

THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARDS 2024

Edward van de Vendel



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Candidate for the **2024 Author's Award**

Nominated by The National IBBY Section of The Netherlands



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Dossier on author

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NOTE:

This dossier has been compiled for the jury of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2024.

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Life and Work of Edward van de Vendel: A Short Biography

Edward van de Vendel (1964) is a Dutch writer and translator. He was born on August 1, 1964 in Leerdam, The Netherlands, as the eldest of three children in a family of teachers. He grew up in Beesd in the middle of the country. His father was headmaster of a school, his mother worked as a kindergarten teacher and later as a resource teacher. After high school, Van de Vendel decided to follow in his parents' footsteps and go to the Pedagogical Academy. After working in education for five years, he founded his own school together with a number of colleagues, of which he became the principal. They decided for themselves which subjects they wanted to teach and why. After four years, Van de Vendel changed jobs and worked again as a teacher for several years, until he became a full-time writer in 2001.



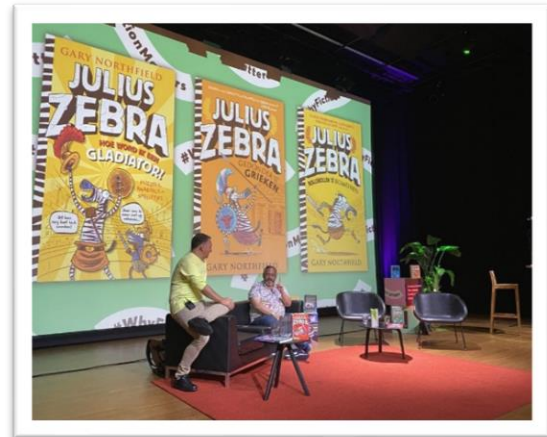
Already in high school, Van de Vendel wrote songs and participated in the school cabaret. During his studies he became acquainted with modern youth poetry. He published his first poems in 'De Blauw Geruite Kiel', the youth supplement of the magazine *Vrij Nederland*. In 1996, his first collection of poems, *Betrap me* [Nab me], was published. After that, new books followed each other in rapid succession.

Van de Vendel writes novels for children and young adults, poetry, picture books, non-fiction and song lyrics, which are published at Querido's publishing house (The Netherlands) and De Eenhoorn (Belgium). His books were awarded with many prizes, including the Gouden Zoen/Gouden Lijst (Golden Kiss, best book for teenagers, 4 x), Zilveren Griffel (Silver Slate Pencil, best books of the year for children, 14 x), Woutertje Pieterse Prijs (critic's choice, 2 x), Golden Poetry Medal (Belgium, best poetry collection 2x), the Prix Sorcières (France, best picture book), the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis, White Ravens from the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (6 x) and the Jenny Smelik-IBBY Prize for books that advocate cultural diversity. He was previously nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (5 x) and for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (2018). His books have been translated to over thirty-five languages.

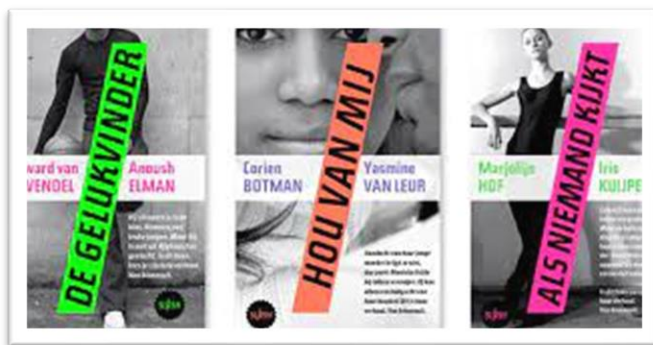
Translator and reading promoter

Van de Vendel is also a very productive translator from English, French, German, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. He translated over 180 books, mainly picture books by for example Benji Davies, Jon Klassen, MacBarnett and series such as the Treehouse-series by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton and the Julius Zebra-series by Gary Northfield, but also Ulf Stark, Sydney Smith and lesser known books of all kinds of genres

and themes, from popular series to literary gems. Van de Vendel is often mentioned on the cover of the books that he translated, as his name is regarded as a ‘mark of quality’ by both publishers and readers.¹



Besides making all these foreign language books available in translations of high quality, Van de Vendel has initiated many literary projects to promote reading among young people. Encouraging them to read more starts with offering books they actually want to read. That is what Edward van de Vendel does, not just by writing these books himself, but also by initiating projects in cooperation with other (young) writers and his publishing house.



Slash, a series of novels based upon true stories is one of these initiatives. In this series, a famous author teams up with a remarkable young adult to write a book about his or her life experiences. In 2008, Van de Vendel wrote the first novel in the series, *De gelukvinder* [The boy who found happiness],

which tells the story of an Afghan refugee boy. ‘Reality, authenticity and honesty in a story is magical,’ according to Van de Vendel. ‘This book gives refugees not only a face but also a heart, more so than all of the newspaper articles about refugees,’ writes literary critic Bas Maliepaard in newspaper *Trouw*. This commitment is exactly what Van de Vendel pursues.

¹ See here for a complete list of the (over 180) books that Van de Vendel translated: <https://www.edwardvandevendel.nl/vertalingen/boeken-die-ik-vertaalde>.

Van de Vendel reached out to young aspiring writers with the project ABCyourself (2010-2020), encouraging them to publish new work at this website weekly for the duration of one year. He assisted the young writers in their writing process and organized theatre events where they could perform their work. He is also one of the initiators of the online literary platform Vuurland (www.vuurland.nu) that he started in 2021, where a diverse group of mainly young writers present new literary work, projects and post articles, interviews and podcasts about today's literature. Here, Van de Vendel publishes his podcasts *Lawines razen*, in which he rereads literary classics from Dutch children's literature together with other writers and illustrators, and *Gloei* with interviews with people from the LGBTQI+-community.

Van de Vendel noticed that young readers want to find in books what they find on Netflix, namely topics linked to their world and characters who could be them. 'The literary world needs to catch up,' said Van de Vendel during a recent interview. This is why he has set up the Querido Glow series together with his publisher Querido. This series of books is about what 'glows and sparkles' in the lives of young people and shows the legitimacy of diverse relationships by zooming in on stories set within the LGBTQI+-community. With these books, he addresses a new audience of young readers who are looking for stories they can relate to.



This is also why Van de Vendel initiated the series Tijgerlezen ('Tiger Reading'). With Tiger Reading, children choose their new favorite book mostly because of their interest in the story and not necessarily because the book is categorized within the reading level they are at. Learning how to read is not controlled by a technical roadmap but by making reading fun.

Van de Vendel gives a voice to young people. He makes literature more diverse by reaching out to young writers and readers from different backgrounds, with different interests, and at different reading levels, hereby making use of a broad variety in literary form, style and themes. On his writing, Van de Vendel says: "There is a kind of addictive primal pleasure in writing and telling stories. I am addicted to children's literature. After all those books, I still don't understand how someone writes something down, or draws something, and then suddenly it's there: a book. That's magical. I can't really analyse what I'm doing. In the end I feel that there is a fire burning inside me and that I must be near it. It might have something to do with a childlike delight in the magic of writing. The wonder of it."

On his commitment to making a difference with his writing, Van de Vendel says: “I myself have an insane need for responsibility. One book can change a child's life. That is the highest I can achieve, writing that book for that particular child. And then it's not my book, but the child's book, the book someone hides under their sweater. I give many lectures in schools, both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, and if a child can quote a poem from for example *Super guppy*, it is really fulfilling. Yesterday I received an email from a boy who wrote how important my youth novel *The Days of Bluegrass Love* was to him. He had read it seventeen times. I can only achieve that if I can make what I want. That's the contradiction. I want my work to do something for someone else, but I'm willing to do that when I know that it comes from no one but myself.”²

Sources used for this text:

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- <https://www.edwardvandevel.nl/over-mij/biografie>.
- Pictures from <https://www.edwardvandevel.nl/over-mij/fotos>.

² Quotes from ‘In schrijven zit verslavend oerplezier’ by Miek Smilde, 15 February 2014: <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/in-schrijven-zit-verslavend-oerplezier~b5121203/>.

Van de Vendel's Contribution to Literature for Young People

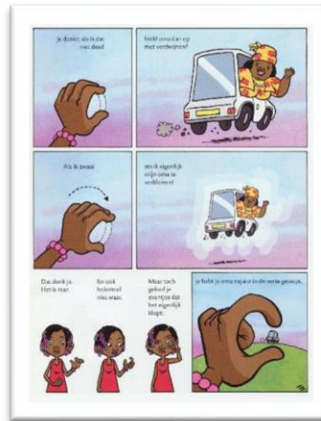
Edward van de Vendel is an acclaimed writer of picture books, poetry, children's and YA-novels and non-fiction, covering topics from animals to gay love, from sports to cancer and from refugees to 'instruction poetry about what to do if you stumble on a hippopotamus'. He masters a large variety of genres and is the initiator of numerous literary projects that promote reading and writing among children and young adults.

Van de Vendel's work can in general be characterized both by its sparkling cheerfulness and at the same time by its capability to discuss serious topics in an appealing way. Examples of these distinct characteristics can be found in his playful poetry about *Superguppy* and *What to do if you stumble on a hippopotamus* on the one hand, in which Van de Vendel plays with rhyme and syntax and different forms, styles and voices in a humorous and unique way. On the other hand, Van de Vendel is an advocate of socially committed children's literature. He pleads for realistic books about difficulties and challenges that children may experience. For example concealing a homosexual relationship in a soccer team in *The days of Bluegrass Love*, life as a refugee boy in *The Boy Who Found Happiness* from the *Slash* series and the story of a boy who is diagnosed with cancer, co-written with a young adult who has experienced this. Besides this, Van de Vendel excels in many other genres.



For instance, Van de Vendel is a master in combining genres into new narrative forms. Together with illustrator Floor de Goede, Van de Vendel published several books with 'graphic poems', poems cast in the form of a comic strip / graphic novel. From a review about the first book: "This innovative concept, applied to a collection of 22 fun and high quality poems, makes for a straight bull's-eye. All kinds of themes from a child's everyday life are mixed with a dose of lively fantasy and pointed humor and cast in rhythmic, melodious verse. The texts read like a train, nicely in cadence, rocking on structuring but never forced rhyme, surprising by sudden track changes. (...) Each graphic poem takes up a double page. You absolutely cannot dismiss the prints as 'illustrating the text'. They are as essential a part of the story as the words. The end result is a gem of a book that makes you look forward to more of that."³

³ From Belgian children's literature review website Pluizer.be: <https://www.pluizer.be/kinderboeken-jeugdboeken/opa-laat-zijn-tenen-zien>.



4

Another illustrator with whom Van de Vendel has a long-standing collaboration is current Dutch children’s book ambassador Martijn van der Linden. Before they published *Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt* [What to do if you stumble on a hippopotamus], they made *Stem op de okapi* [Vote for the okapi], a unique book in which non-fiction is combined with fiction and poetry, in which author and illustrator present a colourful, imaginative and poetic tribute, not only to the okapi, but also to the joy of creativity and the endless possibilities of writing for children. Van der Linden and Van de Vendel will publish their new collection of illustrated poetry in 2023.



Other hybrid books are *Gloei* [Glow] in which Van de Vendel combines interviews with young people from the LGBTIQ+ community with poems based on the interviews and *Rekenen voor je leven* [Maths for life], written with mathematician Ionica Smeets and illustrated by Floor de Goede. Within a frame narrative by Van de Vendel about a class of children who demand their mathematics classes to be more interesting by starting from real life questions that involve maths, math problems are presented in the form of comics. “A lively, varied, and above all very cheerful ensemble book,” according to newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.

⁴ Poems from respectively *Opa laat zijn tenen zien en andere stripgedichten* [Grandpa shows his toes and other graphic poems] (2008); *De zombietrein en andere stripgedichten* [The zombie train and other graphic poems] (2017); *Draken met stekkers en andere stripgedichten* [Dragons with plugs and other graphic poems] (2010).

No matter which form Van de Vendel chooses, he finds the right form and tone and throughout his oeuvre, his literary talent is evident. However, his books are never highbrow or contrived and are equally loved by young readers and literary critics. In 2019, Van de Vendel received the Anna Blaman Award for his oeuvre. The jury wrote:



“How do you measure literary quality? That was the first question the jury of the Anna Blaman Award 2019 had to find an answer to. Many potential laureates came along and were discussed at length, from talented poets and essayists to playwrights and novelists. And a youth and children's book author: an author who quickly formed an outside category. Not because of the genre, but because of tone and style. Writing so convincingly, movingly and thoughtfully and making it look like you just happened to toss it off: only a literary heavyweight can do that.

Edward van de Vendel, who has been translated in more than twenty countries and won several Silver Slate pencils and Golden Kisses, easily convinced the jury with his work.

(...)

Versatile, humorous and decisive. We saw exactly that energy in the oeuvre of Edward van de Vendel. He writes with visible pleasure and unmistakably individuality resulting in books that he would undoubtedly have liked to read as a child. That's the kind of writer you'd wish for every reader, young and old.”⁵

Van de Vendel is a very productive writer, usually publishing several books a year. In an interview he points out that he has about 14 books in his head all the time. “So if I'm planning to write a new book I can choose. Sometimes I drop the idea for a book, but other planned books can remain in the list for a very long time. In between there are sometimes other books, for example because of a request from an illustrator to come up with a story for their illustrations. A book idea always sticks in my head and is also regularly adjusted. For example, a title can change or there is a different illustrator who might better suit the story. I am happy that I can make what I want to make and almost every book I have been wanting to make for a long time. There is usually 5-6 years between an idea and the actual book.”⁶

⁵ Excerpt from the jury report of the Anna Blaman Award 2019: <https://pb-cms.nl/app/uploads/sites/11/Juryrapport-Anna-Blaman-Prijs-2019-Edward-van-de-Vendel.pdf>.

⁶ From an interview with Van de Vendel on <https://ikvindlezenleuk.nl/2018/07/interview-met-edward-van-de-vendel/>.

A recurring theme in both his poetry and prose is the search for identity. Another characteristic of Van de Vendel's work is that he clearly knows what goes on in children's minds, how they think and what they like. His visual language is also characteristic. Van de Vendel understands the art of using surprising and 'down-to-earth' images that are accessible for children and make his poetry playful, light-hearted and comprehensible. In his poems Van de Vendel strives for a recurring structure: "I try to write poetry with a first sentence as a strong threshold and a new insight at the end, captured in a new and clear image." Van de Vendel had great success with his five poetry books about Superguppie (Super Guppy, 2003-2014), poems that remain close to home in terms of subject matter, but are made special by the poetic imagery. The poems are written from the child's perspective and the images used by the author are in line with the child's imagination and bear witness to their own point of view.



When the third collection, *De groeten van Superguppie* [Greetings from Super Guppy], was published, Reine De Pelseneer wrote in the *Leeswelp* (2008) that this collection seems to surpass its predecessors: "Van de Vendel pulled out all his craftsmanship to bring together a collection of poems full of language play, variation, ingenuity, recognizability and surprises. The poems are full of playful thoughts, but in addition, Van de Vendel seems to play a subtle psychological game with his readers. There are poems that end with minor disappointments and unpleasantness. And when you read it, you think: this is how it should be."

According to poetry connoisseur Jan van Coillie, the playfulness of the collections is emphasized by the surprising rhymes, the light-hearted rhythm and the use of colloquial language. The graphic poems with Floor de Goede are accessible, narrative poems with mainly short sentences. For inexperienced readers, this form can be a stimulus, because it makes poetry more concrete. Van de Vendel himself says about this: "Many children think that poetry is strict and complicated. Poetry is great, but you have to strip it of its dull image. The form must also match what children and young people like."

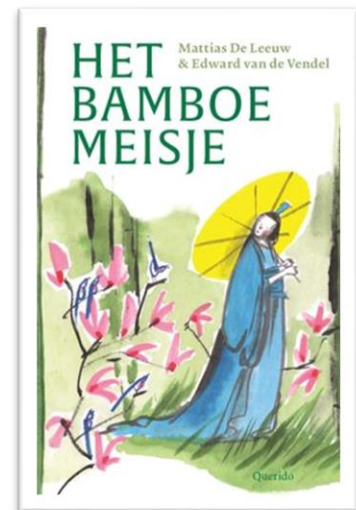




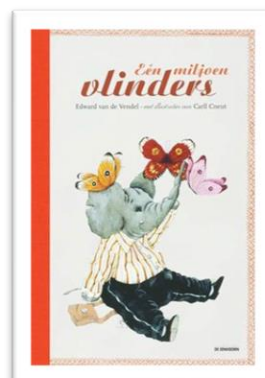
His poetic talent is also clearly visible in his picture books and other prose. Characteristic of the picture books, sometimes with verses or text in rhyme, is the use of repetitions that bring rhythm to the text and of appealing metaphors and reversals that provide the necessary humour. Van de Vendel has worked together with many different illustrators, both established like Wolf Erlbruch, Carll Cneut and Gerda Dendooven and young illustrators such as Mattias de Leeuw and Alain Verster.⁷ The picture books often receive a lot of praise. Vanessa Joosen, professor of Children's Literature at Antwerp University, writes about *Django en de papegaai* [Django and the parrot]: "Edward

van de Vendel is unsurpassed in writing screenplays for picture books: there is not a word too much, and yet he builds subtle anchor points in the story." (Vanessa Joosen in *De Standaard*, 2009).⁸

Van de Vendel's prose has received praise for its visual language, the choice of topics, and the way Van de Vendel always stays true to the child. He takes his characters as well as his readers seriously, whether it concerns a simple reading story or a complicated youth novel. Jan van Coillie calls *The Days of Bluegrass Love* a 'masterpiece'. He praises the author's ability to "bring life to a character in one paragraph or conjure up an entire story in one sentence."



Vanessa Joosen rightly characterizes Van de Vendel as a 'literary jack-of-all-trades'. Moreover, a writer who is driven in his work by the ambition to write books that readers want to keep close to their hearts.



⁷ Read more about Van de Vendel's collaborations with illustrators in the article on pp. 16-26.

⁸ The paragraphs on Van de Vendel's poetry and picture books draw heavily on the following text in *Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur*: Van der Pennen, Wilma (2011). 'Edward van de Vendel' in: Jan van Coillie, Wilma van der Pennen, Jos Staal, & Herman Tromp (1982-2014), *Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur*. Retrieved from DBNL (KB Royal Library): https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/coilo01lexio1_01/lvdjo1032.php.

Appreciative Essays About Edward van de Vendel

INADVERTENTLY A ROLE MODEL

By Mirjam Noorduijn

22-06-2020

Retrieved from <https://www.lezen.nl/tijdschrift-artikel/onbedoeld-een-rolmodel/>.

Originally published as Noorduijn, M. (2020). 'Onbedoeld een rolmodel' in *Lezen 2* (2020), Amsterdam: Stichting Lezen.

"WHOEVER WRITES CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, NOT ONLY CHOOSES LITERATURE, BUT ALSO CHILDREN."

Literary all-rounder Edward van de Vendel once said this in an interview in *NRC Handelsblad*. All in all, this quote is the credo of his authorship.

'The realization that a book is only a book if there is another side, if there are children who embrace it, has always been dormant,' says Van de Vendel. 'It is a direct extension of the responsibility I felt towards children when I was a teacher. Since my high school days I had an ideal image of being a primary school teacher. Apart from my parents, who both worked at a primary school, this image was mainly formed by Theo Thijssen's *De gelukkige klas* [The Happy Class, 1926]. At the end of that book, the teacher says something like, "It doesn't matter what we did this year, as long as we were a happy class." I was very aware of the fact that I am the one who has to ensure that children can think back to their school days with a feeling of happiness.'

'I choose the middle'

Through *The Days of Bluegrass Love* (1999), Van de Vendel suddenly realized that one has a similar responsibility as a children's book author. His YA-novel about Tycho Zeling, who finds the love of his life in Oliver Kjelsberg during a summer camp in America, unexpectedly provoked many reactions. Van de Vendel: '*The Days of Bluegrass Love* had arisen from a kind of fever, almost literally: I felt a glow, an enormous drive to write that story. That writing drive came entirely from myself. And then the reactions came from outside: I received passionate letters from all kinds of young people: one wrote that he dared to tell his boyfriend for the first time how he felt about him. Another emailed, "I finally told my parents who I am." I was surprised that it was really possible to write a book that touches so many others.'

By the way, I only became a full-time writer then. In 1996, just after my debut, I didn't dare to take that step: I thought it was a selfish choice. [laughing] I feared that I would be sitting all alone in an attic thinking only about myself. But after *The Days of Bluegrass Love* I understood that I had to find a balance between my personal writing – my development in it and how to use mature literary criteria and choose subjects that I find important – and my public writing: how can you write in such a way that it book opens up to the readers. I deliberately choose the middle: I don't want to make books that are completely flat and are written on the basis of marketing strategies. I find that cynical. But I also don't just want to write books that you can only understand if you already have a lot of reading experience, which you have to peel off layer by layer before you can understand them.

'Accessible is not automatically less literary'

Van de Vendel continues: 'In my first books I often looked for the most original possible literary angle. For example, I would start somewhere in the middle of a dialogue and only later would I indicate who was speaking. That can be quite complicated for children. For a period of time I did many school visits in Flanders, Belgium. When I asked the children what their favorite book was, they often mentioned Geronimo Stilton. In terms of language, those books are not fantastically well-written, and it is a pity that they are so commercially driven. But I can't just brush off the love children feel for that series. Then how seriously do I take them?

So I started reading those books. And I understood their appeal: the combination of images, words that are highlighted, funny facts... Because of that experience, in combination with a project for which I regularly visited schools with children with poor language skills and noticed how much pleasure and happiness reading aloud evokes, I wondered how I could reach more children. The beautiful, literary children's books mainly end up with a privileged group, with the necessary reading experience. Couldn't I write in a different way? A more accessible story does not necessarily have to be less literary, as long as you write clearly.

'Learning to read is more fun when you are motivated'

How literary Van de Vendel himself writes and the extent to which he takes his readership into account depends on the genre. A book like *Oliver* (2015) – the prequel of *The Days of Bluegrass Love* and the sequel of *Ons derde lichaam* [Our third body, 2006] – comes from his innermost being, he says, that it has to be completely right: the images, the dialogues, the psychology of the characters. The Tiger Reading series, on the other hand, is based on a more reading-promotion ideal. Van de Vendel: 'To explain how the idea of the series came about, I actually have to go back to my teaching job and my first acquaintance with the stacks of booklets for beginning readers (...). I found many of those booklets extremely boring and constructed, except for a few volumes by Joke van Leeuwen, Ted van Lieshout and Rindert Kromhout. Those, on the contrary, were so good

that I started reading aloud them to the pupils. To my surprise, the children wanted to read them again themselves, even though they already knew the story.

That incident is actually the basis of Tiger Reading. I thought, what if we ask all those fantastic authors at Querido [Van de Vendel's publisher] to write an appealing book that is either very funny or very exciting – because those are the criteria that matter to children –, books that you can read aloud? And then let children read them on their own. But not strictly according to this AVI-system [reading levels that focus mainly on technical skills]. Research shows that AVI does not always lead to the intended results. Children learn to read fastest and happiest when they are really motivated, when they pick up a book on their own. Querido has of course traditionally been a literary publisher where the starting point has always been, “We don't determine what we publish, the authors do that”. But that culture has been tilting somewhat in recent years, and my idea has been adopted with enthusiasm. There seems to be a need for such a series: fortunately the Tiger Reading books are doing well. Significant and nice is that a lot of titles were sold in the first quarantine week of the covid pandemic.

‘Some things happen by chance’

Whether this kind of initiative, driven by idealism, makes Van de Vendel a role model? [laughing] ‘A role model? No, I don't see myself that way. Some things just happen by chance,’ he says. ‘The first graphic poems that I made with Floor de Goede, twelve years ago now, for the collection *Opa laat zijn tenen zien* [Grandad shows his toes], were initially the result of a passion for experimentation. I want to prevent boredom while writing: there has to be something to discover. What I really like are hybrid forms. As you can see in *Vosje* [Little Fox], the book I made with Marije Tolman, or in *Stem op de okapi* [Vote for the okapi]. That book is fiction, non-fiction and poetry at the same time, in which the illustrations by Martijn van der Linden also play a crucial role. I was also curious about the combination of a comic strip and poetry. At the request of Kidsweek I tried out four comic poems with different illustrators. The collaboration with Floor was so much fun that we moved on. The fact that my poetry became more accessible through the comics was an unintended effect. For me, the comic poems were also an exercise in how to mix humor and seriousness. A light packaging makes heavy subjects more bearable: the serious poems in *Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt* [What you should do when you stumble over a hippopotamus] can be there, because they are surrounded by cheerful poems.’

‘I am driven by passion’

Another fluke was ABCyourself: ‘Occasionally I received e-mails from young people who knew my books and asked for advice on how to write themselves. That gave me the idea to help really talented young people advance by setting up a platform. That started ten years ago and has now grown into a story blog and literary guidance process. Every year

we select about two or three new writing talents. It amazes me every time how passionate and fun those people are. A number of them have now made their debut successfully: Iduna Paalman, Roelof and Harm Hendrik ten Napel, Pim Lammers... I really enjoy doing this. I simply enjoy getting to know enthusiastic people and working together on beautiful things. I couldn't be happier about that. In that respect I was lucky and we shouldn't make those projects of mine too sacred.

The choices I have made in my life have not been driven by the thought: this is good for the world, although this does play a role. I was raised in a Christian way based on the motto: use your talents well, and that's what I try to do. But at first I do things out of a passion. When I notice afterwards that I reach many children and young people with what I write and undertake, it does give a purpose and justification to what I do.'

Edward van de Vendel (Leerdam, 1964) made his debut as a youth poet in 1996 with *Betrap me*, but soon discovered what else language can do. After Gijsbrecht (1998), which was awarded a Gouden Zoen, one title after another appeared. Picture books, poems, youth novels, children's stories, non-fiction, songs, translations: Van de Vendel masters all genres, keeping an eye on his target group. Worthy of mention is his initiative for the Slash Series, the life stories about and co-written with young people, which he himself kicked off with *De gelukvinder* [The Boy Who Found Happiness, 2008]. His work has been awarded many times. He has won the Woutertje Pieterse Prize twice: for the children's poetry collection *Superguppie* with Fleur van der Weel (2004), and for *Stem op de okapi* with Martijn van der Linden (2016). In 2019 he received the Anna Blaman Award for his entire oeuvre.

June would see the launch of the first titles of the Querido imprint Glow : a book series for and about young people from across the queer spectrum. Due to the pandemic, this has been postponed to autumn. Initiator Van de Vendel about Glow: 'This series is really ideologically driven. The discourse among young people about gender and sexuality has changed enormously in the last ten years: that subject is now – partly due to all kinds of famous role models – an obvious part of their search for their identity. It is no coincidence that *Love, Simon* by Becky Albertalli has been a bestseller worldwide for years. I thought it was strange that there are hardly any books like this available in The Netherlands. Querido agreed with me and immediately embraced my proposal for Glow. The first to appear is my book *Gloei* [Glow], with interviews I have with young people about what glows in their lives – and you have to interpret that broadly – in which I wrote poems and Floor de Goede made portraits, and *This is Kind of an Epic Love Story* by Kacen Callender and *Like Fire* by Sara Lövestam.'

MY ILLUSTRATORS

About the collaboration between Edward van de Vendel and illustrators

By Kris Nauwelaerts

Retrieved from https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_lit004201701_01/_lit004201701_01_0051.php.

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Anyone who opens Edward van de Vendel's web page is immediately presented with three questions: whether you want to know more about the books he writes, whether you want to know more about his reading tips, his news and his artists and whether you have any urgent questions. If you then click on 'My artists', you will see twenty-nine so-called 'thumbnails' with fragments of illustrations. Each fragment refers to an illustrator. Established illustrators such as Carll Cneut (1969), Sylvia Weve (1954), Wolf Erlbruch (1948) alternate with novice illustrators such as Mattias de Leeuw (1989), Liesbeth De Stercke (1988) or Anton Van Hertbruggen (1990). Edward makes no secret of the fact that he has a soft spot for the illustrators he works with. He calls them 'my illustrators' as one would say: my friends.

During a long conversation I had with Edward, sitting on a sunny Rotterdam terrace, it became increasingly clear that his illustrators are indeed his friends. The collaboration between writers and illustrators often results in a close friendship, so that their collaboration takes on an exclusive character. (...) The collaboration between Edward and his artists lacks this exclusive aspect because he resolutely opts for diversity and contrast. Typical is the way in which he starts and expands the collaboration with his illustrators.

Tailored to the illustrator

Edward van de Vendel is not enthusiastic about a blind collaboration with an illustrator. Submitting a text to a publisher only to find it illustrated in a book, no matter how well, is not for him. He prefers to discover illustrators himself or based on recommendations. He makes a distinction between renowned and novice illustrators. Edward expects renowned illustrators to interpret and depict his text in a way specific to them. He is happy to accommodate them by keeping the relevant illustrator in mind while writing. He will therefore write differently for a book with Carll Cneut than for a book with Marije Tolman (1976). According to Edward, it is not enough to know the work of the illustrator you work with; the work must fascinate you and you must know how to use its strong elements. 'Cneut is a gifted storyteller,' says Edward: 'I leave gaps in my text because I know that he will use them to construct his version of the story.' He takes a different

approach when collaborating with aspiring illustrators. His first impression of their work is crucial: an illustration, sketch or careless scribble can intrigue him to such an extent that they form the beginning of a theme, a story fragment or a character. Once his interest has been aroused, Edward meets the relevant illustrators, discusses football, art, illustrating or dinosaurs with them, listens to their dreams and aspirations and then sets to work. Through the conversations, the first impression is placed in a broader perspective and deepened. The personal involvement of the author and illustrator remains central: themes, characters and text fragments are subordinate and can be changed if it appears that the writer or illustrator loses his or her involvement in the story and wants to take a different path.

This working method colors his oeuvre right from the start. In an interview with Eric Bos (1999), Edward says that he wrote *Gijsbrecht* (1998) because illustrator Hanneke van der Hoeven (1955) sighed that she wanted to do something other than illustrate poems, she wanted to do something 'Medieval'. This was a challenging proposal for Edward and he set about an idiosyncratic adaptation of Vondel's play *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel* (1637). The impetus for the book *Dertien rennende hertjes* [Thirteen Running Deer, 2012] is the sketch of a drinking deer (Figure 1) by Mattias de Leeuw that Edward came across while surfing the web. The sudden emergence of a deer from the foliage, the dynamics of the lines and the glowing blue accents of colored pencil immediately evoked all sorts of questions and assumptions in his mind.



Figure 1: *Stroom 2*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw

When he also looked at the illustration of a stream (Figure 2) by Mattias, he was convinced.

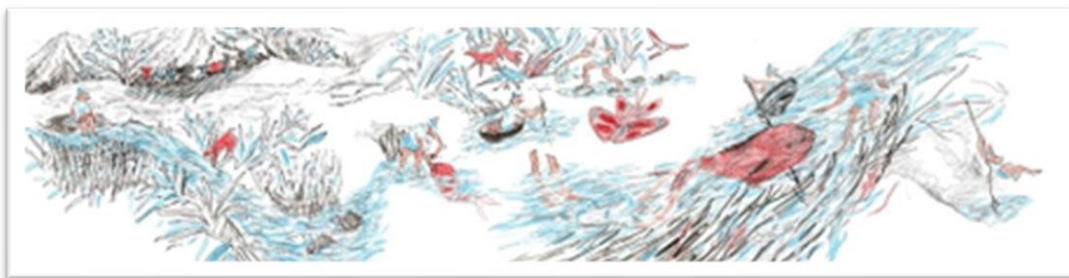


Figure 2: *Stroom*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw

These illustrations aroused Edward's interest in such a way that he suggested to Mattias that they do 'something' together. Edward wrote four pages about a girl who fantasizes about thirteen deer and discussed this text with Mattias. He responded with a number of drawings in which he imagines what could happen between the girl and the deer.

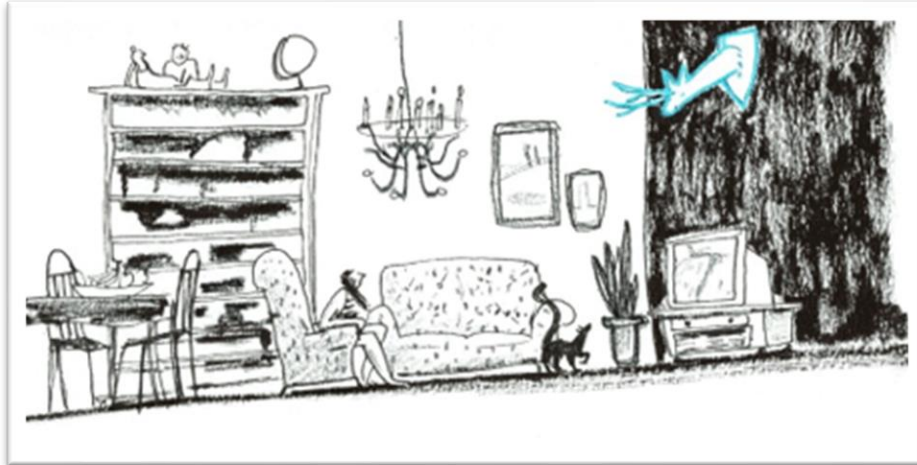


Figure 3: *Hertjes 1*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw

A close look at the series of illustrations shows that Mattias starts rather conventionally: he draws a quiet living room. Due to its high position, blue color and contrast with the background, the trophy dominates the image plane (Figure 3). The second drawing (Figure 4) is more dynamic because Mattias draws a confrontation between the woman and the trophy.



Figure 4: *Hertjes 2*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw

The third drawing (Figure 5) shows the woman sitting in the bath. The trophy has been replaced by two moving deer. There is a suggestive tension through the direct and mutual gaze between the woman and the deer.

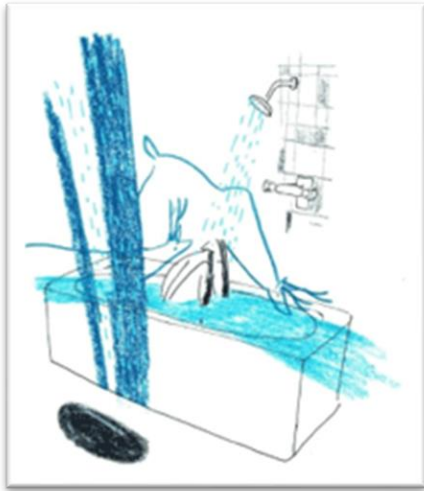


Figure 5: *Hertjes 3*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw



Figure 6: *Hertjes 4*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw

The third drawing (Figure 6) suggests a landscape in a living room (or vice versa). Two blue coloured deer and a woman walk through the landscape. The woman is younger, has shorter blond hair and blue antlers like a deer. The series of drawings clearly shows what Edward is all about. By not writing a finished story, but by giving Mattias a start, he invites the illustrator to give free reign to his imagination. Being an illustrator myself and a teacher of illustrative design, I clearly recognize the evolution of a creative design process in the series of drawings by Mattias: the first sketch usually stays close to the text because it provides guidance, while the following sketches are more explorative and develop gradually. The first drawing (Figure 3) indeed shows a rather helpful attempt to visualize the text. The last drawing clearly shows the interpretation of an illustrator who separates himself from the text. And it is precisely there where Edward seeks connection. After all, the last drawing (Figure 6) suggests that the woman is (or has

become) a deer. In the final story, the main characters coincide psychologically with the animal they carry within them.

Engagement and creative challenge

Sitting on the terrace, Edward repeatedly refers to the conversations he had with Mattias as a result of the first drawings. He said that during those conversations he deliberately gauged Mattias' preferences in order to incorporate them into his text. Mattias had indicated, among other things, that he prefers not to draw humanized animals because he prefers to look for a poetic, suggestive atmosphere in his drawings and that a strong figure in combination with 'real' animals appeals to him more. This shows that Edward's working method aims to strengthen the involvement of the illustrator by allowing themes that are close to an illustrator's heart to enter the core of the story. This not only gives the illustrator more starting points, but also more space to tell the story. Edward emphasized that he has made it a habit to work out a story in fragments, only a few pages at a time, and let the illustrator continue the story based on these pages in order to maintain involvement throughout the design process. In this way, in addition to the main story, all kinds of side stories are created that give the design process a broad context and deepen the theme. It is possible that one or more of these side stories become so important that it is decided to include them in the main story. During a telephone conversation, Mattias confirmed that this way of working was very motivating for him and gave him the feeling that illustrator and writer can both express their personalities.

The collaboration just outlined allows for major differences between the design phases and the final result. This can be clearly seen when one compares the preparatory drawings with the illustrations in *Dertien rennende hertjes*. They show an average house with a modest interior. The main character, Maantje, is younger and wears a sportier dress than the woman in the first sketches (Figure 7). The trophy has disappeared and the deer are smaller than Maantje. She is clearly the main figure, the Duchess, who must be able to direct the deer, unlike the illustration with the woman in the bath (Figure 5) where the deer are dominant.



Figure 7: from *Dertien rennende hertjes* (2012, p. 10)

(...)

When asked about his motivation for continuing to work in this way, Edward replied that it stems from his vision on children's literature. In an interview with Annelies den Haan (2006) he states that the difference between children and adults is not that great. All the feelings and emotional experiences of adults are present in children in their purest form. 'Questions such as "who am I, am I important in this world, what is friendship, what is love" also arise in children' (Den Haan, 2006, p. 64). As an adult you (re)experience this childlike curiosity, according to Edward, by seeking new situations and challenges, just like children. When Edward can also spark this childish curiosity in his illustrators, he can create a greater involvement in the story.

During our conversation, Edward emphasized several times that involvement ensures that a book can strongly appeal to the child reader. That is why he often envisions a child clutching his book to their chest. That book must first and foremost be a book by Edward van de Vendel. And that book does not necessarily have to be funny or full of suspense. Even though Van de Vendel finds these aspects important, literary quality cannot be tampered with.

Writing for children is not a return to one's own childhood, but an actual experience of what childish wonder can bring about. The popular view that a children's book writer has always remained a child somewhere inside, does not apply for Edward. He makes a clear difference between children and adults in this regard. Adults bear a responsibility and are able to make more conscious choices based on a broader experience. Edward gives the example of children who, because of their curiosity and wonder, behave loudly when they are on the train for the first time. They must be able to express that amazement and it is not annoying. It is different when children, who are used to traveling by train, and adults behave noisily on the train. They do not take the fellow travelers into account and that causes annoyance. Children often experience things for the first time and react intuitively. Bjørkvold (1992) argues in this context for more respect and appreciation for the growing child's experiential drive. He considers the experiential drive as a survival strategy in which there is play and rivalry, of attraction and repulsion. Characteristic is the great learning hunger for common codes: body jargon, jokes, the tricks of the language, song verses and competitions. These are the keys that give the child access to children's culture and they are often copied from more "experienced" children. It is a serious occupation and when children notice that adults don't take them seriously, they feel cheated. Edward's conception of authorship is closely related to this.

When asked about the essence of his writing skills, Edward stated that, in his opinion, the aim of writing children's books is to enthuse the child reader. A children's writer must use his influence to get children to read. The power of stories cannot be underestimated. That does not mean that complex or difficult themes cannot be discussed, but there must always be the possibility of a positive ending, a positive way out. That is why, according to Edward, there is no place for the cynicism of the disappointed adult in

children's literature. After all, that leaves no possible way out and gives no space for curiosity.

The children's book writer faces two dangers. On the one hand, you have the influence of the book business. A proposal from a publisher is not enough reason for Edward to write a book as long as he does not feel that the story or character "wants something from him" and that he "needs to make" this book. On the other hand, there is the influence of the adult mediators of children's books that makes you write too 'adult'. Zohar Shavit (1986, p. 37) notes in this regard that the children's book writer is perhaps the only author who is required to address a particular audience and please another (adults) at the same time. This need not be an insurmountable problem. Good children's writers manage to write from a childlike perspective without sacrificing psychological depth and linguistic richness so that they can also appeal to an adult audience (Nikolaeva, 2004, p. 167). For Edward, too, a good children's book must be able to appeal to several readers at the same time through humour, suspense, originality and well-groomed literary language. That is why it is very important to Edward that illustrators are strongly involved and that they have the feeling that it is also their book.

Diversity asset

The style characteristics of the illustrators Edward works with show great diversity. Ranging from fairly realistic to highly stylized illustrations, from dark tragedy to hilarious pastiche and from poetic images to sober representations. The aim for diversity is evident in the collaboration with some of his illustrators. With each of these illustrators, Edward initially looks for an idiom that mixes with the images without coinciding with them. According to him, this is very important for a starting illustrator. For example, he said that during his first collaboration with Alain Verster (1984) he felt that he had to add more life, setting and context to Alain's poetic and philosophical images through his text in order to give the whole more lightness and a humorous touch (Figure 8).



Figure 8: from *De duif die niet kon duiken* (2011, pp. 8-9)

By doing this, he noticed more and more clearly that Alain had more to offer than what he shows in the illustrations of *De duif die niet kon duiken* [The pigeon that couldn't dive, 2011]. When he happened to see a cheerful illustration of a pig in a football T-shirt by Alain Verster, he had found a clue to continue what he calls the 'turn in someone's work'. I know from experience that illustrations that appear suddenly and apparently apart from a specific project often show in a more direct way what the artist is working on. In the drawing with the pig, Alain shows that he knows how to bring humour to his drawings in a very specific way and that he has a predilection for football. By tapping into this in their next collaboration, Edward noticed that Alain was more successful in telling a story when he moved away from the philosophical and instead used poetry and humour in his artwork. If one compares an illustration from *Vasco het voetbalvarkentje* [Vasco the soccer pig, 2013] (Figure 9) with the illustration from *De duif die niet kon duiken* (2011) (Figure 8), one immediately notices that the artist is closer to his characters: he makes them bigger and in a more direct way so that the reader is also more involved.



Figure 9: from *Vasco het voetbalvarkentje* (2013, pp. 14-15)

(...)

[In this book,] text does not require any additional input for life, setting or context, so that in short sentences Edward mainly concentrates on the interaction between Matteo and Vasco. The design process of their second book therefore went more as Edward likes it: with the necessary obstacles and consultation moments. Ultimately, the result is that the diversity in Alain's work increases and that is what Edward is all about. Striking is the freedom that he always puts first when working together. This leads to diversity because Edward is out to discover something new in each other's work.

In the second book about Matteo and Vasco, *Vasco en het groene monster* [Vasco and the green monster, 2017], there is at one point a conversation between Vasco and the geese, the chickens and a rooster. However, Alain initially draws eight flamingos for this scene. Instead of immediately assuming that the illustration needs to be adjusted so as not to

contradict the text, both look for a solution. For Edward, this means searching for solutions and being bound in freedom.

The same desire for diversity is present in the collaboration between Edward and Floor de Goede (1980). Floor is originally a cartoonist and uses a visual language in his illustrative work that refers to cartoon and animation: a clear, closed contour line with flat colors and a minimum of setting. The figuration is characterized by the large heads, the expressive eyes and mouths and the thin, elastic limbs with small hands and feet. Each of these features can be increased or decreased depending on the expression or action (Figure 10). The emphasis is on expression as a means of expression. There is no illustrator with whom Edward made as many books as with Floor de Goede. Their collaboration is based on a flawless sense of each other's possibilities and often follows the standard principle: Edward supplies a text and Floor makes a visual translation of it. However, Floor often adds a (visual) story as an addition or sequel. They then discuss what works and what doesn't. The Sofie series, such as *Sofie en de dolfijnen* [Sofie and the Dolphins, 2014] or *Sofie en het geheime paard* [Sofie and the Secret Horse, 2015], contain a wide variety of text and images. In addition to the illustrations by Floor, it also contains photo comics by Ype & Willem. The streamlined collaboration with Floor does not alter the fact that Edward challenges him for the book *Ik ben bij de dinosaurussen geweest* [I have been with the dinosaurs, 2015] to adapt technique, use of colour, figuration, setting and his way of depicting expression to more illustrative requirements for this book (Figure 11).



Figure 10: from *Sofie en de dolfijnen* (2014, p. 36)



Figure 11: from *Ik ben bij de dinosaurussen geweest* (2016, p. 5)

(...)

Happy drawing

Edward said he had an immense admiration for good illustrators. With their images they reach the reader sooner and more directly than a text does and they can address several readers at the same time. Moreover, the first acquaintance with a book often takes place through the image. This certainly applies to picture books (Joosen & Vloeberghs, 2008, p. 14). For Edward, the picture book is a high-quality form of children's literature. It is an excellent hybrid form that relies on a strong and high-contrast text-image interaction. But finding a good balance between what should or should not be told in the text or in the drawings and at the same time grasping the right reading rhythm is very difficult as far as he is concerned. Often a small start is enough to let the artist tell his story in a unique way, or vice versa, a line, a color or a scribble can be enough to write an original and fascinating continuation in the text. The main thing is that author and artist should be given the opportunity to expand their universe in every book.

Through his collaboration with all those illustrators, but also with publisher Marita Vermeulen (De Eenhoorn), he learns more and more from picture books. Conversations with renowned picture book makers such as Leo Timmers (1970) and Carll Cneut are very important for Edward to think about specific characteristics such as perspective, figures, setting or rhythm. Artists who make inspiring drawings that he can work with make him happy. It does not matter whether they are avant-garde inspired woodcuts, smoothly drawn cartoons, poetic collages or detailed pen drawings. They inspire Edward in his authorship.

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List of Awards and Other Distinctions

Anna Blaman Award

Complete oeuvre (2019)

Nomination Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

Complete oeuvre (2011, 2012, 2019, 2020, 2021)

Nomination Hans Christian Andersen Award

Complete oeuvre (2018, 2024)

Zilveren Griffel (Silver Slate Pencil)

- Rekenen voor je leven (2022, with Ionica Smeets)
- Gloei (2021)
- Er lag een trommeltje in het gras (2021)
- Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2020)
- Vosje (2019)
- De zombietrein (2018)
- Stem op de okapi (2015)
- Toen kwam Sam (2012)
- Hoera voor Superguppie! (2011)
- Fluit zoals je bent [anthologist of the collection] (2010)
- Opa laat zijn tenen zien (2009)
- Eén miljoen vlinders (2008)
- Superguppie (2004)
- Dom Konijn (2001)

Vlag & Wimpel (Flag and Streamer Award)

- Miss Eenhoorn (2020)
- Ik ben bij de dinosaurussen geweest (2017)
- Ik juich voor jou (2014)
- Draken met stekkers (2011)
- Ajax wint altijd (2010)
- Kleinvader (2008)
- Rood Rood Roodkapje (2004)

Gouden Zoen (Golden Kiss for the best book of the year 12-16 yrs)

- Ons derde lichaam (2007)
- De dagen van de bluegrassliefde (2000)

- Gijsbrecht (1999)

Gouden Lijst (Golden Frame for the best book of the year 12-15 yrs, previously Golden Kiss)

- Oliver (2016)

Nomination Gouden Lijst

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Woutertje Pieterseprijs

- Stem op de okapi (2016, with Martijn van der Linden)
- Superguppie (2004, with Fleur van der Weel)



Honourable Mention Woutertje Pieterseprijs

- Gijsbrecht (1999, with Hanneke van der Hoeven)
- Bijna alle sleutels (1999, with Sylvia Weve)

Gouden Poëziemedaille (Golden Poetry Medal)

- Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2020)
- Ik juich voor jou (2014)

Shortlist Gouden Poëziemedaille

- De zombietrein (2018)
- Mijn fijne geluidenboekje (2014)

Pluim from de Senaat van de Nederlandse Kinderjury (Children's choice)

- Sofie en de pinguïns (2011, with Floor de Goede and Ype + Willem)

Rainbow Book of the Year

- Gloei (2021, with Floor de Goede)

Glazen Globe

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Jenny Smelik-IBBY Award (for cultural diversity)

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Shortlist Jenny Smelik-IBBY Prijs

- Het bamboemeisje (2022, with Mattias De Leeuw)

Stripschappenning for Book of the Year, category Youth

- Draken met stekkers (2010)

Shortlist Dioraphte Literatour Prize

- Oliver (2016)

Kinder- en jeugdjury – children's jury (Flanders)

- Sofie en de pinguïns (2012, with Floor de Goede and Ype + Willem)

Shortlist De Boon (Flanders)

- Misjka (2023, with Anoush Elman and Annet Schaap)

Longlist De Boon (Flanders)

- Papa is een ijsbeer (2022, with Saskia Halfmouw)
- Het bamboemeisje (2022, with Mattias De Leeuw)

Nomination Boekenleeuw (Flanders)

- Vosje (2019)

IBBY Honour List

- Gloei (2022, with Floor de Goede)

White Raven

- Het bamboemeisje (2021, with Mattias De Leeuw)
- Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2020, with Martijn van der Linden)
- Vosje (2019, with Marije Tolman)
- Het telboek van Prins Hayo de Gelukkige (2017, with Mattias De Leeuw)
- Hallo (2013, with Fleur van der Weel)
- Pup en Kit (2003, with Geert Vervaeke)

Prix Sorcières (France)

- Het hondje dat Nino niet had (2015, with Anton Van Hertbruggen)

Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (Germany)

- Het hondje dat Nino niet had (2016, with Anton Van Hertbruggen and Rolf Erdorf)



Nomination Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (Germany)

- Vosje (2021, with Marije Tolman and Rolf Erdorf)
- Dertien rennende hertjes (2015, with Mattias De Leeuw and Rolf Erdorf)
- Wat ik vergat (2005, with Rolf Erdorf)

Tower of Babel Honour Diploma (Estonia)

- Stem op de okapi (2018, with Martijn van der Linden and Kerti Tergem)

Brief explanation of some of the awards

Golden and Silver Paintbrush, Golden and Silver Slate Pencil & Flag and Streamer Awards

Most important annual awards for children's literature in The Netherlands, for illustration (Paintbrush) and text (Slate Pencil), established by the CPNB (Collective Propaganda for the Dutch Book). An independent jury can award two books in four different categories (three age-categories and one for non-fiction) with a Silver Paintbrush. The same applies to the Silver Slate Pencils. From the awarded books, one is then selected as winner of the Golden Paintbrush and one as the Golden Slate Pencil. These awards were introduced in 1981 and 1973 respectively. The 'Vlag en Wimpel' (Flag and Streamer) is an honourable mention for this award.

Woutertje Pieterse Prijs

The Woutertje Pieterse Prize was established in 1987, and awarded for the first time in 1988. Libris, a bookseller's chain, sponsors the prize, which is intended for children's books of Dutch origin with literary merit. The laureate receives 15.000 euro. The goal of the Woutertje Pieterse Prize is to improve the quality of children's writing by means of the award. The jury is free not to grant an award when there is no book of sufficient quality. The prize owes its name to the character Woutertje Pieterse, since the story of this boy by Multatuli is said to be one of the finest ever written. Besides the Golden and Silver Slate Pencils and Painbrushes, the Woutertje Pieterse Prijs is regarded as the most important award for authors of children's literature.

De Boon

The Boon is a new literary prize, established in 2021, awarded each year in two categories: one for fiction and non-fiction and one for children's and youth literature, originally written in Dutch. The prize, funded by the Flemish government, aims to make literature in Flanders visible and accessible, give authors and illustrators the recognition they deserve, and seduce the audience into reading, borrowing and buying books. In terms of remuneration, it is the biggest award in the Dutch language region with a reward of 50,000 euros.

De Gouden Poëziemedaille (Golden Poetry Medal)

Since 2014, Poëziecentrum and CANON Cultuurcel have awarded the biennial Gouden Poëziemedaille to the best collection of children's poetry in Flanders and The Netherlands. A professional jury honours the best book of children's poetry in the Dutch language with a gold medal, while a children's jury awards four 'poëziesterren' (poetry stars) to the best individual poems in each age category.

The laureates don't win money, but musicians and artists make a song and music video of the winning poems. Watch the video for 'What you should do when your mother cries', one of Van de Vendel's winning poems here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlX9bmfgkHg>.

And another winning poem by Van de Vendel, 'Stretch a rope over it' from the collection of poems written to illustrations by Wolf Erlbruch here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubrJ_bBoQ3Y.

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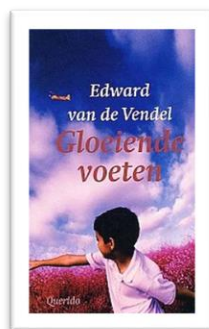
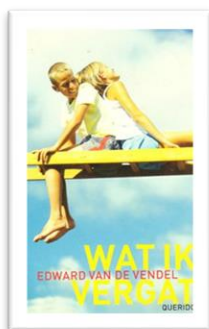
Poetry



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- Edward van de Vendel. *Leeftijd: Wat ik vergat*. [What I forgot]. 2001. Amsterdam: Querido.
- Edward van de Vendel and Geert Vervaeke (illustrator). *Pup en Kit*. [Pup and Kit]. 2002. Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn.
- Edward van de Vendel and Carll Cneut (illustrator). *Zootje was hier*. [Mess was here]. 2004. Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn.
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- Edward van de Vendel and Martijn van der Linden (illustrator). *De lol*. [The fun]. 2004. Tilburg: Zwijsen.
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- Edward van de Vendel and Anjo Mutsaars (illustrator). *Gooi dit boek maar uit het raam*. [Throw this book out of the window]. 2005. Tilburg: Zwijsen.
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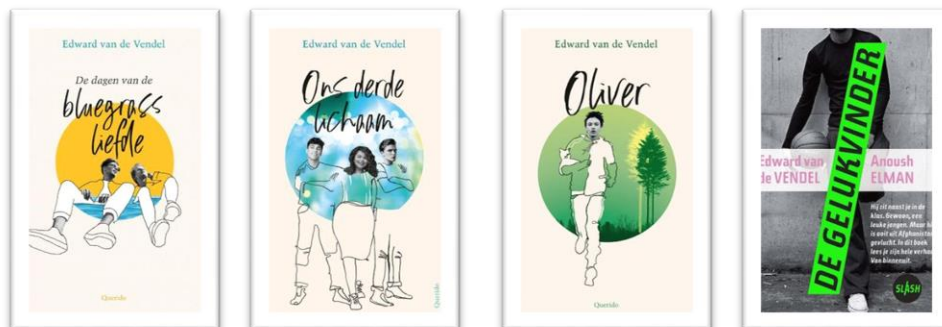
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- Edward van de Vendel & Floor de Goede (illustrator). *Pup en Kit*. [Pup and Kit]. 2018. Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn.
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Youth novels



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- Edward van de Vendel. *Een verhaal met een tong*. [A story with a tongue]. 2006. Rotterdam: Lemniscaat.
- Edward van de Vendel. *De hamburger files*. [The hamburger files]. 2007. Averbode: Altiora.
- Edward van de Vendel. *Onder schot*. [At gunpoint]. 2009. Amsterdam: Leopold.
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Young Adult novels



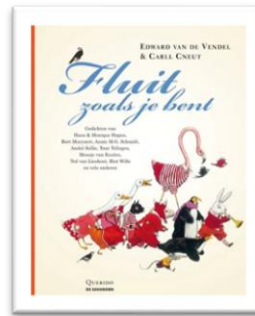
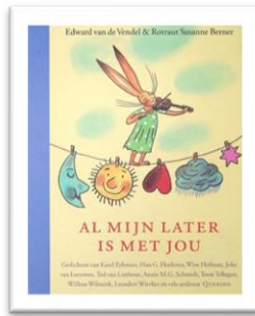
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- Edward van de Vendel. *Ons derde lichaam*. [Our third body]. 2006. Amsterdam: Querido.
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Non-fiction



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- Edward van de Vendel. *Ajax wint altijd*. [Ajax always wins]. 2009. Amsterdam: Querido.
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- Edward van de Vendel and Sanne te Loo (illustrator). *De jongen die met de dieren schaatste*. [The boy who skated with the animals]. 2018. Amsterdam: Querido.
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Other books



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List of Translations ⁹

Van de Vendel has been translated to Afrikaans, Catalan, Chinese, Czech, Danish, English, Estonian, Farsi, French, Georgian, German, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Slovak, South-African (several languages), Spanish and Turkish.

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Catalan

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Chinese

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⁹ Source: <https://letterenfonds.secure.force.com/vertalingendatabase/>.

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Danish

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English

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van de Vendel, Edward. *Mi amigo futbolista*. Spanish / transl. from Dutch by Micaela van Muylem. Ill. Alain Verster. Barcelona: Thule Ediciones, 2019. Children's Books; Picturebook, gebonden. Original title: Vasco het voetbalvarkentje. Wielsbeke: De Eenhoorn, 2013. Published with support from the Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren.

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Swazi

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Venda

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Xhosa

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Zulu

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South Ndebele

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South Sotho

van de Vendel, Edward. *Sam A Hlaha*. Zuid-Sotho / transl. from English by n.n.. Ill. Philip Hopman. Kaapstad: Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), 2015. Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Toen kwam Sam. Amsterdam: Querido, 2011.

Ten of the Most Important Titles¹⁰

DE DAGEN VAN DE BLUEGRASSLIEFDE (1999)



THE DAYS OF THE BLUEGRASS LOVE

The book is situated successively in a provincial town in the Netherlands, a summer camp in Knoxville, USA, and a town in Norway, is about the budding identities of two boys. In order to discover who he is and what he is capable of, after his final exams, Tycho who had an extremely sheltered upbringing, leaves for a year at an American summer camp.

At Amsterdam Schiphol Airport he meets Oliver, a passionate footballer, who is on his way to the same camp. Although they hardly realise it themselves, after a six and a half hour flight a close and passionate relationship has been formed between the pair. It soon becomes obvious, however, that there is no place for juvenile homosexuality in the camp's views on friendship. When the outside world discovers that the two junior assistants are more than just friends they are sent home in disgrace. They fly to Norway. There, Tycho discovers that football is more important to Oliver than their relationship. Oliver is in love with Tycho, but cannot see himself as being gay. Tycho's confusion, the physical contact and the macho world of football are depicted just as clearly and convincingly as the society's hypocrisy regarding homosexuals. There is plenty to read between the lines. The cutting dialogue, in short and strongly contrasting scenes, makes one boy's search for his own identity more than just a literary experience.

“Even in his prose, Van de Vendel succeeds in voicing the almost unmentionable (...) poetic talent is clearly not restricted to one particular genre.”

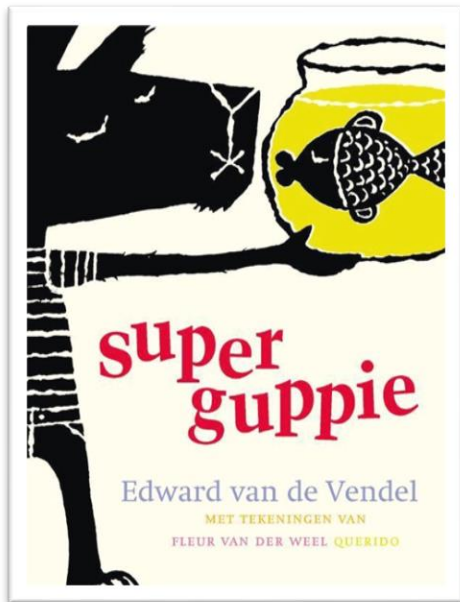
De Volkskrant

Age: 15+ | Translated to English, Latvian, German and Macedonian.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/313/the-days-of-bluegrass-love>)

¹⁰ All summaries are from short author and book presentations by the Dutch Literary Foundation: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/>. The exact url's are included after every text.

SUPERGUPPIE (2003)



SUPER GUPPY

With illustrations by Fleur van der Weel

Super Guppy is a collection of fifty-one wonderful, multifaceted poems for children of six years and up. Van de Vendel stays close to home: splashing through puddles and getting your socks wet, being tucked in at night by Mum, and having a plaster on your knee – ow! – taken off. To these familiar things, he adds dimension, an unusual way of seeing things, to make the young reader work a little. The storm lashes at the windows, but it breathes too, just like the child, for instance. Or a dead blackbird lies ‘folded flat / in the station on the ground’ and no one notices, not even Mummy.

The poet weaves these exciting extras into his stimulating, often funny verses. The newspaper becomes ‘paper meals on wheels’ for the ‘letterbox’ and a young narrator whispers to the cat on his lap, dreaming of tasty mice: ‘They’re biting back today!’

In the title poem ‘Guppy’ the cat has eaten almost all the guppies in the fishbowl. Almost, but not quite all: one still swims proudly round, and that one last fish comforts the little boy for the loss of all the others. Because:

I’d rather have this single feller
Than all the others put together
Super guppy swimming round
Being there –
That’s all that counts.

It's brilliant to finally link childish pride in that one surviving fish ('super guppy') with the adult statement: 'Being there – that's all that counts'. This, for instance, is where Van de Vendel's readers have to put in that extra bit of effort, but he writes in such a way that they are quite capable of doing so. Great, classy kids' poetry!

By Peter de Boer

"With Super Guppy he has instantly become one of that select group of poets in whose timeless children's verse anthologers will one day find gold."

PCZ, Jan Smeekens

"The funniest and most enchanting collection of recent months is, without a doubt, Super Guppy by Edward van de Vendel."

De Morgen, Annemie Leysen

"Edward van de Vendel surprises again. Where in his previous collections of poetry for children from about nine his original imagery was a breath of fresh air, in this collection he turns children's poetry upside down."

Leesidee jeugdliteratuur, Jan van Coillie

Age: 6+

Translated to German, French and English.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/328/super-guppy>)

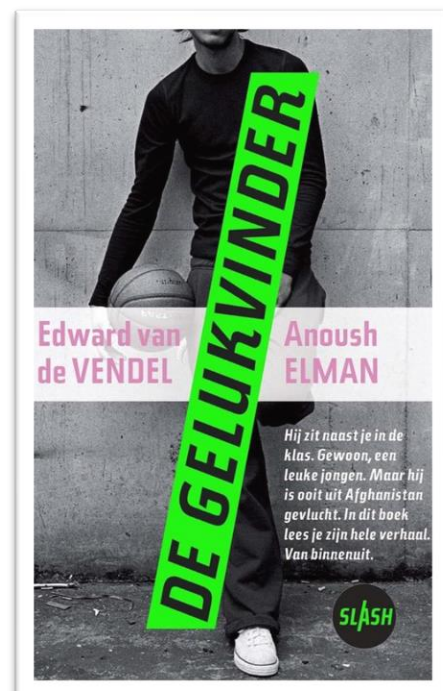
DE GELUKVINDER (2008)

THE BOY WHO FOUND HAPPINESS

Written with Anoush Elman

De gelukvinder is a spectacular book for adolescent readers, in which Edward van de Vendel relates the eventful life of Afghan refugee Hamayun, a seventeen-year-old whose character is based on that of co-author Anoush Elman. Together with his family, Anoush fled from the Taliban, ending up in the Netherlands more or less by chance, after an incredible journey.

De gelukvinder is the first book in Querido's new Slash series, initiated by Van de Vendel himself: a series of novels written by well-known Dutch authors and based on dramatic life stories



of young people today, with the aim of introducing more realistic social issues into the world of the literary children's book.

Although the series has educational goals, *De gelukvinder* is very much a literary novel. Van de Vendel cleverly avoids indoctrination and preaching by allowing events to speak for themselves. For instance, when Hamayun's mother arrives in Iran, she expresses her newfound freedom by throwing her burqa into a litterbin. The only comment she makes is: "Well, that's that then."

The film-like character of the book is reinforced by its structure, which resembles a collection of scenes from a documentary. Hamayun writes the script for his drama teacher, who believes that the Western world needs to know about the suffering of refugees.

Hamayun throws himself into his school project, painting a vivid picture of his plight. The threat of the Taliban is truly frightening, as it slowly destroys Hamayun's freethinking father, a teacher, and chases him from his homeland. The farewell from Hamayun's grandmother and baby brother is painful – they stay behind in Afghanistan to allow the others to "flee by the fastest route". The "road movie" section of the book, covering Hamayun's months of flight, is absolutely gripping. And Hamayun's "uprooted feeling" is deeply tragic – he describes this as "the sense that everyone else in the whole world has a house and work and friends [...]. And that we have been cut off from that world."

Although the story is intense, the tone remains light. This lightness of tone, together with the wide variety of realistic characters and Hamayun's fascinating coming-of-age story, combine to make *De gelukvinder* a remarkable book with universal relevance.

"More than all of the newspaper articles ever written on the subject, Edward van de Vendel gives asylum-seekers not only a face, but also a heart. It's enough to make you speechless."

Trouw

"A truly great novel"

NRC Handelsblad

Age: 15+

Translated to Catalan, German, Norwegian, Spanish (Spain and Mexico)

(Retrieved from : <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/674/the-boy-who-found-happiness>)

TOEN KWAM SAM (2011)

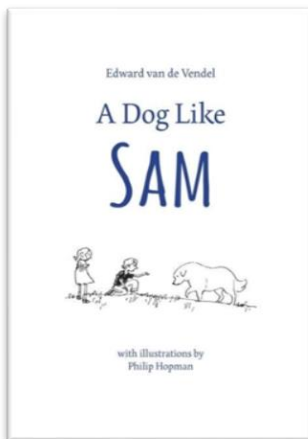
A DOG LIKE SAM

With illustrations by Philip Hopman

‘Seeing him was always a surprise, because he was so beautiful and white, and a little bit mysterious.’ Nine-year-old Kix and his younger sister Emilia fall in love with a big Pyrenean mountain dog the instant he walks into their lives. The dog is nervous and thin, with sad eyes and tangles in his ‘warm snowy fur’. Slowly the children gain his trust. But where did he come from?

This heart-warming story is one of Edward van de Vendel’s best books so far, mainly because of its tone. Based on a

true story, it flows as if telling itself. Kix’s voice and experiences strike the reader as utterly authentic.



Kix and his sister want to keep the dog and they decide to call him Sam. But Kix’s dad discovers that the dog actually belongs to a disturbed character called Cracker, the son of the nasty neighbours across the road. It’s not long before Sam becomes the focus of a quarrel between neighbours. Things get particularly tense during a night-time mission to liberate Sam, which leads to shotguns being used. Yet the story remains entirely credible. Part two, Sam’s Riddles, is no less exciting: the dog disappears and Kix sets off in search of him. Philip

Hopman’s lively pen-and-ink drawings are outstanding, making Sam look wonderfully lumbering and sweet.

“A moving book to be read at one long stroke.”

Jaapleest.nl

“Psychologically varied and multi-layered literature that never goes over children’s heads.”

De Standaard

Age: 8+

Translated to German, French and English, Estonian, Czech (expected), Chinese (expected) and 11 South African languages.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/823/then-came-sam>)



STEM OP DE OKAPI (2015)

VOTE FOR THE OKAPI

With illustrations by Martijn van der Linden

Driven by their relentless curiosity and unbridled fantasy, Edward van de Vendel and Martijn van der Linden present the okapi as a “splendid and silent mystery animal”. Remarkable facts about one of the last large mammals to be discovered alternate with small okapi stories and cheerful little okapi poems. Van de Vendel’s words are interspersed with Van der Linden’s striking and original illustrations, which show a remarkable range of styles composition and atmosphere.

What a wonderful idea it was to make the okapi the protagonist of a non-fiction book. Because how much do we actually know about this animal that looks as if it’s been stuck together? “A bit of deer. A bit of horse. A bit of zebra.” It turns out that they don’t bray. They don’t whinny. They don’t bark or trumpet. They hardly make any sounds, at least not sounds that humans can hear. In fact, okapis are so shy and unobtrusive that you could easily make the mistake of walking right past their enclosure at the zoo without noticing them.

Luckily, thanks to Vote for the Okapi, the chances of that happening have been significantly reduced. Van der Linden’s okapi pictures, with their many different styles and colours, perfectly reflect this creature’s mysterious diversity. Together with Van de Vendel’s poetic, vivid descriptions of the okapi, with its “tiptap hoofs”, “sunny bum” and brown “regal pelt”, which is like “earth that’s just been rained upon”, they stir the reader’s imagination and curiosity. What kind of wonderful creature is this?



Then, when you go on to read that okapis exist in the wild only in Congo, that they weren’t discovered until a hundred years ago, that they have no relatives except for the giraffe, and that okapi babies don’t poo for the first nine weeks of their lives, it makes you want to head straight to the zoo. And who knows? You might even get to meet not only the okapis but also one of the okapi keepers who have been interviewed at length in this delightful book by Van de Vendel and Van der Linden. A unique non-fiction title in which author and illustrator present a colourful, imaginative and poetic tribute to the okapi.

Edward van de Vendel and illustrator Martijn van der Linden have come together to create a non-fiction book about the okapi that is both wonderfully original and artistic.

Trouw

Fantastic illustrations by Martijn van der Linden, perhaps the finest animal illustrator that our country possesses.

Jaappleest.nl

Age: 7+

Translated to Estonian.

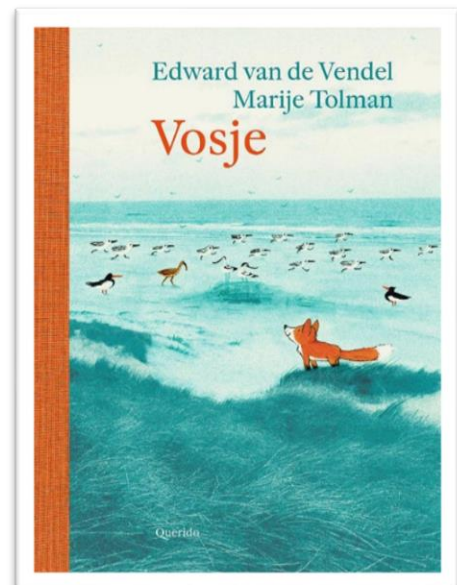
(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/1133/vote-for-the-okapi>)

VOSJE (2018)

LITTLE FOX

With illustrations by Marije Tolman

Little Fox is the result of a real urge to experiment, the power of language, a love of life, and an outstanding collaboration between illustrator Marije Tolman and author Edward van de Vendel. The central figure in this harmonious picture story is a fox cub who wants nothing more than to discover life, but then takes a tumble and finds himself in a dream that is actually a near-death experience.



Tolman, the illustrator, takes the lead in the opening scenes. In five double spreads, she gives the reader the space to get to know Little Fox and his habitat, for which she has employed grainy blue-green photographs of beach and dune landscapes. In combination with the pen drawings of animals and the cheerful bright-orange fox cub, this already results in an enchanting experience. The clever composition and varying perspectives make these spreads intriguing works of art that straddle the line between reality and fantasy.

She subtly swaps the background photographs for beige textured paper when the protagonist finds himself in a dream world after his unsuccessful butterfly hunt ends with him coming a cropper. The dream contains memories of the snug den where he took his first joyful steps with his fox brothers and sisters. Van de Vendel shows himself to be a master here, deftly leading the reader through the dream and writing in clear sentences

about the happiness of small moments of discovery and experiences that excite the senses.

But what is actually happening is that Little Fox, hovering between life and death, is seeing his life pass before his eyes like a film. The story takes a new turn when a human boy zooms into the story on his bike. He knows Little Fox, as the dream tells us, from when the cub got his curious little head stuck in a jar and the boy freed him. Will he save Little Fox again?

‘Curiosity will be the death of you,’ as Little Fox has learned from Father Fox. But is that really true? After all, if you don’t go out to explore, you don’t get to know life and what it’s all about – that is the inspiring message of this colourful story.

“A warm story and, thanks to Marije Tolman’s brilliant illustrations, one of the most beautiful books of 2018.”

Trouw

“Marije Tolman and Edward van de Vendel have created an accessible and attractive book with different layers. This is children’s literature of a high level.”

Kinderboekenpraatjes.nl

Age: 6+

Translated to English, German, French, Italian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Farsi, Russian, Slovenian, Slovak, Spanish, Turkish, and Chinese (expected).

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/1245/little-fox>)

WAT JE MOET DOEN ALS JE OVER EEN NIJLPAARD STRUIKELT (2019)

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU STUMBLE ON A HIPPOPOTAMUS

With illustrations by Martijn van der Linden

‘Poems that will be of some use to you’ is the subtitle of this textually and visually multi-faceted collection of poetry by Edward van de Vendel and Martijn van der Linden.

The poet and the artist have compiled a ‘self-help collection’ for children, in which every poem is another lesson. The titles of the poems include ‘What to do if your train is delayed’ and ‘What to do if someone has died and you didn’t know them very well.’ And, of course, ‘What to do if you stumble on a hippopotamus’. The advice in that case is: say sorry and then shovel in so many sweets that the next hippos you encounter have to get out of your way.

The two poems that advise you what to do when you're in love subtly mislead the young reader: if you want to woo a boy, play really loud tunes on the recorder, and if you want to win a girl's heart, build an insect hotel: 'Everyone knows girls get a kick out of creepy-crawlies, don't they?' The irony should be clear, because Van de Vendel's real lesson here is that it's wise to keep thinking for yourself. That's something that really will be of some use.

The texts are as varied in style and emotion as the illustrations by Martijn van der Linden. In addition to the funny, ironic poems, the collection also includes heartfelt, touching poems, like one about a forgetful grandfather and a sad mother ('When she feels she can lean on you for a moment / a bit of the trouble washes / out of her head'). That makes this book a collection that demonstrates exactly what characterizes Edward van de Vendel's oeuvre: he takes children seriously, nudging his readers towards happiness, but they have to take those steps themselves:

You want to conquer climbing problems
slowly slowly
so that by and by
you can stand
in the blue
of the sky.

"This is *parlando* poetry bursting with linguistic fun. Van de Vendel plays with words in a light, sparkling way."

De Standaard

"Not only the best collection of poetry Van de Vendel has ever made, but also a book that shows exactly where Dutch children's literature is right now."

NRC Handelsblad

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/1344/what-to-do-if-you-stumble-on-a-hippopotamus>)

Age: 9+

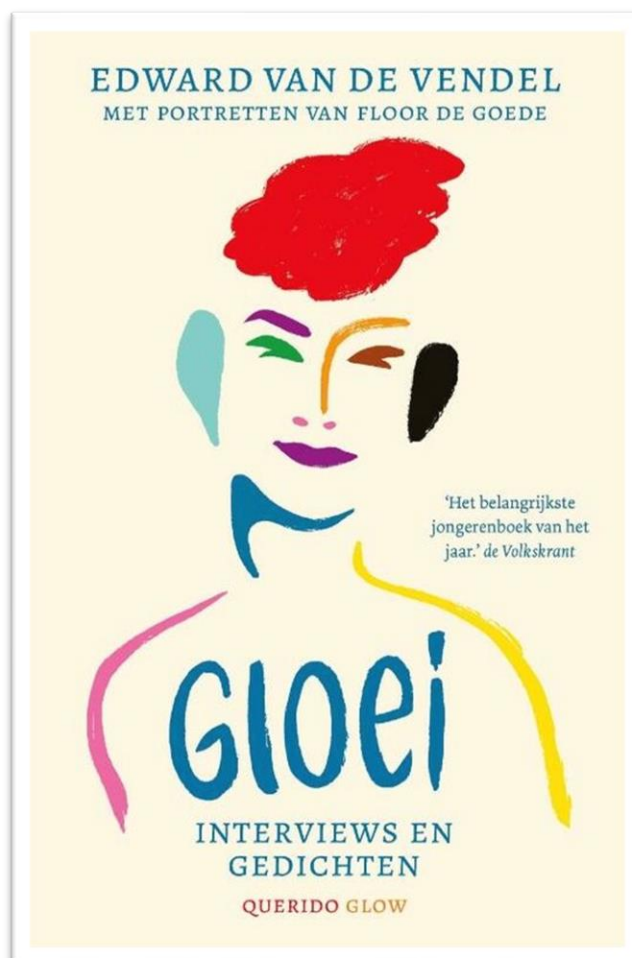


GLOEI (2020)

GLOW

With illustrations by Floor de Goede

For this collection, writer and poet Edward van de Vendel interviewed twenty-one young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three. They talked frankly about all the things that glow in their lives: love, anger, ambition. Being extremely diverse – a Paralympic swimming champion, a refugee from Syria, a zookeeper who performs as a drag queen during the weekends, a university student who grew up in a strict religious family, a bar keeper from Armenia living in Amsterdam, to name a few – they all have one thing in common: their sexuality or their gender differs from the majority. Their personal stories give a broad picture of today’s young people who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, non-binary, pansexual, transgender, asexual, queer or something in between. Or just: as themselves. To every interview, Van de Vendel wrote a poem based on the story of the interviewee and artist Floor de Goede drew a portrait. The book ends with a chapter about what happened after the interviews.



“The most important YA book of the year”

De Volkskrant

Age: 14+

REKENEN VOOR JE LEVEN (2021)



MATHS FOR LIFE

Written with Ionica Smeets, with illustrations by Floor de Goede

Writer Edward van de Vendel, illustrator Floor de Goede and the most famous mathematician in the Netherlands, Ionica Smeets, have joined forces to show how closely life and maths are connected, in this book told from the perspective of a primary-school class.

The starting point for this sparkling book is the class's dissatisfaction with maths. The children think their lessons are totally boring and old-fashioned. 'What do those sums have to do with

our lives?' they wonder. Their teachers come up with a suggestion for alternative lessons: every week, one of the twenty-two students is allowed to devise a maths question based on their own life.

In enthusiastic language, Van de Vendel then sketches a lively picture of a happy and diverse class. All the children and their life stories are featured, and Smeets bases fun maths lessons on them. For example, Romée wants to know, as she is trying to wash away her first heartbreak in the bath, if it's possible to fill a bathtub with tears. Patrick, whose dad is a pilot, asks the question: 'What if someone built a bridge from the Earth to the moon and we started walking now, would we get there before we're old?' And Jens, who is struggling to cope with his divorced mum and dad, wants to know how many houses there would be for refugees if all divorced parents moved back in together.

The clear explanations are humorously presented in De Goede's comic-style illustrations, as he imaginatively plays with reality. For Sven's question about whether peeing in the shower is good for the environment, we see a cartoon of the teacher peeing, but also a visual explanation of the average person's water usage per day, illustrated with icons of showers, toilets and washing machines. And when the class calculates how much people could lift if they had the strength of ants, we see the teacher raising a small elephant over his head!

The arts of storytelling and maths and words and pictures are effortlessly combined in this wide-ranging book. No one will ever find maths boring again.

“A lively, varied, and above all very cheerful ensemble book.”

NRC Handelsblad

“A playful and energetic book, in which numbers and children come to life.”

JaapLeest

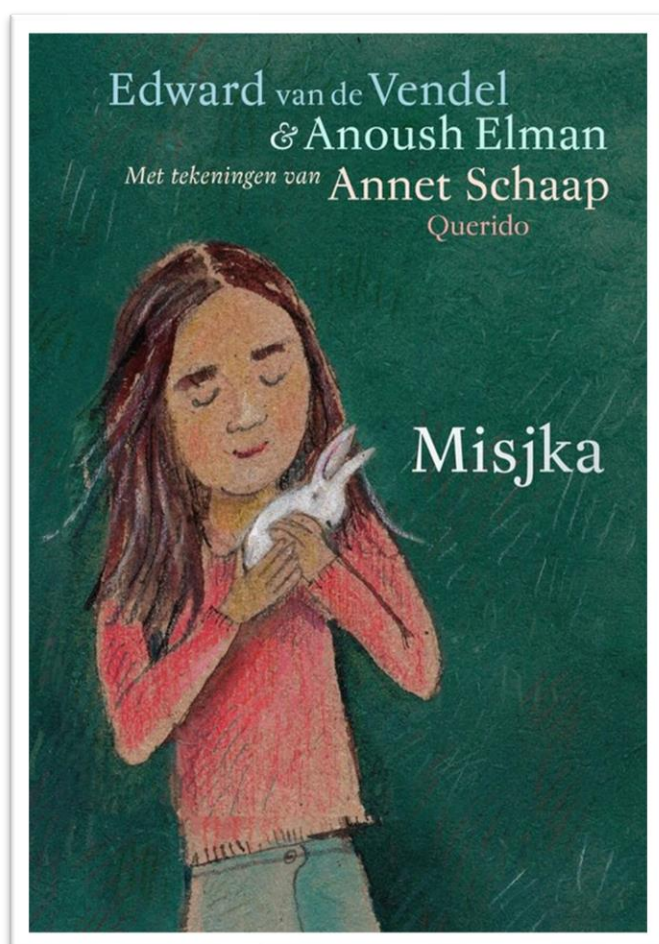
“The longest story sum you’ve ever read, but also the most fun.”

Trouw

Age: 9+

Expected translations to Serbian, Korean, Spanish, German, French.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/1491/maths-for-life>)



MISJKA (2022)

MISHKA

Written with Anoush Elman,
with illustrations by Annet Schaap

With the YA novel *De gelukvinder* (2008), about Hamayun and his family’s escape from Afghanistan, Edward van de Vendel caused a sensation from Norway to Mexico. This book, based on the life story of Anoush Elman, now has a stand-alone sequel for younger readers.

This time it is Hamayun’s younger sister, Roya, who is at the centre of the action. When, after years of bureaucratic limbo, the family receives permission to stay in the Netherlands,

they decide to get a pet: Mishka. To help the dwarf rabbit get to know her, Roya tells him her story, an abbreviated version of *De gelukvinder*. But then Mishka goes missing...

Van de Vendel beautifully mirrors the difficult journey from Afghanistan to the Netherlands in the missing rabbit’s wanderings. With understated colour illustrations by

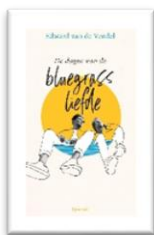
Annet Schaap, the creator of *Lampie*, this new Van de Vendel is once again another book to treasure.

Age: 8+

Expected translations to German, French.

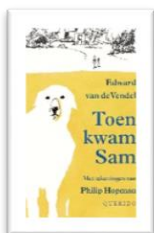
(Retrieved from: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/book/1556/mishka>)

Books Sent to the Jury



De dagen van de bluegrassliefde (1999)

- + Full PDF of the English edition *Days of the Bluegrass Love* (2022)



Toen kwam Sam (2011)

- + Full PDF of the English edition *A Dog Like Sam* (2016)
- + Full PDF of the German edition *Ein Hund wie Sam* (2013)



Vosje (2018)

- + Full PDF of the English edition *Little Fox* (2020)



Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2019)

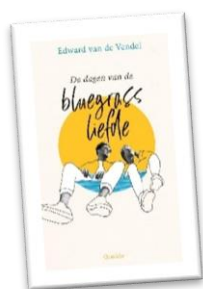
- + Sample translation in English of some of the poems



Misjka (2022)

- + Sample translation in English

Selection of Reviews of the Books Sent to the Jury



DE DAGEN VAN DE BLUEGRASSLIEFDE

THE DAYS OF BLUEGRASS LOVE

BY [EDWARD VAN DE VENDEL](#); TRANSLATED BY [EMMA RAULT](#) • RELEASE DATE: MAY 17, 2022

The heated beginnings of an international queer romance.

Tycho Zeling has never really thought about the course his life should take. Perhaps that's why he makes the sudden decision to take a gap year after high school and spend his summer at an international youth camp in Knoxville, Tennessee. In the Amsterdam airport, the Dutch teen happens to meet up with a fellow junior counselor who is headed for the same camp—Oliver Kjelsberg from Norway. The two strike up a fast friendship and end up sharing a tiny supply closet as their camp housing. After Tycho awakens to his feelings for Oliver, what follows seems fantastically inevitable. The boys' romance rushes along largely in private until the camp director tells them they need to be more discreet. Even though the majority of the staff support them, Oliver and Tycho decide they would rather leave than live inauthentically. They depart for Oliver's empty house (his mother is on holiday), where Tycho now has the privilege of seeing his boyfriend in his natural habitat, but he still cannot find a place for himself. Dutch author Van de Vendel's writing is poetic, intensely emotional, and sensitively philosophical in this beautiful translation by Rault. This book, originally published in 1999, is described in the author's note as standing in defiance of the old trend of depressing, fatalistic queer literature; it leaves readers with an open ending that leans strongly toward the optimistic.

An enduring story populated with endearing characters. (*Fiction. 14-18*)

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(Retrieved from: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/edward-van-de-vendel/the-days-of-bluegrass-love/>)

The Days of Bluegrass Love

Edward van de Vendel, trans. from the Dutch by Emma Rault. Levine Querido, \$18.99 (208p) ISBN 978-1-64614-046-6

Originally published in 1999, Dutch author Van de Vendel crafts a sensitive portrayal of sexual awakening and queer first love set in Knoxville, Tenn. in this earnest novel, originally published in 1999. When Dutch Tycho Zeling meets Norwegian Oliver Kjelsberg, both 18, on their way to be counselors at an international summer camp, the two become inseparable. During a swimming excursion, Tycho considers that he might be gay, citing his blossoming crush on Oliver, despite never having had feelings for boys prior. With a fellow counselor's encouragement, Tycho and Oliver giddily launch a tender relationship. After a camp leader warns them to be less obvious with their affections, Oliver convinces Tycho to sneak out, which leads to their employment termination. Instead of returning to Amsterdam, Tycho follows Oliver to Norway, but Oliver's sudden emotional distance causes their relationship to falter. Their opposing internal journeys, including Oliver's straightforward interpretation of his own queerness ("I'm just Oliver.... And Tycho Zeling from the Netherlands is the person I want to be with") and Tycho's earnest questioning, are thoughtfully examined. Van de Vendel's compact, deeply introspective tale follows a sedate pace, and the narrative's subdued approach to conflict allows the boys' tentative identity exploration to flourish sans traumatic upheaval. Ages 12–up.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781646140466>)

The tingling language of Edward van de Vendel hopefully finds its way to many generations of new readers

By Thomas de Veen

11 November 2022 in *NRC Handelsblad*

Originally published as Veen, Thomas de (11 November 2022). 'De tintelende taal van Edward van de Vendel gun je vele generaties nieuwe lezers' in *NRC Handelsblad*.

Here, NRC writes about the most popular books of the moment. This week: perhaps even more attractive than what *The Days of Bluegrass Love* describes is how the romance between two boys is told.

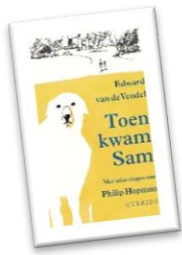
It is not only a modern, award-winning literary YA classic that deserves the revival of attention, but also fits in seamlessly with the taste of today's young adult readers.

It's about love – romance is the favorite genre among BookTokkers. And that love is not treated childishly: on the first page a bra is already pulled from between two bodies. But perhaps more importantly, the bluegrass love is not heteronormative love. After that first bra experience, at a summer camp in the US, Tycho's heart beats faster especially for the handsome Norwegian fellow counselor Oliver. In 1999 there was not much YA literature about love between boys in a non-problematic way; one of the reasons that Van de Vendel wrote his book was to fill that gap. Meanwhile, love between boys is just as obvious in literature as it is among the youth of today.

Perhaps even more attractive than what the book describes is how Edward van de Vendel tells that story: with stylistic fireworks that fully reflect the passion of adolescent love and lust. It is not difficult to feel with Tycho how all those summer nights 'began with words that eventually ran out, followed by feeling each other's skin. Then the touching that slowly gave way to a sensation of warm snow, of melting.'

Yes, that's heavy, fat romance - but it also tries to find fresh words for that fresh lust and avoid clichés. The tingling language of Edward van de Vendel hopefully finds its way to many generations of new readers.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2022/11/11/de-tintelende-taal-van-edward-van-de-vendel-gun-je-vele-generaties-nieuwe-lezers-a4147703>.)



TOEN KWAM SAM

BARKS OF JOY

By Vanessa Joosen

28 October 2011 in *De Standaard*

Originally published as Joosen, Vanessa (28 October 2011). 'Blaffen van vreugde. En toen kwam Sam van Edward van de Vendel' in *De Standaard*.

It is too early for end-of-year lists, but with *A Dog Like Sam*, Edward van de Vendel is already taking an option on the best children's book.

I dare say that 2011 will go down in the history books as a particularly good year for children's literature. Choosing one book from the rich autumn production is therefore no easy task, but it is difficult to resist the piercing eyes on the cover of *A Dog like Sam*, the new book by Edward van de Vendel.

The eyes belong to Sam, the snow-white dog who one day walks into the lives of Kix, Emilia and their parents. The family already has two dogs, but soon Kix can't get the mysterious snow dog out of his thoughts and feelings. Sam visits the family unannounced more and more often and then seems to settle permanently in their shed. Kix and Emilia can't help but embrace him, but that makes them particularly vulnerable.

Sam is an expensive dog, and his previous owner could be very cruel, as evidenced by the kicked and starving body hidden under Sam's thick fur. What if that owner comes to claim his dog back one day? And how well do Kix and Emilia really know their snow dog? Behind Sam's friendly face also appears to be a dangerous, aggressive animal. In a poignant scene in the middle of the book, the children watch helplessly as Sam nearly bites another dog to death. Their world collapses for a moment, but then their grandfather explains that Sam was trained as a watchdog and that he wanted to protect the family.

Kix and Emilia experience intense moments throughout the book, but they can count on the unconditional love and understanding of their parents. Just as Edward van de Vendel takes his readers seriously, Kix and Emilia's parents are honest with their children and do not laugh off their fears and dreams. This gives the book a warm atmosphere.

Recognizable

With *A Dog like Sam*, Edward van de Vendel has written a children's book that is psychologically versatile and literary layered without ever growing over the children's heads. The setting appeals to the imagination. The book is set in Canada and the children not only have dogs, but also horses and enough pastures to run around endlessly.

However far away Canada may be, the engine of the story is recognizable: Kix loves his dog intensely and does not want to lose him. When Sam's owner shows up, Kix is not only afraid that he will take his dog, but he even fears that Sam will choose his old boss. The doubts and moral dilemmas Kix goes through in the course of the book are powerfully evoked and clearly explained, without the story ever becoming pedantic.

Early in the book, Kix is concerned about Sam's barking when a train passes by at night. At the end, he realizes that Sam is not barking out of fear, but his barking is a cry of joy. As a reader you can think that Sam might be very happy to live with such a sweet boy like Kix.

Philip Hopman's illustrations support the story beautifully. The prints have perfectly captured the warm atmosphere of the book: from the first rapprochement between Sam and the children to the dangerous confrontation with his old boss. Joy, sadness, adventure, fear and happiness alternate in the story, and that wealth is also reflected in the varied prints. Just like Sam, this book has everything it takes to steal a child's heart.

THE AUTHOR: Dutch poet and author of youth novels, plays and non-fiction. He won the Silver Slate Pencil for *Dom konijn* and *Superguppie*.

THE BOOK: Sam the dog walks into the lives of Kix, Emilia and their parents. But what if the owner shows up?

OUR VERDICT: the book has everything it takes to steal a child's heart.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.standaard.be/cnt/023hgkej>.)

SAM THE DOG WANTS TO BE WITH US

By Bas Maliepaard

10 September 2011 in *Trouw*

English translation by Laura Watkinson

Originally published as Maliepaard, Bas (10 September 2011). 'Sam de hond wil bij ons horen. En toen kwam Sam van Edward van de Vendel' in *De Standaard*.

'It came as a surprise whenever you saw him, because he was always so beautiful and white, and also a little bit mysterious.'

Nine-year-old Kix and his younger sister Emilia immediately fall in love with the big Pyrenean mountain dog who walks into their lives, but sometimes suddenly disappears again. The dog is nervous, thin, has sad eyes, and tangles in his 'warm snowy fur'. Slowly the children gain his trust. But where did he come from?

This heart-warming story is one of Edward van de Vendel's best books so far. This is mainly a result of the tone, which flows as though the story, which is based on true events, is telling itself. With the exception of a few details, you don't sense a writer at work here, trying to craft everything as beautifully as possible. Van de Vendel does of course do so in this book, but more subtly than in his other works. Kix's authentic voice and his experiences really are the most important elements.

This means that, seen through adult eyes, it remains a rather small story, entirely about emotions and the problems surrounding a stray dog. But Van de Vendel skilfully makes us feel how such an event is anything but a small story in the life of a nine-year-old.

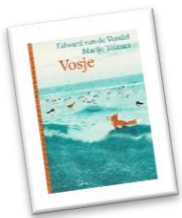
Kix and his sister want to keep the dog and they call him Sam. Their love for Sam is touchingly obvious in the way they see him as an equal and take his own wishes seriously. He's free to go where he pleases, but happily Sam realises one morning that he knows something for certain: 'Sam didn't come here because they wanted to keep him. He came because he wanted to keep them.'

Then Kix's dad discovers that the dog actually belongs to the disturbed Cracker, the son of the nasty neighbours across the road. And his name is Nanook, not Sam. But Kix is sure that whenever anyone had ever called Sam Nanook in the past he'd always thought: 'I'm not a Nanook. I'm a Sam.' Because that's how it works when you're a child. You're sure that no one understands your pet as well as you.

It's not long before Sam becomes the subject of a row with the neighbours. The tension really rises during a night-time mission to liberate Sam, which even involves the use of shotguns. And yet the story remains entirely believable.

Philip Hopman's outstanding pen-and-ink drawings are as lively as ever, but seem sturdier than usual because of the way he plays with large areas of black. The white Sam shines out of them, looking wonderfully lumbering and sweet.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.basmaliepaard.nl/publicaties/trouw-recensie/then-came-sam>)



VOSJE

WILL CURIOSITY KILL THE FOX?

By Thomas de Veen

19 October 2018 in *NRC Handelsblad*

Originally published as Veen, Thomas de (19 October 2018). 'Wordt nieuwsgierigheid het vosje fataal?' in *NRC Handelsblad*.

In this children's book a curious little fox falls and ends up in a dream – which is actually a near-death experience. The picture book *Little Fox* is a highlight in the oeuvres of both illustrator Marije Tolman and writer Edward van de Vendel.

A little fox, his young muzzle curiously pointed upwards, watches the birds on the shoreline, runs after seagulls, spreads his feet in jest like the cormorant beside him who dries his wings, and sees something, look closer, we see it too, and only then – after five double pages with scenes – writer Edward van de Vendel (1964) takes the floor, with a delightful opening sentence: 'Little fox runs after two butterflies, because they are purple.'

This run-up immediately shows the formidable collaboration between illustrator Marije Tolman and Van de Vendel in the children's book *Little Fox*, which is a highlight in both their oeuvres. Tolman (1976), who often combines techniques in her visual work, uses a background of grainy blue photographs of the beach and dune landscapes in many of her drawings. That mixes fantastically with the added animals, especially the main one, the fox in splashing orange. The images have something realistic and fictional – they have an 'everydayness' and something that transcends it at the same time.

The running fox follows the butterflies just too far, until the dune falls away from under his feet and he falls, and ends up in a dream. A wonderful dream: full of warm memories about frolicking fox brothers and sisters, about when the little fox discovered the world for the first time. Van de Vendel writes grandly about small happiness, with the same joyous attention that makes the children's poetry in his *Super Guppy* collections so strong. 'And if you stand in the wind, your hair will blow upwards! And when you turn around it blows to the other side!' Tolman uses brown wrapping paper as a background - a subtle style change that emphasizes the dream.

Porch of death

Wait: a dream? You don't immediately realize it, but what is happening is serious. Little Fox passed out, sees his life pass by like a movie, because he is in fact in the porch of death. But when Van de Vendel is silent for a moment, Tolman exchanges her wrapping paper for dune photos and then a human boy, just as cheerful and curious as Vosje, cycles into the story. He already knows Little Fox, we learn, from when he carelessly put his head in a pot and the boy rescued him.

That curiosity now threatens to prove fatal to Little Fox – many a children's author with serious literary inclinations would have let this story end on a minor note. But not Edward van de Vendel, who is a very warm-hearted writer, but who does not choose simple solutions. Step by step, scene after scene, portrayed more and more sensitively, Tolman and Van de Vendel let the beautiful sides of curiosity (it leads to encounters, trust, love, courage!) prevail. That ending is so firmly anchored in the story that it is as inescapable as it is literary sophisticated. At the end you have firmly taken Little Fox's zest for life in your heart.

(Retrieved from:

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/10/19/wordt-nieuwsgierigheid-het-vosje-fataal-a2635077>)

‘Tolman and Van de Vendel have created an accessible and attractive book that has several layers. This is high quality children’s literature.’

By Susan Venings

25 October 2018 on children’s book review website kinderboekenpraatjes.nl

Little Fox immediately conquers your heart on the first page. He sits on the beach beaming, fluorescent orange and visibly curious. He looks at the resident birds, which he chases a little later with a grin from ear to ear. Little Fox also plays with the birds and even imitates a cormorant. In the forest, too, Little Fox looks at his surroundings with an open mind and sees badgers, deer, pheasants and two purple butterflies.

So far, Marije Tolman has told the story with her beautiful images. Only when the butterflies appear the text begins: 'Little fox is running after two butterflies, because they are purple.' However, Little Fox's enthusiasm gets him into trouble, suddenly there is no ground under his feet and he falls with a big bang. And then 'his dream' begins.

The world of Little Fox that Tolman has drawn in the story up to this point is made up of blue/green tinted photos in which drawn animals are depicted. Due to the calm use of color, the background does not impose itself, while many details can be seen. The careful layout and original perspectives make each spread a work of art. The illustration with a thorny tree in the foreground is beautiful, but just as beautiful is the illustration that follows, where Little Fox goes after the butterflies in a wide sandy landscape.

Tolman's style changes when Little Fox dreams. Everything that takes place in the dream is drawn, including the beautiful subtle backgrounds. Little Fox dreams about the past. About the warm nest, about the first time outside and about his adventurous trips. Little Fox enjoys the wind to the fullest, for example: 'If you stand in the wind, your hair will blow upwards! And when you turn around it blows to the other side!'. Little Fox also has encounters with other animals, for example a deer that is very large according to him.

In his beautiful style, Van de Vendel describes how Little Fox experiences all of this. In addition, he regularly mentions that the reader is still in Little Fox's dream and with that he helps young inexperienced readers to hold on to the thread of the story.

Suddenly, the storyline of the dream is interrupted. The reader again sees the blue/green background and a boy is cycling in it. He must be near Little Fox, because the landscape looks familiar. Two deer approach the boy. The reader knows one of those deer, which is the deer that Little Fox met earlier on.

Things are not going well with Little Fox in the meantime. He gets cold and he sees himself lying there: 'That's crazy, because that's not really possible. That can only be

done in a dream.' Little Fox sees himself lying somewhere. On the ground, in the sand. He lies very still, his eyes are closed. Little Fox thinks: 'How did it end for that little Fox?'

The boy finds Little Fox and everything will be fine. But the story doesn't end there. An intriguing question lingers. Was it Little Fox's curiosity that got him into trouble and should Little Fox take his father's motto 'curious is deadly' to heart? Or has Little Fox's curiosity, which has brought him special friends, been his salvation?

Van de Vendel and Tolman seem to challenge Little Fox not to give up his curiosity. Tolman shows how colorful butterflies arouse Vosje's curiosity again, and Van de Vendel remarks: the butterflies are there, but they are not purple. Will Little Fox go after it again?

Little Fox is a book that does not reveal itself in one go. Yet it is not a complicated story: Little Fox has an accident, he dreams a strange dream and he is rescued. It is the details in word and image that stick to the reader and invite them to read, look and think about it again. For example, about death, about curiosity, about the joy of life and the courage to live.

Tolman and Van de Vendel have created an accessible and attractive book that has several layers. This is high quality children's literature.

(Retrieved from:

<https://www.sites.google.com/a/kinderboekenpraatjes.nl/kinderboekenpraatjes/home-blog/vosje-edwardvandevendelmarijetolman>) (Archived review)



WAT JE MOET DOEN ALS JE OVER EEN NIJLPAARD STRUIKELT

PRACTICAL POETRY: WHAT TO DO IF YOU STUMBLE OVER A HIPPO

Poems that are useful if, for example, you don't like your name, or you stumble over a hippo.

By Bas Maliepaard

25 May 2019 in *Trouw*

Originally published as Maliepaard, Bas (25 May 2019). 'Praktische poëzie: wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt' in *Trouw*.

A bundle of useful poems - what a good idea! Because, great, poetry, but what good is it? In this book, Edward van de Vendel offers solutions to practical problems, such as: 'What to do if you stumble over a hippopotamus' and 'What to do if you don't like your name.'

This concept often leads to humorous poems that playfully color outside the lines. Although Van de Vendel makes targeted use of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration, a colloquial looseness dominates, which, in combination with the you-form, gives the impression that the poet is talking to you. The poems are therefore excellent for reciting aloud and with some theatrical guts – in fact, they come out even better this way, according to a performance by Van de Vendel on YouTube.

In terms of content, the poems sway cheerfully and associatively through the twists and turns of his original fantasy, but in the end turn out to contain a clear punchline.

The poet often brings things to life in surprising metaphors. A sock becomes 'a snake that can't swallow its prey', a swimming pool becomes the swimmer's mistress: 'At home you still smell / the chlorine from her kiss', and household goods want to dance: 'Mug 'n' roll , / cup hip hop, / lamp samba”.

A few poems touch on more sensitive subjects – there should have been more of those. About a grandfather suffering from dementia ('Grandpa has an erasable dog in his head'), a cool friendship ('we texted much less after that, / our conversation had

withered') and a crying mother ('you don't have to understand anything, / you don't have to ask. / You only have to / scaffold her' – occasionally the rhyme sounds forced, as here).

The illustrations by Martijn van der Linden reflect Van de Vendel's cheerful ingenuity: each poem is cleverly illustrated in a different style. Pencil drawings, stamping technique, watercolor and pen illustrations, and so on. And there are strong images, such as the brainless head of the demented grandfather, with a dog on it.

This sparkling collection certainly proves the usefulness of poetry, not only because after reading you know what to do if you stumble over a hippopotamus, but also because you see the world through new eyes - and that's what good poetry can do.

Verdict: merry and resourceful, sparkling bundle.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.trouw.nl/cultuur-media/praktische-poezie-wat-je-moet-doen-als-je-over-een-nijlpaard-struikelt~b9e74482/>)

WHAT THIS HIPPO CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT CHILDREN'S POETRY

By Thomas de Veen

4 July 2019 in *NRC Handelsblad*

Originally published as Veen, Thomas de (4 July 2019). 'Wat dit nijlpaard je kan leren over kinderpoezie' in *NRC Handelsblad*.

How do you capture life lessons in literature without becoming preachy? Children's book authors have been setting themselves up for that task for years – and Edward van de Vendel excels at it. His new collection of poems shows where children's literature stands today.

Well, what should you do if you stumble over a hippo? 'First, / act humble. / Apologise. / But then, / visualize / how to make that hippo stumble.'¹¹ The summary of the considerations in the title poem of Edward van de Vendel's new collection of children's poems: become larger than a hippo. Specifically: eat sweets to get fat. Until you bulge and bulge. And the hippo trips over you.

¹¹ English translations by David Colmer from a proof translation of the book. See the accompanying documents for the full translation of this poem.

That helps you – but not really. And yet this is the opening poem of *What to do if you stumble over a hippopotamus*, with the provocative but justified subtitle: 'Poems that help you.' Rightly so? Would you like a lesson about hippos lying around? No, of course. It's mostly a joke. No lesson.

Poetry isn't there to be useful, is it? No one has ever repaired a bicycle tire, filed a tax return or toasted a sandwich with a poem. Poems may be useful for weddings and funerals, but otherwise we believe that a poem exists to be beautiful, or only: to be. Our idea of what literature is collides with our idea of what is useful.

'I am naughty'

'Literary texts give the reader space', writes poet Tonnus Oosterhoff in his collection of essays *A cry is not the disaster* (2018) – the context is very different, but the one-liner represents an entire conception of literature. If a literary text teaches an unequivocal lesson, then the text becomes a signpost to a fenced area. Then space shrinks. Then we don't consider it a literary text - where nuance and ambiguity reign supreme and you have the freedom to see and extract what you want from it. If a text is useful, we consider it a textbook, or a self-help book. Or: a children's book.

(...)

Children's book writers (and educators) now know better: a lesson does not have to be moralistic. "I am naughty," wrote Annie M.G. Schmidt. Anti-moralistic, but: a lesson indeed. *What to do if you stumble upon a hippo* also contains lessons - and not just from the joking hippo kind. There is nothing ambiguous about the poem about what to do when your mother cries: 'Go / and sit down next to her: / your arm against hers, / shoulder to wrist.' Van de Vendel writes: 'When she feels that she can lean on you, / that's what she'll do.' How this will help her doesn't matter: 'Something to do with burden distribution, / angle of inclination, / and percentage concentration.' The denouement is touching, thanks to a quirky detail: 'At last, Mum's not pouring / sadness out over everything. / Somewhere a Mediterranean sun / has started to sing.'¹²

Goosebumps

There is another poem (about friendship) that gives goosebumps, thanks to a great repetition at the end. At the same time there are cheerful, carefree poems about the emotional life of shoes, about what household goods do when no one is home, about how salamanders deal with rain. There is a resounding, Annie M.G. Schmidt-like rhyming story about two mischievous cats, a wild alphabet of alternative first names ('*Moeverraund. Nomaña. Ofja. Paljotze.*'). There is a mind-expanding poem in which three

¹² English translations by David Colmer from a proof translation of the book. See the accompanying documents for the full translation of this poem.

generations pass on stories from the past, there is a technically virtuoso game with bilingual rhyming words in a mini lesson in Norwegian. There are wonderful observations ('Grandpa has an erasable dog in his head') and convincing ideas on how to give life to inanimate things. (...).

The twenty-five poems by Edward van de Vendel (1964) are just as diverse in use and elaboration as the illustrations by Martijn van der Linden (1979) – together they have already created the eclectic *Stem op de okapi* [Vote for the okapi] (Woutertje Pieterse Prize 2016). Sometimes Van der Linden draws an absurd, photo-realistic hippopotamus on a sidewalk, then again impressionistically a penguin mother with cub (with that crying mother). He makes something cartoonish when appropriate, a delicate watercolor when it comes to swimming pool ripples, a drawing in gray pencil for a poem that cannot bear a screaming illustration.

The bundle shows the makers in full regalia. Van der Linden excels as an illustrator, practicing many styles. Van de Vendel combines all the good things of his previous work as a children's poet: the lightness of his Super Guppy poetry collections, the playfulness of *Ik juich voor jou* [I root for you, 2013], the collections of comic strip poems and the fiery sensitivity of his youth poetry. His technical mastery is exemplary: rhyme and rhythm are right without being too emphatic, his love for playful neologisms is rampant (and not too much).

Seduction

In addition, the multiformity of the collection keeps you sharp. Because what about the answers that the intended reader of about ten years old will most diligently seek: in the two poems 'What to do if you are in love with a boy', and 'What to do if you are in love with a girl'? The lessons of those poems make no sense, to be honest, absolutely nothing. Boys can be seduced by blaring as loudly as possible with a recorder in their ear, girls are pleased when you send as many insects as possible at them.

Just kidding. Within the collection, these two poems fulfill the function of a lesson in media literacy: never just trust what it says, think for a moment about who is saying it – those lessons force themselves upon you, and that way you will certainly benefit from them (as a starting poetry reader). The poems are thus also an instruction to suspicion against anyone who prescribes a lesson for you. With which the volume provides itself with an instructive footnote, but also contains a valuable lesson for educators. The basic attitude of the collection – and also the lesson that could be learned from the title poem – is that children should be able to grow up on their own.

That is typical of how Edward van de Vendel deals with that hierarchy that is fundamental in children's literature. See also his poem 'What to do if your parents never let you win'.

There he writes, this time as unequivocally as possible: ‘*First of all –/ parents who let you win / don't take you seriously. / For do they really think / that you are one of those people who, / when you lose at chess,/ needs a large white sheet / to sob into?!*’ Such parents keep you small.

Iconic

“It's about understanding the nature of growing up. How exciting that is, how vivacious, but also how scary and life-threatening.” Van de Vendel said this to his colleagues in 2012, when he gave the annual Woutertje Pieterse lecture. That lecture became a kind of statement of principle: while as a literary prize winner he stood on the serious, 'responsible' side of the children's book spectrum, against the popular serial writers without literary ambitions, his desire was to remove that polarization. Couldn't it be both? That children's authors were concerned with quality and attractiveness for children? “For the realization that child criteria are not opposed to adult criteria. For trying to learn from the passion of children, without concealing your adult commitment.” Many children's book authors who are now iconic in the Netherlands – Anna Woltz, Annet Schaap, Jan Paul Schutten, Bibi Dumon Tak – endorse this ambition. In their books, from *Lampie tot Plaster*, highly regarded by readers of all ages, they succeeded in using their weight, but not towering over the children. That is why *What you should do if you stumble over a hippopotamus* is not only the best collection of poems Van de Vendel ever made, but also a book that shows exactly where our children's literature is now - a book that embodies the prevailing ideals in an exemplary manner. Namely: as much as possible on the same level as children, without forgetting that the writer is an adult and the reader is a child.

The lessons are clear. Take your destiny into your own hands. Grow up on your own. And pay great attention, even to what is small. So also for that button on your pants, for bus drivers and snails. Those poems are signposts, yes, but they are also literary, because they don't fully map out the route and because they point out the fenced area. To freedom, where it is exciting and vivacious and scary – with which the poems show what children's poetry can do, and embrace the nature of growing up. They are lessons that give the reader space.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/07/04/denk-als-een-kind-en-voel-je-groot-a3966112>)



MISJKA

IN MISHKA, A FLIGHT STORY IS TOLD IN A CALM MANNER, VIABLE AND MOVINGLY BEAUTIFUL

By Pjotr van Lenteren

25 August 2022 in *De Volkskrant*

Originally published as Lenteren, Pjotr van (25 August 2022). 'In Misjka wordt een vluchtverhaal beheerst verteld, behapbaar en ontroerend mooi' in *De Volkskrant*.

Children's books don't often tell stories that really happened to the author. An interesting exception is Mishka, which focuses on the flight story of an Afghan family.

(...)

Strangely enough, good stories that have actually been experienced by the narrator are much less common in children's books. An interesting exception is Mishka by Edward van de Vendel and Anoush Elman, with illustrations by Annet Schaap. One of them shares his experiences, the other two write it down and illustrate it.

The genesis of this book is a story in itself. Van de Vendel met an Afghan refugee family more than fifteen years ago. One of the children, then 17-year-old Anoush, tells him about his dangerous flight to the Netherlands, which they make into the book *The Boy who Found Happiness*. In the book his name is Hamayun, but his author's name is also a forced pseudonym: when the book was published, it was not yet certain whether the family would be allowed to stay in the Netherlands permanently.

(...) *The Boy who Found Happiness* (Querido, 2008, 14+), became the first part of a series of true stories and is also the most successful one. After that, Van de Vendel and Elman remained friends, the latter now has a job and two children.

Mishka tells more or less the same story, but to a much younger audience. The little sister Roya is now the main character. Once the family lives in their first Dutch home, she wants to have a rabbit pet. Mishka comes and quickly becomes a valued family member whom you can tell everything. So they do. In this way, the rabbit, and Roya too, is told the story

of the flight bit by bit, each time in slightly different colored perspectives. The chunky Bashir, the soft Hamayun, the tough eighth grader Navid and sometimes father and mother each give their own contribution.

It takes a lot from a writer to get the funny, the everyday, the adventurous and the terrible balanced on paper. Where *The Boy who Found Happiness* sometimes drowned in beautiful writing and irrelevant details, in this version the story has been stripped down to the essentials, told in a calm manner and fully succeeded in being small, viable and touchingly beautiful at the same time. Everything that Van de Vendel can do has come together in this beautiful book.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/in-mishka-wordt-een-vluchtverhaal-beheerst-verteld-behapbaar-en-ontroerend-mooi~bbe013a7/>)

THE MASTER OF EMPATHETIC WRITING MOVES INTO AN AFGHAN FAMILY IN THIS NEW CHERISHABLE BOOK

By Joukje Akveld

12 August 2022 in *Het Parool*

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Some children's books transcend the target group implicit in the genre name. In this section, Joukje Akveld highlights books for an audience with no upper limit. This week: *Mishka* by Edward van de Vendel (Querido, € 17.99).

Who is Edward van de Vendel?

Award-winning children's book author who has mastered all genres: fiction, non-fiction, picture books and poetry. The common denominator: stylistic mastery and great empathy. Van de Vendel is the king of empathetic writing. His texts speak of unbiased involvement. From young people struggling with their sexuality to cancer patients and Afghan refugees, everyone gets a voice with him, which makes you want to become friends with his characters right away.

When will Mishka appear?

Next week, August 16. It is a stand-alone book, but for those who are familiar with Van de Vendel's oeuvre, it is also a kind of sequel. In 2008, together with Anoush Elman, he

wrote the young adult novel *The Boy who Found Happiness* about the flight to the Netherlands of the Afghan Hamayun and his family. In this case, writing together meant that the story is based on Elman's life and everything he told Van de Vendel, who, in his turn, did the writing. In *Mishka*, for readers from the age of eight, Hamayun's younger sister Roya takes center stage. Elman is again mentioned as a co-author, but this story also clearly comes out of Van de Vendel's pen.

Who is Mishka?

A white dwarf rabbit. When the Afghan family finally gets a residence permit after years of bureaucratic tug-of-war, 9-year-old Roya thinks that a new home needs a pet. That will be *Mishka*. To ensure that the rabbit gets to know her, she tells the animal her life story, a very concise version of *The Boy who Found Happiness* – compositionally a smart find.

What makes the book special?

Mishka is a successful hybrid of *The Boy who Found Happiness* and *A Dog Like Sam*, another Van de Vendel title about the close bond between a boy and a dog. When *Mishka* is lost, the family's desperation is palpable. Van de Vendel beautifully mirrors the difficult journey from Afghanistan to the Netherlands in the wandering of the missing rabbit. The rabbit finder's suspicion and latent racism towards the 'foreigners' is subtly hidden between the sentences. Annet Schaap, author of the acclaimed *Lampie* and illustrator, provided the story with sober color illustrations. Altogether, this new Van de Vendel once again becomes a cherishable book to keep close at heart.

(Retrieved from: <https://www.parool.nl/kunst-media/de-meester-van-het-empathisch-schrijven-verplaatst-zich-in-een-afghaans-gezin-in-dit-nieuwe-koesterboek-bca488ce/>)

Nomination dossier by The National IBBY Section of The Netherlands

