

Mirjam Pressler



**Nomination for the
2020 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award**

Mirjam Pressler

“Without books the world remains a confining place and limits what we can imagine and consider doing. We need many books, many, many different books – many little peepholes in the wall between us and that world which often seems so incomprehensible. Books provide us with perspectives. No single one can show the entire world. (...) I don’t fall for the illusionary idea that books can change the world, but for any individual person, a certain book can acquire an important, world-changing meaning.“

Mirjam Pressler

**Nomination for the
2020 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award
by Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur e.V.,
German Section of IBBY
Category: Author**

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Reasons for nomination

Mirjam Pressler is a central voice of German-language, anti-authoritarian children's literature that declares its readers to be capable of handling problem stories. Many of her novels are considered classics. Their "damaged childhoods" are still as contemporary and explosive as ever. She once said, "if there had been books in my childhood like the ones I've written, (...) I would have understood my own circumstances better." In her stories the reader learns how it is possible to live in a world that he or she can't change. A happy end for Mirjam Pressler means finding strategies for survival through literary heroes.

Short essence of "When Stories Taste Like Real Experiences"
by Roswitha Budeus-Budde



Mirjam Pressler with "Momo", statuette of the German Children's Literature Award

"And here I've come to my chief concern: talking, speaking out, not hiding or covering up one's own fears, desires, or inhibitions, as most adults usually do, even though it doesn't make them any happier.

Silence and concealment don't make the world alright, but only give you a stomach ache."

Mirjam Pressler

Mirjam Pressler – presentation of candidate

When Stories Taste Like Real Experiences

by Roswitha Budeus-Budde

When Mirjam Pressler was awarded the Oldenburg Children's and Youth Literature Prize in 1980 for her debut novel *Bitterschokolade* (Bitter Chocolate), she immediately became a central voice of German-language, anti-authoritarian children's literature that declared its readers to be capable of handling problem stories. In this genre other novels soon followed that are now considered classics. Their "damaged childhoods" are still as contemporary and explosive as ever.

While remaining a committed translator and hence an "ambassador" of international children's literature, Mirjam Pressler has developed a wide oeuvre of her own that ranges from picture book texts to fictional works that appeal to all age groups.

Beginning in the 1990s the author expanded her scope of interest to include Jewish childhoods during the Holocaust in Europe. In particular, in the life and writings of Anne Frank, she found a symbolic figure that spanned generations. As editor of a collection of letters between Frank family members or their friends, she helped make that period of time accessible to today's generation of readers and put a stop to the icon-building. Parallel to that she used other literary motifs from world literature, such as the *Golem*, *The Merchant of Venice* or the parable of the ring in *Nathan the Wise* in order to promote intercultural understanding through literature.

In her novel *Nathan und seine Kinder* (Nathan and His Children), with its narrative told from different perspectives, she brings historical sources to life without losing sight of the present and she addresses what is probably the most central issue of our times: religious tolerance. "My life is made up of detours, and this applies also to my writing." This is one of those statements from Mirjam Pressler that shows in a flash a very different literary career than what is expected of an author of children's and youth literature. Hans-Joachim Gelberg, her publisher, recalls the early years when she turned in five manuscripts between 1980 and 1982. First the award-winning *Bitterschokolade* (Bitter Chocolate), and then *Nun red doch endlich* (Come, Say Something), *Kratzer im Lack* (Scratching the Varnish), *Novemberkatzen* (November Cats) and *Zeit am Stiel* (A Lollipop of Time). The manuscripts became books because Gelberg sensed that they were not just dreamed up but had the taste of experience. When he asked why she submitted so many at once, she answered: "But I haven't written anything in the past 40 years." This past consisted of a difficult childhood in a foster family and an orphanage, a stint as art major at college in Frankfurt, and a series of different jobs that enabled her to support her family. I still clearly remember her jeans shop in the Augustenstrasse in Munich.

From its beginnings in the first books which she wrote for her daughters, this creative obsession – which still has its grip on her today – has led to an astoundingly wide oeuvre and

brought her numerous prizes. And all this although every piece of writing or translation, as she once said, feels like a free fall. In fact, these works often reflect the jolts and shocks in her own life. The shocking revelations of Jewish fates, especially that of Anne Frank, have become a life-long concern. In 2009 she documented the story of the whole Frank family on the basis of their many letters in her *“Grüße und Küsse an alle”* (“Love and Kisses to Everyone”).

In her novel *Nathan und seine Kinder* (Nathan and His Children) she takes up Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s leitmotiv of tolerance and passes it on to today’s readers, both young and old, as something to hope for the future.

“I strongly believe in the power of positive role-models”, is a statement that captures her work ethos and she once said, “if there had been books in my childhood like the ones I’ve written, such as *Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen* (When Happiness Turns Up, Offer It a Chair), I would have understood my own circumstances better.” In such stories the reader learns how it is possible to live in a world that he or she can’t change. A happy end for Mirjam Pressler means finding strategies for survival through literary heroes.

And how do readers respond to Mirjam Pressler? Let me cite just one here: “Hi! I’m the laziest writer in the whole world. But now I’ve fallen sick and have forced myself to write you this letter. I want to thank you for the book *Nun red doch endlich* (Come, Say Something). So here it goes: Thank you for the book.” – Johanna.

This text is based on the jury’s explanation and the laudatory speech of the German Children’s Literature Special Award 2010 for the complete work of Mirjam Pressler.

Translated by Martha Baker



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Mirjam Pressler and Federal Minister Dr. Kristina Schröder at the German Children’s Literature Award Ceremony 2010

Biography

Mirjam Pressler was born in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1940. As an illegitimate child of Jewish descent she was reared by foster parents who were old enough to be her grandparents. After leaving school, she attended the Frankfurt Academy of Fine Arts and studied languages in Munich. She then went to live in a kibbutz in Israel. Upon her return to Germany in 1965 she worked at various jobs to support her family.

Her first children's novel, *Bitterschokolade*, which she wrote at the age of 40, won the 1980 Oldenburg Children's and Youth Literature Prize. Since then she has written numerous novels and stories for children and adolescents, many of which portray children who encounter loneliness or violence and lack self-confidence. Mirjam Pressler's books have been awarded many prizes and in 2001 she received the Carl Zuckmayer Medal for her "contributions to the German language". So far she is the only person to have won the special award of the German Children's Literature Prize twice, once for her literary work (2010) and once for her achievements as a translator (1994).

She translates books from Hebrew, Dutch, Flemish, Afrikaans and English. Her translation of a revised edition of Anne Frank's diary led to her first nonfiction book, *Ich sehne mich so, die Lebensgeschichte der Anne Frank*. Other authors she has translated include Ruth Almog, Els Beerten, Imme Dros, David Grossman, Nira Harel, Joke van Leeuwen, Bart Moeyaert, Uri Orlev, Amos Oz and Nurit Zarchi.

Mirjam Pressler has three daughters and lives as a freelance writer and translator in Landshut, a town not far from Munich. Since 2009 she has been the patron of the Landshuter Jugendbuchpreis (Landshut Youth Literature Award), a project to promote reading and literacy that is organized through the city's library and financed by the local government. The library's youth book club conducts the award process. Each year the members nominate 15 recently published young adult books. A jury comprised of local school classes from different types of schools chooses the three winners.

"The social reality in my books is definitely not a destruction of the 'idyllic world of childhood', nor is it an attempt to fulfill any pedagogical intentions. I write about what I know, the real life of children, just as I myself or my children (and many other children) have experienced it."

Mirjam Pressler

Awards

(Selection)

- 1980 Oldenburg Children's and Youth Literature prize (Oldenburger Jugendbuchpreis, *Bitterschokolade*)
- 1982 German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Stolperschritte*)
- 1987 German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Nickel Vogelpfeifer*)
- 1994 German Children's Literature Special Award for her complete work as a translator (Sonderpreis des Deutschen Jugendliteraturpreises)
- 1995 German Children's Literature Award (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen*)
La vache qui lit (Zurich children's book award, *Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen*)
- 1998 Friedrich-Bödecker-Prize
Janusz-Kroczak-Medal
- 2001 Carl-Zuckmayer-Medal for her "credits for the German language"
Award of the Deutsche Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur for her complete work
LUCBS Award of the year for Children's and Youth Literature (*Malka Mai*)
La vache qui lit (*Malka Mai*)
- 2002 Catholic Children's and Youth Literature Award (Katholischer Kinder- und Jugendbuchpreis *Malka Mai*)
German Book Award (Deutscher Bücherpreis, *Malka Mai*)
German Children's Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Malka Mai*)
- 2004 German Book Award for her complete work (Deutscher Bücherpreis)
- 2006 Bavarian Order of Merit (Bayerischer Verdienstorden)
- 2008 Jane Scatcherd Award for her translation of significant hebrew literature

- 2009 CORINE – Youth Literature Prize of the Waldemar Bonsels Foundation (CORINE – Jugendbuchpreis der Waldemar Bonsels Stiftung, *Nathan und seine Kinder*)
- 2010 German Children’s Literature Award, nominee (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, *Nathan und seine Kinder*)
- 2010 German Children’s Literature Special Award for her complete work as author (Sonderpreis des Deutschen Jugendliteraturpreises)
- 2013 Buber Rosenzweig Medal for her contribution to Christian-Jewish understanding
- 2014 Hans Christian Andersen Award, finalist
- 2015 Leipzig Book Fair Prize, category „translation“, for the translation of Amos Oz’s *Judas*
- 2016 Hans Christian Andersen Award, finalist
- 2017 Munich Literature Award for her complete work as author (Literaturpreis der Landeshauptstadt München)
- 2018 Children’s Book of the Month, Deutsche Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur Volkach (*Ich bin’s, Kitty*)
Grand Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (Großes Verdienstkreuz des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland)



Mirjam Pressler (2nd from left) and her daughters Tall, Ronit and Gila 1985

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bold print: ten of Pressler's most important titles

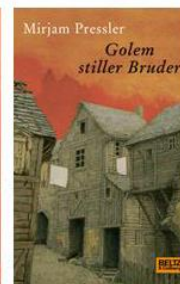
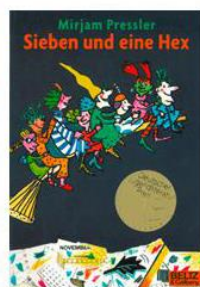
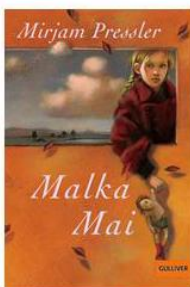
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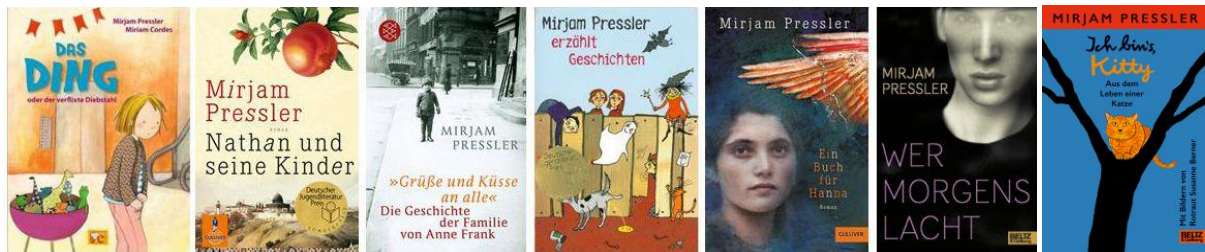
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DVD

Gute Unterhaltung. Mirjam Pressler und ihre Bücher. FWU Institut für Film und Bild in
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“What I wish for is that the child’s world – the inner and the outer
 one – with all the difficulties that come with it, be taken seriously.”

Mirjam Pressler

List of translations

(Selection, includes expired licences)

Alle Geschichten von Jessi

- Korea

Bitterschokolade

- China
- Denmark
- France
- France (Basque)
- Georgia
- Greece
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)
- Spain (Galician)
- Spain/France (Basque)
- Taiwan
- Thailand

Ein Buch für Hanna

- Italy

Geschichten von Jessi

- Japan

Golem stiller Bruder

- Israel

“Grüße und Küsse an alle.” Die Geschichte der Familie von Anne Frank

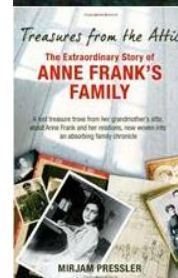
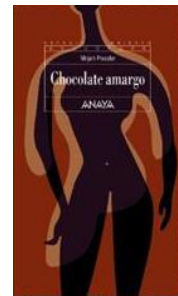
- Brazil
- France
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States

Ich bin's, Kitty

- China

Ich sehne mich so... Die Lebensgeschichte der Anne Frank

- China
- Denmark
- France



- Greece
- Japan
- Netherlands
- Slovenia
- Spain
- United Kingdom

Katharina und so weiter

- France
- Italy
- Spain

Kratzer im Lack

- Japan
- Norway
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden

Malka Mai

- China
- Denmark
- France
- Hungary
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Netherlands
- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)
- Taiwan
- United Kingdom
- USA

Nathan und seine Kinder

- Japan
- Spain

Neues von Jessi

- Japan

Nickel Vogelpfeifer

- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Japan
- Korea
- Netherlands
- Spain
- Turkey



Novemberkatzen

- China
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Korea
- Netherlands
- Slovenia
- Spain

Nun red doch endlich

- Japan
- Korea
- Netherlands
- Spain

Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen

- China
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- France
- Georgia
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Lithuania
- Netherlands
- Spain
- Spain (Catalan)
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- USA

Wundertütentage

- China
- Korea
- Spain

Zeit am Stiel

- Netherlands

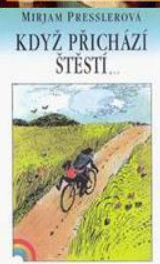
Zeit der schlafenden Hunde

- Latin America
- Taiwan
- Turkey
- United States



Quand le bonheur arrive

Mirjam Pressler
Le grenier est vraiment une formidable cachette. Depuis que l'idée m'est venue de m'y installer, j'aime un peu plus être au foyer, du moins le soir, après l'extinction des lumières. Dommage que je ne puisse y aller aussi la journée.



Contact addresses

Mrs.
Mirjam Pressler
Litschengasse 709a
D-84028 Landshut
Germany
0049-871-276 82 16
mirjam.pressler2@t-online.de
www.mirjampressler.de



Arbeitskreis
für Jugendliteratur e.V.

German Section of IBBY
Ralf Schweikart, President
Doris Breitmoser, Managing Director
Steinerstraße 15 B
D-81369 München
Germany
Phone 0049/89-45 80 80 6
Fax 0049/89-45 80 80 88
info@jugendliteratur.org
www.jugendliteratur.org

Publisher
Beltz & Gelberg
Verlagsgruppe Beltz
Werderstraße 10
D-69469 Weinheim
Germany
www.beltz.de

Appendix

- Summary of selected works
- Press Commentaries
- Selected Articles and Press Reviews
 - Baumann, Ute D.: „Grenzgänge. Ein Interview mit der Übersetzerin Mirjam Pressler.“ In: *JuLit* 4/94, pp. 37-42.
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“For young children I’m prepared to make some concessions and I think over what a child can be exposed to, how much he or she can be expected to bear and understand. For adolescents I don’t do that. When teenagers chose to read something, they are able to bear it.”

Mirjam Pressler

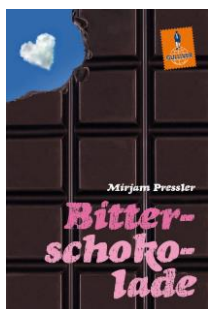
“Life is dangerous. It’s all the more important that we get to know conflicts, that we get familiar, in our minds, with terrible events, and that we vary and adapt our positions often and over and over again. The chance to do this is only available in books. In real life, there is no second chance.”

Mirjam Pressler

Summary of selected works

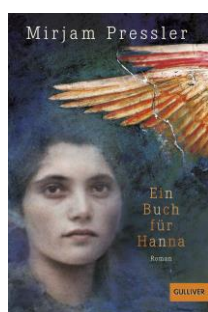
(English titles aren't necessarily the real titles of the licences)

Bitterschokolade (Bitter Chocolate)



Eva is not only overweight but also convinced that everybody is laughing at her and nobody likes her. In order to numb her sorrow she keeps eating, herring-salad or chocolate for example. She falls in love with Michel but doesn't dare believe that he really wants to be her friend. Slowly but surely she is able to dispel her general mistrust and realizes that it isn't her "fatness" which separates her from the others: that is just a single feature along with a great many other qualities. She learns to accept herself the way she is.

Ein Buch für Hanna (A Book for Hanna)

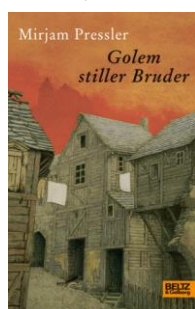


"You are the blessed, the chosen ones!", they tell 14-year-old Hanna when she is due to leave Germany in the summer of 1939. The destination is Palestine, but first there is a stopover in Denmark. There are no palm trees and the sea is not as blue as in Andersen's fairy tales, but at least they are safe from the Nazis there. However, this turns out to be a delusion. Together with the other girls Mira, Schoschi, Bella, Rosa, Rachel and Sarah, Hanna is deported to Theresienstadt. Hanna is luckier than the others and survives the concentration camp. But how many farewells can one person endure? Is it really friendship that ties Hanna to the other girls or has fate only cast them together? Does a person remain a child

forever when robbed of childhood?

In describing this novel, which is based on a true story, Mirjam Pressler says: "Above all, it was Hanna's development that interested me while I was writing. How can a girl who primarily experienced loss and near extermination later become such a warm-hearted, strong and happy young woman? I don't have an explanation for this miracle. I would rather that my readers find their own interpretation for this phenomenon."

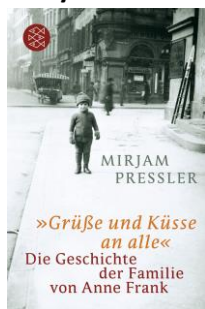
Golem, stiller Bruder (Golem, Silent Brother)



In Prague, around 1600, according to the legend, Rabbi Loew created an artificial human out of mud, a golem, whose purpose was to protect the Jews in the ghetto. The 15-year-old narrator of the story, Jankel, develops a special relationship to the golem. A great historical novel that ends tragically, it deals with human impudence and also draws on the fascination for eerie circumstances. It also serves as an introduction to the Jewish religion, which is rich in legends and myths.

Jankel, age 15, lives with his great uncle, the famous Rabbi Loew in Prague, the Golden City. He has just started to work for Mendel, the baker. And for the first time he has found a real friend, the apprentice Schmulik, who wants to be a storyteller when he grows up. All would be well if it weren't for the mysterious man living in the attic. Josef is a servant in the synagogue and the ugliest, most stupid person imaginable. Everyone treats him as if he were not human – although Josef always comes to the aid of those who are in need of his great strength. When the Jews are threatened by rabble-rousing Christian citizens, Jankel learns that Josef is a golem that Rabbi Loew brought to life by speaking magical Cabbalistic incantations in order to protect the Jewish community from harm. When the Jews are suspected of committing a murder, Rabbi sends Golem out to solve the crime and Jankel is supposed to accompany him. Although Josef is not human, Jankel cares about him. But when the golem runs amok, Jankel and Schmulik have no choice but to "turn him off". And that will cost the life of one of them.

“Grüße und Küsse an alle.” Die Geschichte der Familie von Anne Frank (Love and Kisses to Everyone. The Story of Anne Frank's Family)



The story is one envisioned many a time: a relative, an old woman who has lived in the same home for a lifetime, passes away. Her death leads the surviving family members to the inevitable task of sorting through her effects. In the attic, a treasure trove of historic importance is found.

Rarely does this actually happen, but when Helene Elias died, what she left behind turned out to be priceless. Helene Elias was born Helene Frank, a sister of Otto Frank, and therefore became the aunt of Anne Frank. Stashed away upstairs in the house she inherited from her mother and then passed on to her son, Buddy Elias, Anne's cousin and childhood playmate, was the documentary legacy of the whole

Frank family: a vast collection of photos, letters, drawings, poems and postcards preserved over decades – a cache of over 6.000 documents in all.

Chronicled by Buddy's wife, Gertrude, and the renowned German author Mirjam Pressler, these findings weave an indelible, engaging and endearing portrait of the family that shaped Anne Frank. They wrote to one another voluminously, recounting summer holidays, and telling all about their loves and hardships. They reassured one another during the terrible years and waited anxiously for news after the war had ended. Through these letters, they rejoiced in new life, and honoured the memories of those they had lost.

Ich sehne mich so... Die Lebensgeschichte der Anne Frank (I Have Such Longings... The Life Story of Anne Frank)



An engaging and sensitive inquiry into the personality of Anne Frank, her gifts, problems and dreams, this is also an informative biography that complements and deepens the famous autobiography. Through her diary Anne Frank, who died in 1945 in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, became world-famous.

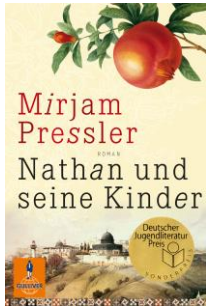
Translated into more than 60 languages, the diary is read afresh by each new generation. 1991 saw the publishing of the diary in a widely expanded, new translation into German by Mirjam Pressler – the major source for her sensitive and informative biography of Anne Frank. Based on numerous documents and statements from witnesses of the day, Pressler traces a portrait of Anne Frank's life and the Nazi period in Germany and the Netherlands, the years before she went into hiding, but also the last seven months of Anne's life in the camps of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. The author draws a lively picture of Anne's contradictory personality, her gifts, conflicts, and dreams, and traces the themes that were most important to Anne herself: her relationship with her parents, with her sister, to love and sexuality, writing and religion.

Kratzer im Lack (Scratching the Varnish)



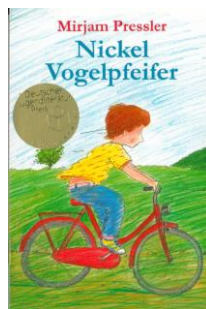
All that the small, pale and near-sighted 14-year-old Herbert can do is hide in his dream world and console himself with candy, which he buys in old Mrs. Kronawitter's shop. And Mrs. Kronawitter, of all people, sees him scratching up cars with his new knife. Mrs. Kronawitter doesn't say anything. She takes a new look at her own life, honest with herself for the first time. This helps her understand Herbert and the narrowness and confusion of his confining, but seemingly well-ordered world. She would like to help him, to make up for what she failed to do for her own son. But can Herbert accept her help?

Nathan und seine Kinder (Nathan and His Children)



Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*) is a famous piece of world literature first published in 1779. The play's protagonist is the Jewish merchant Nathan who relates the "Parable of the Ring" as a plea for religious tolerance. And this message has lost none of its relevance up to this day. Indeed, the problem of peaceful co-existence between Christians, Jews and Muslims seems more pressing than ever, in Europe and America, as much as in Africa or the Middle East. In an adaptation of an entirely new kind, Mirjam Pressler makes Lessing's material the basis of a novel for young people entitled *Nathan and His Children*. Her declared aim is to make the subject more accessible to young people in our own times. The most appropriate form for that is the novel, because who voluntarily reads plays today? The characters in Lessing's play, says Pressler, are "put rather too much to the service of the ideas that he wanted to convey", and human beings as real people get short shrift in this ideological drama. In a story for young adults, the characters need to be more rounded and lifelike, set against a background of everyday life. Pressler wanted to give them "social reality", but at the same time "keep as close as possible to Lessing's guidelines". Mirjam Pressler, who once spent a year in a kibbutz, makes the action of Lessing's drama credible in every respect. She describes flesh-and-blood people, their fears, their hopes and anxieties. Above all, her verdict on the religious conflict that she presents is unsparing. *Nathan and His Children* is not a tale of the victory of religious tolerance, but a tale of hope that the efforts of Nathan's children and their descendants – such as the readers of this fine book for young people – will help it to win some day.

Nickel Vogelpfeifer (Nickel Birdwhistler)



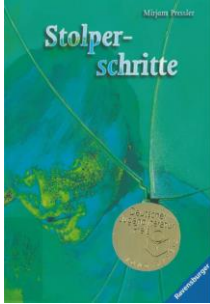
In this poignant children's book Mirjam Pressler writes about family problems – especially, about how nine-year-old Nickel does something he shouldn't because he's unhappy, and how his brother Django helps him. It is the story of how one small boy finds himself. At last his most heartfelt wish is about to come true: Now that Nickel's Mom and Dad have bought their new car, there's just enough money left to buy Nickel a bicycle. All his school friends have one. So does his brother Django. Nickel has already picked out just the bike he wants: bright blue and nice and shiny. But then the washing machine goes and breaks down. Washing machines have priority, explains Nickel's Mom. Nickel can't believe it. Upset at having to take a back seat, he gets madder and madder. Everything starts going wrong at school. Nickel quarrels with his best friend. And then, one day, he simply takes somebody else's bike left in front of the supermarket. He hides it in the woods. Sometimes he practices riding it, in secret. Other times he just lies under the trees and listens to the birds so closely that he learns to imitate them. His teacher is surprised at how well Nickel knows the different birds' songs... – No one really understands what's wrong. Nickel can't tell his mother, can't talk to his father. Finally his 13-year-old brother Django gets Nickel to tell him the whole story. What a relief for Nickel. He knows Django will help. And that's just what Django does.

Novemberkatzen (Novembercats)



"November cats are no good at all", says Ilse's mother, "nobody wants them". And nobody really wants Ilse – neither her father, who left the family years ago, nor her granny, who already takes care of Ilse's sister, nor her brothers, who think that Ilse is just too stupid for words. The other children don't like her either, but nonetheless, there is brightness in Ilse's life. A kitten, for example. Or the knowledge that her mother needs her. And there is Helmut, confined to bed, who is happy when Ilse visits him. Ilse has dreams and wishes and desires just like other children, but less chances to fulfill them. She lives her life between resignation, putting up with her situation, and fighting against it. Despite everything, her surroundings give her support and protection.

Stolperschritte (Stumbling about)



15-year-old Thomas is physically disabled. His father is away most of the time and his mother keeps treating him like a small child and showing him up in front of his friends. Thomas' younger brother Frieder also suffers on account of his mother's domineering behaviour. When the sensitive younger boy kills himself, this threatens to disrupt the relationship between Thomas and his mother. In the end they seem to have found a new way of communicating with each other.

Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen (When Happiness Turns Up, Offer It a Chair)



The favourite pastime of 12-year-old Halinka, who has lived in an orphanage for years, is to spend time alone in her wonderful hiding place up in the attic. There she writes special things in her book of thoughts. In her novel about daydreams, desires and about fears, Mirjam Pressler describes all this in a sensitive and understanding way.

Halinka received an autograph book from her Aunt Lou for friends to write things in. But Halinka has never had a friend, so, instead, she writes down her own thoughts and sayings, such as "When happiness turns up, offer it a chair". But happiness has rarely found its way to the orphaned Halinka. At night, when she can't sleep, and Rosemarie doesn't come into her bed to be comforted, and when even counting doesn't help, Halinka sneaks up into the attic to write by candlelight in her book, or sometimes to join Huckleberry Finn on his raft for a ride down the Mississippi.

This novel takes place in early post-war Germany. Mirjam Pressler conveys not only a child's insecurity, but also her search for happiness and self-realization.

Press commentaries

Mirjam Pressler

“Mirjam Pressler is one of our great writers and it wouldn’t actually be necessary to give her a prize just in order to tell her how good she is.”

Die Zeit

“Suppose there were no Mirjam Pressler... then the world (of books) would be much poorer. One of the best-known children’s and youth book authors in the German language is a language fanatic, a passionate word artist, a record-making book producer. Hundreds of thousands of times in print, recognized nationally and internationally, touring up to 1000 days of the year to author readings, etc. Phenomenal!”

1000 und 1 Buch

“Pressler is a master of quiet stories full of existential experiences that she portrays in a totally unspectacular manner. Her crisp, unembellished language evokes an enormous intensity – in all her books. Her heart throbs for children with difficult stories, for people with fractured biographies.”

Ostdeutscher Rundfunk

“No-one can explain more poetically than Mirjam Pressler why stories need to be told.”

Literarische Welt

“There is no doubt that Mirjam Pressler gives all those a voice whose longings were smothered in the years of persecution and destruction.”

Bulletin Jugend & Literatur

Further press commentaries

(only in German)

Ein Buch für Hanna

„Mirjam Pressler entwickelt in dieser Geschichte eine erzählerische Intensität, die der Gefühlswelt der jugendlichen Hanna entspricht. Ein gelungener Balanceakt zwischen literarischer Distanziertheit und unvermittelter Sentimentalität.“

Süddeutsche Zeitung

„Pressler berichtet ohne Schnörkel vom Schicksal einer ungewöhnlichen Frau. Sie mutet den jungen Lesern die Wahrheit zu.“

Die Welt

„Sie schildert den Schrecken ohne Effekthascherei, und die schönen Momente ohne Kitsch. Ihr Buch ist Literatur und Geschichtsbuch in einem, mit einem ausführlichen Glossar am Ende.“

WAZ

„Mirjam Pressler gelingt in ihrem Buch der Spagat zwischen didaktisch notwendiger Reduktion und geschichtsgetreuer Berichterstattung, zwischen Verharmlosung und Überforderung, zwischen Schuldzuweisung und Pauschalentlastung.“

Augsburger Allgemeine

„Hannas fiktive Geschichte ist eine Hommage an eine Generation, ‚denen diese Verbrecher die ganze Jugend gestohlen haben‘.“

Frankfurter Neue Presse

Golem, stiller Bruder

„Mirjam Presslers Roman ist weit mehr als ein spannendes Geschichtsbuch: Er erzählt, wie Intoleranz und Fanatismus entstehen.“

Berliner Morgenpost

„Die düsteren und dramatischen Ereignisse beschreibt Mirjam Pressler aus zwei ständig wechselnden Perspektiven: Mal berichtet der Erzähler, eng angelehnt an seinen Protagonisten, vom Geschehen im historischen Prag – dann wieder ist es Jankels Geschichte. Mit kompositorischem Geschick arrangiert Mirjam Pressler beide Erzählebenen zu einem bewegenden, mitreißenden Roman.“

Die Zeit

„Was für ein Buch! Mirjam Pressler erfüllt mit diesem meisterlich erzählten Roman alle Wünsche, die man an sinnvolle Lektüre stellen kann: Ihre Sprache ist klar und konzentriert sich an entscheidenden Stellen zu einer eindrucksvollen Schlichtheit. Mirjam Pressler hat ein Buch geschrieben, das beweist, wie notwendig es ist, Sprache mit größter Sorgfalt zu verwenden.“

Buchmarkt

„Wie in all ihren Büchern beherzigt Mirjam Pressler Schmuliks Weisheit: ‚Wie Brot Nahrung für den Körper ist, sind Geschichten Nahrung für Herz und Seele.‘“

Frankfurter Neue Presse

Ich sehne mich so... Die Lebensgeschichte der Anne Frank

„Unbefangen, intelligent, manchmal sogar kess witzig geschrieben, lässt sich dieses Buch ebenso als rührendes Mädchenschicksal lesen, das die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus auch ein wenig entlastet.“

Süddeutsche Zeitung

„Auf sehr einfühlsame Weise ist Mirjam Pressler der Individualität Anne Franks auf der Spur.“

Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung

„Ein wichtiges, informatives, menschliches Buch, Spiegel einer grausamen Zeit.“

Treff-Schülermagazin

„Welches Leben hätte sie gelebt in einer anderen Zeit? Dieser Frage geht Mirjam Presser, kundige Herausgeberin der ungekürzten, kommentierten Tagebücher von Anne Frank, in dieser Lebensgeschichte nach. Anne wäre heute mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit eine bemerkenswerte Journalistin und Schriftstellerin. Denn dieses sensible, spöttische Mädchen war wahrhaft hochbegabt und unerschrocken. Anne Franks Tagebuch ist eben nicht nur ein Dokument jüdischen Lebens in dieser Zeit, sondern auch eines werdenden Frauseins in allen Zeiten.“

Emma

Malka Mai

„Die einfache, schrecklich einfache Geschichte einer Flucht. Man darf sich nicht scheuen zu sagen, wie spannend diese Geschichte sich liest. Und zugleich ist zu sagen: Ganz karg ist dieses Buch, überall ist eine Reduktion auf das Wesentliche am Werk, ganz reich ist dieses Buch, voller Blicke, Gesten und Bewegungen.“

Die Zeit

„Selten findet man diesen Stoff der Kindheit derart ergreifend aufbereitet wie hier. Szene für Szene reißt dieses Buch den Leser in den Strudel seiner verhängnisvollen Geschichte. Es gibt kaum ein Detail in diesem Roman, das nicht wahrhaftig erscheint. Ein Buch, das man so schnell nicht vergisst und das fortan zu den wichtigsten Werken der Autorin gehören wird.“

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

„Mit seltener Intensität erzählt Mirjam Pressler von einer verletzten Kindheit, den Strapazen der Flucht und dem Verhalten der Menschen in einer schwierigen Zeit. Mirjam Pressler hat die Gabe, das Schwere mit Poesie und Spannung auszusprechen, ohne es zu verharmlosen.“

Der Tagesspiegel

„Diese Geschichte eines kleinen Mädchens und seiner Mutter geht an Herz und Nieren. Genau im Einzelnen und exemplarisch zugleich, öffnet dieses Buch Jugendlichen den Zugang zu unglaublichen Zuständen und haut noch einmal in die Kerbe des Vergessens. Großartig.“

Buchmarkt

„Ein bewegendes Jugendbuch, das eindringlich von Angst und Verlorenheit, von Grausamkeit und Egoismus, aber auch von Hilfsbereitschaft und vom Überlebenswillen erzählt.“

Radio Bremen

„Ein eindringliches, bewegendes Buch.“

Deutsche Welle

„Pressler schildert dieses grausame und harte Schicksal packend und mit einer unsentimentalen, kargen Sprache. Dieses Buch braucht keine ausdrückliche Botschaft. Die Geschichte ist Botschaft genug. Die jungen Leser werden sie begreifen.“

Stuttgarter Nachrichten

„Mirjam Pressler ist das Kunststück gelungen, den richtigen Ton zu treffen. Sie verdrängt nicht, sie drängt zum Erinnern. Eine tolle Geschichte zur Geschichte.“

Kurier Wien

Nathan und seine Kinder

„Ein lebensnahes Plädoyer für einen anderen Weg aus der Jahrtausendtragödie der Weltreligionen als den, von dem wir tagtäglich in den Nachrichten hören.“

Die Zeit

„In Presslers Roman werden Ideen verkörpernde Figuren zu lebendigen Wesen. Erfrischend anders!“

Die Welt

„Mirjam Pressler gelingt der Brückenschlag zwischen der Zeit der Aufklärung und der politischen Gegenwart, als Auftrag und Hoffnung für die Zukunft.“

Süddeutsche Zeitung

„Ein hochaktuelles, spannendes Buch über Toleranz und die Koexistenz der drei Religionen, die ja bis heute nicht gelingt.“

Frankfurter Rundschau

Shylocks Tochter

„*Shylocks Tochter* ist nicht nur eine anrührende Liebesgeschichte, sondern auch Ahnung des Kommenden.“

Die Zeit

„*Shylocks Tochter* ist ein sprachlich so ausgefeilter, so vielschichtiger und dichter, ein so gut recherchierter historischer Roman, dass man ihn immer wieder lesen kann!“

Eselsohr

„Klug und mutig stellt sich Mirjam Pressler dem Vergleich mit der Wortmächtigkeit biblischer Texte.“

Süddeutsche Zeitung

Wenn das Glück kommt, muss man ihm einen Stuhl hinstellen

„Einfach zauberhaft, wie Mirjam Pressler mit einer schlichten, kleinen Geschichte große Momente erzeugt.“

Aargauer Zeitung

„Das Wunderbare an diesem poetischen Buch ist Halinkas Optimismus, ihre Fähigkeit, sich mit einer schlimmen Situation nicht abzufinden. Eine Heldin, die Kindern in schwierigen Lebensumständen Vorbild sein kann.“

Brigitte

„Ein in seiner Feinfühligkeit und Innigkeit, in seinem Humor, gerade in seiner fehlenden Moral zutiefst menschliches Buch für junge Menschen, die ja alle immer ein wenig allein sind.“

Aargauer Tagblatt