



**ANDREAS STEINHÖFEL**

Nomination for the 2026  
Hans Christian Andersen Award

# Andreas Steinhöfel

**"Never would I deny adults  
that they are capable of development  
or that they are concerned about the world.  
But the beauty of children is  
that their minds are much more agile in many ways.  
They're much more receptive to things that we adults are no  
longer aware of."**

**Nomination for the  
Hans Christian Andersen Award  
by Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur e.V.,  
German Section  
Category: Author**

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## Reasons for nomination

In his first stories Andreas Steinhöfel already surprised with puns, an unsentimental and at the same time empathetic narrative and radically gets rid of clichés common in children´s and young adult books. He still is a child at heart and knows naturally how his heroes look at the world and how they try to understand it.

Steinhöfel´s child heroes are mostly outsiders: the unparented, the unloved. Nevertheless, they bravely set out again and again, laughing away their fear, unembarrassed and unapologetic. With the "lowly-gifted" Rico and the highly-gifted Oskar the author bestows stories out of a sensitively illuminated social milieu on his readers– stories that have never existed before.

He wants to tell stories, not to educate, so you will never find Andreas Steinhöfel proving a point. He has no inclination to teach. "People, talk to each other!" is one of his most important messages. He wants us to pay attention to those, who set off again and again and who never forget to show solidarity with their neighbors.

Statement of the jury for the Special Prize of the German Children´s Literature Award 2013



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## Presentation of candidate

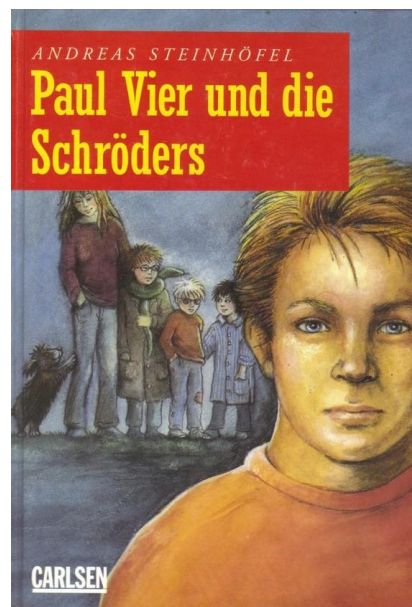
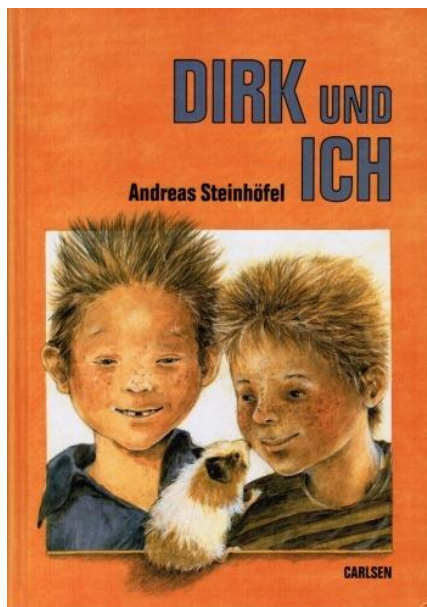
### “People, talk to each other!”

Tribute to the author Andreas Steinhöfel on the occasion of the awarding of the Special Prize of the German Children’s Literature Award 2013

by Eva Maria Kohl

Andreas Steinhöfel wrote himself into children’s literature over 20 years ago with the story *Dirk and I* and the novel *Paul Four and the Schröders* because he was annoyed by stupid “topic books”. Suddenly, a completely new kind of voice appeared in the world of children’s books – a voice both absurdly funny and surprisingly unsentimental. From the beginning, he broke with the usual narrative clichés and, instead, wrote what he really wanted to write.

If he was going to write, Steinhöfel decided, he might as well be independent and truthful. He began by investigating the breaks and contradictions in his own life, searching for what was meaningful and was worth telling. Through writing, he sought to liberate himself from the ghosts of his childhood, to heal himself with the written word. At first, he himself doubted whether he would ever succeed.

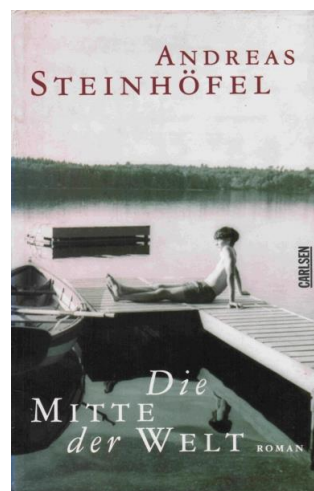


But the stories and the rather weird characters that he met in his search and began to develop, stride through the world with amazing confidence, laughing out loud, miraculously inappropriate. You are amazed by them and you cannot forget them: the overweight boy who almost drowns; the annoyed children in the back seat of the

family car; the frogmouth girl who wants to be kissed; the two boys who disappear into the mountain; the brother's keeper; the map children who wander through the big city of Berlin in search of some peaceful place they must reach in order to be happy like the poor heroes in fairy tales. Some characters we will encounter several times and can anticipate their fate. They appear in early stories and reappear in later novels and young adult books. Other characters harbor a secret that is never revealed and is troubling.

Steinhöfel's child heroes are mostly outsiders: the unparented, the unloved, the children of divorce, the emotionally homeless, the fatherless, the battered. They are often handicapped in some way. (They are too heavy, too slow, too rebellious, too clever.) Nevertheless, they bravely set out again and again, laughing away their fear, unembarrassed and unapologetic. The author never betrays them, sharing their hope that everything will turn out fine.

Steinhöfel has retained the perspective of the child. This is something rare and, in it, he resembles authors like Erich Kästner or Hans Christian Andersen, who remained at eye level with children all their lives. It is fitting that Steinhöfel was honored with the Erich Kästner Award for Literature in 2009. Many other awards followed.

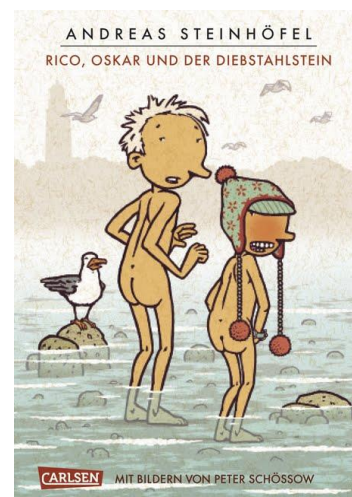


He takes readers by the hand and leads them into adventures that they read breathlessly and do not want to put down even when the last pages of the book have been turned. His plots are full of paradoxes that intrigue readers and unexpectedly make them rethink their world. Perhaps this explains the success of his novel *The Center of the World*, which was nominated for the German Children's Literature Award in 1999. Although written for young adults, this novel even made it onto bestseller lists for adults. With its fantasy subject, its intertextual references and its allegorical fields of meaning, the novel has become a cult book for many readers.

How remarkable and wonderful that the author never runs the risk of proving a point. He has no inclination to teach – yet he is, in fact, a consistently good educator. He does not flaunt his literacy and intelligence, he rather stuffs it into his hero's jacket pocket without him noticing it, or he lets his characters stumble over it, like Rico, who explains to his friends strange foreign words the adults use:

“EGOTISM: If you only think of yourself. There is also the opposite of that, then you only think of others, and whoever does so becomes a saint. But saints are mostly only exploited and finally killed off. You probably have to find something in between, and above all the right balance.” (*Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows*, pge. 100)

Moving through the Berlin “hood” with such opposite heroes as “lowly-gifted” Rico and over-eager Oskar is a special kind of reading pleasure. With *Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows* the author presents his readers with stories in a sensitively illuminated social milieu – stories that have never existed before. These books are a sensation in the German book market, which has not exactly been spoiled with children's books that make you laugh.



“People, talk to each other!” is one of the most important messages in Andreas Steinhöfel's books. I am very pleased not only to be able to talk to Andres Steinhöfel today, but also to congratulate him most warmly on receiving this special award for an author's entire oeuvre. I very much hope that he is not irritated by this word “oeuvre” (and does not take it too literally), but continues to write confidently and defiantly. May he give us many more books as wonderful as those for which we sincerely thank him here today.

This text is based on the jury's explanation and the laudatory speech of the German Children's Literature Award 2013, Special Prize for the complete oeuvre of Andreas Steinhöfel.

Translated by Myriam Halberstam.

## **"I like outsiders"**

### **Children´s interview with the author of "Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows"**

Andreas Steinhöfel is one of the most famous authors of children´s books in Germany. He told the "Dein SPIEGEL" children´s reporters how he threw spaghetti as a child and why he doesn´t write on paper.

Editorial assistance: Antonia Bauer - February 16, 2020

**Dein SPIEGEL:** One of our favorite books is "Dirk and I", which deals with all the crazy things you and your brother did as children. Did one of these stories really happen?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** The wildest story of all happened almost exactly like I wrote it: "The Spaghetti Monster". On my birthday we ate spaghetti with our hands, hid with the noodles in the dark, threw them around and wreaked so much havoc that the bed collapsed. In the story, the mother forgives the boys at the end. Unfortunately, in real life it wasn´t like that, our mother was really upset.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** What were you like as a child?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** Today you would call me a nerd: thick glasses, big belly. I was either in the forest with the dog or I read.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** How did you feel when you were reading?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** I could immerse myself in other worlds. My parents had little money, so we only had a few books. In our village there was a tiny library with only one shelf with children's books, 15 of them maybe. I read them over and over again. It wasn't always funny at home. My father had a violent temper and hit us children. But he didn't hit me when I was reading a book. He wasn't educated himself, but he had respect for education. So, for me reading was also some form of protection.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** At school you get a funny look when you are different. Do you know what that´s like?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** Oh yes. Thickness and glasses were never trendy - and then I was gay. I had a swimming instructor who was strict and unfair. At some point I refused to participate. As punishment, he sent me to the girls' class. He thought that was the ultimate humiliation. However, I was delighted and felt at home among the girls. And the absurd thing was: Suddenly the boys wanted to be friends with me because I had such good contact with the girls. I was always supposed to set them up and was constantly asked something like: "You know Petra, can't you ask her if she wants to go on a date with me?"



**Dein SPIEGEL:** What can you do when you have the feeling that you don't belong?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** Others will always find something to criticize: they think your hairstyle is stupid or they don't like that you are good in class. I am not sure if you always have to fit in. I like outsiders. You get stronger when you have to go through something. But that is a nice thing to say and only applies to the end. When you are in the middle of something, it's bad advice. Maybe this will help: Most people think they don't belong. Everyone has a part in them that differs from the others.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** In your books there are often outsiders. Do you yourself have a friend who is as different from you as Rico is from Oskar?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** I once had a partner who was a Rico type. He always did an awful lot of things at the same time, stirred with one hand in the saucepan, wrote an SMS with the other, and tapped his foot in time to the music. He could do a lot of things at once, but never concentrate on one thing. He was a soulful person, loved the whole world. Without him I wouldn't have been able to write Rico like that. Unfortunately my friend has already died. But he read the first volume with the greatest effort. Reading and concentrating was so exhausting for him that he was literally sweating after one page.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** What do you think, which of your books is your best?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** The smallest, thinnest of all: *An Elk Dropped In*. It is a Christmas story. There is a lot of me in the boy who tells the story. I wrote this book after the divorce of my parents. When I was a child, I always hoped they would get a divorce. There was always so much trouble. They did it finally when I was an adult and it was terrible. I cried for a long time and then wrote that book. I felt better after that.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** What's the process when you write something?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** I once tried writing on paper. I had imagined it so romantic, candle lit, a glass of wine. After half an hour I was drunk and had a cramp in my hand. So I write on a computer. The advantage is, you can delete or change something quickly if it's not good or the feeling the text is supposed to convey is not right.

**Dein SPIEGEL:** What do you do when you no longer know how the story evolves?

**Andreas Steinhöfel:** I read or watch television. I really like to watch old children's series. But that doesn't always help. Honestly, it is a really stupid feeling to be stuck. I put two novels aside, one for young adults and one for adults, because I just couldn't go on. I already was on page 300 or over with both! At some point I definitely want to finish them.

**Dein SPIEGEL - The news magazine for children**

## Biography

Andreas Steinhöfel was born in 1962 in Battenberg. He is the author of many awarded books for children and young adults. His bestseller *Die Mitte der Welt* (*The Center of the World*) was shortlisted for the German Children's Literature Award in 1999 and has been translated into many languages. For *Rico, Oskar und die Tieferschatten* (*Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows*) he received among other awards the German Children's Literature Award and the Catholic Children's Award. In 2013, Andreas Steinhöfel was awarded with the German Children's Literature Award, special award for the complete oeuvre.

He is the first author of children's and young adult literature to be a part of the German Academy of Language and Poetry. He currently is one of the most popular German children's book authors, but also works as screenwriter, critic and as translator of English literature.

**"I never wanted to write, actually. I never wrote.  
That is my advantage:  
It has never been my dream to become a writer.  
Therefore I am less susceptible to coercion.  
I was always able to say: I don't have to do all that!  
I want it this way, otherwise I won't do it at all!"**

Andreas Steinhöfel

# Awards

(Selection)



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Andreas Steinhöfel with "Momo",  
statuette of the German Children's Literature Award

- 2023 Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany / Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande
- 2019 Hamburger Tüddelband (Harbour Front Festival)
- 2017 James Krüss Award for International Children's and Young Adult Literature
- 2016 Admittance to the German Academy of Language and Poetry
- 2013 Special Prize of the German Children's Literature Award
- 2013 Alice Salomon Poetics Award
- 2009 Erich Kästner Award for Literature

## ***Völlig meschugge?! (Completely meshuga?!)***

- 2023 Catholic Children's and Juvenile Literature Award

## ***Wenn mein Mond deine Sonne wäre (If My Moon Was Your Sun)***

- 2017 Catholic Children's and Juvenile Literature Award (Nomination/Recommended)

2016 The Top 7 in February (Deutschlandfunk)

***Anders (Different)***

2015 Most Beautiful German Books (Children´s/Young Adult book)

The Silver Feather (German Female Doctors Association)

2014 Children´s and Juvenile Booklist

***Rico & Oskar und das MisTverständnis (Rico & Oskar and the misTunderstanding)***

2020 LUCHS of the Year (DIE ZEIT/Radio Bremen)

***Rico & Oskar – Fische aus Silber (Rico & Oskar: Fishes made of Silver)***

2017 Book Of The Month May (German Academy For Children´s and Juvenile Literature)

***Rico, Oskar und der Diebstahlstein (Rico, Oskar and the Stealing Stone)***

2011 Top 7 in December (Deutschlandfunk/Focus)

***Rico, Oskar und das Herzgebreche (Rico, Oskar and the Heartbreaking)***

2009 Top 7 in June (Deutschlandfunk/Focus)

***Rico, Oskar und die Tieferschatten (Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows)***

2009 IBBY Honour List

Catholic Children´s and Young Adult Literature Award

German Children´s Literature Award (Category Children´s book)

2008 The Top 7 in February and June (Deutschlandfunk/Focus)

LUCHS of the Month (March, DIE ZEIT/Radio Bremen)

Owl of the Month (April, Bulletin Jugend und Literatur)

CORINE 2008 (Young Adult Book Award of the Waldemar Bonsels Stiftung)

Heidelberger Leander 2008

***Der mechanische Prinz (The Mechanical Prince)***

2003 The Children´s and Young Adult Booklist (Spring, SR/Radio Bremen)

The Top 10 of Bremen (chosen by 25 bookclubs in Bremen´s schools)

Bronze LUFTI (Lufti Pegasus, Mecklenburg)

***Defender***

2002 Nomination for German Children´s Literature Award (Category: Young Adult Book)

2001 Leselotse

***David Tage – Mona Nächte (David Days – Mona Nights. With Anja Tuckermann)***

2000 Hans-im-Glück-Award of the City Limburg

***Die Mitte der Welt (Center of my World - UK / The Center of the World - US)***

2000 IBBY Honour List

1999 Nomination for German Children´s Literature Award (Category: Young Adult Book)

Buxtehuder Bulle

Jury of young readers (Literaturhaus Wien)

1998 The Top 7 in March (Deutschlandfunk/Focus)

Book of the month May (Deutsche Akademie f. Kinder- und Jugendliteratur)

Leselotse

“The Children´s and Young Adult Booklist” (SR/WDR/Radio Bremen)

LUCHS of the month (April, *DIE ZEIT*/Radio Bremen)

***"The Center of the World, Dirk and I, Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows – novels by Andreas Steinhöfel, which are characterized by astonishing lightness, originality as well as intensity – since many years rank highly in German children´s and young adult literature. His work sets standards, as it demonstrates how an entire literature can be further developed through intensive work with the material language and in the awareness of narrative traditions."***

Statement of the jury,  
James Krüss Award for International Children´s and Young Adult Literature 2017

# Bibliography

Marked in the list: five of Steinhöfel's most important titles, that are submitted to the jury, are in bold print.

- 1991**     ***Dirk und ich (Dirk and I).*** Carlsen
- 1992     *Paul Vier und die Schröders.* Carlsen
- 1993     *Glatte Fläche*, since 2010 as *Trügerische Stille.* Carlsen
- 1994     *Beschützer der Diebe.* Carlsen
- 1994     *Glitzerkatze und Stinkmaus.* Carlsen
- 1995     *1:0 für Sven und Renan* (out of print). Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag
- 1995     *Es ist ein Elch entsprungen. (An Elk Dropped In)* Carlsen
- 1996     *Honigkuckuckskinder.* Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2018 Carlsen
- 1996     *O Patria Mia!* Carlsen
- 1997     *Herr Purps, die Klassenmaus* (out of print). Ars Edition
- 1998**     ***Die Mitte der Welt (Center of my World – UK / The Center of the World – US).*** Carlsen
- 1999**     ***David Tage – Mona Nächte (David Days – Mona Nights. With Anja Tuckermann).*** Carlsen
- 2000     *Wo bist du nur?* Carlsen
- 2001     *Defender. Geschichten aus der Mitte der Welt.* Carlsen
- 2003     *Der mechanische Prinz.* Carlsen
- 2006     *Froschmaul. Geschichten.* Carlsen
- 2008**     ***Rico, Oskar und die Tieferschatten (The Pasta Detectives/Rico, Oskar and the Deeper Shadows).*** Carlsen
- 2009     *Rico, Oskar und das Herzgebrehche.* Carlsen
- 2011     *Rico, Oskar und der Diebstahlstein.* Carlsen
- 2013     *Glücksstadt.* Aladin
- 2015     *Wenn mein Mond deine Sonne wäre (If My Moon Was Your Sun).* Carlsen

- 2014 *Anders (Different)*. Königskinder. 2017 Carlsen
- 2017 *Rico & Oskar. Die Regenhütte*. (Comic) Carlsen
- 2017 *Rico & Oskar. Fische aus Silber*. (Comic) Carlsen
- 2017 *Rico, Oskar und das Vomhimmelhoch*. Carlsen
- 2018 *Rico & Oskar. Die perfekte Arschbombe*. (Comic) Carlsen
- 2019 *Rico & Oskar. Die Sache mit Öhrchen*. (Comic) Carlsen
- 2019 *Das große goldene Pixi-Buch*. With Cornelia Funke, Kirsten Boie, Paul Maar etc. Carlsen
- 2020 *Rico, Oskar und das Mistverständnis*. Carlsen
- 2022 *Völlig meschugge?! (Comic)* Carlsen**
- 2023 *Rico und die Tuchlaterne* (easy reading) Carlsen
- 2024 *Rico und die Klautörtchen* (easy reading) Carlsen
- 2025 *Herbsthundewetter* (picture book with illustrator Dirk Steinhöfel) Carlsen

**“I feel safe in libraries. The world’s knowledge can be found there.  
This turns a library into a stronghold against the irrational.  
At the same time, all the stories in the world are gathered there  
and they lend our imagination mighty wings.”**

Andreas Steinhöfel

# Reference Material

Petra Josting: *Andreas Steinhöfel. Bielefelder Poet in Residence 2014*. München: kopaed 2015.

Jana Mikota / Viola Oehme: *Andreas Steinhöfel – "Mein Credo: Kein Kind stirbt an einem Nebensatz"*. Siegen: UniPrint 2014.

Also available online at: [https://dspace.ub.uni-siegen.de/bitstream/ubsi/951/1/werkstattgespraeche\\_2014\\_1.pdf](https://dspace.ub.uni-siegen.de/bitstream/ubsi/951/1/werkstattgespraeche_2014_1.pdf)

## Websites

Blog of the author

<https://newsfromvisible.blogspot.com/>

Homepage of the publisher

<https://www.carlsen.de/urheber/andreas-steinhoefel/18851>

**"It is my belief, a long sentence could never harm children.  
A child should always try to stretch, not cower.  
Children might have to use their brains by reading my books.  
I don't write functional literature for children,  
who read a book only now and then.  
That sounds cruel, but it's true, I write for reading children."**

Andreas Steinhöfel



# List of translations

Selection, may include expired licences

## *Anders (Different)*

- Netherlands
- South Korea
- Spain (Catalan)
- Turkey
- Arabian world rights

## *Beschützer der Diebe (Protector of Thiefs)*

Italy  
Spain

## *Die Mitte der Welt (The Center of the World)*

- Denmark
- France
- Italy
- Japan
- Macedonia
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Russia
- Slovenia
- Türkiye
- United Kingdom
- Ukraine
- USA

## *Dirk und ich (Dirk and I)*

Italy  
Slovenia  
Türkiye  
Vietnam

## *Der mechanische Prinz (The Mechanical Prince)*

- France
- Italy
- South Korea
- Taiwan

## *Es ist ein Elch entsprungen ()*

- Denmark
- France
- Hungary
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Russia
- Sweden
- Japan
- USA (out of print)

## *Paul Vier und die Schröders (Paul Four and the Schröders)*

- Türkiye

*Rico & Oskar series*

- Albania
- Belgium (dutch)
- Brazil
- China
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- France
- Greece
- Hungary
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Macedonia
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Russia
- Romania
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Spain (Catalan)
- Sweden
- Syria
- Taiwan
- Türkiye
- Vietnam
- Arabian and English world rights

*Wenn mein Mond deine Sonne wäre (If my moon was your sun)*

- Argentina
- Canada
- Latvia
- Netherlands
- South Korea
- Türkiye

## Contact addresses

Mr.  
Andreas Steinhöfel  
Am Roten Weg 1  
D-35216 Biedenkopf  
Germany  
a.steinhoefel@onlinehome.de



German Section of IBBY  
Prof. Dr. Jan Standke, 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

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www.carlsen.de

## Appendix

- Summary of selected works
- Press Commentaries
- Review to "Give us books, give us wings – Jella Lepman's children's book bridge." A film by Andreas Steinhöfel

**"With the Rico-books and especially the character  
I want to state my position in the discussion about educational alienation.  
People tend to think only in black and white,  
hence the assumption that every uneducated household,  
making a living from unemployment benefit,  
brings up problematic children.  
This assumption really annoys me. I want to change that image."**

Andreas Steinhöfel

# Summary of some selected works

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

## ***Der mechanische Prinz (The Mechanical Prince)***



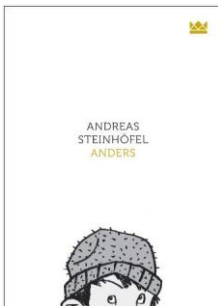
A young unhappy boy who feels unloved by his parents is given a magical golden subway ticket. This ticket enables him to step onto a magical underground station that takes him to different worlds symbolic of his states of mind and past experiences. He is transported to Neverland, a desert with a lake made up of his salty tears, to another place where he meets his quarrelling parents, and to a forest where he meets himself. Max, as he is called, has to overcome obstacles in each of these worlds and is finally led to the mechanical prince who sets him further difficult tasks. He must accomplish all of them to be given a new chance of living in the real world. He must also find his heart in one of the worlds and merge with it. His entire future and happiness will depend on it.

## ***Die Mitte der Welt (The Center of the World)***



17-year-old Phil has felt like an outsider as long as he can remember. All Phil has ever known about his father is that he was Number Three on his mother's long list – third in a series of affairs that have set Phil's family even further apart from the critical townspeople across the river. As for his own sexuality, Phil doesn't care what the neighbors will think. He is just waiting for the right guy to come along. But Phil can't remain a bystander forever. Not when he is surrounded by his mother, Glass, who lives by her own rules and urges Phil to be equally strong; his twin sister, Dianne, who is abrupt and willful, with secrets to share; his uncle Gable, a restless mariner, defined by his scars; his best friend, Kat, who is generous but possessive. And finally, there is distant Nicholas, with whom Phil falls in love, until he faces the ultimate betrayal and must finally find his worth ... and his place in the world.

## ***Anders (Different)***



After the accident – time and the world were disconnected. For 263 days the boy called "Winter" had been in a coma, which, ironically, was the exact number of days that his own mother was pregnant with him 11 years prior. People around him then experience a miracle: On a gorgeous summer day Felix Winter returned to life, but he now refers to himself as Anders? He has no memory of the time before the accident or the accident itself ... however there is someone who will do anything and everything to ensure that it stays that way.

## ***Rico, Oskar und die Tieferschatten, (Rico, Oskar and the Pasta Detectives)***



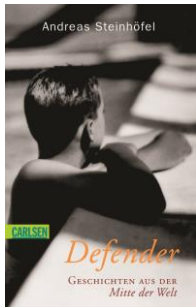
Rico lives with his mother in Berlin and describes himself as "lowly-gifted". When he meets highly-gifted Oskar the two unlikely friends haven't got any clue that they will soon play major parts in a kidnapping case. During the search for the victim, Rico turns out to be quite a shrewd investigator.

### ***Paul Vier und die Schröders (Paul Four and the Schröders)***



When the unconventional Schröder family moves into the house opposite Paul Four all hell breaks loose in Elm Street!  
A story about friendship and the courage to stand up for one's beliefs.

### ***Defender***



Johannes, the defender, can't expect anything from his mother, but at least he has Mimi Kaminski – kiosk owner, good friend, unmarried and very diabetic. And there is someone else, who believes in the defender: Hosianna, the absent-minded, well-read philanthropist, who gives Johannes the opportunity to re-sort books and, above all, his own life. The death of the father and husband, the call from a former lover, the liberation of the sister from psychiatry, the staging of the first love – *Defender* is a book about the moments of setting the course in one's life.

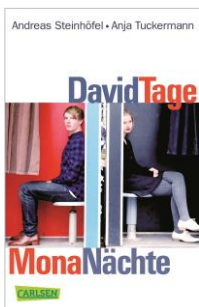
### ***Wenn mein Mond deine Sonne wäre (If My Moon Was Your Sun)***



Max, a 9-year-old boy, sneaks his grandfather, who has dementia, and another older woman, Miss Schneider, out of their nursing home. Gently, he leads them to a country meadow where his grandfather once proposed to his grandmother. He is fully aware that they will be caught but he still is determined that his grandfather should experience the peaceful green country setting anyway. His mission is successful. His grandfather slips into brief lucidity and offers Max gentle reassurance of his continued love.

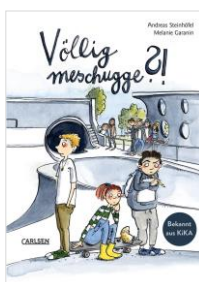
A CD accompanies this title, the reading interluded by classical music, Sergei Prokofiev's "A Summer Day" and Georges Bizet's "Petite Suite", played by the SWR-Sinfonieorchester.

### ***David Tage – Mona Nächte (David Days – Mona Nights)***



Mona wants to get to know David, but she doesn't want to meet him, she wants to write him letters. And taciturn, cool David, who cannot express himself should write back. Only hesitantly he gets involved with her idea, and step by step a different David appears in the letters – one who changes his baby brother's diapers, who has a problem with being younger than Mona; and who finally wants to know everything about her. But suddenly it's Mona, who withholds something.

### ***Völlig meschugge?! (Completely meshuga?!)***



Being a teenager is never easy. Not for environmentalist Charly, not for Syrian refugee boy Hamid, and not for Benny, whose grandfather is dying. As a parting gift, he gives his grandson a Star of David, and it's only when Benny wears it in public that everyone realizes he's Jewish. And Hamid is a Muslim! Suddenly, the traditional resentments of the adult world burst out of the youngsters – but the three fight for their friendship.

## Press commentaries

**"This is what we should expect from literature."**

### **Andreas Steinhöfel**

"Yes, this man writes children's books. And what a kind of books. [...] As directly as Steinhöfel deals with his audience he also writes – true to life. And life is neither always politically correct nor pedagogically valuable."

**Mareike Nieberding, *DER SPIEGEL***

"The spectrum of Steinhöfel's books is enormous and very complex: from a caricature of a petty bourgeois scene to an exciting thriller, from a bizarre Christmas fairy tale to an amusing and funny story of brothers. [...] What connects his books is the look behind facades. The author isn't interested in normality, it's the hidden he wants to uncover."

**Cornelia Geißler, *Berliner Zeitung***

"Andreas Steinhöfel is one of the best children's and young adult book authors in Germany. He wants to entertain. Education is not his business."

**Susanne Gaschke, *DIE ZEIT***

"With the different pair of friends Rico and Oskar, Andreas Steinhöfel has created two of the most well-known children's book heroes for years. The two belong to the diverse world of his characters, who are often outsiders or disadvantaged. Full of empathy and a sense of suspense, Andreas Steinhöfel tells the stories of these everyday heroes, with which he encourages young people to believe in themselves. In doing so, he makes the importance of values such as tolerance and cosmopolitanism vividly clear to his young - as well as to his many adult - readers. Andreas Steinhöfel was the first children's book author to be accepted into the German Academy for Language and Literature. He also regularly volunteers and gives readings in schools, old people's homes and nursing homes. Because showing solidarity is not just a character trait of his book heroes."

***Der Bundespräsident, Cross of Merit presentation***

### ***Anders / Different***

"Andreas Steinhöfel's novel is a plea to do it different. Like 'Different', who searches and struggles and shoves – until he decides to be Felix again."

**Katrin Hörnlein, *DIE ZEIT***

"Is this a children's book? For young adults or adults maybe? These are questions you ask yourself while reading it. Probably you can always read it, no matter how old you are. Read it with excitement, admiration for the author and attachment to the protagonists. That is what we should expect from literature. But perhaps adults can learn the most from it. Like how to give children freedom and still save them, if needed."

**Tilman Spreckelsen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung***

### ***Die Mitte der Welt / The Center of the World***

"Steinhöfel's wonderfully light, delicate and poetic descriptions draw the reader ever deeper into the life in and around [villa] Visible. He describes growing up as an exciting adventure. Through the eyes of his protagonist, he lets us take part in the search for happiness, the longing for security and the hunger for love."

***Süddeutsche Zeitung***

"With *The Center of the World* author Andreas Steinhöfel has done a great job. It is a magical, refreshingly relaxed initiation novel that will delight young and adult readers alike. Relaxed because Steinhöfel does not problemize adolescent homosexuality, instead he describes it matter-of-factly – which he is doing extremely well thanks to his sensitive, vivid language."

***Frankfurter Rundschau***

"This book has changed the scene of young adult literature. This book will be used to measure the quality of literature for young readers in the future and therefore it is a challenge for the entire industry."

***Buchmarkt***

### ***Dirk und ich / Dirk and I***

"*Dirk and I* catapults the reader into the life of the seven and six year old brothers Andreas and Dirk. Nothing is safe from their full of zest for action and together with their friends Richard, Uli, Susanne and Christiane, they effortlessly succeed in letting every harmless move end in lively chaos in no time. No, this turbulent reading fun is definitely not a well-meant, pedagogically correct children's book. But the author makes his little readers laugh and read – what more do we want!"



***Es ist ein Elch entsprungen / An Elk Dropped In***

When Santerklaus, as Santa Claus is called in Andreas Steinhöfel's books, comes to Bertil's family to fetch his ill-fated moose, he suddenly becomes angry: "Buying, buying," he growls. "You humans only think about money and buying!" And then he speaks somewhat unctuously of "wishes from the deepest heart of mankind." Bertil knows exactly what he means: the difference between a fully automatic juicer for his mother and the remote possibility that his father will return to the family. At the end of *Es ist ein Elch entsprungen*, definitely the second wittiest Christmas book for children (after *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* by Barbara Robinson), not only is the juicer handed over, but the fulfillment of the heartfelt wish seems a little likelier.

***Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung***

***Rico & Oskar***

"Steinhöfel is a master of realistic, empathic storytelling: what becomes banal or even kitsch for many, he balances lightly on a fine line between the two, and that line is at the top."

***Eva-Maria Magel, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung***

"How Steinhöfel combines all of this – people, milieu, atmosphere, tragedy, drama, jokes, slapstick and the art of vivid storytelling – every reader has to discover for themselves."

***Siggi Seuss, Süddeutsche Zeitung***

***Völlig meschugge?!/Completely meshuga?!***

"When Benny's grandfather dies, Benny uses his necklace with the Star of David as a symbol of his memory and connection. He has no idea that he is thereby invoking prejudices that are reflected in increasingly racist attitudes (and actions) within his school. As if that were not enough, his friend Hamid also sees Benny's explicit religious affiliation as a demarcation and, in his insecurity, is increasingly influenced by his older brother. Who, in turn, finds his self-assurance in the community of Syrian refugees through culturally charged, radical-conservative interpretations of Islam.

Both Benny and Hamid are given an adult figure who accompanies religious views and insights: For Hamid, it is an imam who represents the peaceful and integrative moment of religion; for Benny, it is an old woman he meets at the cemetery and who points out the indispensability of German culture of remembrance.

The self-confident Charly literally stands between the two friends. Despite all influences, she believes in the deep friendship that has endured despite all symbolism and stereotypes, and hopes for a reconciliation. Her ability to act draws attention to the fact that social mechanisms are set in motion that the children and young people do not (yet) understand, but which are used in the sense of cultural, pseudo-moral imitation. One's own identity can only be understood as creating identity in contrast to the other or the foreign. The fact that only knowledge of one another leads to meaningful togetherness is inscribed in the graphic novel as a cognitive process. "

**Statement of the jury of the Catholic Children´s and Juvenile Literature Award 2023**

"Now, however, there is a Steinhöfel comic that at first glance looks like a second exploitation, but is much more. *Völlig meschugge?!* uses the plot of the six-part Kika tv-series, but offers an in-depth look at the unstable friendship between Charly, Hamid and Benny, three twelve-year-olds from an unnamed small town who first become estranged and then reunite in the course of the action. That doesn't sound unusual for this age, but Steinhöfel, like any accomplished young-adult author, tends to tackle larger themes in his stories – adult ones, you might say. Children like to read beyond their age, wanting to be challenged by questions they still approach instinctively rather than from life experience. In the case of *Völlig meschugge?!* it is the phenomenon of anti-Semitism."

**Andreas Platthaus, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung***

"Anti-Semitism of Islamic migrants, inner-migrant conflicts between the secular and the pious, xenophobia of "bio-German" youth – these are difficult topics, all the more so in a comic for young readers. In *Völlig meschugge?!* Andreas Steinhöfel succeeds in telling about them not only without mindcuffs, but in an exciting and even funny way."

**Verena Hoenig, *Odenwälder Echo***

"Expressive, atmospheric, impressive."

**Maria Riss, *Zentrum Lesen FHNW***

Alexander Korb

### **Charming, but merciless**

With his documentary film "Give us books, give us wings" about Jella Lepman, Andreas Steinhöfel pays tribute to her remarkable work that fostered international understanding and sheds light on a forgotten piece of contemporary history

It is surprising that the well-known children's book author Andreas Steinhöfel - Rico and Oscar - decided to make a documentary film about Jella Lepman (1891-1970), as he has not previously distinguished himself with historical topics or documentaries. But it is a stroke of luck, as Steinhöfel's emotional and humorous view and his calm manner create a worthy cinematic monument to the journalist, author and founder of the International Youth Library (IJB) in Munich.

Finally, one might say, as it was long overdue to rescue Lepman from the darkness of oblivion. Smaller streets in Stuttgart and Munich commemorate her. And of course, the IJB honors the memory of its founding director: with a commemorative plaque, the lecture hall named after her (in which the film premiered on May 23, 2023) and a beautifully made new edition of her autobiography, which is so exciting to read.

[...]

Andreas Steinhöfel is fascinated by the strength with which Lepman overcame her inner resistance to returning to Germany, as well as the external resistance: as a woman, she had to assert herself against American military and West German bureaucrats. The film vividly describes the contradictions that must have plagued Jella Lepman: her skepticism towards the adult Germans who had driven Jews like her out of the country and murdered them and acted as if nothing had happened after 1945; and her love for children as the innocent ambassadors of international understanding. Lepman's project, her fight for a peaceful future for young people, helped her to endure this contradiction. "The children will show the adults the way," was her almost naive credo, in which she was unswerving. It seems ironic that it was precisely the support of the US military that made Lepman's peace project possible.

Fortunately, the film does not hide the ambivalences of its heroine: as much as she was committed to the well-being of children and their opportunities, she could not really do much with them as concrete people and remained rigid in her contacts with them. Her dealings with "the Germans" were also ambivalent and oscillated between pragmatism and moral rigor. Lepman kept her distance and signed her letters in a decidedly American way with "Ms. Lepman". Her American uniform helped her with this. She asked herself whether returning was even possible, whether her real home was not her childhood and had little to do with the present. In the film, some questions, particularly those relating to the last phase of Lepman's life, are only touched upon, such as why she did not feel at home in Munich and Germany and moved to Zurich.

Steinhöfel succeeds in creating a moving portrait of an energetic and non-conformist German woman who was badly treated by Germany and National Socialism, but who nevertheless achieved immeasurable things in her field, the cultural promotion of children. The film succeeds in traveling through 70 years of German contemporary history in just 50 minutes, capturing Jella Lepman biographically and getting viewers interested in her. Steinhöfel produced the film on his own and with his own production company. Now we can only hope that public and private broadcasters will discover Jella Lepman and include the film in their programs.

[excerpt, original article was published in the quarterly journal of the German IBBY section, *Julit* 3/23]