don't want to join in all the time! One of Freja's best friends is her dad, and she prefers to avoid parties and excitement. Her grown-ups worry that she is lonely, but Freja likes being by herself, drawing or crafting and thinking about big and difficult questions.

JULIA HANSSON

(b. 1990)

Julia Hansson's picture books about Billie and her dog, Bean, feature clear, rich colours and modern, dynamic visual narration. Words interact playfully with a visual idiom that engages through a combination of big, all-embracing perspectives and the kinds of tiny facial and postural details that are so essential to conveying meaning in a picture book. The grand view sends our eye roaming around the picture, even as we perch on Billie's shoulder and follow her down the road and beyond. There is a lot to love in Hansson's storytelling.

Hansson portrays everyday details with such care that each page opens up a new world to explore. Billie is bold and adventurous and loves to take off down new paths with Bean at her heels. She gives the impression of being constantly in motion, an impression accentuated by Hansson's meticulous rendering of movements, gestures and facial expressions. While studying illustration in Tokyo (among other places), Hansson adopted a lively, relaxed idiom that far transcends the conventional in its artfulness and precision. She stages scenes – in the city, at the beach, on the ski slopes – behind which life seems to flow on in the background. The world is a wondrous place, full of small idiosyncrasies and unfamiliar, sometimes mysterious, conditions. If you step off your usual path around the block, what might you discover? What was that strange light you saw under the water through your diving mask? No matter the adventure, with a playmate like unpredictable, loyal Bean at your side, you'll always find your way home.

Thomas Evertsson

Rights: Koja Agency
Rights sold: English, French, Spanish, Catalan, Danish, Korean



Foto: José Figueroa



Billie, Bean and the Mountains, picture book, 32 p., 2023, Natur & Kultur

Billie, Bean and Mum travel to the mountains. Billie goes to ski school by herself since Mum needs to rest. At first, it's exciting to go off on her own. But when snow falls and little dog Bean disappears, it's frightening. How will Billie find Bean and get them both back to the ski slope again?



Billie and Bean at the Beach, picture book, 32 p., 2020, Natur & Kultur

Billie, her mum and their dog Bean are at the seaside. Bean loves jumping in the water, rolling in the sand and chewing on seaweed. Billie – not so much. The kids on the beach are so loud! When Billie goes into the water with her diving mask, a world of silence and wonder unfolds before her eyes.



Billie and Bean in the City, picture book, 32 p., 2021, Natur & Kultur

Billie's mum is in the laundry room. Billie is bored, the clock is ticking, and her dog Bean is impatient. Billie takes Bean out on a walk, but suddenly the park feels scary. Billie realizes that they are lost in the big city. How will they find their way back home?

HELENA HEDLUND

(b. 1987)



Foto: Kicki Nilsson



Stellan and the Wolf Bag, children's fiction, 100 p., 2024, Natur & Kultur

Sometimes Stellan has days of anger. But luckily, he has a wolf bag in the attic. In it, he can scream as loud as he wants, but he always needs to hurry to close it, otherwise the anger is released again. But there are happy days too. Stellan's emotions are big and strong and learning how to be a human among other humans can be exhausting.



Burn, Horses, Burn, children's fiction, 150 p., 2023, Natur & Kultur

Dora's life changes when her best friend suddenly abandons her, and her parents get divorced. She starts to question who she is and what she wants. Just as she decides to stop horse riding, Dad tells her he has bought a horse for her. Is a horse as fascinating as a boy in school?



The Kerstin series (6 titles so far): Being Kerstin, children's fiction, 144 p., 2019, Natur & Kultur

Kerstin is six years old and loves gold. She finds a ring on the floor at school and when her teacher Lottie asks if anyone has seen her wedding ring, not a peep comes out of Kerstin's mouth. And then it's too late... A story of tangled secrets, friendship, and the best thing about being Kerstin.

With her books about Kerstin and, most recently, the book *Burn, Horses, Burn* for slightly older readers, Helena Hedlund has emerged as a reliable children's book author who spends time on many of the central questions that occupy children. Why is understanding the world, and understanding oneself, so hard? When everything is going your way, life can be great. But at any moment things could take a radically different turn. It is this shift, as swift as it is hard to explain, that Hedlund's main characters particularly wrestle with.

Seven-year-old Kerstin knows all about feeling like a fish out of water, both at school and among her friends. Why does she never seem to fit in? And why does everything always get messed up? All of sudden she has her teacher's wedding ring, and she can't bring herself to say that she took it. What will everyone think when they find out the truth? A ray of hope appears in the form of a new friend who, like Kerstin, is a bit of an odd duck. Hedlund dares to linger on uncomfortable moments and lets readers share in Kerstin's doubts as she finds her way forward.

Hedlund's newest book, *Burn, Horses, Burn*, likewise examines a sensitive moment in a young girl's life as she moves out of early childhood into a new stage marked by new interests. If you aren't a horse girl anymore, who are you? After the summer, Dora's school class is different. Old truths have lost their sparkle. Mum is moving out and suddenly Dora is going to get a pony. As life tilts first in one direction, then the other, the everyday details that always form part of Hedlund's world feel particularly electric. The real diversity of today's societies is reflected in a natural, unforced way.

Thomas Evertsson

Rights: Koja Agency

Rights sold: German, Norwegian, Danish, Polish

CECILIA HEIKKILÄ

(b. 1984)

Cecilia Heikkilä's illustrations are irresistible, with that enviable quality of being timeless and innovative all at the same time. Warm, expressive, and simply beautiful, her pictures are as suited to the classic tales by Astrid Lindgren as they are to something brand-new. They radiate a warmth that makes you want to climb inside them.

Since her debut in 2016, Heikkilä has written and/or illustrated some ten-odd books, including chapter books, picture books and nonfiction. She studied graphic design in Vancouver, Canada and currently lives in a small town in Dalarna. She has been commissioned to illustrate the works of such great authors as Lindgren and Tove Jansson. Heikkilä treats these beloved tales with tender respect, sometimes giving them a whole new look and sometimes retaining the old look with some of her own touches.

Heikkilä is a deft hand at both digital and analogue painting. Her pictures, constructed in fields, billow with motion, plays of light, and painterly elements. They have a traditional feel, but it is hard to pinpoint what tradition they belong to. There are elements of the Anglo-Saxon; possibly the Japanese; the Nordic as well; and of course they also exist in their own tradition, one where nature is always at the doorstep and upright-walking, basket-carrying animals feature prominently. Equally timeless are Heikkilä's texts. Inhabiting their own poetic universe, artless and with the up-close perspective of a child, they always revolve around such strong and moving topics as friendship, grief and the meaning of life.

Linnéa Krylén

Rights sold: Finnish, German, Norwegian, French, Bulgarian, Danish, Estonian, Dutch, Italian, English, Galician, Spanish



Foto: Jonas Erickson



***The Last Outpost*, picture book, 40 p., 2021, Bonnier Carlsen. Rights: Bonnier Rights**

Grandpa says the last outpost is the most beautiful place in the world. Little Bear longs to see it for himself. The two bears set off together on a journey to find the last piece of wilderness. But a lot has happened since Grandpa's time. Will the last outpost still be there?



***The Badger's Journey*, picture book, 48 p., 2018, Bonnier Carlsen. Rights: Bonnier Rights**

Badger is an old captain who lives on an island. One day a little animal is washed ashore. It makes a terrible noise and jabbars on as if it's trying to say something important. Something about a storm... A book about friendship and a desire to travel far beyond the horizon, with magical illustrations.



***Bruno Goes Sledding*, board book, 20 p., 2018, Rabén & Sjögren. Rights: Rabén & Sjögren Agency**

Bruno and Mum are heading home from preschool. It's cold outside. Wait, what's that? Tracks in the snow! Dog tracks... but no dog. Where did it go? Readers of all ages will find much to recognize in this series of six board books about the charming Bruno!

DAVID HENSON

(b. 1985)



***The Dinosaurs are Back!*, picture book, 32 p., 2024, Bokförlaget Opal**

Just imagine: You go to the Natural History Museum to see the dinosaur skeletons, but there aren't any! In this story, dinosaurs come back from a vacation to Mars to find a changed world: new roads, new buildings, new little creatures screaming and running around. And where is Grandma Dinosaur?



***Mira's Big Day in School (text by Stina Klintberg)*, picture book, 32 p., 2023, Bokförlaget Opal**

Mira has been looking forward to the first day of school. With every step she takes she gets bigger and bigger. But when she arrives at school, Mira shrinks and everything feels scary. Until she hears someone say, "Hi! Do you want to play?" A story about starting school and having an exciting mix of feelings.



***Let's bike!*, picture book, 32 p., 2020, Bokförlaget Opal**

There's a lot to remember when you're riding a bike. It's a good thing Big Sister knows all about helmets, fixing tyres, safety lights, and more! David Henson's book about loving bikes.

Lines and colours fairly cavort through the up-tempo visual world of David Henson. Colours and compositions are bold, and Henson's illustrations have a distinctive tendency to grow bigger than the plot itself, always offering much more to see and to discover. His texts are equally fast-paced, playful and propulsive. It's clear that Henson has an adventurer's spirit to match that of his young readers.

Henson was born in 1986 and spent his earliest years in Zimbabwe before moving to England where he grew up. He moved to Sweden for love and currently lives with his family in the town of Värnamo, where he has worked full-time as an illustrator since his debut in 2016. He is the author and/or illustrator of some ten-odd books, including nonfiction as well as adventure stories. Of all those titles, perhaps two are especially close to his heart? Rumor has it that Henson owns a considerable collection of bicycles.

Henson begins his illustrations with pen and paper and finishes them at the computer. His experiences as a radiology nurse and a keen interest in anatomy and physiology are reflected in his free and confident portrayals of bodies in motion, which stretch the boundaries of real movement to capture something that lies beyond. Henson portrays children as strong individuals with unique expressions and emotions, and he takes care that his illustrations show the strength that lies in every child, regardless of background or ethnicity. All drawn with a warm, extended hand.

Linnéa Krylén

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EVA JACOBSON

(b. 1962)

Eva Jacobson's illustrations thrum with mystery. Along the edges that frequently frame her pictures, or in the lurking shadows behind trees and rocks, a blackness whispers. The characters who inhabit her tales are often animals, but do we always know what *kind* of animal? Slightly skewed—in-between creatures, as it were—they are nonetheless drawn with humour and warm recognition. The colour palette throughout is soft and muted. It, like the text, invites readers to stop and ponder. Is that a missing tail? How does it feel when you're not the obvious partner for a walk anymore?

The Stockholm-based Jacobson studied drawing at l'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. Her creative process usually begins with the image. She has said that she does not really illustrate texts; rather, she puts words to illustrations. She also sculpts and paints, and in these works we find the same tendency and direction as in her picture books. One gets the feeling that Eva Jacobson is busy building a larger world, filled with sculptures, book characters and paintings alike, of which the pictures and scenes in her books are just one slice.

Jacobson published her first picture book, *Morgan's Café*, in 2019 and has followed it up with three more picture books in quick succession, all with the same subtle sense of humour and clever, propulsive dialogue.

In a fast-moving, colourful world, Eva Jacobson's quieter style offers a different kind of reading experience for the youngest children. Using familiar themes and emotions, she shows that there are many powerful ways to express yourself.

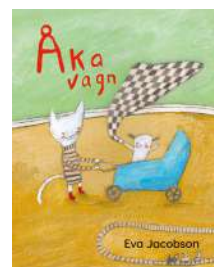
Linnéa Krylén

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Foto: Gustav Grill



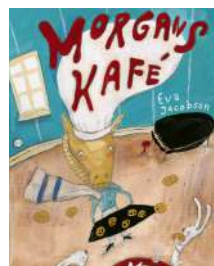
Lalla's Pram, picture book, 32 p., 2023, Lilla Piratförlaget

Lalla always pushes Tuss in his pram, but one day someone else is riding in it. Tuss feels as if there's no room for him – not in the pram or anywhere else. What should he do? A story about the complicated feelings that can arise when a nice, orderly life is disrupted by the arrival of someone new.



A Tail On the Loose, picture book, 32 p., 2022, Lilla Piratförlaget

Hasse and Nisse are on their way to a party when Nisse discovers that his tail is missing. They go and see a doctor, who suggests replacing the tail with a tie. The doctor attaches the tie-tail. A little while later, Hasse and Nisse see something lying on the ground... What is it? Who is it attached to?



Morgan's Cafe, picture book, 32 p., 2019, Lilla Piratförlaget

A customer with no money turns up at Morgan's café and asks if he can trade his violin for coffee and some buns. He eats thousands of cinnamon buns! When he finally leaves, it's time to open the violin case... A story of solidarity and friendship, deception and acceptance.

AMANDA JONSSON

(b. 1994)



Foto: Filip Lundgren



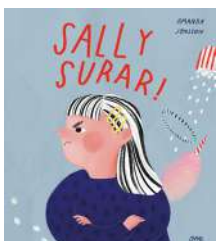
Solvej's longing, picture book, 32 p., 2024, Bokförlaget Opal

At Solvej's house, everything is always the same. Her family likes things nice and quiet, but Solvej aches for something else – for music. One day she hears a trumpet playing and her life is transformed. Solvej must find the trumpet player. A story about music, friendship and a lost trumpet.



Disco, picture book, 32 p., 2021, Bokförlaget Opal

Expectations for the upcoming disco are high. The sisters have invited Eskil to the party, but they start watching a film and forget about the time. When Eskil rings the doorbell, nothing is ready. It's a good thing friends can help each other! A sensitive story about children's feelings.



Sally is Grumpy, picture book, 32 p., 2020, Bokförlaget Opal

Sally is grumpy! Nothing feels quite right or cheers her up. Her sandwich doesn't taste of anything, mum is boring, and meeting a new friend doesn't help either. But Sally's mood changes when they go to a circus hidden deep in the woods... Playful illustrations and a charming story.

Author and illustrator Amanda Jonsson's picture books are instantly recognizable by their voluptuous, luminous colouring that exploits the ability of collage to create contrast and visual depth. Each separate visual element interacts playfully with the others but also has a shine all its own: an independence that creates small dislocations, mirroring, perhaps, the child's world of infinite possibilities within which Jonsson's stories are set. In the same way, Jonsson's naïve idiom and decisive colouration never tips into merely cheery or undefined.

You might forget about being angry because you and a new friend found a circus in the forest. You might forget you invited Eskil to a disco. And it might happen that you ache to hear a trumpet and hear the notes of a melody ringing through the city. Children live in a world where the power of the imagination can bring any situation to radiant life. Amanda Jonsson remembers this better than most, both in her illustrations and in her prose, whose immediacy suits her characters so well.

Siblings sit watching a film about dinosaurs. Before long, they are making up a scary-funny dinosaur game. Suddenly the fearsome lizards are invading the illustrations, transporting readers seamlessly into the imaginary play. Of course, the distress is immediate when the party organizer realizes she forgot to do any organizing. But distress comes and goes, as do games and discos.

Amanda Jonsson's books often engage in a bit of resistance that make them all the more arresting. It sometimes shows up in the comedic effects of the candid dialogue, and it testifies to Jonsson's generosity and great faith in her young readers. None of her stories have pre-packaged endings. They like to surprise, to wander off in their own directions.

Thomas Evertsson

Rights: Opal Agency
Rights sold: Danish, Korean

ULRIKA KESTERE

(b. 1988)

Ulrika Kestere's picture books pop on the shelves like vibrant, colourful candies, and their flavour is a mix of cookies and cakes, friends and rowdy neighbours. We find big emotions portrayed with ready wit in a world populated by animals who stand upright and who, like humans, are sometimes fearful, sometimes strong and brave.

Ulrika Kestere studied graphic design in Malmö, industrial design at the Ingvar Kamprad Design School in Lund, and photography in Lofoten, Norway. She was born in Latvia in 1988 but moved at age four with her family to Lund, where she now works as a photographer, illustrator and art director. Since her debut in 2017 she has published five picture books, all written and illustrated by her. Together they have been translated into 14 languages. Her interest in psychology and interpersonal relations translates into themes that she skilfully (and engagingly) uses to centre and weave together her stories. They are universal motifs we can all relate to, no matter where we come from.

Kestere is clearly inspired by traditional tales from her East European background and her time in Lofoten. She begins her illustrations by hand and later colours them digitally in happy but slightly muted pastel colours. Her writing addresses readers directly, and just like her pictures, it is playful and funny, welcoming and warm. Naturally, she brings her graphic designer's eye to the composition of the page, and she sometimes work with text placement to create visual effects – to reinforce dialogue, for instance. Readers can count on Ulrika Kestere to set a beautiful table of reading treats.

Linnéa Krylén

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Foto: Privat



No More Cookies, picture book, 32 p., 2023, Bokförlaget Opal

Pelle and Lollo's house needs cleaning. Before they get started they want something sweet to eat, but they're out of cookies. Time to bake! Baking a cake turns out to be a messy and adventurous affair where they often choose the easy way out. A story about greed, laziness and bad luck.



The sensitive Hedgehog, picture book, 32 p., 2019, Bokförlaget Opal

The hedgehog has spotted a huge blackberry and it's finally ripe. She picks it and sets off for home. Different animals advise her on the best way to carry her berry and what to do with it when she gets home. Can't she just carry her berry in peace? A tale about following your own instincts.



Wild Neighbours, picture book, 32 p., 2017, Bokförlaget Opal

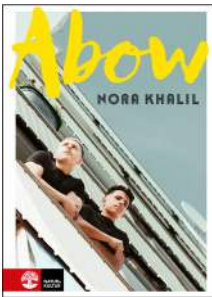
The rabbit has bought a summer house, but wild cats are drinking from his fountain. And when they finish drinking, they go crazy! They're running around, scratching and digging up his flowers. The rabbit thinks it's scary, and the cats aren't even paying rent... What should the rabbit do?

NORA KHALIL

(b. 1977)

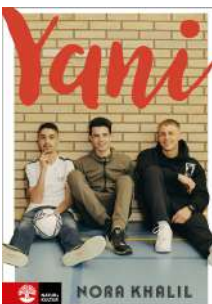


Foto: Daniela Spiroska



Abow, YA fiction, 181 p., 2023, Natur & Kultur

Rayan feels out of place in his new school. As he is trying to manage his new upper secondary school life, he sees Caspian drifting in a different direction. In Caspian's closet, Rayan finds a bulletproof vest. Old and new worlds collide in this stand-alone sequel to the August Prize-nominated *Yani*.



Yani, YA fiction, 222 p., 2022, Natur & Kultur

An evocative debut novel that depicts friendship, marginalization, longing, grief and belonging with humour and scrupulous social criticism. *Yani* is both a coming-of-age story about Rayan and a collective novel about the lives and dreams of teenagers in an at-risk suburban neighbourhood.

Fifteen-year-old Rayan doesn't have much to believe in. In his part of town, you see the police more often than the sun. The after-school centre downtown is a safe place—but as Rayan cynically observes, the reason it's downtown has got to be so the cops can keep an even closer eye on him and his friends. Rayan, Caspian and Amir are a band of brothers. They get through the days at their lower secondary school and think about the future and upper secondary school – despite the teachers who say kids like them should forget about higher education; they'll end up working at Baba's Pizzeria anyway.

Yani is Nora Khalil's first novel. Racism and marginalization are a constant presence in the lives of its characters. So is an unrelenting violence that intrudes most tangibly when the older brother of their classmate Wahida is shot. Implacable reality intrudes, as well, when Amir receives a sudden notice of deportation from the Swedish immigration authority. The friends start a petition and hold a public protest, but teenage Amir is deported anyway. The sense of grief and loss feels infinite.

Nora Khalil depicts the transition between lower and upper secondary school with surgical precision in this vivid portrait of teen life in an at-risk Swedish suburb. Character-driven, grittily realistic, and teeming with slang that never feels fake or forced, Khalil's debut is a convincing and confident coming-of-age novel where optimism, dreams and identity interweave. The humorous tone – and Rayan's never-failing ability to see through the grown-ups – lend lightness to a serious story.

Hanna Jedvik

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OSKAR KROON

(b. 1980)

Oskar Kroon has the ability to move readers and create drama without overblown or superfluous gestures. He brings us characters with clipped wings and bruised self-esteems, broken alliances and newfound friendships, and constant inquiries into the meaning of existence. His stories transcend their target reader groups; they can easily be read by everyone. They invite us into the child's fragile world, where idylls and daydreams dwell next door to catastrophe and the abyss.

In the bittersweet and lyrical *Waiting for Wind*, a girl in her early teens is running from troubles at home and in school, her parents' divorce, and the fact that her father is having a baby with another woman. Vinga is happy when she can escape for the summer to stay with her grandfather in the outer archipelago. On the island, she luxuriates in uneventful days and the hard work of making their little sailboat seaworthy. One day, a girl her age turns up – she is demanding and jaded about life on the island, but also mysterious and captivating. The island idyll is real, but so are all the things chafing at its edges. The summer is one long inhale before life resumes. After the long heatwave, the storm rolls in. Vinga's story unfolds organically thanks to Kroon's easy, tender lyricism.

Kroon's newest book, *Windflowers and Piss Rats*, brings an arresting shift of perspective. We follow the story of Kaj, who can only watch as his solitary and slightly strange big brother Krister lands in the claws of the mob. What can you do when you see grown-ups looking the other way while your beloved brother is driven into ever greater isolation? Many scenes from this book will linger, as we see social ties rent and loneliness descending upon a young child.

Thomas Evertsson

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Foto: Casia Bromberg



***Windflowers and Piss Rats*, children's fiction, 168 p., 2023, Rabén och Sjögren**

Kaj loves his big brother, Krister. Krister knows so much about space, robots and parallel universes. Krister dares to be himself. He doesn't know how to be anything else. But sometimes that causes problems. A sensitively told, moving story about siblings and vulnerability.



***Everywhere and Nowhere*, children's fiction, 142 p., 2020, Brombergs förlag**

Sillen and Nikolaj are best friends, but Nikolaj only believes in quantum physics! How can you be friends with someone who says your brain is full of sawdust and snot? A story about ordinary, extraordinary things like cozy Friday nights, head lice and complicated friendships.



***Waiting for Wind* (English edition: Rhubarb Lemonade), children's fiction, 205 p., 2019, Brombergs förlag**

Vinga is spending the summer with Granddad on the island when a girl starts appearing. At first, all they seem to have in common is their age and being on the island. It turns out to be much more. Through a storm of farewells, new friendships and stranded whales, Vinga holds true to her course.

ELIN LINDELL

(b. 1981)

Foto: Lars-Erik Kohrs



***The World's Worst Sister*, children's fiction, 174 p., 2023, Alfabet**

Dani knows she would be the best sister in the world. If only Mum could give her a baby brother or sister. A tiny, cute sibling – that's not too much to ask, is it? One day Dani meets Elton. He is the spitting image of Dani and probably a donor baby too, just like her. Could Dani have found a real sibling?



***That Jonny Jonsson Johnson* (The series about Jonny, 3 volumes), children's fiction, 174 p., 2018, Alfabet**

If your name is Jonny Jonsson Johnson, there are two things you know for sure. One: Your lame parents couldn't even agree on a last name. Two: People whose first names end in "y" always wind up in prison. A warm, funny, fast-paced series rife with awkward situations, situations and warmth in the vein of Jeff Kinney and Liz Pichon.



***Lost: Cat, Friend, Pants* (The series about Jördis, 4 volumes), children's fiction, 124 p., 2014, Alfabet**

Jördis is best in her class at football and has a really nice best friend, a cute cat, parents who only embarrass her once in a while, and a younger brother who is quite sweet. But Jördis sometimes gets tangled up in lies and embarrassing situations, even if her intentions are always good.

Author and illustrator Elin Lindell uses the everyday as an ingenious springboard for stories about children and teens that take place in an environment that is markedly realistic and commonplace, yet never dull or uneventful. The title of her book *That Jonny Jonsson Johnson* is a perfect example. Jonsson is the most common last name you can have in Sweden, but it turns absurd when your mother's last name is Jonsson, your father's is Johnson, and you get saddled with both. In Sweden, as well, first names that ends in "y" are associated with children who act up or pull pranks, which gives the reader an exciting glimpse into the main character's personality.

Lindell's series about the boy with the somewhat peculiar name Jonny Jonsson Johnson has turned out to become a great success among readers in the age group 9-12. In *Come on, Jonny!* (2020) Lindell masterfully demonstrates her literary skills. Jonny, now 12, describes his daily life with hyperbole and wit. Both books have received overwhelmingly positive reviews. Critics have particularly praised Lindell's genuinely funny storytelling and the universal and important underlying themes. When Jonny turns 12, everything changes. His best friend is suddenly more interested in girls than in being friends. His mum gets a new boyfriend. And maybe Jonny himself should get together with Naimal? The books are written for ages 9–12 (Jonny's age).

Lindell is also the author of the Jördis series, aimed at readers a little too young for Jonny. The Jördis stories also rely on humour as well as on the portrayals of Jördis' relationships with the people closest to her.

Elin Lindell eschews idylls and is free-spoken while remaining within the experiential world of her young readers – two qualities that will make her books relevant and unique for years to come.

Martin Hellström

Rights: Alfabet

Rights sold: Norwegian, Danish, German

JALI MADI SUSSO

(b. 1991)

After a number of years writing easy-to-read books about teen life in a hardening social climate, Jali Madi Susso has also published a string of picture books around the theme of representation and migration. In the rich and varied world of picture books, one blind spot has been the experience of growing up with a non-European background in a Western society. Comedic opportunities and opportunities for reader identification abound, and Susso gives them due attention without resorting either to scolding or to oversimplification.

In Susso's most recent book, *Addi's Afro*, illustrated by Felicia Fortes, problems arise when Addi doesn't want to get braids in his hair so he can wear a cap. Capless, he runs out into the snow with his sled, and soon he meets some forest animals who take an interest in his afro. You have to wear a cap! (Don't you?) The animals are cold and want to jump into his big hair and get warm. Addi doesn't like it, and finally he has had enough. But he still wants to help his chilly animal friends. And his grandpa has knitted loads of hats that are just lying in the bureau at home. The story opens many doors to understanding. By moving the challenge to Addi's hair to the animal world, Susso slips a complex question into a readily absorbable context. With enough goodwill and mutual respect, there is every chance of making everyone happy – even freezing forest animals.

Addi's Afro provides one welcome opportunity for more people to read about children with different experiences and different daily struggles. Jali Madi Susso's down-to-earth storytelling is joyful and inviting. Felicia Fortes' illustrations lend colour and depth, alternating between views of landscapes and domestic scenes and the illumination of specific expressions through gesture and body language.

Thomas Evertsson

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Foto: Ulrica Zwenger



***Addi's Afro* (ill. Felicia Fortes), children's picture book, 40 p., 2024, Bonnier Carlsen**

Grandpa knits hats, but Addi doesn't like wearing them. Outside, Addi meets a lot of animals who wonder where his hat is. His hair keeps his ears warm, Addi explains. The animals jump into his hair, but Addi shakes them off. Maybe Grandpa's knitted hats could keep them warm instead?



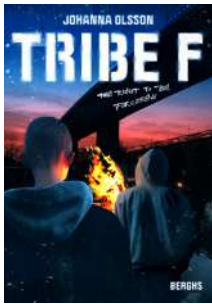
***The Treasure Hunt in Mundu Onak* (written with Eva Susso, ill. Katsiaryna Dubovik), picture book, 96 p., 2019, Bonnier Carlsen**

Mfalme the lion is the king of Mundu Onak. One day Glen the pig washes up on the shore of Mfalme's kingdom. Glen is searching for treasure in order to impress his brother. Samira the street dog joins Mfalme's and Glen's treasure hunt. But treasures might not always be what we expect them to be...

JOHANNA OLSSON

(b. 1979)

Foto: Pernilla Petterson



Tribe – The Right To Be Forgotten, YA fiction, 230 p., 2023, Berghs förlag

The year is 2043. Cities are crowded, citizens are being surveilled and robots are a part of everyday life. Estrid is being harassed online. She hears about an underground network rebelling against digital society. It could be Estrid's salvation. But it comes at a cost: never seeing her family again.



Can I Be Your Human? (ill. Mia Nilsson), picture book, 32 p., 2023, Berghs förlag

Vide wants a pet, but Mum says no. So Vide decides to look for one in the woods. He invites different animals to come live with him, but they all say no. They don't want to walk on a leash, behave themselves – or risk winding up on someone's plate. Can it really be this hard to find a friend?

Writing dystopian thrillers that also capture the kinds of everyday struggles today's teens will identify with is an art. Johanna Olsson has mastered it, as she clearly shows in her most recent young adult novel, *TRIBE F: The Right to Be Forgotten*. In a style that channels Nordic noir, Olsson gives us a surveillance society set in the future, full of robots and self-driving cars. Main character Estrid lives with her Uncle Pål and Aunt Zoe. Pål has started up a relationship with Mindy, their sexy robot housekeeper, while Zoe is a super-famous influencer who won't hesitate to share content about their children on social media to sate her followers and sponsors.

In this world, individual freedoms are conspicuously absent, and we soon learn that protesting teens are escaping underground, fleeing the omnipresent seekers. For Estrid, things come to a head when an ill-advised picture falls into the hands of Troy, an Internet paedophile. The pressure on Estrid mounts as she worries about her little sister Liv, who will soon be old enough to understand the extent of the surveillance society she lives in. When Estrid hears about the youth movement TRIBE F, it ignites in her a desire for escape, revolt and revenge. Johanna Olsson is an experienced dramaturge and scriptwriter. Her storytelling is propulsive and densely atmospheric, with impressive worldbuilding. The slightly melancholic tone of her prose suits the portentous story, and the marriage of the two dimensions creates an engaging dystopia. An everyday kind of realism is interspersed with thrills, revenge and political awakening.

Hanna Jedvik

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Rights sold: Danish, Korean**

KLARA PERSSON

(b. 1985)

Writer Klara Persson's stories tend to the zany and slightly absurd. She invites readers to think twice: to stop and reflect on the multiple layers of the stories she tells. In *Highest!*, illustrated by Charlotte Ramel, a wild child rampages through the world. In *Go Away, Stupid Night*, illustrated by Persson herself, Vivi the bear is sitting on the floor drawing a bus when night makes an unwelcome appearance. As darkness falls, Vivi can't see her paper anymore. "Go away, stupid night!" Vivi roars. Suddenly the darkness is gone, the light is back, and Vivi can go on drawing... as long... as she wants... Finally, she's ready to go to sleep. But night won't come back. She watches a movie about sharks. She watches a show about bears. But night still won't come. And without night, she can't sleep. She'll have to ask her neighbour Betty for help. Betty comes to her rescue, putting night in a box for Vivi to take home with her. But just when it's time to lift the lid and let night out, Vivi gets an inspiration. She's going to draw a bus with 12 floors! Night will have to wait.

Go Away, Stupid Night is a playful look at the role of creativity in our lives that both children and grownups will identify with. The not entirely simple story of Vivi, whose diurnal rhythms get hijacked by creative inspiration, is pioneering and empathetic. The pithy, rhythmic, funny prose brings Vivi's battle against sleep to life. The illustrations, a mix of watercolour and collage, are deep and warm with lovely detail. They capture the small agonies and homely details of everyday life with understanding and precision. A beautiful book to read and talk about together.

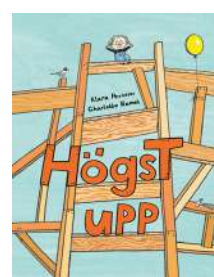
Hanna Jedvik

Rights: Lilla Piratförlaget

Rights sold: Danish, German, English, Korean, Italian, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Complex, Czech, Faroese

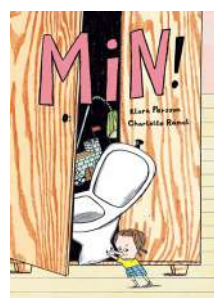


Foto: Elisabeth Dunker



Highest! (ill. Charlotte Ramel), picture book, 32 p., 2023, Lilla Piratförlaget

Eva is no regular baby. She loves to climb so much that her mums decide to build her a climbing frame that reaches higher, higher, higher. But how will the mums get down again? *Highest!* is a warm and humorous book about focusing on what you do best.



Mine! (ill. Charlotte Ramel), picture book, 32 p., 2022, Lilla Piratförlaget

Sally doesn't want Nico to play with her favourite toys. "We'll put them in the cupboard for now," says Mum. Nico isn't allowed to jump on Sally's bed, so it had better be stowed away too. Oh, by the way, can Nico borrow Mum? Lots of humour about young children's reluctance to share!



Go Away, Stupid Night, picture book, 32 p., 2021, Lilla Piratförlaget

Vivi is busy crafting when day turns to evening. "Go away, stupid night," Vivi shouts, and night fades away. But when Vivi wants to sleep, night is still nowhere to be found. Where could it be? A tender book about getting help from good friends and making friends with night.

JOHAN RUNDBERG

(b. 1973)

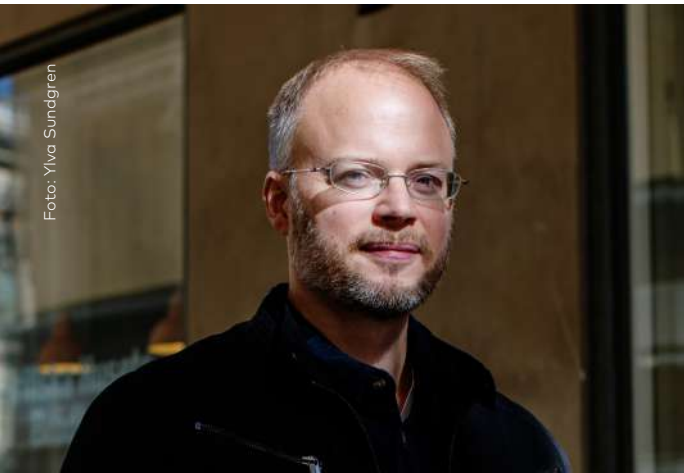


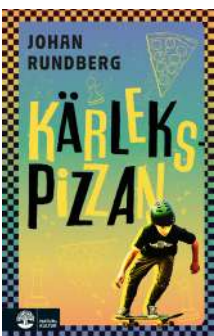
Foto: Ylva Sundgren



Total Refusal, children's fiction, 207 p., 2023, Natur & Kultur
What will Leo do all summer? An unexpected turn of events leads her to join a punk band, but what's the point when Grandma Jackie, a punk icon, has dementia? A story about Alzheimer's, punk, friendship, and what to do when your brain never wants to go to sleep.



The Night Raven, children's fiction (series of 5 titles), 183 p., 2021, Natur & Kultur
It's 1880 in Stockholm and death lurks everywhere. Mika and the orphanage will struggle to survive this winter. But at least the Night Raven, a serial killer, is finally off the streets... or is he? Mika's unique ability to notice details gets her recruited to Detective Hoff's murder investigation.



The Love Pizza, children's fiction, 180 p., 2014, Natur & Kultur
Is Movits a natural raw talent, born to skate among the best? Absolutely not. But don't underestimate the beginner's luck. He manages to perform one of the hardest skateboard tricks there is and a TV show wants him to repeat the trick before a live audience. Will he be able to pull it off once more?

It is with a sense of mounting intensity that one reads most of the books by Johan Rundberg, which have won awards and reader raves in Sweden. For years, Rundberg has demonstrated his versatility with a string of successful titles for different ages. As readers, we come close to all of his characters, whether their struggles take place in the arena of everyday life or on the stage of historical adventure. Inexorably, they are all led to the moments in life when friendships are tried, tangled love affairs must be solved with courage and honesty, and justice and survival go hand in hand.

Sometimes the dramatic climax occurs at the beginning. *The Love Pizza* opens on a terrified boy named Movits as he stands in front of a huge ramp, surrounded by TV cameras, holding his new skateboard. He seems to have been plucked up and set down here by an invisible, unstoppable hand. The light and lively touch and the dramatic verve are all typical of Rundberg's narrative style.

In *The Night Raven*, a detective story, Rundberg enters a new, darker world. The era is the late 1800s. Mika is an orphan girl with keen powers of observation. When an old, down-at-heel constable notices her skills, she joins the hunt for a mysterious killer. Rundberg paints a meticulous portrait of a frozen Stockholm and its less fortunate residents, making us feel both the chill and the heroism through the pages. *Total Refusal* brings yet another shift of register as we meet Leo, a school-weary 11-year-old. She is looking for a place she can feel life to the fullest and she finds it in music. Meanwhile, something strange is going on with her punk grandmother, and her mother is trying to hold her emotions in check. Rundberg lets us join his characters as they discover new worlds in the transition between childhood and adolescence.

Thomas Evertsson

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KRISTINA SIGUNSDOTTER

(b. 1981)

Cricket Karlsson is 11 and in fifth grade. She lives with her mum and dad, and all in all, life is good. Except that she just had chickenpox. And she is losing her best friend, Nour, to the horse girls. And her beloved Aunt Frannie, the artist who dreams of riding a horse by moonlight, has lost her joy and is in the hospital. Meanwhile, Cricket's mother is walking around sighing at everything, paleo dieting, and (just possibly) nursing a case of unrequited love for her childhood crush, Mats from Madras.

The Secrets of Cricket Karlsson is a darkly funny diary book in which Kristina Sigunsdotter and Ester Eriksson give a tender accounting of what it feels like to be 11 years old and struggling with setbacks and lost friends. In the book, Cricket lists all the secrets she has told to Nour, which she is now afraid that the horse girls will find out about. We also learn about Cricket's dreams of being an artist, which are personified in Aunt Frannie, and what it feels like to be alone with anxiety and insomnia.

Ester Eriksson's warm and slightly sprawling illustrations work in beautiful harmony with the fast-paced and very funny text by Kristina Sigunsdotter.

Comparisons between the Cricket Karlsson books and Barbro Lindgren's *Sparrow* series are unsurprising. Both authors describe the same headstrong perspective on life and the same feeling of not really fitting in and harbouring an inner fragility. The Cricket books are multi-layered, full of wisdom and identification. They stick to the child's viewpoint through thick and thin. Last but not least, they convey hope: an element that is all but essential in what are, at times, sorrowful reflections.

Hanna Jedvik

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Foto: Anthony Hill



Bim's World (ill. Jenny Jordahl), book series, 3 titles, Natur & Kultur

Most children live a big part of their lives at school, and Bim is no exception. Bim's World is a book about having different kinds of friends, carrying a soup of tears in your chest, and hiding out with someone you like. Sigunsdotter's characters and situations will evoke real emotion in readers.



The Secrets of Cricket Karlsson (ill. Ester Eriksson), book series, 3 titles, children's fiction, 107 p., 2020, Natur & Kultur

A bright and fearless novel about Cricket, who is trying to win back her best friend and help her depressed aunt get her joy back. In her diary, Cricket shares her secret thoughts. With punkish and surprising comic-style illustrations, this is a liberating and unexpected story about (not) fitting in.

GUSTAV TEGBY

(b. 1980)

Foto: Kajsa Göransson



Army of Orphans (Changelings series, 3 titles), 11+ fiction, 260 p., 2022 and When Giants Awake (Changelings series, 3 titles), 11+ fiction, 253 p., 2023, Rabén & Sjögren

A trilogy set in an enchanted version of contemporary Stockholm, where beings from Norse mythology live hidden in our midst, and magic is always just around the corner. A fast-paced, touching, sometimes scary and often funny story about heartbreak, identity and facing your own failures.



Touched, YA fiction, 404 p., 2019, Rabén & Sjögren

With a fondness for everything weird, darkly funny and noir-ish, Gustav Tegby finds new ways to explore the best and the worst in humanity through the lens of the supernatural. Elin was born with an incredible ability. Or rather, a curse. Everyone she touches dies – at least according to her father.



Gustav Tegby has his first home in the theatre. He has written more than 30 plays for renowned theatres across Sweden, and his deep knowledge of stagecraft shines through his books for young readers, where he sets up thrilling plots and multifaceted characters in a few deft strokes.

Tegby's *Changelings* series merges Norse mythology and fantasy tropes with storylines that unfold in an urban setting. In book one, *Army of Orphans*, Dorian learns that he is a changeling – an elf. Throughout the series, Dorian and his friends battle evil in a variety of ways to save the earth from destruction. The surprising twists come thick and fast as they strive to fulfil their mission. Tegby knows just how to hook even the reluctant reader – the one interested less in language and characterization, more in thrills and adventure.

Tegby's experience as a playwright also shows in the short story collection "Fear: Eleven Horror Stories for Middle Graders" (2017). Tegby has a knack for introducing, developing, and concluding these hair-raising little tales that are each just a few pages long. The stories are a masterclass in the art of capturing readers who often don't have the ability to immerse themselves in a long work of literature. Tegby works with literary ingredients that will be familiar to many, but also adds elements that echo, at least for Swedish readers, earlier generations of storytellers like John Bauer or Elsa Beskow. For readers outside Sweden, these fairy-tale elements – magical beings that pad or prowl through the fields and forests of Sweden past – are likely to feel exotic and exciting.

Martin Hellström

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ALMA THÖRN

(b. 1990)

Alma Thörn's work has a sense of lived experience that never falters. Her comic book *Always Goodbye* also flows naturally into an autobiographical tradition within Swedish comic literature. Keenly attuned to the drama of the everyday, Thörn favours lingering scenes where close-ups of facial expressions and body gestures work to powerful psychological effect.

The POV in *Always Goodbye* shifts between 12-year-old Alma and her mother, Johanna. Both are shaped by childhood experiences of divorce. When Alma finds a diary written by her mum when she was Alma's age, we step with Alma into the sepia-toned 1970s. Just like Alma, Johanna had to listen while her parents argued and got caught in the middle of their disagreements. Yet it still seems Johanna doesn't understand anything. On a school break, Alma is sent down to the west coast to visit her dad. It's a long way from home up north and her best friend, Lina. When are you old enough to decide for yourself who you want to be with?

Thörn attends with psychological precision to the way this younger version of herself tries to navigate without stepping on anyone's toes. Alma's grandma says: "Pull yourself together!" Yet the knot in Alma's stomach won't go away. Thörn puts us in her characters' heads; we feel a finely tuned sense of intimacy with them and share in the uncertainty of their situation. Her narrative offers no ready answers. Instead, it gains power from Alma's ambivalence.

In *Wednesdays at the Pool*, a book for first-year readers, Thörn returns to the theme of how hard it can be hard for a child to make themselves heard and understood in a world full of well-meaning but inflexible grown-ups. Her visual narrative, with warm, full-colour illustrations, again invites us directly into the mind of a child: this time, a child with lots of worries about learning to swim.

Martin Hellström

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Wednesdays at the Pool,
children's fiction, 122 p., 2023,
Alfabeta

Annika's class has swimming lessons every week. Annika knows how to swim, but only when she can touch the bottom. The grown-ups don't get it. Only her best friend Naima understands. How will Annika make it through the whole school year in the big pool? A humorous story about fear and courage.

SARA VILLIUS

(b. 1976)



Scissors (ill. Aslak Gurholt) picture book, 32 p., 2020, Rabén & Sjögren

This pair of scissors wants to cut! Not everything, of course. Not fingernails. Yes to string, grass, leaves, sticks and doll's hair. But what about your own hair? Or chopping away at the table? Scissors is a funny, liberating tale for young readers.



The Snake (ill. Mari Kanstad Johnsen), picture book, 32 p., 2018, Rabén & Sjögren

What does Snake eat? Snake is tired and hungry and is dreaming about his next meal. But what does Snake eat? A mouse? A sheep? Or maybe even an elephant? Look and guess! This is an interactive book with lots of humour and beautiful illustrations.



The Night (ill. Mari Kanstad Johnsen), picture book, 32 p., 2017, Rabén & Sjögren

What happens when night comes? What does the moon do? Where does the fox go? A wonderful book about what happens at night: the adventures of an owl, the sounds of the wind and a girl who bakes blueberry pie even though it's late.



Sara Villius has never forgotten how children relate to the world. The child's gaze and children's play spill across her pages, and in collaboration with skilful illustrators, she creates stories that suck you in and make you want to read them again, immediately. An example is *Scissors* (2020), with its simple but suspenseful prose. The scissors in this book have a life of their own; they do things their owner can't control. We have to double-check: did the scissors do something not allowed? Reading Villius' stories out loud, the child's voice comes through. Her prose is considering and declarative, like a child explaining the world – with attitude, self-confidence, and awe.

Villius has run a publishing company, been a youth arts producer for Kulturhuset Stadsteatern in Stockholm, and written for radio, film and television. She debuted as an author in 2002 with a book for adults. Her first picture book followed in 2018. She currently also teaches creative writing.

Villius has worked with illustrator Mari Kanstad Johnsen on three of her four picture books to date. Kanstad Johnsen is a master of the art of disorderly perfection, and her pictures, although digitally coloured, have a free, random look. *Scissors* is brilliantly illustrated by Aslak Gurholt, whose pictures for the story have a graphic look, as if cut out by scissors. Both of Villius' illustrators capture the humour and subtlety that give her stories a life beyond the page.

Take a child by the hand and come along as we go through the wood, into the rooms, and duck for snake's teeth!

Linnéa Krylén

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EMMA VIRKE

(b. 1974)

Emma Virke has a rare ability to jump between the roles of author and illustrator, track down the right partners to realize her ideas, and make picture book art that transcends the perceived limitations of the form. Since her debut in 2009, her unflagging creativity and pure writerly joy have given readers many new friends to long for, be surprised by, and keep coming back to.

Since she was little, Emma Virke has liked to make and experiment with pictures, but it took her a few years working as a web designer and journalist to find her way back to her childhood dream: creating her own stories. Since her debut, she has written and/or illustrated some 20 picture books, and step by step she has challenged and played with the possibilities of the form. In *A Sour Lemon*, physical holes let the reader contribute two fingers to help a banana play the drums. In the surprising (to say the least) *The Present*, the innovation lies in the book's form as a whole. Virke has also made use of accordion formats, cut-outs, and ingenious flipping-the-pages effects.

In 2013, Virke was one of 31 illustrators representing Sweden at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. She has received and been nominated for multiple prestigious Swedish prizes. Virke holds workshops based on her books for both children and adults; she also gives lectures and works with artistic interpretation in the public sphere. Her fine art is also sold at galleries.

Emma Virke is always both funny and serious, down-to-earth and lyrical, playful and instinctively true to the child's point of view.

Linnéa Krylén

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Foto: Gustav Grall



***The Present* (together with Emelie Östergren), picture book, 64 p., 2023, Lilla Piratförlaget**

A wonderful tactile experience that transcends time and genre, celebrating the picture book as a physical object while refusing to be confined by its covers. Through holes inventively placed in the book's pages, the characters in the stories travel in and out of each other's fictional worlds.



***An Angry Orange* (a book series about fruits and feelings, 5 titles), board books, 18 p., 2023, Lilla Piratförlaget**

Cut-outs and surprises appear when you turn the pages. Interactive and fun. These popular books really invite play, repeated readings, and discussions about emotions.



***My Mum Is Faster Than Yours!* (ill. Joanna Hellgren), picture book with fold-out spreads, 32 p., 2021, Lilla Piratförlaget**

Two children are waiting for their mums to come pick them up. Which mum will get to the nursery first? The story turns into a race like no other – with all kinds of vehicles, fights with sharks, flights with an umbrella and a pair of really fast running shoes!

CONTACT

Alfabeta Bokförlag

www.alfabeta.se
AnnaKaisa Danielsson
annakaisa.danielsson@alfabeta.se

Bonnier Rights

www.bonnierrights.se
Agnes Gustafsson
agnes.gustafsson@bonnierrights.se

Grand Agency

www.grandagency.se
Jenny Khayon
jenny@grandagency.se
Rights contact for Johan Ehn
Jenni Brunn
jenni@grandagency.se

Koja Agency

www.kojaagency.com
Carin Bacho
carin.bacho@kojaagency.com

Lilla Piratförlaget/Gilla Böcker

www.lillapiratforlaget.se
AnnaKaisa Danielsson
annakaisa.danielsson@alfabeta.se

Opal Agency

www.opal.se
Melina Nordstrand
melina@opal.se

Rabén & Sjögren Agency

www.rabensjogrenagency.se
Lillevi Cederin
lillevi.cederin@rabensjogren.se
Linda Altrov Berg
linda.altrovberg@norstedts.se

Salomonsson Agency

www.salomonssonagency.se
Linda Andersson
linda@salomonssonagency.com

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Amanda Jonsson

Writers

Linnéa Krylén (b. 1987) has a degree in children's culture and is an author, illustrator, art educator, and teacher of writing at Linnaeus University. She lives and works in the country outside Strängnäs.

Hanna Jedvik (b 1975) is an author and arts journalist who lives in Gothenburg on Sweden's west coast. She writes for both young adult and adult readers and freelances in the arts and culture sector.

Martin Hellström (b. 1979) is a senior lecturer at Linnaeus University and a reviewer for Dagens Nyheter. He lives in Vadstena.

Thomas Evertsson (b. 1985) is a librarian and critic and the editor for the magazine Kritiker.



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