

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD

candidate for the 2026 Author's Award

RENOMINATION BY

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**EDWARD
VAN DE VENDEL**

THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARDS 2026

Dossier on author

Edward van de Vendel



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Candidate for the **2026 Author's Award**

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NOTES:

This dossier has been compiled for the jury of the Hans Christian Andersen Awards 2026.

The author was nominated earlier, in 2024. This file has been updated for the 2026 nomination. All new and other notable sections are therefore underlined.

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

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



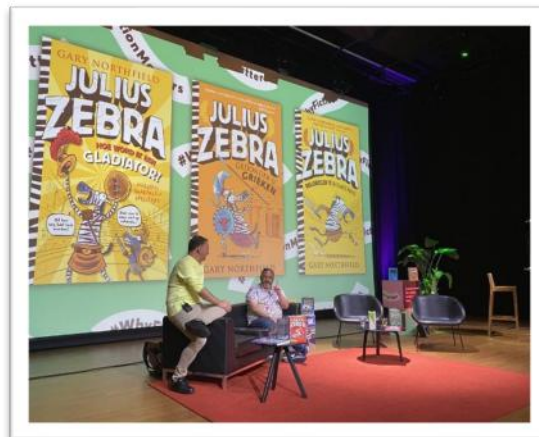
Already in high school, Van de Vendel wrote songs and participated in the school cabaret. During his studies he became acquainted with modern youth poetry. He published his first poems in 'De Blauw Geruite Kiel', the youth supplement of the magazine Vrij Nederland. In 1996, his first collection of poems,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

Van de Vendel writes novels for children and young adults, poetry, picture books, non-fiction and song lyrics, which are published at Querido's publishing house (The Netherlands), Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds (The Netherlands) and De Eenhoorn (Belgium). His books were awarded with many prizes, including the Theo Thijssenprijs (complete works), Gouden Griffel (best books of the year for children), the Gouden Poëziemedaillon (best collection of children's poetry published in Flanders and the Netherlands), De Boon voor kinder- en jeugdliteratuur (Flemish award for best books for children and youth in Dutch), the JugendsachbuchPreis, the Premio Andersen, Gouden Zoen/Gouden Lijst (Golden Kiss, best book for teenagers, 4 x), Zilveren Griffel (Silver Slate Pencil, best books of the year for children, 16 x), Woutertje Pieterse Prijs (critic's choice, 2 x), Golden Poetry Medal (Belgium, best poetry collection 2x), the Prix Sorcières (France, best picture book), the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis, White Ravens from the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (6 x) and the Jenny Smelik-IBBY Prize for books that advocate cultural diversity.

He was previously nominated for the A.L.M.A. (5 x) and for the H.C.A.A. (2018). His books have been translated to over thirty-five languages.

Translator and reading promoter

Van de Vendel is also a very productive translator from English, French, German, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. He translated over 180 books, mainly picture books by for example Benji Davies, Jon Klassen, MacBarnett and series such as the Treehouse-series by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton and the Julius Zebra-series by Gary Northfield, but also Ulf Stark, Sydney Smith and lesser-known books of all kinds of genres and themes, from popular series to literary gems. Van de Vendel is often mentioned on the cover of the books that he translated, as his name is regarded as a ‘mark of quality’ by both publishers and readers.¹



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



Slash, a series of novels based upon true stories is one of these initiatives. In this series, a famous author teams up with a remarkable young adult to write a book about his or her life experiences. In 2008, Van de Vendel wrote the first

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

³Publisher

Last but not least: In 2023 Van de Vendel initiated Blauw Gras [Blue Grass], a new publishing company in The Netherlands that creates books for and about as well young people as adults. Most of the published books have a link to something related to today's society. Van de Vendel was given this opportunity by Singel Publishers, after having mentored various writing talents for years and being the source of book series as previously mentioned.

With Blauw Gras he hopes to publish light, relevant, fresh and mattering books that emphasize focus, clarity and optimism - concepts our confusing times need.



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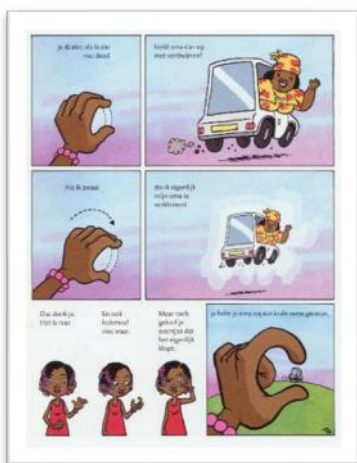
² Quotes from ‘In schrijven zit verslavend oerplezier’ by Miek Smilde, 15 February 2014: <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/in-schrijven-zit-verslavend-oerplezier-b5121203/>.

³ Photo: the launching of Blauw Gras, <https://www.edwardvandevedel.nl/over-mij/fotos>.

Van de Vendel's Contribution to Literature for Young People

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

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



For instance, Van de Vendel is a master in combining genres into new narrative forms. Together with illustrator Floor de Goede, Van de Vendel published several books with 'graphic poems', poems cast in the form of a comic strip / graphic novel. From a review about the first book:

"This innovative concept, applied to a collection of 22 fun and high-quality poems, makes for a straight bull's-eye. All kinds of themes from a child's everyday life are mixed with a dose of lively fantasy and pointed humor and cast in rhythmic,

melodious verse. The texts read like a train, nicely in cadence, rocking on structuring but

4

never forced rhyme, surprising by sudden track changes. (...) Each graphic poem takes up a double page. You absolutely cannot dismiss the prints as 'illustrating the text'. They are as

⁴ Poem from *De Zombietrein en andere stripgedichten* [The zombie train and other graphic poems]

essential a part of the story as the words. The result is a gem of a book that makes you look forward to more of that.”⁵

Another illustrator with whom Van de Vendel has a long-standing collaboration is previous Dutch children’s book ambassador Martijn van der Linden. They recently won the Gouden Poëziemedaile for [Golden Poetry Medal] for *Gelukkig en blij* [Happy and delighted]. The jury report stated that:



*“Gelukkig en blij transcends genre boundaries and is picture book and poetry collection in one. Thanks to the idea of the care farm, the recurring characters and the linked poems everything clicks together. Edward van de Vendel gives his voice to the animals, contributing topical themes that readers of different ages and reading and living experience can appeal. New experiences present themselves with each reading.”*⁶



Two figurines from *Gelukkig en blij* play the lead role in *Hannes en Hassan weten meer dan jij / 12,5 gedichten* [Hannes and Hassan know more than you / 12,5 poems]. Van de Vendel: “In recent years there were sometimes ideas for series of poems that could not fill a very thick volume. Therefore, in each volume of this series twelve new poems with twelve drawings. Then at the end of the volume is another half, hand-written

by me: a preview from the next volume. That makes a total of 12 and a half poems. There are two collections a year, always with a different theme, and the price is also low: € 12,50.”^{7 8}

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

⁵ From Belgian children’s literature review website Pluizer.be: <https://www.pluizer.be/kinderboeken-jeugdboeken/opa-laet-zijn-tenen-zien>.

⁶ Photo and excerpt from the jury report: <https://www.poeziecentrum.be/projecten/gouden-poeziemedaile-en-poeziesterren>

⁷ <https://www.edwardvandevendel.nl/boeken/hannes-en-hassan-weten-meer-dan-jij>

⁸ Photo: <https://lezersgoud.nl/edward-van-de-vendel-martijn-van-der-linden-hannes-en-hassan-weten-meer-dan-jij-125-gedichten-1/>

comics. ‘A lively, varied, and above all very cheerful ensemble book,’ according to newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*.

No matter which form Van de Vendel chooses, he finds the right form and tone and throughout his oeuvre, his literary talent is evident. However, his books are never highbrow or contrived and are equally loved by young readers and literary critics.

Two times Edward van de Vendel received an Award for this oeuvre: in 2019 the Anna Blaman Award and in 2024 the Theo Thijssen Award. The juries wrote:



“Edward van de Vendel (...) easily convinced the jury with his work. (...) Versatile, humorous and decisive. We saw exactly that energy in the oeuvre of Edward van de Vendel. He writes with visible pleasure and unmistakably individuality resulting in books that he would undoubtedly have liked to read as a child. That’s the kind of writer you’d wish for every reader, young and old.”⁹



“He is socially engaged, enterprising, creative, has an eye for what children want to read and is collegial. He enjoys collaborating with peers, wanting to advance creators and give others a voice. He also mentors young writers and illustrators, and not only reads the work of his colleagues, but writes about it on his website.”¹⁰

Van de Vendel is a very productive writer, usually publishing several books a year. In an interview he points out that he has about 14 books in his head all the time. *“So if I’m planning to write a new book I can choose. Sometimes I drop the idea for a book, but other planned books can remain in the list for a very long time. In between there are sometimes other books, for example because of a request from an illustrator to come up with a story for their illustrations. A book idea always sticks in my head and is also regularly adjusted. For example, a title can change or there is a different illustrator who might better suit the story. I am happy that I can make what I want to make and almost every book I have been wanting to make for a long time. There is usually five, six years between an idea and the actual book.”¹¹*

⁹ Excerpt from the jury report of the Anna Blaman Award 2019: <https://pb-cms.nl/app/uploads/sites/11/Juryrapport-Anna-Blaman-Prijs-2019-Edward-van-de-Vendel.pdf>.

¹⁰ Excerpt from the jury report of the Theo Thijssen Award 2024: <https://literatuurmuseum.nl/nl/literatuurprijzen/theo-thijssen-prijs/2024-edward-vendel>

¹¹ From an interview with Van de Vendel on <https://ikvindlezenleuk.nl/2018/07/interview-met-edward-van-de-vendel/>.

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



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

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

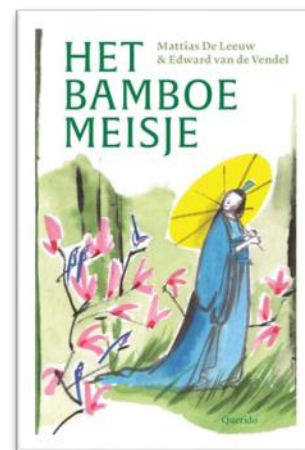




His poetic talent is also clearly visible in his picture books and other prose. Characteristic of the picture books, sometimes with verses or text in rhyme, is the use of repetitions that bring rhythm to the text and of appealing metaphors and reversals that provide the necessary humour. Van de Vendel has worked together with many different illustrators, both established like Wolf Erlbruch, Carll Cneut and Gerda Dendooven and young illustrators such as Mattias de Leeuw and Alain Verster.¹² The picture books often receive a lot of praise. Vanessa Joosen, professor of Children's Literature at Antwerp University, writes about *Django en de papegaai* [Django and the parrot]: "Edward

van de Vendel is unsurpassed in writing screenplays for picture books: there is not a word too much, and yet he builds subtle anchor points in the story." (Vanessa Joosen in *De Standaard*, 2009).¹³

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



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



¹² Read more about Van de Vendel's collaborations with illustrators in the article on pp. 16-26.

¹³ The paragraphs on Van de Vendel's poetry and picture books draw heavily on the following text in *Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur*: Van der Pennen, Wilma (2011). 'Edward van de Vendel' in: Jan van Coillie, Wilma van der Pennen, Jos Staal, & Herman Tromp (1982-2014), *Lexicon van de jeugdliteratuur*. Retrieved from DBNL (KB Royal Library): https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/coil001lexi01_01/lvdj01032.php.

Appreciative Essays About Edward van de Vendel

PERSONALITY AS KEY TO INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

By Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer

2024

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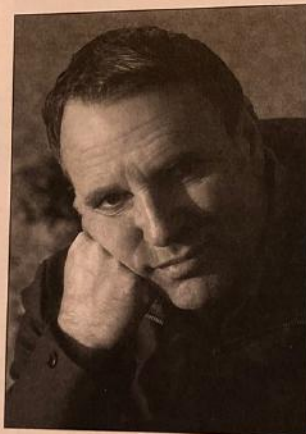
Personality as Key to Intergenerational Communication:

Dutch Author Edward van de Vendel

by HELMA VAN LIEROP-DEBRAUWER

Edward van de Vendel, born in 1964 in the Netherlands, is without doubt a “literary centipede.” He worked as an elementary school teacher when, in 1996, he debuted as an author with *Betrap me (Catch Me)*, a collection of poems for children. His debut was well received. Critics valued the rhythm of his poems, their pace, and the interplay between sound, image, and meaning (*de Bruijn*). The book was the start of an impressive career, and he became a full-time writer in 2001. Since then, van de Vendel has written more than one hundred books, ranging across poetry, picturebooks, books for beginning and middle-grade readers, nonfiction, and young adult (YA) books.

Not only is he a very productive author, but he is also a much-appreciated translator. He has translated children’s books from English, French, German, Spanish, Norwegian, and Swedish. In 2023, he started his own publishing house, *Blauw Gras (Blue Grass)*—a new move in his literary career. In The Netherlands, his work has been awarded Golden and Silver Slates, the Woutertje Pieterse Prize and, in 2024, the Theo Thijssen Prize, the most prestigious Dutch award for children and YA books. The Dutch International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) section has also nominated him several times for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Award. In 2023, he was shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, a clear sign that his works are also highly appreciated



internationally.

Some other international prizes had also been awarded to him. *Het hondje dat Nino niet had (The Dog That Nino Did Not Have)* (2013) received the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis and the French Prix Sorcières. In 2024, van de Vendel and his coauthor Anoush Elman won the Italian Premio Andersen for *Misjka* (2022). They had collaborated before, publishing *De*

gelukvinder (The Fortune Finder) (2008). Both books are about the same Afghan family trying to build a new life in the Netherlands after their flight from Afghanistan. While *De gelukvinder* is told from the perspective of Anoush, a young adult at the time, *Misjka* is narrated through the eyes of Anoush’s younger sister.

Van de Vendel’s versatility comes from his need to constantly renew himself as a writer. In an interview with Dutch literary critic Thomas de Veen, van de Vendel admitted that challenging himself by initiating new projects is important to him. For him, ideas and projects have to be “dangerous” to develop:

There must be a chance that you fail, otherwise there is nothing at stake. It must be so difficult that you think: I might be able to do this, if I do my very best. Then you have gained more as an author and it will be a more interesting book to read. (de Veen 18; author’s translation throughout)

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His courage to test himself by pushing the boundaries of literary genres has resulted in books that stand out for their originality of ideas and form, playful styles, and open eyes for what matters to (young) readers. Alongside illustrator Floor de Goede, he experimented with *stripgedichten*, the closest English equivalent being graphic poems. In words and images, they tell little stories about everyday situations with a twist in the text, the images, or both: author and illustrator add new dimensions by enlarging details, using an unexpected perspective or turning things upside down. The first collection of graphic poems, *Opa laat zijn tenen zien en andere stripgedichten* (*Granddad Shows His Toes and Other Graphic Poems*; 2008) was awarded a Silver Slate.

For beginning readers, van de Vendel initiated the series *Tijgerlezen*. *Gelukkig leren lezen* (*Tiger Reading: Happily Learning to Read*) as an alternative to the technical approach of learning to read in Dutch elementary schools. Because academic research showed that children learn to read more easily when they have a positive attitude about reading, he introduced the series with attractive books by well-known authors and illustrators that meet children's needs and also invite adults and children to read aloud.

With *De dagen van de bluegrass liefde* (*The Days of Bluegrass Love*; 1999), van de Vendel wrote his first adolescent novel, which was well received by reviewers who valued the nuanced portrayal of the two gay protagonists, Tycho and Oliver, who struggle with their relation in a largely homophobic environment, and his delicate use of metaphors. This novel, its sequel *Ons derde lichaam* (*Our Third Body*; 2006), and its prequel *Oliver* (2015) touch upon universal themes, such as figuring out who you are and finding your place in the world. The series is appreciated by both adolescent and adult readers who read the books for their own

reading pleasure, thus being a good example of crossover fiction, books that "may find an audience of both children and adults with or without authorial and/or editorial intention" (Beckett 7).

Notwithstanding the versatility of genres and his commitment to innovation, van de Vendel's ambition as a writer has not changed over time. His drive to write books that find their way to readers' hearts continues to shape his identity as an author. Despite his awareness of the age difference between himself and his readers, as stated in several interviews, he strongly believes that personality is more decisive than age in literary communication. The encounter between a writer and a reader through books is a communication between people, wherein the author has to engage with his or her whole personality, because only then, argues van de Vendel, can young readers intuitively feel the author's authenticity.

In some of his writing projects, van de Vendel takes the aspect of personality in intergenerational communication one step further. He likes to work together with young people; he wants to hear what they have to tell, what they have been through and the dreams they have. One of these projects is the *Slash* series, launched in 2006.

The *Slash* series is a run of YA novels depicting the lives of "special youngsters" (as they are described on the back cover of each book). The novelty brought by the *Slash* books into Dutch children's literature is its being a form of "collaborative life writing" (Smith and Watson 264): the books are a cooperative effort of young adults and well-known children's authors, with the former telling their life stories to the latter, who subsequently wrote them down.

The series consists of fourteen life stories about boys and girls who, growing up under difficult circumstances, tried to find an identity of their own and a place where they could feel



PERSONALITY AS KEY TO INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

at home. The name of the series is a deliberate choice: the slash on the cover, with the author's name to the left of it and the younger coauthor's name to the right, emphasizes the intergenerational collaborative aspects. As such, this series constitutes an interesting example of YA books that connect adults and young people. Van de Vendel hoped the *Slash* series would blur the traditional age divide between children and adults. He expressed his belief that children's and YA literature is an intergenerational joint venture: "Children's literature can make clear how close we are to each other. How our breath, once blown, always, always mingles" (van de Vendel, "Over adem" 128).

The first book in the *Slash* series was the aforementioned *De gelukvinder*, which van de Vendel wrote together with Anoush Elman. The book is Anoush's life narrative, told against the background of the Taliban's oppressive regime in Afghanistan in the first part of the story, and the political situation in the Netherlands around the turn of the century in the second part. Dutch politics then was characterized by a growing popularity of right-wing parties, resulting in, among other things, a stricter immigration law. Upon newcomers' arrival, Dutch society immediately imposed the identity of immigrants on them, othering them from the start. The title emphasizes this imposed identity, as it refers to how the Dutch minister of foreign affairs at the time characterized asylum seekers. In this context, Anoush had a hard time developing a sense of belonging and a sustainable self-image, because he and his family floated "in an unreal in-between life" (*De gelukvinder* 252).

De gelukvinder is a political book, albeit not explicitly written as a political commentary. It does, however, function as "moral inquiry," making readers aware of problems Dutch society is struggling with, and giving them tools



to change situations in the future. The novel can be interpreted as an "act of resistance," the telling of a counterstory (Eakin 11). Being the personal story of Anoush, it is simultaneously meant to be representative of the plight of many other refugees. The narrative is a response to the Dutch government's immigration politics, the inhumane conditions asylum seekers are forced to live in, and the uncertainty faced by these people, who have left everything they had behind and have to try to go on with their lives. This lack of certainty many refugees are experiencing is also emphasized through the end of the novel, which underlines once more how young people like Anoush (called Hamayun in the narrative) lived between hope and fear, with little opportunity to settle and develop a sense of belonging. Anoush and his family are isolated from Dutch society. Their social life is limited to encounters with other asylum seekers. The eventual outcome was unknown at the time the book was published, leading the book to have two endings. It is quite an effective way to make

readers aware of the seriousness and exhausting situation asylum seekers find themselves in. Reflecting on their writing process of this book, both van de Vendel and Elman stressed the opportunity to creatively contribute to the project and the openness of the process and the feeling of connectedness (van Lierop-Debrauwer and Steels). They experienced the writing process as intergenerational solidarity put into practice. For van de Vendel, the book was "something invaluable that Anoush has given to me" (van de Vendel 2008).

Projects such as the *Slash* series demonstrate in an explicit way the premise of van de Vendel's authorship, being that personality, not age, is essential in writing literature for and with young people. In his other works, this basic assumption is present in a more implicit way,

through themes, characters, and style. They all give evidence of van de Vendel being an author who is, in the words of Victoria Ford Smith, "attentive to young people as social actors" (21). In and through his books, he fosters intergenerational dialogues that transcend the traditional age divide between young people and adults, doing justice to their personality.

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INADVERTENTLY A ROLE MODEL

By Mirjam Noorduijn

22-06-2020

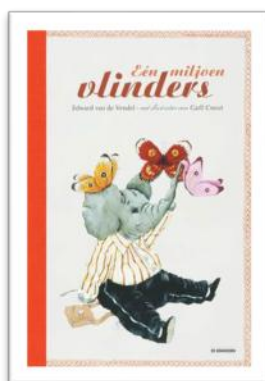
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Originally published as Noorduijn, M. (2020). 'Onbedoeld een rolmodel' in *Lezen 2* (2020), Amsterdam: Stichting Lezen.

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

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

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



'I choose the middle'

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

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

'Accessible is not automatically less literary'

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

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

‘Learning to read is more fun when you are motivated’

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

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

‘Some things happen by chance’

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

comics was an unintended effect. For me, the comic poems were also an exercise in how to mix humor and seriousness. A light packaging makes heavy subjects more bearable: the serious poems in *Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt* [What you should do when you stumble over a hippopotamus] can be there, because they are surrounded by cheerful poems.'

'I am driven by passion'

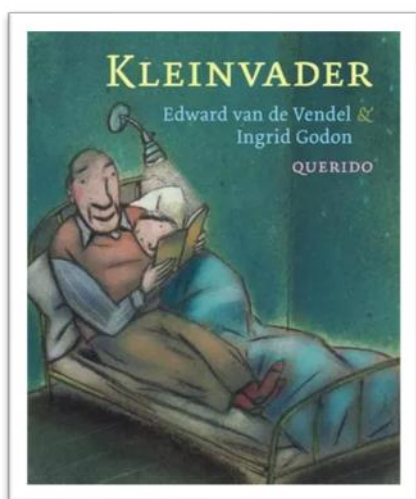
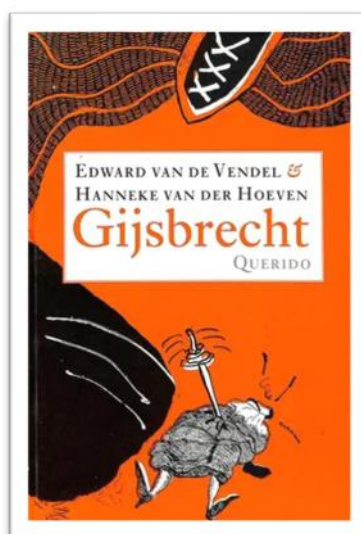
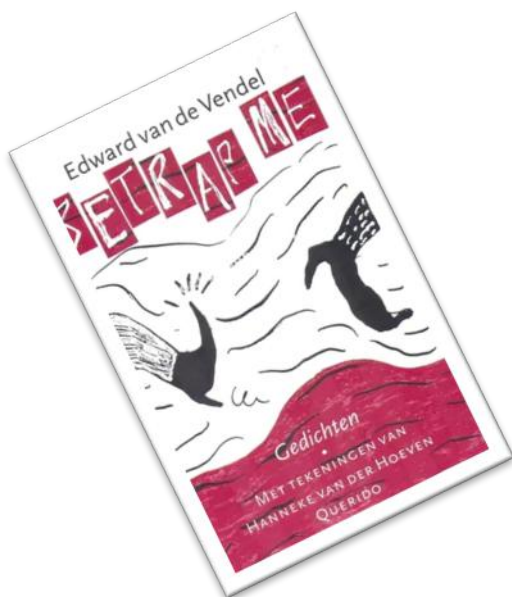
Another fluke was ABCyourself: 'Occasionally I received e-mails from young people who knew my books and asked for advice on how to write themselves. That gave me the idea to help really talented young people advance by setting up a platform. That started ten years ago and has now grown into a story blog and literary guidance process. Every year we select about two or three new writing talents. It amazes me every time how passionate and fun those people are. A number of them have now made their debut successfully: Iduna Paalman, Roelof and Harm Hendrik ten Napel, Pim Lammers... I really enjoy doing this. I simply enjoy getting to know enthusiastic people and working together on beautiful things. I couldn't be happier about that. In that respect I was lucky and we shouldn't make those projects of mine too sacred.

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

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

June would see the launch of the first titles of the Querido imprint Glow : a book series for and about young people from across the queer spectrum. Due to the pandemic, this has been postponed to autumn. Initiator Van de Vendel about Glow: 'This series is really ideologically driven. The discourse among young people about gender and sexuality has changed enormously in the last ten years: that subject is now – partly due to all kinds of

famous role models – an obvious part of their search for their identity. It is no coincidence that *Love, Simon* by Becky Albertalli has been a bestseller worldwide for years. I thought it was strange that there are hardly any books like this available in The Netherlands. Querido agreed with me and immediately embraced my proposal for *Glow*. The first to appear is my book *Gloei* [Glow], with interviews I have with young people about what glows in their lives – and you have to interpret that broadly – in which I wrote poems and Floor de Goede made portraits, and *This is Kind of an Epic Love Story* by Kacen Callender and *Like Fire* by Sara Lövestam.’



MY ILLUSTRATORS

About the collaboration between Edward van de Vendel and illustrators

By Kris Nauwelaerts

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

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

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

Tailored to the illustrator

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

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

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



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

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



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

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



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

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



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

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

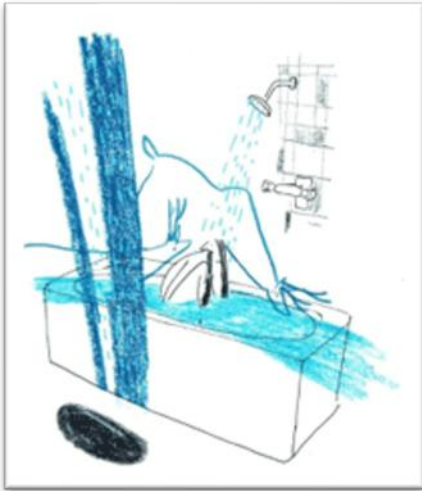


Figure 5: *Hertjes 3*, unpublished illustration, Mattias de Leeuw



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

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

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

Engagement and creative challenge

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

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



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

(...)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Diversity asset

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

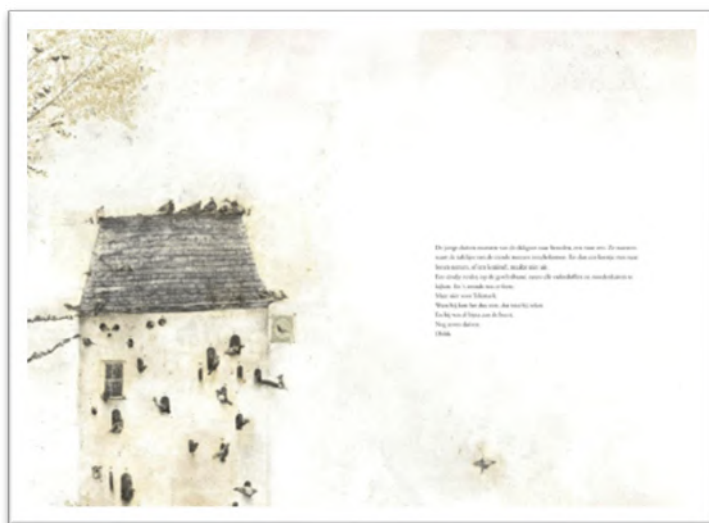


Figure 8: from *De duif die niet kon duiken* (2011, pp. 8-9)

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



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

(...)

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

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

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

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



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



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

(...)

Happy drawing

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

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

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¹⁴ Edward van de Vendel and Floor de Goede signing books, <https://www.edwardvandevel.nl/over-mij/fotos>.

List of Awards and Other Distinctions

Theo Thijssenprijs

Complete oeuvre (2024)

Anna Blaman Award

Complete oeuvre (2019)

Nomination Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award

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

Nomination Hans Christian Andersen Award

Complete oeuvre (2018, 2024, 2026)

Shortlist Thea Beckmanprijs

- Misjka (2024, met Anoush Elman en Annet Schaap)

Gouden Griffel (Gold Slate Pencil)

- Misjka (2023, with Anoush Elman)

Zilveren Griffel (Silver Slate Pencil)

- De restjes van de zon (2024)
- Gelukkig en blij (2024)
- Rekenen voor je leven (2022, with Ionica Smeets)
- Gloei (2021)
- Er lag een trommeltje in het gras (2021)
- Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2020)
- Vosje (2019)
- De zombietrein (2018)
- Stem op de okapi (2015)
- Toen kwam Sam (2012)
- Hoera voor Superguppie! (2011)
- Fluit zoals je bent [anthologist of the collection] (2010)
- Opa laat zijn tenen zien (2009)
- Eén miljoen vlinders (2008)
- Superguppie (2004)
- Dom Konijn (2001)



Vlag & Wimpel (Flag and Streamer Award)

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

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

- Ons derde lichaam (2007)
- De dagen van de bluegrassliefde (2000)
- Gijsbrecht (1999)

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

- Oliver (2016)

Nomination Gouden Lijst

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Woutertje Pieterseprijs

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



Honourable Mention Woutertje Pieterseprijs

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

Gouden Poëziemedaile (Golden Poetry Medal)

- Gelukkig en blij (2024)
- Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt (2020)
- Ik juich voor jou (2014)

Shortlist Gouden Poëziemedaile

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

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

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

Rainbow Book of the Year

- Gloei (2021, with Floor de Goede)

Glazen Globe

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Jenny Smelik-IBBY Award (for cultural diversity)

- De gelukvinder (2009, with Anoush Elman)

Shortlist Jenny Smelik-IBBY Prijs

- Het bamboemeisje (2022, with Mattias De Leeuw)

Stripschappenning for Book of the Year, category Youth

- Draken met stekkers (2010)

Shortlist Dioraphte Literatour Prize

- Oliver (2016)

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

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

De Boon (Flanders)

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

Shortlist De Boon (Flanders)

- Gelukkig en blij (2024, met Martijn van der Linden)

Longlist De Boon (Flanders)

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

Nomination Boekenleeuw (Flanders)

- Vosje (2019)

IBBY Honour List

- Gloi (2022, with Floor de Goede)

White Raven

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

Prix Sorcières (France)

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

Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (Germany)

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

Nomination Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (Germany)

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



Deutsche SachbuchPreis (Germany)

- Rekenen voor je leven (2024, met Ionica Smeets, Floor de Goede en Sylke Hachmeister)

Tower of Babel Honour Diploma (Estonia)

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

Brief explanation of some of the awards

Theo Thijssenprijs

The Theo Thijssen Prize is a Dutch literature prize that is awarded to a writer of original Dutch-language youth or children's literature.

The prize is named after the Dutch author Theo Thijssen and is a triennial literature prize established in 1988. The prize is not attached to a specific work, but concerns the author's complete oeuvre.

The prize was first awarded in 1964 and other laureates included for example AMG Schmidt, Tonke dragt, Guus Kuijer, Paul Biegel and Ted van Lieshout.

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

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

Woutertje Pieterse Prijs

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

De Boon

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

De Gouden Poëziemedaile (Golden Poetry Medal)

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

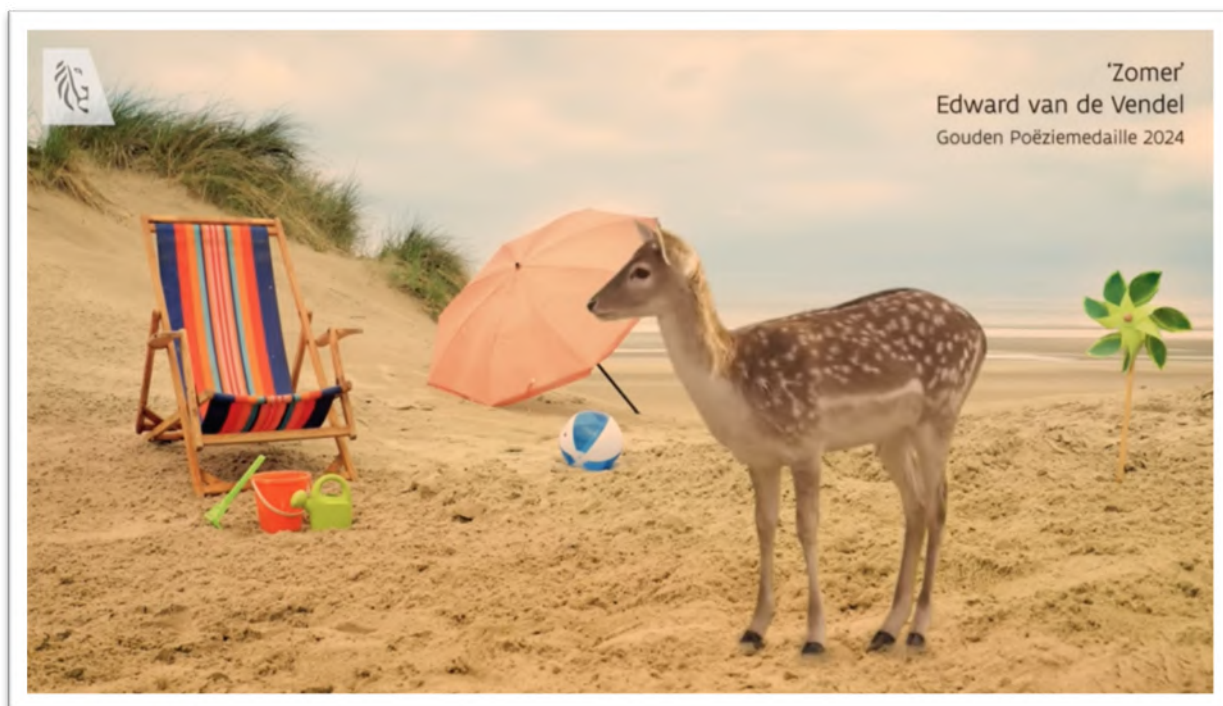
The laureates don't win money, but musicians and artists make a song and music video of the winning poems. Watch the video for 'What you should do when your mother cries', one of Van de Vendel's winning poems here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlX9bmfGkHg>.

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

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

And here you can watch the music video of *Zomer* - 'Summer'- , one of the poems from *Gelukkig en blij* [Happy and delighted]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7rASTM2lls>



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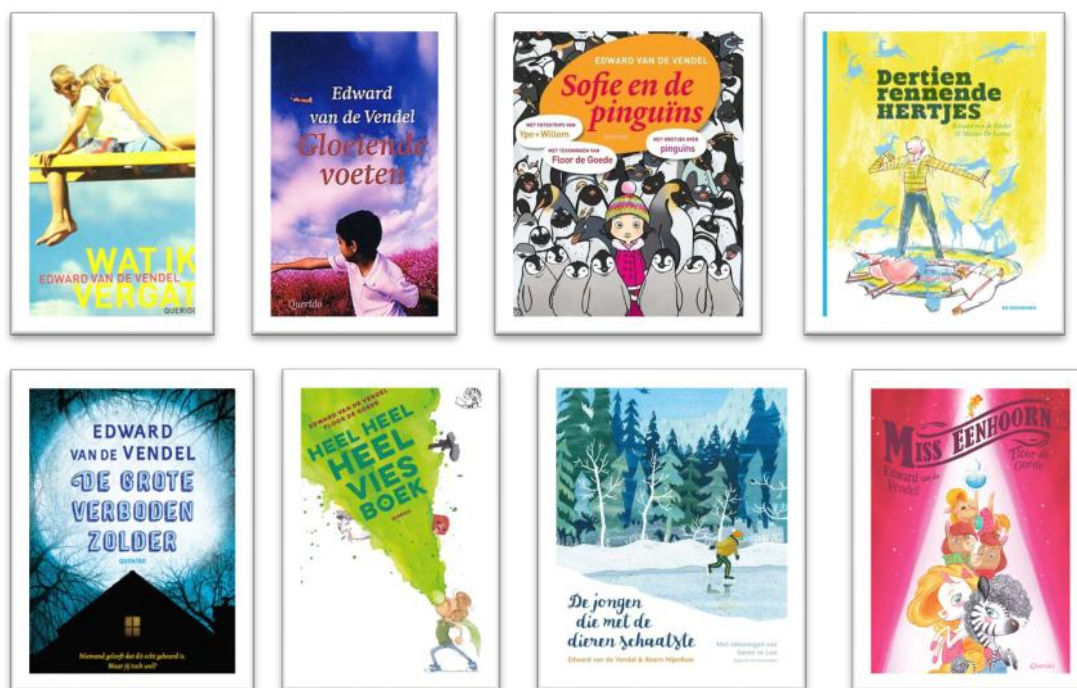
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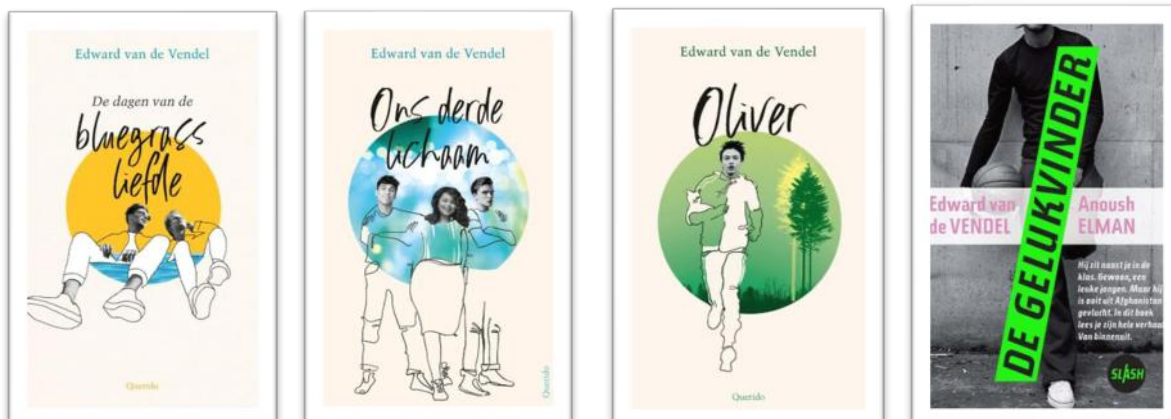
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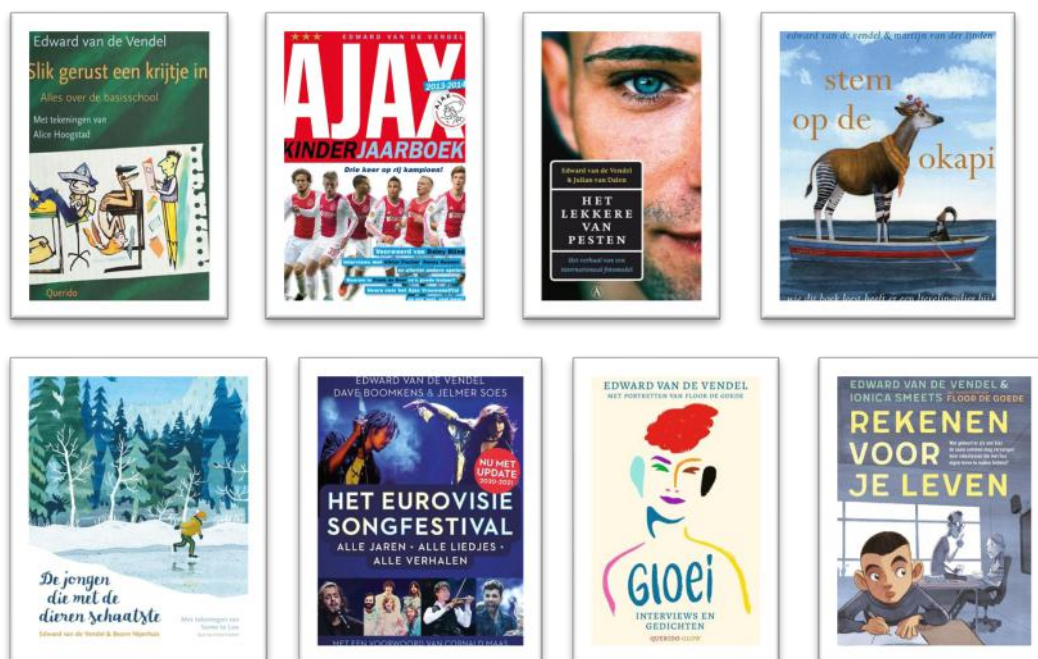
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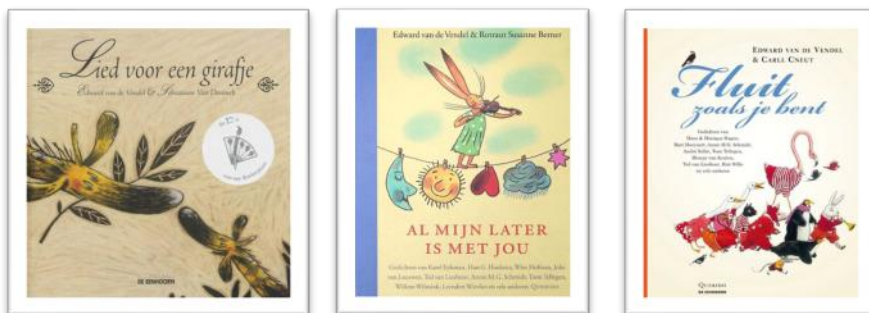
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¹⁵ In 2018 Edward van de Vendel and producer Tjeerd Oosterhuis wrote the title track of the 39th *Kinderen voor Kinderen* [Kids For Kids] album. The song called *Kom erbij* [Join us] and suited the theme of De Kinderboekenweek [Week of Children's books].

List of Translations ¹⁶

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

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Albanian

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¹⁶ Source: <https://letterenfonds.secure.force.com/vertalingendatabase/>.

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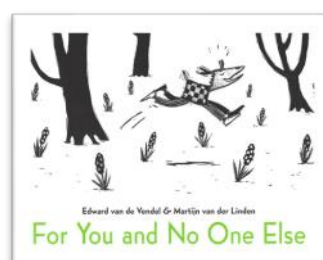
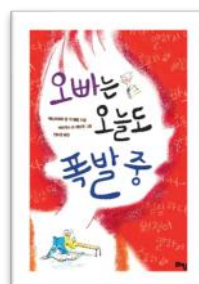
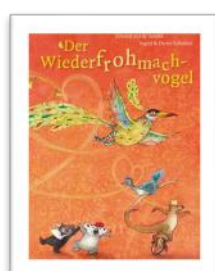
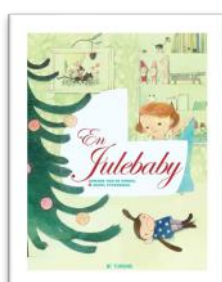
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van de Vendel, Edward. *Küçük Tilki*. Turkish / trans l. from Dutch by Erhan Gürer. Ill. Marije Tolman. Istanbul: Meav Gayrimenkul Yatırım, 2022. Children's Books; Picturebook, gebonden. Original title: Vosje. Amsterdam: Querido, 2018. Published with support from the Nederlands Letterenfonds.

Venda

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

Xhosa

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Zulu

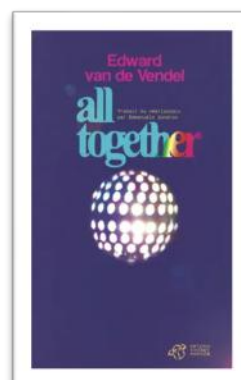
van de Vendel, Edward. *U-Sam Wathi Thushu*. Zoeloe / transl. from English by n.n.. Ill. Philip Hopman. Kaapstad: Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), 2015. Children's Books, paperback. Original title: Toen kwam Sam. Amsterdam: Querido, 2011.

South Ndebele

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

South Sotho

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



Ten of the Most Important Titles¹⁷

DE DAGEN VAN DE BLUEGRASSLIEFDE (1999)



THE DAYS OF THE BLUEGRASS LOVE

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

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

De Volkskrant

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

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

¹⁷ All summaries are from short author and book presentations by the Dutch Literary Foundation: <https://www.letterenfonds.nl/en/>. The exact url's are included after every text.

DE GELUKVINDER (2008)

THE BOY WHO FOUND HAPPINESS

Written with Anoush Elman

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

De gelukvinder is the first book in Querido's new Slash series, initiated by Van de Vendel himself: a series of novels written by well-known Dutch authors and based on dramatic life stories of young people today, with the aim of introducing more realistic social issues into the world of the literary children's book.

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

The film-like character of the book is reinforced by its structure, which resembles a collection of scenes from a documentary.

Hamayun writes the script for his drama teacher, who believes that the Western world needs to know about the suffering of refugees.

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



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

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

Trouw

“A truly great novel”

NRC Handelsblad

Age: 15+

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

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

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¹⁸ Edward van de Vendel and Anoush Elman who inspired him for as well *De gelukvinder* as *Misjka*, <https://www.edwardvande Vendel.nl/over-mij/fotos>

TOEN KWAM SAM (2011)

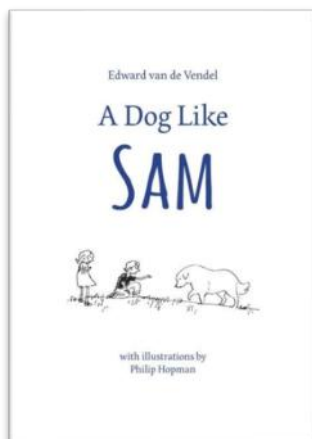
A DOG LIKE SAM

With illustrations by Philip Hopman

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

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

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



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

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

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

Jaapleest.nl

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

De Standaard

Age: 8+

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

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



STEM OP DE OKAPI (2015)

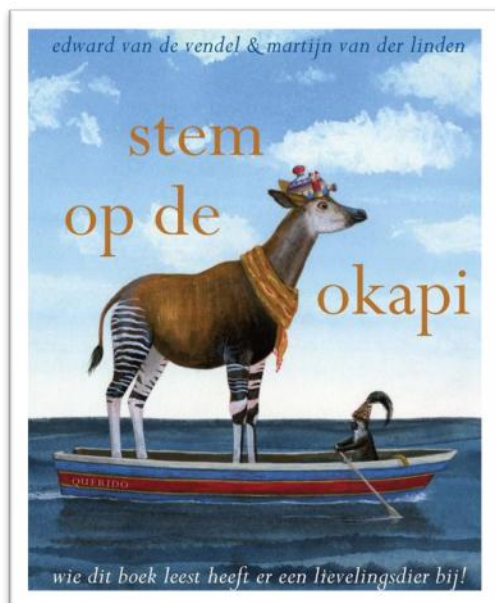
VOTE FOR THE OKAPI

With illustrations by Martijn van der Linden

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

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

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



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

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

Trouw

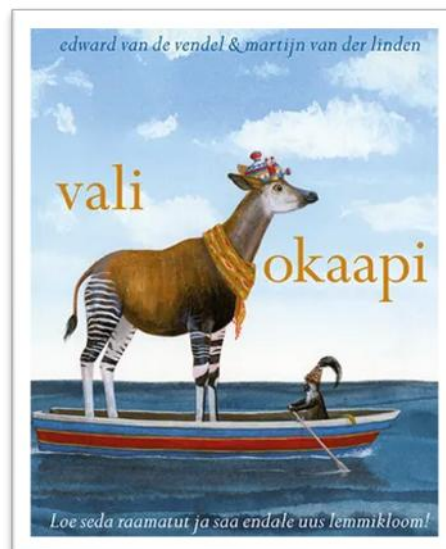
Fantastic illustrations by Martijn van der Linden, perhaps the finest animal illustrator that our country possesses.

Jaappleest.nl

Age: 7+

Translated to Estonian.

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



VOSJE (2018)

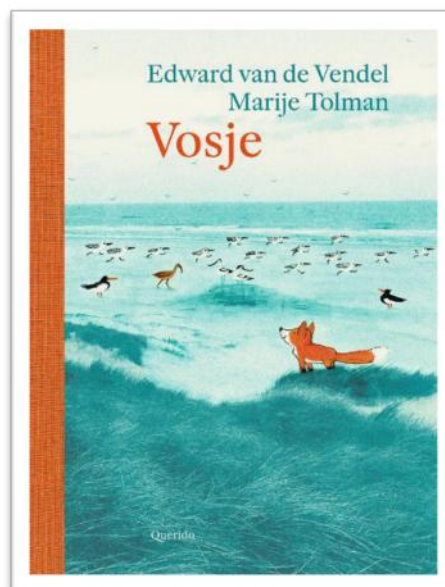
LITTLE FOX

With illustrations by Marije Tolman

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

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

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



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

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

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

Trouw

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

Kinderboekenpraatjes.nl

Age: 6+

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

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



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

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU STUMBLE ON A HIPPOPOTAMUS

With illustrations by Martijn van der Linden

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

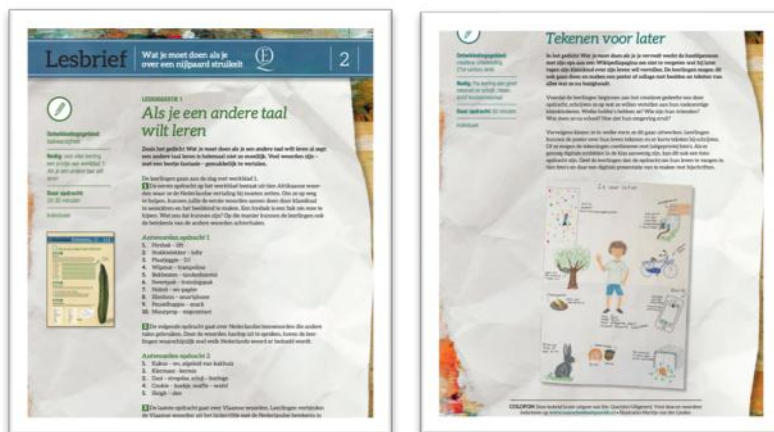
The poet and the artist have compiled a ‘self-help collection’ for children, in which every poem is another lesson. The titles of the poems include ‘What to do if your train is delayed’ and ‘What to do if someone has died and you didn’t know them very well.’ And, of course, ‘What to do if you stumble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

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

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



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



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

De Standaard

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

NRC Handelsblad

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

Age: 9+

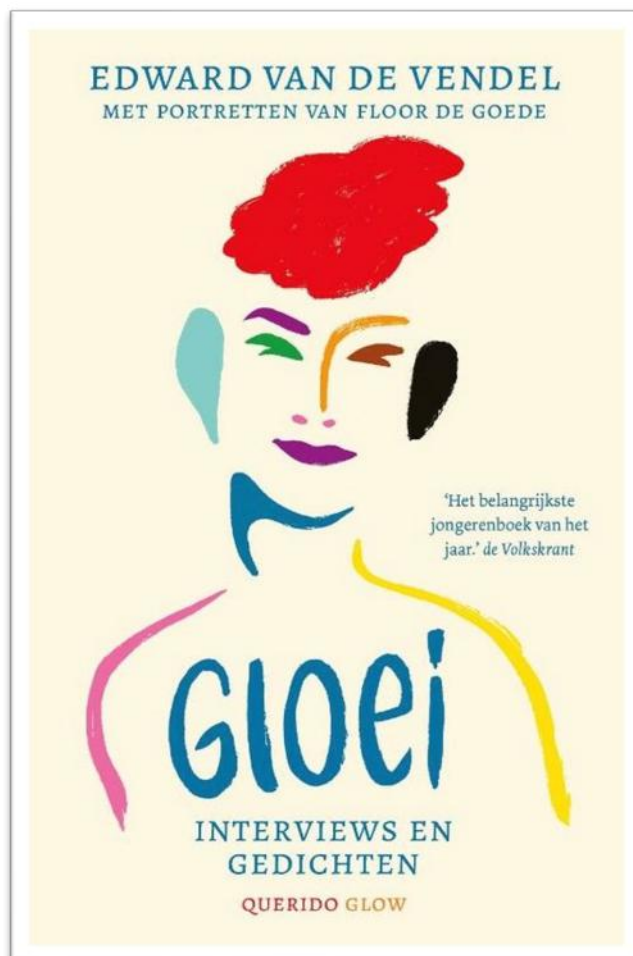
¹⁹ Two pages from a lesson plan the publisher developed to accompany *Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt*. The right one is about learning a new language, the left is about drawing the important things in your current life for later, when you’re an adult: https://naarschoolmetquerido.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-08-Wat-je-moet-doen-als-Nijlpaard_defdef.pdf

GLOEI (2020)

GLOW

With illustrations by Floor de Goede

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



“The most important YA book of the year”

De Volkskrant

Age: 14+

REKENEN VOOR JE LEVEN (2021)



MATHS FOR LIFE

Written with Ionica Smeets, with illustrations by Floor de Goede

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

The starting point for this sparkling book is the class's dissatisfaction with maths. The children think their lessons are totally boring and old-fashioned. 'What do those sums have to do with our lives?' they wonder. Their teachers come up with a suggestion for alternative lessons: every week, one of the twenty-two students is allowed to devise a maths question based on their own life.

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

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

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



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

NRC Handelsblad

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

JaapLeest

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

Trouw

Age: 9+

Translations to Albanian, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish.

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

MISJKA (2022)

MISHKA

Written with Anoush Elman,
with illustrations by Annet Schaap

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

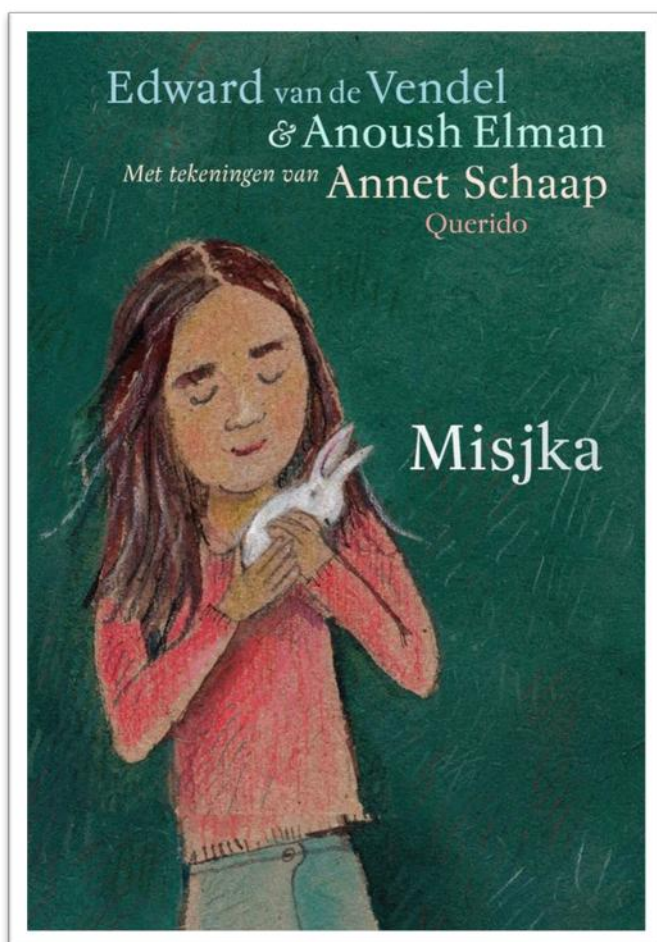
This time it is Hamayun's younger sister, Roya, who is at the centre of the action. When, after years of bureaucratic limbo, the family receives permission to stay in the Netherlands, they decide to get a pet: Mishka. To help the dwarf rabbit get to know her,

Roya tells him her story, an abbreviated version of *De gelukvinder*. But then Mishka goes missing...

Van de Vendel beautifully mirrors the difficult journey from Afghanistan to the Netherlands in the missing rabbit's wanderings. With understated colour illustrations by Annet Schaap, the creator of *Lampie*, this new Van de Vendel is once again another book to treasure.

Age: 8+

Translations to English, Estonian, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latvian, Macedonian, Swedish.



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

GELUKKIG EN BLIJ (2023)

HAPPY AND DELIGHTED

With illustrations by Annet Schaap

Shortlisted the Boon for children's and youth literature 2024

In this collection of moving, funny and sometimes serious poems, Edward van de Vendel and Martijn van der Linden show that happiness can lie in very different things.

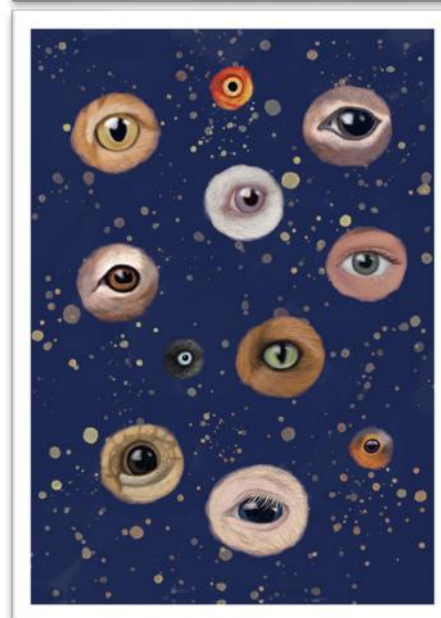
20

The cats Hannes and Hassan, the donkeys, the tortoises, the mama pig with her piglets, the dwarf rabbit and the goldfish, the birds: they live happily and joyfully on the farm. The more predictable their days are, the happier they are. But sometimes their peaceful existence is shaken up and there is nothing left but to get used to something new. Yet happiness often turns out to be very close at hand!

A heart-warming bundle with enchanting illustrations in colour for everyone from 10 years old to well beyond.

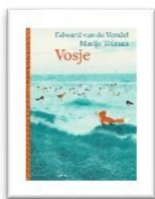
Age: 10+

(Retrieved from: <https://www.kinderboeken.nl/boek/gelukkig-en-blij/?srsltid=AfmBOorOcGXiPyDEnb8gXHUxjNDrZVnuW7ZL8W6Gtd-Gwaqpodkslyct>)



²⁰ Illustration by Martijn van der Linden.

Books Sent to the Jury



Vosje (2018)

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



Gloei (2020)



Rekenen voor je leven (2021)

- + Full PDF of the French, German, Korean, Serbian and Spanish version



Misjka (2022)

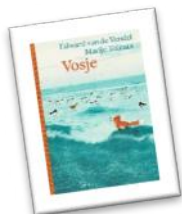
- + Full PDF of the German, English and French version



Gelukkig en blij (2023)

- + Sample translation in English of some of the poems

Selection of Reviews of the Books Sent to the Jury



VOSJE

WILL CURIOSITY KILL THE FOX?

By Thomas de Veen

19 October 2018 in *NRC Handelsblad*

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

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

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

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

The running fox follows the butterflies just too far, until the dune falls away from under his feet and he falls, and ends up in a dream. A wonderful dream: full of warm memories about frolicking fox brothers and sisters, about when the little fox discovered the world

for the first time. Van de Vendel writes grandly about small happiness, with the same joyous attention that makes the children's poetry in his Super Guppy collections so strong. 'And if you stand in the wind, your hair will blow upwards! And when you turn around it blows to the other side!' Tolman uses brown wrapping paper as a background - a subtle style change that emphasizes the dream.

Porch of death

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

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

(Retrieved from:

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

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

By Susan Venings

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

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

So far, Marije Tolman has told the story with her beautiful images. Only when the butterflies appear the text begins: 'Little fox is running after two butterflies, because

they are purple.' However, Little Fox's enthusiasm gets him into trouble, suddenly there is no ground under his feet and he falls with a big bang. And then 'his dream' begins.

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

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

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

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

Things are not going well with Little Fox in the meantime. He gets cold and he sees himself lying there: 'That's crazy, because that's not really possible. That can only be done in a dream.' Little Fox sees himself lying somewhere. On the ground, in the sand. He lies very still, his eyes are closed. Little Fox thinks: 'How did it end for that little Fox?'

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

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

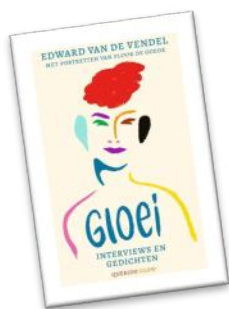
Little Fox is a book that does not reveal itself in one go. Yet it is not a complicated story: Little Fox has an accident, he dreams a strange dream and he is rescued. It is the details in word and image that stick to the reader and invite them to read, look and think about

it again. For example, about death, about curiosity, about the joy of life and the courage to live.

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

(Retrieved from:

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



GLOEI

GLOW

Queerboeken.nl

Gloei is a unique book: not only did Edward van de Vendel interview a number of inspiring young people, he also wrote beautiful poems to accompany them. So it is both a poetry collection and an interview book in one. And actually it is much more than that, because we cannot forget the beautiful portraits by Floor de Goede. In this special way we are introduced to twenty-one young people who tell about their lives. They are diverse stories, but all have in common that their gender or orientation differs from that of the majority. And they have something else in common: they are all true role models. Van de Vendel collected young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three and interviewed them about their lives, love, anger and ambition. They are diverse life stories, including a couple searching for the right form for their relationship, a Syrian boat refugee, a boy and a girl who are in a relationship and are both trans and a non-binary person. The young people candidly and honestly tell their stories, and Van de Vendel uses the right questions to make sure it's not just about gender or sexuality, but also about love, ambitions, passions and interests.

The interviews are actually impressive enough. The young people have often been through a lot and their stories are moving, instructive and inspiring. But this book goes much further than just a personal story: Van de Vendel has written an emotional and often moving poem for each young person and De Goede has drawn a beautiful portrait of each young person in the atmosphere of the interview. Gloei is thus a fascinating and fantastic book. It feels special to get to know all these young people in this way.

Van de Vendel is a multi-awarded children's and youth book author. Among other things, he wrote the wonderful series about Tycho and Oliver, of which *Our Third Body* and *The Days of Bluegrass Love* are also on this site. De Goede is an illustrator and cartoonist, known for his autobiographical comic on doyouknowflo.com and his social media. The two often work together and have made a large number of books for children, including comic poems and picture books. So now, with Gloei, they have added this impressive

book for young people. Hopefully they have a taste for it, because they may make many more books like this!

(Retrieved from <https://queerboeken.nl/boeken/gloei/>)

‘A WONDERFUL PLACE FOR GLOWING VOICES’

By Kris van der Voorn

14 August 2022, on Flemish-Dutch platform for critics on literature *dereactor.org*

The interview is a very specific but powerful genre for singling out stories. The relationship between interviewer and interviewee is one built on a precarious bond of trust between the two parties. On one side are the interviewees, who are in possession of a story that only they can share because of their specialization or identity. On the other side are the interviewers, who hold the power over the final presentation of these stories.

It is precisely this power that makes Edward van de Vendel's book *Gloei* so important. Van de Vendel, poet, children's book author and creator of the podcast series *Gloei*, has already published several children's books about gay infatuations and has now delved further into the lgbti+ community. *Gloei* is the result of his exploration of two intersectional themes that still tend to destroy the credibility of individuals in our heteronormative society: non-cis gender identity and young age. In the in-depth interview journey he took with gender-diverse young people, Van de Vendel places their voices at the center. That makes *Gloei* an enchanting book about and by a little-heard group with an intriguing and insightful look at society.

Both themes are of great importance in relation to current events.

For example, in the March 2022 Dutch municipal elections, both the position of gender-diverse people and young people played an important role. Some parties even expressed the intention to lower the voting age. An important argument is that the specific issues involved in the elections are of vital importance to younger generations, which is why they want to have a say in issues such as the climate crisis and mental health care. In addition, the transphobic noise in the media about the self-determination of gender-diverse people contributes to negative images surrounding this group. In both cases, the voices of the groups at issue are not being listened to.

In *Gloei*, Edward van de Vendel has given those voices the floor. The result is a unique and much-needed book, with a very powerful but simple format. *Gloei* consists of 21 chapters with 21 interviews with 21 young people. Each chapter opens with a poem Van de Vendel

wrote based on the conversations he had with them. Both the conversations and the poems are very diverse in nature, but circle around the themes of love, growing up and identity.

Van de Vendel uses an unsurprising technique to shape the poems. Namely, he chooses one main term from the interview each time, which then names the theme of the poem and is often the title. For example, *A box* is about asexuality, where ‘box’ stands for the assumptions that exist from society about love, relationships and sex:

*their child
who with ass on the wall
stands hesitating about where it should be.
How it should walk,
along what line,
to which gate -
and so this poem continues for a while,
but you had this whole metaphor
(which stands for everything expected;
giggles, infatuation, courtship, [...])
already hours through.*

This paints a picture of a cubicle around infatuation and relationships into which young people feel almost obligated. This symbolism is frequently used within *Gloei* to put down queer relationships and asexuality in particular.

(...)

This poem about Marijke, for example, provides a variation in tone. Her story is emotionally heavy - she was not allowed to be herself in her environment - and by focusing in the poem on the love that changed her relationship to faith, Van de Vendel brings relief.

Another very strong aspect of the book is the multilingualism that Van de Vendel integrates into his poems. Indeed, the use of English words in Dutch often plays a role in young people's creativity. I am therefore pleased to see how much slang is used by generation Z and adopted by the poet in the poems, such as Instagram, filters, reset and switch. Certainly the poem *If you know me then you know me* is a mix of English and Dutch. (...)

Van de Vendel seems to apply this mix where the young people themselves did so in the interviews. As a result, the poems reflect some of the personality of the young people.

When reading or listening to interviews, it is important for me to be critical of the quotes

being quoted. Some of the questions that come into play for me to gauge the credibility of the quotes are: is the interviewer listening to the interviewees and thus are follow-up questions asked to get depth in the right places?

Does the interviewer put words in the interviewee's mouth? If I were to ask someone whether they like red or green better, I may not say that I know what this person's favorite color is - so questioning is very important. In addition, it is essential to know the purpose of an interview in order to remain critical of what has not been said.

In *Gloei*, a question-answer model is used as a style, giving the text a spontaneous narrative form. This makes it as if you are in the middle of the conversation, which also detracts from the rigid interview structures that apply to me as a journalist. Every so often, Van de Vendel puts words like thesis into the other person's mouth, but gives the interviewee room to contradict it. For example, Quinten does not address a question about several loves in a short period of time:

[Q] Do you like falling in love with one person one time and then another? Or do those things just happen?

[A] That sounds like I'm some kind of field researcher.

And Dylan doesn't let overgeneralizing comments about his drag-ness get to him:

[Q] The combination of drag and love is tricky, they say. Is that true?

[A] Love is tricky anyway, whether you're a drag queen or not.

Van de Vendel manages to connect with young people in an innocent and open tone. Where his knowledge is inadequate, he asks how things work. This ensures that the book is also very instructive: queer jargon is constantly explained and related to the young people's lives. As a result, those terms become more than words sometimes used in the media; they really come to life.

[Q] Do you call yourself non-binary?

[A] That's the closest thing. But it's not that I'm going to specifically tell everyone that I'm non-binary. I'm just being myself. If you know me, you know me.

By asking these questions in a childishly simple way, he manages to lay out the important issues within the queer community among young people in an approachable way. For example, Priscilla is given space to explain how bisexuality is still seen as 'you're some kind of *transformer*. That if you're with a man, suddenly you're straight' (original emphasis added).

There is a lot of room for the pain of identity for these young people, but also for dreams about later. Eighteen-year-old Lenno, for example, faces a lot of exclusion in his village, but turns these experiences into self-written lyrics with which he hopes to make a living later.

[Q] But you do more than dream. You also write it down.

[A] Since I can write I have been writing. I also always said I wanted to be a writer later. And finally one day I got an idea, and it grabbed me so violently that it became a whole book. Then I was thirteen.

Asking questions, Van de Vendel manages to give young people a voice, and we see how they see the world and what they expect from it. The result is a refreshing generational view of how our society works. Moreover, Van de Vendel takes young people very seriously: he allows couples (some aged sixteen and seventeen) to speak together about their love, infatuation and relationship. In doing so, he presents very enriching perspectives on these themes.

Moreover, the interviews show how the traumas we carry with us later in life manifest themselves in young people. One example is the story of Marijke, who is convinced that she will go to hell after she dies - something that stems from the ideas her community constantly conveys: 'then I thought: I will never belong.' These ideas were reinforced in part by the reactions Marijke received to her coming out:

[Q] Then why did [the high school teacher] have to cry?

[A] We sat down and I said: 'You once said that being bisexual is attention seeking. And I don't agree with that.' [...] And then we had a conversation where he said that it must be so hard for Christian gay people to not be allowed to live it out. He prayed for me, and during that prayer he cried, 'Do You want to be with Marijke? It must be so hard for her.' He still believed that homosexuality was a sin.

Van de Vendel has in an extraordinary way - and hopefully one day in a way that young people themselves appreciate - reached out to a generation that is partly heard (think of great names like Greta Thunberg), but still has little to say in our world. Van de Vendel shows in *Gloei* that young people have a lot to tell us and that their voices can have an impact on our world.

(Retrieved from <https://www.dereactor.org/teksten/gloei-edward-van-de-vendel-recensie>)



REKENEN VOOR JE LEVEN

MATHS FOR LIFE

A pigeonholing children's book par excellence

Originally published as Veen, Thomas de (30 September 2021). 'Rekenen voor je leven: een hokjesdoorbrekend kinderboek bij uitstek' in NRC.)

By Thomas de Veen

30 September 2021 in NRC

Writing for children and creating art: that is what Van de Vendel can do. In *Rekenen voor je leven* he breaks through conventions and thus underlines his message.

An eternal question hanging over children's literature: if the book is really for children, is it real art? True artistry versus audience-oriented writing - often these are presented as opposites. But writer Edward van de Vendel unites them.

"I think we should strive to make children's 'favourite' books," has been his motto for about ten years. Van de Vendel deliberately makes his books for children - he once began as a literary author who made few concessions, but gave his authorship a new twist. No longer writing from an ivory tower of an artist, he cares, in his own words, about "the other side," about readers to whom the book arrives - should arrive. He stands among his audience, creating outstanding books, from prose, poetry, picture books to nonfiction - and not rarely all those genres at the same time.

The success with which Van de Vendel pairs the literary with the accessible does distract attention somewhat from the innovator of form that he also is, the experimentalist. Do not underestimate the picture book *Er lag een trommeltje in het gras*, published last year, for which Van de Vendel recently received a Zilveren Griffel. In it he challenges the boundaries of the picture book genre by abandoning the unity of time. It begins with a lost drum, but the story picks out what happened before that moment, goes back in time decades - and then leaps into the future with seven-mile boots. Dizzying, daring and rarely seen, and it works wonderfully.

(...)

And see his latest book *Rekenen voor je leven*, for which he collaborated with mathematician and professor of science communication Ionica Smeets (and again with illustrator

Floor de Goede, someone with an increasingly broad palette as well) - a pigeonholing book par excellence. Is it an informative book about math? A story about a school class? A comic strip? Yes, yes and yes.

The premise: grade seven thinks math class is stupid. Boring. Because: 'What do these sums have to do with our lives?' asks Pijke. 'What we learn here must be important, right?'

Teacher Tine and teacher Tuur bounce the ball back: then the children can come up with their own math questions, which are then answered in class.

That is the great starting point of what has become a sparkling, varied and above all enormously cheerful ensemble book has become. All the different children contribute their own storytelling sum (in narrative texts), with mostly surprising answers (in comics, incorporating arithmetic). That diversity does an enormous amount for the dynamics of the book: it is by no means school-like, just surprising.

Moon wants to know, 'How can we draw lots flawlessly?', to which the answer is more surprising than you could imagine. Thus this book is often simultaneously amusing and instructive - about distances, about multiplication, and in fact: how to make the world a little more manageable by doing math.

Patrick's question: "Suppose a bridge is built from the earth to the moon and we start walking now, will we arrive before we are old?" (Yes!)

Sven's: 'Is peeing in the shower really good for the environment?'

Some children are again more dreamier (Saya: 'Is there any way to understand time better?'), others more earthy - like the heartfelt present Chiara: 'Which kind of discount will help you and which won't?'

The question from influencer fan Benthe ("Can you become famous at math?") leads to a series of historical portraits of female mathematicians.

In this way, Van de Vendel and Smeets show that math really covers all parts of life. And there is even more underneath: the math lesson that is about life teaches children an important lesson about self-determination, about that magical ability to control that math offers. It makes the world just a little bit more manageable.

And the form of *Rekenen voor je leven* underscores that: life and math are not different "boxes," they are intertwined. What sticks is that the book is about all those different children, about that class, with all human beings, with their own stories, loves, friendships, worries and happiness. That really makes it a book for everyone.

THIS CHEERFUL MATH BOOK WOULD YOU WISH FOR EVERY CHILD

And every adult too

Originally published as Hal, George van (25 November 2021). 'Dit vrolijke rekenboek zou je elk kind gunnen. En elke volwassene ook.' in *Trouw*.)

By George van Hal

25 November 2021 in *Trouw*

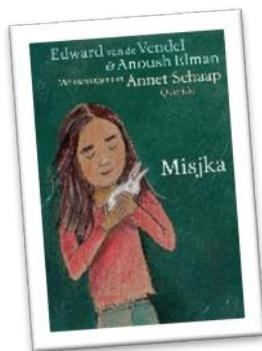
It is quite understandable, the resistance of Mano, one of the characters in *Rekenen voor je leven*, to his math books. Indeed, even his teachers find them very boring and stupid. 'Can't we secretly flush those math books down the toilet,' they whisper to each other, when they think the children can't hear. And so a plan emerges. Each week, one of the 22 students in grade 7 gets to ask a math question that is engaging. Like: when you build a bridge from the earth to the moon, how long does it take to walk across it? (The answer - many years - is most fun when you've calculated it yourself).

What follows is a math book you wish you had once gotten from your master or teacher himself. It is packed with fine comics, warm stories and even a stray St. Nicholas poem. Even as an adult without elementary school age children, you can get lost in it for hours. The book proves definitively that math not at all boring. It is at most all those old-fashioned math books that sometimes inadvertently reduce sums to long-winded drudgery.

²¹



²¹ Illustration by Floor de Goede: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/09/30/kinderen-kom-maar-uit-dat-hokje-a4060253>



MISJKA

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

By Pjotr van Lenteren
25 August 2022 in *De Volkskrant*

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

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

(...)

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

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

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

Mishka tells more or less the same story, but to a much younger audience. The little sister Roya is now the main character. Once the family lives in their first Dutch home, she wants to have a rabbit pet. Mishka comes and quickly becomes a valued family member whom you can tell everything. So they do. In this way, the rabbit, and Roya too, is told the story of the flight bit by bit, each time in slightly different colored perspectives. The chunky Bashir, the soft Hamayun, the tough eighth grader Navid and sometimes father and mother each give their own contribution.

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

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

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

By Joukje Akveld

12 August 2022 in *Het Parool*

Originally published as Akveld, Joukje (12 August 2022). 'De meester van het empathisch schrijven verplaatst zich in een Afghaans gezin in dit nieuwe koesterboek.' in *Het Parool*.

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

Who is Edward van de Vendel?

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

When will Mishka appear?

Next week, August 16. It is a stand-alone book, but for those who are familiar with Van de Vendel's oeuvre, it is also a kind of sequel. In 2008, together with Anoush Elman, he wrote the young adult novel *The Boy who Found Happiness* about the flight to the Netherlands of the Afghan Hamayun and his family. In this case, writing together meant that the story is based on Elman's life and everything he told Van de Vendel, who, in his turn, did the writing. In *Mishka*, for readers from the age of eight, Hamayun's younger sister Roya takes center stage. Elman is again mentioned as a co-author, but this story also clearly comes out of Van de Vendel's pen.

Who is Mishka?

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

What makes the book special?

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

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



GELUKKIG EN BLIJ

‘VAN DE VENDEL ALWAYS MANAGES TO SURPRISE, ENTERTAIN AND ABOVE ALL TOUCH WITH HIS CAREFULLY CHOSEN WORDS’

By Femke Ganzeman

29 June 2024 on children's books reviews website lesbevorderingindeklas.nl

(...)

This beautiful book of poems, containing no less than fifty poems, is truly wonderfully well put together. Each poem discusses a feeling of happiness - such as a robin who, as “a bird-shaped bombshell,” is a “soldier of happiness,” or the little donkey Aquamarine with “a fountain in his head that sprays thought foam”; or, on the contrary, a feeling of melancholy or uneasiness - such as the turtle who goes “drizzling” for a moment or the winter that lasts far too long. Each poem is a contemplation in itself, but together the poems also tell a story.

This begins immediately with the beautiful poem on the endpapers, a poem you might quickly read over, but which already contains such a wonderful message about people:

*they are silent so little,
that's why they are so little butterfly,
or cat,
they are so little their own children.
Because see label much less,
they sniff much more.*

The world as a recovery farm, a world where we all dwell just a little longer on all those bundles of happiness. Whether it is a beautiful cloud, a still deer on the horizon or a swift dragonfly, above the pond - image that stays with us for days because it was there for two seconds. But Edward van de Vendel also shows you with great humor how the turtle gets his happiness from a rustling heating tube (fantastic, how do you think it up?!), or how piglets can wallow delightfully in a ‘soppy onesie of ‘drizzly mud’. Also very nice is

the reference to Ionica Smeets, with whom Van de Vendel previously wrote a book, in a poem in which Hassan and Hannes try to calculate who gets petted the most. But ...

'LOVE IS BEAUTIFUL BUT
IT CAN'T BE MEASURED,
LET'S GO EAT
BIRDS TO EAT!'

But there are also more serious poems, about death or how to deal with anger in the world. Van de Vendel always manages to surprise, entertain and above all touch with his carefully chosen words.

The wonderful illustrations by Martijn van der Linden certainly contribute to this: his drawings not only provide the right atmosphere, but often give an extra layer to the poems and tell their own story. The poems and illustrations follow the seasons, and slowly you can see how the care farm is constantly being refurbished.

Because the animals keep returning in the different poems, they increasingly get their own personality, which is also so wonderfully well rendered by Van der Linden. Perhaps the most beautiful thing is how all these different stories - for that is what the poems really are - come together in the second-to-last poem, *People*. This is clearly not just a book of poetry for children, although, especially with guidance, they will also be able to extract the deeper layers and will love the life-like illustrations of the animals! Without a doubt, these are poems to make a lot of people very happy!

(Retrieved from <https://leesbevorderingindeklas.nl/book-review/gelukkig-en-blij/>)

'EVERYONE HAS A SUN IN THEIR HEAD SOMEWHERE'

Rating: Brilliant collection

By Jaap Friso on children's book reviews website jaappleest.nl

It is hard to choose which poems from this collection can be labelled favourites. Will it be the opening: *Recovery Farm* which laments that adults are so little like their own children: 'For they stamp much less / who sniff much more'.

Or still go for the hilarious which commemorates the sorry cases that lost their lives. With a closing line that keeps you chuckling. You can already hear Edward van de Vendel reading it at a subsequent Night of Poetry after which the audience erupts in thunderous roars of laughter. It is possible, but it would do the poems about the romping cats

Hannes and Hassan a disservice. They are 'stroke competitors' and cannot live with, but also cannot live without each other.

What about the little donkey from the Betuwe who likes 'that everything is allowed to be so excitingly the same.' Or the donkey who, like other donkeys, is called Berrie, but is actually called Aquamarine. He elicits outpourings from the other donkeys: 'Madeleen. That's my name. Inside. I always knew it. But that a name is so important / I had forgotten.'

There is just a lot to choose from. *Gelukkig en Blij* contains no fewer than 50 poems, all of which are of high quality. So then just one favourite for almost every week of the year. That you say: this week I choose *The longing of the garden gnome* about (of course) a garden gnome who has promised himself he exists. And there's proof of that, just listen: 'Your smile that was happy and joyful / has turned into evil as it ages / that can't have happened by itself, can it? / And oh, the fact that your plastic was discoloured? / That mud stuck to you? / Isn't that also a kind of life / That's also a kind of life!'

And then add that drawing of the angry-looking garden gnome. Yes, we can also let it depend on Martijn van der Linden's illustrations, which are sometimes very funny but often hushed and therefore moving. And in certain cases so precise that it comes close to photography. If the robin ('robins are soldiers of happiness') was not wearing a helmet, he might have been made with a camera. The poems and illustrations fit together so well because they leave room. For imagination, for fantasy, for generous laughter.

In fact, that has always been the hallmark of Edward van de Vendel's poetry. There is space and it breathes. Rarely is it buttoned up, is anything pre-written or imposed. Not that there is nothing to learn, or no message in it. There is room for that too, and the possibility to choose to read more into it than it literally says. Van de Vendel more or less names this in the poem *You may always look at everything differently too*. You don't have to be happy when others are: 'because they are there: unpleasant days / and they usually put muddy glasses on you. Yet everyone has a sun somewhere in their head / that makes dreams glow, and keep repeating.'

Many poems feel like a mirror to us, the human species. The dwarf rabbit and the goldfish comment in their own way: 'One believes in facts, the other in between (...) if one finds one, the other finds another. / It has to be with headwinds.'

The poems about tortoise J. J. van der Sluis should not go unmentioned either. 'The finest thing in the house / said Tortoise J. J. van der Sluis / is the heating pipe'. Do we hear an echo of Annie M.G. Schmidt there? Also very special: the diptych that follows the previous collection *Wat je moet doen als je over een nijlpaard struikelt*. What do you do with anger that you yourself are the only one feeling or not feeling? 'You are the goose that would rather perhaps / graze one more round / before blowing wildly around itself'. Animals are central because Van de Vendel because has lightly chosen life on and around the farm as the framework. It gives unity to the collection and room for all kinds of verses from which an indestructible optimism radiates. Even for Hannes and Hassan who, in between annoying each other, are actually quite happy and joyful cups.

A splendid collection that certainly rivals the previous one. That one was perhaps a bit more balanced in terms of content, but Happy and Happy then excels by its understated exuberance and exuberant modesty. There is currently no other children's book writer in our country so elastic with language. What a gift if you can write like that, and fortunately Van de Vendel is happy to share the products of his talent with the outside world. Preferably read the poems aloud, for yourself or others, then virtuosity and rhythm stand out even more.

And that most favourite poem? May it also be 50?

(Retrieved from <https://www.jaappleest.nl/gelukkig-en-blij/>)

Condensed profile

Biography

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

Already in high school, Van de Vendel wrote songs and participated in the school cabaret. In 1996, his first collection of poems, *Betrap me* [Nab me], was published. After that, new books followed each other in rapid succession.

Van de Vendel wrote about hundred novels for children and young adults, poetry, picture books, non-fiction and song lyrics, which are published at Querido's publishing house (The Netherlands), Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds (The Netherlands) and De Eenhoorn (Belgium). His books were awarded with many prizes and translated in several languages.

Early work

Van de Vendel debuted with poems in 1996. In 1999, he published *Gijsbrecht*, his first prose work. It immediately won awards. In the same year, *De dagen van de Bluegrass liefde* [The Days of Bluegrass Love] was published, also a success, and in 2000 Edward showed with the collection *Aanhalingstekens* [The sexy storm] that he can also write for adults.

Key characteristics

- Writing for children and creating art: that is what Van de Vendel can do. He breaks through conventions and thus underlines his message. An eternal question hanging over children's literature: if the book is really for children, is it real art? True artistry versus audience-oriented writing - often these are presented as opposites. But writer Edward van de Vendel unites them.
- Van de Vendel integrates multilingualism into his poems. The use of English words in Dutch often plays a role in young people's creativity; much slang is used by

generation Z and adopted by Van de Vendel in the poems, such as Instagram, filters, reset and switch.

- Van de Vendel seems to apply this mix where the young people themselves did so in the interviews. As a result, his poems reflect some of the personality of the young people.
- In addition to the funny, ironic poems, Van de Vendel's poems also include heartfelt, touching poems. That characterizes Edward van de Vendel's oeuvre: he takes children seriously, nudging his readers towards happiness, but they have to take those steps themselves:
- Van de Vendel cleverly avoids indoctrination and preaching by allowing events to speak for themselves.

For Van de Vendel a good children's book must be able to appeal to several readers at the same time through humour, suspense, originality and well-groomed literary language.

- Van de Vendel is a very productive translator from English, French, German, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian. He translated over 180 books, mainly picture books by for example Benji Davies, Jon Klassen, MacBarnett and series such as the Treehouse-series by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton and the Julius Zebra-series by Gary Northfield, but also Ulf Stark, Sydney Smith and lesser-known books of all kinds of genres and themes, from popular series to literary gems. His name is regarded as a 'mark of quality' by both publishers and readers.
- Van de Vendel has initiated many literary projects to promote reading among young people. Encouraging them to read more starts with offering books they actually want to read. That is what Edward van de Vendel does, not just by writing these books himself, but also by initiating projects in cooperation with other (young) writers and his publishing house.
- Versatile, humorous and decisive, that's the energy in the oeuvre of Edward van de Vendel. He writes with visible pleasure and unmistakably individuality resulting in books that he would undoubtedly have liked to read as a child.
- Van de Vendel is socially engaged, enterprising, creative, has an eye for what children want to read and is collegial. He enjoys collaborating with peers, wanting to advance creators and give others a voice. He also mentors young writers and illustrators, and not only reads the work of his colleagues, but writes about it on

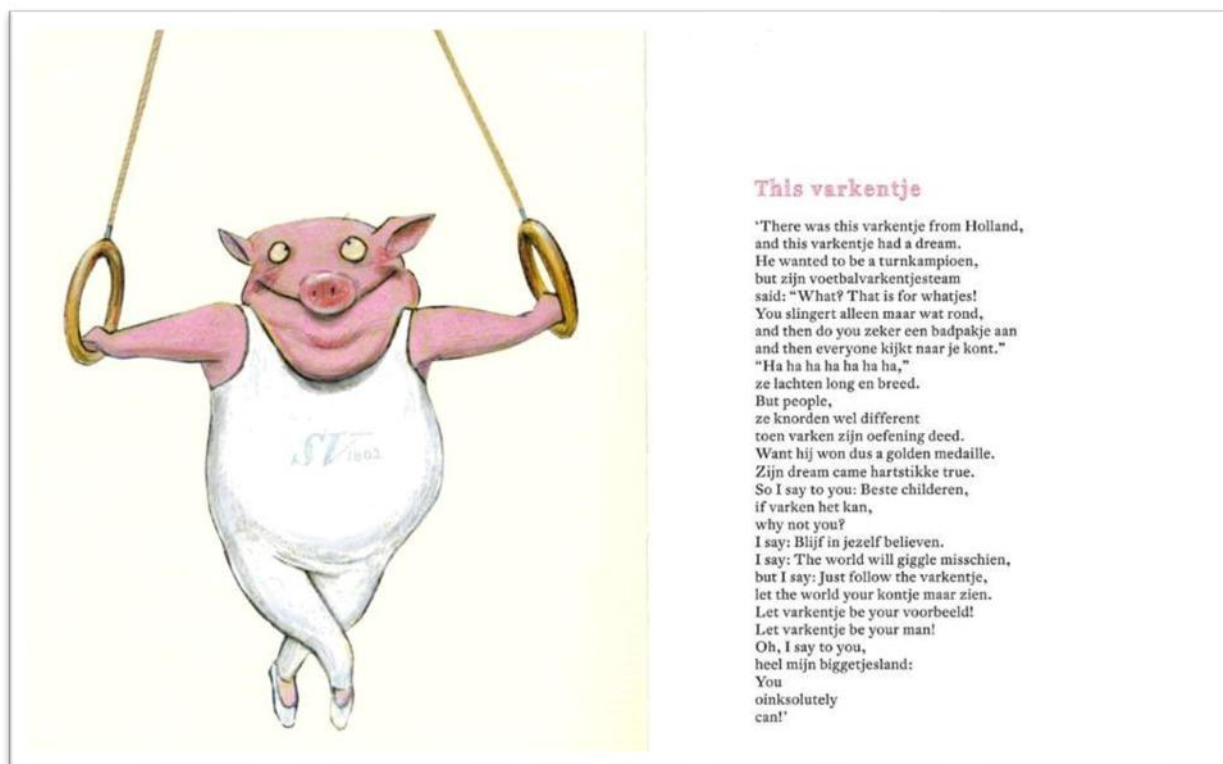
his website.

- Van de Vendel is a very productive writer, usually publishing several books a year.
- In and through his books Van de Vendel fosters intergenerational dialogues that transcend the traditional age divide between young people and adults, doing justice to their personality.
- *Van de Vendel gives a voice to young people. He makes literature more diverse by reaching out to young writers and readers from different backgrounds, with different interests, and at different reading levels, hereby making use of a broad variety in literary form, style and themes.*

Awards and translations

Van de Vendel so far has won more than 50 awards and honourable mentions with his books and has been nominated several times for longlists and shortlists. His books have been translated into dozens of languages.

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²² From the collection *Ik juich voor jou*, with illustrations by Wolf Erlbruch

**Renomination dossier by the
national IBbY section of The
Netherlands**

