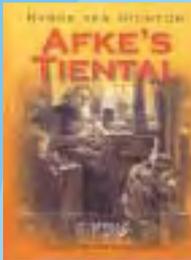
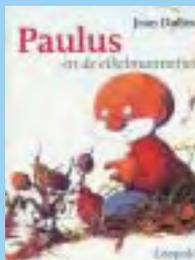


12 Children's Classics

from Holland



Nynke van Hichtum



Johan Fabricius

An Rutgers van der Loeff



Jean Dulieu

Annie M.G. Schmidt

Jan Terlouw



Paul Biegel

Thea Beckman

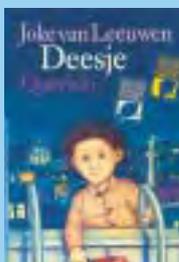
Tonke Dragt

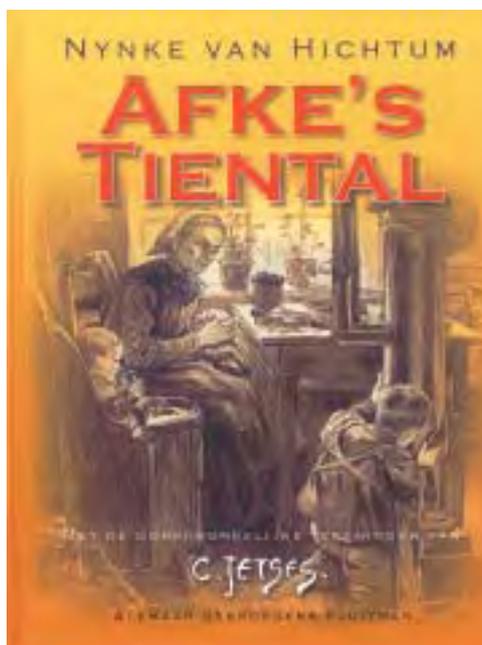


Guus Kuijer

Toon Tellegen

Joke van Leeuwen





Nynke van Hichtum

Afke's Ten

A*FKE'S TIENTAL* (Afke's Ten, 1903) by Nynke van Hichtum is one of the first great literary works of the twentieth century for young readers in the Netherlands. The book is a lively, penetrating sketch of country life in a

The importance of Nynke van Hichtum is still evident today. This is illustrated by a work of art in Nes, the Frisian village where she was born in 1860, a clergyman's daughter; a statue of Afke with her ten children in Warga (Friesland); the internationally praised film *Nynke* (2001, Pieter Verhoeff) about Van Hichtum's failed marriage to Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the renowned leader of the Dutch social-democratic workers' party; the two-yearly 'Nienke van Hichtumprijs'; and Aukje Holtrop's fascinating biography (2005).

In addition to writing 'Frisian stories', Van Hichtum adapted many folktales from different cultures and was a leading reviewer of children's books, calling for good style, beautiful form, easy accessibility and inspiring content, for adults as well. Van Hichtum kept on publishing until the year of her death (1939). Her oeuvre, with *Afke's tiental* as its high point, will last for centuries.

poverty-stricken Frisian family of farm labourers, consisting of father Marten (an agricultural worker who is dependent on seasonal work), mother Afke and ten children from nought to nineteen: a sketch with its origins in the family stories that Van Hichtum's maid Hiltje Feenstra told her and which is close to the reality of the time, without being dominated by the degrading poverty in which working-class families lived back then. In her typically Frisian tale, with its evocative descriptions of the lake landscape of northern Friesland and focus on Friesland's language and traditions, Van Hichtum convincingly emphasises Afke's devotion and love for her family, the sense of solidarity between the ten children and the family's optimistic attitude to life, subtly demonstrating that even a poor life can be 'rich'.

Afke's tiental still touches readers even today, as can be seen from the sixtieth reprint with the original illustrations, in which all of the characters are depicted in a believable and human way: the children have their arguments and petty jealousies. Mother Afke, seriously weakened after the birth of her youngest 'poppet', sometimes has difficulty keeping her spirits up in the one-room house, where everyone crams in to spend the night. And father Marten, when on an exciting summertime sailing trip, sees a boat belonging to rich people and has a painful realisation: 'Oh, what a difference – all that abundance there, and then our poverty.' But he says nothing, 'because he didn't want to spoil his children's enjoyment of their holiday.'

So poverty does play a role, albeit it a subordinate one, in spite of Van Hichtum's marriage to Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the militant socialist leader. Van Hichtum, a born storyteller, was opposed to writing with a political slant and wanted only to write about ten children who, even though they are inevitably confronted with life's harsh realities on a daily basis, still clearly remain children in the way they act and the things they want. And this is precisely what made *Afke's tiental* such a timeless, inspiring literary monument.

MIRJAM NOORDUIJN

Afke's Ten immediately received wide recognition as a special story, both for children and for adult readers.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Even 86 years on, *Afke's Ten* can still be read to children with great success.

HAARLEMS DAGBLAD

Without exception, children find the story so beautiful it almost brings a tear to the eye, as librarians have noted.

DE VOLKSKRANT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Afke's tiental (1903, 159 pp)
Illustrations Cornelis Jetses
Age: 10+

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Johan Fabricius

Bontekoe's Cabin Boys

ON THE QUAY in the historic town of Hoorn, three bronze cabin boys gaze out over the wide waters of what was once the Zuiderzee. They are listening to 'the voice of the sea, which entices and intoxicates'. They are Hajo, Padde and Rolf, the cabin boys of shipmaster Willem Ijsbrantsz Bontekoe

(1587–1657), who found fame with the publication of his ship's log about his improbable journey to Bantam (East Indies) in 1618, which he undertook in the service of the Dutch East India Company during the Golden Age.

Hajo, Padde and Rolf are now more famous than the master of their ship, thanks to one of the greatest storytellers and most prolific writers in Dutch literature, Johan Fabricius, who was inspired by Bontekoe's log to write *De scheepsjongens van Bontekoe* (Bontekoe's Cabin Boys) in 1924. This superlative, thrilling sea adventure is one of the classics of Dutch (children's) literature. At the end of 2007 a large-scale adventure film about the cabin boys is coming out.

It is, above all, their true-to-life nature and their different characters that have ensured the threesome a place in the Dutch collective memory: Hajo is romantic and dreams of adventures in far-off lands. Padde, clumsy, fat and the butt of people's jokes, is 'Hajo's shadow' and reluctantly follows his friend to sea. And Rolf, Bontekoe's nephew and an orphan, is contemplative and calm, and often rescues the others from predicaments.

And they certainly get into plenty of predicaments. Vividly and with a great sense of pace, Fabricius describes how the crew of the *Nieuw-Hoorn* is hit by storms, impenetrable fog, Spaniards, becalmed seas and scurvy, the 'dreaded enemy'. The high point is a true event: an explosion that occurs when, through Padde's fault, a candle flame spreads via a brandy barrel to the gunpowder store. The ship is blasted into a hundred thousand pieces, amidst 'hissing and cracking' it disappears into the sea.

When the cabin boys are washed ashore on Sumatra, they lose Bontekoe and begin a perilous journey through the interior of Sumatra (the mysterious atmosphere of which is captured perfectly by Fabricius, a native of Indonesia) to Bantam, Java. There, they are reunited with the survivors and with Bontekoe. They arrive back in Hoorn on New Year's Eve 1620, in the spot where they are still standing on the quayside today, thanks to Fabricius' exceptional talent for storytelling.

MIRJAM NOORDUIJN

Johan Fabricius (1899–1981) combined his various talents and character traits in his acclaimed historical stories, novels (for young readers) and plays: his desire for adventure and his wanderlust provided him with a variety of subjects. His evocative skill, which he honed during his training as a realistic figurative painter at the Academy of Art in The Hague, inspired him to create wonderfully detailed, atmospheric descriptions. And his gently romantic nature provided his realistic stories with drama and with fantastic characters.

Fabricius was an independent spirit. With the exception of literary greats such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevski and his contemporary J. Slauerhoff, he took inspiration from no one. He chose his own path, travelled all over the world and was not only an author, but also a correspondent for the BBC and *The Times*. And meanwhile, he tirelessly continued to write.

Everything about this book is good: the pace, the sense of humour, the way the dialogue races along, and the tension mounts with every page.

HART VAN HOLLAND

This book succeeds in combining spectacular adventure with historical value.

FABRICIUS

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De scheepsjongens van de Bontekoe
(1923, 398 pp)
Illustrations Dick de Wilde
Age: 8+

FACT

Being filmed; release date: autumn 2007

PUBLISHER

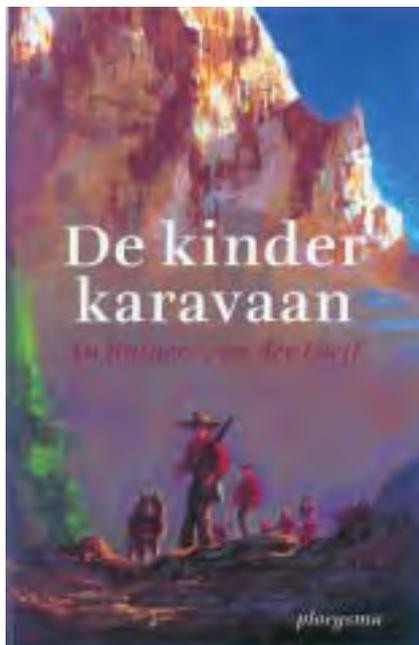
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TRANSLATIONS

Czech, German



An Rutgers van der Loeff

The Children's Caravan

IN 1844, a gang of starving children arrived at a missionary station in Oregon. With their father, mother and a large group of pioneers they had been heading west to try their luck. But fate harshly intervened and their parents died. When the rest of the

pioneers wanted to deviate from the original plan and go to California, the children, under the leadership of thirteen-year-old John, decided to fulfil the wish of their parents and to make the journey to Oregon all by themselves.

An Rutgers van der Loeff read this report in a Swiss newspaper sent to her by a friend. The incident so captivated her that she began to delve into the history. The result was *De kinderkaravaan* (The Children's Caravan, 1949) her first book for children, for which she earned a great deal of praise both at home and far beyond. In her story the author describes how the brave John takes responsibility for caring for his younger brother, sisters and baby *Indepentia* and leads them across the rugged natural landscape of America. On their march westwards, the children have a testing time, having to contend with quicksand, bears, a forest fire, hunger and thirst. It is thanks mainly to John's willpower and the rock-solid belief of the other children in their older brother that they still manage to keep their spirits up under the most appalling of circumstances.

An Rutgers van der Loeff was an inspired writer. Her work shows a great sense of social justice. For her, writing meant 'standing in someone else's shoes', and in this way she brought different people and cultures closer together. She believed that children have a right to the truth and so her books were always underpinned by thorough research. Her great commitment and her ability to keep her readers on the edge of their seats with her exciting stories ensure that *De kinderkaravaan* reads like a breathtaking adventure even today.

JOUKJE AKVELD

An Rutgers van der Loeff (1910–1990), along with Annie M.G. Schmidt and Miep Diekmann, is seen as one of the pioneers of post-war children's literature. With her work, she made an important contribution to the emancipation of the children's book. Rutgers van der Loeff succeeded in writing fascinating, research-based stories for children on the most diverse subjects. Her work has frequently been translated and in 1967 was awarded the National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People. Rutgers van der Loeff made her debut as a writer of children's books with *De kinderkaravaan* in 1949. This exciting story immediately became a classic.

The Children's Caravan was Rutgers van der Loeff's first book for young readers and it is perhaps the book within her extensive oeuvre that most deserves the label of 'timeless classic'.

DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER

And still this true story about seven children who made their way across the Wild West after the death of their parents in 1844 continues to make an unforgettable impression on the reader.

PZC

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De kinderkaravaan (1949, 183 pp)
Illustrations Carl Hollander
Age: 11+

PRIZE

National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People

PUBLISHER

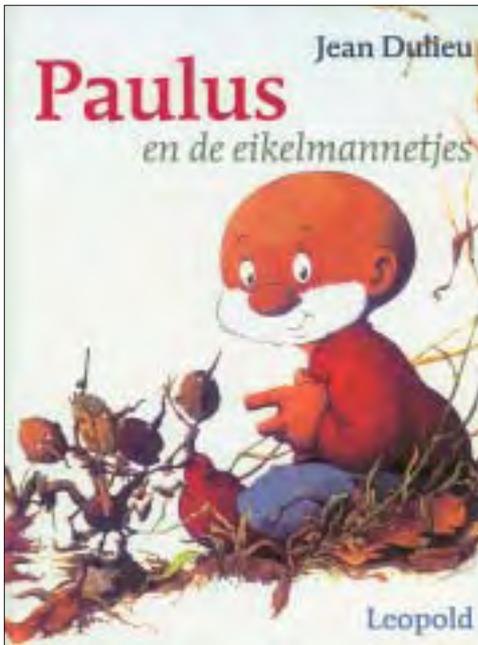
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TRANSLATIONS

English, German, Hebrew, Spanish



Jean Dulieu

Paulus and the Acorn Men

FOR ALMOST FORTY YEARS, Jean Dulieu produced the humorous adventures of his creation Paulus the Wood Gnome, without help from anyone else: they were initially published as a beautifully drawn newspaper strip (1946). Then came the puppet show, the radio play, the record,

Nature lover Jean Dulieu (1921–2006), the French translation of his real name Jan van Oort (John of the place), was an unparalleled all-round artist. After being forced to give up working as a concert violinist during the Second World War, he began a new career as a strip cartoonist, illustrator, author, puppet-maker, and actor and voice artist for radio plays. Although Dulieu created several cartoon characters and books, including the internationally acclaimed *Francesco* (1956, about St Francis of Assisi), his artistic career is inextricably linked to his creation Paulus the Wood Gnome, an important figure in the Dutch canon of children's literature. Dulieu's versatility is demonstrated by the prizes he was awarded: in 1962 he won a Golden Slate Pencil for *Paulus en de hulpsinterklaas* and an Edison for the record *Paulus is jarig*. In 1981, he was awarded the Stripschapsprijs for his oeuvre.

the serial story in magazines, the puppet TV series, the animated cartoon and the illustrated children's book.

The thirty-three Paulus books are characterised by the ingenious resonance and creativity of the language, by the sophisticated pen drawings and the bright watercolours. Every book about this slightly naive, very human wood gnome and his comical fellow woodland dwellers, Salomo the raven, the pompous owl Oehoehoeroe and the whining, pestering witch Eucalypta, is unforgettable. But *Paulus en de eikelmantjes* (Paulus and the Acorn Men, 1965) is unsurpassed.

In this humorous, philosophical adventure story about biological decay and the inescapable cycle of nature, you experience both the emptiness and the abundance of the autumn in full. Dulieu applied watercolours to an oil-paint base, creating ingenious, colourful pictures that form a mysterious, mycelium-like whole. The shrieking wind blows throughout the book. The 'rustling and stirring and shuffling' of whirling leaves can be heard on every page. As the gusts of wind rise, the 'crackles and cracks and snaps' blow in from all directions. And throughout these sentences, so resonant with autumnal sounds, the acorns constantly drop down: 'smack, bang'.

They turn out to be the empty-headed acorn men: large in number, small of wit. A magic prank by Eucalypta makes Paulus their reluctant king, and he has to bring order to their kingdom. However, this turns out to be a hopeless task. Paulus' wind-blown subjects whirl around like enthusiastic ne'er-do-wells, dragging him against his will into lots of woodland adventures.

After a visit to the Old Oak, the omniscient Great Father of the acorn men, 'or Family Tree, call him what you want', Paulus realises that 'the acorn men's sense of direction forces them into a fatal cycle' that controls their entire life. Following the death of one of the acorn men, he understands that they only gain any purpose when they're buried and rise again from the ground.

Paulus, suffering from homesickness, realises that being king is pointless and, in spite of certain pangs of regret, this changed wood gnome leaves the 'world of the acorn men': an enchanting world to be revisited every autumn.

MIRJAM NOORDUIJN

Paulus the wood gnome, the magnum opus of Jean Dulieu, also remains invincible. Dulieu is a great narrator, filling his stories with fairytale mysteries and intrigues that continue to thrill young readers.

DE VOLKSKRANT

His rich imagination and gentle humour express a great sense of love for humankind and a positive attitude to life. Dangers and wickedness will always remain, but there's always a solution to be found.

HET ABC VAN DE JEUGDLITERATUUR

PUBLISHING DETAILS

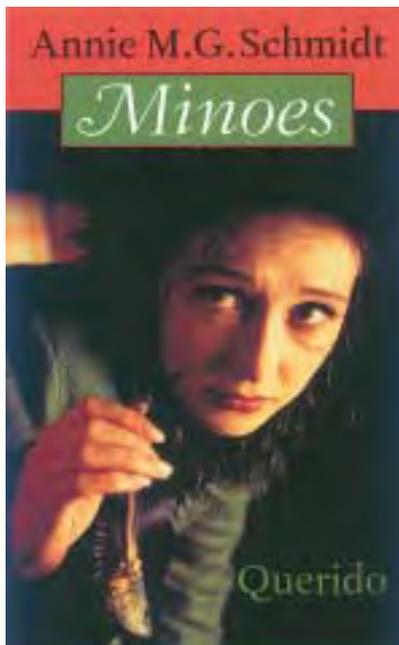
Paulus en de eikelmantjes (1965, 239 pp)
Illustrations Jean Dulieu
Age: 5+

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Annie M.G. Schmidt

Minoes

MINOES IS A GLORIOUS, original and funny story. The theme, the openness of the main characters and the choice of words – all of these elements are equally unexpected. As in her other books, Annie Schmidt allows the weak to triumph against authority.

In this story, the tetchy, grubby stray cat gets all of the attention and protection and the most powerful man in town gets it in the neck. *Minoes* is also the book that Annie Schmidt loved best and the one for which she won a Silver Slate Pencil in 1971. It has been translated into at least twelve languages and was successfully filmed in 2001.

Pussycat *Minoes* has become a lady, at least for the main part. Even as a woman, she still has some cat-like traits: she nuzzles up to people, she purrs, hisses, scratches and climbs trees. And that's where the rather dopey journalist Tibbe first finds her, up a tree! Tibbe always writes about cats; he's actually too shy to gather real news for himself. He's given one more chance by his editor-in-chief – if he can't quickly produce some real news, then he'll lose his job. Tibbe next finds the peculiar Miss *Minoes* in his own kitchen and he gives her shelter – in exchange she passes on news that she finds out from the cats on the roof. Tibbe gets to keep his job! One day the cats discover that Mr Ellemet, factory manager and beloved local benefactor is actually the villain of the piece. Miss *Minoes* ensures that Tibbe gets all the information he needs for an exclusive article in the newspaper. But then the whole town turns against him and Tibbe still gets fired, because writing an offensive article about an upstanding member of the community is simply not done. Miss *Minoes* and the cat news service refuse to put up with this! Justice must prevail and Tibbe must get his job back. Finally, however, *Minoes* is struck by doubts and hesitations, because although she wants to be a human, her own feline world is still calling to her...

DORINE LOUWERENS

After a career at the public library in Vlissingen, Annie M.G. Schmidt (1911–1995) went to work at the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* in 1946, where her talent was discovered. She started writing for the children's page. In 1950, *Het fluitketeltje*, her first collection of poetry, was published. From that moment on, she produced a veritable flood of publications for young and old. She received a great deal of acclaim for her work. In 1965, she was the first person to receive the National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People, now called the Theo Thijssenprijs. And she won the Constantijn Huygensprijs for her whole oeuvre in 1987. But the most wonderful moment came in 1988 when Astrid Lindgren presented her with the top international prize for children's books: the Hans Christian Andersen Prize.

Annie is not a writer, she's a miracle!

GUUS KUIJER

Annie M.G. Schmidt's books deserve preferential treatment. Books of this quality are a rare thing.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Minoes (1970, 150 pp)
Illustrations Carl Hollander
Age: 10+

PRIZE & OTHER FACTS

Silver Slate Pencil 1971
Filmed in 2001, released in several countries

PUBLISHER

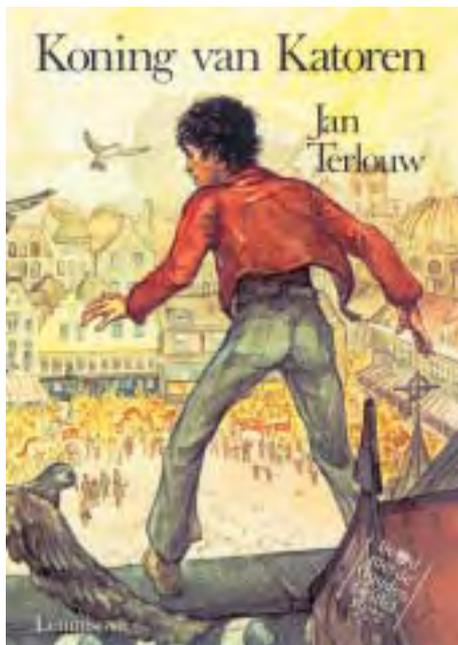
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TRANSLATIONS

Bulgarian, English, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Latvian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish



Jan Terlouw

How To Become King

THE MERRY OLD KING of Katoren has died and there's no heir to the throne. Six sour ministers rule the land and claim that they're looking for a new king, but nothing happens – for seventeen years. Then suddenly

there's a boy standing at the door of the royal palace who was born on the night the king died. This boy, Stach, has firmly resolved to become the new king of Katoren and he asks the six ministers what he must do in order to be considered for the role. The ministers, afraid of losing their splendid position at court, give the boy seven almost impossible tasks, which can be brought to a successful conclusion only by one who possesses kingly attributes such as wisdom, courage and self-sacrifice. The six ministers are convinced that Stach will fall at the first hurdle, but he turns out to have an amazing amount of persistence and ingenuity.

Koning van Katoren (How To Become King, 1971) reads like a modern fairytale. The six ministers, with names that reflect their personalities, appear to have stepped right out of the enchanting world of the Brothers Grimm, but the seven tasks that they dream up for the young Stach are surprisingly similar to the problems of our modern society. The situation in Smogg, for example, where a dragon is suffocating the inhabitants of the city with its poisonous breath, is not much different from the smog-filled cities of our own time. And circumstances in Ekumeni, where Stach has to bring twelve shambling churches together to form one stable church, seem even more relevant in these days of religious wars than when the book was first published. In a vivid, often humorous style, Terlouw describes how Stach is able to complete all of the tasks successfully and finally become king of Katoren. The fairytale character of the story, combined with the plain, contemporary language, make *Koning van Katoren* a timeless classic.

JOUKJE AKVELD

Jan Terlouw (b. 1931) made his debut as an author of children's books in 1970. He was for many years the leader of D66, the left-wing liberal party. His social conscience can be seen in his books, in which he often considers current issues in his exciting, vivid writing style. Terlouw's work was twice awarded the Golden Slate Pencil, has been translated into 17 languages and has never been out of print since publication. *Koning van Katoren* has been reprinted 54 times; over 350,000 copies have been sold. The book was turned into a successful musical in 2000. Kasander Film Company is currently working on a film version, an international co-production that should be in the cinemas in 2008.

The writer masterfully creates a witty parody of our society, in the form of an exciting fairytale.

ELSEVIERS LITERAIR SUPPLEMENT

Terlouw possesses a vivid style, a delightful storytelling voice and a great imagination. (...) Terlouw, the W.F. Hermans of literature for young readers!

VRIJ NEDERLAND

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Koning van Katoren (1971, 168 pp)
Age: 10+

PRIZES & OTHER FACTS

Golden Slate Pencil, 1972
The Austrian Children's Book Prize, 1973
European Award, Province of Trento, Italy 1973
Being filmed; release date: 2008

PUBLISHER

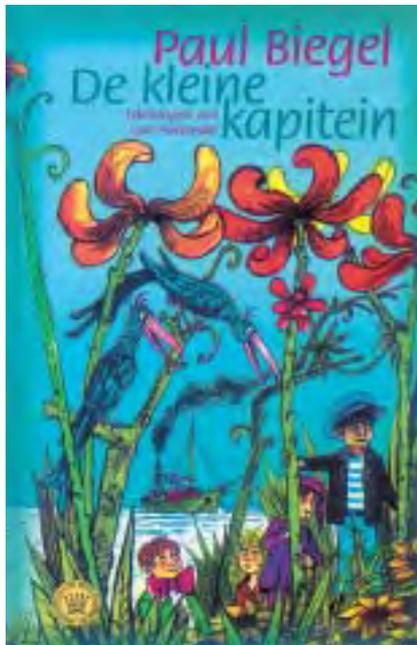
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TRANSLATIONS

Basque, Catalan, English, French, Gaelic, Italian, Slovakian, Spanish



Paul Biegel

The Little Captain

DE KLEINE KAPITEIN (The Little Captain, 1970) is one of the most appealing children's stories ever to have been written in Dutch. Rarely has the spirit of a nine-year-old (boy or girl, it doesn't matter which) been understood so

completely and been quite so irresistibly enchanted.

Just imagine it happened to you. You live in a village by the sea and, one day, waves as high as a tower block dump a ship onto the dunes. And from that ship, the *Neverleak*, crawls a boy who says that he's the captain. Of course you're going to help him repair the *Neverleak*, and wait with him for the huge wave to turn around and get his boat afloat once again.

And then, while all the other children are asleep, that special storm begins to rise. Tubby, Marinka and Timid Tony are the only ones awake and they go with the Little Captain. Far away from school and parents, they have the craziest adventures on the island of Great and Growing, and visit a fire-spitting mountain and a ghost town built on stilts. And Biegel wouldn't be Biegel if there weren't a thread running through the story to tie everything together.

However, this colourful, fairytale Odyssey for children was certainly not Biegel's favourite book. Although it was probably his best-selling title and the one that children most appreciated, later in life he was sometimes rather grouchy about his most adventurous creations, perhaps because they were so much more light-hearted than his more profound masterworks.

He was wrong about this, however, because the masterly style of this book really is a match for his other titles. And *De kleine kapitein* is also infused with elements that typify Biegel's work: the desire to go off on an adventure and yet, at the same time, being scared of the idea; the uncomplicated world of boyhood, contrasted with threats from the big outside world; and the fear of becoming an adult, which in his books is always just about, once again, averted.

PJOTR VAN LENTEREN

Paul Biegel (1925–2006) is an author who already has a certain reputation abroad. His work has won all the possible prizes in the Netherlands and has been translated into many languages. The best-known titles are *Het sleutelkruid*, *De kleine kapitein*, *De tuinen van Dorr*, *De rode prinses* and *De twaalf rovers*. Biegel actually wanted to become a concert pianist, but he did not have sufficient talent for the conservatory. He became a journalist and learned to write stories in the cartoon workshop of Marten Toonder. He wrote over sixty books and had the same kind of status in the Netherlands as Roald Dahl in Great Britain. There were two sequels to *De kleine kapitein*: *De kleine kapitein in het land van Waan en Wijs* (1973) and *De kleine kapitein en de schat van Schrik en Vreze* (1975).

The Little Captain helps every child some of the way through the sea of life en route to the island of 'Great and Growing'. Fantastic.

JEUGDBOEKENGIDS

The language fizzles and sparkles and is packed with jokes, rhymes and words that don't yet exist.

DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De kleine kapitein (1970, 128 pp)
Illustrations Carl Hollander
Age: 6+

PRIZE

Golden Slate Pencil, 1972

PUBLISHER

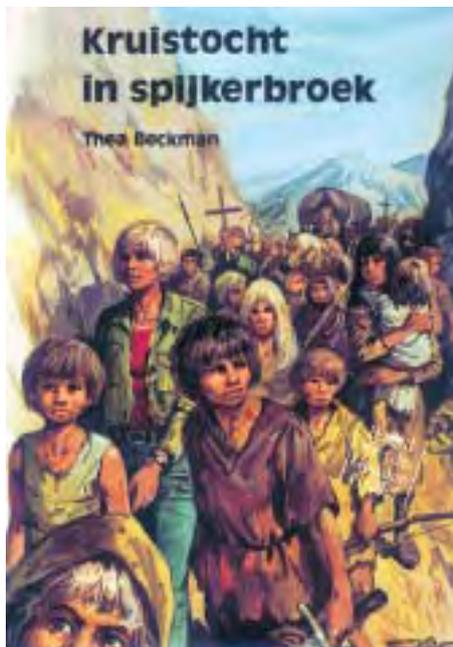
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TRANSLATIONS

Afrikaans, Danish, English, French, German, Greek, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish



Thea Beckman

Crusade in Jeans

IN THE NETHERLANDS, the big story of autumn 2006 was the long-awaited film version of Thea Beckman's classic *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* (*Crusade in Jeans*, 1973). This film, an international co-production by Kasander Film

Company, attracted an audience of over 400,000 and was selected for the film festival in Berlin, where it competed for the Crystal Bear for the best children's film.

Kruistocht in spijkerbroek came out in 1973 and represented Thea Beckman's breakthrough as an author of books for young people. The story is about the 15-year-old Dolf Wega, who travels in a time machine and ends up in the middle of a children's crusade in the year 1212. He looks in bewilderment at the eight thousand bare-footed children who are singing and praying their way to Jerusalem. The crusade is led by two monks and by the shepherd boy Nicolaas, who has received from God the task of liberating the Holy Land from the Saracens.

The organisation of the army of children is in complete chaos. The children hardly have anything to eat and many of them are sick and weak. With his twentieth-century knowledge, Dolf begins to organise the crusade. Thanks to his organisational talent, he succeeds in leading the army of children over the Alps and they safely reach the beach at Genoa. There Nicolaas is to part the sea, so that the children can walk to the Holy Land. But Dolf doesn't believe the sea will listen to Nicolaas. He suspects that the monks have other plans for the children, but what kind of plans...?

Kruistocht in spijkerbroek is a breathtakingly exciting book, packed with adventure. The power of the story lies in the fact that Dolf is looking at the Middle Ages through modern eyes. His astonishment, admiration, and occasional incomprehension for the way of life of people almost 800 years ago ensure that the reader is easily able to identify with him. Beckman's epic storytelling style and the compelling character of the story do the rest – and generations of children have now read the book.

JOUKJE AKVELD

Thea Beckman (1923–2004) is seen as the most important twentieth-century Dutch writer of historical children's books. *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* was the first book that she set in the past. Many more were to follow, including her best-selling trilogy about the Hundred Years' War. *Kruistocht in spijkerbroek* immediately made Beckman one of the most popular authors of children's books of her time. The book was awarded the Golden Slate Pencil in 1974 and won the European Prize for the Best Historical Children's Book in 1976. Translations have been published in 19 countries. The book has now reached its 82nd reprint and over half a million copies have been sold.

Quite simply, everything about this book is good.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Even combined, all of the prizes for children's books that the Netherlands has to offer, cannot reflect the value of this book.

HAAGSCHE COURANT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Kruistocht in spijkerbroek (1972, 363 pp)
Age: 10+

PRIZES & OTHER FACTS

Golden Slate Pencil, 1974
European Prize for the Best Historical Children's Book, 1976
Filmed: *Crusade in Jeans*, directed by Ben Sombogaart, 2006, released in Holland, England, France and Spain.

PUBLISHER

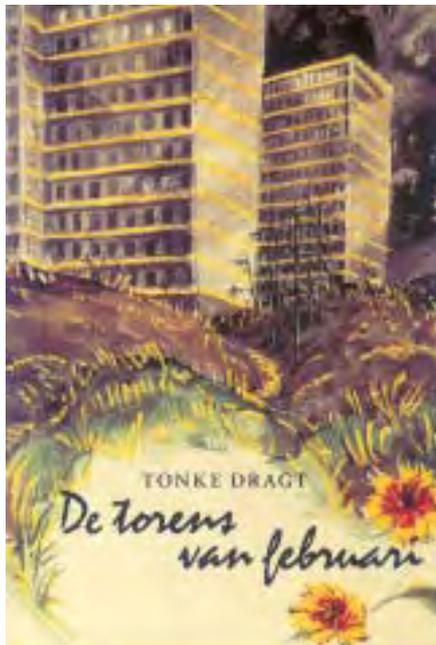
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TRANSLATIONS

Bulgarian, Catalan, English, Galician, German, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish



Tonke Dragt

The Towers of February

IN 2004, Tonke Dragt won an award for the best children's book of the previous five decades: *De brief voor de koning* (The Letter for the King, 1962). However, she received most fan mail for *De torens van februari* (The Towers of February, 1973), the incomparable science-

Tonke Dragt (b. 1930) writes in an evocative and penetrating style, displaying her fascination for time and space and her passion for other worlds. Medieval tales, oriental legends and Tolkien, Jorge Luis Borges and Ursula K. Le Guin have all inspired her. However, her most important source of inspiration was her native Indonesia, where the 'hidden forces' told their own mysterious stories.

Dragt's oeuvre, which was awarded the National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People in 1976, could be described as literature with a philosophical slant for readers of all ages. Her collection of work is varied and, in addition to numerous fantasy and fairytale stories, also contains exciting adventures such as *De Zevensprong* (adapted into a successful TV series), mysterious novels about the future (*Torenhoog en mijlen breed*) and daring literary experiments such as *Aan de andere kant van de deur*.

fiction story that according to Dragt herself is perhaps her 'best' book.

The book's large number of fans were probably won over by its classic diary form. Dragt pretends, most convincingly, that she is only the bearer of a found manuscript, which she has presented in a readable form and provided with footnotes. This clever, carefully employed literary technique increases the illusion of authenticity, confusing and intriguing the reader and creating a sense of 'this-really-might-all-be-true'.

The exciting literary thought-experiment upon which the story hinges is the idea that other worlds might exist: mirrored worlds whose different time dimensions intersect every leap year between 29 February and 1 April, creating a moment when it is possible to step from one world into another, as long as the right word, which Dragt keeps secret, is spoken.

Fourteen-year-old Tom Wit succeeds in doing this, following the old scholar Thomas Alva. However, the consequence is a loss of memory. And so when he arrives in 'world X' at the beginning of this astonishing story, Tom doesn't know who or where he is. In the vivid, familiar language of a diary, Tom provides an evocative four-part account of his quest to find his identity, the actual theme of the book, supplemented by notes added by Alva, newspaper clippings about his disappearance and a letter to his brother.

Helped by the diary entries that he wrote in our world, in mirror writing that he first has to decipher, Tom, who feels incomplete, manages to rediscover his past, together with Alva. Does Tom then decide to leave 'world X', where the failings of our society appear not to exist? Or does he choose for the here and now of 'world X' and for Téja, his great love?

Although Dragt presents her speculations in a postscript, these questions remain unanswered. Because 'the correct answer' and 'the truth' don't exist – as anyone who reads the wonderful, philosophical *De torens van februari* will wholeheartedly agree.

MIRJAM NOORDUIJN

The story has the compelling tension that Tonke Dragt is so good at creating. The reader gropes around in the unfamiliar darkness, but, step by step, this strange world becomes more clear.

KIOSK

Read this exceptional classic and allow yourself to be put on the wrong track time and again.

LEMNISCAATKRANT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

De torens van februari (1973, 201 pp)
Age: 10+

PRIZE

National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People, 1976

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TRANSLATIONS

Danish, English, German



Guus Kuijer

The Madelief book

IN ONE OF THE FIRST STORIES in the first Madelief book, *Met de poppen gooien* (Throwing Dolls), Madelief and Roos talk about the toilet. The rather prim Roos is embarrassed by the subject, whilst tomboy Madelief tries to kid her that she and her mother don't even have a toilet. But then

they ring Madelief's doorbell and hear her mother call out 'wait a moment!', followed by the roar of a flushing loo. End of story.

It's not easy to adequately describe Kuijer's way of working, but this short story, told in distinctive, supremely simple sentences and everyday language is typical of his work. What he wants to tell children is clearly there on the paper, and yet it's not there.

In Kuijer's work there's always something left to guess at, but it's never so difficult that a child can't manage to work it out. Kuijer is a master of little ironies. And for good reason. Because children, as he adamantly insisted all his life, are very good at thinking for themselves. They don't need adults to do it for them.

His realistic stories deal with modern-day problems in a light, sometimes almost satirical manner that always sets the reader thinking. His characters are never holier-than-thou superheroes, but real people. They have problems, but are able to cope with them. Madelief herself, for example, is the child of a single mother. But she's certainly not to be pitied!

It's difficult to pinpoint the best book in the series. Many people feel that the high point is the recently filmed *Krassen in het tafelblad* (Scratches on the Tabletop), in which Madelief turns out to understand the problems of her dead grandmother better than the adults in her family and, in a touching way, restores her grandfather's lust for life.

But the funny *Op je kop in de prullenbak* (On Your Head in the Rubbish Bin), about Mr. Cowboy the teacher, who would rather be something else, and *Grote mensen, daar kan je beter soep van koken* (Big People, You're Better Off Making Them into Soup), about a little boy who lives as a child squatter on an abandoned boat, are just as good. What is special is the way these books grow with the readers. You can read one of them every year. In spite of the absence of the mobile phone, these are books that could almost have been written today.

PJOTR VAN LENTEREN

Guus Kuijer (b. 1942) didn't like school, but still became a teacher. In his free time, he wrote and when he could no longer combine the two, he chose writing. His first books for adults were not a success, but his children's books were immediate best-sellers. Subsequently, he rarely tried to write for adults and that's a great loss for them! Kuijer's oeuvre is characterised by his ability to write realistically without creating a dumping ground for all modern-day ills. Kuijer repeated the success of *Madelief* with his five books about Polleke, which are just as popular with modern children as *Madelief* is with their parents. Many of Kuijer's books have been awarded the top prizes in the Netherlands and he received the National Prize for Literature for Children and Young People for his whole oeuvre in 1979, which in retrospect was perhaps a little early, but was far from undeserved.

Guus Kuijer is a monument in Dutch-language children's literature. His five books about Madelief can already be seen as classics.

DE STANDAARD DER LETTEREN

There are few writers who are able to describe so vividly what it's like to be a child – and with such skilful spontaneity.

DE VOLKSKRANT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Het grote boek van Madelief (405 pp). Contains *Met de poppen gooien* (1975), *Grote mensen, daar kan je beter soep van koken* (1976), *Op je kop in de prullenbak* (1977), *Krassen in het tafelblad* (1978), *Een hoofd vol macaroni* (1979) Illustrations Mance Post Age: 8+

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TRANSLATIONS

Met de poppen gooien (Danish, English, Estonian, French, German, Spanish,)
Grote mensen, daar kun je beter soep van koken (French, German, Spanish, Swedish)
Op je kop in de prullenbak (German, Spanish)
Krassen in het tafelblad (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish)
Hoofd vol macaroni (German)



Toon Tellegen

Not a Day Went By

ER GING GEEN DAG VOORBIJ (Not a Day Went By, 1984) is a collection of forty-nine animal stories about the squirrel, the ant, the cricket, the elephant, the bear, the whale and the other creatures who feel at home in surroundings where woodland, river, mountain, desert and sea lie close together.

The animals are all the same size and there's only one of each kind. The stories are short and exceptionally imaginative and poetic. The book has a number of recurring themes. Squirrel travels a lot; he's always looking for something, but he doesn't know what.

'Is this the other side?' asks the squirrel after swimming across the great lake. 'No, that's the other side, where you've just come from.' So he quickly swims back to the other side! The story in which the giraffe invites him to go on a voyage of discovery is wonderful. 'To discover what?' asks the squirrel. 'Well, if I knew that, it wouldn't be a voyage of discovery any more, would it?'

These stories are little gems that are reminiscent of the philosophical discussions between Pooh and Piglet. Time is also an important theme in Squirrel's life. He concludes most poetically: 'I am only now. I have never been later and I shall never be before.' Some of the animal stories are very melancholic ones. When the ant takes the squirrel's belongings on his back to help him move house, he slips and everything falls into the depths: 'Oh,' said the ant. 'Yes,' said the squirrel, with tears in his eyes, as he saw his chair take a swan dive over the river before disappearing into the water.' Not one word too many and every word in its place!

These are funny and touching stories full of absurd situations and simple profundities, fascinating because of Tellegen's concise use of words and the absence of explanations. And all of this is beautifully complemented by the pen drawings of Jan Jutte.

DORINE LOUWERENS

Toon Tellegen (b. 1941) is a doctor and a poet. In 1980, Tellegen made his debut with a volume of poetry for adults. *Er ging geen dag voorbij*, his first collection of children's stories, was published in 1984. It was followed by further collections of stories about the squirrel, the ant and all of the other animals. His books have been translated into more than ten languages. Toon Tellegen's children's books have won many awards. He has received the Golden Owl, two Golden Slate Pencils and three Silver Slate Pencils, he won the Woutertje Pieterseprijs twice, and his complete oeuvre was recognised in 1997 with the Theo Thijssenprijs.

Toon Tellegen lives and works in Amsterdam, and became a grandfather for the first time in 2003.

Because, when it comes to Tellegen, only one question remains: is he a writer or a genius? I suspect the latter.

DE MORGEN

Toon Tellegen's short stories provide endless pleasure, because you can read them over and over, and then you have to read them out loud too, again and again.

DIE ZEIT

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Er ging geen dag voorbij (1984, 108 pp)
Illustrations Jan Jutte
Age: 8+

PUBLISHER

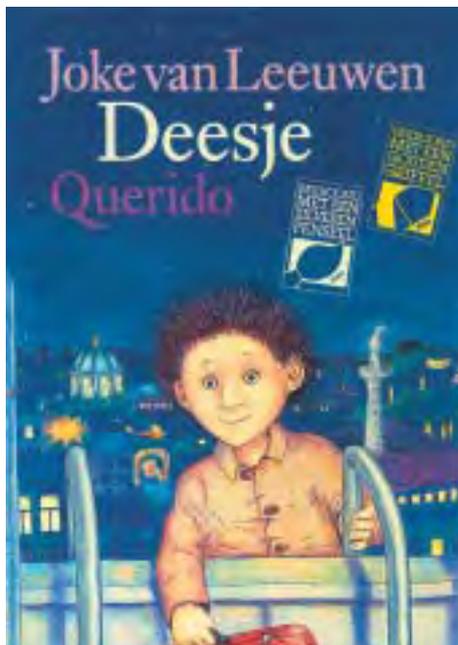
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TRANSLATION

Hungarian

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Joke van Leeuwen

Deesje

IN *DEESJE* by Joke van Leeuwen you roll along with the main character from one adventure into the next. And not only as far as the story is concerned; reading the words and looking at the pictures is one

big surprise. In the work of the doubly talented Van Leeuwen, text and illustrations complement each other perfectly, and humour and seriousness intermingle. The language is packed with puns and the comical black-and-white drawings are really different and also tell a story. A veritable feast for the eyes.

In a large picture-book format, the story of *Deesje* is told over 88 pages. All by herself, she travels to stay for a while with her half-aunt, because her father and the lady who studied child science thought it was a good idea. And, after all, Dad and her two big brothers have no time for her. During the day they're always busy knocking together strips of wood and in the evening they watch *Big Adventures from America* on TV.

And with this journey begins a series of misunderstandings and adventures. *Deesje* can't find her half-aunt on the packed platform and she's taken away by the wrong lady on a bus full of children.

When they go to look round the city, they visit Escher's house and Van Leeuwen treats her readers to truly Escheresque drawings. *Deesje* seizes her chance and runs away. After an eventful detour, she ends up at the house of the Gate Shutter and Tina Teen, who are really nice to her. As *Naturelle Gazeuse*, an expert on the universe, she goes out earning money on the streets with Tina Teen and before long she accidentally ends up on television. And, fortunately, that's where her half-aunt finds her.

This genuinely childlike but also eccentric way of looking at the world is reminiscent of Annie M.G. Schmidt; in Van Leeuwen's work, outsiders such as Tina Teen also come off a lot better than the people with authority.

DORINE LOUWERENS

Joke van Leeuwen (b. 1952) trained as a graphic designer at the art academies of Antwerp and Brussels and studied history at the University of Brussels. In 1978, she made her debut with *De appelmoesstraat is anders*. Van Leeuwen is a widely acclaimed author and illustrator. She has won a Golden Brush, four Silver Slate Pencils and a Vlag en Wimpel. For *Deesje* she was awarded both a Golden Slate Pencil and a Silver Brush, as well as the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis. In 2000, van Leeuwen received the Theo Thijssenprijs for her oeuvre and in 2005 the Flemish Plantin Moretusprijs. Joke van Leeuwen is a creative artist with many strings to her bow: she's a writer, a poet, an illustrator and a cabaret artist and stage performer.

What would we be in the Netherlands and Flanders without Joke van Leeuwen? We have seldom seen a more creative writer and illustrator for children.

Everything is just the way it has to be.

GPD-NEWSPAPERS

An original writer and illustrator whose talent is impossible to pin down: it is forever leaping off in a new direction, manifesting itself in ever more surprising ways.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Im Grunde sind alle ihre Bücher kleine Kunstwerke in Text und Bild, die preisverdächtig sind.

SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Deesje (1985, 88 pp)
illustrations Joke van Leeuwen
Age: 8+

PRIZE

Golden Slate Pencil, 1986
Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, 1988

PUBLISHER

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TRANSLATIONS

German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish,

12 Children's Classics

12 Children's Classics presents the loveliest Dutch children's books.

A team of ten experts was asked to select children's books that warranted the status of a classic. There proved to be a high degree of unanimity in their choice, which is extraordinary when you consider the diverse criteria by which children's books are judged, but not when you look at the books themselves. These ten are a cut above the others in every aspect. They are books that are discovered afresh by succeeding generations. The privilege of reading these classics should not remain reserved for Dutch children alone.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE TRANSLATION OF DUTCH LITERATURE

The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature (NLVPF) stimulates interest in Dutch literary fiction and non-fiction abroad by providing information and granting translation subsidies. When buying the rights to a work of Dutch fiction or non-fiction, publishers may apply to the foundation for a translation grant. Applications should be submitted together with a copy of the contract between the publisher and rights owner, as well as a copy of the contract with the translator.

The book itself, the translator and the publisher are all factors taken into consideration when determining the amount of subsidy awarded.

If the translator is unknown to the foundation, a sample translation is required. The subsidy is paid on receipt of ten complimentary copies of the foreign-language edition.

12 CHILDREN'S CLASSICS FROM HOLLAND

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