



# 2025 IBBY SELECTION

OF OUTSTANDING BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



## Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities 2025

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IBBY Collection for Young People with Disabilities

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*Min hjerne er en snekugle (cat. no. 25)*

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*Ik ben autistisch! (cat. no. 36)*



The outstanding books selected for the 2025 Selection join the main reference collection in Toronto, where 4,000+ titles for and about children and teens who are d/Deaf or disabled are kept. The 2025 catalogue, as well as previous ones, can be downloaded from [www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org) or [www.tpl.ca/ibby](http://www.tpl.ca/ibby)

The IBBY Collection highlights include:

- Accessible formats such as braille, picture communication symbols, sign language, easy-to-read
- Material in over 50 languages
- Unique tactile and textile books
- Extensive collection of picture books and novels that uphold the concepts of inclusion, empathy and disability awareness.

The books in the IBBY Collection (1991-2025) are available in the library to scholars and others. Please email ahead for an appointment or tour. If you are not able to visit in person, the Toronto Public Library website includes bibliographic information and subject headings for the outstanding books as well as all other submissions. Catalogue annotations are in English, but the books are in their original languages.



*Schsastia - tse Lysychka (cat. no. 4)*

# Welcome!

Welcome to the annotated catalogue of the 2025 IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities.

## Statistics

For this new selection, we were pleased to receive **200** submissions from **32** countries in **22** different languages. The **40** outstanding books, selected after long assessment and discussion, represent **24** countries in **18** different languages.

Why do these statistics matter to us? They indicate an increase in the publication of books worldwide representing children and teens who are Deaf or who have a variety of disabilities. Our aim is not only to encourage publication of materials, but also to provide excellent and innovative examples.

## Appreciation

We sincerely thank the members of IBBY Sections for helping us select some of their country's best examples and we hope that they will continue to highlight them

nationally. This selection would not have been possible without their efforts. We would also like to thank the many publishers who have generously provided copies of these books for the collection. It is encouraging to see the increase of inclusionary books from around the world.

Our appreciation goes to the staff at the Toronto Public Library and volunteers from across Canada and internationally, who assisted in the creation of this 2025 catalogue. We remain committed to promoting disability awareness and encouraging the publication of books for and about young people who are Deaf or disabled.



*Perros increíbles (cat. no. 3)*



# Forward

## Selection Process

IBBY believes that all young people have a right to read in an accessible format and to see themselves represented in stories, whether they are disabled or not.

An invitation was sent to all IBBY Sections for submissions suitable for the 2025 IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books. Following our usual practice, publishers of books included in the previous selection were also invited to send suitable new titles to their IBBY Section.

All the submissions were read and evaluated by readers. After the final 40 books were selected by a jury, this annotated catalogue was written and presented at the 2025 Bologna Children's Book Fair.

The 2025 IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books is a snapshot of titles published during 2020-2024. We have not attempted to make this a definitive list of books for and about young people with disabilities: there are many excellent books that never reach this project. We encourage you to seek these titles out and share them with young people, your

colleagues and friends. We encourage you to submit the best of them to your IBBY Section for consideration for inclusion in the 2027 IBBY Outstanding Book Selection.

## Submissions

Our overall goal is to create a useful curated catalogue. Diverse representation was our guiding principle—representation from many countries and many disabilities. We have tried to give you an idea of the many different formats and topics that are available today. The 2025 selection highlights new ideas and new voices.

## Category 1

**Accessible Books** includes formats that can help a child or teen to read independently. For those who need to read with a partner, we have chosen formats that allow for as much participation as possible. These formats include braille, sign language, picture communication symbols, tactile books and easy-to-read books. Technological advances are providing new tools in this area.

## Category 2

**Portrayals of Disability** provide examples of respectful representations of disabilities. The 2025 selection reflects a movement within society to expand the definition of disability. We have shifted from the medical model of diagnoses to a more social model of viewing how people's lives are affected.

In choosing these books, we hope to encourage a more inclusive understanding of disability that gives people a new language to talk about their experiences and validates the experiences of those who are rarely represented in literature.

## Trends in the 2025 Selection

**Historical books:** This year we received several nominations that featured particular national historical events. From these we selected the two-volume story of the Holodomor in Ukraine (13). This is an example that offers an important opportunity for young readers with disabilities to learn about history alongside their peers.

**Easy-to-Read format:** It is gratifying to see more books in an Easy-to-Read format, which use standards from Inclusion Europe or the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. These books are helpful for many people

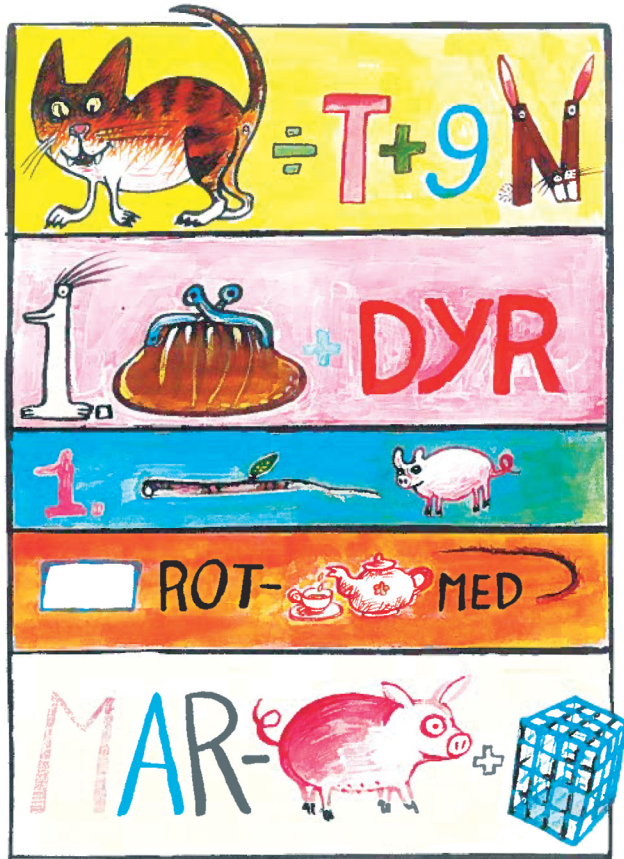
who are neurodivergent or have learning or developmental disabilities. Thus, access to simplified books with content appropriate to their age and maturity level is needed.

## Terminology

Do you say, 'disabled person' or 'person with disability'? Yes, vocabulary is also changing. Using a people-centred approach aims to highlight the person first. Others feel that their disability defines their identity. As with any identity, individuals deserve to choose the terms they will be known by. For example, a person might prefer to be referred to as an 'autistic teen' as opposed to a 'teen with autism'. Some people who are Deaf do not consider themselves disabled at all. Hearing loss can be seen as just a medical diagnosis, and is not necessarily disabling, much like neurodivergence is just a different way for a brain to function. This catalogue represents a group of disparate people, countries and books, and you will see that we have varied the terminology to match.

## Lived Experience

People with a specific disability or condition can usually depict their lived experience more easily and authentically than an author who has relied on research. This was something we took into consideration when making our selections.



Min hjerne er en snekugle (cat. no. 25)

However, we also recognize that the universality of the human experience with isolation, bullying, joy, fear, pain, loneliness, families and friendship lives in all of us. In the end, we chose stories that appeared genuine to us.

### Multiple Access Points

It is exciting to see enhanced print texts that have additional access points or information. These include QR codes, CDs or digital audio content, braille, sign language, picture communication symbols and better tactile illustrations. Accessibility and universal design must be included from the book's inception.

### Little Things Matter

We are pleased when innovations are brought forward in the selection cycle. The tactile book *Rukavichka: russkaya narodnaya skazka* (2) from Russia, uses magnets rather than velcro to attach felt animals to the page. And the tactile *Dwarrelbos* (11) from the Netherlands, provides tactile QR codes so that a person with vision loss might easily locate that access point.

Join us in celebrating this selection of exciting books. We hope that they inspire and delight you!



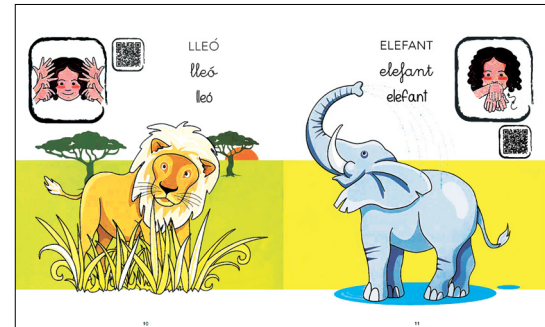
Mangerei volentieri un bambino (cat. no. 5)

## Category 1: Accessible Books

Books using different systems and designs can make reading accessible for everyone. These may include braille, sign language, large print, non-verbal communication systems or tactile formats. We have also included easy-to-read books with simplified, age-appropriate concepts and shorter texts that are specifically written for young people who are neurodivergent or have intellectual or developmental disabilities.

- 1 Al Najjar, Nadia and Al Khoury, Noura (text) Al Hoseny, Asmaa (ill) **Rasa'el Fi Zaman Mukhtalif** [Messages in different times] Dubai, UAE: Al Hudhud Publishing House, 2022 [79pp] ISBN 978-9948-467-64-9

Mahra and Reema become fast friends when they first meet. But the girls live in different cities, one in Dubai and the other in Abu Dhabi, and the Covid-19 virus is beginning to spread. The pair exchange addresses and soon become pen pals, sharing details of their daily lives as well as their hopes and worries. While they do email each other as well, it is the physical letters that bring the girls the most joy. They learn to find pleasure in the smell of paper and



Col·lecció: *Ple de signes: Primeres paraules; Accions; Colors; Família; Aliments; Animals; Espais; Transports (8 vols) (cat. no. 7)*

stamps and the beauty of someone's handwriting. Plus they discover how much fun it can be to receive letters in the post!

Written for teen readers, this book, in the form of letters, is a reminder that although digital technology creates many opportunities, there is still value in physical correspondence. Readers with vision loss, through the use of Arabic braille, will share the story of best friends navigating the new Covid routines, decorating for Ramadan and exploring science. This light, enjoyable read highlights the importance of friendship and human interaction for teens, particularly during difficult times.

- 2** Barshay, Sergey and Zhukova, Ekaterina (creators) Charushin, Yevgeny (original text) **Rukavichka: russkaya narodnaya skazka** [*The mitten: Russian folktale*] Krasnoyarsk, Russia: Krasnoyarsk Regional Special Library, 2022 [24pp] No ISBN

In this retelling of a famous folktale, a mouse seeks shelter in an abandoned mitten. When the other woodland animals, including a small rabbit and a massive bear, all burrow inside, the mitten just grows and grows, becoming very tight and crowded. Finally, the mitten's owner returns, and all the animals tumble out and run away!

This cumulative story, written with rhythmic language, begs to be read aloud! Even non-readers can still participate in the story by joining in the repetitive phrases used throughout. On every page,



*Rukavichka: russkaya narodnaya skazka*  
(cat. no. 2)

there is large print text, braille, and a QR code that leads to an audio recording.

However, the best way for a child to engage with the story is through play! Each page has a beautifully detailed, hand-made mitten and two felt animals attached with magnets. The stuffed

figures are distinct in size, colour, and shape, so that a child with vision loss can distinguish the different animals by touch. Children with developmental disabilities will enjoy using the animals to act out the folktale. Indeed, everyone will take pleasure in touching and moving the stuffed animals in and out of the mitten.

- 3** Creixell Moya, Mariajose (text) Fuenzalida, Catalina (ill) **Perros increíbles** [*Incredible dogs*] Santiago, Chile: Editorial Azafrán, 2023 [30pp] ISBN 978-956-6148-30-2

Meet Luna, a playful dog whose life is full of adventure. Everything changes when her family brings home a new baby, but the pair become best friends. Split into two parts, this book first tells the story of Luna's adventures with her human sister and then with her fellow doggy friends. Children will delight in the

imaginative, humorous stories about the dogs' adventures in outer space, at the beach, and playing in the mud.

This thoughtfully designed book incorporates many features that make it accessible for a range of disabilities. The sturdy board book pages are easy to turn. Each page includes text using the OpenDyslexic font and illustrations that are colourful and engaging without being overwhelming. Comprising five short stories, this large-format book allows readers to stop after just one story, an important feature for those who struggle to focus. The book also includes

*Rasa'el Fi Zaman Mukhtalif*  
(cat. no. 1)



*Perros increíbles (cat. no. 3)*

three QR codes linked to high-quality recordings of both audio narration and sign language versions of the stories, as well as a useful teaching guide. It even comes with a miniature magnifying glass. The book seamlessly integrates these multiple access points, making it an excellent example of how to produce a broadly inclusive publication.

- 4** Datsyute, Evelina (text)  
Baida, Anna (ill)  
**Schsastia - tse Lysychka**  
*[Happiness is a fox]* Lviv, Ukraine:  
Ukrainian Union of People with  
Disabilities, 2022 [23pp]  
ISBN 978-617-614-280-5

A young boy lives in a treehouse with his mother and father in a big city. Every day he walks to the bakery and takes the scenic route home, preferring the winding path through the woods over the busy city streets. One day, he meets a friendly fox playing on a swing in the forest. With each passing day their friendship grows as they talk about everything. But one day the boy's parents announce that they are moving to a new city! Try as he might, the boy cannot convince his parents to change their minds and so he must leave his friend behind. Will they ever be reunited? Adapted from a multi-award winning



*Il girasole (cat. no. 6)*

picture book from Lithuania, the story is now published in large print and braille text in Ukrainian. There is also an audio recording with roles voiced by blind children and local actors and artists. Although this version is not fully illustrated, a few simplified illustrations are included. They use bright colours on white backgrounds and are

lightly embossed for children who are blind or have low vision. With themes of friendship, joy, and adapting to change, this gently philosophical story will appeal to readers young and old.

- 5** Donnio, Sylviane (original text) Rocca, Federica (trans) Crivelli, Enza and Bandirali, Sante (WLS trans) De Monfreid, Dorothee (ill) **Mangerei volentieri un bambino** [*I'd really like to eat a child*] Crema, Italy: Officina Babùk, 2023 [22pp] ISBN 979-12-81495-02-9

One day, a baby crocodile named Achilles decides he does not want to eat his regular food anymore. Mama and Papa crocodile offer him lots of yummy food, but he still will not eat: not bananas, not a sausage, not even cake. There is only one thing that the baby crocodile wants to eat: a child! But Achilles quickly learns that he is much

too small to eat a child. First, he must eat all his other foods so he can grow big and strong.

In this adapted version of a children's picture book, the humorous tale is translated into Widgit Symbols (WLS). This is a form of picture-based communication used by some readers who are neurodivergent or have developmental disabilities. Each word or concept of the text is also represented by a simple



*Planeta Q. Un lugar donde vivir (cat. no. 10)*

line drawing, allowing readers multiple ways to read the story. They can read using either the text or the symbols, or they can use the symbols to help them decipher the text. Colourful, expressive illustrations complement the already silly story and will have readers laughing along as Achilles turns his nose up at cake and gets his tummy tickled by the child he hopes to eat.

- 6** Lungo, Valentina and Delmastro, Enrico (text and ill) **Il girasole** [*The sunflower*] Verscio (CH) and Milan (IT): DieciOcchi Tactile Book Design, 2022 [12pp] No ISBN

For a plant, life begins as a seed in a pot. Then magic happens as the seed blossoms into a flower. The flower soon fades away, but then the magic begins again, and the cycle of life continues. This universal story of science and wonder is made accessible to young



*Mala explore (cat. no. 9)*

readers with disabilities in a beautifully constructed tactile format.

The inspiring creators of this book have used bright yellow thick card, paired with black printed text and braille, as well as black and white illustrations. This is not only reminiscent of the colours of a sunflower but also an excellent colour contrast option for readers with low vision. The tall narrow design uses

spiral binding at the top, so that the pages turn vertically like a flipbook and can lie flat. Each sturdy cardboard page has a cut-out that reveals more and more of the flower as the life cycle progresses. The tactile elements use a bold, simple design to effectively convey the different parts of a plant, and the spinning flowers add a fun, interactive feature. The book even includes sunflower seeds so that readers can grow their own.

- 7** Molina, Raquel and Molina, Sara (text) Ribes, Txell (ill) **Col·lecció: Ple de signes: Primeres paraules; Accions; Colors; Família; Aliments; Animals; Espais; Transports (8 vol)** [Collection: Full of signs: First words; Actions; Colours; Family; Food; Places; Animals; Transports (8 vols.)] Barcelona, Spain: M.A. Salvatella SA, 2023 ISBN 978-84-19565-45-7



*Khaleh Mibafe Man Mipoosham (cat. no. 8)*

Sign language is an important communication tool for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Signing to a newborn can begin just as speaking to a hearing child can. However, language and literacy delays are common among Deaf children because it can be more difficult for them to pick up language from their surrounding environment. Additionally, sign languages are typically distinct in syntax and grammar from spoken and

written languages. For these reasons, visual sign language dictionaries can be a useful tool to help Deaf children develop literacy skills, such as associating a specific sign with a printed word.

Much like other beginner vocabulary books, this series focuses on words that are most relevant to young children. The eight volumes address topics such as colours, animals, family and actions.

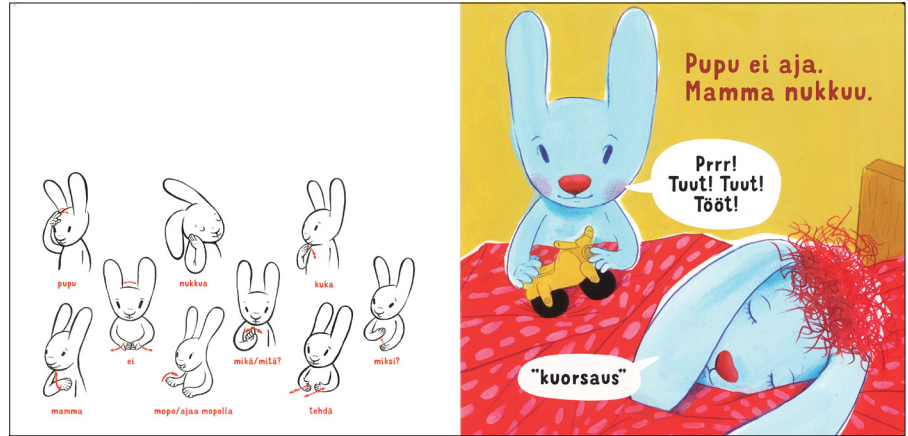
Each page features a word written three ways: all upper-case letters, cursive writing and all lower-case. There is also a large illustration depicting that word. At the top of the page, alongside a diagram of a child demonstrating the sign, is a QR code that links to a video demonstration. In addition to benefiting Deaf children, this series can also be used with children with developmental disabilities or who are otherwise nonverbal, as well as hearing family members and classmates of Deaf children.

- 8** Namin, Sevda Azado (creator) **Khaleh Mibafe Man Mipoosham** [Auntie knits, I wear] Ardabil, Iran: Sevda Azadi Namin, 2024 [18pp] No ISBN

A young child is visiting auntie. The pair play and bake cookies and enjoy time together while the auntie knits. Because the child is blind, they narrate their

experiences using their other senses: the smell of the cookies, the shape of auntie's glasses, the balls of wool that shrink as auntie knits. Auntie makes a guessing game out of her knitting projects. Will it be a scarf, a sweater or a hat?

This lovingly crafted tactile book is made entirely by hand. Great care has gone into making sure the book is not only beautiful, but also safe and sturdy for little fingers. The miniature items of clothing are expertly knitted and the other tactile elements, such as the cookies in the oven and the aunt's slippers, accurately represent their real-world counterparts. Each time the aunt starts a new project, the book includes a set of knitting needles with a partially completed knitted item, and readers are invited to guess what is being knitted! The next page has a large circular flap that reveals the finished item. With print and braille Farsi, as well as print



*Pupu ei nuku (cat. no. 12)*

English, this cozy, tactile story is a true gem for readers with vision loss or developmental disabilities.

- 9** Négrerie, Solène (text and ill)  
**Mala explore** [*Mala explores*]  
 Talant, France: Les Doigts qui  
 Rêvent, 2023 [17pp]  
 ISBN 978-2-36593-150-2

What is Mala doing? What does Mala's hand do? It touches, scratches, and squeezes. In this tactile book based on a French nursery rhyme, toddlers and early readers can complete the same actions as Mala as they learn about common gestures and textures. Using short sentences and onomatopoeic language, each page will teach them the word associated with a movement.



*Planeta Q. Un lugar donde vivir (cat. no. 10)*

They can stroke a piece of fur, lift a flap, and much more.

The interactive elements are accessible to a range of disabilities. The diverse

textures, including soft, rough, crinkly and squishy, will appeal to sensory seeking readers who are neurodivergent or have developmental disabilities. The large print black text and embossed braille also make it accessible to readers who are blind or have low vision. The construction of this book is both beautiful and durable. It will engage the readers and survive any rough handling – it is even safe to put in a washing machine. The book also provides a QR code that links to a video of the nursery rhyme, as well as tips for using the book and activities for expanding on the concepts in the book.

**10** Peix, Susana (text) Montaña, Marta (ill) **Planeta Q. Un lugar donde vivir** [*Planet Q. A place to live*] Ponte Caldelas, Spain: Edicións do Cumio, 2022 [48pp] ISBN 978-84-8289-558-1

Zeta was grumpy. He never gets enough sleep, his feet hurt, he feels alone, and is bored. He lives on the very hot Planet Q, and dreams of building a spaceship from his foraged treasures and flying away. Suddenly, a gleaming spaceship lands on Planet Q needing repairs. At the same time Zeta learns that he has neighbours on the planet after all: they have been hiding from his bad moods but want to help him and be friends. Should Zeta fly to a new planet or stay on Planet Q with his newly found neighbours?

Available in Spanish, Catalan, and Galician, this beginning-to-read chapter book is outstanding in the way that it offers accessibility. The large print, using a 20-point sans serif font, is easily legible on the matte cream-coloured pages of thick paper. The text includes short sentences in short paragraphs with left-justified margins and generous line spacing. Following the IFLA

Easy-to-Read recommendations, this simple story with whimsical illustrations strives to make reading fun for those who might struggle due to low vision, dyslexia, or learning disabilities. The creators of this small book have expertly provided an example of how to successfully craft a broadly accessible book.

- 11** Pelt, Colette (concept) Westera, Bette et al (text) Noten, Kelly (photos) Versteegh, Chrétien (ill) **Dwarrelbos** [*Flutter forest*] Terheijden, Netherlands: PrentenboekenPlus, 2023 [24pp] ISBN 978-94-926-52-218

As summer turns to autumn, the world around us changes. How does the crisp air feel on your skin? What do the falling leaves sound like? Can you feel them crunch under your feet? As part of a series about the four seasons, this book uses poetry to encourage readers

to use all their senses to experience the forest in autumn. Fifteen poems, written by popular Dutch children's poets, lyrically describe scurrying squirrels, splashing puddles, rough tree bark, and more.

The beautiful seasonal poems in this book are printed in both large print text and braille. The spiral bound pages turn easily and lie flat. High quality photographs offer sure views of the beauty found in nature. Key details of the photographs are also embossed to create tactile illustrations, with different patterns in the embossing, replicating the ripples in a puddle or the



*Col·lecció: Ple de signes: Primeres paraules; Accions; Colors; Família; Aliments; Animals; Espais; Transports (8 vols) (cat. no. 7)*

veins of a leaf. Each poem includes a tactile QR code that links to an audio performance of the poem as well as image descriptions. Every book comes with a brief teaching guide and a fluffy toy squirrel for readers to befriend!

- 12** Valtakorpi, Maaria (text) Airola, Sari (ill) **Pupu ei nuku** [*Bunny is not sleeping*] Helsinki, Finland: Puheterapeutien Kustannus Oy, 2022 [22pp] ISBN 978-952-67656-3-1

What is a bunny to do when he is awake and ready to play but Mamma is still sleeping? Bunny definitely does not bring toys into Mamma's room and play with them loudly on her bed. Except, of course, he does. Finally, a tired Mamma climbs out of bed to make coffee. But when her coffee is ready, where is Bunny? Playing is hard work so Bunny has fallen fast asleep in her bed.

This adorable board book, with its simple and colourful close-up illustrations, is very entertaining for young children. In addition to traditional printed text, the story is told using line drawings depicting Finnish Sign Language. For readers who sign as their first language, the inclusion of sign language imagery can help improve their print recognition. For anyone new to sign language, the book provides a simple introduction to several common signs.

Published by the Finnish Association of Speech Therapists, this is one of the few commercial board books that include sign language and print. With its short sentences, onomatopoeic words, and lots of repetition, young children will giggle along with Bunny's antics while parents and caregivers will relate to Mamma's attempts to get just a few more minutes of rest.

**13** Zarzhytska, Elina (text) Laichuk, Daryna and Havrylenko, Nadiia, et al (ill) **Try Skhodynyky Holodomoru (2 vol)** [*Three steps of the Holodomor*] Budapest, Hungary: Foundation of Ukrainian Books in Hungary, 2023 [102pp:95pp] ISBN 978-615-01-9300-7

The Ukrainian Famine, also known as the Holodomor, was a human-orchestrated famine that took place in Soviet Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. Millions of Ukrainians starved to death. To honour the 90th anniversary of this tragic period, noted Ukrainian children's author Elina Zarzhytska wrote the story of two fictional children living in rural Ukraine during the famine.

This powerful novella introduces the Ukrainian children of today, and those around the world, to this misunderstood and often hidden period in the country's

history. Written as an adventure with two heroes fighting for truth and justice, it was important to Zarzhytska to tell the story from a child's perspective so that young readers could more easily relate. Her regard for young people is also evident in the black and white drawings and the striking cover art, which were created by young people at a regional youth centre in Dnipro. Using large print text and braille, this accessible version of the book was released in two volumes to ensure that it was a manageable size for readers. It is also available as an audiobook. It offers an important opportunity for young readers with disabilities to learn about history alongside their peers.



*Dokusho bariafuri: Mitsukeyou! Jibun ni atta dokusho no katachi* (cat. no. 20)

**14** Zhao, Murong and Sun, Zhongyan  
(text) Su Gezi (ill) Sun Bei (ed)  
**Long de Tushuguan**  
[*The dragon's library*] Beijing,  
China: China Braille Press, 2022  
[30pp] ISBN 978-7-5224-1210-8

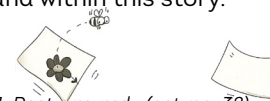
Any story about a dragon is already magical, but a story about a librarian dragon who shares his love of reading with children is a particularly special kind of magic. The story follows a young girl as she explores the fantastical library. When a blind child arrives at the library with her cane and guide dog, the young girl reads books aloud to her new friend. But the girl also wants her friend to be able to experience the joy of reading independently, so the dragon sets out to find books she can read by touch. Eventually a young dragon returns with books in braille that his grandfather asked him to deliver, and the trio settles down to read in the cozy library.



*Long de Tushuguan* (cat. no. 14)

Designed with large print text and braille, readers with and without vision loss can enjoy the magic of this book together. The whimsically soft watercolour illustrations have a dreamlike quality to them. The matte finish reduces glare, and the spiral binding allows the durable pages to turn easily and lie flat. The picture book, written in simplified

Chinese, also includes simple activities and basic Chinese characters, discussion questions, and an informational section. Readers young and old will find themselves drawn into the wonder that can be found within this story.



*SuperVid. Epizoda 1, Past u razredu* (cat. no. 38)



*Alguien como tú (cat. no. 19)*

## Category 2: Portrayals of disability

This section includes fiction and nonfiction books that depict people who are Deaf or disabled. These subjects do not include physical health issues, such as common childhood illnesses and injuries, unless they lead to chronic disability. Mental health issues such as OCD or schizophrenia are also included.

- 15** Armand, Avianti (text) Putri, Gratiani (ill)  
**He Says the Nicest Thing** Jakarta, Indonesia:  
 Kesaint Blanc, 2023 [24pp] ISBN 978-602-477-286-4

Told from the perspective of his devoted sister, this is an easy rhyming story about a young boy with Down syndrome whose smile conveys greetings and empathy. He smiles at neighbours and kids on their way to school. If his sister is upset, he hugs her. She knows he means, *"Don't be sad. I love you."*

With his sister as the narrator, it may seem that he has no influence on his world. However, the softly coloured illustrations reflect the emotional tones of the story. They move from dull when his sister is feeling sad, to cheerful pastels when he positively affects her. This is a reminder of

how a nonverbal child can intentionally make a difference in the lives of those around him.

This picture book includes facts on Down syndrome at the end of the book. *He Says the Nicest Thing* is part of the *Empathy for Children* series. It is very important to begin reading early to children about disabilities and diversity, whether there are disabled children in the classroom or not. Where possible, these books need to be written and



*Ik ben autistisch! (cat. no. 36)*

set locally. This bilingual publication in Indonesian and English addresses inclusion, developmental disability and nonverbal communication.

- 16** Ashour, Yahya (text) Qawariq, Abdullah (ill) **Lehatha Rayan yamshe hakatha**  
[*Why Rayan walks this way*]  
Ramallah, Palestine: Tamer Institute for Community Education, 2021 [38pp]  
ISBN 978-9950-27-041-1

*Why Rayan Walks This Way* tells the story of a young boy with a physical disability that impacts the way he walks. Written in free verse with rich imagery, his inner monologue evokes feelings of loneliness, bullying and battling the hopes and expectations of the adults in his life. His family and doctors offer exercises and prayers, but he knows he is not sick simply because he walks differently.



*Lehatha Rayan yamshe hakatha (cat. no. 16)*

This is a poignant story about a boy who has a strong enough sense of self to know that it does not matter how he walks. Illustrator Abdullah Qawariq uses vivid abstract illustrations such

as the recurring images of watchful eyes and mirrors to contrast Rayan's perceptions of himself with those of other people. Rayan wonders, "*Why don't they look at my heart before*

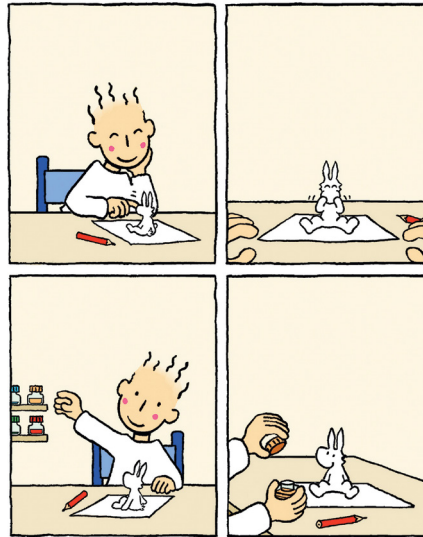
*they look at my walk?"* This short, insightful depiction of how one young person interprets their own disability reminds the reader that actions and words have an effect. While Rayan is confident about his body image, the way that people view him still has an emotional impact. He ends by saying, *"I walk this way because that's what my legs decided. It is not important to know why."*

**17** Bow, Erin (text)  
**Simon Sort of Says**  
 Toronto, Canada: Scholastic  
 Canada Ltd, 2023  
 [320pp] ISBN 978-1-4431-9313-9

Twelve-year old Simon O'Keeffe and his family have recently moved to the town of Grin And Bear It in Nebraska. As Simon tells it, they were driven out by alpacas, but there is also something in Simon's past that he does not like to

talk about (or think about). We learn late in the novel that Simon is the sole survivor of a school shooting.

The strange new town with no internet or cell phones offers Simon a chance to escape the media circus following



*Petit Tom et le dessin magique (cat. no. 21)*

the shooting. Simon becomes fast friends with Agate, who is autistic, and the pair soon find themselves in trouble for trying to broadcast a fake alien signal to a radio telescope.

This book could have been a straightforward, or even, depressing novel. Instead, the author has written a hilarious story with unconventional characters, a lovelorn peacock, a funeral home, squirrels and aliens. Nonetheless, it does not shy away from the realities of PTSD and neurodivergence. Simon experiences anxiety, claustrophobia and panic attacks, while Agate deals with sensory processing issues. Both characters receive support from mental health specialists. The book also includes resources for the reader. A sensitive depiction of disability and trauma recovery, this book delivers a laugh-out-loud and insightful reading experience.

- 18** Cazemier, Caja and Letterie, Martine (text) Halfmouw, Saskia (ill) **Hoor je mij?** [*Can you hear me?*] Amsterdam, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Ploegsma, 2022 [215pp] ISBN 978-90-216-8342-3

Told from alternating perspectives, this novel follows two Deaf teens starting high school in very different eras. Freek, born into a Deaf family in the 1950s, attends a school for the Deaf where students are banned from using sign language and forced to lip read and learn to speak. Sterre, born in 2000 to a hearing family, has a cochlear implant that provides her with some functional hearing. She has persuaded her parents to let her attend a mainstream high school without an interpreter. Things go well at first, but the nuances and in-jokes leave her rather isolated.



*He Says the Nicest Thing (cat. no. 15)*

How has life changed for Deaf teens? Hearing readers will be shocked at how people were treated in the past and will learn what it feels like not to be able to join a hearing society. Teens who are Deaf or hard of hearing will recognize familiar frustrations and difficulties, such as a group of hearing peers all talking at once. Co-written

by two teachers, the book reinforces the universal importance of making your own choices about the ways you communicate and your preferred communities. It also includes additional information about the real Effatha school that Freek attends, as well as cochlear implants, Dutch Sign Language, and how the writers researched this project.

- 19** Docherty, Helen (text) Roberts, David (ill) Schmidt, Alejandra (trans) **Alguien como tú** [*Someone just like you*] Santiago, Chile: Editorial Zig-Zag, 2023 [32pp] ISBN 978-956-12-3725-4

*"Somewhere in this world, there is someone like you, who finds the same things funny and who laughs like you. If they needed you, would you help them?"* This moving call to action reminds children through lyrical, rhymed text and vibrant illustrations

that people share more similarities than differences.

There is no mention of disability or other forms of diversity in the text, but it is wonderfully depicted in the illustrations. David Robert's cheerful drawings in neon pastels portray a wide variety of body shapes and sizes, ethnicities, religions, clothing choices and hairstyles. The children use crutches, wheelchairs, hearing aids or implants, braille and prosthetics. They are shown against a white page, thus keeping the focus entirely on them.

The light and cheerful colour scheme gives this book a very hopeful feeling, which, with the matter-of-fact portrayal of differences, diversity and disability, can promote empathy in preschool-age children. Kindness is possible and actionable, even when you are young.

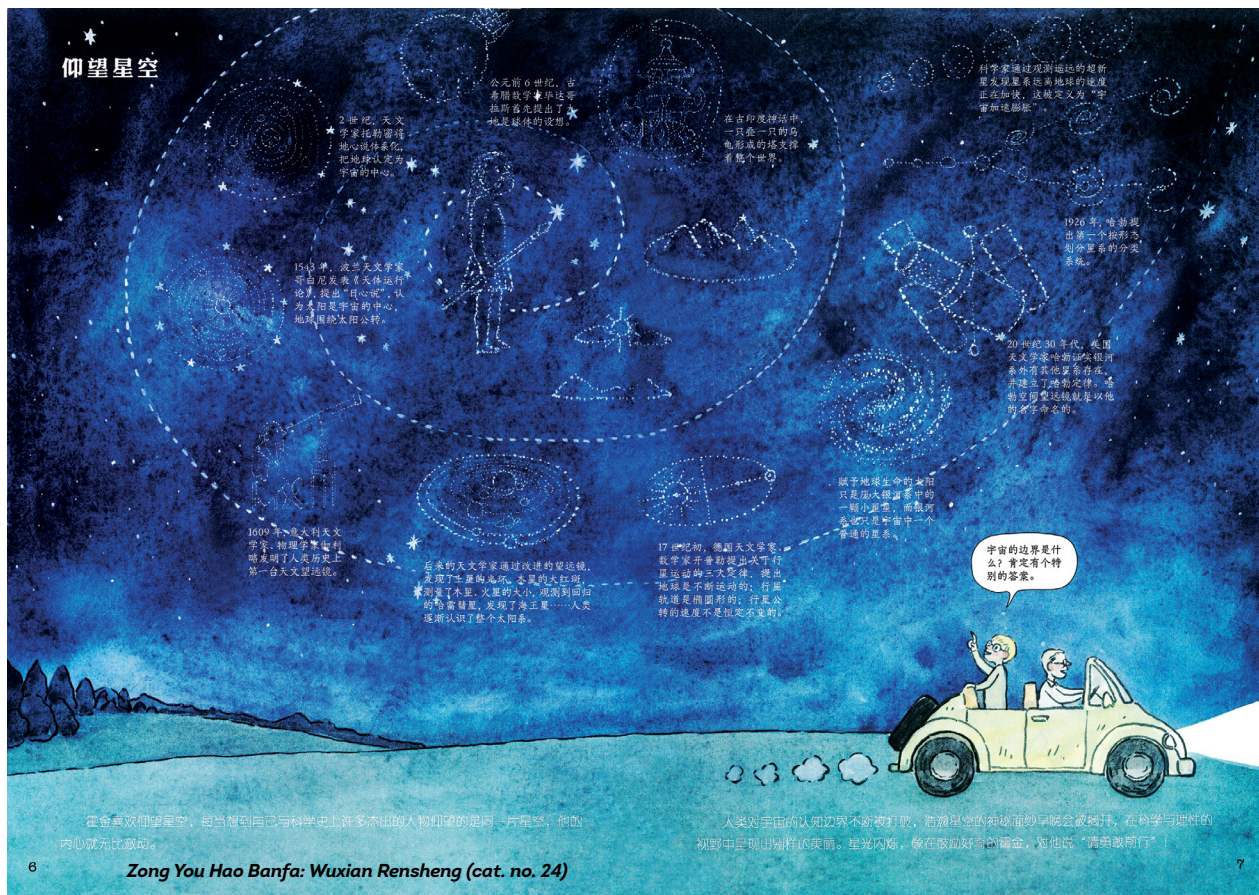


*Tuwing Linggo: Isang Kuwento tungkol sa Pag-aaral ng Sign Language (cat. no. 23)*

**20** Dokushokobo (edit and ill)  
**Dokusho bariafuri: Mitsukeyou!**  
**Jibun ni atta dokusho no katachi**  
*[Barrier-free reading! The best way for you to read]* Tokyo, Japan:  
 Kokudoshsha, 2023 [80pp]  
 ISBN 978-4-337-28950-5

Reading is an important skill for navigating and interpreting the world

around us. People who are unable to read traditional printed text by themselves may struggle with day-to-day issues, such as employment and education, and will need a tool to help them. This nonfiction book from Japan demonstrates a variety of methods for making reading accessible to everyone. While the examples shown primarily include books for recreational



reading by children, the principles and techniques carry over into many situations. Case studies feature photographs and descriptions of readers using accessible formats. These formats include braille tactile books, cloth tactile books, large print, simplified easy-to-read books, audiobooks, manga, electronic books and books with sign language.

From the colourful circles and symbols on the cover through the image-filled pages inside, children will be drawn into this bright and informative book. Designed to be inviting, much of the content is in text boxes and speech bubbles, with little characters guiding us through the chapters. The reader can dip into quick facts and examples and then move into the longer explanations. Included also are discussions about accessibility, technology and copyright. Japan's amazing progress in this area is documented in this outstanding book for school-age and older readers.



*Dokusho bariakufuri: Mitsukeyou! Jibun ni atta dokusho no katachi (cat. no. 20)*

- 21** Duquennoy, Jacques (text and ill) **Petit Tom et le dessin magique** [*Little Tom and the magical drawing*] Montrouge, France: Mini BD kids (Bayard editions), 2022 [121pp] ISBN 979-10-363-4545-6

A young boy draws an imaginary rabbit and with a puff of magical air, blows life into him. Their play begins with the rabbit hunting for colours. Tom draws a series of objects, such as fish and a corn cob, which also come to life. The adorable rabbit collects one item of each colour. Once it has found them all, Tom asks the rabbit to draw a picture. Using all four paws it paints a magical rainbow carpet out of the colours. With another magic puff, Tom makes the carpet fly. Soon, the friends are flying together around the world.

The simple illustrations in this graphic novel use crisp linework and a limited colour palette to convey a playful adventure. Readers will enjoy jumping from panel to panel, observing the unfolding action. Tom, who is seen sitting in his wheelchair, is depicted as a happy child. The story explores the wonders of his imagination without reinforcing the stereotype that a person needs to escape their wheelchair. Sparse text, simple vocabulary and a clear black font on white speech bubbles makes the text accessible to

children with low vision, or with developmental or learning disabilities.

**22** EIRI (text and ill) **Boku ra niwa boku ra no kotoba ga aru** [*We have our own words*] Tokyo, Japan: Kadokawa, 2022 [224pp] ISBN 978-4-04-605800-3

When you combine baseball signals with sign language and add in a hard-won friendship, you get an exciting baseball manga. It follows the story of two high school boys, Mashiro, a Deaf pitcher, and Hiroaki, a hearing catcher, as their friendship develops while playing baseball. At first, Hiroaki is not interested in learning Japanese Sign Language to communicate with Mashiro. However, once he sees Mashiro's skill at pitching, the two develop a friendship where they both learn each other's languages: Japanese Sign Language and spoken Japanese.

This is not a story of tragedy or overcoming one's disability; it is the story of two people learning to communicate in new ways. The use of sign language and baseball 'language' pair well because baseball is a sport that already uses hand signs. There are informative insets to explain fingerspelling and baseball facts. The manga also respectfully depicts issues Deaf people commonly face. We learn that

Mashiro is supported by his Deaf mother, who was forced as a child to use hearing aids and learn to lip read rather than using sign language. Attracted by the manga formatting, teens will relate to the characters' journey towards a friendship rooted in the love of the game!



*Vanliga människor: Autistens guide till galaxen (cat. no. 37)*

**23** Gonzales, Och (text) Reynaldo, CJ (ill) **Tuwing Linggo: Isang Kuwento tungkol sa Pag-aaral ng Sign Language** [*Every Sunday: A story on learning sign language*] Quezon City, Philippines: Kahel Press (St. Matthew's Publishing Corporation), 2020 [32pp] ISBN 978-971-625-444-0

Every Sunday a young girl goes with her mother to buy ice cream from Kuya Berto, the local vendor. She soon realizes that the cart owner cannot hear. Some of Kuya

Berto's customers write their orders on a whiteboard, while others get frustrated and walk away. The young girl is the exception. To begin with, she really wants to say good morning and thank you, so Kuya Berto begins to teach her sign language. She makes mistakes along the way but practices at home and even teaches her friends to sign. She enjoys using her hands to chat with her new friend.

Written in both English and Tagalog, this simple picture book introduces young readers to the ways that Deaf people communicate. The digital illustrations, created by a Deaf graphic artist, incorporate basic signs, and there is the Filipino Sign Language alphabet in the back. It is this portrayal of empathy and the girl's desire to learn to sign that elevate the story past most sign language books. Without needing to adopt contrived messaging, the book teaches by example. It does not preach inclusivity towards Deaf people; it simply models it.

**24** Hong Ma Books Studio (text and ill) **Zong You Hao**  
**Banfa: Wuxian Rensheng** [*Always good ways*  
*series: Stephen Hawking's infinite life*] Beijing,  
 China: China Children's Press & Publication Group  
 Co., Ltd, 2023 [56pp] ISBN 978-7-5148-8283-4



*Min hjerne er en snekugle (cat. no. 25)*



*Geulol ttaega isseo (cat. no. 26)*

From black holes to the Big Bang theory, Stephen Hawking is renowned for his work in cosmology and theoretical physics. He is also remembered as the scientist who continued his research after a diagnosis of amyotrophic

lateral sclerosis (ALS). This motor-neuron disease eventually progressed to his using a computer and just three fingers to talk and operate his wheelchair. In the style of traditional softcover comics, this nonfiction book documents

Hawking's life and explains the science behind his theories.

This very graphic book, written in simplified Chinese, portrays Hawking as he would like to be seen – clearly and dispassionately as a scientist. While the authors do discuss his disease and how it affects him and his family, the comic emphasizes his career, from his best seller, *A Brief History of Time*, to his stint on *The Simpsons* television show. Hawking wanted to make science simple enough for the average person to understand. The authors at the Hong Ma Books Studio achieved this by presenting his theories graphically. They use clear dialogue in short speech bubbles, with longer explanations when needed. The graphic illustrations are accompanied by soft water-colour backgrounds, which together make the book attractive to teens as well as to young adults. This is both an entertaining comic and an

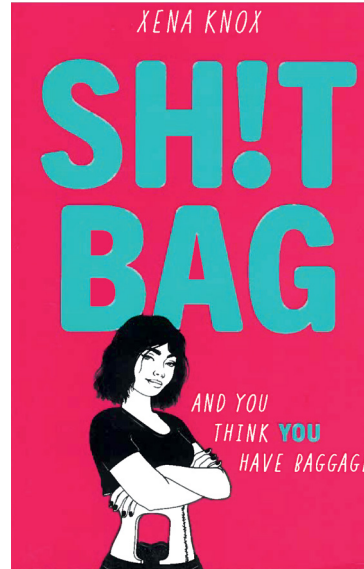
educational introduction to basic physics.

- 25** Juul, Trine (text) Karrebæk, Dorte (ill)  
**Min hjerne er en snekugle** [*My brain is a snow globe*] Frederiksberg, Denmark: Billedroman (Dansk lærerforenings Forlag), 2023 [53pp]  
 ISBN 978-87-7211-326-5

*My brain is a snow globe  
 you can shake all year round  
 just ask for something with letters  
 in front of others then it swirls...*

Thus starts a book of poetry written from the perspective of a fictional high school student with dyslexia. She writes of her frustration and embarrassment with school, with reading and with classmates. Her feelings of low self-esteem and fear of not being good enough are expressed through simple eloquent

poems, which tie into the universal need of all teens for self-acceptance and inclusion. The narrator conjures images verbally, which illustrate the difficulty of her dyslexia. She is bright and able, and although she struggles daily with her learning disability, her



*Shit Bag London (cat. no. 27)*

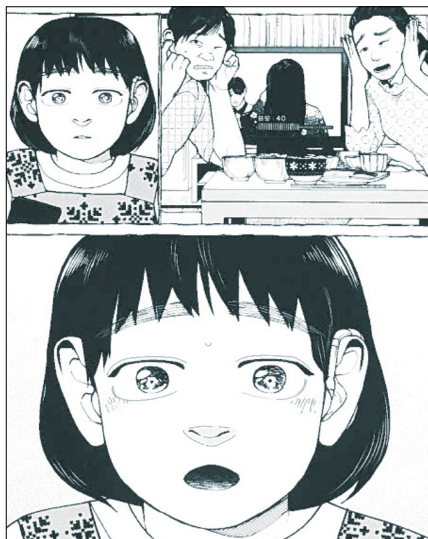
love of words and beautiful images transcend them.

Aimed at young teens, this is a collection of somewhat quirky poems about her struggles, about her teacher's fingers, carrier pigeons and imaginary bus drivers. Dorte Karrebæk's illustrations with odd, rounded figures depict emotions in a sometimes bizarre yet relatable way. Published by the Danish Teachers' Association, the short, simplified text in large font makes this an excellent choice for use in the classroom or by readers seeking an alternative to a full-length novel.

- 26** Kim, Jung-young (text and ill)  
**Geurol ttaega isseo**  
*[It all happens, sometimes]*  
 Paju-si, Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea:  
 Kookminbooks Co., Ltd, 2020 [48pp]  
 ISBN: 978-89-11-12815-0

There are times that we all get worried and anxious. Sometimes you do not want to do the things that are asked of you. There is always a reason. Maybe the food you are offered is the wrong colour or you are feeling too shy to talk that day. This reassuring picture book presents a variety of scenarios that a young child can relate to, such as talking, swimming, using the toilet and going to bed. In each situation, an animal friend explains that these feelings happen to them too. Sometimes the seal does not want to swim and the pig does not want to eat. They share what they do when this happens.

The pages, full of colour and conversation, provide opportunities to start discussions. While the animals seem cartoon-like, the diverse group of children exhibit genuinely worried expressions that a young reader will understand. We all live with stress, but there are not many books for toddlers



*Boku ra niwa boku ra no kotoba ga aru (cat. no. 22)*

on this subject. This non-threatening gentle book helps children begin to process and express their anxieties.

**27** Knox, Xena (text) **Shit Bag** London, UK: Hodder Children's Books (Hachette Children's Group), 2023 [295pp] ISBN 978-1-44497-205-4

Freya's summer plans are disrupted when she wakes up in a hospital with an ileostomy bag, and a "rickety drip stand with me like I'm a geriatric Bo Peep." She is told she must go to "Poo Camp" – a place where young people with bowel disease can talk and boost their confidence through various activities. When someone from school starts to call her "Shit Bag" on social media, she claims the name for herself to help her cope and laugh at her situation. Along the way, Freya makes new friends and falls in love as she learns to live with her bowel disease and ileostomy bag.

A typical teen novel with angst, swearing, drama and boyfriends, *Shit Bag* also throws in specifics about ulcerative colitis and is sprinkled with some dark bathroom humour. Freya has a strong and angry voice, which can be irreverent as she talks to the reader, but nevertheless she is a

loveable main character. The author's own experience with this chronic illness comes through as she does not shy away from the realities of living with an ileostomy bag. *Shit Bag* is a groundbreaking novel that manages to neutralize the messiness of an ileostomy bag so that the reader, like Freya, can accept the reality of this life-changing diagnosis and move on.

**28** Kontoleon, Anna (text) Kalogeri, Lila (ill) *Oi katàskopoi tis Geografias – To messeonikò kàstro kai oi Gigantes tou Ouranoù* [*The spies of geography – The medieval castle and the giants of the sky*] Athens, Greece: Dioptra Publishing, 2024 [112pp] ISBN 978-618-220-536-5

Nano travels to Poitiers in France to visit his mother's friend Leoni and her daughter Miovi. Miovi is a typical teenage girl: moody, rude, bored and impatient. Oh, and she uses a wheelchair. Leoni assigns Miovi the task of keeping Nano busy, which of course she is not thrilled about. With another friend they visit an avian raptor show at a medieval castle. During the show the birds of prey escape into the forest.

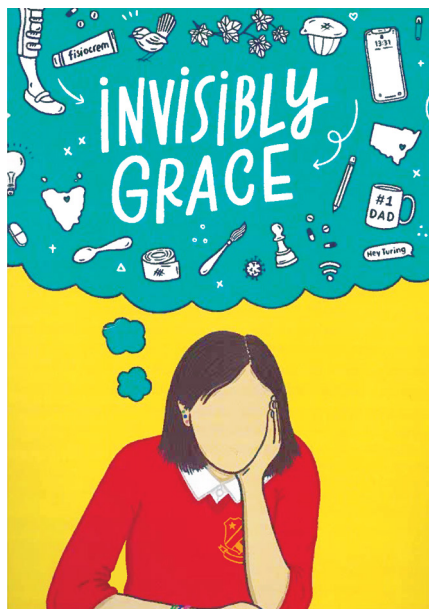
*Oi katàskopoi tis Geografias – To messeonikò kàstro kai oi Gigantes tou Ouranoù* (cat. no. 28)



Is this connected to the castle jewels that were stolen the year before? Can the three young people solve these mysteries? Their adventure begins as they set off by bus, train and foot to find and rescue the birds.

This rollicking adventure story for school-aged children is the sixth in *The spies of geography* series. The author mixes in elements of medieval history, geography and astronomy. As is typical in mysteries, each character has a skill that they contribute to the team effort. Miovi excels in map reading and bossiness. It is the emphasis on action and plot, as well as the integration of Miovi's disability into the narrative, which make this novel outstanding.

**29** Lloyd, Natalie (text)  
**Hummingbird** New York, NY,  
 USA: Scholastic, 2022 [348pp]  
 ISBN 978-1-338-65458-5



*Invisibly Grace* (cat. no. 30)

"A wheelchair is my normal, but I get that it's not everybody's normal." Olive Miracle Martin has brittle bones, or osteogenesis imperfecta (OI). Tired of homeschooling, she yearns to go to

Macklemore Middle School and have a BFF (best friend forever). Once there, she tackles mean girls, an inaccessible stage, an overly solicitous aide, ableism, and the hummingbird mystery. If you find the magic hummingbird, your wish will come true. Should Olive wish for strong bones or something more important?

What a fun read! Olive's blended family, schoolmates and neighbours are packed with personality and nuance. Quirky bits of birding facts and folklore are thrown into this early teen novel about friendship, standing up for yourself, and finding your own voice. Olive knows about the pain of breaking



*Schsastia - tse Lysychka* (cat. no. 4)



*More than Words: So Many Ways to Say What We Mean (cat. no. 31)*

bones, but it is worth the risk to perform on stage, explore the woods, and experience the highs and lows of public school. As her world expands, Olive's attitude towards her disability evolves, transitioning from wishing for a miraculous cure to understanding that she can have a fulfilling life just as she is. Written by someone with OI, the disability representation rings true, and so too does the school drama.

**30** McDougall, Avery (text) **Invisibly Grace** Hobart, TAS, Australia: Forty South Publishing, 2022 [281pp] ISBN 978-0-6452928-8-6

Midway through the school term, Grace's family moves to a new town. Starting at a new school is never easy, but it is even harder if you have an invisible disability. Grace wants to be seen as someone who loves art and is a trivia nerd, not the "Sick Girl" who does not look sick. Adept at hiding her physical illness and pain, she pushes through the year, navigating a new doctor, new meds, teachers and a possible boyfriend. Written in first person narrative, the reader grows to appreciate Grace's humour and resilience through her conversations with her peers and sarcastic comments to the reader.

*Waking Ben Doldrums (cat. no. 34)*



This is a realistic portrayal of a teen with chronic pain and an auto-immune disease. It is a visceral and rarely seen depiction of pain. We also learn of doctors and teachers who will not listen to her, anxious parents, an adoring sister, and plenty of mean teens thrown into the mix. It is not an inspirational novel about overcoming illness; rather, it is the story of one teen's life with a chronic condition. Teens with similar experiences will appreciate seeing themselves on the page, and all readers will relate to Grace's desire for acceptance among her peers.

**31** Maclean, Roz (text and ill) **More than Words: So Many Ways to Say What We Mean** New York, NY, USA: Henry Holt and Co. (Macmillan Publishing Group), 2023 [32pp] ISBN 978-1-250-86450-5

Our narrator Nathan notices the many ways that his classmates communicate. Fatima and Mateo use sign language, Ian writes, Tamara loves to talk. His friends use tools such as touch screen tablets, alphabet boards, text-to-speech programmes, braille and picture communication symbols. Nathan sees others expressing themselves indirectly through dance, song, fashion, body language. More importantly, he shows us that communication is a two-way

concept: to communicate you must know how to listen.

The extraordinary thing about this gentle picture book is that it explores many methods of communicating, especially those available to nonverbal children. The friendly characters are wonderfully diverse in ethnicity, culture and disability. They are all given names, helping young readers to see them as real people. The vibrant illustrations incorporate key aspects of the text. For example, "build" is written on a sandcastle and "move" is spelled out with leaves blowing in the wind. The book also includes detailed information about augmentative and alternative communication, as well as tips for improving communication access; it does not stop at just braille or sign language. Reading this book about



*Oi katàskopoi tis Geografias – To messeonikò kàstro kai oi Gigantes tou Ouranoù (cat. no. 28)*

inclusivity encourages children to think about ways of expressing and listening so that everyone can be included.

**32** Roe, Monica (text) **Air** New York, NY, USA: Macmillan Children's Publishing Group, 2022 [267pp] ISBN 978-0-374-38865-2

Twelve-year-old Emmie is sassy, athletic



*Collecció: Ple de signes: Primeres paraules, Accions, Colors, Família, Aliments, Animals, Espais, Transports (8 vol) (cat. no. 7)*

and driven. She also is a wheelchair-user at a chronically under-funded school in South Carolina. Emmie has a passion for speed and loves Wheelchair Motocross (WCMX). Her wheelchair is an extension of her body, and she prides herself on being independent. However, after a fall off a school ramp, Emmie is forced to accept an Educational Assistant. The assistant and the principal feel so inspired by Emmie's efforts to raise money for a new wheelchair, that they start a school fundraiser. Emmie feels conflicted, because she does not want to be the sole focus of the fundraiser or treated as a 'charity case', especially when the school is not accessible.

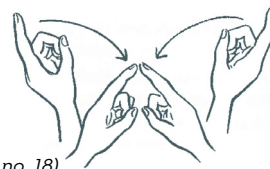
What to do? Emmie's dilemma becomes the crux of this preteen novel that addresses ableism and the frustrating challenges of being disabled yet seeking independence. Emmie ultimately gives the donated money to the school for



*Ik ben autistisch! (cat. no. 36)*

accessibility upgrades, as she believes that the money should be for everyone.

This fast-paced book delivers a compelling portrayal of the intersection of disability, poverty, and life in the US South. Emmie's fierce spirit and realistic experiences will attract young readers.



*Hoor je mij? (cat. no. 18)*

**33** Sénéchal, Jean-François (text)  
**Chris: Le boulevard; Au carrefour; Les avenues**  
 [Chris: *The Boulevard; At the Crossroads; The Avenues*]  
 Montréal, Canada: Leméac  
 Éditeur, 2023 [629pp]  
 ISBN 978-2-7609-4263-9

What would happen if you had an intellectual disability and on your 18th birthday your mother left you alone and did not return? If you were Chris, you would weave yourself into a community in a gritty Montréal neighbourhood and begin to thrive. By the final book of the trilogy, Chris is now working as a concierge in his apartment building. He has married his girlfriend, who also has an intellectual disability, and is a new father. The first book in the trilogy, *Le boulevard*, was selected for the 2018 IBBY Honour List.



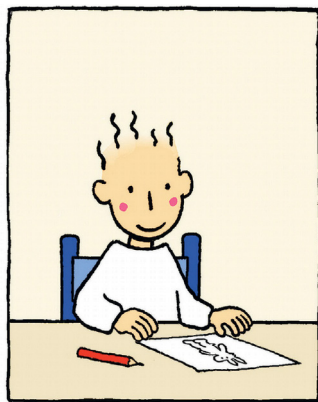
*SuperVid. Epizoda 1, Past u razredu (cat. no. 38)*

Narrated by Chris, this well-written trilogy offers reflections on his life in a candid, naive way, and by doing so reveals his belief that he can contribute equally to his community. Using short sentences, conversation, and some cursing, the novels are realistic, although not always rosy. The series' strength is the world Sénéchal has created. The reader gets caught up in wanting Chris to succeed and find happiness, while discerning what may

be essential in their own life. Young adults with disabilities, like all young adults, need support and people who love them. They are also capable of so much when given a chance and the proper environment to do so. This is certainly the case with Chris.

**34** Smith, Heather (text)  
 Eggenschwiler, Byron (ill)  
**Waking Ben Doldrums**  
 Victoria, Canada: Orca Book  
 Publishers, 2023 [32pp]  
 ISBN 978-1-4598-3391-3

Frida and her father live in a four-unit apartment building, two up and two down. Every morning, Frida uses a broomstick to tap the ceiling, waking up Ben Doldrums who lives above them. Next Ben raps on the wall to wake up the family next door. They, in turn, knock on their floor to wake up the couple living below them, who let



*Petit Tom et le dessin magique (cat. no. 21)*

their cat out. One day, when Frida taps on the ceiling, nothing happens. Ben is in bed and does not want to get up. Everyone tries their best to help him with his depression, but nothing works until Frida suggests a way how he can participate in the morning routine, even when he cannot get out of bed.

With detailed illustrations and distinctive characters, this picture book is a

realistic portrayal of depression and an equally realistic way in which everyone tries to help. Ben's big, dark blanket effectively portrays the heaviness of his depression. Created for 4-7-year-olds, this book can be used to gently guide a discussion about mental health. It does not offer instant solutions; instead, it emphasizes the importance of talking to the person and standing by them through the good days and bad.

### 35 Tamisier, Sabine (text)

**Malou Hibiscus Flamant** [*Malou Hibiscus Flamingo*] Montreuil, France: Éditions Théâtrales, 2022 [79pp] ISBN 978-2-84260-879-8

Stories and examples are a particularly effective method of conveying important life lessons to teens. In this case, a play brings to life a teen girl with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), who has learning difficulties, memory challenges

and trouble making friends. When Malou's mother finally admits that she caused this condition by drinking during pregnancy, the whole family deals with the resulting denial, guilt and resentment.

This play was inspired by a friend of the author who had adopted a child with FAS and is the founder of *Viure avec le SAF* (Living with FAS), which informs teenagers about the dangers of drinking. Published as a part of *Ateliers Théâtrales Jeunesse*, the author uses this gritty play as a tool for youth



*Min hjerne er en snekugle (cat. no. 25)*

theatre mediators, social workers and teachers to spark discussion with young people about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy. To assist in that process, *Malou Hibiscus Flamant* includes a detailed chapter on theatrical exercises as well as extensive information about FAS. By reading the play aloud and discussing the characters' actions, the rawness, complexities and consequences of this situation become more real.

**36** Toeps, Bianca and Walraven, Esther (text) Roozeboos (ill) **Ik ben autastisch!** [*I am autistic!*] Utrecht, Netherlands: Blossom Books, 2021 [197pp] ISBN: 978-94-63-49207-2

*"I am Bianca. I am autistic and fantastic - autistic"* Using herself and her friends as examples, Bianca has written a book to explain what it means to be invisibly different. Her brain functions and



*Stars in their Eyes* (cat. no. 39)

processes information in a non-typical way but that is not who she is as a person. She always wears a hat and baggy clothes, loves Japan and collects

everything that has to do with Disney. Although she does briefly discuss the scientific and medical aspects of autism, her focus is on what it is like to be an



*Perros increíbles (cat. no. 3)*

autistic person. She shares experiences related to topics such as school, sports, parties and food, as well as common misconceptions about autism.

Adapted from Toeps' best seller, *But you don't look autistic*, this playful nonfiction book is aimed at 9-12 year olds. Written from the perspective of herself as a child, the book is full of age-appropriate humour. The text is broken into short sections with illustrations of Bianca's friends drawn by the popular illustrator Roozeboos.

It is an excellent guide to help young autistic readers develop self-awareness, learn their own limits and triggers, and navigate a neurotypical world. Friends and family will also find practical tips for supporting the autistic person in their life.

**37** Törnvall, Clara (text) Furmark, Anneli (ill) **Vanliga människor: Autistens guide till galaxen** [*Ordinary people: The autistic guide to the galaxy*] Stockholm, Sweden: Natur & Kultur, 2023 [190 pp] ISBN 978-91-27-18186-1

There are many books on autism, written by neurotypical (NT) authors, aimed at teaching autistic people how to change their behaviour. In a twist, Clara Törnvall, diagnosed with autism as an adult, has written a book to help autistic teens decode neurotypical behaviour by

explaining how most people act and think. She has included facts, a glossary, tips, and input from autistic voices. Designed with an autistic reader in mind, the layout features short chapters, lots of open space on the page and illustrations from graphic artist Anneli Furmark.

This book explains in a clear and neutral voice differences in the way brains function and how nonverbal communication plays a role in interpretation. It reassuringly notes that being different can be positive. There are many helpful examples given, such as the act of shaking hands. What does it mean if you do not shake back? What is the correct answer to "how are you?" While this book is directed towards helping autistic individuals navigate a neurotypical world, it can be equally useful for teachers and parents, who seek to understand, rather than change, someone who may think or speak differently.

- 38** Valetič, Žiga (text) Vukotič, Jaka (ill) **SuperVid. Epizoda 1, Past v razredu** [SuperVid. Episode 1, School class mystery] Dob pri Domžalah, Slovenia: MIŠ Publishing, 2022 [64pp] ISBN 978-961-272-547-1

Vid wonders why his parents gave him his name because Vid means eyesight in Slovenian and he describes his eyesight as worse than a rhino and more like a mole. However, he gets along just fine at regular school with his aide, Bojan, and his cane. His grandpa tells him that Vid really means “someone who can see beyond everyday things.” Perhaps this will help him solve the classroom mystery of who threw all the class artwork out the window. Was it the school bully or someone else?

Designed for emerging readers, this chapter book uses a large font, with plenty



*Boku ra niwa boku ra no kotoba ga aru (cat. no. 22)*

of dialogue and short paragraphs and chapters. It is studded with frequent small cartoon-like illustrations. The humorous tone, complete with ever-popular bathroom humour such as “farty party”, will appeal to school-aged readers. This

book shows the reader a main character with low vision going about his school life, dealing with his disability in a practical way. SuperVid does not have superpowers, but is an ordinary kid who stops to think, and solves the mystery with calm deduction. This contemporary story introduces a disabled character to a wide audience without requiring him to teach the reader a lesson.

- 39** Walton, Jessica (text) Aśka (ill) **Stars in their Eyes** Fremantle, WA, Australia: Fremantle Press, 2021 [223pp] ISBN 978-1760-99071-8

Fourteen-year-old Maisie is going with her mum to her first fan convention. The long trip is a chance to share her nerdy passions with her mum, and to meet the star of an action television show who uses a prosthetic leg that is similar to her own. At the convention, Maisie meets Ollie, a non-binary teen

volunteer and attendee with whom she feels an instant connection. This book shows not only the wonderful social experiences that queer and nerdy spaces can be, but also the physical toll that these hectic gatherings can take on those who are chronically ill or disabled.

Romance and queerness are rarely given room in disability narratives for young people and this story is a refreshing mix of both. The art is bright, detailed and immersive, giving the feeling of a real convention with all the crowds and excitement. Maisie uses mobility aids such as her prosthetic leg and crutches, which are depicted accurately. She navigates challenges, including uncomfortable seating, phantom pain in her missing leg and panic attacks. She also struggles to strike the balance between wanting her independence and needing her mum's support. The conversational writing style and the visual literacy combine to create an engaging and accessible reading experience.

**40** Whaley, Ashley Harris (text) Rao-Middleton, Ananya and Wood, Hannah (ill) *I Am, You Are* London, UK: Ladybird Books (Penguin Random House), 2023 [32pp] ISBN 978-0-241-57311-2

*"Disability is a word that means there are certain things a person's body or brain can't do."* This nonfiction book, filled with joyful illustrations, does a superb job of discussing disability in a matter-of-fact and affirming way. The comprehensive plain language text, written for disabled and able bodied school-aged children, provides more than just basic definitions of disabilities. It directly addresses ableism and disability justice. It reminds us that disabled children do not have special needs – they have human needs. Rather than offering platitudes on simple differences, it explains that ableism is all around us – in unkind words, in inaccessible buildings and in unfair assumptions we make about others.

The author and illustrator, who are both disabled, have created a book to answer questions and normalize disability. They point out that it is everyone's responsibility to learn for themselves. The colourfully drawn figures and informal tone will make the reader feel as if they are part of a conversation instead of receiving a lecture. The book concludes with a glossary of terms, as well as open-ended questions to stimulate further discussion among friends and family. It is one of the better teaching tools on disability to date.

## The future is bright!

People being different from one another creates a richer, more vibrant society. Like anyone else, disabled people have many talents, skills and stories to share.



Like everyone else, disabled people deserve to tell their own stories. We can learn so much from each other's differences.



Disabled people have so much to offer the world.

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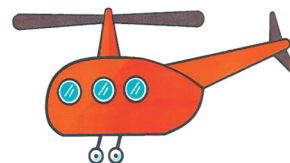
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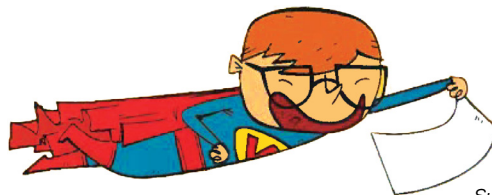
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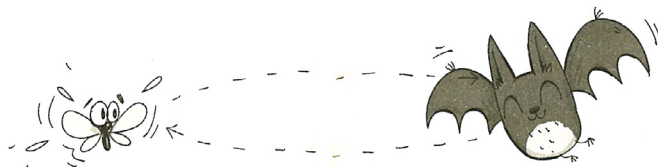
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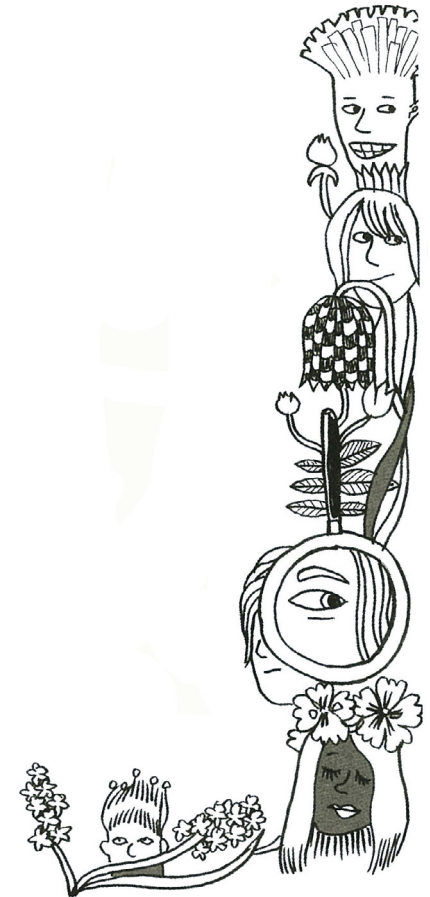
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