

Best of Books for  
Young People  
with Disabilities  
IBBY Jubilee  
Selection 2002

INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

iBbY

**Best of Books for Young People with Disabilities**

**IBBY Jubilee Selection 2002**

by Nina Askvig Reidarson

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IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for  
Disabled Young People  
Department of Special Needs Education,  
Faculty of Education, University of Oslo  
P.O. Box 1140, Blindern, N-0318 Oslo, Norway  
Tel. (+47) 22 85 80 59, Fax (+47) 22 85 80 21  
E-mail: n.s.a.reidarson@isp.uio.no

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Project leader: Nina Askvig Reidarson  
Project coordinator: Leena Maissen  
Language editor: Elizabeth Page  
Design: Marcela Montes  
Printed by Schwabe & Co. AG, Basel

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Tel. (+41 61) 272 29 17, Fax (+41 61) 272 27 57  
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# Foreword

This annotated catalogue presents 44 children's books of different categories and genres for, about and by young readers with special needs. Having been selected from among the more than 4,000 books that the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People in Oslo has received throughout the years from the IBBY National Sections, publishers and individuals worldwide, they document the impressive creative diversity in this field.

The Centre in Oslo was established in 1985 and at that time was the fruit of five years of co-operation between the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), the Norwegian Institute for Special Education in Oslo and the dedicated work by a pioneer in this field, the Norwegian professor Tordis Ørjasaeter. This work was encouraged and supported by Unesco. Later, the IBBY Documentation Centre was transferred to the Department of Special Needs Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Oslo. Significant results of this international collaboration are the IBBY projects about books and disabled children: 1981, 1985, 1991, 1997 and 2001, all of them exhibiting and listing books under separate categories to illustrate different kinds of approach for young readers with special needs. All the projects were completed successfully due to international collaboration and the support of a network of enthusiastic people.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all our colleagues who helped us to identify suitable books and then submit them to the Centre in Oslo. We wish to express our great appreciation to the University of Oslo for its long and generous support of the IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled Young People, which as of summer 2002 will move to a new home with a new director, at the Haug Municipal Resource Centre for Young People with Disabilities, in Baerum/Oslo.

We also wish to express our sincere thanks to Schwabe Verlag in Basel and its director Urs Breitenstein for their generosity in donating the printing of this publication as a special contribution to IBBY's 50th anniversary jubilee.

We hope that this catalogue and exhibition will strengthen the connections between countries and lead to more and closer co-operation between them in producing, publishing and translating suitable books. We also hope that it may help parents, librarians and educators in their choice of books for young people with special needs.

Oslo and Basel, May 2002

Nina Askvig Reidarson, Director  
IBBY Documentation Centre of Books for Disabled  
Young People, Department of Special Needs  
Education, University of Oslo

Leena Maissen, Executive Director  
International Board on Books for Young People



Fingrar som ser, Seeing in special ways

# Introduction

As an instrument for communication and participation, literature has an important role to play in the development of our identity and quality of life. The loss or reduction of a functional ability may, however, create communication problems and thus bar the way to language development and reading ability. All over the world there are young people who are deficient in language and reading as a result of impairment, and thus have difficulties in finding suitable books among publications available. Therefore, they need specially produced books or selected books of literary and artistic quality that meet their special needs regarding design, language, plot structure and pictures.

It is neither possible nor desirable to make a blueprint of what is a suitable book, because young people with disabilities are, like all of us, individuals with very different needs and skills. Only a wide choice of books based on a profound knowledge of the various special needs can, in the end, give young people with disabilities access to books.

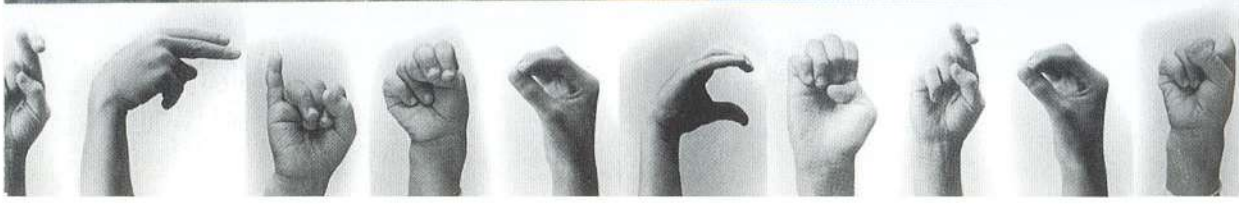
This catalogue presents a broad range of books that includes all the main suitable book types. For each category we chose

books that could illustrate different kinds of approach and different solutions to the same set of problems. Some of the books listed in the catalogue are pioneer books that have played an important role in the development of this field.

Many fine books unfortunately had to be omitted from this selection because of space restrictions. However, some of them are referred to in the earlier IBBY projects and catalogues mentioned in the foreword.

It is evident that this limited selection cannot give the full picture of existing books and possibilities. Nevertheless, we hope that it can give the reader an insight into the engagement of IBBY in this field. We also hope that it will promote more understanding and knowledge, as well as inspire and suggest ideas for the publication and promotion of books for young people with special needs.

RHINOCEROS



# Signing a story

Deaf children use eyes instead of ears to receive information. They do not, like hearing children, develop speech spontaneously. Difficulties in imitating the spoken word and in associating written symbols with sounds complicate communication as well as making it difficult for them to pick up a good knowledge of the written and spoken language.

Consequently, deaf children often lack adequate reading skills. Several countries recognize that sight instead of hearing is the sense that can convey language symbols to children who cannot hear, and acknowledge that signing is their first and educational language as well as their principal means of communication. Deaf children who are brought up with signing usually communicate successfully through this language.

Sign language is a visual and gestural language with a grammar structure and rhythm of its own, which is different from that of spoken language. It requires body movements, facial expressions and sign formation to convey the exact meaning. Signed video versions of regular children's books stimulate signing and language in general and give deaf children access to popular books told in their first language. Videos are a suitable means for visualising the various elements of sign language. Nevertheless, deaf children should, like other children, have printed picture books in their primary language. Such books will also inspire non-deaf children to play with signs, and thus pave the way for communication between them and their deaf friends.

Adaptations of the national sign language exist in most countries. Signed English, is

for instance, an adaption of American Sign Language (ASL). These sign language systems follow the word order of the spoken language in a country. Books in adapted sign language may be suitable for children with no hearing difficulties, but who have language difficulties and use signs as well as speech in their communication.

The books listed below illustrate different kinds of approach to sign language in children's picture books.

**1** Ancona, George and Mary Beth Miller

**Handtalk Zoo**

New York: Four Winds Press, 1989. [30pp.]  
ISBN 0 02 700801 0

In a lively story told with colourful photographs, text and American Sign Language, Mary Beth and a group of children spend a fun-filled day visiting the zoo. As they see their favourite animals, they demonstrate the signs and fingerspellings for each one.

**2** Bertels, Sarah (text), Catherine Hewitt (ill.)

**The River of Silence**

Melbourne: Lothian, 1990. [28pp.]  
ISBN 0 85091 400 0

The poetic story of the river's search for its lost noise is captured in extraordinary and fascinating colour illustrations. The text is written in Signed English and English.

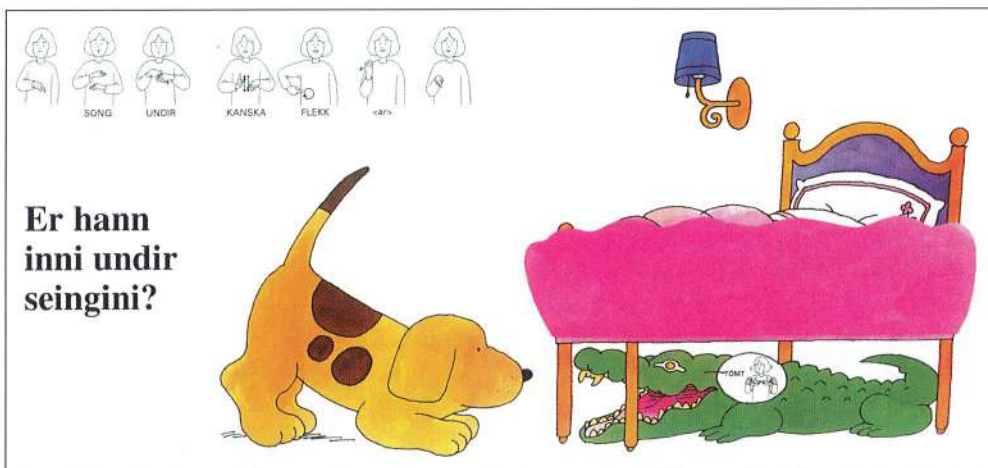
**3** Henkes, Hans

**Hoor je me niet!** [Can you hear me!]

Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 1981. [144pp.]  
ISBN 90 216 0913 4

Ian, a deaf boy, is taken prisoner by a robber. His deafness turns out to be an





Hvar er Flekk? [Where's Spot?]

advantage for him, when he, together with his friend Rose helps the police catch the thief. The author wrote this picture novel in Dutch Sign Language and Dutch in order to stress signing as deaf children's first and educational language and also to give deaf children in Holland a book written in their first language.

4 Hill, Eric (text/ill.), Edny Poulsen (sign language translation), Hanna Orlof (sign.ill.)

**Hvar er Flekk?**

[Where's Spot?]

Tórshavn, Faroe Islands: Føroya Skúlabókgarunnur, 2000. [22pp.], ISBN 99918 0 235 5

Illustrations with tactile elements, such as lift-the-flap books stimulate the sense of touch, curiosity and imagination. The sign language illustrations and the playful pictures in this Faroese Sign Language adaptation of Eric Hill's popular lift-the-flap book are a playful invitation to signing as well as a joyful introduction to words and concepts. Clearly presented and instructive

sign language illustrations that are closely connected to the colourful pictures and captions help deaf and non-deaf children play together with signs and pictures. The captions in Faroese written language help deaf children learn to read and write the standard language of their country. The large black print, the clear colours and the distinct outlines of the illustrations may also be legible for partially sighted children. Such a bilingual edition of a very popular children's book promotes integration of deaf children in society. The book follows up the similar sign language editions of the Spot series that were published in UK and USA in the 1980s. It is part of a Nordic co-production, thus underlining the necessity of international cooperation in this field.

5 Lillevik, Linda (text), Kjell Ove Storvik (photos), Sigrid G. Holm (signed ill.)

**Klart vi tør!**

[Of course we dare!]

Bergen: Eide, 2000. 47p. ISBN 82 514 0606 4

This photo book is the second book about Kristine, a four-year-old girl with Down Syndrome. The reader follows Kristine on a day out at the seaside with her family, her best friend Marie and the dog Raja. The writer and the photographer do not focus on the disability, but capture the joint activities and the friendship of the two girls. The captions are simple and closely connected to the pictures. Large and distinct sign language illustrations draw attention to key words and concepts in the photographs and captions. This is a book for all children, and in particular for young people with language difficulties who use signs as well as speech in their communication.

**6a** Newth, Philip (text & ill.), Tore Hansen (sign ill.)

**Fy katte!**

[Fie cat!]

Oslo: Aschehoug (Talking Hands), 1982. 22p.

Spiral bound.

ISBN 82 03 10909 8

Humorous illustrations depict life with a zany cat. As well as being enjoyable, the pictures and text introduce basic concepts, e.g. prepositions, thus stimulating language in an amusing way. This picture book was one of the first original Norwegian picture books made for deaf children. It appeared in a series of thirteen picture books with sign language illustrations, published in the 1980s, all of them written and illustrated by established Norwegian writers and artists, something which gave prestige to this kind of book. The texts in these books are in Norwegian and in Signed Norwegian – whereas Norwegian deaf children's first language is Norwegian Sign Language. Nevertheless, they seem to act as an instrument for social inclusion. They have

inspired non-deaf children to play and communicate with signs. They have proved to be suitable for children who use signs as well as speech in their communication, among them young people with mental disability. Finally, the expressive pictures and the concrete concepts may encourage deaf readers to sign the story in their first language.

**6b** Newth, Philip (text & ill.),

Frances Ann Kidney (sign ill.)

**Fy, kat!**

[Fie cat!]

Copenhagen: Mallings (Talking hands), 1987. 22pp.

Spiral bound

ISBN 87 7333 380 8

This Danish translation of *Fy katte* (see no. 6a) – published five years later – has another kind of approach. In this edition the text is written in the deaf children's first language, i.e. Danish Sign Language. The sign language illustrations are less stylized and somewhat more expressive than they are in the original Norwegian edition

**7** Orlof, Hanna (ill.), Eia Guldborg,

Malene Lytting (text)

**Blæksprutter prutter – tosserier med tegn**

[Octopuses are farting – signed nonsense verses]

Copenhagen: Center for Tegnsprog og

Tegnstøttet Kommunikation, 1996. 41pp.

ISBN 87 89082 28 1

Just as children with no hearing difficulties develop language by playing with words – such as nonsense words, rhymes and jingles – deaf children can develop language by playing with signs. This Danish picture book employs signed nonsense verses

and a standard text to invite deaf children to play with hand shapes, hand positions and facial expressions. Each nonsense verse has a basic hand shape. Signs or rhymes with new meanings can be created by changing hand positions and movement. The sign language illustrations are large, distinct and rather expressive, thus easy to interpret and imitate. The basic hand shapes are repeated in the vivid and humorous conventional illustrations, which can also open the way to signed storytelling. The book not only inspires signing but also encourages the combining of signs with written words. As well as being a book for deaf children, it is also suitable for children with language deficiencies (e.g. mental disability) who use signs as well as speech to communicate. Such a book can inspire hearing children to play with signs, hence facilitating communication between them and their deaf friends. Sign language texts can also help parents and other adults who want to learn this means of communication.

8 Rankin, Laura

**The Handmade Counting Book**

New York: Dial Books, 1998. [30pp.]

ISBN 0 8037 2309 1

This book shows how to count using American Sign Language. The artwork on each page shows a clearly presented hand shape representing a number and paintings of matching objects. The book is at once a joyful invitation to counting in addition to being a playful introduction to signing numbers. Moreover, it promotes special skills such as language development, visual perception and motor skills.



Fy, katt!

# Story books with BLISS and pictograms

BLISS and pictograms are international non-verbal pictorial systems, which can help non-speaking people communicate.

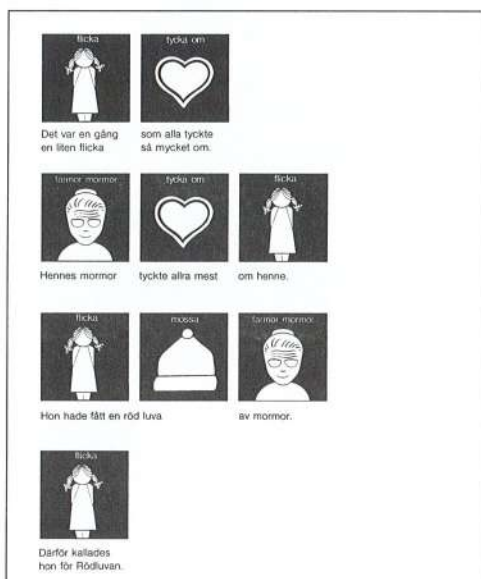
Some young people with mental disability use these systems in combination with signing, single words and regular illustrations.

9 Diesen, Anette

**Stol på meg, sa stolen** [Chairs]

Tønsberg: Likeverd, 2000. 28pp. Spiral bound  
ISBN 82 8002 000 4

"A child is a child and a chair is a chair" say the chairs to each other. But one day a special chair entered the kindergarten. It was a silvery, lilac and black chair with a headrest, a footrest and a seat as soft as velvet. But what was most important, it had wheels instead of legs, and was not left behind like the other chairs. This amusing story in BLISS and Norwegian



turns things upside down. It deals with disability in a humorous way and looks for possible inherent advantages. The story is easy to follow and the topic of being different easy to identify with. The book was read on the Norwegian Children's Radio Programme and inspired many children to make drawings for the programme. This book has no regular illustrations. Instead, the author uses the BLISS figures in a different and amusing way, by presenting them not only as pictorial symbols for words but also allowing them to act as illustrations. A BLISS explanation board is enclosed. 1

10 Hornung, Helga (text/ill.),

Monika Amrein (BLISS translation)

**Der kleine Lulu** [The little Lulu]

Luzern: rex, 1998. [39pp.] ISBN 3 7252 0680 5

Lulu, a very lonely child, meets Moon Prince who becomes his friend. The imaginary friendship helps him break his solitude. Expressive and colourful acrylic paintings convey a poetic story of solitude and happiness that everyone can identify with. BLISS symbols are added to the standard text. This book takes a multiple approach and can reach readers with different needs and skills. The BLISS system is explained in an appendix.

11 Johansson, Anita (idea, ill. and text)

**Rödluvan och vargen** (pictoverison)

[Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf]

Umeå: SIH Läromedel, 1992. 15pp.

ISBN 91 7838 233 5

This is a bilingual and abridged edition in pictograms and regular Swedish of the well-known fairy tale.



stol stol stol stol stol stol stol stol



stol stol stol rullestol stol stol stol stol



stol stol stol stol stol stol stol stol



stol stol stol stol stol stol stol stol



stol stol stol stol stol stol stol stol

The pictograms are easy to understand and the regular text is very short and simple so that the the readers themselves may be able to tell or perhaps sign the story to their families and friends and even discuss it further with them. This book has no illustrations, but in the foreword the author explains that before using

it with her pupils, she tells them the original story in full, often in combination with illustrations from regular picture book versions of this fairy tale. According to her experience, pictogram versions like this open the way to language ability and in the end to better self-esteem.

## Reading with your fingers

Children who are born blind build their language and mental picture of the world primarily by means of the audible and tactile senses, which must be relied upon to gain the meaning of words and concepts. Because we live in a visual world where language usually is based on codes relating to visual experiences, many blind children have insufficient understanding of the meaning of the words and concepts they listen to and learn to use. Most young people with visual loss have some degree of sight, and it is important to know whether a child with visual impairment is able to read regular print and pictures – probably large print – or to what extent he or she needs alternative media based on sound and tactility, e.g., Braille (raised print), tactile pictures (raised pictures), cassette books, and books with sound illustrations.

A tactile picture book (with raised illustrations) can give children with severe visual impairment the opportunity to enjoy picture books. This is an important book for children who cannot read print because it stimulates the sense of touch and the

art of recognizing and interpreting shapes, thus preparing them for learning Braille later on. Tactile picture books can help develop language provided the illustrations are comprehensible to the blind child. But mere tactility is not sufficient.

Many tactile illustrations are based on visual power and are not easy to understand for a child without visual experience. Conventional realistic pictures, even if the outlines are raised, are difficult to interpret for children who are blind from birth. If such pictures are to be 'legible' they should probably represent small objects with the shape, size and texture that a blind child is familiar with in everyday life.

Blind children can certainly take pleasure in tactile representations even if they cannot interpret all the pictures or need guidance from a sighted person in order to understand them. But there should be books available that blind children can read without help. For instance, some tactile picture books have illustrations with small, simple, non-figurative or geometrical shapes and characters. Contrary to conventional

pictures, these figures need no visual experiences in order to be understood.

Legible raised illustrations and Braille text need print and paper of high quality. To allow the book to be read by blind and sighted children together, the Braille text should be written beneath the standard print and its placement should not interfere with the tactile illustrations.

A cloth book is another kind of tactile picture book. It can provide a different experience to that of paper picture books and can be enjoyed by all children. In particular, such books can encourage children with mental disabilities, motor difficulties, or multiple impairments to play with the textile elements and thus take an interest in reading books. Blind children can enjoy the touch of the soft cloth and play with the pictorial representations. Whether they can comprehend the pictures will most likely depend upon the shape of the pictures, the children's general ability, linguistic level and previous experience in picture reading.

Tactile picture books are a way of integrating disabled children into society. Books based on rhymes and stories from oral tradition can give young people access to the cultural traditions of their country. Likewise, tactile versions of popular picture books can give children the possibility of sharing a book with others.

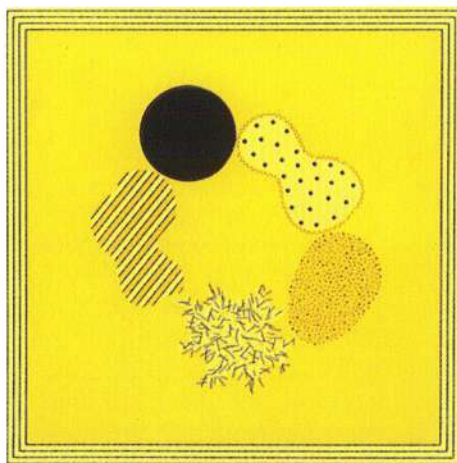
12 Allen Jensen, Virginia and Dorcas Woodbury Haller

#### **Hvad er det?**

[What's that?]

Copenhagen: IBIS, 1998 (1977).

23pp. Spiral bound. ISBN 87 90477 02 6



Hvad er det?

Little Shaggy is hiding, and little Rough and the others set out to search for him. This is a new edition of a book that has won a number of international prizes and that has been translated into 13 languages. It was a pioneer in 1977 because it paved the way for the non-figurative tactile representation in picture books for blind children and for the mass production of such books. The book is designed to provide the first step towards learning to read pictures. It is produced on pale yellow cardboard and is printed in two colours, black and yellow-orange in varying intensity. The non-figurative illustrations are in raised print (heat print). Each figure, representing a literary character, is nothing more than what you can feel/see on the page – a patch of rough, of smooth, of scraggly lines, spots or stripes. The text is in standard type only as the book was intended primarily for very young children.

13 Claudet, Philippe and D. Dufresne

**Au pays d'Amadine...dine dine**

[In the country of Amandin...din din]

Dijon: Les Doigts Qui Rêvent, 1998 (1994).

24pp. Spiral bound. ISBN 2 911782 15 1

Happy little Amandin is enjoying herself all day long. One Saturday she hears the voice of Pierre, who lives in a dreary country. The characters and objects in this carefully worked-out tactile book are represented by non-conventional forms, each with its own particular shape and texture, thus following up the idea of the pioneer books of the 1970s (see no. 12). The fanciful illustrations match the text, each offering many different ways of exploring it. The Braille text is written beneath the large black print so that the book can be read by sighted and blind children together. This book is included in a series of tactile picture books aiming at five to seven-year-old elementary Braille readers.

14 Diesen, Anette

**Det var engang**

[Once upon a time]

Oslo: Solum, 1990. 14pp. Spiral bound.

ISBN 82 560 0674 9

Once upon a time three coins were going to the bank to become many... The story is a paraphrase of the well-known fairy tale "the three billy-goats". The text is in Braille and red standard type. Three real coins are glued to the first page, and later represented in life-size raised illustrations. The few illustrations depict objects and characters in a way blind children usually experience them. For instance, the chewing gum dispenser that plays an important

part in this story is not represented in full, but only its small rectangular slot for coins cut into the cardboard.

15 Diesen, Anette

**Strømpedyret**

[The stocking-animal]

Oslo: Solum, 1998. 16pp. Spiral bound.

ISBN 82 560 1021 5

The bald-headed stocking-animal understands that she is different. By trying on various wigs she hopes to resemble the other animals. In the end she meets another stocking-animal that loves her the way she is. The text is in Braille and easy-to-read standard print with tactile illustrations using fur from different animals. The book was designed for and tested by children with visual impairment, mental disability and multiple handicaps, but can be enjoyed by all children.

16 Farmani, Zahra (design),

Mahin Mahboobi (realization)

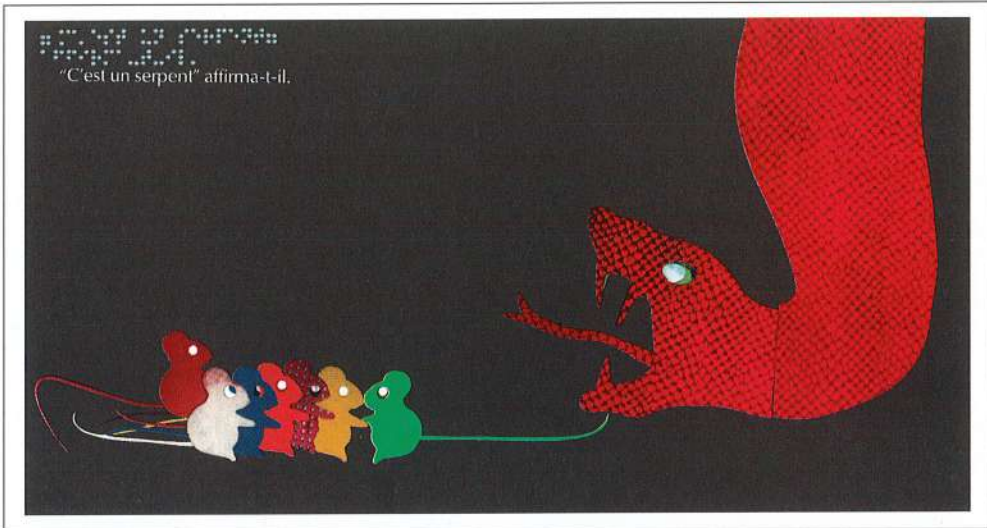
**Gol ya Poutch** [Full or empty]

Tehran: 1998. [8pp.]

Available through the Children's Book Council of Iran

This handmade washable cloth book is produced by a group of Iranian women. The title of the book is taken from an old Iranian guessing game. Textile models of a hand are sewn on soft cloths in various sparkling colours. The fingers of the hands can be folded and unfolded by means of Velcro tape. Tiny models of textile animals can be moved from hand to hand and hidden in the fist. The book invites blind and sighted readers to make finger and calculation games, play with the pictures and make up their own stories.





7 souris dans le noir

17 Krishna, Vinita (text), Ankur Sabharwal (assist.)  
Manorama Jafa (ed.)

**The Clever Rabbit – a Panchatantra Tale**

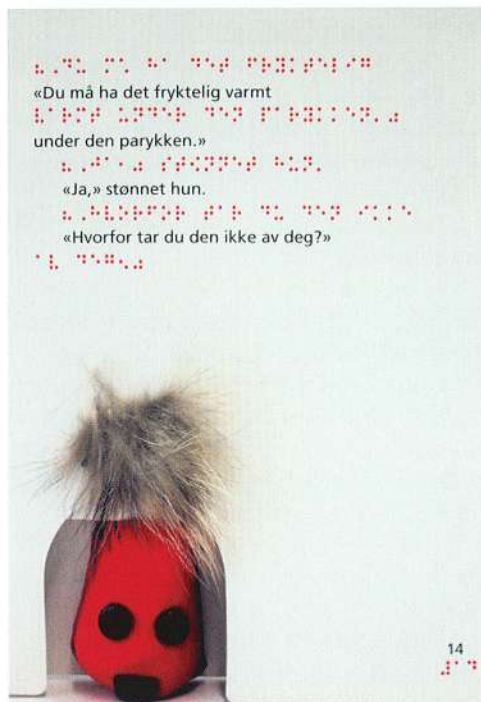
New Delhi: Khaas Kitaab, 1999. [10pp.] Spiral bound.

This is the story of a ferocious lion that terrorizes the animals of the jungle, but is tricked by the clever rabbit. It is one of five books based on the Panchatantra, which are stories from Indian oral tradition and storytelling, appealing to children as well as adults. The stories carry messages of human and social skills. This special edition is one in a series of handmade multi-sensorial interactive books with tactile and regular illustrations and an English text in standard print.

18 Nagasaki, Gennosuke (orig.ed.),  
Hiroko Noda (cloth book adapt.)

**[Butterfly]**

Sapporo: Fukinoto Library, [s.a.] [16pp.]



Strømpedyret



This cloth book, based on a regular Japanese picture book, tells the story about a yellow butterfly that goes in search of its friends among the flowers and animals. The butterflies and flowers can be moved from page to page and placed into the pictures by means of press studs. For any young child, whether disabled or not, this kind of cloth picture book provides an excellent introduction to the imaginary world of picture books. In particular, it invites children to make up their own stories, thus stimulating imagination, concentration and language development and helping those who have difficulties in following the story line to link the various episodes of a plot. The press studs may be difficult to handle for some children with motor difficulties who would probably prefer Velcro fastenings.

**19** Newth, Philip

**Rulle på eventyr – en bok for blinde barn –**

**og for seende** [Roly goes exploring – a book for blind and sighted children]

Oslo: Tiden, 1977. [40pp.]

Spiral bound. ISBN 82 10 01397 1

Roly, the adventurous main character, is a tiny round hole on the page. He goes exploring and meets children different to himself. Like Allen Jensen's tactile picture book (see no. 12) this book was a pioneer book. All the characters are represented by means of circles, squares or triangles of different sizes that are cut out of cardboard. The text is in Braille and large, bold standard type. The standard text is placed above the Braille text. As well as being a tactile picture book, this book also deals with the topic of social acceptance of children who are different from others.

**20** Young, Ed (text/ill.), Philippe Claudet and Michel Garnier (tactile adapt.)

**7 souris dans le noir**

[Seven blind mice]

Dijon: Les Doigts qui Rêvent, 1998. [57pp.]

Spiral bound.

ISBN 2 911782 12 7

[Orig. ed.: New York: Philomel Books, 1992]

A humorous and charming tactile picture book based on a French translation of a well-known American regular picture book about seven blind mice who meet an elephant. The seven little mice one by one, day by day, and bit by bit investigate the big animal in order to find out what kind of object it is. 'Bit by bit' is actually how people with visual impairment discover the world and how they read pictures, and the tactile representation in this book allows the reader to interpret the illustrations 'bit by bit'. In this manner the pictures can stimulate tactility, motor skills, visual perception, imagination and curiosity and can be enjoyed by sighted as well as blind children. The pictorial items are placed on a black background, which represents darkness. This background also makes a fine contrast to the colourful characters depicted, and so make the illustrations easier to understand for young people with low vision or with poor visual perception ability. The material that is used for the illustrations give a convincing tactile representation of the objects. Children born blind will most likely need help in order to be able to interpret the final and conventional image of the complete elephant. Nevertheless, such a book can give blind children access to popular children's picture books and thus help social inclusion.

# General picture books with text in standard type and Braille

General picture books which include the text in Braille permit blind parents to read a picture book to their sighted child. These books are regular editions, usually with the Braille text printed on plastic sheets and placed in between the pictures and the standard text, then spiral bound. Many countries have rules concerning the availability of Braille editions. For instance in Norway, one copy of the regular edition is given free of charge to the National Library for the Blind on condition that they publish a Braille edition. In principle, there is no limit to the number of Braille copies that can be produced, but further copies of the regular edition have to be purchased from the publisher at the usual price. Owing to high production costs these adapted books are usually only available through the special library services for the blind.

- 21** Peterson, Hans (text), Ilon Wikland (ill.)  
**Anders og Anne kommer til Bergstaden**  
[Anders and Anne come to the mining town]  
Oslo: Norsk lyd- og blindeskriftbibliotek [s.a.].  
[28pp. and 21 Braille pp.] Spiral bound.  
Regular Norwegian ed. Oslo: Damm, 1989.  
ISBN 82 517 7622 8  
Original Swedish ed.: *Barnen in kopperstaden*,  
Rabén & Sjögren, 1989

One night, a long time ago, two young orphans set out on a tiring walk over the mountains. All they had was a goat, and their destination was the mining town of Røros in Norway. Here the two children hoped to find work and a place to live. The evocative illustrations match this fictional story from days gone by and paint a realistic picture of Røros and life there in former times.

# Taped books with sound illustrations

A blind child can have a fine vocabulary, but due to lack of visual experience there is often a gap between vocabulary and a real understanding of the words. Visually impaired children mainly form their concepts of the world around them audibly. Taped books with sound illustrations may give blind children a real basis for association on their terms, and can provide information, experience and excitement. Their auditory discrimination ability can also be strengthened. Sound pictures are an excellent means of stimulating language in general and can be enjoyed by all children, language disabled or not.

- 22** Burningham, John (text) Søren Larsen and Nick Jørgensen (sound ed.)  
**The Dog**  
Kalundborg: Refsnæsskolen. Sound cassette. (4 min.)  
Orig London: Jonathan Cape, 1975, ISBN 0224011367

In this taped edition of Burningham's well-known picture book children can listen to the pictures instead of looking at them. It is a very simple story about a little boy taking care of a big dog. The words and concepts in the pictures and text in the printed version are related to sound and can therefore easily be associated with and "translated" into sound illustrations.

# Specially designed 'easy-to-read' books

Young people with reading difficulties spend a lot of time and effort on decoding words and then understanding and mastering the skill of reading. Motivating reading requires a wide supply of easy-readers – both fiction and non-fiction, specially written materials as well as adaptations of classics and popular books. We need easy-to-read books with appropriate subjects related to age and interest, and an appearance that invites the reluctant reader to take up the book. Thus, an attractive cover, manageable size and volume, a clear and probably slightly larger print than usual, open layout, and illustrations that reflect the style and story are all important factors. Well-known terms and a simple and concrete language are also factors that promote reading and understanding. What probably matters more, however, is a well-organized story with a fascinating topic and chain of events, as well as characters and emotions that are easy to identify with. The story should follow a single plot and develop in a logical and chronological order. Likewise, the action should be direct and simple without long introductions and should involve a limited number of characters.

It is important to bear in mind that people with intellectual disabilities are not a homogenous group and their capabilities range from borderline normal intelligence to severe disability. Many people with a mild or moderate intellectual disability can learn to read fairly simple stories or short easy-to-read texts, but because their reading ability is usually delayed, the challenge is to find appropriate materials at a low reading level. Specially designed easy-to-read books for young people with mental disability often have several text levels

(e.g. short captions and a longer text). Illustrations that support the text are an important aid for poor readers. They are a means of explaining words and concepts, and sometimes the story can be "read" through the pictures alone.

Reading does not, however, always mean reading on one's own. People with severe reading difficulties may benefit from reading aloud in a group or listening to a story. Reading together with others is a cultural experience and a meaningful form of communication.

Easy-to-read books are frequently accompanied by a sound version with the story being read at various speeds. Easy-to-understand taped books, electronic books and adapted video versions of classic and popular novels supplement printed books and facilitate cultural inclusion.

**23** Abelin, Björn (photos), Lotta Thorsén (text)

## **De röda skorna – en kärlekshistoria**

[The red shoes – a love story]

Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 1994. 59pp.

ISBN 91 88180 395

Anneli's greatest wish for her birthday is a pair of high-heeled red shoes. She is looking forward to wearing them when she goes to the cinema with her boyfriend. When she gets a pair of solid sandals instead as a gift from her mother, she takes action and exchanges them for the kind of shoes that she really wants. Out of consideration and love for their mentally disabled children, many parents overprotect them. This easy reader with colour photographs has turned out to be very popular and has raised vivid discussions

in reading groups with young adults and grown-ups with mental disabilities who recognise the situation and feelings and can identify with the main character. There are very few other characters for the reader to cope with and the story follows a single plot which develops slowly and in a logical and chronological order. The story is written in the form of a short text with a low reading level and is supported by the photographs.

**24** Fors, Mats (text), Erja Lempinen (photos)

**Färdtjänsten kommer – hit og dit med Lisa**

[The transport service is coming – hither and thither with Lisa]

Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 1998. 62pp.

ISBN 91 89042 32 8

Lisa was born with spina bifida and cannot move her legs. Through colour photographs, pictograms and an easy-to-read text we follow Lisa when she makes use of the transport service for people with disabilities in order to go to work or to town. Readers can understand the story by looking at the photographs, or they can refer to them when reading the very simple text and pictograms. By combining photographs, pictograms and a low reading level with a design and topic that is suitable for young adults, this book meets the special needs of young adults who have difficulties in finding suitable books.

**25** Hedin, Benkt-Erik

**Dikter tillsammans**

[Poems we share]

Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 1998. [38pp.]

ISBN 91 89042 44 1

This is a new edition of a Swedish classic.



Färdtjänsten kommer

The book presents very simple poems for everybody about "my body", the importance of words, the need for contact with other people, anger, happiness and identity. The poet was inspired to write these poems after being with people with mental disabilities. They present opportunities for discussion and are very popular with young people who have mental disabilities. With these verses the poet has proved that it is possible to combine a low reading level with a high literary standard.

**26** Krog, Kirsten Mejlhede (text), Lillian Brøgger (ill.)

**Må vi være her?**

[May we live here?]

Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1989. [34pp.]

ISBN 87 00 41082 9

The grey duck and her ducklings learn to live side by side with the coots – black water birds – and their young. Based on an easy reader by Krog and Brøgger, this picture book was especially designed for

children with mental disability. The fine artistic illustrations introduce an almost identical setting throughout the story. Only small, nearly invisible changes in colour shades appear in order to illustrate different times of the day, weather and minor changes in location, as the illustrator carefully moves the setting a little bit to the left and then to the right in order to capture the ducks and coots swimming. The topical theme of this book, which is introduced in a warm-hearted, humorous and easily comprehensible way, as well as the high artistic and literary standard makes this an important book for all children. The captions, written in large bold print, are closely connected to the pictures and present a well-organised short story, which is easy to follow. The fine longer text can be read aloud. Thus, both the pictures and the text open the way to various kinds of approach to this important topic.

**27** Lumholdt, Helene (text), Anki Almqvist (photos)

**Welcome to our Palace**

Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 2000. 90pp.

ISBN 91 89042 840

Orig. title: Vad händer på slottet. LL-förlaget, 2000



Damen som drömmar och andra bilder

For many people easy-to-read versions of news bulletins and other informational documents represent their only means of exercising their right to be informed about society. In this photo book the reader is taken on a tour of the Swedish Royal Palace and shown how people working there make the palace function. The book also tells about the palace's history and about some of the prominent people from other countries who make state visits and attend royal banquets. Readers who are unable to read the short texts can explore this book by means of the colour photographs. The book is particularly well suited for reading groups of people with mental disabilities where it can be read aloud and then discussed.

**28** Lykkenborg, Liv R.

**Svein rømmer** [Svein runs away]

Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983. 103pp.

ISBN 82 05 14394 3

This photo book was written at a time when people in Norway with mental disability used to live in special institutions. The writer is opposed to this kind of institutionalization and to placing people with mental disabilities under tutelage. Svein, who is the main character of this story, is tired of being constantly looked after and he often runs away. Usually he is found at the railway station. This time he gets far away, but is eventually taken back to the institution. This book was one of the earliest Norwegian storybooks specially designed for adolescents and adults with mental disability, and it has served as a model for later publications in this genre. The book can be read in various ways. The reader can choose between shorter captions and



Må vi være her?

a longer text, the story can be understood by looking at the photographs, or by listening to the audiocassette. The hard cover helps to keep the book open. The story follows a single plot and develops in a logical and chronological order. The chapters are short and clearly marked. The text is in rather large type and has an open layout. Terms that may be difficult to understand are explained and repeated in the text. The few characters are very well introduced and the emotions are easy to identify with.

**29** Mogensen, Lone (text) Knut Andreassen and the Kulturen Museum in Lund (photos and paintings)

**Damen som drømmer och andra bilder**

["A lady dreaming" and other paintings]

Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 1991. 58pp.

ISBN 91 881 8006 9

The activities of the art-study group at a Swedish day centre for people with mental disability form the basis of this photo book. The readers follow a group of young adults and grown-ups around the museum where they are looking at old paintings. The easy-to-understand text gives a detailed description of the paintings and of how the audience responds to them. The paintings open the way to memories, associations, feelings and thoughts, and raise vivid discussions, such as: Why are the children dressed like grown-ups? Who is this lady? What does she look like? Is she happy? When are you happy?

# General picture books

General picture books are another source of reading and joy, and they are also a pleasant means of stimulating visual perception, language and communication, motor skills, as well as for expressing feelings. They are important because they can be chosen from the general stock and are easily available. Not all books, however, are easy to understand for the disabled child. Readers with low vision or with poor visual perception ability need easy-to-read pictures, which may have conventional or true-to-life pictorial representations with clear colour contrasts and outline. For readers with intellectual disability it is important that the pictures have sufficient references to the reader's own experiences and background, such as familiar objects and situations. The overall important feature, however, seems to be an age-relevant topic appealing to the curiosity, feelings and interests of the reader.

**30** Alda, Arlene

**Arlene Alda's ABC**

Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 1993. [29pp.]

ISBN 1 883672 01 5

Orig. ed. Millbrae, CA: Celestial Arts 1981

Before you can learn to talk and later read and write, you must understand concepts and the meaning of words. You must also learn to discriminate between different shapes before you can recognize letters. In this alphabet book readers, children as well as adults, are invited to explore the environment and detect objects that resemble alphabet letters. The full-colour photographs teach the alphabet through artistic and visual association. Such a book encourages attention and imagination, and can stimulate visual perception and

the power of discriminating between shapes, thereby leading to pre-reading activities.

**31** Duncan, Riana (ill.)

**When Emily Woke Up Angry**

London: André Deutsch, 1989. [30pp.]

ISBN 0 233 98293 0

One morning Emily gets out of bed on the wrong side. In order to help her cool off, one by one her animal friends demonstrate to her what they do when they are really angry. The cat, for instance, arches his back, raises his tail and hisses, the gull flaps his wings and makes a lot of noise, the spider counts to twenty-five and all the way back again, and the frog jumps up and down. On imitating them Emily eventually finds it difficult to remember to be cross and begins to enjoy herself. Picture books conveying feelings, anger as well as joy, love and caring are particularly good for language disabled children, who are not very capable of expressing themselves in general language. This book tells us that it is OK to be angry and that you are allowed to express your feelings, and it invites the reader to do so by means of motor activities and sounds. The very slow progression of the story, the expressive illustrations that perfectly match the story and the pointed topic, make it easy for children with intellectual disability to follow and thus identify with Emily.

**32** Machado, Juarez

**Ida e Volta**

[Flat foot – an invisible adventure]

Rio de Janeiro: Primor, 1976. [32pp.]

In this wordless book footprints lead the



way across the pages – first barefoot, then in shoes for walking, dancing, playing football – until finally a rapid descending curve shows our hero balancing on a bicycle. This book gives rise to curiosity, joy and creative activities not just with young children. When being read by two young adults with apparently poor verbal language abilities, this book brought about different kinds of body language and movement, such as "hand dancing" and it also provoked latent verbal language.

**33** Ryu, Jae Soo (ill.), Dong Il Sheen (music)

**[The yellow umbrella]**

Seoul: J'aimimage, 2001. [30pp.]

ISBN 89 86565 35 8.

1 CD with 14 short pieces of piano music.



When Emily Woke Up Angry

and directly in combination with art and music, which can transcend cultural and language barriers.

**34** Tidholm, Anna-Clara

**Knacka på!**

[Knock at the door]

Stockholm: Alfabeta, 1992. [28pp.]

ISBN 91-7712-335-2

What is hiding behind the blue door, and behind the yellow and the red? Knock, and you'll see! This is an exciting read-aloud-book for young children. The pictures are easy to read with very clear colours and outlines. Both the pictures and the text in rhythmic verses encourage motor skills and conversation. This book has turned out to be very popular with young children with Down syndrome. An interactive CD-rom version of the book is also available.

One rainy day the illustrator of this book was looking through the window at the children coming to school carrying their umbrellas. He was intrigued by the scene and came up with the idea of this book. While watching them, boys and girls, good-looking and not so good-looking, tall and short, he realized that physical differences disappeared. What remained in his mind was the visual image of the harmonized colours and movements of the umbrellas. It seemed to him that these children were claiming that they were all equal in spite of their physical differences, and this was what he wanted to show in his wordless book. There is no linear sequence of story in this book; the readers are free to imagine what the heroines and heroes look like and who they are. The accompanying music is unconventional and was carefully composed to match the lyrical atmosphere of the images. The book is designed to be enjoyed spontaneously

# People with disabilities portrayed in children's books

Many writers and photographers have made books that portray the disabled child with sensitivity and insight. Such books can answer questions and dispel prejudices connected with disabilities. These books deal with the topic in different ways; thus can give a many-sided picture of disabled children and their families. Some books, for instance, deal with the subject of being a sibling of a disabled child. Siblings of children with disabilities have additional challenges in their lives. They usually have some responsibility for taking care of their brother or sister, whether that sibling is older or younger. They may experience anger, embarrassment or feelings of isolation because other children do not have siblings like they do. Mixed with these emotions are strong feelings of loyalty, responsibility and love.

**35** Bergman, Thomas

## **Fingrar som ser**

[Seeing in special ways – children living with blindness]

Stockholm: LiberFörlag, 1976. [71pp.]

ISBN 91 38 02968 5, American ed.:

Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens Inc., 1989

"There should be a mirror where you can feel what you look like". This striking comment is made by seven-year-old Peter in his conversation with the photographer and writer Thomas Bergman. Through interviews with blind children he captures the essence of their personalities and moods. The thoughts and feelings that Thomas' young friends share with him form the basis for the insightful text that accompanies the striking black-and-white photographs. This thought-provoking book is one in a series of photo-books where the author

introduces young readers to other children who have disabilities that have tested their physical strength and sense of humour.

**36** Kremer, Susanne

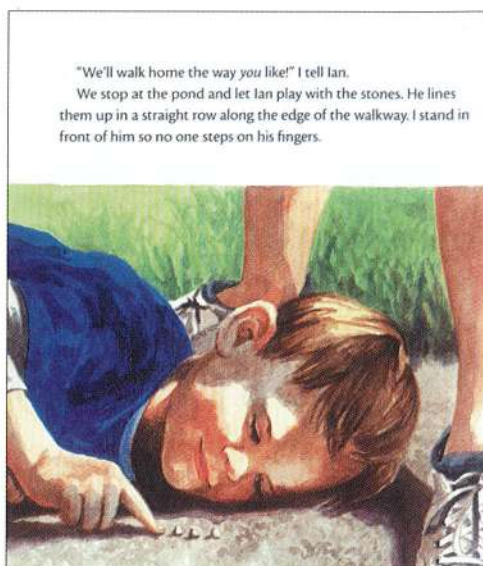
## **Wir – Geschwister – ein Dialogbuch**

[We – siblings – a dialogue]

Göttingen: Quirl, 1997. 28pp.

ISBN 3 931008 01 0

*Wir – Geschwister* is a book that in a special way describes the relationship between two siblings, one disabled, the other not. Short texts and pictorial symbols for the two siblings, a wheelchair and footprints, point at similarities and differences, positive and negative feelings and friendship, as well as the right of both to be independent individuals. The use of such symbols instead of regular pictures opens the way for imagination and identification. The readers are free to imagine



Ian's Walk

whether the two siblings are boys or girls, what they look like, etc. The book is a good starting point for reflection and further talks.

**37** Lears, Laurie (text) Karen Ritz (ill.)

**Ian's Walk – a Story about Autism**

Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 1998. [30pp.]  
ISBN 0 8075 3480 3

This is an unsentimental story about Ian, a boy suffering from autism. It is told by his sister, Julie. One day Ian gets lost in the park and Julie realizes just how much she cares about him. Autism is hard to explain to others. Very often the child with autism looks like other children, but reacts very differently to ordinary situations. This book can make it a little bit easier to understand autism and the unpredictable behaviour that accompanies it. In addition, it opens the way for acceptance of the mixed emotions of siblings of children with disabilities.

**38** Rivera, Augie (text) Beth Parrocha-Doctolero (ill.)

**Xilef**

Quezon City: Adarna House, 2000. [36pp.]  
ISBN 971 508 080 4

"When I opened the book, the letters started moving... and no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't read them!" With humour and affection the writer tells the story of a young boy trying to cope with dyslexia. The colourful and playful pictures not only match the text perfectly and vividly illustrate the chaos he is confronted with, but also his imagination and creative abilities. This book is a bilingual edition in Filipino and English and includes a post-script with general information on dyslexia.

Xilef is easy for the reader to identify with, and helps develop understanding and acceptance of dyslexic children.

**39** Southall, Ivan

**Let the Balloon Go**

Ringwood, Victoria [et al.]: Penguin Books (Puffin), 1979. 112pp. ISBN 0 1403 0513 0  
Orig. ed: Sydney: Methuen, 1968

"A balloon is not a balloon until someone cuts the string". Twelve-year-old John has the normal healthy wish to play games, climb and swim like any other boy. However, he is spastic, his body won't always do what he wants. His well-intentioned mother overprotects him, something that drives him mad with frustration. This is a convincing account of a special day in the life of a physically disabled boy and the story of how he cuts his own personal string.

**40** Trueman, Terry

**Stuck in Neutral**

New York: HarperCollins, 2000. 114pp.  
ISBN 0 06 028519 2

The narrator of this novel for adolescents is fourteen-year-old Shawn. He has cerebral palsy and is unable to communicate. He has been diagnosed as being profoundly developmentally disabled and incapable of understanding and learning. But Shawn's life is not what it may seem to anyone looking at him. Not even those who love him have any idea of what he is truly like. The author, himself a father of a son like Shawn, makes the reader look beyond the obvious and question common notions.



# Artwork and literature by people with disabilities

**41** Sasaki, Takuya (artwork),  
Kyoko Kishida (text), Masumi Horiguchi (photos)  
**Oka-asan [Mother]**  
Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2000. 39pp.  
ISBN 4 09 727248 9

The artist, who created the clay figures featured in this book in his late teens, was born in 1975 with brain damage and was later diagnosed with autism. At twenty-one he held his first exhibition. Currently his artistic creations range from clay figures to oil painting. This book, embracing his earlier works, expresses his feelings for which he had no words. The book has an afterword written by his mother.

**42** Han Tiecheng (ed.)  
**The Radiance From the Heart –  
the Album of Blind Children's Paintings**  
Nei Monggol People's Publishing House,  
1996. 114pp.  
ISBN 7 204 03158 X

These are exciting art works produced by blind children studying at the Hohhot Special Education School in Inner Mongolia. The paintings were shown in Hohhot in 1991, Beijing 1992, Bangkok 1992, Athens 1994, and in Brighton, UK in 1995. The text is in Chinese and English.

**43** Zimmerman, Ulla  
**Vind och vatten [Wind and water]**  
Stockholm: LL-förlaget, 1991. [8pp.]  
Spiral bound.  
ISBN 91 881 8010 7

Laila is a Swedish girl who has severe mental and physical disabilities and is unable to communicate verbally. The artist, Ulla Zimmerman, worked closely with Laila on the creation of this book. Ulla recited some lines from a Swedish poem by Björn von Rosen: "Over the hills blows the wind, bending slowly blades of grass. Bending them in soft waves..." (free translation). By repeating the poem over and over again, Ulla reproduced the rhythm and sound of the poem in yellow strokes on the canvas. Laila listened carefully for a long, long time and then fumbled for the brush. This book painted in yellow is one of four books, each in a single colour, that the two of them created together. It helps illustrate the effect of poetry and painting as a means of communication.

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